

# DEAD MAX COMIX

## THE DEADENING

### Discussion Guide

By Dana Sullivan

1. Derrick's dog, Max, dies at the beginning of the book. Have you ever lost a pet? What was that experience like for you?
2. Derrick seems surprised, but not frightened, when Max returns from the dead. Why do you think Derrick reacts that way? Would you have the same reaction?
3. Derrick brings Max's urn to school with him. Why do you think he's so attached to Max?
4. Derrick follows Max's advice and pushes a bully to the ground in gym class. Do you think that was the right way to handle the situation?
5. Have you ever been bullied? How did you handle it?
6. Derrick is a talented cartoonist, but he's afraid to show his comics to his friends. Why do you think he feels that way? Have you ever been afraid to show your work to others?
7. Kim gives Derrick many hints that she wants him to ask her to the Spring Fling, but he still takes a long time to do so. Why do you think that is?
8. Doug submits Derrick's cartoon about his dad leaving to the school newspaper behind his back—and it gets published! Do you think Doug did the right thing? Is Doug a good friend to Derrick?
9. After his comic is published, Derrick receives many notes from other students revealing their own secrets. Do you have any secrets? Have you ever told them to anyone? If so, how did telling the secret feel?
10. What do you think the overall message of the book is? What did you learn from reading it?



#### Book Details

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## About Book 1

Derrick Hollis is a 7th grader at Zachary Taylor Middle School and an aspiring cartoonist too shy to show his work to anybody but his best friend Doug. Derrick is devastated when his dog Max dies. But after being cremated, Max returns from the other side and starts giving Derrick advice. Derrick could use it, especially when it comes to affairs of the heart and standing up to bullies. Derrick has a crush on Kim but is too scared to tell her or ask her to dance at the Spring Fling. Max tells Derrick to “dog up!” and gets him to shake his tail on the dance floor. Will Dead Max be good for Derrick or lead him astray?



## About the series

Middle school can be survival of the “fitting-in” at best. In Dead Max Comix, Derrick discovers that his secrets aren’t as scary as he thought, and that he’s not much different than other kids. Dead Max Comix is a light-hearted touch at accepting yourself and not letting something as trivial as your dog getting killed by a car or your parents divorcing get in the way of finding your own way.

—“Dead Max is drop-dead funny!”

—Dav Pilkey, creator of Dog Man

## About the Author-Illustrator

Dana Sullivan grew up in Southern California drawing on every piece of paper he could find. He kept at it until someone finally published his books. He’s written and illustrated dozens. He even teaches picture book and graphic novel classes. Dana now lives near Seattle. You can see more of his work at [www.danasullivan.com](http://www.danasullivan.com).

