



Redline

Alex Van Tol

Reading level: 2.8

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Book Summary

Blaming herself for the death of her best friend, Janessa isolates herself and does her best to avoid connecting with people. All she wants to do is drive—FAST. Tired of sneaking her father's car out at night, she buys a car for herself, but she has no idea that the guy from whom she buys her new car will become so important to her. To escape her feelings for Dmitri, Janessa begins street racing; the speed of the race gives her a sense of freedom from Dmitri and separation from her pain. As king of the street racers, Cody comes on strong to Janessa. Will Cody help Janessa forget her feelings for Dmitri and the pain of her best friend's death? Or will the danger of street racing drive Janessa to the brink of destruction?

Prereading Idea

The death of teenagers from unintentional injury has risen dramatically since 2000 due to a variety of reasons. With the death of teenagers comes an outpouring of questions and recriminations. Ask students to investigate the services available in their community and school to the friends and relatives of the teens who die in automobile and other unintentional tragedies. As a class, compile the list and seek permission to post it on the school and community's website.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Ask students to assume the voice of Adrienne, a parent, friend, pastor or counselor and to write a letter to Janessa that will help her understand that she is not at fault for Adrienne's death. Be sure to include specific examples from the book or conduct research to locate a similar accident to use for comparison.
- Janessa's dad says, "We're all alone in this world. It's best to figure out how to be on your own. Not depend on other people for things. For favors. For friendship. For love" (ch. 2). Ask students to write about an experience they have had that would either support or refute this advice. Have students share what they have written in small groups.

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

Ask students to draw a Venn diagram to compare and contrast Dmitri and Cody. After they finish brainstorming with the Venn diagram, students should create a two-sided poster that compares the two characters. Students should include visual elements, color and significant quotations from the book that demonstrate the essence of each character.

Setting

With a partner, ask students to make a list of everything that relates to the time and place where the story occurs and have them identify which items are necessary to the plot line. Then, ask students to change those critical items to alter the story's plot. For example, if Adrienne had been killed in a water skiing accident instead of snowboarding, would that have changed the story? If so, then how? Have students work in groups of four to five to write a graphic novel using the new settings and characters from the novel. Share and post the revised novels.

Theme

World heavyweight boxer, Joe Lewis, said, "He can run, but he can't hide." If the "He" was changed to Janessa, how could this statement be the theme for *Redline*? Ask students to write a soliloquy for Janessa based on this quotation and incorporating justification from the book. Have students write in first person assuming the voice of Janessa and present their soliloquies to the class.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Janessa's dad says it is better not to depend on other people for favors, friendship or love. What does Janessa think about her father's advice? How does she attempt to follow his advice after Adrienne's death?
2. Why does Janessa's wealthy father make her work for her car instead of simply buying her one? How does Janessa react to paying for her own car? How does she feel when she buys the car of her dreams?

3. Why is Janessa attracted to Dmitri and to Cody? How does her relationship with Dmitri differ from her relationship with Cody? How does Janessa act and react differently with each guy? Why does she end her relationships with them?
4. At the end of chapter 6, Janessa says she finally has a taste of freedom after driving her new car. Then, in chapter 7, Dmitri tells Janessa that she drives because she is running. From what does Janessa need to be freed? From what is she running? Will driving meet her need?
5. Why doesn't Janessa talk to a counselor about her feelings after Adrienne's death? Why doesn't Janessa's father recognize she is having such a difficult time? What does his lack of interest say about their relationship? What is the result of Janessa's mother's attempt to talk to her (ch. 2)?
6. How does the title, *Redline*, relate to the plot, characters or theme? What would you have titled the novel?

Writer's Craft

Foreshadowing

In chapter 6, with his all-so-serious voice and deep dark eyes, Dmitri warns Janessa against street racing, leaving her shivering with dread. How could this statement be considered foreshadowing? What does this warning bring to the reader's mind?

Repetition

The author uses repetition to emphasize a point: "Nothing left..." to show Janessa's reluctance to get involved with Dmitri in chapter 2, and "It's not..." to show her excitement on their date in chapter 7. Find other places in the novel where the author uses repetition. What other reasons are there for an author to use repetition? Is it an effective writing technique? Why or why not? Have students select an important moment in the novel. Have students rewrite the dialogue or the scene, incorporating elements of repetition—of words, phrases, ideas or even entire sentences. Have students share and post their practice with repetition.

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 lives in Victoria, British Columbia.

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