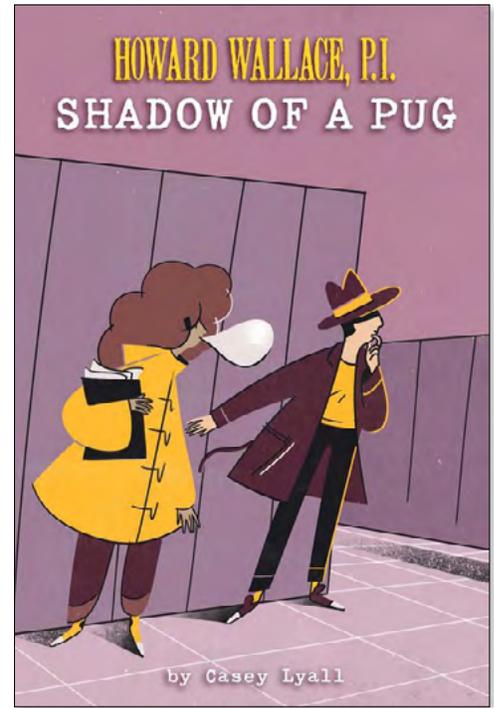STERLING CHILDREN'S BOOKS

SHADOW OF A PUG
(HOWARD WALLACE, P.I. #2)

This discussion guide is designed to help parents, teachers, librarians, and booksellers explore the story's ideas, themes, and meaning with middle-grade readers.

THEMES FOR DISCUSSION: FRIENDSHIP, FORGIVENESS, AND PROBLEM-SOLVING

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Shadow of a Pug* is the second book in a series about Howard Wallace and Ivy Mason. What sort of information does the author provide in the opening chapters about what happened to Howard and Ivy in the first book?

2. Howard and Ivy don't want to take on Carl's case, but they decide to anyway. Why?

3. In chapter seven, Ivy shares with Howard that her mom didn't call her that week, and wonders whether to forgive her just as Howard is wondering whether to forgive Miles. Come up with at least two other ways in which Ivy's relationship with her mom can be compared to Howard's relationship with Miles.

4. In chapter 16, in front of his friends, Miles pushes Howard into the snow. Why? How does having other people around affect the way bullies act? What would you do if you saw your friend bullying another person?

5. How does the fact that the story is told from Howard's first-person point of view affect the way we understand what's going on? Were there points where you disagreed with Howard, or felt he wasn't showing us the whole picture?

6. Think about this line from chapter 25: "Despite their ever-so-slightly higher moral ground, the Arts Council's bad methodology was burying them up to their necks in repercussions." What does Howard mean by this? Do you think the Arts Council had a right to take Spartacus?

7. At the end of the story, Howard finally realizes that something has being going on with Ivy and confronts her about it. Can you find specific scenes in the text where it seemed like Ivy was upset, and Howard didn't notice?

8. Think about Howard and Ivy at the beginning of the story and at the end. How have they each changed?

9. What would you consider to be the main theme of *Shadow of a Pug*? Is there more than one theme? If so, how do they work together to tell the story?

10. Have you ever had to work closely with someone you disliked, or someone who'd been mean to you in the past, the way Howard has to work with Miles? How did you handle it?

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EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. If students have read *Howard Wallace, P.I.*, ask them to compare and contrast the two stories. As a group, chart or list the ways that Howard and Ivy have changed between the two books. Ask them to come up with a mystery for a third story and detail the ways the mystery might test the characters.

2. The Arts Council has to fight to get money from the school to keep their activities running. Have readers pick an extracurricular activity that means something to them, and come up with persuasive arguments for why their activities need funding.

3. Review mystery vocabulary with students: crime, suspect, motive, alibi, evidence, clue, witness. Split students into groups, and ask them to identify as many of these elements as possible in the case of the missing pug.

4. Talk to readers about investigative reporting, and go over the ways that Leyla Bashir is both a detective and a reporter. Ask them to pick a topic that they've always been curious about and do some investigative reporting themselves. Have them write up a short article or blog post, and make sure they come up with a snappy headline that would make Leyla proud!

5. Ask students if they've ever participated in a sit-in or a protest like the one that takes place during the basketball game. Have them choose an issue (school-related or not) about which they feel passionate, and design a poster that expresses how they feel about this issue to the opposing side.