

Reading Guide

OldEarth Ishtar Encounter

Elementary

- 1** What is Ishtar heading toward in the beginning of the novel? Does he want to go? Why or why not? Who is directing Ishtar? Does he have any say in the matter?
- 2** What do Obed and his wife argue about? Who is right? Can they both be right? Can disagreements sometimes help people gain greater insight into the world and other people's perspectives?
- 3** Who is Amin and why is he so angry with his clan? Who is he trying to protect and why? Is it really his responsibility?
- 4** How does Ishtar change during the novel? What influences his change of heart?
- 5** A hidden, alien race observes and judges humanity throughout the novel. Could such aliens exist? How might an alien describe humanity to another alien that has never observed us?

Secondary

- 1** What kind of man is Ishtar at the beginning of the novel? How does he change? What influences alter his trajectory?
- 2** There are several subplots in the novel. How do they twine around Ishtar's story?
- 3** How would you describe Eoban and his place in his clan? He doesn't have official authority, yet he influences the people around him in powerful ways. How does he do it?
- 4** Who is Alanah? Why does he help Ishtar? And why is his help so extraordinary? Is Ishtar ever able to return the kindness?
- 5** The aliens, Teal and Sterling, have a complicated relationship. How do they influence each other? What do you suppose they really think about humanity?

Adult/Book Clubs

- 1** Ishtar has been raised by his father to enslave other people. When he breaks away, he makes new friends, yet his past still haunts him. What are some key factors that help him alter his self-destructive trajectory?
- 2** There are several intertwining subplots in the novel. What is your favorite and why? Which characters seemed most vivid to you?
- 3** The aliens, Teal and Sterling, have a complicated relationship. Much is left unsaid yet understood. Would you consider their relationship a healthy one? Do they benefit each other in any way?
- 4** What role does Alanah play in Ishtar's life? Who are some of the characters that alter Ishtar's trajectory? How does role with his mentor change by the end? Does that often happen in real life where the mentor becomes the one in need of aid?
- 5** Is Chai a realistic character? Does Ishtar's reaction to him make sense? Why or why not?

Paperback/Journal Reflections

- 1** How do I relate to Ishtar's struggle to alter the trajectory of his life? Though most of us haven't been raised to enslave other people, dark influences might have set childhood patterns we wish we could change. What are some patterns of thinking and behavior I would like to change in myself?
- 2** In the interaction between the various plot lines, characters influence each other in ways they may not be aware. Are there people who influenced me, but I didn't realize it until much later? Am I an influence in other people's lives they may not be aware of yet?
- 3** As Alanah mentors Ishtar in an understated manner, he is also dealing with a rising family crisis. Can we struggle with our own problems but still help another person deal with their issues? Does a wounded person perhaps have as much to offer as someone less wounded?
- 4** Ishtar has to face the enemy within and enemies without. Who are some of the outside enemies he has to face, and how does he defeat them? Who are some enemies I have faced in life? Do I feel like I won or lost? Or is the battle ongoing?
- 5** The original title for this novel was *Ishtar's Redemption*. Do I believe that Ishtar is fully redeemed? Or could he fall again? Can a person fall many times and still find redemption? How does that thinking play out in my life?