



## **Night Terrors**

Sean Rodman

Reading level: 3.2

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### **Book Summary**

After his brother drowns, Dylan begins experiencing night terrors that prevent him from living a normal life. Wanting to escape from home and his nightmares, Dylan accepts a job at a resort in the country miles away from civilization. Once there, he begins to hear weird stories about Edward, the manager, and witnesses his cruel treatment of others. Dylan manages to fly below Edward's radar, so when the summer season is over, Dylan and Josh, another worker, agree to stay on for another week to help the management close up for the winter. Left alone with Edward, Dylan begins to realize that Edward is crazy and is doing his best to terrorize Josh and him. When Dylan's nightmares return, he has a difficult time distinguishing them from Edward's cruel reality. Finally, Dylan and Josh must try to escape before Edward kills them.

### **Prereading Idea**

Drowning remains the second-leading cause of unintentional death in children. Ask students to research ways to prevent drowning and to make a prevention poster to display at local pools and parks.

**Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas**

- Dylan's family does not deal well with Sammy's death. Dylan's dad begins to drink and to pick fights with Dylan's mom while Dylan experiences night terrors. Dylan's dad tells him it is all in his mind, but this is not the truth. In small groups ask students to investigate night terrors and to create a brochure explaining what they are, how they are treated, and where people who suffer from night terrors can receive care. Have students discuss an appropriate audience for the brochures in their community and submit them for display.
- Clearly, Edward is psychotic and out to destroy anyone who poses a threat to him. Ask students to create a background story for Edward; have students relate why he manages a summer resort in the country, what he does in the winter months, why he attempts to humiliate those who work for him (trying to kill those who pose a threat to him), and what caused his psychosis. Students can include other factors that would help explain Edward's life. Have students share their stories in small groups.
- As Dylan begins to understand that his life is in danger, he tries to convince Josh to leave with him. Josh thinks Dylan is delusional, and he tells Edward of Dylan's plan. Ask students to write a poem in two voices conveying the conflict between Josh and Dylan. Have students perform their poems for the class.

**Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel*****Foreshadowing***

The author allows the reader to see Edward's mean side in chapter 1. In chapter 5, the reader understands Edward is evil when he allows Josh to nearly drown, having no intention of saving him because there is no gas tank in the boat. Ask students to identify other clues in the story. How does the author's use of foreshadowing build suspense and drive the plot forward? Have students work with a partner to create a visual (such as a flow chart, a timeline of events, a T chart, or others) that highlights the examples of foreshadowing and their effectiveness. Post visuals in the classroom.

***Setting***

The setting in *Night Terrors*, an isolated resort in a cold, snowy wilderness, sets the mood for the evil that occurs at Edward's hand. In what other ways does the setting contribute to the plot? In small groups ask students to select an alternate setting, but one that would still set the mood for evil. Have students detail the new setting, determine what parts of the story would need to change to fit the setting, and make a list of the changes to share with the class. As a whole class, discuss how well the various settings could be adapted to the plot of *Night Terrors*.

### *Character*

Have students work with a partner to select one of the characters and to brainstorm the character's feelings, actions, traits and relationships. Since each character in the story has "a job to do" with regard to the plot, have students create a job description for the character. Students should include: main responsibilities within the story, special skills needed, personality traits required for the job, hours worked, etc. Have partners share their job descriptions with the class.

### **Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions**

1. Edward sees himself as a firm but fair leader with exacting standards, but his staff sees him as a jerk. What other character traits does the author reveal about Edward?
2. Why does Dylan decide to work at Ravenslake Lodge? Are his reasons for leaving justified?
3. What occurs that aids Josh and Dylan's friendship? What do they have in common that helps them bond?
4. When Harvey realizes that Edward is out of line, why doesn't he do anything to stop him? What could he have done to help protect Josh and Dylan?
5. How does the nature of Dylan's nightmares intensify as the situation at the lodge becomes increasingly dangerous? Do the nightmares help Dylan understand what is happening with Edward?
6. Why does Josh tell Edward about Dylan's attempt to leave? What is Edward's response to the news? How does Dylan react?

### **Writer's Craft**

#### *Conclusion*

Ask students to read the final paragraphs of *Night Terrors* and ask themselves what impression the author wanted the reader to have about Dylan's mental state. Does the book's conclusion leave the reader with questions? Is the conclusion successful in tying up the loose ends and satisfying to the reader? Ask each student to write an additional paragraph using fifty words or less to change the author's intended meaning. Students can share their final paragraphs with the class.

### **Author Biography**

**Sean Rodman** wrote his first book, *The Aliens of History*, at age 5. After that humble beginning, he received a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology from Trent University and a Master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Victoria. He has traveled around the world and worked with teenagers in Australia, as well as working in an international school with teens from more than one hundred countries. It is his work with teens that inspired him to write. He currently lives in British Columbia and is the Strategic Partnerships Manager at Royal British Columbia Museum.

### **Author Website**

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