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Thunder Dog: The True Story of a Blind Man, His Guide Dog and the Triumph of Trust at Ground Zero by Michael Hingson with Susan Flory

Summary

Hingson's remarkable relationship with guide dogs began long before the events of 9/11. Growing up blind, the author came to rely on their dedication, loyalty and courage at a very young age. Guide dogs helped him navigate through grade school, college and his first jobs. It was a beautiful but storm-shy Labrador retriever with a golden coat who would help save his life. The chilling account of how the two worked in tandem to safely descend 78 floors and 1,463 steps, while simultaneously helping others remain calm, is truly awe-inspiring. A decade has not muted the horrors of 9/11, and Hingson and co-writer Flory do a magnificent job of relating what it was like in the aftermath of the attack. That account alone would have been a worthy and important endeavor. But the authors go beyond that, offering both an illuminating look at the realities blind people face every day and the astounding capabilities of seeing-eye dogs. Seamlessly weaving the narrative between the extraordinary exodus from the burning towers and Hingson's fascinating life is a savvy literary device that only enriches the tale.

Discussion Questions for Adult Readers

1. Michael Hingson speaks about "blind power" throughout the book. What is this power and how did he use it to transform his life?
2. What is it about the relationship between Michael Hingson and Roselle that allows them both to remain calm during the events of 9/11?
3. Does Michael Hingson's story about his life and his escape from the building help us think about the act of terrorism that took place on 9/11?
4. Why is this book given the title: *Thunder Dog*? What role does fear play in Michael Hingson's life and in his experiences on 9/11?
5. In the introduction to *Thunder Dog*, Michael Hingson says; "The real story, in my mind, isn't how I got out of the World Trade Center. It's how I got there in the first place." Were the challenges he faced in becoming a successful businessman greater than the challenges he faced on 9/11?
6. Has this book changed the way you think about people who are different from you?
7. How does having trust in a dog like Roselle differ from having trust in another person?
8. What is the main understanding you take away from reading *Thunder Dog*?