

FOREST LEGEND: THE TALE OF OL' SPLIT TOE

By Dan Ellens

Questions for Book Club and High School Discussion

1. What would you say the central conflict is in FOREST LEGEND?
2. Why do you think the author presents a deer rather than a human as the story's central figure and protagonist?
3. How would you define Mother Nature?
4. Split Toe struggled to understand humans' place of in the natural order of things. What is your own view of how humans fit into the natural world?
5. In what way is human civilization, even the largest cities, part of nature?
6. On page 277 and 278 the spirits challenge Split Toe to understand how the lifespan of a species (400 years for a tree, 85 years for a human, 3 weeks for a fly) impacts its perspective. If species with such different lifespans could talk with each other, could they understand each other? What could they learn from each other's perspective on the natural world?
7. FOREST LEGEND walks a reader through environmental change to our world. Do you think your parents or grandparents could have imagined the changes that would happen during their lifetimes?
8. How do you imagine the environment will change during your lifetime? During the lifetime of the generation that comes after you?
9. How do you think the environment will change during the lifetime of the generation that comes after you?
10. FOREST LEGEND begins at a time when human population was small and when the world may have seemed limitless to them. In only a few millennia, humans have left their impact in a big way. If space is also part of nature, what should humans today consider about their impact as they expand into this region that now seems so vast?

Middle School Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What makes Split Toe's/Waawaashkeshi's time-travel possible?
2. Why does Split Toe/Waawaashkeshi time-travel?
3. What happened to the flea?
4. Name six things that can cause a tree to die.
5. What is Waawaashkeshi's lesson in the Ice Age?
6. What does Edra convince the loggers to do that weaves like a thread through the rest of the story?
7. What grew next on the land after loggers clear-cut the large white pines?
8. What upsets Edra at the gathering?
9. What do humans do to the eighty acres in the 1950s and how does it help the humans?
10. What is the agricultural disaster that happens in the farming community?
11. How is the boy's plan for the eighty acres different from his father's generation?
12. What happens to the tag alder swamp?
13. What do scientists of the future study on the eighty acres?
14. What did Mukwoh leave for someone in the future to find?
15. What happens to Split Toe?

Middle School Discussion Questions

1. What would you say the central conflict is in FOREST LEGEND?
2. What is Split Toe/Waawaashkeshi's mission?
3. How does the author define Mother Nature? How would you define Mother Nature?
4. From Waawaashkeshi's point of view, how is a spirit or soul like a drop of rain?
5. What did Waawaashkeshi learn about himself at the sacred circle?
6. How is the spirit pool in the Ice Age different from the spirit pool in the logging era?
7. In the story, Split Toe and the Ojibwe view land and boundaries in a similar way. What is different about the way settlers and those who came after view those things?
8. What puzzles Split Toe about the loggers' behavior?
9. What do you think of Edra's land management experiment?
10. What does the boy learn from the Grandfather Tree?
11. Why does Split Toe return back in time in the Epilogue?
12. What does the old man learn from his dream?

13. Do you think humans are more powerful than nature’s actions and reactions.
14. Who is your favorite character in FOREST LEGEND? Explain your choice.
15. What do you think the message of FOREST LEGEND is for humans today?