

## HOW TO START YOUR OWN BOOK CLUB

Think it would be hard to start your own book club? Think again!  
All you need is a group of friends as excited  
about books as you are and a little bit of organization.

### HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED:

#### The best way to find people to be in your book club is to ask your friends.

Think of all the people you know who like to read, and ask them to join. If you still don't feel like you have enough people, ask each of your friends to bring someone else. You can usually get a good discussion going with 6–8 people, but any number that is comfortable for you will work. If you're having trouble finding enough cool people to form your book club, check with your school, local library, or bookstore to see if there's a group that you can join.

#### Figure out when and where you want to meet.

Some groups meet once a month, some meet every other month. You could get together at someone's house, in a park, on the beach, or in your school's library. If it sounds too official and overwhelming to decide all the "where"s and "when"s right now, don't worry! It's YOUR group and so YOU get to make all the decisions. All you have to do is get together once, and you can work out the rest of the details later.

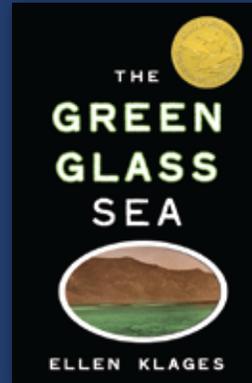
#### Decide how you will choose books, and how the discussions will be run.

This is another one that sounds a little scary but totally isn't. Maybe you have a favorite author that you and your friends would like to focus on. Or maybe you want to take turns picking your favorite book. Maybe one person likes to talk and would like to lead the discussion, or maybe you would rather just get together and talk about the books you are reading. If you get stuck, you can often find discussion questions online (try the publisher's web site) or at your local library or bookstore.

**The most important thing to remember is that there's no right or wrong way to have a book club. Do what you're comfortable with and always have fun, and your group will be a success!**

For more discussion guides to get your group going, visit  
[www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians](http://www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians)

## Two highly acclaimed books about two extraordinary girls



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by Ellen Klages

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Ages 9-12 • Grades 4-6

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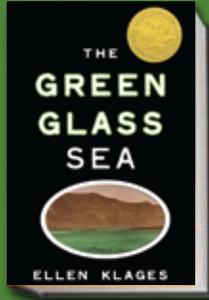
## DISCUSSION GUIDE

# WHITE SANDS, RED MENACE

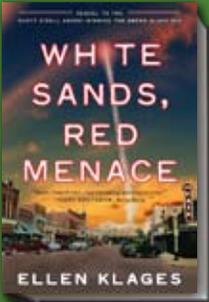
"Quiet, magnificent, heartbreaking and inspirational."

—CORY DOCTOROW, *Boing Boing*

## ABOUT THE BOOKS



When this Scott O'Dell Award-winning novel opens, the year is 1943 and eleven-year-old Dewey Kerrigan is enroute to New Mexico, to live with her mathematician father. Soon she arrives at a town that, officially, doesn't exist. It's called Los Alamos, and it is abuzz with activity, as scientists from all over America and Europe work on "the gadget." But none of them—Dewey, least of all—know how much "the gadget" is about to change their lives.



It is 1946. World War II is over—ended by the atomic bomb that Dewey Kerrigan's and Suze Gordon's scientist parents helped build.

Dewey's been living with the Gordons since before the war's end, before her beloved papa died, and is almost—but not quite—a member of the family. She has moved south with them from "the Hill" in Los Alamos to Alamogordo, New Mexico. At the White Sands Missile Range, Phil Gordon is working with Wernher von Braun on rockets that will someday go to the moon; at home on Michigan Avenue, Terry Gordon is part of the scientists' movement to control and limit the Bomb. Meanwhile, Dewey and Suze have conflicts of their own.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ellen Klages was born in Ohio and is a graduate of the Clarion South writing workshop. Her short fiction has appeared in numerous science fiction and fantasy anthologies. She now lives in San Francisco, and when she's not writing, she collects and sells old toys and magazines.

Please visit Ellen at [www.ellenklages.com](http://www.ellenklages.com).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR *THE GREEN GLASS SEA*

- How does the author describe Dewey and Suze? Compile a list of character descriptions from quotes from the text.
- Compare and contrast Suze's and Dewey's relationships with their fathers and how the girls relate to other children on the Hill.
- Who are you more like—Dewey or Suze? Whom would you rather have as a friend? Why?
- Dewey's dad takes her to the Anasazi caves for their conversation about his secret work. How does this setting add to the significance of their conversation?
- Discuss Dewey's father's ambivalent attitude toward the Germans (p. 126). Do you agree with Dewey's father that "math is its own language"? How are math and music related?
- Explain the meaning of the chapter title "Patriotic Duty."
- Discuss the origins of Dewey's and Suze's names and their parents' intentions when naming their daughters.
- How do people on the Hill experience May 8, 1945?
- In what way will the outcome of the experiment impact how Dewey remembers her dad?
- Discuss the responsibilities of scientists. Should all that is scientifically possible actually be done? Consider other examples of controversial scientific breakthroughs, such as stem cell research, cloning, and so on.
- Research some of the real scientists who appear in the book. Does the author portray them accurately?

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR *WHITE SANDS, RED MENACE*

- Terry is excited that "all atomic research will be controlled by civilians—by *scientists*—not the military." Why does Terry think it's important that scientific research be kept separate from the government? Do you agree or disagree?
- Why are most people so surprised that girls (like Suze and Dewey) are interested in junkyards and engineering projects?

- Dewey likes to figure out the scientific principles behind everyday things like ice cream cones and amusement park rides. Do you find things to be more or less exciting/interesting if you understand how they work?
- What are some of the skills girls are supposed to learn in Suze and Dewey's Home Ec class? Do you think these are valuable things to learn?
- Dewey says that there are "No *girls* allowed" in the Shazam Club. What does this mean? Why do Suze and Dewey have this rule?
- When Dewey's grandmother dies, Dewey inherits a box of Nana Gallucci's most precious belongings. What do the contents of this box say about her? If there were a box of your belongings, what would be in it, and what would its contents say about you?
- Dewey realizes that the law would be on Rita's side "because blood was stronger than anything else." Why is this the law? Do you think that's a good law?
- Dewey knows that Suze is right about the dangerous effects of the atomic bomb. So why does Dewey not stick up for Suze in Mrs. McDonald's class?
- When Suze tells Mrs. McDonald about radiation sickness, Mrs. McDonald says, "That is disgusting!" and sends Suze to the principals office. Why does Mrs. McDonald deny the effects of the atomic bomb?
- Why is Suze jealous of Dewey's relationship with Terry? Do you think Suze has good reason to be jealous?
- Ynez is Suze's first real friend other than Dewey. Suze "liked Dewey, and she liked Ynez, but neither one understood what she saw in the other." Compare and contrast Suze and Dewey's friendship with Suze and Ynez's friendship. What does Suze get from her relationship with Ynez that she doesn't get from her relationship with Dewey, and vice versa?
- How are Suze's and Ynez's lifestyles and home lives similar? How are they different? Do you think it's hard for them to be friends, given that they come from different backgrounds? What sort of assumptions does each girl make about the other, and how are their assumptions proved correct or incorrect?
- Why doesn't Dewey want Owen to quit school?
- What are some different expressions and slang words that kids used in the 1940s? Make a list of those that appear in the book. How can you tell what these expressions mean? Are there any you want to start using?
- What was life like for kids growing up before television? How would Dewey's and Suze's lives be different if they had a TV or a computer?