Discussion Questions

1. Do you think Alex’s uncle was preparing him to become a spy by teaching him karate, scuba diving and rock climbing?

2. Is Alex more upset that his uncle is dead or that he really knew nothing about his uncle?

3. Alex focuses on the seatbelt rather than thinking about his uncle. Why?

4. Alex refuses to harpoon the guard to get the Jeep, but he does not mind when the jellyfish kills Vole, or when the cars that chase him end up machine gunning each other, or when his actions cause the death of the guys on the motorcycle. Do you think there is a difference between pulling the trigger and letting them kill themselves by missing him?

5. Alex faces a lot of situations that are difficult to deal with. If you were Alex what would you do in these situations?
   a. When he find out his uncle’s death is not an accident.
   b. When he meets Blunt in the cemetery.
   c. When he meets Sayle
   d. When he is handcuffed.

6. In the Killing House, Wolf pushes Alex to try and get him binned, but Alex does not tell the sergeant. Why do you think Alex doesn’t tell on Wolf?

7. Even though Wolf was mean to Alex from the start, Alex helped him in the airplane. Why do you think Alex was willing to help someone who treated him so badly?

8. Alex does not tell MI6 about Gregorovich because he knows that they will pull him out of the mission. Do you think it’s a good idea for Alex to stay? How do you think the book would have been different if Alex had called in MI6 with the information instead of going on the walk?

9. Were you suspicious when Nadia Vole told Alex about the path into town? What about when Mr. Grin was talking on the phone and watching Alex leave? Do you think Alex has enough powers of observation to be a spy?

10. The librarian said that Ian Rider was looking for information about viruses and that he had some books sent from London to the post office in Port Tallon. Do you think that it’s believable that MI6 did not know about the information that he requested?
Knowing what books he requested would have helped Alex to figure things out faster. Do you think that MI6 did not give Alex all of the information?

11. Alex describes going into the mines shaft as “being buried alive”. Have you ever been in a cave or other place underground with little or no light? What was it like?

12. Why do you think Sayle tells Alex about his plans? Do you think he wants to be stopped or that he wants someone to understand how hard things were for him?

13. At the end of the book Mr. Blunt says, “we’ll know where you are if we need you again” to Alex. Alex has made it clear that he is not interested in being a spy but Mr. Blunt makes it clear that they will use him again. Do you think it’s fair to treat Alex this way?

14. Do you think any of the adults in the book are realistic? Blunt and Jones force Alex to become a spy. Ian Rider lies to Alex his whole life and may be preparing him to be a spy. Jack is a vague parent figure who is never around. The villains kill without remorse and have no problem killing children. The only adult who seems to care for Alex’s welfare is the contact killer, Gregorovich. He gives Alex the advice to be a kid and say no the next time MI6 asks him to do a job.