

# Summer Reading 2021

## Cirque du Freak *by Darren Shan*



In addition to your letter to your English teacher, we'd like you to have a go at reading this book. Please answer the questions on the first few chapters and then pick two of the 'after reading' tasks.

We hope you enjoy it!

Your English teachers.

**Name:**

**Your task:** Read this novel and complete the activities, bringing your work into school on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> of September.

A link to a PDF version of the novel can be found here on the William Ellis website:

[www.williamellis.camden.sch.uk/y6-summer-activities](http://www.williamellis.camden.sch.uk/y6-summer-activities) or

<https://www.williamellis.camden.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=2489&type=pdf>

Paperback book details (should you want to buy it):

- Publisher: **Harper Collins Children's Books**
- ISBN: **978-0006754169**

**Introduction**

1. What has the narrator, Darren, always been fascinated by? What are your first impressions of the narrator?

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**Chapter 1**

2. How does Darren describe his best friend Steve?

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**Chapter 3**

3. What kind of relationship do you think the Darren and Steve, his best friend, have?

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**Chapter 7**

4. Do you agree with the narrator's view that "there are certain things you don't discuss with your friends if you're boys. Girls can talk about stuff like that..." Explain your reason for agreeing or disagreeing.

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5. What did the outside of the freak show building look like? What impression does it give?

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**Chapter 8**

6. What did the tall man look like? How do you think Darren felt towards him?

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**Draw a picture of him here:**

## Chapters 10, 11 and 12

6. Match up the name of the circus act to the description of their act.

Rhamus Twobellies		'He pointed to a huge clock being lowered from ropes above...The clock started to tick and... started to eat like the wind. His arms moved so fast you could hardly seem them. His mouth didn't seem to close at all. He shovelled food in, swallowed and moved on...He had eaten all that food in less than 5 minutes.'
Alexander Ribs		'very beautiful, dressed in flowing red robes...stepped closer to the edge of the stage then said something that sounded like a seal barking. She put her hands on her face one at either side and stroked the skin gently. Then she held her nose shut with two fingers and tickled her chin with the other hand. An extraordinary thing happened. She began to grow a beard.'
Hans Hands		'...he was a contortionist...somebody with bones like rubber who can bend every which way. First he tilted his head back so far it looked like it had been cut off. He turned around so we could see his upside-down face then went on leaning backward until his head was touching the floor. Then he put his hands around the backs of his legs and pulled his head through until it was sticking up in front of him. It looked like it was growing out of his stomach. He straightened up and began twisting his body round like a curly-wurly straw.'
Truska		'a creepy looking man...turned and faced us. He bowed and smiled...."Madame Octa has been with me for several years...some of her kind live to be 20 or 30 years old. She is an incredible creature, both intelligent and poisonous"...Mr Crepsley produced a shiny tin whistle. He called it a flute...and blew a few sharp notes. Madame Octa immediately leaped through the air and landed on the goat's neck."
Mr Crepsley and Madame Octa		'sat down, pulled up his legs and wrapped his feet around his neck. He stood on his hands, walked up and down the stage, then hopped off and challenged four men, picked at random, to a race. They could race on their feet; he'd race on his hands. He promised a bar of gold to anyone who could beat him.'

7. Which one do you think is the most fascinating and why?

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## Final Prediction

The book is the first in a series of books. What do you think might happen in the next few books?

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## After reading tasks

### Choose 2 (or more if you want) of these tasks

- Research and find out more about Victorian 'freak shows'. Make a poster to present what you have learnt. The British Library is a good place to start. <http://vll-minos.bl.uk/learning/cult/bodies/freak/freakshow.html>
- Find 3 images of Victorian 'freak shows' and use them to write a short poem from the perspective of someone visiting a show for the first time.
- Design a film poster for a film adaptation. You could include the following on it
  - Pictures of the main characters: Darren, Steve, Mr Crepsley and Madame Octa
  - A clear title of the film.
  - Decide what age rating you will give the film.
  - A film slogan. This is a short phrase to make the audience want to watch the film. For example: 'Meet Darren. He's sixteen going on immortal.'
  - A spooky background
- Write a book review including:
  - Your opinion of the book
  - Your favourite part



- Your favourite character (or the most memorable one)
- Any other comments about the way the story is written
- Write a 'missing scene' from the novel. Imagine the writer deciding to leave out an important scene in his final version. Write 2 or 3 paragraphs describing what happens in that scene.
- Pick your favourite moment from the novel and create a storyboard for it. This means you draw 5 or 6 images from it and write a brief description underneath to explain what is happening.