

Reader's Guide
For
BRINGING THE BOY HOME
by
N.A. Nelson

A Debut Middle Grade Novel

About the Book

Tirio was cast out of the Takunami tribe at a very young age because of his disabled foot. But an American woman named Sara adopted him, and his life has only gotten better since. Now, as his thirteenth birthday approaches, things are nearly perfect. So why is he having visions and hearing voices calling him back to the Amazon?

Luka has spent his whole life preparing for his *soche seche tente*, a sixth sense test all Takunami boys must endure just before their thirteenth birthday. His family's future depends on whether or not he passes this perilous test. His mother has dedicated herself to making sure that no aspect of his training is overlooked...but fate has a way of disturbing even the most carefully laid plans.

About the Author

N.A. Nelson was born in London, England and grew up on a cattle farm in rural Missouri. Living on a thousand acres of wilderness provided plenty of opportunities for adventure, but it also created a sense of wonderment about what else was out there. After graduating with a degree in tourism, the author strapped on a backpack and has been exploring the world ever since. Recent journeys include the jungles of the Amazon and the glaciated peak of Mt. Kilimanjaro. *Bringing the Boy Home* is the author's debut novel and the winner of the 2005 Ursula Nordstrom Fiction contest.

Discussion Questions

1. The Takunami believe in the survival of the fittest. Weak children are often killed or banned from the village. This culling occurs in many real jungle tribes today. Explain why you agree/disagree with this practice as it pertains to life in an unforgiving environment. Do you think Tirio would have passed his test if he had been allowed to stay with the tribe? Now imagine this: You are the captain of a soccer team; would you pick the handicapped Tirio as one of your players? What if it was a championship game?
2. During Luka's training, he must use each of his five senses to pass a specific test. Which of the five senses: hearing, smell, taste, touch, vision, did Tirio use the most to find his way home to the Takunami village? Which sense do you use the most everyday? Which would you never want to live without? Why?
3. Throughout the story, a lot of mistakes are made because people do not talk to each other. Who do you think was to blame the most for Tirio being put into the corpse canoe?

Why? Give three examples from the story when Tirio himself did not communicate with people in his life.

4. The author uses animal comparisons to help us get to know both the appearance and the personality of the characters: Tirio imagines himself as an injured ant, Sulali is compared to a monkey, Weru is likened to a peccary (jungle pig.)

a) What animal are you?

b) Luka imagined his sister as a poisonous spider with eight braids instead of legs. Later, she became a jaguar. Explain which animal you think she best embodies.

5. Which character's chapters did you enjoy reading more, Tirio or Luka's? Why? Which chapters do you think a student in Buenos Aires, Argentina enjoy more? Why?

Activity

Come up with a manhood/womanhood test for the people around you. The boys should come up with a test for the girls and the girls for the boys. Then switch and have the boys write one for the boys and the girls for the girls. Pick one to discuss and then explain why passing this test would make the person worthy of being a man/woman.