

# THE HIDEAWAY

## PAM SMY

Resource Pack for Book Groups, KS2 & KS3 Teachers & Librarians

9781843654797 | £14.99 | Hardback | Published by Pavilion Children's Books



### ABOUT THE BOOK

*The Hideaway* tells the story of a boy, Billy McKenna, who runs away from a difficult situation at home and takes refuge in an overgrown graveyard. While hiding there he meets an elderly man who is tending the graves in preparation for a day in November when something magical is set to happen.

The book is written in two alternating narratives, both different aspects of the same story. One thread tells of Billy's experience of hiding away in the graveyard, his mixed-up feelings and emotions, and the supernatural events he eventually witnesses. The other tells of his mother's situation at home and the police search for Billy. Covering themes of family, childhood, separation and reunion, domestic violence and doing the right thing, this is an important and beautiful book for middle-grade readers right up to adults.

Billy's story is illustrated throughout with tonal and textured black and white drawings, until the event on All Souls' Eve, when the text gives way to a series of double-page images of the supernatural happening.

*The Hideaway* is a compelling, exciting and emotional story that will stay with you long after you finish the last page.

### CURRICULUM LINKS

The book would link to the curriculum in PSHE, English, History, Art or Drama. It would be particularly relevant to PSHE topics which include: British values, consent and relationships.

### QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES FOR GUIDED READING / BOOK GROUP OR WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION

#### Key Stage 2

- Listen with your eyes closed while someone reads p7 aloud (or read the page, then close your eyes). What images come into your mind? Discuss what you think this book is going to be about and how the story might develop.
- In the following extract from the story (p3), Billy can hear arguing coming from downstairs:

*I just don't know what to do! You never listen! You drive me bloody crazy, woman! You make me...*

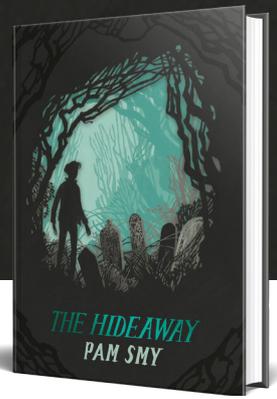
*In the kitchen Billy quietly pulled open the cutlery drawer. He took a spoon, fork and knife,*

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and after hesitating for a few seconds he decided to also take all the sharp chopping knives. He wrapped them in a tea towel. Then he took string, candles, matches, a torch and a roll of bin bags from under the sink. He dropped some apples, cheese and half the loaf of bread into a bag. As he turned the key in the lock of the back door, click, he heard the first...

### *Slap!*

An example of onomatopoeia is used to show that the argument has resulted in an act of violence. Using this scene from the book as inspiration, design and display information posters about when and where to go for help if a conflict has got out of hand.

- When Billy leaves home, he seeks refuge in a small hut within a graveyard:  
**Billy felt safe here, cocooned in the pillbox in the middle of a graveyard of all places. So much safer than he felt at home. He was relieved he had got away at last.**

Reflect on what home means to you. Consider, how does your home make you feel? These feelings might be both positive and negative. Using these thoughts, write an acrostic poem, where the first letters in each line spell out 'My home is', when read vertically down the page.

- Read chapter 8. As a group, discuss how Billy's home life was different before Jeff arrived. On post-it notes, write down significant words from this chapter of the story which show a loving home environment. Share these words as a class.
- On p126, we read an extract from Billy's diary. Write a new diary entry detailing Billy's experience of staying in the graveyard on Halloween (chapter 22).
- In chapter 28 the old man disappears again. Write a prediction linked to where he goes.
- Create a collage depicting the many acts of kindness which are shown towards Grace and Billy in the book.
- Inspired by the illustrations depicting All Souls' Night, use chalk and charcoal to create your own ghostly image of the graveyard (p192-213).
- Why do you think Billy didn't want Izzie to discover him, or to go into his hideaway? Have you ever built a hideaway? Describe the kind of hideaway you would build if you could (p75).
- The story is set around Halloween and All Souls' Eve. What are some of the customs and traditions associated with these two events and where did they originate from? Research how other countries celebrate these events and what their associated customs and traditions are (p100).
- Describe what Billy's emotions and feelings would have been after Izzie leaves him (p83-85).

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### Key Stage 3

- Billy uses a Pillbox in the graveyard as shelter. Create a PowerPoint slide containing facts about the role of Pillboxes in World War II.

- ***I guess this is my back garden now. Better get to know the neighbours!***

Billy starts to explore the gravestones. Write a life story for one of the people featured on one of the gravestones (p25–29).

- In chapter 16, Izzie discovers that Billy is living in the Pillbox. Discuss reasons why people become homeless. What can we do to help these people?

- In chapter 22, why does Billy react so strongly to Josh's actions and how may Josh remind Billy of Jeff?

- The book is written in two alternating narratives, both different aspects of the same story. One thread tells of Billy's experience of hiding away in the graveyard, his mixed-up feelings and emotions because of the situation at home and the supernatural events he eventually witnesses. The other tells of his mother's situation at home and the police search for Billy. How does this structure add to the power and your enjoyment of the story?

- List the reasons why Grace may be staying in an abusive relationship with Jeff, rather than seeking help? Discuss how you would persuade her to get help.

- One of the sub-themes of the book is the story of the relationship of Grace and Billy's birth father. Why does she react the way she does when he turns up after seeing the news of Billy's disappearance? How do you think this will be resolved (p172–3)?

- ***Little by little their past life was tidied away, as if it had never even existed.***

What do you think this means and why does Billy feel this way (p37)?

- Is it ever right to run away as Billy did? What other actions could he have taken instead? What advice and help would you have given him?

- The book includes the poem All Souls' Night by Frances Crofts Cornford (p135). Read two further poems by her and discuss how similar or different their themes are compared with All Souls' Night.

### Questions for KS2 & KS3

- After the police leave, Grace goes through her hidden boxes and puts all the pictures of her and Billy around the house. Why do you think she does that and what do you think it symbolises (p164–6)?

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- When Grace realises that Billy is missing, at first she is worried about contacting the police. Why do you think that is and what makes her decide that she has to contact them (p64-7)?
- The illustrations for the book are in black and white. What do you feel they add to the book and why do you think the author chose black and white illustrations rather than colour? Can you tell what happens in the story just by reading the illustrations?
- Look at the production quality of the book – it has black sprayed edges, green end pages with an image of the kind of tangled weeds that might be found in a graveyard and an atmospheric front cover. What do they add to the story? Look at the cover of the book before you read the story – what do you think the book will be about? Look at it again once you have read the story – do you get a different idea of the story, and do you see things that you didn't see the first time?
- Write an alternative back cover blurb for the book.
- What did you think about the ending of the book – did it complete the story in a satisfying and believable way for the reader? How might it have ended differently? Write a different ending for the story.
- Read Pam Smy's other book, *Thornhill* – compare and contrast the two books – are similar themes explored? What are the characters like in both books?
- If Izzie hadn't had her earbuds in when her mum was told that a boy was missing, how do you think she would have reacted and how might the outcome of the story have been different (p94)? Do you think she did the right thing, keeping Billy's secret? Discuss as a class how you would have handled it.
- **He thought of all the times when he was younger that Jeff had said 'Man up, Billy. Men don't cry!'**  
Is that true? Why is that bad advice to give to a child (p156)?
- If you had to sum up the book in three words, what would they be and why?

### QUESTIONS FROM THE AUTHOR PAM SMY

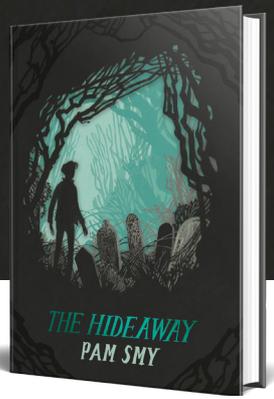
- Although the main character in this story, Billy, is a boy, there are many strong women in the story. Who are they, and why do you think they are important to the story?
- Graveyards are seen as 'scary' places. Do you think they are? Can you think why they are seen as frightening, and are there other ways you could describe how graveyards are or how they make you feel?

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- There is a picture sequence towards the end of the book where there are no words on the pages. In it you see people from different times in history, and what their relationships might be. Can you guess at what they are? Can you think why I may want to include all these types of people in this story?
- There is a poem in the graveyard by Frances Cornford. When I first read it I didn't immediately understand what it meant. Is it clear to you what it is about and what are the clues in the poem that help you (and me!) understand the meaning?

### ABOUT PAM SMY

Pam Smy studied Illustration at Cambridge School of Art, where she now lectures. Pam has illustrated books by Arthur Conan Doyle (*The Hound of the Baskervilles*), Julia Donaldson (*Follow the Swallow*) and Kathy Henderson (*Hush, Baby, Hush!*), among others. She lives in Cambridge.

Her first novel, *Thornhill* was a critical and commercial success, shortlisted for the Waterstones Children's Book Prize, the UKLA Book Awards, and the CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal 2018 and winning the 2018 British Book Design & Production Award for Graphic Novels.



### Also by Pam Smy

*Thornhill* published by David Fickling Books (2017) 9781910200612



Notes prepared by Annie Everall OBE, BA (Hons) Lib, Authors Aloud UK (with input from Zoe Rowley, Wolverhampton Grammar School).