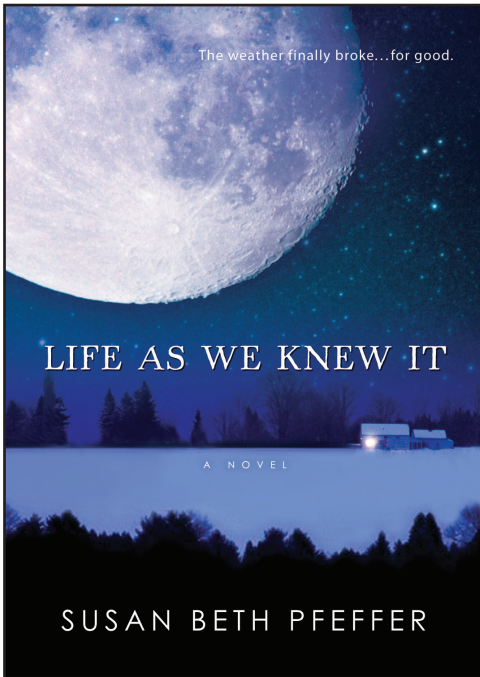


Life As We Knew It and *The Dead & The Gone* by SUSAN BETH PFEFFER



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. When Miranda first hears the reports of an asteroid on a collision course with the moon, it barely rates a mention in her diary. But when the asteroid hits the moon, pushing it off its axis, and causing worldwide natural disasters, all the things Miranda took for granted begin to disappear. Miranda's riveting day-by-day journal entries reveal her family's struggle to survive extreme weather changes, loss of utilities, food and gas shortages, and sickness in their small Pennsylvania town.

About the Author

Susan Beth Pfeffer's first three apocalyptic novels, the New York Times bestselling *Life As We Knew It*, *The Dead and the Gone*, and *This World We Live In* were widely praised by reviewers as action-packed, thrilling, and utterly terrifying. *Life As We Knew It* received numerous starred reviews and honors and was nominated for many state awards, winning six. Ms. Pfeffer lives in Wallkill, New York.

About the Guide

Life As We Knew It and *The Dead & the Gone* are novels 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 questions and many of the activities are aligned with the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts. The page numbers in the guide refer to the hardcover editions.

Pre-Reading Activities

Remind readers of recent natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the tsunami that struck Indonesia. 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 web sites 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. W 7.6

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.



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Questions for Discussion

These discussion questions align with Standards 1 and 2 of the Common Core Reading Standards for Literature K-12 (RL).

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?



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About the Book

In this terrifying companion to *Life As We Knew It*, the same events unfold in New York City and are revealed through the eyes of seventeen-year-old Alex Morales. When Alex's parents disappear in the aftermath of tidal waves and are presumed dead, he is left to care for his two younger sisters as food and aid supplies dwindle, city services collapse, and law and order disappears. Manhattan becomes a deadly wasteland with danger lurking around every corner. With only his faith, personal courage, and resourcefulness to rely upon, Alex must find a way to keep what is left of his family intact and get them to safety.

Questions for Discussion

These discussion questions align with Standards 1 and 2 of the Common Core Reading Standards for Literature K-12 (RL).

Why does it help Alex to make lists of things he knows?

What role does religious faith play in the Morales family? How does their faith sustain them through their hardships?

What does Alex realize at Mass after he hears Father Franco's announcements? (p. 28)

How would you describe Father Mulrooney? What is his perspective on the events that are unfolding?

Do you think it would have been better for Alex to find his mother's body in Yankee Stadium? Why or why not?

Why does Alex pray after he leaves Yankee Stadium? What does he not want to acknowledge? (p. 65)

Where does Alex send Bri? Do you think it was the right decision? What is Julie's reaction?

Why does Uncle Jimmy offer to take Julie with him and his family to Tulsa? Why does Alex decide against letting go of her?

Why does Alex think Father Mulrooney showed "insufficient compassion"? (p. 133) Do you agree with Alex?

Father Mulrooney says that in the worst of times rules are needed more than ever to prevent anarchy but Alex argues that rules sometimes cause the anarchy. Who do you agree with? What does Alex mean when he says that rules sometimes cause anarchy? What are some examples of that in the story?

What natural disasters are happening in the western part of the country to make things worse in New York?

How does Alex feel about going "body shopping" with Kevin? Would you do the same under similar circumstances?



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What does Alex find out from James about the evacuation camps?

Why does Bri return to Alex and Julie? What is it about her medical condition that complicates things?

What does Alex confess to Father Mulrooney? What does he tell Alex to do?

What does Alex realize about how things have changed with money and social status when he has the surprise birthday party for Julie?

What does Harvey want in return for arranging to get Alex and Bri to Florida? How would you characterize Harvey and the things he does?

Why does Mr. Flynn want to help Alex and his sisters?

Kevin and Alex talk about what about they miss most (p. 240). Under similar circumstances, what would you miss most? What would you do to try to compensate for and cope with what you missed?

How does Alex's relationship with his sisters change over the course of the story?

When the first big snow comes, Alex starts to doubt the wisdom of every decision he has made (pp. 246-247). Do you agree with him that all of his decisions were mistakes? What decisions would you have made differently from Alex?

After Bri is found dead, what does Alex realize after reading the note she wrote to her parents?

What words of comfort does Sister Rita offer to Alex about Bri?

What do you think will become of Alex and Julie?

Follow Up Activities

Ask readers to visit the National Geographic web site for information about natural disasters at science.nationalgeographic.com/science/earth/natural-disasters and learn more about the events that occur in the novels. W 7.6

As an individual project or small group collaboration, have readers create a survival guide to natural disasters that would help teens like Alex and Miranda survive under circumstances similar to those in the novels. A good source of information on emergency preparedness is located at www.bt.cdc.gov/preparedness. W 6.7

Alex has to take on the immense responsibility of looking after his two younger sisters as well as himself when he realizes his parents are missing and probably dead. Ask readers to write about what they would do under similar circumstances. What steps would they take to ensure day-to-day survival? Who are the people and organizations they would turn to for help? W 3.6,[7],8

Compare and contrast the situations Alex and Miranda must face and how each cope with them. RL 9.5[6]

Guide Written by Ed Sullivan.

Ed Sullivan is 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.

