Brittany Barry

ENGL 112B

Book Talk paper

Dr. Warner

**Book Talk**

***Losers Bracket* by Chris Crutcher**

1. **Author information/biography:**

Chris Crutcher’s website: <http://www.chriscrutcher.com/>

Additional biographical information from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chris_Crutcher>

Crutcher is a young adult author who is from Dayton, Ohio. After finishing college at Eastern Washington State College with his BA in psychology and sociology, Crutcher was not sure what he wanted to do so he decided to go back to school to get his teaching credentials. After working in schools for many years as a teacher and writing his first novel, he got a job as a family therapist. Crutcher’s novels are controversial for some people because he writes about teens coping with serious problems from domestic abuse, drug and alcoholic families, racial and religious prejudice, homosexuality, and more. Although his novels were controversial for some, Crutcher still managed to win the annual award in 2000 for six of his novels. The observers came to the conclusion that his novels “bring life” to the teen world and also include a deeper side that most teens are comforted to read about because they can relate to the stories.

1. **Summary of the book:**

Annie has never been somewhere where she felt she belonged. Just a girl with a drug addict mother and a father who isn’t in the picture. Her life has been full of bouncing back and forth from foster houses and back to her unfit mother. She knows her family is toxic. She knows she deserves better and that her family will never truly be there for her in the way she needs them, but for some reason, she keeps running back. It wasn’t until Frankie went missing that Annie started to push all the hurt her family had put her through and the argument, she is in with her foster dad aside so she could figure out who took her nephew Frankie. With the help of her mother’s boyfriend and her social worker she has grown close to, they work together to create a plan.

**Three important quotes from the book:**

1. **“So I didn’t get the parents I want, but I got the ones I need. A childhood with the Boots does not lead one to Yale or Stanford or even Spokane Community…. Free at last.” (14)** I think this passage is significant to the start of this novel because it describes the kind of attitude Annie has as well as the kind of relationship she holds with her mother. This quote introduces Annie referring to her birth mother as “Nancy” and also explains the kind of foster family she has been put with. Within this passage, Annie expresses the feeling she gets when she does not see her birth family. Although she knows how bad they are and how much they continue to hurt her, she still feels anxious when she does not see them for a while.
2. **“I spend all my time trying to keep my lives apart; you know, the one I come from and the one I live in, and the minute I’m not paying attention, they come together. If that stupid fight had never broken out, none of this would have happened, and the common denominator in that fight was me.” (129)** I think there’s major importance in this quote because Annie is voicing how she thinks that Frankie’s disappearance is all her fault. This is important because it displays the kind of attitude Annie has created for herself and the lack of proper support, she gets from her birth family. All Annie wanted to do was have her family at her swim meet. Even if her mom and sister argue all the time, she just wanted them to show up because that is the only way she gets to see them. Now that Frankie has disappeared, she blames herself for wanting that kind of attention from her birth family. This also causes a major fight between Annie and her foster dad.
3. **“But I swear, when I look back remembering who I was as that little kid trying to figure out how to get back to a mother who couldn’t take care of me, a sister I banged heads with *hourly,* and a ghost dad, I can’t see what I could have done differently. The *draw* alone has always felt like what I imagine addiction to be. When anxiety reaches a certain level, you’ll do *anything* to bring it down.” (173)** Annie’s feelings towards her toxic family makes her feel as if she just got unlucky with the family she was brought into. Although she knows how awful they can be, she still feels that she needs to be there with them.
4. **Teaching ideas/resources:**
5. *Losers Bracket* by Chris Crutcher should be taught in High Schools so teenagers can read a novel they can possibly relate to in a way. A way to approach presenting this novel to students would be to do an activity where students write down a time, they have felt discouraged, left out, or unimportant by others or by a specific event in their lives. After this activity, students can share to the class if comfortable, and by doing this, students will be able to understand the feelings Annie went through in the novel.
6. The appropriate age level for this novel could be for freshmen-seniors (ages 13-17) in High School.
7. Teens should read this book because it tackles many different serious problems teens may face within their lives. Although not all students will be able to relate to Annie’s full experience, students might be able to relate to the feelings Annie displayed and be able to connect those feelings to a specific time or person in their lives. I think it is extremely important to allow students to read novels that can they can connect with if possible, because that gets students more engaged and more involved with the material. The category this book would fall under is realist fiction/sports.

**Text Complexity:**

Qualitive Complexity: According to Lexile and Quantile Tools, the Lexile range of complexity for *Losers Bracket* by Chris Crutcher is 740L-1010L meaning this book is written in a complex way that will be easier for higher grade levels to read and comprehend. The ATOS book level for *Losers Bracket* is 4.97-7.03 meaning the complex sentences within this novel also require a great deal of critical thinking but also allow students to see the true meaning of the text.

This novel would be best suited for the younger audience within high school range because of the light use of curse words and blunt reality that is shown with drugs and alcohol. This book would appeal to the young audience the most because it can allow them to relate to the outside world that they have experienced or know can happen to others. Annie and her therapist are the two narrators of this novel which allows the students to see both points of view within the heart of the text. The challenges Annie faces prove to make her stronger and happier in the end and displays ways to cope with common issues as hers and ways to handle tough situations. *Losers Bracket* allows intellectual growth within the students’ knowledge of tough situations while being a teenager as well as the ability to connect to a text and feel like they aren’t alone.

Drugs and alcohol are a difficult topic to express to young teens especially because that is a common age for self-experimentation. But this novel gives a good gateway for teens who are struggling with at home addictions or family abuse issues as well as fighting their own temptations with drugs and alcohol as well.