



Yellow Line

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Reading level: 2.4

978-1-55143-462-9 PB

AR Quiz # 102529

Book Summary

Vince lives in a small town where whites live on one side of town and Indians on the other; both know not to cross between the lines. Furious when his best friend Sherry begins to date Steve, an Indian boy, Vince becomes involved in a scheme to break them up. Enter Raedawn, a girl from the Indian reserve who takes Vince's breath away. As his feelings for Raedawn deepen, Vince begins to understand Sherry's relationship, and together they try to convince their parents that Steve and Raedawn are not "undesirables" simply because of their race. The conflict with his parents and friends eventually forces Vince to take a stand against prejudice.

Prereading Idea

Read the article found at the following website to students.

http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/199809/24_herzogk_racism-m

Ask students to write a reaction to the article, and then discuss the information in the article and the students' reactions.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Because of Sherry's involvement with Steve, Vince must suddenly confront the racism in his small town, and his attraction to Raedawn only serves to complicate matters for him. With a partner, ask students to write an article for the local newspaper from Vince's point of view discussing the long overdue need to eliminate the "yellow line" in their town.
- In chapter 7, Nick and Justin describe their encounter with Raedawn, but in chapter 13, Raedawn tells Vince what really happened. Ask the class to assume that Raedawn has pressed charges against Nick and Justin for their attack on her and that the case is coming to trial. Organize and stage a mock trial. Divide the class into groups of three and give each group an assignment: judge, prosecuting attorney, attorney for the plaintiff, newspaper and television reporters, and jurors. Have the opposing attorney groups prepare their case and present it to the judge and jury.

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

Throughout *Yellow Line*, one of the major conflicts is prejudice between the Indians and the whites and the resulting hostility that affects the people who live on both sides of the Forks River Bridge. The racism runs deep, and everyone in town abides by the "rules." "The one thing that stays the same, Dad says, is that people have always known their place. Indians on one side and whites on the other." In groups of four or five, ask students to make a three-column chart. In the first column, list the names of all characters in the novel. In the second column, list the effects the prejudice has on each individual or group, and in the third column, list the resolution of the conflict. In their small groups, have students share and discuss the effects of prejudice on each character or group. Have students display the charts on the wall and share new understandings with the class.

Point of View

The story is told from Vince's point of view, so the reader only knows what Vince is thinking and feeling. Have students work with a partner and select the scene on pages 29–30 or pages 118–119 to rewrite from Raedawn's point of view. Ask students to share their rewrites with the class.

Plot

The plot of the story would be effective as a movie screenplay. As a class, determine which famous actor would play each part. Then, divide the class into thirteen groups, and assign each group a chapter to rewrite as a movie script, using as much of the dialogue as possible. When completed, combine the chapters to make one script, and have students perform the screenplay.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Sherry and Steve have been raised in a town where “the most important rule is date your own kind.” Why do they risk breaking this rule? What are the possible consequences?
2. The tension between Vince and Charlie begins in the gym and continues to grow throughout the story, but Vince does not show his fear. He is more upset about the taunts from the girls about his chicken legs. Why do their taunts bother him more than Charlie’s threats of beating him up? How does what they say about his legs shake his confidence in himself?
3. The first time Raedawn and Vince show any interest in each other, Vince is furious with himself. He asks himself, “What am I doing?” Why does his interest in Raedawn make him angry? How does their initial attraction affect the outcome of the story?
4. Vince is furious with Nick and Justin when they begin to talk trash about Raedawn, and when he defends her, both of his friends are bewildered. Why are Nick and Justin shocked at Vince’s attitude toward Raedawn?
5. Vince and Sherry have been best friends since they were small children. Vince is upset about Sherry dating an Indian, but what is the real reason he is so angry? How does his anger toward Sherry affect his actions toward their parents?
6. The good advice the old man gives Vince in chapter 11 affects the decisions he makes about his relationship with Raedawn. What other decisions are affected by this advice? How do Vince’s decisions alter the course of his life?
7. When Steve “steps up to the plate and plays the ball” in chapter 12, Vince is amazed. Why are Steve’s words so shocking to Vince? What effect does Steve’s conversation have on Sherry’s parents?
8. Vince’s change in attitude causes him to lose his relationship with Nick and Justin? Why is he willing to risk everything to buck the system? What does he have to gain?

Writer’s Craft

Simile and Metaphor

A simile is a tool writers employ using the words *like* or *as* to compare one concept to another generally unrelated concept, but with one strong similarity between the two. A metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two or more things that have something in common without using *like* or *as*.

Ask students to read the following sentences, paying close attention to the simile and metaphor.

“Now the place has shriveled up like dried prunes full of old people and weirdos who have escaped from the city.”

“She’s a magnet.”

Ask students to choose a situation in the book and to write their own simile or metaphor. Have students illustrate their written examples and display the students’ work in the classroom.

Vocabulary Enrichment

Place the following words in a complete sentence, using context clues so that the reader will be able to determine the meaning of the word.

Eruption

Pathetic

Annihilated

Crescent

Inseparable

Gangly

Eerie

Snivels

Ask students to read their sentences orally and then write some of the best sentences on sentence strips to post around the room.

Author Biography

Sylvia Olsen was born and educated in a white, middle-class neighborhood in Victoria, British Columbia. She married into the Tsartlip First Nation when she was seventeen, and for more than thirty years she has lived and worked and raised her four children in the Tsartlip community. At age thirty-five, Sylvia returned to school and earned a master’s degree in history, specializing in Native/white relations in Canada. Writing about her experiences and those of others, Sylvia often finds herself exploring the in-between place where Native and non-Native people meet. Sylvia currently works in the area of First Nations community management, with a focus on reserve housing.