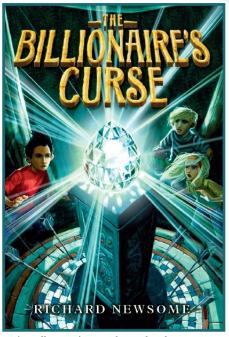
# THE BILLIONAIRE'S CURSE Reading Group Guide

erald Wilkins is your average twelve-year-old. That is, until he alone—much to his extended family's frustration inherits twenty billion pounds, a Caribbean island, a yacht, and three houses from a great-aunt he never knew. Still, things could be worse. And they're about to be. First, there's a theft at the British Museum, mysteriously coinciding with his aunt's death. Then, there's an oddly sinister man dressed in black who seems to be following Gerald everywhere. And finally there's a letter from his great-aunt, meant only for his eyes. In it, she asks him a favor: "I expect you've figured out that I was murdered. I want you to find out who did it."



*The Billionaire's Curse* by Richard Newsome Hardcover ISBN: 978-0-06-194490-1



**RICHARD NEWSOME** has had a number of careers, including working as a journalist and a communications director, but being an author is by far his favorite job to date. His debut novel, *The Billionaire's Curse*, originated as a story he told to his children. Richard Newsome lives with his wife and three kids in Brisbane, Australia.

#### This reading group guide is designed to help students note important events in the story and hone their observational skills as readers and detectives.

#### Prologue:

• Why does Constable Lethbridge have to guard the diamond?

#### Chapter 1:

- How does Gerald react when the class laughs at his drawing and story?
- How does Gerald's mom feel about the death of her aunt, Geraldine? Why do you think she feels this way?

#### Chapter 2:

- What questions does Gerald have while he and his family are flying to London? Who finally answers his questions?
- Why is Violet so happy that Geraldine was "just about the richest woman in the whole world" (page 30)?

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#### Chapter 3:

CHALLENGE QUESTION: Gerald thinks, "Relatives and money—what a toxic mix" (page 33). What does "toxic" mean? What do you think Gerald means by this statement?

#### Chapter 4:

- List the people Gerald meets at Geraldine's funeral. How are they related to Gerald? Why hasn't Gerald ever met them before?
- Who inherits all of Geraldine's money? Why is everyone so surprised when they find out?

#### Chapter 5:

- Gerald meets with Mr. Prisk to talk about some important things. What is Gerald surprised to find out?
- After Mr. Prisk tells Gerald that he must stay at Geraldine's house in London for the remainder of his vacation, Gerald feels as though he's stuck in a prison. Why does he feel this way?

#### Chapter 6:

- Mr. Fry serves kidney and black pudding for breakfast (pages 79–80). What is the main ingredient of black pudding? Have you ever been asked to eat something that you thought sounded gross? Did you try it? Were you surprised by the taste?
- How does Gerald escape his "prison" to get to the British Museum?

#### Chapter 7:

• What groups of people does Gerald see in the British Museum (page 88)? Why does he think they are there?

#### CHALLENGE QUESTION: Which aspects of being famous could be annoying?

#### Chapter 8:

- How does Ruby save Gerald from the thin man?
- When Gerald can't get in to see Professor McElderry, Ruby recommends saying "the magic word" (page 107). Gerald thinks this word is "please," but Ruby says it's "money." Do you think this is true in real life? Explain.
- How does Professor McElderry say that the diamond disappeared? What do the others say?
- What does "Noor Jehan" mean?

#### Chapter 9:

• What dramatic event happens at the end of this chapter?

#### Chapter 12:

**CHALLENGE QUESTION:** On page 151, Sam pulls Gerald out of a two-way closet that has a door on each side. Sam responds to Gerald's confusion by saying, "Who were you expecting? Mr. Tumnus?" What is Sam referring to?

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# Chapter 13:

- Why doesn't Gerald try harder to make the police believe him? Do you agree with Gerald's reasoning?
- Gerald says he is "thinking of adopting" Ruby and Sam's parents (page 176). What does he mean?

# Chapter 14:

**CHALLENGE QUESTION:** Why do the servants at Avonleigh want to call Gerald "sir" now? How does money change the way people see others?

# Chapter 15:

- Ruby and Sam get into an argument at the beginning of this chapter. How is the argument settled?
- On pages 205–206, how does Ruby save the day?

# Chapter 16:

• What scares Sam and Ruby on pages 224–225? What would you have done in their situation?

# Chapter 17:

• Why do Gerald, Sam, and Ruby think the major wants to find the casket?

CHALLENGE QUESTION: Make your own list of suspects. Based on what you have read up to this point, why do you think each might want the diamond?

# Chapter 18:

• Who is more of a bully, Ruby or Sam? List examples from the book to support your opinion.

#### CHALLENGE QUESTION: What might be causing Gerald's visions?

# Chapter 20:

• How is Gerald saved from the thin man at Tor?

# Chapter 21:

• What happens when the major and Chesterfield use the diamond to open the casket?

#### Chapter 22:

- Green says, "You won't do it, Gerald, because you can't do it" (page 321). What can't Gerald do? What does he decide in the end?
- How do Gerald, Sam, and Ruby get out of the crypt?
- What is Major Pilkington's secret? Why did he have to hide the truth from everybody?

CHALLENGE QUESTION: Why did Geraldine entrust her estate to Gerald?

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