

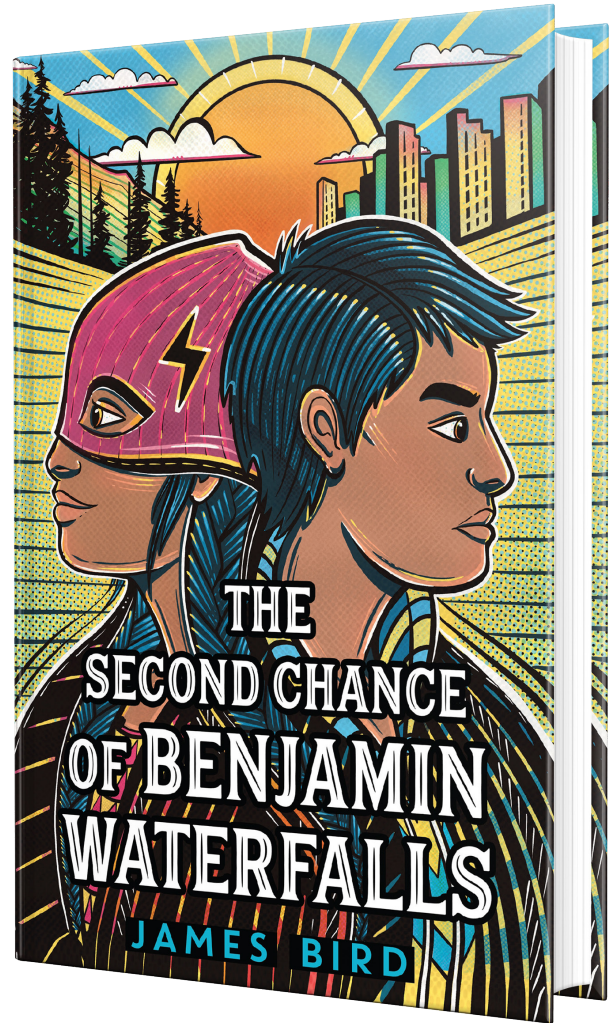
# THE SECOND CHANCE OF BENJAMIN WATERFALLS DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ABOUT THE BOOK

In James Bird's middle-grade novel, a boy is sent to his Ojibwe family to straighten out his life.

Benjamin Waterfalls comes from a broken home, and the quickest fix he's found for his life is to fill that emptiness with stuff he steals and then sells. But he's been caught one too many times, and when he appears before a tough judge, his mother proposes sending him to "boot camp" at the Ojibwe reservation where they used to live.

Soon he is on his way to Grand Portage, Minnesota, to live with his father—the man Benny hasn't seen in years. Not only is "boot camp" not what he expects but his rehabilitation seems to be in the hands of the tribal leader's daughter, who wears a mask. Why? Finding the answer to this and so many other questions prove tougher than any military-style boot camp. Will answers be enough for Benny to turn his life around and embrace his second chance?



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**JAMES BIRD** is a screenwriter and director at the independent film company Zombot Pictures; his films include *We Are Boats* and *Honeyglue*. A California native of Ojibwe descent, he now lives in Swampscott, Massachusetts, with his wife, the author and actor Adriana Mather, and their son.



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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### QUESTIONS

1. At the beginning of the story, Benjamin says, “The more I took, the better I felt about being good at something.” Do you think being good at something was the only reason he chose to steal?
2. Trust is a strong theme in the story and is said to be the foundation of any relationship. What other values do you believe are important for a strong relationship?
3. Benjamin ends up moving away from the city with his mom to a more rural setting with his father. What do you think would be the most difficult parts of moving from a bustling city to a calmer environment? What would be some of the benefits?
4. When Benjamin first arrives in Grand Portage, he describes the new setting as green based on the people and scenery around him. What color would you use to describe where you live?
5. While Benjamin is staying in Grand Portage, his father teaches him many words of the Ojibwe language. Why do you think this important for Benjamin?
6. Benjamin’s dad says that “hurt people hurt people.” Do you agree with him? Why do you think people who have been hurt decide to hurt others?
7. Throughout the book, Niimi and Benjamin help the “blooming people” through their struggles. What lessons do you think Benjamin learned from helping others and learning their stories?
8. Gichigami Garden holds glass bottles where people store written messages confessions about themselves or a loved one. If you were to have your own bottle, what message would you store in?
9. The story shows the importance of second chances. Was there a time when you were given a second chance or you gave someone you knew another opportunity to gain your trust?
10. Do you think Benjamin is done with stealing? What do you think the future holds for him and the other characters in the story?

