



Marked

Norah McClintock

Interest level: ages ten to fourteen

Reading level: 3.3

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AR Quiz # 122467

Book Summary

When Colin accepts the job to clean up the graffiti in an upscale neighborhood, he worries that he might be targeted by gangs. But he doesn't expect to become a suspect in a series of robberies. Every time he is sent to clean up graffiti, the police are nearby investigating a crime. Colin knows he's done nothing wrong, but even he acknowledges his presence at the crime scenes looks suspicious. The only way he can clear his name is to figure out what is really going on.

Author Biography

Norah McClintock is a five-time winner of the Crime Writers of Canada's Arthur Ellis Award for Best Juvenile Crime Novel. Her fascinating mysteries are hard to put down and often deal with young people in unusual relationships. As well as *Marked*, Norah wrote the novels *Bang, Down, Snitch* and *Tell* in the Orca Soundings series. A freelance editor, Norah writes at least one novel a year. She lives with her family in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Connecting to the Text**Adjectives—Telling the Story using Powerful Descriptive Words**

Adjectives describe or modify nouns; they help us understand what the noun really “means.” In *Marked*, there are many examples of powerful adjectives that expand our understanding of the nouns they modify. Ask students to rewrite the sentences below using alternate adjectives. Once the adjective changes, how does our understanding change? Encourage students to find other sentences in the novel which use adjectives.

- *[Dave Marsh] is one of those dead-serious guys who can look you in the eye and know that you’re hiding something from him* (p. 1).
Examples could include: cautious, dangerous, dramatic, fierce, friendly, generous
- *I was just another screwed-up kid, and it had been his job to straighten me out* (p. 4).
Examples could include: angry, cheerful, depressed, energetic, frantic, hungry, late.
- *You do a sloppy job, you’re fired* (p. 17).
Examples could include: extraordinary, funny, horrible, inaccurate, peculiar, terrific.

Vocabulary Enrichment through Creative Writing

1. The following words/terms are used in *Marked* and are organized into three themes, based on Colin’s experiences: employment, the urban landscape and crime. Invite students to use at least four of the words in sentences or paragraphs. For writing ideas, see the examples provided below.

Employment

- It’s my first day at a new job. I’m excited but nervous too...I wonder what’s behind that door over there. Oh, no...
- I just started my new job, and I can’t believe who just walked in!
- Now we’re alone in the warehouse. What was that sound?

clipboard	industry	reliable	companies
information	resume	confidence	inspect
schedule	coveralls	interest area	shift
efficient	location	supervision	elbow grease
minimum wage	supplies	expecting	newspaper
warehouse	factory	overtime	work boots
fired	photo ID	work order	

Urban Landscape

- Imagine you are an artist and you've been commissioned by your city to paint one of the outside walls of your city hall. What theme would you choose? Why?
- Think of a part of your community that really needs cleaning up. Write a plan to make that happen. Involve your friends in the plan. What steps will you take?
- Your city hall has decided to dedicate the side of its building to graffiti, but they want to make some rules first, and they've asked you to write them. Make three rules the graffiti artists will have to agree to.

aggressive tagging	detail	property	taggers
blank canvases	graffiti	residents	traffic
burners	landscape	spray bottles	urban art
creative	pieces	surface	utility poles

Crime

- This is a pretty tough neighborhood. There are a few things you really have to watch out for...
- Did you hear about that kid from the other class? Boy, he was sure in the wrong place at the wrong time last night...
- Our class got to go on a tour of the police station last week. We were sure surprised when, all of a sudden,...

arrest	evidence	property	break-in
forensic	recognize	burglar	gangs
ringleader	caught	identification	security stickers
coincidence	involved	stealing	criminal
police officer	suspected	dangerous	presence
suspicious	deter	prison	territory

Connecting to the Characters

1. Colin has had some trouble in the past:

(p. 31) *I had to remind myself that there was no way they were here for me. I hadn't done anything wrong. For once I was the good guy.*

- As an individual writing assignment, ask students to reflect on the character of Colin and his troubled past. What do you think was the trouble that Colin got into last summer? Imagine you are Colin. Write an account of what happened last summer, using evidence from the text to support your writing. To get you thinking, consider:
 - Why did Colin need a youth worker?
 - By getting a job, Colin wouldn't "go out and shoplift like [he] used to" (p. 3).
 - Colin wanted to "get through the summer without having anything to do with cops" (p. 10).
2. Colin says his mom "had it tough" (p. 11). She had Colin when she was seventeen, and Colin's dad died when Colin was eight, so she had to work two jobs for a long time. At that time, Colin got into trouble.

(p. 11) *The last time I got into trouble, I thought her heart would break. When she came down to the police station, she had the same look on her face as she did the night she woke me up to tell me my dad was gone.*

- Ask students to write a letter to Colin, giving advice to him on how to stay out of trouble. Give Colin some practical tips. Where, in your community, could you go to find safe, fun activities and friends?
3. Colin assumed that because the neighborhood he removes the graffiti from is very rich, "people who lived here didn't have much to worry about...It must be nice to live in a neighborhood where [graffiti] was the worst thing that ever happened" (p. 20).

In a group, discuss Colin's assumption. Do rich families have less to worry about than families who are not rich? Are their lives easier than those in less affluent neighborhoods? Why or why not?

Prompt: If Colin had lived in a rich neighborhood, would his father's death be less painful? Would he have stayed out of trouble, or do rich kids get in trouble too? Did Colin make an assumption about Alyssa when he thought that because she was from a nice neighborhood, she'd have more confidence and less to worry about?

Connecting to the Curriculum—Personal Planning and Life Skills

1. A number of occupations are presented in *Marked*, including:

- Youth worker (Dave Marsh, p. 1)
- Doctors and lawyers (in the neighborhood, p. 9)
- Dental hygienist (Colin’s mom, p. 12)
- Dog walker (Alyssa, p. 23)
- Stockbroker (in the neighborhood, p. 29)
- Police officer (in the neighborhood, p. 31)
- Artist, art teacher (p. 78)
- Veterinarian (Dr. Evans, p. 79)
- Social worker (Alyssa’s brother, p. 92)

As a group, discuss these occupations (or similar occupations chosen by the students).

- Do you think you would like to do this job? Why or why not?
 - How would you imagine these jobs to be? Would they be interesting, challenging, meaningful, boring, exciting, dangerous, etc.?
 - What kind of skills would you need to do these jobs?
 - What kind of personality would be best suited to these jobs?
 - What schooling or training would be required?
 - If you were interested in pursuing one of these professions, how could you find out more about them?
2. Colin enjoys drawing and sketching, and he carries his paper and pencil with him. He knows that he will only improve if he practices regularly. Do you have a skill you’d like to improve?

(p. 3) *I like to draw. I like it a lot. The past year I’d even had a half-decent art teacher who said nice things about my stuff and gave me lots of tips and pointers. She said I had a good eye. It was the best compliment I’d ever received.*

- Make a plan to practice your skill every day by creating opportunities in your daily routines. Make a list of three realistic ways to practice every day and share them with the group. For example, if you’d like to...
- Walk or run five miles, you could: take the stairs instead of elevators or escalators; walk to the mall instead of taking the bus; or run around your block twice before every meal.

- Be less nervous speaking in front of people, you could: practice speaking in front of the mirror in the morning when you're getting ready for school; ask your teacher if you can read the daily announcements to the class; read stories to the first graders at recess.
 - Write stories, songs or poems, you could: keep a journal and pen beside your bed and record your dreams when you wake each morning; keep a notepad with you in case a new story idea comes to you; listen carefully to the conversations around you and record words and phrases that interest you.
3. Colin's youth worker was "big on kids having jobs". He said, "Jobs teach responsibility. They're a positive way to spend your spare time. They give you money so maybe you won't go out and shoplift..." (p. 3). As a group, complete the following:
- In your community, what are some summer jobs that teens can find? Brainstorm potential jobs by recording them on the board or on flipcharts. You may wish to prompt students by organizing the jobs into groups (for example, jobs in community recreation; in the arts or entertainment; in retail sales; in food services; in a hospital or clinic; or working with children, seniors or pets).
 - Ask students to choose a summer job from the list and, as a research and discovery project, encourage them to find out more about their communities and identify possible opportunities to find their jobs. If possible, have community phone books and newspapers available for students to look through.
 - In the group, discuss: What interests you about the job you chose? Why did you choose it? If you wanted to pursue this job, what could it develop into in the future?

Option: Invite a youth employment worker or job coach to speak to your class. Before the guest arrives, send them the list of the summer jobs the students chose and ask them to speak about real opportunities the students can explore and real strategies the students can use.

4. In *Marked*, Alyssa has a dog-walking business. She walks many different breeds of dogs: a German shepherd, an Airedale, a chocolate Lab, a pug and a Jack Russell Terrier. Ask students to research one of these dog breeds (or another breed the students choose), being sure to answer the following questions:
- What is the color and size of the dog?
 - Do they have any special skills? (sense of smell; strength; skills in seeking, retrieving or protecting; ability to swim, etc.)
 - Does this breed have any special needs, such as daily grooming or diet?

- What kind of owner lifestyle would best suit this breed? (For example, a Labrador would be best suited to a family who loves outdoor activities and exercising.)
- Write one interesting fact about this dog (its history, parentage, where it comes from, etc.).

Option: Ask a volunteer or worker at your local Humane Society or Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) to visit your class and give a presentation on pet care and responsible pet ownership.

Art and Personal Reflection

1. Ray Mehivic says three very meaningful things to Colin (p. 8):
 - “I’m a big believer in second chances”
 - “Everybody makes mistakes”
 - “...people can change”

Ask students to choose one of the above sentences and use it as the theme for a poster. Encourage students to consider the posters like advertisements promoting second chances, forgiveness or a “fresh start.” You may wish to bring an assortment of tools for students to use for inspiration, such as magazines, old photo albums or inspirational poems and quotations. Once completed, display the posters prominently either in the classroom or in the school library or hallway.

2. Colin doesn’t believe graffiti is art. He says it’s “territory marking” and “stupid” (p.36). As a group, discuss and debate this topic. Can graffiti be art? Ask students to consider the following in their assessments:
 - Graffiti is often created on personal property and without permission.
 - Graffiti is generally temporary, as it is often cleaned away or painted over.
 - Graffiti can be beautiful/touching to one person but not to another.
 - Graffiti can be an expression or “voice” in an expressionless urban landscape.
3. Take a walking tour of an area of your community in which there is graffiti (or bring pictures to show the group). Ask students: Are there some examples of graffiti that appeal to you or you find meaningful? Describe why or why not. Like Colin, can you identify any individual styles of the graffiti?