



Pinch Me

Gabrielle Prendergast

Reading level: 3.3

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Book Summary

After another night of girls, music and booze, seventeen-year-old pop star Darius Zaire falls out of bed and lands on the cruddy floor of his old bedroom. No mansion, no luxury cars, no platinum records. Now he's just ordinary Darren Zegers. Some kind of nightmare has erased everything that happened to change Darren the dweeb into Darius the multimillionaire.

Now Darius has to face an ordinary day in the twelfth grade, suffering through remedial English and wondering what happened to the last three years, let alone all his fans and money. He desperately wants to return to his old life, but he is starting to worry that maybe this is reality, and it was his other life that was the dream.

Prereading Idea

Ask students to identify the different types of dreams people have and to define each type of dream. Students should then select one of the types and write about a dream they have had. Have students share their dreams with other students in small groups.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Ask students to investigate drug and alcohol rehab facilities in their area and to describe the program offered by the rehab facility, the cost of a rehabilitation stay, and the success rate of the program. Have students compile their findings in an informational brochure to be made available in the school library and/or counseling center.
- Many teen idols make it big in a short time period: Justin Bieber, Miley Cyrus and Justin Timberlake—to name a few. Ask students to select a teen who rose quickly to stardom and to research how he or she initially managed the fame and what the selected celebrity's life is like today.
- At the end of the novel, Darren likely feels the need to apologize or explain his past behavior to one or more of the other characters. He should also explain what he intends to do to repair the relationship. Have students think of a person in their life that they feel they owe an apology or explanation. Have students write a letter to the person voicing their apology or explanation and what they intend to do to repair the relationship. Give students the option to share and/or send their letters to the appropriate individuals.

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

Darren is a dynamic character, changing as a result of the conflict in his life. As a class, brainstorm Darren's character traits that evolve from the beginning to the end of the story. In groups of three or four, have each group of students focus on one trait and prepare a line graph quantifying the trait on the vertical axis and listing story events on the horizontal axis. Chart the change in each trait as a result of the story's events. Post the charts in the room.

Plot

The sequence of events in a story is called the plot, which includes four stages: exposition, rising action, climax and falling action. Discuss with the class what occurs in each stage. Then ask students to complete a story board of twelve sections on an 8.5 x 14 piece of paper. For each section, have students draw a visual to represent a major event from the novel and include a caption explaining the action and identifying which stage of the plot is involved. Have students share their storyboards in small groups of three or four and then post story boards in the classroom.

Theme

The theme of a story is often based on the lessons the main character learns. Ask students to write a thematic statement based on what Darren learns as a result of his "dream." Ask students to write their statements on a sentence strip and discuss in groups of four or five students. Post theme strips in the classroom.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Why doesn't Darius like his famous lifestyle? What are his major complaints? What does he enjoy about his stardom?
2. When Darius wakes up the morning after his party in chapter 2, where is he? Why is he so confused about his life?
3. Why is Darren in a program at a special school? Who does he know in his old life?
4. How does Darren wind up in the back of a police car? How does the female police officer show compassion for him?
5. What prompts Darren to finally tell the truth about his strange situation? How do his mother and Susan respond to his revelation about his former life?
6. Why is Darren so uncomfortable with Susan? What is her concern about Darren's "dream" life?
7. How does Kier help Darren find the crossover point? How does Darren follow through with Kier's suggestions?
8. How does Darius react when he wakes up in his old life? What is his epiphany in the last chapter?

Writer's Craft*Vocabulary Enrichment*

Ask students to find the synonyms for the following words:

Squalid	ch. 2	Delusions	ch. 8
Vague	ch. 3	Mortifying	ch. 9
Entourage	ch. 3	Perplexing	ch. 9
Incessant	ch. 3	Plausible	ch. 10
Dubious	ch. 7		

Then, ask students if they think the synonym they found or the author's word works best in the sentence and to justify their choice.

Author Biography

In 2014 **Gabrielle Prendergast** was the Writer in Residence at Vancouver Public Library, and in 2015 she was nominated for the BC Book Prizes and chosen to tour the province to promote BC Books. Ms. Prendergast lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, with her husband, daughter and two chickens.