



The Darwin Expedition

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Reading level: 2.5

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AR Quiz # 114177

Book Summary

When Liam and Tej roll their truck on an old logging road, they realize they must hike out of the backcountry in order to save themselves. The two boys assemble the necessary provisions from the truck and begin the long trek back to civilization. Enduring the hardships of cold weather, rain, lack of food, and fighting between themselves is challenging enough, but when they cross paths with a yearling grizzly bear and her cub, their lives are truly threatened. Attempting to escape the bear's attack, Liam and Tej catapult down a perilous slope of rocks where Tej breaks his foot. Now Liam must leave him alone if he hopes to save both of their lives.

Prereading Idea

As civilization encroaches on wildlife areas, attacks on humans by wild animals are becoming more prevalent. Ask students to search the Internet for stories about wild animal attacks and to share them with the class. Discuss with the students man's culpability in these attacks.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- The grizzly bear and its habits play an important role in Tej and Liam's adventure. Divide students into group of three and assign each group one of the following topics: eating habits, traveling patterns, mating and birthing, defense responses, physical characteristics, and adaptations for attack or defense. Ask each group to thoroughly research their topic and to prepare a short presentation using a visual aid: poster, diorama, mural, shadow box, 3D model, costumed reenactment.

In their presentations, the groups should also include the connection between the information they presented and the events in the novel.

- Usually, when teenagers are lost or abducted and later when they are found, a media blitz ensues covering their adventure and their rescue. In groups of two or three, ask students to prepare one of the following: a television news spot, a radio broadcast, a newspaper report, or a television interview with Tej and/or Liam. Students might also want to “interview” the boys’ parents and friends. Celebrate the boy’s rescue with a media day, including all of the group presentations.

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

In *The Darwin Expedition*, the setting could be considered a character because of the role it plays in the plot of the story. As a class, ask students to define setting and justify why it could be a character, using support from the book. Then have students work with a partner to write the story of Liam and Tej’s adventure as told in first person by “the setting.” Students can narrow the character’s viewpoint (the road, the backcountry, the cliff, the slope) or write as the setting as a whole.

Allusion

An allusion is an indirect reference to another literary work or to a famous person, place or event. When Liam and Tej refer to Darwin, they are convinced they are experiencing the theory Darwin promoted. Ask students to find the Darwin references in the novel and then to write an explanation of how Darwin’s theory, Survival of the Fittest, relates to their situation. Have students informally share their findings with the class and post the explanations for all to read and enjoy.

Plot

The sequence of events in a story is called the plot, and it is generally built around the conflict. The story's plot includes four stages: exposition, rising action, climax and falling action. Discuss as a class what occurs in each stage. Then have students complete a storyboard of twelve sections on an 8.5 x 14 piece of paper. For each section, have students draw a visual to represent major events from the novel and include a

caption explaining the action and identifying which stage of the plot is involved.

Then have students use the storyboard as a tool to pre-write their own individual narrative stories focusing on the plot stages.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Why is it a risk for Tej and Liam to take the logging road? Why do they disagree about the decision?
2. Tej's first concern after the wreck is his truck. How does Liam feel about Tej's lack of concern for him? What does this show about Tej's personality?
3. The only mention of the boys' parents is in chapter 1. How do the boys' relationships with their parents differ? What role do the parents and other family members play in the boys' adventure?
4. Tej appears to be inconsiderate, selfish and hateful toward Liam. Why have the boys been friends for twelve years? What has held them together? Does this event strengthen their relationship? Why or why not?
5. How does this adventure change the boys' relationship? Who changes the most? Why? How does the story validate the change?
6. Tej says, "Trust me. I know what I am doing." How could this statement be considered "famous last words?" Does Tej know what he is doing? How could events in the story be used to support both Tej's knowledge and lack of knowledge in this situation?
7. Although Tej and Liam argue throughout their trek out of the forest, why are the fights they have in chapter 7 and chapter 10 so important? How does what they say cause a shift in their relationship?
8. Why is it so important to Tej that Liam leave Tremblay? Why is it equally important to Liam that he stay? Why is Tej so determined to get out of Tremblay?

9. In chapter 9, the author uses the term “Darwin expedition.” How does her use of the term help explain the title? How does the title relate to the story?
10. Liam’s decision to leave Tej on the mountain with two matches is a bold one. Why does he make it? Is Tej in agreement with his decision? What other decisions could Liam have made? Was his choice the best one? Why or why not?

Writer’s Craft

Imagery

The first paragraph of the book includes a metaphor, personification and alliteration. Throughout the book, the author uses these tools as well as onomatopoeia and similes. With a partner, ask students to find at least two more examples of each of the above tools written by the author. Then ask students to find a place in the book where they could use these tools to write an original sentence. Ask students to share their original sentences with the class and post the sentences in the classroom.

Author Biography

Award-winning author **Diane Tullson** has a BA in English literature and has studied journalism, creative writing and editing. Writing professionally since 1996, she says rejection is the hardest aspect of her writing, but she doesn’t let it stop her from creating works with irresistible characters for teens. Diane lives with her family just outside Vancouver, British Columbia.