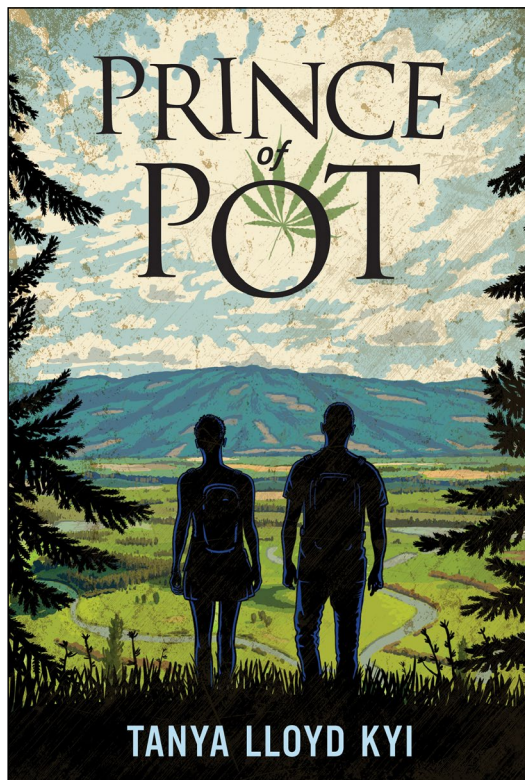




# GROUNDWOOD STUDY GUIDES

## Prince of Pot

*Written by Tanya Lloyd Kyi*



Legalizing weed doesn't mean that living on a secret, family-run grow-op is easy, especially when your new girlfriend is the daughter of a cop.

### **CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

Ages 13 and up / Grades 9 and up

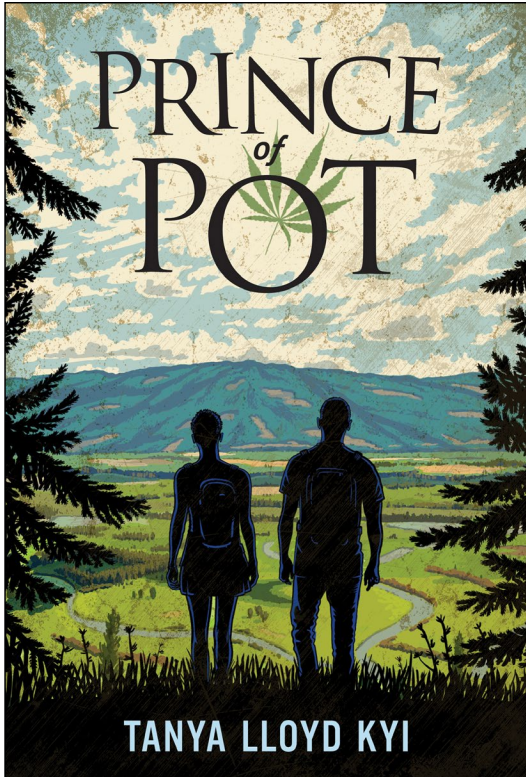
YOUNG ADULT FICTION / Family / General

5.5 x 8.25 / 216 pages

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## BOOK DESCRIPTION

Isaac loves art class, drives an old pickup, argues with his father and hangs out with his best buddy, Hazel. But his life is anything but normal. His parents operate an illegal marijuana grow-op, Hazel is a bear that guards the property, and his family's livelihood is a deep secret. It's no time to fall in love with the daughter of a cop. Isaac's girlfriend Sam is unpredictable, ambitious and needy. And as his final year of high school comes to an end, she makes him consider a new kind of life pursuing his interest in art, even if that means leaving behind his beloved home in the Rockies and severing all ties with his family. For a while he hopes he can have it all, until a disastrous graduation night, when Sam's desperate grab for her father's attention suddenly puts his entire family at risk.

## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

**If this discussion is taking place as a class, designate a student to act as secretary to take notes on answers to these questions. If students are reading the novel individually, recommend they write a journal entry using the below questions to guide their anticipations of the novel.**

As a class, consider the title of this novel. Ask students: What topic might this book be about? What emotions or ideas does the title evoke? Does it remind students of any other novels they have read?

How do these expectations align with the cover of the book? Where do students think this novel will be taking place? Why? Have students read other books that take place in a similar setting?

Now read the dust jacket descriptions. Who do students expect the main characters of this novel to be? From this small portion of text, have students describe their first impressions of the characters' personalities or tendencies. What do they anticipate the main theme of this novel to be?

Finally, read the author's bio. Ask students if they have read anything else by Tanya Lloyd Kyi. What do we learn about the author from her bio?

## POST-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

### RE-EXAMINING PREDICTIONS

After finishing the novel, revisit the notes made in response to the above pre-reading questions. Discuss with students which predictions most aligned with the story as it unfolded. In general, what were the most surprising elements of this novel and why? What were the most troubling?

### IDENTIFYING THEMES

In literature, a “theme” is a story’s main message or idea. What were the main themes of this novel? What do students think the author was really trying to say through Isaac’s story?

### COMING OF AGE

*Prince of Pot* could be classified as a coming-of-age story, which is defined as a story whose plot revolves around a protagonist who moves from youth to adulthood, usually through difficult lessons or experiences. Ask students how the character of Isaac is different at the end of the novel? How has his life and attitude changed? What are the lessons he has learned? Is his arrival into adulthood a positive or negative development?

Are students familiar with any other coming-of-age stories, not only in novels but also movies and other media? In what ways does this coming-of-age story differ from those?

Optional activity: have students write a coming-of-age short story about themselves. They can focus on one major decision or experience that has taught them something about maturity.

## LAWS AND FREEDOM

*Prince of Pot* serves as an interesting commentary on the theme of freedom. It depicts an often overlooked reality, namely how families are impacted when they are on the other side of the law. Isaac's parents chose to participate in an industry that was, in the novel, illegal, yet they also had strict rules for their son to follow. With students, list the ways that rules or laws impacted Isaac's life. In what ways was he free or not free? Has this novel changed students' perspectives of laws? Would they enjoy living the way Isaac and his family did?

## LEGALIZATION OF CANNABIS

Questions about laws and their effects on people's lives, as depicted in this novel, are important to consider given the movement toward the legalization of cannabis. Have students consider how legalization would have changed some of the dynamics in Isaac's life. What problems would legalization have alleviated, and what problems might it have created? Ask students: In your opinion, does this book serve as a positive or negative critique of legalization? Why?

## SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Aside from the legalization debate, what role did substance use and abuse play in this novel?

## EKPHRASIS

"Ekphrasis" is a term that describes an author's attempt to describe physical works of art (like paintings or sculptures) in words in the context of a literary work. This convention features several times in *Prince of Pot*, when Isaac's artwork is described. Have students locate one or two of these passages in the book, and, using the descriptions, try to recreate one of his paintings.

## DECISIONS

Isaac's path through the novel is shaped by numerous choices and decisions, small and large. Ask students: In your opinion, what were the three most important decisions he made in this story? What basis or factors did he rely on to make his decisions? Do students think his decisions were good or bad? Have students reflect on their own lives. What have been the three most important decisions they've made so far? What or whom do students rely on in making difficult choices? Are there any decisions they regret?

## RELATIONSHIPS

Over the course of his story, Isaac learns who he can and can't count on. Make a list of all the characters in the story and rank them in order of dependability. Be prepared to justify your ranking with examples or reasons. In what ways does this list surprise you?

## BEARS

Perhaps the most loveable "characters" in the book are the bears. Ask students what kind of relationship Isaac shares with them? What do the bears provide for him that the humans in his life cannot? On a metaphorical level, what do students think they represent? Once they've come up with their own answer, students can research what bears symbolize in literature and ancient and Indigenous cultures. Ask students: Did your answer line up with what you found?

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**Tanya Lloyd Kyi** is the author of more than twenty books for young readers, including *Eyes and Spies* and *Anywhere But Here*. She spent several childhood years in Crawford Bay near Isaac’s imaginary home, and while she didn’t live on a grow-op, there were plenty of habituated bears around. She has yet to forgive the one that wrecked her swing set.