



L. RON HUBBARD PRESENTS WRITERS OF THE FUTURE Volume 38 Discussion Guide

“Agatha’s Monster”

by Azure Arther

In a world where monster killing and trapping is big business, one girl from a Hunter family decides she won’t kill monsters. As a matter of fact, her best friend is one. . . .

“The Magic Book of Accidental City Destruction: A Book Wizard’s Guide”

by Z. T. Bright

A “book wizard” wants to help a pair of young orphaned brothers repair their relationship. But a powerful new magic book with problematic spellwork stands in the way.

1. Since Martin, the cat-sized Titan, had never harmed anyone in the house, do you think he would have stayed tame if he hadn’t been discovered? Why or why not?
2. Do you think it was fair for Agatha to hide Martin from her family? Would you have hidden your monster if you were her?
3. Why do you think Martin attacked Ardwin? Could Ardwin have attacked first? Why or why not?
4. If you lived in this world as mageless, would you volunteer to have your eyes “fixed”? Why or why not?
5. Why do you think *The Book of Truths* became problematic for society? What do you think the Book Wizard’s Guild could have done to avoid that?
6. Do you think BW made a good decision in destroying *The Book of Truths*? What would you have done differently?
7. BW and Kadin both had issues with their family doing and saying things to hurt them. How were their responses to this different? How do you think you would respond? What do you think is the best way to respond?

"The Squid Is My Brother"

by Mike Jack Stoumbos

The daughter of Neptune Station's greatest hero is about to face her most daunting mission yet: elementary school on Earth.

8. Think about a time when you had to adjust to a different environment, like a new home, city, or school. What made the change difficult for you, and/or what helped you get through it? In the story, which steps seem to help Mica most?
9. We know that Mica has been sent to Earth from Neptune Station with an attached alien symbiote she calls "Brother." What other phrases and small details did you notice that show how she sees the world differently?
10. Why do the teacher and students want Mica to hide Brother? If you were a student in her classroom, how do you think you might react to seeing an alien creature like the one described in the story?
11. "The Squid Is My Brother" was written right at the beginning of the COVID-19 school closures, when no one really knew what was going to happen. In the story, what unknowns does Mica fear? How can you relate those to the unknowns students experienced in 2020?

"Gallows"

by Desmond Astaire

A bartender with a vendetta against the future must determine if his customer is a time-traveling tourist.

12. Are Gallows's ruthless methods for stopping time travelers ethically and morally justifiable? Do the ends justify his means?
13. Senator Blackcastle tells Gallows that Gallows is "responsible for travelers going missing across 130 years." How is this possible?
14. What was the actual function of the neurotechnology installed underneath the time travelers' temples?
15. Was the callousness of "Gallows" always a part of David Enzman's personality?
16. What eventually happens to all the imprisoned time travelers?

“The Professor Was a Thief”

by L. Ron Hubbard

*Grant’s Tomb—missing!
Pennsylvania Station—missing!
The Empire State Building—
missing! New York City is
disappearing piece by piece. . . .*

“Lilt of a Lark”

by Michael Panter

*A disgraced Lark is forced to
take the job nobody wants.
His songs can sway minds,
but there’s no margin for
mistakes in the frozen north.*

17. What do you think about the newspaper reporters’ ideas and reactions to the catastrophes occurring around them? Do you think this was an accurate take on reporters? What do you think goes on today with reporters and news sources?
18. Professor Pertwee has some innovative ideas about four dimensions and the size of matter. What science is behind this? And what do you think it all means?
19. Since Pertwee didn’t hurt anyone, do you think his actions were ethical? And from what viewpoint would they be ethical or unethical?
20. Pertwee is trying to increase the efficiency of freight transportation. If you had the power to change the size of matter would you make things bigger or smaller? And what purposes would you have to base your decisions upon?
21. Malk is gifted with the ability to sway people’s minds through his songs. If you had this power, would you use it despite the obvious moral question marks lingering over it? In what circumstances would you deem it acceptable, if so?
22. Throughout this story, people and things are not necessarily as they first appear. What situations have you encountered where a person has subverted or defied the expectations you placed on them upon the initial contact? Or perhaps where a person has lived up to them? How important is the skill of being able to look beyond face value?
23. If music in the real world could literally control people’s thoughts and actions, what famous songs do you think would have the most effect? What song would you look to play?

“The Mystical Farrago”

by N. V. Haskell

When a lieutenant with a mysterious past discovers an exotic creature held captive by a traveling farrago, they must decide how far they will go to save what matters most. . . .

“Tsuu, Tsuu, Kasva Suuremasse”

by Rebecca E. Treasure

Alone but for her grandchild and a fox spirit, Emily braves Russia’s winter and Napoleon’s army to keep her family alive and together.

“The Daddy Box”

by Frank Herbert

An abused boy finds an alien artifact that gives him the strength to reshape his life and stand up to his violent stepfather.

24. Why does the main character hide what they are?
25. What do you imagine you might see at a traveling farrago (a conglomeration or assortment of things)?
26. What does the crysallix see in the lieutenant, sexually or otherwise?
27. What do you think the lieutenant will do after the story ends? Will they return to their life, hiding what they are, or travel to the mountains with the crysallix?
28. Will the way people view the crysallix change after the man who escaped tells his tale? Why or why not?
29. Do you have sympathy for Marie when she abandons Emily and Karl? Why or why not?
30. Do you think Emily made the right choice to steal the milk, but not the cow? Why or why not?
31. If you could have an animal companion, what animal would you choose and why?
32. War and hardship makes morality a matter of life and death. How do you think you would have reacted to the events Emily faces?
33. Where do you think the box came from? And what does the “ferossilk” actually do and how? And why would it call itself “a daddy box” when it was in Billy’s hands?
34. What would it be like to gain within an afternoon the knowledge of five hundred and sixteen human years? What do you think you would learn? And what would you want to learn if you could be taught at a speed faster than light?
35. What kind of person is Henry and did he deserve what happened to him? Did his family?
36. Who is the storyteller in this story?

“The Island on the Lake”

by John Coming

A son must decide whether to follow his father’s footsteps and accept a responsibility he doesn’t understand.

“The Phantom Carnival”

by M. Elizabeth Ticknor

When a desperate bid to recover stolen memories goes wrong, Alice must decide how far she’s willing to go to protect her best friend.

37. If you could see the present, past, and future in the water of the pool, what would you want to see? What would you expect to see in the fourth season?
38. Who are the caretakers of the Island? What or who is the entity?
39. When Pete looked through his father’s book, he found lists of instructions. How do you think those actions would affect the future? And what sort of instructions would you expect from an entity to control the future?
40. What effects will the entity have upon Pete after he destroyed his father’s journal?
41. What do you imagine your life might have been like if you were a teenager during the Great Depression? What would you be willing to do in order to ensure the survival of yourself or your family? What kinds of obstacles and dangers would you encounter if you ended up riding the rails?
42. What is Alice’s relationship with fear at the beginning of the story, and how does it change by the end? What might you have done differently if you were in her shoes? How do you think that would have affected the outcome of the story?
43. Do you think Dog-Faced Dan was right to try visiting the Doctor despite the potential risks? Why or why not?
44. If you were given the opportunity to exchange random memories for magical powers and abilities, would you take it? Would your decision change if you were allowed to choose which memories were taken from you?

“The Last Dying Season”

by Brittany Rainsdon

A botanist must cure a dying planet before an evacuation when she will be forced to leave her young daughter behind.

“A Word of Power”

by David Farland

When Fava, a Neanderthal shaman, discovers the men of metal driving away her mammoths, she must find magic powerful enough to save the herd.

“The Greater Good”

by Em Dupre

Technology suppresses crime on the generation ship Eudoxus until a body is discovered, threatening the years of peace.

45. At the start of the story, Edri claims she was lured “with the program’s promise of eternity: *You’ll live forever, endure and explore. You’ll be doing something that matters. You’ll live to see and BE the future.*” Edri later describes her excitement at being reborn on Kalefe and exploring it. How do her values change over time? What do you think makes life worth living?
46. The heartsplant tells Edri, “Without conscience, courage becomes cruelty.” What does this mean? Do you agree or disagree with the heartsplant? Why? Does remembering our wrongdoings help us, or is it better to forget?
47. Prima is willing to abandon the young children already born on Kalefe if it means saving the potential lives and *future* of humanity so they can survive on other planets. Edri seeks a way to save life as it exists now. Why do Prima and Edri prioritize “life” differently? Is either right or wrong for their views? Explain.
48. What is the relationship between the humans and the Neanderthals in this story and in history? And what is their relationship with the mammoth herd?
49. If you had the skills to draw power from the air, what power would you draw and for what use?
50. What is the message of peace in this story? How does it have the power to affect the mammoths and Neanderthals?
51. If memories of our mistakes and wrongdoings kept getting erased, how do you think that would affect our society?
52. Do you see Adrian as a morally correct person? Do you feel his actions are just?
53. What would you have done with a murderer in such close quarters?
54. If you were on a generation ship, would you want to live this way?

“For the Federation”

by J. A. Becker

A genetically engineered assassin, concubine, and bodyguard has to unravel the entirety of her being to save her son. . . .

“Psychic Poker”

by Lazarus Black

Tyson doesn’t need to be psychic to know the invitation is a trap, but he can’t refuse a poker tournament with the highest stakes imaginable.

55. What are the differences between Beth and her clone? Why will her clone “never make it” as Beth puts it?
56. Why is Beth an “unfit” mother?
57. Why is the title of the story “For the Federation”?
58. Why is Tyson’s motto “No one should know what I do”?
59. How was each player transformed during the game? Why?
60. Why was Tyson the least affected of everyone in the game? Is he really more powerful? Or was there another reason?
61. How hard do you think about what goes on in another person’s mind? What is going on in the minds of the people around you now? Are you right?

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