



Dead-End Job

Vicki Grant

Reading level: 3.6

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AR Quiz # 87397

Book Summary

Working the night shift at a convenience store enables Frances to help earn money to pay her way to art school. Her night cashier's job seems boring until she meets Devin, a nice guy who is easy to be with and fun to talk to. But Frances begins to notice Devin everywhere she goes, and when Devin sends her photos of herself in those exact places, she begins to worry. Her best friend encourages her to call the police; still Frances thinks she is overreacting. However, when Devin sneaks into the store through a window and threatens Frances's life, her fears are confirmed and she is not at all sure she will live to see morning.

Prereading Idea

Most students have heard warnings about talking to strangers both in person and on the Internet. Ask them to brainstorm a list of warnings they have heard from their parents or from their friends' parents and write the list on the board. Then ask them to discuss the reasons for each warning and whether they have ever had a reason to heed the warning.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- In the past several years, reports of celebrities being stalked have dramatically increased and the news media sensationalizes each of these occurrences. Ask students to select a partner and research recent stalking incidences to determine the impact on our society and whether the news coverage has played a role in the increase in reported cases. Then, divide the pairs of students into two groups: have one group create TV interviews that focus on sensationalism and have the other group create interviews that focus on accuracy and factual reporting.
- Often friends encounter situations that are neither safe nor healthy for them, but they can not see it. As a friend, we need to be able to be honest with them. Ask each student to choose a person that could have warned Frances about her involvement with Devin. Then have the students write a letter to Frances warning her about the danger she could be in and giving her advice on how to extricate herself from the situation. Post the letters as part of a stalker awareness bulleting board.

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

The plot is the story line; one event leads to the next until the conclusion of the book. In small groups, ask students to choose one of the main characters and write journal entries from that character's point of view from the first meeting with Devin and Frances to their last encounter. The journal entries should demonstrate how the plot of the story evolved.

Theme

The theme is often based on the lessons the main character learns. Ask students to write a thematic statement based on what Frances learns from her encounter with Devin. Ask students to write their statements on an overhead transparency so that they can be shared with the class. With a partner, have students take one of the thematic statements and turn it into a slogan for a stalker awareness program. Ask students to prepare a poster using the slogan and safety tips.

Characterization

The author paints a picture of Devin from his entry into the story. Divide students into groups of three and ask each group to draw a web listing Devin's characteristics. Then compare his characteristics to the traits of other stalkers to determine if his character is true to form.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Frances thinks introducing Kyla to Devin will be a positive move for all of them, but she is wrong. Why does the lunch date not go according to plan? What could she have done at this point to help the situation?
2. What should Frances have done when she first began to question Devin's stories about his father and the recording contract? Why does she continue to believe him when she is confronted with the truth?
3. In the beginning, Frances is flattered by Devin's interest in her, but her heart is always with Leo. How could she have handled Devin's advances in a different way? Based on Leo's behavior, are her lies to him justified?
4. Frances and Leo have what seems to be a good relationship, with the exception of Leo's jealousy. How does Leo's jealousy play a role in what happens to Frances? Does Leo have a reason to be jealous of Devin? Why or why not?
5. Frances' refusal to tell her parents, Mr. Abdul or Leo about Devin forces her into a dangerous situation. How would her parents have responded to Devin's interest in their daughter? What might they have done?
6. What is it about Frances and her attitude that attracts Devin? Why does he choose her to stalk?

Writer's Craft***Foreshadowing***

The author builds suspense through the use of foreshadowing. She hints at the fact that Devin might not be all that he says he is. With a partner, ask students to make a list of the clues and the conclusions that could be drawn from those hints. Then write the hints in the order of their occurrence on the board. Have students make a storyboard of the plot showing the foreshadowed events.

Author Biography

Vicki Grant always knew she wanted to be a writer, and after she graduated from college, she was hired as an advertising copywriter. She learned the characteristics of writing and what it meant to meet deadlines and take criticism. From advertising, she began writing for a children's television series, and after seven years, she took some time for herself to write her first novel. Vicki lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, with her husband and three children.