



Damage

Robin Stevenson

Reading level: 3.5

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Book Summary

While on vacation with his parents, Theo sees the beautiful babysitter he had when he was eleven. She invites Theo to drive with her and her two-year-old son to LA. Since Theo and his parents are arguing all the time, Theo decides to take off with Ronnie, only leaving his parents a note. Upon arriving in LA, Ronnie and Theo stay with a friend of Ronnie's in a dirty apartment in a less-than-desirable part of town. But when Ronnie leaves Theo with her son and disappears, Theo finds her cell phone and discovers that she is running from her ex-husband. After talking with him, Theo realizes that Ronnie has kidnapped her son and is running away. Theo has a tough decision to make, and, hopefully, the decision he makes will be the best for everyone concerned.

Prereading Idea

Ask students to write a two or three sentence explanation of what they would do in one of the following situations:

1. Their best friend is busted for drugs and goes to juvenile hall.
2. Their parents are on their back all the time, and their parents don't trust them.
3. They know a friend is doing something illegal and harmful, impacting not only their friend, but others.

Ask students to share some of the scenarios they write with the class.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Theo dreams of working in the motion picture industry making animated movies. When he was eleven, he made stop-motion animated films with his action figures. Ask students to investigate the techniques used to make stop-motion animated movies and, in groups, have students write a script for a short movie using characters of their choice. Have students film their stop-motion movies and present them to the class.
- In chapter 11, Max tells Theo that “Most kidnappings are committed by the noncustodial parent.” Ask students in small groups to investigate noncustodial-parent kidnappings and to either verify or refute Max’s statement. Students should research the prevalence of kidnappings, penalties and long term consequences of kidnapping, preventative government measures, and alert systems designed to locate kidnapping victims within the window immediately after the kidnapping. Have students create a public information brochure designed with parents of divorce as its audience. Have students post their brochures at school and community sites.

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

When the story is over, the reader often wonders what happens to the characters after the last page is turned. Making sure that they stay true to the character’s personality, ask students to select a character in *Damage* and to write a monologue revealing what happens to that character after the story’s end. Ask students to assume the voice of the character and to perform their monologues for the class. Post monologues in the classroom or bind for the classroom library.

Plot

The plot of this story would be effective as a movie screenplay. As a class, determine which famous actor would play each part. Then, divide the class into thirteen groups, and assign each group a chapter to rewrite as a movie script, including stage directions. When completed, combine the chapters to make one script, and have students practice and perform the screen play.

Theme

With a partner, ask students to determine and to write the theme of the book based on the changes brought about in Theo and Ronnie through their adventure together. 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 poster board and then add elements from the novel to support their selection: quotations from the text, drawings and/or illustrations that support the theme, a timeline of events, etc. Display the thematic posters in the classroom.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Theo's parents assume he is guilty of drug use because his friend was busted with marijuana. What does it say about Theo's character that he stood by his friend?
2. How does Theo justify leaving with Ronnie even though he knows his parents will be upset?
3. Theo's mom frequently uses the phrase, "It's time to face the music" (ch.2, ch. 5). When does Theo finally understand what she means? Why does Theo use the phrase?
4. Soon after Theo and Ronnie leave, what causes him to have doubts about his decision?
5. What impact does Zach have on Theo? How does Theo help Ronnie with Zach? What do Theo's actions say about his character?
6. What does Theo learn about Ronnie from Max and Joelle that forces him to see the situation as it really is?
7. What does Theo learn about his life through his experience with Ronnie? How does Darrell shed some light on their parents that helps Theo understand their attitude?
8. What decision does Ronnie make that could possibly change her life? How does Theo help her make the decision?

Writer's Craft*Vocabulary Enrichment*

Ask students to look at the list of words below and to find them in the book. Have students work with a partner to select one of the vocabulary words and determine its meaning from context clues in the sentence. Then have students create a mini-poster for the word; students should include synonyms, antonyms, an original sentence using the word, and an illustration. Display mini-posters in the classroom as part of a word wall.

Compelled	(ch. 1)	Plummeted	(ch. 10)
Dregs	(ch. 6)	Scowled	(ch. 9)
Foreboding	(ch. 5)	Subsided	(ch. 8)
Infuriating	(ch. 9)	Vulnerability	(ch. 12)

Author Biography

Former counselor and social worker, **Robin Stevenson** loves to read, write and travel. While she has always loved to write, her publishing career began after her son was born. She has since published twelve novels for children and teens. A world traveler, Robin spent a year sailing to the Bahamas and has also lived in Japan, Australia and England. She currently lives in Victoria, British Columbia, with her partner and son.

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