Overview

This fast-paced novel is ideal for students at Years 5 and 6, but will be enjoyed for its amusing and clever plot by students in Year 7 and less able readers in Year 8. Joel tells the story. He lives with his Gran and has problems staying focused and paying attention. His Gran understands him, and so does his other ally, Mei Pham. The one thing that Joel is good at is fishing, but he has never been able to enter the fishing competition run in the small town where he lives, as he doesn't have a father. Joel thinks up a brilliant way to get a father - by advertising in the paper. Dev Eagle replies and he and Joel get along well - until a great deal unfolds about Joel's parents and their past. Everything looks as though it will be ruined, but the story ends happily for all. In the process, both Joel and the reader learn a lot of important things about life.

Activities

• The craft of writing: What are the ingredients for a good novel?
• Joel's Gran says that he has no sense of danger. Do you think this sums up Joel's character?
• You are the school psychologist. Do a character study of Joel saying what he is like as a person, what motivates him and what his relationships with other people are like (his Gran, Mei, Shawn Houser and his teachers). Describe his family background. What does he do? What is his attitude and self-image? What does he think of himself? What are his interests? What are his problems? What he is good at?
• Who tells the story? What is the advantage of this stance? Are there disadvantages? Look at how the reader finds out things.
• Joel often tells us about his feelings. Find places in the book where this occurs and list these.
• Characters: Do a pen portrait of Gran, Zoe, Mei Pham and Dev.
• What does Joel do to find a dad? Describe his first meeting with the applicant.
• How does the relationship develop?
• Tell the story in your own words.
• You have just finished reading The Keeper by Rosanne Hawke and you liked it. Write an e-mail to a friend telling them about this good book you have just read.
• List the signs and clues we have that Joel has a problem.
• Talk about: fishing, Dev's philosophy, strategies for handling bullies, stereotypes, prejudice, dilemmas, trust, contrasts, hope, fear, trouble and being scared.
• What is a 'keeper'?
• Pretend you are Joel. Write in your secret diary what happened at Rogue's Point when you took Dev there.
• Comment on the different voices in the novel. What is each like? Comment on each of the following voices: Joel's, Gran's, Zoe's, Mei's and Shawn's.
• What is the author's purpose in bringing in Mei's voice? What does it achieve?
• Choose a scene or part of the story that you thought was significant. Say why you chose this scene.
• What does Mei find attractive in Joel?
• Why does Dev like him?
• Where is the story set? Is the setting important to the story?
• Describe what emotions you felt while reading The Keeper by Rosanne Hawke.
• Pretend you are a reporter. Write about the incident at Rogue's Point.
• Tell a friend about the ending of the novel.