

SUMMARY:

Seventeen-year-old A.J. McCreary is facing all kinds of problems: taking a picture for the cover of the Valentine edition of the school paper; being dateless for the upcoming King of Hearts Dance; and fighting with her dad about her desire to become a photographer.

The worst thing for A.J., though, is her many unfortunate dating decisions, and now she is enamored with Peter Terris, who not only is a star athlete and beyond gorgeous, but also deeply involved with the beautiful Julia Hart. When Jonathan, a cupid, visits A.J., offering help in one area of her life, she chooses romance, much against his advice, and orders him to shoot an arrow into Peter's heart, thus making him love her. A.J. quickly learns that the Peter isn't the man she imagined he would be, so she desperately cries out for Jonathan, hoping he will reappear and undo the spell that has made her life miserable.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What does Jonathan mean when he tells A.J., "Infatuation cannot be sustained indefinitely, my friend. Love that embraces the entire person is a monumental gift that takes time to grow!" (p.73)

How would you handle a situation in which you think you are being manipulated?

How is A.J.'s dream view of Peter different from the reality?

Why is it easy to think that acceptance by the "in" crowd makes a person better?

Why does going with someone who is popular make a student more acceptable?

What does Jonathan mean when he tells A.J., "You must listen to the things that you try to ignore."? (p.139)

How does the cupid-enabled relationship with Peter change A.J.?

How can living with the consequences of a decision be difficult?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

I express myself creatively through...

If someone would offer me assistance vocationally, academically, or romantically, I would ask for help with...

The nicest day I ever spent with my mother or my father was when. . .

A life-altering decision I once made was. . .

ACTIVITIES:

Experiment with photography.

Research any of the following photographers or painters, whose names are mentioned in the novel: Alfred Stieglitz, Ansel Adams, Georgia O'Keeffe, Sandro Botticelli, Raphael, Peter Paul Rubens, or Andy Warhol. Look for photographs or paintings by them.

Learn about photography as a profession.

Look for information about keeshonds.

Draw a scene from the novel.

BOOKTALK:

Seventeen-year-old A.J. McCreary is a talent photographer, but she has the worst record in unrequited love. She has now fallen for the "gorgeous beyond words" Peter Terris, even though he is epoxied to the excruciatingly beautiful Julia Hart. Her best friend Trish tells her, "You are a wonderful person, A.J., an attractive person, and you fall for a guy's image without knowing the person behind it." (p.34)

When Jonathan, the cupid, complete with quiver, bow, and arrows, makes A.J. the recipient of a Visitation, he offers her help in one area of her life, artistically, academically, or romantically. She chooses romance, much against his

vociferous advice, so Jonathan has to fulfill the request, and thwong, he sends an arrow piercing Peter's heart. Can love won in such a manipulative way ever be lasting and what if the reality of Peter is not at all what A.J. has envisioned?

TIE-INS:

How are Thwong and the short story "Blocked" different from Joan Bauer's other works?

Trish reminds A.J. about how her photography was once blocked for three months. What is being bogged down for Chloe in "Blocked," and how is the problem solved?

Read "A Letter from the Fringe" in *On the Fringe*, and discuss what high school life is like for a student who is not a part of the "in" group.

RELATED MATERIALS:

Bauer, Joan. "Blocked." *Dreams and Visions: Fourteen Flights of Fantasy*. Ed. M. Jerry Weiss and Helen S. Weiss. New York, Tom Doherty Associates, 2006. 17-29.

Bauer, Joan. "A Letter from the Fringe." *On the Fringe*. Ed. Donald R. Gallo. New York: Dial, 2001. 181-193.

RELATED WEB SITES:

Occupational Outlook Handbook: Photographers - <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos264.htm>

American Kennel Club: Keeshond - <http://www.akc.org/breeds/keeshond/>

Black and White Film Processing - <http://www.photogs.com/bwworld/bwfilmdev.html>

The Black and White Photography Process - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A586523>

Dog Breed Info Center : Keeshond - <http://www.dogbreedinfo.com/keeshond.htm>

Get the Picture: Alfred Stieglitz - <http://www.artsmia.org/get-the-picture/stieglitz/index.html>

The Ansel Adams Gallery - <http://www.anseladams.com/>

Georgia O'Keeffe Museum - <http://www.okeeffemuseum.org/home.aspx>

WebMuseum, Paris - <http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/>

The Andy Warhol Museum - <http://www.warhol.org/>

Mythology: Cupid in Roman Mythology - <http://www.loggia.com/myth/cupid.html>

Christine Blair served as Media Specialist at Nuttall Middle School in Robinson, Illinois, from 1973 until she retired in 2005. She holds a B.A. from Illinois Wesleyan University and an M.S. in Ed. in Instructional Materials from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

She is the author of *Let Your Fingers Do the Searching: Using Reference Sources and Their Indexes*.

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