

Reader's Guide for *Good Brother, Bad Brother*

1. Write examples, including page numbers, of when John Wilkes Booth was a "good brother" to his brothers, sisters, or sister-in-law, Mary Devlin Booth.
2. Write examples, including page numbers, of when John Wilkes Booth was a "bad brother" either to his brothers, sisters, or brother-in-law, John Clarke.
3. Write examples, including page numbers, of when John Wilkes Booth was a "good son" to his mother, Mary Ann Booth.
4. Write examples, including page numbers, of when John Wilkes Booth was a "bad son" to his mother, Mary Ann Booth.
5. How do you explain John Wilkes Booth's behavior in helping to get a statue of William Shakespeare erected in New York City (in the North, which he hated, pp. 97–99) and assisting with the rescue of Adam Badeau (Edwin's wounded Union Army friend) during the Draft Riots (p. 84)?
6. Focusing in particular on pp. 53–58, 60–63, 82–86, 96–97, 101–9, 110–124, and 136–149, what did John Wilkes Booth believe about:
 - John Brown and abolitionists?
 - the North's superior numbers and use of immigrant Irishmen in the Union Army?
 - not fighting for the South?
 - treason laws in the North?
 - acting as a spy and blockade runner?
 - Lincoln and his legitimacy as president?
 - the North's superior numbers and collapse of prisoner-of-war exchanges?
 - African-American slavery?
 - extending citizenship and the vote to African Americans?
 - the ethics of kidnapping Lincoln?
 - the ethics of killing top officials of the United States government, including Lincoln?
 - the press not viewing him as a Southern patriot following the assassination?
7. Do you think there was a particular point in his life when John Wilkes Booth's assassination of Lincoln was inevitable, or was it a random, irrational act that could have been prevented by any number of things? Explain.
8. Do you think, as Edwin Booth did, that on the matter of patriotism to the South, John Wilkes Booth was "insane on that one point"? Or were his actions sane, if wicked? Explain.
9. Do humanizing details about John Wilkes Booth make him more likable or more troubling to you? Explain.
10. "For every person who knows that there was once a great actor named Edwin Booth, there are thousands who know that his brother, John Wilkes Booth, assassinated Abraham Lincoln" (p. 221). Explain whether you believe any book, play, or film can change that reality. Does *Good Brother, Bad Brother* succeed in transforming John Wilkes Booth from the one-dimensional, demonically possessed man of Magee's cartoon into a more complete person? Is it better for history and students of history that we have a well-rounded study of even those who perpetrate great evil? Explain.