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Professor Warner

ENGL 112B

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WILD AND CROOKED

written by Leah Thomas

More about the author at: <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/t/leah-thomas/>



<https://popgoesthereader.com/author-photo-leah-thomas/>

Leah Thomas lives in San Diego, California where she also teaches. She's an American author known for writing young adult literature, science fiction, romance, gay and lesbian romance and fiction. Her writing career first began in 2015. She has written other novels and series and is best known for *Because You Will Never Meet Me* series.

Summary:

In the small town of Sambroso not much goes on until Kayln Spence starts attending Jefferson High. She chooses to disguise herself by a different name so no one will find out about her

family's past but is met with someone who can see right through her. Gus becomes good friends with Kalyn but he knows she is hiding something and soon finds out her father, Gary Spence, murdered his dad, James Ellis. This causes some conflict between their friendship and they are



now stuck with the uncertainty of their friendship. When new evidence arises that will possibly turn into a retrial for Gary Spence, Kayln and Gus no longer know what to believe. Do they choose to put their past behind them and be better than their past generation? Or let this be the end of their friendship? They soon discover their familial past does not define THEIR future.

<https://vickywhoreads.wordpress.com/2019/06/02/wild-and-crooked-by-leah-thomas-another-favorite-feat-murder-mystery-queer-teens-rural-towns/>

Quotable quotes:

<p>#1.</p> <p>“Maybe Phil’s right. Maybe we can atleast do better than our parents” (pg. 227).</p>	<p>This quote is what Gus says after he finds out Kayln’s dad is who “murdered” his dad. Only knowing Kayln for a short time and developing a friendship with her he hopes this is something they will be able to overcome. Although his family hates the Spences, he hopes to put his family’s past history behind</p>
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	him and be the bigger person. To do better and be better than let the past ruin his present.
<p>#2</p> <p>“I don’t want to give up yet. There aren’t many things worth keeping in the world. Maybe Kayln and me, our friendship, isn’t worth keeping, either. But almost every aspect of our lives has been decided for us. Trying to make this work is <i>our</i> decision” (pg. 229).</p>	<p>Gus is at a crossroads where he feels he needs to make a big decision on whether he should keep his friendship with Kayln. The odds are set against them and a part of him believes Gary Spence is innocent. If he advocates for Gary Spence he worries how his family might feel. He realizes Kalyn and him have a lot in common and wants to create his own future/fate instead of having it already decided for him. It will take the both of them to change the agenda.</p>
<p>#3</p> <p>“Dad’s a loss I’ll always feel, but like my arm and leg and Kalyn and my family, that loss is apart of me. ... I wouldn’t know Kalyn. I wouldn’t be me. It would be another great tragedy” (pg.433).</p>	<p>Gus finds out the truth about his dad and although he feels sorry he realizes his life would not be the way it is if the murder would have never happened. He uses his family history to signify who he is and who he has become as a part of him like his disability. He even compares Kayln as family because not only did this situation test their friendship but also strengthened it and brought them closer</p>

	<p>together. He can't imagine his life without his best friend and wouldn't want it any other way. From his loss he gained something valuable, friendship.</p>
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Teaching the Book in a Classroom:

Wild and Crooked touches on many different topics such as; friendship, self-identity, murder mystery, disabilities, family issues and sexual orientation. It would be a great way to teach while also introducing personal narratives or journals, which will allow students to freely express themselves and could write about which character they relate or empathize with and why. These are all important topics that deal with real everyday issues and that can apply to students. With that being said this book falls into Chapter 4: Books about Real-Life Experiences. If students feel comfortable they can share why they resonate with the character they chose either with a partner or to the whole class. Another way of teaching is, I could hold an actual retrial where students can be assigned or chose whether they want to be on the Spence side or the Ellis side. Students should read this book because it mainly revolves around friendship and how the two main characters, Kalyn and Gus, handle when their family's past creeps up on them and

opens up an unclosed wound. Kalyn and Gus are able to put the past behind them and not let their past generations define who they are destined to be.

Text Complexity:

Quantitative complexity: According to Lexile and Dale-Chall tools, the LEXILE range of complexity is 650-800L and Dale-Chall's final score is 7.6, which is rather suitable for grades 9-10.

Qualitative language: *Wild and Crooked* is an easy read and easy to follow along.

Throughout the book the author does include some complex language, but nothing too out of the ordinary. It's a good book to start off highschoolers with as the complex language only appears every so often in the book. The sentence structures are within the range of the grades and the dialogue can resemble day to day regular conversations. I would strongly recommend this for highschoolers because there are mentions of murder, drugs, and some inappropriate language. Although, this book highly resembles similar themes and diction like the book *The Outsiders*, it could be considered to be read and taught in middle schools.