



An Original EduGuide for

BOY ROBOT

A NOVEL BY SIMON CURTIS

IT GETS
BETTER
PROJECT

ABOUT THE BOOK

BOY ROBOT

In a single night, Isaak's life changes forever. His adoptive parents are killed, a mysterious girl saves him from a team of soldiers, and he learns of his own dark and destructive origin. An origin he doesn't want to believe, but one he cannot deny.

In his debut, author and recording artist Simon Curtis has written a fast-paced, high-stakes novel that explores humanity, the ultimate power of empathy, and the greatest battle of all: love versus fear.

This official reader's guide for *Boy Robot* will walk you through each of the book's 18 chapters, asking you to think critically about the adventure you read. It's intended for young adults (YA) ages 14+, or those already in late middle or high school. You can follow this guide on your own, in a reading club or GSA, during family night, or even in a classroom. The options are limitless! In total, there are 66 questions, 90 vocabulary words, and 9 bonus and brainstorm activities, including those included in the 'Activities' section at the end of this guide.

For bonus material, visit:

www.itgetsbetter.org/BoyRobot

ABOUT THE

MAIN CHARACTERS

- ★ **ISAAK**, a boy who learns that he's not quite as human as he always thought.
- ★ **AZURE**, a Robot with a mysterious past and murky objectives.
- ★ **KAMEA**, a human helping to lead Robots safely to the Underground.
- ★ **JB**, a human working with Kamea who takes a special interest in IsaaK.
- ★ **V**, a Robot capable of storing and converting kinetic energy.
- ★ **TACE**, a Robot who finds great power in his voice.
- ★ **ARIELLE**, a Robot with the power to alter her appearance at will.
- ★ **MALEK**, a Robot who can control the human body with just a simple touch.

Questions

1. Who is the **Running Girl** (p. 1)?
2. Who is the **Punching Bag** (p. 43)?
3. Who is **It** (p. 87)?
4. Who is the **Sheriff** (p. 133)?
5. Who is the **Mute** (p. 173)?
6. Who are the **Twins** (p. 217)?
7. Who is the **Creator** (p. 385)?
8. Who is the **Traitor** (p. 399)?

CHAPTERS



AZURE

8 pages (p. 1-8)

THE RUNNING GIRL

Questions

1. The Running Girl tries to lead three young people to safety. Describe each one. What do they have in common? What makes them different?
2. Make a prediction: Who are the Sheriffs? What do you think they represent?

Vocabulary

★ **Remnants** (p. 1)

★ **Inferno** (p. 5)

★ **Inconspicuous** (p. 1)

★ **Pallid** (p. 6)

★ **Ricocheted** (p. 3)

33 pages (p. 9-42)

ISAAK CH. 1

Questions

1. Isaak shares that he and his best friend, Jonathan, are polar opposites, and that's what makes their relationship both comforting and frustrating (p. 15). Why do you think that is? Have you had a similar relationship in your life? Explain.
2. Isaak gets kicked out of his adopted parents' home because they say he's "not right, not natural" and an "abomination" (p. 22). How would those words make you feel?
3. Answer Isaak's question: "What's worse: losing one parent who truly loved you or losing two who don't even want you?" (p. 25). Give your reasons.
4. Isaak decides to escape with the girl who appears in his bedroom the night of his birthday (p. 32). What events from the previous day might have led him to trust this stranger?

Vocabulary

★ **Chintzy** (p. 9)

★ **Cacophony** (p. 13)

★ **Myriad** (p. 27)

★ **Maelstrom** (p. 29)

★ **Pert** (p. 31)

19 pages (p. 43–62)

THE PUNCHING BAG

Questions

1. The Punching Bag decides to run away instead of file a report with the campus police (p. 45). Why doesn't she want to tell on her bullies? Why might she not trust the woman that helped stop her attackers?
2. Both Isaak and the Punching Bag come from difficult homes. Compare and contrast their family experiences. What might this tell us about who they are?
3. The consistent physical harassment that the Punching Bag experiences eventually leads her to commit violence of her own (p. 61). How could this have been prevented?

BONUS: Drawing V and other superheroes provided an escape for the Punching Bag (p. 48). Draw your own superhero, one that embodies everything you wish you could be.

Vocabulary

★ **Winced** (p. 43)

★ **Feral** (p. 51)

★ **Onslaught** (p. 43)

★ **Knell** (p. 62)

★ **Saunter** (p. 49)

23 pages (p. 63–86)

ISAAK CH. 2

Questions

1. On page 65, we learn that Isaak is, in fact, a Robot. What special qualities do Robots like IsaaK and Azure (and the other unique characters we've read about up to this point) possess? Describe them in as much detail as possible.
2. IsaaK notices that Azure is eager to "distinguish herself as something other than human" (p. 67). Why do you think that is? Explain your answer using examples from the book.
3. IsaaK associates being a Robot with being a monster (p. 77). Why do you think he makes that connection? How does this compare with how some communities in our own society have been made to feel about themselves?
4. Like the Punching Bag, Azure ends up committing violence in order to save her own life and that of her companions. Explain in your own words why this brought both of these girls such sadness.

Vocabulary

★ **Iridescent** (p. 63)

★ **Volition** (p. 65)

★ **Aloof** (p. 66)

★ **Verdant** (p. 75)

★ **Sallow** (p. 79)

IT

Questions

1. While Isak always thought of himself as “real,” It always knew she wasn’t, or at least that’s what her caretakers told her (p. 90). Explain how you think growing up with these different perspectives might have shaped the two characters differently.
2. Why do you think it was important for It to be seen as a “her” and not as an “it” (p. 91)? Why is it important for many people that their personal identities be recognized by others?
3. It has a hard time explaining how she feels about the caretakers’ abuse of the yellow-haired girl (p. 94). How would you describe her feelings?

BONUS: It says that she’d “rather sit by herself in an empty room and be alone than be forced to sit by herself in a room full of people and feel alone” (p. 95). Have you ever felt that way? Write about what that experience feels like in a personal journal.

Vocabulary

★ **Shoddy** (p. 88)

★ **Stifled** (p. 93)

★ **Commissary** (p. 88)

★ **Rapturously** (p. 100)

★ **Guttural** (p. 92)

ISAAK CH. 3

Questions

1. Azure saves the day once again with her “brilliant blue dome of electric light” (p. 113), but JB doesn’t seem to think she should be trusted (p. 120). Make a prediction: who should Isaak believe, Azure or JB? Defend your answer.
2. While in the car, Isaak makes the comment that “LA seems like a good place for a bunch of freaks to hide” (p. 125). What do you think he means by that? Do you agree with his statement based on what you know about that city? Explain.
3. Azure and Kamea don’t seem to agree on how Robots should be called. “Synthetic, organic, whatever,” JB adds (p. 126). What groups or communities are you aware of that also seem to battle with labels? Why do you think that is?
4. At this point, we’ve learned that Isaak and Azure are Robots, and Kamea and JB are humans. How does this difference impact the dynamics of the group?

Vocabulary

★ **Clad** (p. 111)

★ **Din** (p. 112)

★ **Cataclysmic** (p. 113)

★ **Dons** (p. 115)

★ **Asinine** (p. 126)

15 pages (p. 133-148)

THE SHERIFF

Questions

1. In this chapter, we learn about the backstory of another character that has been hurt by violence (p. 139). Why do you think that's a recurring theme in *Boy Robot*?
2. The Sheriff turns to drinking as a way to cope (p. 139). What are other, perhaps healthier, ways to work through stress or trauma?

BONUS: Like the Sheriff, many veterans experience difficulties recovering after spending time in war. What could you do to help such veterans in your community?

Vocabulary

★ **Vain** (p. 136)

★ **Brevity** (p. 138)

★ **Criterion** (p. 144)

★ **Pension** (p. 144)

★ **Forgo** (p. 146)

23 pages (p. 149–172)

ISAAK CH. 4

Questions

1. Kamea sees JB as a strong ally of the Robot community (p. 151). Who are the allies of minority groups in your community? What makes them good allies?
2. Why do you think the Sheriff decided not to kill Isaak when he had the chance (p. 165)? Provide evidence from the book to support your answer.
3. Azure ends up taking the life of the Sheriff we learned about in the previous chapter (p. 166). How does this moment make you feel? How could this outcome have gone differently?
4. In this chapter, we start to learn what some of Isaak's special powers are. If you could have any superpower (or "Robot Power"), what would it be? Share your top reasons.

Vocabulary

★ **Waft** (p. 149)

★ **Barrage** (p. 150)

★ **Coalescing** (p. 153)

★ **Ineptitude** (p. 162)

★ **Jettison** (p. 166)

23 pages (p. 173–196)

THE MUTE

Questions

1. The Mute experienced traumatic events as a small child that made him not want to speak (p. 181). How is that coping mechanism different from the ones the Punching Bag and the Sheriff used?
2. This chapter shares memories about three different mothers. Compare and contrast them. How was each mother remembered?
3. Comic books became the bridge that helped the Mute connect with his adoptive father. What sort of things help you connect with your parents or guardians? Why so?
4. The Mute's voice ends up being an extremely powerful weapon (p. 196). In what ways are the other Robots' powers reflective of their personalities, too?

Vocabulary

★ **Eluded** (p. 174)

★ **Effervescent** (p. 188)

★ **Pungent** (p. 175)

★ **Writhed** (p. 191)

★ **Lank** (p. 177)

19 pages (p. 197–216)

ISAAK CH. 5

Questions

1. Once again, IsaaK is faced with the question of whether or not Robots are “real” or “human” (p. 207). What are your thoughts on the subject at this point? What makes you think that way?
2. Azure tells IsaaK that he’ll eventually need to be trained for war (p. 208). Make a prediction: what has led to this moment? Why do you think Dr. Mayur Asim and the Sheriffs are trying to round up and kill the Robots?
3. Despite being a teenager at the time, JB’s parents kicked him out of his home because he had a boyfriend (p. 211). If you could, what would you say to JB’s parents to help them accept their son as he is?
4. Even after losing his boyfriend, JB decides to stay in the Underground and devote the rest of his life to helping the Robots (p. 214). What does this say about JB?

Vocabulary

★ **Monolith** (p. 200)

★ **Terse** (p. 206)

★ **Copse** (p. 201)

★ **Feigns** (p. 210)

★ **Shroud** (p. 205)

33 pages (p. 217–250)

THE TWINS

Questions

1. The Twin believes that his brother’s hatred of their sister stems from fear (p. 217). What do you think he means by that? Why would fear lead them to hurt her both physically and emotionally?
2. “You are my sister, you always have been, and I will always love you” (p. 233). What do you think it meant to Aaron to hear those words from her brother? Explain.
3. After “manifesting,” Aaron is able to physically transform her body and present herself as who she really is (p. 245). Write about what you think this power might mean to someone like her.
4. Like many of the other characters in *Boy Robot*, the Twins were raised by non-biological parents. Why do you think that’s such a significant theme in the book? Give examples from the book to support your answer.

BRAINSTORM: The Twins watched as their Aunt Janet fell victim to police brutality (p. 229), something that happens all too often in the United States. How do you think that problem could be addressed or prevented in your local community?

Vocabulary

★ **Makeshift** (p. 224)

★ **Curtness** (p. 227)

★ **Putrid** (p. 236)

★ **Malleable** (p. 247)

★ **Squandered** (p. 248)



V

30 pages (p. 251-281)

ISAAK CH. 6 (PT. 1)

Questions

1. Isaak believes that Azure attacked him, but she assures him that she only knocked him out to keep him safe. At this point, would you trust Azure? Why or why not? Explain.
2. Kamea interrupts the intimate moment between Isaak and JB on the cliff (p. 257). Why do you think she doesn't "sound too happy, either"? What makes you think that?
3. Answer Azure's question as if you were in JB's predicament: "Do you die now, as your body intended? Or do you cheat it and run the risk of decaying in your own skin for the rest of your cursed existence?" (p. 264)
4. Isaak befriends Griselle, another human ally working for the Underground (p. 272). Why do you think people like her (and JB and Azure) are so willing to risk their own lives to help the Robots?

Vocabulary

★ **Unscathed** (p. 260)

★ **Crests** (p. 260)

★ **Anechoic** (p. 277)

★ **Haggard** (p. 280)

★ **Pristine** (p. 281)

30 pages (p. 282–312)

ISAAK CH. 6 (PT. 2)

Questions

1. Azure believes that Griselle sold them out to the Sheriffs, but Iszaak refuses to believe it (p. 285). Who do you agree with? Give your reasons.
2. Iszaak's heroic decision on the bridge by the Hoover Dam possibly saved hundreds of innocent lives (p. 290). Describe in your own words what happened on the bridge.
3. Iszaak starts to realize that perhaps Kamea is the kind of friend he's been desperately looking for (p. 298). Think back on everything that has happened so far. In what ways has Kamea shown true friendship?
4. The group now finds themselves on the Las Vegas Strip, as guests in a lavish resort hotel (p. 301). What are your thoughts on this unusual turn of events?
5. What do we know so far about Richard, the group's "benevolent benefactor and ally" (p. 302)? If you had been sitting at the dining table, what's one question you would have asked him?

Vocabulary

★ **Tacit** (p. 289)

★ **Sadistic** (p. 300)

★ **Palatial** (p. 301)

★ **Revelry** (p. 306)

★ **Inaugural** (p. 306)

22 pages (p. 313–335)

ISAAK CH. 6 (PT. 3)

Questions

1. Based on some of the clues we've read in the last few chapters (p. 313), who are V and Tace? Why do you think they have such a strong bond to each other? Explain.
2. The group can't seem to determine whether or not Richard is an enemy or an ally (p. 318). What do you think? Give evidence to back up your position.
3. Upon meeting Malek, we learn why Kamea wasn't too happy about IsaaK and JB's intimate moment back in Ch. 6 (p. 325). What are your thoughts on the matter? If you were IsaaK, how would you address the situation?
4. IsaaK's been having particularly strange visions/dreams ever since the Sheriffs' raid at the Las Vegas hotel (p. 333). Make a prediction: why is IsaaK experiencing these visions, and what do they represent?

BRAINSTORM: Arielle tries to cheer up IsaaK with the following words:

“My entire life felt like a nightmare before I came here. But I made it. I found others like me. Found out what I really am -- who I really am -- and discovered I have a purpose. You have one too. I'm not scared anymore. You won't be either” (p. 331–332).

Think about someone in your life that could benefit from hearing those words. What would you do or say to help them through the challenges they might be having?

Vocabulary

★ **Smarmy** (p. 318)

★ **Despondently** (p. 326)

★ **Catatonic** (p. 326)

★ **Placating** (p. 327)

★ **Utilitarian** (p. 331)



ARIELLE ▲ MALEK

24 pages (p. 336–360)

ISAAK CH. 6 (PT. 4)

Questions

1. Why might the other robots at Grand Central avoid interacting with Kyle? Why, in turn, does Kyle seem surprised that IsaaK doesn't treat him the same way (p. 337)?
2. Make a prediction: Based on what we've seen of IsaaK's powers up to this point, and what is revealed during the Assembly testing (p. 346), what kind of Robot is IsaaK?
3. During his conversation with the other robots during lunch, IsaaK gets the sense that Ivan isn't proud of what he did to the Sheriffs in Indiana (p. 350). Why do you think that is? How does that compare to IsaaK's experience?
4. Despite some hesitation, IsaaK decides to follow JB on their adventure outside of Grand Central (p. 353). What is your take on this situation? Explain your thinking.

Vocabulary

★ **Percolates** (p. 342)

★ **Promenade** (p. 356)

★ **Eclectic** (p. 347)

★ **Ebbing** (p. 359)

★ **Concentric** (p. 355)

23 pages (p. 361–384)

ISAAK CH. 6 (PT. 5)

Questions

1. Make a prediction: What is the importance of the Gate, and why do you think Kamea needs Isaak's help to work on it (p. 367)?
2. The Assembly finally fills Isaak in on what kind of Robot he is, but not everyone is excited about the power he holds (p. 373). Do you think their fear or hesitation is warranted? Defend your answer.
3. Isaak has learned over the past week "that life is short, bizarre, rarely takes you where you want to go, and hardly ever gives you the answers you think you deserve" (p. 383). Do you think that's true for you? Explain your answer.
4. In your own words, describe Isaak's experience at Tribo (p. 378–384). What are your thoughts on the matter?

Vocabulary

★ **Deftly** (p. 363)

★ **Unbridled** (p. 369)

★ **Anomaly** (p. 372)

★ **Exuberance** (p. 379)

★ **Appeasement** (p. 382)

13 pages (p. 385–398)

THE CREATOR

Questions

1. In what ways was [the Creator](#)'s early story similar to those of the Robots we've read? In what ways was it different? (p. 386–387)
2. How do you think it felt for the Creator to have to abandon his daughter (p. 396)? How do you think she might have felt about her father in the years to come?
3. What is your reaction to the reveal at the end of this chapter (p. 397)?

BRAINSTORM: Battling cancer can be a grueling experience. How could you help individuals or families in your community who are dealing with that struggle?

Vocabulary

★ **Cherubic** (p. 385)

★ **Precarious** (p. 393)

★ **Vigor** (p. 390)

★ **Assimilate** (p. 394)

★ **Imperishable** (p. 392)

16 pages (p. 399–415)

ISAAK CH. 7 AND THE TRAITOR

Questions

1. Describe in your own words the final events in the book, including what happened back at Grand Central (p. 403). What are your reactions?
2. Asim and Kamea think that IsaaK “could be the key to everything” (p. 413). What do you think that means? What is the significance of IsaaK’s existence?
3. Who do you think the Traitor is (p. 415)? Explain your reasons.
4. Look back at the predictions you made throughout this guide. Did any of the events work out the way you thought they would? Explain.

Vocabulary

★ **Reverberant** (p. 400)

★ **Vacuum** (p. 400)

★ **Solace** (p. 406)

★ **Fruition** (p. 411)

★ **Albeit** (p. 411)

BONUS



ISAAK

ACTIVITIES

Reading is only half the fun! You can also choose one of the following activities to take your learning one step farther. Don't be afraid to step outside of your comfort zone.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

- ★ **ACT** - *Boy Robot* is chock-full of LGBTQ+ characters (like Isaak, JB, and Arielle), but the story of the Robot's struggle in general can be seen as an allegory for what many minority communities face in the world today. Take a look at where you live. What are some challenges people in your community face? What can you do to resist prejudice and discrimination in your community? How will you take these ideas and turn them into action?
- ★ **WRITE** - Choose a character from *Boy Robot* whose backstory wasn't included in the book. Give the character a nickname (like "The Punching Bag" or "The Twins"), and write their story in your own words. As you write, think: what happened in this character's life that made them who they are, or brought them to where they are now? Then, share your fan fiction with your class, team, or even just a friend.

- ★ **SHARE** - Make an It Gets Better® video or write your own personal story. Tell the world who you are, why stories like those in *Boy Robot* matter to you, and what message of support you'd like to share with an LGBTQ+ young person having a tough time. Submit your video or written story to the It Gets Better Project's website at www.itgetsbetter.org/share-your-story.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SIMON CURTIS

Simon Curtis was born in Michigan and raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was diagnosed with leukemia at age 10 and began performing in musical theater and opera that same year. He was the happiest bald, chemotherapy-addled cancer patient ever seen onstage. At eighteen, he moved to LA. After various roles on Nickelodeon and Disney Channel, Simon left acting to pursue music, releasing his first album, *8bit Heart*, as a free download, followed by his second album, *RA*, which landed at number twenty on Billboard's Dance & Electronic Albums chart. Simon continues to write and release music as an independent recording artist, and looks forward to his new chapter as a an author. Above all else, he strives to inspire hope in young people. *Boy Robot* is his first novel.



Website:

www.simon-curtis.com

Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/simoncurtis>

Instagram:

www.instagram.com/simoncurtis/

Check out Simon's **It Gets Better® video** at www.itgetsbetter.org/BoyRobot.



ABOUT THE

IT GETS BETTER PROJECT

This reader's guide was written by education staff at the [It Gets Better Project](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles, California (USA). With affiliates operating on 4 different continents, the It Gets Better Project boasts a truly global operation. Together, we use the power of story – told through online videos, social media, films, books (like *Boy Robot*), and more – to uplift, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ youth around the globe. So far, over 60,000 It Gets Better® videos have been shared.

The It Gets Better Project has also identified over 1,000 organizations in 30+ countries around the world offering support to LGBTQ+ youth. To find a resource near you, go to www.itgetsbetter.org/GetHelp.

YouTube:

www.youtube.com/itgetsbetter

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/itgetsbetterproject

Twitter:

<http://twitter.com/ItGetsBetter>

Tumblr:

<http://itgetsbetterproject.tumblr.com>

Instagram:

www.instagram.com/itgetsbetter

IT GETS BETTER PROJECT®

IT GETS BETTER and IT GETS BETTER PROJECT are registered trademarks of Savage Love, LLC, licensed for use by the It Gets Better Project.

© 2018 It Gets Better Project. All rights reserved.