

# **Stormbreaker Study Guide**

**Stormbreaker by Anthony Horowitz**

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# Plot Summary

Stormbreaker by Anthony Horowitz is the first novel to feature teenage spy, Alex Rider. In this novel, Alex's uncle dies in what he is told is a car accident. However, after doing some investigating on his own, Alex discovers his uncle was actually murdered. Convinced he never really knew his uncle, Alex continues to try to find out why someone would kill him. This leads to a meeting with Uncle Ian's employers who tell Alex his uncle was a spy for a special division of the MI6. Alex is blackmailed into finishing his uncle's case, a case that could lead to Alex's own murder. Stormbreaker is an exciting, suspenseful novel that jumpstarts the career of a highly unusual spy.

Alex Rider wakes in the middle of the night to hear the police knocking on the door. The housekeeper, Alex's good friend Jack Starbright, opens the door to learn that Alex's uncle, Ian Rider, has been killed in a car accident. Ian has been Alex's guardian since the death of his parents when he was an infant; therefore, his death leaves Alex without a relative to care for him.

The funeral is planned and executed by a man from the bank where Ian was an executive. At the funeral, Alex sees the head of the bank, a cold man called Blunt. When Alex and Jack return home from the funeral, they find that the office Ian always kept locked is now open and completely empty. This leads Alex to wonder if his uncle was really just a bank official.

Alex begins looking into his uncle's death, beginning with the accident itself. Alex goes to the salvage yard where he believes his uncle's car was taken. The car is there, but it was not damaged in a car wreck. However, there are bullet holes all along the driver's side door. Alex is about to leave when he hears people coming, so he jumps into the car. A moment later the car is lifted and put into a crusher. Alex just barely escapes death.

A few days later, Alex is called to the bank to talk about his uncle's will. While waiting for the executive scheduled to speak to him, Alex sneaks into his uncle's office. Alex is caught and knocked unconscious with a dart. When Alex wakes, he finds himself inside a house at a training facility. Blunt is there with a woman called Mrs. Jones. They tell Alex that his uncle worked for a special division of MI6. Ian was working on a case involving a business tycoon who recently announced the donation of thousands of computers to English school children. Blunt then tells Alex that they would like him to finish what Ian started by going into the company pretending to be a young man who won a contest to try out the computers. Alex refuses.

Blunt tells Alex that the bank controls his inheritance. If Alex refuses to help, they will sell his house, send Jack back to America, and place Alex in an orphanage. For this reason, Alex agrees. For the following few weeks, Alex is put through training with other men who are joining MI6 or the Special Air Service. These men resent having a child there and treat Alex poorly, but he proves himself by keeping up with them. After two



weeks, Alex is sent to Sayle Enterprises to begin his assignment. Almost immediately Alex finds evidence his uncle left behind.

Alex quickly begins following the clues his uncle left behind and comes to realize that Herod Sayle has implanted a modified smallpox virus into each computer with the intention of having the Prime Minister kill all of England's school children with the push of one button. Alex is caught spying, but he escapes the many attempts on his life to reach the Prime Minister moments before disaster can strike.



# Chapter 1, Funeral Voices, and Chapter 2, Heaven for Cars

## Chapter 1, Funeral Voices, and Chapter 2, Heaven for Cars Summary

Stormbreaker is the first novel in the Alex Rider series. Written by British television and film writer Anthony Horowitz, the Alex Rider series is highly popular and this novel was made into a movie in 2006.

In Chapter 1, Alex wakes in the middle of the night to the sound of knocking on the door. Alex overhears the police telling Alex's housekeeper and good friend, Jack Starbright, that his uncle, Ian, has been killed in a car accident. Ian has been Alex's guardian since he was an infant after his parents died. For this reason Alex immediately begins to worry about his future. Alex wants to look in his uncle's office for his will, but Jack encourages him to wait until after the funeral.

The funeral is planned by Mr. Crawley, an executive from the bank where Ian worked, Royal and General. At the funeral, Alex is puzzled by the claims of patriotism made by everyone who eulogized Ian. Alex also meets Mr. Blunt, the head of the bank, a man he finds cold. The odd thing about Mr. Blunt is that Alex notices his driver is carrying a gun. When Alex and Jack get home from the funeral, they find that someone has come into the house and removed everything from Ian's locked office.

In Chapter 2, Alex returns to school, but he cannot stop thinking about all the odd things that have happened since his uncle's death. Alex decides the best way to check into his uncle's death is to look at his car. Alex goes to the office and looks through the listings for salvage yards. When Alex finds one with a familiar name, he decides to go there. At the salvage yard that afternoon, Alex quickly finds his uncle's car. The car does not have crash damage, but it does have a series of bullet holes on the driver's side. As Alex prepares to leave, he hears a couple of men coming toward him. Alex hides in the car, but quickly realizes his mistake when he feels the car being lifted by the crane. Alex tries to escape out the back, but his leg is trapped. However, when the car moves into the crusher, his leg is freed and Alex barely escapes with his life.

## Chapter 1, Funeral Voices, and Chapter 2, Heaven for Cars Analysis

The reader meets the main character and the conflict that will propel the plot almost in the same sentence. Alex wakes to learn his uncle has been killed in a car accident. Alex, a fourteen year old boy living in London, has just lost the only relative he has left. Alex is grief-stricken, but he also finds several incidents that take place after the



announcement of his uncle's death to be odd. The over helpfulness of his uncle's co-workers and the disappearance of his uncle's office items convinces Alex that his uncle's job is not as simple as a bank executive.

Alex shows his intelligence and creativity when he locates his uncle's car. The car proves that Uncle Ian was not killed in a car crash. At the same time, Alex proves his own resourcefulness when he manages to escape sure death when he is accidentally trapped inside his uncle's car.



## **Chapter 3, Royal and General, and Chapter 4, 'So What Do You Say?'**

### **Chapter 3, Royal and General, and Chapter 4, 'So What Do You Say?' Summary**

In Chapter 3, Alex gets a call from Mr. Crawley asking him to come to the bank the following day. When Alex arrives at the bank, he notes how little activity is taking place in the bank's lobby. Alex is taken upstairs by Mr. Crawley and he sees his uncle's office door, but is told it is locked. Alex decides to sneak into the office through the window when Mr. Crawley is called downstairs. Alex manages to get into the office and begins searching for something that will tell him the truth about his uncle. However, before he finds anything, Mr. Crawley returns with Mr. Blunt's driver. Alex is shot with a tranquilizer gun.

In Chapter 4, Alex wakes in a strange bedroom late the following morning. Alex takes a shower and changes into clothes that must have been brought to this place by the bank people. A few minutes later, Alex is taken into a dining room to have lunch with Mr. Blunt. Mr. Blunt is waiting with a woman he calls Mrs. Jones. Together, Mr. Blunt and Mrs. Jones tell Alex how his uncle worked for them as part of the Special Operations Division of MI6. When he was killed, Ian Rider was working on a case that involved Herod Sayle, an Egyptian man raised in England who now owns a multi-million dollar business. Sayle has recently announced the donation of thousands of computers, called Stormbreakers, to English school children. Blunt and Mrs. Jones became suspicious of the huge donation and sent Ian Rider to check it out. Before he died, Ian Rider told them he had seen a well known Russian assassin at the company and that he had found something else he could not tell them about. Ian Rider was on his way back to London to report on Sayle when he was killed.

Blunt asks Alex to take his uncle's place. There was a contest to find a teen to test the Stormbreaker. The winner was a fourteen year old boy who looks like Alex. For this reason, Blunt believes they can send Alex in without suspicion. Alex is simply to observe and report. However, Alex refuses. It is then that Blunt tell Alex that they are the executors of his uncle's will and can sell his house, return Jack to her native America, and place Alex in an orphanage. Under the pressure of this blackmail, Alex agrees.

### **Chapter 3, Royal and General, and Chapter 4, 'So What Do You Say?' Analysis**

Alex continues to show his intelligence and strength, something that is noticed not only by the reader, but by Mr. Blunt as well. Alex is knocked out and taken to an MI6 training facility where he finally learns the truth about this uncle. Relieved to know the truth, Alex



is still reluctant to help out the people who employed his uncle. Alex's reluctance is understandable because his uncle was killed, therefore it is not a huge jump for Alex to fear for his own safety. However, the MI6 hold Alex's future in their hands, therefore Alex really has no choice as to whether or not he should help them out.

Alex is about to become a spy. At fourteen, Alex will be the perfect spy and able to stay under the radar. However, the reader cannot help but realize there will be many obstacles in Alex's path, leaving his future uncertain.





# Chapter 5, Double O Nothing, and Chapter 6, Toys Aren't Us

## Chapter 5, Double O Nothing, and Chapter 6, Toys Aren't Us Summary

In Chapter 5, Alex is moved immediately into the barracks of the training facility. The other four men in Alex's unit, Wolf, Snake, Fox, and Eagle resent a child being placed with their unit. Wolf especially dislikes Alex and begins taunting him. One day while they are in a house they are supposed to escape without triggering booby traps, Wolf intentionally pushes Alex into a trip wire. Alex, who is exhausted from nearly two weeks of non-stop training, faces the wrath of their instructor, but he never turns on Wolf. The next day, Alex and the other men of K Unit are sent on a survival course. Alex has twelve hours to find his rendezvous point. Alex finds it with fifty-five minutes to spare. When Alex joins the rest of his unit on top of the hill, he brings them matches he picked out of the instructor's pocket on the way up.

In Chapter 6, Alex is on a parachute run with his unit, but has learned that he cannot jump because someone from headquarters decided it was too dangerous. Alex watches as the men from his unit jump one by one. When it is Wolf's turn, he hesitates. Alex knows any hesitation could end his chances at becoming MI6, so Alex kicks him out of the plane.

Alex returns to the hanger to find Mrs. Jones waiting for him. With Mrs. Jones is Smithers, the equipment expert for the MI6. Smithers has built a yo-yo that is motorized and has thirty feet of a special nylon, a zit cream container holding a cream that can burn through metal, and a Game Boy with four cartridges that can communicate with headquarters, fax papers, X-ray items, and act as a smoke bomb. When Smithers leaves, Mrs. Jones shows Alex a picture of Yassen Gregorovich, the man believed to be responsible for Ian's death. Mrs. Jones warns Alex that if Yassen appears at Sayles Enterprises, that he is to report it so they can move him immediately.

## Chapter 5, Double O Nothing, and Chapter 6, Toys Aren't Us Analysis

Alex is put through training with the MI6 and SAS trainees. Alex proves that he is strong both physically and mentally as he keeps up with his fellow trainees, despite the difference in age, and he is able to take cruelty without complaining about it. This gives the reader hope that Alex will be a good spy for the MI6.

Alex is prepared for his trip to Sayle Enterprises. Alex is given several gadgets that the reader suspects will come in handy as the plot continues to develop. Among these

gadgets is a Game Boy that has several cartridges that can do many different things. This shows the reader that Alex will not be completely on his own, but it also shows the reader how much danger is expected to be involved in this mission, adding suspense to the novel.



# Chapter 7, Physalia Physalia, and Chapter 8, Looking for Trouble

## Chapter 7, Physalia Physalia, and Chapter 8, Looking for Trouble Summary

In Chapter 7, Alex is picked up outside of Felix Lester's house. Felix Lester is the real winner of the contest, but he has been sent to Florida so that Alex can take his place. The ride to Sayle Enterprises' in Port Tallon is long and boring. When they arrive, Alex is taken into Sayle's private residence where he is led to a room that is dominated by a huge aquarium. Inside is a jellyfish, a physalia physalia. Mr. Sayle tells Alex that he caught the animal while diving in the China Sea. As they chat, Alex tells Mr. Sayle to call him Alex without catching his mistake until it is too late. However, Alex is able to cover by claiming it is a nickname given him by his friends. A short time later, Mr. Sayle introduces Alex to Mr. Grin, his butler who was once a knife expert in the carnival. He had had an accident that left him with scars from mouth to ear on each side of his face. Alex is given a room on the first floor and he quickly uses the Game Boy to check for bugs, one of which he finds.

In Chapter 8, Alex finds a piece of paper stuck in the canopy of his bed. Immediately Alex recognizes his uncle's handwriting. However, the diagram and number on the paper make no sense to Alex. Alex faxes the picture to Mrs. Jones with a request for information. A short time later, Alex is taken to the Sayle Enterprise plant to play on the Stormbreaker. After playing for a time, Alex sneaks out of the room and begins searching the building. Alex comes across a stairwell that leads into a basement corridor with a locked door at the end. Alex uses a cartridge from the Game Boy to see through the door and to listen to the people on the other side. Alex hears a discussion of some sort of delivery that would take place late that night. It is then that Alex is caught by Vole, the Russian woman who is acting as his escort. Alex lies and tells her he had been searching for the toilet and had gotten lost.

## Chapter 7, Physalia Physalia, and Chapter 8, Looking for Trouble Analysis

Alex arrives at Sayle Enterprises where his uncle lived the last few days of his life. Alex begins his assignment by accidentally allowing his real name to slip. Alex worries that he will ruin the entire investigation, but continues on with the same determination that got him through training.

Alex finds a piece of paper Ian Rider left behind, almost as if he had known what would happen. Alex has no clue what the paper means, but he keeps it with him anyway. Later Alex overhears talk of a delivery expected late that night. This foreshadows an attempt

by Alex to find out what the delivery is. However, Alex is caught by Vole, his escort, leaving the reader wondering if Alex might not be discovered before he can learn the truth about the Stormbreakers.



# Chapter 9, Night Visitors, and Chapter 10, Death in the Long Grass

## Chapter 9, Night Visitors, and Chapter 10, Death in the Long Grass Summary

In Chapter 9, Alex plays Herod Sayle at snooker. When Sayle suggests a bet, Alex talks him into one hundred pounds a point. Sayle is angry when Alex manages to win the game, causing Sayle to owe him four thousand pounds. Alex and Sayle have dinner together. Alex finds Sayle's company difficult. That night, Alex gets out of bed at one o'clock and hides in the back of a truck which Mr. Grin drives away. The truck goes down to the sea shore where a submarine rises out of the water. Mr. Grin and his men take multiple metal boxes out of the submarine and load them into the truck. Yassen Gregorovich is among the men from the submarine. When one of the workers drops a box, Yassen kills him on the spot.

In Chapter 10, Alex spends the morning on the Stormbreaker once again. In the afternoon, Vole encourages Alex to go for a walk. Alex follows a trail that leads him above the village of Port Tallon. Suddenly a rider on a four wheeler comes out of the high grass and tries to run Alex over. When he misses, another four wheeler joins him. Together the four wheeler riders attempt to kill Alex with a thin piece of piano wire. When this fails, Alex manages to run up the hill, narrowly missing running into an electric fence. Alex uses this fence to stop one of the drivers, causing him to run into the fence. Alex climbs onto the four wheeler and finds himself in a game of chicken with the remaining rider. This ends with the second driver driving off a cliff to his death.

## Chapter 9, Night Visitors, and Chapter 10, Death in the Long Grass Analysis

Alex goes with Mr. Grin unwittingly to pick up his delivery. Alex learns nothing, however, except that whatever is in the mysterious boxes, they are important enough to cause Yassen Gregorovich to kill a man for dropping one. This suggests that the delivery is not software or hardware for the computers. Alex remains in the dark as to what they contain, but the reader suspects the delivery might be some kind of bomb or other dangerous weapon to be detonated by the activation of the Stormbreakers.

Alex goes for a walk the next day and is nearly killed by two four wheeler drivers. This alerts both Alex and the reader to the fact that Sayle is on to him. It also suggests that whatever is going on is important enough to kill two people. Now Alex must be very careful about what he might decide to do next.



# Chapter 11, Dozmary Mine, and Chapter 12, Behind the Door

## Chapter 11, Dozmary Mine, and Chapter 12, Behind the Door Summary

In Chapter 11, Alex goes into Port Tallon and visits the library because Sayle told him Ian Rider spent some time there. A discussion with the librarian helps Alex establish that his uncle had been looking for books on viruses and books that contained some of the local history of the area. As Alex begins to leave, he realizes that the number on the shelf of local history books is similar to the beginning of the number on the paper Ian Rider left in his bedroom. Alex goes to the shelf and takes the book that fits the number, a book on the history of a local tin mine, the Dozmary Mine. In the book, Alex finds a map that, when the drawing on Ian's paper is laid over the top, shows directions to a location. Alex realizes that this location is the other side of the metal door he found in Sayle Enterprises' plant.

Alex rides the stolen four wheeler to a place where he believes he can get into the tunnels of Dozmary Mine. Alex finds it locked, but the lock has been left undone. Alex goes into the mine and follows the map, coming to a tunnel that is underwater. However, there is a dry suit waiting there as if Ian Rider intended to return. Alex swims, afraid he will drown before he finds the end of the tunnel.

In Chapter 12, Alex happily finds the end of the tunnel before he runs out of air. Alex follows the remainder of the trail and finds himself outside a man-made wall with several air conditioner vents. One of the vents has been loosened. Alex slips inside and finds himself in a store room. Outside the store room, Alex finds himself on an observation platform. Alex looks down on a lab where Stormbreakers are being assembled, with some kind of vial being placed in a hidden compartment on the monitors. Just as Alex realizes what he is seeing, he is caught by a security guard. Alex knocks the man out with a karate kick and escapes, but an alarm goes up and he is chased through the rooms by two more guards. Alex finally makes it to the room on the other side of the metal door he found his first day there and escapes to his bedroom. However, as Alex tries to make his escape, Mr. Grin is waiting outside the door and knocks him out.

## Chapter 11, Dozmary Mine, and Chapter 12, Behind the Door Analysis

Alex goes to the library and finally figures out what the paper is that Ian Rider left in his bedroom. It is a book that leads Alex to a map that will help him reach the secret laboratory in Sayle Enterprises. Alex follows the map and quickly finds himself watching the secret implantation of some sort of vial into the Stormbreakers intended for

England's school children. This confirms Alex's assumption that something dark is going on at Sayle Enterprises.

Alex is nearly caught, but again he shows his survival instincts and escapes the guards. However, Alex has forgotten about Mr. Grin. Alex attempts to escape Sayle's compound altogether, but is stopped when Mr. Grin knocks him out. Now the reader has no doubt about the trouble in which Alex finds himself.



# Chapter 13, The School Bully, and Chapter 14, Deep Water

## Chapter 13, The School Bully, and Chapter 14, Deep Water Summary

In Chapter 13, Alex wakes the following morning in a cellar and is taken to the room where the jellyfish is. Mr. Sayle asks Alex all he knows and Alex admits to everything. Sayle then admits that he has placed a modified smallpox virus in the computers that will be released when the Prime Minister pushes the button to bring all the computers on line during a ceremony later that day. Mr. Sayle has done this because as a child he was horribly tortured by school bullies. These bullies were led by a young child who grew up to be Prime Minister. Mr. Sayle now has a deep hatred of children and the Prime Minister; therefore, this plan appears to be a perfect form of revenge for both. Mr. Sayle then has Mr. Grin walk him out to his helicopter, leaving Alex alone.

In Chapter 14, Vole comes to Alex's rescue, claiming to have worked with Ian Rider. However, Vole tricks Alex and causes him to fall into the aquarium with the jellyfish. Alex quickly realizes he has no means of escape. As Vole watches, Alex thinks over his options. Finally Alex remembers the metal dissolving cream. Alex wipes the cream on the metal frame of the aquarium, worried it will not work under water. However, the cream works and Alex is freed, but Vole is killed by the jellyfish.

## Chapter 13, The School Bully, and Chapter 14, Deep Water Analysis

Alex wakes to find himself a prisoner of Mr. Sayle. Alex seems to be in a desperate situation so he sees no harm in telling Mr. Sayle all he knows about Sayle's plan. This leads to Mr. Sayle telling Alex the truth about the plan, which includes a story of childhood bullying. Mr. Sayle is attempting to get back at the Prime Minister for making his childhood difficult. The problem with this is that most people outgrow this type of bullying and come to understand it was about childhood insecurities. Mr. Sayle has not outgrown the hurt and pain, however, leading to a form of insanity that will allow for him to plot the deaths of thousands of English school children.

Alex is then placed in the aquarium with the jellyfish. Alex knows he will either be killed by the monster jellyfish or drown, so he has to find a way out quickly. Alex shows his intelligence once again, and the luck of having the MI6 behind him, when he uses the metal dissolving gel to escape the aquarium with less than an hour to save the English school children.





# Chapter 15, Eleven O'Clock, Chapter 16, Twelve O'Clock, and Chapter 17, Yassen

## Chapter 15, Eleven O'Clock, Chapter 16, Twelve O'Clock, and Chapter 17, Yassen Summary

In Chapter 15, Alex rushes out of the house, armed with a harpoon, intent on finding a quick mode of transportation to get him to London before the Prime Minister presses the button at noon. Alex takes a Jeep from a guard, stealing his gun at the same time, and fixes the nylon string from his yo-yo to the harpoon before rushing toward the runway where a cargo plane is about to take off. A couple of other guards notice Alex. The guards rush toward Alex in two separate Jeeps, finally shooting one another in an attempt to shoot Alex. Alex then shoots the harpoon at the cargo plane and pulls himself up to the underbelly of the plane beside a door. Alex boards the plane only to find Mr. Grin is the pilot. Alex forces Mr. Grin at gunpoint to fly the plane to London.

In Chapter 16, the plane reaches the city. Alex parachutes out. When Mr. Grin turns the plane to fly through Alex's parachute chords, Alex sets off a smoke bomb in the plane with the Game Boy. Mr. Grin flies into an empty lot and crashes. Alex then guides his parachute downtown and aims for the roof of the Science Museum with less than a minute to spare. As Alex crashes through the glass roof of the museum, Sayle has just finished his speech and the Prime Minister is about to push the button that will release the virus. Alex uses the gun he stole from the security guard to fire at the computer, shooting the mouse, but also shooting the Prime Minister in the hand. Alex also shoots Sayle twice. In the chaos of the aftermath, Sayle disappears.

In Chapter 17, Alex goes to Blunt office the following morning and is told he did a good job, but this is the only reward he gets. This and Jack Starbright's visa as well as the right to remain in his own home. As Alex leaves Blunt's office, he hails a taxi. The taxi driver turns out to be Sayle. Sayle takes Alex to the top of a building where he plans to shoot Alex before taking off in a helicopter. However, as Sayle aims to shoot Alex, the pilot of the helicopter shoots Sayle. The pilot is Yassen. Alex asks if Yassen plans to kill him too, but Yassen says he does not have orders to do so. Yassen takes off in his helicopter.

## Chapter 15, Eleven O'Clock, Chapter 16, Twelve O'Clock, and Chapter 17, Yassen Analysis

Alex is the only one who can stop the release of the smallpox viruses in schools across the country, but he is more than five hours away. Alex has learned enough to get himself on to a plane and make the flight to London, landing in time to stop the virus. Alex uses a gun even though Blunt did not want him to learn to use a weapon. This makes Alex a

hero, but he does not get any reward. In fact, Mrs. Jones goes out of her way to make sure the press knows nothing about him. For Alex, life simply returns to normal sans his uncle.

When Alex is kidnapped by Sayle at the end and nearly killed, the reader once again sees how vulnerable Alex truly is. However, Alex is saved by the same man who killed his uncle, an ironic turn of events. This save is timely, but it seems to suggest to the reader that Alex will face down Yassen again at a later date.



# Characters

## Alex Rider

Alex Rider is a fourteen year old boy orphaned as an infant who goes to live with his uncle, Ian Rider. Alex believes his uncle works in a bank and travels frequently for business. When Ian is not traveling, he and Alex spend a great deal of time traveling and rock climbing. Alex is also proficient in karate as well as multiple languages.

When Alex learns that his uncle has been killed in a car accident, he becomes suspicious by the actions of the bank for which his uncle worked. Alex begins investigating his uncle's death and soon comes to the conclusion that his uncle did not die in a car accident and that he was not a bank executive. This soon leads to a meeting with his Uncle Ian's real employers, MI6.

Alex is convinced to take up his uncle's investigation and finish it. Alex goes to Sayle Enterprises to investigate a computer that is about to be donated to thousands of schools around the country. This leads Alex not only to learn what got his uncle killed, but to find himself in his own peril. Alex turns out to be a born spy, getting into and out of situations without the trouble any other fourteen year old might experience. Alex is a strong, intuitive, and creative kid who manages to save the world while his peers are out buying ice creams and pimple cream.

## Ian Rider

Ian Rider is Alex's uncle. Ian takes Alex in as an infant after the death of his brother and sister-in-law. When Ian is not traveling for work, he takes Alex on trips that include trips overseas and to do things such as rock climbing. After Ian's death, the MI6 begins watching Alex and they come to the conclusion that Ian had been preparing him for the day when Alex would become a spy himself. Clearly Ian prepared Alex well because he survives the same mission that killed Ian.

## Mr. Blunt

Mr. Blunt is the chief executive of the Special Operations Division of MI6. Mr. Blunt is a cold, calculating man who has no problem sending a fourteen year old child into a case that will more than likely end his life. Mr. Blunt has his eye on the prize, the need to make sure the security of the nation is ensured, not a single life. For this reason, Mr. Blunt blackmails Alex into taking on the case that his uncle was killed over even though he knows that Alex will more than likely be killed. In fact, Mr. Blunt expects Alex to be killed and he hopes to use Alex's death to force a larger investigation of Herod Sayle.



## Mrs. Jones

Mrs. Jones is the head of operations for the Special Operations Division of MI6. Mrs. Jones is a motherly type woman who seems to genuinely care about the people she sends out into the field. However, Mrs. Jones works closely with Mr. Blunt and when she is with him she seems to feel the need to seem cold, like him. On her own, Mrs. Jones is kinder and she does the best she can to ensure that her agents survive their assignments. From her, Alex gets a sense of reluctance just before he is sent to Sayle Enterprises, but she never shows him much compassion. Instead, Mrs. Jones sits back and allows Mr. Blunt to blackmail and bully Alex, allowed to only supply him with the few implements that will help him survive his ordeal.

## Herod Sayle

Herod Sayle is an Egyptian man raised in England. As a small boy Herod Sayle is one of a large family living on the edge of poverty. Sayle had been walking down the street one day and had saved an English couple from being crushed by a piano. The couple are so grateful to Sayle that they bring him to England and educate him in the English school system. There Sayle is terribly bullied by all his classmates, including the man who would one day become Prime Minister. This causes Sayle to nurse a grudge all his life. Sayle plots to donate computers to all the schools across the country and release a smallpox virus through them that will kill all the schoolchildren and leave the Prime Minister with some of the guilt.

## Mr. Grin

Mr. Grin is Sayle's butler. Mr. Grin had once been a carnival performer who worked with knives. One day Mr. Grin is distracted as he attempts to catch a knife in his mouth. The knife cuts him from ear to ear, leaving him with a scar that looks like a deranged grin. Mr. Grin works for Sayle and he coordinates the criminal activity as well as being the one who deals with people who appear to present an obstacle. Mr. Grin is the one who stops Alex from escaping the house and is the pilot who flies the cargo plane that delivers Alex to London. Mr. Grin dies when Alex detonates a smoke bomb in the plane while Mr. Grin is still flying.

## Fraulein Nadia Vole

Fraulein Vole is an employee of Mr. Sayle's. Vole escorts Alex to the Stormbreaker each day and she is the one who catches Alex when he finds the basement door that leads to the secret lab. Vole tricks Alex late in the book, convincing him that she had been working with Ian Rider, but then she causes Alex to fall into the aquarium with the jellyfish when she pulls the arm of a statue that opens a slide into the aquarium. Vole is killed when Alex melts the metal of the aquarium with a special cream made for him by MI6 and the jellyfish is released on top of her.



## **Mr. Crowley**

Mr. Crowley is an executive who supposedly works in the personnel department of the same bank where Ian Rider worked. Mr. Crowley arranges the funeral for Ian Rider. When Mr. Crowley calls Alex and asks him to come to the bank to discuss the will, Alex has no reason to distrust him. However, Mr. Crowley sets Alex up in a test that Mr. Blunt has arranged.

## **Jack Starbright**

Jack Starbright is an American who rents a room in Ian Rider's home and soon becomes his housekeeper. When Ian Rider dies, Jack is the only person Alex has left to care for him. Mr. Blunt threatens to send Jack back to America if Alex does not agree to work for him. Alex does not know from what name Jack is shortened, but suspects Jacqueline.

## **Prime Minister**

The Prime Minister had once been a schoolmate of Herod Sayle's. Sayle claims that the Prime Minister had been the leader of the boys who bullied Sayle all through his school years. For this reason, Sayle plans to donate thousands of computers to schools throughout England and have the Prime Minister push a button that will make all the computers come on line. However, when the Prime Minister pushes the button he will actually be releasing a lethal form of the smallpox virus, killing all of England's schoolchildren. This is Sayle's idea of revenge for childhood bullying.



## Objects/Places

### Ian Rider's Car

Alex finds Ian Rider's car in a salvage yard in London. The car does not have accident damage, but has clearly been shot with a high powered, assault rifle.

### Yo-Yo

Alex is given a yo-yo that has a special nylon cord in it and a motor so that he might use it while climbing or in other such incidences while he on a mission for MI6.

### Zit Cream

Alex is given a tube of zit cream that is actually a cream that can dissolve metal on contact. Alex uses this to get out of the aquarium with the jellyfish.

### Game Boy

Alex is given a Game Boy system that has four cartridges that allow him to fax material to MI6, X-ray objects and through doors, contact MI6, search for bugs, and release a smoke bomb.

### Metal Boxes

Yassen brings metal boxes to Sayle Enterprises that Alex later learns contain the vials of the modified smallpox virus.

### Submarine

Yassen Gregorovich brings many metal boxes to Port Tallon on a submarine belonging to someone Alex never identifies.

### Ian Rider's Home Office

Alex returns from Ian's funeral to find that his office has been completely emptied.



## **Cargo Plane**

Alex escapes the Sayle compound and reaches London in time to save the country's schoolchildren by stealing a ride on a cargo plane.

## **Stormbreaker**

Stormbreaker is a computer developed by Sayle Enterprises that is loaded with educational software. Sayle plans to donate thousands to schools all over the country, but these computers will also be loaded with a fatal smallpox virus.

## **Dozmary Mine**

Dozmary Mine is an abandoned tin mine in Port Tallon that has been sold to Sayle Enterprises. Ian Rider had discovered that Dozmary Mine provides a way to the secret labs of Sayle Enterprises. Alex follows Ian's clues to find his back way into the secret lab and learn the secret of the Stormbreakers.

## **Science Museum**

The ceremony celebrating Sayle's donation of the Stormbreaker computers is held at the Science Museum in London. It is here that Alex parachutes into the ceremony and shoots the Prime Minister.

## **Sayle Enterprises**

Sayle Enterprises is the name of Herod Sayle's company and the company that produces the Stormbreaker computer.



# Themes

## Family

The book begins with Alex learning that his uncle, the only parent he has ever known, has been killed in a car accident. Alex is devastated by this news, but it does not keep him from trying to learn the truth about his uncle's death. Perhaps it is Alex's grief that leads him to seek the truth, but whatever inspires him, Alex is determined to find the man who killed his uncle. This determination, however, does not include joining the MI6 at the age of fourteen.

As Alex trains to become a spy, it is discovered that he already has many of the skills required. It is suggested that perhaps Ian had been training his nephew to become a spy all along. Alex knows multiple languages, how to rock climb, and karate. Ian had been looking out for his nephew, preparing him for a world in need of good spies.

The family tie in this novel is very clear from the beginning. Alex adores his uncle despite their unique situation and their unique relationship. Ian clearly loved Alex as well, preparing him as he did for the future. Alex is a unique teenager and this is all due to the love and devotion of his uncle, making family a strong theme of the novel.

## Revenge

Alex wants revenge. Alex wants to punish the man who killed his uncle. However, Alex knows he is too young to go after this person alone. Despite coming face to face with Yassen, his uncle's killer, he lets him go because he knows that there is little he can do until he is older.

Herod Sayle wants revenge. Herod Sayle had been bullied as a young Egyptian child in a strange country with a strange accent and appearance. This had led to a great deal of ridicule at the hands of his classmates, something expected of school age children. However, rather than learning from this torment and becoming a better person, Sayle becomes bitter and plots revenge. Sayle has decided to kill all the school children of England and to have his worst tormentor, a young man who is now Prime Minister, hold some of the blame.

The difference between Alex's need for revenge and that of Sayle is night and day. Sayle is the adult, the man who has made his fortune thanks to his English education. Alex is the child, the one who is neither mature enough nor has the experience to know that revenge will one day take care of itself if he is patient. However, it is Alex who waits for revenge while Sayle seeks it out in a most childish fashion. For this reason, revenge is a theme of the novel.





## Espionage

Ian Rider is a spy for MI6 and it is this occupation that leads to his death. Alex has always believed his uncle works for a bank and that his frequent trips are related to that occupation. When Ian dies, however, Alex quickly becomes aware of oddities in the behavior and actions of his uncle's co-workers. This soon leads Alex to seek out the truth and to discover his uncle's true occupation.

In time, Alex is told about his uncle's affiliation with MI6. Not only this, but Alex is asked to pick up where his uncle left off. Alex is afraid of his own death; therefore, he refuses at first. However, when Alex sees he has no choice but to become a spy, he goes undercover to Sayle Enterprises where he quickly learns that Sayle plans to expose thousands of children to a modified and fatal version of the smallpox virus.

Alex finds himself in a world of espionage before he is even old enough to drive. However, his uncle had prepared him well for this world. Alex can speak many languages, he can defend himself with karate, and he can drive despite his young age. This is the world in which Alex has been raised to live in and the time has come for him to find his destiny.



# Style

## Point of View

The novel is written in the third person omniscient point of view. Alex Rider is the main character; therefore, the point of view often follows him and his activities. However, there are times in which the author changes his point of view character in order to allow the reader to see or hear things of which Alex could not possibly be aware, such as Blunt's hope that Alex's probable death will open Sayle up to close scrutiny by his agency.

The point of view of this novel is a common one of modern novels. The author has chosen to use his main character as the point of view character the majority of the time, bringing the reader close to Alex Rider in such a way that the reader cares about what might happen to Alex. Therefore, when the point of view briefly changes to a discussion of Alex's probable death, the reader becomes angry and more determined for Alex to live. In this way, the writer has used his choice of point of view to bring the reader deeper into the plot and to increase the tension. For these reasons, the point of view of this novel works well with the plot.

## Setting

The novel is set in England, the country in which the author also resides. The novel begins in London, the large city where Ian and Alex Rider make their home. In time, the novel's setting switches to Port Tallon, Chelsea, where the Sayle Enterprises plant is located. In this location the main character lives in a large compound where the company has its plant and the owner has his home. Later, the main character explores the empty mines under the town where Sayle also has a secret lab.

The setting of this novel is a large city, like any novel of this genre might use. This city is London, a large city in England that is a common setting of many books, such as the James Bond novels that are mentioned several times in this novel. The setting then switches to a small village in Chelsea where the bad guy has his company. This change is not as drastic from the big city setting as it might seem because the main character spends much of his time within the confines of Sayle Enterprises, a large company that could be situated in nearly any large city in the world. The setting of the novel is particular to the writer, a place with which he is familiar; therefore, his character is also shown to be familiar with it. For this reason, the setting is appropriate to the plot.

## Language and Meaning

The novel is written for young adults so it is written in a simple language that most young adults can comprehend. The language, however, is not so simple that it talks down to an older reader. The novel includes some foreign words or phrases, but these



are often explained in the text and present no problem to the reader. The language also lacks some of the slang that one might expect in a novel written by a writer from England. It does, however, include some words or phrases familiar to those from England but perhaps not as familiar to those living in other countries.

The language of the novel is educated, but simple. The language reflects the age of the main character and the age of the intended reader being simple, clear, and at some points somewhat unique. A young reader can easily comprehend the overall intention of the writer. Appropriately, the language of this novel fits with its characters, its subject, and its intended audience.

## Structure

The novel is written in seventeen chapters, each given a unique name that fits with the actions or characters of the chapter. Each chapter is fairly long, often containing more than twenty pages. Told both in exposition and dialogue, with equal use of both, this is a story that the reader can see clearly in their mind without interruption or confusion arising from the writing style.

The novel has one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows Alex Rider as he learns of the death of his uncle and investigates the death, quickly learning that his uncle was not who he thought he was. This leads Alex into a mission for MI6 to help finish what his uncle began. One subplot follows the actions of Herod Sayle, a bitter man who wants revenge on the children who tormented him many years ago. Another subplot involves the relationship between Alex and his housekeeper Jack. Many of these plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel, while others end with hints to future novels featuring Alex Rider.



## Quotes

"When the doorbell rings at three in the morning, it's never good news." Chapter 1, Funeral Voices, pg. 1

"He couldn't see. He couldn't move." Chapter 2, Heaven for Cars, pg. 21

"The man fired. There was no explosion. The gun spat at Alex and he felt something slam into his heart." Chapter 3, Royal and General, pg. 37

"Dead meat. Suddenly he knew how it felt." Chapter 4, 'So What Do You Say?', pg. 55

"Double O Seven? Double O Nothing's more like it." Chapter 5, Double O Nothing, pg. 61

"Sleep took a long time coming to the dead man's bed." Chapter 7, Physalia Physalia, pg. 99

"So she knew he was lying to her. Not a good start." Chapter 8, Looking for Trouble, pg. 111

"Alex knew he was in trouble the same way an animal does." Chapter 10, Death in the Long Grass, pg. 135

"He had followed a trail left by a dead man. It was only now that he realized it might lead only to a grave." Chapter 11, Dozmary Mine, pg. 162

"It was their job to kill him. It was what they'd been trained for." Chapter 16, Twelve O'Clock, pg. 221

"Alex had refused her offer of a peppermint, although he was beginning to realize it was all the reward he was going to get." Chapter 17, Yassen, pg. 223

"Killing is for grown-ups and you're still a child." Chapter 17, Yassen, pg. 234



## Topics for Discussion

Who is Ian Rider? Why was he killed? How was he killed? Why is his family told he was killed in a car accident? Was he? Where did Ian work? What was his job? Why did he travel so frequently? What did his family think of his job? What was locked on the top floor of Ian's house? What happened to that during the funeral?

Who is Alex Rider? How does he think his uncle died? How did Alex come to live with his uncle? Explain. Why does Alex begin investigating the death of his uncle? What does he learn? Where does this knowledge lead Alex? How does Alex feel about the people to blame for his uncle's death? What does he plan to do?

Why does Alex initially refuse the offer to finish what his uncle began with his final investigation? What are the dangers of this mission? What are the dangers of refusing this mission? What is the final demand that causes Alex to fold and choose to do the mission? Who offers the mission to Alex? Who are they? What is MI6?

Who is Herod Sayle? What does his company manufacture? How does Alex know about the product Sayle makes? What is unique about the product? Why does MI6 want to investigate Sayle? What do they think Ian Rider learned about Sayle? What does Alex expect to learn about Sayle? What is Alex's first impression of Sayle? How does that compare to his later understanding of Sayle?

Who is Mr. Grin? What is unique about Mr. Grin's face? How did this come to be? What does Mr. Grin do for Mr. Sayle? Why can Mr. Grin not speak? What do you think caused this situation? What does Mr. Grin do for Mr. Sayle? What does Mr. Grin do to Alex? How does Mr. Grin die? Is this death justified?

What is Stormbreaker? What does Alex think of Stormbreaker the first time he is introduced to it? What does Alex think of Stormbreaker when he learns how Mr. Sayle plans to use it? Could the donation of Stormbreaker to schools have been a good thing? Why does the Prime Minister want to celebrate Mr. Sayle for the donation? What does Mr. Sayle plan to do at this celebration? Why does Mr. Sayle refuse to forgive and forget?

Who is Yassen Gregorovich? What role does he play in Mr. Sayle's plan? What role did he play in Ian Rider's death? Why does Yassen kill Mr. Sayle at the end of the novel? Whose life does he save by doing this? Why did Yassen save this life? Why does Alex do nothing to avenge his uncle's death at this point? Does this meeting foreshadow a future meeting between these two characters? Explain.