



## **Tell**

Norah McClintock

Reading level: 4.0

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AR Quiz # 110014

### **Book Summary**

Two police officers awaken David and his mother in the middle of the night to convey the news that Phil, David's stepfather, has been murdered. David's surprisingly nonchalant attitude contrasts sharply with his mother's devastation. In the following days and weeks, the police find evidence that could convict David of the murder. Caught off-guard by their evidence, David finally tells the police all he knows about Phil's murder.

### **Prereading Idea**

Discuss with students the importance of telling the truth and the effects of lying to an individual, his family and society. As a teacher, give a personal example of how a lie has affected each aspect of your life. Then ask students to write an individual, brief example of how lies have affected them and their families, as well as their community. Students can volunteer to read explanations aloud.

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

- Even though Jamie and Phil are dead when this story takes place, they function as essential characters in the story events. In pairs, ask students to select either Jaime or Phil and to draw a character web, including all the details they know about Jaime or Phil and their deaths. Discuss with students which details would be included in a news story and which details would not be considered “news worthy.” Then ask them to write a news story about Jaime’s death or Phil’s murder, encouraging students to supply additional inferred but logical elements of a news story. After reading the stories aloud, display them in newspaper format in the classroom.
- David believed his brother Jaime suffered from Attention Deficit Disorder, or more specifically, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. With a partner, ask students to research one of the disorders and to write an informational brochure about the disorder. Students should include the cause, the treatment and the symptoms, and highlight organizations that can help people who suffer with the disorder. Brochures can be duplicated and distributed to the nurse and counselor of the school.

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

In small groups, ask students to identify and list the questions, phrases and statements in chapter one that lead the reader and the detective to believe that David and/or his mother might have been involved in Phil’s death. After completing the novel, have students write a paragraph explaining the truth behind the statements and questions and explaining how this use of foreshadowing moved the plot forward. Groups can read their paragraphs to the class.

*Characterization*

David, a complex character, must deal with painful truths about his life that have been hidden from him. Ask students to make a T-chart listing the lies David has believed and next to each lie the truth. Using a class-generated list of emotions that David experiences in this story, have students write a poem expressing one or more of the emotions and the reason behind that emotion. Or have students write a poem for two voices using the list of lies and truths with David assuming one voice and his mother, stepfather, his brother or society assuming the other.

**Conflict**

Each character in this story must deal with internal conflict in order to make a decision that will alter the life-course of several other people. Ask students to select a character and list the first decision that character must make across the top edge of a half sheet of poster board. To emphasize the internal conflicts, have students create a flow chart with decision choices and possible outcomes for each decision. Have students add creative visual elements to their charts and display them around the room.

**Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions**

1. Why does David's mother encourage her boys to live a pretense around Phil? How does her desire for her boys to be "perfect" lead to tragedy?
2. David's mother discovers that Phil lied to her about having a life insurance policy. What else did Phil lie about? How do his lies continue to affect David and his mother?
3. How does Phil's gambling and drinking affect David? What could David have done differently to help change his attitude toward Phil?
4. David dislikes and even resents Phil. What role does Jack play in helping David accept his feelings about Phil? How does learning Phil's "tell" help David discover the truth behind the lies?
5. Why does Jack tell David the truth about his father? How does David's attitude toward his mother change when he discovers the truth about his father?
6. How does David change when he realizes the truth about Phil's role in Jaime's death? On the night Phil is murdered, what does David do that causes him to feel guilty? Should he feel guilty? Why or why not?
7. How does the title relate to the story? What is a "tell"? What other meanings does "tell" have?

**Writer's Craft****Vocabulary Enrichment**

Ask students to look up the following words in the dictionary and to list synonyms for each word. Then, working with a partner, write several original sentences that relate to one another, using the synonyms and/or the word.

Nudged	(ch. 2)	Muttered	(ch. 7)
Hysterical	(ch. 3)	Scowled	(ch. 7)
Canvassed	(ch. 5)	Needling	(ch. 7)
Vicinity	(ch. 6)	Cascade	(ch. 9)

**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. 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.