

Nowhere to Run

Discussion/Writing Guide

Here are some ideas for discussion and/or short writing assignments. Pick the ones that interest you and your readers the most.

Comprehension

1. How does Deej keep Norris P from beating up Calvin?
2. Who does Calvin work for after school?
3. Who does Deej live with?
4. What animal does Deej compare Junior's father to?
5. How does Deej's life change after the suspension?
6. What happens to Calvin in the Coach store at the mall?
7. What illegal thing does Deej get Calvin to do?
8. Why doesn't Albert call the police on Calvin?
9. What does Deej tell Calvin to do in the championship race?

Thematic/Issue

1. *Nowhere to Run* was written by a white woman. Does knowing this make you feel differently about the book? Does it make the story feel less true? Should white people write books that feature other races than their own?
2. A big theme in the book is friendship. How would you describe Calvin and Deej's friendship? Is it an "equal" or "unequal" friendship? Does it change over time?
3. There are several scenes where Calvin and Deej talk about serious issues. Is it important to have that kind of relationship with somebody? Why or why not?
4. How would you describe Calvin's relationship with Albert? What does Calvin get out of it? How does Albert benefit?
5. Describe the home situations of Calvin, Deej, and Junior. What are the advantages or disadvantages of each? Which situation would you want for yourself?

6. What are the potential problems in a relationship like Calvin and Junior's where they have different backgrounds and expectations about life?
7. How would you describe Norris P? What makes him such a bad guy?
8. What do you think of the ending? Does Calvin win the race or not? What makes you think so? Would you like the book better if the ending was more obvious?
9. What do you think the future holds for Calvin and Junior? Are things over for them?
10. What do you think Calvin's relationship with Albert will be like in the future?
11. Do you know anyone like the characters in *Nowhere to Run*? Which character is most like you? Why?
12. Do you think parenting is important to a child or teen's success? What are some obstacles to good parenting?
13. Do you think education is important to success? How would you describe success?
14. Calvin is good at running and other people recognize his talent. Is this important to how he sees himself? How much value do you think this has in a teen's life?
15. After Calvin gives Albert the diamond earring, Albert says that "everything is a test." Do you agree? Can you think of a time you – or someone you know – passed, or failed this kind of test? How did you feel about it later? How do you think this relates to the quote at the beginning of the book? BTW it's by Soren Kierkegaard, a very deep Danish guy (who's now dead).

Life is lived forward but understood backward. – Soren Kierkegaard