



Mirror Image

K.L. Denman

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AR Quiz # 114176

Book Summary

Sable wears only black and has always felt that her doom is near. Lacey wears pink, and seeks beauty everywhere. When their art teacher pairs Sable and Lacey together for their final project, the girls must get to know one another and select a suitable poem for the back of each other's decorative mirror. Sable is less than thrilled at having to spend time with Lacey, who she believes to be nothing more than a brainless doll. As the project progresses and Sable gets past her resentment, she learns some surprising truths about who Lacey really is. All of Sable's images begin to change—including the one she holds of herself.

Author Biography

K.L. Denman began writing young adult fiction after reading the books of some talented authors and discovering the evolution of this fascinating, multi-faceted genre. With her teen children and their friends providing abundant raw material and re-kindled memories of this challenging passage, writing for teens became an irresistible venture. Her first novel, *Battle of the Bands*, has been nominated for the ALA 2006 list of Quick Picks for Reluctant Readers. She recently moved to Powell River, British Columbia, with her family of people, dogs, cats and horses.

Connecting to the Text

Theme

1. A prominent theme in *Mirror Image* is that there's more to the image than meets the eye. As students read the novel, ask them to identify examples of the characters' development touching on this theme. Consider each character's point of view—how does this shape their perceptions? Examples could include:
 - ◆ At first Sable thinks Lacey has a perfect life. She learns that there's more to Lacey's life than meets the eye when...
 - ◆ At first Lacey thinks that Sable is weird and that they couldn't possibly have anything in common. She learns there's more to Sable than meets the eye when...
 - ◆ Sable thinks that Lacey is lucky, and Lacey thinks that Sable is lucky. They both learn that there is more to each other than meets the eye, because...
2. As a group, identify scenes from *Mirror Image* that contain contrasting elements. Then encourage students to find their own examples. Ask students to keep a list as they read through the novel, then lead a group discussion. You may wish to use this exercise to introduce the literary convention of irony. Group discussion topics could include: Why does the author present these contrasting elements? What can they tell us about the characters? How do they help us understand the theme of this novel? Some examples could be:
 - ◆ Sable's home life is good. Her mother is kind, supportive and outgoing. But Sable is unhappy, withdrawn and has a constant feeling of dread.
 - ◆ Lacey's home life is not good. Her mother has a mental disorder and is unkind, cold and demanding. But Lacey's outlook is positive, cheerful and hopeful.
 - ◆ Sable always wears black. She always seems to see the negative side of things. Lacey always wears pink. She always seems to see the positive side of things.
 - ◆ In Mr. Ripley's mirror art project, the most important part, the poem, isn't visible. The students can look in their mirror, but they can't see what's in it.
 - ◆ The outside of Lacey's house is the "dumpiest little old house" Sable has ever seen, while the inside is "white...to an impossible extreme" (ch. 7).

Plot

Use the questions below to assist students with their understanding of the text. Using the model below, ask students to answer the questions in two stages: first, as they finish reading each chapter (encourage students to guess, based on what they know so far); and then after they have finished the novel. Hold a group discussion to compare the students' findings. How did their understanding of the story change as they read the book? Did early foreshadowing help them guess at some of the answers?

Chapter Questions	After reading the chapter, what can you GUESS is the answer?	After reading the book, what do you NOW KNOW is the answer?
1 The main character feels that “doom is near,” and has a “big cloud of dread.” Why?		
2 Why does the main character hate Lacey so much?		
3 Is Sable’s mom having an affair? Why is Sable worried about it?		
4 Who will be Sable’s art project partner?		
5 Why does Lacey want to go to Sable’s house, instead of to her own?		
6 Why did Lacey lie to Sable about where she was after school?		
7 Is Lacey’s life “naturally perfect”?		
8 Why is the inside of Lacey’s house “white...to an impossible extreme”?		
9 How will Sable’s “makeover” turn out?		

Chapter Questions	After reading the chapter, what can you GUESS is the answer?	After reading the book, what do you NOW KNOW is the answer?
10 What will Lacey's "dare" be for Sable?		
11 Why does Sable use the "tough girl act"?		
12 What is it that Sable is "so close to understanding"?		
13 What does Sable mean by "changing the world"?		

Connecting to the Curriculum

Vocabulary Enrichment

The following words or terms are used in *Mirror Image* and are organized into two categories, based on Sable's experiences: mirrors and perceptions, a recurring theme in the novel, and the war in Bosnia and its effect on Sable. Invite students to use the words in sentences or paragraphs.

Mirrors and Perceptions

beauty	meaningful discovery	exposed
observe	expression	reflection
glossy	shallow	intensifies
stare	introspection	superficial

Bosnia and Sable's Fears

bombs	hopeless	conquer
outside forces	deep, dark secret	refugees
doom	soldiers	dread
suffocating	escape	terror

Connecting to the Curriculum

Social Studies

Sable and her mother, Sofija, are from Bosnia—now Bosnia and Herzegovina—and escaped during the war. Sofija says she is happy now they have immigrated to Canada.

- Create a timeline for Bosnia, covering the decade 1990–1999. Pinpoint at least five key events on the timeline. What preceded or influenced each of the key events?
- Research the war in Bosnia in 1993. What started it? How did it end? What were the Washington Agreement and the Dayton Agreement? Who signed them, and where?
- Create a tourism brochure for Bosnia and Herzegovina today. Ideas could include culture, language, food, important historical sites, climate, etc.
- Research the immigration laws in your country. Is anyone allowed to come to live in your country, or are there stipulations and limitations? Can visitors or tourists stay as long as they want?
- If there are students in your class or school who immigrated to your country, ask them to share the experience. Why did they immigrate? Were there challenges adjusting to a new culture? What was most difficult? What was easiest?

Art

1. Lacey found out about a group from Vancouver Island who are taking a mirror, decorating the frame, and placing a significant poem or quotation behind the glass. The owner of the mirror can then “look at themselves in the mirror and think about the poem” (ch. 2). As an art project, have students create their own mirrors, using papier-mâché, paint, tinfoil, etc. Students can choose their own quotes or work in pairs, where each partner chooses the other’s quote. Some ideas for quotes are given below.

Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends of them? —Abraham Lincoln

Every artist was first an amateur. —Ralph Waldo Emerson

Expect great things and great things will happen. —Mary Kay Ash

Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.
—Henry David Thoreau

Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly. —Robert F. Kennedy

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.
—Eleanor Roosevelt

The future depends on what we do in the present. —Mahatma Gandhi

There’s a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in. —Leonard Cohen

Real change begins with the single act of people talking about what they care about.
—Margaret Wheatley

When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us. —Helen Keller

You must be the change you wish to see in the world. —Mahatma Gandhi

2. Sable is haunted by her constant feelings of doom and dread. Because of this, she only wears black. The color black matches her mood and is a powerful symbol for her. As a group, talk about the connotations of different colors. Why do some colors evoke specific feelings for us? Are these connotations universal or are they individually or culturally specific?
 - ◆ Assign each student a color, using a wide range of choices, so that each student has a different one (a local hardware or paint store may be able to provide a variety of paint swatch strips at no cost).
 - ◆ Ask the students to imagine that the color they've been given is the color they wear because, like Sable, it reflects their mood. Ask the students to create a portrait, demonstrating that mood. Encourage the students to incorporate descriptive words (cheerful, hostile, peaceful, frightened, excited, aloof, comic, zany, etc.). What kind of mood would you be in to wear neon yellow? Electric blue? Steely gray? Forest green?
 - ◆ As a group, discuss whether the connotations the students suggested for their colors are universal or individual. For example, red may suggest cheeriness for one person, and anger for another.
3. Lacey suggests that their art class try an art form that was popular a few hundred years ago (ch. 2). Invite students to research heritage or vintage crafts. Students can choose a craft and prepare a short presentation for the class, talking about the history and materials of the craft they chose. Their presentation could include a demonstration. Ideas for crafts could include: braided rugs, "cat's cradle" game, embroidery, dream-catchers, moccasins, origami, Ojo de Dios sticks, Papel Cortado decorations, papier-mâché, silhouette paper cuttings, wind chimes, wood whittling, etc.
4. Sable's art class has a discussion about "what is art?" (ch. 4). Drawing from *Mirror Image*, write each of Mr. Ripley's definitions on the black board or flipchart:
 - ◆ Art is intended to create beauty
 - ◆ Art communicates a thought or an idea visually
 - ◆ Art is a measure of culture
 - ◆ Art is none of these things—it simply exists for its own sake

Be sure to leave a blank space for students to contribute their own definitions of art. Present an assortment of items on a central table, and have students "decide" whether each piece is "art" or not. There should be a wide range of items—at least as many as there are students. Items could include: a bottle of cola, a hammer, an old postcard, a light bulb, a Rubik's Cube, a picture of a famous painting, a signed baseball, a book of poetry or a textbook, a student's drawing, a photograph, a necklace, a toddler's finger painting, a CD of popular music, etc.

Connecting to the Students—Ideas for Exploration

1. Sable is haunted by her constant feelings of doom and dread. These feelings make her angry and nervous. She keeps looking for the cause of her feelings of doom and can't find it. Sable's family was deeply affected by the war in Bosnia and this is connected to her anxiety and fear. Because of the war, her father was killed, and her mother left with Sable to begin a new life in a new country.
 - ◆ What is the best advice for Sable on how to cope with her feelings? What are some step-by-step strategies she can use to relieve her fears and help her feel better about herself and her family's past?
 - ◆ One of the ways that Sable copes is by making a list of things she can do (ch. 1). The items on Sable's list aren't very realistic. Make a list of ten realistic ways to cope with anxiety, fear or worry. For example: go for a walk, hike or swim; shoot some baskets; do some yoga; write in a journal; listen to music or call a friend.
 - ◆ Sometimes, when we know where we came from, it helps us better understand who we are now. Would it be helpful to Sable to research the war in Bosnia, to find out more about it? How could she go about this? Where could she start this research? Make a list of three places or people Sable could go to for more information.
 - ◆ If someone in your school was struggling with constant anxiety and fear and, like Sable, living in dread, where could they turn to for help? Make a list of resources that are available for kids in your school or community, including phone numbers and addresses, and post it prominently in the classroom.
2. At the beginning of *Mirror Image*, Sable has a very clear idea of what Lacey is like, although she's never spoken to her. What is the basis of Sable's impression of Lacey? Why do Lacey's seemingly positive traits have such a negative effect on Sable?
 - ◆ Think of a time when you met someone for the first time. On what did you base your first impressions of those new people? Did your first impression match your later feelings about the person? Why, or why not?
 - ◆ What kind of first impression do you make? How does the way we choose to present ourselves (our hairstyle, the way we dress, our body language, facial expressions, etc.) send a message to others about what we're like? Using mirrors, challenge students to see themselves objectively, as others do.

3. Like many teens, Sable feels she has little control over her life and craves independence.
 - ◆ When you compare Sable's home life to Lacey's home life, does Sable really have so little power over herself? Can Sable be her own person? Can Lacey?
 - ◆ Using a black board or flipcharts, write two lists: one titled "things I have control over" and "things I have no control over." Choose two students to act as scribes, and lead the class in a brainstorming session. Examples could be:
 - I don't have control over: the weather, where I live, my family's income, etc.
 - I do have control over: my attitude, my grades in school, how I feel about my schoolwork, how I spend my lunch money, etc.
 - ◆ Looking at the two lists, challenge students to choose an item they have control over, and create an action plan to see it through, listing their plans step by step. For example, to make more friends they could join a new club. Students may be surprised at how much power they actually have!
4. Lacey gives Sable a makeover and Sable discovers she's a "babe" (ch. 11). But is this the "real" Sable? Should Sable put on makeup and wear colors other than black to be beautiful, or was she beautiful already? What makes people beautiful? Could Sable be beautiful without the makeup and clothes?
5. Lacey says that "beauty has power" (ch. 11). One example for her is her power to attract boys' attention: "But see, if you wanted, you could get them to pay attention to you...Isn't that power? Getting what you want?" (ch. 11). Is this "power"? How does Sable feel about this?
6. Sable and Lacey eventually learn to trust each other. Because they learn that they have a lot in common, they become friends. Have you had an experience like this? Think of your relationships with your friends. What brought you together?