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Book Talk

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***Before Goodbye***

A person sitting on a chair and playing a guitar

Description automatically generated with low confidenceA child playing a musical instrument

Description automatically generated with low confidence

**About the Author**

Mimi Cross is a Canadian author, singer and songwriter. Before writing *Before Goodby,* Cross was a musician and music educator. Her love of music can be seen in her novel. Her writing and singing is described as “inspiring, evocative and refreshing.” Aside from creating music and writing novels, Cross also teaches yoga and is a certified yoga instructor operating out of New Jersey. She also offers private lessons for guitar and singing. Cross has one other novel, *Shining Sea.* [https://www.mimicross.com](https://www.mimicross.com/)

**Summary**

The novel is told from two perspectives, Cate Reese and David Bennet. Cate and David alternate chapters talking about their lives and the tragedies and difficulties that they have to deal with everyday. Cate Reese is a young musician who falls in love with her long time friend and fellow guitar player, Cal Woods. Cal is killed in a car accident and Cate is left feeling alone and responsible for Cal’s death. Cate begins a downward spiral in her life, searching for any way to escape her pain. David Bennet is a classmate of Cate’s who on the surface lives a perfect life. However, David is riddled with survivors guilt and the struggle of dealing with his brother’s suicide. Cate and David begin to bond when Cate babysits David’s younger sister. Together they begin to heal and find themselves and their voice.

**Quotes**

“Tear after tear rolls down my face, and I feel like I might never come out of this crouch, might never get back up. I want to curl into a ball, stay under this tree. Dissolve into the dirt…” (110-111)

Cate is visiting the memorial for Cal at the point in the road where he died. This is the first moment in the novel when she begins to deal with the grief of losing her first love. Cate is lost at this moment and her parents do not provide her the guidance that she needs so she looks to the memorial and Cal for the help that she requires. Even though this is a place that she knows well, she is struggling to deal with the feeling of grief that has come over her. This quote explores how Cate is handling the loss of a loved one. Cate is searching for answers calling out ‘help me’ (111) even though she is alone in the woods. The quote shows the pain that is brought on when a loved one suddenly dies.

 “I would’ve kissed her, but all of a sudden Cate was standing, gone from her seat on the rock, gone from the moment, that second where I thought maybe she, maybe we-that maybe I was good enough for her.

I’m glad she stood up, put herself out of my reach.

It takes the entire walk home to convince myself of this.” (139)

David and Cate shared a romantic moment together as they walk home from school together. David had just told Cate that he likes her but Cate is very skeptical thinking that David is playing her. Cate leaves because she is questioning why the more popular David is showing interest in her. On the other hand, David thinks that she leaves because he is viewed as a player. He is also experiencing self doubt which is something that other people do not see. David is struggling to fit in because he has quit all the sports teams at the school and has this persistent self doubt now after he had a terrible accident. This is a moment in the novel where is struggling with his self worth and has this doubt of whether or not he is good enough.

“‘My brother.’ he gestures vaguely with the busted umbrella, to a point somewhere behind him.

I’d heard about David’s brother. Heard the silences, was more like it. The conversations that snapped shut when I walked in the room…” (224)

Cate and David unexpectedly meet at the graveyard as they visit the graves of the loved ones that they lost. David tries to help Cate understand what it is like to lose a loved one and she makes another attempt at grieving and moving on from Cal. This is also a moment in the novel where Cate begins to understand why David is the way that he is. She understands that David has had to learn to deal with the loss of his brother at a very young age. She understands that he has been struggling with the death of his brother. This quote shows the pain that the death of David’s brother has caused him.

**Teaching *Before Goodbye***

1. Because one of the main aspects of the novel is music, students could take a chapter from the novel and pick a song that would play in the background.
2. Add two additional chapters to the end of the book from the perspective of David and Cate. Focus on the recovery of the two teens as they continue their relationship.
3. Write a short essay about a time that the students went through an expected change or how they might react to an expected change. (ex. losing a loved one, changing schools etc.)

***Before Goodbye* in *Adolescents in the Search For Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story***

* Chapter 4: Real-Life Experience- Cate and David both have to deal with parents who are not a part of their lives. They also have to handle the challenge of fitting in at school and the problems that come along with being in high school.
* Chapter 5: Facing Death and Loss- Both have to deal with the death of somebody close to them. David has to deal with the death of his brother, and Cate the death of Cal.
* Chapter 6: Identity, Discrimination and Struggles with Decisions- David struggles with making decisions and still trying to appease his father. Both also struggle with finding their identity as they cope with the tragedies that have occurred in their life.

The novel meets many of the Exeter qualities and meets the characteristics on the Honor List for YA books. It also covers very difficult topics and themes relevant for young adults.

**Text Complexity**

Lexile: 810L-1000L

Dale-Chall: 6 for grades 7-8

The novel uses first person point of view throughout. The vocabulary is simple and there would be no outside knowledge required to understand what happens in the book. The novel is also fast paced, with short easy to read chapters. There are no flashbacks or flash forwards that may confuse readers.

While the novel may fall under the grade levels of 7-8, the novel is best suited for students in grades 10-12. The younger students would not be able to handle the mature issues that arise in this book. They also may not understand what is happening to the characters as Cross does not always make it clear. The topic of rape, drug addiction and suicide is often discussed by the characters. A persistent issue in the novel is centered around Cate’s addiction to Ketamine. The novel also uses mature language that may not be suitable for younger readers.