



ROWAN THE STRANGE by Julie Hearn

1. The story begins in England at the outbreak of World War II.

Why is this historical setting important to the plot? Could the story have taken place today? In what way would it change, do you think?

2. What are your first impressions of Rowan Scrivener? What kind of boy is he? How does he get on with his grandmother? Why is this relationship important to him? What does her job say about her and her personality?

3. There's a key scene in the book when Rowan breaks his sister Laurel's fingers by smashing the piano lid down onto them. Why is this scene so important? How does the author convey the horror of the incident?

How do you feel towards Rowan afterwards? And how do you feel towards his sister?

4. Why does the author show us Rowan's 'Strictly Confidential' admissions report? Do you learn anything new about him and his condition from this form and its completion?

Do you think a lunatic asylum is the right place for Rowan? Why is 'the voice' in Rowan's head such a crucial factor in his admittance?

5. Are all the doctors agreed on the 'very latest medical treatment' for Rowan's schizophrenia? How does Dr von Metzger persuade them? Do you think they should have waited?

How do you feel when you learn that one hundred and ten volts of electricity is shot in a barbed wire arc through Rowan's brain?

6. The treatment that Rowan receives at the hospital 'scrambled' his head and turned his past into 'a half-forgotten story'.

How does electroconvulsive therapy help Rowan? Is it possible it actually set him back in his recovery? How would you feel do you think, if you were to lose your memories as a result of this kind of therapy?

7. "Careful, Dottie. You've just slapped your precious Joan of Arc...she's leaving you. She's leaving you for good."

Why are Nurse Springfield's words to Dorothea so cruel? What is Dorothea's response? Does it alter the way Rowan feels about Nurse Springfield? What is the relationship between Dorothea and Joan of Arc? How does it differ from Rowan's relationship with Superboy?

8. In what way does Dorothea's attack help Rowan? How is it a turning point in his recovery? When he sends her a message via Dr von Metzger, what does this tell us about Rowan's state of mind? Why does he pointedly insist that the message is from 'Rowan Scrivener'? Why does Rowan still want his Superman comics back?

9. How does the audience react to Dr von Metzger playing Captain Hook in the pantomime? In what way has he been typecast? Are the audience reacting to him as a doctor, as an actor, or as a German? Why does Rowan have a different view from the audience? Why does he want to yell at them from the wings?

What are the words that Dr von Metzger cannot bring himself to say? Why is this so significant?

10. What effect does the discovery of Dorothea's body have on Dr von Metzger? And on Rowan? Rowan thinks 'it's all his fault'. Is he right?

Is anyone to blame? Could Dorothea's death have been avoided?

