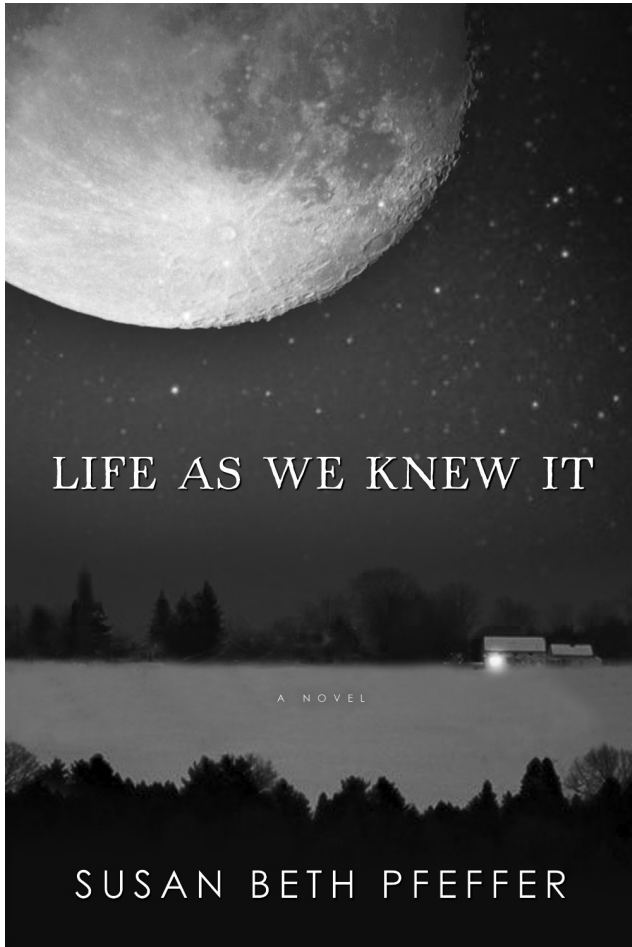


Discussion Guide for **LIFE AS WE KNEW IT** by Susan Beth Pfeffer



About This Guide

Life As We Knew It is a novel that's appropriate for readers in grades seven through twelve, or for students ages twelve to eighteen. This guide was created for use with reading groups or for students in the classroom. The guide includes a variety of questions. Some involve comprehension, and others prompt readers to draw conclusions, to speculate, to make connections, and to "dig deeper" into the story. The questions could be adapted as writing prompts. Please see the separate discussion guide for the companion novel, *the dead and the gone*.

Praise and Honors for *Life As We Knew It*

An ALA Best Book for Young Adults
A *Booklist* Editors' Choice
A CCBC Choice
A Junior Library Guild Premier Selection
An Amazon.com Best Book of the Year
A YALSA Teens' Top Ten Book

★ *"Readers will find it absorbing from first page to last. This survival tale by the author of *The Year Without Michael* celebrates the fortitude and resourcefulness of human beings during critical times."*

—Publishers Weekly (starred)

★ *"Readers will respond to the authenticity and immediacy . . . Each page is filled with events both wearying and terrifying and infused with honest emotions. Pfeffer brings cataclysmic tragedy very close."*—Booklist (starred)

"Riveting and deeply frightening . . . Readers will inevitably imagine their own responses to such a global event."

—The Bulletin

About the Book

Miranda's disbelief turns to fear in a split second when a meteor knocks the moon closer to the earth. How should her family prepare for the future when worldwide tsunamis wipe out the coasts, earthquakes rock the continents, and volcanic ash blocks out the sun? As summer turns to Arctic winter, Miranda, her two brothers, and their mother retreat to the unexpected safe haven of their sunroom, where they subsist on stockpiled food and limited water in the warmth of a wood-burning stove.

Told in journal entries, this is the heart-pounding story of Miranda's struggle to hold on to the most important resource of all—hope—in an increasingly desperate and unfamiliar world.

Reading and Understanding

Life As We Knew It

1. Before the meteor strikes the moon, what are the biggest concerns in Miranda's life? How do they change in the months that follow?
2. How does Becky's death affect the friendship among Miranda, Megan, and Sammi? (p. 6)
3. After the meteor strikes the moon, services such as telephone, Internet, and television stop, and Miranda writes in her journal that "Civilization had ended." (p. 21) Do you think people are too dependent on electronic gadgets? Would you feel as Miranda does if you could no longer use the gadgets many people have come to depend on in their daily lives? How would you handle this situation?
4. What changes does Miranda notice about people in the days following the meteor strike?
5. What does Miranda experience at the supermarket that makes her realize how things have changed for the worse? (pp. 35–38)
6. How would you describe Miranda's relationship with her brothers, Matt and Jonny? How does this relationship change during the course of the story?
7. Why does it bother Miranda when Megan gives away half her sandwich at lunch? (p. 63)
8. How does Miranda feel about Megan's religious convictions? (pp. 68–69) How does this affect their friendship? Do you think Megan's faith is a good one?
9. How would you describe the relationship between Miranda and Dan?
10. Why is Miranda's mom so angry about her leaving the food line to get Dan? (pp.100–101) What surprises Miranda most about her mom's reaction?
11. Why does Sammi leave town with forty-year-old George? (p. 134) How does Miranda feel about Sammi leaving?
12. What does Miranda realize about her mom when she visits Megan for the last time? (pp. 164–65)
13. Do you think the reaction Miranda's mother has when she sees Miranda eating the bag of chocolate chips is appropriate, or did she overreact? (p. 193–95) How does her mother's reaction affect Miranda emotionally? (p. 195)
14. Why does Miranda call Reverend Marshall "despicable?" (p. 222) Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
15. After Mrs. Nesbitt dies, Miranda goes through her kitchen cabinets and says doing so makes her "feel like a cannibal?" (p. 240) Why does she feel this way?
16. Why does Miranda call the family's first Christmas after the catastrophe "Absolutely the best Christmas ever"? (p. 280)
17. On New Year's Eve, Miranda wonders if people ever realize how precious life is. (p. 287) What events have happened in Miranda's life to remind her that life is precious?
18. What incident happens at the house to make Miranda believe her family will survive no matter what? (p. 305)
19. What does Miranda realize in terms of why she has been keeping a journal? (p. 337)
20. What do you think will become of Miranda and her family and friends? Continue Miranda's journal by writing four journal entries that describe what you think has happened to her, her family, and her friends.
21. If you were in a catastrophic situation like Miranda, what would you do? What would you be willing to do in order to survive and take care of your family?
22. Miranda and her friends Sammi and Megan have different ways of surviving. Sammi leaves her home with a benefactor; Megan puts her faith in God; and Miranda stays put. Which one of those actions would you take to save yourself and your family, or would you do something different?
23. Several times in the book, Miranda describes her dreams and daydreams. In many of those dreams, Miranda struggles to determine if she is in heaven. Why do you think this is important to Miranda? How do her dreams affect her in her waking life? Why does she need to daydream? Why does the last dream (p. 326) make Miranda decide she needs to sacrifice herself for her family?

Follow Up Activities

1. Direct readers to the National Geographic web site for information about natural disasters at <http://science.nationalgeographic.com/science/earth/natural-disasters/>. At this site readers can learn more about floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and other natural disasters that are fictionalized in the book.
2. As an individual project or small group collaboration, have readers create a natural disaster survival guide that would help teens like Miranda survive under circumstances similar to those in the novels. A good source of information on emergency preparedness is located at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/preparedness/>.
3. If readers also read the companion novel, *the dead and the gone*, have readers compare and contrast the situations Alex and Miranda experience. Ask readers which story they enjoyed more and why. Which situation would the reader want to be in—a rural setting like Miranda, or an urban one like Alex—and why?



About the Author

Susan Beth Pfeffer is the author of many books for teens, including *the dead and the gone*, the companion novel to *Life As We Knew It*, and the bestselling novel *The Year Without Michael*. Among her other books are the popular Portraits of Little Women series and the award-winning *Kid Power*. She lives in Middletown, New York.

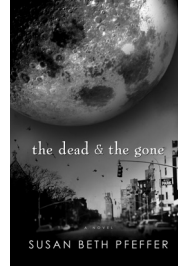
Life As We Knew It

978-0-15-205826-5 • 0-15-205826-5 • Hardcover • \$17.00

978-0-15-206154-8 • 0-15-206154-1 • Paperback • \$6.95

Also available

the companion novel to *Life As We Knew It*,



the dead and the gone

978-0-15-206311-5 • 0-15-206311-0 • Hardcover

\$17.00 • June

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