

DEEP, DARK, AND DANGEROUS by

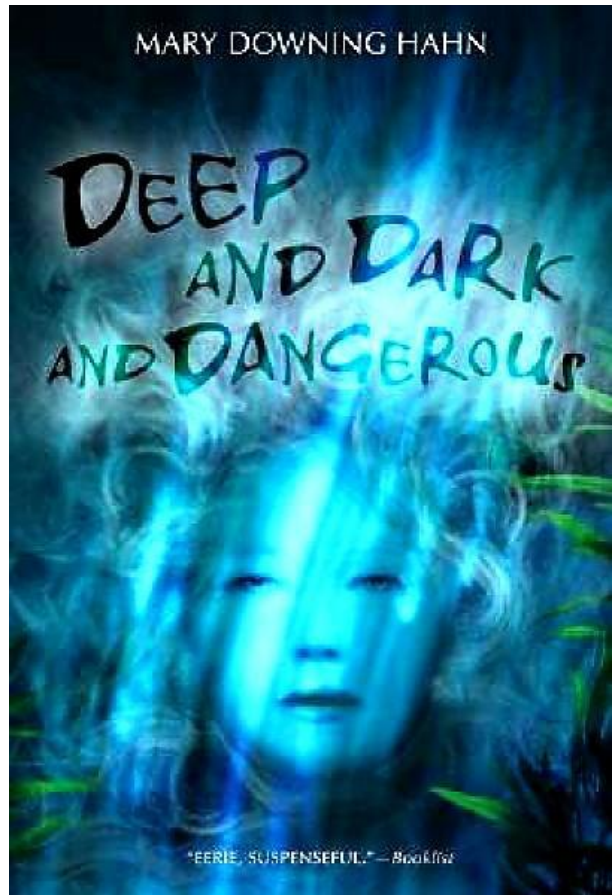
Mary Downing Hahn

(Houghton, Mifflin, 2007)

When thirteen year-old Ali goes to spend the summer at the family's vacation house in Maine, she stumbles upon a secret that her mother has been hiding for thirty years. Stormy weather, a deep dark lake, and many unanswered questions keep this eerie, supernatural tale exciting.

Discussion Questions

1. How is Ali's mother different from Ali's Aunt Dulcie (Ali's mom reads Emily Dickinson's poetry and Ali says: Emily Dickinson... "is not a good choice in my opinion for a depressed person. Dickinson's poems were full of things I didn't quite understand, but that frightened me. Her mind was haunted I thought, by death and sorrow and uncertainty.")
2. Why does aunt Dulcie decide to go back to the lake?
3. Gull Cottage has been painted, it has new roof, and a new bathroom. But what kinds of things remain from the childhood of Emma and Ali's mothers? (Board games – Teresa's name on the Candyland game.)
4. What about the Lake – how does the author create an eerie atmosphere?
5. When Aunt Dulcie shows Ali her painting that is full of blues, greens and greys she says: "It's the first of a series based on the lake and its moods. I want it to capture the power in water and rocks, and trees – capture it as it captures me. Maybe I'll manage to free myself." What do you think she meant by this?
6. Emma's favorite book is *The Lonely Doll*? Why does she say she likes it? What does this tell us about Emma?
7. Ali has a dream about the photo she finds – three girls out on the lake in a boat, but why does Emma dream and has nightmares of bones at the bottom of the lake? There are other images of bones. P. 46 When Ali carries Emma home from the store, Emma say: "I am just a bag of bones."



8. P38 Emma and Ali meet Sissy for the first time. Ali says: There was something I disliked about her on sight – a sharpness in her eyes, a mean set to her mouth.” Why do you think Ali had this reaction to Sissy?
9. Sissy seems to be having a negative influence on Emma’s behavior. Why does Emma seem to really like Sissy?
10. One night Emma has a temper tantrum and afterwards her mother, Dulcie, says to Ali –I don’t know much about kids – I don’t remember anything before my teen years. P. 68 Do you think Dulcie really doesn’t remember her childhood?
11. Dulcie’s paintings are vandalized – letters on them read “I’m watching you – tell the truth or else.” Ali begins to think that a ghost is speaking to her through her dreams demanding justice. Nice Mrs. Trent says “there are no such things as ghosts.” P126. Is Sissy a ghost?
12. P. 110 Dulcie is having trouble painting and her paintings are getting darker and darker – why is she painting what looks like a skeleton at the bottom of her paintings?
13. P. 115 Sissy gives Emma the doll Edith – the lonely doll, and Dulice is furious when she sees it and throws it off the cliff – why?
14. P.131 Sissy lures the girls into a canoe and then teases Emma into jumping overboard after Edith the doll. We learn finally that that is precisely what happened the day Theresa/Sissy drowned. What was Sissy’s motivation to re-enact the same scene with Emma and Ali?
15. Sissy only appears to Ali and Emma. Why does Sissy disappear everytime Dulcie appears?
16. How does Sissy begin to change toward the end of the book? (Comes and sleeps with Ali.) P. 158 – How does Ali’s view of Sissy change towards the end of the book. Sissy says: “Just a few more nights and then you’ll never see me again.” And Ali feels sad – why?
17. How does Sissy finally come to be at peace?

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