

Stephen Fair

by Tim Wynne-Jones

Novel Study created by Janet Somerville

pp. 1-33

Dreamcatcher; Stephen Fair; Tinkerpaw; Virginia Elizabeth Dulcimer Skye

READING FOR MEANING

1. a) List questions that the prologue (*Dreamcatcher*) raises for you about what will happen in the novel.

b) Why is a prologue a useful technique for an author to use?

2. Describe your impression of Hesketh Martin. Could you take her remedy seriously?

Write down the remedy Hesketh prepares for Stephen.

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3. If you were Stephen, what kind of help would you want to seek?

4. Why do you think Brenda was threatened by Marcus's desire to continue going to the "trick-cyclist?"

5. Why do you think Marcus decided to leave home?

6. Make a list of the characteristics of "Tinkerpaw" and the "Ark" where Stephen now lives with his mom and baby sister Toni.

TINKERPAW	ARK
*	*
*	*
*	*
*	*
*	*
*	*
*	*
*	*

LANGUAGE PLAY

1. Print your full name: _____

Build as many words as you can with the letters in your name. See if you can write a sentence made up of some of those words.

SENTENCE:

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2. Tim Wynne-Jones uses figurative language to make his descriptive writing more interesting. Explain why the following *similes* are especially effective.

a) “There were words trapped inside the eerie sound, like something in a chrysalis fighting to emerge.” (p.1)

b) “It made him feel nauseous, as if he were stranded high up on a stalled ride at the fair.” (p.27)

CAUGHT YA

Make spelling and grammatical corrections to the following passage. Then re-write the paragraph properly.

The nightmare announces it's presents with a long drawn out mone in the monkey cage

Stephen opened his eyes'. He glances upwards, the bunk above him creeked. Stephen

listened up that was his job. Marcus's arm flailed agenst the wall and he shouts Stop!

And Stephen lay perfectly still outside of the dreem—beneathe it—not daring to breath.

CREATIVE EXTENSION

Create an entry in the “Dreamcatcher log” that Stephen writes. (About 250 words long)

pp. 34-68

Me, Myself and Why/ A Vision in Orange/ A Good Day for Canal Building/ Casablanca

READING FOR MEANING

1. Explain what you think Picasso’s statement means:
“ Art is a lie through which we perceive the Truth.”

2. Why does Virginia believe that Stephen “got at the very essence of the project” with the poem he wrote that is printed on pages 44 and 45?

3. How are Doug (Stephen’s Dad) and Lehmann (Virginia’s Dad) similar?

4. Do you agree with Virginia when she complains to her father, “Didn’t anyone tell you that teenagers hate everything?” (51)

5. Do you think that Brenda and Doug’s reasons for being called by their first names by their children instead of Mom or Dad make sense? (56)

6. What do you think Stephen is trying to do when he responds to Virginia, “You’re right. That’s why I’m so glad that I, myself, am a Zorgon from Alpha Centauri?” (58)

7. List some evidence that reveals that Virginia and Stephen like each other:

8. Copy down the lines from *Casablanca*:

- Why did you _____
- I came for the waters.... _____

_____ informed.

- This gun _____
- That is my _____
- Here's lookin' _____

9. Like Virginia, “do you think it’s possible to hate someone you love very, very much?” (77)

LANGUAGE PLAY

Lehmann gets mad at Virginia about her flippant use of the word *hate*. He claims it’s “*a door of a word. A big heavy steel door. Hate! Do you hear what I mean? Like a door slamming shut.*”

Explain what you think he means and why the **simile** and **metaphors** he uses work so well to make his point.

What does the following **simile** reveal about Lehmann’s character?

His “voice rode the waves of conversation like a proud schooner.” (77)

Make corrections to the following passage that is riddled with errors including comma splices, run-on sentences, spelling mistakes, missing punctuation and incorrect verb tense.

The five of them sat at the barre in the Skyes rec room below the muted noize of the grown ups upstares they are drinking fake champagne cocktails and ordering Ainsley, who was at the piano to, Play it Ainsley. You played it for her, you can play it for me.”

Ainsley picked out the toon for “As Thyme Goes Bye” with one finger

CREATIVE EXTENSION

Do a version of the “Me, Myself and Why” autobiography about yourself that Stephen and Virginia had to do for their English teacher. The format is your choice, but you “must invent yourself out of the facts of your existence.” (38)

Evaluation Rubric:

Interest level	1	2	3	4	5
Creativity	1	2	3	4	5
Authentic Content	1	2	3	4	5

JUST FOR FUN

Rent *Casablanca* starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman. Watch it with someone else in your family and discover why it has such a following of devoted fans like Virginia’s Dad and her friend Dom.

pp. 69-95

Inside the Picture/ From the Brow of the Hill/ The Usual Suspects/ The Water Rises

READING FOR MEANING

Why do you think the “letter of transit” is an effective device to further plot and contribute to theme?

Why is the photo of Marcus as a young boy of 3 or 4 important to Stephen?

Do you agree with Stephen when he says, “*You couldn’t talk when you were trying to remember a dream—not so much as a word. Talking broke the spell.*”

What do you think Brenda could be hiding from Stephen?

Why do Dom, Virginia and Stephen think “the Usual Suspects” is an appropriate name for their group of friends?

What purpose does Thread Bear serve?

List what happens in the THREE consecutive nights of dreams that Stephen has:

Possible interpretation

FIRST NIGHT

SECOND NIGHT

THIRD NIGHT

Personal Connections

List any anecdotes you can remember from dreams you've had. Do you have any idea how your dreams could be interpreted?

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pp. 96-129

Collapsing the Crystal/ The Covenant/ Tiddlywinks/ The Letter of Transit/ The Tree House/ Stephen Dark

INFERRING MEANING

Explain why each of these chapter titles is appropriate:

Collapsing the Crystal	
The Covenant	

Tiddlywinks	
The Letter of Transit	
The Tree House	
Stephen Dark	

PART TWO
pp. 133-154

Rock-a-bye Baby/ Making the Blind See/ Under Hesketh's Spell

How do each of the following excerpts either **reveal character**, **advance plot**, or **contribute to theme** in the novel?

Dear Virginia, I have made a big mistake! I am a dunce, a cretin, an imbecile.	
Rock-a-bye baby on the treetop. When the wind blows, the cradle will rock. When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall, And down will come baby, cradle and all. And without knowing why, he started to cry.	
Of course, nobody's ever just one thing, are they? Nothing's just ever black or white.	

<p>Lehmann said your guerrilla theatre tactics—that’s what he called them—were truly inspired. You called him on his Nazi act. That’s how he put it. I bet you could convince him to keep the bike.</p>	
<p>He recalled something the trick cyclist told Marcus. He had written it down in Dreamcatcher because he found it unbelievably wonderful. “Apparently, even people blind from birth still have vivid dreams. In dreams even the blind can see.”</p>	
<p>It is as if you have ‘caught’ her grief and it is magnifying whatever it is that causes your troubled sleep. She cannot heal herself so she is trying to nurse you back to health.</p>	

pp.155-179

Marcus/ The Mourning Dove/ Olive Place

Explain why the title of each chapter is relevant. (Consider plot development, character development, and theme.)

Marcus	
The Mourning Dove	
Olive Place	

Make a list of some of the PHOTOS Stephen looks at:

*

*

*

*

*

How do these photos help him piece together his past and what happened to Marcus?

IMPORTANT EXCERPTS

- a) *He was full to bursting with untold riches of secret information. It was a burden he didn't much enjoy.*
- b) *"It's a mourning dove", said Nan closing the top again. "And I do believe it's time to set him free."*
- c) *"Well that's something", said Nan looking relieved. "I thought maybe you were another refugee from the Ark."*
- d) *"I find it hard to believe you haven't heard any of this before."*
- e) *"He's got another family now, a baby not much older than Ray. He's building an adobe structure...For his new family's sake, I hope he doesn't finish it."*

What does Stephen discover about the timing of his nightmares from his conversation with Nan?

Why does Stephen call Virginia at the end of "The Mourning Dove?"

pp. 180-218

The Ninth Hour/ The Baby in the Tree/ The Namesake/ Mordor/ The Rescue Remedy/ Epilogue

Explain how both Stephen and Virginia take off their masks.

- a) Virginia

- b) Stephen

Why is it symbolically appropriate that on Good Friday Stephen chooses to walk his own *Via Dolorosa*?

Interpret Brenda's greeting to Stephen: *You're not supposed to be here.*

How does Marcus begin to fill in the pieces of the puzzle that is Stephen Fair?

Why does Brenda say she **had to lie** to Stephen? Do you agree with her reasons?

Why do you think Stephen gives Marcus Hesketh Martin's name and number?

How does going to MORDOR help Stephen?

QUOTABLE QUOTES

- *Now here was the dove in Mordor. A kind of peace descended upon him. The peace that had come with the mourning dove's song now firmed into resolve.*
- *It was if we'd passed the audition and now all we had to do was learn our parts.*
- *Anyway it was a complex thing; all breakups are. But let's just say our guilty secret—our crime—always hung above the relationship like a thundercloud.*
- *It's a role-playing thing...you have to answer to Mom. If you're interested in the job.*
- *You should see this. Somebody brought us a baby.*
- *Maybe some rainy day when there was nothing better to do, he would find in Lehmann's name the right words to thank him.*