

1. It is important to place this book into historical context. Share what you know about Sputnik and the Space Race of the late 1950's – early 1960's.
2. There were many failures in the rocket development, both in the U.S. and Russian space programs and for the Rocket Boys. Should they have been deterred by these? Would you have? What motivated each to keep trying?
3. There's a saying, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." How is this true in *Rocket Boys*? Do you see this in your own community?
4. Everyone in Homer's family wanted to get out of Coalwood except his father. How did the other members of the family deal with their desires? Why did Homer's father want to stay?
5. Homer's relationship with his father changed over time – describe how and why. Was Homer's father a "good" father? Why? Why not?
6. Other family relationships affected Homer, too. What part did his mother play in his success? How did his relationship with his brother affect his life?
7. What does this story tell you about the challenges of breaking out of an expected pattern? Can you find an example of this in your life/family?
8. What does Homer say about the value of education in his story? Do you think your education has made/will make a difference in your life?
9. Do you think Homer Sr. and Elsie loved each other? Can people care about each other when they disagree strongly on something?
10. With which character did you identify most? Why?
11. In the story, Rocket Boy O'Dell says, "A rocket won't fly unless someone lights the fuse." He's talking about more than just a rocket... What do you think he is saying?
12. Could this story have only taken place in Coalwood, WV, or is this a "universal" story? Why or why not?