



My Time as Caz Hazard

Tanya Lloyd Kyi

Reading level: 3.2

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AR Quiz # 83809

Book Summary

Following her two-week suspension for a violent incident, Caz Hallard transfers to a different school where she is placed in a class for students with learning disabilities. In that class she meets Amanda and together they bully fellow students, steal from stores in the mall and refuse to complete assignments. In constant trouble, Caz and Amanda are also targeted by other bullies at their school who call them and the other students in their class “Speds.” Life takes a turn for both Caz and Amanda when a girl they have been bullying commits suicide.

Prereading Idea

My Time as Caz Hazard touches on issues that many teens face: divorce, peer pressure, bullying, suicide, learning disabilities and shoplifting. Ask students to write a brief account explaining how one of these issues has affected their lives or the life of someone they know. Ask students to share their writing with the class.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Most schools have programs and classes, similar to those in Caz's school, for students with special learning needs. Ask a special education teacher to speak to the class about different types of emotional and learning disabilities. Then assign students a learning disability to research or allow them to select one of their own choosing. Ask students to write a paper from the viewpoint of a fictional disabled student. Students should define their character's disability and give an example of how the disease affects learning. Students can compile their accounts into a video presentation. Possible audiences include parent or community organizations and teacher or student groups.
- Caz experiences bullying, and she bullies others in her school; both have devastating results. Ask students to investigate the problem associated with bullying and the programs available to help students recognize and cope with bullying. Then in small groups, ask students to write a skit that demonstrates bullying. Have each group perform their skit in front of the class. After each performance, discuss with students appropriate and inappropriate ways the bullied student could have handled the situation.

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

The theme of the book can often be determined by the lessons the character learns and how those lessons affect the character's personality and attitude toward life. In groups of three, ask students to make a chart listing the main characters in one column, the lessons learned by each of those characters in another column, and the results the lessons have on each character's life in the final column. Then, ask each group to write a poem that incorporates the information from the chart and ends with a thematic statement. Have the groups present and then display their poems in the classroom.

Conflict

The author establishes several conflicts in the first three 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.

Plot

The plot of the story would be an effective movie screenplay. As a class, determine which famous actor would play each part. Then, divide the class into thirteen groups and assign each group a chapter to rewrite as a movie script. When completed, combine the chapters to make one script and have students perform the screenplay.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Caz is suspended from school for hitting her boyfriend, and she receives two weeks of suspension. Does the punishment fit the crime, or is two weeks excessive? Why or why not? How does this punishment compare to that which a student would receive in your school?
2. Caz and Amanda justify stealing by minimizing the effect it has on others and rationalizing that what they steal is somehow owed to them. They first steal candy bars, but the value of the items they steal increases every time they do it. What is the difference between stealing from a large store and stealing from a small business? Should the punishment be the same? What motivates teenagers to shoplift?
3. Caz and her brother are angry with their parents for splitting up, but primarily because they don't have a say in what happens to them. In chapter 7, Caz's mother tells her to mind her own business. To what degree should children have a say in their parent's marital problems?
4. At the end of chapter 7, Caz and her friends visit a tattoo parlor, just for fun. What motivates Caz to have her belly button pierced? Why does she eventually remove the belly button ring?
5. When she leaves the special class, Amanda tells Caz that she told her foster mom that the students in the class were a bad influence on her. What is ironic about this explanation? What events occur to justify the irony?
6. Dodie's death affects Caz and Amanda differently. While Caz is willing to accept responsibility, Amanda isn't. What do their reactions say about their character and integrity? How does Dodie's death affect Amanda and Caz?

Writer's Craft*Verb Usage*

The following powerful verbs help create an image in the reader's mind. Ask students to find five other examples of powerful verbs, and then have them find five sentences in their own writing to rewrite using more powerful verbs. Have students select their best revision, and, as a class, prepare "before" and "after" revision displays to remind students of the potential of powerful verbs.

Punched
Ducked
Swept
Poked

Padded
Stomped
Slumped

Nudged
Jerked
Goggled

Author Biography

Tanya Lloyd Kyi began writing poetry in high school and has never really stopped. Tanya's early writing jobs included newspaper reporter and brochure writer for the government. Her interest in writing was sparked by "a wish to work at home, travel lots and not report to anyone." Besides writing, Tanya's interests include a women's running group, knitting circle and ultimate Frisbee team. She also enjoys cooking and reading and would like to add gardening to her list of hobbies. Tanya lives in Vancouver.