



Crash

Lesley Choyce

Reading level: 3.2

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Book Summary

Cameron's life falls apart when his parents get a divorce; his father moves out of town, and his mother moves in with her boyfriend leaving Cameron with no place to live. As Cameron begins to deal with the changes in his life, he meets Mackenzie, a homeless girl, who offers Cameron a different outlook on life. But soon after she moves into his home, the police put everything Cameron owns on the curb, and padlock the doors on the house. So starts a new life as a homeless teen, with his only worldly possessions his dog Ozzie and what he can carry in a backpack. As Cameron learns to navigate the streets, he realizes his life will never be the same—and that might just be for the best.

Prereading Idea

Ask students to read the fact sheet on the following website: www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/youth.html. Discuss the topic of homeless teens with the class. Ask students to brainstorm ways that, as young adolescents, they can make an impact on the problem of homelessness among teens.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Mackenzie is homeless because her parents were drug addicts. Cameron also becomes homeless as a result of his parents' choices. Ask students to research the topic of homeless teens to determine reasons they find themselves homeless and to learn how they survive on the streets.
- The high school dropout rate has steadily increased. Ask students to work in small groups and to prepare a digital presentation about staying in school. Students should research the reasons kids drop out and address those reasons in their presentations. As a class select the most convincing presentation(s) and have students post their digital presentations on the school's website as a parent resource.

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

Cameron learns about life and relationships on the street. As a class, brainstorm a list of life lessons Cameron and Mackenzie learn through their experiences on the street. Then ask each pair of students to select one of the lessons and to write a poem with the selected theme: a poem for two voices, a narrative poem, or others. Students should use supporting details from the novel, including “found” phrases and ideas, and practice and present their poems to the class.

Characterization

In chapter 1, Cameron tells the reader that he doesn't want “the old me.” When he makes his New Year's resolution, Cameron has no idea how his life is going to change. Being homeless allows Cameron to discover who he is and the character traits he possesses. Using support from the novel, ask students to write a character analysis of Cameron and how living on the street changes who he is and allows him to reinvent himself. Students can share their analysis with the class.

Setting

Living on the streets and attending high school prove to be almost impossible for Cameron and Mackenzie. As a class, discuss how living on the streets impacts the two characters and the conflicts that they face. Have students work in small groups and draw from a selection of other settings (time and place) such as: civil war, worldwide depression, natural disasters, wilderness trek, worldwide pandemic, aftermath of nuclear war, etc. Have students create a comparison and contrast visual that highlights the similarities and differences between the two settings and the impact on the characters and the conflicts that they face. Post the visuals and have students take a gallery walk to better understand the importance of setting.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. What prompted Cameron's New Year's resolution? How do his parents destroy his resolve to change?
2. Why is Cameron set against moving in with Nick? What does Cameron's mother think about his choice not to move into Nick's basement?
3. Why does Cameron choose the streets over living with either of his parents? Does he regret his decision?
4. Why is Cameron attracted to Mackenzie? Why does he agree to follow her rules? How does their relationship grow and change?
5. Why does Mackenzie walk out on Cameron? What is Cameron's reaction to her departure?
6. In chapter 9, why does Cameron see Ethan as a lifeline? Why doesn't he follow Ethan's advice to go home?
7. Why does Cameron dislike panhandling? How does panhandling make Cameron feel?
8. What role does Ozzie play in Cameron's life? How does Ozzie help and hinder Cameron and Mackenzie?
9. Why does Cameron feel like he and Mackenzie have found a home when they meet Margaret Sampson in chapter 17?

Writer's Craft*Vocabulary*

Ask students to find the following words in the book and then to look up their meanings in the dictionary, writing the definition that most closely fits the meaning of the word the way it is used in the sentence. Have students create a student-developed writing dictionary to be used throughout the year. Students should add a page for each of the words and list the meaning of the word; students will continue to build their understanding of the words by adding synonyms, antonyms, illustrations and ways they see the word used during the year.

badgered	(ch. 15)	splurged	(ch. 11)
condescending	(ch. 12)	tekking	(ch. 16)
meager	(ch. 10)	tirade	(ch. 4)
scrounge	(ch. 9)	taipsed	(ch. 10)
snarky	(ch. 12)	vulnerable	(ch. 12)

Author Biography

Lesley Choyce teaches part-time at Dalhousie University, hosts a nationally-syndicated TV talk show in Halifax, runs Pottersfield Press and has written over eighty adult and young adult books, including science fiction, fantasy, poetry and nonfiction. He is a writer, publisher, educator, musician and television host. He surfs year-round and has worked as a rehab counselor, a freight hauler, a corn farmer, a janitor, a journalist, a lead guitarist, a newspaper boy and a well-digger. He lives in a 200-year-old farm house at Lawrencetown Beach overlooking the ocean. He says, "I decided to be a writer with high hopes that it would allow me to avoid work. When writing turned out to be work as well as fun, I stuck with it anyway."