



**Discussion Questions for
Tankborn**
by Karen Sandler

1. In the story, we find out that GENS are “genetically engineered.” What does it mean to be genetically engineered? Can you think of anything we use today that has been genetically engineered or modified? (Examples: fruits and vegetables, corn and soybeans, animals given genetically engineered growth hormones.) Do you think genetic engineering is ethical? How might science sometimes progress at the expense of living things? What are the positives and negatives?
2. What is a sket? If you were a GEN and could determine your own sket, what would you want it to be? What do you think your sket would be used for if you were to be given an Assignment?
3. Sandler introduces many new vocabulary words to describe the world of *Tankborn*. Create a glossary with 10 new words from the book, defining them in your own words and using textual evidence to support your definitions.
4. What is a utopia? What is a dystopia? Would you consider Loka to be more a dystopia or a utopia? Why?
5. Why does Zul Manel have a tattoo on his face, even though he is not a GEN? Can you think of anything else that people on Loka might do to express opposition to the status quo?
6. How do Mishalla and Kayla differentiate people of lowborn, minor-, demi-, and high status? Do we use similar differentiations to place people in society today? How does this book reflect our society?
7. What are some of the technologies we use to communicate with one another today? Who gets to use technology today and how has it changed lives? How did the restriction of the sekai technology impact the GENS?

8. What is the Grid? What is its purpose? How do the lowborns and trueborns in the book justify it? Can you think of any examples from history where one group of people have tried to justify controlling another group of people in a similar way or for similar reasons?
9. One of the characters in *Tankborn* who changes most is Devak. Compare and contrast Devak at the start of the story to his character at the end. How does he change? What are some specific scenes that mark turning points for Devak as a character? Use textual evidence to support your answer.
10. GENs, because they are created with both human and animal DNA, are not considered human in the world of *Tankborn*. If you were a lawmaker in Loka, how would you define what makes someone human?
11. Compare and contrast the GEN religion created by Pouli, Cohn, and Gupta with a religion you've studied (for example, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, etc.). Why was the GEN religion created? How do Kayla's feelings about her religion change over the course of the story? How does the GEN religion contrast with Devak's trueborn religion?
12. Why did the people of Earth relocate to Loka? What kinds of patterns do you see the Lokans repeat on their planet that created the climate problem on Earth? (Example: Do Lokans rely on fossil fuels as much as we currently rely on petroleum? How will that impact the planet?)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Sandler is the author of seventeen novels for adults, as well as several short stories and screenplays. Before becoming a full-time writer, she worked as a software engineer, including work on the Space Shuttle program and communications satellites. Sandler first got the idea for *Tankborn* in the mid-1980s when she wrote it as a screenplay, and over the years while she was writing other books, the idea grew to include the planet Loka and Kayla's life. Sandler lives in northern California with her husband, Gary, and their three cats, and can often be found riding her Andalusian/Morgan mare, Belle. This is her first novel for young adults.

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