

Reading Guide

Encounter Science Fiction Short Stories & Novella 2nd Edition

Junior High

- 1** In the introduction, the author mentions how work develops best over time. Why would that be? How might time and distance allow an author to improve his or her work?
- 2** The first stories in the collection focus on main characters from the Newearth world, offering insight to their background experiences. How does knowing a character's history affect the way you read a novel?
- 3** "Horizon Line" and a few other stories touch on the remnant of humanity that lived on Lux during the exile after the end of OldEarth. How might living on a host planet affect humanity's feelings about Earth?
- 4** A key relationship in the Newearth novels between Cerulean, the Luxonian who becomes OldEarth's champion, and his superior, Sterling, is a tense one, full of contradictions. What are some of the important elements in their relationship? Does Cerulean respect Sterling? How do you think Sterling feels about Cerulean?
- 5** The Crestonian, Taug, also a key character in the Newearth novels, has an odd relationship with his father. What do you make of it? Are they dysfunctional according to human standards? How might a science-directed race view them?

High School

- 1** "In Life of Gorth—Fate of a Weapon Maker," there is a lot unsaid. The reader has to peek between the lines to capture what is happening. Does it make sense to you? Does Gorth's end seem fair or just? Why or why not?
- 2** In an intimate portrayal, the story, "Save Our People from Despair," is written in the first person. Do you feel closer to the character because of the first-person point of view? Does this narrative fit with the Bhuac race, being that they are shapeshifters? Is the reader, perhaps, able to "shapeshift" a bit by entering the mind of the character?
- 3** "From Machine to Man," the android, Max, is told that he's not exactly who he thought he was. Who is he? What is he? Is it possible that human sentience

could enter a mechanical armature through an embryonic brain embedded in an android? What are your thoughts on that possibility?

4 Bala and Kendra are two of the most well-balanced human characters in the Newearth novels. How does their relationship help them to keep their emotional and psychological balance in a radically altered world?

5 In the story “Trust Me,” Eric is set up by his boss to commit a terrible crime. Why does Eric go along with Simm’s plan? What is happening between these two characters? How do you think their relationship will play out in the novels?

Adult/Book Clubs/Journal

1 In “Never Forget,” the backstory to the main character, Riko, the Uanyi from the planet Sectine who later becomes the proprietor of the Breakfastnook Café, a key location for several of the Newearth novels, is explained. How does it set up Riko for his journey to Newearth? Is he a sympathetic character? What does his leaving home and making a new life mean to me as a reader?

2 Abbas is an alien from a Mystery Race that none of the other alien races understand. His immense power should make him proud and arrogant, yet he is neither. Why? What could humble even the most powerful character in the Newearth novels?

3 Lucius Pollex is a relatively minor character in the Newearth novels, yet his story delves deep into two key elements in the novels, Bothmal Prison and the mindset of Omega, Abbas’s son. What kind of person is Omega? He is as powerful as his father, yet he doesn’t seem to understand his power. What is his main concern? What does the role of immense power play throughout these stories? Does it ever offer the rewards we as humans might assume it must?

4 “Grace Nelson’s Murder” is told from the first-person point of view. How does the intimacy of the perspective change the story for you? Though she committed murder, is she still a sympathetic character? Should she be?

5 Jeremy Quinn is one of the few characters it is hard to feel sympathy for. Why is that? Does he ring true to life even though he can come across as evil? What would you like to see happen to his character if you wrote his story?