

Diary of a Bat

Author: Sally Sutton

Illustrated by: Dave Gunson

Synopsis

Bat is entering an exciting stage of his life. He is about to start a new year at school and is eager to join the Batty Gang. Bat doesn't know his father but is interested to learn more about him when his principal says that they are alike. The problem is Bat's mum thinks that his father is a no-hoper and refuses to answer his questions about him. Bat has a lot of questions. Why can't he talk to other species? Why can't bats go out in the Shining? Bat is on a quest to find the truth and won't rest until he has all the answers to his questions. He is even willing to risk his own life to find the truth.

Text Type

Diary of a Bat is a charming illustrated chapter book written by New Zealand author Sally Sutton. The story is humorous with broad appeal for young readers. Written in diary form, the story tells us about a young bat's life as he attends school, welcomes a little sister into the world and meets his father for the first time. The bat is determined to join the cool Batty Gang, and in order to get in, he needs to complete a series of dares. One of them – to stay awake during the Shining, might mean the end of him. After all, he has been told his whole life that any creatures awake when the sun comes up will be fried to death. But the young bat loves a dare and is willing to take his chances ...

Sharing the Novel

The novel has been divided up as follows: pp. 3–11, pp. 12–31 and pp. 32–54).

During the shared sessions encourage students to ask questions to clarify words and ideas presented in the story. Have them make predictions about what will happen in the story next. Have them discuss what the conventions of diary writing are and what we learn about the lives of bats from the story.

Introducing the Novel

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

- Brainstorm everything you know about bats.
- What is a roost?
- What do you think the “shining” might be?
- Why is everything in the young bat's life reversed?
- What do you expect to see in a story told in diary form?

Teacher reads pp. 3–11 aloud. Students follow along in their books.

Comprehension pp. 3–11

- What is the date of the first diary entry?
- When does the bat wake up? Why do you think his brain is all fuzzy?
- What is the name of the young bat's brother?
- What does the bat think happens to creatures that go out in the Shining?
- Who is the bat's teacher?
- Who is Vamp?
- Why does the bat get sent to the Principal's office? Why does Principal Pekapeka think that the young bat is like his father?
- What is the reason the bat's mum gives him for not seeing his father?
- Why is it important to find a spot in the tree quickly?
- What kind of bat is the narrator?
- What is "torpor"?
- Why is the young bat confused when he thinks he hears birdsong during the Shining?

Discussion

- What is the bat's mother's opinion of his father?
- Describe the bat's bedtime.
- Why do you think the bat's mother doesn't like answering his questions?
- Why are some sections of the story upside down?
- What do you think will happen in the story next?

Students read pp. 12–31 independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension pp. 12–31

- Why do bats make the Blip-Blip noise?
- How many dares do Stoker and the bat have to complete before the end of the year if they want to get into the Batty Gang?

- What is the first dare? Why isn't Stoker keen to do this?
- What creature does the young bat decide to approach? What does he plan to ask it? Why does Stoker think that these creatures are evil?
- Why are the bat's ears itchy?
- How does the starling initially react when the bat approaches it? What does the bat learn from the starling about the Shining?
- Why do you think the bats keep changing roosts?
- Why does the bat have an "unbirthday"?
- What does the bat's mum mean about "sharing the limelight"?
- What does the bat learn about his father when his mother reminisces about his childhood?
- What is dare number 2? What potential problems do you see with this dare?
- What announcement does the bat's mum make on 17 July?
- Why is the bat unhappy with his mother's reply to his question?
- Why is Vesper in a bad mood?
- What is a "conspiracy"?
- Why does the bat get sent to the principal again?
- What does the bat take the opportunity of being in Principal Pekapeka's office to tell him?
- Why does Principal Pekapeka get angry at the bat when he keeps asking questions?
- What advice does he give him?
- What decision does the bat make when he goes back to class?
- Why does bat have to stay in for all of midnight break?
- What does Stoker tell the bat about the noise?
- What news can't the bat wait to tell his mother?

Discussion

- Why do you think the young bat is so eager to get into the Batty Gang?
- Why does bat begin to wonder if the truth isn't all it's cracked up to be? Is the truth dangerous? Why/why not?
- What do you think is going to happen in the story next?

Students read pp. 32–54 independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension pp. 32–54

- What do you think echolocation is?
- Why does the bat freak out when he realises that the pine tree has gone down?
- Who goes with bat to look for his mother?
- Who takes the bat back to Principal Pekapeka’s office? Who does Principal Pekapeka think is responsible for cutting down the tree?
- What things in this world are “beyond bat’s understanding”?
- Why is it so important how long the bat’s mum said she would be in torpor for?
- Where is the new roost? Who comforts the bat while he waits to see if his mother is going to arrive at the roost?
- How does bat react when he realises that his mum is ok?
- Where was the bat’s mum?
- Why is the bat suspicious about the little bat?
- What is the final dare? When does Vamp suggest that bat completes the dare?
- What is the whole colony excited about?
- What does Vamp tell him about the fireworks?
- Why does the bat fly down the hill? What makes him clutch on to a tree? Who else is down there?
- In what ways is the bat like his father?
- Where is the bat’s mum going?
- How does Vesper react when he learns about Vamp’s dare?
- What activities do the bat and the others do on camp?
- Where does the bat go to see in the day? How does he feel when he sees the Shining? Who watches the sun rise with him? Why do you think the bat doesn’t have any questions?
- What does the bat reveal to his mother when he returns from camp? Who does she introduce him to?
- Why does Stoker look sad when the bat makes it into the Batty Gang?
- Why does the bat turn down Vamp’s offer to join the gang?
- Why do you think Principal Pekapeka says “Bravo, little one” to the bat?

- What does Fu ask bat about the Shining?

Discussion

- Why does the bat think that humans are capable of destroying the world? Do you agree? Why/why not?
- Describe the little bat's personality. Why does he ask so many questions? Why do you think all of the adults in the story don't like answering him?
- Why do you think the bat agrees to complete the final dare even though it could cost him his life? Is he brave or stupid? Explain your answer.
- What does bat learn about the truth in this story?

Activities

Character – Devise 5 questions with answers for the young bat.

Theme – Identify an important theme in the story and design a static image that depicts it. Include quotes and images from the story to back up your ideas.

Static Image – Design an alternative front cover for *Diary of a Bat*. The front cover needs the book's title, and the name of the author and illustrator. Include an exciting illustration about the book. Write the name of the book long ways on the spine. The back cover needs a summary of the story to encourage the reader.

Character – Imagine that you are the young bat in the story and you have been asked to give a speech about yourself to the class on the first night of school. Write the speech and present it to the class in role. Include information about your family, where you come from, things you enjoy doing and what kind of bat you consider yourself to be.

Flow Diagram – Choose 10 important events from the story and make them into a flow diagram.

Poetic Writing – Write a poem based on events that occur in this story. Try and create imagery by incorporating figurative language features into your writing.

Research – Conduct a research assignment about long-tailed bats. Formulate focussing questions to guide your research. Use a range of sources to gather your information. Present your findings as a poster or an oral presentation.

Poster – Design a poster advertising *Diary of a Bat* that would be suitable for display in your school library.

Notes written by Vicki Ladd