

## Discussion Questions

1. What happens in Luca and Isolde's relationship over the course of the book? Why doesn't Luca kiss Isolde on the stairs on their first night in Piccolo? Why does he kiss Ishraq in the doorway of the inn on the night after the storm?
2. Does Johann truly hear God speaking to him? How does he know what to say to Luca, Ishraq, and Isolde about their lives?
3. Many of the characters in Stormbringers have lost or left their parents. Explore the theme of orphans. How is the notion of children without parents developed over the course of the book?
4. Isolde fears that people prefer Ishraq because she has useful skills. "Oh, I know she is quite indispensable," Isolde says, irritated. Ishraq feels sad because she thinks that people will always choose Isolde, for her beauty: "Everyone prefers her to me. Everyone always will." Who is right?
5. Will Freize's disappearance and reappearance change Luca's relationship with him?
6. Isolde takes conventional rules about female honor very seriously, and she is shocked that Ishraq kissed Freize. Ishraq says that her honor comes from her respect for herself, not from external rules. Why does each girl believe as she does? Which girl's ideas are more similar to our own ideas in modern society?
7. Over the course of the book, Ishraq and Freize grow closer. But Ishraq also lies to Freize more than once. Why?
8. Radu Bey invites Ishraq to come with him to study in Istanbul. Why doesn't she go with him?
9. On the night that Freize sleeps by the fire in the inn's kitchen, Freize, Ishraq, and Milord all have different ideas of who visited, of what happened, and of what it means. What do you think the midnight visit meant? What do you think it foreshadows?

10. How are Radu Bey and Milord different? How are they alike? What is the relationship between them?

11. Explaining Brother Peter and Luca's next assignment, Milord tells them that it will be "[f]or the greater good." Discuss the terms of their mission, and whether you agree with Milord's choice of words.

### Activities

1. Luca is excited at the prospect of reading the works of the Greek philosopher Plato. Try reading some of Plato's work—perhaps part of his most famous piece, *The Republic*. What does Plato say about justice? Education? Happiness? Why do you think that Renaissance thinkers valued Plato's works so highly?

2. Write the first two chapters of a story about a child living in the fifteenth century, one from the point of view of the child, and one from the perspective of the parents who abandoned him/her or sold him/her into slavery.

3. Stage a play in which a child leader like Johann leads a large group on an unlikely journey. How can you portray the leader so that your audience will believe that crowds would have faith in him and follow him?

4. In the book, Isolde and Ishraq have their first serious fight. Look for other moments in the text where characters find themselves in conflict with those closest to them. Think about fights you have had with close friends or family members. How was your conflict resolved? If it was not, what happened to your relationship?

5. Rewrite one or more of the scenes between Radu Bey and Luca from Radu Bey's point of view. How does he perceive Luca and his friends? Why does he do all that he does?

6. Learn more about the church in the fifteenth century. List what you think it did well, and what it did poorly. Then learn more about fifteenth-century critics of the church. Were their criticisms the same as yours?

7. The people of Piccolo wash their clothes once a month and bathe themselves once a year, on Good Friday. Find out more about fifteenth-century Europeans' ideas about personal cleanliness. Why did they think that frequent bathing was unhealthy?

8. In *Stormbringers*, there is a terrible storm—caused by an earthquake—in which the sea seems to draw back and then attack the shore. Find out more about earthquakes and storms and the destruction they can cause. What were some fifteenth-century explanations of natural disasters like the one in the book? How do they compare to our own?

9. The people of Piccolo accuse Isolde and Ishraq of being storm-bringing witches. Find out more about witchcraft and magic in fifteenth-century Europe. What powers were witches thought to have? What were witches supposed to look like? What could a woman accused of witchcraft do to prove her innocence? If a woman was found guilty of witchcraft, what was the penalty?