

From the Desk of Zoe Washington
Discussion Guide
Grades 3-7

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Do you think people are all good or all bad? Why?
- What does it mean to forgive someone? When should someone be forgiven?
- What do you think the sentence “When someone shows you who they are, believe them” means?
- Frontload vocabulary for chapters 1-3 (see vocabulary guide)

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections. Prompt students to provide support for their answers from the text.

- What happens on Zoe’s birthday? (Ch.1)
- Who is Marcus? (Ch.1) What does Zoe learn from his letters? (Ch.2, Ch.8, Ch.11, Ch.19) Why is Marcus in prison? (Ch.4, Ch.11)
- Why is it a problem that Trevor lives next door to Zoe’s family? (Ch.4)
- What changes are happening in Zoe’s life? (Ch.2, Ch.5)
- Who is Ruby Willow? (Ch.3, Ch. 5) How is she inspiring to Zoe? (Ch.5)
- Why does Zoe want to sign up for the baking competition? (Ch.5)
- Why does Zoe have to keep her letter to Marcus a secret? (Ch.6)
- How is Zoe’s job different than she expected? (Ch.7, Ch.9, Ch. 12, Ch.19) What does Zoe learn about being a pastry chef? (Ch.12)
- Why do you think Zoe’s Grandma is okay with her writing to Marcus? (Ch.10)
- What does Zoe learn about the legal system? (Ch.13, Ch.14, Ch.24)
- Why are Zoe and Trevor in a fight? (Ch.15)
- Why does Zoe’s Grandma tell her about what happened to Marcus? (Ch. 17)
- How is Zoe’s mom trying to protect her? (Ch.18, Ch.31) Do you think Zoe should’ve been able to read the other letters? Why or why not? (Ch. 31)
- How is Zoe’s relationship with Marcus inspiring her? (Ch. 20) How is it changing her relationships with her parents? (Ch.20, Ch.26)
- Zoe wants to look for Marcus’s alibi witness, but Marcus wants her to leave it in the past. Do you agree with Zoe? Why or why not? (Ch. 22)
- Why is Zoe so determined to find Susan Thomas? (Ch.24) What makes her nervous about finding her? (Ch.28)
- How is Trevor a good friend to Zoe? Provide some examples from the book. (Ch.29)
- What happens after Trevor and Zoe find Susan Thomas? (Ch.30)
- Why does Zoe’s mom call Susan Thomas? (Ch.34) What does Zoe’s family learn about Marcus? (Ch.34)
- How is Zoe’s relationship with her mom fixed? (Ch. 35)
- What happens to Marcus? (epilogue)

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After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

Marcus uses music to teach Zoe about himself. Make a playlist of ten songs people should listen to if they want to get to know you better.

Compare/Contrast Zoe to her mom, dad, or Marcus. What are some things she has in common with each of them?

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.