



The Taking of Room 114

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A series of poems reflect the thoughts of school officials, parents, police, and especially a class of seniors who have been taken hostage by their high school history teacher.

The Taking of Room 114 Details

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Author : Mel Glenn

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Kennedy Barraza says

I feel like this was a very good read, the author was brilliant to make a whole story out of poems, we got to get to know student through their year at school and even some of their personal life and that was interesting. I like that each page made me want to keep reading. I like that at the end of each students story there was an introduction to what was going on in Mr. Weidemires classroom. I think that the end of the book however was a little shocking, my expectations were that there would be more action but there ended up being more suspense than actual action. I would recommend this book to someone who likes suspense and a slight sad ending. Or maybe to someone who likes poetry and wants a full story to go along with it.

Christie says

I don't know how I feel about this book. It was written in 1998, before Columbine, before Virginia Tech, before Sandy Hook. It is about a teacher that takes his class hostage at gun point. I guess it is just so weird to read with all the media right now talking about gun violence and all the bad things we have seen with guns in school.

However I enjoyed the poems. It has the stories of each of the students as they wait for their yearbooks before school, then Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, and the day of the event. I liked reading about the evolution or devolution of each student. However the holding the class at gun point just seemed pointless.

The only lesson you learn in this book is you never know what is under someone's facade. One maybe holding on to more than you know on the inside.

I thought the writing was good though so I may try another Mel Glenn book.

Mathew Jackson says

The Taking of Room 114 by Mel Glenn is a gripping hostage drama that is uniquely written in poems. The setting is Tower High School in inner-city Chicago. It is the last day of school and students and teachers alike can't wait for the summer break. The school is poorly funded by the state; making it an unpleasant and sometimes dangerous place to be. One history teacher, Mr. Wiedermeyer, has had enough. He is sick of the school system and the kids in his class who are completely unwilling to learn and grow. Glenn, a former teacher himself, possibly is trying to convey the nationwide frustration of teacher with unruly students who do nothing but slack off. It is on this last day of school that Mr. Wiedermeyer decides to do something. As the class walks in, he proceeds to hold them at gunpoint. This all Glenn tells the reader before launching into the meat of the novel; the student's poetic reflections on each year of high school. I won't go into details, but seeing how each kid changes over their four years of high school is enthralling and beautiful. Glenn seems to know exactly the worries and triumphs of a teenage life. The ups and the downs. Each character is memorable and sympathetic. Glenn then throws the reader back into the dire situation. Where the reader discovers much more about Wiedermeyer's motives. Although the different slang can be irritating to the modern reader, I would recommend this book to anyone willing to give it a try. It also has a nice length to it,

so it won't take you that long to read.

Sarah Maddaford says

The poetry did a pretty good job of telling the story, but the middle section was a bit disjointed. I realize that the readers needed to know the characters better in order to care about them, but giving them each five poems made it difficult to keep any kind of pacing in the book. With such a long, intricate section before it, the end just kind of fell flat for me. As for the story, I have trouble connecting with it. For one thing, I was apathetic about school and some of my teachers were tired of teaching, but none of them ever showed any kind of violence or aggression in class. Most of the other students were fairly calm too although we had our trouble makers. I just don't understand how things can get so bad without anyone noticing. For another thing, I don't approve of the way the police in the story handled things. I think the teacher was ultimately harmless and could have been talked down.

Elizabeth says

What starts out as an ordinary day for a group of high school seniors turns into anything but when their history teacher takes them hostage. The book takes us through each of their lives through a series of five poems, where we learn about the issues and goals that resonate underneath the facade of their high school personas. Throughout the book we see how the personal lives of the students intersect with their actions in the public domain, and readers will wonder how the hostage drama will play out for both the students and their teacher. Readers of all ages will identify with a wide range of feelings and ideas that come up throughout the book, which will likely cause readers to scramble for some scrap paper as they jot down a favorite passage or two. While a quick read, expect a complicated emotional impact that will take some time to unfold. The story takes place in a contemporary urban high school with a diverse group of students. A must for high school libraries, and a must read for any adult interacting with high school aged kids.

Suzanne Dix says

So glad I randomly chose this book off the shelves. The free verse was amazingly crafted and the story was so unique. There are 5-6 references to sex so I can't unfortunately hype this one with my middle school kids but it will definitely stay in our Teen collection.

Brit Wilson says

I spent a while debating on whether or not it would be a good idea to read this one. On one hand, I went to school in a rough neighborhood growing up and the lifestyle to be presented was pretty standard to my personal experience. I had reason to believe I wouldn't find the material offensive (I didn't.) But, on the same hand, was it really something I wanted to read about, as sad as it was likely to be?

I decided it was worth the risk largely because it was a required author for us, and this one was at least fascinating to me, being that its about a young single father. Even more rare is the fact that he's a young

single father and it's not his fault he's single. But, I was still expecting a lot more reluctance on his part as I began the book.

I didn't get it. I got a beautiful heartwarming piece about a urban kid who the reality bus blindsides, but still maintains his integrity and his goodness. A kid, who though woefully unprepared to be a father does so in light of his personal tragedy. In fact, does so because of his personal tragedy. If the tragedy had not occurred, he would not be going through the growth he was going through, simply because he would not have kept the child, they didn't plan on keeping it, and everyone said that was the right thing to do, for them and the baby. But when the tragedy bus is chasing the reality bus by about nine months, the whole situation changes.

I never truly cried in this book, just teared up a little bit near the most emotional parts, and it took me a bit to realize why that was. The story has unique way of being revealed. Each chapter is labeled now and then. So, even though I see the outcome of the pregnancy, I still get to flip back and see the past too, see how they got their. I see their struggle as a couple to make their decisions. I see their panic, I see how much those two actually loved each other, which is hard to say for teenagers who often only have an understanding of the first stage of love. In the end, Bobby kept Feather out of love both for her and for her mother. If they hadn't had a deeper bond than most teenage romances have, they would not have survived the pregnancy together, and he certainly would not have shouldered the burden of a baby when a home was lined up for it already.

I feel like it also has a realistic view of how others react, and that was one of my favorite parts in the book. The teacher, who pulls him aside to ask how he's doing, though he offers no help save not punishing him for falling asleep in class. The neighbor who volunteers, and the mother intent on making her son feel the drain for his actions with as little help as possible. Also, Bobby's own failings keep him a real person. I don't think that the book would be the same without the day he accidentally skipped school. That changed him so much as a person. My favorite chapter though was the chapter in which he compared his life to a fairytale, complete with the princess in Chelsea. It felt so obscure, but sometimes our thoughts get that way.

I wouldn't recommend this book to anyone under the age of 16. I don't think it would be appreciated by anyone much younger, personally, but maybe some mature 14 year olds could handle it. But I agree that it's good for reluctant readers. The mystery of what happens to Nia keeps you curious to the end, and it's not bogged down by anything unnecessary. Overall, a better read than I was expecting!

Warnings:

Language: Lots. It's New York. Coloured kids in New York. Yeah. At least one f-word.

Violence: Actually, very little. There's a scene where violence against a vague character is mentioned, but the main cast is pretty violence free.

Drugs: Smoking mentioned

Sex: Well, yes, that's how they got in this mess. There is one scene that leads to them hooking up while she's pregnant, but it is relatively ungraphic. And stops early.

Rock and Roll: Not a large musical presence here either-- except for the rhythm of the street.

Other: Very consequence heavy.

Evan says

This is a nice quick read, that I'd recommend to reluctant teen readers as an example of poetry as a story telling device. A history teacher takes his class hostage with a gun, and Glenn gives us multiple perspectives of the incident. The verse format allows us to hear distinct voices as we briefly see each student grow up in

high school, and see the state of mind they find themselves in that day. We see the reactions of the police, parents, and the media. He also makes some fun use of concrete poems.

Glenn manages to build a decent amount of tension before wrapping his story to a close, though I have to say at the end I didn't feel like I'd read anything particularly great.

Alison says

Mel Glenn uses poems to tell the story of a group of senior students on one of their last days of high school. Each poem is told from a different students' perspective and leads up to the climax in which their teacher, Mr. Wiedermeyer, takes them hostage. What unfolds in the classroom is only revealed through the students' poems and Mr. Wiedermeyer's cryptic notes that he passes under the door.

The Taking of Room 114: A Hostage Drama in Poems is highly engaging. The author reveals so little about what is actually happening during the hostage situation and mostly through character's reactions, that the reader is propelled through the story. Insights are given into each student in the room, and a poem from each year of high school from each one's perspective is presented. It's amazing how much character development the reader can observe through just a few brief poems, and you can really grasp how the students have changed and matured (or not) through their high school years. The poems are often witty, sassy, and reek of disdain for authority. Some of the poems parallel each other in order to draw a connection between the characters. A girl thinks of a boy, "There's the guy from my history class, the one I want to get to know better" (p. 5), while the boy thinks, "there's a girl in that class I want to know better" (p. 6). Glenn also uses similar lines to sharply contrast the differences between characters, like the perceived poor English (it is actually very precise) of an immigrant with the comfortable (and in reality, poor) English of a native speaker. Perspectives of bystanders, parents, administration, news reporters and police officers are briefly presented. Glenn uses the same verbiage with some of the bystanders to portray opposing opinions of how to deal with the hostage situation. The mystery of why Mr. Wiedermeyer has taken the class hostage is finally revealed at the end, and leaves the reader with a sense of closure. It is not exactly "satisfying" because I think those are the wrong words to describe this situation, but the reader would be left wondering had Glenn not explained Mr. Wiedermeyer's motives. This book would appeal to high school students, and is also an interesting read for teachers.

Avery France says

I picked up this book, because it was strongly recommended in my Teaching English in the Classroom class by the teacher. I also had a classmate tell me how good it was. It seemed interesting to me, as well, because it is a book written in poetry, and I like poetry.

I loved this book. It is an excellent representation of students and gives several differing perspectives. I would love to have future English classes read this because there is something for everybody. I think boys and girls would appreciate this book, and this book is something that most students regardless of their race or social class can enjoy, because of the wide variety of voices and perspectives.

This book has some swear words, it mentions teen sex and teenage pregnancy. There is a hostage situation where a teacher holds his students with a gun. The man is shot in the shoulder.

Amanda says

This book addresses a lot of problems faced by adolescents today. It presents the perspectives of around 20 students in the form of poetry. The perspective changes approximately every one or three poems depending on the section of the book. This made it a little difficult to follow, but it also allowed me to see high school with new eyes as I was introduced to each new character. I don't remember high school holding so many different kinds of major problems. As a teenager, I guess I was too focused on my academic problems. I had never given much thought to the other problems because my standards and upbringing kept me away from them. I didn't realize how much partying, drinking, and other activities went on at my high school.

But *The Taking of Room 114* is much more than a look at high school and the problems faced by students. It is also a look at the difficulties teachers face when trying to impart their knowledge to their students. They are under appreciated. They are human too. What would it be like to stand in their place at the front a classroom instead of being the student?

While not one of my favorites, I think that this book reminds readers what it is like to be a teenager again. It also reminds them that they are not alone in their struggles. Everyone has problems. This book is definitely not a onetime read because to catch half of what is going on, you need to read it twice or three times. There are so many lives to explore.

Spoilers—Content to be aware of:

Sex: Lynette talks openly of having sex and talks about how sex doesn't last (43). Beer is mentioned on page 45 in conjunction with a party/get-together where girls will meet up with some guys. Sex, condoms, virginity, teenage pregnancy, or a similar topic is mentioned on pages 63, 66, 76, 78, 108, 112.

Violence: Some talk of bullying, action on the courts, or other small acts of violence are mentioned throughout the book. Mr. Wiedermeyer holds his history class at gunpoint while teaching them for hours. A police officer is sent in and makes the decision to shoot Mr. Wiedermeyer in the shoulder so that the children can be evacuated safely.

Profanity: contains multiple uses of h---, d---, b-----, j-----

Cory says

This was a good quick reading book that entwined plenty of emotion within the book and the writing itself. The author did a stellar job of making it seem like you were there, in every set of shoes in the classroom, teacher and students.

Cedric says

The only good thing about this book was simply the idea of it. It was disappointing and cliché to the very last page. The writing at times was good but most of the time it did nothing to impress me or even make me want

to finish the book. I'm upset that I actually spent money on this boring thing.

Bobbie says

I really enjoyed this book, but the ending was a little bit weak. I guess it just did not come to a strong enough conclusion for me to be fully satisfied, and maybe that was the point, but it frustrated me. With that said, I loved the rest of it. I felt connected to the students, and flipped through every page with a sense of urgency.

The poems were well-crafted, and the premise (a poem mystery) was incredibly unique. I enjoyed the unique perspective of each student - seeing their high school careers and comparing that to their reaction to the hostage situation. This is a great read, and a fast one too.

Violence: Gun and a shot or two. No deaths (a couple drownings are described in one of the poems)

Sex: There is a pregnant student who talks about sex in her poems.

Language: There might have been a couple instances, but I have a really hard time remembering language. Sorry. No "f" bombs for sure, and if there were any bad words, they were few enough to be skipped over (in my opinion).

Alcohol/Drugs: I believe there was one poem that talked about alcohol.

Lindsay Robertson says

This collection of poetry takes you through every student's and parent's nightmare--a high school teacher taking an entire class hostage at gunpoint. The poetry starts at the beginning of the day where the students are standing in line for yearbooks. As the students become trapped in the class, four poems are written in each of their perspectives about their four years of high school and concluding with a poem about that day. Interspersed with the student's memories are poems from the teacher, Mr. Weidermeyer, which show his frustration with the students, and short news updates from the police, news reporters, and bystanders of the incident.

This book deals heavily with coming of age. As you read each of the student's poems of their high school experience, you are presented with many backgrounds, personalities, and attitudes toward subjects like moving out of the house, sex, abuse, family, education, and chosen careers. Although the book does not spend much time on any character, there is a very good chance that the reader will be able to intimately relate to at least one. The writing is reminiscent of each character's background, which can be a little grating as high schoolers are not usually known for their eloquence. Despite that, the book does a very good job of creating personalities for many characters without much exposition.
