



## ***Home Invasion***

Monique Polak

Reading level: 3.6

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AR Quiz # 102521

### **Book Summary**

Josh does not like Clay, his new stepfather, and he resents him for trying to assume the role of his absent father. However, Josh is left alone with Clay for more than a week when Josh's grandfather has a heart attack and his mother has to leave town to care for him. As the two of them try to live together peacefully, Josh is drawn to other families that are intact. In an effort to observe what he considers "normal" families, he begins to break into people's houses to listen to their lives and get to know them. Surprisingly, his curiosity enables him to help capture a violent home invader and accept his fractured family for what it is.

### **Prereading Idea**

Ask each student to search the Internet for a news article that discusses a home invasion incident. After students have shared their articles with the class, reading several of the articles out loud, brainstorm a list of characteristics that home invaders possess. Using the list of characteristics, have students create a wanted poster or develop a list of actions that will make their own homes less susceptible to home invasion.

**Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas**

- Josh conveys that one of the reasons he continues to sneak into houses is the adrenaline rush he gets. Ask students to define an “adrenaline rush,” and to discuss the types of people that live for this excitement. For example, men and women who are involved in extreme sports, crime or other dangerous occupations. Students can then choose a person that is involved in one of these activities and write a short biography of the person. They should include what the person does, what motivates him/her to take the risks, and how the person became involved in this particular activity. Ask students to read their biographies to the class. Then compile the biographies into a book, complete with title, cover and table of contents. Place the book in the classroom or school library.
- One of Josh’s motivations for entering other people’s houses is his curiosity about their lives; he knows that observing people when they don’t know they are being watched is a way to really get to know them. Ask students to go to a public place and to observe people, finding at least one person that looks interesting. If possible the students can take a candid picture. Then ask the students to imagine all aspects of the observed person’s life and to write a one-page story, including as much detail as they can about his/her family, career and current situation. Students can read their stories to the class.

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

Authors use irony to show the contrast between appearance and reality. Situational irony exists when the outcome of a situation is opposite of what is expected, verbal irony exists when a person says one thing and means another, and dramatic irony occurs when the reader knows something the character doesn’t. The author uses all three types of irony in *Home Invasion*. Ask students to select a partner and find examples of each type of irony. Ask each pair of students to write and illustrate their examples on a poster board to share with the class.

***Characterization***

The home invader is a character in the book the reader never gets to see firsthand, but the reader knows a great deal about him and his personality by his actions and what other people say about him. In groups of two or three, ask students to brainstorm a list of facts they know about the home invader. Then, based on what they know, have them write a short story in which the home invader is the main character, telling the story from his point of view, including the reason for his crime spree. Ask students to read their stories to the class.

**Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions**

1. The author sets up conflict in the first paragraph of the book by showing the human characteristic of judging others based on our own values and ideals. How does Josh's opinion of Clay change? What other characters form immediate opinions that eventually change?
2. In chapter 2, Josh quotes Edgar Allan Poe's idea called "the imp of the perverse," and, citing the example of *Wet Paint—Don't Touch*, he explains that to be told not to do something gives you the overwhelming urge to do it. Why does knowing about the "imp of the perverse" help Josh? How does the "imp of the perverse" affect other characters in the book?
3. Josh is concerned regarding Patsy's opinion of him and his family. Why is this important to him? How does Patsy's opinion of Clay change from their initial meeting? Even though their families are different, how are their family situations similar?
4. When Clay enrolls Josh in basketball camp without his knowledge, Josh is angry, mostly because it was Clay's idea. Why does that matter to Josh? How does basketball camp open new doors for Josh?
5. When Bobby comes to Josh's house for dinner, Bobby asks him why he hates Clay so much. Josh says, "I hate him because he's not my father," (ch. 5). Why is Clay the target for Josh's anger toward his father?
6. When Josh overhears Patsy's parents talking about her father's gambling problem, he determines "there are some secrets you'd rather not know," (ch. 6). What other secrets does Josh know? How does he handle the secret knowledge he possesses?
7. When Josh's three-point shot misses and the team loses the game, he wants to disappear. Why is he irritated when the coach tells him, "You did your best, Josh. That's what counts," (ch. 8).

**Writer's Craft*****Powerful Verbs***

Verbs are the power in every sentence because they convey action; using strong, specific verbs makes writing more enjoyable to read. Read the sentences below with examples of strong verbs.

*I **trudged** along the sidewalk, my basketball **cradled** in the crook of my arm.*

*The dad laughed and **rumpled** his son's curly hair.*

*...Clay was **sprawled** on the couch...*

*My eyes **darted** around the room...*

*I **dashed** over to the closet...*

Ask students to find additional examples from the book and write a sentence using a strong, descriptive verb. Use sentence strips to display their sentences in the classroom.

**Author Biography**

**Monique Polak** teaches writing and English literature in Montreal, where she lives with her husband and daughter. She is also a freelance writer for the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Montreal Business Magazine*.