



B Negative

Vicki Grant

Reading level: 3.1

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AR Quiz # 143366

Book Summary

Paddy Armstrong is willing to join the Army to get away from his overbearing stepdad, Anthony, even if it means losing his girlfriend and his place in the band. But Paddy has no idea that a routine checkup will uncover a family secret that will forever change the lives of everyone in his family. Paddy has type B negative blood, yet his mom and the man that Paddy has believed to be his father all his life both have type A. So when Paddy learns that two parents with type A blood cannot have a child with B negative blood, he knows John Armstrong is not his father. The startling revelation brings with it a myriad of questions—questions that demand answers, no matter how painful they may be.

Prereading Idea

Blood types of parents have a direct correlation on what blood types their children will have. Paddy has B negative blood type, an impossible outcome based on who he believes his parents to be, and key to the conflict in the story. Go to the following website to find out what blood type his actual biological parents could have had.

www.biology.arizona.edu/human_bio/problem_sets/blood_types/inherited.html

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Whether Paddy's mother knew who his real father was or not, Paddy wrongly believed John was his biological father. Ask students to investigate this problem of incorrect identification of a child's father: How often does it occur? What are the laws regarding correcting the father's name on a birth certificate? Does child support wrongly paid have to be paid back? What is the moral obligation, if any, of the wrongly named father? Have students use answers to these questions and others that might arise in class discussion to write a human interest newspaper article about Paddy and his situation or another situation, fictional or not. Have students share and then post their newspaper articles.
- When Paddy discovers the truth about his father, his feelings are raw and confused. As a class, brainstorm and write on the board words or phrases that reveal Paddy's feelings and confusion. Have students select from among the brainstormed phrases and additional ideas to write a poem expressing Paddy's feelings about his father and mother and the situation in which he finds himself. Have students select appropriate background music to accompany their poems and share their poem and music with the class.

Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel***Characterization***

Ask students to complete a Venn diagram for a compare and contrast poster about Anthony and John, the fathers in Paddy's life. Students should include usual interactions with Paddy, reaction of each to the "news," and changes in behavior and attitude resulting from the revelation of the reversal of their roles as father and stepfather. Students should focus on the above and the "before" and "after" aspects of their relationships. Have students prepare the compare and contrast poster from Paddy's viewpoint, and share and post their posters in the classroom.

Theme

Generally speaking, the theme of a book revolves around the main character—what he learns and/or how he changes as a result of his experiences. Based on Paddy's experiences and what the reader learns about Paddy, what is the theme of *B Negative*? As a class, ask students to brainstorm and write several thematic statements on sentence strips. Then ask each student to write a personal connection to one of the themes on a 4x6 index card. Display sentences strips and the students' personal connections to them around the room.

Conflict

Conflict is what makes the story interesting and entertaining to read. In *B Negative*, Paddy deals with both internal and external conflict, and his reaction to the conflicts are what moves the story forward. Ask students to make a list of both his internal and external conflicts and how Paddy resolves them. Working in small groups, have students write a skit depicting one of the conflicts Paddy faces. Students may incorporate drama, exaggeration, humor, sarcasm or other elements to highlight the conflicts. Have students perform their skits for the class.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Why does Paddy make the decision to join the Army? What is Paddy's mother's reaction? Why is Tara so upset with Paddy about his decision to join the Army?
2. Why does Paddy's mother enlist Dr. Wallace to talk to him about joining the Army instead of Anthony or John? What does Dr. Wallace tell Paddy that sets the revealing of the lie in motion?
3. When Paddy tells the band he is joining the Army, the band members are angry. Paddy asks himself, "Why does everybody act like this is about their life, not mine?" How would you answer Paddy's question?
4. When Paddy figures out that John—the man he has always thought was his dad—is not his biological father, what is his first reaction? Why does Paddy hit Anthony? Why is Paddy so angry?
5. What is John Armstrong's reaction to the news that Paddy is not his son? Why is he angry at Paddy?
6. How do John and Paddy save each other's lives?
7. What role do John and Anthony play in Paddy's future? How will the family mesh together?
8. What does Paddy learn as a result of the revelation of his real father?

Writer's Craft***Foreshadowing***

When Paddy and his mother run into Nadine in the coffee shop, and she says about Paddy, "Wow. The resemblance is amazing." What does she mean? Based on Paddy's mother's reaction, is this the first time she has thought that Anthony might be Paddy's father? What other clues does the author give the reader that Anthony could be Paddy's biological father?

Author Biography

Vicki Grant always knew she wanted to be a writer, and after she graduated from college, she was hired as an advertising copywriter. She learned the characteristics of good writing and what it meant to meet deadlines and to take criticism. From advertising, she began writing for a children's television series, but after seven years, she took some time for herself to write her first novel. Vicki lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, with her husband and three children.