



Kids Book Club Kit | Darien Library

The Big Dark by Rodman Philbrick

Recommended for grades 4 to 6

Summary: Charlie's small town is baffled. Every spark of electricity has suddenly vanished, and now cars won't start, the heat has shut off, and the TV is blank. As people become desperate, lawlessness erupts and the pharmacy is torched by an arsonist. Charlie's mother will die without her medicine, so he heads off alone, traveling through brutal ice and snow. As he encounters a burned-out, looted city of terrified citizens, can he find the strength to save his mom?



Discussion Questions:

1. Charlie's New Year's Eve unfolds in a surprising way. Describe what happens and how Charlie and his family react. How do their reactions differ from those of other townsfolk?
2. Charlie's mom, Mr. Kingman, and Mr. Bragg all play different roles in their community following the blackout. What kind of choices do they make, and how do their choices affect others? What do their actions reveal about their characters?
3. Charlie discovers that Mr. Kingman has been deceiving the townsfolk about the efficacy of his crystal radio. Does the truth surprise you? Why or why not? Do you think Mr. Kingman's actions are justified?
4. Discuss the dangers Charlie faces on his mission. How does he receive help and help others in turn?
5. Discuss Charlie's perception of Mr. Kingman. How does it evolve over the course of the story?
6. Charlie's dad used to say, "Chin up." Think of a difficult situation where you were positive or brave. What happened? How did you grow from it?

Further Resources:

About the author: <https://dar.to/35rGJhb>

10 fun things to do in a blackout: <https://dar.to/335aiDp>

Activities

1. Imagine if your entire city's power went out. What would you do to survive through snow and ice without any power? Create your escape and survival plan. Make a map, a list of supplies, etc.
2. Create a board game based upon a disaster. Sketch ideas out for a board and how the game will work, then make it. Create rules about surviving the disaster and how to win. Gather all the pieces, your board, and play the game! See this site if you need a little help: <https://dar.to/2D2m3jp>