



Unity Club

Karen Spafford-Fitz

Reading level: 4.3

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Book Summary

Brett is president of her school's Unity Club. When a new group home for at-risk youth opens in the neighborhood, Brett becomes friends with Jude, one of the boys who lives at the home. After a series of acts of vandalism, the community starts demanding that the group home be shut down. Brett doesn't believe that Jude, or any of the other teens, is responsible, but when an elderly woman is seriously injured, Brett begins to have doubts.

Author Biography

Karen Spafford-Fitz worked as a swimming instructor and lifeguard, an aquatics director and a junior-high teacher before discovering her passion for writing. She is the author of several novels for young people, including *Vanish* and *Dog Walker* in the Orca Currents series. When she is not writing in her studio in Edmonton, Karen is often training for her next half marathon with her beloved German shepherd. For more information, visit karenscafford-fitz.com.

Prereading Idea

Ask the class to read chapter 1 and, as they read, make a list of the characters introduced. Then ask students to list possible story lines based on the questions the narrative leaves open. For example, why did Brett's parents get a divorce? List possible story lines and conflicts.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

1. Brett feels betrayed by her mother and replaced by her mother's boyfriend and his children. Ask students to write a letter from Brett to her mother explaining Brett's feelings and posing a solution to their estrangement. Ask students to volunteer to read their letters to the class.
2. Ask students to write a brief paragraph describing Brett's relationship with her father. Students should explain how the two coexist and survive after Brett's mother leaves. In this paragraph students should draw conclusions about the impact of the departure of Brett's mother. Students may also want to discuss resources that could have better supported Brett and her father after the breakup of the family unit.
3. Divide students into groups of three and have them research group homes in neighborhoods in their city or state. Ask students to search for the rules of the home, the requirements for living in the home, the cost of living there and whether or not the home receives support from the community. Have students combine their information into a resource guide for parent-teacher organizations, school counselors or other interested parties.

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

Brett experiences serious internal conflict regarding her feelings about Jude, the group home and the evidence that seems to be piling up against them. She also experiences internal conflict about her relationship with her mother. Ask students to work with a partner to create a two-column chart. In one column, students should list the conflicts Brett is dealing with, and in the second column, students should state how Brett resolves each conflict. Then have the partners write an enactment to demonstrate one of the internal conflicts that Brett is experiencing: a role-play, monologue, poem for two voices or an interview. Have students present their enactments to the class.

Characterization

Ask students to select a minor character in the story: Ms. Chen, Jude, Amira, Kaden or another character that interests them. Then ask students to write a description of that character's personality traits and how they handle emotion in a given situation. Have students discuss in small groups whether the character's response represents a healthy or unhealthy way to deal with the emotion.

Setting

As a class, have students define setting and describe the multiple settings in *Unity Club*. After identifying the settings, ask students to think about each setting in the book and brainstorm a list of facts about it, including the elements of location, time of year, elapsed time, climate and other factors they consider important. After the list is complete, ask students to determine if each element of the setting is crucial to the story and, if so, to explain why. As students share their responses, ask the class to corroborate their reasoning.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. What is the purpose and goal of the Unity Club? What are some of the projects its members have completed?
2. How do Brett's feelings toward her mother change as the story evolves? How does Jude help Brett see her mother from a different perspective?
3. What is the conflict between Brett and Kaden? How is the conflict ultimately resolved?
4. Why is Brett so bitter about her mother moving to Winnipeg? How does Brett feel toward the new boyfriend and his family?
5. What does NIMBY mean? Why is Brett so shocked by this attitude?
6. What project does the Unity Club create to welcome the new kids living in the group home to Addison Junior High?
7. How do Brett and Jude react to each another? Why are they attracted to each other? Why is it important to Brett that Jude receive the scarf she knitted?
8. Why do the neighbors dislike the group home and the teens who live there? What do the neighbors think will happen?
9. What leads to the argument between Brett and her friend Amira? How do they resolve their conflict?
10. Why does Jude change schools? What is Brett's reaction to Jude's news? How are they going to stay connected?
11. Why does Brett blame Jude for Mrs. Rashid's fall? How does Jude react to Brett's accusations?
12. Why do the members of the Unity Club seem to turn on Brett? Why does Brett feel like the fun has been sucked out of the club? (See chapter 14.) How does Brett resolve the problem?

Writer's Craft*Vocabulary Enrichment*

Ask students to find the following words in the book and then look up their meanings in the dictionary, writing the definition that most closely fits the meaning of the word the way it is used in the sentence. Have students create a student-developed writing dictionary to be used throughout the year. Students should add a page for each of the words and list the meaning of the word; students will continue to build their understanding of the words by adding synonyms, antonyms, illustrations and ways they see the word used during the year.

converted	(ch. 4, p. 28)	trudge	(ch. 8, p. 58)
scowling	(ch. 4, p. 29)	murmurs	(ch. 9, p. 72)
sprawled	(ch. 4, p. 32)	surly	(ch. 10, p. 78)
tenses	(ch. 7, p. 49)	objective	(ch. 10, p. 80)