Discussion Guide

Skeleton Creek

By Patrick Carman

Sarah and Ryan are in deep trouble...and deep into a mystery...something that everyone in their hometown of Skeleton Creek seems to want to keep secret.

The last time the two went out to the creepy old dredge abandoned in the middle of the woods, Ryan ended up in the hospital, and in a cast that left him stuck at home, forbidden to speak with or contact Sarah. Sarah is intent on unraveling the mystery of the dredge, and of what happened to Ryan that night, because she has footage that no one else has seen.

The story is told from alternating viewpoints—and in alternating formats. First, you read a chapter of Ryan’s journal in the book. Then, at the end of each chapter, there’s a website and a password, with which you can go online and continue the story by watching Sarah’s video. This exciting new storytelling format will have kids riveted as they try to figure out what these detectives will discover next.

Teachers, use Skeleton Creek to bridge the digital divide and lure students inside the structure of a novel. Use it to open up discussion and exploration of different storytelling formats with which students can experiment.
10. What do they discover at the dredge at the end of the book? In the end, where are Sarah and Ryan?

9. What passwords does Sarah give Ryan to access the videos? What is the significance of these words? Where do they come from?

8. What does Ryan learn about the tapping sounds on the video and what they mean? Do you think it connects to Ryan’s dad?

6. How is Ryan able to make connections between what he discovers from his dad and the videos from Sarah?

5. How is Ryan’s dad involved in the mystery of the story? What information does Ryan learn from him about the dredge and Old Joe Bush? Does your town have any local ghost stories?

4. What do you learn from watching Sarah’s footage of the night in the woods? Would you be willing to continue on solving the mystery or not? Why? Which part of the story do you think was more difficult to write: the journal or the script? Why?

3. What are Hooke, Boyle, and Newton? How did their discoveries become important to unraveling the mystery of the dredge? How does Ryan uncover the detailed truth about their important work?

2. How does Ryan start eliminating suspects from the list they found in the secret room? What surprising facts does he learn about people on the list?

1. Describe Ryan as he sees himself. Do you think anyone who writes as much as he has will eventually become good at it? What condition is he in? Why?

Discussion Guide to Book 2
Skeleton Creek: Ghost in the Machine

1. How did Sarah and Ryan escape from the secret room? What did they learn while trapped down there? What warning did they get? Would you continue with the search?

2. How does Ryan start eliminating suspects from the list they found in the secret room? What surprising facts does he learn about people on the list?

3. Who were Hooke, Boyle, and Newton? How did their discoveries become important to unraveling the mystery of the dredge? How does Ryan uncover the detailed truth about their important work?

4. Sarah’s videos elicit more intense responses from Ryan in this book than in the last. Why? Are you more influenced by video or print? Ten years from now, what do you think will the most influence in entertainment? Why?

5. What clues does Ryan discover in his own house and by his surveillance at the local library? Why are the crossbones involved with the dredge?

6. What does Sarah discover the night of the crossbones secret society meeting? How does she gain access?