



A TRICK OF THE LIGHT

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Mike Welles had everything under control. But that was before. Now things are rough at home, and they're getting confusing at school. He feels directionless, lost. Then there's a voice in his head. A friend, who's trying to help Mike get control again and guide him to become faster and stronger than he was before, to rid his life of everything that's holding him back. If only Mike will listen. *A Trick of the Light* tells the story of a rarely recognized population of eating disorder sufferers—young men.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The voice in Mike's head often refers to mastering the chaos in Mike's life. How does this concept relate to anorexia?
2. Describe Mike and Tamio's friendship. What about their friendship is typical, and what is atypical? How does the voice keep them apart? How does the voice, inadvertently, bring them together?
3. Do you think Mike cares about the voice in the same way he cares about Tamio? Does he recognize the voice as a friend?
4. Amber says that she has a best friend named "Anna" and a boyfriend named "Eddie." Did you suspect that she was lying about them before she tells Mike the truth (p. 114–16)? Why or why not?
5. Why does Valerie's rejection of Mike give the voice more power and control?
6. Mike has a cut on his finger that won't heal after many months. Besides being a physical symptom of anorexia, what does the cut symbolize in the story?
7. How do Mike's parents affect his behavior? Why is Mike able to get away with his behavior for so long? What is it that makes Mike's mom check him into the hospital?
8. Amber uses expressions such as "dances between the raindrops in the rain," "stand in the sun and cast no shadow," and "move as lightly as a spider, not even disturbing a web" (p. 115) when describing anorexic ideals. Why does she do this?
9. How does the title, *A Trick of the Light*, relate to anorexia?
10. *A Trick of the Light* is told from the point of view of an unreliable narrator. Is the voice immediately unreliable, or is he able to deceive the reader as well as Mike? What aspects of the voice show that he might be unreliable?
11. Mike loves stop-motion animation, but the voice is bored by it. How does Mike's love for stop-motion evolve throughout the story?
12. How is Mike's grandma Celia significant to the story?
13. How does Miranda's appearance change the experience at the hospital? Do you think Mike will keep in touch with Miranda? Why or why not?
14. What does the two-headed Cyclops drawing mean throughout the story? Is the Cyclops important to Mike and Tamio's friendship?
15. How does buying a new mirror help Mike stand up to the voice? Do the different mirrors change Mike's perception of himself?
16. Why is male anorexia often overlooked or hard to diagnose? What about Mike's experience is different from that of the girls in the hospital, if anything?

