

Tomorrow, When the War Began

JOURNEY THROUGH DANGER

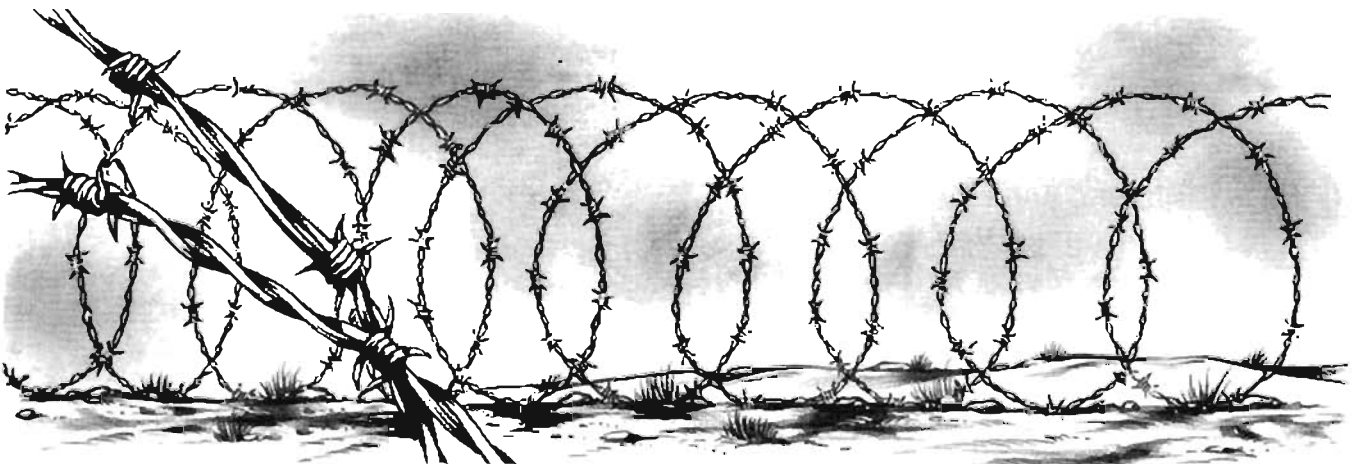
Exploring the Text

Check with your teacher about which questions to try.

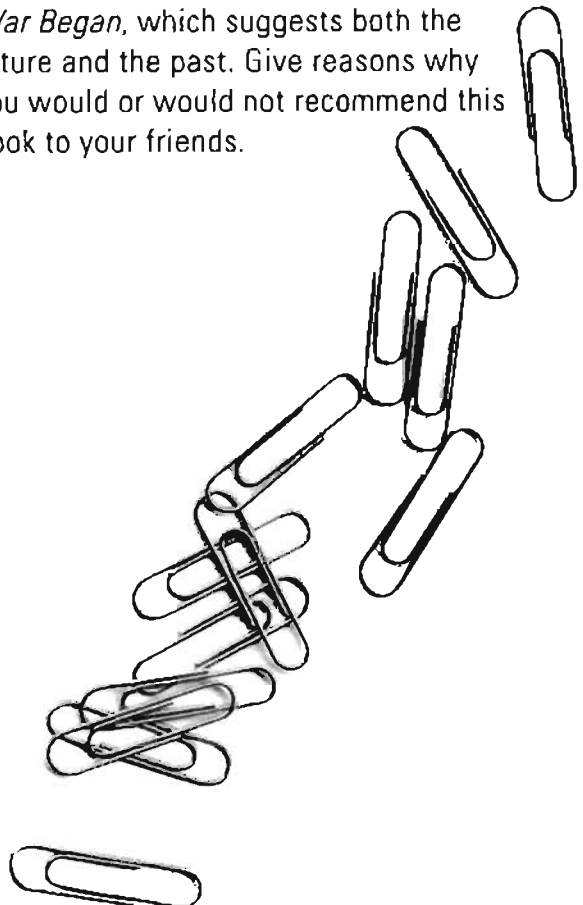
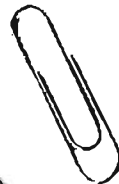
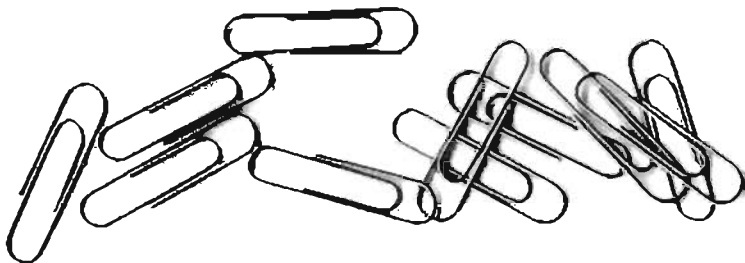
- ① The series of books by John Marsden, which begins with *Tomorrow, When the War Began*, has been read and enjoyed by thousands of young people all over the world. Now that you have finished reading the first book in the series, what would entice you to read the others?
- ② What would be your parents' reaction if you had been invited to camp in Hell?
- ③ Homer and Lee reacted in very different ways to Ellie's invitation. Why? Consider the personality and the background of each boy and explain your ideas and reasons clearly.
- ④ Ellie said, '**No, Hell wasn't anything to do with places, Hell was to do with people. Maybe Hell was people**' (p. 44). Do you agree with Ellie? Give details to support your opinion.
- ⑤ Have you ever been camping in a remote area? Could you compare it to Hell? Describe your special place, if you have one, and give details of similarities/contrasts. If you have never had such an experience, explain why you would or would not wish to have a camping trip to Hell.
- ⑥ The camping break is over and the friends have arrived at Ellie's home. Which of the friends was the first to realise the true situation? Explain.
- ⑦ Ellie had felt uneasy before she left Hell, and she had begun to make some connections. Why was she afraid to ask questions?

Page references are to the Pan 1995 paperback edition of *Tomorrow, When the War Began*.

- 8 When the friends realised they were alone they looked immediately to Ellie for leadership – without any discussion. Why was that a natural reaction? What qualities did Ellie have that inspired their confidence?
- 9 When Ellie realised that she had led Corrie and Kevin into a trap in Mrs Alexander's garden, she felt she had been arrogant in assuming a leadership role (pp. 85–6). In your opinion did Ellie make a good leader? Explain in detail.
- 10 Think about Homer. He was **'wild, outrageous. He didn't care what he did or what anyone thought ... He had a radium heart ...'** Yet he was **'becoming more surprising with every passing hour'** and the friends were beginning to recognise Homer as a leader. What was **'Homer's genius'** (p. 111) and how do you explain the transformation?
- 11 Do you know anyone who is like Homer? Describe your character. What would it take to change him or her?
- 12 Ellie sees the helicopter as **'a great big, ugly, dark thing'** (p. 114). Has anything ever overshadowed your life? Describe it. If not, what could you imagine that might represent such a threatening shadow? It might not necessarily be an object – it could be an emotion, a situation, a person or even an attitude.
- 13 After the bombing of Corrie's home by the **'black jet, fast and lethal'** the friends were showing an ever-increasing sense of responsibility (pp. 113–21). Evaluate their decisions. Were they wise decisions?
- 14 Consider Robyn and her habit of fainting at the thought of needles and blood (p. 129). Where do you think she gains her extraordinary bravery and, as Ellie suggested, heroism? Does she surprise even herself? Explain.
- 15 When Ellie found Chris asleep on guard duty, she was shocked at the violence of her reaction, which she describes as being like **'a raging monster'** (p. 161). How do you explain her reactions? Were they justified?



- 16 When Robyn, Corrie, Kevin and Chris returned after their 'time spent on reconnaissance' near the showgrounds, Ellie reflected on all the laws they had broken (pp. 220–2). Are there any laws that it's okay for you to break?
- 17 Robyn remarked on the obvious and growing relationships between Ellie and Lee, Homer and Fi. If the friends had still been at school in the normal way, do you think the relationships would have been formed? Give reasons for your opinions.
- 18 Ellie raised the idea 'I suppose we should have been delighted at the thought of not going to school but we weren't' (p. 238).
(a) Do you think you would miss 'using your brains'?
(b) What is it about school that you find: most challenging? most interesting? least interesting?
(c) Are there better ways to learn? Explain.
- 19 Each of the friends was very honest when explaining how he or she felt about renewing the efforts to make a difference. What were the strong personal feelings of each of the friends about what had already been achieved? (pp. 238–43).
- 20 Read page 249. You are Homer. Tell the story of the disaster that followed the incident where he'd 'taken all the screws out of the Principal's lectern in the Assembly Hall'.
- 21 John Marsden clearly has a talent for making the most dangerous of acts, perpetrated by his young characters, absolutely credible. Write one or two lines to illustrate:
(a) his understanding of young people
(b) his ability to make his characters so alive.
- 22 *Tomorrow, When the War Began* makes us think about the possibility of war. Why would anyone want to invade Australia? Do you think anyone will?
- 23 Explain the title *Tomorrow, When the War Began*, which suggests both the future and the past. Give reasons why you would or would not recommend this book to your friends.



Think it through  **talk it over** 

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

1 Feeling – thoughts

Ellie suggests that when she has to write a true account of the friends' experiences that 'little things can get in the way. Little things like feelings, emotions' (p. 1).

Are feelings real?

Where do feelings come from?

Does a thought come before a feeling or a feeling before a thought?

What did Ellie feel about Lee?

What did Ellie think of Lee?

2 Attitudes – cultures

Homer and Lee come from very different cultures. Define the word 'culture'.

If music and dress are a part of our culture, think about the music and dress favoured by you, your parents and your grandparents. Do you think that different generations have different cultures?

In what ways are the thoughts and attitudes of Homer and Lee influenced by their cultures?

What is the difference between culture and environment?

Language can be a significant cultural difference. What other differences between people can you attribute to culture? Name as many as you can.

Have culture and environment affected Homer and Lee differently?

3 Death and dying

Ellie's friends were no strangers to fear. Homer admitted to the group 'My teeth were chattering so bad I had to hold my mouth shut to keep them in. I don't know how I didn't vomit. I was absolutely convinced I was going to die' (p. 241).

Do you think dying in these circumstances would be unfair?

Is it fairer if the enemy dies?

Is it fairer when older people die than when young people die?

Is dying fair when it happens to bad people as well as good?

4 Loyalty – courage – goodness – friendship

'Loyalty, courage, goodness. I wonder if they're human inventions too, or if they just are' (p. 284).

Do we
'invent'
courage?

Does courage come before an act or does an act only become an act of courage when we look back on it?

Are some actions more foolish than courageous? Describe one.

Is a courageous person always good?

Is a good friend a loyal friend?

Can you think of any situations where being loyal to a friend might cause problems?

Were the good friends in *Tomorrow, When the War Began* good for each other?

Does a family provide more support than friends?

5 Help – giving and receiving

'I don't know how long we'll be here. Maybe as long as the Hermit... We've got to stick together, that's all I know' (p. 284).

Which would you prefer: to help your friends or to have your friends help you?

Do you help people because they might help you in turn?

Do you only help people you like?

What would make you help someone you really disliked?

How do you feel when you help someone and they do not thank you?

Should we always expect thanks for help or a favour?



First try a brainstorm. See if you can think of a really original way to present your favourite scene from the novel. You might like to try one of the following activities.

a photographic presentation

Set up the scene, dress as the characters or think of symbols to represent the scene and start 'shooting'.



a collage Find old magazines, newspapers, fabrics, wool. Imagine the scene, and use any or all of these materials to recreate it. The graphics do not have to be realistic – they can be abstract or symbolic. Maybe your collage could illustrate a quote from the novel.



a frieze This idea has lots of possibilities. You could show the main sequence of events in the novel or choose one episode to show in more detail. You will need a long narrow piece of paper (your art teacher may be able to help). To create your frieze you could use paint, pastels, pencils, textas, crayons, coloured paper cut-outs – whatever you have available. A frieze can look great along a wall in the classroom or in a corridor. The librarian might like it for the library.



something different Find a large sheet of white or brown paper, and paint or draw a huge explosion. Cover the whole page. Search your house and shed or garage for odds and ends, such as odd shapes or chunks of metal (not too heavy so they can stay on the page) and bits of wood. Stick them onto your explosion to create a very graphic presentation of the scene in Mrs Alexander's garden when the mower was blown up.



a mural Now here's a challenge – Hell in the classroom. You will need a huge sheet of paper or many pieces arranged together, large brushes and lots of paint.



making music Get a group of your friends together, find at least one with a drum, if possible, and write a rap song or a folk song the characters may have written to tell their story.

finishing touch Write a page of explanation of the scene you have chosen for this activity, indicating its significance in the novel, any changes to, or developments in, the characters, and the reasons for your choice.

