

FEEDING THE FIRES

Book Club Discussion Guide

About the Book

“Feeding The Fires” is a contemporary eco-fantasy that follows teenager Kyle and his connection to Mars, an ancient dragon, during a catastrophic wildfire in the Cascades. The novel explores themes of environmental stewardship, Indigenous wisdom, family relationships, and the balance between traditional knowledge and modern practices.

Pre-Discussion Activities

- Research local fire management practices
- Study recent major wildfires and their impacts
- Learn about Indigenous fire management techniques
- Reflect on personal connections to nature and environmental issues

Discussion Questions

Opening Questions

- What was your initial reaction to the book? Which scenes stayed with you?
- How did the blend of fantasy (dragons) with real-world environmental issues work for you?
- What did you think about the alternating perspectives between humans and dragons?

Character Development

- How does Kyle’s relationship with his heritage evolve throughout the story?
- Discuss the transformation in John and Kyle’s relationship
- How do the different dragons reflect various attitudes toward humanity?
- What role does Anne play in the story? How does her unique ability to communicate with dragons set her apart?

Themes and Symbolism

- How does the novel portray humanity’s relationship with nature?
- What does the dragon scale symbolize in Kyle’s journey?
- How does the book address the conflict between traditional knowledge and modern practices?
- Discuss the significance of fire as both destroyer and renewer

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Environmental Issues

- How does the novel challenge current fire management practices?
- What role do the Young Dragons play in raising environmental awareness?
- How does the book balance hope with environmental crisis?
- What parallels exist between the events in the book and real-world challenges?

Family and Identity

- How does Kyle’s discovery of his family history impact his sense of self?
- Discuss the different types of family bonds portrayed
- How does the concept of inheritance (physical and cultural) play into the story?

Contemporary Relevance

- How does the novel reflect current debates about climate change and environmental policy?
- What message does the book convey about youth activism?
- How does social media play a role in the story?

Extended Activities

Research Project

- Choose one aspect of fire ecology or Indigenous fire management to research
- Share findings with the group
- Discuss how this knowledge enhances understanding of the book

Creative Response

- Write a short story from the perspective of a creature affected by the fire
- Create artwork depicting a scene from the book
- Design a social media campaign similar to the Young Dragons

Local Connection

- Investigate local environmental initiatives
- Research Indigenous history in your area
- Learn about local fire management practices

Environmental Action

- Discuss ways to apply the book’s messages to real-world action
- Plan a group environmental project
- Create a list of resources for further learning

Additional Discussion Points

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Technology and Nature

- How does the novel portray the relationship between technology and natural forces?
- Discuss the role of social media in environmental activism

Voice and Perspective

- How effective is the multiple-perspective narrative structure?
- How does the author balance magical elements with realistic situations?

Final Reflections

- What lessons can we take away from this story?
- How has this book changed your perspective on environmental issues?
- What questions remain after finishing the novel?

Suggested Further Reading

- “Braiding Sweetgrass” by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- “The World on Fire” by Stephen J. Pyne
- “Youth to Power” by Jamie Margolin
- Other eco-fantasy novels and environmental literature

Discussion Guidelines

- Encourage all members to participate
- Welcome different interpretations
- Connect discussions to personal experiences
- Consider both literary elements and thematic content
- Allow conversations to flow naturally between topics

Note: This guide can be adapted based on your group’s interests and time constraints.