

Book Talk Presentation by Emrick

Palmero

https://www.npr.org/2019/06/17/727649223/patron-saints-ofnothing-is-a-book-for-the-hyphenated

About the Author & Summary

Author & Summary

RANDY RIBAY (http://www.randyribay.com)

- Filipino-American author and high school teacher
- Written three novels, with Patron Saints of Nothing as his latest so far
- Teaches in the SF Bay Area
- BA in English Literature from University of Colorado, Boulder
- MA in Language and Literacy from Harvard Graduate School of Education

Patron Saints of Nothing Summary Overview

The story follows a Filipino-American teen named Jay, who finds out from his father that his cousin, Jun, had died in an unspecified manner. Stricken with grief but perplexed at the lack of given information from his father or Jun's family, Jay takes it upon himself to spend the rest of his last high school year in the Philippines, determined to discover the details behind his cousin's death.

Quotations from the Novel





"I think of all the letters we wrote each other over the years. What did his last one say? I don't even remember. But this I'll never forget: I left it unanswered" (8).

Quotation #1

Jay's grief turns to partial self-loathing upon learning about the sudden death of his cousin, Jun. The guilt that Jay builds up becomes one of the motivating emotions for Jay to go uncover the shrouded details of Jun's death, a problem of neglect that he yearns to atone for throughout the novel.



"Maybe he did start using. Maybe he continued to and that's why the police killed him. Maybe that's the truth, plain and simple. No. Not the Jun I knew" (158).

Quotation #2

Showing an instance of resolve, Jay remains determined even when faced with obstacles that prevent him from finding more about Jun. When he hears from Jun's father, Tito Maning, about Jun's apparent involvement with drugs (which warranted his death), he absolves his doubts and pushes further for an explicit truth—the story viewed from different accounts that would verify how Jun died.

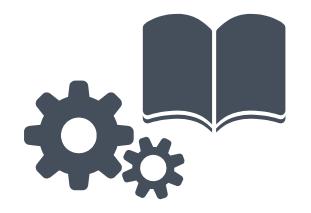


"It strikes me that I cannot claim this country's serene coves and sun-soaked beaches without also claiming its poverty, its problems, its history. To say that any aspect of it is part of me is to say that all of it part of me"

Quotation #3

Another one of Jay's self-conflicts involves his stance of his ethnic identity: can he really call himself a Filipino despite having been raised in a different culture? Jay realizes that he cannot simply be one or the other—he eventually accepts himself for who he is: a Filipino-American.

Patron Saints of Nothing Text Complexity



Text Complexity

Using a passage from 226-227: "But eventually abandoned."

Dale-Chall Readability Score

- Raw Score: 2.1779
- Adjusted Score: (3.6365 +2.1779)
- Final Score: 5.8
 - Grades 5-6

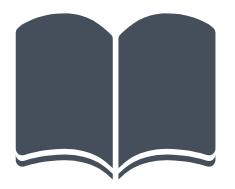
The novel uses everyday English (save for the Tagalog phrases and words) which makes sense for the elementary-middle school reading level. However, the novel does have inappropriate themes for younger audiences, such as the issues of death by murder and drug abuse described in the novel. I would rather use this text in a high school classroom.

Lexile Text Complexity Score

Lexile Indicator: 840L

Lexile defines this as an "Upper Level" indicator, gearing towards the 14-17 age range which is well within the later middle-school to high-school age range. The reading level suggests 7th to 8th grade reading level, which ranks higher than the Dale-Chall score but I would contend that the language in the novel is enough for at least a middle schooler to understand.

Applications from Dr. Mary Warner's Adolescents in the Search for Meaning



Chapter Themes

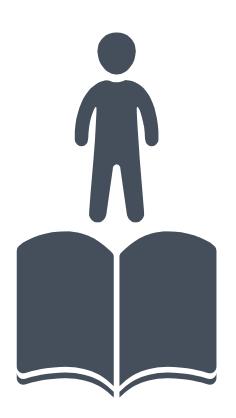
Chapter 4: Books about Real-Life Experiences

Jay represents an example of mixed-race progeny who have been raised elsewhere that is not their native country. Immigrant identities are sparse and omnipotent across multiple nationalities, so for a struggle to understand oneself becomes an important lesson for someone to consider when they are having trouble with ascertaining who they define themselves as in terms of ethnicity, nationality, and social identity.

Chapter 5: Books about Facing Death and Loss

Since the topic of the novel revolves around the death of an individual, Jay's journey is not only a search for the truth but also a path of recovery towards accepting the death of his cousin and accepting the fact that he had chosen not to keep in touch with him. Despite these things, Jay is more determined to make things right with Jun by uncovering his hidden death and push forward the much deserved regard for his life from his family.

Why should teens read Patron Saints of Nothing?



Reasons to read Patron Saints of Nothing

The novel, while most intended for an audience of Filipinos and Filipino-Americans, still makes for a thrilling read. With the given context of an occurring Philippine drug war, the stakes of the novel becomes more serious when Jay attempts to uncover the gritty truth behind his cousin's death. The social implications of the novel is definitely its biggest highlight, shedding light on a civil rights issue that is rather largely ignored by the rest of the world, which is applicable to other tragedies happening as well in other countries (e.g. Myanmar Police-Junta conflicts). In its essence, the novel introduces social awareness in a manner that can be appealing to a teen's building of character, in which they can view Jay as a model for coming to terms with one's own immigrant or mixed-race social identity, which is one of the main problems that Jay deals with throughout his journey in the Philippines.

Teaching Applications

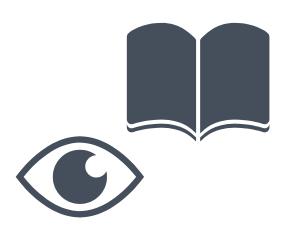


Teaching Strategies

- The novel would be a great supplement for a unit study, perhaps on a theme of justice or resistance
 - e.g. Beals' Warriors Don't Cry memoir, Wiesel's Night
- A high school classroom setting would be most appropriate in consideration of the novel's mature content.
 - A seminar on the book's content could reveal personal connections by students to the plights exhibited in the novel. Not only Jun's suffering but also Jay's struggle with social identity throughout the novel.
- Ribay provides some supplementary readings and resources for research regarding the Philippine drug war
 - There can be a research activity to practice research skills by using the allotted links and articles from Ribay → further compiling a potential research paper for those interested



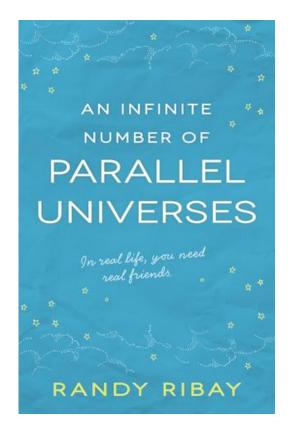
More Works from Randy Ribay



<u>An Infinite Number of Parallel</u> <u>Universes (2015)</u>

Summaries & Images from Goodreads

"As their senior year approaches, four diverse friends joined by their weekly Dungeons & Dragons game struggle to figure out real life. Archie's trying to cope with the lingering effects of his parents' divorce, Mari's considering an opportunity to contact her biological mother, Dante's working up the courage to come out to his friends, and Sam's clinging to a failing relationship. The four eventually embark on a cross-country road trip in an attempt to solve--or to avoid--their problems."

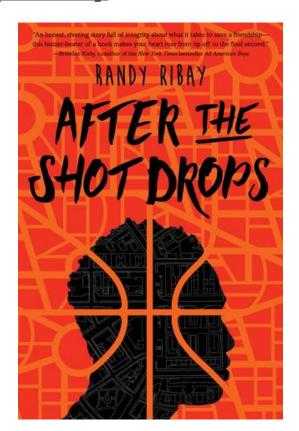


After the Shot Drops (2018)

Summaries & Images from Goodreads

"Bunny and Nasir have been best friends forever, but when Bunny accepts an athletic scholarship across town, Nasir feels betrayed. While Bunny tries to fit in with his new, privileged peers, Nasir spends more time with his cousin, Wallace, who is being evicted. Nasir can't help but wonder why the neighborhood is falling over itself to help Bunny when Wallace is in trouble.

When Wallace makes a bet against Bunny, Nasir is faced with an impossible decision—maybe a dangerous one."



Works Cited

- Ribay, Randy. Patron Saints of Nothing, New York, Penguin Books, 2019.
- Lexile and Quantile Hub. "Find a Book: Patron Saints of Nothing," https://hub.lexile.com/find-a-book/book-detail-by/9780525554912. Accessed 7 March 2021.