



Watch Me

Norah McClintock

Interest level: ages ten to fourteen

Reading level: 3.0

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Book Summary

At first, Kaz intends to help the old lady who's fallen in the park. But then he starts thinking about how he never gets what he wants. He wanted a games system, but he got hockey equipment. And worse, the hockey equipment was his mom's boyfriend's idea. Kaz hates everything, including hockey—and his mom's boyfriend. The next thing he knows, he's made a snap decision and he's running away with an old lady's purse. The purse contains only five dollars and a battered old watch. When Kaz learns who the old woman is and the story behind the watch, he begins to understand the consequences of his decision in a new way.

Author Biography

Norah McClintock is a five-time winner of the Crime Writers of Canada's Arthur Ellis Award for Best Juvenile Crime Novel. Her fascinating mysteries are hard to put down and often deal with young people in unusual relationships. As well as *Watch Me* and *Marked* in the Orca Currents series, Norah wrote the novels *Bang, Down, Snitch* and *Tell* in the Orca Soundings series. A freelance editor, Norah writes at least one novel a year. She lives with her family in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Connecting to the Text**Plot**

The plot tells us the story. Each situation or event that occurs affects what happens next, until the conclusion of the story.

- As a large group, ask students to brainstorm the succession of events in *Watch Me*. How does one event affect what happens next? Ask students to choose three events from early in the novel to build on. For example:
 - Kaz was unhappy about his birthday present. He didn't want hockey equipment; he wanted a gaming system.
Prompt: When he saw the old lady's purse, he thought about the games system, and he stole the purse.
 - Instead of helping the old lady, Kaz grabbed her purse.
Prompt: Inside the purse was Jana's grandmother's watch.
 - When Drew shoved the old lady, she fell and her head hit the cement.
Prompt: Jana's grandmother had to go to the hospital. Later, because Jana was upset by her grandmother's experience, she slapped another girl and was sent to detention where she met Kaz.
- Ask students to consider alternative plot scenarios. How would they change the succession of events in the novel? Examples to get students started are:
 - Kaz decides to try out his hockey equipment and join a hockey team.
Prompt: What would happen if he joined the team his mom's boyfriend coaches? What if he got to be good at hockey again?
 - Instead of grabbing the old lady's purse, Kaz decides to help her.
Prompt: Would he still have met Jana, perhaps under better circumstances?
 - Kaz grabs the old lady's purse and Drew shoves her, but when they see she's hit her head on the cement, they offer to help and call an ambulance.
Prompt: Would Kaz still have a relationship with Jana? Would Jana's grandmother forgive Kaz and Drew?

Vocabulary Building

The following words were used in *Watch Me*.

- Ask students to write a story or chapter summary using words from below. To set the context for students, see page numbers below:

apologize	(p. 28)	disappoint	(p. 32)	explain	(p. 32)
pressure	(p. 21)	assignment	(p. 19)	disoriented	(p. 47)
expression	(p. 9)	relaxed	(p. 6)	belonged	(p. 49)
dyslexic	(p. 35)	imagined	(p. 9)	remember	(p. 39)
coincidence	(p. 45)	embarrass	(p. 26)	important	(p. 60)

shoulder	(p. 39)	conversation	(p. 7)	equipment	(p. 9)
neighborhood	(p. 13)	suspend	(p. 28)	detention	(p. 29)
exception	(p. 34)	official	(p. 22)	trouble	(p. 26)
understand	(p. 39)				

Theme

1. Theme, the broad idea of the story, can sometimes be revealed in the lessons learned by the characters. To engage students with the main characters and themes in *Watch Me*, use the following as group discussion topics, individual novel study or writing exercises:
 - Drew tells Kaz not to worry about getting caught after Kaz steals the old lady's purse. Drew says, "The cops have serious crimes to solve...It's not like there was thousands of dollars in there...The cops aren't going to put a bunch of ace detectives on the case" (p. 14). Does the fact that there was only five dollars in the purse make the act less wrong? What other crimes have been committed besides stealing the five dollars?
 - Kaz says, "Sometimes I took stuff. Usually I did it when I was mad about something. It made me feel better. I don't know why. It just did" (p. 15). Does taking things to feel better justify the act? Does it make a difference if it's small things or big things? Do our laws reflect a difference?
2. Divide the class into groups, with each group working to complete one of the following options. Encourage students to draw from the novel. Once all groups have completed their activities, have groups share their findings.

Friendship

Brainstorm examples from *Watch Me* where a character demonstrates that they are a good friend. Then, make a list entitled "What Friendship Means," with examples from the novel. *Prompts:*

- Don't make fun of your friend, like the way Drew...
- Stand by your friend, like when...
- Do what's right, like when...
- Accept an honest apology, like the way...

Coping with Change

Brainstorm examples from *Watch Me* where a character demonstrates a reluctance to cope with an inevitable change, and then make a list entitled "Coping with Change" with examples from the novel. Consider what the situation was before and how it's changed. Think of ways that the characters might cope with change better.

Prompts:

- The senior citizens at the bank don't like to use the instant teller; instead they stand in line to take out their money. Things have changed...
- Kaz has a hard time coping with his mom's boyfriend Neil living with them. Things have changed...
- Some of the kids can't handle the way Kaz looks now. Things have changed...
- Kaz's dad finds it hard to cope with Kaz's burns and his experience in the fire. Things have changed...

Connecting to the Curriculum

Research Projects—School Life

1. Kaz has dyslexia. He says, "I don't like newspapers. I don't like magazines either. Or books. I don't like reading. It's too hard" (p. 18), and "I hate it...when people tell me I'm wrong—like I don't know that already" (p. 33). Research the resources available for students with dyslexia in your school. How can students with dyslexia get help—both from faculty and from other students?
2. Kaz is bullied by Rufus, Tad and other boys at school. They tease him and laugh at him and sneak up behind him to pull his hood off. Does your school have rules about bullying? Research these rules and present them to the class. If Kaz was a student at your school and Rufus was bullying Kaz "only...when there were no teachers around" (p. 26), where could Kaz turn for help?
3. Kaz's school has a peer-tutoring program where Jana tutors math. Research the resources in your school for students who need extra help. Choose three subjects (math, science, physical education, etc.) and indicate where students can get extra help for each of these. Include a schedule and contact information if they are available.

Art and Reflection

1. Encourage students to choose an interesting quotation from the novel, then express a response to the quotation with an art project. Students should be prepared to describe why they chose the quotation they did and how their artwork captures or illustrates its theme, drama or emotion. Students may wish to include the quotation in their projects.

Prompt: How does the quotation help us understand this character or this part of the story? What theme, actions or emotions are being expressed?

Examples for projects could be collages, scrapbook pages, creative diaries, journal writing and poems, print work, etc. Ideas for meaningful quotations include:

- Because of the fire, Kaz has scars on his neck and face which he hides by wearing his hood up. He says, “I’d wear my hood up at school too, if it wasn’t against the rules” (p. 3).
- Kaz made a daring rescue when he saved his dad in the fire. “...I saved my dad’s life. He would have died, burned up in a fire, if it hadn’t been for me” (p. 4).
- Kaz made a crucial decision outside the bank. “Instead of helping the woman, I grabbed her purse.” He said, “Was she even breathing? I don’t know. I tucked the purse under my hoodie and I ran. I ran until the park was way behind me” (p. 10).
- Kaz is unhappy and misses his dad. “I thought about my dad and how everything would be different if I lived with him instead of with my mom and Neil” (p. 10).
- Kaz learns the story behind the watch: “This watch is special. It belonged to my grandma’s older brother. He was a pilot during World War Two. His plane was shot down over the jungle in Burma” (p. 49).
- Kaz has a profound realization when he mails the watch to Jana: “For the first time in a long time, I felt good about something I had done” (p. 81).
- Kaz’s dad has a hard time dealing with what happened. Kaz’s mom says, “Your father blames himself for what happened to you. I think when he looks at you, it makes him remember what he did” (p. 89).

Current Events

1. Kaz saved his dad’s life by rescuing him from a fire. Kaz said, “The whole thing was written up in the newspaper. It was on TV too. They said I was a hero. But being a hero isn’t as great as you might think” (p. 4). As a research project, ask students to complete the following:
 - Look through your local community newspaper to find examples of people who, like Kaz, did selfless things to help others. You may not find examples quite as dramatic as Kaz’s story, but there will be examples of citizens who perform selfless acts. (For example, kids who help with seniors, the homeless or animals in the community).
 - Cut out one of these examples from the newspapers and write a short report describing the selfless act you chose. Who is profiled? What did they do? What do you think motivated them? How did their selfless act affect other people in your community? Are they seen as a hero?
 - Include in your report one idea for a selfless act that your class could participate in. Ideas could be volunteering to help at a fundraiser, monitoring the halls during lunch, collecting blankets for animal shelters or cleaning up garbage on school walkways.
- Option: Once all students’ reports are complete, make an inventory of their ideas. As a group, discuss the proposed ideas. Is there an idea your class can commit to?

Drama

1. Ask students to work in small groups to improvise skits based on key scenes from *Watch Me*. Have students create their own scenarios or choose from the examples below:
 - Imagine you are newscasters presenting the nightly news, and you're interviewing the old lady. She is lucid, unhurt, and can identify Kaz and Drew. Be sure to include Kaz and Drew's reactions to watching the news broadcast!
 - Imagine you are newscasters giving a live broadcast at the fire. Interview the people standing nearby. What are they saying about Kaz?
2. Kaz has it rough. He misses his dad who's moved, his mom has a new boyfriend and he's behind in school. Write a skit in which a group of people talk about Kaz's situation without Kaz present. The group could be his friends, his teachers, school counselors, his mom and Neil, or a group of the students' choice. First, summarize Kaz's situation. Then, discuss what he can do to make his situation better.
3. When Kaz tells his mom that Rufus is "always making fun of him. And he's got lots of friends. They all back him up," she suggests they role-play. She says, "We can deal with this" (p. 65–66). Write a skit in which Kaz and his mom role-play what Kaz can do in situations like this at school. What are his options?

Creative Writing Ideas

Invite students to write a short story or diary entry on one of the following:

1. Imagine that you find a WWII watch in a paper bag on a park bench. Like Jana's grandmother's watch, this watch has engraving on the back of it. Write a short story describing how you find the watch's owner.
2. Kaz is a real hero, although nobody at his school seems to care. Write a song, rap or poem to express Kaz's situation.
3. Do you think Kaz did the right thing by selling his games system to buy back the watch? Would you have done the same thing? Write a journal entry that describes what you would have done. Begin at the point where Jana tells Kaz that her grandmother is in the hospital because "someone pushed her down and stole her purse...She hit her head really hard. She's seventy-five years old" (p. 43–44).
4. Jana's dad knows that most people would consider the watch "a piece of junk" (p. 52), but that, to Jana's grandmother, the watch has deep sentimental value. Write a paragraph describing something that your family has which has sentimental value. Is there a story behind this item?

History

1. Jana says that the watch belonged to her grandmother's brother, who was a pilot in WWII. Have students research the history of the wristwatch and the role played by pilot Alberto-Santo Dumont. Include one factor which contributed to the rise in popularity in wristwatches in the early 1900s (answers could include: practicality over the pocket watch for soldiers and officers in war time; miniature parts technology; and culture and changing styles). Include pictures of early wristwatches and those of today. How are they different?
2. Kaz really enjoyed getting to know Jana's grandmother and hearing about her experience during the war. He said, "I also liked listening to her talk about her brother and what it had been like reading all about the war in his letters and wondering all the time if he was okay" (p. 92). Although Jana's grandmother's letters are quite old, her experience is still meaningful. Invite a veteran or the family member of a veteran to your class to speak about their experiences. Ask the guest to bring pictures or memorabilia, if possible.