

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

PROJECT JACKALOPE

BY EMILY ECTON



A secret government agency.
Two kids on the run.
And one ruthless killer—
with a fuzzy cotton tail.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Consider the novel's cover. In what ways is the image symbolic for the events that transpire throughout the course of the book?
- At the opening of the novel, Jeremy shares, "Just so you know—it's not like I'm a total loser. I'm not saying I'm brain surgeon material or anything, but I'm pretty much one of your basic junior high types." How would you describe a "basic junior high type"?
- The author uses some unusual titles to introduce the chapters; which of them is your favorite? For what reason?
- Given the events that transpire throughout the novel, how would you describe Jeremy? Do you find him to be a dynamic character? Is he the type of person you would want to befriend? Why or why not?
- After discovering the jackalope and while considering seeking Agatha's assistance, Jeremy states, "I don't want to say hanging out with her is social suicide, but with her big mouth, she can clear a lunch table faster than anyone I know (so yeah, it's social suicide)". In your opinion, is this a fair assessment? Why or why not?
- Describe Agatha. Do you find her to be a likeable character? Why or why not?
- Consider the relationship between Jeremy and Agatha. How would you characterize the interaction between these two characters, and how does it change over the course of the novel?
- How would you describe Agatha's attitude about her research? Consider her relationship with Carter Oliver; in what ways does her attitude toward him provide further evidence of her commitment to science?
- Describe Professor Twitchett. In your opinion, is he a good scientist? Explain your position.
- Consider the variety of settings for *Project Jackalope*; name the three places you believe to be most important to the story. Using textual evidence from the book, explain why you find them to be significant to the overall story structure.
- Of the DARPA weapons introduced in the novel, which was your favorite? Why? Were you surprised to learn that DARPA really exists?
- *Project Jackalope* is told in first person; how would the story be different if someone besides Jeremy were telling it? Do you think changing the point of view would make the story better or worse? Why?
- At the beginning of the novel, Jeremy is fearful of Jack, the jackalope, as he sees him as a potential killer. How does his opinion of the Jack change throughout the course of the novel? In what ways do the actions of Jeremy and Agatha prove they have become fond of this creature?
- What role do the adults in *Project Jackalope* play in the story? Do you find them to be of importance? Why or why not?
- Using the phrase, "This is a story about..." supply five words to describe *Project Jackalope*. Explain your choices.

CLASSROOM EXTENSIONS

Agents from DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) play an important role in *Project Jackalope*. Using the internet and other resources, have students research the following:

- What is the history of the agency?
- How is it funded?
- To whom does the agency report?
- What are some of the types of current projects?
- What type of employment opportunities exist?

After completing their research, have students create a visual presentation which illustrates their findings.

Considering Character—Create an “I AM” Poem. The purpose of this strategy is to help students demonstrate knowledge of a character from *Project Jackalope* by following written prompts to complete a poem about the individual. Students can be given the prompts to follow on a worksheet or alternatively, students may create an original slideshow using PowerPoint or Movie Maker.

“I AM” POEM

FIRST STANZA:

I am (name the character)
I wonder (something the character is actually curious about)
I hear (an imaginary sound the character might hear)
I see (an imaginary sight the character might see)
I want (something the character truly desires)

SECOND STANZA:

I pretend (something the character actually pretends to do)
I feel (a feeling about something imaginary)
I touch (an imaginary touch)
I worry (something that really bothers the character)
I cry (something that makes the character very sad)
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

THIRD STANZA:

I understand (something the character knows is true)
I say (something that the character believes in)
I dream (something the character might actually dream about)
I try (something the character really make an effort about)
I hope (something the character actually hopes for)
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

The jackalope is a mythical animal often referenced in American folklore and legends. Have students research other popular cryptids and answer the following:

- What are cryptids?
- What type of science studies cryptids?
- When was the term cryptids coined?
- What are some of the most famous cryptids in the world?
- Where have they been sighted?
- How does cryptid “activity” in an area impact the local economy?

After completing their research, have students create a visual presentation which illustrates their findings.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Jeremy's troubles begin when his eccentric neighbor leaves him an “experiment” for safekeeping—a jackalope! This so-called mythological creature looks like a bunny rabbit, but comes with razor-sharp antlers and is purported to be a ruthless killer. When government agents show up at Jeremy's house seeking the jackalope for their own nefarious purposes, Jeremy must find a way to protect the jackalope, and himself. So he reluctantly joins forces with Agatha, his holier-than-thou genius neighbor. Together, with the jackalope (and his weapons-grade antlers) tucked away in a backpack, they have only one chance to save Jack and still get their science fair projects in on time. With her striking sense of humor, Emily Ecton has created a hilarious and suspenseful adventure, complete with a compelling and unforgettable cast of characters.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

EMILY ECTON is a writer and producer for *Wait, Wait...Don't Tell Me!*, the NPR news quiz. She has also been a playwright, a chinchilla wrangler, an ice cream scooper and a costume character. She lives in Chicago with her dog, Binky. *Project Jackalope* is her first project with Chronicle Books. Visit Emily at emilyecton.com.



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This guide was created by Rose Brock, a teacher, school librarian, and doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University, specializing in children's and young adult literature.



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