

RED KAYAK

Discussion Questions

Brady's dramatic rescue of Ben illustrated how important it is to know how to perform CPR. Could you do it? Did it make you think about learning this life-saving skill? Sadly, Ben did not survive. But what if he had lived? Would the story have had the same impact? How would it be different?

Brady came from a good and loving family. Do you think it was difficult for him to be an only child? Do you think he missed his sister, Amanda? People react differently to death. How was the reaction of Brady's parents to his sister's death different from the reaction of the DiAngelos when they lost Ben? Why did Brady's parents send him to the aquarium the day of his sister's funeral? Do you think this was the right thing to do? Do you think anyone can ever "get over" losing a child?

Take a look at the friendship between Brady, Digger and J.T. Why were they such good friends? How was this friendship changing? Do you think there is any chance their friendship will survive into the future?

How did you feel when Brady threw away the drill? Why did he do that?

The butterfly garden was therapy for Brady's mother. Do you think it helped Mrs. DiAngelo, too? At what point in the story does Brady realize how healing the garden was for his mother? Did it help Brady as well? Does the garden symbolize more than hope? What about new beginnings? What else happened at the end of the story that provided a ray of sunshine in the DiAngelos' dark and difficult year?

The main theme of RED KAYAK is reaching inside to do the right thing, which meant coming forward with the truth. Was there any doubt in your mind that Brady did the right thing? Why was it so difficult for him? Do you think JT and Digger could have kept this secret if Brady had not come forward with the truth? Does friendship ever trump the truth? Doing the right thing isn't always easy, is it? What makes it so hard?

Brady wasn't the only character in RED KAYAK to feel peer pressure. Didn't his father also experience peer pressure? From who? And how did he handle it? Have you ever felt peer pressure?

Do you think the juvenile court judge was too hard on J.T. and Digger? Or was the judge too easy? Did you think that Brady should have been held accountable for his role in the tragedy?

Why do you think the author included the oxymorons in the story?

What role did the river and the Chesapeake Bay play in Brady's life? Why did Brady have a love/hate relationship with the Corsica? And what does this really represent?

Do you think that communication – or the lack of it – is also a theme in the story? Can you find examples? How does the communication within Brady's own family change at the end?

Brady has a very poignant recollection toward the end of the story. In it, Ben reappears and in his three-year-old voice makes an amazing distinction between being *mean* and being *bad*. What is he saying? Do you agree with this little boy? And did you get the feeling that this scene conveys a sense of forgiveness to Brady and his friends for what they have done?

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