

A Time To Run: Teacher's Guide

A novel study.

Introduction

A Time To Run: Stuart and Sam 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 FASD. It is also a novel that can promote discussion about cardiovascular diseases in children, use of the AED, 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: A Time To Run

Meet Stuart and Sam:

Stuart was born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) and has learned to run away from all kinds of trouble. Because of his FASD he is impulsive and often reckless. Stuart and his older brother, Declan, were adopted by a loving family as his mother was unfit to raise them.

Sam is a high school varsity basketball player with dreams and aspirations of heading off to university to play basketball. Sam's parents and his older sister were born in Bosnia and spent six years in a refugee camp in Germany. Sam was born in Canada after they immigrated.

Discussion Questions for the Students: Prereading

1. What does it mean when someone has a FASD?
2. What are some of the characteristics of someone with FASD?
3. What are some ways that someone with FASD can cope?
4. Do you know anyone who has FASD? Explain what that person was like? If you don't know someone with FASD, look it up on the internet and see if you can find someone who has FASD.
5. What is hypertrophic cardiomyopathy?
6. What is an AED or defibrillator?
7. How can it help save someone's life?

8. What is the Best Buddies Club? Do you think you could have such a club at your school?
9. What activities could students do that belonged to the Best Buddies Club?
10. Research the Special Olympics. Who can be involved? What sports are available? Where do events take place?

Activities for the Students to do: Prereading or Postreading

1. Research the heart.
2. Watch videos on kids with FASD. How do they think differently, act differently, and what are some of their physical differences, if any?
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.
5. Brainstorm activities for a Special Olympics and write a brochure on this or set up a website about the Special Olympics?

Novel Discussion Questions:

Chapters One and Two.

Pages 1-21

Stuart is at Sam's basketball game and as Sam is going up for a layup, he collapses on the gym floor. Sam is taken by ambulance to the hospital, where he undergoes some testing for his heart.

Questions:

What kind of family is Stuart from?

What kind of family is Sam from?

What is FASD? What characteristics are shown in the first chapter with Stuart?

What happens to Sam? How important is it to have AED's in a school? Do you know where yours are located in your school/and or community centers?

Let's talk about the Writing

Literary Devices

Sam's parents are from Bosnia. How did the author create their accent?

Voices

What distinguishes the two voices of Stuart and Sam?

Character Description

In your words describe the character of Stuart.

In your words describe the character of Sam.

Write short bios for some of the other characters who are introduced.

Relating to Your Life – Have you ever been with people who are impulsive? Or have you ever done something on impulse? Write a journal entry about that.

Have you ever had an injury or illness that stopped you from doing an activity that you loved?

Chapters Three and Four

Pages 22-34

Summary

Stuart is at home and he is confused about what happened to Sam. He tries to sleep but can't. The next day he goes to school and because he is upset he is agitated and he tells his aide a lie about his parents. Sam is in the hospital and the doctor tells him he won't be able to play varsity basketball anymore. This is depressing for him.

After Reading

Why does Stuart have his bed in the middle of the room?

Why does Stuart have an aide at school?

Does Stuart have any friends?

Who are Sam's friends?

How does Sam react to the news about his heart?

What do you think is going to happen to Sam?

Let's Talk about the Writing

Character differences

How has the author created two characters who are so very different in how they relate to people?

Describe what kind of character you think Stuart is?

Describe what kind of character you think Sam is?

Foreshadowing – How is the author foreshadowing what is going to happen to Sam? How will this affect Stuart?

Plot Summation- Summarize what happened in these two chapters.

Relating to Your Life

How would it feel to know that there was something wrong with you and that you would have to quit something you loved? Have you ever felt that you had to quit something and you didn't want to?

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

Chapters Five and Six

Pages 35-57

Summary

Stuart visits Sam in the hospital and tells him he doesn't want to be the water boy for the basketball team if Sam isn't playing. Then at home, at dinner, his step-siblings come over. He runs away when Randy tells him to stick with the team. Then he sees Mary and she is pregnant. He makes a statement that he hates his mother for drinking when he was young and she made him stupid. Sam gets out of the hospital and goes home and he gets upset up in his room. He just can't believe this has happened to him. He starts to feel depressed about his situation and just wants to quit everything.

After Reading

Why did Stuart have a meltdown?

Why did Sam have a meltdown?

Why did Stuart get upset and say he hated his mother?

Why did Stuart run away?

How did Sam's parents help him?

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 – Sam has a conversation with his parents up in his room. What do they tell him?

Stuart has a conversation with his mother and sister, Mary. What did they talk about?

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 had one of your parents comfort you when you were crying?

Have you ever wanted to run away from something?

Chapters Seven and Eight

Page 58-77

Summary

Stuart is upset with Sam for quitting Best Buddies and he finds a new friend named Donny to hang out with. Sam is feeling less and less like going out with his friends, but he does attempt to go to a party. He doesn't have a good time and leaves unexpectedly.

After Reading

Who does Stuart meet?

How does he handle Sam's news that he is quitting Best Buddies?

What lie does Stuart tell?

Sam goes to a party. Who does he talk to?

What happens at the party?

Let's Talk about the Writing

Secondary Characters

Describe Donny? Both physical appearance and what he is like as a person.

Why does Donny want to be Stuart's friend?

Describe Ginny? Both physical appearance and what she is like as a person.

Why does Ginny want to be Sam's friend?

Foreshadowing

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

Plot Summation

Summarize the plot using your own words.

Relating to Your Life

Have you ever had to do something for someone that you knew wasn't right?

Have you ever left a party of event because you felt you didn't belong?

Chapter Nine and Ten

Pages 78-102

Summary

Stuart goes to Donny's house and gets to play video games that he doesn't play at home. Then he goes to the bathroom and gets lost. He goes in a room that has a gun, and Donny gets angry with him. When he gets home Sam is at his house and this is confusing. Sam finds out that Stuart is hanging around with Donny and he doesn't like that because of Donny's reputation. He follows him and tries to run to keep up but can't. Then he goes to Stuart's house to tell his parents.

After Reading

What happened to Stuart at Donny's house?

What was bad about this situation at Donny's house?

What happens when Stuart gets home?

Does he lie about where he was?

How did Sam find out about Stuart and Donny?

What happens to Sam when he tries to chase the car?

What decision does Sam make? Why do you think he makes this decision?

What Best Buddies event do Stuart and Sam attend?

What new character is introduced at this Best Buddies event?

What does Stuart find out that he is good at?

What is Special Olympics?

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. What is Stuart's conflict? What is Sam's conflict. Write down their internal feelings on the conflict.

Dialogue

Dialogue is important in writing fiction. The author has a scene between Stuart and Sam at Stuart's house. This scene brings out a lot of information about the tension that is going on between Stuart and Sam. 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 Sam contacting Stuart's mother.) Write about this and how you felt afterwards?

Have you ever met someone who you immediately connected with?

Chapters Eleven and Twelve

Pages 103-132

Summary

Sam takes Stuart to the track and field club after school. He ends up doing really well and his family shows up to watch him. Sam is also thrilled with Stuart's gift for running. Sam enjoys his time with Stuart at the track practice until he runs away and gets scared that he has lost him. Then he attends a Special Olympics practice to see if that would be something that Stuart would like, plus he wants to see Bethany again.

After Reading

Stuart goes to track and field and he does well. How do the other track students react to Stuart being involved?

How does Stuart do in his runs?

What makes him excited?

What does he find boring? Why do you think he finds some of that stuff boring?

How does his FASD factor in to his practicing?

How does Stuart's success affect Sam?

Why does Sam want to go to the Special Olympics practice?

What background information does the author give about Sam's family?

Let's Talk about the Writing

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.

Have you ever tried to help someone who doesn't listen to you? Or even babysit someone who doesn't listen?

Have you ever played a game with someone to get to them? What game did you play? What other ice breaking games can you think of?

Chapter Thirteen and Fourteen

Pages 132-163

Summary

Stuart is at track practice and ends up running into Donny, who gives him a video game. Then on Saturday, he gets new shoes with his father and they go to the track to practice. He remembers the video he hid in the bushes. When he gets home, he runs back to get it. Then he plays it in Declan's room, and Declan comes home and breaks the video. At track practice, Stuart gets freaked out when he hears the gun go off to start the race. Stuart has a meltdown. Sam is confused when Stuart runs away at the track practice, and he jogs to get him. Mr. Rossi, the track teacher, suggests that maybe Stuart shouldn't be on the school team. Sam disagrees. Sam has an evening with Bethany and meets her younger brother.

After Reading

Why do you think Stuart takes the video from Donny? What part of his FASD makes him do this?

How does Stuart react when Declan breaks the video game?

Why is Stuart freaked out about the gun going off to start the race?

What does he do after he hears the gun go off?

Why do you think Sam believes in Stuart?

What does Mr. Rossi say that makes Sam upset?

What do you think about his relationship with Bethany?

Sam rebuilds a relationship with who? How does he do that?

Let's Talk about the Writing

Conflict- What is the conflict that Sam has in his life? Why do you think he believes in Stuart so much? Would you have the same belief in someone?

Point of View – Authors write from certain points of view. A Time To Run is from Stuart and Sam’s point of view. But there are other characters. Rewrite the scene between Bethany and Sam when they are watching the game from Bethany’s point of view.

Also write about Donny giving Stuart the tape from Donny’s point of view.

Plot Summation

Summarize, in your own words, these two chapters.

Relating to Your Life

Have you ever been disappointed by a friend?

Have you ever been confused by someone’s actions?

How do you feel about standing up for what you believe in? 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 164-180

Summary

Stuart has his first track meet and he is little agitated and not quite sure when he gets to the starting line. He gets nervous about the gun and has a couple of false starts. Sam watches Stuart have his false starts and could kick himself for not telling him. Then he gets Stuart organized for his 200 meter.

After Reading

What does Stuart find out before his track meet?

What happened to Stuart at the start line of the 100 meter race?

Why do you think this happened?

How does he react when he’s told he false started twice?

Why does Sam feel so badly about what happens to Stuart?

How does he help him prepare for the 200 meter race?

Let's Talk about the Writing

Action - This chapter has some action with the track and field meet. List some of the words the author used to describe Stuart's race.

Simile – What are some of the similes used to describe the action?

Plot Summation

Summarize the plot in these two chapters.

Relating to Your Life

Have you ever felt nervous about something that you have to do?

Have you ever felt nervous for a friend?

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.

Chapter Seventeen and Eighteen

Pages 181-196

Summary

Stuart runs his race and does really well. Then he races the 400 meter race and also does well. They have an awards ceremony and Stuart gets his medals. Sam is thrilled with Stuart's success. Bethany shows up at the track meet and this makes Sam happy. After they go for ice cream and they talk about a lot of things. Plus, they have their first kiss

After Reading

What happens when Stuart runs his 200 meter heat?

What does Stuart think about his 400 meter race?

What decision does Stuart have to make about racing the 200 meter final?

How does Sam convince him to run the final race?

What did Stuart's friends from Best Buddies do for him that made him feel special?

Stuart doesn't think he has a lot of friends. Who does he find out might be his friend?

Where does Stuart go at the end of chapter 18?

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.

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 been happy that someone was successful?

Have you ever had to go out of your comfort zone to help something or someone?

Chapter Nineteen

Pages 197-201

Summary

Mary is having her baby and Stuart isn't quite sure he wants to go to the hospital. But then he makes a bracelet for the baby and decides that it might be okay to see her. He goes to visit and is intrigued by how small she is.

After Reading

Why do you think Stuart doesn't want to go to the hospital in the beginning?

What changes his mind?

What does he feel when he is at the hospital?

Let's Talk about the Writing

Metaphor – The author has concluded the story in this final chapter. What metaphor do you think the author used in this chapter to help understand Stuart's FASD?

What parallels can you draw between the baby and Stuart's FASD?

Plot Summation

Summarize the plot in your own words.

Relating to Your Life

Have you ever decided not to do something because you were scared, then came around and did it anyway?

Activities – Postreading

- 1) Write an informative essay about FASD.
- 2) Research coping mechanisms for those who have FASD. 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 I Can Play Event, that includes a lot of people.