

**BAEN BOOKS TEACHER'S GUIDE TO *FIRE SEASON*
BY DAVID WEBER AND JANE LINDSKOLD**



Contents:

- recommended reading levels
- biographical material and links
- background of the book and plot summary
- character sketches
- guides for segments of the book which include plot summaries of each chapter and may also include some of the following:
 - prepare to read . . .
 - vocabulary
 - focus questions or initiating activity
 - quiz/reading comprehension questions—multiple choice/short answer questions to testing reading comprehension
 - reflection and discussion questions—may be used to initiate classroom discussion, as short writing assignments, or as test questions
 - suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration—suggestions for activities and projects

Recommended reading levels: *Fire Season* is appropriate for a young adult audience. Classroom use of the book is probably most appropriate for middle school students.

Biographical information on David Weber:

David Weber is a popular, best-selling author of science fiction and fantasy. He was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1952. He graduated from Hillcrest High School in Simpsonville, South Carolina, in 1970 and received a bachelor's degree from Warren Wilson College. Weber also did graduate work in history at Appalachian State University. He started writing poetry and short fiction when he was in the fifth grade. His mother was an advertising copywriter and trained him in that craft. Before becoming a full-time writer of fiction, he worked in advertising, public relations, and war-game design. His first novel, *Insurrection*, was published in 1990. This book, a collaboration with Steve White, grew out of Weber's experience as a game designer. He has written over fifty solo and collaborative novels and contributed to numerous anthologies of short fiction. He is best

known as an author of science fiction with military themes, but he has also written fantasy, “space operas,” and alternate history. Weber and his wife Sharon, along with their children, dogs and cats, live in Greenville, South Carolina.¹

Biographical resources on the web:

- Weber has provided an interesting biographical sketch on his website, *David Weber*, <http://www.davidweber.net/biography>.
- “David Weber,” *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Weber.

Biographical information on Jane Lindskold:

Jane Lindskold is a popular author of science fiction and fantasy. She was born in Washington, D.C., in 1962. She graduated from Immaculata Preparatory High School in Washington, D.C., in 1980, and received a bachelor’s degree from Fordham University. At the age of twenty-six, Lindskold also received a Ph. D. in English from Fordham, concentrating on Medieval, Renaissance, and Modern British Literature. She taught for a year at Fordham before moving to position as Assistant Professor of English at Lynchburg College in Virginia. There, Lindskold could also concentrate on writing science fiction and fantasy stories, often influenced by her upbringing in the most political city in the United States. The mechanics of government and political issues often appear in her work. In 1992, she began publishing short stories. In 1994, she left Lynchburg College and divorced her first husband. She moved to New Mexico and work with her closest friend and mentor Roger Zelazny. When Zelazny died of cancer, she completed two of his unfinished books, *Donnerjack* and *Lord Demon*. She has written over twenty solo and collaborative novels and has published over sixty short stories. Lindskold and her husband, archaeologist Jim Moore, live in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Biographical resources on the web:

- Lindskold has provided an interesting biographical sketch on her website, *Jane Lindskold*, <http://www.janelindskold.com/bio.html>
- “Jane Lindskold,” *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Lindskold

Suggested class activity: Have your students read the autobiographical information on Weber and Lindskold’s websites before they begin the book. Ask them to make notes as they read. Have the class discuss the several different influences that led Weber and Lindskold to become a writer. They also might want to explore some of the interviews available on Youtube and Baen’s website (<http://baen.com/interview.asp>) in which Weber discusses his development and interests as an author.

For further information on David Weber, Jane Lindskold, and their work:

- Weber’s and Lindskold’s websites contain a wealth of material that students may enjoy exploring in addition to their biographical details: photos, a bibliography, discussion forums, FAQs, downloads, and information about upcoming appearances (<http://www.davidweber.net> and <http://janelindskold.com/>).
- David Weber’s page at Amazon.com contains a brief biographical note, a list of books available, and a forum for reader comments (http://www.amazon.com/David-Weber/e/B000APBAFE/ref=sr_tc_ep?qid=1308078796).

- Several interesting interviews with Weber are available at Baen's website (<http://baen.com/interview.asp>) and on YouTube.

Bibliographies:

¹ The sources for the information contained in this biographical sketch are David Weber, "Biography," *David Weber*, <http://www.davidweber.net/biography> (accessed June 13, 2011) and "David Weber," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Weber (accessed June 13, 2011).

The sources for the information contained in this biographical sketch are Jane Lindskold, "Biography," <http://www.janelindskold.com/bio.html> (accessed March 18, 2012), "Jane Lindskold," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Lindskold (accessed March 18, 2012), and "Jane Lindskold – Summary Bibliography," http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/ea.cgi?Jane_Lindskold (accessed March 18, 2012).²

You can find bibliographies of Weber's work at his own website (<http://www.davidweber.net/books>), at the website *Internet Speculative Fiction Database* (isfdb.org) (http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/ea.cgi?David_Weber), at the website *Fantastic Fiction* (<http://www.fantasticfiction.co.uk/w/david-weber>), at the website *SFBookcase* (<http://www.sfbookcase.com/author.asp?author=David+Weber>), and on *Wikipedia* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Weber).

You can find bibliographies of Lindskold's work at her own website (<http://www.janelindskold.com/novels.html> and <http://www.janelindskold.com/other.html>), at the website *Internet Speculative Fiction Database* (isfdb.org) (http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/ea.cgi?Jane_Lindskold), at the website *Fantastic Fiction* (<http://www.fantasticfiction.co.uk/l/jane-m-lindskold/>), at the website *SFBookcase* (<http://www.sfbookcase.com/author.asp?forename=Jane&surname=Lindskold>), and on *Wikipedia* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Lindskold).

Background:

Published by Baen Books in 2012, *Fire Season* fills in some of the background for Weber's best-selling Honor Harrington adult science fiction series. The protagonist, Stephanie Harrington, is one of Honor's ancestors. It is also the second book in a young adult series dealing with the Star Kingdom of Manticore. Students may be interested in delving into the wiki for its heroine, Stephanie Harrington (http://honorverse.wikia.com/wiki/Stephanie_Harrington), and exploring other facets of what has come to be called the "Honorverse" in which the book is set (http://honorverse.wikia.com/wiki/Main_Page).

Plot Summary: Stephanie Harrington and her parents have settled into the frontier planet of Sphinx with her native treecat companion Climbs Quickly. Almost fifteen terran years old when the story opens, Stephanie wrestles with adolescence and its accompanying emotional trials. Rebellious but quickwitted, she and her friend Karl discover a human-caused fire that endangers the lives of treecats, also known as "The People." They save the treecats, but the fire sets in motion a future conflict with other treecat clans, who already distrust many of the humans on Sphinx. Stephanie meets Anders Whittaker, who

visits Sphinx with his father's xeno-anthropology expedition, and she develops a crush on him. When Dr. Whittaker accidentally strands his expedition and nearly fatally injures one of his crew, Stephanie and the rest of the Sphinx Forestry Service search for them, only to be deterred by another major forest fire, which threatens not only the Damp Ground Clan of treecats, but Anders and his father's team. Can Stephanie and the SFS save the endangered treecats? And will attempting to save the Damp Ground Clean mean she cannot reach Anders in time?

Major Characters:

- Stephanie Harrington is a young woman, almost fifteen terran years old when the story opens. An intelligent, only child, she is impatient to test the limits of her maturity. Stephanie is a "genie," a human with genetic mutations designed to help her adapt better to high gravity planets, but these mutations also give her other skills as well.
- Richard Harrington is Stephanie's father. He has degrees in both Terran and xeno-veterinary medicine.
- Marjorie Harrington is Stephanie's mother. She is a plant geneticist.
- Climbs Quickly is the treecat, a member Sphinx's sentient native species. He acts as a link between treecats and humans. Stephanie and her family call him Lionheart.
- Scott MacDallan is a medical doctor on Sphinx and the second person to develop a bond with a treecat.
- Karl Zivonik is Stephanie's friend and Scott MacDallan and Irina Kisaevna's nephew.
- Anders Whittaker is a young man visiting with a team of anthropologists and is Stephanie's crush.
- Dr. Bradford Whittaker is the head of the xeno-anthropology team from the planet Urako, and is Anders' father. He leads his crew into disaster.
- Dr. Calida Emberly, Kesia Guyen, Dr. Virgil Iwamoto, Dr. Langston Nez, and Dacey Emberly are all part of Dr. Whittaker's team.
- Sanura Hobbard is a xeno-anthropologist who introduces Stephanie to Dr. Whittaker and his team.
- Jessica Pheriss was friends with Trudy, but becomes closer to Stephanie. Her family lives in the Sphinx equivalent of poverty.
- Trudy Franchitti is Stephanie's age and an enemy. The two never avoid competing with one another.
- Toby Mednick is a member of Stephanie's hang gliding club and becomes her friend.
- Stan Chang is Trudy's boyfriend and a cause of much trouble for Stephanie's friends.
- Christine Schroeder is a member of Stephanie's hang gliding club and becomes her friend.
- Chet Pontier is a member of Stephanie's hang gliding club and becomes her friend.
- Frank Lethbridge is a Sphinx Forestry Service ranger and one of two rangers who trained Stephanie and Karl.

- Ainsley Jedrusinski is a Sphinx Forestry Service ranger.
- Gary Shelton is Chief Ranger of the Forestry Service on Sphinx.
- Scott McDallan is Karl’s uncle and also has a treecat companion.

The Honorverse wiki (http://honorverse.wikia.com/wiki/Main_Page) contains a useful link with short descriptions of most of the characters in the “Honorverse” (<http://honorverse.wikia.com/wiki/Category:Characters>) as well as links for geography, political groups, and star nations that students might find useful as they navigate the book.

GUIDE TO chapters 1—4 Prepare to Read

- Familiarize yourself with the following vocabulary and terms:
 - the prefix xeno-
 - mirror twins
 - nano tech
 - atavistic
 - linguistics
 - non-indigenous
 - paternalistic
 - lithics
 - parasite

- **Focus question/initiating activity:** Investigate with your students why fires are used for ecological containment. Ask them to think about the benefits and the dangers of such tactics, and how fires are different on Sphinx and earth.

Chapter Summaries:

- Chapter 1: Stephanie Harrington, the nearly fifteen-year-old heroine, tests her boundaries by flying an air car before she has received her learner’s permit or her license. Her best friend Karl lets her drive so she can prepare to test for a provisional license on her fifteenth birthday. While she and Karl navigate the forests, Climbs Quickly, her six-legged treecat companion, detects a fire. Stephanie and Karl have been trained in the dangers of potential forest fires and radio into the Forestry Service, where they volunteer as junior rangers, to let them know the fire is about to quickly spread. However, the fire is not a normal fire. It blazes on the land of Stephanie’s enemy, Trudy Franchitti, and, to make matters worse, treecats are caught in the blaze, unable to escape. Climbs Quickly successfully communicates this terrible danger to Stephanie.

- Chapter 2: Instead of calling for help to rescue the two trapped treecats, the ever-resourceful and rebellious Stephanie attempts to rescue them. Right-stripe, one of the treecats, has been badly burned by the fire and is unconscious, so Left-stripe, his brother communicates to Climbs Quickly that they are trapped in a tree and unable to escape. The fire combined with the wind makes for a dangerous combination and Climbs Quickly worries he has doomed all of them to death. Stephanie, undeterred, straps on a fire-suit, adjusts her counter-gravity unit, and steps out of the car to help rescue the two ‘cats, even as fire latches onto the branch on which she stands. She successfully rescues the two, and

she and Karl take the 'cats to her father so he can assess the fire's damage on their bodies. Her father treats the 'cats for smoke inhalation and treats Right-Stripe's burns. He also lectures her about carrying Climbs Quickly on her back because he thinks she will develop a stoop. Elsewhere, Anders Whittaker, who is fascinated with treecats and with what he has heard about Stephanie, lands on Sphinx with his father and his father's team of xeno-anthropologists, who have been allowed access to study the treecat culture on Sphinx.

□ Chapter 3: Stephanie agrees to meet with a team of off-world xeno-anthropologists, led by Dr. Whittaker. Dr. Hubbard warns the team to respect Stephanie as she is an expert when it comes to treecats. Anders' father allows Anders to join the expedition, and they talk about the treecats' intelligence and what kind of rights they should have, beyond the ones their protectors, who think they know what rights the animals should have, allow. In this conversation, Dr. Whittaker also tries to convince Anders to sweet talk Stephanie so she will trust the team and will tell them secrets about the treecats. Meanwhile, Climbs Quickly communicates with the wounded treecats Left-Stripe and Right-Stripe, who have been healed by Stephanie's father. They explain to Climbs Quickly that they were in this terrain because human settlement has disrupted their other habitats. Stephanie and Karl go to the Sphinx Forestry Service to meet Dr. Whittaker and his team. She meets Anders, who she immediately likes, despite his questions about whether or not Climbs Quickly could go back to living among his own people without any problems. She explains to the crew that treecats do have empathy, but she does not know precisely how they manage to communicate so effectively with one another.

□ Chapter 4: Stephanie invites Anders to her family's freehold to meet Left-Stripe and Right-Stripe and to go on a hike. Using a system of hand signals to communicate with Climbs Quickly, Stephanie, Karl, and Anders study the two recovering treecats before leaving for their hike. Stephanie and Karl teach Anders to use a handgun while they practice shooting. Climbs Quickly leaves the practice to accompany Left-Stripe and Right-Stripe, who are returning to the Damp Ground Clan. He is disappointed to lose his new friends, but understands why they must leave. At dinner, Stephanie is dismayed to find out her parents will not allow her to get her provisional license on her birthday because they are planning a party for her. They tell her to invite people from her hang gliding club, who are her own age, which upsets her. They argue that Stephanie needs to socialize especially if she hopes to help teach others to respect the treecats. Stephanie thinks her parents will not allow her to get her provisional license and leaves the table abruptly, even when Climbs Quickly tries to soothe her. Climbs Quickly is confused by her behavior and consults with Sings Truly and Twig Weaver from his own clan. They remind him that Stephanie is still growing up and that her emotional outburst is a symptom of that; they tell him to act as the wiser one and remain aware that Stephanie is growing up.

Quiz/Reading Comprehension Questions:

1. Why does Stephanie want a provisional license? (chap. 1)
2. Why are Stephanie and her family called "genies"? (chap. 1)
 - a. It is short for "genius." They all have extremely high IQs.

- b. They are genetically engineered humans.
 - c. They come from humans who originally developed on the planet Gena.
 - d. They are descendants of humans who were voluntarily interbred to preserve superior genes.
3. What does Anders Whittaker do to adjust to Sphinx? (chap. 2)
 - a. He wears an oxygen mask.
 - b. He uses a counter-gravity unit.
 - c. He wears a brace to compensate for the extra arms he grows.
 - d. Both A and B.
 4. Why does Stephanie's father lecture her about carrying Climbs Quickly on her back? (chap. 2)
 - a. He thinks she will get scoliosis.
 - b. Climbs Quickly claws through her clothing and ruins all her clothes.
 - c. He is afraid she is too emotionally attached to the treecat.
 - d. She makes people her age jealous.
 5. Why were Left-Stripe and Right-Stripe so close to human territory when the fire started? (chap. 3)
 - a. They went there to start the fire and stop further human settlement.
 - b. They were scouting the area for ecological growth, thanks to human farming habits.
 - c. They were holding a rally to organize against trappers and hunters.
 - d. They were lost and hungry.
 6. Why does Dr. Whittaker call the Sphinx Forestry Service paternalistic? (chap. 3)
 - a. They are the forefathers of the planet.
 - b. They use their forms of technology to determine the best treatment for creatures on the planet and to protect the treecats.
 - c. He does not like the way they control the treecats.
 - d. They engineer creatures in laboratories and set them free to repopulate the forests.
 7. Why is the system of hand signals Climbs Quickly and Stephanie have developed so important? (chap. 4)
 - a. They show treecat intelligence.
 - b. They allow the two of them to interact when they do not have a common language.
 - c. It helps humans understand when to safely approach a new situation involving treecats.
 - d. All of the above
 8. Why is Climbs Quickly so confused by Stephanie's behavior? (chap. 4)

Answers:

1. Her parents are often too busy to take her where she needs to go; she also likes the independence it offers. 2. b 3. b 4. a 5. b 6. b 7. d 8. She is experiencing hormonal growing pains that cause her emotional state to fluctuate quickly.

Suggested Activity/Inquiry-Based Exploration:

Some humans on Sphinx are hesitant to grant treecats protection and/or rights, for a

number of reasons. Have your students explore the problems and possibilities involved in allowing that another species might be just as intelligent as humans. Weber and Lindsfold offers some glimpses of both in chapter 1: what are they? You might divide your students into teams to debate the pros and cons of human interactions with other intelligent species. Some useful resources:

- A free lesson plan on human feelings toward animals, animal evolution and intelligence for grades 9-12 is available at the New York Times website (<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/08/10/1-years-of-lesson-plans-about-the-animal-kingdom/#>)
- Catherine Hutchings and Bridget Anderson, “[Love Them or Leave Them?](http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/02/love-them-or-leave-them/)” – Designing an experiment identifying factors that influence humans’ attitudes, feelings and ambivalence toward animals. (<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/02/love-them-or-leave-them/>)
- Kenneth Sleight, “How Animals Adapt to their Environments,” at brighthub.com (<http://www.brighthub.com/environment/science-environmental/articles/124903.aspx>)
- Marcella Runell and Yasmin Chin Eisenhauer, [What’s All the Buzz About?](http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2006/05/02/whats-all-the-buzz-about/) Exploring unique animal behaviors and considering ways in which humans perform similar behaviors. (<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2006/05/02/whats-all-the-buzz-about/>)

GUIDE TO chapters 5—8 Prepare to Read

- Familiarize yourself with the following vocabulary and terms
 - the prefix ethno-
 - permutations
 - quinceañera
 - egalitarian
 - portulaca
 - nodal
 - the prefix hexa-
 - Terran
 - provisional
 - reproof

- Focus question/initiating activity: Why is it necessary that explorers and anthropologists not “taint” research sites? What is the importance of preserving a piece of land used by the species or group that researchers are studying? Have your students explore the concept of “conservation” and efforts made today to preserve areas that other species use with frequency.

Chapter Summaries:

- Chapter 5: Ranger Jedrusinski takes Dr. Whittaker and his team, including Anders, out to explore the native landscapes and creatures of Sphinx. Ranger Jedrusinski explains that although treecats make tools, they do not fashion tools to harm other beings; in the case of self-defense, they rely on their six limbs to protect themselves against predators. When Jedrusinski takes the group to see a former treecat habitat, the group discusses their

purpose in being there. Ranger Jedrusinski tells them the SFS does not know where all the treecat territories are. It's the responsibility of Dr. Whittaker's team to study the treecats to determine how sentient they are. Several groups on Sphinx do not feel the treecats are as intelligent as some of the signs suggest, and Jedrusinski notes this problem causes strife for those who want the land for private use. After the expedition ends, Stephanie's mother calls to invite Anders to her birthday party, while Stephanie goes to hang gliding club with the instructions to invite people her age. As usual, she is pitted against Trudy because the two do not get along, but Stephanie successfully invites Chet, Toby, Christine, and Jessica to her party. However, unbeknownst to Stephanie, her mother has invited Trudy to the party. When Stephanie finds out that both Trudy and Anders are coming to her party she nearly explodes.

□ Chapter 6: Anders arrives at Stephanie's party and watches them hand glide before meeting the other members of the hang gliding club. Stephanie and Trudy war it out on their gliders before coming down to dinner. When Trudy meets Anders, she does everything she can to flirt with him, but her terrible attitude toward treecats repels him. Irina Kisaevna quizzes Anders on what his father can add to local treecat knowledge, which starts a discussion, spearheaded by Trudy on the differences between treecat and human intelligence. Trudy accuses Stephanie of hypocrisy when Stephanie asks if treecats do not deserve rights; Trudy comments on the displacement of other species that occurs when any human settles into the territory. Jessica disagrees with Trudy and explains that human settlement makes care for other species even more important. Stephanie's mom cuts them off, and after Trudy is out of earshot, Stephanie's friends rally around her to voice their support of Stephanie.

□ Chapter 7: Stephanie finally tests for her provisional license and passes with flying colors. While walking to a celebratory lunch, Stephanie overhears bullies Stan Chang and Focus Câmara bullying her pal Toby, pressuring him to take drugs with them. She intervenes and rescues Toby from their clutches, cementing a stronger friendship with him. While taking some time to himself, Climbs Quickly notices a change in the weather, and fears for the coming season, since it is sure to bring dry, destructive fires through the region. Meanwhile, Anders overhears his father arguing with Dr. Nez, who disapproves of Dr. Whittaker's decision to overstep the rules of their trip. When Anders learns his father means to go to the abandoned treecat site, he resolves to go along too. Stephanie rides home with Jessica one afternoon after hang gliding club. When Jessica takes Stephanie to her house first, Stephanie realizes just how impoverished Jessica's family really is. Stephanie convinces her mom to interview Jessica's mom for an assistant botany position.

□ Chapter 8: Anders accompanies his father's team on a secret expedition to the abandoned treecat site. While they explore the site, their air van begins sinking into a bog. Dr. Langston Nez climbs into the sinking van to pass out supplies; in the process he gets sucked into the bog and narrowly escapes death. While the rest of the team is busy attending to Dr. Nez, who is unconscious and breathing shallowly, Dr. Whittaker cleans himself up and puts on fresh clothes. Uncharacteristically, Anders explodes at his father, blaming him for stranding the team deep in the woods, far from where anyone knows to

look for them, without any means of contacting help.

Quiz/Reading Comprehension Questions (Section 2, Chapters 5-8):

1. Anders asks Ranger Jedrusinski what a “Forestry Service District” is. What is the answer the ranger gives him? (chap. 5)
2. What, according to Ranger Jedrusinski are the strongest indicators of treecat intelligence? (chap. 5)
 - a. stone tools
 - b. walkie-talkies
 - c. nets
 - d. Both A and C.
3. Why is Dr. Marjorie Harrington’s profession as a botanist so important for the citizens of Sphinx?
 - a. She is able to communicate with plants so people understand where to cultivate the best growth.
 - b. Her hybrid experiments enable humans to have the necessary nutrients to survive on Sphinx.
 - c. Both A and B.
 - d. None of the above.
4. What does Trudy disagree with, in regard to treecat rights?(chap. 6)
 - a. They should receive protection because Sphinx is their only planet.
 - b. They can use tools, which proves intelligence.
 - c. Humans have more power than treecats because they can control the land.
 - d. Both A and B.
5. What causes the seasonal fires Climbs Quickly fears so? (chap. 7)
 - a. A change in season, bringing lightning and storms.
 - b. Humans clearing undergrowth.
 - c. Increases in nano-technological experiments on the environment.
 - d. Holiday celebrations.
6. Why does Dr. Whittaker decide to go to the abandoned treecat site without getting permission first? (chap. 7)
 - a. He’ll avoid a biased study because he won’t have to study captive ‘cats.
 - b. He’s a renegade.
 - c. He thinks the SFS is too protective of treecats.
 - d. Both A and C.
7. Why is Virgil Iwamoto so excited upon finding evidence of treecats’ stone tools?
 - a. He needs a sharp tool to cut Dr. Nez loose.
 - b. The tools, located in specific areas, prove that the treecats are intelligent.
 - c. The stone tools imply that treecats have specialists and can focus on specific tasks necessary to the improvement of their clans.
 - d. Both B and C.

8. Why does Dr. Langston Nez lose consciousness? (Chapter 8)

Answers:

1. Lands owned by the crown. The SFS ensures the conservation of these lands, to the dismay of settlers who would like to use the lands for monetary profit.
2. d
3. b. 4. d 5. a 6. d 7. d 8. He climbs into the sinking air van to rescue supplies, gets sucked into the bog, and inhales mud.

GUIDE TO chapters 9-12 Prepare to Read

- Familiarize yourself with the following vocabulary and terms
 - gleaning
 - incipient
 - insubordination
 - fire tetrahedron or “fire triangle”
 - pathetic
 - conflagration
 - seminal
 - displacement
 - candling
 - hypothermia
 - tussocks
 - hummocks
 - comatose

- Focus question/initiating activity: Investigate the concept of ethics, in the contexts of balancing environmental preservation, profitability, and career/work advancement. Ask your students what kind of principles they think others should abide by when trying to balance often conflicting areas of interest. What behavior is acceptable and what is not?

Chapter Summaries:

- Chapter 9: Karl informs Stephanie that Anders and the rest of Dr. Whittaker's crew have been missing for four days. The SFS has searched for them at all the sites where they were supposed to be, and their ongoing search is still focused on the area north of Twin Forks. Dr. Whittaker attempts to place blame on his crew, while they deal with the situation by caring for Dr. Nez, conserving their anti-grav units' power, and foraging for food.

- Chapter 10: Anders makes a giant X on the bog and flies a brightly colored flag in a treetop to attract rescue. Dr. Whittaker downplays their predicament, asking his crew to continue their research as usual, but they edge towards mutiny. Anders stands up for the SFS against his father, and Dr. Whittaker tries to hit him. Elsewhere, a forest fire has started, which makes the search for Whittaker's team a lower priority.

- Chapter 11: Whittaker's team becomes aware of the threat of fire and begins to plan accordingly. Meanwhile, Climbs Quickly senses the distressed communications of a treecat clan that is threatened by fire, and he leads Stephanie, Karl, and Jessica to them. Stephanie summons her friends Chet, Christine, and Toby to help them rescue the treecat clan, and Climbs Quickly guides some younglings who have evacuated ahead of the rest of the clan. Some of these younglings take Climbs Quickly's instruction willingly, but others, influenced by their parents' disapproval of Climbs Quickly, are not so willing.
- Chapter 12: As Whittaker's crew move their camp to an island in the bog, the instability of Dr. Whittaker's mental condition becomes more obvious, and Anders worries that as a result he will be taken from the treecats and from his new friends. Meanwhile, Stephanie, Karl, and Jessica work to create a firebreak to give the Damp Ground Clan more time to evacuate. Chet, Christine, and Toby swoop in with a truck that will be able to carry many treecats to safety, but only if Climbs Quickly's diplomacy is successful. Many members of the Damp Ground Clan are afraid of two-legs – they've heard the stories of Speaks Falsely who kidnapped many People -- and they do not believe that Stephanie and her friends are there to help. As they work desperately on the fire line, a burning tree falls on Jessica.

Quiz/Reading Comprehension Questions (Section 3, Chapters 9 – 12):

1. Why are Anders and his father's crew unable to use their uni-links?
 - a. They sank with the van.
 - b. Dr. Whittaker will not allow his crew to alert the authorities they are missing.
 - c. A hexapuma cornered them and separated them from the communication devices.
 - d. The uni-links are off-world models and cannot be used to communicate long range.
2. What measures do Anders and the rest of the party (besides Dr. Whittaker) take to deal with the emergency? (Chapter 9)
3. How does Anders try to attract help? (chap. 10)
 - a. makes a big X on the bog
 - b. puts a flag up in a tree
 - c. both of the above
 - d. none of the above
4. What urgent task does the Sphinx Forestry Service assign Stephanie and Karl?
 - a. To help establish a new home for a group of abandoned tree kittens.
 - b. To train volunteers in SFS protocol
 - c. They are to check out a southern forest fire to determine the danger of it spreading.
 - d. To find Anders and his father's team.
5. Why is picket wood in particular such a dangerous tree when it comes to forest

fires?

- a. It carries a natural form of kerosene in its trunk and acts as a common form of petroleum for people on Sphinx.
 - b. Its branches extend for long distances, creating a bridge for any fire.
 - c. It is sentient and is at war with the humans of Sphinx.
 - d. Both A and B.
6. When Climbs Quickly encounters some young People evacuating before the rest of the clan, why does one young treecat resist his guidance? (Chapter 11)
7. What worries Anders the most about his father's (Dr. Whittaker's) disgraceful behavior? (Chapter 12)
8. Where is the Whittaker party's camp before they become aware of the fire? To where do they move it? (Chapter 12)

Answers:

1. d 2. They conserve their counter-grav units' power, forage for food, and care for Dr. Nez. 3. c 4. c 5. b 6. Her father told her Climbs Quickly is a disgrace.
7. Anders is worried that he will have to leave the treecats and his other new friends, especially Stephanie. 8. Originally they set up camp high up in the rock trees. When they become aware of the fire, they move it to a stable island in the bog.

Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration:

1. Both treecats and humans tend to give each other names based on their qualities. Ask your students how they would characterize the types of names the treecats give the humans, and how they would characterize the types of names the humans give the treecats. Then ask them to name each other using both systems. Ask them to write about which names they like better and why.

GUIDE TO chapters 13--15 Prepare to Read

- Familiarize yourself with the following vocabulary and terms
 - ovoid
 - fanatical
 - detritus
 - cultural anthropologist
 - ethno-archeologist
 - altruism
 - bane
 - insubordination
 - amend
 - encroaching
 - apprehensively
 - rube

- siphon
- offal

□ Chapter 13: Treecats and humans unite to save Jessica and a treecat named Dirt Grubber from the fallen tree. They discover that before losing consciousness, Jessica tore open her fire suit to protect Dirt Grubber. The two are barely alive, and the fire has gotten so close that they must evacuate immediately. Fortunately, the treecats are now convinced that the humans are there to help, and they pile into the truck. As they fly away from the fire, they discover that Jessica and Dirt Grubber have bonded in the same way Stephanie and Climbs Quickly did. Meanwhile, the Whittaker crew is menaced by a horrible fanged mud creature.

□ Chapter 14: Left-Striped, having discovered the Whittaker party, leads Stephanie's crew to their rescue. The mud creature dismantles the sonic fence that had been protecting the humans, so they create their own sonic disturbance by banging on buckets and metal. When Stephanie's van-load of treecats arrive, they sing a caterwauling chorus that drives the mud creature away.

□ Chapter 15: A day and a half later, an assortment of interested parties gathers at the Harrington residence to catch up on the details and deal with a few unresolved points. Stephanie is thrilled that, as a condition of Whittaker's team being able to remain on Sphinx, SFS members will join the team, which means Stephanie will see much more of Anders. The humans on Sphinx react favorably to video of the treecats rescuing the Whittaker party from the mud creature; as a result, humans come closer to accepting the treecats' sentience. And the treecats, who have their own meeting, come closer to accepting the humans as allies.

Quiz/Reading Comprehension Questions (Section 4, Chapters 13 – 15):

1. What happens that forms a bond between Jessica (Windswept) and Dirt Grubber (Valiant)? (Chapter 13)
2. Why does Stephanie allow Jessica and Dirt Grubber to ride in the truck bed with the rest of the treecat clan?
 - a. So she can create a diversion and stay behind to search for Anders.
 - b. The treecats can send out soothing waves to help ease stress and pain.
 - c. Climbs Quickly forces her to let them.
 - d. Both A and B.
3. How is Kesia able to avoid the mud creature when it first tries to attack?
 - a. A treecat comes out of hiding to warn her.
 - b. She throws rocks at it.
 - c. She ties it up with one of her scarves.
 - d. Both B and C.
4. What does the mud creature do that makes the Whittaker party think it is smarter than

it looks? (Chapter 14)

5. What does the swamp siren look like?
 - a. An alligator
 - b. A turtle with numerous teeth.
 - c. A tiger with fins.
 - d. A giant, man-eating plant.

6. Dr. Whittaker's team does not leave right away, even with Stephanie's crew rescuing them. Why?
 - a. The mud creature has not really been driven away.
 - b. Dr. Whittaker has treecat artifacts he wants to preserve and needs help carrying.
 - c. Dr. Nez is too fragile to move.
 - d. The truck has run out of gas and cannot carry them all away.

7. Dr. Whittaker and his team are allowed to stay and study the treecats under what condition? (Chapter 15)
 - a. They go to prison for fifteen days.
 - b. They return the treekitten they "rescued" to its clan.
 - c. That he and his team wear tracking beacons whenever they leave their residence.
 - d. Both A and C.

8. What makes the human settlers on Sphinx have a higher opinion of the treecats?

Answers:

1. They each risk their life to save the other when a burning tree falls on them.
2. b
3. a
4. It methodically disassembles the sonic barrier by uprooting the rods with its flippers.
5. b
6. b
7. c
8. The holo-images of the treecats coming to the rescue of the stranded humans had shown that treecats as a community were willing to assist humans.

Suggested activities/inquiry-based exploration:

1. Much of the discussion about treecats and human relations centers around the question of rights. If the treecats are sentient, then they cannot be ignored or treated as not mattering, which brings up several questions: what rights should the treecats have, how does that disrupt human settlements, and in what ways will those opposed to treecat "rights" react that might actually endanger the 'cats? You might divide your students into teams to discuss the pros and cons of granting the native sentient creatures rights. What could people on Sphinx stand to gain from granting the 'cats a say in what happens to their land? You might have your students write papers on the definition of rights and what kind of sentient animals in our own society are granted rights, if any. How do these rights compare with the kind of rights discussed in *Fire Season*?

2. Jessica and Stephanie nearly sacrifice themselves to save treecats. Had they not learned proper fire safety training, both could have easily died. What are the survival

skills they needed to survive in a fire? Have your students explore other survival skills they might need in the face of a natural disaster. What tools would they need in a fire like the ones Stephanie and Jessica faced? What tools and preparedness kits would they need in the face of other natural disasters? Have them write papers about what they would choose to save and what they would have to sacrifice in the face of danger.

3. Have your students choose particular characters to discuss or write about. How realistic was the characterization? What were some of the character's virtues? What were some of their weaknesses? Did you like them or dislike them? Did their actions seem to flow naturally from who they were? Did they change over the course of the book? If the character made a moral choice, do you agree with that choice? Why or why not?