

Greetings,

I wish there was some way to share the energy in my classroom these past five weeks. My students have loved this book and they have even enjoyed working through the packet. We have also covered a myriad of state standards!

*The concept behind the novel **Zach's Lie** begins with a 7th grade boy having to take on a new identity in the Witness Protection Program because his dad is a part of a drug cartel. We all know that students in the "middle years" are just beginning to form identities so the sheer idea of having to change one identity for another is intriguing. This novel also speaks to the themes of family, friendship, boy/girl relationships, abandonment, change, and, of course, truth. The reading level is anywhere from 5th grade to 8th, although I recommend using this unit with 6th or 7th grade students.*

***Zach's Lie** will speak to all your students. Those who have a solid family home and those who do not; those who have close friendships and those who go through life alone; and finally those who have had to move and be the "new kid" and those who never leave their small little town. This book is from the genre contemporary realistic fiction but there is a great deal of intrigue and suspense and a few historical elements as well. The characters in this book are realistic and so are the events that take place. Elko is a real place in Nevada and there are real kids in the Witness Protection Program. Is the character Jack/Zach/Mack real? You decide.*

*The concept behind the unit **Zach's Lie** is based on complex literacy and literature skills. Learning is a process – it is not a series of products, tests, or projects – you will find none of that here. When are young adolescents ever taught how to sequence, how to use cause and effect, and how to inference? When are they given a chance to practice these crucial skills that connect to every other subject area; they are not. They are merely assigned these tasks. This unit attempts to help students build these skills and more. Students investigate many of the elements of fiction with the help of literacy tasks. For example: after students learn to sequence more effectively they can then fill in all the areas of plot using the sequence charts with ease. "This is easy now!" they sigh.*

My students have enjoyed working through these complex tasks. One student even whispered to another after the second sequencing session, "I feel so smart!". "Me, too!" The other replied. I want all young adolescents to feel smart, to feel as if they can learn and apply their knowledge. I want literate adults who can critically read and appreciate good writing. And this is great writing – it is so easy to work with Roland's style as it is full of literary merit.

As you look through the unit, remember that students are working through a process – they may need to revise their work again and again to gain real understanding, even at an elemental level. All the lessons are tiered at the highest levels for seventh grade students – adjust as you need to. Please, if they need another chance building the inference skills, I would ask you to give it to them – or if their Character- Cause & Effect does not share the effects but states "who the minor characters are" have them try again by revising three or more of the characters actually using the work affects. There are second chances in life and our students need the same consideration if not more.

*I have included a time line, connections to English standards, teacher notes and general answers to most assignments, and an appendix which includes a unit rubric, student work, and the Socratic Discussion Method. I hope you enjoy the unit; school should be a place we all want to be! I know you will love reading **Zach's Lie** with your students. ☺*

On a personal note, I would like to thank my 7th grade students at Kasson/Mantorville Middle School for all their brilliant ideas, creative suggestions, and arduous work throughout the piloting of this unit. Also, the students of Kenyon/Wannamingo for their advice and aide. A final thank you to Kathy Henderson for her ideas, encouragement, proofreading skills and constant commitment to young adolescents. This unit is better because of these people.

Please feel free to contact me at any time with your questions or concerns. I would love a note from your students as to what they enjoyed, thoughts regarding rigor and relevance, what they would change, etc. Also, you can share with them that Zach's Run, a sequel to Zach's Lie, will be out sometime next year.

*Working With You,
Julie Sprague
spraguef@charter.net*

507 319- 8309 cell phone

A Quick P.S.

Please take the time to read Roland Smith's biography to your students. He is an extraordinary man who has led and is leading a fascinating life. He puts a great deal of research into his writing and a great deal of himself into his books. I love to have my students guess which parts are most like Roland. If you have the opportunity of hosting him at your school you will not be disappointed. We raised the money selling pizzas at one of the schools I taught at and had student pay a fee for an "in school" field trip at another school. You can find any and all information about Roland at www.rolandsmith.com

Time Line

WEEK ONE

Anticipation Set: I use a quick write with the following questions to jumpstart students' thinking about honesty. I usually ask students to choose five or six to answer. I also let them know that I will be the only one reading their writing. However, I do share that dangerous information issues will have to be shared with a counselor.

What does it mean to tell the whole truth?

What is a white lie?

When, if ever, would you lie?

How are trust and truth connected?

What does it take for you to trust someone?

Does stealing have anything to do with lying?

When, if ever, is it right to keep a secret, what's the bottom line for you?

How do you test if someone is telling the truth?

How are age and truth connected?

What does it mean to "come clean" or "own up"?

How is deception different than lying?

When is a lie dangerous?

Is the truth ever harmful?

Has a lie ever hurt you?

Has the truth ever hurt you?

I also do a truth/lies statement sheet about myself, see appendix. I make up statements and they have to decide if I am telling them the truth or lying?? They really love this and it helps them get to know me – sometimes I have them think up their own truths and lies and share in pairs.

Finally, students create a Zach's Lie File. Students use file folder that has an extension at the bottom to keep track of all their materials throughout the unit; this can be placed on their materials list at the beginning of the year or you can place it on your materials list. Students place the unit, filler paper, and a several sheets of filler paper with a cover for the journal in the file. They can write their questions about the unit or book on the cover or just decorate it. Also on the back of the file is placed an Anticipatory Guide sheet, see appendix; students answer this sheet before the unit and then check their answers as the book progresses.

We begin reading the book and try to get through Chapter 6. Sometimes I read, sometimes students read to themselves -depending on the chapter and time limitations. As we read students fill in information in many of the sections – such as Character and Cause and Effect and Zach's Biography.

I also "frontload" vocabulary. We complete Acquiring Vocabulary page first and then Memorizing Vocabulary.

Students can begin the Universal Themes section. (Do not teach universal and vicarious at the same time- brain research shares that it is hard for young adolescents to sort when differences are presented at the same time.)

Week One journal is assigned on day one and due on day five.

WEEK TWO

Students need to complete Sequence and Inference Part One before you read on.

After you work through sequencing together have them write their exposition paragraph right away – you can collect or they can keep “safe”.

Using Vocabulary usually takes two days. And four minute mini-vocabulary quizzes are done on days two and four.

Read through Chapters 7- 14– A great deal of reading gets done this week and students again can take notes in packet where applicable.

Week Two journal is assigned on day one and due on day five.

WEEK THREE

Students finish Part Two reading Chapters 15 and 16.

Sequencing and Inferencing for Part Two is completed in small teams (3-5) and then shared with class.

Rising Action Paragraph can be completed and added to the exposition paragraph.

Conflict, Characterization and Cause & Effect, Vicarious Themes, and Socratic Discussion Questions sections can be worked through about halfway.

Four minute quiz continues on days 2 and 4.

Week Three journal is assigned on day one and due on day five.

Begin Reading Part Three, Chapters 17 and 18.

WEEK FOUR

Read Part Three – Chapters 19-26 and students take notes as the reading progresses.

On their own, students complete Sequencing and Inferencing for Part Three.

Four minute quiz continues on days 2 and 4.

Finish Plot Point Paragraphs by adding Climax- Resolution, Conflict, Character and Cause & Effect pages.

Week Four journal is assigned on day one and due on day five.

WEEK FIVE

Vocabulary Quiz – Attempt #1

Complete Universal and Vicarious Themes

Characterization and Theme Page

Biography Page – This may be a two day assignment??

Vocabulary Quiz – Attempt #2

Socratic Discussion Questions

Socratic Discussion

This unit can be extended with more discussion and more time in class for each assignment. I will take six weeks next year. I can justify the time, because there are so many standards addressed and so many important English skills practiced. I try to finish the book itself in three weeks to four weeks but then much of the work starts and I will take more time for the Socratic Discussion as students love this and really have a great deal to say.

Of course, the unit can be done in a much shorter time frame but revising and editing some of the learning experiences.

Again, feel free to contact me.

English Language Arts Standards

These Standards are taken from the state of Minnesota but can be readily and easily adapted to any state or national English Language Arts standards.

Literacy Standards and Benchmarks

Vocabulary and Simile Learning Experiences

Word Recognition, Analysis, and Fluency:

- ◆ *Read unfamiliar complex and multi-syllabic words using cueing systems, advanced phonetic analysis and structural analysis.*
- ◆ *Read narrative text with fluency, accuracy and comprehension at an appropriate silent reading rate.*

Vocabulary Extension:

- ◆ *Acquire, understand and use new vocabulary through explicit vocabulary instruction and independent reading*
- ◆ *Analyze word structure and use context clues to understand new words.*
- ◆ *Identify and explain similes*
- ◆ *Determine pronunciation, meanings and alternate word choices through the use of dictionaries, thesauruses and electronic tools*

Anticipatory Set, Sequencing, Inferencing, Socratic Discussion, Universal/Vicarious Themes Learning Experiences

Comprehension:

- ◆ *Use a variety of strategies and demonstrate literal, interpretive, inferential and evaluative comprehension.*
- ◆ *Comprehend, interpret, and evaluate text by asking and answering questions.*
- ◆ *Recall and use prior learning and preview text to prepare for reading.*
- ◆ *Make inferences and draw conclusions based on explicit and implied information from texts.*
- ◆ *Critically read and evaluate to determine the author's purpose, point of view, audience and message.*

Inferencing, Sequencing, Characterization and Cause and Effect, Characterization and Theme, Plot Points, Conflict, Socratic Discussion, Biography, Similes, Universal and Vicarious Themes Learning Experiences

Literature:

- ◆ *Actively engage in the reading process and read, understand, respond to, analyze, interpret, evaluate and appreciate a wide variety of fiction.*
- ◆ *Read a variety of high quality, contemporary literary works specific to America.*
- ◆ *Identify and analyze the relationships among elements of fiction.*
- ◆ *Identify and analyze the effect of characters' traits on the plot and resolution of the conflict.*
- ◆ *Analyze how figurative language and literary devices contribute to the meaning of a text.*

- ◆ *Identify and understand recurring themes across literary works, citing evidence from the texts.*
- ◆ *Respond to literature using ideas and details from the text to support reactions and make literary connections.*

Journals, Biography, Plot Points/Sequencing Learning Experiences

Writing:

- ◆ *Create informative and expressive writing*
- ◆ *Engage in the writing process*
- ◆ *Create multiple paragraph compositions that state, maintain and use details in a logical order to support a main idea.*
- ◆ *Consider the intended audience when composing text.*

Biography, Plot Points, Socratic Discussion Learning Experiences

Spelling, Grammar, Usage

- ◆ *Apply standard English conventions when writing.*
- ◆ *Compose complete sentences when writing.*
- ◆ *Edit writing for correct spelling and sentence clarity.*
- ◆ *Apply grammar conventions correctly in writing.*
- ◆ *Apply punctuation conventions correctly in writing*

Sequencing, Inferencing, Socratic Discussion Learning Experiences

Speaking and Listening:

- ◆ *Participate in and follow agreed-upon rules for conversation and formal discussion in large and small groups.*
- ◆ *Know and apply listening rules for formal setting*
- ◆ *Orally communicate information, opinions, and ideas effectively to different audiences for a variety of purposes*

Teacher Notes and Answer Guide:

Below are a few notes about progressing through the unit as well as examples and answers to certain sections. All teacher notes are in italics.

Acquiring Vocabulary:

Students' first look through the list of words for word structure- words such as traumatized, generally, partially, precaution, etc. should stand out because of prefixes and suffixes. Students then go to the pages of the novel to find if the context will help them – words such as cordoned off, wrenched, gawking, ransacked should stand out. Most of these words can be defined at a basic level using context.

Students then look at the words that are remaining one last time and place an R in the blank for resource – words like minions, waning, and inconspicuous usually emerge.

We take a great deal of time discussing this in pairs and then in whole group.

Using Vocabulary:

This is self explanatory; however if your students are unfamiliar with prepositional phrases and they have been working with action verbs you can exchange the requirements or do a mini-lesson on prepositions and make a “prepositional phrase bank” they can draw from. The part of speech is what will help them write accurate sentences. I really emphasize parts of speech in a mini-lesson...

Memorizing Vocabulary:

This is just the list of words that work for my students – you can take whatever words from the text that you like and have students memorize. Each Tuesday and Thursday we take mini-quizzes (only six words are chosen at random). This is not for a score but a contest between each of my sections – or it can be a contest with themselves for progress.

Figurative Language

Students can keep a running list of similes as they (you) read the text.

Or you can assign this for extra credit after the text is over.

Also, a mini lesson on quoting from text would help here.

Here are a few:

p. 4 – “...pretend to fly like superheroes.”

p. 47 – “His hair was dark like his father’s.”

p. 82 – “He stared at her like a deer frozen by headlights...”

p. 91 – “He felt light, as if he were floating above the recliner.”

p. 110 – “Your hair looks like a dust mop.”

p. 122 – “Catalin’s grandfather looked like a bear.”

p. 127 – “Sam is curled up in his bag like a cocoon...”

p. 147 – “...voice like an angel.”

p. 149 – “...something as small as a twitch of an eye.”

p. 203 – “...his heart was slamming in his chest like a wild bird trapped in a cage.”

p. 203 – “...his legs felt like mud.

Journaling:

Week One:

Talk with your family, parents, aunts, grandparents, any adult and collect as many types as you can. Record each type of lie and then explain what you believe it means.

Example:

Omitting the truth: You tell only part of the story, not the whole story, or you don't tell any of the truth hoping no one will know or find out.

Fish tales: The fish I hooked was "this big" but it got away. :/

These are endless but they really need to get some ideas from parents and grandparents.

Bending the Truth: Making the lie sound better than it really is.

Skirting the Truth: Getting around the truth somehow – perhaps by not answering questions when asked by asking their own question instead of answering.

Exaggeration, Being Polite, Diplomacy, Lying to himself/herself, lying to accomplish a purpose

Week Two:

For one week write down all the times you were honest and all the times you were dishonest.

Reflect about your honest and dishonest acts using these questions:

- Do you feel you recorded your acts as honestly as possible?
- Did you surprise yourself in anyway?
- Were you more honest because you were keeping track?
- What is your overall impression of this week' journal?

I only look at the four questions and see if they have complete answers – most students share that they are surprised how often they lie and that they did try and lie less because of the recording. It does help them reflect a little about their honesty.

Week Three:

Explain who Zach can trust and why?

Who can you trust? Why?

I usually ask for paragraphs with six to eight sentences each. I also insist they share more than one person that Zach can trust and they can trust. It makes them extend their thinking a bit past friends; their first inclination for trust partners.

Zach can definitely trust his family – they are in the same situation; Sam, he did not tell the "fight" secret; Caitlin – did not laugh at him or tell others about Commander IF, etc.

Week Four:

Describe your life if you had to go into the Witness Protection Program.

If you had to change your life and go into the Witness Protection Program:

- Where would you like to go?
- What would be your new name?
- What changes would you make in yourself if you got a fresh start?
- How do you feel about the overall idea of Witness Protection
- What would your overall feelings be about being placed in Witness Protection?

These answers are my favorite and vary from "No, way!" to "I would love to start fresh."

Identifying Correct and Faulty Inferences – Part One

Using Part One of *Zach's Lie* decide which of these inferences is Correct or Faulty.

Record below:

C= Correct Inference F= Faulty Inference

This is the first practice with inferencing. Students and I discuss the answers together and they must support their C or F choices with sections of the book, identifying page numbers when possible.

F Zach and his sister have a strong brother/sister relationship. *So far this is hard to tell but what we know so far, they do not.*

C Zach's father is guilty of drug trafficking. *Zach's father actually admits he did this to Zach and his mom.*

C Zach's mom is a determined and strong woman. *She is starting her whole life over and trying to make the best of it – she doesn't fall apart in front of the drug traffickers or the DEA.*

C Alonzo is a serious criminal. *Best indication is when he is willing and wants to "eliminate" Zach's father.*

F Zach's mom knew about the drug trafficking. *Agent Pelton doesn't believe that she is guilty and Zach's dad tells Zach she had nothing to do with it. Also, she acts just as lost as the children when the traffickers and DEA come.*

F Benjamin Bender is a trustworthy attorney. *He may be loyal and trustworthy to Alonzo but overall he is a criminal and can't be trusted.*

F Zach's mom is furious with her husband. *This is a hard one?? She exhibits fear, confusion, exasperation, and other feelings. There is one time when she shares, how could he do this without me knowing?*

C June Saunders is a trustworthy attorney. *There is nothing to lead us to think that she isn't but the students will wonder why the bad guys know where they are in the hotel SHE chose. But she is a lifelong family friend and even the DEA trust her.*

C Alonzo knows where Zach's family is hiding. *Yes, if Benjamin Bender knows Alonzo knows. Also, his two minions are watching the house.*

C Zach's father has evidence against the drug cartel. *We think so! It never really says but it "infers" that he has placed something in the jack-in-the-box. Also, they tell us that he does speak Spanish which "infers" that he had heard Alonzo's conversations. Also, another time the book shares that he knows where a warehouse of Alonzo's is.*

C Zach's father loves his family more than himself. *Zach's dad may be put in prison for the rest of his life but he is willing to do this so his family is safe. He DIDN'T put them ahead of himself before but he is now.*

C Agent Pelton and the DEA are keeping the family safe. *So far, so good. The DEA moved them into a safehouse and started them in a new life and stayed with them for awhile.*

F Zach keeps a journal just for fun. *If the journal was just for fun it would not be in a safe box, behind some panels in the garage, and he wouldn't have asked his father to swear to secrecy to not read them. Zach takes them very seriously!*

F/C Zach's sister is adjusting to the changes better than Zach. *The key word is better? Some will say yes because of the physical transformation and willingness to leave and help her mom. Other will say no, because she didn't go see her dad and because of her reaction to the new house and room.*

F Zach is furious with his father. *From what we know, no, he is disgusted, scared, worried, but not mad? He loves his dad very much.*

F Zach is excited about living in Elko, Nevada. *Zach is not excited. He has to live in a smaller town, smaller house, no friends, and he is so worried about this family the town just adds to his grief.*

Interpreting Inferences - Part Two

On a separate sheet of paper, use the following statements to decide what the author wants you to know about a character, setting, and/or story event. The pages have been given to you; you may need them. You may tell what the author really means in a short paragraph or completely rewrite the statement and share what is truly meant.

Students and I do the first inference about the principal and then they must do the rest on their own. Below is an idea of what students should have but many times they will share even deeper ideas than these. I do not score this for points but share how many of their inferences are close to mine. We take a great deal of time discussing these after I have reviewed them.

1. "Mrs. Pyle handed him a sheet of paper. 'We have one thousand one hundred and twenty-two students, nearly three hundred more students than we can hold comfortably. The point is, Zach, you are not the only transfer student, and you aren't the only student with divorced parents. I think if you give us a chance here you'll discover that you've landed in a pretty decent place.'" p. 79.

What Mrs. Pyle really means is that the school is crowded and other students have problems. If Zach's tries he will be okay here because it's a good place to be.

Students could also state it like this:

Now Zach, this is a crowded school and many students have problems like you so go out there and try and this will be a good place

2. "He wheeled Jack into their daylight basement, which he had converted into a gym while Jack was in the hospital. There were weights, punching bags, jump ropes, and in the center of it all, a

small boxing ring... 'I quit my job Jacko. I'm going to stick around home until you're back on your feet.'" p. 81

I care so much about you that I am putting everything else on hold and helping you. You mean more to be than money and a job. You can do this, walk, I believe in you.

3. "Ms. Miller said she wanted everyone to stand up in turn and introduce themselves. '...My name is Ms. Miller. I've been a teacher at Elko Middle School for twenty-two years. This will be my last year teaching. Next year at this time, I hope to be sitting on a warm Mexican beach watching whales frolic in the cobalt-blue water. I trust you'll help me make this last year of teaching my best.' One by one the students stood and introduced themselves." p. 82

This is my last year of teaching; I can't wait to be out of here and in the warm weather. Don't give me any garbage so my last year is good.

4. "Sam walked over to the punching bag and slapped it with his hand. 'Before we talk, I want you to beat up the bag for a few minutes. Gets rid of the tension. Over the years, half the boys in this school and some of the girls too, have been in here to have it out with my bag. Your friend Peter has been in here more than a dozen times.'"

'He's not my friend.'

'I gather that. Put the gloves on.'" p. 89

Get out all your anger Zach, just punch the bag like many others have done, don't feel bad. I know Peter is not your friend but there is more to your anger – get it out!

5. "Blue lies, Zach thought. He watched her until she turned the corner." p. 95

Even my stupid blues eyes lie to Catalin. Will she ever know the real me. OR

My eyes are fake and so are many other things. I wonder how many lies I will have to tell?

6. "She smiled. 'I want you home by nine at the latest.' Zach smiled back. It had been along time since he had heard that. Too long." p. 99

Finally, things are getting back to normal, Mom worries but trusts me and I have a friend.

7. "This is turning into a pretty good job, Zach thought." p. 117

I get to make \$500.00, eat great food and hang out with my beautiful girlfriend. And my boss is the nicest guy in Elko.

8. "Ander went into the tent and came back out with a plate piled with steaks and a pot of boiled potatoes. It was hard for Zach to believe that anything could taste better than the meal he had eaten at the hotel the night before, but it did. He was beginning to understand why Benat stayed up in the mountains." p. 125

The beauty and freedom, the fresh air and friends like this – who wouldn't want to live up here.

9. "Ander went into the tent and came back out with an old, battered guitar and a small accordion. He gave the guitar to Benat and they began to play and sing. Zach did not understand the words but it didn't matter." p. 126

Who cares if I don't know the words, the music is soothing, Catalin is here and I am finally feeling safe and happy.

Applying Inferences – Part Three

Find 9 inferences in Part Three and share what they infer, just like I did in Interpreting Inferences – Part Two.

Use this space to keep track of the page the inference is on and what it infers as we read together and as you independently read.

Students will have various answers.

Here is a list of pages that many of the inferences are on; there are many more.

p. 147 “ but his discomfort...”

p. 170 “Don’t look so shocked...”

p. 172 “Peter knew better than to push it...”

p. 177 “Maybe we should talk by ourselves...”

p. 179 “Unfortunately, you know a little too much...”

p. 180 “We’ll deal with you later...”

p. 180 “...unscheduled vacation...”

p. 186 “...a long time ago there was a Russian boy...”

p. 187 “How is your eyesight...”

p. 193 “The Basques have been taking...”

Sequencing – Parts One – Three

Part One: I do this with each of my sections as if it is the first time I have ever done it. Sometimes when I do this with my class we decide to add rungs to the ladder because there is more than seven important events. Wording of the events is somewhat irrelevant what is important is the placement. Hint: Part Two could have eight or nine.

*Intro. to Osbornes/Grangers
Drug guys vs. DEA(protect)
Jack's accident – new business for Dad
Jack in the Box
Bender vs. Saunders
Dad guilty tells all to Zach and DEA
New Life*

Part Two: I place students in small teams (4 or 5) and they find all the important events on the opposite page and then put numbers by them. In a whole group, we discuss, in depth, what they have and fill in the ladder together.

*Meets Sam Sebesta
starts school, meets Caitlin
Punching
New friend Darrell
2 jobs (these are a bit out of order but work here)
Mountain Trip/Adapts to Elko
Postcard
Peter and backpack*

Part Three: Students do this entirely on their own for credit. I give them the first rung and the last. Some of these could be separated into nine rungs but this is basically the idea.

*Chalkboard - 1 journal missing –I found
auditions – stranger – L.A.
Peter plays all his cards - Zach panics/Sam calms
Peter vs. Alonzo
Catalin and Benat kidnapped/mtns.
traps/Sam vs. Alonzo
new life with Dad*

Characterization - Cause and Effect

On a separate sheet of paper, explain how the following minor characters affect Zach's thoughts and actions.

Do they:

make him think?

do something he wouldn't normally do?

make him angry?

create problems?

scare him?

encourage him?

etc.?

Take notes about each character as you read the story.

Please make sure the notes are only to help the students remember who the characters are. They do not use them to share the affects or at least not directly. Many times students will just take their notes and write them into sentences. The assignment is to share how each of these characters affect who Zach is not to tell about the minor characters. The purpose of all minor characters is to shed light on the major/main one.

This is a good time for a mini-lesson on affect and effect, too.

Neil Osborne affects Zach because he builds a gym so Zack can get his strength and legs back. He makes him strong and he shows Zach how much he cares. Neil also has a negative affect because he creates problems for Zach with the drug trafficking. He makes him angry and discouraged; Zach thinks he will never have his family back.

Agent Pelton affects Zach because he takes many of Zach's family's belonging. He also places Zach's family in the Witness Protection Program and keeps him safe. At first he scares Zach but later Zach trusts him.

Sam Sebesta affects Zach in many ways. He helps Zach to control his emotions by showing him the punching bag. He encourages Zach to get out all his anger. He makes Zach feel responsible and happy because of the job and food at the Nevada. Zach is also affected by Sam because he can trust Sam and he looks up to him like a father figure.

Alonzo Aznar affects Zach with fear.. He is the leader of the drug cartel who threatens Zach and his family. He also makes Zach mad because Zach wished he would have done something when Alonzo tied him up.

Peter Short affects Zach in some ways. He puts Zach into a panic by writing the notes on the board and finally sharing that he has the journal. He blackmails Zach and tries to get Zach to drop Catalin as his girlfriend. Even though Zach doesn't know it, Peter also puts Zach and his family at risk because he tells Alonzo everything he knows.

Catalin Cristobal affects Zach in a good way. She has become Zach's girlfriend and she makes him feel cared for and accepted. Zach is also affected by Catalin because he worries that he will never be able to tell her the truth, this frustrates him. Catalin also makes Zach feel more calm and comfortable in Elko.

Characterization – Theme

On a separate sheet of paper, describe, in detail, which characters match with which themes.

Honesty Example: Zach’s father deceives the family about his part in the drug trafficking business. He also lied to himself that he wasn’t hurting anyone. This book shows how devastated Zach and his family were because of his dad’s lies; Zach and his family are paying a high price. They have to change everything about themselves and keep their own secrets for believing in their father and husband. Also, Neil Osborne is paying a high price because he is not allowed to see his family and will probably go to prison or be killed by the criminals. The secrets that Zach has to keep from Catalin are very hard for him as well. He knows the importance of honesty and it hurts him to keep the truth from her. Neil Osborne is also very honest with his son when he tells him that he was involved with Alonzo Aznar, he doesn’t try to “candy-coat” the truth but tells Zach everything.

This example shared with students and you. There is so much more that could be said here but I have tried to cover the basic ideas.

Remember to share that each word has two sides to it. Honesty and dishonesty; fear and courage; abandonment and acceptance; relationships and loneliness, etc. I usually ask students to choose 5 of the themes they can write about without a lot of thinking, that is, which ones make connections right away for them. The students will have various answers of their own – they are usually insightful with deep thoughts! This is one of my favorite learning experiences.

Fear:

Perceptions:

Abandonment:

Change:

Identity:

Family:

Guilt:

Loyalty:

Characterization - Biography

See appendix for a student example.

On a separate sheet of paper, write a one – two page biography of whom Jack was and who Zach is and who Mack may become.

Write about who he is and the changes has he gone through both externally and internally?

There should be, at least, five to six paragraphs:

Paragraph #1 - Who Jack was: 6-10 sentences

Paragraph #2-#5 – Who Zach is: three to four 6-8 sentence paragraphs. Think of who his is on the outside, home, school, work, with friends, with enemies, etc.

Paragraph #6 – Who Mack will become: 6-8 sentence prediction

HINTS:

1. Talk about the person not the plot.

Use adjectives such as, Zach is **sarcastic** because when he is talking with his mom about the “museum event” he is kind of a smart-mouth about being late. AND

Zach is **thoughtful** because he keeps a journal and writes down all his thoughts.

OR

Use nouns that describe such as, Zach is a **daredevil** because he jumps out the window during his cape-crusader days. AND

Zach is a **listener** because he loves to hear Sam’s and Catalin’s stories.

2. You should see Jack/Zach/Mack’s name and the pronoun “he” all through your paper.

3. Only share events in the context of “who Zach is”.

After Jack broke his legs, he had to spend time learning to walk again so his Dad built a gym for him and **this helped Jack get close to his Dad**. Also, he spent a great deal of time reading and

he now loves to read. This information “in bold” is what is important in the biography.

Zach is **not really very athletic but he works very hard** cleaning out Sam’s building and to impress Catalin; **they are close friends**.

Also here is a word bank of important words and phrases to consider and possibly use in your writing:

<u>Word Bank</u>		
broken legs	caring	Witness Protection
journal	Commander IF	Elko
books	strong-willed	pilot
Basque	tall	fight
Nevada	frustrated	lies
work-sawdust	loyal	blue eyes
friendships	mountains	Jack-in-the-box
normal	panic	daredevil
thoughtful	listener	honest
tall	non-athletic	risk-taker

Plot Points

Students do this after the sequencing ladder assignments. The ladders will be invaluable to them as they fill in each of these sections. They simply take the titles and turn them into sentences and paragraphs. The sentences and paragraphs are then placed inside each section of plot. The rising action's the most difficult as it has most of the story.

I have indicated how each section should begin. Upon completion students should have an excellent "book summary". I then ask them to use this process with their own outside reading book.

On a separate piece of paper, summarize the novel by sectioning the events into the different sections of plot. However, do not label each section just indent for your new paragraph. When you are finished you will have an excellent book summary.

Use the space provided under each section to take notes.

Exposition: 4- 5 sentences *Introduced to the Grangers.*

The beginning which explains the background of the story.

Rising Action: 10-12 sentences *Starts with Dad telling all to the DEA.*

The central part of the story during which various problems arise.

This section is usually the majority of the novel.

Climax: 3-4 sentences *Starts with chalkboard and journals missing and found*

The highest point in the action of the story. Usually the main character begins to change here or is presented with the opportunity to change.

Falling Action: 3-4 sentences *Starts with Peter telling all to Alonzo*

The part of the story which follows the climax or turning point: it contains the action or dialogue necessary to LEAD the story to a resolution or ending.

Resolution: 3-4 sentences *Starts with Sam's trap (because we know the traps will work because we know who Sam is now!)*

The part where the problems are solved – usually the satisfying end.

Conflict

I must say that this section will truly show you if your students have understood the story. Their responses will tell you if they understand the characters and the problems that arise in the story. Encourage them to share more than just one example per conflict area.

Below, identify how each of the following conflicts is found in the novel. Please use details from the story.

Man vs. Man: One character in a story has a problem with one or more of the other characters. *Zach vs. Pete OR Zach vs. Dad OR Dad vs. Alonzo OR Sam vs. Alonzo, etc.*

Man vs. Society: A character has a conflict with society: school, law, gang, etc. *Dad vs. Drug Cartel OR Dad vs. DEA OR Drug Cartel vs. DEA, Benat vs. town society*

Man vs. Himself: A character struggles with himself and has trouble deciding what to do. *Zach vs. himself OR Peter vs. himself OR Dad vs. himself*

Universal and Vicarious Themes

List any of the universal and vicarious themes on the T chart using bullets.
The examples are only examples and depending on the student could go either way.

<u>Universal Theme</u>	<u>Vicarious Theme</u>
Experiences I have that are similar to the events in the novel.	Events in the novel that I have not had and probably will never have.
Example: Zach not wanting to move.	Example: Zach going into the Witness Protection
<i>feeling left out</i>	<i>dad working for drug traffickers</i>
<i>difficulty making friends</i>	<i>dad in prison</i>
<i>fight with parents</i>	<i>starting new life in Witness Protection</i>
<i>fight with siblings</i>	<i>changing their names</i>
<i>close talks with siblings</i>	<i>tied up and gagged</i>
<i>Mom asking where and when</i>	<i>living in the mountains</i>
<i>going to a friend's house</i>	<i>having a job</i>
<i>liking a girl/liking a guy</i>	<i>living in a restaurant/boarding house</i>
<i>finding an adult for a friend</i>	<i>fight in school</i>

Socratic Discussion Questions

On a separate sheet of paper, answer all questions with complete sentences and thoughts.
Please make sure that you review the Socratic Discussion Method, see appendix, as there are specific rules and procedures.

*Many of the questions are written by my students.
Please work through the answers with your students as some of them have more than one acceptable answer. All answers must be supported with whys.*

1. Why was Elko, Nevada not acceptable to Zach?
2. What does Zach's mom do in Elko?
3. Who are the Basque?
4. Why are students sent to the custodian instead of the principal when they fight?
5. Do Agent Pelton and the DEA keep the family safe?
6. Why is keeping a journal so important to Zach **and** what problems does it cause?
7. Could Zach have prevented anyone knowing who he was?
8. Is Neil Osborne a good father?
9. Why was it harder for Zach to change than his mother and sister?
10. Was Jack happier as Zach or Jack?
11. How could Peter and his parents have a better relationship?
12. Why will Cat always keep Commander IF?
13. What are **three** changes Zach had trouble with when being placed in the Witness Protection Program?
14. What different situations, in the future might be difficult for Zach and his family in the Witness Protection Program?
15. What do you think would be the hardest part of being in the Witness Protection Program? the best part or good part?

Other Possible Socratic Discussion Questions???

Write, at least, three more questions that could be used in our Socratic Discussion.
Please send these to me via email so I can share and update.