



Book Club Discussion Guide

1. How do Prismaena's opinions of the following things change over the course of the book?
 - a. Abi
 - b. The King
 - c. The Queen
 - d. The Rebellion
 - e. Palma

Did your opinions change along with hers? What lesson does Prissy learn about judging things too quickly? Can you think of a time where you judged something too quickly and later changed your mind?

2. At the beginning of *A Blood Red Smile*, a little girl treats Prissy like a celebrity because she's the "balloonist's daughter." Later, Marybeth does the same. Why do you think that is?
3. Mr. Dudley is arrested for having "contraband," including rubber. It may seem silly to you that something as common as rubber would be considered dangerous. Why do you think King Michael feels that rubber and other simple inventions are threatening?
4. When they first meet, Prissy and Abi don't get along. Why not? What are some of their differences? What do they have in common? What changes over the course of the book that leads to them becoming friends?
5. Wren is faced with an impossible choice - leave her family behind or stay and allow the war to continue. Do you think she made the right decision? Is there anything else you can think of that she could have done?
6. At the beginning of the book, Prissy's father gives her a speech about the importance of following the laws, comparing the people in a society to the parts of a machine. Do you agree with his comparison? Does Prissy agree with it? How might Prissy's role as an inventor influence the way she thinks about machines?
7. During Prissy's first hot-air balloon flight, she thinks: *It made me feel bleary and light-headed—but in a good way...We were above it all. We were flying.* Can you think of an activity that feels this way to you? Did it always feel this way?
8. How does Prissy's relationship with her father change over the course of the book? Do you think their relationship is stronger at the beginning or the end?
9. Prissy tells Halston he "brought her mother back." What does she mean by that? What might Prissy be feeling after she learns about her mother's secret past?
10. In Oren, a giant wall separates the kingdom from its neighbors. King Michael thinks the Wall will protect the people, but the rebels want to tear it down. Why might each side feel the way they do? Can you think of any other "walls" in the book (real or metaphorical) that have the same impact? Do you think such walls are effective at keeping people safe?



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