



## ***Fallout***

Nikki Tate

Reading level: 3.0

978-1-55469-976-6 PB

978-1-55146-997-6 LIB

### **Book Summary**

The year after Hannah commits suicide, her older sister Tara competes in a poetry slam, reading poems she has written about her sister's death. The poems are sad but realistic as Tara struggles through the first year of her loss—without the help of her emotionally distant parents.

### **Prereading Idea**

Ask students to investigate a poetry slam and to make a list of characteristics of essentials and elements of a poetry slam. Then as students share their list, compile a master list of guidelines, rules and unique elements of a poetry slam and how one functions.

### Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Have students work in small groups of three or four to investigate teen suicide for both factual data and personal stories. Have each group prepare a brochure focusing on one of the following: trends in teen suicide, medications and strategies to combat teen depression, danger signs of teen depression, school and community resources for depressed teens, or community resources for grieving families. Post the brochures in visible locations in the school, such as the hallways, the library and the counseling office.
- As a class, discuss some of the feelings, conflicts and loss that Tara experiences upon the death of her sister. Have each student work with a partner to write a poem for two voices incorporating similar strong feelings, conflicts or loss that one of the students, a friend or a family member has experienced in relation to a life event. Prepare the students for a poetry slam and arrange to have class in the library. Have each pair perform their poem for two voices, much like Ebony and Tara do in chapter 3.
- After reading book reviews of teen books on the sites below, ask students to write a book review for *Fallout*.
  - ◆ The following websites publish reviews for young adult books:  
[www.yabookscentral.com/cfusion/index.cfm?fuseAction=books.reviews](http://www.yabookscentral.com/cfusion/index.cfm?fuseAction=books.reviews)  
[www.teenreads.com](http://www.teenreads.com)
  - ◆ The following websites will offer helpful guidelines for writing reviews.  
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/bookrev/tips.htm>  
<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/bookrev.html>

After writing their review, students can post them at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

### Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel

#### *Plot*

*Fallout* could be considered a novel in verse because the story within the story is told in free verse form. Each story, Hannah's suicide told in free verse and Tara's struggle told in prose, has its own plot. Both story plots include four stages: exposition, rising action, climax and falling action. In groups of four, ask students to identify what occurs in each stage of each plot line. Have students complete a storyboard of twelve sections on an 8½ x 14 piece of paper. For each section, have students draw a visual to represent major events and include a caption explaining the action and identifying which stage of the plot is involved. Focusing on the plot stages, have students create their own personal storyboard to use as a tool to prewrite their own individual narrative or free verse stories.

**Conflict**

Tara's internal conflict drives the story forward as she lives the first year after her sister's suicide. Ask students to make a list of the conflicts Tara is experiencing. For example, guilt over not answering the phone, guilt over arranging that Hannah ride the bus after her accident, and anger at her parents for their lack of emotional availability. In pairs, ask students to choose a specific conflict and to rewrite the conflict as a dialogue in which the conflict is amicably resolved. Have the students share the rewrites with the class by performing the scenes.

**Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions**

1. How does Tara's poetry help her cope with her sister's death, her parents' divorce and her mother and father's refusal to accept life as it happens?
2. After hearing another Hannah poem, Ebony says, "I can't decide if I wish I'd known her or I'm kind of glad I didn't," (ch. 8). How does this statement affect Tara? How could Tara change the tone and subject of her poetry to allow people to know who Hannah was in life?
3. Why does Tara break up with David after Hannah's death? What role does David continue to play in Tara's life?
4. What does Tara read in Hannah's journal that sends Tara into a tailspin of depression? How does Ebony help Tara out of the abyss of darkness?
5. How do Rosie and Tara help each other heal from the pain of loss in their lives? What brings the girls together?

**Writer's Craft****Personification**

Personification is giving human characteristics or feelings to non-living objects. Ask students to read the following excerpt, paying close attention to the personification.

(ch. 8) "*For a long time I listen to the rain punish the world.*"

Ask students to find a scene in the book in which they can use personification to create a mood or enhance the author's message. Have students write and illustrate their creations and display the students' work in the classroom.

**Author Biography**

**Nikki Tate** is an author and professional storyteller. She works as a freelance writer; her articles, reviews and opinion pieces have appeared in publications in Canada, Japan and the United States. When she is not working, Nikki enjoys puttering in her garden, camping, kayaking, horseback riding, traveling, and building big things with sticks and string. Nikki lives on Vancouver Island in British Columbia with her father, her daughter and a menagerie of well-loved animals.