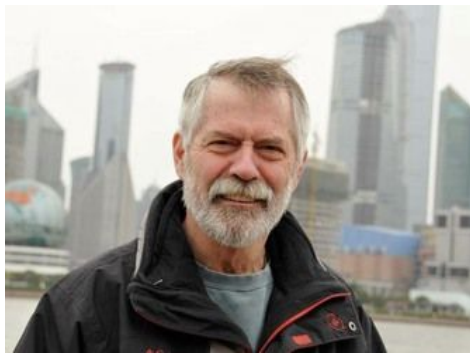


Deadline

By Chris Crutcher

About the author

Chris Crutcher was born on July 17, 1946 in Dayton, Ohio. Following his birth, Crutcher's father left the Air Force, and his family settled down on a cattle ranch in Cascade, Ohio. This is a place where Crutcher's worldview was shaped, and later became a major influence for much of his work.



After high school, Crutcher was accepted into Eastern Washington State College, where he received his B.A. in sociology. His work as a director at Lakeside School in Oakland, California introduced him to a racially diverse and courageous community, which was a significant inspiration for his professional career as a writer.

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Summary of the Novel:

Ben Wolf is a high school senior looking forward to start what he thinks will be the best year of his life. He has big plans for his last year of school, but things take a turn when he is diagnosed with Leukemia. Ben accepts his fate, and chooses not to opt for treatment. He decides to keep the news a secret from everyone, and aims to make the most of the time he has left. He quits cross country in order to join his star quarterback of a brother on the football team, and finally musters up the courage to introduce himself to his dream girl. These days he is constantly pushing himself, whether it be academically, socially, or physically. As the year goes by though, keeping his secret becomes harder and harder as he faces the reality of his own mortality.



Excerpts from the novel:

1. “The more I tell Marla Dawson how I am the more she doesn’t get it [...] to consolidate a life into a year” (Crutcher 27).

Ben has asked his doctor to keep the diagnosis a secret. His doctor complies but only under the condition that Ben speak to a therapist. This passage is one of the first instances where Ben visits his therapist and the reader gets a glimpse of how Ben feels about his diagnosis. He clearly has accepted his misfortune and wants to take it in stride. Above all, Ben does not want to appear weak or be a burden to anyone close to him.

2. “I’ll tell you all you need to know [...] seeing a piece of what you see” (149).

Occasionally Ben will have conversations in his dreams with a character he calls Hey-Soos. Hey-Soos allows Ben to dive deeper into his own issues and reflect upon the things happening around him. In this passage Ben’s conversation with Hey-Soos makes him realize how his life is connected to others. He is beginning to understand that if he truly cares about his friends and family he ought to tell them the truth.

3. “I go back to that old thought [...] I can’t let Dallas diminish that” (310)

Ben is now lying on his deathbed and Dallas Suzuki comes to visit. Even as he faces his own death he shows incredible insight and maturity. His conversation with Dallas is the last one he will have and it is the culmination of his plan to live a meaningful life. Ben has done all that he can to do right by his loved ones, which is all he can hope for.

Additional Information/Text Complexity:

Crutcher has written many other books for young adults that cover a wide range of topics. This particular novel would fall under the categories of books that talk about real-life experiences, facing death, discrimination, and courage. His style strays from the fantastical and he portrays average people dealing with everyday problems.

Lexile rates this book at 880 and ATOS gives it 10 points, placing it in the 9th to 12th grade level. The topics covered in this novel are serious enough to create intrigue, but

remain approachable. The story focuses on realistic experiences that young readers can easily relate to. Although it revolves around the idea of death, it also touches on family issues, mental health, sex, child abuse, and racism. Crutcher uses language that could be grasped by students below 9th grade, but adult clarification might be needed for further context on certain issues. The story moves along fairly quickly, with all the events happening within the span of a year. Although the whole story is told from a first person perspective, and there are shifts in time or place, there are several opportunities for significant insight. *Deadline* fulfills almost all of the Exeter qualities, including themes of secrecy, well structured and imaginative plot, lively language, and a character undergoing an atypical approach to death.