

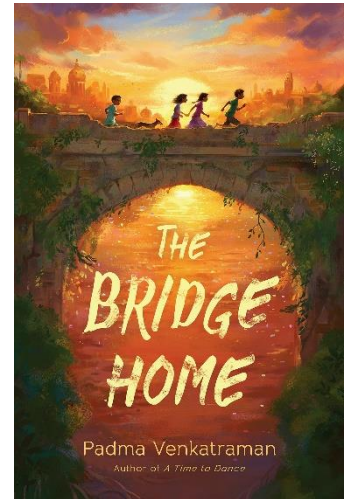


Kids Book Club Kit | Darien Library

The Bridge Home by Padma Venkatraman

Recommended for grades 4 to 6

Summary: Life is harsh in Chennai's teeming streets, so when runaway sisters Viji and Rukku arrive, their prospects are grim. Fortunately, the girls find shelter – and friendship – with two homeless boys they meet on an abandoned bridge. But when illness strikes, Viji must decide whether to risk seeking help from strangers or to keep holding on to their fragile, hard-fought freedom.



Discussion Questions:

1. Many of the events in *The Bridge Home* are told in flashback or direct address (by using second-person point of view). Why do you think the author chose to write the story this way?
2. Viji and Rukku's parents are isolated from their own families. What is the reason for this? And how does not being connected to aunts, uncles, cousins and other extended family affect the sisters?
3. Viji knows that some aspects of her life will be much harder if she runs away with Rukku, but she does it anyway. Why?
4. How do Viji and Rukku come to view the deserted bridge as their new home? How does it offer more peace than their life with Amma and Appa? How is the bridge a more difficult place to live?
5. After a long, hard day of struggling to find work, Viji says, "We were in plain sight. But we were invisible." What does she mean? Have you ever felt invisible?
6. Why does Viji share fairy tales with Rukku? How do the stories change after they meet the boys?
7. Arul's faith is important to him and he frequently shares his beliefs with the other children. How do they feel about religion?
8. In what ways do Arul, Viji, Rukku and Muthu act like the children they are? In what ways are they forced to "grow up"?
9. Viji is protective of Rukku out of fear that people will mistreat her because she has a disability. In what ways might she be holding Rukku back?
10. Muthu doesn't trust adults because they were cruel to him. Have you read other books about children like Muthu who were enslaved and forced to work? How can we ensure that children's rights are respected and protected? What do you think every child needs to have?

Further Resources:

Kirkus Review: <https://dar.to/3nrJSrs>

Interview with the author: <https://dar.to/2R5ZaG1>

Learn more about Chennai: <https://dar.to/2R4zsC5>

Activities

Environmental awareness is one of the themes of this story. What are some things you could do to protect the environment? Pick one or two and make a plan to incorporate them into your life.