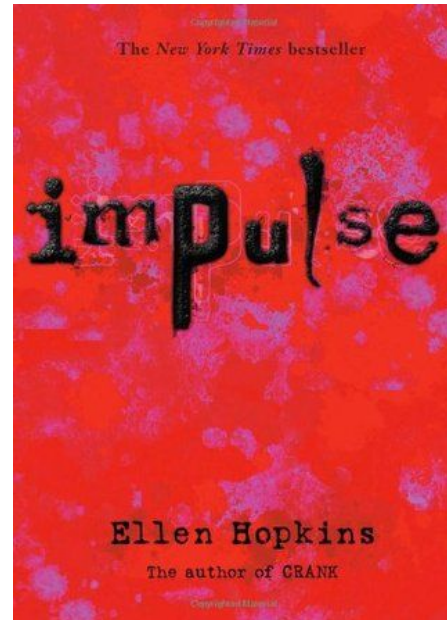


Impulse by Ellen Hopkins

Courtney Ginn Engl 112B



[Image Source](#)



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About the Author

- ★ Ellen Hopkins was born in Long Beach, California in 1955. She had her first publication at the age of 9 and has won almost every writing competition she entered throughout high school
- ★ She has 3 children of her own, 1 adopted son, and 3 grandchildren under her guardianship
 - Her children and their stories are often the real-life inspiration for her books
 - The novels *Crank*, *Glass*, and *Fallout* are inspired by her daughter and adopted son's struggles with drug abuse
- ★ She has written 20 non-fiction works, 3 adult novels, and 13 best selling novels
 - These best selling novels, like *Impulse*, are all written in verse

<http://www.ellenhopkins.com/>

The Story at a Glance

The poem follows the lives of three teens, Conner, Vanessa, and Tony and their experiences in a mental hospital for troubled teens. Each guilty of differing suicide attempts, they must struggle to find their own reasons to live, while also impacting the lives of each other. The story focuses on the individual trials the teens put themselves through, yet offers an overlapping story as they come together. Despite being in the hospital, none of the teens seem to want to get better as they continue a rapid decline of self harm and hatred. Conner strives to meet the high standards of his family at any cost. Vanessa struggles to see a life without her blade by her side as her only comfort. Tony is forced to overcome the loneliness and pain inflicted on him his entire life.

Quotes & Significance

"Try to blot it out, scrub / it out, rip it out of my / brain completely, / But you can't forget / something like that, / no matter how much you / drink, snort, or shoot into / your veins. The memory / stalks you forever and / creeps up to maul you / like a rabid dog when / you least expect it" (Tony, 88).

- + This quote holds great significance in understanding Tony and his thought process. He binds his suffering to his memories and has yet to discover a healthy way to process them. This quote shows that memories can haunt us, and no matter what harmful measure one takes to bury them, it only makes the pain greater. Unfortunately, Tony has had to learn this the hard way, yet still finds himself constantly haunted by the memories of his past.

"Pain isn't the worst thing / at least you know you're not / just a shadow, darkening / someone's wall, a silhouette / thrust haphazardly into their lives" (Conner, 23).

- ★ This quote is significant because it is a reality that many people suffering from depression, including Conner, believe. Depression makes you feel like you are worthless, a waste of space and an inconvenience in everyone's lives. The worthlessness can make you feel like a ghost floating through life, and in Conner's eyes, the pain at least reminds him that he's real. Conner feels like he only exists to fill a position in his family hierarchy and it isn't until he decides to kill himself that he finally feels alive.

"My happiest memories / have no place in the / past; they are those / I have yet to create" (Vanessa, 358).

- ★ The importance of this quote is within the fact that Vanessa says she has "yet" to create happy memories. This implies that she plans on actually creating them, she plans on finding genuine happiness. This is something we all want, to fill our lives with

undeniable moments of happiness, yet it can seem impossible to achieve when suffering from depression. Vanessa relies on her pain to bury the memories, just like Tony and Conner, but she has hope that one day the pain will stop.

Why Should Teens Read It?

Teens suffering from depression, anxiety, or other mental illnesses often feel alone, like no one understands what they are going through and by having a book full of characters who understand how they might be feeling, that they can relate to, may be able to help with this loneliness. The topics Ellen Hopkins brings to light are ones that are often overlooked by the curriculum leaving teens feeling as if their problems are not valid/not shared. By exposing them to such sensitive and important topics at the right age, children will be able to learn that it is okay to be not okay and that they are not alone.

Book Complexity

★ Qualitative:

- Lexile Score: HL680L

I believe Lexile gives *Impulse* this high-low rating due to its easy to follow poetic flow and simplicity of the text. However, the subject matter itself definitely raises the complexity to the higher side due to the disturbing and serious topics discussed.

- ATOS Reading Level: 4.5 / Interest Level: 9-10th grade

Just as with the Lexile score, the complexity of the text is very low, it is an easy and quick read, yet the subject matter is much better suited for a high school level student. A younger student may lack the understanding of self harm and depression to fully follow the characters and their struggles. It is perfect for early high school students as they may relate to the subject matter, yet also be able to follow the simplicity of the text.

★ Quantitative:

- This novel fits beautifully with the Exeter Qualities #3 and #7. It contains compelling and complex characters, including one very strong female, dealing with harsh realities that are rarely explored in academic settings. Hopkins also asks readers to open their hearts to the teens' struggles and feel their pain with them and follow on their journey without judgement. Being a subject not often touched on in schools, this book can expand youths emotional understanding of the truth behind mental illness.

How To Teach It

- ★ It can be taught as an introduction into poetry and taught in small segments as individual poems
 - This way engaging the students in poetry they can possibly relate to and enjoy analyzing
- ★ You could use it as a companion piece of any other difficult novels dealing with similar topics of mental illness such as *Thirteen Reasons why* or *The Catcher in the Rye*
- ★ This book can be implemented along with an entire lesson on mental health and the way authors portray teens struggling with it.
- ★ It would have to be taught to a more mature class that could handle such serious topics and appreciate the struggles of the characters
- ★ Encouraging students to read something with such depth and sensitive subjects teaches them to apply that same view to their own writing and hopefully make them feel comfortable expressing their own personal feelings within their assignments.

What Category Does This Book Fall Into?

This book falls perfectly into Chapter 4 of *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story*. This chapter focuses on books about real-life experiences and characters who are forced to make difficult decisions in their personal lives. Each character in *Impulse* had been victim to emotional, physical, or mental abuse by someone in their family and are caught in a position of deciding whether they actually want to live or not, and if they do, how do they go about it. These are genuine questions that so many people, but especially young adults, struggle to answer and many like the characters in the story take the most heartbreaking approach to finding a solution.