

The Drowning

Reading Group Guide

The story opens with the John Otis urban legend, a campfire story passed down at Camp

Waukeelo over generations. Did you grow up with any urban legends? How would you feel if, today, you discovered they were real?

Describe Joey Proctor. Why do you think he latches on to Steve, his counselor? Did you ever have a role model like that growing up?

Why do you think Alex Mason leaves Joey on the raft? Do you think Alex is completely at fault for Joey's disappearance?

We jump forward 21 years from the opening of the novel and meet Alex as a grown man. What kind of person is he? Do you think he has matured since we last saw him at eighteen?

Alex pays for his teenage mistakes in a big way. Do you think it's fair that he is punished for what he did at eighteen? Do you think he feels guilty?

Did you ever make a mistake that you somehow got away with? If you could go back in time, what would you do differently? If someone found out today, should you be held accountable?

Compare and contrast Joey Proctor and Lyndsey Mason. Do you see any similarities between these two young characters? Why do you think Alex tries to force Lyndsey to swim in the deep end, something he did to Joey years before?

Many horrible things happen to Alex and his family over the course of a few days. Which incident would you find the most terrifying? If you were Ashley, would you stay with Alex during this time? How would you protect yourself?

Describe Marty Pollock. Why do you think Alex turns to him for help in the first place? What does Alex learn from Marty?

What do you make of Ed Unis? Why do you think Ed never tells anyone what he saw the day Joey Proctor went missing? Why does Alex kill him?

Marty blurs the lines between what is real and what is fake in his documentary. Why do you think he does this? What is his end goal is? Does he achieve it?

At the end of the story we realize that Joey Proctor has now become his own urban legend—a story passed down over decades. What do you think actually happened to Joey Proctor that day on the raft?