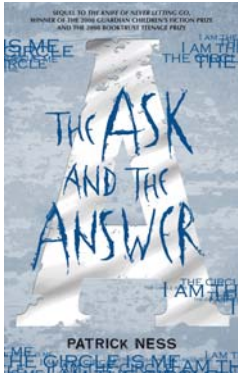


The Reading Agency Reading Guide to: The Ask and the Answer (Chaos Walking) by Patrick Ness

This great guide will help you present a title to a reading group. There are ideas to trigger in-depth discussion and information about some exciting online resources. There are six guides in total, one for each of the 2009 shortlisted titles.



Title: The Ask and the Answer
(Chaos Walking)

Format [eg: pb/hb]: hb

Pgs: 536

Publisher: Walker

Price: £12.99

ISBN: 978-1406310269



About the author:

Patrick Ness was born on an army base called Fort Belvoir, Virginia in the US in 1971. After just a few months he moved to Hawaii, where he lived until he was almost six. He moved to England in 1999.

He read English Literature at the University of Southern California, and worked as a corporate writer at a cable company, before the publication of his first novel, *The Crash of Hennington*, in 2003.

His second book was a collection of short stories, *Topics About Which I Know Nothing* (2004).

In 2008, he published the first in a trilogy for young adults, *The Knife of Never Letting Go*. This book won the 2008 Guardian Children's Fiction Prize and the Booktrust Teenage Prize, and was shortlisted for the 2009 Carnegie Medal.

Obscure fact:

Patrick has a tattoo of a rhinoceros.

What's it about?:

The Ask and The Answer immediately takes the reader back to the point at which *The Knife of Never Letting Go* reached its nightmarish end, with Todd and Viola at the mercy of Mayor Prentiss in the promised town of New Haven.

As Mayor Prentiss and his army inflict their terrifying regime on the people of the town, a resistance group *The Ask*, led by the healer Mistress Coyle plot a war that pitches man against woman.

Todd and Viola find themselves pulled into opposing idealisms, as the battle to gain power gathers pace before the anticipated arrival of the new settlers from Old World.

BOOKTRUST
TEENAGE
PRIZE
2009



booktrust

Talk about:

1. Are there any parallels between the way that Mayor Prentiss controls the men of Haven and the way in which we are controlled by the rulers of our society?
2. The treatment of the Spackle is reminiscent of the way that Hitler treated the Jews, or the way in which Black people were treated in the days of the slave trade. Why do you think Patrick Ness decided to show Todd, the hero of the story, participating in this degrading treatment?
3. In *The Ask And The Answer*, like its predecessor *The Knife Of Never Letting Go*, men's thoughts have become audible to everyone through some freak of the planet's chemistry, but women are not similarly affected. Do you think this is just something that makes for a good story or is Patrick Ness making a comment about the way men and women have traditionally behaved?
4. *The Ask And The Answer* includes some shocking scenes, such as the one in which Todd watches behind a one-way mirror as a woman is tortured. Discuss the impact of these scenes and whether they can be justified?

Read more:

- *The Crash of Hennington*
Flamingo, 2003
- *The Knife of Never Letting Go*
Walker, 2008
- *Topics About Which I Know Nothing*
Flamingo, 2004
- *The Ask and the Answer*
Walker, 2009

Online:

To find out more about the Booktrust Teenage Prize, why not visit www.bookheads.org.uk. If you'd like your reading group to be featured on the Bookheads blog please email kathleen.keaney@readingagency.org.uk

www.groupthing.org is an online community around words and creativity. Young people can set up their own groups and start taking part for free. www.groupthing.org will be running features and competitions on this year's prize. Why not get the young people in your library or school to join a group, or start their own!

More links:

- www.patrickness.com/books.html
- www.walker.co.uk/contributors/Patrick-Ness-7219.aspx

Contacts:

Booktrust is an independent charity dedicated to encouraging people of all ages and cultures to engage with books and the written word.

Contact:

Claire Shanahan

Tel: 020 8516 2977

Email: claire.shanahan@booktrust.org.uk

www.booktrust.org.uk

The Reading Agency is an independent charity which inspires more people to read more.

Contact:

Kathleen Keaney

Tel: 020 7324 2549

Email: kathleen.keaney@readingagency.org.uk

www.readingagency.org.uk



booktrust

read
the reading agency

groupthing
where creative things meet

