



## **Reckless**

Lesley Choyce

Reading level: 2.9

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AR Quiz # 136649

### **Book Summary**

Josh knows he's riding recklessly when he knocks down the old man he suspects is the hermit of Loggerman Creek. But he is shocked when the hermit walks into the forest with his bike after the accident. Being without his beloved bike for a week motivates Josh to hike into the woods and confront the crazy old man. The hermit, Jonathan, has fixed Josh's bike, and Josh learns that he has more in common with the old man than he ever imagined. When Jonathan needs help, Josh has to respect the old man's choices in order to save his life.

### **Author Bio**

**Lesley Choyce** divides his time between teaching, writing, running Pottersfield Press and hosting a television talk show. He is the author of over seventy books for youth and adults. *Reckless* is Lesley's third book in the Orca Currents series. Lesley lives in Lawrencetown Beach, Nova Scotia.

## Connecting to the Text

### Character

1. As students read the novel, ask them to make notes about Josh using two columns labeled “Strengths” and “Challenges.” Ensure that as the students make notes, they provide examples from the novel. In the strengths column, students could note that Josh is cool under pressure. He didn’t panic when he saw Jonathan injured. In the challenges area, students could note that Josh didn’t tell his parents the truth about what happened to his bike, and he let Anton’s taunting get to him, putting himself in a dangerous situation.
  - ♦ Imagine that Josh is considering what kind of career he’d like to have. What kind of career would Josh be well-suited to based on his strengths?
  - ♦ What could Josh do to develop or improve some of his challenges?
  - ♦ Do you think you could be friends with Josh? What do you like about him?
2. As students read the novel, ask them to compare Josh and Jonathan. What things do they have in common? Ask students to find two examples of Josh comparing himself to Jonathan.
  - ♦ Josh says, “...maybe I’ll move out in the woods and become a hermit like [Jonathan].” Why does Josh feel that way? Do his feelings change over the course of the novel?
  - ♦ Josh sees a photograph titled *Jonathan at 17*, which is close to Josh’s age. Imagine that Jonathan at 17 was having a conversation with Josh at 18. What would they talk about with each other?
3. Some of the ATVERS bring Jonathan supplies from time to time. Imagine that you are a hermit, like Jonathan. What basic foods and supplies would you need? Living alone far from civilization, what would you miss most? What do you think Jonathan misses most?
4. Josh says, “Part of me identified with Jonathan. Some of us truly don’t fit in with the rest of society. I was one of those people.” Josh feels disconnected from the rest of the world. In the first chapter, he describes his bike as his “only friend.”
  - ♦ Does Josh belong in the forest like Jonathan? Why, or why not?
  - ♦ Think of characters in movies, TV shows or books who, like Josh, don’t fit in with the rest of society. Choose one and compare the character’s experience to Josh’s. How are they similar, or different? How do the stories’ endings compare? (*Prompt: Harry Potter, The Breakfast Club, Mean Girls, Glee, My So Called Life, etc.*)
5. At first, Josh thinks Jonathan is a crazy old man. He says, “I took a few steps towards him, but I stopped. Who knew what he might do? But it was my bike. That’s when I said, ‘I guess it is true. I guess they are right. You are crazy.’” First impressions can be deceiving. By the end of the story, Josh realizes he has more in common with the old man than he ever imagined, and the two become friends.

- ◆ Incorporating quotations from the novel, explain how Josh and Jonathan evolve from being enemies into close friends.
  - Have you ever had a first impression about someone, only to find it was wrong, as Josh did about Jonathan? Compare your experience to Josh's. Did you, like Josh, become friends with that person?
  - What kind of first impression do you leave on others? Ask two people you trust to share what their first impression of you was. Did you make the impression you wanted to? Why, or why not?

## Connecting to the Curriculum

### Language Arts

1. Personification is a figure of speech where things are given human or animal qualities. Below are some examples of personification in *Reckless*. Read the following examples aloud, or write them on the board.

Personification of Josh's bike:

*...it was my only friend right then.  
I loved the throaty roar of the old engine*

Personification of the forest:

*The forest didn't seem so friendly anymore.*

- ◆ Discuss the examples of personification, and encourage students to find more examples in the novel. How does personification lend meaning to these sentences, and to our understanding of Josh's experiences?
  - ◆ Invite students to write sentences or paragraphs using personification for these topics or others of their choice:
    - Josh and Anton's bikes at the gravel pit.
    - Jonathan's 1949 Harley while stored in the shed.
    - The snowmobiles, SUVs, ATVs and helicopter in the forest.
    - The forest at night when you're camping under the stars.
    - The school bell when you're running late.
2. Jonathan recites part of the poem *Home, Sweet Home* by John Howard Payne. Choose one of the topics below for class or individual writing and reflection.
    - ◆ This was once a popular song. Find the song online and listen to it. Write a paragraph describing how it makes you feel. What do you like about it? Dislike?
    - ◆ Research John Howard Payne. Name three interesting facts about him. When did he write *Home, Sweet Home*?
    - ◆ The poem is important to Jonathan because it reminds him of his childhood. Is there a poem or song that is very important to you? Write out the poem or lyrics, along with a short description explaining why it is important to you.
    - ◆ Hold a poetry slam in your class—write poems about key themes from *Reckless*, such as being an outsider or a hermit, the effects of a rumor, first impressions or unlikely friends.

3. Use one of the following quotations from *Reckless* as the first sentence in a short story, diary entry, travel journal, letter or song, and ask students to describe what the quote means in the context of the novel.
- ♦ *I forgot the trail is always changing.*
  - ♦ *We learn from our mistakes, right? I tend to learn the hard way.*
  - ♦ *He's unpredictable—scared silly of anyone in a uniform.*
  - ♦ *He could use a friend...But you gotta be a friend on his terms.*
  - ♦ *Every home should have a name. What do you call yours?*
  - ♦ *The whole world is crazy. Maybe I'm the only one who is sane. Hmm.*
  - ♦ *I had bragging rights but I wasn't going to use them.*
  - ♦ *I'm pretty sure the aliens are smarter than us and friendly.*
  - ♦ *There was so much about Jonathan I didn't know.*
  - ♦ *It was amazing how generous people were.*
4. Write an extra chapter to *Reckless*. Continue the story of the main characters. Ideas could include: Does Anton get his due? What happens with Sonia and Josh? Does Jonathan ever return to civilization?
- Option:** In groups of three to four partners, create a skit or movie to present what happens next. Make sure to include all the important characters in the book.

### Vocabulary

The words below are organized into two categories, based on Josh and Jonathan's experiences in *Reckless*. Ask students to write paragraphs describing key themes of the novel, using three or more of the vocabulary words below.

### Biking Terms

clutch	exhaust pipe	handlebar	revved
cranked it over	faceplate	helmet	rutted
dirt bike	fishtailing	idled	studded
downshifted	full throttle	leaning low	traction
eat dirt	gear	motorcycle	trail
engine	gravel	noise	U-turn

### Jonathan

amnesty	deserted	foxhole	kindling
camouflage	dismal	helicopter	primitive
civilization	fierce	hermit	sabotage
descent	flashbacks	infernal	uniform

*History*

Kyle explains to Josh that Jonathan was a soldier in the Vietnam War before becoming the “hermit of Loggerman Creek.” Jonathan’s experiences in the war affected him strongly for the rest of his life. This is described in chapter 8.

- Research and write a short report about the Vietnam War. What caused it? When and where was it fought? How did it end?
- Research and write a short report on post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by soldiers. Name three symptoms. Could this be what Jonathan has? How do you know? Use examples from the novel in your response.

**Web Resources**

Veterans Affairs Canada’s educator website  
[www.vac-acc.gc.ca/youth](http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/youth)

Veterans Affairs Canada’s Youth Corner  
[www.vac-acc.gc.ca/youth/sub.cfm?source=activities/youthcorner](http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/youth/sub.cfm?source=activities/youthcorner)

USA National Archives Teacher’s Resources  
[www.archives.gov/education/lessons/vietnam-photos/activities.html](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/vietnam-photos/activities.html)

United States Dept. of Veteran Affairs’ Kids section  
<http://www4.va.gov/kids>