

**Some Discussion Questions for *Black Hole* by Charles Burns**

1. In what ways does this book capture teenage angst? Is the STD the cause of this angst? Why or why not? How well does Burns capture the typical American teenage experience? Are we writing teens off a bit by just calling them “angsty”?
2. Why do the characters seem so ostracized from the adult world? Are adults leaving them out of the picture, or vice versa? How does the disease itself ostracize teens from their peers as well as adults? Is it just the disease that is responsible?
3. Drugs and sex factor in heavily to the lives of the characters. Is this common among teenagers? How do drugs and sex influence the characters? Is this behavior just a product of the time period in which this book is set?
4. When teens are infected they often mutate in some way. Could this mutation be a metaphor for something (or several things)? Teenage experience? STD stigmatization? Do the unique types of mutations reflect anything about the characters themselves?
5. Are there elements of horror in this book? What are they? Does the subject matter lend itself to the horror genre? How so?
6. How does Burns’ artwork affect the mood of the book? Does it add to or detract from the story? Black hole imagery is used frequently in the book – what does this imagery reflect about the story itself?
7. Were the characters differentiated enough? Were they supposed to be? Did any character stand out or were any particularly memorable?
8. Burns took a full ten years to write this entire story and it was serialized in a number of comic book issues. Would you have guessed this reading it all at one time? How well does the story flow – does it seem disconnected or disjointed?

**Some Discussion Questions for *Asterios Polyp* by David Mazzucchelli**

1. Which aspects of Asterios' personality are redeemable? Which are irredeemable? Is there some kind of theme here? For example, how might this tie into the notion of duality?
2. What did you think of the artwork? His use of color? What is conveyed by both his style and use of color, if anything? In what way does his style deviate from others you're familiar with? In what ways is his style similar to others you're familiar with?
3. Would you say Mazzucchelli favored style over content? If so, how does this fit with the many metaphors in the book? Or doesn't it?
4. Asterios is a "paper architect" - a designer and not a builder. Is this a metaphor for something? Could we apply this as a metaphor to other aspects of Asterios' life?
5. What is the dynamic between Hana and Asterios? In what ways does their relationship work? In what ways doesn't it?
6. You could spend quite a bit of time trying to tease out all of the metaphor, symbolism, and references to other works in this book. What did you notice?

**Some Discussion Questions for *Epileptic* by David B.**

1. Why does Jean-Christophe begin to act out the way he does, treating his family so cruelly? Why does his family allow him to continue acting out like this?
2. Why don't Jean-Christophe and David get along? Is there anything other than Jean-Christophe's illness that keeps them from being close?
3. What do you think of B's panels? How did they affect the story? How did they affect you? Are they at all similar to others you've seen? What do they do for the story that "only comics can do"?
4. Why does David depict Jean-Christophe's illness the way he does? Particularly the image of the snake, why choose a snake to represent his illness? Why does this depiction permeate more panels than just the ones we see Jean-Christophe in? How does this representation change as Jean-Christophe gets older?
5. What might David's fascination with war and battle and later the esoteric say about him? What might Jean-Christophe's fascination with dictators and 70s rock/metal say about him?
6. In what ways does this memoir compare to others we've read or you've read on your own?
7. How did the many therapies David's parents put the family and Jean-Christophe through affect David? How do they affect Jean-Christophe? Why do they pursue so many treatments?
8. Why do you think Jean-Christophe seemed cured when being treated by Master N? Later on, why do you think he succumbs to the illness? Is this inevitable or is there more to it than that?
9. Why must David keep writing stories and drawing? David does explain this, or try to. Does it help him deal? Is it his form of epilepsy?