



First Time

Meg Tilly

Interest level: grade 7 and up

Reading level: 3.1

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AR Quiz # 126433

Book Summary

Haley's life begins to change the day her best friend, Lynn, buys her first car; suddenly, Lynn seems so much cooler, wearing clothes and makeup that make her look older. Then Haley's mother's boyfriend starts hanging around the house when her mother isn't home, making Haley feel uncomfortable with his unwelcome looks and touches. When Lynn starts dating an older boy, and Haley's mother falls in love with Larry, Haley feels alone with no one to tell about Larry's inappropriate behavior. Forced to face the truth, Haley makes a tough personal decision and then confronts both Lynn and her mother with the consequences of their decisions.

Prereading Idea

First day of school, first airplane ride, first trip to the dentist—by the time students are adolescents, they have experienced many “first times” in their lives. As a class discuss the appropriate “first time” events students have encountered since first grade. Then have each student write a short personal narrative about one of their “first times,” relating the event and the emotions surrounding it. Have students read their personal narratives to the class and then post them on a classroom display.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

Because of safety issues, new laws have been passed in many areas that prohibit cell-phone use in school zones by all drivers and also prohibit young drivers from using cell-phones at any time while driving. Legislators cite accidents involving drivers on cell-phones as proof of the necessity of such laws. Ask students to research laws that are in place in their area on accidents involving cell-phone use by drivers under the age of 18 and fatalities in those accidents. Ask students to form their own opinions about the laws and then to write letters to their senators and legislators expressing those views.

Sadly, sexual abuse occurs in too many homes by people who are known to the family, as is the case with Haley. Ask students to research strategies young people can employ to protect themselves against unwanted advances and attacks. When sexual abuse does occur, what can the victims do? Who can they call? How can they contact agencies to obtain help? Ask students to create an informative brochure including this information and more. Students should contact local health officials, counselors, police and others who can give them pertinent information. Have students place the brochures in the school library and the counselor's office.

Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel

Characters

Haley's relationships with her mother and Lynn are almost destroyed because of their relationships with Larry and Chad. Ask students to work with a partner and draw a Venn diagram listing the similarities and differences between Haley's mother and Lynn focusing on their relationships with the men in their lives and how they relate to Haley. Then have students work with their partner to write a brief poem for two voices using two of the three female characters. Poems should include some choral lines as well as alternating lines between characters. Boys may prefer to do the same activity using the two male characters. Students should present their poems to the class.

Plot

The elements of plot are exposition, the introductory information needed to understand a story; complication, the catalyst that begins the major conflict; climax, the point in the story that points to the solution of the problem or conflict; and resolution, the set of events that bring the story to a close. Ask students to draw a plot line and place each of these elements of the plot on the line with an explanation of when in the story each occurs. Have students create a series of journal entries written by Haley corresponding to the plot elements.

Conclusion

Place students in groups of three and ask them to write an additional two or three pages to tie up loose ends and to make explicit ideas that are left implicit or unstated in the original conclusion. What happens after Haley tells her mother? Does Haley's mother believe her? An attorney, Larry threatened Haley when he molested her, telling her that no one would believe her because he was such an important man. What will happen to him? When students have completed their alternate endings, have students read them to the class. Discuss which endings are most plausible based on the circumstances and the motivations of the characters.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. From the beginning, Haley feels uncomfortable around Larry. Why doesn't she trust her instincts? What, if anything, could she have done to avoid what happens?
2. Why does Haley take an immediate dislike to Chad when Lynn so obviously is attracted to him? How does Haley support Lynn despite her misgivings about Chad?
3. Lynn obsesses over Chad for days, and then when he shows up at school, she pretends she doesn't remember him. Why does Lynn play this game with Chad? How does Haley feel about Lynn's pretense? What is Haley's reaction when Lynn drives off and leaves her stranded?
4. Why is Haley embarrassed to tell Lynn that Larry exposed himself to her? Why doesn't Haley tell her mother? Of what is she afraid?
5. After Haley and her mother fight about the burnt chili, Haley is hurt that her mother doesn't come to her room, as is her custom, so they can talk their differences out. How could Haley have handled the situation differently? Why didn't her mother come to her room?
6. The horror of what Larry does to Haley is not only physical. In what other ways does Larry hurt Haley?
7. What changes does Haley make in her life after Larry molests her? What does Haley's mother do to make the reader aware of her reaction to Haley's changed behavior?
8. How are Haley's relationships with both her mother and Lynn almost destroyed because of their choices with Larry and Chad? What occurs to salvage the relationships?

Writer's Craft

Vocabulary Enrichment

The author uses powerful words in her story to help the reader “see” the images she is painting. Ask students to use a thesaurus to look up the words and to write a one- or two-word definition, selecting words with which they are more familiar.

Chaotic	page 4	Staid	page 8
Reeks	page 14	Hordes	page 23
Talisman	page 25	Perplexed	page 26
Dubious	page 27	Proprietary	page 28
Salient	page 39	Provocation	page 88
Succulent	page 89	Scintillating	page 91

Author Biography

Meg Tilly has been a dancer in New York City, an actress in Los Angeles and a writer everywhere she has lived. *First Time* is her fourth book. Meg has a wonderful husband and three children, and she says her children are “The biggest blessing in my life. The heart of me.”