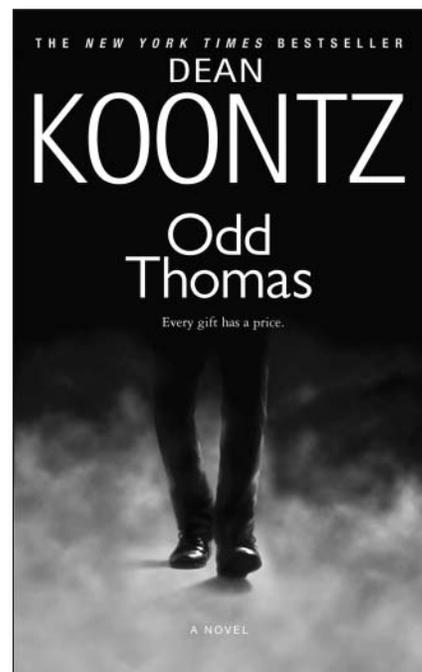




Odd Thomas

Written by Dean Koontz



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“Odd Thomas is another name for courage, truth and devotion to your fellow man.”

—*The Baton Rouge Advocate*

• note to teachers •

In *Odd Thomas*, acclaimed writer Dean Koontz presents us with a modern, provocative tale that explores the beauty and power of humility, the conquering charm of innocence, and the necessity of hope. Koontz also puts a unique and contemporary spin on the classic “good versus evil” story found in literature throughout the ages. Students will be able to relate to the story and the characters, especially to twenty-year-old Odd Thomas, and the text will allow you, as the teacher, the opportunity to explore several thematic units and character traits.

Students can use *Odd Thomas* as a springboard to compare and contrast characters and themes in such classic literature as Homer’s *The Odyssey*, Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*, and Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*. Yet, *Odd Thomas* offers a very modern story as well. Koontz’s references to contemporary culture, the modern world, and the supernatural will peak students’ interest. Students will come to create alliances with many characters, allowing them to make connections to the text and reflect upon their own personal stories of change and growth.

The protagonist, Odd Thomas, embarks on simultaneous journeys—one of adventure and self-realization, the other in the realm of the supernatural. Within these pages, students will experience an alluring voyage of a young boy coming of age as he tries to save the lives of others. Stormy, Odd’s girlfriend, describes Odd best when she says, “You’re as smart as anyone I’ve ever known... and yet so simple. It’s a lovely combination. Brains and innocence. Wisdom and naiveté. Sharp wit and genuine sweetness.”

Koontz’s characters, both good and evil, all struggle to discover who they are. At the same time, they also strive for a sense of belonging and connection to others. Their faults and weaknesses make them vulnerable, believable, and true-to-life characters. Their strengths give us hope and faith in people. Students will remain engaged as the plot twists and the suspense deepens. The author ultimately excels at offering a new tale of the strength of the human spirit, humility, innocence, good versus evil, and coming-of-age.

• about this book

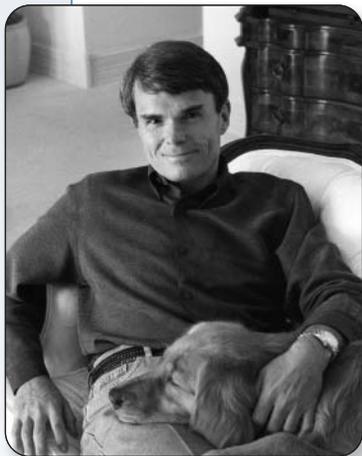
Odd Thomas is a memoir written by an innocent, self-deprecating young man who wishes to live a simple and unremarkable life. Since childhood, however, Odd's life has been complicated by his ability to see the spirits of the lingering dead, a talent that thwarts his hopes for quiet and anonymity. These lost souls seek Odd's help in leaving this world behind. He takes great satisfaction in being able to aid them, and his selfless efforts on their behalf function as a metaphor for a teenager's search for meaning in a world full of mystery. Elvis Presley, a recurring spirit and companion to Odd throughout the novel, expresses great concern about an unspecified, oncoming event that will do terrible damage to the little town of Pico Mundo, and Odd becomes increasingly convinced that a singular evil is imminent.

Odd is also able to see "bodachs," shadowy entities of unknown origin who are attracted to mass violence, and whose appearance always portends trouble. Although he is fearful of the "bodachs," their presence confirms that he needs to take action to prevent some great crime from being committed. Ultimately, Odd is torn between his desire for an ordinary, simple life and his supernatural gifts.

Although Odd lacks familial bonds, his relationships with characters such as Stormy, Chief Porter, Karla Porter, and Little Ozzie are meaningful, fulfilling, non-judgmental, and compassionate. Stormy's intense spirit and deep connection to Odd sustain him through troubling experiences and difficult decisions. Her solidity of self, sense of humor, and unfaltering ability to see things in a positive light will influence Odd's life in many ways. Stormy accepts and loves Odd unconditionally, which strengthens his convictions to do the right thing. Chief and Mrs. Porter, Odd's "surrogate parents," provide a balanced support system, and are dedicated and trustworthy friends. Odd's revelations to Chief Porter demonstrate his trust and respect for their relationship. Little Ozzie views Odd as a son, offering love, advice, companionship, and sometimes criticism. It is Little Ozzie who convinces Odd to write of the events in Pico Mundo, knowing that in the effort to tell his story, Odd will find meaning, solace, and a measure of peace.

Readers begin their journey with a boy and end with a more mature, wizened adult who is able to reflect upon the past and change his future.

• about the author



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DEAN KOONTZ is the writer of eleven #1 *New York Times* bestsellers. Read Odd Thomas' further adventures in *Forever Odd*, *Brother Odd*, and *Odd Hours*, and in graphic novels like *In Odd We Trust*. Dean lives with his wife, Gerda, and the enduring spirit of their golden retriever, Trixie, in Southern California.

• discussion, writing & comprehending the text

Note: All page references are from the mass market paperback edition.

1. Odd's first words to the reader are, "My name is Odd Thomas, though in this age when fame is the altar at which most people worship, I am not sure why you should care who I am or that I exist." What does he mean by this statement? What does Odd mean when he says, "fame is the altar at which most people worship"? (1)
2. Odd states, "Like me, you are human after all, and we know what a joy and terror that is." What emotions is Odd trying to evoke from the reader? (2)
3. What reason does Odd give for writing this memoir? (2-3)
4. Odd warns us that he is an "unreliable narrator." What do you think this means? How will this affect the way the novel reads? (4)
5. Stormy Llewellyn is a solid character with a deep sense of strength and humility. "In treacherous currents," Odd states, "she is kept steady by a moral anchor the size of a ship." Give an example that demonstrates this statement. What do you expect of this character? (8)
6. What does Odd realize after meeting Penny Kallisto? What does Odd do about the information he has received? What does Penny represent? (9)
7. What are Stormy's beliefs concerning this life and the next? (25)
8. When Odd speaks of the dead to Stormy, he says, "They pity us, I think, and no doubt they should." Why do you think Odd feels this way? (27)
9. We are introduced to Chief Porter. Based on his conversation with Odd, they have a history together. Tell about their relationship. What clues are given to indicate this information? (27-28)
10. Mrs. Sanchez is overwhelmed with fear. Why does she think she is invisible? What is she really asking Odd? (34)
11. What are "bodachs"? To what are they attracted? (37-38)
12. While working, Odd noticed "Fungus Man." How did he come to give him this name? Why does he feel that this man may be a threat? (43-44)
13. What makes Odd think that Terri is a latent medium? What is her connection to Elvis? (52)
14. Odd says, "So many things are beyond my control: the endless dead with all their requests, the bodachs, the prophetic dreams." What emotions provoked this statement? Refer to the text to support your answer. (57)
15. What does Stormy identify as "psychic magnetism"? (68)
16. Stormy says, "Maybe it's not a gift. Maybe it's a curse." What does she mean by this statement? (71)
17. Why did Odd break into Fungus Man's house? Describe the visit and his home. (77)
18. Describe Elvis' attire when he appears to Odd. How is this apparition different from all the others Odd sees? What significance do you think this has? (109)
19. Elvis, a familiar ghost to Odd, seems quite upset one day. He clasps Odd's hands as if he knows something dreadful is going to happen. About what do you think he is concerned? (120)
20. Upon leaving Ozzie's home, Odd says, "Each time I leave this house after a visit, Ozzie hugs me as a father hugs a beloved son, as neither of us was ever hugged by his father." What does this tell you about their relationship? (141)
21. Why do Stormy and Odd have dinner in the perch? What interrupted them? (146-150)
22. Stormy has very deep feelings for Odd. What does she tell him that she loves about him? (169-170)

• discussion, writing & comprehending the text (continued)

23. What do we learn of Stormy's past? How do you think this shaped her identity? (174)
24. In response to Varner's explanation of the tattoo, Stormy says, "Lots of people rewrite their pasts rather than face up to it." What is she implying? (191)
25. Odd finds Stormy compelling and intriguing. What does he mean when he says, "I can see the dead, but I can't see through you?" (192)
26. Describe Stormy's home. What does it tell you about her? How does Odd feel there? (230-231)
27. What is the significance of the card from the fortune-telling machine? (231)
28. Upon returning to his apartment, Odd discovered Robertson's body. What decision does he make? Why did he do this? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. (244)
29. After seeing Karla Porter, Odd compares her to Stormy. How are they alike? What do they each, in their way, bring to Odd's life? (300)
30. How did Odd's father respond when he answered the door and found Odd? What type of relationship do you think they have based on this response? (356)
31. Describe Odd's childhood. How did the experiences of his childhood create the person he has become? (368)
32. How does Odd feel about Granny Sugars not intervening in his life? What role might she have played in his mother's illness? (380)
33. Describe the scene at the mall. (411)
34. Although he wants to look for Stormy, Odd is distracted by a "magnetism." Where is he being led? What thoughts are racing through his mind? (418)
35. Describe the meeting with Stormy in the ICU. (428)
36. What was the relationship between Gosset, Eckles, Varner, and Robertson? (434)
37. What was Odd's reaction to Stormy's death? Why could he not accept that he was communicating with her not as a living person? (442)
38. How do you think Odd's life changed after these events? (445)
39. The epigraph from *The Book of Counted Joys*, at the front of the book, suggests that a key theme of this novel is the necessity for perseverance in the face of life's misfortunes. In Odd Thomas's life, many things have happened to him that required perseverance. How many can you list? What experience tested his perseverance the most?
40. Of all the qualities of Odd's character, his humility may be the most striking. He does not believe he is a hero, only a fry cook with unwanted gifts. Do you think Odd is aware of his deep humility? Or is it such a natural part of him that he does not even recognize it?

• suggested activities/teaching ideas

1. The classic struggle between good and evil has long been a recurrent theme in literature. Introduce students to classic works of literature that are parallel to *Odd Thomas*, such as *The Odyssey* by Homer, *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, and *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. Begin a thematic unit on good versus evil. Have students compare elements found in different works of literature. How do the writings differ? What components do they share? How do the expectations of students differ when reading classics versus modern literature? Create graphic organizers comparing the two styles of writing. Students will write a persuasive essay arguing what style they prefer, and why.
2. Introduce a unit on poetry. Instruct students to write Diamante style poems (good versus evil).
3. Have students choose a character from the text and create a silhouette of the character as the student imagines them to appear. Within the silhouette, students will write a description of their character and the experiences they have had without revealing the person. This will be done as an essay. Upon completion, students will read and present their silhouettes to the class, and the other students will attempt to guess the character.
4. Have students analyze and respond to the following quotes. Students should include their opinions, thoughts and/or feelings. They should cite specific examples and reference the text to support their answers.
 - “I’m not the law. I’m not vigilante justice. I’m not vengeance personified. I don’t really know what I am or why.” (14)
 - “I want anonymity, a simple and quiet life, or at least as simple as the spirits will allow.” (29)
 - “I see dead people. But then, by God I do something about it.” (32)
 - “Fire scares me, yes, and earthquakes and venomous snakes. People scare me more than anything, for I know too well the savagery of which mankind is capable.” (83)
 - “Because my Granny Sugars had only recently died and because I’d been missing her, I wrote a piece about her. Unfortunately, it won first prize, making me a minor celebrity in high school, though I preferred to keep a low profile.” (133)
 - “They fail to explore these experiences in part because they believe that acknowledging the supernatural world would be irrational. They are also frightened, often unconsciously, by the prospect of opening their minds and hearts to the truth of a universe far more complex and meaningful than the material world that their education tells them is the sum of all things.” (196)
 - “I wanted to please her. Pleasing her pleases me, and then the birds sing sweeter than usual and the bees make better honey and the world is a place of rejoicing—or so it seems from my perspective.” (225)
 - “In jail, I would be safe from whatever bloody catastrophe might be descending on Pico Mundo, but I would be in no position to use my gift to prevent the tragedy.” (249)
 - “Guilt and shame have, until now kept me silent on this issue. I am old enough, even if just twenty to know that I have no logical reason to feel guilt or shame, that I was the victim, not the victimizer. Yet I’ve been so long marinated in both emotions that they will forever flavor me.” (381)

• writing prompts

1. Odd Thomas' dry, wisecracking humor is scattered throughout the memoir. When Odd discovers Fungus Man's name, he says, "Good-bye Fungus Man; hello Bob." Reference three additional statements and/or comments that reveal this lighter side of Odd's personality.
2. Odd refers to his fear of guns throughout the memoir. Why is he so afraid of them? What childhood fears or experiences do you think have influenced your life until now?
3. Who was your favorite character? Why? What connections were you able to make with this character? Would you change anything about him/her? Tell why or why not.

• beyond the text

Answer each question using specific examples and references to the text. Include your opinion and points of view for each answer.

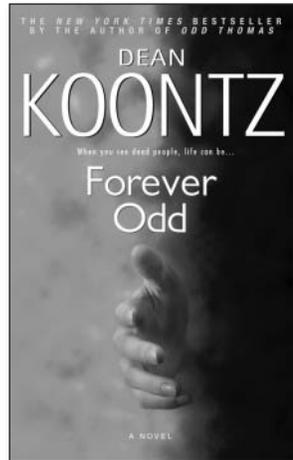
1. Homes are described a great deal in relation to the characters that inhabit them. Compare and contrast three homes described in the book. Tell about the people who live in them and how their homes represent them. Describe your home (or room). How is it a representation of you? What would you change about it if you could, and why?
2. Many of the relationships Odd has to male characters in the book are described as father-son in nature. Identify two of these relationships and give a detailed explanation. Briefly describe a relationship you share that has helped you through difficult times.

• vocabulary

1. *attribution, n.* - something, such as a quality or characteristic, that is related to a particular possessor.
2. *countenance, n.* - appearance, especially the look or expression of the face.
3. *cynic, n.* - a person who believes that only selfishness motivates human actions and who disbelieves in or minimizes selfless acts as disinterested points of view.
4. *edifices, n.* - a building, especially one of imposing appearance or size.
5. *gesticulate, v.* - to make or use gestures, especially in an animated or excited manner with or instead of speech.
6. *inexplicable, adj.* - incapable of being accounted for or explained.
7. *irrational, adj.* - without the faculty of reason; without or deprived of normal mental clarity or sound judgment.
8. *manifestation, n.* - one of the forms in which someone or something, such as a person, a divine being, or an idea is revealed.
9. *refinement, n.* - fineness or elegance of feeling, taste, manners, language, etc.
10. *self-effacing, adj.* - not drawing attention to oneself; modest.
11. *sinuous, adj.* - having many curves, bends, or turns; winding.
12. *unerringly, adv.* - invariably precise or correct.
13. *vigorous, adj.* - strong; active; robust; powerful in action or effect.

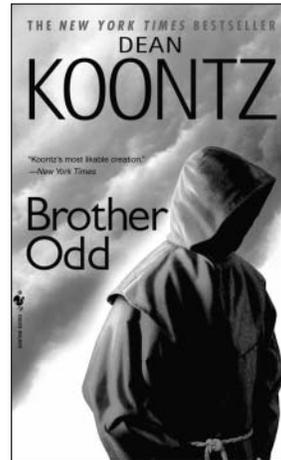
** Definitions were taken from Dictionary.com, an online compilation of dictionaries and reference materials.

• further Odd Thomas adventures



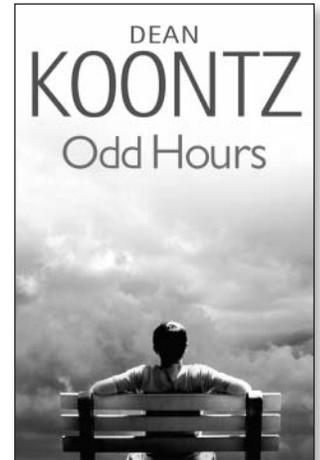
Forever Odd

Book Two in the series. Odd embarks on a journey of sheer terror and anguish as he discovers his childhood friend has disappeared.



Brother Odd

Book Three in the series. As Odd Thomas seeks solitude and peace in a sanctuary in California's High Sierra, he is once again faced with an enemy. Odd is to embark on his most mysterious and suspenseful journey yet.



Odd Hours

Book Four in the series. Drawn to a small town by the sea where nothing is as it seems, Odd Thomas prepares for the worst.

• resources

- www.deankoontz.com
- www.oddthomas.tv
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• about this guide's writer

DANIELLE SILVERSTEIN is a reading specialist, reading tutor, and adjunct lecturer. She lives in Queens, NY, with her husband, Michael, and their two children.

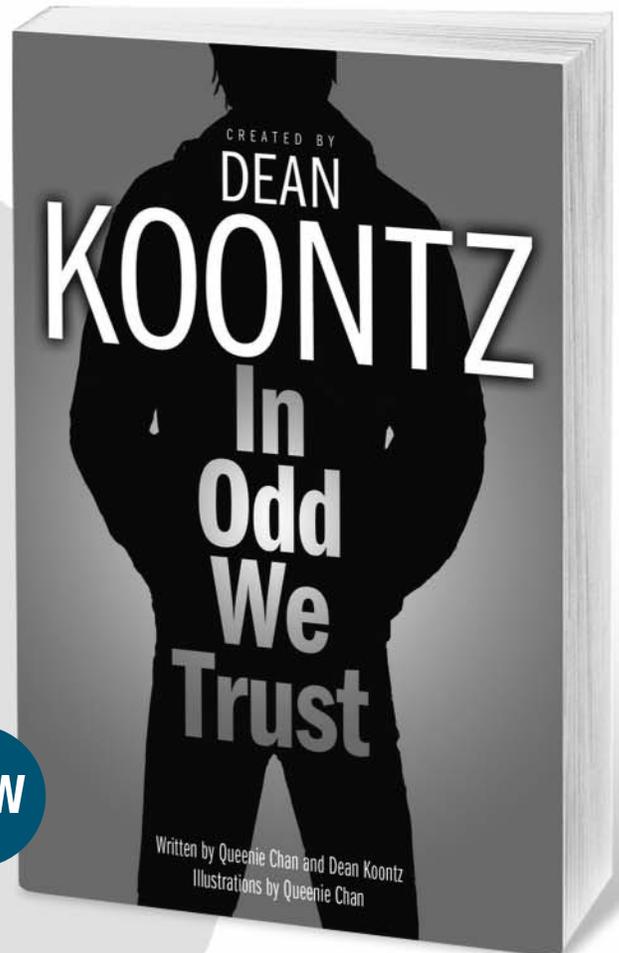
Read and see Odd Thomas in a whole new way!

In Odd We Trust is an exciting new graphic novel that follows Odd's race to solve the murder of a young boy whose killer appears to be stalking a second child.

Odd's girlfriend, Stormy, Police Chief Porter, the ghost of Elvis Presley and many other characters from the novel appear as well. Author Dean Koontz and illustrator Queenie Chan collaborated on this project. The following pages offer a brief preview.

About the Illustrator

QUEENIE CHAN began drawing at the age of 18, and in 2004 began a mystery-horror series called *The Dreaming* for Los Angeles-based manga publisher Tokyopop. Since then, the series has been translated into four languages, with the third and final installment arriving in November 2007. Apart from her professional work, she also draws a number of online manga strips on her personal site: www.queeniechan.com.



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