

STUDY GUIDE for
The Explorers: The Reckless Rescue
By Adrienne Kress





ABOUT ADRIENNE KRESS, AUTHOR OF *THE EXPLORERS: THE RECKLESS RESCUE*

Adrienne Kress is a writer and an actress born and raised in Toronto, Canada. She is the daughter of two high school English teachers, and credits them for her love of both writing and performing. She has a cat named Atticus, who unfortunately despises teeny hats. Look for her online at AdrienneKress.com and follow her on Twitter and Instagram at @AdrienneKress.

PRE-READING

The pre-reading phase in the study of a novel is usually meant to prepare students to read fiction in general and to acquaint students with some of the facts and issues particular to the specific work under study – especially any facts and issues that may lie outside their experience.

FOR THOSE CLASSES WHO DID NOT FOLLOW THE STUDY GUIDE FOR *THE EXPLORERS: THE DOOR IN THE ALLEY*, PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE ARE PRE-READING ACTIVITIES IN THAT GUIDE BASED ON EXAMINING EXPLORERS AND EXPLORERS ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE STILL PERTINENT TO *THE EXPLORERS: THE RECKLESS RESCUE*.

Activity 1: For the “fiction in general” part, we suggest class discussions of a question that middle grade students rarely get to talk about: **When a book is classified as “fiction,” that means that all or part of it is untrue. It’s made up. It’s “a lie.” What do we gain from reading stories that are not true?** (The traditional answer, is this: first, entertainment; secondly education in the form of facts and in the form of insights into human nature. If you think about it, these are the two things teachers generally ask questions about when they study literature with a class. The “entertainment”

issues often lead to questions about the author’s writing techniques. The “education” (or “information”) issues often lead to questions about character and theme.)

Activity 2: We suggest some research into topics that are featured in the novel so that the students are familiar with them before they read about them. Then, when the topic comes up, the students are ready for discussion. Form groups of students and assign each group one of the following topics to research and present to the other members of the class. (You might want to have the students wait to do their presentations until they get to the relevant spot in the novel so everyone can participate in a discussion about how the topics relate to what’s happening. E.g. The difference between how real sharks behave and how the sharks in the novel behave should elicit interesting ideas about why authors create characters – even animal characters – the way they do.)

(a) Animal behavior. An important plot line in “The Reckless Rescue” revolves around a shark. Research sharks – their physical nature, habitat, relationship with other sharks including family life, if any.



(b) Australian Aboriginal culture. Take a look at: their history, language(s), belief systems, music, art, literature, recreation/sport, technology.

(c) Musical groups. i. Some musical groups are formed organically – i.e. a group of friends get together and form a band. Some groups are formed very deliberately by agents/managers. An example of an organic group might be The Beatles. An example of a deliberately formed group might be The Spice Girls. Pick two organically formed groups and two deliberately formed groups and explain their history – when they were formed, how, what kinds of music they performed, how famous they became, how long they lasted, etc. Does how the groups are formed matter – i.e. does it affect their talent, their style, their popularity, their relationships with each other and their managers?

ii. What is K-pop? Where is it most popular? How are K-pop groups formed? Describe their music, costumes, routines, etc.

DURING-READING ACTIVITIES

As mentioned in the lead-up to the Pre-Reading activities, fiction has two goals – to **entertain** and to **educate**. While activities done during the reading of the novel help to ensure that the students are comprehending what’s happening in the story, they also act as a basis for a deeper understanding of the goals of entertaining and educating. A good approach is to give students the responsibility to make notes on particular entertainment or educational features as they are reading the *The Explorers: The Reckless Rescue* so that they may later teach the rest of the class by sharing insights and examples. The students, as individuals or in groups, focus on just one of the questions below as they read the novel.

Note: One way of taking up the homework is to allow all the students to take the first part of each class to discuss their answers with the other students doing their topic. Have each group come up with one quotation or example from the section under discussion that brings out their point clearly. Have them put this on a large piece of paper to place at the front of the room and use it to lead a discussion on the topic.

If you use the same sheet of paper every day, by the end of the reading phase, each topic will have a complete list that can be used for summary, review and/or evaluation.

A. Entertain:

1. Humor – How does humor show up in the *The Explorers: The Reckless Rescue*? Puns, jokes, ridiculous characters and situations, etc. What does humor add to the novel?

2. Style – Style is an aspect of writing that has to do with the fact that there are many choices open to authors when they are writing. They can decide to use very long, formal words or short, everyday words. They can write sentences and paragraphs of great length or short, snappy sentences and paragraphs. They can use a lot of adjectives and adverbs or rely more on similes and metaphors to describe things. And they can “fool around” with standard writing conventions. Examine the author’s use of language choices, vocabulary, and literary devices (like the tone of the narrator, use of footnotes) in order to enhance the reader’s experience of reading the novel. What aspects of Adrienne Kress’s style are distinctive and entertaining?

[e.g. i) Italics: Italics are the “itchy-looking” letters that lean to the right. They have many potential uses. For example, all book titles mentioned in a piece of writing must be in italics. They can also be used for emphasis.



Adrienne Kress deploys them frequently throughout this book. Notice her use of italics, especially in Chapter 3. What do her italicized passages represent? Once you've answered that question, look through the rest of the book and see if she uses italics for the same purpose again. What's entertaining about her use of italics?

ii) Paragraph length: Notice that there are occasional one- or two-word paragraphs throughout the book. Find some (especially the ones where there are several on a page). Explain why Adrienne Kress would choose to write sudden short paragraphs. What do they add to the entertainment value of her writing?]

B. Educate:

1. Facts, problems and theories, etc. – What new facts, vocabulary, history does the reader learn?

[e.g. Vocabulary – “Vulnerable” is an important word on the very first page. What does it mean? Why does Benedict feel vulnerable at the start? Who else in the book is vulnerable? What do “vertiginous” and “filipendulous” mean? Both words are used in the book as mere names for things, but do their meanings have anything to do with “vulnerable”? Why would the author plant these words in prominent places in her book? Explain and give examples.]

2. Psychology/Character – Literature is about what is involved in being human. One remarkable human trait is that people change as they grow in experience. See if you can find quotations from the book that show characters – especially main characters – behaving differently from the way they used to behave.

[e.g. i. In the first book of *The Explorers* series, Sebastian was highly intelligent, logical, methodical and creative, but also cautious, afraid of risks, happily stuck in his daily

routines and very respectful of authority figures. In *The Explorers: The Reckless Rescue*, Sebastian shows signs of change. The last sentence of Chapter 1 is this: “It was time to plot a daring escape.” This is a perfect snapshot of Sebastian in transition. He still likes to plan (“plot”) things carefully, but he’s also willing to risk a “daring escape.” Then notice his new attitude toward authority in Chapter 3: “But do I respect your authority?” and following. See if there are other examples of a growing Sebastian throughout the book.]

[ii. What does it say about Sebastian’s development that he is willing to “teach” Kwan to rebel against Suwon’s authority? See especially Chapter 23.]

3. Important Questions – Novels occasionally cause readers to think about “the Big Questions.” In *The Explorers* series, notions of ethics and morality (e.g. fairness, loyalty, commitment, etc.) for example, are often brought up. Note where these and other “important questions” show up and whether the characters have an easy or hard time deciding how to deal with them.

[e.g. i. Early in Chapter 2, Evie apologizes to the pig in the tiny hat. Why? What is she feeling guilty about?

ii. In the same chapter, during the meeting, what does Evie reveal about her powerful need to rescue Sebastian? Are there other examples in the book of Evie’s or other characters’ commitment to ethical behavior?

iii. As human beings, we’re usually proud of our big brains and our ability to plan. Yet one of the major themes in *The Explorers: The Reckless Rescue* is the fact that the things we plan very often have results that are different from what we imagined they would be. This surprising fact is often called “The Law of Unintended Consequences.” Probably the most obvious example of this “Law” is Eric’s feverish attempts to boost tourism by creating an



aquarium with a shark as its main attraction. Yet his efforts result in a reduction of tourism to almost zero. How does this happen? What other examples, both big and small, do you see throughout the book?]

the end of the novel, they want very much to keep going. Why?

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

Suggested topics for class discussions or short writing assignments:

1. Stop the reading just before the final chapter (Chapter 39 “In which decisions are made and some aren’t”):
Predict what’s going to happen next to Evie and Sebastian. Make sure your predictions fit with what has happened so far and what you know about their personalities. What decisions do you think are made and which are not?
2. Both the first book in *The Explorers* series and this second one end in a “cliff hanger.”
What is a “cliff hanger”? What would make an author want to end a book in this way? Are “cliff hangers” unfair to the reader, or are they good because they suggest something important about the people and events of the book you’ve just read and hint at what’s coming up next?
3. Many adults are fond of dismissing young people’s ideas, opinions and efforts on the grounds that children and teens are too inexperienced to be helpful in solving serious problems. After reading *The Explorers: The Reckless Rescue*, would you say that the author is one of these dismissive adults? i. Provide examples from the book to support your opinion. ii. Provide examples from world or local news or from your own experience that show what young people can do to make a difference.
4. Sebastian and Evie have both been through a lot. You would think that they might have had enough danger and adventure by now. Yet, at

This Guide for Educators was prepared by:

CYNTHIA KRESS, BA, BEd., Adjunct Professor at the
Faculty of Education, Queen’s University,
Kingston, ON, Canada. (Ret.)

AND

FLEMMING KRESS, BA, MEd., Adjunct Professor at
the Faculty of Education, Queen’s University,
Kingston, ON, Canada (Ret.)