



Lightning Strikes: Dead Certain By Sally Gould

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Themes:

Death
Cremation
Grief
Black comedy
Cars
Family

Synopsis

A black comedy that begins at a funeral.

At Uncle Jack's funeral, Max discovers he's the only person who knows Jack wanted to be buried next to his dad, not cremated. Max races against the clock to help out his uncle one last time ... even if that means stealing the body.

Author Focus

Sally Gould grew up in Sydney where she spent lots of time creating imaginary worlds at the beach and in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. She lost her way and became a corporate lawyer, but at least realised she liked playing with words. Since having children, she plays with words by writing stories. Sally now lives in Melbourne where she continues to write and let her imagination run wild.

Sally Gould's inspiration for writing *Dead Certain*:

"The idea for this story began at a funeral of a relative who died too young. He was a great bloke and was loved by everyone who knew him. Earlier I'd arranged for Andy Griffiths to come and speak to my writing class. While I was at the funeral I thought, I wonder what Andy would do with this setting? The story idea followed. Max and Charlie are based on my sons. Josh, the oldest, is logical and responsible like Charlie. Nic is sometimes a little crazy like Max."

Activity Ideas

- Look at the front cover of *Dead Certain* and read the blurb on the back. What do you think this story will be about based on the clues available. Write your own story based on these clues.
- Name three qualities you admire and three qualities you do not admire about any character in *Dead Certain*. Discuss with the class why you find these characteristics admirable or not admirable.
- On page 12, Max decides his older brother is half alien. What reasons does Max give for believing his older brother is half alien?
- On page 13, Max rates his parents on a Scale of Dumbness. Where do your parents rate on Max's Scale of Dumbness? Take into account things like: can they read a street directory? Can they work the technology at home? Can they beat you in a video game? And do they know what Facebook and Twitter are (bonus points if they actually use it)?
- On page 22, a simile is used to describe Max watching his Dad frown "so hard, he looked like he was trying to work out how to stop an asteroid from hitting the centre of the city." What other similes are used in *Dead Certain*? Create your own simile.
- On page 26, Max thinks Jack might be sending him a sign. Write about a time when you felt the universe was sending you a sign, or make up a fictional story about a sign sent from the universe.
- Research the beliefs held by a culture, either current or historical, about the afterlife and the treatment of bodies after death.
- *Dead Certain* is a black comedy. Why do you think it's called a "black" comedy? Research different colours and the emotions and events they are associated with.
- After reading *Dead Certain* write a review of it.