**Discussion questions**

***Marvelous Jackson***

**By Laura Anne Bird**

CHAPTERS 1-10

1. When the book begins, Jack is experiencing some very big emotions. Can you describe them? Do you have empathy for Jack?
2. Have you ever been so angry and frustrated that you’ve done something you instantly regret? How did you make the situation better?
3. Have you ever stuck up for someone, like Jack does for Theo? If so, why did you feel so protective of this person?
4. During the opening scene in the hallway at school—followed by his visit to Principal Engel’s office—Jack realizes that he needs to make some big changes in his life. Do you think he’ll be able to follow through? Why or why not?
5. Have you ever been faced with a consequence that felt unbearable? Were you able to avoid it? If so, how?
6. What are your hobbies? Why do you love them so much?
7. When Jack goes to Theo’s cottage for the first time, he is surprised by how welcome, comfortable, and happy he feels. Have you felt like this at a friend’s house? How were you treated there?
8. Do you like to bake? If so, what is your favorite thing to make? Why?

CHAPTERS 11-19

1. Describe Jack’s relationship with Norm. Do you think it makes sense that they are disconnected right now? How would you try to improve the situation if you were Jack?
2. Talk about your local library. How does it compare to the Alwyn Public Library? Do you have a favorite spot or book inside it?
3. What are some positive adjectives to describe Jack, now that you’re getting to know him better?
4. What are your impressions of Ellie, the “flawless” contestant on *The Marvelous Midwest Kids Baking Championship*? Do you think it’s helpful that Jack looks up to her? Does it set unrealistic expectations for him?
5. If you were on a reality television show, how do you think you would do? What would be most challenging about being in front of a camera? What would come easiest for you? Explain.
6. Describe Benny and his role in *Marvelous Jackson* so far. He’s a minor character, but he’s critical to the story. Do you think he’s capable of changing, too?
7. Do you live in the Midwest? If so, what do you appreciate about the area and about your state in particular? If you’ve never been to the Midwest, what are your impressions of it?

CHAPTERS 20-34

1. Jack’s application—including his Presidential Pride cake—is a huge accomplishment for him. Explain why it’s so significant.
2. Do you know anyone like Miss Holzhacker in real life? Do you think Jack’s reaction to her makes sense? What would you do if you heard Miss Holzhacker talking about you in such a way?
3. Describe Jack’s relationship with his oldest friends, Carlos and Pogo. How does their relationship evolve over the course of the book?
4. If Jack were taking special requests from *you*, what would you ask him to bake? Why?
5. “Greatness takes time.” Do you agree or disagree?
6. If you found yourself in Jack’s quandary, what would you do? Would you give up your audition spot to help your dad at the nuggie competition, like you promised? Do you think Jack handles this tricky situation well?
7. How do you feel about the different friends in Jack’s life—Theo, Lola, Carlos, Pogo, and even Clare in Chicago—coming together to help him? What aspects of their baking bootcamps do you enjoy the most?

CHAPTERS 35-44

1. Jack’s dessert deliveries aren’t just about unloading his sweet treats onto other people. Why are they so meaningful?
2. What would you do if your ride to Chicago fell through at the last minute?
3. Are you shocked by what happens to Dutch’s? Would you be surprised to learn that the same thing happened to a *real* restaurant in northern Wisconsin? What do you think the owners decided to do?
4. Which grown-up character have you enjoyed getting to know most in *Marvelous Jackson*? Why?
5. What do you think of the ending of the book? Is it satisfying?
6. What themes have you noticed in *Marvelous Jackson*? Are there any moments that will stick with you?
7. Now that you’re finished with *Marvelous Jackson*, do the quotes at the very beginning (from Taylor Swift, Chris Bianco, and Langston Hughes) resonate with you? Which one do you like best?
8. Are you going to bake any of the recipes at the end of the book? Which ones?