

Discussion questions for *Toby and the Secrets of the Tree*:

Toby's world is under greater threat than ever before. A giant crater has been dug right into the centre of the Tree, moss and lichen invade the branches, and one tyrant controls it all. Leo Blue, once Toby's best friend, now his worst enemy, is holding Elisha prisoner, hunting the Grass People with merciless force, capturing all who stand in his way and, inflicting a life of poverty and fear. But returning after several years among the Grass People, Toby will fight back. And this time he's not alone. A resistance is forming.

The eagerly anticipated sequel to the award-winning *Toby Alone*, now in paperback, is a gripping conclusion to a new classic adventure story.

Toby and the Secrets of the Tree

by Timothée de Fombelle

illus. François Place

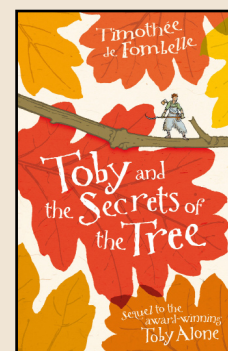
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- Toby and the Secrets of the Tree* explores many different themes. Read the themes below and define them during class discussion. While you are reading the book write down quotes and list examples of where these themes are explored. Create a table to help you record these.

Global Warming
Industrialisation
Racism
Culture
Belonging
Relationships
Good vs Evil
- Toby and the Secrets of the Tree* is filled with emotive and descriptive language. Below is a list of words taken from the book. Define each word and its meaning in the book, then explore the word and how it can be applied to different situations or take on different meanings.

terrorising (p44)
precipices (p47)
companion (p74)
oppressed (p85)
disentangle (p107)
epidemic (p110)
parasite (p125)
independence (p141)
vengeance (p192)
lamentable (p210)
harmonious (p221)
stupefied (p254)
relentlessly (p290)
traitor (p316)
legend (p358)
victory (p394)
tenderness (p408)
- Parts of this story show the perspective of the small insects and animals that live in the tree e.g. the woodlouse. Imagine the world from the point of view of an insect e.g. a fly, butterfly, mosquito. Write a brief paragraph on how this insect would view your classroom.
- Throughout the book we are often taken to the camps where the prisoners are held. Discuss these camps in relation to the concentration camps of WWII.
- Read Chapter 1. Write down all the words that Clot pronounces incorrectly and which are spelt incorrectly. Re-write these words and sentences as they really should be.
- After reading Chapter 1, create a list of descriptive words to describe the prison that Elisha is kept in.
- Leo Blue uses a boomerang throughout the story. What is a boomerang? Research boomerangs. Draw a boomerang and decorate it with the leaves of the tree.
- "Fireflies were crossing the night like lazy shooting stars" (p54). This is a simile. Write similes for the movement of other animals of your choice. As you read, what other similes can you find in the book?
- Discuss the statement "nature doesn't produce rubbish" (Ch 8). What does this mean? In class research and discuss how rubbish is processed. How can we dispose of rubbish carefully and thoughtfully?
- Create a table with two headings 'Joe Mitch' and 'Sim Lolness' (see Table 1). As you read compare and contrast these characters writing down words in each corresponding column to describe them.
- What do you think could be done to stop our world from becoming like the world of the tree? Would you want to stop the world from becoming that way? Discuss.
- View the cover of *Toby and the Secrets of the Tree* then view the inside image of the map. How do these two images provide further information about the story? Why do you think it is necessary to include a map showing all the characters. Discuss.
- What is the significance of the 'Spring Uprising'. Discuss the term revolution. When have revolutions occurred in history?
- Sim Lolness presents a lecture which is only a few words (p 214). What is his statement? Create a list of different types of animals and the features that place them into different groups e.g. insects, arachnids etc
- How is the blue ink a symbol of community and culture for the grass people? Are there any symbols for your culture or other cultures that you know of?
- "Forewarned is forearmed" (p117). What does this mean? Discuss this phrase in class. How can knowledge help us deal with problems? How would knowledge of his family have helped Leo Blue?

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- “You’re as stupid as starlings, as wretched as wrens, as limp as linnets!” (p295). This text uses several metaphors as an insult, it also uses alliteration for emphasis. Create your own alliterated metaphors using different animal characteristics.
 - Look for images which reflect the themes and atmosphere of the story. Create a poster in the classroom of images that reflect the natural state of the tree and the unnatural state of the tree.
 - How are family and love important themes in *Toby and the Secrets of the Tree*? Write down particular scenes in the book that show the importance of family relationships e.g. pp150-151.
 - Research deforestation, mining and logging. How can these have an adverse effect on the environment? Are there procedures in place to help companies to this safely and resourcefully?
 - Discuss Toby’s resilience. How is he a resilient character? How does Toby show continuous courage and strength?
- Create a board game based on Toby’s journey up the tree. What places and which people will you include?
 - Search for and read online reviews for *Toby Alone* and *Toby and the Secrets of the Tree*. Do you agree? Write your own review.
 - View the following link.

<http://www.translatedfiction.org.uk/show/feature/Home/Interview-Timothee-de-Fombelle-and-Sarah-Adams>

This page includes an interview with author Timothée de Fombelle and translator Sarah Ardizzone. Answer the following questions after reading the the interview:

What elements of his own life did Timothée de Fombelle use in the book?

Do you agree with the ending of the novel, even though some critics did not?

TABLE 1

Joe Mitch	Sim Lolness