**Book Club Discussion Questions**

1. How did Etienne’s mother change throughout the book (she seems to start off weak but eventually stands up for her son)? Why was she so weak, after showing strength in leaving her family to marry Etienne’s father? How do men and women help/balance each other?
2. What do you think turned François into a bully? How did Etienne deal with it in the end? What did he see between François and François’ brother, Tomas? What was their relationship like? Why did they seem so different?
3. Is disobedience for a good cause justified? Etienne left the ship despite the fact that he would be disobeying both his father and the ship’s captain. Was this right?
4. What difficulties and anxieties might Etienne face or has he faced in moving to a new country without knowing anything about it? How has he tried to make a new life for himself? How might Etienne’s story connect to the immigrant story today?
5. Why do you think there was such animosity between the Huguenots (Calvinist Protestants) and the Catholics? Even the French Huguenots and English Puritans (Reformists), after having left their homelands in order to escape religious persecution, both ended up leaving the Netherlands and going to America because they felt that there was too much religious tolerance. Does this make them hypocritical?
6. How does the religious persecution in this book relate to today? How do you think they reconciled intolerance of other beliefs even after experiencing persecution themselves? Do we see the same issues in our society? What does this say about humanity?
7. Looking at your answers to the questions above, what should be our response to people of differing belief systems?