



Viral

Alex Van Tol

Reading level: 2.9

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AR Quiz # 143374

Book Summary

Best friends since elementary school, Lindsay and Mike are ready to take their relationship a step further—until Lindsay sees Mike with another girl and mistakenly thinks he might be hooking up with her. Hurt and disappointed, Lindsay's life begins to spiral downward as she experiments with drugs and alcohol. Mike stands by trying to intervene and repair their once-close relationship, but Lindsay will have nothing to do with him. Then, at a party, Lindsay is filmed in a compromising scene with another guy. When the video goes viral, Mike reveals his true loyalty (or character) as he stands by Lindsay.

Prereading Idea

Ask students to consider the subject of the book based on the cover and the title. After brainstorming ideas as a class, ask students what constitutes a viral video? How can a viral video be a good thing? How can it be destructive?

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Mike and Lindsay obviously care for one another a great deal, and because of their pride, they both make some bad decisions. Ask students to choose one of the other characters in the book to intervene in the situation between Mike and Lindsay before it turns vindictive. The chosen character should write a letter to Mike and/or Lindsay to explain the situation with Scarlett and to remind the characters of their shared history and feelings for each other. Have students share letters in groups of five to seven and then post letters in the classroom.
- Working in small groups, have students make brochures focusing on the risks of having casual sex with multiple partners. Students should research sexually transmitted diseases as well as other long-term ramifications such as childhood pregnancies and parenthood and vulnerability to certain types of cancers, as well as lack of self-esteem and damage to “reputation.” These brochures can be made available in the counseling office and posted in individual classrooms.

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

The setting of a story is more than just a physical location; it can include atmosphere and mood, as well as customs, ideas, beliefs and values. The author chose a high school setting because both the audience and the characters are high school students. Divide students into groups of three and ask them to cast the book as a movie, using popular teen actors and actresses. Each group should write a script for a movie trailer advertising the movie and focusing on elements of the setting. Students should prepare simple props or sets for their script and present a live or taped version of their movie trailer.

Plot

A story's plot, or sequence of events, usually includes four stages: exposition establishes setting and introduces the characters and the conflict; rising action moves the plot along by expanding the conflict; climax signals the turning point; and falling action resolves the conflict. In small groups, identify the events in *Viral* that fall into each stage, and then, as a class, make a large wall mural depicting each stage.

Point of View

The story is told entirely from Mike's point of view. Ask students to work in small groups to select a scene to rewrite in first person from Lindsay's or one of the other character's viewpoints. Students should include dialog as well as narrative sections and stay true to the story's plot and the character's actions and reactions as the author intended. Upon completion, students can present their rewrites to the class with students assuming the roles of narrator and characters in the scene.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. What could Mike have done at the party to prevent Lindsay from leaving angry? Why isn't Lindsay willing to listen to what Mike has to say?
2. Lindsay leaves for the summer and returns a different person. Why does she change so much over the summer? How does she change?
3. When Morgan tells Mike that Lindsay is in a contest to see who can make the most guys, how does Mike react? What does his reaction say about his feelings for Lindsay?
4. What is unique about Mike's relationship with his mother? Why does he go to her with his problems?
5. In chapter 12, Mike's mother gives him advice about what to do about the Lindsay video. How does Mike respond to the advice?
6. Lindsay allows what she does to define her as a person, but Mike continues to see Lindsay for who she really is. How will this help Lindsay overcome what happened to her?
7. Lindsay says that people always blame the victim, and Mike thinks the situation is a sick cosmic joke. "He'll be the stud, she'll be the slut," (ch. 14). Is this a true reflection of what will happen?
8. Lindsay thinks her only choice of escape is suicide. What other options could she have explored?

Writer's Craft

Vocabulary

Have students work with a partner to use the following words in a complete sentence. Students should use context clues so that the meaning of the word is clear to the reader and write sentences that can be "acted out" for the class. Have partners select their best sentences to present to the class.

Frenemies
Haze

Hemp
Intimidated

Solidarity
Wrenching

Author Biography

A former middle school teacher for eight years and a writer since she was two years old, **Alex Van Tol** realized her dream of being an author when her first book, *Knifepoint* was published by Orca Book Publishers in 2010. On her way to becoming an author, Alex worked in a video store and a nightclub, and she experienced life as a white-water rafting guide and a wrangler on a ranch. She currently lives in Victoria, British Columbia, with her family.