



Beyond Repair

Lois Peterson

Reading Level: 2.9

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AR Quiz # 143396

Book Summary

As much as life has irrevocably changed since the death of his father, much has stayed the same for Cam. He's always had a great deal of responsibility around the house, but the burden is heavier now because of the grief he's been carrying. After the man who was driving the truck that killed his father turns up at the end of the driveway, Cam feels pressure to keep his family safe. He starts to see the man everywhere: at his work, in stores, even at his sister's school. Cam needs to know what the man wants from his family, and he starts following his father's killer in search of answers.

Author Biography

Lois Peterson wrote short stories and articles for adults for twenty years before turning to writing for young people. She was born in England and has lived in Iraq, France and the United States. Recently retired from her job as a librarian, she now lives in Surrey, British Columbia, where she writes, reads and teaches creative writing to adults, teens and children.

Connecting to the Text

Character

Even before Cam's dad died, Cam had many responsibilities, including the family's grocery shopping, taking care of his sister, Leah, and holding a part-time job at the video store. After his dad died, some relatives told him, "Your mother and sister depend on you. You're the man of the house now" (ch. 1). Cam has a lot to manage, including his own feelings of grief. He says, "Real men don't throw cereal bowls" because he's feeling angry and overwhelmed, but doesn't have a place to express these feelings. In chapter 3 he says, "Jeez. A couple of months ago I'd never have been so mean."

- Ask students to keep a journal that follows Cam's feelings about what it means to "be a man" and his own sense of responsibility to his family. How does it change throughout the novel? Does his mom share Cam's sense of responsibility? Encourage students to record quotations from the text that demonstrate the change Cam goes through.

Point of View

Cam and Cam's mom refer to Mr. Klausen as a "killer" and "the man who killed [our] father." In chapter 12, we learn that Mr. Klausen was driving along a road when Cam's father stepped out in front of the vehicle without looking first. We also learn throughout the novel that Cam's dad was often absent-minded, distracted and not focused on the tasks at hand. What happened was clearly an accident.

- Ask students to reflect on this situation and the language that Cam's family uses to describe the driver of the vehicle, Mr. Klausen. Is he really a "killer"? Does that word imply intent? Why do Cam and his mom use that word? Are there other words they could use?

Theme

One of the themes in *Beyond Repair* is recognizing that people deal with death and loss differently. As they are reading, ask students to compare how Cam, Leah, their mom and Mr. Klausen each deal with the death of Cam's father. How do they respond, and are there changes in their responses over the course of the novel? Encourage students to find quotations from the text. For example, in chapter 1, we learn that Leah cries every time someone mentions her dad's name, and that Cam carries a lot of anger.

- Introduce students to the work of Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, who explored the five stages of grief in her book, *On Death and Dying* (1969). She found that the five stages applied to people who were dying as well as people who were experiencing loss: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. She also noted that people don't experience all stages, nor are they experienced in a particular order. Ask students to identify evidence of any of these stages in the characters and plot of *Beyond Repair*.

The Writer's Craft

1. There are a number of examples of alliteration in *Beyond Repair* (see examples below). Ask students to consider how alliteration lends interest to names, situations and events and helps us remember them. Invite students to find other examples from sports teams, video games, movies, brand names, etc.
 - (ch. 2) “*Sad Sack Stacie*”
 - (ch. 3) “*Marcus the Midget Manager*”
 - (ch. 5) “*seriously spooked*”
2. In chapter 4, Lois Peterson creates powerful images of Cam’s memory of his dad’s death. Cam says, “Waiting in the cold hallway at the morgue while my mom had to...Standing in a huddle in the pouring rain at the cemetery. I thought funerals held under dripping black umbrellas only happened at the movies.” Another example can be found in chapter 8: “My head is spinning as I look one way, then another, at a shadow, someone passing, a movement, any movement.” These images help us imagine what was happening for Cam in this scene and therefore understand him better.
 - ◆ Invite students to write powerful and creative sentences that illustrate another scene from the novel. Examples could include: the newspaper clippings under Cam’s bed; Cam’s growing feeling of paranoia as he thinks he is seeing Mr. Klausen everywhere; or Cam’s feelings after he realized Mr. Klausen had been in the video store.
3. An example of irony can be found in the death scene of Cam’s father. In chapter 4, Cam says, “The man who killed my dad—he was on his way to visit his own dad. Who is still alive, I guess. Part of me wishes his father had died.” As students to think of examples of irony, reminding them that irony doesn’t always have to be something tragic. Examples to get students going, include:
 - ◆ Handing in an assignment on “the importance of being on time,” late!
 - ◆ Your friend is always talking about being in shape so why does he smoke?
 - ◆ A group of weathermen go camping and get rained out!

Connecting to the Curriculum***Language Arts***

Both Cam and Mr. Klausen are suffering because of what happened in the accident. When Cam and Mr. Klausen meet and talk about it in chapter 16, they come to an agreement that Mr. Klausen can’t overcome his own guilt by helping Cam and his family, and that he must leave them alone forever. This is a big step for Cam, and he is relieved afterwards.

- Ask students to consider how Mr. Klausen might feel after their conversation. Students can reflect on this through journal writing, or by writing a letter to Mr. Klausen offering advice on how to move on with his life.

Vocabulary

Challenge students to write short stories or descriptive paragraphs using four or more of the vocabulary words below from *Beyond Repair*. Story ideas are given below, or students may wish to create their own. Encourage students to draw comparisons to characters or plot from the novel, where they can.

Themes: stake-out, observation, mystery

- We were pretty sure we knew who was stealing all the cash from everyone's lockers, but there was only one way to find out for sure...
- Seems like every time me and my pals go to the movies, that same weird guy is always hanging around by the entrance. We thought we'd figure the mystery out by sticking around the parking lot after the theatre closed...
- Something about that abandoned corner store that doesn't feel right. It's been closed for over two years and now the light is on in the back every Saturday night...

confront
creeps
curiosity
direction

disappear
follow
inconspicuous
instinct

lurking
privacy
probably
stake out

stalking
suddenly
suspicious-looking
wondering

Themes: stress, mental health, responsibility

- Sometimes I feel like I've been given more than I can handle. When that happens...
- My friend really has it tough. His mom is alone and has to work two jobs, so my friend has to do all the work at home. I think the stress is starting to getting to him because...
- Sometimes when I'm super stressed out, I imagine that I'm with a psychologist, and really pouring my heart out. It's helpful because...

angry
amnesia
crying
depend

frustration
imagination
memory
mind

nervous
panicky
paranoia
protective

psychologist
supposed to
unusual
worried

Connecting to the Students—Ideas for Exploration

In chapter 3, Cam and DJ talk about following Mr. Klausen to “check him out...and suss out what he wants.” Cam says, “That makes us as bad as him, doesn’t it? Mom called it stalking when he showed up here. It’s stalking when he tracks me down at work. So it’s stalking if we follow him.” As a group or in teams, ask students to research what “stalking” means and when actions like Mr. Klausen’s or Cam and DJ’s have “crossed the line.” Have the group share their findings, connecting to the novel where possible.

Web Resources

An overview of the five stages of grieving

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%BCbler-Ross_model

Alliteration activities

www.lessonplanet.com/article/language-arts/alliteration-activities-and-lesson-ideas