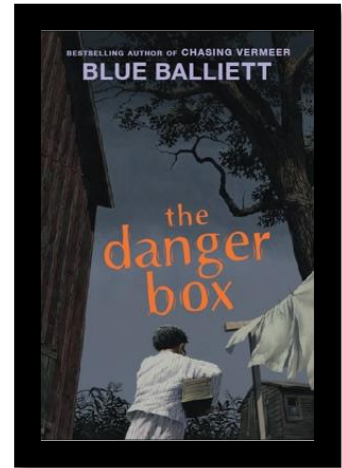


Title: The Danger Box
Author: Blue Balliett
Grade Level: 5th Grade



SUMMARY

Survival of the fittest is a deadly game. When Zoomy, a young boy, discovers the danger box and its mysterious contents in his grandparents' garage, he can't imagine that it will change his life and almost kill others. The improbable intersection of lives – both past and present, fictitious and real – come together in this mystery in a believable and engaging way. Your entire family will look forward to the reading of each chapter as answers are sought and new questions emerge. The layers of the story, which at first appear disconnected, are slowly woven together in an unusual way. This makes it a perfect story to share and talk about with 5th grade students.

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- pathological (pg. 20)
- illusion (pg. 20)
- muttering (pg. 28)
- soul (pg. 32)
- gazette (pg. 32)
- naturalist (pg. 82)
- squeamish (pg. 130)
- kin (pg. 145)
- universal (pg. 149)
- simmered (pg. 223)
- facilities (pg. 231)

You might use a question like:

Based on the book, what does "foolishness" mean? What other words does the author use (context clues) to help you figure out what it means? How is this word different than its synonym(s)?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

1. There are three distinct fonts used in this book. A few chapters, like the first one, are written in italics. Others, like that found on page 33, are written in another font and on gray paper. Finally, the majority of the story is in a more traditional font. Talk about why the author chose to present the story in this way. Ask your child to use the story for clues. How do you think this unusual story structure helps to tell the story?

2. Zoomy, the primary narrator of the story, is legally blind. While this disability causes lots of problems, much is made about how he sees the world differently. Ask your child: In what ways does Zoomy see the world differently? Talk about both the literal and figurative ways he sees things. How does the way he sees compare with the other characters in the story?
3. Ask your child at what point he or she discovered the mystery of the Gas Gazette? What words and clues helped you most to figure it out? What questions do you have about Darwin and his missing journal?
4. Zoomy finds great comfort in the life and personality of Charles Darwin. Ask your child to compare the two. What do they have in common? Talk about the importance of Zoomy's discovery of their similarities and what this means to his view of himself.
5. If you haven't already, go back to the beginning of the book and read the Author's Note, "opening the box." Blue Balliett, the author, writes, "Every book that shares secrets is a Danger Box." Now that you've finished the book, talk about what you think she means. Why would she start the book with this vague and mysterious statement?

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

1. Read the picture book, *The Tree of Life: A Book Depicting the Life of Charles Darwin Naturalist, Geologist & Thinker* (also included in this library), by Peter Sis. This engaging biography of Charles Darwin will supplement *The Danger Box* well. Darwin's theories and contributions have influenced the world of science forever.
2. Research the Galapagos Islands and the animals living there. Today, so many tourists visit that they are overrunning the island. What will this mean for the future? Conduct your own research project to find out.