



Death Wind

William Bell

Reading level: 3.2

978-1-55143-215-1 PB

978-1-55143-543-5 LIB

AR Quiz # 58563

Book Summary

Allie loves her parents, but their constant fighting about her is making her crazy. When she gets her report card with three failing grades, and she thinks she is pregnant, fear of her parents' reactions force her to make a rash decision; she runs away with her friend Razz, a skateboard champion. After several days on the road participating in skateboarding competitions, Razz schedules a visit home for an upcoming television interview. Return home, Razz and Allie are caught in a tornado that kills twelve people and destroys Allie's home. While she frantically searches for her parents, she realizes their importance in her life and what she was sacrificing.

Prereading Ideas

- Search the Internet for sites about the Barrie tornado using terms such as *Barrie*, *Tornado*, *Ontario*, etc. Wikipedia is a good place to start. Read appropriate news story to your students and show them some of the pictures of the devastation the tornado left in its wake.
- Have students obtain information on the path of destruction, duration, wind speed, casualties and property damage. Then, have students locate occurrences of these and other tornadoes on a wall map and include the statistics from the news reports. Label areas susceptible to tornadoes such as "Tornado Alley."

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Ask students to investigate programs that offer assistance to pregnant teens or teen runaways in their community, and national preventative programs not available in their community. Then encourage them to start a campaign to provide such programs in their community by writing or calling concerned citizens at both the community and national levels. Have students make and disseminate posters about the programs.
- Razz is a champion skateboarder who has won a lot of competitions. In groups of three, have students use research skills to investigate the moves, the equipment and the competitions available to extreme sports such as skateboarding, motocross racing, hang-gliding, bungee jumping or surfing. Then have each group make a presentation to the class using a visual aid to show at least one aspect of their research.

Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel

Theme

“Hope in the face of despair” could be the theme of this book on several levels. Ask students to think about the characters and the events that occur in *Death Wind* and write a paragraph(s) justifying this as the theme. Ask students to compile a thematic notebook centered on this theme. Include a newspaper article of current events, poems, cartoon strips and short stories to illustrate this theme. Have students use their theme justification paragraph(s) as the introduction to the notebook and a personal response to the theme as their concluding piece.

Characterization

The author draws a comparison between Razz and Slammer. Ask students to prepare a line graph of the personality characteristics of Razz and Slammer. On the vertical axis, have students chart them on such characteristics as helpfulness, compassion, intelligence, kindness, honesty, loyalty and any others that come to the students' mind. List specific events in order along the horizontal axis. Students can share their comparative findings with the class.

Plot

The sequence of events in a story is called the plot, and it is generally built around the conflict. The story's plot includes four stages: exposition, rising action, climax, and falling action. In groups of three, ask students to identify what occurs in each stage. Have students complete a storyboard of twelve sections on an 8.5 x 14 piece of paper. For each section, have students draw a visual to represent major events and include a caption explaining the action and identifying which stage of the plot is involved. Use the storyboard as a tool for students to pre-write their own individual narrative stories focusing on the plot stages.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Allie thought that running away from her problems would ease her stress and help her avoid informing her parents of her failing grades and possible pregnancy. Why is it impossible to run away from problems? What lesson did Allie learn from her experience?
2. Razz tells Allie that fighting does not solve anything. Do you think he is right? Do you think fighting is ever the right thing to do? If so, in what circumstances would fighting solve the problem?
3. Even though Allie is relieved to be away from her parents, she is concerned that they are worried about her and wondering where she is. What was Allie's biggest fear about returning home? Do you think her parents were better off without her as she said in her note?
4. What do you think motivated Slammer to be such a jerk to Allie and Razz? Were his actions justified? Why do you think Razz chose not to react to Slammer's provocation?
5. Allie put her life on the line to save a child she did not know. Why was she willing to take the risk? What other examples have you seen or heard about in the news where people selflessly risk their own life to save someone else?
6. When Allie and Razz began helping in the rescue by providing first aid to the tornado victims, they were able to focus on situations other than the tragedy around them. How did their actions enable them to focus on what was important in life? How do you think the tragedy changed their lives?

Writer's Craft***Irony***

Verbal irony is saying one thing and meaning another. Why is it ironic that Slammer and Razz called Allie "Brainy"? In pairs, ask students to write a situation using dialogue where verbal irony could be used. Have students perform the dialogue in front of their classmates two ways: one, by reading the dialogue, or two, by acting out the literal meaning of the words demonstrating the verbal irony.

Vocabulary Enrichment

Ask students to look at the list of words below and find them in the book. Then, ask them to write definitions of the words based on the context clues in the sentence. Students can then write an original sentence using the words. Have students select their best sentence and write it on a sentence strip to display in the room.

Sneered (ch. 4)

Bulging (ch. 5)

Daze (ch. 6)

Debris (ch. 6)

Scoring (ch. 7)

Author Biography

William Bell published his first short story in the high school newspaper, and after college, he became a high school English teacher in Ontario. After listening to an author's speech in 1978, he was motivated to write a short story, which later became his book *Crabbe*. He has since written twelve books and speaks to both elementary and secondary students about creative writing and his books. William lives in Orillia, Ontario, with writer Ting-xing Ye, and he has three children.