

Teacher's Guide for *Fat Kid Rules the World*, by K.L. Going

Note to Teachers

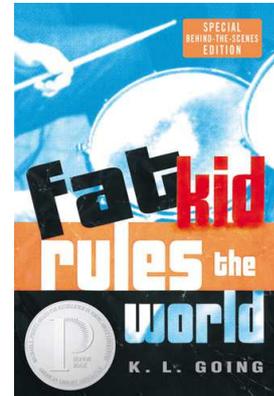
The inspiration for *Fat Kid Rules the World* came from a mix of punk music, Kurt Cobain biographies, and believe it or not, a rejection letter! An editor to whom I submitted a previous novel noted that sometimes characters need to be larger than life. Hmm... I wondered what would happen if I created a physically larger than life character.

Having always been a self-conscious kid (although I wasn't fat growing up) the theme of self image was natural for me to write about. And any writer loves to mix in their current passions, so somehow the world of punk rock worked itself into the fray. The result is a book I hope will speak to teens, and hopefully appeal to kids who might rather be watching VH1 or listening to their iPod.

The issue of bad language often comes up, but I think that most kids A) have already been exposed, B) can understand that the language is used in the context of the punk scene and C) are better able to read discerningly than we give them credit for. Perhaps the language itself can lead to great discussions - should characters swear in teen novels? When would it be wrong to censure a character?

I hope this novel sparks lots of great discussion in your classrooms!

--KL



Questions for Discussion

Q: Which character do you identify with the most? Have you ever felt like Troy feels in the beginning of the novel?

Q: How could a skinny writer create a believable overweight character? Did you find Troy believable? Should writers create characters who are very different from themselves? What if the character is of a different race than the author?

Q: What do you think happens after the book ends? Does Rage/Tectonic make it big? Does Curt stay clean?

Q: This book is written with short, staccato chapters. Do you think the author did this for a reason? How does it add or detract?

Q: Troy and Dale have opposite obsessive eating issues. Did you notice Dale's? Why might the author have chosen two male characters rather than two female characters?

Q: Is Troy's Dad a "disappointed dysfunctional parent"?

Q: Have you ever been made fun of? Have you ever made fun of someone else?

Q: What's the riskiest thing you've ever done? Were there good or bad consequences?

Q: Curt lies, steals, is manipulative and smelly... he abandons Troy and gets him in trouble. Did you like Curt anyway? Why?

Q: Curt takes drugs. Troy's dad says, "No Drugs Ever". Ollie says, sometimes it's okay. What do you think? Does the author give her opinion or leave it up to the reader?

Q: "Born in the USA. Ain't got fucking much to say. Don't we all want it that way?" Does your generation have much to say?

Q: Did you expect Troy to throw up on stage? What's the most embarrassing thing you've ever done? Did you think you would get over it?

Q: What do music and cutting through the bullshit have in common? Does all music do this or just certain music? Does some music create more bullshit? What about the music you listen to?

Q: Does Troy make the right decision to tell his father about Curt's prescription drug abuse? What do you think of the ending of the book?

Q: What are your thoughts about reading assigned novels for class? Does it detract from your experience of reading a book? Would you have read the book otherwise?

Q: What was the last book you read for your own pleasure? Do you consider reading entertainment? Has your view of reading changed from when you were a kid?

Activities

** Design the jacket art for the Rage/Tectonic CD.

** Design a Smack Metal Puppets T-shirt.

** Come up with a soundtrack for the Fat Kid Rules the World movie.

** Write lyrics for your own punk song. What makes punk different from other types of music? Is it still art? Poetry?

** Have a Fat Kid Wrap party when your class is done reading the book. Bring in Doritos, Oreos, Entemann's cherry cheese danish, Pringles, Spaghettios... Take a break from worrying about weight and relax!!

** Write to the author. You can write to me via my web site's contact the author link, and it may take a while, but I will write back. I love to hear from readers.

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