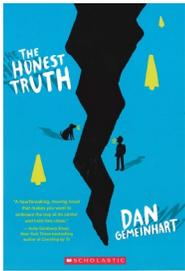


# Books by the Stack



## *The Honest Truth* by Dan Gemeinhart

A boy named Mark, tired of being sick with cancer, conceives a plan to climb Mount Rainier, and runs away from home with his dog, Beau--but with over two hundred miles between him and his goal, and only anger at his situation to drive him on nothing will be easy, and only his best friend, Jessie, suspects where he is heading.

**Why you'll like it:** touching, suspenseful, adventure

**About the Author:** Dan Gemeinhart lives in a small town smack dab in the middle of Washington state with his wife and three young daughters. He's lucky and grateful to be a teacher-librarian in an elementary school, where he gets to share awesome books with awesome kids. He loves camping, cooking and traveling. He also plays guitar (badly) and reads (constantly). His house is always a mess. He is really pretty darn happy.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Mark destroys his late grandfather's silver pocket watch at the beginning of his journey. He thinks, "Here's what I don't get: why anybody would want to carry something around that reminds you that your life is running out." What does this scene reveal to the reader about Mark's reason for heading to the mountain?
2. Author Dan Gemeinhart structures the story so that chapters about Mark's journey to the mountain alternate with chapters about the search for Mark. How did this affect the way in which you read and experienced the story?
3. Compare the dangers Mark encountered in a seedy part of downtown Seattle to the dangers Mark faced during the storm on the mountain. What did each dangerous situation reveal about Mark's character?
4. Though Mark has carefully planned his journey to the mountain, he encounters people who grow suspicious about a 12-year-old boy traveling alone. The waitress at the restaurant in Seattle, the shuttle driver taking passengers up to Mount Rainier, and Wesley, the biologist for the park service, all sense that something is not right with Mark, yet none of them discover the full truth about why Mark is traveling alone. Wesley is the only one who seems to realize Mark's identity, though he, too, lets Mark continue on his way up the mountain. Why do you think that none of these adults did more to help Mark?
5. Loyalty is a strong theme throughout the story. Mark's best friend Jessie realizes why Mark is missing and to where he has probably gone, but she chooses not to tell Mark's parents in the beginning. Mark's beloved dog Beau is equally loyal to Mark, risking his life as they climb the mountain. How far do you think loyalty should go when the person you are loyal to is in danger?

6. Mark packs supplies for his journey, including clothing and food. What is the importance of bringing along his camera and his journal?
7. At one point in his journey, Mark breaks down and calls the tip hotline. He is in pain and has been robbed of his money. He is almost ready to give up, but instead he gives the police misleading information about where “the missing boy” is. Why do you think Mark changed his mind about what to tell the police?
8. Jessie and Mark communicate with one another by writing haiku poems. Haiku poems are brief, just three lines, and have a precise number of syllables in each line. Why do you think Jessie and Mark prefer to capture their feelings and observations in this style of poetry?
9. Mark’s dog Beau suffers during the climb up the mountain. First, Beau is nearly swept away as he and Mark are trying to get to the island in the river. Beau also falls in the crevasse as he is trying to warn Mark. In both incidents, Mark struggles to rescue Beau. How do you think these scary episodes with Beau affect Mark’s original plan to die on the mountain?
10. How was Beau instrumental in ultimately rescuing Mark from the stormy mountain?
11. Mark awakens in the hospital battered, weak, and very sick. The doctors share that he should have been dead already. Jessie snaps back, “He shouldn’t be dead at all!” Why do you think Jessie had such a strong reaction to the doctor’s statement given that she already knew that Mark was terribly ill with cancer?
12. At the end of the novel, Mark entrusts Jessie with the telling of his story. As they look through his journal and his photographs, Jessie thinks about the different kinds of “truth.” What do you think it means for Jessie to write a truthful tale of Mark’s journey to the mountain?

*(Questions provided by publisher)*



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