



Shark

Jeff Ross

Reading level: 3.7

978-1-4598-1682-4 PB

Book Summary

In this high-interest novel for teen readers, Mark “Shark” Hewitt is forced to play pool for profit.

Prereading Idea

After reading the book summary to the class, ask students to brainstorm the possible reasons a teen could be forced to play pool for profit. As you write the reasons on the board, discuss each option with the class.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Much like Mark, students often find themselves struggling with internal conflict surrounding decisions they need to make or situations in which they are involved. Ask students to write about an internal conflict they have experienced and explain how they resolved it. Ask students to share their writing on a volunteer basis.
- Movies have been made and books have been written, some of them based on true stories, about pool sharks or hustlers and how they make their reputation. Ask students to research famous pool players and then select one player and write a summary of that person's rise to fame. Ask students to share in small groups which person they chose and how that player made it big.

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

Setting is the time and place of action in a story. Ask students to think about the setting in *Shark* and to brainstorm a list of facts about the setting. For each item on the list, ask students to determine if that element of setting is crucial and to explain why. As students share their responses, ask the class to corroborate their reasoning.

Conflict

Mark experiences serious internal conflict about playing pool for money, working for War. Ask students to work with a partner to create a two-column chart. In one column, have them list the conflicts Mark is dealing with, and in the second column, ask students to state how Mark resolves each conflict. Pair students with partners to write a performance piece that demonstrates the internal conflict Mark is experiencing: a role play, monologue, poem for two voices or an interview. Have students present their pieces to the class.

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a literary technique often used to tease readers about plot turns that will occur later in the story. Jeff Ross uses foreshadowing to let readers know that War will be a danger to Mark and his family. Ask students to work with a partner to identify at least five sentences that could lead the reader to see that something sinister might happen to Mark at the hands of War. Then have the students relate these sentences to what occurs between Mark and War.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Why do angles fascinate Mark? How does seeing angles help him in his pursuits?
2. What are Mark's feelings about letting War into his home to use the bathroom? Why doesn't Mark want to tell his mother that War was in the house?
3. Why is Mark so committed to not playing pool for money? How does War finally convince Mark to play pool for money?
4. What actions does War take to ingratiate himself with Mark's mother?
5. How does Mark justify to himself that he has to follow through on War's plan?

6. Other than sharking people at pool halls, what other things does Mark do as a result of his entanglement with War that he hasn't done before?
7. Why do the patrons at the pool halls dislike War so intensely?
8. What role did Mark's father play in Mark's love for pool and his expertise in the game?

Writer's Craft

Imagery

The use of imagery helps readers “see” in their mind's eye the scene the author is trying to paint.

For example, the author may use personification:

Chapter 1—“His clothes screamed biker.”

Or the author may use descriptive images:

Descriptions of Minnesota's, Hippy and War throughout chapter 1.

Or the author may use powerful verbs:

Chapter 4 (page 35): “I bristled at the question.”

Ask students to find other examples of imagery in the book and to select at least four with which to create a collage of images. Students may use drawings, cartoons, magazine pictures or computer graphics to prepare their collages. Ask students to include the four textual references on their collages. Post collages in the classroom.

Author Biography

Jeff Ross is an award-winning author of several novels for young adults, including the Orca Soundings titles *Coming Clean* and *A Dark Truth*. He currently teaches script writing and English at Algonquin College in Ottawa, Ontario, where he lives with his wife and two sons. For more information visit jeffrossbooks.com.