



Saving Grace

Darlene Ryan

Reading level: 2.4

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AR Quiz # 110013

Book Summary

When Evie learns she is pregnant, her father tries to convince her to have an abortion. Unsuccessful in his attempts, he pressures Evie to put her baby up for adoption, and she ultimately agrees. But Evie is miserable without her little girl, and after watching the adoptive parents with her daughter for two weeks, she is convinced they are not taking good care of her baby, so she steals her back. Planning to leave town and start a new life, Evie tricks Justin, the baby's father, into driving her out of town with the baby. When Justin finally realizes Evie wants to keep the baby, he calls the police and reports her location, forcing Evie to take the baby and run. After eating in a café and talking with a caring waitress, Evie realizes the baby is sick. She makes the difficult decision to take Grace to a clinic, knowing the police will pick her up.

Prereading Idea

A serious societal problem—more teen girls are getting pregnant than in any other time in our country's history. Ask students to investigate the trend of teen pregnancy over the last fifty years: for each decade, find the percentage of girls who have an abortion, who opt for adoption, and who keep their baby to raise. Have students graph the statistics they discover and write individual, personal reactions to the trend.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Evie's father forces her to put Grace up for adoption. In small groups, ask students to investigate the procedure for giving a baby up for adoption. What are the laws governing the adoption of newborns? What are the birth parents' rights? Ask students to research programs in their area that help teen mothers make a decision about the options available to them and create a brochure advertising an available program that helps in the decision making. The brochures can be displayed in the school nurse and counselor's offices.
- Justin and Evie have completely different ideas about their relationship, Evie and her father disagree on adoption, and Evie struggles with herself to decide whether or not she should keep her baby. In pairs, have students write a poem in two voices expressing the characters' opposing views. Students can select one of the above scenarios or choose another one from the book. Have students read their poems to the class and then compile them in a book.

Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel

Plot/Conflict

The sequence of events in a story is called the plot, and it is generally built around a conflict. Divide students into small groups, and ask them to divide a sheet of paper into thirds lengthwise. Students should list the conflicts, both internal and external, in *Saving Grace* in the first column, write the resolution in the second column, and the lesson the character learned in the third column. Then have each group create a “silent movie” of the book. Show students a clip or two from an old silent movie to give them a feel for the melodrama and exaggerated actions of a silent movie. Then have each group write and perform their silent movie version of the conflicts in the book. Students may want to add strobe lighting or background music for special effects.

Point of View

The story is told from Evie's point of view, so the only way the readers know what the other characters do and say is through what Evie tells them. In pairs, ask students to choose a scene involving Evie and another character and to rewrite that scene from the other character's point of view. Then have the students perform their new scene for the class.

Theme

The theme of *Saving Grace* is not clearly stated but is definitely implied. Family, betrayal, mothers and daughters, and coming-of-age all play a role in the theme. With a partner, ask students to write a thematic statement that embodies these ideas and a well-developed paragraph that focuses on one of these themes and the lessons Evie learns. Then each pair of students should write a “teaser” for a made-for-television movie about Evie and her situation. Have students present their “teaser” to the class, inviting the audience to watch the “movie.”

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. What is the significance of the baby's name? Why did Evie change it from Grace to Brianna? Why is the title *Saving Grace* instead of *Saving Brianna*?
2. Evie frequently asks Justin, "Do you think I'm stupid?" What is his verbal response? How does the reader know that Justin does think Evie is stupid? How does Evie respond to his physical reaction?
3. Why does Evie's relationship with Justin cost her the relationship with her best friend Jade? How could Evie have handled this differently?
4. Evie wants Justin, their baby and her to be one big happy family. Why is her plan doomed from the start? Why isn't Evie's plan to move to Montreal and become a fashion designer very realistic?
5. What role does Justin play in the kidnapping? How could Justin have handled the situation in a more mature way? What should he have done when Evie got into his truck with the baby?
6. How do Evie's life at home and her age play a role in her decision to kidnap her baby? Or to get pregnant by a boy that she has to keep a secret? How does Evie's father feel about her?
7. How does the waitress in the clinic help Evie with her baby? What makes the waitress suspicious of Evie?
8. What motivates Evie to take her sick baby to the clinic? Why is it such a difficult decision for her to make?

Writer's Craft*Verb Usage*

The following powerful verbs help create an image in the reader's mind. Ask students to find five other examples of powerful verbs, and then have them find five sentences they can rewrite using a powerful verb. Students can share one of their sentences with the class.

Whacked
Clenched
Sputtered

Scrunched
Muttered
Squirmed

Raved
Wrench

Author Biography

Darlene Ryan has been writing all of her life—as a teacher, a scientist, a late-night disk jockey, a producer, an entertainment columnist, a consumer reporter, a news reader and a copywriter. As a child she was taken to the library every two weeks for a stack of books that was never enough to last the two weeks. This early desire to read has made her an avid reader, so she knows how to develop characters full of life and to put them in situations that hit home to her many readers. Darlene has recently been honored in the poet category by receiving the Dr. Marilyn Trenholme Counsell Early Childhood literacy award from the Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick.