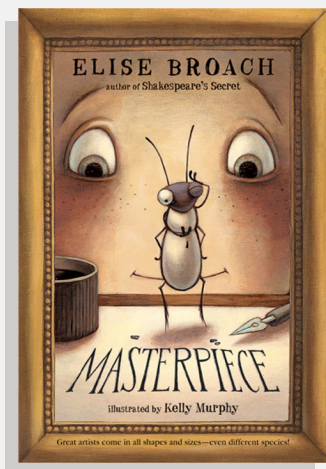


Book Club for Kids



Masterpiece

by Elise Broach

2012 Rebecca Caudill Young
Readers' Book Award Nominee;
2016 Bluestem Award Nominee

Recommended Ages:

8-12



helenplum.org

Summary: Marvin, a beetle, and James, a human with whom he shares a house, work together to help recover a Dürer drawing stolen from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Discussion Questions: Spoiler alert! Some of the questions contain key elements of the plot. Do not read if you don't want to know what happens!

1. Who in this book would you most want to be friends with? Why?
2. Who do you think is the most interesting character in this book? Why?
3. Marvin and James become friends. Marvin can't talk to James, but they find other ways to communicate. What would change about their friendship if they could talk to each other? Have you ever been friends with someone you couldn't talk with? How did you communicate?
4. Marvin's parents want to keep him safe. They ask him to follow their rules. Why does he decide to break some of their rules? What sorts of things happen when he breaks the rules? Are these good or bad things?
5. What do you think would have happened if Elaine, instead of Marvin, was the artist and the one to go with James to the museum?
6. In this story, Dürer made drawings of four virtues: Justice, Fortitude, Temperance, and Prudence (discussed in chapter 20). Is one of these virtues most important in this story? If you made a list of the most important virtues, what would you include? What do you think are Marvin's best virtues? What are James's best virtues?
7. Christina and Denny love Dürer's drawings. In chapter 20, they say: "His drawings are full of humanity. . . . But there's always something held back. It's almost as if he couldn't bear to expose his tender imagination." Go to a museum or look through a book of art. What art really grabs you? What about it do you like or find compelling?
8. At the end of chapter 22, when Marvin asks why beetles don't ever get divorced, Marvin's mom explains her idea of beetle life philosophy. What do you think about this philosophy? Do you think it would work for humans?
9. How does James feel about taking credit for Marvin's artwork? How does Marvin feel? If you were James or Marvin, would you feel the same way?
10. James and Marvin both put trust in others: each other, Christina, Denny, and their parents. Is it good that they trust these people? How do you decide when to trust someone (or when not to)?

11. Why does the thief steal the Dürer drawings? Do you think the thief should go to jail?
12. Once James took credit for Marvin's artwork, people expected him to make more. How does he get out of this situation? Does he do it on purpose? What do you think of his solution?
13. In chapter 36, Marvin thinks, "When you saw different parts of the world, you saw different parts of yourself. And when you stayed home, where it was safe, those parts of yourself also stayed hidden." What do you think this means? What different parts of himself did Marvin see in this book? What parts of himself did James see?
14. What makes James and Marvin's friendship so strong?

Activities: Flip through a book of art (or visit a museum) and find an artwork you like. Using paper and pencils, crayons, markers, or any other media you like, try making your own copy of the piece. You could also make something out of your own imagination. Which did you enjoy more? You and your friends could all try making a copy of the same piece. In what ways are your and your friends' art reproductions similar? How are they different from one another? Without putting names on them, can you tell whose is whose?

Snack Ideas: Make beetles on a park bench! Slice sticks of celery. Spread them with peanut butter or cream cheese. Dot some raisins or nuts on top (these are the beetles). Eat!

Adapted from Multnomah County Library.