



Email: bridget@paperdragonreads.com Phone: (407) 212-7759

Family Reading Guide for "The Bug Bandits"

Conversation starters for parents and children

Getting Started

What This Book Is About

"The Bug Bandits" follows Liberty Jacobs, a girl who feels completely at home at the Insectarium her father runs. When she discovers the Insectarium may close and that thieves are planning to steal its rarest insect residents, Liberty and her friends take action. Drawing inspiration from the movie Home Alone and the natural defense mechanisms of insects, Liberty hatches a clever plan to protect the place and creatures she loves most.

Key Themes Your Child Will Encounter:

- **Expertise and passion:** Liberty's deep knowledge of insects is her greatest strength, showing that genuine interest in any subject has real value
- **Protecting what matters:** The story explores what we're willing to do to defend places, institutions, and living creatures we care about
- **Teamwork and community:** Liberty doesn't act alone—her friends join the mission, showing that collaboration makes us stronger
- **Nature's ingenuity:** Insects have evolved astonishing defenses over millions of years; the story celebrates this natural brilliance
- **Resourcefulness:** Using available knowledge and tools to solve problems is more powerful than waiting to be rescued
- **Community institutions:** Museums and educational spaces like the Insectarium enrich communities in ways worth protecting

Tip for Parents: This book celebrates insects and their remarkable natural defenses. It may inspire children to look more carefully at the world of bugs around them. Consider visiting a local nature center, museum, or insectarium together after reading!

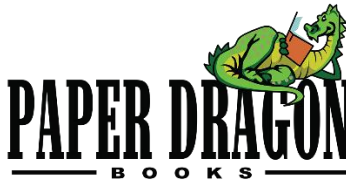
Discussion Questions

About Liberty and Her World

- Why do you think Liberty feels so at home at the Insectarium?
- What does it tell us about Liberty that she knows so much about insects?
- How do Liberty's friends help her when things get serious?
- What would you do if a place you loved was threatened?

About Insects and Their Defenses

- What insect defenses from the book surprised you most?
- Why do you think insects evolved so many different ways to protect themselves?



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- How does Liberty use insect behavior to protect the Insectarium?
- What other animals have surprising natural defenses?

Fun Conversation Starters

- If you could design a defense system inspired by any animal, what animal would you choose and why?
 - If you ran an insectarium, which insect would you most want in the collection?
 - What place in your community would you want to protect if it were threatened?
 - What's the most amazing bug you've ever seen up close?
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Discussion Activities

Insect Exploration

- Visit a local nature center, insectarium, or natural history museum
- Look for insects in your backyard or neighborhood and research their defenses
- Watch a nature documentary about insects together
- Try to identify three insects you see in a week and learn one fact about each

Connections to Protecting Community

- Research a local museum or community space and learn about its history
 - Discuss what institutions in your community you value and why
 - Talk about what it means to volunteer or advocate for a cause
 - Consider donating or fundraising for a local nature or science organization
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Conversation Tips for Parents

Creating a Safe Space for Discovery

- Share your own favorite subject or obsession—modeling enthusiasm validates your child's interests
- Ask open-ended questions: "What's the most amazing thing you learned about bugs in this book?"
- Let your child be the expert—ask them to teach you about insects they find interesting
- Validate unconventional passions: expertise in any subject is valuable

Building Critical Thinking

- Ask about Liberty's choices: "Do you think her plan was the right move? What would you do differently?"
- Explore consequences: "What might have happened if Liberty's friends hadn't helped?"
- Discuss real-world connections: "Have you ever had to defend something you cared about?"
- Encourage empathy: "How do you think the rare insects felt during all this excitement?"

Making It Personal

- Share a place or institution that matters to your family



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- Talk about a time someone helped you when you faced a big problem
 - Discuss what makes your family's community special and worth protecting
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Questions by Age Group

For Younger Readers (Ages 6-8)

- What is your favorite insect in the book and why?
- How does Liberty save the Insectarium?
- Who helps Liberty and what do they do?
- What would you want to see if you visited an insectarium?

For Older Readers (Ages 9-12)

- How does Liberty use scientific knowledge as a practical tool?
 - What does the story suggest about the value of unconventional interests?
 - How does teamwork change what Liberty is able to accomplish?
 - What does the threat to the Insectarium represent for the community?
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Activity Ideas

Creative Projects

- Design your own insectarium exhibit featuring a favorite insect and its defenses
- Write a journal entry from the perspective of one of the insects during the adventure
- Create an informational poster about an insect's natural defense mechanism
- Draw a map of the Insectarium as you imagine it

Science Connections

- Research three insects and their specific defense strategies
- Grow a garden patch designed to attract and support pollinators
- Build a bug hotel from recycled materials to support local insect populations
- Keep an insect observation journal for one week

Community Action

- Write a letter to a local museum or nature center expressing appreciation for their work
 - Learn about local wildlife that might need protection and how to support it
 - Start a classroom or school "bug appreciation" display
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"The Bug Bandits" is a reminder that expertise in any area—even one as overlooked as entomology—is a genuine superpower. Liberty Jacobs shows that when we combine deep knowledge with care for our community and the willingness to act, we can accomplish remarkable things. Let this story open conversations about what



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your family knows and loves, and what places or creatures you'd be willing to go to bat for. The insect world is all around us, waiting to be noticed and appreciated.