



Juice

Eric Walters

Reading level: 2.9

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AR Quiz # 87400

Book Summary

The chant “Moose is on the loose” reverberates through the crowd as Michael makes the tackle for his team that saves the championship game. He is awarded MVP of the year and appointed captain of next year’s football team. But when Coach Reeves retires, the new coach arrives with a host of sponsors and a surplus of money. For strength, coach gives the players special shakes to drink, and he convinces several players to take steroids so that they can be winners. The illicit activities finally erupt in chaos when the coach and his assistant are arrested for steroid distribution.

Prereading Idea

With all the reports in recent years concerning steroid use in professional and Olympic athletes, students should have no problem understanding the reason some athletes take them. Ask students to find a news report about a high school or professional athlete who was caught taking steroids. Read the articles to the class and discuss the consequences to the athlete and his or her team. Discuss the additional consequences to the viewing public and young and impressionable athletes.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- In chapter 1, the author gives a description of the winning play of the championship football game. Ask students to list the words and phrases in the author's description that stand out to them. Have students give the ideas a title and write a poem with the found words and phrases. Compile the poems in a book for the class to share.
- Ask students to research both the physical and emotional side effects of steroids, some of which are listed in chapter 10. Then have the students prepare a Public Health poster to display in the halls of the school emphasizing the dangers of steroid usage.

Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel

Theme

Theme is not the subject of the work. Theme is an insight about life or human nature. Based on this definition of theme, ask students to determine the theme of *Juice*. List their ideas on the board, and from those ideas challenge students working with a partner to write a creative and appropriate theme for the novel, using the idea of “juice” as part of the theme message. Have partners write and illustrate their theme messages to post in the classroom.

Point of View

Readers are allowed to see the thoughts of Moose, but not of anyone else. Ask students to work with a partner and select a situation in the book written from Moose's point of view. Then ask students to write the situation from another character's point of view. Have students read their rewritten text to the class. As an extension, use the “other points of view” as a discussion catalyst. Have the students rewrite an incident from their own experience told from the other person's point of view.

Setting

The setting for *Juice* is a small town high school whose most popular past time is football. In groups, ask students to consider how the story would differ if the school was a large, metropolitan high school. What conflicts might take place? How would the characters act and react to the conflict? How would the problems be resolved? Ask each group to prepare a skit showing how the new setting would change the story. Have the class choose the best scenario based on the believability of the skit.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Moose instinctively knows that taking steroids is cheating, but he lets the coach talk him into using them anyway. How can the use of steroids be considered cheating? Why does Moose go against his gut instincts?

2. Tony tells Moose not to discuss his use of the “juice” with anyone, and he doesn’t. What happens to prompt Moose to talk to Caleb? How does Caleb help Moose own up to his problem?
3. When Moose’s mother meets Coach Barnes, she feels like he is trying to sell her something (ch. 7), and she thinks he would make a good used car salesman. What is he trying to sell her? Why does Moose feel he has to defend the coach?
4. Tony obviously “talks” with most of the players, but if he talks to Caleb, Caleb does not agree to take the steroids. Why would Tony not talk to Caleb? Assuming Tony did talk to Caleb, why does Caleb not fall into the trap like the other players?
5. Tony tells Moose not to use the word *steroid*, but to refer to the drugs as *juice*. What is the significance to Tony of calling the steroids juice? Why is this important?
6. When Coach Barnes and Tony are arrested, Coach Reeves returns to the team and accepts responsibility for his role in selecting Coach Barnes. What does this say about Coach Reeves’ character as a man? How does his apology affect the team?
7. Coach Barnes and Coach Reeves have different philosophies about winning and losing and what it takes to be a winner. How do their philosophies differ? Use of steroids aside, who is the best coach? Why?

Writer’s Craft

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a tool authors use to prepare their readers for the events to come. These clues help build suspense and heighten interest in the story. In chapter four the author raises the question concerning the source of the funds to pay for all of the new equipment, and the coach requires the team to agree to do *whatever* it takes to win the championship game. Ask students to look for other examples of foreshadowing that hint at steroid use. Compile the list on the board. Ask students to write a paragraph explaining why the team, especially Moose, does not heed the warnings.

Author Biography

Eric Walters enjoys presenting to children, blending drama, storytelling, audience participation and interaction. Eric strives to motivate his audience members, not only about his books, but also about their own personal writing process. When he is not writing, Eric is coaching his children’s soccer and basketball teams. In addition, he plays the saxophone and enjoys music.