



When

Victoria Laurie

Grade Levels: 6-12

Synopsis:

Maddie has “the gift” to see the death dates of people on their foreheads. Because her mother is alcoholic and unable to hold down a job, Maddie gets paid for “readings” where she reveals their death dates. When a client’s son disappears on the day she has predicted his death, Maddie is a suspect. Another person dies, and Maddie and her best friend Stubs become involved and are bullied at school by students and teachers. Maddie finally proves her gift to a police detective and helps save his partner. After many dangers and twists, Maddie helps catch the murderer and makes a hopeful new start with her mother.

Author Website:

- <http://victorialaurie.com/home.html>

Curricular Connections:

- Discussion of bullying
- Example of detective murder mystery

Lesson Ideas:

- Ask students to imagine that they could have any super power or “gift.” What would they choose? Have them write a poem, short story or essay about how they feel about having their gift and how they would use it in a positive way.
- In the book, Maddie decides to help Mario, one of the bullies, by telling him that he would die on the same day as his reckless pal Eric. As Mario processes that information, his death date changes to many years in the future because he makes the decision to avoid Eric. Have students come up with a list of positive behavior changes that might extend their own life, or write a list of recommendations for their friends or family that will help extend their lives.
- Have students imagine that something besides a death date is revealed to them on other people’s foreheads. Have students draw or write about what aspect is revealed to them. Examples: people’s future occupations, their secret wishes, their greatest fears, their biggest strengths.

Common Core Standards:

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3** Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

Suggested Companion Titles:

- *The Naturals* by Jennifer Lynn Barnes
- Confessions novels series by James Patterson

Professional Reviews:

- *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* (02/01/15)
- *Horn Book Guide* (10/01/15)
- *Kirkus Reviews* (10/15/14)
- *Library Media Connection* starred(05/01/15)
- *Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)* (02/01/15)