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Julia and the Dream Maker Discussion Topics:

- ✦ The novel's characters face the age-old and up-to-the-minute conflict between scientific research and religious belief, intensified by the government's decision to take sides. The result is a thought-provoking as well as a fascinating tale.
- ✦ Religion v. Science—Can they co-exist? The clash comes to a head in *Julia and the Dream Maker* but has its roots in our own time.
- ✦ Human Evolution—The possibility of evolution helped along by scientists raises questions about the future of all of us.
- ✦ Government Control—In the novel's world, Mutant Laws have been enacted to control scientific research, possibly a logical extension of today's concerns with cloning, stem-cell research and gene-mapping.
- ✦ If it's artificial, is it intelligence?—The novel raises the question of when and whether artificial intelligence can transform into actual intelligence and something that is "alive."

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Julia and the Dream Maker Discussion Questions:

1. Steven's computer program attains self-awareness, but is it a "life-form" or "alive" if it exists only in electronic form? How would you define "alive"?
2. Can present-day political, legal, and social infrastructures remain essentially constant in the face of significant technological advancement?
3. What major political, legal and/or social changes are needed to handle significant technological advances? Would you favor government restrictions on science?
4. In the novel, the military wields significant influence over civilian life. Why might a free society grant these powers to its armed services? What are the consequences of doing so?
5. Steven's trial is a major part of the novel. Would such courtroom procedure and interaction—especially Steven's reliance on the AID rather than a human defense attorney—lead to a fair and just legal system?
6. The Mutant Laws limiting bio-scientific research indicate conservative Judeo-Christian values and beliefs are a powerful influence in the novel's future world. Yet Steven, Eli, and Bennie seem relatively untouched by these influences. Does this paradox exist in our society today?
7. Can science and religion co-exist? Can they ever compromise, or is compromise inherently incompatible with both?
8. Do you think scientists will actually create artificial "life"? How would you define "life"?
9. Does scientific intervention as extensive as portrayed in this novel qualify as evolution? Or does evolution have to be a purely natural process?
10. Do you see any benefits from the type of research Steven is doing? If so, what are they?

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