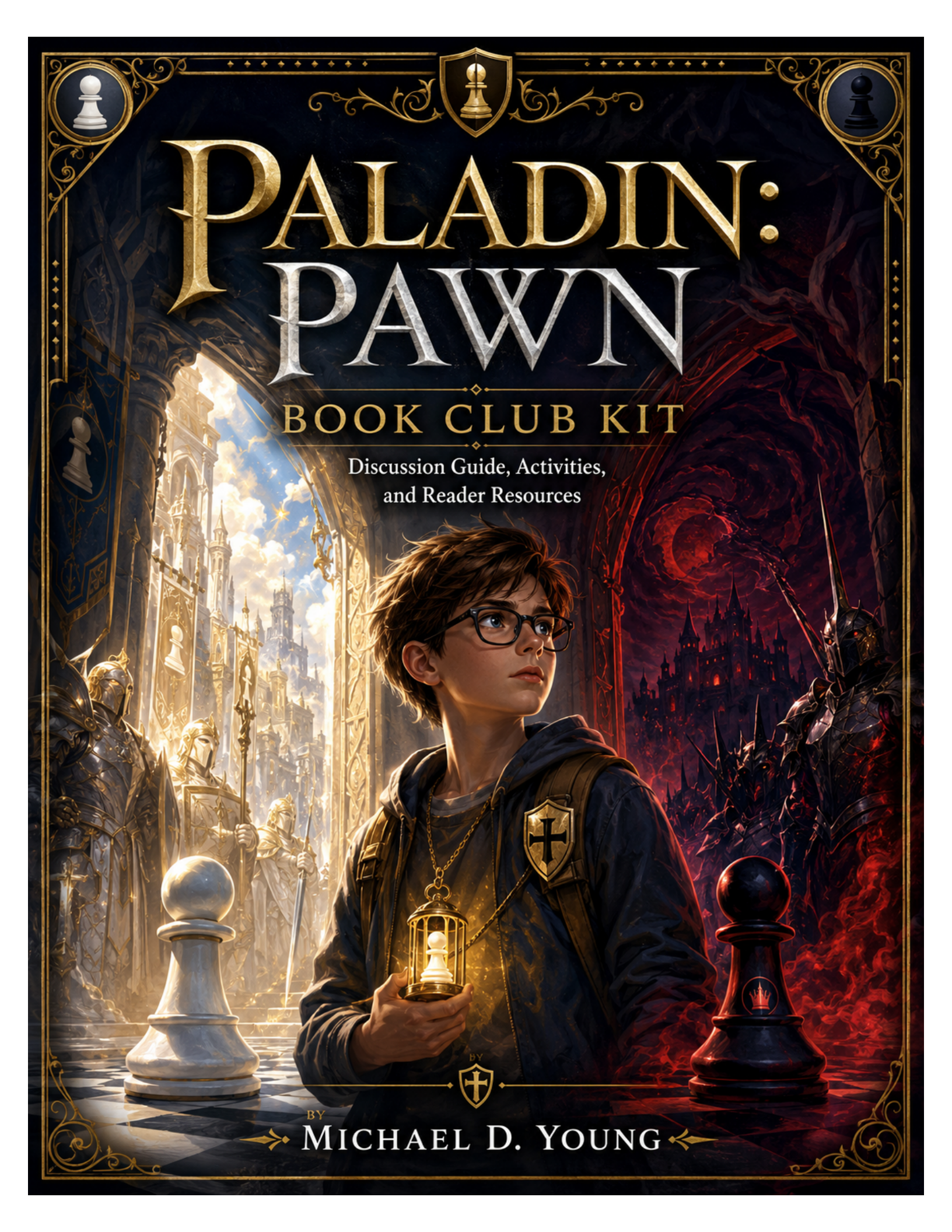




PALADIN: PAWN

BOOK CLUB KIT

Discussion Guide, Activities,
and Reader Resources

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WELCOME, READERS

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A compact guide for a first meeting, classroom preview, family read-aloud, or website download. No ending spoilers are included.



THE PREMISE

Rich Witz is an imaginative eighth grader who has spent years feeling more like a target than a hero. When a white pawn arrives from his grandmother and a black pawn challenges him, Rich is pulled into a hidden conflict tied to his family history. To claim his place among the paladins, he must prove courage, wisdom, compassion, and sacrifice in the least glamorous arena imaginable: ordinary life at home and junior high.

Use this guide after the opening chapters or after the full novel. The questions focus on character, theme, humor, and the story's central idea of modern knighthood without revealing which quests Rich completes.



QUICK MEETING PLAN - 45 MINUTES

TIME	ACTIVITY
5 min	Choose a chess piece that matches Rich at the beginning.
15 min	Discuss identity, bullying, imagination, and the title.
15 min	Explore the four virtues and modern chivalry.
7 min	Complete the activity on page 5.
3 min	Rate the reading experience and make one prediction.



CONTENT CONSIDERATIONS

Bullying, grief, missing family members, threatening magic, fire, violence, and dangerous behavior appear in the novel. Readers may always pass on personal questions.

SPOILER-FREE QUESTIONS

Spoiler-Free Questions

*Start with the questions that best fit your group.
There is no need to answer them in order.*

1. Rich often escapes into elaborate daydreams. When does imagination help him understand the world, and when does it keep him from facing the world?
2. Why is Rich embarrassed by the name Heinrich? What is the difference between inheriting a name and choosing what that name will mean?
3. The title calls Rich a pawn. At the beginning, who or what seems to be moving him around the board?
4. How does humor change the way the novel handles bullying, grief, and danger? Does it make the serious moments more effective?
5. Rich imagines traditional knights, but his real tests happen at school and home. What does the novel suggest modern chivalry looks like?
6. What responsibilities do adults in the story have toward Rich? Which adults protect him, and which leave him without information he needs?
7. How do Rich's glasses function beyond being a physical object? Consider vulnerability, identity, sight, and the difference between seeing clearly and understanding clearly.
8. Why might a magical order use ordinary moral choices as its entrance test instead of combat or spellcasting?

MORE QUESTIONS

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Move from first impressions toward the novel's central moral framework.

- 9 What first impression does Aaron make? What qualities make him a useful guide, and what qualities make him a difficult one?
- 10 How are school hierarchies similar to a chessboard or a medieval court?
- 11 Which early mystery most interested you: the two pawns, Minerva's disappearance, Rich's father, the mural, or the new figures at school?
- 12 Before reading the resolution, rank courage, wisdom, compassion, and sacrifice from easiest to hardest to prove. Explain your ranking.
- 13 Rich accepts the challenge before he understands it. When should a person be held responsible for a choice made without full information?
- 14 What does the story suggest about the difference between looking heroic and being helpful?
- 15 Which character seems most likely to surprise Rich, and why?
- 16 What would a modern paladin need to defend that a medieval knight would never have encountered?



PREDICTION PROMPT

Which virtue will Rich understand first? Which will be hardest?
Write down the group's predictions before continuing the novel.

ACTIVITY: PAWN TO PALADIN



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Create a modern quest without revealing the novel's later solutions.

Choose one virtue and complete the three boxes. Then share the quest with the group.



COURAGE

A false test: an action that looks impressive but misses the real virtue.

An authentic test: an ordinary choice that requires the virtue for the right reason.

A reward: a magical ability that symbolically fits the lesson.



WISDOM

A false test: an action that looks impressive but misses the real virtue.

An authentic test: an ordinary choice that requires the virtue for the right reason.

A reward: a magical ability that symbolically fits the lesson.



COMPASSION

A false test: an action that looks impressive but misses the real virtue.

An authentic test: an ordinary choice that requires the virtue for the right reason.

A reward: a magical ability that symbolically fits the lesson.



SACRIFICE

A false test: an action that looks impressive but misses the real virtue.

An authentic test: an ordinary choice that requires the virtue for the right reason.

A reward: a magical ability that symbolically fits the lesson.



FAST GROUP VARIATION

Assign one virtue to each pair of readers. Give them five minutes to create the false test, authentic test, and reward. Vote for the quest that best fits a modern junior-high setting.



OUR GROUP'S BEST QUEST IDEA

RATING AND PREDICTIONS

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*Complete before discussing the ending so the group can
compare expectations with the finished novel later.*

Rich as a protagonist	1	2	3	4	5
Humor	1	2	3	4	5
Mystery	1	2	3	4	5
Fantasy concept	1	2	3	4	5
Emotional connection	1	2	3	4	5
Interest in continuing	1	2	3	4	5

◆ The mystery I most want solved

◆ My prediction about the black pawn / nemesis

◆ My prediction about Rich's family



FIND THE FULL KIT

The complete website-ready kit includes full-book questions, character analysis, the four virtues, sequel theories, activities, an author-visit question bank, and printable notes. Visit authormichaelyoung.com.