



ISBN: 978-1-58089-316-9 • HC • \$16.95  
Ages 10–13

# KYLE'S ISLAND

## Discussion & Activity Guide

For as far back as Kyle can remember, he spent summers at Gram's cottage on the lake—fishing all day, and hanging out with the whole family. But this year is different. His father has moved out, his grandmother has died, and his mother is selling the cottage because they can't afford the upkeep.

Sally Derby takes readers to a small lake in 1970s Michigan, where thirteen-year-old Kyle comes to understand that loss isn't forever, and that people are more complicated than they seem.

---

### Discussion Questions

1. When Kyle arrives at the cottage, he says, “I was as happy at that minute as I had been for months” (pg. 17). Do you have a special place that makes you happy? Where is it, and how do you feel when you go there?
2. Kyle gathers worms and catches crickets to sell to the local store to help his mom pay the taxes on the cottage. Why was this not enough to persuade his mom not to sell the cottage? Are there other things he could have done to help?
3. Tom tells Kyle, “Mostly we don’t know, about other people” (pg. 162). What does Tom mean by this? How does this affect the way that Kyle thinks about other characters in the novel? Have you ever re-examined what you think about someone after you get to know them better?
4. The island that Kyle explores has captured his imagination for several years. What does this island symbolize to Kyle? Why is he so interested in it?
5. Kyle learns that Tom eats because he promised himself after he was starved as a prisoner of war in World War II that he’d never go hungry again. Have you ever made decisions that weren’t good for you? Think about your own bad habits? What do you think their sources are?
6. How does Kyle feel about his father? How is it different from how Josh feels? Why do you think they feel differently from one another about their father?

## Language Arts

1. Have students write an essay about a place, whether it is a summer home, favorite state, or even tree house, that is important to them. How would they feel if this place were taken away from them? What would they try to do to get it back?
2. *Kyle's Island* is written in the first person narrative, meaning that the narrator tells the story from his or her own point of view using the pronoun "I." Ask students to think about a time that they explored a new place. Was it exciting? Dangerous? Fun? Have them write a story about their experience in the first person. Make sure to explain the difference between an essay, like the activity above, and a story, like the novel. Stories use the elements of setting, characters, and plot. Essays often simply describe and analyze something. Have students read their stories aloud.

## History & Social Studies

1. *Kyle's Island* takes place in 1974. Divide students into three groups and give each group one of the following categories: politics, popular culture, world events. Instruct the groups to research what was happening in their category during 1974. Once they have completed their research, have each group give an oral presentation to the class.
2. Tom Butler was a prisoner of war from 1942 until 1945. Have students research World War II. What countries had POW camps? How many soldiers were held in these camps, and how were they treated? Were some POW camps better than others? Did the United States hold prisoners of war? What is the Geneva Convention? Use this research project to introduce the current debate over the treatment of prisoners of war.

## Mathematics

1. Tom Butler pays Kyle \$5 a day to go fishing with him. Clyde pays him \$1.50 for each dozen night crawlers and four cents a piece for red worms. Kyle's mom needs \$800 to pay the taxes on the cottage. Calculate the following to see what Kyle should do to earn the money his mom needs.
  - A. How many days would he need to work for Tom?
  - B. How many night crawlers would he need to catch?
  - C. How many red worms would he need to catch?
  - D. If Kyle only has 60 days to work for Tom, how many night crawlers and worms combined would he need to catch?



# Sally Derby

*“Come listen, let me tell you what it was like,  
how the icy branches sparkled,  
what I heard the dragon boast,  
what Old Joanna dreamed about . . .”*

Sally was born and grew up in Dayton, Ohio. She had a very ordinary life until she learned to read and write. After that, whenever she wasn't in school, she was either reading or writing herself into exciting and wonderful places. She lived with her parents, her younger sister Cecelia, and the fabulous characters from books and her imagination until she went to college in Oxford, Ohio.

When she finished college she married Karl Miller and moved a whole forty miles to Cincinnati, Ohio. Soon she became a mother. Son after son was born or came to live with her until she and her husband were the proud parents of eight sons and one daughter. For the next thirty years or so she has written over ten books for children including *No Mush Today* (Lee & Low Books), *Whoosh Went the Wind* (Marshall Cavendish), and *Hannah's Bookmobile Christmas* (Henry Holt), a Smithsonian Notable Book .

Sally lives in Cincinnati, Ohio. Visit her website at [www.sallyderby.com](http://www.sallyderby.com).