



Bang

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Reading level: 3.0

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AR Quiz # 114168

Book Summary

Quentin and JD have been best friends for as long as they can remember; they trust and depend on each other for everything. Or so they thought. When Quentin gets caught stealing from a canteen truck, JD “helps” him by killing the owner of the truck who has Quentin in a headlock. JD remains cool and calm, but Quentin is a nervous wreck, just waiting for them to be found out—and they are. But JD has lied to Quentin about evidence, and when Quentin is arrested based on that evidence, their friendship is over. Eventually, the truth prevails, as JD’s lies are revealed through a picture his twin sister took of Quentin and him. Now the tables are turned, and JD is in jail where he belongs.

Prereading Idea

Movies and television shows about crime scene investigators allow the public to understand how every minute detail of a crime can be traced. Discuss with students the probability of committing a crime that could not be solved. Ask students what types of clues could reveal the identity of the criminal and what role eyewitnesses could play.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Our society is the victim of random acts of violence on a daily basis; innocent people are robbed and killed for no reason. Ask each student to find a report of violent acts against the innocent and perpetrated by teenagers. After reading the reports in class, make a list of the common characteristics in each case. Ask students to brainstorm steps they, as youth, can take to help stamp out violence initiated by teenagers. Have students refine their action plan and share it with the school counselor, a victim's rights group, youth organizations or other anti-violence organizations.
- Gun control issues are constantly in the news. Advocates of gun control assert that guns should be illegal, while opponents believe it is every citizen's right to have the freedom to bear arms. Ask each student to take a position on the issue of gun control, research their topic, solidify their beliefs on the issue and write a persuasive letter taking a stand on the issue. Have students share their views with the class, and then send their letters to their local congressman or government representative and to the local newspaper editorial staff.

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

Even though JD appears to be the leader, ask students to find support in the story that Quentin relinquishes power to JD even though he knows JD's plans are not the right or best thing to do. With a partner, have students write a scenario involving common peer-pressure situations students might face. Instruct students to write the scenario so that the characters are able to withstand the negative peer pressure, but to avoid flippant, moralistic scenarios for scenarios that demonstrate the true difficulties of dealing with peer pressure.

Theme

Ask students to choose one of the following universal themes (friendship, betrayal, overcoming challenges or family problems) or determine one of their own and find a quote that expresses their theme. Have students divide a poster into two parts, representing both major characters. Students should list the theme and quote, and on each half depict significant scenes from the novel that relate to the selected theme and character. Display the posters around the classroom.

Plot

The plot of this story varies from the normal sequence of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and finally, the resolution. In small groups, ask students to draw a plot diagram on a poster board, listing the events of the novel chronologically, and at each change in the plot, to identify the event as one of the stages of plot. Discuss as a class the way authors will “play with time” to create unusual plot scenarios, including plot lines from familiar books and movies. Have students continue to work with their small group to prewrite a narrative, developing an alternative plot sequence with a skeletal list of story events plotted. Have groups share their prewriting.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. The first time the boys meet Mr. Braithwaite in the park, he asks them, “When it’s all over, what do you want people to say about you?” What are people saying about Quentin and JD? For what reasons do the opinions of others matter to each of them?
2. JD and Quentin handle the murder of Mr. Braithwaite very differently. How does each of the boys handle the stress of knowing what they have done? What does this say about each boy’s character?
3. In chapter 8, Quentin asks JD, “Geez, why did you even do it?” Does JD ever answer this question? Does he accept responsibility for his actions? Why or why not?
4. At the end of chapter 4, JD says to Quentin, “Maybe I lost the battle, but I’m going to win the war.” What does JD mean by this statement? How does this statement prove to be wrong?
5. When JD returns from summer camp, Quentin knows he shouldn’t hook up with JD again. Why does he? What does Quentin need that JD has?
6. Quentin repeatedly says that the shooting was his fault. Since JD pulled the trigger, why does Quentin view the murder as his fault? Why would blame be placed on Quentin?
7. After the shooting, why does Quentin try to stay away from JD? Why does JD refuse to let Quentin be anywhere without him?
8. JD and Quentin are supposed to be best friends, so why does JD lie to Quentin about burning his clothes and try to set him up as a scapegoat for the murder? What role do the boys’ parents play in their choices?

Writer's Craft

Flashback

This is a literary device that inserts into a chronological sequence of a narrative an earlier depiction of a situation and/or conversation. For example, Quentin stacking cans in the grocery store is repeatedly used to introduce a flashback. Ask students to find several places where the author uses a flashback to inform the reader of an event that occurred in the past.

Author Biography

Norah McClintock was born and raised in Montreal, Quebec, and earned a degree in history from McGill University. A five-time winner of the Crime Writers of Canada's Arthur Ellis Award for Best Juvenile Crime Novel, she began writing mysteries because she personally loves reading them. In addition to her love of reading, she enjoys writing, hiking, biking, taking long walks in the woods, cross-country skiing, baking and going to the movies. The initial ideas for her books usually stem from news stories to which she adds her own imagination and creativity. Norah lives with her family in Toronto, Ontario.