



Homecoming

Diane Dakers

Reading level: 3.5

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Book Summary

Fiona's life is shattered when her father is convicted of raping a teenage girl while he was chaperoning a party. As her father serves his time in prison, Fiona and her mother adjust to a new normal. People at school move on and leave Fiona alone, but when her father returns her life once again becomes intolerable; bullies harass Fiona, her parents fight constantly, and her friends can no longer visit her house. To escape the discord at school and home, Fiona starts hanging out with the fast crowd and partying, a decision that, ironically, leads her to the truth about what really occurred between her dad and the girl who accused him of rape. Armed with the true account of that night, Fiona contacts the police and does what she can to clear her father's name.

Prereading Idea

Society often fails to understand what happens to the families of convicted felons when they go to prison. Ask students to discuss the possible effects on children, parents and spouses. Then ask students what the continuing consequences are for felons who have served their time and been released, as well as for their families.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Zak and his friends use a variety of techniques to bully Fiona: name calling, intimidation and threats. In groups of three, ask students to research programs available to help prevent bullying, noting the similarities and differences in the programs. Ask students to evaluate the programs and to select one to implement in their school. Then ask each group to explain the reason(s) for their choice and, after a class discussion, come to a consensus on the selection of one program. Appoint three people to present the selected program to the school's administrative team for possible implementation.
- A bomb explosion in a school could be disastrous in costs of innocent human lives, and with the school violence in recent years, every threat must be taken seriously. Ask students to work in small groups to investigate bomb explosions or bomb scares in recent years in public places. For each incident students find, ask them to investigate the circumstances of the bomb-related incident: Who planted it? Was there a warning? Was there loss of lives and property? What type of bomb was used? What was the punishment levied against the bomber? Ask students to present their findings and group conclusions to the class using technology.
- Ask students to write a found poem using the words and phrases Fiona uses to describe her situation and her feelings. Have students locate words and phrases from the text that speak to Fiona's situation and that captivate them as a reader. Students should copy a selection of these words and phrases; they may add, rearrange or omit words and phrases as necessary to create their found poems. Have students share their poems with the class.

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

The characters in *Homecoming* struggle with both internal and external conflicts. After discussing conflict in small groups, have students select a character and draw the character's conflict journey throughout the book. Students should include the conflicts, both internal and external, events that increased the conflicts, conflict resolutions, and lessons learned by the character. Post the conflict journey maps around the room.

Elements of a Novel

In small groups ask students to define the following common elements of a novel—character, point-of-view, plot, setting, theme and tone—and to relate each element to *Homecoming*. After discussion, each group should select one of these elements for the novel *Homecoming* and discuss in depth the author's technique using that element: What did the author do? How did the author do it? What was common or unusual in her technique? What was the effect on the reader? Each group should organize and present their information to the class using visuals and/or technology.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. How does Fiona pay for her father's crime? What, if anything, could she have done to change her situation?
2. Why is Fiona's mother so uncomfortable when her dad returns home from prison? How does Fiona react to her father's return?
3. Why does Fiona start hanging out with Charley and her friends? How do they treat Fiona?
4. How do Zak and his friends make Fiona's life miserable? Why doesn't anyone attempt to stop Zak from tormenting Fiona?
5. Why is Eric so protective of Fiona? How does Fiona feel about Eric's protectiveness?
6. How does Fiona find out that her father was innocent and wrongly imprisoned? What does she do to help rectify the situation?
7. What punishment do the girls receive who withheld information about the night at the party? How is Megan's life altered as a result of the false charge she brought against Fiona's dad?
8. How does Fiona's dad's life change as a result of being proven innocent without question or reservation?

Writer's Craft*Dialogue*

The author uses dialogue: (1) to build story background, (2) to develop character, (3) to give readers information, and (4) to move the plot forward. Ask students to locate at least five sections of dialogue and identify the purpose of the section of dialogue. Then have students select a point in the story that they believe would benefit from dialogue for one of the above reasons. Each group should write and present dialogue for their selected portion of text.

Author Biography

Diane Dakers is currently a freelance writer and journalist. She has had the privilege to work in a variety of positions. She has taught at Carlton University, served as the communications manager for the Royal BC Museum, and worked as a writer/reviewer for the *Times Colonist* and a cultural reporter for local TV stations. Summer will find her travelling to the Arctic region of Canada to experience the time of the midnight sun. *Homecoming* is her first novel for Orca.

Writer's Craft*Verb Usage*

Powerful verbs can help create an image in the reader's mind. Ask students to find the examples below and then to find five other examples of powerful verbs in the novel. Then have students find five sentences in their own writing to rewrite using a powerful verb. Students can select their best revision and share their "before" and "after" versions of their writing with the class.

bolts	(ch. 1)	poke	(ch. 3)	slumps	(ch. 9)
bounces	(ch. 7)	ruffle	(ch. 7)	squeals	(ch. 3)
hoist	(ch. 7)	scurries	(ch. 5)		
plowed	(ch. 4)	shifted	(ch. 11)		

Author Biography

Vicki Grant always knew she wanted to be a writer, and after she graduated from college, she was hired as an advertising copywriter. She learned the characteristics of good writing and what it meant to meet deadlines and to take criticism. From advertising, she began writing for a children's television series, but after seven years, she took some time for herself to write her first novel. Vicki lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, with her husband and three children.