

***Dave at Night*, by Gail Carson Levine**

Reading Guide

About The Book:

In *Dave at Night*, Newbery Honor award–winning author Gail Carson Levine brilliantly describes in gritty detail an orphan’s journey from loss to fulfillment. The year is 1926. Dave’s beloved father is dead, and his stepmother doesn’t want him. Only the HHB will take him in. Hebrew Home for Boys. Hell Hole for Brats. Dave is tough, a troublemaker. He can take care of himself. If he doesn’t like the Home, he’ll run away and find a better place. Only it’s not that simple. . . . This stunning new novel by Newbery Honor award–winning author Gail Carson Levine takes Dave from the poverty of the Lower East Side of New York City to the misery of the Hebrew Home for Boys to the hope and magic of Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance. It tells a tale of terrible loss and hard-won gains, of cruel relations and kind strangers, of great poverty and great wealth. Most of all, though, it tells a tale about the power of friendship.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why do you think friendship is so important to Dave? Who are his true friends in the story? Why?
2. Dave and the other eleven call each other “buddies.” What does it mean to be a buddy? How is a buddy different from a brother? How is a buddy different from a friend?
3. Many difficult things happen to Dave throughout the story: he becomes an orphan, he’s separated from his brother, and he’s bothered by bullies. How does Dave deal with each of these hardships? Overall, would you consider *Dave at Night* a sad story? Why or why not?
4. Irma Lee doesn’t go to school and spends most of her time with her mother’s friends at her late-night parties. Why do you think this is? How do you think her social situation affects her friendship with Dave?
5. What’s a gonif? According to Solly, is it good or bad to be one?
6. Dave lives on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, while Irma Lee lives uptown in Harlem. What are these neighborhoods like? What kind of people live there? What kinds of people live in your neighborhood?
7. “[The doctor] said I’d have the scar for a long time, maybe forever, which was good. I wanted a souvenir of the time I got the better of Mr. Doom.” What is the scar from and why is it important for Dave to remember?

8. Even though Dave's father has recently passed away, Dave writes him letters during study time at the Hebrew Home for Boys. Why do you think he does this? In what ways do these letters help Dave in his new situation?
9. Dave is continually told that he should follow the rules and not be a troublemaker. What sorts of things happen when he breaks the rules? Are these good or bad things?
10. When his father dies, Dave finds himself without a home. Where does he belong? Where does he find the most happiness?

About The Author:

Gail Carson Levine's first novel, *Ella Enchanted*, was a 1998 Newbery Honor Book. Gail is also the author of the three books in the Princess Tales series: *The Fairy's Mistake*, *The Princess Test*, and *Princess Sonora and the Long Sleep*, all retellings of popular fairy tales.