

Bent Not Broken: Teacher's Guide

A novel study.

Introduction

Bent Not Broken: Madeline and Justin is a contemporary novel appropriate for grades six and up. It is written in two voices so the reader can see how two teens think differently when confronted with the same situation. This guide is to encourage individual reading, literature circles or class novel discussion. The guide will help increase awareness about those who suffer from a brain injury. It is also a novel that can promote discussion about siblings, mental health, equinox therapy, brain function and diversity. The guide can be used in its entirety or you can also just use portions of it to go along with reading circles.

Novel Summary: Bent Not Broken

Meet Madeline and Justin:

Madeline is a teen who is also an identical twin. She fell off her bike when she was just eight years old and suffered a brain injury. Although, she has made great gains in her recovery, Madeline still suffers from some cognitive functions (she finds math hard) and also emotional outbursts that she just can't seem to control. For therapy, Madeline is part of a miniature horse program at a local barn. Madeline and her identical twin, Becky, are struggling to keep their relationship balanced.

Justin is the Chapter President of the Best Buddies program at Sir Winston Churchill High School. He took on this role as a way of giving back to his sister, Faith, who passed away just one year ago. Faith had autism and was often bullied by kids at her school, which led to an eating disorder, which eventually killed her. Justin's mother is having a difficult time dealing with Faith's death, and Justin and his father are trying to deal with the mother's depression. Being in grade twelve is also a bit stressful for Justin as he doesn't know what he wants to do when high school is over.

Discussion Questions for the Students: Prereading

1. What does it mean when someone has a traumatic brain injury?
2. Look at the brain. What areas affect what types of function?
3. What are some ways that someone with a brain injury can cope?
4. What kind of rehab would a person have to do after a brain injury?

5. Are there organizations that help those who suffer from a brain injury?”
6. Do you know anyone who has a brain injury? Explain what that person was like? If you don't know someone with a brain injury look up traumatic brain injury on the internet and see if you can someone who has had one and some of the things they have gone through.
7. What is depression?
8. What is bullying? What would you do if someone was bullying your friend?
9. How does smoking harm a person's health?
10. What is the Best Buddies Club? Do you think you could have such a club at your school?
11. What activities could students do that belonged to the Best Buddies Club?

Activities for the Students to do: Prereading or Postreading

1. Research the brain. Look at the different areas and how they relate to function.
2. Watch videos on kids with brain injuries. How do they think differently, act differently, and what are some of their physical differences?
3. Make a poster or brochure about the Best Buddies club that could be put up on a bulletin board in your school or be handed out to students to encourage them to join.
4. Brainstorm activity ideas that a Best Buddies club in your school could do. How could they make such a club work? Organize a mock schedule of events for a Best Buddies club in your school.

Novel Discussion Questions:

Chapter One and Two.

Pages 1-28

Summary

Madeline and her twin sister, Becky, get on the bus for school and three of Becky's friends get on the bus. They light up cigarettes on the bus. After they are kicked off the bus for smoking, Madeline is upset which makes her extremely anxious. Sometimes this can lead to meltdowns. She also has a little of a meltdown in her math class when Gloria, a friend from Best Buddies, insinuates that Madeline likes Justin. When she meets with Justin at lunch to play cards she asks him to come to see the miniature horses with her. Justin clams up. But he clams up because today is the anniversary of his sister's death. Faith died from an eating disorder. He doesn't know how to answer Madeline and stalls. After school Justin heads home, worried about his mother. She is not dealing with the death of his sister and is struggling with her grief, and has taken to her bed.

Before Reading

Discuss grief and how people deal with it.

Discuss equinox therapy.

Discuss smoking and the health hazards.

After Reading

How did Madeline react when the girls started smoking on the bus?

What is Becky doing that is different than Madeline?

How does Justin cope with the way his mother is handling the grief?

What is Justin's relationship like with his father?

What is depression?

Let's talk about the Writing

***Literary Devices**

What literary device did the author use to create the speech of the character of Madeline?

***Voices**

How did the author change the voice of Madeline from how she thinks to how she speaks?

What distinguishes the two voices of Madeline and Justin?

***Character Description**

In your words describe the character of Madeline.

In your words describe the character of Justin.

Plot Summation

Summarize what has happened in the first two chapters.

Relating to Your Life – Have you ever been with people who do something that you don't want to do? Write a journal entry about that.

Madeline has coping mechanisms. What were some of *your* coping mechanisms if something is stressful? (This can be an event with your parents, an audition of some sort, a meeting for

something, being with a group of people who do something that bothers you, the start of a new year at school etc.)

Chapter Three and Four

Pages 29-48

Summary

Madeline and Becky go to the barn after school to see the horses. When Becky's friends show up, and they are smoking, Madeline gets upset with her. The owner of the horses, Tonya, is introduced. Becky leaves the barn with her new found friends. When Madeline's mother picks her up, she grills Madeline on where Becky has gone. At home, Becky arrives home late for dinner and Becky and the mother fight. Madeline and Becky go up to Madeline's bedroom. Madeline asks Becky why she is hanging out with those girls.

Justin gets a test back and has a bad mark. It upsets him because he knows these kinds of marks aren't going to get him into any university. After he has a little fight with Anna, he meets with the Best Buddies group and they play dodge ball and that makes him feel better. He apologizes to Anna and also agrees to go see the horses with Madeline.

After Reading

What character was introduced at the barn? Who is she? What role does she seem to be playing in Madeline's life?

What does Madeline love about the barn?

What else does Madeline like to do besides being with the horses?

What is Justin struggling with?

What event does Justin introduce to the Best Buddies group?

Let's Talk about the Writing

***Poetry**

The author has a poem that Madeline wrote. Can you write what is being said in the poem?

***Character Description**

In your own words describe Tonya. Give her a physical description but also describe her personality.

Plot Summation- Summarize what happened in these two chapters.

Relating to Your Life

How would it feel to know that you are different like Madeline? Have you ever felt different?

Have you ever been confused about something in your life and really don't have an answer?

Chapter Five and Six

Pages 49-70

Summary

Madeline is at home with Becky and she has a meltdown in her bedroom because of something Becky said about Justin. Once Becky leaves her room, she writes a poem. Then she goes downstairs to play the piano, which she can't play very well anymore. Becky and Madeline's mother have a big fight which is something they've been doing a lot lately. The next day, they all head to the barn to see the horses even though Becky doesn't want to. After the horses, Becky and Madeline will be picked up by their father because their parents are divorced. Justin goes to the barn, getting a ride with his father. They talk a little about what he could do in his future. He likes the barn and enjoys being with the horses.

Before the Reading

Discuss Cerebral Palsy.

After Reading

Why did Madeline have a meltdown in her room? What set it off?

What do you think about Madeline's mother, and what is going on between her and Becky?

How did Justin react when Madeline talked to him about his sister?

How did Justin feel when he went into the barn?

What did Justin say about the willow branches?

Let's Talk about the Writing

***Cliff Hangers** – Sometimes authors end chapters on cliff hangers to make the reader think, "What will happen next?" Write a few sentences about some events that happened in chapter five that you think *might* happen in the next chapter, or later on in the book.

***Dialogue** – Madeline and Becky have a conversation about clothes but also about Justin. Rewrite this scene from Becky’s point of view, and continue until when the mother comes in.

***Poetry** - Madeline writes another poem in chapter five. What do you think it means? Can you write a poem about an event that has happened in your life?

***Metaphor** – What metaphor did the author use at the end of chapter five?

Plot Summation

In your own words summarize the plot in these two chapters.

Relating to Your Life

Have you ever had a fight with your mother or father that you regretted? What was it about?

Have you ever disagreed on something with a friend or sibling and had a spat like Madeline and Becky had in chapter five?

Have you ever tried something new and been nervous about it, like Justin was a bit nervous to go to the barn?

Chapter Seven and Eight

Page 71-94

Summary

Madeline and Becky are staying at their father’s house and Becky tells Madeline she is sneaking out and to leave the window open. Madeline isn’t happy, and actually forgets about the window. Becky comes home late, and smells of smoke. The next day, Madeline’s father has a surprise for her and Becky, and it is to ride big horses. Madeline is thrilled but Becky is tired. When Madeline and Becky are dropped back off at their mom’s house after a wonderful day of riding the horses, their mother gets mad that they went horseback riding.

Justin is with Madeline and she tells him that he should invite his mother to come see the horses. Justin isn’t sure about this but talks to his father. Justin also takes Anna to see the horses and she thinks they are cute. After his time at the barn, Justin gets a ride home with Madeline’s mother. The tension in the car is awkward.

After Reading

How did Madeline react when Becky came home late?

Did Madeline really want to help Becky?

What surprise did Madeline's father have for her and Becky?

How did their mother react when they got back to her house? Why do you think their mother reacted the way she did?

What does Madeline ask Justin?

How does Justin ask his father about taking his mother to the barn?

Why is Justin nervous about this?

What questions does Justin ask Tonya?

Let's Talk about the Writing

***Setting**

Madeline lives in two homes, her mother's and her father's. What is the difference between the two houses? Can you write a paragraph to describe your house? Your bedroom?

***Foreshadowing**

The author is foreshadowing during both of these chapters. What do you think is going to happen?

***Similes**

Can you find some similes in these chapters?

Plot Summation

Summarize the plot using your own words.

Relating to Your Life

Have you ever had to do something for someone that you didn't really want to do?

What do you think about Becky's friends drinking in the park?

Have you ever had to ask something (like Justin asking Tonya about his mother) someone something that was almost uncomfortable and you were afraid to ask?

Chapter Nine and Ten

Pages 95-116

Summary

On the way home from the barn, Becky and her mother get into a fight in the car. Madeline can't control her emotions over the fight and has a meltdown. She goes to her room and writes a poem, which she lets Justin read. He thinks it is amazing. Becky also convinces Madeline to get a ride to school with friends and Madeline gets claustrophobic in the car and screams to get out, embarrassing Becky. Justin and Anna go to the movie and have a talk afterwards about their future, which makes Justin irritable. Afterwards he takes a walk by himself and runs into Becky, hanging out in front of a store with her friends. The next day he takes his mother to the barn, and to his surprise she loves it and her and Madeline get along great.

After Reading

Madeline meets a new friend in science class. Who is it?

What happened in the car? Write about this.

What happened at the store front?

What happened when Justin's mother came to the barn?

Let's Talk about the Writing

*Conflict

The author has put conflict in these two chapters. Conflict is important for every story, and it can be internal or external. Write a scene between two people that has some conflict in it, perhaps an altercation between two friends who don't agree on something. Now take that same scene, and one of the character's feelings about the altercation, and write about how that person is internally conflicted. How do they feel?

*Dialogue

Dialogue is important in writing fiction. The author has a scene between Becky and Madeline when they are in the car and when they get out. This scene brings out a lot of information about the tension that is going on between Madeline and Becky. Write a scene between two people that has a lot of dialogue. It can be two people talking about the topic of your choice but they disagree.

Plot Summation

Summarize the plot in your own words.

Relating to Your Life

Have you ever felt as if you are being pushed into something that you didn't want to do?

Have you ever seen a friend do something that perhaps you think they shouldn't do?

Have you ever stepped out of your comfort zone to do something that made you nervous? (Like Justin's mother.) Write about this and how you felt afterwards?

Chapter Eleven and Twelve

Pages 117-135

Summary

Madeline confronts Becky on why she lied about being with their old friend Sarah. Becky thinks that Madeline and Becky should move to their father's house because their mother is too controlling and has too many rules. Madeline doesn't really want to move. Justin's mother comes to the barn again and Madeline enjoys being with her. Becky's friends come to the barn and Justin sees them smoking and runs over and tells them to butt it out. There is one last meeting before the Evening of Friendship, (a Best Buddies event with another school). Madeline reads her poem about the Best Buddies to Justin and he thinks she should recite it at the event.

After Reading

Why do you think it would be dangerous to smoke around a barn?

If you were Madeline would you want to go along with Becky and move to their father's house?

Describe the friendship between Madeline and Justin's mother.

Let's Talk about the Writing

***Foreshadowing** - Sometimes authors foreshadow events to keep the reader turning the page. What is foreshadowed in these two chapters?

***Using senses** – Make a list of places where the author has used different senses to describe the scene.

Plot Summation – Summarize, in your own word, these two chapters.

Relating to Your Life

Have you ever had to do something that made you nervous but after you did it made you feel good about yourself? Write about that.

Chapter Thirteen and Fourteen

Pages 136-160

Summary

Becky helps Madeline get dressed for the Evening of Friendship event and for a short period of time, Madeline thinks things are better until Becky gets a phone call. Madeline and Becky's mother drops them off at the community center where the event is being held but Becky spends most of her time on her phone. Madeline wants Becky to hear her recite her poem but doesn't tell her and Becky misses it. Madeline does a great job of reciting her poem and after Justin congratulates her, he goes outside to find Becky. Becky is out front and a car pulls up and she gets in the car. Justin tries to stop her. At the end of the Evening of Friendship when Madeline's mother comes to pick her up, Becky is still gone.

After Reading

How does Madeline feel at first to have Becky help her out with picking her clothes?

How does Becky disappoint Madeline?

Why do you think Becky went with those girls in the car?

Do you think it was up to Justin to stop her?

Let's Talk about the Writing

***Conflict-** Both Becky and Madeline have a lot of inner conflict. What do you think some of that conflict is? For both characters.

***Point of View** – Authors write from certain points of view. Bent Not Broken is written from Madeline and Justin's perspectives. But there are other characters. Rewrite the scene between Madeline and Becky when they are trying on clothes but write it from Becky's perspective.

***Description** - The author has used description to show the reader what the room looks like for the Evening of Friendship. Can you recreate that room? Perhaps you could draw the room and show what it looked like to you.

Plot Summation

Summarize, in your own words, these two chapters.

Relating to Your Life

Have you ever been disappointed by a friend?

How do you feel about public speaking? Is it easy or hard for you?

Have you ever had a friend try to convince you to do something you didn't really want to do?

Chapter Fifteen and Sixteen

Pages 161-180

Summary

Madeline dances with Harrison at the Evening of Friendship. When the evening ends, Madeline's mother picks her up and wonders where Becky is. When she says something to Justin, Madeline freaks out in front of all of her Best Buddy friends and she is really embarrassed. When her and her mother get home, they see Becky on the front lawn, passed out. Immediately, her mother realizes that Becky is drunk. They get her in the house and she throws up and keeps telling Becky she is sorry. Justin and Anna go into his house and his mother is up and she is doing really well, and this makes Justin happy. He makes popcorn and they have a normal conversation. She also agrees to go see the horses the next day. Again. Justin is happy about this.

After Reading

What happened to Madeline in front of all her friends? How did she feel about this?

Where do Madeline and her mother find Becky?

Why do you think Becky got drunk?

Why do you think Becky keeps saying she is sorry?

Justin is happy about something, what is it?

What advice does Justin's mother give to him about his future?

Let's Talk about the Writing

***Conflict** – The author has given Madeline some real ups and downs. In this chapter what happens that is good for Madeline and what happens that is bad for Madeline?

***Action** - This chapter has some action when Madeline and her mother arrive at home and find Becky on the front lawn. List some of the words the author used to describe the urgency of the situation with Becky.

Plot Summation

Summarize the plot in these two chapters.

Relating to Your Life

Have you ever had a day where everything is going right then suddenly it takes a turn and something happens that makes it not so great? Describe this.

Have you ever felt peer pressure from someone to do something that you know is wrong? Describe how you felt? How you reacted?

Chapter Seventeen and Eighteen

Pages 181-197

Summary

Madeline gets up in the morning and Becky is still sleeping off her hangover when Madeline goes to the barn with her mother. When she arrives at the barn, she sees a police car. Then she finds out that someone has let the horses out. Everyone pairs off together to find the horses and Madeline insists on going with Justin. They search and search and finally find Willow, tangled up in a fence. Madeline also finds an earring and it looks like one that Becky's friend wears. She jumps to the conclusion that it was Becky and her friends who let the horses out. Justin and Madeline walk back to the barn with Willow. Just as they are getting back, Becky shows up with her father.

After Reading

How does Madeline react when she finds out the horses have been let out?

How does Madeline's mother react when she finds out the horses have been let out?

What does Madeline find by the sleigh?

Where do Madeline and Justin find Willow and how do they help her?

What does Madeline accuse Becky of to Justin?

Let's Talk about the Writing

***Story Arc** – In every story there should be an arc. Each story follows steps to get it to the top. Chapter 17 and 18 are almost at the top of the arc. Can you describe how the author has brought the story to this point? Draw an arc and put the chapters from 1-18 on the arc with 18 being at the top. Write one sentence beside each chapter about the most important event from that chapter.

***Red Herring** - A red herring is a clue that has been dropped earlier in a novel and it comes back later. What is the red herring in chapter seventeen and where was that red herring dropped earlier in the book?

***Dramatization** - It can be fun to see words acted out. Work in groups to write a short script about the scene at the barn. Show the different characters and how they react to finding out about the horses being let out.

Plot Summation

Summarize the plot of these two chapters.

Relating to Your Life

Have you ever accused someone of something before having all the information?

Have you ever had to go out of your comfort zone to save something or someone? Can be a pet or a friend or family member.

Chapter Nineteen, Twenty and Twenty-One

Pages 198-218

Summary

Becky arrives at the barn and Madeline accuses her of letting the horses out. Madeline screams at her, and doesn't believe her. Then she heads into the barn to help Willow by putting ointment on her scrapes. Justin joins her and they talk a little but not a lot because Madeline doesn't feel like talking. He tries to tell her that Becky wasn't there but Madeline is still upset because she knows it was Becky's friends who let the horses out. Madeline gets a ride home with her father and Becky goes home with her mother. Justin gets a ride home with Madeline and her father. Justin

is worried about his mother because she left when all the drama was happening at the barn. He worries she will spiral down again into her depression but when he gets home she comes down for dinner and is showered. Madeline, meanwhile goes to her father's place while Becky is at her mother's. After a few hours, Madeline misses Becky. They go for dinner as a family. Her parents tell both Madeline and Becky that they aren't getting back together but they will work to be there for both girls. It is agreed they will stay with their mother but their father will be more involved. Becky and Madeline patch up their differences.

After Reading

What happens when Madeline accuses Becky of letting the horses out?

What does Madeline do to Becky?

What does Justin find out about Becky?

What happens with Justin's mother?

Why does Madeline decide to go for dinner after she said she wouldn't?

What is good that is happening in Madeline's life?

Let's Talk about the Writing

***Story Arc** – The author has concluded the story in these final chapters. A story arc goes upwards until it hits the climatic part (chapters 17 and 18) then it concludes. How did the author end the story? Were you expecting this ending? Rewrite the ending and make it how you would have ended the novel.

***Characterization-** The story is written in Madeline's point of view. Change the scene between Madeline and Becky and write it from Becky's point of view. Include how Becky would have felt to be slapped by Madeline?

Often authors have character growth throughout a novel. How has Madeline grown from chapter one to chapter twenty-one? How has Becky grown from chapter one to chapter twenty-one? And how has Justin grown through-out the book?

***Dramatization** - Partner up and play out the scene where Madeline and Justin are in the barn. Partner up and play out the scene between Madeline and Becky at the barn. (Please, don't include the actual slap!)

Partner up and play out the scene between Madeline and Becky at the restaurant.

Plot Summation

Summarize the plot in your own words.

Relating to Your Life

Have you ever done something that you weren't supposed to do but you didn't do it on purpose? Like when Madeline slaps Becky. This isn't right but Madeline just lashes out.

Have you ever had something happen where you felt like a failure? Write about this. And write about how you learned from this experience. And how you know you weren't a failure in the end. (Remember, Becky wasn't a failure she just *thought* she was.)

Activities – Postreading

- 1) Write an informative essay about a traumatic brain injury. What parts of the brain affect what parts of the body?
- 2) Research how the treatment of those who have a traumatic brain injury. How is it different for each individual?
- 3) Write an informative essay on the Best Buddies program.
- 4) Drama idea - Take your favourite scene and rewrite it in script form. Then act it out. Perhaps it is a scene with two people talking. Or perhaps it is a scene, like the Evening of Friendship, that includes a lot of people.