

CYRM Resource Book
Young Adult Nominees
(Grades 9-12)
2007-2008

Elsewhere

by Gabrielle Zevin

Farrar Straus Giroux, 2005.

Private Peaceful

by Michael Morpurgo

Scholastic Press, 2003.

Vampire High

by Douglas Rees

Delacorte Press, 2003.



California Young Reader Medal
**Young Adult
Ballot**
2007-2008

_____ *Elsewhere*

_____ *Private Peaceful*

_____ *Vampire High*

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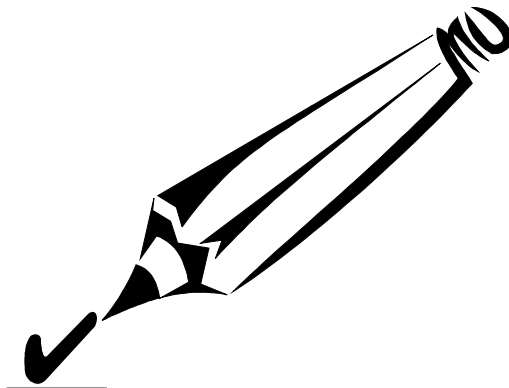
_____ *Vampire High*

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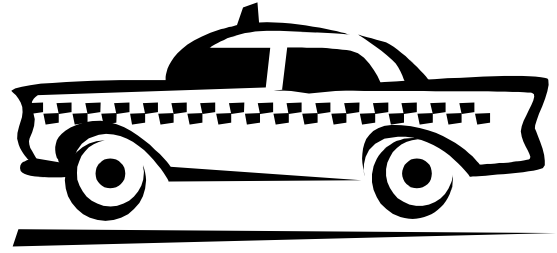
_____ *Private Peaceful*

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Elsewhere

by Gabrielle Zevin



Synopsis

Liz Hall is a typical fifteen-year-old looking forward to getting her driver's license, graduating from high school, going to college, falling in love. Then she finds herself in a bunk bed aboard the SS Nile heading for Elsewhere. Once there, she slowly comes to understand that she has died, a victim of a hit and run accident. She meets her grandmother who died before she was born, and learns that in Elsewhere no one grows older, but ages backward one year for each year they are there, until they eventually return to Earth to be reborn. Liz, angry at what she has lost, struggles to understand what is happening to her. She refuses to get to know this new world, wants her old life back and spends her time keeping tabs on her surviving family and friends through magical coin-operated telescopes. Gradually, she starts to follow advice from the Office of Acclimation, takes a job counseling deceased pets, finds romance and makes periodic visits back to Earth. Through this, she sees that she has made a new beginning and learns about the redemptive power of love.



Hooks

- How do you picture heaven? What do you think happens to you in the afterlife? Liz Hall finds herself in Elsewhere after she is killed by a taxi and discovers life there is not what she thought it would be. Read *Elsewhere* to learn what she experiences.
- Liz Hall finds life in Elsewhere different from life on Earth and makes a list of the four things she misses the most. If you found yourself in Elsewhere, what would be on your list?

Meet the Author—Gabrielle Zevin



Gabrielle Zevin is from New York City. She has written for adults and also for the movies. Actually, she has been writing since she was eight years old and got her first computer. When she was a teenager, what she wrote included music reviews. Like Liz, the heroine of *Elsewhere*, Ms. Zevin loves animals and owns a dog, a pug named Mrs. DeWinter. One of the things Ms. Zevin loves about being a writer is that it is a profession that allows her to explore many possibilities: what happens after we die, what it's like to be a veterinarian, and so much more. Her own favorite books are two children's classics, *Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White, and *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Ann Paterson. Death plays an important role in both of these stories.

For more information, see:

<http://www.teenreads.com/authors/au-zevin-gabrielle.asp>

and

<http://www.bloomsbury.com/childrens/microsite.asp?id=948§ion=3&aid=1317>





Future Life—Fiction

- Albom, Mitch. *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*. Hyperion, 2003.
- Crutcher, Chris. *The Sledding Hill*. Greenwillow Books, 2005.
- Langston, Laura. *Exit Point*. Orca Book Publishers, 2006.
- Shearer, Alex. *The Great Blue Yonder*. Clarion Books, 2002.
- Shusterman, Neal. *Everlost*. Simon & Shuster Books for Young Readers, 2006.
- Springer, Nancy. *Skyrider*. Avon Books, 1999.
- Whitcomb, Laura. *A Certain Slant of Light*. Graphia, 2005.
- Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Modern Library, 1992.

Death—Fiction

- Brooks, Bruce. *All That Remains*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2001.
- Creech, Sharon. *Walk Two Moons*. HarperCollins, 1994.
- Hite, Sid. *A Hole in the World*. Scholastic Signature, 2001.
- Kadohata, Cynthia. *Kira-Kira*. Atheneum, 2004.
- McGhee, Alison. *All Rivers Flow to the Sea*. Candlewick Press, 2005.
- Spring, Nancy. *The Friendship Song*. Atheneum, 1992.
- Wiles, Deborah. *Each Little Bird That Sings*. Harcourt, 2005.
- Wiles, Deborah. *Love, Ruby Lavender*. Harcourt, 2001.
- Woodson, Jacqueline. *Behind You*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2004.

Other Titles by Gabrielle Zevin

- Margarettown: A Novel*. Miramax Books, 2005.

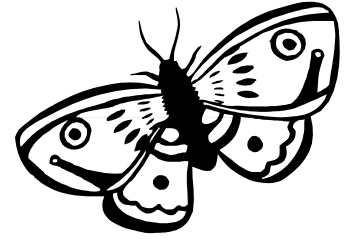
Writing Prompts / Discussion Questions for *Elsewhere*



- Since Liz was not quite sixteen years old at the time of her death, she will never get to experience learning how to drive, going to the prom, going to college, falling in love or getting married. What events in your life do you look forward to in order to feel that you will live a complete life?
- Afterlife as it exists in *Elsewhere* is distinctly secular, unbound by the precepts of religion. Yet, one of the fundamental principles of life in *Elsewhere* is reverse aging and reincarnation. Research what world religions believe in reincarnation. Compare these beliefs with the situation in *Elsewhere*.
- Aldous Ghen explained to Liz that an avocation is something that makes one's soul complete. In *Elsewhere*, British rock star Curtis Jest becomes a fisherman, John Lennon a gardener and Marilyn Monroe a psychiatrist. Think of some recently deceased celebrities and decide what sort of avocation would truly reflect their soul. Explain your choices.
- Due to the reverse aging process, the rules of dating and relationships are confusingly topsy-turvy in *Elsewhere*. How is this true for Liz's grandmother and Curtis Jest, and for Liz and Owen?
- At the Observation Deck, Liz identifies the cab driver who struck and killed her, and she becomes obsessed with watching Amadou Bonamy in his daily life. How do her observations of him finally wean her away from her addiction to the Observation Deck?
- Liz arrives in *Elsewhere* in a cruise ship and is launched back to Earth in the River. What is the significance of water images in this novel?
- Liz maintains a connection with the family dog Lucy, and becomes a canine counselor, discovering her ability to speak canine. Watch a few episodes of the television program "The Dog Whisperer," and compare methods of canine communication.
- *Elsewhere* is not an afterlife of cottony clouds, angels playing harps, or pearly gates. However there are some heavenly elements in *Elsewhere*. What are they?
- *Elsewhere* is an uplifting novel about death. How does Zevin turn a normally gloomy topic into a positive story?

Private Peaceful

by Michael Morpurgo



Synopsis

Private Thomas “Tommo” Peaceful is alone, standing watch, waiting for dawn and the horror he know will come. As he counts down the minutes and hours, he is determined to stay awake through the night and remember everything exactly as it happened. He recalls his father’s death and the part he thinks he played in it. He remembers his big brother, Charlie, always there to look after him and their older, brain-injured brother Joe. He thinks about his mother who has to work hard to provide food and shelter for her family. And he recalls Molly, the only girl in his life, and how Charlie took her away from him. War comes into their lives and Charlie is forced to enlist. Tommo, just short of sixteen and considered too young to fight, lies about his age so that he and Charlie can be together. They are sent to France where they endure bullets, bombs, shells, noise, dirt, rats, and disease, facing certain death each time they try to advance the British lines. Poignant and dramatic, *Private Peaceful* is both a love story and an honest, moving account of the horrors of World War I.

Hooks

- What do you know about World War I?
- Do you know anyone who has done something illegal and gotten away with it? Do you know someone with a reputation for pulling pranks? What do you think about them?
- A character in this book is brain-injured. How do you think his brain injury will limit his abilities?

Meet the Author—Michael Morpurgo



Michael Morpurgo has written more than 60 books for children. He was born in England, during World War II, where he still lives. He has been a schoolteacher as well as a writer. However, as a boy, he was not a writer or reader; instead he enjoyed playing rugby. After college, Mr. Morpurgo joined the Army. He also began to read classic authors, including Robert Louis Stevenson, Ernest Hemingway, and Ted Hughes. The experience encouraged him to try his own hand at writing, and he has authored books featuring the past, moral dilemmas, and even some fantasy across the subsequent years. He has also written picture books for young children, and used great English legends, like those about King Arthur, as inspiration for some of his stories. Mr. Morpurgo's respect for animals and the environment led to his establishing a foundation called Farms for City Children, to help introduce urban youth to nature. He has won many awards for his writing, only some of which are available in the United States.

For more information, see *St. James Guide to Young Adult Writers* (2nd edition, 1999) and <http://www.michaelmorpurgo.org/>.



Connections for *Private Peaceful*



Poverty—Fiction

- Blackwood, Gary. *Moonshine*. Marshall Cavendish, 1999.
Darrow, Sharon. *The Painters of Lexieville*. Candlewick Press, 2003.
Hartnett, Sonya. *Thursday's Child*. Candlewick Press, 2002.
Joinson, Carla. *A Diamond in the Dust*. Dial Books, 2001.
Taylor, Kim. *Bowery Girl*. Viking, 2006.

Soldiers—Fiction

- Garland, Sherry. *In the Shadow of the Alamo*. Harcourt, 2001.
Hughes, Dean. *Soldier Boys*. Atheneum, 2001.
Nix, Garth. *Sir Thursday*. Scholastic Press, 2006.
Wilson, John. *Four Steps to Death*. KCP Fiction, 2005.
Young Warriors: Stories of Strength. Edited by Tamora Pierce and Josepha Sherman. Random House, 2005.

Single Parent Families—Fiction

- Dee, Barbara. *Just Another Day in My Insanely Real Life*. Margaret K. McElderry, 2006.
Freymann-Weyr, Garret. *The Kings are Already Here*. Houghton Mifflin, 2003.
Ghent, Natale. *No Small Thing*. Candlewick Press, 2003.
Rottman, S. L. *Slalom*. Viking/Penguin, 2004.
Shands, Linda. *Wild Fire*. Fleming Revell, 2001.
Wolff, Virginia Euwer. *Make Lemonade*. Scholastic, 1993.
Wolff, Virginia Euwer. *True Believer*. Simon Pulse, 2001.

People With Mental Disabilities—Fiction

- Curtis, Christopher Paul. *Bucking the Sarge*. Wendy Lamb Books/Random House, 2004.
Holt, Kimberly Willis. *My Louisiana Sky*. Holt, 1998.
Lamstein, Sarah. *Hunger Moon*. Front Street Books, 2004.
Rottman, S. L. *Head Above Water*. Peachtree, 1999.
Rubin, Susan Goldman. *Emily Good as Gold*. Harcourt Brace, 1993.

World War I, 1914-1918—England—Fiction

- Lawrence, Iain. *Lord of the Nutcracker Men*. Delacorte Press, 2001.
Sedgwick, Marcus. *The Foreshadowing*. Wendy Lamb Books/Random House, 2006.

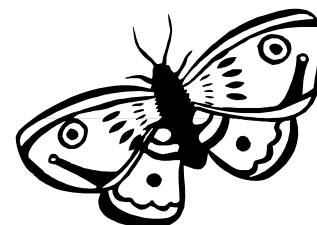
Other Titles by Michael Murpurgo

- Twist of Gold*. Egmont Books, 2004.
Waiting for Anya. Puffin, 1997.
War of Jenkin's Ear. Putnam, 1997.

Writing Prompts / Discussion Questions for *Private Peaceful*

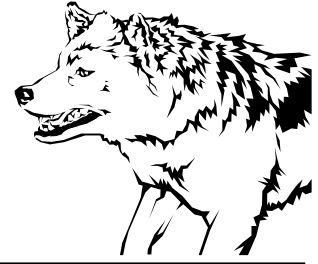


- Michael Morpurgo was Children’s Laureate in England from 2003-2005. Research what it means to be Children’s Laureate. What is the history of that position?
- The Peaceful family’s relationship with the landowner, Colonel, and his wife at the Big House foreshadows Charlie and Tommo’s relationship with Sergeant Hanley. What are the parallels in these relationships?
- At the front, in the trenches, Charlie never wanted to talk with his brother about home and family. Why do think he wanted to keep these two worlds apart?
- Throughout history, underage soldiers have served in wars. Research the average age of a soldier during World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the current Iraq war. What are current U.S. military age requirements? Do you see any patterns?
- Big Joe’s mental disability at times seems to be the glue that holds the Peaceful family together. Why do you think he always sings *Oranges and Lemons* at the most heartbreaking moments?
- Morpurgo’s descriptions of trench warfare (rats, lice, mud, etc.) and descriptions of dead soldiers are graphic and sometimes morbid. Is this just gratuitous or does the author have a purpose for this?
- Charlie disobeyed a direct order from Sergeant Haney that would mean certain death, in order to stay with his injured brother. Therefore he faced a court martial and execution. Should Tommo blame himself for this, in much the same way he blamed himself for his father’s death? Why or why not? Was this an act of heroism or cowardice? What would you have done?
- Charlie’s court martial took less than an hour, with no witnesses to speak on Charlie’s behalf. Do the special circumstances of war justify the suspension of normal judicial procedures?
- When they were younger, Charlie and Thomas often got into trouble because of their various escapades including game poaching and dog stealing which gave them a bad reputation among the people of their village. Were their actions justified and their punishments deserved?



Vampire High

by Douglas Rees



Synopsis

When his father changes jobs, Cody Elliot is transplanted from his beloved California to New Sodom, Massachusetts and he is miserable in this small New England town. His plan of action is to fail all his classes in the hopes that his parents will be willing to move back to California. His father, however, see things differently and gives Cody a choice to either attend Our Lady of Perpetual Homework or Vlad Dracul Magnet School. Not wanting to go to a school with “homework” in its name, Cody opts for the magnet school. Once there, he finds things to be very different from any other school he has attended. Most of the students are vampires and they will die if they get wet. Cody’s only requirement is to play water polo, helping the school meet the state’s standard of having a water polo team. He won’t have to do any work in his classes, will get straight A’s and be guaranteed admission to the college of his choice. It all sounds perfect and a way to satisfy his father. Most of the vampires (jenti) despise the non-vampire students (gadges). Cody upsets the status quo when he befriends two of the jenti, falls in love with a vampire princess, insists on doing his own school work and devises a way to save the school.



Hooks

- Would you like to go to a school where you didn’t have to do any homework and get straight A’s? Cody Elliot attends just such a school and finds it is less than ideal. Read *Vampire High* and discover why.
- Have you ever been the “new kid” in a school? What adjustments did you have to make?
- Cody Elliot is faced with making a choice between getting a free ride or being a true friend. Had you ever had to choose between fitting in and doing the right thing? What kind of decision did you make?

Vampire High

Meet the Author—Douglas Rees



Douglas Rees decided to become a writer when he was twelve, although he didn't publish a novel for 35 more years. Born in Riverside, California, he now lives in San Jose, where he works as a librarian as well as writing books for young adults and children. Mr. Rees grew up on various Air Force bases in the U. S. and Germany. While much of what he has written is steeped in historical fact, *Vampire High* is a humorous take on the horror genre, because that was a type of writing Mr. Rees wanted to explore. It took him three years to complete the book, a story which he believes was inspired both by his school days in Germany and a visit, much more recently, to a high school in Massachusetts. He also writes about art history that combines fiction with lives of famous artists.

For more information, see *Contemporary Authors Online* (Gale 2007)
and
<http://www.douglasrees.com/>.





Vampires—Fiction

- Atwater-Rhodes, Amelia. *Shattered Mirror*. Laurel Leaf Books, 2001.
- Bradbury, Ray. *The Homecoming*. Collins Design, 2006.
- Classic Vampire Stories: Timeless Tales to Sink Your Teeth Into*. Compiled by Molly Cooper. Contemporary Books, 1996.
- Klause, Annette Curtis. *Blood and Chocolate*. Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 1997.
- Klause, Annette Curtis. *The Silver Kiss*. Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 1990.
- Vampires: A Collection of Original Stories*. Edited by Jane Yolen and Martin H. Greenberg. HarperCollins, 1991.
- Vande Velde, Vivian. *Companions of the Night*. Harcourt Brace, 1995.

High Schools—Fiction

- Alphin, Elaine Marie. *The Perfect Shot*. Carolrhoda Books, 2005.
- Boone, Ian. *Sleep Rough Tonight*. Dutton Books, 2005.
- Crutcher, Chris. *The Sledding Hill*. Greenwillow Books, 2005.
- Korman, Gordon. *Jake, Reinvented*. Hyperion, 2005.
- Marino, Peter. *Dough Boy*. Holiday House, 2005.
- On the Fringe*. Edited by Donald R. Gallo. Dial Books, 2001.
- Plum-Ucci, Carol. *The Body of Christopher Creed*. Harcourt, 2000.

Massachusetts—Fiction

- Cohn, Rachel. *Pop Princess*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2004.
- Cormier, Robert. *The Rag and Bone Shop*. Delacorte Press, 2001.
- Griffin, Adele. *Amandine*. Hyperion Books for Children, 2001.
- Hurst, Carol Otis. *In Plain Sight*. Houghton Mifflin, 2002.
- Sleator, William. *The Last Universe*. Amulet Books, 2005.
- Wittlinger, Ellen. *Blind Faith*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2006.
- Wittlinger, Ellen. *What's in a Name*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2001.

Other Titles by Douglas Rees

- The Janus Gate: An Encounter With John Singer Sargent (Art Encounters)*. Watson-Guption Publications, 2006.
- Smoking Mirror: An Encounter With Paul Gauguin (Art Encounters)*. Watson-Guption Publications, 2005.

Writing Prompts / Discussion Questions for *Vampire High*



- How would a vampire student fit into your high school? What kind of cultural adjustments would he or she have to make?
- To what literary genre does this novel belong—horror, humor, or romance? Explain your reasons with examples from the novel.
- Cody's father gives him a choice of Our Lady of Perpetual Homework or Vlad Dracul High School, which basically offers him an academic free ride with no homework. Why does Cody eventually decide to take his classes seriously?
- Cody is welcomed to Vlad Dracul High School by Principal Horvath primarily for his ability to swim. Is it legitimate for high schools to recruit outside students strictly for their athletic talent?
- The librarian morphs into a wolf in order to deal with a pesky rat problem. Does the librarian at your school remind you of any particular animal? Why?
- Justin informs Cody that vampires refer to themselves as *jenti* and to non-vampires as *gadje*. Is this just an example of politically correct terminology, or does it have something to do with Bram Stoker's depiction of vampires as evil, dark and scary creatures?
- Cody "donates" blood to Justin so that he will have the strength to attend Ileana's birthday party. How far would you go to demonstrate true friendship?
- Cody's friendship with Justin begins when he rescues Justin from the bully Gregor and his toadies Vladimir and Constantin. What kind of traits do bullies usually look for in a victim? What kinds of tactics do they use to torture their prey?
- Research vampire myths and legends. Compare those mythical vampires with the lighter, humorous depiction of vampires in this novel.

