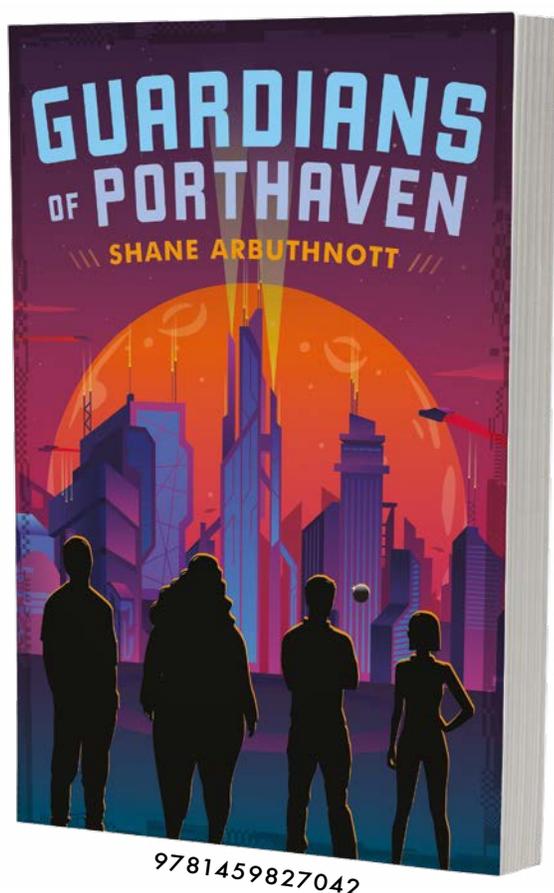


# GUARDIANS OF PORTHAVEN DISCUSSION GUIDE



## Key Themes

- White privilege
- Discrimination
- Family and friends
- Allyship
- Moral responsibility
- Community action

## About the book:

On his fifteenth birthday, Malcolm Gravenhurst is preparing to take on the mantle of Guardian. The Guardians are tasked with defending the city of Porthaven, and the Gravenhursts are the only ones with the superpowers necessary to battle the alien invasions of the robotic klek. And while their power has brought the Gravenhursts great responsibility, it has also brought them wealth and fame beyond imagining. Malcolm grew up in a world of prestige and influence, but all he's ever wanted is to use his abilities to help people. When he meets a group of teens working hard to stay off the Guardians' radar, Malcolm learns that underneath the heroic facade, the Gravenhurst family is hiding some very dark secrets. With the threat of the klek invasion growing, Malcolm's loyalty to his family could mean the difference between survival and annihilation.

## Author biography:

**SHANE ARBUTHNOTT's** debut novel, *Dominion*, was nominated for multiple awards, including the Kobo Emerging Writer Prize. That novel's sequel, *Terra Nova*, published in 2018, also received great critical acclaim. His short fiction has appeared in *On Spec* and *Open Spaces*. Shane grew up in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and now lives in Regina with his family.



# QUESTIONS

## Characters

- Malcolm is our protagonist, but he's not perfect. What do you like about him? What don't you like about him?
- Malcolm learns a lot from his friends. What kinds of things have you learned from your friends?
- Malcolm, Drew, Blair and Kazue are all quite different from each other. How do their differences make them work better together as a team?
- In the end, Malcolm doesn't agree with his family's choices, but he still grew up as a Gravenhurst. Pick one of the other Gravenhursts and compare/contrast them to Malcolm. How are they the same? How are they different?
- What do we learn about the other heroes' families? Pick Drew, Blair, or Kazue. How do their families shape who they are?
- Each of the characters have different powers. What do those powers tell us about what kind of people they are? If you had a superpower that represented you, what would it be?
- Malcolm collects comics, and some of his ideas about who he wants to be come from this hobby. What hobbies do you have? How have your hobbies changed your idea of who you are or who you want to be?
- Drew says he doesn't want to be the leader of the team, but his friends tell him he should be anyway. Do you think Drew is a good leader? What makes him good or bad at leading the team?

## Responsibility

- In the last chapter of the book, a reporter tells Malcolm, "It's not about giving up your power, Malcolm.... The hard thing is to take what power you have and use it to make sure things change." Do you agree? Why or why not? What kind of power do you have, and how can you use it to change the world for the better?
- Malcolm didn't choose who his family was, but when he learns their history, he decides it's his responsibility to fix mistakes they made. Do you think he's right? Why or why not?
- Some of Malcolm's choices end up hurting his friends. If you were one of Malcolm's friends, would you want to keep hanging out with him afterwards? Why or why not?
- Malcolm's family tells him he's not a superhero. Do you agree or disagree? What makes someone a superhero? What's the difference between a Guardian and a superhero?
- How do you feel when Malcolm and the others bring more people with powers back to Porthaven? Do you think it was the right choice? Why or why not?



# QUESTIONS [CONTINUED]

## Race and privilege

- Drew tells Malcolm that “if it had been a different family, if it had been my family” that got the powers first, things would have been different. Do you think that’s true? Why? Think about how the racial identities of Drew and Malcolm’s families might change what they would be allowed to do.
- When Drew and Malcolm stop a robbery, Drew lets the robbers go with a warning instead of calling the police. Why do you think he does that? Was it the right thing to do? He tells Malcolm, “calling the cops doesn’t work the same for everyone.” What does he mean by that?
- The Gravenhursts have been sending other people with powers away from Porthaven for a long time. Why do you think they do that? How does it benefit them?
- Shane Arbuthnott, the author of this book, is white, cisgender and straight. How do you think that changes the point of view of the novel? How does it affect his ability to write characters of colour or people of different sexual orientations?

## Setting

- Porthaven has been changed by the alien technology that landed in the city. Do you think those changes are good or bad? If you could pick one thing from Porthaven to bring over into your real life, what would it be?
- Malcolm grew up in Gravenhurst Tower, which is very expensive but feels more like a business than a home. How would you feel if you lived in the Tower? Would you feel lucky or unlucky?



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