

# THE CHIME SEEKERS

DISCUSSION GUIDE



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"Charming, hilarious and brimming with magic." Catherine Doyle

WALKER BOOKS

# THE CHIME SEEKERS

ROSS MONTGOMERY

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR WALKER BOOKS

### ABOUT THE BOOK

*The Chime Seekers*, from acclaimed author Ross Montgomery, is a glorious fantasy, brimming with all the best elements of classic children's books. We meet Yanni, whose baby sister never stops crying. He misses his old life – his old house, his old friends, and most of all, having his parents all to himself. But when a faerie swaps his sister for a changeling, he and his slightly odd cousin, Amy, must venture into the Land of Fae to try to rescue her. With time running out in a world full of strange creatures, peril, trickery and deceit, Yanni must risk everything to discover what truly matters.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ross Montgomery started writing stories as a teenager, when he should have been doing homework, and continued doing so at university. His debut novel, *Alex, the Dog and the Unopenable Door*, was shortlisted for the Costa Children's Book of the Year and Branford Boase Award. It was also selected as one of the *Sunday Times'* Top 100 Modern Children's Classics. His books have also been nominated for the CILIP Carnegie Award, while his picture book *Space Tortoise* was nominated for the Kate Greenaway Award and included in the *Guardian's* Best New Children's Books. *The Midnight Guardians*, Ross's first fiction novel with Walker Books, was selected as a Waterstones Children's Book of the Month and is garnering huge praise. He lives in London with his girlfriend and their cat, Fun Bobby.

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

There is a huge amount to explore in *The Chime Seekers*. Not only is it a richly imagined world full of grand concepts, ideas, and fantastical characters, but at its heart are themes that many children will understand – loneliness, frustration, family, fear, anger, and what it is to call somewhere "home". With so much to explore, there should be opportunities to let the conversation flow and allow group members to steer around topics organically. Where there may be sensitive points to discuss, particularly around family relations, or moving to somewhere new, ensure that adequate support is in place if required, and all members are made to feel comfortable in discussing the book.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### Getting started

Ask for the group's thoughts on the book. What did members like about it? Were there any parts of the book they found scary? Or exhilarating? Or intriguing? Which characters did they most enjoy reading about? Why? Encourage members to expand on their answers if they can.

## 1. Yanni

"Anyone can be *kind*, Yanni..."

"But not everyone is, though," he said. – p.231

The book is written in the third person, but the reader experiences it through Yanni's perspective. Why might Montgomery have written the novel like this? What effect does it have? Look at the exchange between Yanni and Amy on pages 231-232. Did any member's opinion of Yanni change while they were reading the book? It takes him a long time to realize he hasn't been kind – was it the same for the group?

## 2. Lorde Renwin

But something about the man's beauty was *wrong*, somehow. – p.51

Together as a group, reread the description of Lorde Renwin when he first arrives in Yanni's house (on p.51). How does Montgomery introduce him to the reader? What impression did members have of him when he arrived? Did they notice anything particularly odd, or that became relevant later? Was anyone reminded of other characters, or creatures, they'd come across before?

## 3. Amy

Dad had messed up, so now he was setting Yanni up with his weird cousin – his weird *second* cousin. – p.42

What is Amy like at the beginning of the book? Does the reader get a fair impression of her when she arrives? How does her character change throughout the novel? What causes this change?

## 4. Myths and fairy tales

Amy practically squealed. "*I knew it!* It was a faerie! Omigod, Omigod..." – p.70

What creatures or ideas from fairy tales and folklore did members recognize in the book? Who had read or seen other stories featuring faeries, goblins, changelings or fairy bells before? How did these creatures compare to the ones in *The Chime Seekers*? Had any of the group come across some of the "rules" that govern faeries before, like a fear of iron, or being invited into a home? What about the idea of a changeling? How did the group respond to these ideas? Montgomery also introduces twists on these ideas, like bells chiming out of tune to represent broken magic. Discuss the title of the book, and how it relates to the novel.

## 5. Hatred

Don't introduce this subject by name. Ask if anyone can remember what Lorde Renwin's true name is. (It's revealed on p.348.) What do members think this means? How does Lorde Renwin embody "hatred"? Now read the first line of the novel with the class again, and the last lines of the chapter "All Hallows' Eve" on p.49 – what do they notice? Is there a connection between Yanni and Lorde Renwin?

## 6. Protection

She placed her hand on the stone that now hung at his chest, just above his heart. – p.24

Larry fitted into Yanni's arms like it was the only place he was ever meant to be. – p.190

What sort of protection does Yanni have during the novel? What protection does he offer to others? Discuss the *mati* that Yanni received as a gift from his yiayia. Why does the *mati* protect him? Why is it a protection against "hatred"?

## 7. Trickery

Welcome to Hallow Fall – p.85

How does Lorde Renwin trick Yanni? Ask who can remember exactly how some of his tricks happened. What does Lorde Renwin use to trick him? (Word play, cleverness, distraction, specificity of language, etc.) Ask the group if the author uses any similar "tricks" in his writing. Think about the word play in the names, Hallow Fall vs Fallow Hall, or the school Yanni now goes to, Riddleton, or Larry/Lari – what do these suggest?

## 8. The Changeling

He only had to take one look at the thing writhing and snapping in the bouncer to know that it wasn't Ari any more. – p.70  
Yanni suddenly saw how small and frightened and vulnerable he was. – p.190

How does the changeling change throughout the book (its character, not just its shapeshifting)? What causes this change? Can any members find more examples of the changing language the author uses to describe the changeling? How do these changes affect the reading of the novel?

## 9. The importance of names

*You kill a monster by saying its name.* – p.347

Consider the first meeting of Yanni and Lorde Renwin again (p.50), then look at the list of Lorde Renwin's names, on p.347. Why are names so important across the book? What is in the power of a name? Is it important that Yanni and Ari have Greek names? If so, why? What is Montgomery suggesting by disguising the true name of "hatred" in so many other names?

## 10. The Land of Fae

*"I don't think it works like that," said Amy. "I think you have to be frightened to be brave."* – p.247

Does anyone in the group like the idea of exploring the Land of Fae? If so, why? What did members like about this other realm, like our world but exaggerated and full of fantastical ideas? Who thinks they would have been brave enough to venture into the Land of Fae? Read out the quotation above, about bravery – what do the group think this means? Discuss what it is to be "brave".

