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Family Reading Guide for "Star Splitter"

Conversation starters for parents and children

Getting Started

What This Book Is About

"Star Splitter" is a suspenseful science fiction thriller about Jessica Mathers, a teenager who is supposed to teleport to a distant planet to reunite with the parents who left her six years ago for their research. But when Jessica wakes up, something has gone terribly wrong. Instead of safely aboard a spaceship, she finds herself in a destroyed landing unit on the planet's surface, surrounded by empty corridors with bloody handprints and mysterious graves outside. As Jessica tries to survive and uncover what happened, she must grapple with profound questions about identity, consciousness, and what it means to be human.

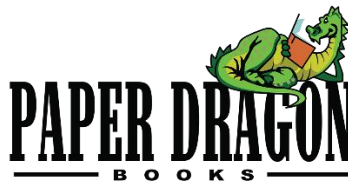
Key Themes Your Child Will Encounter:

- **Identity and self:** Deep questions about what makes us who we are and whether consciousness can be separated from our physical bodies
- **Survival and resilience:** How humans find strength and resourcefulness when facing extreme isolation and danger
- **Family relationships and abandonment:** The complex feelings that come from parents choosing work over being present
- **Trust and uncertainty:** Learning to navigate situations where nothing is as it seems and even your own perceptions might be questioned
- **Scientific ethics:** The consequences when technology and research advance without fully considering potential costs
- **Mystery and problem-solving:** Using observation, logic, and determination to piece together what happened

Content Note for Parents: This book contains suspenseful and potentially frightening scenarios including isolation, implied violence (bloody handprints), death (graves), and psychological tension. It's best suited for mature middle grade and young adult readers who enjoy science fiction thrillers.

Character Connection Questions

About Jessica



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- How do you think Jessica felt about leaving Earth to join parents who left her six years ago?
- What strengths does Jessica discover about herself through this crisis?
- How does Jessica's situation force her to grow up quickly?
- What would you most want to say to Jessica during her ordeal?

About Family Relationships

- How do you think Jessica's feelings about her parents affect her actions in the story?
- What does the story suggest about parents' responsibilities to their children?
- How might Jessica's relationship with her parents change after these events?
- When is it okay to choose important work over family, and when isn't it?

Big Ideas to Explore

Identity and Consciousness

- If you could teleport by having your body disassembled and reassembled, would you still be "you"?
- What do you think makes you uniquely yourself—your body, your memories, your consciousness, or something else?
- If someone had all your memories, would they be you?
- How does the teleportation technology in the story raise questions about what it means to be human?

Survival and Problem-Solving

- What skills and qualities help Jessica survive her situation?
- How does being alone force people to rely on themselves in new ways?
- What would you do first if you woke up in Jessica's situation?
- How does mystery-solving help Jessica focus during a terrifying experience?

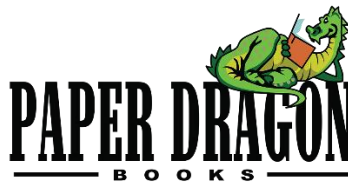
Ethics of Technology and Science

- Should we develop technology just because we can, or should we consider potential consequences first?
- What responsibilities do scientists have when their research might affect others?
- How do we balance the benefits of scientific progress with potential risks?
- What questions should we ask before using new technology?

Fun Conversation Starters

Science Fiction and Future Possibilities

- Would you want to teleport if the technology existed? Why or why not?



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- What do you think space colonization will really be like in the future?
- If you could visit any planet, which would you choose and why?
- What technology from the book seems most realistic for our future?

Mystery and Investigation

- What clues would you look for first if you were trying to figure out what happened?
- How does Jessica piece together the mystery from the evidence around her?
- What questions would you want answered most urgently?
- Have you ever had to figure out what happened when you weren't there to see it?

Isolation and Connection

- How would you handle being completely alone in an unfamiliar and dangerous place?
- What memories or thoughts would help you stay strong?
- How does human connection affect our ability to survive difficult situations?
- What would you miss most about Earth if you were far away in space?

Discussion Activities

Philosophical Exploration

- Discuss thought experiments about identity and consciousness (Ship of Theseus, teleportation paradoxes)
- Research current scientific theories about consciousness and what makes us "us"
- Explore ethical questions in science and technology development
- Discuss the balance between scientific progress and safety considerations

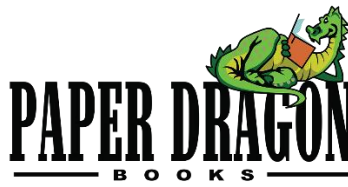
Real-World Connections

- Research current space exploration and colonization plans
- Learn about how astronauts handle isolation and dangerous situations
- Explore the history of scientific discoveries that had unintended consequences
- Discuss how scientists today consider ethics in their research

Conversation Tips for Parents

Creating Safe Spaces

- **Acknowledge that the book deals with frightening scenarios** - validate if your child finds parts scary or unsettling
- **Be open to deep philosophical discussions** - this book raises genuine questions that even adults struggle with
- **Connect to your child's concerns** - if they worry about being separated from family, address those feelings



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- **Balance the scary elements with problem-solving focus** - emphasize Jessica's resourcefulness and resilience

Encouraging Deep Thinking

- **Ask open-ended questions:** "What would you do in Jessica's situation?" or "What do you think really happened?"
- **Explore ethical dilemmas:** "Is it ever okay to...?" or "What should scientists consider before...?"
- **Wonder together:** "What do you think makes someone the same person over time?"
- **Connect to identity questions:** "What do you think makes you uniquely you?"

Making It Personal

- **Discuss family dynamics:** Talk about how families balance work, research, or careers with being present
- **Explore resilience:** Share family stories about times when people had to be strong in difficult situations
- **Connect to values:** "This reminds me of why our family believes..."
- **Plan related activities:** visit science museums, watch documentaries about space exploration, discuss ethical questions

Questions by Age Group

For Younger Readers (Ages 10-11)

Focus on adventure, mystery, and basic ethical questions:

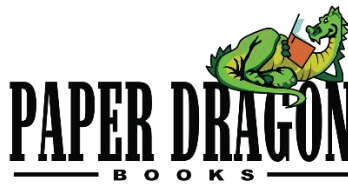
- What's the most exciting or scary part of Jessica's adventure?
- How does Jessica show bravery even when she's frightened?
- What would you pack if you were going to another planet?
- How does Jessica figure out clues about what happened?

For Older Readers (Ages 12-14)

Explore deeper themes of identity, consciousness, and complex ethics:

- What does this story suggest about the nature of consciousness and identity?
- How do the ethical questions about teleportation apply to technology we're developing today?
- What responsibilities do parents have to be present for their children?
- How does the mystery structure reveal deeper truths about human nature and scientific progress?

Handling Complex and Potentially Disturbing Content



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Scary or Violent Imagery

- Acknowledge that descriptions of bloody handprints and graves can be frightening
- Emphasize that the book is fiction and uses these elements to build suspense
- Focus on how Jessica handles fear and continues to problem-solve
- Discuss the difference between suspense in stories and real-world concerns

Themes of Abandonment

- Validate that Jessica's feelings about her parents leaving are complex and understandable
- Discuss how different families make different choices about work and presence
- Emphasize that most parents don't face such extreme choices
- Connect to conversations about how your family balances work and family time

Questions About Death and Mortality

- Approach discussions about the graves and implied deaths age-appropriately
- Focus on how mysteries often include serious consequences that make the stakes meaningful
- Emphasize Jessica's determination to survive and honor others
- Connect to broader conversations about how we remember people and handle loss

Identity and Consciousness Questions

- Acknowledge that questions about "what makes us us" are complex even for adults
- Explore different philosophical and scientific perspectives on consciousness
- Validate uncertainty—these are questions humans have always grappled with
- Focus on how thinking about these questions helps us appreciate our existence

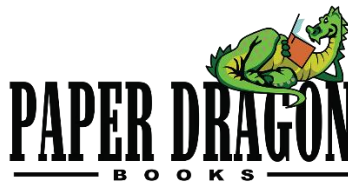
Science and Ethics Discussions

Teleportation Ethics

- Discuss whether destroying and recreating someone is the same as moving them
- Explore what scientists today consider before developing new technologies
- Consider how we balance the benefits of advancement with potential risks
- Connect to real discussions about AI, genetic engineering, and other emerging technologies

Responsibility in Science

- Discuss how Jessica's parents' choices to prioritize research had consequences
- Explore what responsibilities scientists have to consider impacts of their work
- Consider how society should guide scientific development
- Connect to current events involving technology and ethics



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Activity Ideas

Science Fiction Exploration

- Watch documentaries about space exploration and colonization possibilities
- Research current teleportation research (quantum teleportation of particles)
- Discuss other science fiction that explores identity and consciousness
- Create your own science fiction scenario exploring an ethical question

Critical Thinking Exercises

- Practice mystery-solving with family puzzle or escape room games
- Discuss philosophical thought experiments about identity
- Research how scientists and ethicists think about new technologies
- Create survival plans for various challenging scenarios

Remember

"Star Splitter" provides rich opportunities for discussion about identity, consciousness, ethics in science, and human resilience. While the book deals with complex and sometimes frightening themes, these elements create space for meaningful conversations about profound questions that become increasingly relevant as technology advances.

Use Jessica's journey as a starting point to explore not just the story's mysteries, but the deeper questions about what makes us human, how we define ourselves, and what responsibilities we have to each other—especially within families. The book's combination of suspense and philosophical depth can inspire conversations that help young readers develop critical thinking skills while grappling with questions that have fascinated humans throughout history.

Most importantly, let the story's celebration of human resilience and problem-solving inspire confidence in your reader's ability to face challenges and think deeply about complex questions. Jessica's determination to survive and uncover truth, even when everything seems impossible, offers a powerful model of human strength and curiosity.