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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 Student Readers**

1. In Chapter 4 Michael Hingson says, "No one in my family treated me like I had a disability." Why is this important to him?
2. How is "trust" defined in this story?
3. Are Michael Hingson and Roselle "heroes?" What events in the book support your opinion?
4. On 9/11 how did Michael Hingson react to the terrifying situation he found himself in? Why did his reaction differ from that of the sighted people around him?
5. What is the "blind power" Michael Hingson refers to? How does he discover it and use it?
6. If you were blind, do you think you would ride a bike? Does Michael Hingson's story help you imagine that there might be some things you would not do that a sighted person might do?
7. Has this book changed the way you think about people who are different from you?
8. How does reading about Michael Hingson's trust in his dog help you think about what it means to have trust in another person? Whom would you trust in a scary situation?
9. Do sighted people make use of echolocation? How does this ability help Michael Hingson lead a normal life?