



Discussion Questions for *Skyriders* by Polly Holyoke

1. In the opening chapters of *Skyriders*, what does Kiesandra Torsun want? How do her goals change over the course of the story?
2. Kie is confident in her abilities as a sky courier, but unsure of herself in other ways. Where do you see examples of her lack of self-confidence? Does her sense of self change as the stakes are raised? What events help her gain the most self-confidence?
3. When Kie leaves Durwen to journey six hundred miles away to Pedarth, she takes a leaf from her father's dayan tree. Have you ever had the experience of being homesick? If you were going on a long trip, what would you bring to make you feel connected to your family? Your home? Your city or town?
4. N'Rah thinks Kie would be happier if she had a herd of her own. In the opening chapters, he worries Kie spends too much time by herself. Do you agree? How does she connect with others as the story develops? By the end of *Skyriders*, do you think Kie has found a herd of her own?
5. Uncle Dugs warns about the chimerae and the importance of the old ways of fighting them. His concerns are dismissed as are Kie's when she first attempts to share Uncle Dugs's manual with the Emperor's commanders. Have you had the experience of wanting others to take your concerns seriously, only to be ignored? How did you feel? Did you find a way to persevere? If so, how? If not, is there anything you learned from Kie?
6. When Kie visits Central Relay, she feels a sense of pride as she reads the motto chiseled on one of the buildings: *Through storm and heat, and the darkness of the night, we fly and bind the empire together*. Do you think being a sky courier is an admirable job? Why or why not? What does it mean to Kie? Have you ever been part of a group or a project that made you proud? What was that experience like?
7. Why does Kie think grooming your own skysteed is important? Have you ever had the experience of caring for a pet or another person, perhaps a younger sibling? How did that make you feel? Did you feel more connected?
8. Do you sympathize with the unbound skysteeds? How does Kie help to change their situation? How does this impact grooms like Dessie? What does their experience say about the importance of having a purpose?

9. The concept of the chosen one is an element often found in the fantasy genre, especially in stories with mythological roots. How is Kiesandra Torsun the chosen one? How is her heroism rooted in her unique gifts, destiny, and/or a special lineage? Have you read other stories with protagonists who are considered chosen ones? How are they similar or dissimilar to Kie?

10. What qualities do you think make a good leader? Who in the story demonstrates those qualities? Who would you follow and why? Who do you most admire?

11. In writing *Skyriders*, author Polly Holyoke was, in part, inspired by a book she read as young person: [Pegasus, The Winged Horse retold by Nathaniel Hawthorne](#), illustrated by Hershel Levit. The illustrations of Pegasus and the monstrous chimerae sparked her imagination and stayed with her for many years. Are there stories that have stuck with you for a long time? Maybe a picture book you read when you were younger? What is it about the book you remember? Why is it important to you?

12. Now that Kie is considered the Nexara, the connector between humans and skysteeds, what responsibility does she have? At the end of the book, she is flying home to Durwen. Do you think she'll be able to resume her ordinary life as a sky courier? What do you predict will happen in *The Sky King*, the next book in the series?



Created by Laney Nielson, M.Ed. in collaboration with Author Polly Holyoke