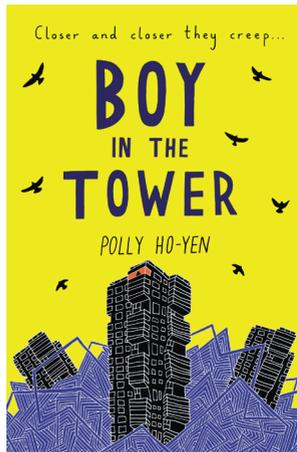


Boy in the Tower

by Polly Ho-Yen

A Guide for Reading Groups



From the seventeenth floor of the tower block where he lives with his mother, Ade watches as the buildings fall around him. The Bluchers - a strange and terrible kind of plant - are taking over the city, and everyone is being forced to evacuate, but Ade's mother is refusing to leave her room. And so Ade watches alone as the city slowly empties, and the Bluchers creep ever closer. Will he ever be able to escape from the tower?

Main characters

- Ade** – a loyal and determined boy who lives with his mum in a flat in a London tower block.
- Mum** – Ade's mum who is suffering from depression and refuses to leave their flat.
- Gaia** – Ade's best friend at school who lives in the tower block opposite Ade's.
- Dory** – an old woman who lives in Ade's tower block.
- Obi** – the caretaker of Ade's tower block.
- Ben** – a man who lives in Gaia's tower block.

Key themes

- Family
- Friendship
- Mental health
- Environment
- Isolation

Questions for discussion

1. 'I knew what I needed to do to make it easier for Mum, so I went back to doing all the things I did before.' (page 39)

What tactics does Ade use to cope with his mum's depression?

2. Do you think Ade and Gaia are good friends to one another? How do you get a sense of the importance of Gaia to Ade?

3. Ade's teacher says, 'It's been a very upsetting time for lots of people at the moment. How are you feeling with what's been going on?' (page 81)

What fears and worries do the children in Ade's class have? What would you be worried about in their situation?

4. Why do the buildings begin to fall down? What pattern does Gaia identify? What does this mean for Ade and Gaia?

5. Lots of people in the book care for and look after others. Can you explain who looks after who and how they go about doing this?

You might want to think about:

- Ade
- Dory and Obi
- Ben

6. When Gaia's tower block falls, one of Ade's worst fears comes true. How does he cope with this?

7. 'I know I am not a hero. Nothing like a superhero in a shiny red cape who knows they will save the day. I'm scared and worried and I don't want to die.' (page 227)

Do you think Ade is a hero and why? How do you think you would act in his situation?

8. How does Ade persuade his mum to begin to leave the flat? How is she helped by different people in the book?

Activity

1. Write a report about the Blucher Disaster area. You might decide this is for television, radio or the newspaper. What information do you think people will need? How will you get their attention?

2. Ade keeps a scrapbook. Create your own version of Ade's scrapbook to record his thoughts and feelings about the things that happen to him. You could include drawings, instructions and other pieces of information that you think Ade would find important.

Further reading

- *The Day of the Triffids* by John Wyndham also describes a post-apocalyptic Britain where human life is under threat from a deadly plant species.

- Like Ade trapped in the tower block, Seth in Patrick Ness's *More Than This* finds himself trapped in a hellish place.

- For another book about urban isolation, try *Blood Donors* by Steve Tasane.

Find out more

'Bluchers weren't beautiful at all. They were evil, menacing, deadly.' (page 123)

Bluchers are a fictional plant species, but many plants such as the Venus fly trap are dangerous to certain animals. Research different carnivorous plant species to find out how these catch their prey.