

Sometimes

you
have
to
take
the
leap.

DIVE — A Discussion Guide for Classroom Use

DIVE



ACCLAIMED AUTHOR OF *POSTED*

JOHN DAVID ANDERSON

ABOUT *DIVE*

From John David Anderson, the beloved author of *Posted* comes a powerful, poignant, and unexpected upper middle grade novel about the rules in life that box us in and the determination to break out.

From the moment Kassandra Connor leaps from the diving board to the moment she hits the water, everything feels in control.

The rest of her life does not.

St. Lawrence Academy is supposed to have everything Kass's old school didn't: safe hallways, small classes, and most important, a chance to dive. But since transferring, all Kass

can think about is what's missing. Like her best friend, Aleah, who's starting to pull away. Or the comfortable life so many of her classmates enjoy while Kass's family's restaurant struggles to stay afloat. Even the excitement she always felt in the pool, now that she's on the same team as Amber Moore—the best diver in the state, who's barely said two words to her all year.

Kass feels like she's drowning, until she meets a boy named Miles. He's a diver, too—someone who searches through dumpsters in the posh side of town for things he can salvage or sell. Miles knows what it's like to be boxed in by things you can't control, and as Kass spends more and more time with him, she starts to wonder what would happen if she tried to break out of her own box—and what she might lose by doing so.



A LETTER FROM JOHN DAVID ANDERSON

DEAR READER,

In your hands is a book about a girl who stands on the edge. She's the new girl in school. She frets about finding new friends. About keeping old ones. About fitting in, and standing out. About her parents' struggling business, their stumbling marriage, their faith in her, her faith in herself. She longs to be seen and disappear all at once.

So anxiously, she stands, breath held, toes curled, fingers clenched.

And then she dives.

This is a novel about dumpster diving, a pastime of mine as a kid and still a widespread practice of many, both by necessity and by choice. It's also a novel about pool diving, a sport that I admire for its beauty, fearlessness, and, it has always felt to me, suspension of the laws of physics. It is an examination of class boundaries in America and both a questioning and an affirmation of spirituality. But mostly it is the story of Kass, a thirteen-year-old girl, who, at a pivotal time in her life, encounters a boy who helps her look beneath the surface to discover what matters most.



I wrote this book because I, too, often find myself holding my breath, standing on the edge, desperate to get beneath the surface of things. To sift through all the refuse and the rubble of this messy world in search of something worth believing in. It's not a quest exclusive to characters in coming-of-age novels.... Or, perhaps, we're all, always, still coming of age.

So I invite you to jump in as well, and perhaps discover something. Something that prompts a laugh or makes you think or breaks your heart. Something worth hanging onto.

Regardless, I hope you enjoy the dive.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John David Anderson is the author of some of the most beloved and highly acclaimed books for kids in recent memory, including the *New York Times*

Notable Book *Ms. Bixby's Last Day*, *Posted*, *Granted*, *Sidekicked*, and *The Dungeoneers*. A dedicated root beer connoisseur and chocolate fiend, he lives with his family in Indianapolis, Indiana. You can visit him online at

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John David Anderson



PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

In *Dive*, we will meet several interesting characters.

Kass has transferred to a private school to pursue her passion for competitive diving, but she feels out of place there. Miles has dropped out of high school and spends a lot of his time looking for salvageable items in dumpsters. Amber seems to have it all: diving skills; wealthy parents; and an untouchable aura. Which of these characters do you think you will connect most (or least) with, and why?

As author John David Anderson has done in previous

books, he has given each chapter in this book a clever name, hinting at what is to come, but certainly not giving anything away. Make a list of the chapter names. Before reading the book, predict the meaning of each chapter's name. After reading the book, review your predictions. Were you correct?



CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

VOCABULARY:

sinew litany
proliferating
siphoning dilapidated

1. THE SCORE

After the diving meet, Kass feels like her mother is trying to hide her disappointment through false compliments or criticisms of the judges' scores. Describe Kass's reaction to her mother's words.

Think about Kass as a character. What traits would you use to describe her after reading this initial chapter? Provide evidence to support your choices.

VOCABULARY:

perpetually bestowed
tentative periphery

2. THE TIP

Review the advice Becka gives Kass on page 13. Do you agree or disagree with her sentiment? How do you think Kass feels about this advice?

On Page 20, Aleah texts Kass: "Don't worry about what all those other kids think. You know who you are. Once a cat." What is the meaning behind this text message, and why does Kass seem to struggle with it?

VOCABULARY:

dyads trinities
precipice veneer
variables
contortionist emphatic

3. THE FIND

Do you think Kass feels more connected when she is in the pool than she is during the rest of the school day? If so, why?

Reread the interaction between Kass and Amber on Page 28. Why do you think Kass is so upset? Do you think her reaction is justified, or do you think she is being narrow-minded?

In this chapter, Kass meets Miles. After their unexpected interaction, Kass leaves their first meeting with a smile, a real one. Why do you think she reacts this way to Miles?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

VOCABULARY:

tersely

4. THE CUT

Why do you think Miles's statement about Kass and him not being strangers anymore continues to replay in her mind?

Do you think Kass is a good friend to Aleah? Do you think that Aleah is a good friend to Kass? Explain, using evidence from this chapter.

On Page 43, Kass's parents have an argument about money being tight, and worry over what might need to be done to make cuts. Kass knows her parents are proud she is going to St. Lawrence Academy. But she also knows that the tuition is making their tight money tighter. How do you think this makes Kass feel?

VOCABULARY:

catechism transgression
admonishing eloquent
conspicuous plausible
preordained

5. THE FIT

On Page 55, Miles says to Kass: "We all have to pretend we're something we're not sometimes." Do you agree that most people do this from time to time? And if so, is this a good thing or a bad thing? Is it hard to tell sometimes?

VOCABULARY:

floundering brusquely

6. THE REQUEST

Why do you think Kass feels an uneasy squirm inside when her mother kisses her on the cheek on Page 64?

What are two big clues that help you understand how Kass is already feeling about Miles?

On Page 75, Miles's voice drops two or three degrees in temperature when he and Kass talk about parents. Why might that be, and what could that tell us about Miles?

Miles says, "I think it's okay to be scared sometimes. Even of the things we love." What do you love doing that also makes you feel scared sometimes?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

VOCABULARY:

magnanimously
blasphemy pristine
chasm amorphous
pervasive pantomimed

7. THE TASTE

Kass begins noticing trash can contents in a new way after her time spent with Miles. What can you learn about someone from their trash? What would the contents of your trash say about you?

On page 85, Kass asks some teammates if they have ever regretted throwing something away. Can you think of anything you have regretted throwing away? What was it, and why did you feel that regret?

Based on the interactions between Kass and Amber and the effect they have on Kass, do you think Kass has let herself sink into the notion that she's not as good as her St. Lawrence peers? Has she let that affect her diving?

What do you think Kass means on Page 89 when she says to Miles: "Just because they accept you doesn't mean they accept you"?

Do you think there is a deeper meaning to what Miles says on Page 106 about most things being broken?

VOCABULARY:

pretentious strafed

8. THE FRIEND

Why do you think Amber lied to the mothers about hanging out with Kass after school?

VOCABULARY:

transubstantiation

9. THE DRAW

By reading about Amber's interactions with her mother, do you gain new insights about their relationship? How might their relationship contribute to the way Amber conducts herself at school and during diving practice?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

VOCABULARY:

portent ambiguous
heady martyrs pert

10. THE CROWN

What is your reaction to Kass skipping practice and lying to her parents so she could spend time with Miles?

On page 169, Kass thinks to herself that assumptions keep you safe sometimes. What do you think she means by this? Do you think this statement is true?

In this chapter we meet the Professor. The following are a collection of quotes he shares. Which of these quotes resonates most with you, and why?

The ornament of a house is the friends that frequent it. —Ralph Waldo Emerson
(Page 172)

Books are the treasured wealth of the world. —Henry David Thoreau
(Page 175)

Step to the music which you alone hear. —Henry David Thoreau
(Page 176)

VOCABULARY:

tantamount

11. THE INVITATION

Kass and Amber have a breakthrough in their relationship in this chapter. Why do you think Kass is so willing to invite Amber to her sleepover with Aleah? How do you think

Aleah will respond to this change in plans?

VOCABULARY:

resignation

12. THE DISCARD

Kass shares pizza with Miles in this chapter, and begins to feel like a genuine friendship is forming. Describe the personal and important information Miles shares with Kass during this scene.

Does it change your perception of Miles?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

VOCABULARY:

anthropomorphized

13. THE ALLIANCE

Describe how the interaction between Amber and Aleah plays out. Do you think it was fair to either girl that Kass did not tell Aleah about Amber coming?

VOCABULARY:

omens suffice

14. THE SAVIOR

The Professor shares another quote on Page 244: “You have not lived a day until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.” (From *Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan.)

What do you think about that message?

Kass makes the choice to go on her own to bring some items to the Professor. She finds herself in a dangerous situation. She thinks to herself, “*You went too far. You crossed the line. This is what you get.*” (Page 251) What do you think about Kass’s choice to see the Professor on her own? What do you think about her conclusion? What might have happened if the Professor had not shown up when he did? What do you think happened after Kass ran away?

VOCABULARY:

plaintive

15. THE MISTAKE

Why is Kass so out of sorts at school on this day?

After school, Kass sees what happened to Miles. He tells her that it was all a mistake, every interaction they had. Do you agree or disagree with Miles?

Kass reflects on her feelings and on the implications of her relationship with Miles. There are many negative things she lists. But then she shifts to think about the many positives. Do you believe that the dark and the light go hand in hand in relationships? Can any relationship be solely positive? Or are the best relationships worth the dark moments?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

VOCABULARY:

insurmountable
penultimate balked
precipice

16. THE MASTERPIECE

What do you think Kass means on Page 263 when she says her world has gone grayscale?

Describe your reaction to Amber's rogue dive. Why is this such a surprising and powerful moment in the story?

VOCABULARY:

shammy approximation

17. THE CALL

Why does Miles call Kass at the restaurant, and what does this reveal about his connection with Kass?

VOCABULARY:

revelation delinquent
sparse

18. THE RETURN

In this chapter, Kass confesses to her parents about her relationship with Miles, and what they have been up to together. Are you surprised that she shares as much as she does? Do you think she has to confess everything?

What does it say about Kass's parents that they jumped into action to answer Miles's call for help? Is this the reaction you expected?

VOCABULARY:

commiserate atoned

19. THE GIFT

Describe all the positive news Miles shares in his letter to Kass. Do you think Kass's involvement has influenced these changes?

What gift does Miles leave for Kass? Explain the significance of the gift and what is done to repair it.

Why do you think Kass's mother has a positive reaction to seeing Miles's gift to Kass, keeping in mind how Kass's mother feels about the relationship Kass and Miles had?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

VOCABULARY:

crescendo vanquished

20. THE FEAST

What is the special twist to Brunchday in the final chapter?
What might this signify for Kass's future?

Readers learn about an award that Kass receives from Coach Q. Do you think this story would have played out differently if Kass had known earlier in the year that she would earn this award?

Describe some of the positive results of Kass's being grounded.



THEMES & LESSONS

FROM THE AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

John David Anderson describes this novel as being about family, friendships, crossing boundaries, taking chances, making and learning from our mistakes, and finding our music. Within the pages of this story, you will find multiple moments that tuck into each of these themes and lessons. How many examples from this story can you find that support each of those concepts? And which, if any, do you find most meaningful?

SCHOOL & LIBRARY EXTENSIONS

Take the Leap!

Using the tagline on the cover “Sometimes you have to take the leap,” create a poster of yourself doing something that you find both intimidating and worth the risk of failure.

Show Care Through Cooking

Discuss the various ways Kass's father shows his care for others through cooking. For example, he sends dinner up to his wife and daughter, he creates a special salsa for Kass and Aleah, and he puts on an incredible monthly brunch for his entire restaurant staff to enjoy. Can you think of a person, or people, in your life that you could show appreciation for? Design a menu, gather recipes, and if you can, create and share the meal!

Lend a Helping Hand

Research local resources available for people in need in your community. What can you do to raise awareness about these resources? Think of ways to offer your time to support those organizations. Perhaps you could gather items for donation, or participate in other ways. Increase your impact by involving a friend or family member!

This Educator's Guide was written by Nicole Levesque, an elementary school teacher in Maine. Nicole earned her BS in Elementary Education from the University of Maine at Farmington and her MS Ed. in Literacy Education from the University of Southern Maine. She served on the Maine Student Book Award Committee for nine years and has spent seven years serving as a Cybils Award Round One Judge in the fiction picture book and board book category. She is the author of the blog *Bluestocking Thinking*.