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Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

Wesley the Owl by Stacey O'Brien

Summary

When biologist Stacey O'Brien first met a four-day-old baby barn owl with nerve damage in one wing, she knew he had no hope of surviving on his own in the wild, so gave him a permanent home living with her. This is the funny, poignant story of their two decades together.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think you could have done what the author did, devoting a good part of 19 years of her life to caring for her pet? Have you ever had a pet who demanded as much time, money, attention, and love as Wesley did? Did the way the pet and you relate to each other change as you both got older? Did your relationship with your pet change how you viewed the world?
2. How did Wesley help Stacey in her own life after she saved his? How did he save her life? What did she learn from Wesley that no other animal could have taught her?
3. What part of the book did you think was the funniest and what part did you think was the grossest? The biologists at the lab where Stacey works are very comfortable with animals. How do the relationships between scientists and the animals play a role in their scientific research and discoveries?
4. Think about the ways in which Stacey and Wesley were able to communicate with each other. To what extent do you think they understood one another? How is this similar to and different from communication between people? Communication between people and their pets? What do you think are the differences between relating to an animal that lives a solitary life and relating to an animal that is predisposed to live in a social group or pack? What do you think are the differences between relating to an animal that is wild versus an animal that is domesticated?
5. What scientific discoveries did Stacey make about barn owls, and what surprised you most about barn owls? Before reading this book, what was your impression of barn owls? Did reading this book change your mind, and if so, in what ways?

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