



Spiral

K.L. Denman

Interest level: grade 7 and up

Reading level: 2.5

978-1-55143-930-3 PB

978-1-55143-932-7 LIB

AR Quiz # 126438

Book Summary

After breaking her back and spending months in physical rehabilitation, Abby's anger at her situation leads her to form a friendship with Jim the Jerk, a bitter, angry young man she meets who is also a paraplegic. Jim uses and sells cocaine to assuage his feelings of helplessness, and he soon has Abby addicted to the feeling of power she has when she is high. When her younger brother, Will, catches her snorting cocaine and rats her out to her parents, Abby finds herself in rehab once again—only this time she is fighting to regain her soul.

Prereading Idea

Ask students to bring in a news report of a teenager hurt in a job-related or car accident. Articles may be found on the Internet or in local newspapers. Have students briefly share the details of their report with the class.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

Dr. Scott quotes statistics about teens hurt in the workplace. Ask students to form small groups to create a safety brochure directed to teens. The brochures should be job-specific to movie theaters, video stores, grocery stores, fast food restaurants, and retail clothing stores. Brochures should notify teens of local training programs, Do's and Don'ts of job safety, and ways to say "No" to an employer when asked to perform an unsafe task. Students should interview managers and employers of the workplace they select. Brochures can then be shared with the class and placed in local businesses.

Animal-assisted therapy has been in use since the 1970s and in recent years has gained popularity due to the success of the many available programs. With a partner, ask students to investigate the use of animals in therapy and then to focus on one aspect of this wide-open field. Together the students should create a visual aid and make a presentation to the class about the program they research. Each team should make every effort to interview a person affiliated with the program, if at all possible.

Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel

Characters

The major characters in this story all carry an emotional burden. Ask students to select one of the characters and to write a poem from the character's point of view, expressing their feelings about Abby's accident and the change it brought into her life and ultimately the character's life. Use the poems to create a "collage of voices" oral presentation to the class. Encourage students to incorporate music and props into their oral presentations of the character poems.

Conflict

Every great story has conflict and Spiral is no exception. Abby suffers from great internal conflict dealing with the anger and bitterness of her accident and ultimately with the "beast." Other characters also have conflicts revolving around Abby's accident. Ask students to select a character and to make a conflict resolution chart, listing the conflict in one column and how the conflict is resolved in the second column. Just as Abby's internal conflict surrounding her cocaine use is depicted as a "beast," have students select one of the character's conflicts and use a visual image to depict the conflict. Students can prepare a drawing of the conflict and then write a paragraph explaining the connection between the conflict and the visual image.

Theme

With a partner, ask students to determine the theme of the book based on the changes brought about in Abby through her accident, physical rehabilitation, drug addiction and therapy, changes that ultimately lead her to complete emotional healing. Once students have written the theme, ask them to go to www.quotationspage.com.

Have students find a quote that best fits the theme they have written. Students should write the quote representing their theme on sentence strips to post in the classroom.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Why is Abby so angry at the doctors and nurses who are trying to help ease her pain? Why does Abby's Dad picket the furniture store in anger? On page 7, Abby says, "there is a boulder of anger." At what is the family really angry? How will they be able to overcome their pain?
2. Why does Abby try to alienate herself from all of her friends? Why is Lily the only friend who doesn't walk away? What does this say about Lily's character?
3. Abby's first impression of Jim is that he is a jerk, but that he is honest because he doesn't sugarcoat what has happened to them; they are in wheel chairs for life. Why does she choose to stay in touch with Jim? What is ironic about her choice?
4. When Abby's parents discover she is using cocaine, her dad freaks out, and her mother cries. Is their reaction normal? Why or why not?
5. Abby forms an attachment to the little girl Gabby and watches her therapy from a distance. Why does the pain Gabby suffers haunt Abby? Why is it so important to Abby that Gabby begin to talk again?
6. As Abby begins to heal and grow stronger, she realizes that Taylor has "presence," and so does Charlie, but Abby knows she doesn't have it. What is the "presence" Abby is talking about on page 99, and how is she going to gain it in her life?
7. After writing an apology letter to Lily and her family, Abby tells Charlie she needs the forgiveness of Lily and her family so that someday she can forgive herself. Why is it necessary for her to have their forgiveness first?
8. The title of the book is Spiral, as is the name of the ranch. How does the word spiral relate to Abby and her life?

Writer's Craft

Personification

The author personifies Abby's addiction as the beast, giving him human characteristics. Why is this an effective use of personification? How does humanizing her addiction to cocaine help Abby overcome it? Why is this an effective tool?

Quote

"Those ugly things we witness, the ugly we find in ourselves...Maybe they must exist so when we find the good, we can be grateful for it," (page 93). How does the author use the wisdom of this quote to help the reader understand Abby's acceptance of pain in herself and others?

Author Biography

K.L. Denman was born in Calgary, Alberta, but spent most of her life in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, with the exception of the summers she worked at a ranch in Alberta. She has also worked as a florist, an Occupational Information Advisor and in various office jobs. The challenge of writing brings great joy to her life, and her current passion is writing for young adults. She currently resides and writes on British Columbia's Sunshine Coast with her family, two dogs, three cats, two horses and an elderly mule.