

READER'S GUIDE

Johnny Graphic and the Etheric Bomb

This guide provides discussion topics for *Johnny Graphic and the Etheric Bomb*. Vocabulary words and questions are listed for reading segments five chapters in length. At the end of the guide, you will find general questions about Johnny's adventures, plus activity suggestions to extend the reader's experience.

To learn more about *Johnny Graphic*, be sure to visit johnnygraphicadventures.com. To contact the author, send your e-mail to drmartin120@gmail.com.

Discussion Questions and Vocabulary Words

PROLOG — CHAPTER 5

Vocabulary Words

Define the underlined word in each of the following sentences:

1. He wore a shabby, wrinkled jacket of light blue, trousers of threadbare khaki, and a white shirt.
2. Mongke Eng smiled at the terse reply.
3. The photo editor at the *Zenith Clarion* had hired Johnny at first to do a simple freelance assignment.
4. Instead, he held tightly to the ghost horse's luxuriant mane and laughed in giddy relief.
5. Pale and translucent, the ghost housekeeper held a real bucket in one hand and a real mop in the other.
6. "If my hypothesis about the physics of etheric light transmission is proved correct," said Mel, "we could make a bundle."
7. Quite famous in the Royal Kingdom, the heiress of the Gorton's Little Pills fortune had helped win females the right to vote back in the late teens.

Questions

1. Why isn't Johnny in school?
2. Melanie, Johnny's sister, is an etherist. Describe the kind of work she does.
3. Johnny doesn't like to fly with Colonel MacFarlane and his horse, Buck. Why not? Do you think you would enjoy it?

CHAPTER 6 — CHAPTER 10

Vocabulary Words

Define the underlined word in each of the following sentences:

1. It didn't take her long to comprehend their dire situation.
2. "Form a perimeter," he shouted in the blasting wind. "All 'round."
3. The co-pilot prodded Captain Merrick in the shoulder.
4. The wraith was hunting for someone among the agitated passengers—through whom he passed invisibly, with no one realizing it.
5. She splashed down in the South Bay and was met by a flotilla of tugs, police launches, and boats with news reporters and curiosity seekers.
6. "This is Assistant Director Santangelo of the Ministry of Etheristics," said the pugnacious, red-haired Crider.
7. His left hand continued to twitch incessantly.

Questions

1. Johnny plays a practical joke on Melanie while she is sleeping on the airplane. What does he do and what are the consequences of it?
2. How did Colonel Horace MacFarlane meet Melanie Graphic?
3. What are the Two Impossible Things that ghosts can't do?

CHAPTER 11 — CHAPTER 15

Vocabulary Words

Define the underlined word in each of the following sentences:

1. After the sandwiches and potato chips had been thoroughly demolished, Mel yawned a prodigious yawn.
2. Johnny was genuinely appalled.
3. The next depicted Mel at the end of her ordeal, a look of utter shock on her mustachioed face.
4. Itineraries were planned.
5. But when he realized it was emanating from the bedroom next to his, he jumped to his feet in the dark.
6. The next time Mel found herself in peril, she might not make it.
7. “I impugned her courage, said that it was just cowardly to shoot me with an arrow from such a close distance.”

Questions

1. In Johnny’s world, it’s 1935 and there are no televisions or computers or smartphones. What do you think he does for entertainment?
2. When the photo of Mel wearing a mustache is printed in the newspaper, Johnny figures Mel would be angry with him for playing a joke on her. Why isn’t Mel angry that Johnny stuck a mustache on her upper lip when she was asleep?
3. Mel is attacked in her bedroom by Checheg, the girl ghost warrior. What does Checheg tell Mel about the khan?
4. Bao and her friend Evvie fly to an island with a lot of other ghosts. From a distance, they see what looks like a ribbon floating up from the island. Some think a volcano is erupting or a fire is burning in the jungle. What is it really?

CHAPTER 16 — CHAPTER 20

Vocabulary Words

Define the underlined word in each of the following sentences:

1. Assistant Director Santangelo of the Ministry of Etheristics sprawled in Crider's own chair behind the desk, his piggy eyes narrowed, a sneer on his lips.
2. "We are fortunate," Santangelo began, sounding like an orator starting on his favorite topic, "that ghosts who engage in the human sphere almost always perform functions that are constructive, vital, affirmative.
3. Grinning in a magnanimous way, saying how sensible they were being, the bald man walked out of the office.
4. A twinkle of moonlight illuminated a well-polished automobile pulled partway off into the brush.
5. Within half an hour they were rolling up Superior Avenue—less hectic than usual, but with late-night denizens still ambling from nightclub to nightclub.
6. A few sad, lonely ghosts loitered here and there, staring dolefully as the station wagon rolled by—trailed by the colonel and the sixteen troopers of the First Zenith Brigade.
7. Johnny saw the colonel tip Buck up almost onto his hindquarters, as if to charge up a precipitous hill.

Questions

1. Agent Wilton Crider wants to reveal something, but first he tells Mr. Cargill, the newspaper editor, that the information is "off the record." What do you think that means?
2. Mel believes the Ministry of War has a special interest in the murders of members of the Hausenhofer Gesellschaft. She thinks it is because of a research paper that Mongke Eng, one of the members, wrote. What did Mongke Eng write about?
3. Danny Kailolu, the pilot, doesn't want to take off for Silver City in the dark. Why is he afraid to do that? What does Mel suggest to solve the problem?

CHAPTER 21 — CHAPTER 25

Vocabulary Words

Define the underlined word in each of the following sentences:

1. A takeoff climb only a few feet lower would have ended in a cartwheeling maelstrom of crushed metal and flame.
2. Up the avenue stood a big, ornamental gate encrusted in sinuous, climbing dragons in red enamel and gold leaf.
3. Johnny and Nina wove their way through gaggles of people.
4. The sodden, bedraggled Nina gave him a desolate, conflicted look.
5. With a grimace, Nina dashed off toward the busy main street.
6. The only thing worse than not having his own pix on the front page was having a shot of *him* out cold and supine on the front page.
7. They were all standing before a yurt.

Questions

1. His first night in Silver City, Johnny is tired but he can't fall asleep. "His head is spinning, his mind is racing." Do you think Johnny's head is really spinning around? If not, what do you think is happening?
2. When Johnny and Nina are attacked by ghost warriors in Jadetown, a friendly ghost tells Johnny to do one thing, and she and her friends will fight for him. What does Johnny have to do?
3. Johnny's photo appears on the front page of Silver City's *Evening Standard*, but he is not happy about it. Why not?

CHAPTER 26 — CHAPTER 30

Vocabulary Words

Define the underlined word in each of the following sentences:

1. Formerly a rubber plantation, Gorton Island was Dame Honoria's most private refuge.
2. "Ming Ho?" she said, her sonorous voice slightly louder than usual.
3. At that the phalanx of ghosts came forward, almost but not quite transparent in the tropical humidity.
4. The old man explained that the night watchers were primeval specters who had died on the island's ancient battlefields.
5. The old woman was by no means tall, but she towered over the diminutive specter.
6. Four spectral guards trudged behind the unhappy couple, swords drawn—as if the famous suffragist might scamper off into the jungle.
7. The Ministry of War dismissed these tales as "pure balderdash and tittle-tattle."

Questions

1. When the night watcher asks Mel why he should help her, Johnny butts in to answer because he thinks Mel's response will be too "namby-pamby." What do you think that means?
2. Why doesn't Bao want to join the rest of the ghosts who go into the tin hut on Old Number One?
3. Dame Honoria gets a big surprise when she is taken to meet the khan. What is the surprise?
4. What is Nina's job on the Como Eagle?

CHAPTER 31 — CHAPTER 35

Vocabulary Words

Define the underlined word in each of the following sentences:

1. However, the next thing she uttered shattered his brief composure.
2. "I would like to propose making a reconnaissance of the phenomenon with a couple of the lads, then we will follow you to Landfall Island."
3. But if any kid had guts and fortitude, it was Nina Bain.
4. Not for the first time, a vexing thought popped into his head: *If I die, will I become a ghost? If I do become a ghost, what will it be like?*
5. But now, soaring over the tempestuous ocean, toward that vast mushroom cloud, the colonel had little thought of delving into those deep waters of philosophy and science.
6. Then they began to feel the nicks and impacts of minute debris and pulverized minerals on their skin.
7. They trod up a set of outside stairs into a room that was cacophonous with the sound of teletypewriting relay machines rattling and banging away.

Questions

1. After Johnny sees the bomb explode, he suffers from flash blindness. What is flash blindness?
2. What happens to the Como Eagle after it is hit by shockwaves from the bomb explosion? Explain what Uncle Louie and Nina do that saves the lives of everyone on board.
3. When Colonel MacFarlane and his horse are knocked to the bottom of the ocean, he starts to hear voices. Who do you think he is hearing?
4. After Johnny is blinded by the bomb, he feels as if he has been "trying to see an ebony cat in an unlit coal mine at midnight." What do you think he means?

CHAPTER 36 — CHAPTER 40

Vocabulary Words

Define the underlined word in each of the following sentences:

1. “He came here to tell us what he thinks has gone awry.”
2. “And this nincompoop here fails to deal with the most dangerous opponents that we have, Melanie Graphic and that pipsqueak brother of hers.”
3. Santangelo felt that he had become invisible, as these two powerful people plotted their baleful schemes.
4. The only landmarks Johnny could clearly make out were Dame Honoria’s tin-roofed house and outbuildings, a clutch of decrepit barns, a brief stretch of white beach, and a substantial timber dock and boathouse.
5. Ozzie Eccleston’s face underwent a remarkable transformation, going from utter vexation to pure obsequiousness in the matter of two or three seconds.
6. There was plenty of canned food in Dame Honoria’s larder.
7. “All I ask of you characters,” Louie admonished the youngsters, “is that you use your noggins.

Questions

1. Mabel Patterson, the Minister of War, says that “We need to cover our tracks, most important of all.” What does “cover our tracks” mean?
2. How does Johnny figure out that Ozzie is a traitor?
3. Even though Ozzie is a ghost, he is not able to escape when Corporal Marchiano restrains him in a wrestling hold. Why not?
4. After Johnny runs off alone to check out Dame Honoria’s cave on Old Number One, Nina is very angry with him. Why is she angry?
5. What does Johnny Graphic mean when he says “I know I open my trap before I think sometimes”?

CHAPTER 41 — CHAPTER 45

Vocabulary Words

Define the underlined word in each of the following sentences:

1. With uncanny clairvoyance, Nina said, "It's not your fault, Johnny."
2. "A few of the Steppe Warriors are lollygagging around outside by the front entrance, with a lot more inside."
3. "Pamela, you know how I abhor the sight of blood."
4. Just then the "guy" came at Johnny with a malevolent look on his face.
5. "The darling baby whose nappies I changed every day has become a megalomaniac who wants to blow up the world."
6. "Now, what I would suggest is that we all lower our weapons and have a little parley among ourselves."

Questions

1. When Percy is preparing to leave Old Number One, his assistant, Pamela, suggests he shoot Mel, but Percy says no. Why doesn't Percy want to shoot Mel?
2. When Johnny finally rescues Dame Honoria, he suspects that something has happened to her. Why does he think this?
3. Corporal Marchiano and Ozzie "look as if they'd been on a steady diet of vinegar." What are they doing that makes them look that way? Describe how you might look after you drank a glass of vinegar.
4. Why do you think the khan told the Steppe Warriors not to kill Dame Honoria?

CHAPTER 46 — CHAPTER 50

Vocabulary Words

Define the underlined word in each of the following sentences:

1. Johnny wished he could get a picture of the colonel, the very image of unstinting heroism.
2. “You had hoped the detonation would blow you all the way to your final resting place.
3. Mel pulled herself up and took a few reluctant steps toward her nemesis.
4. Some tried to remain stoic, their faces rigid and brittle.
5. The news photographer in him could hardly wait to snap a shot of Percy Rathbone getting his comeuppance.
6. Truth be told, he had always had a grim sort of demeanor about him, even as a youngster.
7. The first time produced nothing but a few useless, monosyllabic responses.

Questions

1. When he arrives on Old Number One, Colonel MacFarlane pulls something out of his saddle bag and scatters it into the air. What does he pull out and how do the ghost Steppe Warriors react?
2. When Percy is finally captured, what is the first question Johnny asks him?
3. As a young woman, Dame Honoria worked as a suffragist, fighting to obtain the right to vote for women. Percy wants to win rights for a certain group. Who does he want to help and what rights does he want for them?
4. Dame Honoria tells Johnny and Mel that Percy has changed since she last saw him. What are some of the ways he has changed?

CHAPTER 51 — CHAPTER 55

Vocabulary Words

Define the underlined word in each of the following sentences:

1. He'd told Johnny it wasn't too bad, being stuck in the hoosegow.
2. Johnny felt a little apprehensive about their current mission.
3. Mr. Cargill had been adamant about that.
4. Suddenly aware again of where he was, Johnny looked up and saw that Tom had been practically mobbed, as people pushed in around him to snap up copies of the provocative Extra edition.
5. Johnny sat on the side of the table by the broad picture window that overlooked Zenith Bay, brooding.
6. "I shall ask you things that only my father's majordomo might know," she said.

Questions

1. Why was Mr. Cargill thrown in jail when Johnny was away?
2. Ozzie delivers a letter to Regional Director of Etheristics Wilton Crider. What ultimatum is stated in the letter?
3. Bao is acting oddly around Johnny. What is she doing? How does Mel explain Bao's behavior to Johnny?
4. Mr. Cargill tells Johnny that the government doesn't seem to be doing anything to find a bomb in Zenith. He thinks the government is "calling Ozzie's bluff." What do you think it means to call someone's bluff?

CHAPTER 56 — CHAPTER 60

Vocabulary Words

Define the underlined word in each of the following sentences:

1. In the end, all manner of ghosts answered the colonel's call—from longshoremen and lumberjacks to nuns and nurses.
2. He doffed his campaign cap.
3. "If you notice anything, you'll find me down at the great equestrian statue by the aerial bridge."
4. The ballroom's double doors swung open promptly at seven and the New Year's Eve revelers poured in.
5. Johnny surveyed the big ballroom, looking for signs of imminent doom.
6. Melvin told how he had recently helped Colonel MacFarlane on the city-wide search for ghostly interlopers and strange technology.
7. "Percy has brainwashed this stupid ghost warrior and he won't be satisfied until he's destroyed all of us!"

Questions

1. Most of this book is written from Johnny's point of view. That means the reader sees everything as Johnny sees it. But chapters 56 and 59 are written from two other points of view. Skim each chapter again and write down which character's point-of-view each of them represents.
2. Even though Colonel MacFarlane and his volunteers didn't find the etheric bomb, their search through Zenith led to another good outcome. What did they uncover that helps the local law enforcement?
3. When Johnny receives the Newshawk Award for Photography, he thanks Mr. Cargill for something specific. What is it he thanks him for?
4. Who is the first person in the ballroom to spot the bomb? Where has it been hidden?

CHAPTER 61 — CHAPTER 65

Vocabulary Words

Define the underlined word in each of the following sentences:

1. Mel ignored Johnny's entreaty.
2. The two walked slowly toward Mel and her captor, wending their way amid the debris.
3. Dame Honoria nodded, wiped her profusely sweating brow, and repeated Burilgi's demand.
4. She withdrew the Star of Gilbeyshire, resplendent and glittering in its titanium setting.
5. They started talking in terms so technical and abstruse that Johnny had no idea what they were saying.
6. Mel and Dame Honoria soon reached a consensus.
7. He stared at the big black stone, dazzled *and* flummoxed.

Questions

1. Checheg has shrunk down so small that she fits inside Burilgi's hand. Johnny thinks he knows why she did that. What is his theory?
2. How does Nina manage to hide the bomb from Burilgi?
3. Why do Johnny and the rest of his party head to the Acme Iron Works after they leave the New Year's Eve ball?

CHAPTER 66 — EPILOG

Vocabulary Words

Define the underlined word in each of the following sentences:

1. “We haven’t the luxury of weeping or dawdling.”
2. The pear-shaped gem still seemed far too small and inconsequential to blow up a city of a million people.
3. “We have to spread word throughout the entire ghost world that being in the bomb only makes your predicament worse.”
4. Just like the initial story that ran on New Year’s Day, the follow-up article said nothing about how close Zenith had come to utter annihilation—not once but twice.
5. Johnny thought it was loathsome, the way Percy had used Dame Honoria’s Star of Gilbeyshire for the second bomb.
6. He heard a remarkable story of miserable ineptitude.
7. Within seconds the diaphanous form of Percy’s ghost appeared next to the Steppe Warrior—as dour and gloomy as ever.

Questions

1. Why do Nina and Johnny start a tug of war at the Acme Iron Works?
2. How is the second etheric bomb finally destroyed? What happens as soon as it is destroyed?
3. At the end of the book, there is a clue that Johnny’s story isn’t over yet. What happens in the epilog to suggest that there might be another Johnny Graphic book in the future?

End-of-Book Questions

1. Johnny Graphic tested out of school at age twelve and took a job. If you could test out of school right now and get a job, would you? If so, what kind of job would you want?
2. What do you admire about Johnny Graphic? Is there anything you don't like about him?
3. *Johnny Graphic and the Etheric Bomb* is set in an alternative universe. The United States doesn't exist—instead, there are four separate countries on that same land. In what other ways is Johnny's world different from the world we live in?
4. In Johnny's world, ghosts do many good things, such as searching for minerals underground and helping with medical diagnosis. Can you think of ways ghosts could help solve problems in our world?
5. Which ghost is your favorite ghost in the book and why?
6. How are the ghosts in this book the same as or different from ghosts you've read about in other books or seen on TV or in the movies?
7. What did you enjoy most about this book? Is there anything you didn't like about it?
8. Do you think *Johnny Graphic and the Etheric Bomb* would make a good movie? Should it be a cartoon or live action? What parts of it might be difficult to film?

Projects

1. Make a storyboard showing ten scenes from the book that could be used for a movie.
2. Select a chapter to develop into a short play and write the play.
3. Create your own alternative world. How would your alternative world be different from the real world? Illustrate the differences in a drawing.
4. Write a four-paragraph review of *Johnny Graphic and the Etheric Bomb*.