

## **Book Discussion Guide for The Healing Star**

Written by A. Kidd

1. Relationships are a big part of this story. How would you characterize Julia's relationship with her grandma? How is it different from her relationship with her mother?
2. Discuss the theme of friendship in the story. Compare Julia's friendship with Grammu vs. her friendship with JG vs. her friendship with Petie (her beagle), vs. her friendship with Kathy with a K. Can you think of some examples of how Julia was a good friend to others? Were they good friends to her? Give some examples.
3. There is a lot of talk about heroes. What does it mean to be a hero? Which characters display these traits? Do you think being a hero is important or are there other ways to contribute to society? Who are some of the heroes in your own life? Are they famous or everyday people?
4. What do you think of Jacoby's character? Is he a hero? Why or why not? Do you think the town treated him fairly? Consider the clues he gives Julia to help her find the ladder. Do they actually help her? In what ways can they be applied to real life?
5. Discuss the theme of hope in this story. Why has the town lost its hope? What are the Hopeless Files and which characters are on the list? Why? What do you think makes Julia continue to have hope? Does she ever lose hope and why? Think of a time you lost hope. Who or what helped you regain hope again?
6. Would you try to catch a star to make your wish come true? Are there any dangers in doing so? Consider both physical and emotional consequences. Which characters try to catch a star in the story? Are they successful? Why or why not? Have you ever wished on a star? Regardless of whether the wish came true, how did it make you feel? Why do you think people make wishes?
7. Grammu says pure wishes are stronger than selfish ones. What do you think she meant by that? Do you agree and why?
8. What do you think of the healing stardust? Would you take it as medicine if you were sick? Why does Julia's mother call it fool's medicine?
9. What are some of the lucky objects in the book? What makes them lucky? Do you have a special object you keep with you for good luck?
10. What obstacles does Julia face when she tries to catch a star? Even as things don't go her way, she never gives up. Why? Is persistence a good thing? Is there ever a time when you considered giving up? Who or what made you keep going? Does Julia ever give up and why? Do you think it's okay to give up sometimes? Why or why not?

11. What does it mean to be a bully? Who are some of the bullies in this novel? Why do they behave the way they do? At the end of the novel, do they change, and why or why not?
12. Describe Edgar's role in the story. Do you like him? Why or why not? Would you follow him into the clouds? Does your opinion of him change as you learn more about him? Explain your answer.
13. After learning the truth about the lost star, Julia must decide whether to take Edgar up on his offer or continue her journey alone. Do you think she made the right choice? What would you have done?
14. Would you consider Edgar a villain or more of a trickster and why? Are there any other villains in the story? Keep in mind, a villain doesn't necessarily have to be a person.
15. How does Julia's interaction with the Catchers, the wolf, and the monkey compare with her interaction with the cloud people? What does she learn from the different teachers in her life and how does she apply it to different situations?
16. Describe the setting of the story. Is it detailed and can you picture it? What sensory details does the author evoke?
17. Sometimes nature can take on a human quality. Do you feel like any aspects of nature were personified in this story? Does it add another layer to the story and why?
18. Julia's grandma has a mysterious illness. How does that affect Julia? Julia's mom? The town? What are some of the strategies Julia uses to cope with the idea of losing her grandma? Do they change over time? Can you relate to any of the characters in how they deal with illness and loss? What current events can you think of that might relate to this story and why?
19. When Julia encounters the Tiger of the Sky, she ends up in the Great Horned Owl's giant nest with its baby owlet. What's different about this owl and how does that relate to Julia's situation? Does she learn anything from her experience with the baby owlet and how does that impact her journey? Have you ever felt weak and what did you do about it?
20. Julia expected to get a message from the Great Horned Owl, but does she get one from the baby owlet instead? What does the baby owlet mean when it insists on using the word love instead of luck? How are these two words similar and different? Which word do you think has more value?
21. Bonus Question: The characters in this book share a lot of stories with each other. Some of them are legends about the stars and others are legends about people. How do the stories we hear impact our actions and our lives?