

The Wall and the Wing
by Laura Ruby

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Pages: 336
Ages: 10 and up

About the book:

In a sparkling city where nearly everyone can fly, an eccentric genius, a merciless matron, a mystical cat, a giant rat, a notorious gangster, and a zipper-faced monster search for one orphan girl- a girl who can't fly, a girl who can turn herself invisible, a girl they call "The Wall." But how will they find her if they can't even see her? The race is on...

About the guide:

This guide includes discussion questions and projects intended to extend the use of the novel into classrooms, book clubs, and literature circles. It should promote discussion on the themes of the novel including loss, memory, betrayal, family relationships, friendship and forgiveness.

About the author:

As a child, Laura Ruby liked to ask people questions such as: "If everyone in the world is either a jerk or a creep, which are you?" and "Would you rather have the power of invisibility or the power to fly?" She found out there are a lot of jerks flying around this world and not enough invisible creeps. The Wall and The Wing is her tribute to both. You can visit Laura Ruby online at www.lauraruby.com

Author Interview:

1. How did you develop such a quirky cast of characters for this very imaginative fantasy?
2. Did you create the world before you started writing or did you develop it as you went?
3. Readers must know: If you could be invisible or fly which would you choose? Why?
4. Can you share a bit about your writing process? Would you, for example, prefer to revise or to stare down a blank page?
5. What can readers look forward to next?

Pre-reading activity:

Write five questions based off the cover of the book alone that as a reader you'd like to have answered. Put these on a bookmark, and as you read, answer them as they are revealed.

Discussion Guide:

1. Describe The Hope House for the Homeless and Hopeless. What is the facility like? How are the children treated? Why does it exist? Would you like to live there or send someone there?
2. What is Gurl's special talent? How does she figure it out? Why do they call her "The Wall?" What would you do in your own life if you had this capability? What wouldn't you do?
3. Why are people so obsessed with flying? Why can some people fly and others cannot? Do you think it is really important? Why or why not? In our own contemporary society, are we equally obsessed with anything? What? Do you think has as much value as flying or not?
4. Who is Mrs. Terwiliger? What does she have Gurl do? Would you be willing to do her errands? Why or why not? What does she do to keep Gurl under her control?
5. The details in the story make for a delicious world. For example, the fact that most people prefer birds to cats as pets. What other details were your favorites? Why? What magical items surprised you as you read the story?
6. Who is Sweetcheeks Grabowski? What is his past? Why is he looking for Gurl? What do you think he will do with her if he finds her? Describe the monster who is helping him.
7. How do Gurl and Bug's friendship develop? How do they learn to trust each other? What do they learn from one another? Is Bug a friend you would like to have? Why or why not?
8. What can the silver pen that Solomon (The Richest Man in the Universe) actually do? How can it be "more powerful than all the presidents of all the nations in the world." (p. 141) Are there any problems with this powerful instrument? What are they?
9. What happens when Gurl and Bug escape from Hope House? How do they eat? Where do they go? Eventually, who finds them? What does he do with them?
10. What is the true family identity of Bug? What of Gurl? How does this change how they feel about themselves? What about how they feel about each other? Do you think that with their diverse backgrounds they'll still be able to stay close friends? Why or why not?
11. Who does Jules turn out to be? How does he help Gurl throughout the sticky situations she finds herself in? Why doesn't he just rescue her or tell her exactly what to do? Would you like one for yourself?

12. What happens at the Wing race? What does Odd John turn out to be? How is he defeated? What becomes of Sweetcheeks? In the end, does Mrs. Terwiliger get her due as well? How?
13. Bug says to his father, "It might be in my blood, But I can still choose who and what I want to be." (p.305) Do you agree with this statement? Can everyone make choices for their own behavior despite their family's expectations or the genetics that created them? What do you think of his final statement to his father, " Maybe I am less. But I'm a whole lot more than you."
14. In the end, what were the magical surprises in the novel? Explain the magical significance of the rats, the riddles of cats, the alligators, the monkeys, and the pen. What, do you think, will the crows do with that pen?!

Projects:

As you read The Wall and The Wing fill out these two charts to help you understand the characters and magical elements in the story. Use them as study guides!

	Description	Friend or Foe	Special talents:	Goal of character:	In the end...
Gurl					
Bug					
The Professor					
Sweetcheeks					
Solomon & Bunny Bloomington					
Mrs. Terwiliger					
Jules					

As you come across magical objects or animals add them to the chart with a description of each.

Objects or Animal	Description	Power(s)	Significance in story

Visual Arts:

Create a scene from the story using any media you prefer. You may paint, sculpt, draw, use collage, etc. In a short paragraph that you turn in with the art explain why you picked this scene and how it inspired your use of color, form and style.

Music:

Create a soundtrack for The Wall and The Wing! If you do not have downloadable capabilities then create a list of at least ten song titles. After you have chosen titles or songs, explain in a brief journal why these songs best represent the story to you.

Language Arts:

Create an interview for one of the characters or magical animals in the story. Then, answer those questions based on their behavior, dialogue and how they are perceived by others in the story.

Drama:

Turn a single scene into a script for the movie adaptation of the book. Be sure to use the standard format and to give stage directions when necessary.

This guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and author of [Sketches from a Spy Tree](#). Visit her website to find over a hundred guides for children's literature!