



The Shade

K.L. Denman

Interest level: ages ten to fourteen

Reading level: 2.5

978-1-55143-931-0 PB

978-1-55143-933-4 LIB

AR Quiz # 122470

Book Summary

Safira doesn't believe in ghosts, but the girl she saw in her cabin at camp was not a living person, so what was she? Her friend Trinity is convinced that Safira's seen a ghost and sets out to discover who the ghost-girl is. Safira is too busy dealing with her family to help solve the mystery. Safira has never gotten along with her sister, Mya, and now that Mya's pending marriage dominates the family, there seems to be no hope for friendship between the sisters. But when Trinity discovers the death of a girl named Myra, Safira starts to wonder if the ghost-girl has an important message to tell her about her own sister.

Author Biography

K.L. Denman began writing young adult fiction after reading the books of some talented authors and discovering the wonders of this fascinating genre. With her teen children and their friends providing inspiration, writing for teens became an irresistible venture. K.L. Denman wrote two other novels in the Orca Currents series, *Mirror Image* and *Rebel's Tag*.

K.L. Denman was born in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, but spent most of her life in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, with the exception of the summers when she worked on a ranch in Alberta. She has also worked as a florist, as an occupational information advisor and in various office jobs. She now resides near Powell River, British Columbia, with her family of people, dogs, cats and horses.

Connecting to the Text

Character Study and Point of View

1. Until last summer, Safira loved swimming and being in the water. She says, “Being in water was like being at home” (p. 67) and “[s]wimming was my world” (p. 3). But now she doesn’t want to swim at all. She thinks her dad is disappointed; she used to be a strong competitor, and he was really proud of her. Ask students to read aloud their conversation, which takes place when Safira returns from camp (p. 6):

Great news! What was your time for the backstroke? Better?

I had fun doing lots of other stuff. Campfires, games, crafts. But I told you I wouldn’t swim.

And I didn’t.

Have students reflect upon the points of view of both Safira and her dad and how they conflict. Then, as a group, discuss the following:

- Why is Safira’s dad disappointed that she didn’t swim at summer camp?
- Why didn’t Safira swim at summer camp?
- Is there a way to solve this conflict with a win-win outcome? What could Safira and her dad do, so they’d both feel better?
- Safira accepts Mya’s wedding to Lino, even though she doesn’t like Lino. Safira’s dad says, “If we refused to go along with this, she might shut us out of her life” (p. 44). How does this compare to his approach with Safira?
- Have you had a similar experience with your parents? How did each person’s point of view influence how they responded? How did you resolve the situation?

Figures of Speech—Euphemisms

Trinity found old newspaper articles about the ghost girl’s death. One article said that “Miss Myra Norton was laid to rest” (p. 73). The term “laid to rest” is a euphemism, a more sensitive way of saying “her body was buried.” Euphemisms are used in situations where the subject matter is sensitive, offensive or uncomfortable. As a group, brainstorm the following:

- Think of euphemisms you use every day. You may wish to provide examples, to get the students started: instead of saying “toilet,” you might say “boys’ room” or “washroom;” and instead of saying “died,” you might say “passed away.” Make a list of common euphemisms. Why and when do we use euphemisms?
- Challenge the students to share euphemisms from their experience; i.e., examples their teacher may not have heard, perhaps from popular culture or local usage.

Creating Pictures Using Metaphors and Similes

Metaphors and similes connect ideas, giving us images that expand our understanding of situations and characters.

1. Read the following examples from *The Shade* aloud or write them on the board. Discuss the connection that is being made and how it lends meaning to the text:

(p. 3) *Sure, I've had fun with them, but my dislike of the water has put a fence between us.*

(p. 10) *She reminds me of a hummingbird, a bright lively creature but hardly delicate. She vibrates with energy...She whirs with ideas, sometimes talking so fast everything blurs together.*

(p. 11) *A shiver snakes through me.*

(p. 64) *I feel a huge rush of gratitude that is swiftly washed away in a cold bath of confusion.*

(p. 67) *It was more like I'd taken the best part of me and made it into a machine.*

(p. 78) *Every molecule in my body turns to ice with this certain knowledge: She's here, in my house!*

(p. 90) *And here come the bridesmaids, wafting up the center isle like flowers on a breeze.*

(p. 92) *Mya holds it there like a shield and screams, 'Don't you dare touch my sister!'*

2. Ask students to complete the following sentences.

- My nightmare was so scary! I felt like _____.
- My sleeping bag felt very safe. It was just like _____.
- I just love the water! It feels like _____.
- I didn't get along with the other kids. I felt like they were _____.
- When she was embarrassed, her face turned as red as _____.
- The candles flickered like _____.
- I have to admit, I was scared by all the talk of ghosts. I was a _____.
- The aura around the washbasin was strong. It looked like _____.
- When I saw the bruise on her cheek, I was as angry as _____.
- The wedding was elegant. Being there was like _____.
- The bridesmaids looked pretty, but similar. They looked like _____.

Vocabulary Enrichment through Storytelling

1. The following words are used in *The Shade* and are organized into two categories/ contexts, based on Safira’s experiences with the paranormal and ghosts, and at Mya’s wedding. Invite students to use the words in impromptu storytelling, working in pairs or small groups. Encourage students to create their own story ideas using the words below. Some possible story ideas:

- We thought it would be fun to sneak into the funeral home. Boy, were we wrong!
- It’s empty and dark in the reading room of the library in the middle of the night. And now we can’t get out!
- We stayed in the theater after it closed. We hid under the stage and nobody caught us. It was fun until the curtains came down at midnight by themselves...
- The padlock to the old cabinet in the nurse’s room was rusted and worn. Funny, but the key we found opened more than that one lock...

Paranormal and Ghosts

ancient	bony finger	denial	funeral	ignore
obvious	antique	candles	describe	ghosts
incense	paranormal	appearance	clandestine	determined
ghoul	interpret	poltergeist	atmosphere	concentrate
energy	haunt	message	possibility	aura
connection	evidence	heartbeat	moment	questions
beneath	creepy	excitement	history	myself
quiver	blood	dead quiet	explanation	hovering
mystery	shadow			

Weddings

- The bride is late for the ceremony. Where is she? Nobody’s seen her since last night! Hold on— is that a note under her bouquet?
- I’m the best man. Boy, why does everyone looks so stressed out? All I have to do is bring the ring. Oh no, where is it? I had it a second ago...
- They asked me to take pictures at the wedding. At first, I thought it was a great idea, and I had a lot of fun taking the pictures of the bride and groom. But later, in the darkroom, the groom didn’t “appear” when I developed the negatives...

alterations	ceremony	expression	limo	reception
bouquets	community	gorgeous	makeup	stress
bridal shop	earrings	gown	pictures	suits
bridesmaid	elegant	groomsmen	position	tuxedos
celebration	envelope	jewellery	production	wedding

Connecting to the Curriculum

Language Arts—Writing and Creative Work

1. Use one of the following quotations from *The Shade* as the first sentence in a short story, diary entry, travel journal, letter or song.

Option: Have students choose their own first sentence from the novel.

- (p. 3) *A lot can change in a moment.*
- (p. 4) *I really wish I could have gone to a horse camp, but my parents sent me here.*
- (p. 10) *The book's cover is plain black, no title, no picture.*
- (p. 13) *I've researched ghosts. And when they're hanging around like that, it's because they have unfinished business.*
- (p. 25) *You can tell how someone is feeling, just by reading their aura.*
- (p. 38) *[I] had an experience [I] can't explain.*
- (p. 43) *Real friends are sometimes the only ones who can tell it like it is.*
- (p. 67) *It was... like I'd taken the best part of me and made it into a machine.*
- (p. 77) *I'm wakened by a sharp clatter... And then I hear a low moan... She's here, in my house!*
- (p. 95) *In the realm of the paranormal, coincidence can lead us astray.*
- (p. 100) *Be happy. Be all you can be. Those words ring and echo and bug me, big time. I'm not really happy. I'm not really unhappy. I have no idea what I can be. I only know something I can't be.*
- (p. 104) *I think people in the same family have a special connection. It's like we're tied to each other.*

2. At summer camp, Safira's counsellor was concerned because Safira wouldn't go swimming. The counsellor said, "I know people who ride horses. They say the best thing to do if you fall off is get right back on. Conquer your fear" (p. 5).

We can learn to cope with our fears, or we can work to overcome them. Did Safira's counsellor offer good advice? Write a paragraph explaining why or why not. Use examples from *The Shade* (or from personal experience) in your writing.

If you were Safira's summer camp counsellor, what strategy would you use to get Safira to enjoy camp more? Would you encourage her to swim or encourage her to try something else? Imagine you are the counsellor. Write a letter to Safira's parents, explaining the situation and what your strategy will be.

Drama

1. Ask students to work in small groups to improvise skits based on key scenes from *The Shade*. Choose from the examples below:

- Safira has just returned from summer camp, and her dad is asking her about her backstroke time. What will Safira say? Can she tell her dad how she really feels?
- Safira and Trinity discovered the Ouija board. What will they ask the board to help them solve the mystery of the ghost in Safira's cabin?

- Mya and her Mom are getting ready for the wedding. Mya is acting like “Bridezilla” and Mya’s mom is trying hard to connect with her daughter. Can Mya’s mother talk honestly about how she feels about the wedding—and Lino?
- Jill would really like to “tell it like it is” with Mya, and perhaps save their friendship before it’s too late. Imagine Mya and Jill go for coffee before the wedding and have a heart-to-heart conversation.
- It’s the day of the wedding. Imagine the minister has just said, “Speak now or forever hold your peace”. Who would like to stand up and protest the wedding? (What would Safira say? Her mom and dad? Jill?)

Human Sciences

1. Safira had a panic attack when she was underwater, and it was a terrifying experience. Read the description on page 69. Ask students to research and write a short report on panic attacks, describing at least three of the following:
 - What portion of the population gets panic attacks?
 - What can cause or trigger panic attacks?
 - What are three symptoms of panic attacks?
 - What is happening in the body during a panic attack?
 - What are some ways to treat panic attacks?
 - If someone in your class had a panic attack, to whom could they go for help?

Art and Reflection

1. Ask students to create an art project which demonstrates Safira’s feelings in one of the following situations taken from *The Shade*. You may wish to have a wide range of media available for students to use (for example, paints, pastels, newspapers, magazines, etc.). Once completed, ask students to talk about their art. How does their work interpret Safira’s feelings?
 - Safira loves swimming—in the pool, in the ocean, or in the lake. When she’s in the water, she is “at home.”
 - Safira dove too deep and she’s having a panic attack under water. She feels the “cold black of deep shade.”
 - Safira is at the wedding, surrounded by elegance and ceremony.
 - Safira is in her cabin at summer camp and sees a ghost.
 - Safira and Trinity enjoy delicious dishes from the Philippines in Trinity’s kitchen.
 - Safira and Trinity are in Trinity’s room with the Ouija board—with candles and incense.
 - Safira must speak out at the wedding—or her sister could be in real trouble.

2. After the wedding, Mya had a heart-to-heart talk with Safira. Mya said that Lino tried to control her, and “somewhere along the way, I lost myself. I guess that sounds stupid, but it’s as if I was living in his shadow. I didn’t know who I was anymore” (p. 97).
 - Ask students to create an art project which utilizes the image of something or someone’s “shadow” overpowering another’s ambitions. For example, students could portray someone casting a large shadow, prohibiting the movement or advancement of another.
 - In addition to traditional art projects, you may wish to challenge students to create an artistic non-verbal dramatic presentation. For example, imagine your group members are mimes. Encourage students to “dress the part,” wearing non-distracting clothing.
 - Students may wish to demonstrate the shadow theme through dance, incorporating light sources (such as flashlights, candles, glow-sticks or sparklers) that are extinguished or hidden by a “shadow.”

Geography and Social Studies

Trinity’s mother comes from the Philippines. Trinity and Safira enjoy *lumpia*, a delicious deep-fried spring roll, and Trinity’s mother refers to a Philippines faith healer, called a *Albularyo*. To learn about the Philippines, ask the students to break into pairs or small groups to complete research, reporting on one of the following:

- Research and learn three Filipino words or expressions you would be likely to use in a usual day (good morning, good-bye, the days of the week, my name is, can I buy...?, where is...?, etc.). Act out a conversation in Filipino, using the words you learned. Then ask the class to guess what you said.
- Do you have someone in your school who comes from the Philippines? Interview them, asking them to share their experience of moving from the Philippines to where they live now. What was new for them? Was it easy or difficult to adjust to their new home and school? What do they miss most?
- Choose a dish from the Philippines and describe how to prepare it. Would these ingredients be available where you live? Would you like to try this dish?
- Find the Philippines on a map of the world. What is the capital city? How far is your home from the capital of the Philippines? If you were to travel to the Philippines, what would the most direct route be?

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Topics

As a group, discuss the following topics, drawing parallels to the experiences of the characters in *The Shade*, where possible.

Option: Ask students to write paragraphs answering the questions below.

1. To solve the mystery of the ghost who “needs justice to be at peace” (p. 74), Safira struggles with her belief system. She says, “The problem is that I still don’t understand some things. And no matter how hard I try...I can’t. I’d really like it if things went back to normal...Whatever that is” (p. 100).
 - What does “normal” mean? Is it a standard or metric that everyone should strive for? Are only a few people “normal” or can anyone be “normal”? (To engage students in this theme, you may wish to share a story told by Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw. He said that his eye doctor told him he had ‘normal’ sight—but the doctor also said that normal sight was very rare.)
2. Safira’s sister Mya said: “The only thing you can count on staying the same is that everything changes” (p. 102).
 - Has there been a time in your life when, like Mya, you experienced something life-changing? It could be moving to a new place, starting at a new school, going to summer camp, becoming a blended family, etc. How did you cope? Was it a positive or negative experience? Did you, like Mya, grow from the experience? Was it easier or more difficult than you expected?
 - Do you agree with Mya? Is change a “constant” for us all? If so, how can we prepare ourselves so that we are able to cope with unexpected change? Can unexpected change sometimes be fun?
3. Trinity wants a “green wedding” where “everything will be secondhand” (p. 32). She describes how she will be environmentally and socially responsible at her wedding. She says, “if we [get] diamonds, I’d make sure they weren’t mined by slaves...I’d get married in a woodland garden” (p. 33).
 - Consider common events in our lives, such as birthdays, weddings, housewarmings, graduations or funerals. How can we host these events in ways that are environmentally and socially responsible?
 - Ask students to choose one event, listing four ways they can make it environmentally or socially responsible. For example, for a graduation, you could buy only secondhand gowns and suits, serve only food that is grown locally and ask everyone to walk or carpool to the event. How does each strategy make a difference?