



Kryptonite

Lesley Choyce

Reading level: 3.9

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Book Summary

Jackson knows how to get what he wants. Whether it's sweet-talking his friends into buying lunch or convincing teachers to give him extensions, he feels entitled to take whatever he wants—even a day off school or a new pair of shoes. Now he's set his sights on Abby, a troubled girl fresh out of juvie who only has eyes for Bryce, the go-to dealer of a dangerous but not yet illegal new drug called kryptonite.

Prereading Idea

Ask students to discuss what they know about the original fictional radioactive element Kryptonite and how it affects Superman. Then ask them: "If a drug had the name kryptonite, what could be the possible effects on the user?" After the discussion, ask students to compile their ideas into a short paragraph that predicts what the effects of kryptonite will entail and how the drug will impact the story.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Jackson writes an eye-opening self-reflection in the opening pages of chapter 4. Ask students to read these pages and then, using Jackson's style, write their own self-reflection. Allow students who want to share their self-reflections to do so.
- Jackson dislikes Mr. Carmichael and doesn't understand why Mr. Carmichael is so hard on him. Ask students to write a letter to Jackson from Mr. Carmichael, explaining what he sees in Jackson and why he pushes him so hard. The letter should include the steps Mr. Carmichael has taken to show Jackson how much he cares. Have students share their letters in small groups.
- Jackson learns from Mr. Carmichael what an ethical dilemma is and realizes how involving himself with Abby and Bryce has proved unwise. Ask students to write about an ethical dilemma they have experienced or encountered with another person and the decisions they made to resolve the dilemma. Have students conclude their writing with a final statement about the impact of the moral dilemma on their lives.

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

Generally speaking, the theme of a book revolves around the main characters—what they learn and/or how they change as a result of the story's events. Ask students what they would say is the theme of *Kryptonite* based on its three main characters. Have them brainstorm as a class and write several thematic statements on sentence strips. As a prompt, you may want to ask them if they think the title might have a secondary meaning (hint: Abby's effect on Jackson). Then ask each student to write a personal connection to one of the themes on a 4-x-6-inch index card. Display sentence strips and the students' personal connections to them around the room.

Conflict

The author establishes several conflicts in the first few chapters of the book. With the students, brainstorm a list of the conflicts, categorize them as internal or external, and note the resolution to each conflict. Then ask students to find a partner and draw a cartoon demonstrating one of the conflicts and what, if any, lesson was learned by the characters in the story. Have students share their cartoons in small groups and post them in the classroom.

Character

Jackson is a complex, dynamic character who changes as a result of his experiences. After reflecting on Jackson's character and listing his character traits, ask students to write an analysis of Jackson's character. Students should determine which of Jackson's traits did not change and also how Jackson matured as a result of his experience with Abby and Bryce. Students should include evidence from the book to support their analyses. Have students share their analyses with their classmates in small groups.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Mr. Carmichael says to Jackson, “There’s a word for you, mister.” What word is Jackson afraid Mr. Carmichael will call him? What is Jackson afraid Mr. Carmichael will find out?
2. When Abby catches up with Jackson after he steals the shoes, why does she let him go?
3. What does Abby figure out about Jackson before she asks him to help her find Bryce?
4. Why is Abby so determined to find Bryce after he treated her so badly?
5. What game does Jackson start playing with Abby? What is Jackson’s motive in helping her?
6. How are Bryce’s and Jackson’s personalities similar? How are they different?
7. In chapter 10 (page 57), Jackson says, “Bryce was a force of nature.” How does this help Jackson understand Abby’s attraction to Bryce?
8. Why is Jackson intent on playing a game with Abby and Bryce when he knows that losing the game will potentially cost him so much? What is Jackson risking?
9. Which decisions does Jackson make that show he has some integrity and intelligence?
10. Why does Jackson ultimately choose to forget Abby and keep her out of his life?

Writer’s Craft***Dialogue***

The author uses a lot of dialogue to tell the story, enabling readers to stay focused on the plot and the characters. Partner students and have them write a conversation, using the dialogue in the story as a model, between:

1. Jackson and Abby or Bryce, revealing the situation about kryptonite;
2. Jackson and Abby as they try to find Bryce; or
3. Jackson and Mr. Carmichael discussing Jackson’s plagiarism.

Ask partners to present their dialogues to the class.

Author Biography

Lesley Choyce, who has been teaching English and creative writing for over thirty years, is the author of dozens of books, including *Identify* and *Scam* in the Orca Soundings series. He has won the Dartmouth Book Award, the Atlantic Poetry Prize and the Ann Connor Brimer Award. He has also been short-listed for the Stephen Leacock Medal, the White Pine Award, the Hackmatack Award, the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Award and, most recently, the Governor General’s Literary Award. For more information, visit www.lesleychoyce.com.