

Princess Juniper



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Based upon the middle grade novel **Princess Juniper of the Hourglass** by Ammi-Joan Paquette (Philomel Books). Discover more at www.ajpaquette.com.

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Important Note: These questions contain many spoilers all across the story! For an optimal reading experience, make sure not to pass these out for reading until the appropriate chapter has been reached in the text.

Chapter 1:

1. If you wrote down your "Official Daily Schedule," how might it compare to Juniper's? Is there anything in your day that is the same as hers? What does she get to do that you wish you could do as well? Is there anything in her schedule that you would find really unpleasant?
2. Early in the chapter, Juniper is tired of being treated like some "unapproachable royal figurehead." When Toby smiles at her and gives her two thumbs up, she says that she finally feels seen. Can you remember a time when someone made you feel "seen" for who you really are?
3. If you were a princess turning thirteen, what do you think you might ask for your birthday?

Chapter 2:

1. In preparation for her Nameday ball, Juniper's Comportment Master tells her that royalty should always be at least an hour late, if not more. But Juniper likes to keep herself busy and be on time. Do you tend to be early or late?
2. Do you think that thirteen is a good age for kids to be considered adults, and be given the kind of responsibility Princess Juniper is about to have?
3. At the end of her party, Juniper comes across a gathering of kids and teens who are having a party of their own. What keeps Juniper from joining that party? Are there are things you cannot do because of the wishes of your family?

Chapter 3:

1. King Regis agrees that Juniper's idea of ruling her own country would be a good "test of adulthood" for a princess. Can you imagine a test that would help you discover what kind of person you are? Who might encourage you to consider such an adventure?
2. Princess Juniper knew right away that bookish Erick Dufayne would make an excellent Chief Advisor to help her rule her new country. Who would you choose to help you in such an task? Why would you choose them?
3. Imagine if you were asked to help Juniper as her advisor. Would you accept the job? What strengths would you bring to the group?

Chapter 4:

1. Juniper is late to her music lesson because she is busy planning her kingdom. Can you think of a time when something was so important to you that you could not focus on anything else?
2. Paul Perigor confesses his dream of being a gardener, even though his father wants him to be in the army. Alta shares her dream to be in the army and not become a baker, even though that is her father's wish for her. Do you have a passion that is different from what an adult in your life hopes for you?

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3. Juniper believes that everyone should be allowed to follow their passions, and invites the kids to join her list of settlers in whatever role they wish for themselves. Do you think this makes Juniper a good leader or not? What passion would you tell Juniper about, if you were there?

Chapter 5:

1. Juniper is impatient to start her new country. Imagine a time that you were about to do something very daring. How did you feel? Did you go through with your plan, or decide to wait?

2. When Juniper's father tells her she must leave right away, Juniper realizes that her father's kingdom is in danger and she does not want to leave him. What would you do in her position?

3. Juniper does not want Cyril to come on the trip, but she has no choice but to accept him into the group. Have you ever been asked to include someone in your group that you were unsure of? Did things happen as you expected them to, or were you surprised by the outcome?

Chapter 6:

1. After Erick and Alta insist that she stay in the carriage for protection, Juniper wonders whether she has traded one "closely guarded cage for another." What does Juniper mean by that? Have you ever felt as though you were being too "closely guarded"?

2. Why do you think being outside of the carriage on Alta's horse, disguised as Alta, allows Juniper to feel more in control?

3. Juniper asks Erick to tell her if he has a different opinion to her own. Have you ever been afraid that a close friend is not giving you their honest opinion, in order to save your feelings or to make things easier?

Chapter 7:

1. Juniper is amazed and relieved when a strip of flame lights up the walls of the cave to show them which way to go, just as her father promised it would. Describe a time when something in nature completely took you by surprise.

2. "This was her kingdom now—a traveling one, but still, it was a start," Juniper thinks to herself with a rush. Why does she think this now? What is it that allowed her to see the group as her kingdom for the first time?

3. In the castle, Juniper was discouraged from thanking servants. Now Juniper expresses her gratitude to Tippy and decides that everyone in her new kingdom will be shown appreciation. Does this make her a weaker ruler or a stronger one?

4. Should Juniper meet Cyril's challenge head-on as Erick suggests, or should she wait it out? Are you the type of person who likes to face a challenge directly, or do you handle rude or bullying behavior another way?

Chapter 8:

1. "Enchanted" is the first word that comes to Juniper's mind when she sees the Basin. What is enchanting about it to you?

2. "Get work done, then have fun" is King Regis's motto. Do you have any family mottos, sayings, or traditions? Have these ever been a help to you?

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3. What role do you think Tippy will play in Juniper's adventure? Do you have someone in your life who is happy and joyous like Tippy?

Chapter 9:

1. Why do you think Cyril is so determined to undermine Juniper's position and leadership? Is she dealing with him effectively, or do you think she needs to use a more direct approach?

2. If you were naming your own land, would you want to use your own name, like Juniper's followers suggest? Or would you go for a more general name?

3. Juniper is left wondering why her father sent so much gold and treasure with them. Have you ever held a secret worry or concern that was really big, like this one? Did you have friends to share it with it?

Chapter 10:

1. Compare Juniper's old schedule to this one. Which one looks more interesting to you? What might you add to the day, if you were Queen?

2. Juniper did not spend much time outdoors before now, because it was not something a princess did. Talk about one of your fondest memories being outdoors, or about an outdoor adventure you have always wanted to go on.

3. Dealing with Cyril's challenges to her authority and his less-than-helpful attitude seem to be Juniper's biggest problems. Have you known someone who liked to disrupt things like Cyril does? How did you deal with that person?

Chapter 11:

1. The Beacon allows the King's messenger to come to the Basin with messages from the castle. Try to imagine living without cellphones! What would you miss? What might be desirable about an electronics-free adventure?

2. Juniper tells her kingdom that she may not always be right. Why would this be a daring thing for a leader to say? Do you know anyone in a position of leadership who is open to hearing when they are wrong? Does this make them a better leader, teacher, coach, or parent in your eyes?

3. Juniper tells Cyril, Root, and Jessamyn that they can settle somewhere else if they refuse to help with the Basin's tasks. Would this make you change your attitude if you were Cyril? What would it take for that to happen?

Chapter 12:

1. This chapter opened with screaming! How did Juniper react and how did her subjects react? What would you have done?

2. Juniper thinks it would be too easy to suspect Cyril, Root, and Jessamyn of causing trouble. Do you suspect them? Why or why not?

3. Juniper upstages Cyril's attempt at getting everyone on his side by embracing the idea of a day at the swimming hole. What does this show about her as a leader?

4. At the end of the chapter, there was a "warmth that was far more than skin deep," among the settlers. What do you think this means? Do you believe this is a turning point for the country?

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Chapter 13:

1. Just before jumping into the water, Juniper remembers her mother saying there is nothing like experiencing “the rush of water when left to its own true nature.” Juniper is trusting her own true nature and that she will be safe when she lands. Describe a moment when you decided to take a “leap of faith” like this. Was your experience rewarding, like Juniper’s is?
2. Juniper cannot understand why she has not heard from her father, and the wait is distractingly hard. Can you think of a time that you had to wait to hear from someone very important to you? What was that time like? Were you able to stay focused like Juniper does?
3. What or who do you think is responsible for the ruin in the kitchen and the destroyed timepiece?
4. Instead of being distraught and ready to leave, Juniper sees that the group has grown closer than ever as a result of the attack. Is this a result of her leadership?

Chapter 14:

1. Bookish Erick discovers that dagnite can be used to make weapons. If you were to arrive in this newly formed country today, what skills and talents could you bring to help it grow and thrive?
2. Juniper is growing better at weighing what she knows is best for the group against what she thinks will make them happy. She seems to be growing as a person and a leader. Have you ever noticed yourself changing in a way that makes you stronger as a person, a friend, or a leader?
3. The long-awaited letter brings terribly unsettling news. Torr has fallen and Juniper is instructed to not return until they hear further word. What impact do you predict this will have on Juniper? Would you tell the group this news or keep it to yourself?

Chapter 15:

1. Juniper tells Erick that sometimes “telling the whole truth makes things worse, not better. That’s how it is to be a ruler. Sometimes you’ve got to make tough choices.” Have you ever been told something that you later found out was only part of the truth? Or have you ever had to hold back information from others? Was it the right choice to do so?
2. Erick thinks Juniper should tell her subjects about Torr being under attack. He says that he disagrees with her choice not to tell them, but he will accept her decision because she is the queen. If you were Erick, would you keep Juniper’s secret even if you disagreed with her?
3. Cyril has made the ultimate challenge: to start his own country. Would it be easier if Cyril and his followers were out of the group altogether? What happens to two countries side-by-side that are not on friendly terms?

Chapter 16:

1. Juniper did not want to give in to Cyril by attending his gathering, but was convinced to attend by Erick and Alta. Have you ever been to a party or event where you did not feel welcome?
2. Juniper acknowledges how handsome and powerful Cyril seems in his own camp. She sees that many in her group feel drawn to him. Are you feeling any different about Cyril?
3. Juniper has a week in which to convince the group that she is a better ruler than Cyril. What do think she should do differently in the coming week?

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Chapter 17:

1. Juniper realizes that she is in the middle of a “popularity contest” with Cyril. She has no idea how she can “win.” Have you ever felt like you had to choose between two friends? What was the outcome and how might you have gone about things differently?
2. When Juniper finds herself unable to make a tough decision, she decides to go for a challenging hike. What do you do when you are feeling hopeless or down? Does spending time alone help you, or would you rather be with friends?
3. Juniper knows that Torr has fallen and that Queen’s Basin may be the only place her people can continue to be free. Does this knowledge make her more or less willing to give control of her country to Cyril? Why?

Chapter 18:

1. When the morning began, Juniper had hope that the ballot might go her way. Is there anything she could have added to her speech to get her subjects to vote for her despite Cyril’s news?
2. Cyril was very strategic in how he gave out the information that Juniper knew more than she had told the group. Why was this a smart move in his plan to overthrow her kingdom?
3. Juniper’s defeat is crushing. Have you ever faced anything like this? What do you think Juniper should do next?

Chapter 19:

1. Juniper, Erick, and Alta are immediately taken from the group and imprisoned. Why do you think Cyril felt it necessary to make such a dramatic show of his power? What does that reveal about him?
2. When in prison, Juniper realizes her mistake in keeping information from her people. Do you agree that she should have told them what had happened? Could they be trusted to act rationally?
3. Juniper’s resolve to defend her kingdom returns when Tippy makes her secret visit. Have you ever been in a situation where you thought all was lost, but then found strength to turn it all around?

Chapter 20:

1. Looking around Queen’s Basin, Juniper notices dirty dishes, spoiled food, and wasted resources everywhere. What does this tell her about Cyril’s rule?
2. Juniper appeals to Cyril’s greed and selfishness. With the lure of a fancy celebration and the crowning of Cyril as King, Juniper hopes to procure her own freedom. Could her plan backfire? How?
3. Make a prediction about what will happen in the next week to bring Juniper back into favor with her people. How would you go about regaining their trust?

Chapter 21:

1. Juniper begins to see that Root is his own person and not just an extension of Cyril. Have you ever met someone who acted quite differently when they were away from their best friend?
2. Juniper wants all the girls in Queen’s Basin to share her dresses, perfumes, and accessories, once she finally realizes how little they have. Why has it taken Juniper so long to see this? Have you ever noticed having more than or less than someone else? How did it make you feel to see this?

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3. Tippy makes a huge discovery about Cyril's connection to the Monsians' overthrow of the Torr. Juniper is more determined than ever to regain control of her people and her kingdom. Think of a time where you or someone close to you became completely certain of what needed to be done. What was that like? What happened next?

Chapter 22:

1. By the end of this chapter, it is clear that Juniper has tipped the scale back in her favor with certain members of the group. Is this enough for her plan to work, or is she still facing an enormously hard challenge?

2. When Cyril refuses to let Alta and Erick attend the ball, Juniper remains certain of herself. What does this reveal about Juniper? Do you think she has a back-up plan?

3. Juniper lets all the girls wear her gowns. Is she manipulating them or does she genuinely want to share her things? Or both? Are some gifts given to help make something happen?

Chapter 23:

1. The chapter begins moments before Juniper is to enact her plan to regain her kingdom. Her positivity seems to make her unstoppable. Why do you think she feels so certain of herself at a moment when so much could go wrong? What can we learn from Juniper about facing challenges?

2. In a key moment of the action to overthrow Cyril, someone switches sides. Did this surprise you? Have you ever been completely surprised when a friend or grownup seemed to "change sides" and reveal their truer self? What may have brought this person to that decision?

3. What do you think was the most important thing or moment that turned the people of the Basin back to Juniper's side? Now that she is back in charge, what would you want her to say or do right away?

Epilogue:

1. Juniper takes the time to tell each person in the group what they have taught her. Imagine that you were there. What would you want Juniper to know about what she has taught you over the course of this adventure?

2. All Juniper can say about tomorrow's schedule is: "Unknown." This is an extreme contrast to the first schedule in the story. Will Juniper be able to move forward without a plan? Or does the fact that she doesn't know what tomorrow may bring mean that she is more ready than ever?

3. What are your hopes for Juniper and her people in the future?

