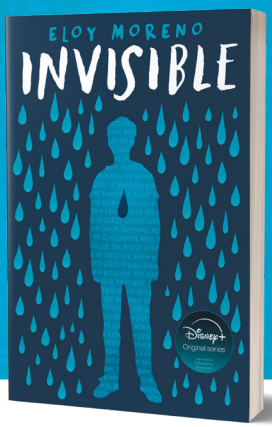
AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO

INVISIBLE

BY ELOY MORENO

Discussion & Activity Guide for Ages 10 to 13



About *Invisible*

A boy wakes up in a hospital room with no memory of how he got there.

As time passes, the pieces of what happened that fateful day start falling into place, and the boy remembers his secret: he has the power to become invisible.

But the boy is hesitant to tell anyone the truth. What will they think of him if they find out the reason he gained this ability? And what if it makes everything worse?

Told in alternating perspectives following the boy, his friends, his parents, his teacher, as well as his bully, the events of that day are slowly revealed through flashbacks. A heart-wrenching and powerful read for anyone who has ever felt "invisible."

Photo © Eloy Moreno

About Eloy Moreno

With more than three million books sold, Eloy Moreno is one of the most widely read and beloved writers for his remarkable ability to address universal themes with a unique sensitivity and always from a surprising perspective. The author holds the Guinness record for the most books signed in a single day, with 11,088 copies. He lives in Spain.

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Pre-Reading Questions & Activities

This book addresses issues of bullying at a junior high school.

1. What anti-bullying policies does your school have in place?
2. What should students do if they are being bullied?
   a. If they see someone else being bullied?
   b. What would make it difficult to react the "right" way?

This book has many different points of view.

1. What other books have students read that have different points of view?
2. How does this approach impact the way the story is told, and how the reader understands it?

Vocabulary

While reading this book, have students keep a list of words that are unfamiliar to them. Have them use context clues to define the word, and then look it up in the dictionary to confirm the meaning. In addition, have students be on the lookout for words that are used in this book in a special way, or that have a special significance—like "monster." What is the impact on the story when the author gives a word a specific meaning?

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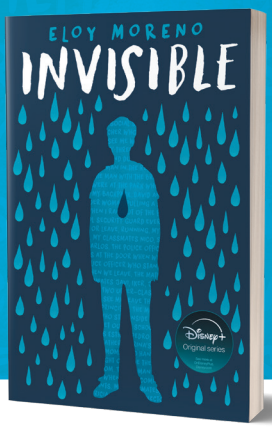

Post-Reading Discussion Questions

Points of View

Invisible uses different points of view in telling its story. Sometimes we are told the story in the first person, from the perspective of the main character. Sometimes we get the perspective of one of the other characters – like the teacher, or MM (also called "third person" voice). Sometimes the story is told by a narrative voice that knows everything (also called the "third person omniscient" voice).

1. Which way of telling the story do students enjoy the most?
2. What do we learn from the first person view? From the third person?
3. How do the different viewpoints let the reader better understand what is going on?

First Impressions

This book is in many ways a mystery—the reader is figuring out what happened to the main character.

1. How did he become "invisible?"
2. How did he get injured?
3. What happened to his friendships?
4. Does he really have superpowers?

As the story unfolds, we learn more about the characters, understanding each one better. Still, the first impressions they make are important. Have readers make note of the first time they meet each major character.

1. What are they doing?
2. What are they like?
3. How does the reader feel about them?

After the class has finished the book, discuss how their first impressions compare to their opinions by the end.

1. How does the way the characters are introduced help readers understand them and their growth?

Names and Titles

(The Mother; The Girl with a Hundred Bracelets; The Boy with the Scar on His Brow; The Boy with Nine and a Half Fingers)

Many of the characters in this book are identified by nicknames or titles as well as by their given names. As a class, make a list of the titles or nicknames in the book, whom they refer to, and how that person relates to the main character.

1. How does identifying the characters this way influence how the reader reacts to the story?
2. Does it make the characters more memorable?

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Friends

1. While he is being bullied, how does the main character interact with his best friends Kiri and Zaro?
2. Does he confide in them, or pull back? Why?
3. How do they act, and why do they act that way?

Pay particular attention to the earlier chapters in the book, from Kiri and Zaro's points of view. Break the class into groups and have each review the way his friends feel after the main character's injury on the train tracks.

1. What did they say and do when they visited him in the hospital?
2. How did the bullying their friend was experiencing affect them all?
3. How did they feel afterwards and how did they express it?
4. Do their decisions and reactions make sense to students?

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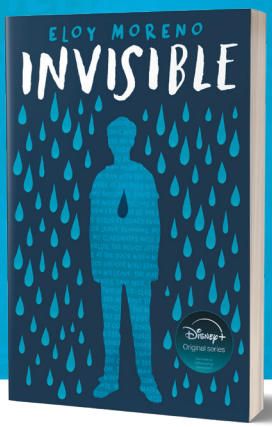

What Happened to MM?

MM—also called the boy with nine and a half fingers—is the antagonist in this story. He is the bully who torments the main character. Invisible gives the reader insight into MM's background, and how he ended up acting the way he does. As a class, locate the parts of the story told from MM's point of view, as well as information we learn about the accident he was in, his relationship with his parents, and how his parents feel about the accident.

1. How do they treat MM? How does he feel?
2. Is he a bully throughout the book, or does he ever try to mend his ways?
3. How does he change at the end of the book?
4. Does knowing more about him make the reader feel differently about him and what he does? Why or why not?

Metaphors

The author uses metaphors to help convey the message of the story and to show—rather than just tell—what characters are going through deep down inside. For example, the main character is described as being, "robbed of his self esteem." Self-esteem isn't a physical object, yet the author describes it as being stolen.

1. How does this image help the reader feel the weight of what the main character is going through?

Other times the metaphors are more complex. For example, when the main character is talking to the teacher with the dragon tattoo, the narrator describes the scene by saying the teacher's "...body begins to disintegrate, as if she were made of paper, and it won't stop raining inside her."

1. What does picturing the teacher as "melting paper" with "rain inside" tell readers about her physical and emotional state in this moment?
2. Why do students think the author uses these dramatic comparisons instead of just saying "he felt sad" or "she was overwhelmed"?
3. What other metaphors stood out to the class?

To Be Seen

When the main character is being bullied, no one steps up to help him. That makes him start to believe that he is invisible, that people can't see him sometimes. In the chapter titled "Luna" he says that his sister Luna is "the only person who has always, and I mean always, been able to see me."

1. What does it mean to students to be "seen?" Is it being physically present, or for people to be aware of how you might be feeling?

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2. How does being "invisible" describe the way the main character is treated by others in the book?
3. Who sees him, and who doesn't?

Comic Book Logic

The main character loves comic books, as does his best friend Zaro.

1. How does his love of comic books affect the way he acts in response to bullying? *For example, when he gets very angry, his face gets red—but he thinks he is transforming, like the comic book character The Hulk.*
2. How else does he imagine he is like a comic book character?

Monsters

When he meets with the psychologist, the main character tells her about the "monsters" in his life, and how he developed superpowers. After their conversation, she has a revelation: "That's when she realizes that to be a monster, you don't necessarily have to do anything that stands out—sometimes it's enough to not do anything at all."

1. What does she mean by that?
2. Who are the monsters he has been fighting?

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The Wasp Incident

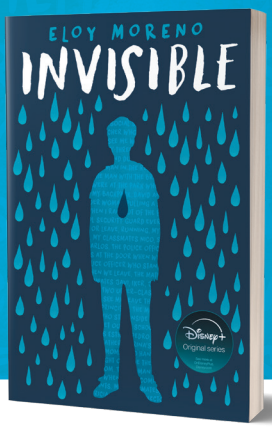
When fleeing the bullies, the main character ends up trapped in an abandoned lot. Looking for a weapon to defend himself, he finds himself next to a wasp's nest.

1. What does he do?
2. What happens to him?
3. How do the bullies respond?
4. When the video of the boy being stung is shared on the internet, how do the students and adults react?
   a. Does it help put an end to the bullying?
   b. How does the way people respond make readers feel?
   c. Does it make them think differently about how they have reacted to things they see online or in real life?

Responses to Bullying: Adults

When the main character is bullied by MM, no one really tries to stop it except for the teacher with the dragon tattoo.

1. Why does she realize what is going on so quickly, and why is she motivated to help?
2. Why do other teachers and administrators ignore the situation?



3. Do MM's parents know what is going on? How about the main character's parents? Other parents and adults?
4. How do we know if they ignore the situation or try to do something?
5. How do students think the adults in the story should have behaved?

Responses to Bullying: Students

The other kids in school react in different ways. Some laugh and encourage MM and the other bullies. Some ignore the situation out of fear, and some don't seem to notice how serious the situation is.

1. What motivations are given by the book for the main character's classmates reacting the way they do?
2. Do readers understand the way the characters in the book respond?
3. What do they think the main character's friends and peers should do instead?
4. What would stop the main character's friends and classmates from doing anything?
5. What have students learned about how to respond if they are ever in a situation like this?

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The Final Act

When we first meet the main character, he is in the hospital following a serious injury, but we don't know what that is. By the end of the book, we know that he was hurt on the train tracks. As a class, carefully review the section leading up to the incident and the description of the incident itself.

1. What was the main character trying to find out, and what did he think would happen?
2. What thoughts went through his mind as the train was approaching?
3. Why did he move out of the way of the train?

Big Ideas

Break the class into groups and have them identify the major themes or "Big Ideas" of the book.

1. How are these messages conveyed?
2. Does the author have an opinion on how people should behave, or is this book just presenting facts?

Come together as a class to discuss groups' insights.

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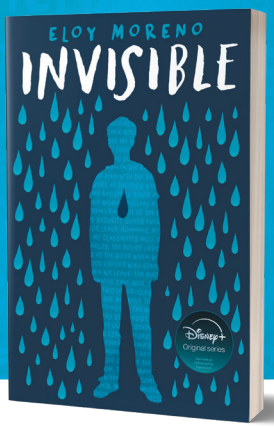

What Happened—Create a Timeline

We meet the main character when he is in the hospital and then the reader learns his story in his own words and through flashbacks. Break students into small groups and have them summarize the story. Have them identify each major event and put them in chronological order, identifying the page in the book when the reader first learned about the event. Come together as a class to create a master timeline of events.

1. What events were hinted at before the reader witnessed them in full?
2. How did telling the story this way impact the experience of readers?

The Book Was Better

After reading the book, have students watch the television series based on this novel.

1. How is the TV show different from the book? How is it the same?
2. What does the book do better? What does the TV show excel at?
3. Is there anything the book can do that the TV show can't, and vice versa?
   a. How does the TV show handle the different perspectives readers get from the book?
   b. How is the story changed to make it work as a TV show?
   c. Which do students prefer, the book or the television series?