

DARK PARTIES

by Sara Grant

Orion
(Secondary)



Set in the future, the Homeland has been cut off from the rest of the world by an electrified dome the Protectosphere, which is supposed to protect, but also imprisons. The isolation has led to inbreeding, lack of resources and food shortages, and life is so controlled and monitored that rebellious behaviour is punished by work camps, torture and even disappearances.

Sixteen-year-old Neva plots to escape this world. She and her friends question the frightening restrictions they live under and try to discover more about the disappeared and what lies beyond the Protectosphere. This leads them into grave danger but also to an even more horrifying truth – one they could never have imagined. Neva has to decide what she will sacrifice for freedom. This dystopian thriller touches on human rights, diversity, identity and forbidden love.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What signs in the opening chapters indicate all is not well in the Homeland? **Possible answers:** Hand-me-down clothes, babies no longer have graves, disappearances, eg Neva's grandmother, everyone looks alike, goods that have disappeared, eg chocolate, no contraception
2. What ways does the state try to control its citizens? **Possible answers:** Restricting information, re-writing history, ragging, CCTV, listening in to phone conversations, assigning people to jobs, network of informers
3. How do Neva and others rebel against authority? **Possible answers:** Celibacy, identifying marks, painting slogans, keeping a list of The Missing, silent protest

4. Can you imagine how you'd protect your identity in such a repressive society?
5. Several of the characters betray others in the novel. For example, Neva betrays her parents and Sanna; Braydon betrays Neva; Ethan betrays Neva; Neva's father betrays the Homeland. Which of these betrayals, if any, is justified?

ROLE PLAY

In pairs, imagine the conversation Neva has with her grandmother after they are re-united.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Article 4: Nobody has any right to make us a slave. We cannot make anyone else our slave.

Article 5: Nobody has any right to hurt or torture us or treat us cruelly.

Article 9: Nobody has the right to put us in prison without a good reason, to keep us there or to send us away from our country.

Article 13: We all have the right to go where we want to in our own country and to travel abroad as we wish.

Article 14: If we are frightened of being badly treated in our own country, we all have the right to run away to another country to be safe.

Article 16: Every grown up has the right to marry and have a family if they want to. Men and women have the same rights when they are married, and when they are separated.

Article 19: We all have the right to make up our own minds, to think what we like, to say what we think, and to share our ideas with other people.

Article 20: We all have the right to meet our friends and to work together in peace to defend our rights. Nobody can make us join a group if we don't want to.

FIND OUT MORE

The author talks about Dark Parties and what books inspire her at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/childrens-books-site/2012/aug/22/amnestyteen-takeover-sara-grant-top-10>

The author's website has interesting information about her books and background www.sara-grant.com

Further resources for teaching around human rights can be found at: www.amnesty.org.uk/education