



Zee's Way

Kristin Butcher

Reading level: 4.0

978-1-55143-279-3 PB

AR Quiz # 78322

Book Summary

When Zee and his buddies are kicked out of their hangout to provide space for a new shopping center, a war begins between the merchants and this group of teenagers who look scary and intimidating. Discriminated against because of their age and appearance, the boys are not allowed to enter the stores or be on the property. They fight back the only way they know how and the situation spirals out of control. When Zee is caught vandalizing a building in the shopping center, he wisely makes a deal with one of the merchants, which leads to a peaceful resolution for all.

Prereading Idea

Ask students to write a brief paragraph explaining how they or a friend have been discriminated against because of their age or appearance. Ask them to specify who discriminated against them and why, and then explain the outcome of the situation and how they handled it. Students can read their paragraphs to the class.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Teenagers are often discriminated against because of their age and appearance. Mike says, “We got rights, you know!” And Danny says, “We’re being persecuted! And it’s not fair. It’s not right. It’s against the law!” Ask students in small groups to first research the laws regarding teenagers and their rights, and then to determine if what Mike and Danny say is true. What actions can teenagers take if they are discriminated against? Have each group of students write a scenario to perform in front of the class to illustrate what they have discovered.
- Ask half of the class to research the history of graffiti, how it is used in today’s society, and the controversy over graffiti art. Ask the other half of the class to research the history of wall murals, how they are used in today’s society, and areas in which they are commonly found. Each group should make a display for the class to view as they present the information they discovered. They may find examples in their community and take pictures or find and print examples from online sources. The following websites might be helpful.

www.graffitihurts.org

www.trompe-l-oeil-art.com/murals.htm

Have each group of students use a portion of one wall to depict their findings and the pictures of the graffiti and murals they discovered.

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

The theme of a book is generally determined by the lesson a character learns and how that lesson affects his or her life. Several of the main characters in *Zee’s Way* change as a result of what they learned from the situation they are in. Focusing on one character at a time, ask students to determine what possible theme emerges based on the change in the character’s life. Have students find a famous quote that illustrates the theme for each character discussed. Ask students to write the quotes on poster board to display in the classroom.

Conflict

The war between the merchants and Zee and his friends drives the story forward. Ask students to assume the voice of one of the main characters and write a poem about their feelings from his or her point of view. Have students focus on specific images and memories that add to the conflict and then type or print the poem using colors and/or fonts that convey the tone of the poem.

Point of View

Have students work with a partner and assume the “voice” of one of the main characters. Ask students to prepare a collage of visual and written images that convey the character’s feelings and point of view, focusing on specific images and memories that add to the character they have selected. Students should use color, pictures and fonts that convey the tone of the collage.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Zee describes his friends’ appearance and says, “If our money’s good, it shouldn’t matter what we look like.” In the novel, is this reality for Zee and his friends? Does his statement reflect reality? Why or why not?
2. Zee takes exception to his father’s remark about graffiti that, “...it doesn’t take a whole lot of brains or talent.” What are Zee’s thoughts about graffiti? Do you agree with Zee or his father? Why?
3. A generation gap is defined as a difference in values and attitudes between one generation and another. The differences often cause misunderstandings and mistrust between the generations. Zee deals with the generation gap between his father and him that mirrors the gap between the merchants and his friends. How are both sides right? Wrong?
4. Why does Mr. Feniuk make the effort to make peace with the boys? What does he gain? What could he have lost?
5. Zee does not want to judge Mr. Feniuk unfairly because he knows how it feels and he doesn’t want to prejudice anyone else. What risk is he taking by trying to help end the war? What does he gain?
6. In chapter 10, Zee says, “The situation hadn’t really changed, but our way of looking at it had.” How does the change in perspective help heal the relationship between Zee and his father? What other characters change the way they look at a situation in order to bring about healing?

Writer’s Craft***Vocabulary Enrichment***

Challenge students to write variations of any haiku and/or diamante poems using the following vocabulary words as the title and focus of the poem.

Razzed	Sneered	Sweltering
Paranoid	Wince	Smirk
Belligerently	Dissension	Glommed
Accrued		

Verb Usage

Powerful verbs move the story forward in a way that keeps the reader's attention.

*I **jogged** across the yard and **hurled** the hedge.*

*...I **pressed** close to a big oak tree and **peered** up and down the deserted street.*

Both of these sentences allow the reader to see the action. Ask students to find other examples of powerful verbs and share them with the class. Then ask students to find sentences in their own writing to rewrite using a more powerful verb. Using sentence strips, have students select their best revision and prepare a “before” and “after” sentence to display in the room.

Author Biography

Kristin Butcher has loved to read since she read her first word, and, for her, being a writer is a natural extension. As a child, she couldn't wait to learn to read because it seemed like magic to her; she wanted to unlock the door to all the wonderful stories her parents had read to her. Dedicated to sharing her love of reading through her writing, classroom visits and workshops, Kristin speaks to both students and teachers—a rewarding practice that charges her with enthusiasm and energy for writing new novels and stories.