



Impossible

Jocelyn Shipley

Reading level: 3.3

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Book Summary

Seventeen-year-old Jemma's older brother took her in when she needed to get away from her abusive ex-boyfriend, Razor. All Jemma wants now is to be a good mom to her baby daughter, Violet. But one night she needs to go out, just for a few minutes, to get diapers and ice cream. On her way back, she witnesses the drive-by shooting of a kid, Kwame, who lives in her building. The driver is Razor. Jemma is terrified. If she tells anyone what she saw, they'll know she left her baby alone, and she might lose custody. But if she doesn't, Kwame's killer will go free. Razor convinces Jemma to make a deal to save her life, but Jemma isn't sure she can live with the consequences.

Prereading Idea

The number of drive-by shootings continues to rise throughout our country. Ask students to discuss the possible reasons these shootings occur and offer potential solutions to this ever-increasing problem in our society.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Despite the availability of birth-control education in the twenty-first century, teen pregnancy continues to be a daunting problem. Divide students into small groups and have each group investigate the statistics about teen pregnancy in the last thirty years to see if there is an established trend. Specific topics to research include the number of teen pregnancies, age of teens at time of pregnancy and the manner in which pregnancies were addressed (through birth, adoption or abortion). Ask student groups to consolidate their findings and make a presentation to the class.
- Have students create a brochure that highlights danger signs of a controlling/abusive relationship and offers details on agencies that can provide counseling support to someone in an abusive relationship and legal paths available to victims of abuse to protect them. Brochures should be made available in the counseling center and posted throughout the school.
- Ask students to write a reflective essay analyzing the reasons for and consequences of an action, event or decision in either Jemma's, Wade's or Razor's life. Students should assume the voice of the character and include lessons learned. Have students share their reflective essays in small groups.

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

All of the relationships in Jemma's life are conflict filled, Jemma's guilt about her decisions negatively impacting them. In groups of three, have students analyze Jemma's relationships and identify the choices she makes that cause her to become a victim. Then have each group write a thematic statement that speaks to individual empowerment rather than victimization.

Conflict

Conflict is what makes *Impossible* entertaining and interesting to read. Jemma suffers with both internal and external conflicts, and her reactions to the conflicts move the story forward. Ask students to make a list of Jemma's internal and external conflicts and describe how Jemma resolves them. Working in small groups, have students write a skit depicting one of the conflicts Jemma faces. Students may incorporate drama, exaggeration, humor, sarcasm or other elements to highlight the selected conflict. Have the students perform their skits for the class.

Characterization

Wade plays a major role in the lives of Jemma and Violet. Jemma says in chapter 1, "He's been like a father to Violet." Ask students to paint a verbal picture of Wade to show his character traits, his integrity and how he supports Violet and Jemma. Students may write a poem, a rap or a prequel to the novel to highlight Wade's character. They should support their written understanding of Wade's character with specific incidents or descriptions from the book that exemplify a specific trait.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. When Jemma decides to go to the store, why doesn't she take Violet with her?
2. What is Jemma's immediate response when she witnesses Kwame being killed in the street?
3. Why doesn't Jemma want to tell Wade?
4. Why is Jemma so afraid to tell *anyone* that she witnessed the drive-by? Is Jemma's fear justified?
5. Why is Jemma's relationship with her mother so tense?
6. How does Razor control Jemma? What role, if any, does Jemma play in his control?
7. What sacrifices does Wade make for Jemma and Violet? Why is he willing to make them?
8. What is Razor's reaction when he sees Violet for the first time?
9. How does Razor justify his crime of driving the shooter?

Writer's Craft***Foreshadowing***

The reader knows that Jemma's decision to leave Violet home alone and Jemma's relationship with Razor will have serious consequences because of the author's use of foreshadowing—clues used to heighten interest. Assign students partners and ask each team to trace the “hints” the author uses that lead up to Jemma's breakdown. Then, as a group, make a list of the hints in chronological order. Extend the conversation to a discussion of real-life foreshadowing of serious consequences. Have students write a reflection of a time in their life when a serious consequence was foreshadowed.

Author Biography

Jocelyn Shipley is the author of several books for young adults, including *Shatterproof* in the Orca Currents series. Ms. Shipley's award-winning stories have been published in newspapers and anthologies, and her work has been translated into many languages. Born and raised in London, Ontario, Jocelyn now splits her time between Toronto and Vancouver Island. For more information, visit www.jocelynshipley.com.