



## **My Side**

Norah McClintock

Reading level: 4.1

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### **Book Summary**

Quiet and extremely shy, Addie has a difficult time making friends and being part of a group. After her only friend, Neely, decides to end their friendship so that she can be part of the popular clique, Addie isolates herself even more. Addie is thrilled, though, when she finds a note in her locker from John, a boy for whom she has held a years-long crush, asking her to meet him in the woods after school. But John didn't write the note, and the people waiting for her when she arrives terrorize and torment her while videotaping the entire incident. When Addie realizes she is not in real danger, she runs from the laughter, but she soon learns that the incident is only the beginning of her nightmare. The videotape is made public, and Neely, unbelievably, seems to be at the heart of the deception.

### **Prereading Idea**

Ask students to define a practical joke, and then ask them, "In what situations could a practical joke turn into bullying?"

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

- Addie and Neely are both victims of cyberbullying with similar outcomes—though different levels of involvement. Participants, Kayla, Jen and Shayna are the perpetrators of the cruel incident. Have students form small groups and prepare for a trial. Students must decide who will be tried and on what charge, and if multiple trials should be held. Each group must also choose students to portray a judge, attorneys for the defense and the plaintiff, and the character(s) on trial. Attorneys will have to consider the parents, school officials and the laws as they prepare their cases. When prepared, the trial can be held in front of multiple classes who will act as the jury.
- The laws surrounding cyberbullying are new and constantly being changed as cases come before the courts. In pairs, ask students to investigate the laws in their city and state that are in place to protect the victims. Based on what the teams discover, ask them to develop an action plan for their school to: (1) make students and parents aware of the legal and emotional impact of cyberbullying, and (2) to eliminate cyberbullying on their campus. Have each team present their action plans to school officials and parent committees as a first step in selecting and implementing an effective cyberbullying prevention plan.

**Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel*****Point of View***

Addie and Neely both tell the story from their point-of-view and the reader knows only each of their sides and what each speaker tells about Kayla and her friends. In small groups, ask students to write a section titled *Kayla's Story*. Students must base Kayla's story on what they know about her personality and personal life. Students should attempt to explain Kayla's actions and thoughts, following the example set for them by *Addie's Story* and *Neely's Story*. Each group can share their take on *Kayla's Story* with the class

***Plot***

The author adapts the plot structure to help the reader understand the dichotomy of what happened from two completely different points of view. Ask half of the class working in small groups to diagram *Neely's Story* and the other half, again in small groups, to diagram *Addie's Story*. Students should draw a plot diagram for each character's story and include: (1) exposition (introduction of character, setting and problem), (2) rising action (problem complications), (3) climax (point of greatest tension), (4) falling action (conflict outcome), and (5) resolution (final outcome). At each point on the diagram students should write a brief statement of what occurs. Then have the students jigsaw groups between the two stories in order to find similarities and/or differences. Have each of the new groups develop three big understandings they have after comparing the two stories and share them with the whole class.

**Irony**

Ask students working with a partner to define and discuss dramatic, situational and verbal irony and to find at least one example from the novel of each type of irony. Have students create a letter “From the Author to My Readers.” In the letter have students assume the voice of the author and tell her reasons for including the three types of irony using the examples and student discussions. Share the letters in small groups and post in the classroom.

**Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions**

1. In chapter 2, Addie says, “if there’s one thing every teenager on the planet is afraid of, it’s being made fun of.” Is this true? Why or why not?
2. Why is it important for Addie to return to school after the incident? How does she feel when Neely, John and Kayla look at her for the first time?
3. Why is Addie so proud to be meeting John at his request? Why is it so important to her that Jen, Shayna and Kayla know John invited her to meet him?
4. When Addie escapes her tormentors and is under her porch in chapter 4, she asks herself, “What did I ever do to deserve something like that?” How does she reconcile what happened to her?
5. Why does Kayla single out Addie to terrorize? Why are Jen and Shayna so willing to cooperate with Kayla’s plan?
6. When the incident goes viral, nothing really happens. How does the situation become a case of the haves vs. the have-nots?
7. What, if anything, could Neely have done to change the course of events? Why was she so easily duped into Kayla’s cruel plan?
8. Both Addie and Neely are hurt by what occurs in the woods. What are the similarities of their pain in the aftermath of the incident?
9. What role, if any, does John play in the bullying incident? How could he have helped in the aftermath? Why does Addie think he is a coward?
10. How does betrayal play a role in each of the characters’ lives? Each character handles the betrayal differently. What is the result of the betrayal in each of the characters’ lives?

**Writer’s Craft****Simile**

Ask students to define a simile and then read the sentences that contain the similes below.

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| “like rocks launched from a slingshot”      | (ch. 1) |
| “like a mouse desperate to get to its hole” | (ch. 2) |
| “like a cemetery filled with mourners”      | (ch. 5) |
| “It cuts like a knife”                      | (ch. 5) |

Ask students working in small groups to reflect on each of the above similes by answering these questions: What do I understand about the simile? How does the simile connect to the plot or a character in the story? What does the author want me to understand about the plot or character based on my understanding of the simile? Have each group share their favorite understanding with the whole class.

### *Vocabulary*

Ask students to select one of the words listed below as the title of a poem and to use “found” phrases from the novel, synonyms, antonyms and ideas of their own to create a short word poem. Have students read their poems to the class and post them around the room.

ambience	(ch. 11)	engulf	(ch. 3)	preferential	(ch. 14)
derelict	(ch. 12)	lurking	(ch. 3)	proprietary	(ch. 2)
emboldened	(ch. 2)	ogled	(ch. 3)	rasping	(ch. 2)

### **Author Biography**

**Norah McClintock** was born and raised in Montreal, Quebec, and earned a degree in history from McGill University. A five-time winner of the Crime Writers of Canada’s Arthur Ellis Award for Best Juvenile Crime Novel, she began writing mysteries because she personally loves reading them. In addition to her love of reading, she enjoys writing, hiking, biking, taking long walks in the woods, cross-country skiing, baking and going to the movies. The initial ideas for her books usually stem from news stories—to which she adds her own imagination and creativity. Norah lives with her family in Toronto, Ontario.