

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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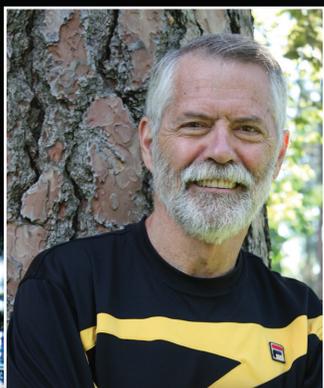


Photo by Kelly Mutter Halls

CHRIS CRUTCHER is the critically acclaimed author of nine novels, an autobiography, and two collections of short stories. His most recent novels include *Deadline*, *Whale Talk*, and *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*. He has won three lifetime achievement awards for the body of his work: the Margaret A. Edwards Award for Outstanding Literature for Young Adults, the ALAN Award for a Significant Contribution to Adolescent Literature, and the NCTE National Intellectual Freedom Award. He lives in Spokane, Washington. You can visit him online at www.chriscrutcher.com.



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Discussion guide prepared by Pam B. Cole, Professor of English Education & Literacy, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA.



AN ELECTRIFYING PAGE-TURNER FROM **CHRIS CRUTCHER**

Period 8 has always been a safe haven, until a student's disappearance uncovers the fact that the ultimate bully is hiding in plain sight.

Begin a conversation about *Period 8*.

Some questions to get you started:

1. What is Period 8, and what value does it hold for the teens who participate? Why does Logs run Period 8? How does this regular event contribute to the story?
2. Describe the central protagonist in *Period 8*, Paulie Bomb (Baum). Why does he tell his girlfriend, Hannah, he cheated? What response does he get from Hannah, from his peers in Period 8, and from Logs? Is Paulie a likeable character? Support your answer with examples.
3. Characterize Hannah. How does her breakup with Paulie impact the story? How does she help Mary Wells, and why is she interested in her disappearance? Should she forgive Paulie? Why or why not? How is their breakup important to the plot? Support your response with evidence from the text.
4. Describe Paulie's relationship with his parents. What does he wish for his parents? What does he fear, and why? What role does his father play early in the story? At the end?
5. Paulie's parents are separated because his father has a pattern of being unfaithful; Mary's family is intact. Compare and contrast the two families and the relationships the parents have with their children. Paulie seems self-assured and emotionally balanced; Mary does not. What family dynamics may account for these differences?
6. Sports are often present in Chris Crutcher's novels. In *Period 8*, both Logs and Paulie are ferocious swimmers. Describe the early swimming scenes. Why are these scenes important to the plot? How do they impact the story's climax? What do they reveal about both Logs and Paulie?
7. Logs is a popular teacher at the school and runs Period 8. How has he gained students' trust through the years? What role does he play in the plot? How does he help Paulie and Hannah unravel the mystery around Mary Wells?
8. Authors develop character several ways. For example, they may do so: 1) through that character's actions and words; 2) through *another* character's actions and words; 3) through the narrator's actions and words. Describe Mary Wells, supporting your description with examples of all three techniques. Explain how Arney appears to his friends and to readers early in the story, and use supporting scenes to explain how his friendships and character develop over time.
9. At first, Arney appears to be an "all-right" guy; however, he is in truth a teenage psychopath. What clues point to his personality and his intent? How does the author develop his character? That is, as the story progresses, what clues point to his true identity? How is Arney able to manipulate teenage girls?
10. Mary Wells comes from a well-to-do family and has a bright future. However, she is the perfect example of the maxim "appearances can be deceiving." How does she get involved with Arney and his lethal game? What makes her a good candidate for Arney's "business"? Why is she interested in Paulie, and how does Paulie attempt to help her?
11. At the end of the novel, Mary's whereabouts and her future are uncertain. How would the ending of the story be different if she had returned home? Why is this ending appropriate?
12. *Period 8* is a thriller. An effective thriller builds mystery/intrigue, and then holds the reader with tension. Authors use several techniques to hold tension: some examples include active voice, showing (not telling), pacing, story hooks, and heightened conflict. Often an author will end a chapter or a scene with a clincher sentence to reveal important information. With these techniques in mind, examine *Period 8*. What techniques does Chris Crutcher use to build suspense and keep the reader interested?