

TUCKSHOP TERRORS

Teacher's notes / study guide

Summary

Navigating sinister canteen staff, bullies and his diabetes, Kip discovers the devious headmaster, Rinkley, is testing mind-controlling science through the canteen food, and Kip must stop this evil scheme, revert his mutating friends, and save the fate of the town.

Synopsis (with spoilers)

Kip is a 12-year-old country boy trying to fit in to a new town, new school, and find new friends. It's not easy when he's struggling with his diabetes, and all the other kids eat from the canteen. He's the odd one out, avoiding confrontations with the beefy kid Jesse Reece, and drawing unwanted attention from the lurking headmaster, Rinkley.

He soon befriends the class larrikin Reggie, then Lucille -another newcomer with homemade lunches. Through a series of mysterious events, the three discover that Rinkley is masquerading as the headmaster and is really the covert president of the food corporation Good Taste, operating right next to the school. In cahoots with the canteen ladies, Rinkley tests the new lines of irresistible junk food on the students. But it's more sinister than trans-fats alone. Kip has discovered that Rinkley is a science whizz who has devised a chemical compound in the food which makes consumers susceptible to mind control!

When Good Taste sponsors the town fete, Kip and Lucille figure out that the town mayor is the megalomaniac mastermind. But it's too late, the entire town gorges on the free food. Adults fall comatose and the kids mutate into bizarre monsters! Kip, Lucille and Kip's little sister, Minnie, are the only ones left amidst a sea of marauding creatures. They alone must find the source of the mind control to save the fate of their friends and families before sunrise!

Surprisingly, the limitations of Kip's diabetes and Jesse's hearing difficulties, enable them to unearth and debunk Rinkley's scheme. In the end, Jesse saves Kip from the meat cleaver of the cruel canteen ladies and confronts his own demons with a heroic skateboard ride, which frees their mutated friends and earns Kip and Reggie's lifelong respect and friendship.

What is *Tuckshop Terrors* about?

- People are not who they seem – for both good and bad.
- Children outsmarting adults!
- Food as a social currency of the schoolyard.
- Belonging.
- True friendship
- Being true to yourself.
- Being different can be a unique advantage.
- You are what you eat!
- The pitfalls of eating too much junk food.

Other themes touched on:

- Bullying and self-esteem.
- Empowering children with disabilities - deafness, diabetes.
- The place of food in culture.
- Multicultural values.
- Corporate corruption vs community values.
- Greed
- Control / power.



Story discussion – for when book is completed.

Suggested questions:

- Who is the main character?
 - Kip.
- What does Kip want?
 - To fit in at his new school.
 - To eat the delicious junk food at the canteen.
 - Then later:
 - To find out more about Rinkley.
 - To find out more about Good Taste Distribution.
 - To free the mutated monster students and people of the town from the mind control.
- Who is Kip's enemy?
 - Jesse.
 - Anton, Derek and Fleigh.
 - Rinkley.
 - Desirée.
- Who is the hero of the story?
 - Kip is the main hero (protagonist).
 - We discover Jesse is also a key hero at the end.
- Who does Kip bond with and relate to?
 - Reggie.
 - Grandpa Don.
 - Lucille.
 - Then finally – Jesse.
- Who is the villain?
 - Initially we think it is Rinkley, as has created the scheme.
 - But we eventually discover that Desirée and the Mayor are ones who have made Rinkley do this.
- Who is Rinkley really?
 - The President of Good Taste Distribution, operating next door to the school.
 - A Science wizz - winner of a prestigious science prize.
 - The son of a factory worker who worked for the Desirée and Chester's father at the cannery.
 - Someone who is being made to carry out the evil schemes of Desirée and Chester, because of a debt they feel is owed to their family.

- Do you think Rinkley is really evil? Do you think he deserved how he ended up?
- How does Rinkley's mind control work?
 - People must eat the contaminated food from Good Taste / canteen.
 - Then they are controlled by the sound of Morse code beeps.
- How does the mind control effect kids compared to adults?
 - Kids mutate in bizarre monsters. (with a full moon and full dose)
 - Adults fall into a comatose sleep.
- How does Morse code work?
 - Morse code is a method used in telecommunication to encode text characters as standardized sequences of two different signal durations, called *dots* and *dashes*, or *dits* and *dahs*. Morse code is named after Samuel Morse, one of the early developers of the system adopted for electrical telegraphy.¹
- What do you think of the three characters Anton, Derek and Fleigh?
- Were any of the characters mean? Who?
 - Anton, Derek, Fleigh
 - Setting up Kip whistling to trigger Jesse's hearing aids.
 - Making fun of Kip when they hear about his insulin injections.
 - Ganging up on Kip and Reggie.
 - Reggie
 - Makes fun of Jesse.
 - Antagonising Anton, Derek and Fleigh.
 - Jesse
 - Vengeful - smashes Kip's sandwich into the dirt.
 - Vengeful - smashes Kip into the dirt during British Bulldogs.
 - Kip
 - Vengeful towards Jesse.
- Which characters realised they were being mean? and learned from what they did to others?
 - Reggie realises that just by watching Kip get lead to antagonise Jesse, wasn't ultimately funny for Kip.
 - Kip does not help Jesse when he is struggling at swimming. Who does?
 - Lucille.
 - Jesse apologises for hurting Kip in the game of British Bulldogs after admitting he wanted to be on Kip and a Reggie's team, instead of siding with Anton Jesse and Fleigh.
- What is Kip's sister Minnie, obsessed with?
 - Swimming pools. Which is why she wears Floaties all the time.

¹ Taken from Wikipedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morse_code

- Some of the characters are migrants from other countries. Which characters and countries?
 - Anh, Reggie’s mum – Vietnam
 - Mrs Fattore, Lucille’s Nonna – Italy
 - Nurse Vera – Yugoslavia
- Nurse Vera said she was from Yugoslavia². Do you know where that is?
 - South-eastern Europe
 - Now separate countries: Serbia / Bosnia / Montenegro / Croatia / Slovenia)



Food

- Do you relate to Kip wanting to eat the canteen food?
- Discuss food that kids like to eat / favourite treats.
 - Fast food.
 - Packaged foods.
 - Sweets.
- Do you know the saying “you are what you eat”? What does this mean?
 - The phrase means that it is important to eat good food in order to be healthy and fit.
- What is good food?
- What are wholefoods?
- What foods should we be careful not to eat too much of?
- What are some different meals from different cultures that you like to eat?



² See more on Wikipedia - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yugoslavia>

- How is Kip different from other students?
 - He has diabetes. (See page on diabetes)
- How is Jesse different from other students?
 - He has severe hearing loss and must wear hearing aids.
- What type of diabetes does Kip have?
 - Type 1 diabetes.

Kip's diabetes is something that is new to him, and he is still coming to terms with / getting used to.

- How does he feel about it?
 - Embarrassed
 - Self-conscious
- How does Kip's disability, his diabetes, become an unexpected benefit for him in the story?
 - His parents won't allow him to eat the highly processed food from the canteen, because it will be harder for his body to process with diabetes.
 - This means he is not susceptible to Rinkley's mind control.
- Do any other characters have any disabilities mentioned in the story?
 - Deafness – Jesse
 - Mrs Fattore – poor vision.
- How is Jesse's hearing difficulties an unexpected benefit for him in the story?
 - He cannot hear the Morse code beeps, and so cannot be affected by the mind control.
- Sometimes you cannot always see when someone has a disability. Do you consider people you know who have a disability?

Diabetes

What is diabetes?³

Diabetes mellitus, or diabetes, is a condition where there is too much glucose in the blood. The body can't make insulin, enough insulin or is not effectively using the insulin it does make.

When someone has diabetes, their blood glucose levels are too high. Glucose is a form of sugar which is the main source of energy for our bodies. High levels of glucose in the blood can lead to long term and short term health complications.

Everything our bodies do requires energy. For our bodies to work properly we need to convert carbohydrates in food from starch and sugars into glucose which enters the bloodstream and is transported to the body's cells. If we don't eat enough carbohydrates our body will make glucose from fat and protein.

A hormone called insulin is produced by the pancreas. It acts like a 'key' in the 'lock' of our cell's 'doors' to let the glucose in where it is used to provide energy.

In people with diabetes, depending on the type of diabetes, insulin is either no longer produced or not enough is produced or the body doesn't use it as well as it used to. When people with diabetes eat foods that contain carbohydrates, the glucose cannot enter the body's cells as the cell 'doors' don't open. The glucose stays in the blood resulting in high blood glucose levels.

In the short term, high levels of glucose in your blood make you feel tired, the kidneys work hard to pass some of the excess glucose out through the urine so you may go to the toilet to pass urine more often, and this can lead to dehydration and feeling thirsty.

In the long term, high blood glucose levels can damage small and large blood vessels and nerves which can cause damage your heart, brain, kidneys, eyes and feet.

Glucose levels can be monitored using a blood glucose monitor or continuous glucose monitor. Blood glucose levels are managed through self-care and treatment.

Three things you need to know about diabetes:

- It is not one condition – there are three main types of diabetes: type 1, type 2 and gestational diabetes.
- All types of diabetes are complex and require daily care and management.
- Diabetes does not discriminate; anyone can develop diabetes

³ Taken from: <https://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/about-diabetes/what-is-diabetes/>