



Reaction

Lesley Choyce

Reading level: 3.0

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AR Quiz # 136628

Book Summary

When Ashley finds out she is pregnant, she and her boyfriend Zach try to do what is best for each of them and the baby. They visit a counselor at the Planned Parenthood Clinic, talk to the school counselor and seek advice from other teen parents. With every decision Ashley and Zach make, both sets of parents interfere, doing their best to undermine Zach and Ashley and to bend them to their view of the best course of action. Ultimately, Zach and Ashley prevail, but not before the police are brought in and the situation escalates from bad to worse.

Prereading Idea

Ask students to investigate statistics on teen pregnancy since 1995 and to discuss with the class the short- and long-term implications those statistics have on our society. Have students prepare posters depicting those implications. Post the posters in the community and the school.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- When a teenager gets pregnant, she has three options: abortion, adoption or keeping the baby. Divide the class into three groups and assign each group one of the options. Each group may sub-divide as they see fit to argue for or against the option they were given. After investigation and discussion of the option, the groups will present their arguments to the class using some creative means: a skit, interactive online tools, visual aids, speeches, debate or other presentation style.
- Ask students to assume either Ashley or Zach's voice and to write journal entries from the time they find out about Ashley's pregnancy until the time she delivers the baby. Then have a read-around of the different journals in chronological order.

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

Authors use various avenues to develop a character—through physical description of a character; through the character's speech, thoughts, feelings, or actions; through the speech, thoughts, feelings or actions of other characters; and through a narrator's direct comments. Ask students to choose a partner and select one of the minor characters—Kiley, Stephen, Mr. Walker, Mrs. Walker, Zach's father or Zach's mother—and to find an example of at least three methods that the author uses to develop their character. Along with an illustration and the name of the character, have students create a mobile displaying the three methods and a quote or situation that models each method. Display the mobiles around the room.

Theme

Theme is not the subject of the work, but, instead, is an insight about life or human nature. Based on this definition of theme, ask students to determine the theme of *Reaction*. 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 "reaction" as part of the theme message. Have partners write their theme message and illustrate it to post in the classroom. As an extension, have students rewrite their messages as: a math, science, social studies, or English concept with the focus on reaction.

Setting

The setting of a story is more than just a physical location; it can include atmosphere and mood, as well as customs, ideas, beliefs and values. The author chose a high school setting because both the audience and the characters are high school students. Divide students into groups of three and ask them to cast the book as a movie, using popular teen actors and actresses. Each group should write, practice and record a script for a movie trailer advertising the movie, focusing on elements of the setting.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Is Ashley right to lay all of the blame for her pregnancy at Zach's feet? Why or why not?
2. Why is Zach's initial reaction one of selfishness? When does he make the realization that the situation is more about Ashley than himself?
3. Why does Ashley tell her friends at school that Zach forced her to have sex with him? What does that accomplish? Is that what Ashley wanted to happen?
4. Why does Zach run away from home? Why does he come back?
5. Why do Ashley's parents react with more anger than Zach's parents? Is her father justified in calling Zach's dad?
6. How does the teen fathers' website initially help Zach make a decision? What confusion does the information on this site cause Zach?
7. What role, if any, does Kiley play in helping Zach reach a decision about what to do about the pregnancy? Why does Ashley's father finally agree to back off and let Zach and Ashley make their own decision without interference from him?

Author Biography

Lesley Choyce teaches part-time at Dalhousie University, runs Pottersfield Press, and has written over forty adult and young adult books, including fiction, nonfiction and poetry. His YA novels center on a variety of topics and issues from the popular—skateboarding, surfing and rock bands—to the controversial—racism, environmental issues and organ transplants. He's worked as a rehab counselor, a freight hauler, a corn farmer, a janitor, a journalist, a lead guitarist, a newspaper boy and a well-digger. He lives in a 200-year-old farm house at Lawrencetown Beach, overlooking the ocean. He says, "I decided to be a writer with high hopes that it would allow me to avoid work. When writing turned out to be work as well as fun, I stuck with it anyway."