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ENGL 112B

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Book Talk: Period 8 By Chris Crutcher

Biography:

<http://www.chriscrutcher.com/biography.html>



Chris Crutcher was raised in Cascade, Idaho far from the nearest everything. In High School, he was what one would consider a jock. In this town, everyone was very sport-oriented and anyone who looked like they were able to play, would be forced to play. The town was close to one another and was comfortable with each other. Something in his biography that is interesting to see is his start in his interest in reading/writing. The biography states, “His early interest in stories came principally from reading Jean Shepherd and other fine authors in the Playboy Magazine delivered monthly to his house because, as he overheard his father saying to his mother, “Some of the very finest contemporary American literature graces the pages of that magazine.” Full disclosure, there is justified suspicion that he may have perused some of the photography before settling down to serious reading.” A little interesting fact that I didn’t know I needed to hear. Two things that I found in researching this author that connects to the book he wrote would be the fact that he was a teacher and a director of an alternative school for grades k-12 as well as his 20 years as a therapist specializing in child abuse and neglect. In a quote included on his page he says, “I have forever been intrigued by the extremes of the human condition,” he says, “the remarkable juxtaposition of the ghastly and the glorious.” I thought that was really interesting to read about given the content of his book *Period 8* relating to high school students with dark experiences*.*

Summary:

 Liar liar pants on fire. When a high school student cheats on his girlfriend, she thinks it’s the end of the world. Little does she and the students in class period 8 know, they would actually be in the most dangerous place they could be. Period 8, a place where nothing but the truth is shared, has a secret liar amidst them. In this short and fast-paced novel, Paul Baum, also known as Paulie, has a very hard time with not telling the truth. Paulie begins the novel by revealing his unfaithfulness to his girlfriend which sets off a series of unfortunate events. Blood, sweat, tears, and lies are spilled in this thriller of a book. Will the students of period 8 make it out alive and discover the enemy among them? Or will they fall for the lies that will lead them to their demise?

Quotes:

1. “Listen, my ass. I’ve figured you out, Stack. You try shit ’til something works. You asked me about you and Hannah and I said ‘go ahead’ when I meant ‘what the fuck’ because I figured I screwed Hannah over and I don’t deserve a break. But see, you know that about me, Arney. You knew what I’d say. You also knew what a kick in the gut it would be. So when I finally man up and say the truth, you act surprised. Fuckin’ Alfred E. Stack. What, me an asshole?” “It wasn’t my idea,” Arney says. “Hannah was the one—” “You’re doin’ it now, you dick. Hannah’s tough, but she’s not mean, and she knows she could crush me a lot of ways without going after one of my so-called friends. I know you’ve said some shit to her you wouldn’t say to me. She’s hanging out with you and there may be some good feeling of revenge ” “to it, but she didn’t invent this. You’re lucky she and I aren’t talking because she’d figure you out pretty quick and this shit would be over.” Arney’s hands go up. “Look, man, I’m just trying to find a way to preserve our friendship. We’ve known each other since we were kids. We can’t let some chick—” “Hannah Murphy’s not ‘some chick.’” “You know what I mean.” “I do know what you mean. Tell you what, go home and write down all the shit you’ve told me in the last few weeks that I might know is a lie. I don’t know it all yet, but it’s getting clearer every day.” Arney swells up, and his expression turns to stone. “Have it your way, buddy. Maybe this is the day we cut bait. You want to think twice before calling me a liar.” That’s the Arney I was looking for. “I’m way past thinking twice.” Arney takes a step forward. He’s not as tall as Paulie and certainly not in as good shape, but he spends hours in the weight room and he could make it interesting. Paulie doesn’t budge. “You know the one comfort I’ve always had with “our ‘friendship’?” “Enlighten me.” “That if it ever comes down to it, I’ll just kick your ass. Go for it.” Arney holds his gaze a long moment and Paulie thinks, This is gonna feel good, but Arney deflates, then turns for his car. He stops and turns back. “Tell you something else, buddy. If I am lying, you want to be real careful of what I’m lying about. You could be bringing a real shit storm down on a lot of people.” He gets into his driver’s seat and slams the door” (172-174).

This quote is significant because it is the first time that Paulie really stands up to anyone. His “friend” essentially asks Paulie for permission to date his girl and at the end of the day, this guy Arnie knows that what he is doing is wrong. When Paulie finally breaks and calls him out on it, Arnie plays the victim. He tries to turn it on the girl involved, saying it was all her idea. This is the moment where Paulie is starting to see the lies that Arnie has been dealing him this entire time. Through the dialogue at this moment, after having read the entirety of this novel, it is important to note the foreshadowing. Whilst reading this novel I took note of this scene because it felt as if it would have some sort of magnitude to the plot at a later date. It is safe to say that I was very much correct.

1. “Paulie brakes in front of his dad’s room. “Thanks, Dad.” He leans over and gives him a quick, uncomfortable hug. “By the way, what’s the latest on your imminent return?” “Not so imminent,” his dad says. “I think maybe you were right: your mom’s had enough. I’m moving out of here in a week and getting into something semi-permanent.” Paulie watches him get out of the car, rolls down the window as he closes the door. “Whatever happens,” he says, “you’re still my dad. I just want you guys to stop killing each other.” Roger Baum grimaces. “And you,” he says. “Listen, you let the so-called adults handle this. Your mother promised she’d quit running her grief past you and I’ll make sure none of it lands on you from my end, okay? You just get your ass out of school and on to the next thing. Mary will turn up.” Paulie nods. “And one more thing. Whatever happened with Hannah, happened. It doesn’t mean you’re like me, okay? I love your mom, and she loves me, but we never should have gotten married. If I’d had any foresight, I’d have known my weaknesses would take us “down. You don’t have those weaknesses. I sometimes wonder if you’re really my kid.” Paulie nods again. “Thanks, Dad. Love you.” “Back atcha. And by the way, you’re the reason whatever our marriage has turned into was worth it”” (198-199).

This quote is important because it’s a calm moment within the storm of chaos when we finally get to see Paulie and his father interact in an actual father-son-loving manner. For the entirety of the novel, Paulie has resentment toward his father for cheating on his mother. When Paulie takes the same actions as his father once did, many many times, Paulie now resents himself as well. He continues to say how much he swore he would never be like his father in that aspect and holds this grudge up until this very moment. We see a bonding moment between the two and a relief taken off both of their shoulders. At the end of the day, the two are both screw-ups but are able to get past it together by talking it out. Paulie's father eases his grief and praises him for the amazing kid that he turned out to be, regardless of his one misstep, as well as lets him know that in no way was any of this his fault, as many children put in this situation believe. This allows Paulie to mend his relationship with his father and get his head back in the game to take down his enemy.

1. “Marley says, “Mr. Logs, if you were going to give us all one piece of advice to take out of here, what would it be?” “Advice about what?” “Anything. One thing.” Logs thinks a minute. Then, “Don’t listen to me.” Marley frowns. “What?” “That’s my advice,” Logs says. “Don’t listen to me. I’m an old guy. Turn me loose and I’ll want you to learn from my experiences. I’ll remember things that happened to me in my time and think I should warn you. But that’s all BS. There is one teacher in this world and that teacher is experience. Mine for me, and yours for you. So that’s it. Don’t listen to me. Go out there and try stuff.” Marley smiles, looks at Hannah. They execute a synchronized eye roll. “I gotta give you one more,” Logs says. “One more what?” “Piece of advice.” “Okay.” Logs raises his eyebrows and points straight at her. “Stay alive. Do whatever you have to do to stay fucking alive.” There is a collective gasp. No one has heard Logs use that word in class. Paulie’s heard it from him plenty of times out in the world, but never here. Logs shrugs “Last day. What can they do to me”” (273-274)?

This quote is significant because it’s the final piece of advice we receive from Mr. Logs. Throughout period 8 Mr. Logs has been there for the students and in a way, they have been there for him. He has a love for these children and wishes the best for them. The students always want to learn from him, even if they don’t want to learn from their actual classes. In this section we see the students look to him once more for advice. The advice he gives to his students is to learn things on their own. A teacher can’t teach experience and that is very important knowledge to carry. The only way a person truly learns something is by experiencing it for themselves. The final section of this passage adds a little humor and just shows the genuine and hilarious character that Mr. Logs truly is.

Teaching the Novel:

 For teaching this book in a classroom setting I would not use the entirety of the book, but passages to help aid students in learning about the morals of lying and telling the truth. I could see this being a lesson in a psychology class and could see if the psych teacher at the school would like to pair up to understand the underlying meaning/purpose of lying. There could also be the potential of pairing up with the forensic teachers if they are doing a unit on serial killers or the minds of murderers to relate that certain portion of the novel to their curriculum. This book is definitely meant for students who are older. The vulgar language in the novel does not make me want to use it for high schoolers even though it is set in high school. However, I could see it being used in a senior class as one of the final books they have to read in order to give them a final fun, interesting, thrilling, and light read before they move on to college and get into the harsher readings. Teens should read this book because although it is funny and exhilarating to read with its jokes and exciting plot, it does hit very important messages. Messages about the relationship between a father and son, a daughter and father, high school relationships, cheating, lying, morals within all ages, etc. When a novel is able to hit multiple important topics, especially those that apply to teens such as these, it is important for those of that age group to read and analyze it. I think this novel connects most closely to chapter 4 in *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story* because that chapter is about Books about Real--Life Experiences Making Life Choices, Facing Violence or Abuse, and Living through Family and Relationship Issues. The reason I believe this novel connects to that topic is that although some of the novel is overdramatized, some of this type of stuff actually does occur. The characters in this novel have to continuously make life choices whether it is with relationships or in how to go about finding a missing person. They also face a whole lot of violence/abuse with friends/family, as well as a vast amount of relationship issues all around.

Text Complexity:

Lexile: Age range is 14-17

ATOS:

IL (Interest level): **UG (upper grades 9-12)** - BL (Book level): **4.2** (4th grades in their second month of schooling) - AR (Accelerated reader) Pts: **7.0**

Dale-Chall:

**Flesch Reading Ease score:** 95.1 (text scale)

Flesch Reading Ease scored your text: very easy to read.

**Gunning Fog:** 4.6 (text scale)

Gunning Fog scored your text: easy to read.

**Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level:** 2.6

Grade level: Third Grade.

**The Coleman-Liau Index:** 4

Grade level: Fourth Grade

**The SMOG Index:** 2.7

Grade level: Third Grade

**Automated Readability Index:** 1.4

Grade level: 6-8 yrs. old (First and Second graders)

**Linsear Write Formula :** 4.4

Grade level: Fourth Grade.

As shown above, the text complexity is classified as easy to read to the point where it is 4th-grade level. Obviously, with the language and topics introduced, this novel is not meant for children of that age but rather students within the high school level (more so upper division). This novel focuses on topics that are important for high school students to observe and think about due to their potential connection and resonation with them. With the qualitative aspects of this novel, it is formatted primarily in first person point of view with the time-to-time change of character. The novel flows smoothly and does not use complex language (besides vulgar language) and is short in length, which is why it can be seen as an easy read.