

YHBA Novel Resource #2
Funerals & Fly Fishing

I. Book Information:

Author: Mary Bartek
Title: Funerals & Fly Fishing
Copyright date: 2004
Publisher: Henry Holt and Company

II. About the Author:

Mary was raised in a small Pennsylvania town where her father had a funeral business. She and her family lived above the business and she remembers the living quarters on the second floor to be very normal compared to her friends.

Mary has been a teacher for more than twenty-five years and is also a former librarian and award winning journalist. She currently lives in Centennial, Colorado with her family. She has two daughters, Megan and Emily, and a dog named lucky.



<http://marybartek.com>

Author's webpage address: <http://www.marybartek.com>

Author's e-mail address: mbartek@marybartek.com.

Author's connection to the book:

Mary grew up in a funeral home in Pennsylvania and then later in life moved to Colorado. She knew first hand what it was like to live on the second floor of the funeral home, and she also remembers what she felt the very first time she went into her new home.

Other books by same author: This is Mary's first book.

III. Annotation:

Brad Stanislawski is an awkward, very tall, twelve-year-old who is looking forward to spending the summer any where except for school. Despite his height Brad seems to have a problem standing up to the bullies that constantly are making fun of his name. Brad believes that he will be spending a few weeks with his mother's best friend after she wins a trip to California, but it turns out that her friend must leave town. Instead of accompanying his mother on what he thinks would be a very fun trip, Brad finds himself flying to see his estranged grandfather who lives in a small town Wallace Corners, near Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.

The thing that Brad's mother neglected to tell him about his grandfather is that he lives over and operates Stanislawski Funeral Home. Brad and his grandfather slowly forge a relationship and are at a local baseball game when a boy who later becomes Brad's friend, tells him that there is a bag of scalps in the drain-the-blood room. Brad looks for the bag and is caught by his grandfather who explains that while the contents look like scalps, that are really animal pelts used for tying fly fishing lures. Brad feels that he has made a friend named Pat who shows him around town. Eventually, Pat talks Brad into showing him the funeral home where he opens a casket with a body in it. Brad's grandfather catches them and explains to Brad about respect.

Brad asks his grandfather why he and his mother don't talk and his grandfather shows Brad many returned letters addressed to his mother. He tells Brad that the letters all contain apologies to her about his treatment of her and her boyfriend. He wants more than anything to have a good relationship with his daughter.

Brad's grandfather also tells Brad that Stanislawski is a name to be proud of and shows him a book about his family. He also tells Brad that he feels that it's the person who brings pride to a name and not the other way around.

The two develop a good relationship as they spend more time together fly fishing, working with the funeral business, and learning about Brad's Polish heritage and the town where his mother grew up. When his grandfather appears to have a heart attack, Brad calls his mother to come and stay with him even though he is safe. After Brad insists that his mother read all of the unopened letters she finally decides to forgive her father. Finally Brad, his mother, and his grandfather all are on good terms with each other. Upon returning home Brad is faced with the bullies that tormented him during his sixth grade year and follows his grandfather's advice. Brad stands up for himself and begins to understand himself.

IV. Booktalk:

What do a funeral home, a Polish dance, and fly fishing all have in common? Brad Stanislawski finds out after he finds himself on a plane to spend part of his summer vacation with a grandfather he has never met. Life in Wallace Corners teaches Brad many things about his grandfather, his mother, and most importantly his own life.

V. Characters

Main	Traits
Brad Stanislawski: age 11	Brad is a very lanky boy who does not stand up for himself. He is rather embarrassed about his name and finds himself running away from bullies rather than standing up to them. He would like very much to have a friend but feels that he is a geek and lacks self-confidence. Brad is an excellent artist and loves to draw. When he is feeling frustrated with life he tends to draw things out on his sketch pad.
Supporting	Traits
Grandfather Stanislawski	Brad's grandfather is a very proud man of Polish decent. He regrets some decisions that he has made in the past and is trying to change into a man that does not show his temper.
Rita Stanislawski	She is Brad's mother and an extremely strong person. She is providing for her son the best way that she can and is improving her self along the way. She has cut all connection to her father after he expressed his opinions about Brad's father and the two of them leaving town. She is a very clear thinker who is looking to get her life on track.

VI. Conflict:

The main conflict in this novel is that Brad is getting to know his grandfather who does not get along with his mother. **This conflict is an external conflict; character vs. character.**

Brad also has a poor self image that he feels is tied to his embarrassing name. **This is an internal conflict; character vs. self.**

VII. Conflict Resolution:

The conflict in this novel is resolved when Brad asks his mother to read the letters of apology that her father had written to her. Brad also realizes that it is the person who brings pride to the name and not the other way around when he stand up to tow bullies that have been harassing him for a long time.

VIII. Genre:

The genre of this novel would fall under:
Contemporary Fiction
Humorous Fiction
Family Fiction
Sports Stories Fiction

IX. If you like this book, you'll love these:

Escape to West Berlin by Maurine F. Dahlberg
Toes by Tor Seidler
Hoggee by Anna Myers
Thin Wood Walls by David Patneaude

X. Levels:

IL: 4-7
RL: 4.3
LEX: 720

XI. Read-Aloud passages:

Chapter 1, page 5

“Overall, sixth grade has not been my favorite. Not at North Middle in Denver, ...
This passage explains why Brad and his mother move a lot, the setting, his size, his character

Chapter 6, page 32

“I head down the street in the direction that my grandfather told me. His big, white funeral home.....
This passage describes the town of Wallace Corners, and reestablished Brad’s fear of bullies.

XII. Setting:

The setting of this novel is in Wallace Corners, Pennsylvania, a small tow outside of Pittsburg, in present day.

XIII. Point of View:

The point of view of this novel is first person for Brad Stanislawski.

XIV. Theme:

The theme of this novel is that it is not the name that makes the person, but the person who makes the name. It is our choices in life that forms who we are, but it is never too late change that person.

One interpretation of the title, Funerals and Fly Fishing, would be that funerals are as much a part of life as fly fishing and other enjoyable recreations.