

THE DISASTER DAYS

Discussion Guide

REBECCA
BEHRENS



Hannah thought that babysitting would be a breeze. But when an earthquake hits, things start to get shaky...

Hannah Steele loves living on Pelling, a tiny island near Seattle. It's a little disconnected from the outside world, but it's been her home forever, and she's always felt safe there.

Which is why when she's asked one day to babysit after school, she thinks it's no big deal. Zoe and Oscar are her next-door neighbors, and Hannah just took a babysitting class that practically made her an expert. She isn't even worried that she left her inhaler at home.

Then the shaking begins.

The terrifying earthquake only lasts four minutes but changes everything, damaging the house, knocking out the power, and making cell service nonexistent. Even worse, the ferry and the bridge connecting the kids to help and their parents—are both blocked. Which means they're stranded and alone. With Hannah in charge as things go from bad to worse.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rebecca Behrens is the author of three critically acclaimed middle-grade novels that explore famous historical figures and fascinating places. Rebecca grew up in Wisconsin, studied in Chicago, and now lives with her husband in New York City. You can visit her online at www.rebeccabehrens.com.

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1. At the beginning of the story, what is Hannah's relationship with her mother like? How does Hannah feel about it?
2. What is Hannah's babysitting experience so far? Do you think Hannah is prepared to be in charge?
3. What are your first impressions of Pelling Island? Would you want to travel to or live there?
4. Why do you think the author chose to include the text messages that Hannah writes and receives throughout the story? What do they tell you about Hannah and her relationships with her parents and her best friend, Neha?
5. How does the author use figurative language to help you understand the characters' experience of the earthquake? How does the language help you understand the changes to the island caused by the earthquake?
6. Hannah describes Neha and their friendship throughout the story. How are the girls similar? How are they different? How does Neha influence Hannah's feelings and actions?
7. How did technology help or hinder the Hannah and the kids during their Disaster Days? How would you feel if you suddenly lost access to your phone or computer, or were without power for an extended period of time?
8. Survival, fear, and bravery are prominent topics throughout the book. By the end of the book, when Hannah passes by Mount Rainier, she states, "But I was not powerless." How have her feelings changed from the first chapter?
9. How would you characterize the relationships between Hannah and Neha and Hannah and her family at the end? Have Hannah's parents' feelings or Neha's feelings about Hannah changed over the course of the story?
10. What details about natural disasters and emergency preparedness did you learn from this book? Are there any actions you plan to take after reading this book?