

Discussion Questions for The Eighth Day

1. Thanks to Riley getting the date of Jax's birthday wrong, Jax has a rocky introduction to the eighth day. If you could create a Self Help Guide for kids experiencing the eighth day for the first time, what information and survival tips would you list in it?
2. What do the chapters from Evangeline's perspective bring to the story? What do we, as readers, learn that can only come from her? Identify passages where we see Jax, Riley, (and A.J.) from her point of view. What does she think of them?
3. Why do you think the author chose NOT to include chapters from Riley's point of view?
4. On page 1, Jax chants, "**Riley sucks.**" However, by page 284, Jax is relying on Riley as a role model. "**Jax gathered his nerve to haul himself up that incline and cut Evangeline free before Balin could react. Riley would do it, he told himself.**" Who changed? Jax? Riley? Both of them?
5. Throughout the book, Jax tries to classify people as the "good guys" and the "bad guys." Which characters don't fall easily into one category? Which good guys behave badly? Which bad guys sometimes behave with honor and courage?
6. Discuss the *external conflicts* in the book. (Jax's unhappy custody situation, learning to navigate an unfamiliar eighth day world full of people like Terrance the bank robber and the Donovans, and the kidnapping of Jax and Evangeline by the vassals of Wylit, who wants to end the world.) Compare these to the *internal conflicts* of the book. (Jax's changing feelings about Riley and where he wants to live, his struggle to know where exactly to place his trust, his decision to lie to Riley and the resulting consequences.)
7. Jax begins the book as a kid who cannot stick to trombone lessons or astronomy and ends as a loyal vassal who risks his life for his liege lady. Identify specific events/experiences in the book that prompted this change in him.
8. Evangeline hid for five years in the Unger house (thirty-five in the real world). She lived in isolation for a long time, obeying the men who put her there, but by page 211, she is plotting to escape. Do you think meeting Jax prompted this change in her? Are there hints that even her contact with Riley (which were fairly recent in her timeline) were having an effect on her?

9. *The Eighth Day* is an urban fantasy, which means that although it has elements of fantasy, the setting is in our modern day world (often a city, but in this case, an American small town). How do the pop culture references scattered throughout the book (Spongebob Squarepants, Harry Potter, Walmart) help to ground the setting of this book in *our* world?

10. EXTENSION: Have students research characters from Arthurian legend and Welsh mythology that are mentioned in *The Eighth Day*. Students can compare the legendary figures to the way the author has twisted the legends for this book. (Ex: King Arthur, Merlin Emrys, Niviane, The Lady of the Lake, Sir Balin, Sir Agravain, Myrddin Wylit, LLyr, Arawen, Excalibur, Morgan LeFay, Sir Owain.)

11. EXTENSION: Have students research the ancient city of Teotihuacan, to learn what we do and do not know about these ruins. Students can compare reputable websites/videos made by scientists to websites/videos that feature “ancient alien” theories. The tunnel used by the Crandalls to travel from one pyramid to the other is real and is currently being excavated by archeologists for more information about the city and the civilization that lived there.