

JONATHAN LIVINGSTON SEAGULL

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. P. 56: To fly as fast as thought, to anywhere that is [...] you must begin by knowing that you have already arrived.
2. p. 58: Chiang speaks to JLS: "You will be ready to begin to fly up and know the meaning of kindness and of love."
3. p. 59: Chiang speaks to JLS: "'Jonathan, he said, and these were the last words that he spoke, 'keep working on love.'"
4. p. 90 JLS speaks to Fletcher: "You don't need me any longer. You need to keep finding yourself, a little more each day, that real, unlimited Fletcher Seagull. He's your instructor. You need to understand him and to practice him. . . . Don't let them spread silly rumors about me or make me a god. O.K. Fletch? I'm a seagull. I like to fly, maybe . . ."
5. p.100: ". . . They [Fletcher and other students of JLS] were honored, and worse—revered, but they were no longer heard, and the birds who practiced flying were fewer and fewer."

6. In response to Jean's "not special" comment:

Is it possible that we all have our next levels, personal next steps, goals that make our lives meaningful? Goals/steps may not look, feel, be "special" to anyone else, but, for the individual, the learning, the growth IS that which gives our life purpose, meaning, and makes it enjoyable.

7. Does it take courage to learn, to achieve at a next level? If so, why/how? If not, why not?
8. Do you see analogies between the following practices described in the novel and ceremonies, rituals practiced in contemporary society: building cairns of pebbles; establishing the location called the Rock of Oneness; carrying heavier and heavier branches as a means of gaining attention, prestige in the Flock; gathering on Tuesdays to hear an Official Flock Student recite "miracles of JLS."
9. Have you read another novel where animals acted like people (they are anthropomorphized)?
10. Is the lesson of Jonathan Livingston Seagull still relevant today? (from Jean)