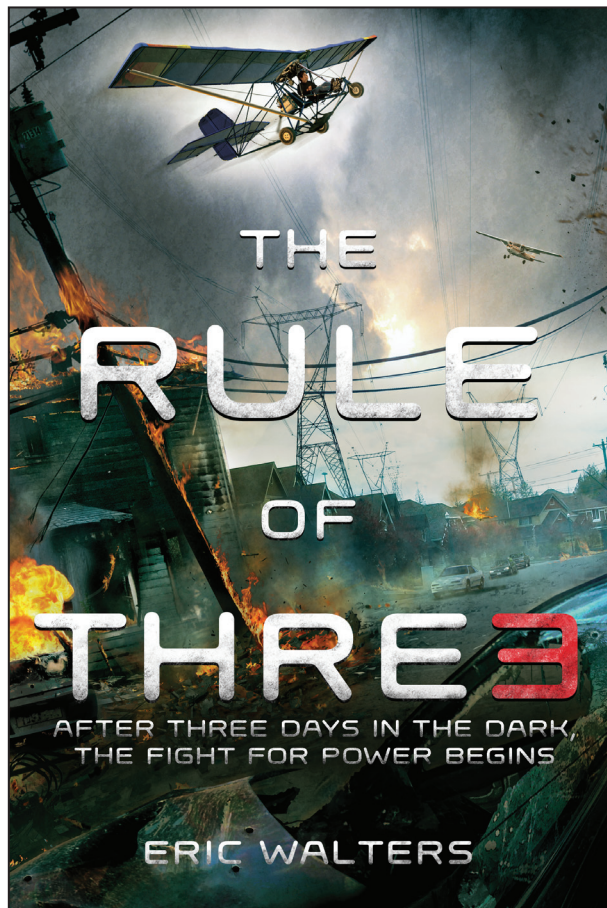


Teacher's Guide for

THE RULE OF THREE



Ages 12 to 17

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ABOUT THE BOOK

One shocking afternoon, computers around the globe shut down in a viral catastrophe. At sixteen-year-old Adam Daley's high school, the problem first seems to be a typical electrical outage, until students discover that cell phones are down, municipal utilities are failing, and a few computer-free cars like Adam's are the only vehicles that function. Driving home, Adam encounters a storm tide of anger and fear as the region becomes paralyzed. Soon—as resources dwindle, crises mount, and chaos descends—he will see his suburban neighborhood band together for protection. And Adam will understand that having a police captain for a mother and a retired government spy living next door are not just the facts of his life but the keys to his survival.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ERIC WALTERS is a former elementary school teacher and a bestselling children's author in Canada who has published over eighty books. He lives in Mississauga, Ontario, and is the founder of Creation of Hope, a charity that provides care for orphans in the Mbooni district of Kenya.



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AUTHOR INTERVIEW

1. How did you get the idea for this book and its sequels?

I always try to write different types of books. I love big books like the Lord of the Rings cycle and the Hunger Games series. I wanted to go beyond what I usually write to try to create something more epic. Adam's neighborhood in the Rule of Three series is based on my own neighborhood (though the books are set in an unidentified city in the northern United States). Walking around the boundaries and thinking about what life would be like if suddenly there were no computers inspired the book and its location.

2. What research did you have to do to make the book so believable?

I read massive amounts about survival—books like the *SAS Survival Handbook*—and about the science behind how the world works. My son, who's an engineer, helped provide me with loads of information to keep my story grounded in reality. This book is set in our world, not an imaginary one. The only science fiction is the computer virus that disables the world. After that, everything that happens is based on my background as a social worker and my understanding of people in general. While I was writing, I often wandered out into my neighborhood. I walked the streets in the middle of the night the way Adam did. I stood on, and below, the bridge in the closing scene to get a feel for what happens there. If that computer virus did hit, I think I've given a pretty good indication about what might unfold in my neighborhood—and yours. I have spent a lot of time in Kenya, in the mountains, working at my children's program. I've witnessed great acts of kindness and charity by people who have virtually nothing. I've also seen how desperation can drive good people into doing terrible things. The veneer of civilization is much thinner than you would think.

3. Adam is a very responsible, mature kid who handles the situation very well. Did you base him on yourself?

Ha! I guess you are saying I seem responsible and mature. Thank you! I think I always had to be fairly mature. My mother died when I was four and my father was unable to provide much for us. You learn to rely on yourself. I'd like to think that I try to do the "right thing," and I think that is the defining quality of Adam that I like so much. I must admit that there is also a fair amount of Herb in me. I tend to look at the world like he does, to some extent.

4. How would you have handled the loss of technology if you were in Adam's shoes? Would you have done anything differently?

I hope that I would have the integrity to handle situations, and people, in a way that Adam himself would admire. We really do need to help take care of each other. No man or woman is an island.

5. How has writing this story changed you?

Setting this story in my neighborhood has meant that this story became embedded in my head in a very intense way. It rains and I walk by the creek and I involuntarily think, "Thank goodness we'll have water." I see a crabapple tree and start to figure out how we can harvest the crop and how many people it will feed for how long. This story has gotten inside of my head and my soul.

6. Is there anything you'd like to add?

I hope the reader enjoys this story. While it's a story of terrible things happening, it's also a story about hope and survival, about doing the right thing. Desperate situations don't have to make us desperate people—they can make us even better.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

1. Look at the front cover of the book. What do you notice? Make some predictions about the plot of the book based on the picture, title, and tagline.
2. The tagline says, “After three days in the dark, the fight for power begins.” What kind of power might the text be talking about? Is there more than one possibility?
3. The first few chapters introduce us to the protagonist, Adam. What do we learn about Adam’s family, friends, hopes, dreams, and daily life before the crisis? Would you describe him as unusual or fairly ordinary?
4. In Chapter 6, we get the first glimpse into how society is starting to fall apart. How does the author use the mini-mall scene to introduce the reader to Herb’s skillful handling of everyone in the community, including the mob, Adam’s mother, and the grocery store manager?
5. In Chapter 18, Adam thinks he’s figured out Herb’s next plan. If he’s right, it will change everything. What do you think of Herb’s apparent next move? If you were in Adam’s shoes, what would your next move be? Explain.
6. In Chapter 20, Herb paraphrases Sir Winston Churchill, saying “the worst form of government” is democracy, “except for all the others” (page 173). What do you think this means?
7. Herb goes on to say, “The question is, are we simply trying to preserve life, or the way of life we claim we believe in?” This is a powerful statement, especially with the word “claim” used. What do you think Herb is really saying? Defend your ideas with evidence from the text.
8. On page 378, Adam talks about his community, saying, “They weren’t just my neighbors anymore—they were part of my tribe.” Compare Adam’s “tribe” with those from shows like *Survivor* and with Native American tribes in North America. Does his choice of the word “tribe” make sense, based on your comparisons?
9. There are a number of times in the story when Adam attempts to get Herb to reveal his past. In Chapter 35, Herb says he was not only used by his employers, but that he was “almost used up” (page 327). In Chapter 40, Herb is still wrestling with his past actions. He says to Adam, “There were times I did things that I *knew* were wrong but that had to be done” (page 379). Why do you think the author shows us these scenes? What do Herb’s comments show us about his character and about his relationship with Adam?
10. Herb and the brash young police officer Brett share some traits. How are they similar? How are they different?
11. Nowhere in this book do we ever learn for certain what caused the loss of power and computer-dependent technology in Adam’s world. Since the story is told through Adam’s eyes, and Adam never learns, we are left to make our own theories. What do you believe caused the disaster, and how did it come about?
12. What Bible story do the names of the main character and of his neighborhood echo? Do you think this is a coincidence? Why?
13. There are two more books in this series. Make some predictions about what will happen next in Adam’s story. What would you like to see in the following two books?

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- **Explore the setting of Eden Mills using Google**

The book is set in the suburb of an unidentified city in the United States. However, author Eric Walters used his own neighborhood in Canada for reference when he created Adam's community of Eden Mills. Go to Google and select the tab for Google Maps. Type in the author's street: Powderhorn Crescent, Mississauga, Ontario.

Explore the neighborhood, moving your cursor around, and using the magnifying function. Make sure you try both the map view and the satellite view.

Try to find the four boundary streets for Eden Mills.

Create a screen capture of the area and print it. Mark the boundaries on your image. Can you find other key locations in the book on this map?

Use the magnifying feature until it gives Street View. See if you can spot any landmarks that could be locations in the book. Does seeing things up close change your understanding or feelings about the book? Explain.

- **Document Herb's mysterious past**

Throughout the book, we receive hints about Herb's past, but we never hear exactly what he did or experienced. Using your imagination and the clues in the text, create a top secret "dossier" (i.e., file) on Herb's previous activities.

- **There's no place like home . . . for disaster**

In Chapter 25, Herb describes the community as a "microcosm of our society" (page 239). In fact, the whole book is a microcosm of what presumably happens all over Adam's world during the power outage.

How do you think your community would handle the events in the story? Could your community function with some sort of organization like Herb and Adam provide?

Using your familiarity and knowledge of your community, create a survival plan for your own actual neighborhood. What "norms" or rules would need to be put into place? What would have to happen? Who would be in charge? Where would the safe places be . . . or would there be any?

- **Plan to survive—Prepping 101**

Thanks to his blackout situation, Adam can't go online and look up important things that might have helped keep him and his community safe. Lucky for you, you can!

According to your teacher's instructions, break into pairs or groups to explore one of the following research topics. Be prepared to present your findings in a way that would benefit the "community" within your classroom.

Feel free to brainstorm additional topics to add to this list as well:

- a) how to use wild plants for food or medicine
- b) how to turn a lawnmower into a vehicle
- c) how ultralight planes work
- d) how to purify water without using chlorine tablets
- e) how to set small traps for game

Be sure to check out some of the “Prepper” websites that are springing up on the Internet. You can get a good idea of the most popular ones here: http://www.shtfplan.com/emergency-preparedness/rise-of-the-preppers-50-of-the-best-prepper-websites-and-blogs-on-the-internet_02012013. You can also find related information on YouTube and through television shows like National Geographic's Doomsday Preppers: <http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/doomsday-preppers/>. *

* These sites are not affiliated with *The Rule of Three* c/o Macmillan Publishers.

This guide was written by Martha Martin

