

T.A. BARRON

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Heartlight

One of the *Adventures of Kate*

ISBN: 0-441-01036-9

About the Book

“Heartlight is a quest with the highest possible stakes, a tale of mystery and adventure that will be enjoyed by readers of all ages. It is the story of the extraordinary bond between a young girl and her grandfather; and an eloquent statement about the ability of one individual, armed solely with the power of love, to change the course of the stars.”

Reviews

“Splendid fantasy, firmly in the tradition of Madeleine L’Engle and C. S. Lewis.”

— *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

“An absorbing story, deeply moving, deeply imaginative.”

— *Lloyd Alexander*

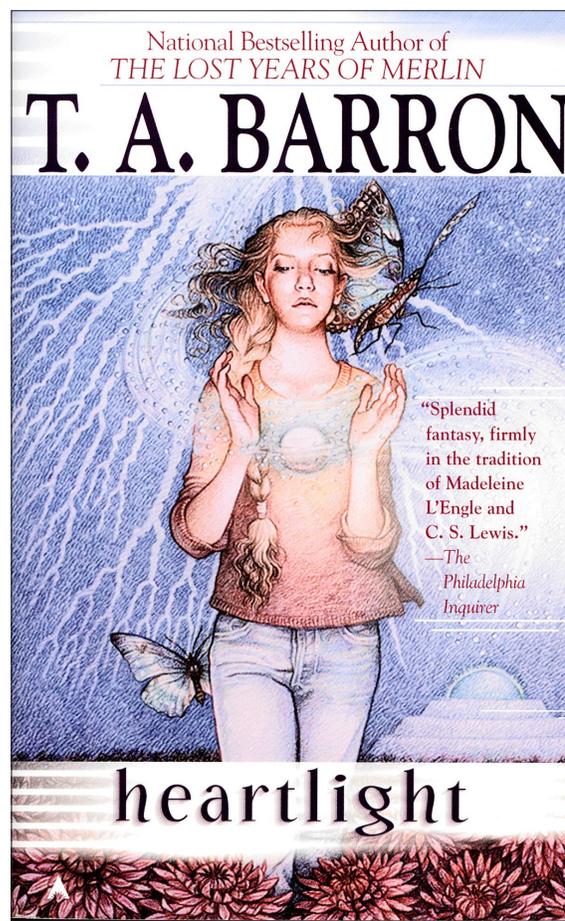
“This thoughtful adventure combines fantasy, physics, and metaphysics in a manner reminiscent of Madeleine L’Engle.”

— *Booklist*

Discuss

All page and chapter references used in this guide are from the 2003 Ace edition of *Heartlight*.

1. Prior to beginning this book, ask students to list all things that have a beginning and an end. For instance, the alphabet, a book, a road, a song, and a life all have a beginning and an end. Then ask them to brainstorm all things that do not have a beginning and an end such as, ideas, numbers, the universe, and depth of emotions. Finally ask students to compare the two lists and discuss the differences. What kinds of things have boundaries and what kinds do not? Ask them what would happen if this were a world or universe where everything had no beginnings and no endings. Keeping that in mind, ask them if they see a purpose for boundaries, even when those boundaries mean some things must end.
2. Explain to students that when they read fantasy, which is by its nature made-up, part of what lets the book become real for them are the truths found in the book. With that in mind, ask the students to identify the parts of *Heartlight* that are true for them.



DISCUSSION GUIDE, CONTINUED

3. Why does Grandfather tell Kate “If there is any quality I wish for you, it is perseverance” (chapter 2, page 21)? Ask students what quality they most wish for themselves.
4. On page 67 (chapter 4), Kate views the Earth from far above and sees it as “a single, unified organism...”. This view helps her see the Earth without the boundaries humans have created between countries. Are these boundaries necessary? Poet Robert Frost writes that fences make good neighbors. Would Kate agree? What about her grandfather?
5. Kate’s grandfather keeps portraits of Albert Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci and Robert H. Goddard hanging in his laboratory. He also keeps Aristotle’s collected writings, and copies of *The Once and Future King* and *The Wind in the Willows* in his lab.

Ask students to research who these people are and what their books are about. What similarities do the books share and what similarities do the people share? Do the books and people share similarities? Knowing what things Grandfather keeps close to him, ask students to list other books and people he would admire.

6. Butterflies play an important part in this book. A butterfly inspires Grandfather’s discovery of heartlight. Later, butterflies transport Kate and Grandfather across the universe.

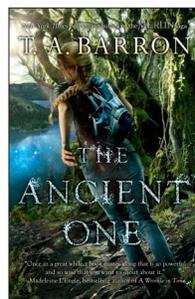
Ask students to consider why Barron might have chosen butterflies for these important roles in this book. Make sure they consider the butterfly’s ability to undergo metamorphosis. Where else do readers see a metamorphosis taking place? In each of the characters? In the stars? In what Grandfather’s discovery means for science?

7. In a quest fantasy, the protagonist is the character who is trying to complete a seemingly impossible task. The antagonist is the character who attempts to foil the task.

The protagonist generally receives some sort of help from an outside positive force. Identify the protagonist, antagonist, and outside positive force in this novel.

8. Symbols help readers create meaning. For example, Barron chose the name Miles Prancer for Kate’s grandfather because it symbolizes certain things about this character’s personality and his quest. What does the element heartlight symbolize? Is it a physical substance, a universal quality, a spiritual concept, or more than one of these things?
9. Bring in several science journals (for example, *Discovery* or *Nature*) and several newspaper articles that address scientific topics. Let students study both. Look how the tone, language, and explanations differ between the two. Now let students reread the scene in which Trethoniel collapses in chapter 19 (pages 236 & 237). Assign students to rewrite this scene as it would be reported in a newspaper or in a science journal.
10. This book is full of foreshadowing of Grandfather’s approaching death. Let students compose a letter written to Kate from her grandfather that she is to find after his death. What would it say?

Other Adventures of Kate Books



The Ancient One



Heartlight Saga
Combined
Edition



The Merlin Effect