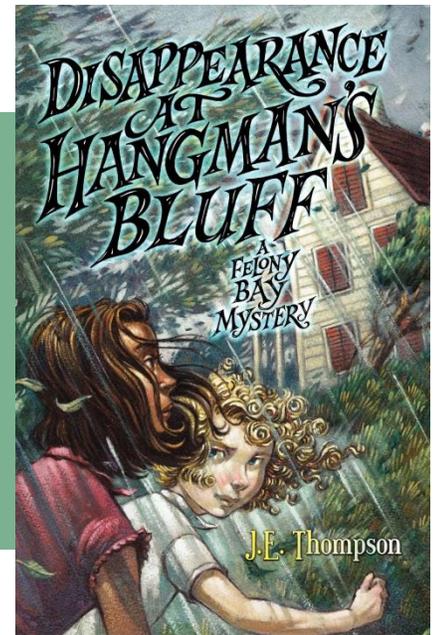


DISAPPEARANCE AT HANGMAN'S BLUFF

A FELONY BAY MYSTERY

By J. E. Thompson



DISCUSSION GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Abbey and her best friend, Bee, set out to solve another mystery with its roots deep in southern history in this follow-up to J. E. Thompson's *The Girl from Felony Bay*. For the first time in a long time, things are looking up for Abbey Force. She's still living on Reward Plantation with Bee, and her lawyer father has just woken up from his coma. But then Abbey and Bee's neighbor's dog, Yemassee, is kidnapped, and they are the only witnesses. They decide it's their job to find the men who took him. This dognapping, though, will lead Abbey and Bee into something much deeper: a mystery connected to both old and new law cases of Abbey's father. Before they're through, Abbey and Bee will once again have to dig through the history of their South Carolina hometown in order to set things right.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Abbey use the word *histers* (page 3) to describe her and Bee's relationship? What does the word mean? Where does it come from?
2. What series of events takes place "toward the end of August" that launches this story (page 6)?
3. Make a list of all the important details we come to learn about Judge Gator's dog, Yemassee, in chapter two.
4. Abbey says of her father's going back to work, "sometimes feelings and facts are just different" (page 33). What does Abbey mean by this statement as she thinks about her father defending Willie Smalls?



5. Professor Washburn and Grandma Em are very excited about identifying all the slave graveyards on Leadenwah Island. Why? What do they hope to do (pages 47–50)?
6. What does Abbey mean when, after she sees the white pickup truck, she says, “My heart went even further into my mouth when my gaze dropped and I saw the set of double rear tires” (page 57)?
7. Abbey’s father says to her, “You don’t have to do it” (page 65). Do what? Why or why not?
8. What does the word *nemesis* mean (page 81)? Why is this word important to the story?
9. Abbey is prepared to insult Donna LaBelle but then stops herself as she tells the reader, “There was so much misery etched in her [Donna’s] face that for once in my life I bit my tongue” (page 101). What does she mean by this thought?
10. Why might looking at the journals that Abbey’s father gave to the Historical Society make Bee “decide she wanted nothing to do with” Abbey (page 122)?
11. What’s a hunch? What are some of the hunches Abbey explains to Bee (pages 149–50)?
12. At the very end of chapter ten, Mrs. Middleton talks about “spirits.” What are spirits? Why does Mrs. Middleton say she thinks they’re “stirred up, and they’re angry” (page 152)?
13. What is a rice gate, and why is it important to this story (pages 159–60)?
14. Why is Abbey so disappointed when she realizes the people in the car are Mr. LaBelle, Mrs. LaBelle, and Donna (page 182)?
15. Why does Bee want to see the puppies (pages 196–97)?
16. Why does Bee bring the skull along with her as she and Abbey make their escape (page 201)?
17. Abbey says, “we put together the best plan and then made a list of all the things we would need” (page 218). Summarize the plan.



18. What happens when Possum sees the skull (page 259)? Why is this event crucial for Abbey and Bee's plan to be successful?
19. How does Donna contribute to the success of the plan (pages 282–83)?
20. The report that Bee and Abbey turn in, titled "How the History Sisters Came to Be: The Story of Two Families" (p.320), ends with these words:

We aren't trying to say that those bonds in any way justify what came before; only that sometimes, very unexpectedly, very good things can come from very bad things. We believe that is a reason for us to try to practice forgiveness and to have hope for our futures.

Explain how "practicing forgiveness" plays an important role in the positive ending of the novel.

