THE STORY

“Johnston’s clever—but never precious—update of Shakespeare’s The Winter’s Tale is unflinching but not at all graphic in its treatment of sexual violence…. Middle and high school readers will pass this powerful, engaging story around and around.”

—Kirkus Reviews, starred.

BOOK SUMMARY

Hermione Winters is captain of her cheerleading team, and in tiny Palermo Heights, this doesn’t mean what you think it means. During a camp party, someone slips something in her drink. And it all goes black. Hermione struggles to regain the control she’s always had and faces a wrenching decision about how to move on. The assault wasn’t the beginning of Hermione Winter’s story and she’s not going to let it be the end.

AUTHOR PROFILE

E.K. JOHNSTON is the author of The Story of Owen and its sequel, Prairie Fire. The Story of Owen earned four starred reviews and was a JLG selection, a Kirkus Prize Finalist, and an LA Times Book Prize finalist; it received a YALSA William Morris honor, a Best Fiction for Young Adults Top Ten placement, and spots on several best of-2014 lists. Prairie Fire was also a JLG selection and has so far earned a starred from Kirkus, which called the book “grand, heartbreaking, ennobling and unforgettable.”

WEB RESOURCES

• Author Website: http://ekjohnston.ca/
• Publisher Website - Book: http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/529826/exit-pursued-by-a-bear-by-ek-johnston/9781101994580/
• Publisher Website - author: http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/2103258/ek-johnston

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

• Alberta Health Services’ teachingsexualhealth.ca Teacher Portal: http://teachers.teachingsexualhealth.ca/
• “Understanding Consent” Teaching Tool from teachingsexualhealth.ca: http://teachers.teachingsexualhealth.ca/teaching-tools/understanding-consent/
• Connect Family & Sexual Abuse Network homepage: http://www.connectnetwork.ca/
• Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse’s (CCASA) homepage: http://www.calgarycasa.com/
READING COMPREHENSION

• Analyze and describe Hermione’s character. What are key components of her personality that help her through her trauma?
• What characters in the novel support Hermione throughout her recovery? What role does each of them play?
• Identify key turning points in Hermione’s coping process.
• Johnston ends the novel with the following quote:
  “As I exit the field with Polly, I close my eyes and imagine a baby who never was and a little girl who was never anything else. They will be forgotten, for the most part.
  And so will I.”
What did Johnston mean by this quote? What was the purpose of ending the book this way?

DISCUSS

• Read the first paragraph of page 176. Examine the significance of Hermione’s sentiments. What do her feelings mean for her character? Why did EK Johnston include this scene?
• Discuss the topic of sexual consent and sexual abuse with your students. Listed below are a few accurate and informative articles on these topics for students to read. After students have read the articles, have them discuss what they have learned. Then have them read the last paragraph on page 189 and have them explain the importance of the quote “A choice I get to make.” in regards to their new understanding of sexual consent.

It is important to note, however, that these topics are of a sensitive nature and must be dealt with in an appropriate and considerate manner. For some students this discussion may be unsettling or triggering; thus, students should be given the option to leave at any time.

  • http://www.calgarysexualhealth.ca/sexual-health-info/communication-decision-making/#consent
  • http://www.connectnetwork.ca/does-someone-you-know-need-connect/sexual-abuse/
  • http://www.calgarycasa.com/resources/sexual-assault-myths/

• Have students read The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime’s article on “Victim Blaming” (http://www.crcvcc.ca/docs/victim_blaming.pdf), specifically pages 2 through 5. After they have read the document, have students discuss what they learned and have them explain what “Victim Blaming” is. Then, have students re-read pages 193 and 194 and ask them to identify what is wrong with this conversation. What does EK Johnston’s book say about society’s treatment of sexual assault victims? How can ‘Victim Blaming’ be put to an end?

SUGGESTED READINGS

FROM THE SAME AUTHOR

• (For Gr. 7 & up) A Thousand Nights (2014) http://ekjohnston.ca/books-nights.php
• (For Gr. 7 & up) The Story of Owen (2014) http://ekjohnston.ca/books-owen.php
• (For Gr. 7 & up) Prairie Fire (2015) http://ekjohnston.ca/books-prairie-fire.php

BY OTHER ARTISTS FROM WORDFEST 2016

• (For Gr. 6 & up) The Swan Riders (2016) by Erin Bow http://books.simonandschuster.ca/The-Swan-Riders/Erin-Bow/9781481442749
• (For Gr. 7 & up) Saving Montgomery Sole (2016) by Mariko Tamaki http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/392187/saving-montgomery-sole#9780670070015
• (For Gr. 9 to 12) Flannery (2016) by Lisa Moore http://houseofanansi.com/products/flannery
• (For Gr. 7 & up) Jillian Christmas http://wordfest.com/speaker/jillian-christmas/

OTHER BOOKS ON RELATED SUBJECT

• (For Gr. 9 & up) Fault Line (2013) by Christa Desir http://books.simonandschuster.ca/Fault-Line/C-Desir/9781442460737
• (For Gr. 9 & up) Speak (1999) by Laurie Halse Anderson http://us.macmillan.com/books/9780312674397
• (For Gr. 9 & up) The Way I Used to Be (2016) by Amber Smith http://books.simonandschuster.ca/The-Way-I-Used-to-Be/Amber-Smith/9781481449359
ACTIVITIES

A READING ACTIVITY – THE WINTER’S TALE

EK Johnston’s Exit, pursued by a bear is a modern re-telling of Shakespeare’s The Winter’s Tale. Have your class read The Winter’s Tale prior to reading Exit, pursued by a bear. Then, while reading Exit, pursued by a bear have students draw parallels from the two novels and see where Johnston incorporated elements of Shakespeare’s work in her novel.

A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY – BE INFORMED

While Johnston’s Exit, pursued by a bear is fiction, the traumatic events that Hermione must go through are not fictional and occur in real life. As outlined in The Washington Post’s article “In the fight against sexual assault, this school district is teaching about consent” (http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/in-the-fight-against-sexual-assault-this-school-district-is-teaching-about-consent/2016/06/20/21158ed4-330f-11e6-8ff7-7b6c1998b7a0_story.html), discussing sexual consent with youth is necessary in order to prevent the incidence of sexual violence in our society.

Exit, pursued by a bear serves as a good introduction to begin a discussion with your students about sexual consent and the issues surrounding sexual violence in our society. It is important to note, however, that these topics are of a sensitive nature and must be dealt with in an appropriate and considerate manner. For some students this discussion may be unsettling or triggering; thus, students should be given the option to leave at any time.

The web resources listed in the activity sheet can assist in starting the conversation and informing students about these issues. However, in order to provide the most comprehensive and accurate education for your students have the Calgary Sexual Health Centre come in to host a workshop on sexual health and sexual consent. More information about the Calgary Sexual Health Centre’s School-Based Education program can be found here: http://www.calgarysexualhealth.ca/programs-workshops/school-based-education/.

CURRICULUM CONNECTION

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

GRADE 7:

• Select and focus relevant ideas from personal experiences and prior knowledge to understand new ideas and information (2.1)

GRADE 8:

• Exchange ideas and opinions to clarify understanding and to broaden personal perspectives (1.2)
• Discuss various ways characters are developed and the reasons for and plausibility of character change (2.2)

GRADE 9:

• Analyze how the choices and motives of characters portrayed in oral, print and other media texts provide insight into those of self and others (2.2)
• Relate the themes, emotions and experiences portrayed in oral, print and other media texts to issues of personal interest or significance (2.2)

GRADE 10 & UP:

• Select appropriate strategies to extend awareness and understanding of new perspectives, monitor their effectiveness, and modify them as needed [for example, record new understandings in a learning log; develop new group perspectives using a fish bowl organization. (1.2.1)
• Explain the text creator’s purpose, including implicit purpose when applicable; describe whether or not the purpose was achieved [for example, describe an author’s use of juxtaposition to develop a contradictory impression of a character; and assess the suitability of a text to the target audience (2.1.1)
• Relate a text creator’s tone and register to the moral and ethical stance explicitly or implicitly communicated by a text (2.1.2)

HEALTH AND LIFE SKILLS/ CAREER AND LIFE MANAGEMENT:

• W-9.7 Evaluate implications and consequences of sexual assault on a victim and those associated with that victim
• P11: Examine the relationship between commitment and intimacy in all its levels
• P14: Evaluate resources and support systems for each dimension of health and well-being for self and others.
Classroom Activity – Be Informed!

ACTIVITY SHEET

While Johnston`s *Exit, pursued by a bear* is fiction, the traumatic events that Hermione must go through are not fictional and occur in real life. As outlined in The Washington Post’s article “*In the fight against sexual assault, this school district is teaching about consent*”, discussing sexual consent with youth is necessary in order to prevent the incidence of sexual violence in our society.

*Exit, pursued by a bear* serves as a good introduction to begin a discussion with your students about sexual consent and the issues surrounding sexual violence in our society. It is important to note, however, that these topics are of a sensitive nature and must be dealt with in an appropriate and considerate manner. For some students this discussion may be unsettling or triggering; thus, students should be given the option to leave at any time. Also, see Alberta Health Services teachingsexualhealth.ca’s “*Setting Ground Rules*” in order to properly and appropriately conduct this discussion with your class.

The web resources listed below can assist in starting the conversation and informing students about these issues. However, in order to provide the most comprehensive and accurate education for your students have the Calgary Sexual Health Centre come in to host a workshop on sexual health and sexual consent. More information about the Calgary Sexual Health Centre’s School-Based Education program can be found here: [http://www.calgarysexualhealth.ca/programs-workshops/school-based-education/](http://www.calgarysexualhealth.ca/programs-workshops/school-based-education/).

Web resources:

- [http://www.calgarysexualhealth.ca/sexual-health-info/communication-decision-making/#consent](http://www.calgarysexualhealth.ca/sexual-health-info/communication-decision-making/#consent)