

# DISCUSSION GUIDE



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## THE SCHOOL for GOOD AND EVIL

BY SOMAN CHAINANI

WHEN BEST FRIENDS Sophie and Agatha arrive at the School for Good and Evil, their fates appear reversed. Princess wannabe Sophie is dumped in the School for Evil, taking classes in henchmen training, while witchy loner Agatha attends the School for Good so she can channel her inner Snow White.

For two hundred years, there's been an intense rivalry between the schools. But Sophie and Agatha are shaking things up, especially when a certain Prince Charming (son of King Arthur) is thrown

into the mix. Plus, there are those “friendly” match-ups such as the Trial by Tale and Circus of Talents, and the Snow Ball, the most ferocious competition of all—if a princess-in-waiting doesn't get asked to the ball, she *fails* (and is one step closer to turning into a helpful rodent).

*The School for Good and Evil* is an epic journey into a dazzling new world where flunking your fairy tale is not an option.

**“Invention in overdrive, indulging in a gnarly smackdown of folklore conventions, *The School for Good and Evil* is a comedic education by a writer primed to shoot to the head of the class.”**

—GREGORY MAGUIRE, *author of Wicked*

**“Wow. From the very first sentence, you know you're entering a thrilling world of strange fantasy. The beautiful Sophie can't wait to be kidnapped by the mysterious School Master. And I couldn't wait, either—because I knew I was in for a wild and dangerous fairy tale ride. I *loved* this book.”**

—R. L. STINE, *author of the Goosebumps and Fear Street series*



# Discussion Questions



- ❧ *The School for Good and Evil* launches the reader into the tale with a bold beginning: “Sophie had waited all her life to be kidnapped.” This unlikely pairing of longing and abduction immediately sets a curious tone for the story. What were your reactions to the beginning of the novel? How did the very first sentence shape your predictions of what might unfold in *The School for Good and Evil*?
- ❧ Describe the legend of the School Master and how the different inhabitants of Gavaldon react to his imminent arrival to take selected children to the School for Good and Evil.
- ❧ The friendship between Sophie and Agatha is forged early in the story as the village of Gavaldon prepares for the appearance of the School Master. Agatha is in almost every way the opposite of Sophie. Agatha craves to feel ordinary while Sophie declares, “I can’t live an ordinary life.” How does the girls’ take on life, coupled with their shared wish to stay in the company of one another “wherever that was,” foreshadow what is to come in the story?
- ❧ Agatha and Sophie experience a dramatic and surprising entry into their respective schools. Sophie feels like a “red rose amongst thorns” at her school while Agatha perceives herself to be “the cat in a nightingale’s nest” at her school. How do these descriptions help the reader understand how the characters view themselves and their respective settings?
- ❧ Agatha and Sophie arrived at the School for Good and Evil armed only with the knowledge of the legend of the School Master. Once at the School for Good, Agatha discovers The Gallery of Good and evidence of what has happened to those kidnapped from Galvador and brought to the school. Agatha realizes that “the line between stories and real life is very thin indeed.” What does Agatha discover about the connection between life at the school and life in Galvador?
- ❧ Castor and Pollux, the two-headed dog that welcomes the new students to the school, tells the students the reason why they have been selected to come to the School for Good and Evil saying that “All children are born with souls that are either Good or Evil. Some souls are purer than others.” Discuss the idea that a soul can be either fundamentally good or evil and how this theory is supported—and in some cases refuted—by events in the story.
- ❧ The character of Tedros throws a wrench in Agatha’s plan to escape the school with Sophie and to return to their village. Agatha realizes that Sophie’s interest in Tedros highlights the opposing desires of Agatha and Sophie: Agatha wants her friend back while Sophie wants the prince. How does Tedros influence the highs and lows of the friendship between Agatha and Sophie throughout the story?

- Agatha and Sophie both wrestle with their unlikely placement in their individual schools. Agatha is initially drawn to the Nevers' goal of solitude and power and Sophie is equally attracted to the Evers' ideals of love and happiness. But soon each friend begins to realize that perhaps they may indeed be in the correct school. What story events help Agatha and Sophie recognize the accuracy of their school placements?
- Agatha and Sophie encounter the Storian when they seek out the School Master in his high tower. What is the Storian? How does it influence what happens to Agatha and Sophie at the School for Good and Evil?
- Sophie's Never roommates reveal the history of the School Master as they tour Evil Hall. What is the timeline of events in the history of the School Master? What mystery remains after the Great War?
- Agatha and Sophie realize the answer to the Story Master's riddle: "What's the one thing Evil can never have and the one thing Good can *never* do *without*?" They recognize that it is not just love that separates good and evil but specifically true love's kiss. The key to escaping their fates as penned by the Storian rests in Sophie's ability to get Tedros to kiss her. The Storian also adds the following to Agatha and Sophie's fairy tale, "But no kiss comes without its price." What do you think is meant by the Storian's cautionary words?
- Sophie undergoes a transformation in appearance and behavior in her quest to attract Tedros' attention. Describe the lengths to which Sophie goes to entice her beloved prince. What are Sophie's true intentions? How does Sophie's motivation reveal more about her character?
- No matter how Sophie betrays Agatha and thwarts Agatha's efforts to free them from the School for Good and Evil, Agatha continues to support Sophie and help her through difficulties. How does Agatha demonstrate her loyalty to Sophie throughout their time at the school? What does Agatha's devoted behavior reveal about her character?
- As the Ball approaches, the stakes continue to rise for both Agatha and Sophie. Professor Dovey tells Agatha, "You are a powerful talent. Good enough to conquer any Evil. Good enough to find your happy ending, even if you've lost your way! Everything you need is inside you, Agatha." Even with that preface, Agatha chooses to use her one wish from the fairy godmother to become beautiful. Why do you think she chooses to improve her appearance even after being shown that her inner character is strong enough to triumph over evil?
- The School Master's true plan in pitting the two Readers against one another provides a dramatic twist at the end the story. When his motivation for bringing Sophie to the School for Good and Evil is revealed, all that has held true for Nevers and Evers melts away. Discuss your reaction to this pivotal plot element and how the School Master's revelation shapes the ending of the story.





# Activities



Sophie notices a series of framed portraits of storybook villains upon her arrival at the School for Good and Evil. The portraits feature children in their “pre-villain” state accompanied by drawings that depict what type of villain each became after graduating from the school. Select a villain from a familiar fairy tale. Create a portrait of what you imagine the villain looks like prior to training at the School for Good and Evil and a drawing of who the villain becomes upon graduation.



Though the plot of *The School for Good and Evil* draws sharp distinctions between the concepts of good and evil and the characters that embody each, the characters in each school have more in common than expected. Use a Venn diagram to compare the characteristics of one Never and one Ever, such as Tedros and Hort or Agatha and Sophie. Cite what makes each unique as well as characteristics, hopes, and dreams that the characters share.



Design a timeline of Sophie and Agatha’s friendship over the course of the story, from awkward beginning in Galvador with a persistent Sophie and a reluctant Agatha, through the twists and turns of loyalty and betrayal at the School for Good and Evil. Which story events were most important in defining their friendship? List the story events in chronological order.



Create a model of either the School for Good or the School for Evil after rereading the rich descriptions of each setting given when Agatha and Sophie arrive at their respective schools. Think of the use of color and detail that defines each setting and incorporate these important elements in your model.



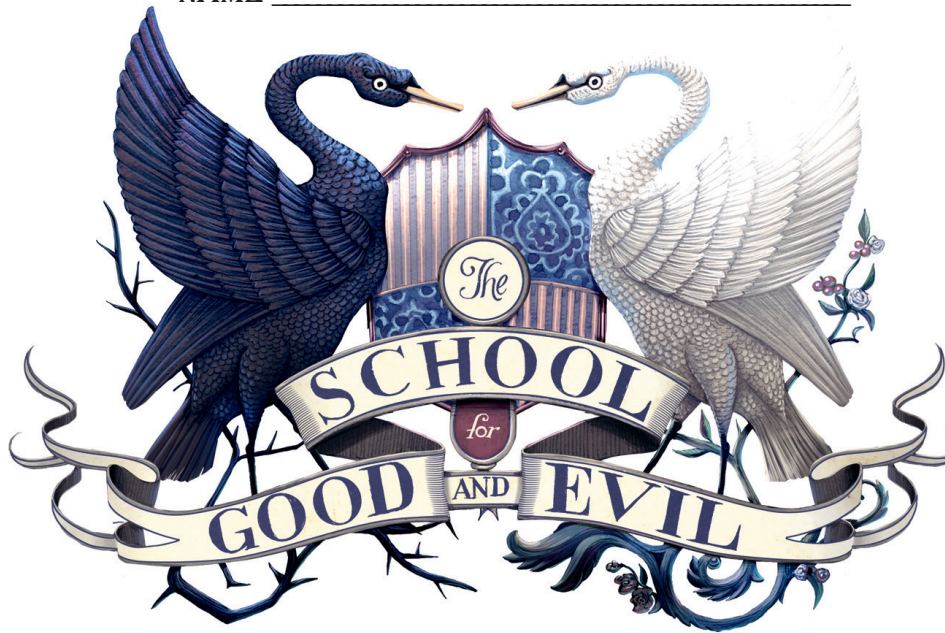
The author of *The School for Good and Evil* leaves a trail of clues in the story that hint that more of the story is yet to be told. Create a T-chart listing some of these moments of foreshadowing on one side of the chart, and listing what you predict will happen if the story continues beyond this book on the other side of the chart.



For example, the School Master remarks, “What other villages?” when asked why he didn’t kidnap children from places other than Galvador. What could happen next in the story based on the School Master’s comment? Using the T-chart of story clues and predictions, write the first chapter of a sequel to *The School for Good and Evil*. What has happened to Agatha and Sophie? What becomes of Tedros as Agatha leaves her prince behind? Is the evil School Master truly gone? Try to address some of the questions left unanswered at the end of *The School for Good and Evil*.



NAME \_\_\_\_\_



## ENTRANCE EXAM

1. If you notice your best friend starting to wear all the same clothes you do, then the same hairstyle, then the same shoes, do you:
  - A. Deliberately wear ugly clothes to make your friend look foolish?
  - B. Mock your friend in front of others for being unoriginal?
  - C. Relish it secretly as proof you inspire your friend?
  - D. Gently encourage your friend to develop a unique sense of style?
2. Upon arriving at the School Ball, you notice your friend's breath smells unbearably of garlic and trout. However, your friend is going with the person you hoped would ask *you* to the Ball. Do you:
  - A. Inform your friend at once of his/her foul odor?
  - B. Say nothing since it is your friend's fault he/she smells?
  - C. Say nothing because you will enjoy watching him/her be embarrassed?
  - D. Offer a piece of sweet licorice without mentioning his/her breath?
3. If, during a test, you notice your teacher's answer key lying on the desk in front of you, do you:
  - A. Correct all your answers without guilt, since it's his fault he left it there?
  - B. Check all your answers but don't correct the wrong ones?
  - C. Pretend it's not there and do your test on your own?
  - D. Alert the teacher he's left it out in plain view?
4. Your best friend has been chosen to represent your school in the Trial by Tale, a deadly skills competition. There's only one problem: your best friend is incompetent and will likely die. Do you:
  - A. Sneak into the competition and help your friend survive, even though you might be sent to the Doom Room of Beatings & Torture if you're found out?
  - B. Stay up all night trying to teach your friend new skills, even though you know he crumbles under pressure?
  - C. Leave your friend to manage alone, since it's his life and not yours?
  - D. Stage a sit-in to protest the fact that there are deadly competitions at this school?

5. Now that you are at the School for Good and Evil, out of the clutches of your parents, you have the freedom to eat whatever you like. When you first go into your school Supper Hall, do you:
- A. Load your tray with sausage pizza and fried potato skins because they taste amazing?
  - B. Eat a spinach and broccoli salad because it'll improve the way you look?
  - C. Stick with rice pilaf and a red-bean stew, because it'll give you energy for class?
  - D. Skip the food and go straight for dessert because it's the only thing you care about?
6. On the first day of school, the most unpopular villain in the entire school asks if he can sit with you at lunch. Then you see the villains at the "cool table" waving you over to sit with them. Do you:
- A. Turn them down and sit with the unpopular kid?
  - B. Bring the unpopular kid over with you to them, even though they might turn you both away?
  - C. Leave the unpopular kid and sit with the cool villains?
  - D. Tell the unpopular kid you can hang out in secret, but not when there are other people around?
7. You and your best friend make a plan to try the new heated wavepool in the Groom Room after dinner. But your crush finds you at dinner and asks you if you want to try out the pool after dinner. Do you:
- A. Tell your best friend that all three of you should go together?
  - B. Tell your best friend you're sick and hope he/she doesn't see you with your crush at the pool?
  - C. Tell your crush that you're going with your best friend and you two should do it another night?
  - D. Tell your best friend you're going with your crush instead?
8. The date you're taking to the Snow Ball develops a hideous acne breakout the day before the Ball. Do you:
- A. Say nothing, since you'll still have a good time?
  - B. Ask your date if there's anything you can do to help clear it up?
  - C. Feign illness and not go to the Snow Ball?
  - D. Tell your date you don't want to go with him/her anymore, since he/she should have warned you he/she was prone to ill-timed breakouts?
9. You notice your best friend is spending an awful lot of time with your crush. Do you:
- A. Act mean to your friend and your crush as long as it lasts?
  - B. Deliberately embarrass your friend in front of your crush?
  - C. Secretly stew and try to find a new crush?
  - D. Confront your friend about his/her disloyal behavior?
10. You're the captain of your rugby team in the big match between Good and Evil. Your team is down 1 point with 5 seconds to go and as you score the winning goal, you fumble the ball to the ground. The teacher referee is from your school and calls it a goal. Do you:
- A. Ask your teammates what you should do?
  - B. Celebrate your goal as if it were real?
  - C. Tell the other team it wasn't a goal and let them win?
  - D. Take the win and confront your teacher afterwards?

To score your test and discover if you belong in the **School for Good** or the **School for Evil**, visit [www.SchoolforGoodandEvil.com](http://www.SchoolforGoodandEvil.com).



**SOMAN CHAINANI** believes in fairy tales wholeheartedly. While studying at Harvard, he practically created his own fairy tale major. He is an acclaimed screenwriter and a graduate of the MFA Film Directing Program at Columbia University. His films have played at more than 150 film festivals around the world, and his writing awards include an honor from the Sun Valley Writers' Conference. He lives in New York City. Learn more about his life and work at [www.somanchainani.net](http://www.somanchainani.net). Visit [www.SchoolforGoodandEvil.com](http://www.SchoolforGoodandEvil.com) for exciting activities based on the book.



## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ADDRESSED BY THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES IN THIS GUIDE:

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.5*

Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.3*

Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot). Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1*

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.2*

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3*

Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3*

Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3*

Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).



The discussion questions and activities in this guide were written by Leigh Courtney, PhD. She teaches in the Global Education program at a public school in San Diego, California. She holds both master's and doctoral degrees in education, with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.