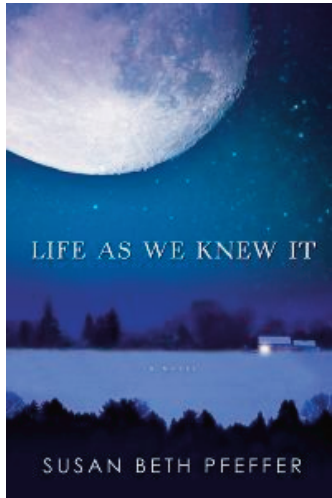


Life As We Knew It

by Susan Beth Pfeffer

A Guide for Book Discussion and Classroom Use



About the Guide

Life As We Knew It is most appropriate for readers in grades 7-12 or ages 12-18. This guide was created to be used for the classroom or smaller reading groups. There are a variety of questions, some addressing comprehension of the story and others prompting readers to draw conclusions, speculate, and opportunities for "digging deeper" into the story. The questions can be adapted as writing prompts. The page numbers in the guide refer to the hardcover edition.

About the Book

In the near future, it is almost the end of Miranda's sophomore year in high school, and her journal reflects the busy life and worries of a typical teenager: conversations with friends, dating, fights with mom, grades, and looking forward to a driver's license. When Miranda first hears the reports of an asteroid on a collision course with the moon, it barely rates a mention in her diary. When the asteroid hits, pushing the moon off its axis and causing worldwide natural catastrophes that result in horrific global devastation and death, all the things Miranda took for granted begin to disappear. Her priorities radically change. Miranda's riveting day-by-day journal entries reveal her family's harrowing struggle to survive extreme weather changes, loss of utilities and public services, food and gas shortages, and injury and sickness in their small Pennsylvania town.

Pre-Reading Activities

Remind readers of recent natural disasters such as the tsunami that struck Indonesia, Hurricane Katrina, the earthquake in Haiti. Discuss with readers what they would do if catastrophe were to suddenly strike them. What knowledge, skills, and supplies should they have to help them survive?

There are numerous websites with information about asteroids and the moon. Give readers an opportunity to explore these, and then have them share with one another facts they have discovered.

In emergency situations, some people adopt a "survival of the fittest" attitude, while others react with charity and compassion. Ask readers to discuss why people react so differently, and then follow up with a discussion of how each of them thinks he or she would react in an emergency.

Questions for Discussion

Before the asteroid strikes the Moon, what are the biggest concerns in Miranda's life? How do they change in the months that follow?

After the asteroid strikes the Moon, phone, Internet, and television service go out and Miranda says "Civilization had ended." Are we too dependent on electronic gadgets? Would you feel as Miranda does if you could no longer use the gadgets we have come to depend upon in our daily lives?

What changes does Miranda notice about people in the days following the asteroid strike?

What does Miranda experience at the supermarket to make her realize how things have changed for the worse?

How would you describe Miranda's relationship with her brothers Matt and Jonny?

Why does it bother Miranda when Megan gives away half her sandwich at lunch? (p. 63)

How does Miranda feel about Megan's newfound religious faith and how it affects their friendship? Is Megan's faith a healthy one?

How would you describe the relationship between Miranda and Dan?

Why is Miranda's mom so angry about her leaving the food line to get Dan?
What surprises Miranda most about her mom's reaction?

How does Becky's death affect the friendship between Miranda, Megan, and Sammi?

What does Miranda realize about her mom when she visits Megan for the last time?

Why does Sammi leave town with forty-year-old George? How does Miranda feel about her leaving?

What do you think of the reaction Miranda's mom has when she sees her eating the chocolate chips? How does it make Miranda feel?

Why does Miranda call Reverend Marshall "despicable?" Do you agree with her?

After Mrs. Nesbitt dies, Miranda goes through her kitchen cabinets and says it makes her "feel like a cannibal?" (p. 240) Why does she feel this way?

Why does Miranda call the family's first Christmas after the catastrophe "absolutely the best Christmas ever?" (p. 280)

On New Year's Eve, Miranda wonders if people ever realize how precious life is. What are some of the things that have happened in Miranda's life to help her realize life is precious?

What incident happens at the house to make Miranda believe that the family will survive no matter what?

What does Miranda realize about why she has been keeping a journal?

What do you think will become of Miranda and her family?

Follow-up Activities

Ask readers to visit the National Geographic web site for information about natural disasters at:

<http://science.nationalgeographic.com/science/earth/natural-disasters/>
and learn more about the events that occur in the novels.

As an individual project or small group collaboration, have readers create a survival guide to natural disasters that would help someone like Miranda survive under circumstances similar to those in the novels. A good source of information on emergency preparedness is located at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/preparedness/>.

About the Author



Susan Beth Pfeffer is the author of many books for teens, including *The Dead & The Gone*, a companion novel to *Life As We Knew It*, and the best-selling novel *The Year Without Michael*. Among her other books are the popular *Portraits of Little Women* series and the award-winning *Kid Power*. She lives in Middletown, New York.

This guide was created by Ed Sullivan, a librarian and author in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. He is the author of many articles, books and reviews about children's and young adult literature.



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT

Harcourt Children's Books, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company

www.hmhbooks.com