

Dreambender
by Ronald Kidd

Discussion guide
Ages 9-12 // Grades 3-7

About Dreambender

Everyone in the City is assigned a job by the choosers—keeper, catcher, computer. Callie Crawford is a computer. She works with numbers: putting them together, taking them apart. Her work is important, but sometimes she wants more. Jeremy Finn is a dreambender. His job is to adjust people’s dreams. He and others like him quietly remove thoughts of music and art to keep the people in the City from becoming too focused on themselves and their own feelings rather than on the world. They need to keep the world safe from another Warming.

But Jeremy thinks music is beautiful, and when he pops into a dream of Callie singing, he becomes fascinated with her. He begins to wonder if there is more to life than being safe. Defying his community and the role they have established for him, he sets off to find her in the real world. Together, they will challenge their world’s expectations. But how far will they go to achieve their own dreams?

Discussion Questions

1. Callie and Jeremy live in a world that’s very different from ours. How is it different? How would your life be changed if you lived there?
2. In Callie and Jeremy’s world, people’s jobs are chosen for them by others, based on what they’re good at rather than what they enjoy. In what ways might this system be good? In what ways might it be bad? Do you think it is good or bad for Callie and Jeremy?
3. When Jeremy first sees people’s dreams, how does he respond? How do you respond? What do you think about the idea of bending people’s dreams?
4. Dorothy says about dreaming: “It could be a way of resting or playing. It could be a mechanism for sorting our thoughts at night. Maybe it’s like taking out the garbage.” What do you think dreams are? Are they meaningful or not? In what ways?
5. In our world, some people study their own dreams. Have you ever studied your dreams? What, if anything, did you learn? What might you learn if you tried it?
6. Eleesha and her friends do two kinds of painting. How is their night painting different from their day painting? Why do you think Callie is drawn to these painters?

7. What was Eleesha's special bond with her twin brother? Why do you think it was broken? Why does she visit the cemetery, and how do you think it makes her feel?
8. Jeremy disobeys the rules when he fails to bend Callie's dream. Is he right to disobey? Is it ever right to disobey rules or laws? Why or why not? Give examples from our world.
9. How does Callie feel after her dream is bent? Does it make her more useful? Does it make her happier? Which do you think is more important, and why?
10. Arthur tells Jeremy, "Today is paper. Tomorrow is fire. Yesterday is smoke." What does this mean in Jeremy's world? What do you think it means, if anything, in our world?
11. Jeremy is banned from the dreamscape for one year. Why do you think his punishment is so harsh? What is the Council afraid of?
12. When Jeremy approaches Callie, she decides to go with him, knowing it's dangerous and will change her life. Why do you think she decides to go? If it were you, would you have gone? Why or why not?
13. Callie and Jeremy escape to the land of Between. Why is it called Between? What do you think makes Between so intriguing to Callie and Jeremy? Why do Sal and his friends live there? Are there places in our world that are like Between?
14. What is the Music Place, and who is the woman who lives there? Do you have a place like that, in your mind or in your world? If you do, how does it feel when you go there? If you don't, how would it feel to have one?
15. Callie tells us, "That was when the world changed." How does their world change? Why do the dreambenders agree to the change? What do you think makes them ready to accept the new world?