

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Tears of a Tiger

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CRASH, FIRE, PAIN

1. Put yourself in the place of one of the boys who escaped the crash but was forced to watch “helplessly as Robert Washington burned to death.” Imagine that a similar crash has happened and that you are now standing on the sidelines, like Andy, B.J., and Tyrone, watching a friend of yours die trapped inside a burning car. What’s going through your head? How do you feel physically—nauseous, full of adrenaline, some other way? How do you expect you’ll feel tomorrow? Freewrite on these questions for at least a page.
2. When you hear or read of a car accident that involved teenagers, do you tend to assume that drugs or drinking played a part in the event? What about when you hear or read of a car accident that involved the elderly? Explain your answers in a paragraph or two.

HIT THE SHOWERS! HIT THE STREETS!

3. Andy and Rob have their own slang and manner of speaking. On the surface, they seem to be putting each other down, but it’s clear to us that they’re close friends who respect each other. Think of a friendship you’re a part of or a group you belong to that has its own “language” or style of speech. What purpose does the language serve? Does it draw you closer together? Does it set you off from others? Write a paragraph or two about it—if possible, in the slang or style itself.

OH NO! IT JUST CAN’T BE!

4. As Keisha, write a diary entry in response to the news that your boyfriend has just survived a tragic accident—and the news that his friend did *not* survive. Does knowing that Andy was driving change the way you feel about him? How do you think the event will affect your relationship?

MEMORIES OF FIRE

5. Tyrone tells Officer Casey what *actions* took place on the night of the accident, but he doesn't share any of the conversation the boys had as they drove around, getting increasingly drunk and "yellin' out the window at old white ladies." In a page or two, write the dialogue the boys might have had, beginning when they first pile into Andy's car and ending at the crash. Use the format of a play; an example beginning is provided below.

Rob: After a game like that, even B.J. should have a celebratory brew!

B.J.: No thanks, man, I'd rather celebrate with your prom date...

"DEAR LORD"

6. Pondering the accident's purpose, B.J. prays, "Was all this done to teach us kids a lesson? Will it stop us from drinkin' and drivin'? Maybe—a few. But the rest will keep on doing it, no matter what."

Why do you think we continue to do things—like drinking and driving, using drugs, or smoking—that we know are likely to end in disaster or death? Explain your answer in a paragraph.

7. B.J. seems to think the accident may have happened for a purpose. Do you believe in fate—that all things happen for a purpose? Whatever your belief, would the death of a close friend cause you to rethink it? Explain your answer in a paragraph or two.
8. In his prayer, B.J. admits that he never questioned the kind of activities Rob, Andy, and Tyrone engaged in because he was just so glad to be included in their group. Write about a time when you badly wanted to belong to a certain group or gain the friendship of a certain person. What was compelling to you about the group or person? Would you have been willing to keep your opinions to yourself if it helped you to belong?

Tears of a Tiger

9. On his decision to return to his church, B.J. says, “I’m not too proud to know when a problem is bigger than I am.” How do you handle situations in which a problem seems bigger than you are? Do you try to push through on your own? Do you turn to a friend, a parent, a coach, or a religious leader? Explain.

“MY MOST FRIGHTENING MOMENT”

10. In a paragraph rich with sensory detail, write about your own most frightening moment.
11. Of the day after the accident, Rhonda writes, “[E]verybody at school was crying—even the people who didn’t know Robbie, even the teachers.” She herself didn’t cry. Instead, she felt sick and angry.

When a public tragedy occurs—that is, not the death of someone in your family but something more “public,” such as the events of 9/11/01 or an outbreak of war—are you more likely to respond with sadness or with anger? Explain your answer in a paragraph.

THE HAZELWOOD HERALD

12. Niafra, an exchange student from French West Africa, feels that American students “do not give enough honor to their teachers.” Do you think teachers deserve more honor than what is regularly given them by their students? Should they be honored more or less than parents are? In what way—if any—do you “honor” your teachers? Elaborate on this topic in a paragraph.
13. One *Herald* editorial says that statistics don’t usually “mean much, but this statistic [Rob] had a name, a face, a basketball jersey, and friends.” When you hear a statistic—such as the *Herald’s* report that someone dies in a drunk-driving accident every eighteen minutes—how do you feel? Do you agree that it’s hard to feel emotional about the numbers when you don’t have the faces to match? Elaborate.

Response Journal

14. Coach Ripley is the faculty sponsor of Students Against Driving Drunk. Three of his basketball players were just involved in a drunk-driving accident. Do you think that organizations like S.A.D.D. achieve anything practical? Are they a waste of time and energy, or well worth the effort? If you are not already, would you consider becoming a member of one? Explore the subject in a page or so.

“HEY, COACH! CAN WE TALK?”

15. Andy and Rob’s friendship began in an unusual fashion: Andy made fun of Rob’s Afro pick; Rob beat Andy up, and the two were inseparable from that day on. Which of your friendships started in the most unusual way? Describe, in detail, the way the relationship began. Are the two of you still friends?
16. Imagine that you’re the principal at Hazelwood High and that Coach Ripley is due for an evaluation. Part of that evaluation will include your assessment of how the coach communicates with and counsels his students. You’ve just watched Andy and the coach’s conversation on a hidden camera. Based on what you observed, write a one-paragraph evaluation of the coach.
17. Andy is worried that he may have gotten off too lightly for his crime. The court revoked his license until he turns twenty-one, and he has to attend Alcohol Rehabilitation classes. Does this seem like a fair sentence to you? Write a letter to the editor of Hazelwood’s local newspaper in which you commend or attack the court’s decision. Support your position with at least three reasons.

SAD SONGS, JUICY GOSSIP

18. Rhonda’s reaction to the idea that she should “share” her sorrow with the grief counselors is “Yeah, right.” How likely are you to go to a school counselor when you have a problem? Does the idea of sharing your feelings with grief counselors turn you off or appeal to you? Explain.

“IF I COULD CHANGE THE WORLD”

19. In his homework assignment, Gerald writes that if he could rid the world of any three things, he'd choose peanut butter, Band-Aids, and five-dollar bills. In a page or so, describe the three things you'd eliminate. Back up your choices with personal reasons, like Gerald does. Stick to concrete items, like peanut butter, rather than abstract ideas like “genocide” or war.
20. Gerald has a good point when he mentions that Band-Aids advertise themselves as being “flesh-toned” when it's clear that only white people (and very few of them, at that) have flesh of that color. In a paragraph, describe another product with advertising that seems exclusionary or bigoted in some way. The “exclusion” need not be based on race.

HOOPS AND DUNKS

21. In Rob's absence, Andy becomes the star of Hazelwood's basketball team, scoring high and making shots that he always missed before. Write about an instance in which your talents were overshadowed by those of a friend or sibling, as Andy's used to be. How did it feel? Did you ever wish that something would “happen” to your competitor, giving you a chance to shine? Explain.
22. Neither of Andy's parents bother to show up for the game. According to Rhonda, they almost never do. How important is it to you that your parents turn out for the events in which you participate? Does it seem like “bad parenting” not to show up? What if your kids are involved in activities that bore you to tears? Explore this topic in a paragraph or two.

“HOW DO I FEEL?”

23. If you were going to see a psychologist, would you feel more comfortable with one whose gender and race were the same as yours? Explain your answer.