



Thunderbowl

Lesley Choyce

YALSA Quick Pick

Interest level: grade 7 and up

Reading level: 3.2

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AR Quiz # 78321

Book Summary

Sixteen-year-old Jeremy has a talent for playing the guitar, so when he joins a new band, and they win a Battle of the Bands at a local club, he is pumped to have a job doing what he loves to do. But his parents and teachers are not happy about his failing grades or his late-night hours. Things reach a climax when he brings his report card home, and his father demands he quit the band. Totally confused about the direction his life is taking, Jeremy refuses to quit and starts living with another band member. With the help of a teacher and a friend, Jeremy eventually comes to a decision that could make everyone happy, including him.

Prereading Idea

Ask students to bring to class appropriate alternative music, so that all students are familiar with what it sounds like. As students listen, ask them to jot down the feelings the music evokes in them.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research

Jeremy expresses his feelings about playing music several times in the book: pages 24–25, 36 and 59. Ask students to read these passages, and then write a “found” poem that expresses Jeremy’s feelings and incorporates student selected words or phrases from these pages. Collect the poems and put them together in a booklet for other classes to read.

Thunderbowl and The Mongrel Dogs both played alternative music. In small groups, ask students to research one of the following topics:

- The history of alternative music
- An alternative band and how it became famous
- An alternative guitarist
- Clubs that play alternative music

Have students type and illustrate their findings and collect them into a classroom alternative music magazine or newspaper. Or have students prepare a book jacket or CD cover incorporating their research along with visual elements.

Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel

Theme

Jeremy has many important choices to make in the course of the book, and every choice he makes affects his life in one way or another. Make a list of the decisions he must make and then beside each one, write the choice he made and the consequences of his choice. Be sure to include his choice to lie to the band, Mr. Lyons, his parents and Suzanne. As a class, discuss the list and the message the author is trying to convey through Jeremy’s decisions.

Conflict

The conflict in *Thunderbowl* focuses on Jeremy’s confusion about the decisions he needs to make for his future. His internal conflict drives the story forward and the plot intensifies when the external conflict between his parents and The Mongrel Dogs enter his life. With a partner, have students select one of the conflicts from the book and write a dialogue between characters to convey the conflict, utilizing humor, appropriate tone and details from the story. Students could write a dialogue between Jeremy and his “self,” (internal conflict) or Jeremy and another character (external conflict). Partners should present dialogues to the class.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Jeremy comments on the wasted potential in Drek's life on page 10. Does his attitude toward Drek's potential change? Based on the choices Jeremy makes, how is this ironic? Why do so many young people fail to live up to their potential?
2. Jeremy and his parents seem to have a problem with communication. On pages 32 and 69 when they argue, Jeremy's father yells at him and doesn't listen or seem to understand Jeremy at all. How could both Jeremy and his father communicate better? How does Jeremy's mother stay out of the conflict?
3. Richie seemed to have it in for Jeremy before he ever met him or knew he played the guitar for Thunderbowl. What motivates Richie's actions? How does Jeremy make the relationship worse? What does he do to make it better?
4. Mr. Langford shows a genuine interest in Jeremy and the choices he is making for his life. What role does he play in Jeremy's decision to drop out of school? Does his input help Jeremy or hinder him? Why?
5. On page 74, Jeremy states, "I had to see it through." Was it realistic for Jeremy to think Thunderbowl would get a recording contract? What other consequences or outcomes should he have considered before making his decision? How does his decision to quit school affect his life?
6. When Jeremy comes up with a plan to make both school and music work, why do Al and Drek go along with it?

Writer's Craft

Simile

A simile is a tool writers use to compare using "like" or "as" to another generally unrelated concept but with one strong similarity between the two. Ask students to read the following paragraphs, paying close attention to the similes.

"...howled like a wounded wolf," (page 16).

"...fingers danced like fireworks," (page 25).

Ask students to find other examples of similes in the book, and then find a situation in the book about which they can write their own simile. Have students write and illustrate their simile and display the students' work in the classroom.

Foreshadowing

The author begins to build a sense of foreboding about the decision Jeremy is making to join the band on page 9; “What I didn’t know was that the band was going to get me in so much trouble.” The author continues to use foreshadowing on page 16 and again on page 25. Ask students to locate the passage on each page that hints of what is to come and find other examples in the book. Then have students write an explanation about why they think Jeremy failed to do what he felt was right. Students can share their paragraphs with the class.

Author Biography

Lesley Choyce teaches part-time at Dalhousie University, runs Pottersfield Press and has written adult and young adult books, including fiction, non-fiction and poetry. His YA novels center on a variety of topics and issues from the popular skateboarding, surfing and rock bands—to the controversial—racism, environmental issues and organ transplants. He’s worked as a rehab counselor, a freight hauler, a corn farmer, a janitor, a journalist, a lead guitarist, a newspaper boy and a well digger. Lesley lives in a two-hundred-year-old farmhouse at Lawrencetown Beach, overlooking the ocean. He says, “I decided to be a writer with high hopes that it would allow me to avoid work. When writing turned out to be work as well as fun, I stuck with it anyway.”