

[The Black Book of Secrets](#) by F. E. Higgins.  
Feiwel and Friends, 2007

Running from a terrible past, Ludlow Fitch arrives in a remote village and becomes an assistant to a mysterious pawnbroker, who trades people's deepest secrets for cash. A spine-chilling read.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. This book appears to have no author – who is this F.E. Higgins, and how did she find this manuscript?  
How did you feel about this framework to the story?
2. What was your reaction to the first chapter when Ludlow escapes to Pagus Parvus? Ludlow says he was the first person to see Joe Zabbidou and wonders – “was it just a coincidence (p.9) that had them both arrive at the same time, or were there other powers at work?” What do you think?
3. Does everyone understand what a pawnbroker does?  
Why does Joe call himself The Secret Pawnbroker?  
Why did Joe pick Ludlow to be his assistant?
4. The names of people and places are rather strange –the tooth puller is Barton Gumbroot; then there is Obbadiah Strang, the gravedigger; Horatio Cleaver, the butcher; and our bad guy Jeremiah Ratchet What did you think about these names? What kind of an atmosphere did they give the story? Where and when do you think the story takes place?
5. Ludlow was raised by his evil parents to steal. Why couldn't he steal from the pawnbroker, Mr. Jellico? He steals the watch pieces and the notebook from Joe (p.68) why does he give them back?
6. P. 67-question about luck vs destiny. Joe asks Ludlow if he believes in luck. Is Ludlow lucky? Why or why not?
7. P. 85 – Ludlow asks Joe if he can save the villagers from that scoundrel Jeremiah ratchet. And Joe responds – “No matter how bad the situation I cannot change the course of things.” What do you think he meant by this?  
Other than replaying their debts how did the confessions affect the villagers?  
Why does Joe listen to everyone's confessions at midnight?  
Why do you think the villagers began to turn against Joe after he had helped them? ( P. 186)
8. Was justice done to Jeremiah? How did he die – was it the frog or the pie?
9. Is the book real or is it magical?  
The satchel Joe opens on p.13 “It was deceptively spacious.”  
What about Saluki – is she real or magical?
10. Why was Ludlow chosen to be the next secret pawnbroker? Do you think he is the right choice? Why?

