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Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

The Girl with All the Gifts by M.R. Carey

Summary

Melanie is a very special girl. Dr. Caldwell calls her “our little genius.”

Every morning, Melanie waits in her cell to be collected for class. When they come for her, Sergeant keeps his gun pointing at her while two of his people strap her into the wheelchair. She thinks they don’t like her. She jokes that she won’t bite, but they don’t laugh.

The Girl With All the Gifts is a groundbreaking thriller, emotionally charged and gripping from beginning to end.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the book portray the relationship between Melanie and Miss Justineau? Do you find it unsettling or reassuring? Does it change in the course of the novel?
2. Do you view the ending as tragic or hopeful? And what do you think will happen next?
3. Education is a theme of the novel, with questions raised about the value of education, what we choose to teach our children and what that choice says about a society. Does Melanie’s education equip her for the world she lives in? Do you agree with the choices that her teachers make?
4. “Which weighs the most, Helen? Which will do the most good in the end? Your compassion or my commitment to my work?” (spoken by Dr. Caldwell to Helen Justineau) Does *The Girl with All the Gifts* offer us an answer to this question? What does the book have to say about scientific inquiry?
5. How effectively does the novel present a post-apocalyptic Britain? And how much does it depend on this setting for its emotional impact?

6. Discuss: the book ultimately portrays the future of human-kind as hopeless.
7. Caroline Caldwell would have been a more sympathetic and likeable character if she was a man. Do you agree with this statement? Why? Why not?
8. The accepted definition of a road movie includes the idea that the journey the characters undergo changes their perspectives on their own lives and the world they live in. Is *The Girl with All the Gifts* a “road novel”?
9. What difference, if any, does the use of the present tense for the narrative voice make to our experience in reading the novel? Why do you think the author chose it?
10. The book has been compared with *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro. How far does each of these books characterize children as grotesque and to be feared?

Summary and Discussion Questions from the publisher.