



Book Club Questions

The Piper by Danny Weston

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1. The story is set in the Second World War, with clear descriptions of daily life at that time. How does the historical setting add to the horror?
2. What makes a good ghost story?
3. The story depicts three different eras: the Napoleonic Wars (when Micheaux was a prisoner of war in Romney Marsh), the Second World War (when Peter and Daisy are evacuees) and the present day (when Peter is an old man). How does this help to create tension?
4. *The Piper* is a traditional ghost story, using many of the conventions of this genre of writing. How does the writer use these conventions to effect? How does the novel compare to other ghost stories (in films as well as books)?
5. The title is reminiscent of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. In what other ways does the author use images from this fairy tale? Why do you think he chose to do that?
6. In many ways, the novel's protagonist, Peter, seems a straightforward young boy, and he remains calm throughout the extraordinary drama he encounters. How does this affect the reader's view of him? What about the fact that he has turned into a cantankerous old man? Can you understand how his experiences have affected him?
7. Daisy is a very young and vulnerable girl, who has already been uprooted from her family. How does this affect the reader's response to her as a potential victim of the Piper?
8. Mr Sheldon goes to extraordinary lengths to try to protect his daughter Sally. Can you understand his motivation and do you think he is right?
9. What is the effect of having a modern teenager (Helen) as an 'audience' for Peter's story?
10. How does the author make use of the chapter endings to make transitions in time and place and mood and to encourage the reader to continue?
11. What function do Mrs Beesley and Adam fulfil in the novel?
12. One of the strongest images in the book is the 'crypt' in St Leonard's Church. What is it that makes this image so powerful?
13. What is the scariest part of the novel and why?
14. The 'truth' about the Sheldon family curse and their mistreatment of Micheaux is revealed by Professor Lowell. As a reader, do you trust his account? Does the fact that he's a professor add weight to his claims?
15. Micheaux was duped by Jeremiah Sheldon. Do you understand or even sympathise with his need for revenge on Sheldon's descendants?
16. The chapter headings are all musical terms. Why do you think the author chose to do this?
17. Do you find the ending satisfying?