



NO ORDINARY THING by G. Z. Schmidt

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About the Book

Twelve-year-old Adam is whisked away from his imperfect but quiet life with the arrival of a stranger and a magical promise in this time-travel mystery.

It's 1999 and Adam doesn't mind living at his uncle's bakery, the Biscuit Basket, on the Lower East Side in New York City, even if Adam doesn't have many friends and he misses his long-dead parents.

When a mysterious but cheerful customer shows Adam a snow globe and says that adventures await him, it's too strange to be true. But days later, an unbelievable thing happens. Adam finds a similar-looking snow globe and immediately travels back in time. It's up to Adam to discover the truth about what is happening to him.

Discussion Questions

- Describe Adam Lee Tripp. Why are his teachers concerned about him? Explain why Uncle Henry seeks help for Adam from the school guidance counselor. He makes reference to being bullied at school. What specifically makes him the target of bullies? How might Adam handle the bullies by the end of the book? Discuss his newly developed self-confidence after his adventures. How is this evident during his final meeting with the guidance counselor?
- What is strange about the man in the raincoat who appears at the Biscuit Basket. How is it obvious that he is contributing to the conflict and setting up the plot? Explain how the man, J. C. Walsh, knows Adam. Adam goes into the attic in search of the adventure that J. C. Walsh assures him will happen. What does he find? Why has he avoided looking at his parents' possessions until now? How does J. C. Walsh know that Adam needs the adventure that the snow globe offers? Describe the moment Adam discovers he can time travel with the snow globe. Why is he so interested in traveling to the past?
- Describe Elbert Walsh. Santiago, the clockmaker, tells Elbert about his three valuables and asks him to promise to protect them should something happen to him. What are the three items? Explain why Santiago thinks he can trust Elbert with his valuables. How is Elbert a man of his word? The clockmaker shows Elbert



the music box that only plays on certain occasions and tells him that the item isn't for the "fainthearted." What does he mean? How does Adam obtain the music box? What is symbolic about what Adam does with the music box at the end of the novel?

- Discuss the concept of *time touch*. Why is it dangerous? Santiago warns that time touch can change a person's character. At what point does Elbert realize the power of Santiago's warning?
- Elbert makes candles that burn for a long time. The people who purchase them believe that they have magical healing powers. How does Robert Baron cheat Elbert out of his candles? Explain how the Baron enterprise controls the people of Candlewick. Adam is stalked on the streets of New York by a tall, thin man who calls himself M. What does M stand for? How does Adam know that he can't trust the man? Explain how M finds out that Adam has the snow globe. Why is he so eager to obtain it? How is M the type of person whom Santiago warned Elbert about? At what point does Adam learn that the man is Robert Baron IV?
- Adam takes leftover bakery items from the Biscuit Basket to The Hole, a nearby homeless shelter. Discuss why Adam is so interested in knowing whether the residents have families. Victor, one of the residents, tells him that "friends are like family." How do Victor, Jack, Daisy, and Francine become "family" to Adam? How does Victor give his life to protect Adam's?
- Discuss Uncle Henry's first reaction when Adam tries to explain his travels to the past. What makes Adam know that he can tell his adventures to Victor? Explain what Victor means when he says that the past can't be changed. At what point does Uncle Henry finally believe Adam?
- Explain the following quote: "It's often said that those who don't learn from the past are doomed to repeat it" (p. 172). How does the Baron family miss this pearl of wisdom? Discuss what Francine means when she tells Adam, "You shouldn't dwell on the past. You are who you are because of it" (p. 192). Adam is a grown man at the end of the novel. How has his past shaped his adult life?
- The snow globe is the object in the novel that moves the plot forward. How does it connect the characters? What is its role in creating an intriguing plot? When and how does Adam learn that his parents were time travelers? Debate whether this knowledge contributes to his understanding of the past, the present, and the future. Explain the following quote: "Perhaps power was only dangerous when it was wielded incorrectly" (p. 224). Discuss why Adam keeps the snow globe in his brief case.

Guide prepared by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

About the Author



G. Z. Schmidt was born in China and immigrated to the United States when she was six. She grew up in the Midwest and the South where she chased fireflies, listened for tornado warnings, and pursued a love of reading. In the third grade, she began writing stories in a spiral-bound notebook and never looked back. *No Ordinary Thing* is her debut novel. She currently lives in Switzerland with her husband and their tuxedo cat.



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