Raven Summer

by

David Almond
About JLG Guides

Junior Library Guild selects the best new hardcover children’s and YA books being published in the U.S. and makes them available to libraries and schools, often before the books are available from anyone else. Timeliness and value mark the mission of JLG: to be the librarian’s partner. But how can JLG help librarians be partners with classroom teachers?

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JLG Guides can be used both for whole class instruction and for individual students. Pages are reproducible for classroom use only, and a teacher’s edition accompanies most JLG Guides.

Research indicates that using authentic literature in the classroom helps improve students’ interest level and reading skills. You can trust JLG to provide the very best in new-release books, and now to enhance those selections by giving your school the tools to use those books in the classroom.

And in case you think we forgot the librarians, be sure to check out the Library Applications page, shown on the table of contents in each guide.

From all of us at Junior Library Guild, we wish you and your students good reading and great learning . . . with JLG Selections and JG Guides.
# Raven Summer

by David Almond

JLG Guide written by Sarah Ward Terrell and produced by School Street Media for Junior Library Guild

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About the Book and the Author

Raven Summer
by David Almond

Summary:
Playing outside, Liam and Max notice a raven. It “flies ahead, stops, flies ahead, stops”—as if it’s been tamed. Curious, the boys follow it past the pub, across the bridge, down toward the river, and into an ancient farmhouse. There, they find a baby and a note that reads, “PLESE LOOK AFTER HER RITE. THIS IS A CHILDE OF GOD.”

Fourteen-year-old Liam seems fated to meet two foster children who have experienced violence in very different ways as he struggles to understand war, family problems, and friends who grow apart.

JLG Reviewers Say:
★ A masterful exploration of human fragility and brutality. At the novel’s heart is the question: does everyone, given the right conditions, have the capacity to commit murder?
★ David Almond has created distinct and memorable characters.
★ The lyrical first-person prose catches the rhythm of daily life in rural northern England.
★ The novel buzzes with the possibility of magic and the unexplainable.

David Almond says he lives with his family “right inside the landscape of the book: in the north of England, beside the Roman Wall, in the beautiful and rather wild county of Northumberland. The garden at the beginning and end of the book is just like our own garden. The walk that the boys take following the raven is a walk through our village. Despite its beauty and its apparent peacefulness, the area has a troubled history. It was a place of savage border wars in the past, and there are remote areas where modern-day soldiers practice for distant conflicts.

“The story is fiction, but it deals with some very realistic subjects: the dramas of growing up, the nature of goodness, our potential for love and friendship, our potential for violence, the place of children in war. The characters, despite their history of desperate problems, seem to me to be people of virtue and courage.”

www.davidalmond.com
Prereading Activities

Making Predictions
Reread the summary for *Raven Summer* on page 4. Then answer the questions below to make predictions based on evidence from the text and/or from your prior knowledge or personal experience.

1. In literature, the raven is often a symbol for coming misfortune. Whose misfortune do you think the raven predicts?

   I predict: ____________________________
   Based on what evidence?: ____________________________

2. What do you think Liam and Max will do with the baby? *Answers will vary.*

   I predict: ____________________________
   Based on what evidence?: ____________________________

3. Set a purpose for reading based on your predictions above.

   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
Before You Read
Introducing Vocabulary: Dialect

*Raven Summer* takes place in Northumberland, a district in England that
borders Scotland. Because of this, the author writes Liam’s narrative in
an English **dialect**, or a version of English spoken in a particular
region or by a specific group of people. Does the author’s use of
dialect make Liam’s story more or less believable? Explain your answer.

Below are some examples of words Liam uses in ways that are specific to his dialect. Match them
by writing the letter of the correct definition on the line in front of each word. If you need help,
find the word on the page number indicated and use context clues to determine its meaning.

_____ 1. reivers (page 3)  a. friends
_____ 2. daft (page 4)  b. bills, money
_____ 3. plaster (page 5)  c. maybe
_____ 4. aye (page 5)  d. raiders
_____ 5. squirt (page 5)  e. cup of tea
_____ 6. nowt (page 8)  f. television
_____ 7. mates (page 9)  g. bandage
_____ 8. mebbe (page 10)  h. diaper
_____ 9. notes (page 15)  i. young child
_____ 10. nappy (page 19)  j. always, or yes
_____ 11. cuppa (page 20)  k. foolish
_____ 12. telly (page 27)  l. nothing
After You Read
Checking Predictions
Before reading, you made a prediction about what Liam and Max would do with the baby they found. What have you read that supports or refutes your prediction?

Analyzing the Writing: Setting
Setting is the time and place of a story. Answer the following questions by thinking about how Northumberland, the setting of Raven Summer, helps David Almond express themes about war and violence.

1. What about the setting is evidence that war and violence played a major role in defining Northumberland's past?

2. Though present-day Northumberland is considered a peaceful and beautiful place, what about the setting shows that war is still a part of life there?

3. At the beginning of the story, Liam is in his family's garden with his friend, Max. Is a garden more likely to be the setting for war or peace? Explain your answer.

History Connection
Hadrian’s Wall
On page 5, Liam describes military jets flying over Hadrian’s Wall, which was built more than 1800 years ago by the Romans. Find out more about why the wall was built, what it looks like, how far it extends, and what role it played in times of war and peace. Create a poster about your findings to share with your classmates.
4. Think about what Liam finds in the garden and the history he imagines for it. What idea about war and violence might his discovery symbolize, or help express?

Getting to Know the Characters: Relationships and Effect on Plot
Complete the chart below by telling how each of the characters is similar to and different from Liam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Similar to Liam</th>
<th>Different from Liam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on what you have read so far, which character in the chart above seems more likely to influence who Liam becomes in the rest of the story? Explain your answer.


Responding to the Story
1. At the beginning of the story, Liam injures himself while using Death Dealer to dig for treasure. What might this foreshadow, or predict, about Liam’s character?


2. On their way to finding the baby, Liam and Max encounter an adder, which is a kind of snake. What do snakes often symbolize, or represent, in stories, and what do Max and Liam’s reactions to the snake reveal about their characters?


3. When Liam and Max find the baby, they see she has a note that instructs whoever finds her to “PLESE LOOK AFTER HER RITE.” How could this note be interpreted in different ways?
4. How does the news story about Liam, Max, and the baby differ from other stories in the news?

5. At the end of Chapter 7, Liam finishes telling about Thomas Fell by saying, “The story’s told, then fades away, like all the stories in the news.” Why do news stories seem to fade over time?
Before You Read
Making Predictions
Liam has helped ensure that the baby is placed with a family who cares for it. Do you think this is the last Liam will see of her, or will she continue to be a part of his life somehow?

---

Literary Devices: Simile and Metaphor
Both simile and metaphor are types of figurative language, or language writers use to evoke images in readers' minds. Both similes and metaphors compare two unalike things that are alike in a specific way. Similes always include the word like or as. Metaphors make a direct comparison that something “is” something else.

Complete the chart below by telling whether each example of figurative language is simile or metaphor. Then find the example on the page indicated and use context clues to tell what two things the figurative language compares and what the figurative language means.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figurative Language</th>
<th>Simile or Metaphor?</th>
<th>Comparison and Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes I feel . . . like I'm spinning away into outer space. (page 36)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to be crazy as the moon, wild as the wind, and still as the earth. (page 37)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Gordon] holds up a black scarf. “This’ll add a bit of spice,” he says. He starts wrapping the scarf over his eyes. (page 45)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Who is she?” says Mum. “She's a shining light in a dark dark world. That's what she is.” (page 50)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After You Read
Checking Predictions
Earlier you made a prediction about whether or not the baby would continue to be a part of Liam’s life. What evidence confirmed or refuted your prediction?

Analyzing the Writing: Juxtaposition and Tension

*Raven Summer* is filled with *juxtapositions*, or the placements side by side of two ideas or events that are different but equally important. Authors use juxtaposition to create *tension*, or draw attention to characters or ideas that are in conflict with one another.

1. Reread the exchange between Liam and Max on pages 36–38. How do Liam and Max’s characters contrast with each other, and what questions do these contrasts raise about what it means to become an adult?

2. Reread the exchanges between Mum and Dad about Alison at the top of page 50 and on pages 58–59. What is the debate between Mum and Dad, and what ideas about social responsibility could each character represent?
3. Reread Chapter 12, pages 54–57. In this chapter, Liam meets Oliver and Crystal. How are Oliver and Crystal the opposite of Liam, and what lesson might they help teach him?

Getting to Know the Characters: Traits
Complete the chart below by telling what each character does to show that he or she possesses the trait indicated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Receptive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam</td>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>Encouraging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal</td>
<td>Resilient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>Conscientious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>Rigid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon</td>
<td>Persistent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responding to the Story

1. What is Gordon’s attitude toward Greg Armstrong, and how does it relate to isolationism?

2. Why do you think Liam attacks Gordon during the snake pit games? Do you agree with Gordon, that it is because Liam is like Gordon? Explain your answer.

3. At the end of Chapter 12, Crystal, Oliver, and Alison all have their eyes on Liam. Why do you think this is?

4. On page 63, Liam says, “We’re all like foundlings, then.” What did he mean by this?

History Connection

The Dark Ages

On page 35, Gordon accuses Liam of thinking Gordon is a “throwback” to the Dark Ages. Find out when the Dark Ages took place and what inspired the name. Then discuss with a partner why you agree or disagree that Gordon’s views and interests are like those of people who lived in the Dark Ages.
Before You Read
Making Predictions
After Liam attacked Gordon, Gordon told Liam that something had been started between the two of them. What do you think Gordon will do to retaliate against Liam?

_____________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Earlier you made a prediction about how Gordon would retaliate against Liam. What have you read that supports or refutes your prediction?

_____________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________

Introducing Vocabulary: Greek and Latin Roots
A root word is a word part that has its own meaning. Each of the following vocabulary words contains a root word from the Greek or Latin language. Use a dictionary or a book of word origins to help you locate the root word in each vocabulary word below. Then write the root word and its meaning in the spaces provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Word</th>
<th>Root Word</th>
<th>Root Word's Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photographs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recognizable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>circumstances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>universal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paramedic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analyzing the Writing: Political and Philosophical Views

A person’s political views are his or her ideas about social relationships involving authority or power. A person’s philosophical views are his or her beliefs about how people should live. In *Raven Summer*, David Almond uses characters to stand for differing ideas people have about why the world is troubled and what is the best way for people to coexist with each other.

1. Who does Dad think is to blame for terrorism and war?

2. What fears about savagery do Liam and Mum share?

3. What beliefs about humanity do the vicar and Mum have in common, and what do they think is the best way to make peace in the world?

4. What does Max think of Oliver’s story, and what does Liam believe are Max’s reasons for feeling this way?

5. What beliefs about angels and monsters might Crystal and Dad share?

6. Why does Gordon automatically dislike Oliver?
Getting to Know the Characters: Actions and Their Effect on Plot

1. Why do you think Liam writes “stupid” in blood across his chest?

2. How do the people who see “stupid” written on Liam’s chest react to it, and how are their reactions different from what you might expect? What effect might their reactions have on Liam?

3. Mum insists that Alison should be christened, but she’s never troubled by the fact that Liam has not been christened. Should she be? Why or why not?

Responding to the Story

1. What are the subjects of Mum’s art, and what ideas do you think she tries to communicate with them? Do you think people understand her art in the way she intends? Explain your answer.

2. For many people in the story, Alison symbolizes a link. What are some different ways that Alison links people together?
3. What does Crystal believe about her fate?

4. Dad seems to like playing the role of the cynic. How is Dad's cynicism ironic, and why do you think he chooses to view life cynically? (Does this point of view benefit him in some way? Explain your answer.)

5. What happened to Oliver in Liberia, and what future does he hope to escape?

Social Studies Connection

Liberia
Oliver is a teenager seeking asylum from Liberia, a country in Africa. Find out more about Liberia: where it is, how the country was formed, and why it has a history of civil unrest. Write a brief report to share with your classmates.
Before You Read
Making Predictions
Crystal thinks fate has brought Liam to her and Oliver, because Liam will be able to help them. Do you think Liam can keep Oliver from being returned to Liberia? Why or why not?

Introducing Vocabulary: Idiom
An idiom is an expression, or figure of speech. It is a word or phrase that conveys meaning beyond its literal meaning. (An example of idiom is underlined in the following sentence: I had the time of my life on my last vacation. In this sentence, the time of my life means “a good time.”)

Complete the chart below by reading the sentence and telling what group of words forms the idiom. Then write the meaning of the sentence. Use context clues from the page number indicated, if you need help defining the sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Idiom</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was a piece of cake to find. (page 96)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You think I’m a pain in the neck.” (page 97)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Your new mate, whatdeyecallim, he’ll know all about that.” (page 98)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“All looks peaceful and lovey-dovey till . . .” (page 112)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After You Read
Checking Predictions
Earlier you made a prediction about whether or not Liam would be able to help keep Oliver in England. What has happened so far that supports or refutes your prediction?

Analyzing the Writing: Literary Allusions
An allusion is a reference to a person, character, or event from history or a piece of literature. When an author makes an allusion, it is a way of helping readers to make connections. These connections help readers understand important ideas and events in the author’s writing.

The following chart contains literary allusions. Complete the chart by telling what the subject of the allusion is. Then tell the allusion’s purpose, or how it helps readers understand ideas or events in the story. Use the Internet or an encyclopedia if you need help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allusion</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Think about when you go to the flicks, Liam. When you’re sitting in the dark down at the Forum watching a movie. What happens at the violent bits, eh? At the really savage bits. Like the last James Bond film . . .” (page 97)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He holds his pen over his notebook, turns his eyes to the sky, pretends to write as if inspired. “Ahem. I wandered lonely as a… Sorry.” (page 113)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once there was a girl called Little Red Riding Hood… One day a pretty little girl called Goldilocks set off walking through the trees… Hansel was the brother and Gretel was the sister and they lived with their mummy and their daddy beside a big dark scary wood . . . (page 115)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responding to the Story

1. Gordon thinks there is no real difference between watching movie violence and actual violence. Do you agree or disagree with him? Explain your answer.


2. In literature, dreams often provide clues about the truth of a situation or they foreshadow coming events. What does Liam dream about in these chapters, and what do you think is the significance of his dream?


3. In Book 2, Chapter 10, Crystal says she was almost adopted by a couple she really liked, but she scared them off. Why might she have done this, and what does this show about her character?


Social Studies Connection

Peaceful Demonstrations
In Chapter 11, Liam’s family and friends attend a demonstration in support of Greg Armstrong, a journalist who has been taken hostage by terrorists. People stage demonstrations such as this one as an alternative to using violence to get what they want. What are the effects of peaceful demonstrations, and what are other examples of ways they can be used? Discuss your ideas with a partner.
4. Denotation is the actual meaning of a word or words. Connotation is meaning beyond what words state, or an implied meaning. Think about what the police officers have to say about Liam. How does the denotation of what they say differ from the connotation, and for whom do they intend the connoted meaning?
Before You Read
Making Predictions
Gordon says that he intends to make his gory videos into high art. Do you think he could have success in this endeavor? Why or why not?

After You Read
Mastering Vocabulary
Below are Greek and Latin root words from the Vocabulary lesson for Book 2, Chapters 1–6. For each root word, write its meaning and then two words in which the root word can be found. Do not use words given in the previous lesson. If you need help, use a word origins book or the Internet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Word 1</th>
<th>Word 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sect</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>phot</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>cogn</td>
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<td>circum</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>uni</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>para</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Checking Predictions
Earlier, you made a prediction about whether or not Gordon would find success as an artist. What have you read that supports or refutes your prediction?
### Analyzing the Writing: Historical and Literary Allusions

The following chart contains **historical allusions**. Complete the chart by telling what the subject of each allusion is. Then tell the allusion's purpose, or how it helps readers understand ideas or events in the story. Use the Internet or an encyclopedia if you need help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allusion</th>
<th>Subject(s)</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Horrible,” says Dad. “But hypnotic, you have to give it that.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mum turns away.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“And it makes you think.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Think of what?” says Mum.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(page 124)

We’re in his bedroom. He’s got his homework spread on his desk in front of him. Posters of Che Guevara, Wayne Rooney and a Massey Ferguson tractor are on his wall.

(page 134)
Getting to Know the Characters: Internal and External Conflict

An internal conflict is a problem a character experiences within him- or herself, such as indecision or grief about a loss. An external conflict is a problem caused by actions taken against a character by others in the story or forces in nature, such as weather or animals.

In the chart below are examples of conflict Liam experiences in Book 3, Chapters 1–8. Complete the chart by telling whether each conflict is internal or external and then explaining your answer.

**Note:** Some conflicts can have both internal and external causes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Internal, External, or Both?</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liam dreams of “Farmer Flynn, Crystal and Oliver, Nattrass and knives and Spotlight and snakes.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max thinks Liam should be more like him.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max and Liam get into a fight at Max’s house.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam can see that Max’s dad thinks Liam is a bad influence from a weird family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon tracks Liam down and tells Liam he has spies watching for Oliver and Crystal.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responding to the Story
1. Liam believes Crystal and Oliver will come from the direction of St. Michael and All Angels rather than the military road. What might Crystal and Oliver’s route symbolize about their characters?

2. In Book 3, Chapters 1 and 2, Mum and Dad debate about what art is. Whose side in the debate would you take, and why?

3. Do you think Dad is like Gordon? Explain your answer.

4. What message do you think Gordon tries to send Liam by using Liam’s parents as inspiration for his art?

5. Reread Book 3, Chapter 8. What event in this chapter could foreshadow what Liam will become later in the story?
Before You Read
Making Predictions
Do you think Oliver and Crystal will come to Liam soon, or do you think they will be caught before they can arrive? Explain your answer.

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Before reading you made a prediction about whether or not Oliver and Crystal would reach Liam. What happened that confirmed or refuted your prediction?

Mastering Vocabulary
Complete the following chart by going to each page number indicated and finding a simile, a metaphor, or an idiom on the page, as directed. Then write the example of figurative language you find. **Note:** More than one example of the figurative language indicated may be found on the same page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type of Figurative Language</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Page 143</td>
<td>Simile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 146</td>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 146</td>
<td>Idiom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 167</td>
<td>Simile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analyzing the Writing: Imagery

Imagery is descriptive language that appeals to the senses. Complete the chart below by reading the page referenced and telling what imagery on it relates to the sense indicated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Sense</th>
<th>Imagery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Page 144</td>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 149</td>
<td>Sight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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Getting to Know the Characters: Traits
1. By what ritual do Crystal and Oliver show that they are respectful of life?

2. Reread page 150. How do Liam, Crystal, and Oliver’s ideas about the rock art differ, and what might this show about their characters?

Responding to the Story
1. What does Liam dream about in Book 3, Chapter 9, and how is his dream powerful?

2. On page 157, Liam tells Crystal and Oliver about his childhood fantasies and then laughs “at the daftness of children’s dreams, at the beauty of them.” What makes the dreams both daft and beautiful?

3. Reread page 163. Why does Crystal think Liam is naive?

4. How has Death Dealer’s purpose changed, under the influence of Crystal and Oliver?

5. How is Oliver like Thomas Fell?
Before You Read
Making Predictions
What do you think Oliver’s story of his true past will reveal about his character?

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Based on what you read, did you predict accurately about Oliver’s story? Explain your answer.

Mastering Vocabulary
On the lines below, write a summary of events from Raven Summer that includes three words with Greek or Latin roots studied in this Reading Guide and one example of each of these types of figurative language: metaphor, simile, and idiom.
Analyzing the Writing: Juxtaposition and Tension

1. In these chapters, we learn that Oliver is two people at once: He is the person Crystal and Liam know, as well as seventeen-year-old Henry Meadows. Oliver always tries to tell the truth in his stories. If his real name is Henry Meadows, what might be the truth in his story about Oliver?

2. Before Oliver lost his family, how was his life like Liam’s? Afterward, how did his life change?

3. How was Gordon both right and wrong about Oliver?

4. How was Oliver both right and wrong about England?

5. Why did Liam try to kill Gordon? Was it to protect Oliver, or was it simply because he hated Gordon?
**Responding to the Story**

1. What did Henry’s dad believe about Europe and America, and how did this connect to his hopes for Henry?

2. According to Henry’s story, how are Liberian children turned into soldiers?

3. What does Henry find most appalling about the soldiers who killed his family and the soldier he became?

4. Think about the character archetype *The Devil*. Earlier in this guide, we said that Gordon was in league with *The Devil*; this means *The Devil* is actually something else in this story. What is it?

5. What does Liam do with the knife at the end of the story, and what might his act symbolize?
Wrap-up

Reviewing Predictions
Turn to page 5 of this guide to review your first predictions. How accurate were they?

Making Connections
1. On page 47, Liam says, “I’m growing and I don’t know how to grow. I’m living, but I haven’t started living yet.” Do you relate to what Liam says? Why or why not?

2. On page 57, Crystal says, “Maybe we’re all daft, and maybe we’re all normal, all at the same time.” How is this true of you and the people you know?

Thinking About Characters
Raven Summer is about a character that comes to understand his violent tendencies and where they could lead him. What are other stories you know in which characters make a similar discovery about themselves? How do they deal with what they learn?

Answers will vary.

Thinking About Theme
1. One could say that Liam’s story begins with the raven, but Liam says his story “starts and ends with the knife.” What story is Liam telling?
2. What parts of Liam's story are like a fairytale, and what do they show about how fact relates to fantasy?


3. Some people believe that fate is predetermined, while others believe we all make our own fate. Based on what you have read in Raven Summer, what do you think David Almond believes about fate? Explain your answer.


4. Gordon mocks the idea that universal love will solve the world's problems. What is right and wrong about his assessment?


Library Applications

Foundlings in Literature
In *Raven Summer*, the author makes allusions to other stories about foundlings, such as Goldilocks, Hansel and Gretel, and Red Riding Hood. Have students think of other foundling stories they know from pop culture, the news, ancient texts, and contemporary fiction. (Examples include *Little Orphan Annie*, *Moses in the Bulrushes*, *Wuthering Heights*, and many others.) Discuss what lessons the stories teach; what special abilities foundlings are thought to derive from their unusual circumstances; and why people seem always to have been drawn to stories about foundling children. Then have students write foundling stories of their own to share with their classmates.

Current Events
The year in which *Raven Summer* takes place is never stated, but historical events the author references involve Tony Blair, George Bush, and Saddam Hussein, suggesting that Liam’s story takes place not long after 9/11. Have students use the Internet and periodicals to conduct research and take notes about why 9/11 happened, how world leaders responded, and what different groups around the world think of the events and how they were handled. Have them use their findings to discuss how themes in *Raven Summer* are reflected in recent history and how the events surrounding 9/11 continue to affect relationships among different political groups today.

The Roman Empire
Hadrian’s Wall, a structure in England that dates back to the reign of the Roman Empire, is one of many archaeological sites that serve as evidence of how far-reaching the Roman Empire once was. Have students use reference books to find out more about famous ruins from the Roman Empire, where they are found, and what they show about the Roman culture and technology of that time. Have each create a poster about a different archaeological site that shows what site looks like and explains its historical significance.
Suggestions for Further Reading

Other books by David Almond

*Heaven Eyes.* Laurel Leaf, 2002.
*Kit’s Wilderness.* Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2009.

Fiction books you may also like:

## Correlations to National Standards
### For Grades 9–12

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