

THE CROSSROADS, by Chris Grabenstein

TEACHERS' STUDY GUIDE

Vocabulary Words

1. snarling (p. 1)
2. rationally (p. 10)
3. tenuous (p. 14)
4. ingenuity (p. 20)
5. feebly (p. 23)
6. concoction (p. 30)
7. embellish (p. 39)
8. mangy (p. 56)
9. reclusive (p. 62)
10. feisty (p. 64)
11. unrelenting (p. 68)
12. pasty (p. 99)
13. dramatically (p. 128)
14. gander (p. 129)
15. matted (p. 146)
16. proclamation (p. 160)
17. fatalities (p. 166)
18. kerosene (p. 170)
19. queasy (p. 177)
20. exotic (p. 195)
21. hoisted (p. 201)
22. gesture (p. 210)
23. mammoth (p. 212)
24. descendant (p. 228)
25. illuminated (p. 230)
26. lunged (p. 232)
27. surveillance (p. 242)
28. remorse (p. 243)
29. lucrative (p. 244)
30. destitute (p. 245)
31. reverted (p. 247)
32. tarnish (p. 249)
33. commotion (p. 273)
34. wager (p. 290)
35. dilute (p. 291)
36. insolent (p. 299)
37. meticulously (p. 304)
38. burrowed (p. 316)
39. remnant (p. 318)
40. sinewy (p. 318)

Comprehension Questions

Prologue - Chapter 6

1. What might the prologue be foreshadowing?
2. How do you know that the motorcycle cop is a ghost?
3. What happened on June 21, 1958?
4. Why is Zack afraid of the dining room in his New York City home?
5. How does Zack feel about Judy?
6. Describe Gerda Spratling.
7. Who is Mr. Willoughby?
8. What does Gerda Spratling do every Monday?
9. How did Miss Spratling's father die?
10. Who are Mrs. Jones and Sharon?
11. Who is the girl in white?

Chapter 7 -14

1. What happens to the tanker truck traveling down County Route 13?
2. Where is Zack's new home located?
3. What time of year is it?
4. Why are Ben and George cutting down the trees?
5. What surprise gift does Zack receive?
6. Why did Zack's father think that it was a good idea to move from New York to Connecticut?
7. Whom does Zack meet at the end of chapter 11? What does he think of her?
8. What is wrong with the toilet?
9. Whom does Billy O'Claire visit? Why?
10. What is a descanso?
11. What happens to Judy's car?

Chapter 15 - Chapter 24

1. Is Zack afraid of the storm? How can you tell?
2. Who helps Judy change her tire? What is mysterious about him?
3. Whom does Miss Spratling call a "dreamboat"? What do you think a dreamboat is?
4. What does Zack think he sees on the far side of the fallen tree?
5. Who is inside the body of the nineteen-year-old boy? How did he get out of the tree?
6. What was the job of the character described in chapter 21? When was he alive?
7. What does the old man think of the oak tree that toppled over in the storm?
8. Who is Kyle Snertz? How does he treat Zack?
9. Where is Zack's dad going on his business trip?
10. Why does the character described in chapter 24 want to kill the old man?

Chapter 25 - Chapter 34

1. What escapes from the toilet?

2. What does the old man insist on doing in chapter 26?
3. Whom does the old man see in chapter 28?
4. What happened to Mr. Mandica, the old man?
5. Who becomes Zack's new friend? Describe him.
6. What happens to Billy O'Claire at the end of chapter 30?
7. What does Zack tell Davy about Zack's mother?
8. What does Miss Spratling tell Judy about Clint's death? Do you think that is how he died? Explain.
9. Who is "the chosen one"? What do you think he has been chosen to do?
10. What idea does Davy have for the stump?

Chapter 35 - Chapter 45

1. Why is Billy eating so many cheeseburgers?
2. Whom does Davy introduce to the Jennings?
3. What verse from the Bible gives Miss Spratling comfort? What does it say? What do you think Miss Spratling plans to do?
4. According to Mary O'Claire, who is "pure evil"?
5. What happens to Mary O'Claire?
6. Summarize the accident as it is described in the newspaper article.
7. What happened to Alice and Tommy O'Claire?
8. What gives Zack the courage to stand up to Kyle?
9. What important information does Billy share with Clint?
10. Why is Zack in trouble at the end of Chapter 45?

Chapter 46 - Chapter 58

1. What does Judy discover about Bud Heckman?
2. How did the Rowdy Army Men really die?
3. What warning does Billy give Sharon? Why?
4. Why doesn't Miss Spratling hate Billy O'Claire?
5. What causes Miss Spratling to become upset in chapter 50?
6. Why is Billy going to Florida? Do you think this plan will work?
7. What is Clint planning to do to Zack?
8. Who else investigated the incident that Judy is researching?
9. Where does Judy go while Zack and Davy have their sleepover in the fort? Why?
10. Why does Zack go to the cemetery in the middle of the night?

Chapter 59 - Chapter 70

1. What does Clint learn from Sister Synnott? What will Clint do with this newfound knowledge?
2. What does Judy realize about the plumber? What is her reaction?
3. What does Zack tell Judy about his mother?
4. Why is Sharon afraid of Billy?
5. What happens to Billy? Is he a hero? Explain.
6. Summarize the importance of Sheriff Jennings' report.

Chapter 71 - Chapter 82

1. What is the priest told he will be doing on the 50th anniversary of Clint's death?
2. What does Zack do to the stump?
3. What is in Miss Spratling's chapel?
4. What happens to the fire?
5. What does Zack's best friend mysteriously do?
6. Why does Zack get in the car with Miss Spratling?
7. What does Sheriff Hargrove tell Miss Spratling? What is her response?
8. What does Sharon discover about Aidan's whereabouts?
9. What does Miss Spratling have planned for Aidan?

Chapter 83 - Chapter 97

1. How does Miss Spratling escape?
2. What does Davy advise Judy to do with the chapel?
3. How does Zack conclude that Clint can't hurt him?
4. Who undoes the lock behind Zack's back? Why?
5. Where does Judy think Zack is being hidden? Why does she think that?
6. What happens to Miss Spratling and her car?
7. Why is Zack called a hero? Do you think that he is a hero? Explain.
8. Who teeters at the edge of the giant hole in the ground? How do Judy and Zack get rid of him? When they do, what do they smell? Why is that significant?
9. What does Davy tell Zack about the bus passengers? What does Davy reveal about himself?

Journal Questions

1. Davy tells Zack, "I don't rightly care what people say you. What they say can't make you who you are-- 'less, of course, your let 'em." (p. 185) Do you agree with Davy's advice? Have you found this advice to be true in your own life?
2. Davy tells Judy that people shouldn't be "dwellin' on the sad parts of life when you ought to be livin' each day and bein' happy." (p. 202) Do you agree with this advice? Why or why not?
3. Have you ever been at a crossroads in your life? What choice did you have to make? What was the result?

Discussion Questions

1. What characters are at a crossroads in their lives? Explain.
2. How does Zack change throughout the novel? What inspires him to change?
3. Contrast Zack's mom with his stepmom.
4. If you were the Jennings, would you have let Gerda Spratling put a memorial on your property? Why or why not?
5. Should Sherriff James Jennings have published his report? Why or why not?
6. Is Davy whom he seems to be? Support your opinion.
7. Do you feel sorry for Miss Spratling? Why or why not?

Suggested Activities

1. On page 87, Mr. Mandica calls the tree a "devil tree." Research the New Jersey Devil Tree and share your findings with the class.
2. Choose one of the passengers on the bus. Write a poem from that character's point of view.
3. What happens to Clint, Gerda, Billy, Mary, and Davy now? Write an epilogue that tells what happens to these characters.
4. *The Crossroads* may become a movie! Design a movie poster that includes the title, a catchphrase, and a picture.
5. Choose three songs that would be appropriate for a soundtrack for the movie. Explain why you chose those songs and when they should be played.