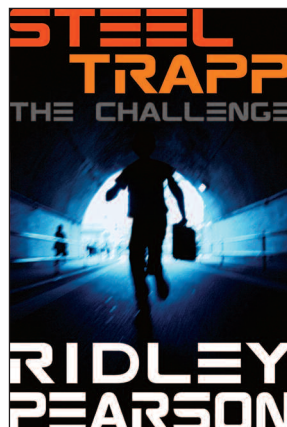


This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and children's author. Visit her Web site at www.tracievaughnzimmer.com to find other guides to children's and young adult literature.

ALSO AVAILABLE



Steel Trapp

Hardcover \$16.99
ISBN-10: 1-4231-0640-7
ISBN-13: 978-14231-0640-1

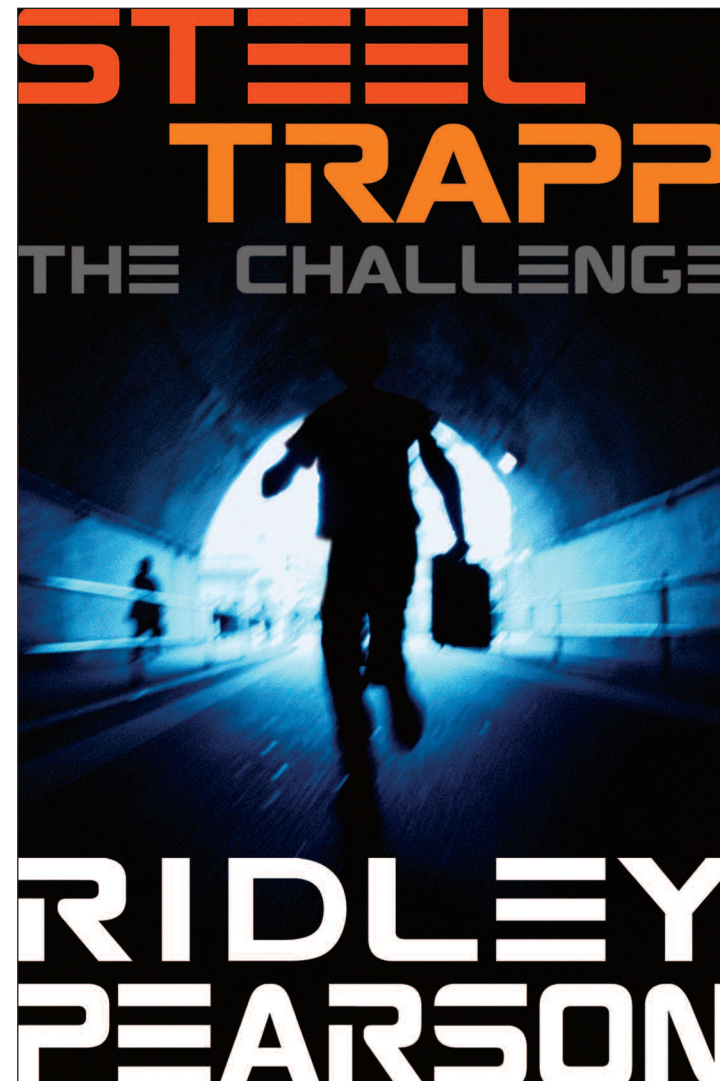


The Kingdom Keepers

Hardcover \$17.99
ISBN-10: 0-7868-5444-8
ISBN-13: 978-0-7868-5444-8
Paperback \$8.99
ISBN-10: 1-4231-0545-1
ISBN-13: 978-14231-0545-9

DISNEY EDITIONS

An imprint of Disney Book Group
114 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011
Visit us at www.disneybooks.com



DISCUSSION GUIDE
DISNEY EDITIONS

ABOUT THE BOOK

In this riveting thriller, fourteen-year-old Steven “Steel” Trapp sets off with his mom and their dog, Cairo, on a two-day Amtrak journey to compete in the National Science Challenge in Washington, D.C. Steel is both blessed and cursed with a remarkable photographic memory—just one look, and whatever he sees is imprinted for keeps. Trying to be a Good Samaritan on the train, he instead becomes embroiled in an ingenious plot of kidnapping and bribery, which may have links to terrorists. Federal agents (first seen in Pearson’s adult thriller *Cut and Run*) track Steel and his newfound science geek accomplice, Kaileigh Augustine, as they attempt to put together the pieces of a complex puzzle. Using Steel’s science contest invention—and with the help of Cairo—Steel and Kaileigh lead readers on an action-packed chase adventure as they attempt to prevent the unimaginable, before it’s too late.

PRE-READING

Read Chapter One and answer the five “journalist” questions about the novel’s starting point: (who, what, when, where, why, and how). Make predictions about what you think might happen based on what you know about other stories you’ve read and seen, particularly mysteries.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

- 1 How does the novel play with time? Why do you think the author decided to structure the book like this? How does the structure add to the story?
- 2 Why does Steven have the nickname “Steel”? Why doesn’t he consider himself smart? Do you agree with his definition? Would you like to have this gift, or do you think it might sometimes be a curse?
- 3 Who does Steel meet on the train to D.C.? Why is she hiding? What is her goal? Do you think she’ll pull it off?
- 4 Describe how Steel’s attempt to be a Good Samaritan turns ugly. Is this typical in mysteries and thrillers—having one incident set off a domino effect? How can this help a reader understand what’s going on in the story?
- 5 Who do you consider the nemesis in this story? Is everyone who he or she appears to be? Why? How do writers let a reader know who is the bad guy? What details are used in this story?
- 6 Explain how Steel is able to see the contents of the briefcase. What does he decide to do about it? What would you do? Have you ever run across something that turns out to be more dangerous than you had expected?
- 7 Why is the pursuit of the suspected terrorists complicated? Why don’t the two agencies communicate with each other about what they know? How is Steel’s family more involved in the pursuit than he first had thought?
- 8 How do Kaileigh and Steel cooperate on the train and in Washington, D.C.? What do they learn from each other? Do you think they have become good friends, or not? Why? What do they share in common?

- 9 Describe Steel's and Kaileigh's science inventions. How do both inventions become integral to solving the mystery? Have you ever invented anything? If you could invent something, what would it be?
- 10 What does Steel learn about his father? Why is this both comforting and disturbing? Do you think there could be things about your own parents that you don't understand or know?
- 11 In the end, what happens to the preacher's wife and at the National Science Challenge? Do you think it's fair that Steel couldn't participate? Predict what you think he'll invent for next year's competition.
- 12 Which part of the novel was your favorite? How did Pearson build the intensity of the story? How can this inform your own writing?

PROJECTS

CAUSE/EFFECT CHART

Create a cause-and-effect graphic organizer based on the decisions that Steel makes throughout the novel. Relate one event and action to the next.

INVENTION CHALLENGE

Your mission is to design (or invent) a useful tool for teenagers. Draw up a blueprint for its design and briefly explain how it will work in an inventor's statement.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



RIDLEY PEARSON is the best-selling co-author of *Peter and the Starcatchers*, *Peter and the Shadow Thieves*, and *Peter and the Secret of Rundoon*. He is also the author of twenty crime novels, including *Killer Weekend*, and the young-adult fantasy *The Kingdom Keepers*. He was the first American to be awarded the Raymond Chandler/Fulbright Fellowship in Detective Fiction at Oxford University. In addition, he secretly wrote *The Diary of Ellen Rimbauer*, which was a companion book to the ABC-TV production of Stephen King's *Rose Red*.

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

- 1 So, are you, like Steel, a natural in science? How about a photographic memory—do you have one too?

My memory isn't terrific, but I have a great love of science. My main interest as a teenager was marine biology and oceanography. I've always loved inventing things. I have many inventions that I've never taken further than a thought in my head.

- 2 How do you get from spark to finished novel?

Time in the chair. You have to write and rewrite to get a book to a publishable form.

- 3 What can your fans look forward to next?

The next novel with Disney is *The Kingdom Keepers: The Rise of Chernabog*, a follow-up to *The Kingdom Keepers*, a story about five kids inside Walt Disney World after dark.

LOOK FOR THESE BOOKS BY DAVE BARRY & RIDLEY PEARSON



Peter and the Starcatchers

Hardcover \$17.99
ISBN-10: 0-7868-5445-6
ISBN-13: 978-0-7868-5445-5

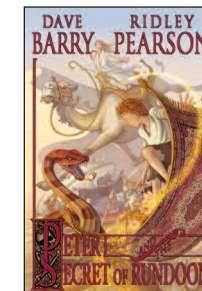
Paperback \$7.99
ISBN-10: 0-7868-4907-X
ISBN-13: 978-0-7868-4907-9



Peter and the Shadow Thieves

Hardcover \$18.99
ISBN-10: 0-7868-3787-X
ISBN-13: 978-0-7868-3787-8

Paperback \$8.99
ISBN-10: 1-4231-0855-8
ISBN-13: 978-1-4231-0855-9



Peter and the Secret of Rundoon

Hardcover \$18.99
ISBN-10: 0-7868-3788-8
ISBN-13: 978-0-7868-3788-5