

## Discussion Guide: THE COMPOUND by S.A. Bodeen



The Compound

By S.A. Bodeen

Grade range: 7 and up

Age range: 12 and up

ISBN: 978-0-312-57860-2 (TP)

ISBN: 978-0-312-37015-2 (HC)

### Questions for Discussion

Eli believes that Mom is a strong woman and that “gentleness” should not be confused with “weakness.” Is he right? What are Mom’s strengths and weaknesses?

On page 95, Lexie calls Mom “lucky” because she doesn’t have the same worries that most mothers do. To what extent is this true? Is this a fair statement?

On page 117, Eli asks, “What are we surviving for?” Put yourself in his place. Would you want to survive a nuclear disaster? Why or why not?

Human cloning has not yet been achieved but it would theoretically allow for the creation of a genetically identical “copy” of a person. How do you think a clone would be similar to and different from a “regular” person? Is it fair to value a clone’s life less than a “regular” person’s?

Eli is a dynamic character. Discuss how he changes from the start to the end of the book. Is Dad a dynamic character as well? Why or why not?

What challenges might you and your family encounter upon reentering “the real world” if you had an experience like the Yanakakis family’s?

S.A. Bodeen purposefully withholds some important details at the start of the story and then slowly reveals some of these details as the story progresses. What are some of these important details? How does it affect the plot?

On page 169, Dad argues that the Supplements have grown up better than the other children because they were sheltered from so many bad things in the world. Do you agree? Why or why not?



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This novel explores the relationship between proximity and closeness. Can proximity damage closeness? In what ways are the Yanakakis family members close? In what ways are they not close? How might your own family relationships change if you never saw anyone else aside from your family?

Perhaps the most disturbing element of the novel is the Supplements. Would you put your own life ahead of another's?

What does it mean to “play God?” In what ways does Rex Yanakakis try to do this with the Compound? What goes wrong? Is there a lesson to be learned?

We learn that Eli never thought he was “worthy” of being touched by his family. Explain why he believed this. Why do you think people withhold things from themselves like Eli did?

In this novel, nuclear war and unlimited resources both threaten the Yanakakis family. Compare and contrast these threats. Which do you think is more frightening?

Several nations currently house nuclear weapons. What could be the consequences of harboring such weapons? Should countries be allowed to possess nuclear weapons?

On page 2, upon realizing that Eddy is above ground, Dad tells Eli, “I still have one of you.” How does the meaning of this change once you read the ending? Go back and revisit some of Dad's earlier conversations with Eli. Upon rereading these conversations, does Dad say anything else that can have multiple meanings?

### Also by S.A. Bodeen



The Gardener

Grade range: 7 and up

Age range: 12 and up

256 pages

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ISBN: 978-0-312-37016-9 (HC)

*Description:* Mason has never known his father, but longs to. All he has of him is a DVD of a man whose face is never seen, reading a children's book. One day, on a whim, he plays the DVD for a group of comatose teens at the nursing home where his mother works. One of them, a beautiful girl, responds. Mason learns she is part of a horrible experiment intended to render teenagers into autotrophs—genetically engineered, self-sustaining life-forms who don't need food or water to survive. And before he knows it, Mason is on the run with the girl, and wanted, dead or alive, by the mysterious mastermind of this gruesome plan, who is simply called the Gardener. Will Mason be forced to destroy the thing he's longed for most?

