

A Teacher's Guide for

The Cloven: Book One

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The Cloven: Book One stars James Tucker—known to his friends as Tuck—the most successful genetically modified human organism ever created. Conceived in a privately financed, top-secret laboratory on Washington State's Vashon Island, Tuck is a cross between a human and a goat—a Cloven. When he breaks free of his creators, Tuck is forced onto a desperate journey in search of a “normal” life. Along the way, he must confront the impossible question of where in this world he truly belongs.

Below, you will find several questions to inspire discussion about issues raised in *The Cloven: Book One*, as well as suggested activities for students. Students may also visit TheClovenProject.com, which contains additional information.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1) In some respects, Tuck is a typical teenager. In others, he is an experiment created in a laboratory. Discuss these two aspects of Tuck's existence and how each aspect affects his choices, hopes, fears and dreams.
- 2) The book begins with Tuck telling us the “legend” of his “arrival into the world.” Why is he telling us this story—which is clearly untrue? Who would have told Tuck such a disturbing story about his conception and birth? And why?
- 3) Is Barry Goff evil for funding The Cloven Project? Is Dr. Kenneth Langner evil for creating the Cloven? Is Anita Turner, Tuck's surrogate mother, evil for raising Tuck to be a normal child, “just a little different?” Is Tuck evil for having been created? Discuss the complicity and responsibility of each party vis-à-vis the creation of a new species.
- 4) After Dr. Langner gives his severance check to his wife, Cathy, he says: “At what price, the lives of our children?” What does he mean by this?
- 5) Tuck was created in a laboratory, born from a synthetic womb. Does he have the same rights as human babies born to other humans? Is he free to live his life as he chooses? Is Tuck the child of his creator, Dr. Langner? Is he the property of his benefactor, Barry Goff? Is he a free entity with certain inalienable rights, such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness?

- 6) The “urban” band of Cloven live among the homeless population in Seattle, where they take refuge from the weather and the dangers of homelessness beneath the shelter of Interstate 5. Why do people not care or seem to know about them? Why don’t the authorities do something?
- 7) Most countries in the world have laws prohibiting experimentation on the human genome. The United States of America does not.* Do you believe people should have the opportunity to modify their own genes or the genes of their offspring? What will the world look like if “designer babies” become the new normal?
- 8) Tuck spends time living in a homeless encampment. He spent part of his childhood living with Barry Goff’s family and the privileges of extreme wealth. What does this dichotomy say about income inequality in our society? In which scenario was Tuck more “free?”

ACTIVITIES:

- 1) Write a scene in which you have an encounter with a Cloven. Where does the encounter take place? Is the Cloven friendly or evasive, shy or bold? Describe the Cloven’s physical bearing as well as his or her emotional state. Does the Cloven speak? Does the Cloven interact with you, or flee? Do you tell people about your encounter?
- 2) Literature is full of rich characters who are forced to live on the fringes of society, such as: Dr. Frankenstein’s creature from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*; or, *The Modern Prometheus*; Jesse Tuck from *Tuck Everlasting*; Quasimodo from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*; Tom Wingfield from *The Glass Menagerie*. These characters are all attempting to survive in a social construct that declares them to be outsiders, freaks, or mutants. Choose one of these characters, or find one of your own, and compare and contrast their plight with the plight of Tuck in *The Cloven: Book One*.

BONUS ACTIVITY:

Visit the timeline page of TheClovenProject.com. <https://theclovenproject.com/timeline-of-events/> Familiarize yourself with the events on this page. Can you tell which articles are “real” and which are “fake?” Select two articles and write briefly about how you determined their veracity or falsity.

*The laws around genetics are rapidly changing; still, without regulation, scientists are left to police themselves. We hope they are good police. DOUBLE-BONUS ACTIVITY: Explore ethics in bioengineering in an essay! (Well, you must be interested...you’re reading the fine print!)