



Pain & Wastings

Carrie Mac

Interest level: grade 7 and up

Reading level: 3.6

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AR Quiz # 122459

Book Summary

After another run in with the police, Ethan gets a break when the ambulance driver who takes him to the hospital recognizes him and offers him a way out of the juvenile justice system. With the approval of his social worker, Ethan accepts her offer, and so begins his journey to wholeness—a four-day stint of twelve-hour shifts, accompanying the ambulance crew into the roughest, poorest neighborhoods in the city where he grew up.

Prereading Idea

Group homes exist to provide teens a safe, nurturing environment where they can work through the pain of their past and move on to a successful future. Ask students to investigate group homes in their communities either as part of the foster care system or as a place for teens in trouble. Then, as a class, ask students to discuss their findings and to share appropriate personal stories.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

There is no mention of any criminal investigation being conducted to apprehend the man who murdered Ethan's mother; for Ethan, no justice has been served for the loss of his mother or the trauma he endured spending a week alone in the house with her after her death. Ask half of the students to assume Ethan's voice and to write a letter to the captain of the police department asking him to review, and if possible, to reopen the case to bring justice to the killer. Have students include a well-developed justification for their requests. Ask the other half of the class to respond to the letters in the voice of the police chief, explaining why the police department can or cannot comply with Ethan's request.

The need for people to work in fields of community service increases as our society becomes more violent, and the crime rate escalates. Communities are in desperate need of qualified employees to fill positions as firefighters, police officers and emergency caregivers. Ask students to investigate these and other community service careers and to create a brochure on the career of their choice. The brochure should include information about the career itself and the education requirements to obtain a job in the field. The brochures can be placed in the counseling office and the school library.

Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel

Characterization

Ask students to reread chapter one and to make a list of character traits Ethan possesses as well as his attitude toward people and life in general. Then, ask them to make a timeline of the emotional roller coaster Ethan rides as he works his way to wholeness. Each event on the timeline should be accompanied by an explanation of the incident and the emotions Ethan is forced to deal with. Timelines can be displayed in the classroom.

Foreshadowing

The author employs the use of foreshadowing to build suspense and create interest in Ethan's past. Holly's references to Ethan's mom, Ethan's memory flashbacks, and the social worker's comments about working downtown where "it" occurred lead the reader to wonder what might have happened to Ethan. Ask students to form groups of three and to make a list of the clues that lead to the revelation that Ethan's mother was murdered. Then have each group create a collage to depict both the revelation and the clues that foreshadowed it. Display the collages in the classroom.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. When the captain refuses to write another letter for Ethan, Ethan disrespects him and walks out of class. Why does Ethan react this way when he knows the captain cares about him? How does his reaction to the captain make him feel?
2. How does the relationship between Ethan and Harvir help them both overcome difficult situations? How does their relationship prove to be destructive?
3. How does riding in the ambulance and assisting with emergency calls for four shifts help Ethan face his past and deal with the emotions he has buried?
4. How does the time Holly invests in Ethan's life pay off for him? What satisfaction, if any, does Holly receive?
5. Ethan's social worker for ten years has helped him through times of tremendous difficulty. How does she help see him through this rough week? What does she do to make him face the reality of his past?
6. No one involved in the murder case of Ethan's mother understands why the man who murdered her has returned. What possible reasons does he have?
7. How does the title relate to the story? Does the meaning hold true for Ethan?

Writer's Craft

Vocabulary Enrichment

Review context clues with students such as: opposite or renaming clues, example clues, definition or restatement clues, comparison, contrast, cause and effect, and word analysis. Then ask the students to use the following words in a complete sentence providing one or more of these context clues so that the reader will be able to determine the meaning of the word.

Deke	page 3	Squeamish	page 64
Writhe	page 6	Acutely	page 67
Grimacing	page 58	Swank	page 93
Scathing	page 62	Prim	page 98

Ask students to read their sentences orally and then have them write some of the best sentences on sentence strips to post around the room.

Author Biography

Awarded a Canada Council for the Arts grant at age twenty-five for her first novel, **Carrie Mac** continues to write award-winning novels for young adults. She supports organizations such as War Child, Right to Play, and Doctors Without Borders. Carrie resides and writes on British Columbia's beautiful Sunshine Coast.