

Dead Harry

Author: Ken Catran

Synopsis

Sam's best mate Harry has died suddenly. Sam is struggling to come to terms with his friend's death when a very strange thing happens – Harry's ghost comes for a visit. It turns out that Harry was murdered and he needs Sam's help to find out who did it and why. Only when Harry's murderers are identified can he move on to the next world.

Sam helps Harry examine his movements before his murder to try and find out who is responsible. What he doesn't understand is that he is putting himself in grave danger. The people who killed Harry are after him too. What is the secret that these people are willing to kill for? Luckily Sam has the help of his friend Anna to help him find out. Sam, Anna and Harry (who is learning heaps of cool tricks from a ghost called old Elias) eventually solve the mystery – but will they be able to reveal the secret or will they all die in a fiery inferno before they have the chance?

Text Type

Dead Harry, written by New Zealand author Ken Catran, is a fast-paced action-adventure with broad appeal. When Sam discovers that his best friend Harry was murdered he is determined to help solve the mystery of why, even though it puts his own life in danger. He finds an unlikely ally in Anna, a girl he has always considered a bit of a geek. Anna has a good understanding of the afterlife and ghosts and helps Sam come to grips with his situation.

Ken Catran makes it easy for readers to make the leap of imagination into a world where ghosts exist and have the ability to play tricks on people. Sam is a credible character dealing with many typical teenage issues. The story is written in colloquial language and deals with heavy issues while remaining light-hearted and humorous.

Sharing the Novel

The novel has been divided up as follows: Chapter 1 (pp. 3–9), Chapters 2–9 (pp. 10–66), Chapters 10–17 (pp. 67–143).

During the shared sessions, have students make predictions and inferences about the story. Have them study the main characters and discuss their personalities, behaviour and motivations. Encourage students to have discussions about what they think happens when you die and their thoughts about ghosts. Identify themes such as friendship, loyalty, and murder and examine how these are explored in the novel. The novel would be a good starting point for a discussion about war criminals and what should happen to them.

Introducing the Novel

Have students study the front cover of the novel and read the blurb.

- What is Sam's problem?
- What images or words come to mind when you think about ghosts?
- What do you think the rules to being a ghost might be?
- Why does Harry need Sam's help?
- Why do you think Harry's murderers might be after Sam too?
- If you were in Sam's position would you help Harry? Why/why not?

Teacher reads Chapter 1 (pp. 3–9) aloud. Students follow along in their books.

Comprehension Chapter 1 (pp. 3–9)

- From whose point of view is the story told?
- What was Harry working on just before he died?
- When did Sam last have contact with Harry?
- Who gives Sam the bad news about Harry? What do we learn about how Harry died?
- How does Sam feel when he hears the news?
- Who offers Sam support?
- What does Sam do at Harry's funeral?
- Why does Sam feel guilty about the pen?
- Where does Harry's ghost first visit Sam? Where does he turn up later?

Discussion

- What do we learn about Harry's character in this chapter?
- Have you ever been to a funeral? What was it like? Why is it important to honour the dead and celebrate their lives?
- Why do you think Harry has turned into a ghost? Do you believe in ghosts? Why/why not?
- Predict what you think would happen next in the story.

Students read Chapters 2–9 (pp. 10–66) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 2–9 (pp. 10–66)

- How does Sam react when he sees Harry's ghost? Why does he black out? How do Sam's parents react when he tells them what he has seen?
- Why does Sam tell his parents that he can't see Harry anymore?
- What happens when Sam takes Harry's hand? Why is Harry confused about his situation?
- What does Harry remember about the night that he died?
- What does Sam realise about Harry's situation when he checks the internet?
- Why does Sam feel guilty for hoping that he has just imagined Harry's ghost?
- Why doesn't Harry want his mum to see him?
- Why does Sam suggest that he and Harry return to Harry's house? What excuse does Sam tell Harry's mum about why he wants to go into Harry's room?
- Why is Sam angry when he finds out what Harry's password is? What happens when Sam logs onto Harry's computer?
- Why does Harry think that he might be getting control over his ghostly self?
- What does Harry's mum remember about him?
- Why does Sam think that Harry might have moved on? How does this make him feel?
- What shocking revelation does Harry make to Sam?
- What new ability does Harry discover that he has?
- Who did Harry see that jogged his memory about his murder?
- What does Harry remember about his school project on refugees?
- What crimes is Mr Dombroski wanted for?
- How did Harry die?
- Why does Sam agree to help Harry find out more about Dombroski?
- Why is Sam relieved that he had all day Sunday without Harry?
- Why is Sam annoyed when he sees Delicia wearing a black arm band?
- Why doesn't Harry want to talk to Anna?
- Why does Sam scream in class? Why doesn't he get in trouble with his teacher?
- Why does Sam feel both angry and relieved about Harry?
- Why does Sam go off by himself at lunchtime? Who does Sam threaten to kill?

- Why does Sam tell Anna to go away? How does she react?
- What did Harry find in Mr Dombroski's hut?
- Describe Harry's plan to get the locked tin. Why do you think Anna agrees to help?
- Why do you think Mr Dombroski might be sleeping in his shed?
- What do Harry and Sam find inside the tin?
- Which photographs horrify Sam and Harry?
- What is Mr Dombroski's real name? What crimes is he responsible for?
- What does Sam take from Dombroski's shed? How does Dombroski know someone has been in his shed?
- Why does Sam laugh when Anna sits down next to him at the mall?
- What do Sam and Harry decide to do about Mr Dombroski? Why do Sam and Harry think that the police might already know about Mr Dombroski?
- Why is Harry so scared when he thinks that someone is watching him?
- What does Sam see when he goes back to school to get his bike? Why do the police want to talk to him?
- Who warns Harry about the black four wheel drive? How does Sam avoid being hit?
- Who comes and visits Sam after he gets home from the hospital?
- What does Sam say to Sergeant Grey that makes him suspicious?
- Why does Harry think that they need to stop hunting for his killer? What does this suggest about his character?
- Who is Sam's surprise visitor? What news does she give him about Mr Dombroski? Why does Anna think that Sam is acting strangely?
- What does Anna overhear Sam saying as she is leaving? How does she react to Sam talking to Harry? Why do you think that Anna thinks Harry is in trouble?

Discussion

- Describe Mr Dombroski. Where is he from? What is he wanted for? Do you believe he is behind Harry's murder? Why/why not? Who do you think the man who actually injected Harry might be?
- Why do you think that some people feel embarrassed or awkward talking about people who have passed away? What do you think the best way to support a friend who is grieving?
- Who do you think might be trying to kill Sam?

- What do you think is causing the evil feeling that Harry is experiencing?
- What do you think is going to happen in the story next?

Students read Chapters 10–17 (pp. 67–143) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 10–17 (pp. 67–143)

- What is the paranormal? What does Anna tell Sam about earthbound spirits? How long does she think Harry might be stuck on earth for?
- What does Anna mean when she says that sometime earthbound spirits “change”?
- What does the voice on the phone tell Sam to do?
- Why does Anna think that she and Sam have to keep investigating Harry’s death? What does she plan to do?
- What does Anna want Harry to practise?
- How does Sam know that Harry is jealous about the attention that Delicia pays him?
- What powers has Harry discovered he has?
- Who is Elias Milton? Why is Anna worried about Harry’s relationship with him?
- What happens when Sam bites into his sandwich? Where is he when he wakes up? What does Harry tell him? How does Sam react to this news?
- What does Sam see and hear when he looks down on his own body?
- How was Sam poisoned?
- Describe Elias Milton. What sort of tricks can he do? How did Elias die? Where does he spend most of his time now?
- Who is Primula? Why has she been selected to stay on earth? What does she tell Sam to do?
- Who promises to stay with Sam in case the murderers come back?
- Why is Sam able to see Elias?
- Who tries to give Sam an injection to help him sleep? Why is Harry suspicious? Who saves Sam’s life?
- How is Anna able to see Harry?
- Who comes and visits Sam to question him after he is released from hospital? Why is he interested in Sam?

- What does Anna think is the reason the killers are still after Sam?
- Why is Sam shocked when he hears that the school is being shut down?
- Why does Elias enjoy being nasty? Why does Sam think that he wants to stay on earth?
- What does Harry remember he has left behind at the library? Why does Sam think that he might be on to something?
- What could go wrong with Harry and Sam's plan to break into the library? Why does Harry think that Elias will help them? What does Harry know about Elias that he is reluctant to tell Sam?
- How does Elias scare the security guard and his dog out of the library? Why does Sam have to get out of the library before he finds Harry's magazines?
- Who do Harry and Sam see out on the street outside the school? Why do they think this is suspicious?
- Why does Harry get annoyed at Anna?
- What idea does Anna come up with for getting in the library?
- What did the police find in Mr Dombroski's hut?
- Why does Anna think that the library job has to be done in the daylight?
- Why does Harry think that he has to catch his own killer rather than leave it to the police?
- What happens when Anna unlocks the cupboard?
- What does Sam discover in the cupboard?
- Why is it ironic that Harry hasn't even looked at the magazine that cost him his life?
- Who is holding the gun?
- Why did Mrs Mills save Sam's life? Who else is involved in the plot? What is their motivation?
- What was in the magazine that got Harry killed? Who was responsible for Harry's death?
- Who locks Harry and Anna in the cupboard? Why do the two men return to the library?
- Why does Elias refuse to help Anna and Sam? Why can't Harry help them?
- What insight does Anna have into Elias's personality and the reasons why he is still on earth? How does she convince him to get them the key?
- Who appears after Anna and Sam escape from the cupboard? Why does Ms Anon decide that they have to be disposed of? How does Elias try and scare Ms Anon away? Who

eventually gets her to drop the gun? How does Elias stop Mrs Mills from getting away? What happens to the money?

- What happens to Elias after he helps Sam and Anna? Why is he able to finally move on?
- What happens to Harry after Ms Anon and Mrs Mills' arrests?
- What do Anna and Sam find out about Mr Rudd at the end of the story?
- Who was the man helping Dombroski?
- What happens to all of the criminals at the end of the story?

Discussion

- Describe Harry's life as a ghost. What are the advantages and disadvantages?
- What do you think Sam's adventure has taught him?
- Describe Anna. What qualities and characteristics does she possess? How is she different from what Sam thought she was like?
- Do you think Sam will see Harry again? Why/why not?

Activities

Plot – Create a flow diagram that identifies 15 important events from the story in the order in which they occur.

Research – Conduct a research assignment on ghosts and the paranormal. Present your findings to the class as an oral presentation.

Static Image – Design an alternative book cover for the novel.

Static Image – Design a poster advertising *Dead Harry* that would be suitable for display in your school library.

Debate – Conduct a whole-class debate on the topic "ghosts really do exist".

Writing – Write a newspaper article about the events that occur on the night of the fire. Remember to use the inverted pyramid style of writing where all of the most important information goes at the start. Include the 5 Ws and H and quotes from people involved.

Writing – Write an epilogue for the novel a year after the action took place. Write it from Harry's point of view.

Static Image – Design a static image that depicts an important theme from the novel. You may wish to do a collage that uses important words and images from the story or you could design a web page.

Writing – Write a letter to a friend explaining to them why they should read *Dead Harry*.

Drama – Choose an important event from the story. Write a script that depicts the event. Remember to include a cast of characters and stage directions in your script. Practise your play and present it to the class.

Plot – Choose an important event from the story and explain how this event affected the outcome of the story. If this event didn't happen how would things have turned out differently?

Notes written by Vicki Ladd