



Life as We Knew It
Discussion Questions

1. Before the meteor strikes the moon, what are the biggest concerns in Miranda's life? How do they change in the months that follow?
2. If you were in a catastrophic situation like Miranda, what would you be willing to do in order to survive and take care of your family? Do you think that would change as time went by?
3. After the meteor strikes the moon, services such as telephone, Internet, and television stop, and Miranda writes in her journal that "Civilization had ended." Do you think people are too dependent on electronic gadgets? What would you do if you could no longer use the gadgets many people have come to depend on in their daily lives? How would your life change?
4. What does Miranda experience at the supermarket that makes her realize how things have changed for the worse? (pp. 35–38)
5. How would you describe Miranda's relationship with her brothers, Matt and Jonny? How does this relationship change during the course of the story? How about her relationship with her mother?
6. As the family settles into a routine, the household chores are divided along very traditional "men's work" and "women's work" lines. Why do you think this happened? Do you think it bothered Miranda?
7. How does Miranda feel about Megan's religious convictions? (pp. 68–69) How does this affect their friendship? Do you think Megan's faith is a good one?
8. Miranda and her friends Sammi and Megan have different ways of surviving. Sammi leaves her home with a benefactor; Megan puts her faith in God; and Miranda stays put. Did any of them do the right or wrong thing? What do you think you would do in their shoes?
9. What does Miranda realize about her mom when she visits Megan for the last time? (pp. 164–65)
10. After Mrs. Nesbitt dies, Miranda goes through her kitchen cabinets and says doing so makes her "feel like a cannibal?" (p. 240) Why does she feel this way?
11. Why does Miranda call the family's first Christmas after the catastrophe "Absolutely the best Christmas ever"? (p. 280)
12. Why does Miranda keep writing in her journal? Who does she think will read her writings?
13. What do you think will become of Miranda and her family and friends? How about her father and stepmother?
14. In many Miranda's dreams, she struggles to determine if she is in heaven. Why do you think this is important to Miranda? How do her dreams affect her in her waking life? Why does the last dream (p. 326) make Miranda decide she needs to sacrifice herself for her family?

About the Author

Susan Beth Pfeffer was born in New York City in 1948. She grew up in the city and its nearby suburbs and spent summers in the Catskill Mountains. When she was six her father wrote and published a book on constitutional law, and Pfeffer decided that she, too, wanted to be a writer. That year she wrote her first story, about the love between an Oreo cookie and a pair of scissors. However, it wasn't until 1970 that her first book, *Just Morgan*, was published. She wrote it during her last semester at New York University; since then, she has been a full-time writer for young people.



She has won numerous awards and citations for her work, which range from picture books to middle-grade and young-adult novels, and include both contemporary and historical fiction. She is also the author of the popular *Portraits of Little Women* series for grades 3-6, and has written a book for adults on writing for children.

To date, she has written more than 60 books. *About David* was awarded the South Carolina Young Adult Book Award. *The Year Without Michael* is an ALA Best Book for Young Adults and winner of the South Carolina Young Adult Book Award; it was also named by the American Library Association as one of the hundred best books for teenagers written between 1968-1993.

When she is not working, she enjoys watching movies, both new and old, and collecting movie memorabilia, reading biographies and histories, and eating foods that are bad for her. She lives in Middletown, New York, with her two cats, Alexander and Emily.

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