

Stick

By Michael B. Harmon

Grade Levels:

- Interest and Reading Level, 9-12

Synopsis:

Brett "Stick" Patterson has a problem. While he loves playing football, he does not love the pressure and competitiveness that his obsessed coach and his alcoholic father both drill into him every day. He feels like he is putting on a costume and an act each week when game-time rolls around. A chance encounter witnessing his cruel teammates bullying Preston Underwood, class nerd, forces Stick to confront his distaste for his life/ He makes the drastic change of switching schools and facing the wrath of coach, father, and supposed friends.

The two boys' lives intersect when Preston tutors Brett in math and Stick gets to see that Preston has issues of his own: his father was murdered before his eyes during a robbery. Like Stick, Preston puts on a costume and an act as well - each night he walks the streets in an homemade superhero costume to recklessly fight crime and stave off the guilt he feels for not intervening in his father's death.

As both boys learn to face their fears and grow in their own courage and truth, they also learn to trust each other and the unlikely friendship that emerges.

Author Website:

- <http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/author/harmon-michael/>

Curricular Connections:

- Health: friendships, anti-bullying, peer-pressure
- Psychology: dealing with trauma, survivor's guilt
- Sports: ethics, teamwork

Lesson Ideas:

- In an anti-bullying unit, this novel could be used to discuss how individual choices and resistance to peer-pressure are important character traits for high school students.
- In a psychology course, the novel could be used to explore how teenagers deal with grief.
- In a research unit on opposing viewpoints, this novel could be used to discuss the ethics of competition in sports.

Common Core Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3. Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Suggested Companion Titles:

- *Staying fat for Sarah Byrnes* by Chris Crutcher

Professional Reviews:

- *Booklist* (July 2015 (Vol. 111, No. 21))
- *Kirkus Reviews* (May 15, 2015)
- *Publishers Weekly* (June 1, 2015)
- *School Library Journal* (July 1, 2015)
- *Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)* (starred, 10/01/15)

Awards:

- ALA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers 2016