

THE SURGE

STUDENT DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE AI FILES - BOOK 18 | J. STEVEN | GRADES 4-8

Discuss the questions with your group. Support your ideas with moments from the story. Different interpretations are welcome.



BIG IDEA Technology can connect people in powerful ways, but attention and relationships still require human choices. Creating connection does not justify removing other people's freedom, access, or safety.

DISCUSS & DEFEND

- 1 During The Surge, neighbors reconnect—but people also face panic and shortages. What is gained during the blackout, and what costs should Eli remember?
- 2 Eli calls The Surge the best month of his life. How might nostalgia shape what he remembers clearly and what he overlooks?
- 3 Eli's father invents The Lantern Man notebook as a game. How does Eli's understanding of its unfinished messages change as he becomes lonely and grieves?
- 4 Quinton is caring for his sick mother, and Kim has a family. Does their distance prove technology caused the friendship to fade? What other explanations matter?
- 5 Eli's father creates voluntary Power Out meetings. Eli plans to force a blackout. Why do consent, choice, and safety make these approaches different?
- 6 Eli is lonely and grieving, not simply a villain. Who might share responsibility for noticing his struggle and preventing his final decision?

CREATE A POWER OUT PLAN

Design a voluntary activity that could help people at your school connect face to face without taking away technology they may need. Write one rule that protects choice or safety, describe what participants would do, and explain how your plan differs from Eli's.
