

TALKING POINTS CILIP Carnegie Medal Shortlist 2015



WHEN MR DOG BITES By Brian Conaghan



The narrative voice, and how the story is told

The author makes it sound like Dylan is really speaking to you as you read . how and why do you think he does this? Can you find specific examples of what he does?

The book uses some strong swear-words . why do you think the author has done this? How did it affect your reading?

He has his own very distinctive language . certain phrases he uses; what examples of this did you notice? (And why?)

Dylan is quite lively and jokey about things . do you think he's always telling us seriously how he *really* feels?

Setting and story

Drumkill is a special school, only for certain kinds of children. But when you read about it, is it also really just like any other school? (Maybe yours?) In some ways are the students there just like any other teenagers you know?

Do we sometimes know things Dylan doesn't, even though he's telling us the story? Are there clues to what's going on that we might see/understand even if he doesn't?

Did you predict the twist at the end, or did it take you by surprise?

The bucket list

What kind of things might go on a bucket list . should they be realistic, ambitious, inspiring? What would be on yours?

Do Dylan's priorities for his bucket list change over the course of the book?

Does Dylan change how he thinks about the things that are important in life when he learns he's going to die? And again when he learns he isn't?





Mr Dog

Why does Dylan do his %brain-gym+(remembering the names of football teams, etc.)?
Why does he carry a green stone around with him?

Mr Growl, Mr Dog . why do you think Dylan uses these characters to describe what happens to him?

What kinds of situation tend to trigger an outburst?

Characters

We see Dylan mostly the way he presents himself to us . but how do you think he's seen by each of these other characters?

- Mum
- Amir
- Tony
- Michelle Malloy

%am not clever or funny,+Dylan says. But is there a difference between the way he sees/describes himself and how he seems to us?

Dylan insists that he and Amir don't call each other the mean names other people use . why is this so important to him?

There are bullies at school . but does the book show how some grown-ups can be bullies, too?

What do you learn about Dad, from the letters exchanged . and how do your feelings about him change as you learn more?

And finally...

You may never have met someone with Tourette's before now . did this book make you curious to learn more about it?

Did getting to know Dylan and Amir change at all how you think about what it's like to have a disability, or to be different in some way?

