

DISCUSSION GUIDE

MIRACULOUS

Two brave friends.
A mysterious tonic.
A small town brimming
with secrets.



CAROLINE STARR ROSE





ABOUT THE BOOK

Thirteen-year-old Jack knows what cured his baby sister when his family thought she might never get well—Dr. Kingsbury’s “Miraculous Tonic.” Guaranteed to relieve maladies known to man or beast, Dr. Kingsbury’s potion can cure everything from pimples to hearing loss to a broken heart, and Jack himself is a witness to the miraculous results and the doctor’s kindness. When he had no money, the doctor didn’t turn him away but gave him the tonic for free along with a job—to travel with him from city to city selling his cure-all elixir.

When Dr. Kingsbury and Jack arrive in Oakdale, the town at first feels like any other they’ve been to. But it’s clear Oakdale is a town with secrets, and its citizens are slow to trust strangers.

Then Jack meets Cora, and a friendship neither expected starts to bloom. Together they uncover something else they didn’t expect—not only secrets about the town but also Dr. Kingsbury. As they race to discover the truth, they’ll have to decide who and what to believe before it’s too late.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Caroline Starr Rose is a middle grade and picture book author whose books have been ALA-ALSC Notable, Junior Library Guild, ABA New Voices, Kids’ Indie Next, Amazon’s Best Books of the Month for Kids, and Bank Street College of Education Best Books selections. In addition, her books have been nominated for almost two dozen state award lists. Caroline was named a Publisher’s Weekly Flying Start Author for her debut novel, *May B*. She spent her childhood in the deserts of Saudi Arabia and New Mexico and taught social studies and English in four different states. Caroline now lives with her family in New Mexico. *Miraculous* is her latest book.

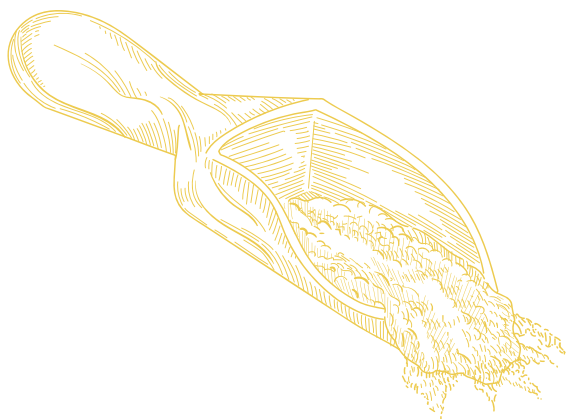


Photo Credit © Trisha Hughes

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

I write books to make sense of the world—this gloriously weird, sometimes heartbreaking, marvelous place we call home. Years ago, while visiting a museum in St. Louis, I heard a talk on charlatans (people who intentionally deceive others for their personal gain). It sparked a number of questions in me: Why do we believe the things that we do? What might we be willing to try to change our circumstances? Exploring these ideas was the starting point for my book, *Miraculous*, and the mysterious Dr. Kingsbury.

I hope the following activities stir your curiosity and enhance your reading experience. Enjoy!



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Caroline Starr Rose'.

Caroline Starr Rose





PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Journal Reflection

- What makes a good friend?
Think of at least three examples.
- What does “miraculous” mean? What, in your opinion, makes something miraculous?

Cover Study

Share the book cover with students and have them write down three predictions about the story or three questions they have based on their observations.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which characters in the story keep secrets? What different things happen when the truth is discovered?
2. Why do you think some characters are willing to believe in the power of the tonic? Do you think in some circumstances the tonic could truly be beneficial? If yes, whom might it help and how?
3. *Miraculous* can be described as a story of second chances. Share three examples from the book that support this idea.
4. How are Jack and Silas similar? How are they different?
5. How are Cora and Evangeline similar? How are they different?
6. What is Mr. Ogden’s greatest fear? Is what he believes true? Explain your answer.
7. What do you think happens to Miss Moore after the story? Why do you think this?
8. Dr. Kingsbury preys on people’s insecurities and worries in order to make a sale. Can you think of advertising examples in our current day that are similar to Dr. Kingsbury’s approach?
9. Do the “miracles” that take place in the story come about because of Dr. Kingsbury or in spite of him? Explain your answer.
10. “Hope is what binds people together. It keeps a soul going, promising better days.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain your answer.
11. Why do you think the book is told through multiple points of view? How would the book be different if Dr. Kingsbury’s perspective had been included?





VIDEOS

Please preview to determine if these are appropriate for your classroom.



Quackery: A History of Fake Medicine and Cure-Alls from CBS Sunday Morning

A good overview of quackery in the United States, the limitations of medical knowledge, and modern-day examples of coronavirus “cures.” (6:59)



Patent Medicines

Lots of visuals of advertisements and handbills, with a focus on Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound (a product still available today!). (6:36)



Patent Medicines from History 101

A quick overview of quackery with some examples of advertisements from the 1800s and modern-day connections. (2:21)



ACTIVITIES

Create Your Own Cure-All

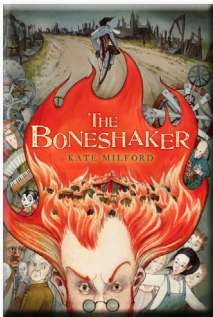
- What type of medicine is your cure-all? What five things will your medicine “cure”?
- Create a poster that will attract your ideal customer.

Classroom Talk Show

Invite characters from *Miraculous* to a classroom talk show! Assign various characters to your students and invite them to take on their persona. Other students should prepare questions to ask the characters. Have students reflect on how characters would interact with each other and how they might respond to questions about things such as their motivations, actions, choices, opinions, fears, strengths, weaknesses, hopes, secrets, and dreams.

FURTHER READING

Read-Alike Titles with Charla



The Boneshaker
by Kate Milford



***The Wish Giver:
Three Tales of Convent Tree***
by Bill Brittain



A Fine White Dust
by Cynthia Rylant

A Great Nonfiction Read

Poison: Deadly Deeds, Perilous Professions, and Murderous Medicines
by Sara Albee

