



## ***The Hemingway Tradition***

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Reading level: 4.2

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AR Quiz # 62997

### **Book Summary**

Shaw's father committed suicide by putting a gun in his mouth and blowing his brains all over the bedroom wall. Shaw found him; life as he knew it to that moment was over. He and his mother move to a new town, and Shaw does his best to escape from himself and change who he is. Forced by outside pressures to confront the truth about his father, Shaw makes peace with himself and his father's death with the help of his mother and his father's journal.

### **Prereading Idea**

Alarming, suicide rates are increasing for all age groups. Ask students to briefly investigate suicide and compile a list of facts from various websites about the causes, prevention programs and grief recovery for survivors. Discuss the data collected, and then read the first few pages and make predictions about what they think will happen.

**Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas**

- Shaw describes the province of Saskatchewan, Canada, briefly in chapter one. He says, “You could practically drive all the way from Alberta to Manitoba without ever touching the steering wheel.” Have students look for pictures of this area and select a way to write and present the information they find. For example, a poem, a song, a description for a travel brochure, a public service announcement or an explorer’s journal. Share the products with classmates.
- Shaw makes several allusions to Ernest Hemingway, and the title of the book suggests that Hemingway plays a role in the story. Have students investigate Hemingway’s life to discover the connection between the characters in the book and his life. Students should write a brief paragraph explaining the connection and giving support from the book to justify their reasoning. As an extension, have students select an author of their own choosing for further research and draw a time line of the major events in their life. The timelines could be displayed in a book of authors.

**Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel*****Theme***

Generally speaking, the theme of a book revolves around the main character; what he learns and/or how he changes as a result of his experiences. Based on the brief glimpse the reader has of Shaw’s life, what would you say is the theme of *The Hemingway Tradition*? Ask students to write a thematic statement on sentence strips and display them around the room.

***Characterization***

Authors use various avenues to develop a character—through physical description of a character; through the character’s speech, thoughts, feelings or actions; through the speech, thoughts, feelings, or actions of other characters; and through a narrator’s direct comments. Ask students to choose a partner and select one of the minor characters, Jai, Tess, Shaw’s father, or Shaw’s mother, and find an example of at least three of the above four methods that the author used to develop their character. On a poster board, have students write the name of the character, the three methods they chose to show, and the quote or situation that models the method. Display the posters around the room.

***Point of View***

This story is told from Shaw’s point of view, so the reader knows what Shaw is thinking and feeling, but not any of the other characters. For example, what is Jai feeling when he is called derogatory names in chapter 9? Does Tess really like Shaw “in that way” as Jai says she does in chapter 7? Have students write a retelling from Jai’s or Tess’s point of view of one of these events or choose one of their own, and the retellings with the class.

**Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions**

1. When Shaw's mother tells him they are moving to Winnipeg, she explains that her company is transferring them. But both Shaw and his mother know they are moving to escape memories of his father. Shaw says, "Pretending was easier for both of us." Why would it be easier to pretend?
2. Shaw's English teacher knows about his writing ability because the permanent file that follows him throughout school contains information written by a former teacher about that ability. How could the existence of this type of file work to the student's favor? How could it be a detriment?
3. Making the volleyball team makes it easier for Shaw to fit in and form friendships. What other actions can new students take to help smooth the transition to a new school? What role did Jai play in helping Shaw feel at home in a new place?
4. After Shaw's fight with Onion Breath because of his racial slurs against Jai, Tess makes the comment to Shaw, "...hatred isn't a quality you're born with. It's something that's learned." What does she mean by this? Explain why you either agree or disagree with this comment. If you have ever had a similar personal experience, share it with the class.
5. Sometimes, what is perceived as the end is only a beginning. How could Shaw's father's death be a beginning instead of an ending?

**Writer's Craft***Vocabulary Enrichment*

Locate the following words and determine their meaning from the context clues. Then write an original sentence using the words. Or have students take a current piece of their writing and look for places where using these words would strengthen their writing. Students can share their revised sentences with the class.

Congeniality	(ch. 4)	Soothe	(ch. 9)
Wincing	(ch. 4)	Faze	(ch.10)
Secluded	(ch. 5)	Wrench	(ch. 10)
Sniveled	(ch. 8)	Caromed	(ch. 11)
Steeled	(ch. 8)	Grimaced	(ch. 11)
Leered	(ch. 9)		

***Puns/Idioms***

A pun is a play on the multiple meaning of words and used for their humorous effect, and an idiom is an expression that has a meaning different from the meaning of its individual words. For example:

“I was obviously going to have to quit ‘stepping on toes’ if I hoped to make any friends.”

“Despite the fact that the two of us had literally gotten off on the ‘wrong foot’...”

Pair students with a partner and ask them to look for other examples of puns and idioms in the novel. Then handout or assign an idiom and have the partners turn it into a scenario that would make it a pun as the author did.

***Foreshadowing***

The author uses foreshadowing to heighten suspense about why Shaw’s father committed suicide. For example, the reader knows Shaw and his mother kept the note a secret from the police, and that Shaw’s father had problems that were too big to handle. Then the reader finally gets to read the note. What other clues did the author give to let the reader know that Shaw’s father was gay? In pairs, make a list of clues hinting that Shaw would become a writer. Share your list with the class.

**Author Biography**

**Kristin Butcher** has loved to read since she read her first word, and, for her, being a writer is a natural extension. She is dedicated to sharing her love of reading through her writing, classroom visits and workshops. Speaking to and teaching both students and teachers charges her with enthusiasm and energy for writing new novels and stories. Kristin also loves to laugh, dance and learn.