

[The City of Ember](#) by Jeanne DuPrau  
(Random, 2003)

Ember, a 241 year-old domed city surrounded by a dark unknown, is dying. But when Doon and Lina find a mysterious message “Instructions for Egress,” they think they have a way out. Can they escape in time?



### Discussion Questions

1. The author, Jeanne DuPrau says she grew up in the 1950's when everyone was scared of the world being destroyed and they built bomb shelters. This book has been stirring inside her for 20 years.
2. Lina has visions of a city lighter, taller with more windows (p.25) – since all connections with the past have been severed over 240 years before, why do you think she is having these visions?
3. How are the main characters Lina and Doon different?  
(Doon wants to work in the pipeworks, he likes to study how things work. Lina wants to be a messenger and she likes to explore.)  
How do they compliment each other and help one another?
4. Lina questions – “who made the builders, who made us, the answer must be somewhere outside of Ember.” (p. 68).  
Why is it that Lina and Doon question the status quo or the way things have always been?
5. What possessed Lina to buy two pencils from Looper?
6. The possibility of never ending darkness changes many of Lina's friends. Lizzie has begun to accept things from someone who is stealing them from the store room.  
P.153 “It was unfair that people could get supplies just because they were in a position to get them.” Why did this make Lina feel uncomfortable? People react in various ways when they feel threatened. How do other people in Ember react to the impending danger?
7. Atmosphere in the town – the author made herself a map to give her a feeling for the town.  
How does the author create suspense through descriptions of the town?  
How do the names contribute to mood of story?
8. There are different groups within the town –  
The believers (believe that everything will be all right),  
The corrupt government officials. Lina's friend Cary says the mayor has always been foolish, but now the worst side of him has won out – he has turned wicked.  
The townspeople just seem to accept the situation. Why do you think they act this way?  
What is the author saying about human nature?  
Cary tells Lina, “Everyone has some darkness inside. It's like a hungry creature.” (P. 168) What do you think Cary means by this comment? In what other ways is light important?
9. There are many rituals in Ember, the Book of Ember  
The Library - Mysterious Words from the Past (p.120)

Singing at the gathering place - The Song of the City

What part do these rituals play in the life of the citizens of Ember?

10. Why do you think the old woman wrote the last message?

Why did she and the old man name the babies Star and Forest?

11. What motivated the builders to set up the experiment in the first place?

“It’s supposed to ensure that, no matter what happens, people won’t disappear from the earth” (P. 259)

Do you think it was a good plan?

Several questions were based on a [Random House book discussion guide](#) to The City of Ember accessed 2/1/2005