

Based on

# Life As We Knew It

By Susan Beth Pfeffer

## About the Book:

Everyone is excited about a once-in-a-lifetime meteorological event that is about to occur. Half the world is about to witness the moon being struck by a large meteor. Just moments after the impact, people begin to notice that something is horribly wrong. The moon has been thrown off its axis and the results will soon be catastrophic. Teenager Miranda tells of these events in a diary that moves the reader along on a doomsday journey. As everything changes in Miranda's life, each entry she writes about is an account of her daily struggle to cope with desperate times. Each day is a day of hope, and each day is a little less like the life she once knew ... and still, the worst is yet to come.

## Set the Stage:

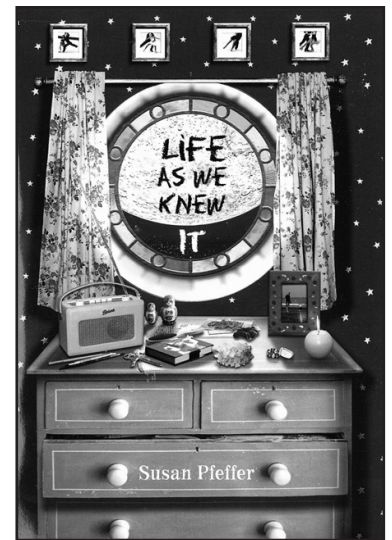
Use the following to get the students ready to read:

- If you found out today that, due to a catastrophic event, the world and the life you are familiar with will change dramatically, what is the first thing you would do?
- Talk about how people planned for nuclear attacks in bomb shelters back in the late 1950s. Talk about concerns for Y2K and what some people did to prepare for what they thought would occur.
- Is it wrong to prepare? Is it wrong to panic? Is it wrong to totally ignore what might happen?

## Review:

After reading the book, discuss the following:

- What is the format of this book, and how does it add to the effect of the story?
- What causes Earth's climatic change?
- Where is Miranda's father?
- Who is Brandon Erlich and what is his relationship to Miranda?
- Why is there such concern for friends and relatives in California and New York City?
- Why is Jonny being given more food than the other family members?
- What was the situation at the hospital and why was it difficult for Miranda to get in to see Peter?
- What does Miranda give her mother for her birthday?
- Near the end of the story, it is extremely important for Miranda to go to the post office. Why?
- On her way to the post office, Miranda becomes sidetracked and goes to the city hall. What is the result of this change?



**Student Activity** (found on the last page of this PDF):

Students are asked to write about what they would do in the face of various scenarios. Ask how they would react if things began to change. How would they attempt to survive against all odds?

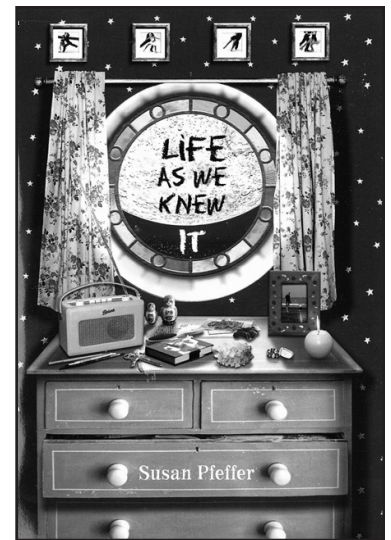
**Related Activities:**

To extend students' enjoyment of the book, try these:

- **The Sky Is Falling:** Ask students to design their own personal shelter. What would they outfit it with to sustain themselves for an extended period of time? Have them draw up the plans for the shelter, make a list of essentials, and write up a daily schedule. Ask them who they would share the space with.
- **OK Too:** Have students write an account of an incident that they remember from the Y2K period. Did they know someone who prepared for the worst? How did they feel at the time? What would they have done if the fears turned out to be true? What impact do they think it would have had on the world?
- **I Will Survive:** Ask students to list five things they would do today if they found out everything had changed due to a catastrophic event. Every modern convenience would be gone. Have students explain why they would do those five things, and then have them list them in the order of importance.
- **Diary of a New Life:** Have students write a short story that begins with a news headline, in the form of a diary/journal. Choose from the following:
  1. Snowfall Averages Could Reach 27 Feet!
  2. Tide Levels Are Rising Daily at a Catastrophic Rate!
  3. Confirmed: The Earth Is Moving Closer to the Sun!
  4. All Flying Creatures Have Died Out!
  5. Water Sources Are Disappearing!

Make sure students indicate where they are living in their story. They don't have to base the story in their hometown.

- **Time to Look Up:** Look up and research the following notable comets. When were they witnessed? How did people prepare for the approach/arrival? What effect did their presence have on people? Are they scheduled to arrive again?
  1. Halley's Comet
  2. Comet Hale-Bopp
  3. Comet Kohoutek
  4. Comet Hyakutake
  5. Comet McNaught



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Surviving Against the Odds

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The world is slowly changing. Things are disappearing. Each day you wake up you have to deal with another challenge. The most difficult part is the fact that you are doing it along with everyone else in the world and the changes will be long-term or, more likely, permanent.

**Directions:** On a separate sheet of paper, write about what you would do each day if you were faced with the following scenarios. Note: Keep in mind your location and the time of year (which determines climate and daylight hours). Also, are you in a city, out in the suburbs, or possibly in a very rural area? It makes a big difference when you are trying to survive.

First determine:

1. Location \_\_\_\_\_
2. Time of year \_\_\_\_\_

Day One: Gas goes up to \$10 a gallon. It may go even higher in the near future.

Day Two: Food is being depleted from grocery stores.

Day Five: School is closed indefinitely.

Day Seven: Gas is gone completely.

Day Ten: All stores have shut down.

Day Eleven: Electricity stops.

Day Twelve: Water runs out.

