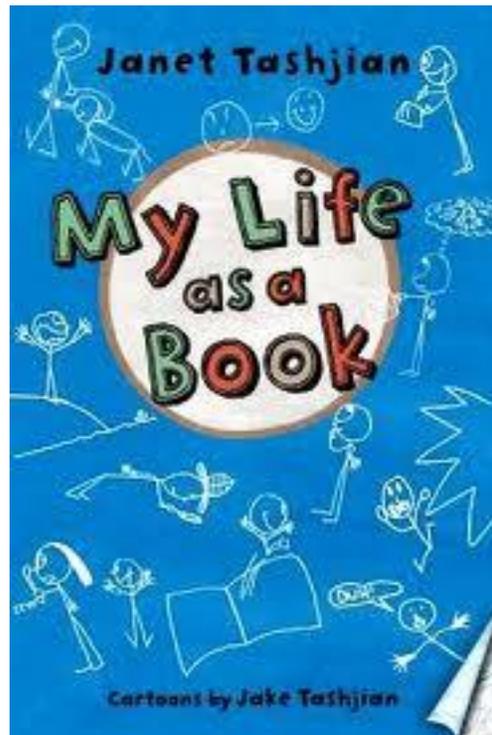


My Life as a Book by Janet Tashjian
(Holt, 2010)

Twelve year old Derek is not excited about summer reading until he discovers an old newspaper clipping. Ten years ago a teenager drowned while babysitting him, and Derek sets out to learn more about the tragedy

Discussion Questions

1. Derek says he likes to read if everyone just left him alone? What kind of an attitude does Derek have about reading? When does he enjoy reading? When does he hate it?
2. What do you think Derek means by when he says summer is a like a pajama and cereal day?
3. Why do you think Derek's parents sent him to Learning camp?
4. His learning camp counselor says, "Reading is not so much fun without the pictures." What do you think she meant by this? How does she help Derek learn to enjoy – well, maybe not enjoy, but at least bear the pain of reading (visualizing the story)?
5. What other ways does Derek learn to use his talents over the summer that might not be traditional? (Learns his sequential art can be turned into a vocabulary flip book, his friend Paul teaches him to animate his drawings on the computer.)
6. Read the note Derek adds to Susan's memory page p. 97. Why do you think Derek decided to write this note to Susan's memory web page?
7. Why does Derek's mom change her mind and decide to go back to Martha's Vineyard after all?
8. After Susan's friend Lauren tells Derek and his family the truth about Susan's death by drowning, Derek's mother is very upset. She feels she has been lied to all these years, but when she meets Susan's mother she can't say anything to her about the truth. Why does Derek say, "I don't think I've seen anyone make a bigger sacrifice than Mom made today." Why do you think Derek thought his mother was making a sacrifice?
9. After the class hedgehog, Ginger, dies why does Derek call up Carly and tell her she did nothing wrong?
10. Why is Derek so fascinated by the video of Pedro the monkey learning how to turn on the light switch?
11. What do you think is the purpose of the stick figures drawings in the margins of the book? Why do you think the author chose to include them?
12. About his summer reading Derek says, "One of the books is about a kid and his dog over summer vacation and all the exciting things they do together and the lessons the boy



learns. I have a dog and - trust me – that stuff only happens in books.” Derek also says, “If my life were a book, I’d have my own cool adventures instead of reading about someone else’s.

13. So what kind of a summer did Derek have?

Caroline Ward,
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