

THE FOREVER SKY

"Riviting."
—Booklist

"A page-turner."

—Chicago Sun-Times

A 2012–2013 Texas Bluebonnet Master List Title

a novel by Eve Yohalem

* * DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. In the beginning of the novel, Lucy believes her mother cares more about her career than she does about her. Do you agree with her assessment? What about Lucy's father and his career? Do you believe Lucy's experience with her parents is particularly unusual given their responsibilities in the workplace? In what ways do her parents grow and reevaluate their family responsibilities because of Lucy's kidnapping?
- 2. Explain the significance of the title, *Escape Under the Forever Sky*. In your opinion, does it accurately describe the events and relationships portrayed in the novel?
- 3. Consider Lucy's relationship with the wild; why does she feel so connected to the animals there? What does her connection with these animals teach her about relationships in general? Have you ever had a close relationship with an animal or pet? What was it about that relationship that made it special? Explain why Lucy feels free to "just be herself" when she is in the bush. Is there a place that makes you feel that way? What role does Dahnie, the park ranger, play in nurturing Lucy's commitment and connection to the wild?
- 4. Fear guides much of Lucy's mother's decisions regarding Lucy's experiences. Why is she fearful for Lucy's safety? Consider the incident at the market; though each of them blame each other, do you believe one of them is right? Why? Describe your observations of the relationship between Lucy and her mother. Do you consider them a strong family? In what ways are they similar or different than your own?
- 5. Early in the novel, Lucy states, "Tana is everything I'm not: calm, patient, beautiful, charming." How does Lucy see herself? Do you agree with her self-assessment? How does the time spent working to escape help Lucy come to better understand herself? Discuss the character traits that allow Lucy to ultimately persevere. Do you share any personality traits that are similar to hers? If so, what are they?
- 6. What are some of the ways in which living in Ethiopia is different from living in your country? What are some of the similarities?
- 7. Consider the variety of settings for *Escape Under the Forever Sky*; 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.
- 8. The curator of the National Museum of Ethiopia tells Lucy, "Nationality and religion are just politics. We are all one species." What do you think he means by that? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your position.
- 9. While discussing Dawit, Tana's father's new driver, Lucy tells her friend, "He gives me the creeps." What is significant about Lucy's gut reaction toward her captor? Have you ever had a similar experience where your felt "warned" by your instincts? How did you resolve the situation?
- 10. Compare Teddy's life in Guge to his life at school in Addis Ababa. How do these differences shape him as a person? Though they are poor, his parents insist he receive the best schooling possible. What do his parents hope to accomplish by ensuring his education is exemplary?
- 11. Consider how race is portrayed in the novel; in what ways does the author help readers understand the complexities of racial relationships and expectation throughout the world? What role does race play in your life
- 12. Did you expect Abba and the rest of the villagers to believe Markos or Lucy? Why?
- 13. Tana describes what it's like being a girl in Ethiopia: "Lucy, if you think it is bad to be a girl here, just imagine what it is like to be a woman. Men are in charge of everything . . . When I grow up, they will all expect me to behave a certain way just because that is how it has always been. I hate it." How does that compare to how girls are treated in your country?
- 14. Consider the standoff between Lucy and her captors in the wild; why do you think the lions surround Lucy? In what ways is this gesture symbolic of Lucy's connection to animals?

- 15. Though the setting of *Escape Under the Forever Sky* is the country of Ethiopia, there are many rituals and routines that likely feel similar to those in your own life. Considering the story, what are the elements that feel most familiar? How do these universal elements enhance the story?
- 16. Describe Tana. What makes her such a dynamic character? Does she remind you of anyone you know? In what ways does her relationship with Lucy help you better understand her character?
- 17. Describe Markos, Dawit, and Helena. Though they are all guilty of kidnapping Lucy, do you find one of them to be more villainous? If so, which one and why?
- 18. Through the course of the novel, Lucy and her mother learn that the world as they know will be forever changed. In what ways will it be better or worse for them? Have you had an experience that reshaped your life? In what ways have you changed due to this incident?
- 19. Using the phrase, "In this story, home means . . . ", discuss the issue of belonging in Escape Under the Forever Sky. Explain your choices.

* * CLASSROOM EXTENSIONS * * *

- 1. Menagesha National Park is the animal sanctuary Lucy explores with Dahnie, the park ranger, in *Escape Under the Forever Sky*. Using the internet, have students research the park to learn the following:
 - What is the geographical location of this national park?
- How is it supported and by whom?
- What are the other physical descriptions of the park?
- What animals can be found there?

• When was it founded/opened?

After gathering this information, have students create a visual presentation which illustrates their findings.

- 2. Throughout *Escape Under the Forever Sky*, important geographical locations in Ethiopia are referenced. Using the textual descriptions in the book as inspiration, place students in pairs and have them role play as news reporters giving a report on a selected location in Ethiopia. To enrich the activity, record the "report" and allow students to use props and costumes for their news report.
- 3. It is her mother's job as the American ambassador to Ethiopia that brings Lucy and her family to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Using the library and internet resources, have students research and learn more about the job of an ambassador for the United States.
 - What are the required qualifications for someone to be selected as an American ambassador?
- Where do ambassadors typically reside?
- What are the duties of this important job?
- Who provides protection for them and their families?
- How many ambassadors does the United States have throughout the world?
- If an ambassador has a family, where do the children usually receive their education?

Allow students to consider what they have learned from the research and ask them to write a short position paper explaining the following question: What do you believe to be the greatest benefits and challenges to serving as a US Ambassador? If you were given such an opportunity, would you be interested in the job? Why or why not?

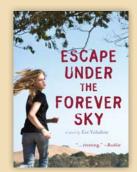
ABOUT THE BOOK

You'd think that being the daughter of the American ambassador to Ethiopia would be one adventure after another, right? Wrong. Thirteen-year-old Lucy Hoffman never gets to see anything beyond the walls of the embassy compound. All she can do is read about the exotic and exciting world outside and imagine what it would be like to be a part of it. Until she gets kidnapped. All along in the wild, Lucy must use her knowledge of African animal life, along with her inventiveness, will, and courage, to escape and find her way to freedom. Inspired by real-life events, this suspenseful story is also funny and touching and will have readers riveted from start to finish.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

EVE YOHALEM is the author of the critically acclaimed novel, *Escape Under the Forever Sky* which *Booklist* described as "riveting". She has worked as an opera singer, a website proprietor, and now is a full time writer. Eve lives in New York City with her husband and their two children; learn more about her at **eveyohalem.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.

