

The City of Ember Study Guide

The City of Ember by Jeanne DuPrau

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Plot Summary

Lina Mayfleet and Doon Harrow are both twelve years old. They are members of the Highest Class of the Ember School. As the book opens, it's Assignment Day or the day the twelve-year-olds are given their jobs. The assignments are arbitrary. There are jobs written on slips of paper in a bag and each student draws a slip to determine his job. Lina is assigned to work in the Pipeworks and Doon is assigned to be a messenger. Doon is certain that the city is in trouble and says so. He trades assignments with Lina, hoping he can do something good for the city if he's working in the Pipeworks. Lina accepts the trade, loving the idea of being a messenger.

The two children know the city's electricity is provided by a huge generator powered by the river under the city. The generator has recently left the city in the dark several times and Lina fears each time will be forever.

The children soon have a series of clues that leads them to a shocking discovery. Lina delivers a message to Mayor Cole from a shopkeeper named Looper about a delivery that evening. Lina finds a set of "instructions," though her baby sister Poppy chews on the paper leaving holes in it. Lina's friend Lizzie has cans of wonderful food that has not been available in Ember for years and Looper has colored pencils. Lina and Doon work on the instructions Lina found and, with the help of their friend Clary, realize it's instructions for leaving Ember - a feat most people believe is impossible. Doon and Lina discover the Mayor has been hoarding supplies and relate the information to a guard without knowing that the guard is in on the secret. When Doon and Lina face arrest for spreading "vicious rumors" about the Mayor, they flee Ember using the instructions.

It's only when they are outside the city that they put their history together. More than two hundred years earlier the Earth was facing destruction. A group of "Builders" created Ember underground and populated it with three hundred inhabitants, most too young to remember a life before Ember. The adults promised never to talk about a life outside Ember. The builders also left a box in the charge of the Mayor with instructions to pass it down to each new Mayor. But along the way the box got shoved into Lina's closet which is how Lina came to have them.

Outside their underground world for the first time, Lina and Doon are amazed at the animals, the moon, the stars, the fruit, and the sun. They realize they've left nothing behind to tell others how to get out of the city and that the generator is certain to fail soon. They can't return the way they came out because the current of the river is too strong. They wander around and find a crevice in the ground. Looking down, they can see Ember. They write instructions for leaving on a piece of paper and throw it down to the people left behind.



Instructions through Chapter 2

Instructions through Chapter 2 Summary

In "The Instructions," the city of Ember has been constructed and the chief builder says the people must live in the city for at least two hundred years, perhaps two hundred and twenty years. An assistant asks how the people will know when it's time to leave and the chief says they'll leave instructions in a box with a lock set to open at the appointed time. The mayor of the city will not know what's in the box but caring for the box and passing it to the next mayor will be an important part of each mayor's duties. The plan works until a mayor contracts an illness that is sweeping Ember. The mayor believes the cure may be in the box and he tries to open it to no avail. That mayor dies without passing on the importance of the box. Years pass and the box is forgotten, shoved into the back of a closet with many other unused possessions. The lock opens but no one sees.

In chapter one, Lina Mayfleet and Doon Harrow are among the "Highest Class" students completing their studies. Both are twelve years old and it's now Assignment Day, the day they will be assigned jobs. Mayor Cole is late but arrives and greets the teacher, Miss Thorn. The Mayor gives a lecture about the need to do their best at whatever jobs are assigned and reminding them they may be reassigned later, depending on whether they are good at their jobs and whether there is a greater need for them elsewhere. Lina hopes for a job that keeps her outdoors. Doon hopes for a job as an electrician helping to keep the city's generator running.

The Mayor has a bag with folded scraps of paper inside. Each student is to draw a paper that will reveal his or her job. The Mayor calls for volunteers and Lina's best friend, Lizzie Bisco, asks to be first. Lizzie chooses a piece of paper and discovers she's to be a supply clerk. She can't hide her disappointment. Chet Noam becomes an electrician's helper, the most common job in Ember and the job Doon had coveted for himself. Another student becomes a builder's helper and another is assigned to work in the greenhouses. Lina knows Clary, the woman in charge of the greenhouses, and believes that would be a good job. Lina draws "Pipeworks Laborer" and is bitterly disappointed. The job is dirty and below the city, working to maintain the maze of pipes that brought water into Ember from the river, also below the city. Doon draws "Messenger," the job Lina had most wanted for herself, but Doon is furious and throws the paper to the floor. The Mayor calls Doon on his action, saying it's "bad behavior" and going on to deliver another lecture, saying Ember "will prosper" if everyone works. Doon speaks up, saying Ember isn't prospering and that the city is facing ruin unless someone figures out some answers.

After class, Doon approaches Lina. He asks if she'll trade assignments. Lina can't believe Doon would rather be in the Pipeworks than above ground but Doon says he wants to try to make a difference to the city's future. The only way he believes he can do that is to learn as much as he can about the city's inner workings. Lina happily trades.



In chapter two, Lina is happy about her new job assignment as messenger. She sees the job as a vital service to the citizens, she loves to run, and she loves to explore the city. Despite that, she's worried about Doon's words. She wonders if the city is really in danger as Doon seems to believe.

Lina arrives at the home she shares with her little sister Poppy and her Granny. Lina's parents have died and Granny has recently been having trouble keeping her little yarn shop in order and keeping track of Poppy. Lina tells her Granny about her new job and Granny is excited. Lina then takes Poppy up to the four-room apartment where they live. The apartment is crowded with items, of which many broken or threadbare from generations of use. Lina's ancestors have lived her for generations. Lina stops to look at a picture she drew of a brilliantly-lit, tall city. The "Book of Ember," which all children study in school, teaches that Ember is the only city anywhere but the city in Lina's imagination seems very real to her. Beyond the lighted part of the city is only darkness that stretches farther than anyone has ever been able to go.

Lina reports for work the following morning and is eager to start running. Lina runs messages around the city all morning and that afternoon is stopped by a man named Looper who sends a message to the Mayor stating, "Delivery at eight." Lina rushes off to the Mayor's office with the message. Lina is left alone while the head guard, Barton Snode, goes to get the Mayor. Lina grows bored with waiting and goes through a door, then up some stairs until she finds herself on the roof. She waves and does a little dance, capturing the attention of those below before the guards order her down. The Mayor is angry and warns her to stay out of trouble. She delivers the message and leaves. Doon is among those who gathered to watch Lina's dance on the rooftop.

Instructions through Chapter 2 Analysis

The opening chapter, "The Instructions," sets the stage for the later discovery of the instructions for leaving Ember. The builders have a reasonable idea - to have the mayor accept responsibility for care of the box as a part of his duties. But they don't take into account human frailties and fallibility. The plan falls through when a mayor fears for his life and believes the box may hold the cure to the disease that's killing him. He is unable to open the box but dies without passing on the importance of the box to his predecessor. However, Lina's Granny remembers that the box was important and that a relative hid it in the closet. Her mind is dimming by the time she begins to search for the box and she has no idea why it's important. An interesting aspect of this entire story is that the corrupt mayor who tried to open the box before it was time was apparently one of Lina's ancestors.

The method of assigning jobs on Assignment Day is completely ignoring the natural talents and likes of the workers. The various jobs open are written on a piece of paper. Lina notes that some years there are many "good" jobs available and other years there is no need for new electrician's helpers or any of the other coveted positions. Assignment is absolutely arbitrary. Lina would not make a good Pipeworks employee. She hates the idea of being cooped up in the tunnels under the city. While Doon isn't the



ideal candidate for that job, he's a better option than Lina. Doon is very curious. As a messenger he could be expected to spend time playing around and stopping to satisfy his curiosity about things that interest him. Doon wants to learn and might have come upon good ideas for the generator, if he'd been assigned that job. However, Doon's position in the Pipeworks means he's going to be in a position to help Lina figure out how to get out of Ember.

Lina remembers a time when she and Doon had been friends. They'd been running around together with a group of children, most of them daredevils who wanted to try new stunts such as leaping off steps or doing a handstand against a wall. Lina had dared to try to climb a light pole but didn't get far. Doon followed suit and fell, as Lina had. But whereas Lina had laughed along when the other children laughed at her, Doon grew furious. Lina and Doon weren't friends after that. Lina will soon come to realize the childhood spat is insignificant and should be forgotten. The fact that Doon was so sensitive to the laughter of the other children is an important part of his character. Doon wants others to think well of him and this trait will later put them in a position in which they almost can't help rescue the people of the City of Ember.

Doon sees Lina on the roof when she's delivering the message to the Mayor. The message itself is a piece of foreshadowing though that's not evident until much later. Doon's thoughts when Lina leaves the roof are another example of foreshadowing. He would like to talk to Lina but knows she'll ask questions that "he didn't want to answer." It seems that even after his first day, Doon has made discoveries though the reader doesn't yet learn what those are.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

In chapter three, the reader has a look at Doon's day in the Pipeworks. He arrives on time and is assigned to Tunnel 97 with an experienced worker named Arlin. Doon has his first look at the river which is nothing like he expects. Doon quickly realizes the city's water system is crumbling into disrepair. Doon does manage to get a look at the generator. Doon has always paid special attention to how things work and prides himself on that ability. He believes that he'll be able to figure out how the generator works if he can just get a look at it. However, when he is able to get into the generator room, he realizes that's not the case. There's a man working on the generator who says the workers have always just replaced parts that break and oiled parts that freeze up, but that he's now concerned about whether the generator will continue to operate.

Doon heads home after work to the apartment he shares with his dad over his dad's store, the Small Items Shop. He doesn't stop to talk with his father as he usually would have, another sign that Doon is troubled by what he's learned over the course of the day. Doon reveals his concerns to his father and his feeling of inadequacy. Mr. Harrow says that Doon's work assignment is out of Doon's control but that he still has some options of what to do with that assignment. Mr. Harrow suggests Doon be vigilant, pay attention to everything he sees, and look for ways to make a positive impact. Doon agrees.

Doon is enamored with the idea of making discoveries. Toward that end, he has begun a journal he calls "Crawling and Flying Things." In this journal, he records observations about various bugs. He also draws what he observes. Doon is currently watching a large caterpillar that has been contentedly living in a box in Doon's bedroom for several days. Mr. Harrow suggests Doon might find some new creatures to study while he's working in the Pipeworks. Doon agrees but thinks that isn't enough.

In chapter four, Lina arrives home after work one day a few weeks later to discover the apartment is in even greater disarray than usual. The couch cushions have been ripped apart and Granny is digging through the closet, rambling about something that's lost. Lina realizes Poppy is alone downstairs and she worries about Granny's ability to watch after the toddler. Granny has talked a great deal recently about her ancestors. Now she says that her grandfather, who was the seventh Mayor of Ember, lost something important. Granny can't remember what "it" was but continues to insist it was important. Lina calls on a neighbor, Mrs. Murdo, to help keep an eye on Poppy during the day while Lina's at work.

Lina heads to the greenhouses to see her friend Clary. On the way she notes the Ember trash heaps. There was a time she and her friends had played there but now there are guards to keep everyone away except the officials "trash sifters." These workers go through the trash in search of anything that can be reused and Lina wonders if this is a



sign that Ember really is running out of supplies. At the greenhouses, Lina learns that Clary is having trouble with some of the plants. Clary tells Lina she'll have to leave as a man, clearly troubled, rushes toward the greenhouses. Lina remains nearby and listens as the man tells Clary he'd gone into the darkness at the edge of Ember, known as the Unknown Regions, but was unable to make himself continue once the darkness was complete.

Lina and Clary talk about the possibility of there being something other than Ember. Clary uses the analogy of a seed. She gives Lina a bean seed and challenges her to plant it, saying the bean seed simply knows how to produce a plant because there is life waiting to burst forth. Clary says she knows the Builders created Ember but says something must have created the Builders. Lina shares her own thoughts that there is a city somewhere. Clary asks where it might be but neither has an idea. Clary gives Lina a seed and a little pot and challenges her to plant the seed, then watch what happens.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Doon's experience in the generator room is a wake-up call. Doon admits that he's always thought he was smarter than most people. This is evident in his belief that he can figure out how to fix the generator if he can just get a look at it. He has overlooked the fact that many people have worked on the generator for years and those people, who know the machine better than Doon, can't figure out how to fix it. However, Doon's idea isn't so far-fetched. Doon has a natural talent for fixing things and figuring out how they work - this is a talent not shared by everyone. The fact that the people responsible for maintaining the generator are chosen at random means someone as talented as Doon might actually have figured out a longer-term solution by this point.

Lina knows Clary because Lina's father worked in the greenhouses before his death. Clary was obviously fond of Lina's father and of Lina.

The Unknown Regions are fraught with danger because there is no way to carry light into them. Lina notes that people have tried to create a mobile light but have been unable to come up with a plan that works. Despite this, there are people who try to navigate the darkness in hope they'll find something - anything - that will be an alternative to living in Ember. The darkness is so complete that they are never able to make themselves go far. An interesting point is that Lina and Doon later discover a crevice through which Ember is visible. The people of Ember apparently can't see the crack because the bit of daylight shining through is less than the street lights of Ember. But it does seem that if people could travel at least a little distance from Ember they might find a similar crevice that would provide enough light for navigation. However, it's never been accomplished.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

In chapter five, Lina arrives home several days to find Granny continuing to search for something. Most days Mrs. Murdo is there though Granny complains that she doesn't want her company. Lina rushes about all day, delivering messages. She hears worries about the lack of supplies and fears for the future of the city and its inhabitants. One day Lina learns that a storekeeper named Looper has pencils for sale. She goes there with Poppy and discovers that he has seven colored pencils though they are very expensive - five dollars each. Lina knows that Granny needs a coat and she can buy one for seven dollars but she desperately wants some of the pencils. She wrestles with her conscience and decides she'll buy a couple of pencils now and a coat for Granny soon. Lina chooses a blue pencil and a green one and makes her purchase.

Just then she realizes that Poppy has wandered off. Lina frantically rushes outside in search of her but can't find her. Then suddenly the lights go off. The lights go off occasionally and everyone is to stop what they're doing and stand still until the lights return. Lina, fearful that Poppy is scared, begins to walk but then realizes she might be walking in the wrong direction and stops. Just when Lina is afraid the lights may never come back on, they do. Lina continues to ask everyone if they've seen Poppy and someone says they saw her go into a nearby store. Lina finds that Doon has Poppy in his father's store.

In chapter six, the residents of the city are summoned to a town meeting by Mayor Lemander Cole. They are to meet in Harken Square for "important information." The Mayor addresses the people the following day using a megaphone to amplify his voice, but the people can barely hear and understand him. He lectures about solutions but never offers any real information about what's being done. Lina overhears pieces of conversation that evening and realizes people believe the Mayor is only trying to keep them quiet about their fears. No one believes the Mayor has any solutions.

When Lina gets home, she finds Granny is on another of her searches. She's looking for the important thing from her ancestor but doesn't know what it is. This time Granny is emptying an over-stuffed closet. Lina has looked in that closet before but it's so crowded with junk that she can't find anything of interest and never digs all the way through. Lina sees an interesting box among the items Granny has thrown out of the closet and looks more closely at it. She can't remember seeing it before and notes that it's empty. She asks Poppy if there was anything in the box but Poppy just giggles and continues to chew on something. Lina looks more closely and discovers that Poppy has a piece of paper. Lina takes it from her and discovers it's covered with small, perfect printing.



Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

When Poppy gets lost, Lina realizes it's her fault for not having watched Poppy more closely. The pencils are a symbol of what Lina hopes for her future. They are bright and unused. They were once plentiful but are now very rare. However, once Lina realizes that her preoccupation with the pencils and the fact that she was so caught up in her greed for them resulted in Poppy being lost, the pencils aren't as pretty as they were when she first saw them.

In chapter five, there's a power outage that lasts longer than previous outages. Blackouts are usually cause for a great deal of talk among the residents of Ember but this time people don't really talk about it. It seems that Doon's fear - that the city is in crisis - is shared by many of the residents. It also seems that they avoid talking about the blackout for fear that it will make their fears have greater weight.



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

In chapter seven, Lina's attention is immediately captured by the printing on the paper. It isn't handwriting such as that seen in *Ember* but is very small, uniform, and neat such as that handed down by the Builders. After Granny and Poppy go to sleep that night, Lina sits down with the paper in an effort to decipher the meaning. She sees the words "instructions," "find door," and "marked with," but the majority of the paper has been destroyed by Poppy's chewing. There are other partial words and Lina sets out to see if she can figure them out. There are seven sentences in the instructions.

Lina believes this might be the important thing her Granny has been looking for but knows that it's a mystery in and of itself, making it something exciting to try to solve. Lina first glues the pieces of the paper to another piece of paper in an effort to keep from losing any of it. Lina goes to her boss at the messenger service, Captain Fleery, with the news of her find. Captain Fleery says it looks like a recipe and points out the words "small steel pan." Lina points out the printing and Captain Fleery says it could be "a very old recipe." When Lina presses, saying the paper isn't like the paper in *Ember* and pointing out the printing, Captain Fleery says Lina's imagination is working overtime. She assumes Lina must be overly tired and offers her a day off work.

Lina's discovery prompts a heart-to-heart talk with Captain Fleery. Captain Fleery says she is a member of the group known as the Believers. Lina agrees that the Builders created the city and Captain Fleery says her group believes the Builders will return soon to "show us the way." Captain Fleery says she and each of the Believers have seen it in a dream.

On her day off, Lina goes to the supply depot to visit Lizzie. Lina questions Lizzie about her job and Lizzie says it's too monotonous. She says she doesn't know a great deal about the supplies remaining and says only a few people are allowed to see the reports for the number of light bulbs remaining. Lizzie also dismisses the note as unimportant. Lina decides she should tell the Mayor about the instructions and decides to send him a note, offering to show him the paper if he wants to see it. He never responds.

Lina begins the tedious chore of trying to decipher the words on the instructions. She finally comes up with the words "river," "riverbank," and "Pipeworks." Lina suddenly realizes she should be talking to Doon about the instructions. The next day is Thursday and Lina decides she'll find Doon.

In chapter eight, the laborers in the Pipeworks have a lot of free time on their hands. Most of them spend that time sleeping, talking, playing cards, or having salamander races. Doon spends his time exploring. Armed with a map, he travels the tunnels in search of anything that captures his attention. He finds several new crawling things including a little creature with a spiral shell on its back. He also finds several closets that



are no longer used and contain only a few scraps of supplies. He finds rocks with grooves that almost look like writing but nothing he believes is of real interest.

Doon spends some time trying to figure out how to make a movable light but can't come up with the answer. He examines light bulbs and the wires that bring electricity into the outlets in his home but can't recreate the current. On the Thursday when Lina is planning to show him the note, Doon goes to the library to look up fire. The library contains a great deal of information though some of it is only from the writer's imaginations. The library is also very disorganized and information about a moth might be under "M" for moth, "B" for bug, or "I" for insect. Doon finally finds information about fire but the information contains nothing useful. There are occasional fires in Ember but always because someone leaves something too close to a hot plate. These accidental fires are quickly extinguished. Doon prepares to leave the library just as Lina rushes in.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Lina is a smart girl and is curious. When the letter of instructions falls into her hands, she's immediately captivated. She realizes it might - or might not - be the important thing Granny's been looking for but isn't that concerned about that point. Instead, she sees the instructions as a challenge and is desperate for something exciting in her life.

Lizzie hints at an important piece of news while she's talking to Lina about the instructions but then says she can't reveal what she knows. It annoys Lina who believes Lizzie shouldn't have said anything at all. It will later be revealed that Lizzie knows about a secret stash of items being hoarded by officials and kept from the general population.

Doon sometimes lets his frustrations manifest in shows of temper. His father tries to make him realize this isn't a positive way to deal with his emotions but Doon doesn't fully understand until one day in the Pipeworks. Doon has been collecting bugs and one day some of the workers see him with a snail, though no one knows exactly what the creature is. They tease him, saying he's collecting his lunch, which makes him angry and he lashes out. The snail falls from his arm and Doon smashes it with his boot. Doon is the only one who realizes the effect of his show of anger but it is an important moment in his emerging maturity.



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

In chapter nine, Lina says she has something to show Doon and he agrees to go to her house to see it. When Lina arrives home, she finds the shop closed. When she goes upstairs, she discovers Mrs. Murdo there. Mrs. Murdo says Granny wasn't feeling well and asked her to come over.

Lina sees her house from Doon's perspective and notes that it's cluttered and messy. Doon comments on Lina's drawing of another city. Lina says she's dreamed about this place. Lina then hands Doon the box that contained the instructions. Doon is immediately fascinated by the locking mechanism on the box and wants to take it apart to see how it works. Lina distracts him with the printed instructions. Lina says she'd initially thought the instructions might be for fixing something, like the electricity problem the city is having. But she points out the word "door" and says she wonders if the instructions are for reaching some other place. Doon agrees that the instructions must be important and suggests the door could be a supply closet with special tools. He remembers seeing a strange door in the tunnels and suggests they go there. He and Lina set out immediately.

Doon knows the way back to the door he remembers and they are soon standing in the center of a small room that has no light. They find a door in the room and there's a keyhole but no key. They begin to search for a place a key might be hidden but hear footsteps and hide themselves a short distance back up the tunnel from the room. There's a thump and a click and Doon and Lina peek out to see a man limping away. Lina knows he's familiar but can't think who he is. Doon and Lina believe this is the door referenced in the instructions and that they're just too late because someone else has already found it. They decide they'll hear the announcement soon of the discovery and go back to their homes for the night.

In chapter ten, Granny becomes very ill. Lina goes for the doctor who says she's very low on medicine but checks in anyway. Lina struggles the entire day to keep Granny cool and get her to drink some thin soup. She also struggles to keep Poppy occupied. At one point Lina pulls out some paper - labels from cans - and the two new pencils. She allows Poppy to draw with the green one while she uses the blue one. Although she doesn't really know why, she colors in the sky with the blue pencil.

That night Lina makes supper and puts Poppy to bed as usual. In the night, Granny calls to Lina and she makes her way to Granny's bedside in the darkness. Granny asks Lina to sit with her for awhile and she does. Then Granny says that Lina should go back to bed. The next morning when Lina wakes, Granny has died.



Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Granny's complaints about Mrs. Murdo's presence were an established fact up until the day Lina returns home from the library with Doon. The fact that Granny had felt so unwell that she called on Mrs. Murdo is a foreshadowing of her death.

Doon and Lina are hopeful that the strange room Doon has found is the room mentioned in the instructions. When it turns out that someone else has found that room, they simply wait for the announcement to be made. Lina will later put clues together about the corrupt government at work here. The man they see in the tunnel is Looper who sent Lina with the message to the Mayor on her first day at work.

Apparently in an effort to make the generator last longer, the electricity is turned off at night. For a period of several hours, there is no light at all. The means used in the generator room to discover problems when the power goes out is never explained. There are no flashlights or any other kind of portable light, nor is fire used to light the way. It seems reasonable that it would become equally dark in the generator room and that the mechanics would not be able to find a problem in the dark.



Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

In chapter eleven, Lina spends the day at Mrs. Murdo's. She notes that their apartments are identical except that Mrs. Murdo's is very neat and orderly. Mrs. Murdo has an extra bedroom and says that Lina and Poppy should stay with her now. Lina returns to work but is troubled by the fact that she suddenly feels very alone in the world. She knows she isn't really but it takes most of the day for her to begin thinking positively about her new life with Mrs. Murdo.

That afternoon Lina sees Lizzie carrying a bag and calls out to her but Lizzie doesn't hear at first. Lina sees Lizzie leaving the depot and asks what's in the bag. Lizzie says she stopped by the market after work even though Lina saw her leaving her job just moments earlier. Lizzie mentions that she has a boyfriend and Lina asks about him, but at that moment Lizzie stumbles and drops some of the items from her bag. Lina sees several cans of food go rolling away. One of the cans Lina picks up is peaches and another is creamed corn, both treats no one has had in years. A boy picks up a can of applesauce and begins yelling about it. Lizzie says the cans were discovered just today on a hidden shelf in the market and that she doesn't mind sharing. She tells Lina and the boy to keep what they have and hurries away. Lina knows Lizzie wasn't telling the truth about where the cans came from but can't imagine an alternative explanation. That night, Lina, Poppy, and Mrs. Murdo feast on the peaches and corn.

The next day Lina encounters Lizzie and demands the truth. Lizzie finally admits that Looper Windly has found a storeroom with more cans of these precious items. Looper is selling the items at a premium and taking a few for himself. Lizzie benefits because she likes Looper as a boyfriend. Lina argues that it's stealing but Lizzie says it isn't. Lizzie says there are other items, such as colored paper and shoes, and offers to share. Lina is momentarily tempted but refuses.

In chapter twelve, Doon is sent to make a pipe repair that takes only a short time, leaving him time to explore. Doon discovers that the door that had been locked when he and Lina visited the tunnel is now open with a light burning inside. Doon pushes the door open slightly and sees the Mayor, sound asleep and surrounded by food and items he's obviously keeping for himself.

Doon catches up with Lina as she's headed home that day and tells her of his discovery. Lina shares her information about Looper and the food he's apparently discovered. Lina and Doon can't decide what to do with their information but finally go to the head guard, believing he'll arrest the Mayor. He assures them action will be taken soon. Doon and Lina leave the building and see the guard talking with other guards.



Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

Mrs. Murdo says that Lina and Poppy can't live by themselves - a statement that catches Lina by surprise. She doesn't understand why they can't. Though only twelve, Lina is an adult by Ember standards. Not only that, she has been taking care of both Granny and Poppy for some time. There is apparently no violent crime and no reason Lina and Poppy couldn't continue to live in their apartment. However, Lina agrees to make the move and is relieved to hand some of the adult chores over to Mrs. Murdo, such as the cooking. There isn't a great deal of information about Mrs. Murdo but she apparently lives alone. She is neat and orderly and seems to enjoy fussing over Poppy and Lina. It could be that her insistence that Poppy and Lina move in is for her own benefit as well as theirs.

Lizzie's explanation about Looper's discovery of the items in the storeroom is somewhat tenuous and unbelievable. Lizzie says she - as a supply clerk - can help get the items out of the depot. Lizzie doesn't seem to even consider the idea that Looper might be using her because her role as a supply clerk makes her valuable to his smuggling enterprise. However, it will soon be revealed that Looper has other officials involved and that he's in no danger of being caught. Lizzie's reasoning behind keeping the discovery a secret from the masses sounds like something she's been told and is attempting to pass off as logic. She says there isn't enough for everyone and that sharing the items equally would be impossible. Therefore, letting people know about them would create arguments. Lizzie says in the interest of keeping peace, it's best that no one know.



Chapters 13 and 14

Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

In chapter thirteen, Lina tells Clary about the Mayor's corruptions. Lina then tells her about note and her thoughts on the meaning. Clary realizes the word Lina had thought was a name was really "egress," which is another word for "exit." With that piece of information, Doon and Lina get more serious about trying to decipher the rest of the instructions. They realize one line indicates there is a stone in the Pipeworks marked with an "E." Doon agrees to keep an eye out for anything that might be that stone.

In chapter fourteen, Doon tells Lina he believes that he's found the stone marked with the "E." Everyone has a day off work the following day for a singing rehearsal and Lina and Doon plan to go into the tunnels. They find the rock and it does look like an "E." The instructions include the words "down" and "river," so Doon gets on his belly and looks down. He finds a ladder and they believe they're in the right place. Doon goes first and Lina follows. On the ledge by the river, they find a door that needs a key. Then they see a panel and realize the "steel pan" is really the "steel panel." They use the key and manage to get the door open.

There's no light inside and they begin to feel their way around. They discover a large item and some smaller boxes they carry back to the ledge so they can see them better. Inside the boxes they find matches and candles but neither has ever seen matches and candles and they don't understand what to do with them. At one point they decide the matches could be used for writing and try to write on the stone walls. The match flares to life and they realize they can light them but don't know what to do next. They tie one of the matches to a candlewick, believing that might provide a way to hold the match so it can burn longer. The match burns out quickly but the wick remains lit and the children are able to return to explore more of the room.

The larger item in the room has "boat" written on it. Though they don't know how it works but following the instructions realize they are to lower the boat to the water and get in. Doon believes the boat is "something to ride in" and that it will take them downstream.

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Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

In chapter fifteen, Doon discovers what he believes to be a problem. He says that if the boat is the method for escaping Ember, only two people will be able to leave. Doon lights another candle so they can better examine the room. It's only then that they discover another door. They enter to find hundreds more boats, each equipped with candles, matches, paddles and the other equipment the Builders believed would be necessary for the trip downstream. Doon and Lina look at the river that disappears into darkness and realize they've solved the mystery. Doon says they'll make their announcement the following day as the town gathers for the annual singing.

The following morning Doon's father heads to the shop though he doesn't have to. He's so accustomed to tinkering with things in the shop that he doesn't know what to do if he's not there. As soon as he's alone, Doon gathers some of his possessions and puts them into his pillow case. He feels he's probably getting ready to leave too soon but can't help himself. Doon wonders about other things he should take but dismisses each, reminding himself that the entire population of the city would be leaving together and that other people would be able to provide things he needed.

Just then Doon hears someone outside his apartment and looks out to see guards talking to a neighbor, Nammy Progg. The guards asks where Doon is and Nammy asks why they're looking for him. The guards say Doon is wanted for "spreading vicious rumors" about the Mayor. Nammy says she's certain she saw Doon earlier in the day headed across town. The guards leave, following her directions. Doon knows Nammy has done him a huge favor but he now has to leave immediately or risk being arrested. He realizes the soldiers will also be looking for Lina and that he has to warn her.

Lina had a restless night thinking about what lies ahead for them. She's at home when Doon pounds on the door and relates the information that guards are looking for her. Lina leaves Poppy and Mrs. Murdo with barely an explanation and she and Doon head for the school, a building they know will be deserted on this holiday. On the way, they see papers fastened to posts and buildings alerting everyone to be on the lookout for Doon and Lina.

At the school, Doon comes up with the idea that they should go to the river and see where the boat takes them. Lina can't imagine undertaking the journey by themselves but Doon convinces her. They decide they'll write the instructions out for Clary, the only adult they can think of who'll follow them and isn't possibly corrupt. Lina is to deliver the note and the two plan to meet up a short time later. But when Lina leaves the school two guards see her and give chase.

In chapter sixteen, Lina rushes to the doorway of the library but finds the door locked. The guards catch her and though she struggles, they take her to the Mayor's office. The



Mayor immediately begins to lecture Lina. He says Ember is in "a time of difficulty" and that all its citizens should be especially loyal and obedient now. He chastises Lina for her curiosity which he says is "regrettable in one so young." In the middle of the lecture, the lights go out. Lina has taken careful stock of the room, planning to make a run for it the moment she has a chance. Because of this planning, she's ready to bolt the minute the lights go out. While the guards and the mayor are stumbling around in the dark, Lina rushes through the door and heads upstairs, hoping the guards will expect her to go downstairs.

Lina is on the roof when the lights come back on but they quickly go off again. At one point Lina considers yelling out the information to the crowd gathered for the singing but doesn't and the opportunity is lost. When the lights come on again, she drops to the roof of another building then to the ground. She knows she has to hurry to meet Doon but has something else to do first. She watches for Poppy and Mrs. Murdo.

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Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

As he's gathering up the items he plans to take with him, Doon takes a look at a caterpillar he's had in a box. A few days earlier the caterpillar had wrapped itself in a web - a cocoon - and had been very still during that time. Now, however, the cocoon is moving and Doon watches as a moth emerges.

Doon's immediate reaction after learning the guards are looking for him is one of anger. He is furious to discover that the government is corrupt. He is about to lash out when he remembers that Lina was the one who told the guards about the Mayor which means she'll be in danger as well. With that thought, he channels his anger into a positive route and heads off to warn her.



Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

In chapter seventeen, Doon leaves the school and is on the way to the river when the lights go out. He lights one of the candles which provides enough light to help him find his way to the door of the Pipeworks. Doon is torn, wanting to save Lina but knowing there's nothing he can do if the guards caught her. When Lina arrives only a little late, Doon is so relieved that he doesn't express his doubt over her decision to bring Poppy along.

Lina uses her sweater to make a sling of sorts for Poppy and manages to descend the ladder. She and Doon are surprised to find the boat isn't as heavy as they'd expected. They load in the supplies though they can't figure out the purpose of the paddles. They use the ropes as the instructions indicate and lower the boat into the water, tying it off on a peg driven into the ledge. The boat floats and Doon drops into the bottom of it, rocking it wildly before finding his balance. Lina hands Poppy down to Doon then gets in as well. Lina and Poppy cower in the bottom of the boat, Lina holding onto Poppy as tightly as she can. Then Doon manages to get the rope untied and they're caught up in the current.

In chapter eighteen, the ride down the river is initially terrifying and all Lina, Doon, and Poppy can do is try to hold on. Lina fears Poppy will fall out so she huddles in the bottom of the boat holding on to the toddler. The river alternately slows and speeds up, and they discover the boat paddles can be used to help steer them off rocks and the walls of the caverns through which the pass. When they come to a place where the river rushes through openings too small for the boat, Lina gets out and they find a path. They sit on the bank of the river and share some of the food Doon has. Poppy finds something and they discover it's a very old book. As Doon and Lina talk about Lina being caught by the guards, she realizes she forgot to leave the note for Clary. Knowing there's no way back up the river, they feel there's no choice but to forge ahead. Lina brings the book Poppy found and they set out up the path.

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

Lina's decision to bring Poppy along is prompted by the lights going out when she's trying to escape. Lina has seen the roaring river. The current is very strong at the point they're launching the boat and the fact that Lina and Doon have no idea how to control the boat makes it very dangerous. No doubt the Builders chose that spot on the river because the current is strong enough to turn the generator. Lina's initial plan is to leave Poppy behind with Mrs. Murdo because she believes Poppy will be safer there than traveling down the unknown river with her. However, when the lights go out, Lina suddenly realizes Poppy won't be safe in Ember and that in fact no one will be safe in Ember for long.



Chapters 19 and 20

Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

In chapter nineteen, Doon discovers a framed notice on the wall of the cave. It is addressed to "refugees of Ember" and warns that there's a climb ahead that will take several hours. It does take that long and Poppy is soon too tired to walk any more. Doon and Lina take turns carrying her. When they emerge into the fresh air, Lina is amazed by the smells. There are thousands of flecks of lights above them and one larger light, but they see no lights that might indicate a city. They are in awe of the plants including trees, which they don't have a name for. They don't really know what to do so sit down to rest and eat. After awhile, Lina notices that the larger light in the sky is moving. After a few more hours, they realize the light around them is changing and watch in awe as the sun comes up. With the sun comes birds - which they've never seen - and their first real look at the land that's now their home. Lina picks up the book Poppy found and begins to read.

In chapter twenty, Lina begins to read what turns out to be a journal. The woman writing says that she believes she was chosen to live in Ember because of her abilities with plants. She says she was told to bring no books or photos but that she's determined to leave this journal behind because someone might need to know how Ember began. The writer says Ember is proof that scientists believe the world is doomed. She says there are fifty men and fifty women and that they'll be matched at random. Each is at least sixty years old and each set of parents will be given two babies to raise. The woman is matched with a man named Stan and they have a boy and girl to "parent." They name them Star and Forest.

Lina and Doon now know that Ember is below ground and so spend the day looking for another way in. In the middle of their search, they encounter a small four-legged creature, unlike anything they could have imagined, that's carrying something in its mouth. They decide the animal must be carrying food and find a tree that has more. It's delicious.

Later in the day, they find a crevice and discover they can see Ember in the distance. They consider yelling but know the people won't be able to see them. They come up with a plan to get the attention of the people. They use the note they'd intended to give Clary and add the information that they'd made it safely down the river. They put this in Doon's shirt, weight it down with a rock, and drop it into the crevice. It falls to the ground directly in front of Mrs. Murdo who stops and picks it up.

Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

The author says that she and the other adults are never to mention their lives on Earth to the children. The children are to grow up without realizing they've lost anything. She



says she's asked how the people of Ember, armed with no knowledge of the world above ground, will know when it's time to come out. One of the scientists explains about the instructions and says people "find a way" to overcome adversity. The journal ends there.

The book has an open-ended conclusion aimed at drawing the reader in for the next installment of the series. Some versions of the book include the first chapter of the next book, which is titled "The People of Sparks."



Characters

Lina Mayfleet

Lina is a twelve-year-old orphan who is living with her grandmother and younger sister as the story opens. She knows nothing about life apart from Ember but has come to believe there might be some other place outside of it. Lina is willing to place faith in her dreams although she has no basis for them. Lina also loves color and spends a great deal of money for a couple of colored pencils when it's believed there are none remaining in the city. Lina is driven by her sense of justice and what's right. When she's faced with the knowledge that Mayor Cole is stealing from the residents, she is furious. Her first instinct is to tell the guards because she believes they will do what's right. Lina is disappointed when she realizes the guards are also corrupt. When Lina is offered an opportunity to have some of the stolen items for herself, she turns it down. Though she can see the problem with trying to distribute a very limited amount of goods among the four hundred people of Ember, she believes it's wrong for a few people to keep those treasured items for themselves. Another important aspect of Lina's character is her loyalty. When she and Doon are about to set out on a trip they believe will take them out of Ember, she initially agrees to leave Poppy behind rather than taking the toddler along on what could be a dangerous journey. But Lina's loyalty to Poppy overrides her fears and she takes Poppy along.

Doon Harrow

Doon is twelve years old as the story opens. He is in school and is about to be assigned the job that he'll hold for the coming years. Doon realizes the need to work but wants to use his talents for figuring out things to better Ember. He speaks out about the city's troubles, a fact that angers the Mayor. Despite that, Doon continues to speak out, insisting that the city is in danger and that something has to be done about it. Doon is assigned the job messenger but sees this as a useless task and trades with Lina in order to be assigned to the Pipeworks. Doon believes he'll be able to make a difference and will find a way to save the city. He's immediately disappointed in his inability to understand the workings of the city's generator. Despite that, Doon continues to explore the Pipeworks in search of answers. When Lina comes up with a list of instructions for leaving Ember, Doon helps figure out the details and is the first to go into the room where the boats are kept. Doon is anxious for glory. When he and Lina discover the Mayor is corrupt, Doon is tempted to tell his father the details. However, he quickly decides that he'll wait, knowing the details will be announced at a gathering of the entire city and can imagine his father's pride when Doon's name is announced in connection with uncovering the plot. Doon understands Lina's need to take Poppy along and takes turns with Lina carrying the toddler.



Poppy Mayfleet

Poppy is Lina's baby sister. She is just a toddler but it's Poppy who finds the note with the information about escaping from Ember. Poppy chews up the note so that it takes Doon and Lina days to figure out the instructions.

Clary

She is the keeper of the greenhouses. Clary is a strong woman, both physically and mentally. Clary figures out the instructions are for escaping Ember, determining the word that Lina and Doon think must be a name is actually "egress." Clary is the person Lina and Doon trust with the instructions on how to escape Ember but they can't get the instructions to her before leaving the city.

Granny

She is Lina's grandmother. She is elderly and has become confused in her old age. However, it's Granny who remembers that there's a box stored at the back of a closet and that its contents might be important. Granny dies before Lina and Doon can figure out how to leave Ember.

Mayor Cole

The leader of Ember, he has become corrupted by greed. The Mayor apparently realizes the city is in trouble and that supplies are running out. He steals things for himself, hiding food and supplies that should be shared with the families of the city.

Mrs. Murdo

She is the woman who lives near Lina's family prior to the death of Granny. She takes care of Poppy when Lina's Granny isn't feeling well. When Granny dies, Mrs. Murdo takes Poppy and Lina in to live with her. She is a very organized woman who takes pride in keeping her apartment neat. She takes much better care of Lina and Poppy than Granny had in recent months and Lina is grateful for the meals that are prepared for her.

Lizzie

A girl in Lina's class, she is assigned to the supply depot as her job. Lizzie becomes friends with a boy who has access to the hidden supplies and benefits by receiving some of the supplies for herself. When Lizzie drops a bag and Lina realizes what's happening, Lizzie explains that she's doing nothing wrong. Lizzie says there aren't



enough cans of food to go around to all the residents of Ember and that it would create problems if everyone knew of the extra food and supplies.

Looper Windly

This is the man who owns a store and who is stealing items for himself. Looper has colored pencils that he is selling at an outrageous price knowing that there are only those left in the entire city.

Mr. Harrow

Doon's father, he runs a shop that specializes in small items. He is wise and advises Doon to find a more productive way to deal with his anger.

Captain Fleery

The head of the Messengers, she is one of the Believers. Lina trusts her and goes to her with the instructions, believing Captain Fleery will help her figure out what they mean and what Lina should do with them. However, Captain Fleery has her own opinion about being saved and believes the Builders will return to "show us the way."



Objects/Places

Ember

This is a city built underground to escape the destruction of Earth.

The Builders

This is the group of scientists who created Ember.

The Pipeworks

This is an area under the city of Ember where the city's water pipes are routed. The Pipeworks lead to the river and are the location of the hidden rooms with the boats.

Assignment Day

This is the day when all the twelve-year-olds are assigned their jobs in Ember.

Lina's Closet

This is where the instructions for leaving Ember are discovered.

Ember School

This is where Lina and Doon attend classes until Assignment Day.

The Book of the City of Ember

This is a book that's treated as a text book in school and contains everything everyone knows about Ember.

Highest Class

This is the last class of school before students at the age of twelve, complete their studies and begin work.



Small Items Shop

This is the store that Doon's father runs.

Crawling and Flying Things

This is the name of the journal Doon keeps in which he records his observations about bugs and worms.



Themes

The will to live

Lina and Doon are caught up in the mystery of the instructions and both are excited about the possibility they might solve the mystery. However, they are more concerned with the need to make their world better so they and their families can survive. Lina, along with every other citizen in Ember, has considered the possibility that the generator will go off permanently, leaving the entire city in darkness. Added to that is the realization that supplies are dangerously low. There are few light bulbs and little food remaining in the city's storerooms. There are few supplies such as clothing and pencils. When Lina visits the greenhouses, she learns from Clary that a blight has struck some of the crops. These shortages added to the concern about the generator have put people on edge. When the Mayor addresses the people of Ember, his message is simply not to worry. While that kind of speech may have made him popular when things in Ember were good, the people are now disturbed at the situation and want to see proof that progress is being made to save the city, providing them a safe place to live. Another interesting aspect of this theme is seen long before the story begins. The author of the journal Poppy finds when Doon and Lina escape down the river writes about her talk with the Builders. The writer says she'd asked the Builders how the people of Ember would know when it's time to leave the city. The Chief Builder said they were leaving instructions. When he is asked what would happen if those instructions failed to find their way to the correct hands at the correct time, the Chief Builder replied that the people would find a way to survive because people always do.

The Power of Greed

The power of greed is an important theme in the book because it's the cause of the Mayor's corruption. When Lina and Doon discover the Mayor is hoarding things for himself, they report it to someone they believe will take appropriate action. They soon discover that these people are benefitting from the Mayor's greed which has corrupted them as well. Lina fully understands greed because she feels that emotion herself when she realizes Looper has colored pencils for sale. Lina can clearly see that the city is in trouble and the electric generator will eventually cease to work at all. Lina realizes what the Mayor doesn't - that all his hoarding of light bulbs won't do him any good when the generator stops working. To a lesser degree, Doon shows greed when he doesn't tell his father about his discovery that the Mayor is hoarding supplies. Doon wants to be a hero and to be recognized for having done something great for Ember. He imagines the announcement from the guards that the Mayor has been arrested and his father's proud reaction to the news that Doon played a role in that. Doon is so greedy for this recognition that he and Lina get completely out of Ember without leaving word of their discovery.



The need to believe in something

There were about fifty adults with approximately one hundred infants chosen to populate Ember when it was initially founded. Those adults were older and pledged never to talk about their lives prior to Ember. The children were raised without knowing anything other than what they were told about Ember. The goal was to ensure that the children would live happily in Ember without clinging to their desire to return to a life they learned about through their adoptive parents. Despite the care given to creating this kind of life, there is a group of people in Ember who become known as "Believers." Lina learns that each of the believers has had a dream that the Builders are coming to "show us the way." Lina also holds to a dream only her dream is somewhat more concrete. Lina believes there is a city that is vastly different than Ember. Like the Believers, she has dreams of this place. It's bright with a blue sky unlike the gray buildings and black sky of Ember. Clary understands Lina's need to believe though others do not. Lina believes the key to finding this city is to leave Ember but she's afraid of the darkness of the Unknown Regions. She isn't alone. There are others who periodically travel into the Unknown Regions but they always become afraid of the complete darkness engulfing them and return to Ember.



Style

Point of View

The story is written in the third person but from a limited perspective. The point of view alternates between Doon Harrow and Lina Mayfleet. The switching of perspective is barely noticeable to the reader but is necessary in order to keep the reader involved in the story line. An early example of this is seen when Lina and Doon are having their first days at work. Chapter two begins with Lina's first day at work and goes through her delivery of a message to the Mayor. While Lina is there, she finds her way to the roof of the building and captures the attention of the crowd below. The chapter ends with Doon among the onlookers though he doesn't stop to talk to Lina. Chapter three picks up with a look at Doon's first day at work. The author's ability to move between the two characters means the reader knows details as soon as events happen to either of the characters. For example, Doon is the one to discover the Mayor is hoarding food for himself. He tells Lina but the reader already knows the details, having seen the scene from Doon's perspective at the time of his discovery. The fact that the story is in the third person eliminates concerns that the characters may not be completely honest in their dealings with themselves or with each other. The reader watches as Doon steels himself to keep information from his father and knows that Doon's motivations are dishonorable - he wants the glory of a public announcement of his achievements.

Setting

The majority of the story is set in the fictional underground city of Ember. The city was constructed by a group of scientists and engineers known as the Builders. The purpose of the city was to provide a means of survival for at least a small group of people in the fear of the total destruction of the world's ecosystem. The city is something of a square with streets crisscrossing as would have been typical of any city. The center of the city is the Gathering Hall, which is fronted by Greystone Street. This is also the location of the clock tower where Lina gets a view of the city. Lina's house is near Quillium Square and Doon's house is near Greengate Square. There are many blocks set aside in the town as "squares" or miniature parks. The city is completely self-contained but has been in existence for more than two hundred years. It was built with the expectations that it would need to provide a viable place for its inhabitants for about two hundred years. By the time Doon and Lina turn twelve years old, the city is in decay and its systems are beginning to fail. There is concern that the generator won't continue to work forever and no one has the expertise to keep it running. An interesting point about the city is that it's not terribly far underground. Lina and Doon can see the city through a crack in the ground after they make their escape to the Earth's surface though they are too far away to be heard. However, the people of Ember have apparently never seen the daylight through that crack.



Language and Meaning

The story is written in a straightforward style aimed at a young audience. The author succeeds in keeping the action moving at a fast pace that will likely retain the interest of the younger readers. There are few words that will be unfamiliar to a reader with an average vocabulary but the reader does have to keep in mind that the inhabitants of Ember have been completely isolated for generations which prompts their lack of knowledge about many topics the reader takes for granted. An example of this is seen when Doon and Lina find the matches. They have no idea what the matches are or how they work and it takes some experimentation for them to master both the matches and the candles. There is not a great deal of detail about the lives of the people of Ember and some readers may be curious about this. For example, Lina's Granny dies but there is apparently no funeral or wake and no one gathers to help Lina grieve for her loss. The reader is left to decide what happens to the body. There are some other ideas that may seem unbelievable to the reader such as the fact that the children, at age twelve, are assigned jobs. There is money in Ember but no real evidence that it's used for food or that anyone pays for the house they live in. Days away from work seem to be common and it's not evident that there's any penalty for missing work. The book is very open-ended, which is an obvious attempt by the author to draw the reader into the next book of the series.

Structure

The story is divided into twenty chapters with most of the chapters ranging around twelve to twenty pages though some chapters are longer. The opening chapter is titled "Instructions" and is a flashback to the time the city of Ember is established. That chapter is just more than two pages in length and sets the stage for the discovery of the instructions for leaving Ember. The other chapters are identified by number and title. Titles are Assignment Day; A Message to the Mayor; Under Ember; Something Lost, Nothing Found; On Night Street; The Box in the Closet; A Message Full of Holes; Explorations; The Door in the Roped-Off Tunnel; Blue Sky and Goodbye; Lizzie's Groceries; A Dreadful Discovery; Deciphering the Message; The Way Out; A Desperate Run; The Singing; Away; Where the River Goes; A World of Light; and The Last Message. The titles offer a clue about the chapter's contents. For example, in "The Door in the Roped-Off Tunnel," Doon and Lina explore a roped-off tunnel where they find a door that eventually leads them to learn that the mayor is corrupt. The book includes a map of Ember. The map helps the reader establish the layout of the city and to better understand where the various points are in relation to each other. The book also includes pictures from a movie based on the book. The movie holds fairly close to the story line of the book. The photos may help some readers establish faces to go with the various characters.



Quotes

"The city of Ember was made for us long ago by the Builders,' the book said. 'It is the only light in the dark world.'" (Chapter 2, p. 25).

"The whole city was crumbling and what was anyone doing about it?" (Chapter 3, p. 45).

"Of course, I hear we might run out of light bulbs before that, and then it won't matter if the generator works or not." (Chapter 3, p. 48).

"All it would take was the courage to walk away from Ember and into the darkness, and then to keep going." (Chapter 4, p. 65).

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"Fear had settled over the city. Lina felt it like a cold chill." (Chapter 6, p. 85).

"The message had something to do with the river, a door, and the Pipeworks. And who did she know who knew about the Pipeworks? Doon, of course." (Chapter 7, p. 111).

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"It seemed an ordinary door - not at all like the entrance to a new world. But that was what made things so exciting - nothing was ever how you expected it to be." (Chapter 9, p. 128).

"She groped her way back to her own bed and fell into a deep sleep, and when, hours later, the clock tower struck six and the lights came on, Lina went fearfully into her grandmother's room. She found her very pale and very still, all the life gone out of her." (Chapter 10, p. 139).

"What Lizzie said was true: if everyone knew there were still a few wonderful things in the storerooms, people would fight each other trying to get them. But what if no one knew? What difference would it make if she had the colored paper of the shoes?" (Chapter 11, p. 152).

"They'll go down into the Pipeworks and see for themselves that we're telling the truth. Then they can arrest the mayor and have all the stuff put back in the storerooms, and then they can tell the city what's been going on." (Chapter 12, p. 162).

"It means the way out. It means exit. The title of this document is Instructions for Egress." (Chapter 13, p. 171).



"If he still had light bulbs when everyone else in Ember had run out, would he enjoy sitting in his lit room while the rest of the city drowned in darkness? And when the power finally ran out for good, all his light bulbs would be useless." (Chapter 14, p. 178).

"The babies must grow up with no knowledge of a world outside, so that they feel no sorrow for what they have lost." (Chapter 20, p. 260).



Topics for Discussion

Who is Lina Mayfleet? What kind of person is she? Who is Doon Harrow? What kind of person is he? How are the two similar? How are they different? Why do they make a good team?

Describe Ember. How did it come into being? What was the plan for helping people escape? How did life in Ember change over the years? Why do Doon and Lina believe they need to get out of Ember?

What are some of the jobs in Ember? How are jobs assigned? Is this a good system? Why or why not? Could there be a better system? What might that be?

Who is Mayor Cole? How does he become corrupt? Why does he become corrupt? Does Mayor Cole do anything to try to keep the city operating? Support your answers.

Who is Looper? Lizzie? Captain Fleery? Mrs. Murdo? Mr. Murdo? Granny? Poppy? How is each connected to either Doon, Lina, or both?

Who is Clary? Compare Clary's character to Mayor Cole. Which is the better person? Which is more honest? Support your answers with examples from the story.

Compare Granny to Mrs. Murdo. How are the two women similar? How are they different? How can you tell these things about them? How is each connected to Lina and to Poppy?