



The Last Death Poet



by
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DISCUSSION GUIDE

Ages 14+

This guide is designed for classroom, library, or book group use with readers aged 14+.

Each section focuses on a key theme and can be used during reading or at natural pauses in the novel. Reading Questions support close discussion and understanding, while the Big Question at the end of each section invites deeper reflection or written response. Additional creative activities are included at the end of the guide.

Content Note: *The book covers sensitive issues including homophobia, suicide, and violence. It is recommended that teachers, parents and carers read the book in advance before sharing it with young readers.*

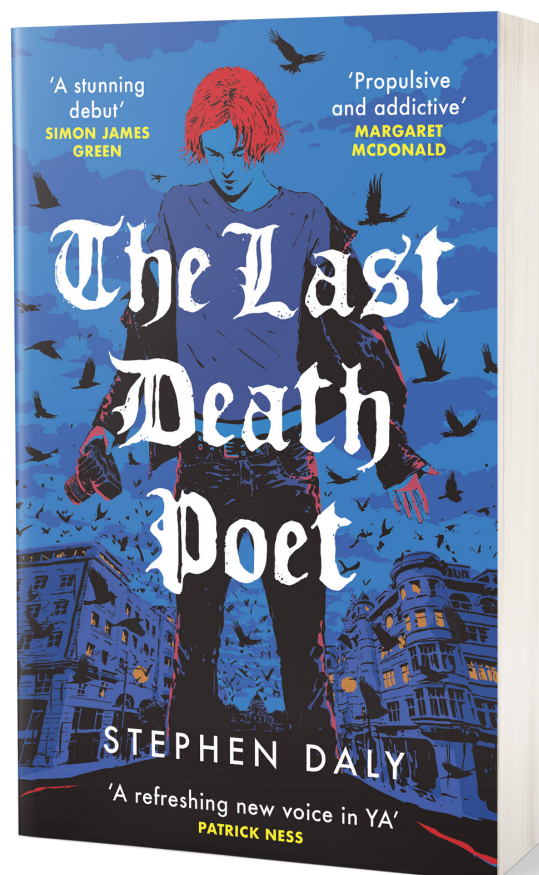


ABOUT THE NOVEL

The Last Death Poet is a queer coming-of-age story set in Belfast, where myth and memory collide. Through Michael's supernatural visions and inherited role as a *file báis* (death poet), the novel explores how stories shape identity, preserve history, and offer the possibility of healing – both personal and collective.

KEY THEMES AND IDEAS

- Storytelling as memory, resistance and responsibility
- Queer identity and self-acceptance
- The legacy of trauma within families and nations
- Belfast as a city shaped by layered histories
- Mythology as a way to understand the present and imagine the future





1. STORYTELLING, MEMORY AND HISTORY

Key Focus: *Why stories matter, and what happens when we stop telling them.*

READING QUESTIONS

- Michael's role as a *file báis* is to tell stories of the past. Why is this duty so important in the context of Belfast's history?
- What key events in Belfast's history are shown or referenced in the book? Create a timeline pairing Michael's visions with the historical events they reflect.
- Michael's visions show people and events from Belfast during the Troubles – families affected by violence, and neighborhoods marked by conflict. How do these visions help him understand his own family's grief and the larger history of the city?
- The novel suggests that forgetting can be dangerous. Do you agree? Why or why not?

BIG QUESTION: Is remembering always an act of healing, or can memory sometimes cause harm?

2. BELFAST – PAST AND PRESENT

Key Focus: *A city shaped by history, memory and everyday life.*

READING QUESTIONS

- How does Daly show modern Belfast through Michael's everyday life – its streets, landmarks and neighbourhoods?
- Michael sees visions of Belfast during the Troubles, a time of conflict and fear. Is this version of the city different from the Belfast he lives in today?
- Michael grew up in England and hasn't learned much about the Troubles at school. How does this impact his sense of belonging in Belfast?
- Belfast has murals, memorials and other reminders of the Troubles. How do these help Michael, and readers, connect the past with the present?
- Why do you think Daly chose Belfast, with its real history, rather than a fictional city, for a story that mixes the supernatural with personal memory?
- Can you think of another real-life place that would make a good setting for a story about a death poet?

BIG QUESTION: How does knowing a place's history change the way you see it and move through it today?



3. MYTHOLOGY AND THE SUPERNATURAL

Key Focus: *Ancient stories shaping modern lives.*

READING QUESTIONS

- Michael's visions are connected to the Morrígan, an ancient Irish goddess associated with war, death and prophecy. What role does she play in the story and how does she affect each of the characters?
- The Morrígan has three forms. Can you identify them and give examples from the book of how each form appears (for example, the crow or other symbols)? How do these forms show ideas about change, memory or fate in the story?
- Michael doesn't know much about Irish myths at first. How does he come to accept that they are part of him and his family's story?
- Why might Daly choose Irish mythology rather than inventing a new supernatural system for this story?

BIG QUESTION: In what ways can ancient stories connect us to the past and guide us in the present?

4. FAMILY, INHERITANCE AND TRAUMA

Key Focus: *What we inherit, and what we choose to let go.*

READING QUESTIONS

- Michael inherits his role as a death poet from his father, Jack, and his grandmother, Nanny Bet. What else – stories, fears or patterns – does he inherit? How might these reflect inter-generational trauma?
- Nanny Bet tries to erase Jack's memories of Brigid's death. Why does she do this?
- How do Nanny Bet's attempts to "protect" Jack and Michael ultimately backfire? What does this suggest about how trauma can pass from one generation to the next?

BIG QUESTION: Can shielding someone from pain ever stop that pain from being passed on?



5. IDENTITY, SEXUALITY AND GROWTH

Key Focus: *Becoming yourself in a world full of expectations.*

READING QUESTIONS

- How does Michael's understanding of his queer identity change over the course of the novel?
- How do his relationships with Ben and Paul reflect different stages of his confidence and self-acceptance?
- In what ways does Michael's emotional growth mirror his growing acceptance of his powers?

BIG QUESTION: How does telling the story of his family's past allow Michael to finally tell his own truth?

6. CHOICE, DESTINY AND THE FUTURE

Key Focus: *What we inherit, and what we choose to let go.*

READING QUESTIONS

- What is Meg's role in the story? How does she help Michael choose to fulfil his destiny?
- How does telling Brigid's story help release the trauma carried by Michael's family?
- By the end of the novel, how does storytelling offer a "better version" of the future?

BIG QUESTION: What responsibility do young people have to remember, challenge or reshape the stories they inherit?

CREATIVE AND REFLECTIVE ACTIVITIES

- **Found History:** Write a short poem or paragraph from the perspective of a place that has "seen" history happen.
- **Myth Remix:** Choose an ancient myth and imagine how it might appear in a modern city today.
- **Memory Map:** Draw a map of a place that matters to you, marking both personal memories and historical events.