



Crush

Carrie Mac

YALSA Quick Pick
for Reluctant Readers nominee

Interest level: grade 7 and up

Reading level: 3.4

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AR Quiz # 106537

Book Summary

When Hope's parents go to Thailand for the summer, they leave Hope with her older sister who lives in New York City, a plan neither sister likes. From the moment Hope steps off the plane, she knows the summer with her sister will be a disaster. Fortunately, Hope meets a young mother who needs help taking care of her twins, and because of Hope's babysitting experience, she is hired to be a nanny for the summer. Then, Hope meets Nat; and true love turns her world upside down.

Prereading Idea

Brainstorm a list of ideas students have about communes and hippies. As students read the book, have them add what they learn to the list.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research

Hope's parents' non-conformist attitude toward life is shaped by their experiences in the 1960s. Have students interview their parents and/or grandparents to find out what non-conformist ideas they had as youth. Using photographs and drawings, have students create a new/old collage that shows what was considered non-conformist then and now. Display the collages in the classroom.

When Hope begins to question her feelings about Nat, she begins to question her beliefs about herself as well. Ask students to reread pages 72–75. Have students use Hope's own words and thoughts to write a poem for two voices expressing Hope's internal conflict about her feelings for Nat.

Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel

Characterization

Carrie Mac creates unique characters who possess out-of-the-ordinary ideas about life. A character can be classified as round, one whose many personality traits are revealed by the author, or flat, one who is described more simply. List the major characters in *Crush* and ask students to identify them as either round or flat based on what the author has revealed about each character. Divide students into groups and assign each group a round character to portray. Have students visually portray this character on a poster board using drawings and graphics, describing words, quotes from the novel, symbolic representations, and 3-D add-ons. Have students share their round character portrayals with the class.

Irony

Situational irony is the contrast between what a character expects and what actually happens. As a class, have students brainstorm the irony in *Crush*. Assign students in small groups to be responsible for one of the situations of irony. Have students in each group write and perform a short skit highlighting the contrast between what is expected and what actually happens.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Hope's relationship with her parents is unique; they all treat each other with immense love and respect. How have the three of them been able to reach this level of respect and communication? Why is Joy's relationship with her parents so different?
2. Why does Joy call Hope "Hopeless"? How does Hope feel about this nickname? Why is it an inappropriate nickname for Hope? What does this nickname say about Joy?
3. On page 30, Hope calls her parents hypocrites because of their use of pot. In what other areas could they be considered hypocrites? How do they ultimately show they are sincere about their beliefs about love and marriage?
4. Hope's experience with Orion causes Hope to question her ability to judge people. How do Hope's feelings of inadequacy in this area affect her ability to see Nat for who she is? Why does her experience with Orion cause her to question her feelings for Nat?
5. How do Maira and Larissa help Hope through a tough time with her sister and her new-found feelings for Nat? In what ways do they encourage and support her? How does their kindness give Hope courage to face the truth?
6. When faced with the news that their daughters are gay, Nat and Hope's parents react quite differently. How do their reactions differ? In what ways do the girls' upbringing and acceptance of themselves reflect their parents' attitudes?

Writer's Craft

Vocabulary Enrichment

Challenge students to select one vocabulary word as the title of a poem and to use "found" phrases from the novel, synonyms, antonyms and ideas of their own to create a short word poem. Students can read their poems to the class.

Extraordinaire	page 13	Gullible	page 41
Cringe	page 25	Eclectic	page 46
Staunchly	page 28	Perplexed	page 52
Vulnerable	page 29	Seething	page 62
Flounces	page 36	Obliterated	page 67
Scrounge	page 38	Belligerent	page 68

Imagery

The author uses imagery to paint pictures with words so that readers can “see” the scene and “feel” the emotions of the character. Have students choose one of the images listed below, or another in the book, and to draw that image as a cartoon. Display drawings with the original written images that inspired them.

- “Because being apart will bruise all of our hearts.” (page 7)
- “She looks ten miles beyond tired.” (page 13)
- “While Joy verbally dissects Bruce...” (page 26)
- “...little bits of Brooklyn filling my awkwardness like confetti.” (page 68)
- “Sleep is like an impatient slip of nothing.” (page 75)
- “...the world feels like one big blue ball of brilliance.” (page 75)

Author Biography

Carrie Mac was awarded a Canada Council for the Arts grant at age twenty-five for her first novel and has since written three more award-winning novels for young adults. She has also had numerous short stories published in a variety of literary journals. Carrie Mac lives and writes on British Columbia’s beautiful Sunshine Coast.