

About *THE RISE AND FALL OF DEREK COWELL*

Derek Cowell never expected to become popular, but his accidental photo bomb and a brush with celebrity took him from invisibility to middle-school fame overnight. It's great, at least for a while. But by the time he's seeing the downside, he's also facing pressure to maintain his popularity. That pushes him to one zany stunt after another ... until fame gives way to humiliation. Can Derek redeem himself? Or is it more important to be popular among the people who matter most?

About VALERIE SHERRARD

Valerie Sherrard is an award-winning author of picture books and young adult novels. Her novel *The Glory Wind* won the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction and the Ann Connor Brimer Award. Her works have been chosen as Red Maple and White Pine Award Honour Books and she has been nominated for the Manitoba Young Readers' Choice Award and Snow Willow Award. Born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, she now lives in Miramichi, New Brunswick.

Curriculum

Grade 4, 5, 6, 7 Language (Reading, Writing)

Student Objectives

After reading *The Rise and Fall of Derek Cowell*, students should be able to:

- Make inferences about texts using stated and implied ideas from the texts as evidence
- Identify the point of view presented in a text, citing supporting evidence from the text, and suggest some possible alternative perspectives
- Analyze texts and explain how specific elements in them contribute to meaning
- Extend understanding of texts by connecting the ideas in them to their own knowledge, experience, and insights, to other familiar texts, and to the world around them
- Develop interpretations about texts using stated and implied ideas to support their interpretations

Getting Started

- Discuss internet challenges (e.g. bad: the cinnamon challenge, the Tide Pod challenge, etc. and good/harmless: the ice bucket challenge, the bottle flip challenge, etc.)
- Discuss/define phobias.
- Ask the students what they think it might be like to be famous.

Discussion Questions

- Derek's family leaves him behind when they leave for vacation and he was almost left behind on a class trip. Has anything like this ever happened to you?
- Derek thinks he has the superpower of being invisible. Would you want this superpower? Why or why not?
- If you could have any superpower, what would you choose?
- Steve and Denise have different motivation for wanting Derek to take a photo with one of the cats at the animal shelter. Discuss what the reasons are and the nature of their difference.
- What is acrophobia?
- Derek knows he's deathly afraid of heights, but agrees to Steve's skywalking plan anyway. Why?
- Was Derek's punishment for trespassing at the train station fair? Why or why not?
- Before starting to read chapter 34, make a prediction about who you think shared the skywalking video.
- Derek ends his story by saying, "Everything that's happened has taught me a few things about what matters. And what doesn't." What do you think he means by that?

Classroom Activities

- Draw your own interpretation of Derek's photobomb on Kim and her friends.
- Re-write a chapter from another character's perspective.