



## Oracle

Alex Van Tol

Reading level: 2.9

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AR Quiz # 154746

### Book Summary

Owen has a crush on Kamryn. Kamryn has a crush on Owen's brother Kyle. Owen knows extreme action is necessary to make sure Kamryn does not end up dating his brother, a jerk who manipulates every situation to get what he wants. So what does Owen do? He manipulates the situation. With the help of his friend Hannah, Owen sets up a blog called The Oracle that gives out relationship advice to local teens. Everything seems to be going great. Hannah and Owen are having fun, and Kamryn seems to be following The Oracle's advice and taking an interest in Owen. Owen thinks he's got it made, but he soon discovers that fraudulent tactics have their consequences.

### Author Biography

Alex Van Tol grew up reading a wide range of books, from Enid Blyton to Stephen King. She taught middle school for eight years then made the switch to writing for a living. She has published numerous titles with Orca. *Oracle* is her first Orca Currents novel. Alex lives in Victoria, British Columbia, with her family.

## Connecting to the Text

### *Connecting to the Characters*

- Owen describes his star-athlete brother Kyle as a “loser” and a “jerk.” Owen says he must attend Kyle’s activities, such as driving to tournaments and going to award banquets. Owen says that Kyle “looks great on the outside, but he uses people to get what he wants” (ch. 2). To connect students to these characters, ask students to reflect on the following:
  - Imagine you are Owen and you have a star athlete for an older brother. What do you think this is like for Owen, in his family life, and at school?
  - Owen appears to be a good student. He appreciates poetry and is a peer tutor in math, but he doesn’t get attention the way Kyle does. Why?
  - Since Kyle seems to have it all (status, popularity, looks), why do you think he manipulates people to get what he wants?
- Kyle and Kamryn are both popular. People want to be their friends even though they share many bad qualities. Both appear shallow, insensitive and, at times, unkind. Hannah is also popular but for different reasons.
 

*Everyone likes Hannah. She’s always nice, always honest, but funny and cool at the same time. People want her to think well of them.* (ch.3)

As a personal reflection exercise, ask students to consider what qualities in a friend, girlfriend or boyfriend, are attractive to them.

  - When you consider the personalities and behaviors of Kyle, Kamryn and Hannah, who do you think would be attractive to you?
  - Who would be popular in your class?
  - Who would be a better friend in the long run?
  - Do you recognize any of their characteristics in your friends or yourself?

### *The Writer’s Craft*

Alex Van Tol uses powerful descriptive language, simile and metaphor to describe Kamryn. In a scavenger hunt, challenge students to find words and phrases that Owen uses to describe Kamryn (good examples are in chapter 3 and 7). To what is Kamryn being compared? Do readers see Kamryn in ways Owen cannot?

- When Owen accidentally crashes into Kamryn, he says, “I shrink back like I’ve been burned” (ch. 3).
- Consider these words used to describe Kamryn: “sneers,” “dirty scowls,” “hisses” and “her glare could break apart diamonds” (ch. 3).
- What is Kamryn being compared to in these sentences?
 

“Kamryn’s eyes narrow into sharp slits of glittering green. She is just getting ready to slay me when the door behind her opens” (ch. 3).

“In one angry movement, her hand flashes forward...With a dismissive little hiss, she drops the paper on the table” (ch. 7).

**Vocabulary Enrichment**

In an attempt to get his crush, Kamryn, to like him and not his brother, Owen decides to create a love advice blog for his school. The blog becomes very popular and Owen gives advice to school mates. In doing so, he loses his friend Hannah and gets himself in a lot of trouble. To build vocabulary and enable reading comprehension, ask students to choose one of the following writing topics from the two themes below, incorporating at least four vocabulary words in their responses.

**Having a Crush**

- Write a diary entry from the point of view of Owen. At first Kamryn seemed very attractive, but later Owen's opinion of her changed. What happened?
- Write a diary entry from the point of view of Kamryn. Why does Kamryn crush on Kyle? What do you imagine she daydreams about, and why?

attention	daydream	interested	popular
complicated	desperate	notice	realize
confusing	friendship	obsess	relationship
crush	heart	perfection	together

**Seeking Advice**

- If you had a problem and wanted advice, what might be the differences between asking a friend and posting a question on an advice blog at your school? Which would feel more comfortable to you?
- Imagine an advice blog at your school. Write a question to the advice blog that has to do with something important to you. After a day, compose a response, offering advice. Try to be as objective as possible—imagine it is someone else asking the question. Is giving advice to yourself difficult and awkward, or easy and free flowing?

advice	conversation	public	serious
announcement	dishonest	questions	situation
anonymous	gossip	random	submit
comment	helping	realize	together

**Connecting to the Curriculum****Language Arts**

Use the quotations below as a way to connect to the novel's characters, plot and themes, or use them as prompts for creative writing.

- *"My love is like to ice and I to fire"* (ch. 1)
  - ♦ Owen quotes 16th Century poem by Edmund Spenser to describe his feelings toward his crush, Kamryn. As fiery as Owen's crush is on Kamryn, she does not warm up to him. Can you think of situations in your own life where the harder you tried to get something, the more difficult it became, or the harder you tried to get someone's attention, the more distant they became?

- *“My loser, jerk brother. He looks great on the outside, but he uses people to get what he wants.”* (ch. 2)  
*“Kamryn thinks she’s above it all. If everyone else thinks she’s perfect, why wouldn’t she?”* (ch. 9)
  - ♦ Sometimes the most physically attractive people seem to get the most attention—they become very popular even though they may have no other attractive or positive qualities. Can you think of public figures or celebrities who gained popularity and fame even though they weren’t good looking? What did they have to offer instead of their looks?
- *“That’s the funny thing. All it takes is one notable deed, and everlasting notoriety is yours. Whether you want it or not.”* (ch. 12)
  - ♦ Lo Ming, as Lucky the mascot, steals the show at the assembly when the dance team performs. Even though she’s a “nobody,” everyone looks at her differently after the performance. In her case, she gains notoriety by making people laugh. How does Owen gain notoriety?
  - ♦ Notoriety is sometimes called “ill fame.” Can you think of a sports figure, celebrity or character in a movie who gained notoriety even though they didn’t seek it? Discuss your feelings about that person or character. What actions or behaviors gave them notoriety? Examples could be Pete Rose, a famous baseball player who gained notoriety because of accusations of gambling on baseball, or Chris Brown, a famous rapper and songwriter who pleaded guilty to assaulting his girlfriend, Rihanna.

### Connecting to the Students—Ideas for Exploration

1. In chapter 2, Owen says, “I want to get Kamryn to like me instead of Kyle. But how do I do that?” To problem solve and consider different options, Owen conducts a brainstorm exercise. In a brainstorm, all ideas are put forward, even if they seem ridiculous or unusable. As a class exercise, learn more about brainstorming, where it originated and how it can be used in individual and group contexts.  
**Note:** The term “brainstorm” is used in some parts of the world to describe a seizure or an episode associated with Epilepsy. A term which is also in use is “brain shower,” suggesting the flow of ideas and possibilities.
2. In an attempt to get his crush, Kamryn, to like him and not Kyle, Owen decides to create a relationship advice blog for his school. The blog becomes very popular and Owen provides advice online to students at his school. While most of the blog entries are about first kisses and crushes, the entry in chapter 8 from a student who is being abused and considering suicide is more serious. Wisely, Hannah and Owen find the National Domestic Violence Hotline and are able to provide appropriate advice on the blog.

As a research project, invite students to find out about resources available for abused or suicidal teens in your school and community. You may wish to ask students to also research abuse, providing definitions for physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, bullying and hate crimes. Ask students to create posters which outline teen resources available in the school, online or by phone, noting where they are anonymous and free. Place posters in areas of high visibility, such as hallways, cafeterias and washrooms.

**Web Resources**

[www.thehotline.org/get-help/help-in-your-area](http://www.thehotline.org/get-help/help-in-your-area)

[www.suicidehotlines.com](http://www.suicidehotlines.com)

[www.teenmentalhealth.org/resources](http://www.teenmentalhealth.org/resources)

[www.lfcc.on.ca/teacher-us.PDF](http://www.lfcc.on.ca/teacher-us.PDF)