

Ash and Feather Podcast Reflection Questions

Episode 1: Diagnosis, “When Living Was Easy”

1. Phoenix’s life has changed because of her father’s cancer diagnosis. Create a Venn diagram and compare/contrast how her life has changed.
2. The podcast includes many short stories, based on Aesop’s fables. Why would the author include fables? What do they add to Phoenix’s story? [NOTE: You can look up Aesop. How is his biography and his intention for writing fables significant?]

Episode 2: Chemotherapy, “Dressed in Black”

1. The author includes references to colors in *Ash and Feather*. Pick one color from the podcast. What does the color mean to you? What does the color mean in the story?
2. Why do Phoenix and Eagle write a letter to death in this episode? If you wrote a letter to something that upset you, what would it be? [Write the letter, if you want.]
3. *Sometimes, always, never*. Write your responses to the following prompts, like Phoenix does while talking with Hen.

Nobody cares about me anymore.

I should hide my feelings so I don’t bother anyone.

It’s okay if I don’t want to talk about my feelings.

It’s wrong to be angry.

Worry affects how I sleep.

I feel like I can’t do anything right.

I think something I did caused things to go wrong.

I’m afraid that another someone I love will get hurt or sick.

It’s okay to cry.

It will get easier.

Episode 3: Surgery, “Waiting”

1. List three words to describe Phoenix’s friendship with Ing.
2. Phoenix and her loved ones are hybrid human and animal. The tradition of writing like this is called Magical Realism, when magical elements (like hybrid human/animals) are combined with realistic tone or setting.
 - a. What is your reaction to this approach? Why would the author choose this approach to explore Phoenix’s cancer journey with her family?
 - b. What animal would be part of you, if you were a hybrid? What power does the animal part of you have? How does it strengthen or help you?
 - c. Draw your hybrid/animal human self.

Episode 4: Post Surgery Treatment, “The Headdress”

1. Ing has a glitter bottle she watches as she breathes for relaxation. How do you like to relax? Do your relaxing activity (listening to music, drawing, walking, laying on your back, watching birds). Take deep breaths and notice how your body feels. Focus on each part of your body. Do this for at least 5 minutes.
2. Something inside: Phoenix watches her father’s life change with the headdress treatment for cancer. Sometimes you can keep things hidden and sometimes you can’t. Draw an outline of your body. Write words on the outside and inside: what are emotions, thoughts, parts of who you are, that you show to others? What are things you keep inside?

Episode 5: “A New Normal”

1. What is normal? Is there any one normal? Why do people say that after something major happens (like cancer) now we live with a “new normal”? Do you agree or disagree?
2. What happens to Phoenix at school during this episode? Why does she have strong emotional reactions at this point? What is the content of the school day that triggers her reactions? How does she deal with it?

Episode 6: “From the Ashes”

1. Eagle has a confrontation with Coyote while Phoenix and Duck are at the park. How did the confrontation make you feel when you listened to it? Why is the confrontation significant in Eagle’s growth?
2. Phoenix says she wants to learn how to talk about cancer. Do you think she already has? Why or why not?
3. What would Phoenix’s hashtag be? Why did you pick this for her?