



Riley Park

Diane Tullson

Interest level: grade 7 and up

Reading level: 3.0

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AR Quiz # 129568

Book Summary

After a party in Riley Park, Darius and Corbin are attacked with a steel rod by three assailants, killing Darius and leaving Corbin seriously injured. The ensuing search for the mysterious assailants by Officer Rex and the police force leave Corbin with nothing but frustrating questions he can't answer, a consequence of the brain injuries he sustained during the attack. As Corbin struggles to overcome the loss of his best friend and life as he knew it before the attack, he desperately tries to remember any detail of the night in Riley Park so that the attackers can be punished for killing Darius, and he can learn how to live again.

Prereading Idea

Dealing with the loss of a friend can be the most difficult for teens, and unfortunately many teenagers today have had to face this tragedy. If they have not lost a personal friend, often someone in their school has died, and they have been a part of the schools' outpouring of grief for the student's death. If students have experienced a teen's death, ask them to write a brief narrative of their memory of that time.

Discuss with students the stages of grief and direct them to the following websites for help

www.griefworksbc.com/About.asp

http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/someone_died.html

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

Darius dies from an accidental death at a party in a local park. All of his friends came to have a good time, and none of them imagined anything tragic could occur. Ask students to form small groups and investigate the circumstances of teen deaths in the news due to accidents. Have each group make a chart, listing the causes, the locations and the circumstances. In the final column, ask students to determine if the death could have been avoidable and answer why or why not? Have students create posters focusing on one of the areas of teen accidents that result in many accidental deaths. The posters should provide precautions and warnings, statistics and help numbers as appropriate. Display the various posters throughout the school.

Corbin comes into contact with a variety of people in many different professions, individuals who help him cope as he returns to health and overcomes his loss. With the class, brainstorm a list of these helping professions and ask students to pair up with another student to research a particular career path. Each pair should create a brochure outlining the steps a person would have to take to pursue that career. The brochures should include the name of the profession, the education required, the length of study, the location of colleges or special schools, and any other pertinent information of interest. Also included in the brochure should be information about the field, such as the expected income, typical work involved, schedule of work and benefits of the career.

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

Forced to adapt to a new way of life while grieving his best friend's death, Corbin reaches a breaking point trying to remember all he can about the attack. Ask students to write letters of encouragement to Corbin from the people in his life: his parents, his friends, his hockey teammates, his teachers, people from the hospital who help him, Officer Rex or others students may think of. These letters should focus on character traits that help Corbin draw on his inner strength as well as words of encouragement appropriate to the character writing the letter. Post the letters in the room as a display of encouragement for Corbin—and others.

Conflict

Internal and external conflicts are both present in Riley Park, and both types of conflict center around Corbin. Either in small groups or with a partner, ask students to make two lists: one for the external conflicts and one for the internal conflicts. Then have students write conflict scenarios that include resolutions or, in those that are not resolved, that demonstrate the still unresolved conflict. Have students present their scenarios. As a class, discuss what Corbin learns from his experience at Riley Park.

Theme

The tragic, senseless death of a teenager is difficult to comprehend. The grief experienced by friends and loved ones is especially intense, and the people left behind often feel guilt and remorse for still being alive. Taking this into consideration, as well as Corbin's injuries and the circumstances surrounding Darius' death, ask students to write a thematic statement, or find a quote or a song lyric, that represents the theme of *Riley Park*. Ask students to write their statement, quote or lyric on a half sheet of poster board to display in the classroom. Ask students to add symbols, pictures or other visual elements to highlight the selected theme.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. How do Corbin and Darius relate differently to girls? How is this obvious when it comes to asking Rubee out? What is it about Darius that makes all the girls like him?
2. Corbin and Darius fight at the party, but Corbin walks away. Before the attack even occurs, how do the readers know these two guys are truly best friends?
3. When Corbin is released from the hospital, why does he return to Riley Park? Why does he look for Rubee? What is he searching for? Why is it so important for Corbin to find it?
4. Officer Rex tells Corbin, "If you're fighting yourself, you're fighting the wrong guy," (page 70). Who is Corbin fighting? Why?
5. Why does Corbin keep calling Darius's phone? Why does Darius's mother tell Corbin, "See your friends. Just live, Corbin," (page 77)?
6. Why does Rubee bring roses to Riley Park every day after Darius dies? Does it help ease her guilt? Why should she feel guilty?
7. On page 93, Rubee says, "...it had to stop. I couldn't be afraid anymore." What is Rubee afraid would happen? How does saving Corbin's life help release her guilt over Darius's death?
8. How do Jason and Corbin finally resolve the conflict between them? How does that help Corbin move forward with his life after the attack?

Writer's Craft

Dialogue

Corbin's parents are mentioned in the book, but the reader does not know anything about them except what Corbin says about them. A few times, Corbin refers to his father—disapproving of him and his lack of ability to return to hockey—but Corbin does not refer to his mother. Ask students, with a partner, to recreate scenes of dialogue from the novel to include Corbin's parents, or have them create new scenes between his parents and other characters, including Corbin. Some examples could be: in the hospital when he comes back to consciousness, one of the times when Corbin is questioned by Officer Rex, when Corbin is in court or a section of the students choosing. How would their presence affect the interactions? Ask students to practice and to present their dialogues to the class.

Author Biography

Award-winning author **Diane Tullson** has published seven novels for young adults and has written for *Canadian Living Magazine*, *Westworld Magazine* and *Chicken Soup*. She has a BA in English literature and has studied journalism, creative writing and editing. Writing professionally since 1996, Diane says rejection is the hardest aspect of her writing, but she doesn't let it stop her from creating works with irresistible characters for teens. Diane lives with her family just outside Vancouver, British Columbia.