

Reading Guide to *The Mysterious Benedict Society* by Trenton Lee Stewart

ABOUT THIS BOOK

When this peculiar ad appears in the newspaper, dozens of children enroll to take a series of mysterious, mind-bending tests. (And you, dear reader, can test your wits right alongside them.) But in the end just four very special children will succeed. Their challenge: to go on a secret mission that only the most intelligent and resourceful children could compete. With their newfound friendship at stake, will they be able to pass the most important test of all?

ABOUT THIS AUTHOR

Trenton Lee Stewart was a first-time children's novelist when he wrote *The Mysterious Benedict Society*-a critical hit and New York Times bestseller. He recently finished the sequel, *The Mysterious Benedict Society and the Perilous Journey*, and is hard at work on a third in the series.

Trenton credits his idea for these novels from his belief that children are often seen, rarely heard and always underestimated. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, he lives with his wife and two sons in Little Rock, Arkansas.

He's a big fan of chocolate-peanut butter ice cream, although he prefers that there isn't "too much" peanut butter.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Mr. Benedict recruits children who are all alone in the world. Why? Is it a good reason, or a bad one?
2. Reynie says he doesn't like television. Do you believe him? How do YOU feel about television? What kinds of messages really do come through TV, radio, and movies? Are they usually positive or negative?
3. Why is it so important for the Society to stay together and work as a team? Even though Constance seems to be a burden at times, what does she bring to the mission?
4. This book shows kids living very independently. For instance, before Mr. Benedict found them, Constance was living in a city library, Kate had joined the circus, and Sticky stowed away on a river barge. Do you think it's really possible for kids to live like that? Do you think kids should be allowed such independence? Would you like to live on your own? What would you do?

6. Which of the four members of the Mysterious Benedict Society do you think has the best skill? Why?
7. At The Learning Institute for the Very Enlightened (L.I.V.E.), the children in the Mysterious Benedict Society are taught that there are no rules. What is ironic about this statement? Is there any truth to it?
8. There are several ranks at L.I.V.E., including Executives and Messengers. What are the benefits of being an Executive? A Messenger? How do the kids serving in these roles differ from the members of the Mysterious Benedict Society? How are they the same?
9. What is the Whisperer? Why does it make the Messengers feel so good about themselves? Why are Reynie and Sticky so terrified to become Messengers? Are their fears founded?
10. Ledropha Curtain and Mr. Benedict are both men guided by very strong beliefs that are very different — in what ways are they similar? Do you think that they could ever work together? Why?
11. How has the Mysterious Benedict Society helped each member grow? What do you think will happen to each of them in the future?
12. What is YOUR special skill? What role would you play in the Mysterious Benedict Society?