



## **Picture This**

Norah McClintock

Reading level: 3.6

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AR Quiz # 133329

### **Book Summary**

Severing gang ties and settling into foster care with the Ashdales place Ethan on the path to a good life, but an armed gunman, a bad cop and a run-in with a former rival gang member threaten to derail him. However, Ethan's determination, Mrs. Ashdale's belief in him and Ethan's involvement with the "Picture This" photo competition at the youth center work together to make Ethan a hero rather than a victim in what could have been his death in this shocking sequence of life-threatening events.

### **Prereading Idea**

Ask students to investigate the meaning and origin of the idioms *A Leopard Can't Change His Spots* or *You Can't Teach an Old Dog New Tricks*. Then, discuss with the class how this can relate to people or to characters in a novel. As students read *Picture This*, ask them to determine which character relates best to these idioms. Ask students to be prepared to discuss the obstacles to change that these characters face in the novel, perceived or real.

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

- Ethan and the other foster kids in the Ashdale's home participate in youth programs in the neighborhood in which they live. Ask students to research programs available in their communities for at-risk kids. Students should investigate the availability of programs, their times of operation, the age groups they serve, the scope of services offered and the eligibility requirements. Students can then create brochures to post and distribute throughout the communities served by the programs.
- As Ethan studies the hawks, he realizes they could soon become endangered because the food they eat will no longer be available to them; furthermore, the food the hawks eat could also become endangered. As cities enlarge their borders, the habitats of animals are destroyed. Ask students to investigate endangered animals in North America, especially those that once resided in areas now densely populated by humans. Have students work in small groups and select at least three animals to display to the class on a poster board, diorama, 3-D model, or other visual presentation. In addition to listing current endangered status with statistics, have each group depict how extinction of that animal could impact other animal species and the environment. Students should present their findings to the class.

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

The plot of *Picture This* twists and turns and captures the reader's attention; therefore, the plot includes much more than the usual and predictable exposition, rising action, climax and falling action. The author expands the rising action with additional conflict. Working in small groups, ask students to draw a plot diagram reflective of the novel, identifying each stage on the diagram. At each stage, ask students to write a two- to three-sentence summary and an illustration of the event. The plot diagrams should be displayed in the classroom.

***Characterization***

The author uses stereotypical, dynamic characters and gives them heart and personality to make them real to the reader. For example, Officer Firelli, hard-nosed, uncaring cop; Mrs. Ashdale, kind-hearted foster mom; and Ethan, tough foster kid trying to do good. The author also uses stereotypical, static characters such as Robert Miller, the bad cop; the gang members; and Devon, the youth worker. All have a purpose and work together to create a story worth reading. Ask students to show how the relationship between the dynamic characters and the static characters motivates change. For example, if the gang members had not been after Ethan, then he would not have told Mrs. Ashdale, and she would not have shown Ethan her care and concern for him. Ask students to create a web or flowchart of at least three connections and share and display them in the class.

**Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions**

1. What does the encounter in the alley with the gunman tell the reader about Ethan's character? Does Ethan stay true to his character throughout the novel? How do events in the novel support your answer?
2. Why is Ethan so paranoid about the Nine-Eights coming after him? How does their involvement in Ethan's life work against him and for the man trying to kill Ethan?
3. Why does Ethan think Officer Firelli has it in for him? Why does Officer Firelli have a valid reason for mistrusting Ethan? When does Officer Firelli change his attitude toward Ethan?
4. How does Ethan feel when he finally tells Mrs. Ashdale about what happened with the Nine-Eights? Why doesn't Ethan tell her sooner?
5. What is the Ashdales' reaction to the trouble Ethan has brought to their home? How does Ethan respond to their reaction?
6. How does the reader know Ethan changes his perspective of himself in the course of this novel?

**Writer's Craft*****Foreshadowing***

Throughout the novel the author gives the readers clues as to the identity of the person, as well as the reason behind the mugging, burglary and kidnapping of Ethan. The first appears when Mrs. Ashdale asks Ethan the identity of the man in the picture he takes of the hawks. Ethan replies, "Just some guy." He was a middle-aged man, and he was leaning on a shovel. Working in small groups, ask students to find at least three more clues in the novel that point to Robert Miller as the culprit. Then have students share with the class the passages they find.

**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.