

The Dead of the Night

JOURNEY INTO THE NIGHT

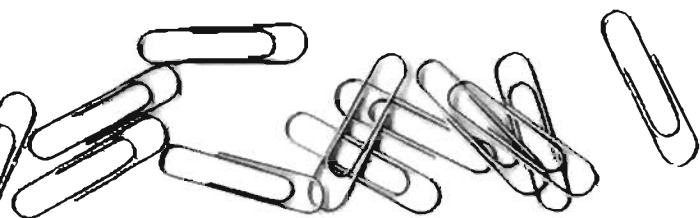
Exploring the Text

Check with your teacher about which questions to try.

- ① **'It gets stuff out of my head and heart and puts it on paper ... it seems like there's more room inside me'** (pp. 1–2). What takes up room in your heart and head? What do you do to make more room inside you?
- ② **'After we'd blown up the bridge she'd [Fi] been giggling, saying, "I can't believe I did that! Let's do some more!" After Kevin drove away with Corrie unconscious in the back seat she cried for a week'** (p. 5). Can you explain Fi's contrasting emotions to Ellie who **'still hadn't got her [Fi] figured out'**?
- ③ Homer answers one of Ellie's questions on courage: **'it's only occurred to me ... how this courage business works. It's all in your head. You're not born with it ...'** (p. 8). Do you agree with Homer? Have you ever had to show bravery? Where do you think your good qualities lie?
- ④ Ellie reflects on the effect of her writing on her friends and their new attitudes towards her. She remarks: **'Oh, the power of the written word'** (p. 10). Homer takes the lead and begins to motivate the friends into activity with a stirring speech (pp. 9–10). Ellie writes, **'That was the power of the spoken word'**. Which would have the greater effect on you, the written or the spoken word? Which would you use to persuade someone to act, the spoken or the written word? Why?
- ⑤ Ellie remarked that **'Deep inside Lee there seemed to be a place I didn't think I had. Maybe it was the place his music came from'** (p. 40).
 - (a) What did Ellie draw from that hidden place of Lee's?
 - (b) Do you think Ellie did herself an injustice when she doubted she had such a place as Lee? Explain.
 - (c) Where does music or poetry or song or love come from if it is deep inside a person?
 - (d) Could hate come from the same place?

Page references are to the Pan 1995 paperback edition of *The Dead of the Night*.

- 6 The friends emerged from Hell determined to visit Corrie in hospital and hopefully to get news of Kevin. As the group crossed the familiar paddocks, Ellie became aware of **'a change in the feel of the land. It felt wilder, stranger, more ancient ... I felt less important'** (p. 11). Can you explain Ellie's feelings? Why **'strange'**? Why **'ancient'**? Why did Ellie feel **'less important'**? Is it only in Australia that someone might feel this way? Why or why not?
- 7 Ellie and Lee were trying to make their escape from the hospital (pp. 44–5). Hiding in a little kitchen, they occasionally heard a girl's voice **'... sometimes making a comment that sounded like English'**. Ellie and Lee **'dared not move'** because they had no idea where the soldiers were. The girl approached their hiding spot and told them when to run. They escaped successfully. How can you explain the girl's presence in the hospital? Can you judge whether her motives were treacherous or otherwise? If you think she was in the hospital for the wrong reasons, maybe Nell could help you understand why (p. 37). Whatever you judge her reasons to be, comment on why you think she helped Ellie and Lee.
- 8 Ellie was happy about **'the sense of rightness that we were doing things again'** (p. 50). Why is it that doing something difficult can sometimes be easier than doing nothing at all?
- 9 **'Corrie in hospital, Kevin a prisoner, and now Chris drinking on the sly'**. Things seemed to hurt most in Ellie's stomach (pp. 51–2). Where do things hurt most for you? What things cause the hurt? How do you stop the hurt?
- 10 Ellie was frightened, and she had **'the panics'** (pp. 51–3). Robyn told her the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Ellie liked the story, and Robyn made the connection that she sometimes felt that the friends were being supported. Do you agree with Robyn? Do you ever feel you are being supported or are drawing strength, ideas, courage, hope from outside yourself? If you do, or even if you do not, where does that extra resource come from when you need it?
- 11 **'A willy-willy of feelings stormed up inside me'** (p. 57). What did the fact that Ellie **'postponed'** these feelings reveal about her? If feelings were storming up inside you, could you control your anger, fear, fury, or hurt – or whatever it was that caused those feelings? Did Ellie's life and experiences in and out of Hell help her in this situation?
- 12 The friends were stripping fruit from the trees on a property **'right up in the hills'**. Ellie remarked that she felt **'a little more alive after picking that beautiful fruit, that cool sharp evening'** (p. 69). Explain why you think she felt more alive.
- 13 Imagine you are Ellie. How would you deal with the **'great black shadow'** hovering over you like **'a predator'** (p. 71)?





- 14 When Ellie settles down to sleep, the friends having joined Harvey's Heroes, she was relieved and didn't care how **'stupid these people were, how unreasonable, how prejudiced'** (pp. 104–12). List four instances of these types of behaviour, all of which were concerning Ellie.
- 15 Ellie felt that Major Harvey was sinister. Did she have reasonable grounds for her feeling?
- 16 Ellie had all but killed the soldier who had followed Fi through the bush (pp. 151–2). He was dying and Ellie and Homer were debating the right or wrong of killing him for their own protection. Ellie was reflecting on their behaviour and values. Is killing ever right? Explain.
- 17 So much had been asked of the friends. Ellie was concerned about expectations. **'We didn't have a right to expectations. Even the things we took for granted – we couldn't take them for granted because those were expectations too'** (p. 165).
 (a) Explain why you think she is right or wrong.
 (b) What are your expectations of your life?
- 18 Ellie and Fi discuss their treatment by the adults at Harvey's camp (pp. 171–2). The adults failed to see the maturity of the friends.
 (a) Do you think most adults fail to see maturity in young people? Give examples to support your view.
 (b) What would you most like adults to notice about you?
- 19 Do you think the friends would have been as responsible or as mature if the war had not intervened?
- 20 The friends are becoming increasingly preoccupied with death and their part in it. John Marsden, it seems, is continually compelling us to think with the minds of the friends and evaluate the decisions they make. Choose one of the characters and think about some of the decisions he or she has made. Describe one decision you support and one you disagree with and give reasons.
- 21 After the **'bombing'** of the houses on Snob Hill, Ellie was reflecting on the fact that destroying something and killing someone was a **'great achievement'**. Imagine you are Ellie. Justify your thought.
- 22 Who was more to blame for Chris's death – Chris, himself, or his friends? Should anybody take the blame?

Think it through talk it over

In groups or as a class, discuss one or more of these topics.

1 Good and bad

The friends took more and more pleasure from delaying the enemy through destruction – wrecking the bridge felt good – but they were also aware of the negative aspects of destruction, ‘I wanted to be remembered as someone who built things, not someone who wrecked them’ (p. 48).

Can we conclude that, in this case, destruction is good?

What is good about the friends’ destructive efforts?

Does it mean that every time the friends destroy something it is good?

Are the friends likely to destroy something good in themselves as a result of their activities?

Can other bad things sometimes be good? Why? Give examples.

2 Right and wrong

Remember the girl who could speak English, at the hospital (p. 45)? Ellie said ‘I know we owe her something special’. Suppose the girl was collaborating with the enemy.

Is collaboration wrong?

Can it ever be right?

The girl saved Ellie and Lee from capture. Does that make up for collaboration?

If the girl had been one of the enemy, would her deed be better than if she were Australian?

The French shaved the heads of female collaborators during the Second World War. Was this justified?

3 Anger and resentment

Ellie was so angry she was grinding her teeth when she realised Major Harvey was not going on the raid (p. 130). She ‘despised him’.

Was Ellie’s anger justified?

‘I began my cleaning jobs in a mood of resentment, hostility’ (p. 121). How are resentment and hostility different? Why was Ellie feeling both?

Are there times when it’s right to be resentful?

Was Ellie right to be resentful?

4 Thinking and action

Is thinking an action?

How do actions begin?

Where do thoughts come from?

Does action always involve thinking?

Can you act without thought?

Do you act on thoughts?

What does your teacher mean if he or she says, 'You should think before you act'?

What do people usually mean when they say, 'You don't think ...'?

5 Courage and bravery

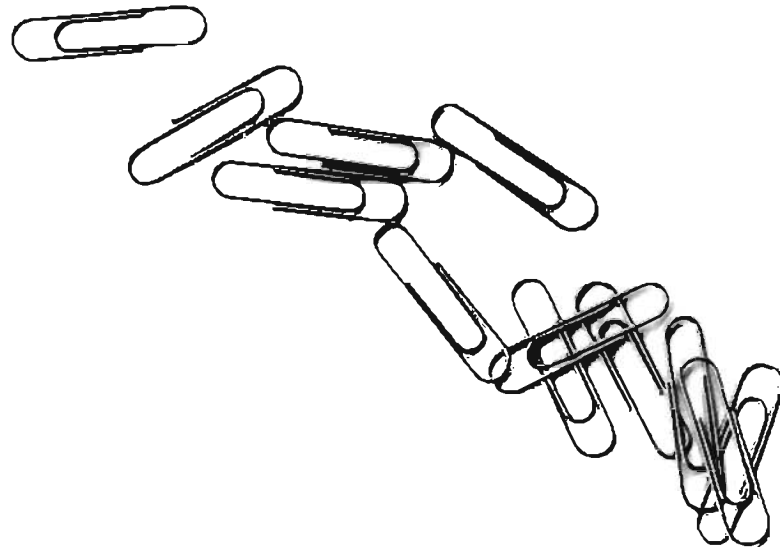
'Sometimes it takes more guts not to do something than to do it' (p. 234).

Bearing in mind Robyn's words, what have you *not done* that it took guts not to do?

What have you done that took the most 'guts'?

What motivates you to make a tough decision?

Have you ever been helped by someone else's act of courage?



ANYTHING GOES

A little night music? Poetry? Or perhaps nocturnal painting? Whatever you decide, your inspiration will be found 'in the dead of the night'. Try one or more of the following activities.



write a poem Write your own poem: Ellie's black shadow – your own black shadow – the music of the night – destruction – growth – fear.



imagine... You are Chris – Why did you choose a destructive escape? Compose a song.
OR
You are Robyn. Compose a prayer.



collage What scene in the novel had the most lasting effect on you? Represent it in colour, texture, shapes, natural materials (roam around the schoolgrounds and find material for a diorama or collage).



paint or draw Ellie's black shadow – was it in her head, her heart? A painting or drawing, in abstract, could be a very appropriate way of presenting a dramatic scene from the novel.



photography Have you tried any photography yet? Do you have the use of a digital camera? Set up scenes in the schoolgrounds. Be creative – Ellie up a tree spying – Lee and Ellie under the (hospital) bed – Find a door in a corridor, have the girl who could speak English show you the way.



brainstorm There was much that was positive in the novel – courage – maturity – tough decisions – responsibility. Brainstorm some themes and ideas. How could you best represent such abstract thoughts? Music? Poetry? Song? Sound? Dance?