

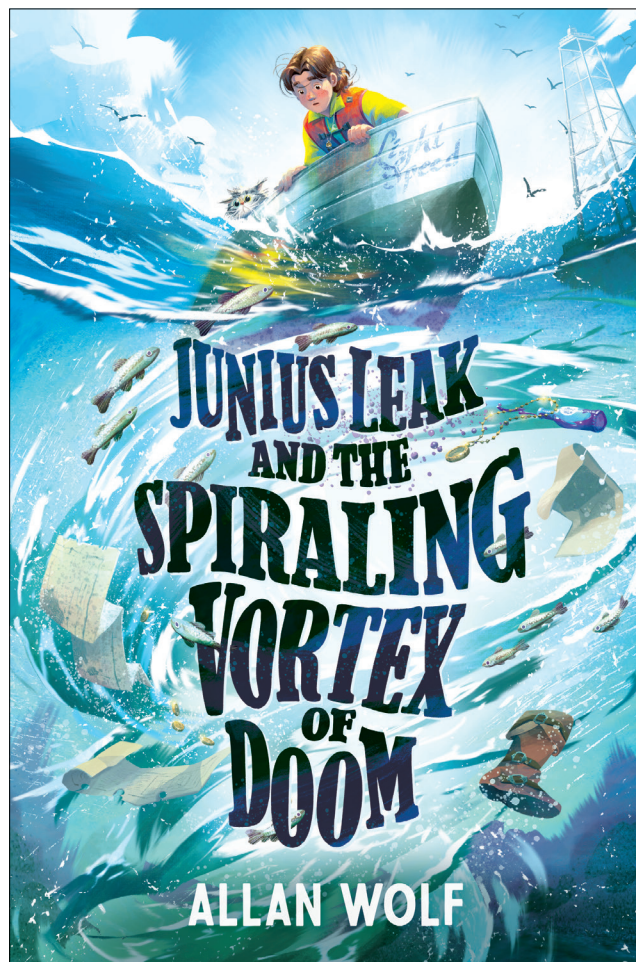
★ “A dazzling tale. . . . There’s wow-worthy content aplenty.” —*Booklist* (starred review)

★ “A clever and engrossing adventure.”  
—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Part mystery, part fantasy-adventure, part riveting real-life disaster, this deft tale-within-a-tale blends the history of the 1980 Lake Peigneur drilling accident with a fateful quest for pirate treasure.

When thirteen-year-old Junius Leak—expert on waterbodies and creator of the encyclopedic *Amazing Waterbodies of the World*—steps foot on Uncle Spot’s rickety dock on Lake Peigneur, the truth assails him: he may love waterbodies, but that doesn’t mean they love him back. The latest in a long line of Junius Leaks, he’s the first to be doomed to ten days of awkwardness and boredom on a houseboat with a relative he doesn’t know while his parents “work on” their marriage. Delcambre, Louisiana, where Junius was born, is awash with unwelcome surprises. He determines to learn why his mom left town when he was a baby—and to conquer his fear of water at the same time. But the lake has other plans for him, plans tied to a hundred-year-old family feud and a swashbuckling mystery. When disaster strikes, Junius must dive deep within to emerge an unlikely hero. Alternating viewpoints spin the perceptions of a highly sensitive person (HSP)—and the wry voice of a lake with a long memory—into an inventive tale of sunken treasure and buried secrets anchored by a dramatic true event.



HC: 9781536217452  
Ebook: 9781536244939

## Instructional Standards

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the instructional standards for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used in writing prompts for independent work.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the first sentence of the lake's prologue: "I am a lake, so let me be clear. The tale I'm about to tell you all is absolutely true" (page 3). What is the truth in the lake's story?
2. The lake says, "Sudden change is part of life, and it's what makes a story interesting" (page 32). What is the sudden change the lake is referring to? How do the lake's story and Junius Leak's story meet in the end?
3. The conflict of a novel is the problem to be solved. Common conflicts include man against man, man against self, and man against nature. Cite specific evidence that all three types of conflicts are present in this novel.
4. Make a list of the characters in the novel. How are they each connected to an ancient story? Junius Leak is the protagonist of the novel. Which other characters rise to main character status? Who are the antagonists? What is the role of the antagonists in establishing the conflict?
5. Discuss the contribution of the animals in the novel: Ringo, the messenger dog, and Aunt Boudreaux, Uncle Spot's cat.
6. Describe Junius Leak. Why is he apprehensive about spending twelve days with Uncle Spot in Delcambre, Louisiana? Explain why Junius refers to his time in Louisiana as his "exile." What does Junius discover about his family and himself while in "exile"?
7. What are Junius's first impressions of Delcambre, its citizens, and Uncle Spot and his houseboat? At what point does he bond with Uncle Spot?
8. Explain why the people of Delcambre are suspicious of Junius. Why does Tibby think that Junius is "poking into folks' business" (page 147)?
9. Explain the meaning of "leaking." Discuss what Junius means when he says that "from sixth grade on up, if you leak, you're considered a freak" (page 24). How does Junius live in fear of leaking in front of people? Junius thinks that his parents have their own way of leaking. Why does June, Junius's mom, leak? Cite the moment Junius's dad leaks. What is significant about the time that Junius sees Uncle Spot leaking?
10. Dale is Junius's stepdad. Discuss how Junius discovers that Uncle Spot is his biological father. Describe his feeling when he learns this. Explain the following metaphor: "It was as if all his life, he had been told he was one of the Great Lakes, only to discover he was actually just a backyard kiddie pool" (page 381). How does Junius differentiate between a father and a dad? How is Dale a dad in every manner of speaking? Why does Junius feel guilty for loving Uncle Spot?
11. June Leak had never shared anything about Delcambre with Junius. Explain why she was so secretive. Why does Junius wonder if she had something to hide? Uncle Spot tells Junius the truth about the accident. Explain what Uncle Spot means when he says, "Just because she was keeping all the facts to herself doesn't mean she was lying to you. Life is complicated" (page 359). How does the truth explain June Leak's depression?



12. Junius finds a cedar chest that belongs to his mom. What are the treasures that he discovers? Explain the following lines Junius finds: *Death to all who dare the draft.*  
*The siren has the final laugh.*  
How does the meaning reveal itself by the end of the novel?
13. Junius is an expert on “waterbodies of the world.” Why does his dad say that he shouldn’t talk waterbodies with people in Delcambre? Aunt Boudreaux destroys Junius’s notebook on waterbodies. How does Uncle Spot react? At what point does Junius learn that he can talk about waterbodies?
14. How is Victoria Vandee related to Uncle Spot? Explain what Uncle Spot means when he says that “the Vandees and Leaks are related less by blood and more by happenstance” (page 91). How does the parallel story told by the lake uncover the relationship between the two families? Explain how this is important to the overall conflict of the novel.
15. Discuss Victoria Vandee’s one-woman protest against Texaco Oil. What do Victoria’s parents mean when they say she is “honest to a fault” (page 178)? How does this explain her lack of friends? At what point does Junius begin to understand Victoria and her mission? How do Junius and Victoria find the treasure of the pirate Jean Lafitte?
16. What is the symbolism of the coin necklace that Junius wears around his neck? Discuss the meaning of the Siren’s Flute. What does June Vandee’s Volkswagen symbolize?
17. The climax of a novel is the turning point. What is the climax of this novel?
18. How does Uncle Spot help Junius conquer his fear of water? What causes Junius to go out on the lake alone? Discuss the “spiraling vortex of doom.” In what way does Junius save the town?
19. Define *legend*. What is the significance of the local legend revealed by the lake? In what way does the legend seem like a tall tale?

## ABOUT ALLAN WOLF

Allan Wolf is the author of several picture books, poetry books, and young adult novels, including *The Snow Fell Three Graves Deep: Voices from the Donner Party*, *The Watch That Ends the Night: Voices from the Titanic*, *Who Killed Christopher Goodman?*, and *Zane’s Trace*. He lives in Roanoke, Virginia, with his wife, his sister, and a dog named Mo.

These questions were prepared by Pat Scales, a retired school librarian and independent consultant in Greenville, South Carolina.

