

CRUSHED: THEME 1 – RELATIONSHIPS

Understanding

Maryn, like all of us, shares her life with others. Her primary relationships include her parents, her brother, her friends, her coach, and her teachers. Find examples where Maryn's behaviour makes the people she loves feel happy (see pages 2, 21, 25/26, 30, 51, 67-70, 75, 76, 81/82, 83-85, 91, 109-111, 113-115, 116, 117-118, 124-125, 126, 128, 202-204, and 214-215) or unhappy (see pages 32, 61/61, 63, 87, 93, 94/95, 102-105, 124/125, 126/127, 149/150, 161, and 175/176).

Thinking

In this book, Maryn experiences her first romance. At first, she doesn't embrace her feelings towards her boyfriend Liam. Discuss how she identifies her feelings. Consider how a relationship can make a person feel strong and confident. Use examples from the book or from your own life.

Creating

As a class, first draw up a list of qualities found in a happy, healthy relationship. Identify the actions of a person who behaves in ways that build a healthy relationship, for example, being on time, keeping a date when something else comes up, etc.

In life, situations and dilemmas come up that can test the relationships between family members, friends, and even teachers/coaches and their students/athletes. Working in pairs, choose the type of relationship you want to focus on, and come up with a dilemma for two characters to address. Act it out, either on your own or in front of other students. You can either create your own scenario or use one of the following samples:

1) A young person has to tell a parent about a problem at school. 2) A new classmate arrives and, while blending into a new group, makes fun of another student to get laughs. 3) A coach or a teacher notices that a student's effort level has dropped and questions the student about why.

Act the situation out, exploring how emotions arise. Have fun and remember to use humour. Talk about the role play afterwards and discuss the choices each character made. Were they positive choices for a healthy relationship?

THEME 2 – EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Understanding

Anxiety comes up again and again in the book and readers see how it impacts Maryn's well-being. Maryn is anxious about doing well in her sport. She is anxious about Janey's problems. She is anxious about being a good friend. She is anxious about falling in love. She is anxious about her relationship with her parents changing as she grows up. Find areas where Maryn seems anxious but does a good job of managing her feelings (see pages 59/60, 67/70, 83/84, 115, 118, 133/134, 204/205, and 209-211); then locate examples where she doesn't (see pages 93/94, 100/101, 141/142, 144-146, 151-153, 163/164, 166/167, 170, 172/173, and 192/193).

Thinking

How do you define anxiety? Is it a feeling? Is it a thought? Can it be both? Do you believe that anxiety can be a serious problem for kids? Describe what you might do to help a friend suffering from anxiety.

Creating

Choose a section from the book where Maryn is feeling intense anxiety—like the scene where Maryn blows up at Liam in the gym—and rewrite it in a completely different way. Explore alternatives. What else could Maryn be feeling, thinking, and therefore doing? What if Maryn thought Liam needed to be on his own? What if she didn't go to the gym? How would that change the story?

THEME 3 – GOAL SETTING

Understanding

Maryn is a competitive mountain bike racer. It's a big part of how she sees herself. But what makes her want to race? Maryn wants to succeed, to compete, and win. She sets training and other types of goals so that she will be successful in her races. Find some examples of goals that Maryn has set (see pages 43-47, 144-146, 157, 187/189, 199/200, and 209).

Thinking

What do you think is the difference between a ‘dream’ and a goal? Is it okay to change our goals? Why do you think the way you do?

Creating

Once a dream has an action plan it’s a goal. If you want to become an astronaut, or a singer, for example, how would you make an action plan to achieve that goal?

Create a goal-setting Action Plan. It should be a SMART plan: Specific, Manageable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely. Figure exactly what you want to do and how you plan to do it.

It can be as simple as a chart or a statement like:

“I want to _____ by this date _____ so I will take these actions _____ to meet my goal.
Signed by _____.”

THEME 4 – HEALTHY HABITS AND WINNING WAYS

Understanding

As a teenager, Maryn is learning to care for herself. In the book, we see her take on more responsibility. In what ways is she becoming more independent? (see pages 43-47, 58, 94, 102-104, 111, 115, 137, and 139).

Thinking

While Maryn takes on more responsibility, she doesn’t always make mature choices. For example, she brings her cell phone into her bedroom at night, staying up late, and then has trouble waking. How does that habit impact her training and at school? In your opinion, should parents have the final say on how and when cell phones are used? Why do you think the way you do?

Creating

Create a list of habits that you think lead to success, for example: getting enough sleep, eating right, and exercising. Create a video Ted Talk to convince the world to embrace your ideas.

Or keep a log of your sleep routine: noting bedtime, dreams, and wake-up time. You can also do this for your meals, keeping a nutrition journal and identifying their food by groups, such as vegetables, fruit, meat and dairy.

THEME 5 – TECHNOLOGY AND TEENS

Understanding

Maryn is rarely without her phone. She is always connected, and her phone plays a role in her personal relationships, especially with Janey and Liam. Find examples where her phone helps (see pages 38, 51-55, 119, 125, 127, 130/131, 146, 165/166, 177-179) or harms (see pages 94, 121/122, 124/125, 130, 140-142, 146, and 181-184) her communication with others.

Thinking

Do you believe that we can disconnect from our phones without disconnecting from our friends? Tell us why you think the way you do.

Creating

Work together as a group to create a smart phone user Bill of Rights and Responsibilities. Consider the pros and cons of having your own smart phone. They might include being able to talk to friends, using it to access the internet for in-class research, getting a part-time job to contribute to its cost, etc. Things the Bill might include:

- a smart phone user has a right to privacy during a phone call;
- a smart phone user won't post a picture of someone else without asking permission;
- a smart phone user has a responsibility to tell a parent or teacher if the user receives a bullying text or phone call;

and so on.

THEME 6 – WHO’S A GOOD SPORT?

Understanding

Maryn’s goal as a bike racer is to get across the finish line as fast as she can; same as every other racer on the course. So how does she handle it when she wins? How does she handle it when she doesn’t? Find examples of Maryn being a good sport (see pages 111, 132, 135, 154, 174, and 201/202).

Thinking

What does it mean to win? What does it mean to lose? Maryn struggles with these questions as she tries to be her best self in all areas of her life. But the cost of winning, and the disappointment she feels when she doesn’t win, take a toll on her. Do you believe that the lessons young athletes learn on the race course help them in other areas of their lives? Explain why you believe this.

Creating

Brainstorm about what qualities make an athlete a champion and worthy of admiration. Choose an athlete from real life whom you believe embodies these qualities and write her (or him) a letter to share your thoughts. You can even mail it if you like!