

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION TOPICS

PROLOGUE – CHAPTER 10

1.

This story is told through multiple points of view from different narrators. Cato's accounts are in first person, whereas other characters are told in third person. How does the author's choice to incorporate other events beyond Cato's knowledge affect the story? Does it add or detract from your understanding of the events?

2.

In the prologue, Cato's mom pleads, "He was born human. He should be protected by human rights!" Who found Cato "guilty," and what was his apparent crime? What made the town turn on him from hero to criminal? Do scenes like this happen in our society today, or is it just part of the author's imagination?

3.

The prologue is told from Cato's first-person point of view, and he refers to his mom as "Mom." And yet, in Chapter 1, he makes an important distinction about his father: "I didn't know what to call him. *Father*, *Dad*—those words had drastically different meanings. Father, the man who sired me, or Dad, the man who raised and loved me? I didn't know why he wasn't in this picture. I remembered absolutely nothing about him, so I supposed I must call him Father." And now, we see that Cato's language has changed in regards to the way he addresses his mom. He now says "my mother" instead of "Mom."

What does this subtle shift in titles tell you about how their relationship has changed over the last two years while Cato was in captivity? What do you think Cato means when he says, "She loved her money and her career more than she did the monster that was me"?

4.

We know from the Agents' perspectives that the test subjects of Project Alpha are very dangerous. And yet, rather than go their separate ways once they're free, these violent, deadly creatures choose to stay together as a group.

Why do you think the Alpha ghosts didn't take an "every man for himself" approach? Their chances of escape would have been better without Axel's deadweight or the twins slowing them down and trying to break away and return to the Agents. What does this decision tell you about the relationship between the prisoners of Project Alpha?

5.

At many points in these first chapters, characters express the importance of their names (specifically Kit, Cato, Jay, and Rayven). What is there about a name that holds such power? How does this affect your opinion of the government Agents when Cato and the other Alpha ghosts “unname” them by always referring to them as “*They/Them*” and “*He/Him*” (capitalized and italicized) rather than their actual names? What is the significance of stripping the names of their tormentors?

6.

Shannon is the first character we meet in Phantom Heights (Chapter 4). Although she’s not an experienced raider and has no knowledge of protocol or even how to use the ghost hunting weapons, she’s still determined to venture out into the conquered town on a perilous raid.

Do you see any parallels between her story as she sneaks out of City Hall with the raid team and Cato’s story on the run from the Agents? What changes do you notice from Cato’s earlier description of town square in the prologue and Shannon’s description of town square two years later?

7.

City Hall is surrounded by a glowing green dome that protects the humans from ghosts. The people of Phantom Heights are technically free, but they’re trapped in confinement. If they leave the safety of the Dome, they’re likely to be killed or sold into slavery.

Although *A Fallen Hero* was published in 2018 before the COVID-19 pandemic began, do you see any similarities between the lives of the survivors in the book and the lives of real people in quarantine under stay-at-home orders? How have the people of Phantom Heights adapted? In what ways have they sacrificed individual freedoms and luxuries for the common good, and have their methods proven to be successful?

What similarities and differences do you notice between how the AGC handled the crisis in Phantom Heights and how the 2019/2020 US administration handled the COVID-19 pandemic?

8.

Finn and Reese exhibit incredible intelligence. They fully understand their mind-reading abilities and their roles as servants to the Agents. Their vocabulary is quite sophisticated for ten-year-olds. However, they’ve never been outside the lab before. How would you explain the world to such sheltered kids unable to grasp the idea that things can exist without being created by humans? How would you explain who turned the sun “on and off,” what causes wind, where rain comes from, and why a tree is alive but a rock is not? What other natural phenomena do you think would need to be explained?

9.

Chapter 7 introduces us to a new antagonist, Azar. The stakes have drastically increased now that two separate organizations are in pursuit of the Alpha ghosts. From this first introduction, how do you feel Azar is similar to Agent Kovak? How are they different? Is one more dangerous than the other, and in what ways?

10.

Axel has rejoined the Alpha group, and yet, he isn't warmly welcomed back into the fold. Despite Cato's reluctance to leave him behind, he's genuinely terrified that Axel tracked them down to kill them.

What are your initial thoughts about Axel? Why do you think both the Agents and the Alpha ghosts (except Kit) seem to have such a deep fear around him? Do you think his presence will be beneficial or detrimental to the group?