

# HOLIDAY HOUSE BOOK CLUB GUIDE



HC: 9780823456352 · PB: 9780823463602 · Ebook: 9780823465118

## *Midnight Mayhem* by Christina Uss

### ABOUT THE BOOK

**Kaz Jakobsen can't sleep.  
Ever again.**

Kaz Jakobsen knows things will never be the same after his family's sudden move to Philadelphia. He'll have to make new friends, which isn't his strong suit. But an even bigger change arrives at a restaurant where he orders a bagel sandwich. Kaz eats a potent combo of the world's greenest mustard and rootiest root beer and loses his ability to sleep.

Scientifically, brain + no sleep = kablammo. The longest a human insomniac has gone without sleep is eleven days. What will happen to Kaz without sleep for more than seventy *years*? How will he survive the lonely boredom?

Kaz luckily meets Floyd, a fellow non-sleeping kid, at a sleep study lab. Floyd thinks being sleepless is a superpower, a chance to try a million new things. He takes Kaz on madcap midnight adventures, introducing him to all the things kids are allowed to do at night in Philadelphia—and a few things they aren't. The bad news: his ideas always seem to lead to mayhem.

Kaz wants to keep Floyd's friendship but lose the mayhem. When he learns there's an antidote to a lifetime awake, he has a tough choice to make. If Kaz cures his sleeplessness, will he lose the best friend he's ever had?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Define mayhem. What does the title of the book suggest about the plot? What triggers the mayhem?
- Kaz Jakobsen makes reference to a life-changing moment. What is he referring to? Debate whether he experiences more than one life-changing moment after he meets Floyd. How does he confront the changes in his life?

- Contrast the house in Philly with the one where the Jakobsens lived in Massachusetts. Explain why Kaz feels especially lonely in the house in Philly. Kaz didn't really have best friends in Massachusetts, so why is he so homesick for his old life?
- Compare Kaz and Maxi, his little brother. What happens when Maxi realizes that they aren't moving back to their old house? How does Kaz's mother call on him to help deal with Maxi? In what way does Kaz help?
- Describe Mr. Beigel. What is unusual about the mustard Kaz tastes at Mr. Beigel's Bagel restaurant? What is an antidote? Discuss Mr. Beigel's approach to finding an antidote to cure Kaz's sleeplessness. How do his parents feel about the antidotes that Mr. Beigel offers?
- Define friendship from Kaz's point of view. At what point is it obvious that he has forged a friendship with Floyd? Why is he so worried about losing this friendship?
- Describe Floyd. How do his sleep behaviors differ from Kaz's? Why are the doctors so interested in Floyd's sleep issues?
- In what way does Floyd bring adventure to Kaz's life? Explain why Kaz is out of his comfort zone when roaming around at night with Floyd. What is the most unusual situation the two encounter?
- How does Kaz learn courage and bravery from Floyd? Cite specific scenes to support your thoughts.
- How does Mr. Beigel know Floyd Bruce? Explain what Mr. Beigel means, "He's [Floyd] a great kid. One of the most individual individuals I've ever met" (p. 120).
- Explain Floyd's statement: "Only boring people get bored" (p. 47). Discuss why Kaz feels like this expression is "an accusing finger pointing at his face" (p. 47).
- Discuss what Mr. Beigel means when he says, "Boring is in the eye of the beholder" (p. 119).
- Floyd says, "My dad says I can't help taking stuff to the extremes" (p. 71). Give examples of behaviors that caused Floyd's dad to make this statement.
- Floyd says to Kaz, "I'm contagious. I broke you. I broke your brain" (p. 132). In what ways does Floyd think he broke Kaz?
- Kaz and Floyd won a contest to host a radio show on WXPN. Discuss their duties as hosts. How does working together as hosts deepen their friendship?
- Dr. Trout finds Kaz's brain waves "perplexing" (p. 53). Debate whether the data collected during Kaz's sleep study is affected by his night escapades with Floyd.
- What finally cures Kaz of sleeplessness?
- Identify the central theme and secondary themes of the book.

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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**Christina Uss's** first novel, *The Adventures of a Girl Called Bicycle*, was selected for the Texas Bluebonnet Award Master List, Maine Student Book Award list, Vermont's Dorothy Canfield Fisher list, and was a Kirkus Reviews Best Book of the Year. It received starred reviews from *Shelf Awareness*, *Booklist*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and *Publishers Weekly*. *Midnight Mayhem* is her second novel. Christina lives in East Longmeadow, MA, and works at a library as a circulation supervisor.