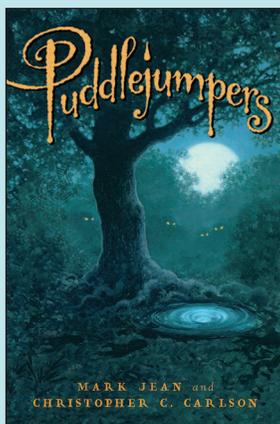


This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and award-winning children's book author. Visit her Web site at [www.tracievaughnzimmer.com](http://www.tracievaughnzimmer.com) to find hundreds of other guides to children's and young adult literature.

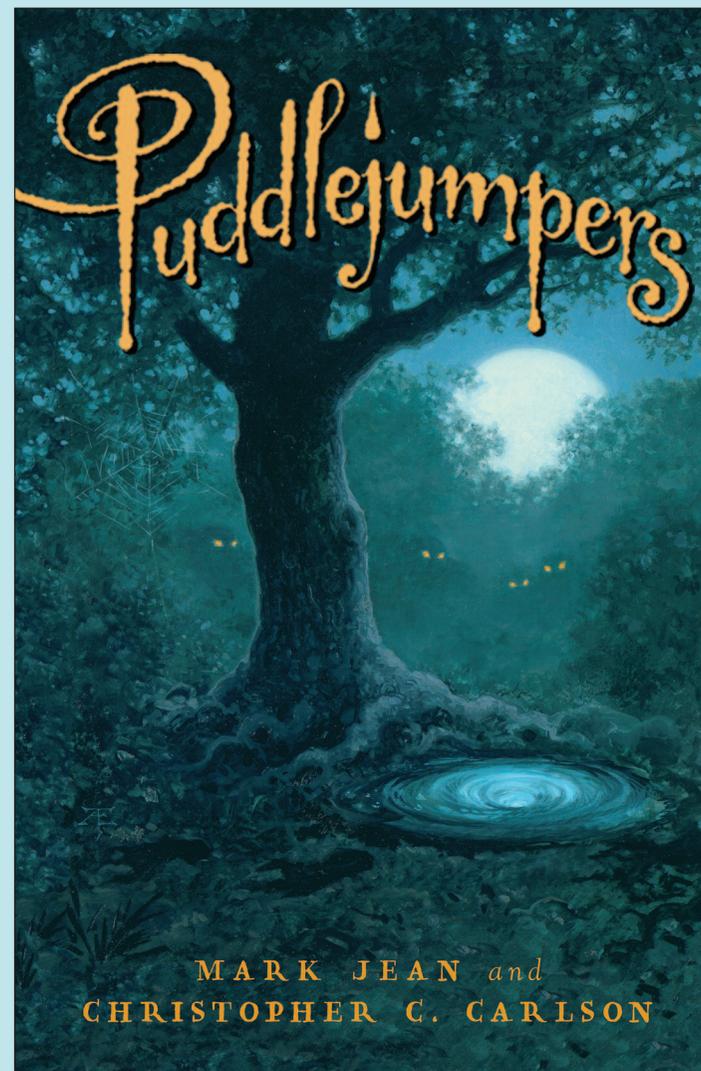


## **PUDDLEJUMPERS**

Trade Hardcover  
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**Disney • HYPERION BOOKS**

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## **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

**DISNEY • HYPERION BOOKS**

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Ernie Banks, named for the legendary Chicago Cub shortstop, is a troubled thirteen-year-old juvenile delinquent. Abandoned on the doorstep of the Lakeside Home for Boys when he was three years old, he's now considered a "lifer," a permanent ward of the state. His only proof that he once belonged to somebody is a vintage Ernie Banks baseball card, a crystal acorn he wears on a string around his neck, and a strange spiral birthmark on the bottom of his right foot.

As a last reprieve before being sent to a juvenile detention facility, Ernie is allowed to spend three weeks on a working farm. When Ernie arrives at the home of Russ Frazier, he learns that the widower's baby was kidnapped years before. The single piece of evidence was a red quilt found in a puddle in the nearby woods. Fascinated by the town's famous "Quilt Baby" kidnapping, Ernie is determined to solve the case. He teams up with Joey, a local tomboy, to investigate clues that lead them on a dangerous journey into a forbidden world of dark secrets, magic puddles, and the cavernous underground kingdom of the Puddlejumpers—eleven-inch-tall water creatures, with whom Ernie has a mysterious connection.

When destiny summons, Ernie must find the courage to save the Puddlejumpers from the Most Dark and lead them in battle against their mortal enemies. Only then can he find his way home.



## PRE-READING

Read chapter one aloud. Discuss Ernie Banks's situation. How do you think he came to live in the Lakeside Home for Boys? Predict how Ernie got a name "that wasn't even his real name."

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- 1 Describe the Puddlejumpers. Why are they so thrilled at the birth of a human baby? What do they expect this child to be able to do?
- 2 Describe the circumstances that leave Russ to take care of a farm and a newborn? Who helps him manage? What gift is left for his son and do you think it will be important to the story?
- 3 The main character is known by three distinct names during the story—Shawn, Ernie, and Wawaywo. Explain how he comes to be known by each of these names. Which one is most important? Are you known by different names in different places too? Explain how you got them.
- 4 Who are the antagonists or enemies in the novel? Which ones do you think are the worst? Why? How are they similar to villains from other stories or movies? What gains do each of the enemies make? In the end, how do they fare?
- 5 Why do the Puddlejumpers kidnap Shawn? Describe the Cavern of Pools and the rituals to celebrate Wawaywo's arrival. List the skills he learns from the Puddlejumpers and circle the one you would most like to have.

- 6 Explain what happens to Shawn and the other Puddlejumpers because of the Trogg attack. What happens to the human landscape because of their invasion? Do you think Shawn is rescued during the escape? What makes you say so?
- 7 Describe Ernie's life in the Lakeside Home for Boys. How do you think Russ or the Puddlejumpers would view his time in that facility? Do you think you would turn out as "bad" as Ernie if you were left with Mrs. McGinty? What few pleasures is he denied?
- 8 How does Ernie end up back out in Circle, Illinois, in Russ's home? What does he think of Joey and Russ? How has the town changed since he was last in it?
- 9 Explain Joey and Ernie's journey into Holsapple's property and mansion. What do they discover? How does Ernie's training from long ago serve them? Why do people think Ernie is responsible for Joey's disappearance? Where is she? Do you think it is fair that everyone blames Ernie? Why or why not?
- 10 How does Ernie discover his true identity? What must he do to save the Puddlejumpers' realm? How, exactly, does he put a plan into motion? What are the results?
- 11 Ernie must drink a powerful potion and become a Puddlejumper. Would you be willing to swallow the elixir? Why or why not? How does he live up to his destiny? Do you think everyone has a destiny?
- 12 In the end, what becomes of Circle, Illinois? Which scene in the novel is your favorite? Would you like to visit the kingdom of the Puddlejumpers?

## PROJECTS

### LANGUAGE ARTS

Keep a log or journal as you read the novel and pretend that you are Shawn/Ernie/Wawaywo.

Write at least ten entries about what is happening and how you feel about those events.

### READING

Good readers realize that every event has a cause and an effect in a story. As you read the novel create a graphic organizer that shows the causes and effects of each major plot point. **Example:**

*Cause:* Delores dies.

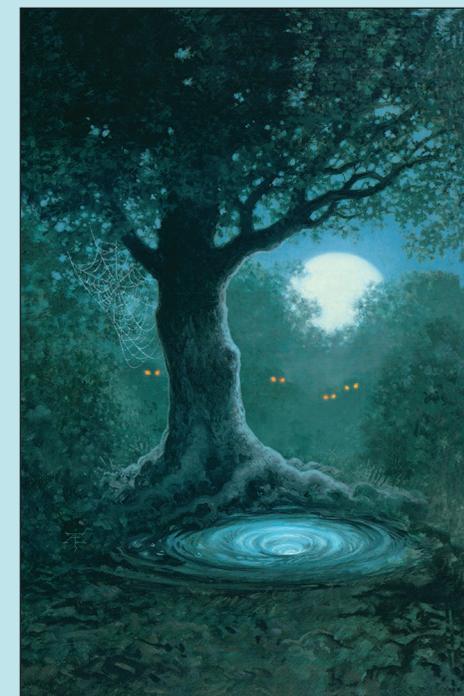
*Effect:* Russ is left to run the farm and care for a newborn. Puddlejumpers are left easy access to baby.

### ART

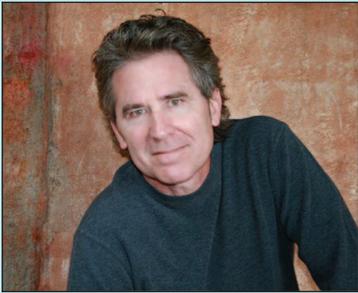
Create a scene from the novel. You can make a diorama or paint, draw or sketch your favorite moment in the story. On the back include a brief artist's statement about your design and a page number of the scene you are depicting.

### MUSIC

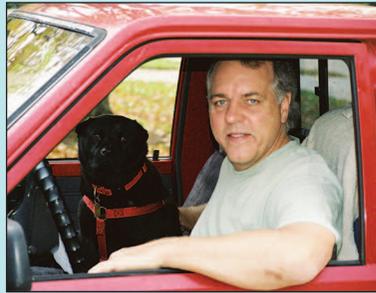
Choose (or create your own) music for the same scene. Explain why you chose this particular piece to represent it.



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**MARK JEAN** is an award-winning director, writer, and producer of film and television. He lives in Los Angeles, California.



**CHRISTOPHER C. CARLSON** lives in Los Angeles, where he writes, teaches, and rambles the Griffith and Elysian hills with his good dog, Molè.

Mark and Christopher have collaborated on several projects, including the screenplay for Cynthia Voigt's *Homecoming*. This is their first middle-grade novel.

## AUTHOR INTERVIEW

### 1 Can you describe your collaborative process?

In the early stages we bounce ideas off each other until something sticks. We try not to limit our imagination, but instead build on one another's ideas. When we find ourselves in disagreement about a story idea, we usually find a third, and more often than not, better idea. Sometimes we write portions of the story together, and other times one of us will write a first draft from notes we've sketched together, then the partner will rewrite. Toward the end of the process we are sitting side-by-side working through each and every paragraph, sentence, and word choice. We even discuss the placement of commas!

### 2 What's the best part?

The best part of collaborating is having someone to eat lunch with. The process of a writer can be an isolating experience and having a partner takes the sting out of that. But beyond that, we believe our collaboration optimizes the likelihood of telling a great story.

### 3 The challenges?

Not to pummel each other. We're both strong-willed and care passionately about the story, so writing collaboratively is a lesson in compromise and negotiation.

### 4 What was the original inspiration for the *Puddlejumpers*?

Growing up, we each had fantasies about miniature worlds and the notion that there might be tiny humanlike creatures that we could befriend. That was the starting point for our book.

### 5 How did you bring all these fabulous details together?

That's the magic we can't tell you! But the great thing about being writers is that nothing is ever wasted. Everything you experience can come into play.

### 6 Will there be more adventures for Shawn Frazier?

We're always listening for messages from the Puddlejumpers. So, we hope so.

