



## Daredevil Club

Pam Withers

Interest level: ages ten to fourteen

Reading level: 3.9

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AR Quiz # 110017

### Book Summary

Kip's only friends are the members of the Daredevil Club, a club whose mission is to complete seven dangerous dares before their rivals, the Wildmen, complete their list of dares. Before the cliff diving accident in which he lost the use of his leg, Kip had been the leader of the Daredevil Club. Now he has difficulty completing the dares and suspects that his membership is threatened. As the Daredevils plan their final stunt, a dangerous climb along a narrow steel shelf beneath a bridge, they try to convince Kip that he may not be up to the task. Kip refuses to back down even though he suspects his friends might be right.

### Author Biography

**Pam Withers** is the author of the Take it to the Extreme series of books for teens, as well as *Breathless* and *Camp Wild*, published by Orca Book Publishers. Pam wrote *Daredevil Club* after a back injury. During her recovery, she missed being able to participate in sports activities with her friends and family, and she started to wonder what would happen if someone were so set on keeping up with their pre-injury activities that they took unreasonable risks. Pam lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, with her husband and teenage son when not touring North America giving presentations to students.

## Connecting to the Text

### Character Development

The character of Kip develops significantly in *Daredevil Club*. Early in the novel, we learn that he is resentful that his family has moved to a small, rural community. He begins to participate in dangerous stunts, and lies to his parents about where he's been, saying "parents need to be kept clueless. They worry too much" (p. 13). He doesn't trust others and always thinks the worst of them. Later, we find Kip helping put together a community carnival fundraiser to support his physiotherapist whose funding was discontinued. Kip now seems to trust others more and has fun with his friends in new and safe ways.

1. Ask students to complete one of the following writing exercises.
  - Kip's accident changed his life forever. Do you think his personality and behavior were different before his accident? How do you know? Write a paragraph that describes how he is different. Use examples from the novel.
  - Can you think of experiences from your own life that helped you grow as a person, like Kip did? Write a paragraph about one of those experiences, comparing it to Kip's experience.
  - Early on, Kip worried that his friends would ditch him if he gave up doing the stunts. He didn't really trust them to stay his friend. What happened that made Kip trust his friends? Write a paragraph describing what happened.

We learn a lot about Kip and his attitude toward his accident by the way he describes himself. He refers to himself as "gimpy" with a "useless" leg.

- Think of three alternative words or terms that Kip could use to describe himself that are positive and empowering. For example, he might say that he is recovering, rebuilding, or in training. Write a short letter to Kip, describing why he should use your words instead of his.
- What advice would you give Kip to improve his self-image? Write Kip a letter, outlining your advice. Give him at least two clear instructions or goals.

(p. 22) *Just because I wasn't in sports anymore didn't mean I lacked an opponent. My adversary was the part of me that still didn't work.*

- How does Kip use his injury to motivate himself? Does his past experience as an athlete help him while he recovers and works with Andrew at physiotherapy? Write a paragraph describing this, incorporating examples from the novel.
- Have you ever had an experience like Kip's where you had to motivate yourself to obtain a goal? Write a paragraph describing what happened and how you used the experience to reach a goal.

2. As a class, consider the following quotations. You may wish to ask students to read these passages aloud. Discussion topics follow.

Before

(p. 12) *[Mom] sat there, hands fidgeting with the sock, eyes traveling around my room. They rested on my hockey trophies, souvenirs of a past life, a past city. There was no hockey rink in this hick town. In Peever, there wasn't much to do at all. Or many people to do it with.*

After

(p. 97) *Living in a rural town wasn't so bad after all. The whole community had pulled together for the event.*

- Early on, Kip dislikes living in Peever. Why? What did his past life have that he doesn't have now in Peever?
- Sometimes moving to a new community and making new friends can be difficult. Instead of starting the *Daredevil Club*, what could he have done differently to make friends? What can make moving to a new community or school easier?
- What are some advantages and drawbacks to living in a small rural town? Make a list of each, and then do the same for living in a big city.

Before

(p. 13) *"Mom! You and Dad were the ones that made us move. It's not like there are many kids to choose from here!"*

(p. 86) *...I had no backup friends.*

After

(p. 102) *It went on all afternoon. Fun, games and money. I got dunked more than once. I never realized how many 'friends' I had in Peever.*

- Kip had a lot of fun and used a lot of his leadership skills preparing for and participating in the carnival. How was this different than participating in the stunts? How are the skills Kip used for preparing for and participating in the carnival similar to those he used in his stunts?
- Have you ever been through a life-changing experience like Kip? Has there been a time when you changed like Kip did? What happened?

### **Metaphor and Simile**

Metaphors and similes connect ideas, giving us images that expand our understanding of situations and characters.

1. Read the following four examples aloud to the class, or write them on the board. Which is an example of a simile? Of a metaphor? After each, discuss the connection that is being made and how it lends meaning to the text.

As there are many excellent examples of metaphor and simile use in *Daredevil Club*, invite students to find their own as they read the novel. Ask students keep a log of them, and then share them in a group discussion.

(p. 46) *Even to me, my tone sounded venomous.*

(p. 62) *Crows flapped their wings and rested on supports high above us, peering down like gargoyles.*

(p. 90) *I was busy trying to massage the demons out of it.*

(p. 92) *The difference was, every now and again they'd press their knees or heels against the steel beam like horse riders applying spurs.*

2. Invite students to write a short paragraph using similes to describe an exciting, fun and safe activity that they might like to try. For example, The rollercoaster ride was great. It moved as fast as a rocket. Looking down, the people below looked like ants. My heart was beating like a drum!

### Personification

Personification is a figure of speech where things are given human or animal-like qualities. Below are some examples of personification in *Daredevil Club*.

Read the following examples aloud to the large group, or write them on the board.

(p. 6) *Fraser's beam raced along walls weeping with humidity.*

(p. 54) *Of course you can't see the rock...Sometimes you can see its shadow lurking.*

(p. 38) *It might pull me off center like an anchor ready to yank me into the water with every move.*

1. As a group, discuss the examples of personification. How does personification lend meaning to these sentences?
2. Invite students to write sentences using personification using the following topics or other topics of their choice.

### Describe:

- Your stomach when you're really hungry.
- A shadow you suddenly see out of the corner of your eye.
- The night when you're walking alone.
- Something you've lost and can't find, no matter how hard you try.
- The unfinished homework on your desk—that was due yesterday!

### **Connecting to the Students—Ideas and Discussion Topics for Character Study Discussion and Reading Comprehension Topics**

Kip is afraid that if he stops doing the stunts, his friends won't like him any more.

(p. 5) "Every day I feared they'd say, 'Dude, we can't wait anymore. We're going to finish those dares without you, okay?' Trying to keep that from happening was everything that drove me after the accident."

- It seems that where Kip used to live, his friends were quite different than the friends he has now. His mom says that "Ever since we moved here, you seem to be...asking for trouble" (p. 12) Why is Kip 'asking for trouble'? Why is he engaging in dangerous stunts when he didn't before?
- What do you think would happen if Kip had decided after the accident that he didn't want to be part of the stunts any more? Would Fraser, Vlad and Clay still want to hang out with Kip? How do you know?
- Sometimes when we want to fit in we might do things we wouldn't do otherwise, including taking risks or participating in dangerous activities. Can you think of other similar things some teens may do to fit in? What could they do instead?

Kip is motivated to be part of the Daredevil Club, in part because he thinks the other kids look up to him.

(p. 13) *Some kids at school regard us as heroes; we've gotten a ton of attention. Why else would the Wildmen have started copying us?*

- Is participating in these daredevil stunts really heroic? What makes an act heroic?
- Why did the Wildmen start copying the Daredevil Club? What were they hoping to achieve?
- Besides being seen as a hero, what else motivates Kip to keep doing stunts?
- By the end of the novel, Kip has stopped doing stunts and is instead helping younger kids on their wooden pedal cars at the carnival fundraiser. Do you think this kind of activity has the same appeal for him?

### **Connecting to Curriculum—Current Events**

1. Kip said that “the fear of getting caught was part of the excitement” (p. 1). Often, youth are involved in dangerous stunts that are reported in the news. Ask students to complete the following research project.
  - Using newspapers, magazines, Internet, radio or television news, find stories about youth involved in stunts similar to those of the Daredevil Club. The stories can be either current or historical. Some examples might be street racing or skiing out of bounds.
  - Choose a story that interests you. What happened? Why was it reported in the news? How did the stunt affect the youth involved? Did the stunt also affect their families or their community? How?
  - Did anything positive come of the stunt? For example, did the stunt raise awareness about the dangers involved, or did local laws change because of what happened?
  - Think of a safe, legal alternative recreational activity the people involved could have chosen. For example, The street racers enjoyed racing because they like driving fast. Instead of street racing cars, they could have “virtually” raced at the arcade instead.

### **Personal Reflection—Journal Writing**

Invite students to complete one of the following exercises

1. Kip said that he “knew [his] friends weren’t okay about the accident” (p. 5). He feared that they wouldn’t want him to stay in the Daredevil Club. Sometimes Kip made assumptions about what others were thinking. Think of a time when you felt like an outsider in your group. What helped you feel better? Write a journal entry about the experience. What did you learn from it?
2. At first, Kip didn’t like living in Peever, a small rural community. “In Peever, there wasn’t much to do at all. Or many people to do it with” (p. 12). Sometimes moving to a new community and having to make new friends can be difficult. Write a list of five things someone new to your school and community could do to make friends and feel at home.
3. Elyse said to Kip, “Kip, if Fraser and Vlad are trying to ditch you, they’re not real friends. It’s not worth re-injuring yourself to stay in with people like that” (p. 83). What does it take to be a friend? Write a list of five qualities you want in a friend, then give an example for each (for example, Trustworthy: A friend never gossips about you behind your back or takes any of your things without asking).

### **Drama**

1. Ask students to work in small groups to improvise skits based on key scenes from *Daredevil Club*. Have students improvise their own scenarios or choose from the examples below:
  - Imagine that when Elyse saw the Daredevil Club at the bridge scouting for their next stunt, she heard their discussion. What might Elyse say to Kip the next time he's at the clinic? How can she convince Kip not to go ahead with the stunt?
  - Imagine you are one of Kip's friends and you are visiting him in the hospital after his accident. What could you say to cheer him up?
  - Kip worried what everyone would say if he quit the Daredevil Club one stunt before the final one. Imagine that Kip had quit. What do you think Vlad and Fraser would say? Clay? Elyse? Imagine that Vlad, Fraser, Clay and Elyse are speaking to each other at the Cowboy Café after Kip has quit the Daredevil Club.

### **Art**

1. Invite students to draw or paint the sites for the seven stunts in *Daredevil Club*. Imagine these locations at different times of the day or year—how would they be different? For a list of the seven locations, see pages 4–13.
2. Ask students to make a poster advertising the carnival in Peever. Incorporate pictures of the activities—the soapbox derby, the water dunking tank, the ring toss, the band—and a catchy slogan. Make your poster as inviting as possible; what kind of poster would make you want to attend a carnival?

### **Personal Planning**

Andrew is Kip's physiotherapist and he coaches and helps Kip after his accident. It's a long and painful process, but it's crucial to Kip's recovery.

1. Ask students to research physiotherapy, or similar professions such as massage therapy, sports medicine or personal coaching, and answer the following questions.
  - Do you think you would like to do this job? Why, or why not?
  - What kind of personality would be best suited to being a physiotherapist?
  - What kind of skills would be necessary to do this job successfully?
  - What schooling or training is required to be a physiotherapist?
  - If you were interested in pursuing a career in physiotherapy, how could you find out more about prerequisites or work study programs like Elyse's?

### **More Ideas, Topics and Activities for Daredevil Club**

1. The Daredevil Club chose seven dangerous stunts to perform. Make a list of seven exciting but safe activities that youth might enjoy. Examples might be riding a rollercoaster or visiting a haunted house exhibit at Halloween. Then find out if these activities exist in your community. Would you enjoy these activities?
2. Sometimes pushing yourself and taking a big risk as Kip did can end badly. Kip had a life-changing accident in which he lost the use of one of his legs. But pushing yourself and taking risks can sometimes be a good thing too. Think of ways that you can push yourself and take a risk where the outcome will likely be positive, such as setting a goal to run five miles, or auditioning for a part in the school play.
3. Although Kip can sometimes be quite down on himself, others see him as a leader. Vlad acknowledged this at the final stunt: “We dedicate the final stunt to our true leader...” (p. 90) and Elyse said, “People look up to you, you know” (p. 83–84). What does it take to be a good leader? Are leaders born that way or can people learn to become leaders? What kind of skills could you learn if you wanted to be a good leader? Where could one learn and practice these skills?
4. At the bridge, the Daredevil Club saw “a couple of grizzled-looking homeless people” and Kip said, “Even Peever had homeless people?” (p. 62). Why are the homeless people sleeping under the bridge? Imagine a day in the life of a homeless person. What kinds of challenges might they face?
5. Andrew was very touched by the kids’ efforts to put together a carnival to raise money to save his physiotherapy clinic. He said to Kip, Fraser, Vlad, Clay and Elyse, “Guys, I can’t tell you how much I appreciate your efforts...you’re doing a great thing” (p. 81). Can you think of a way your class could help a person or group in your community? Brainstorm ideas of who you could help and how you would do it.