If You’re Reading This

AUTHOR: Trent Reedy
PUBLISHER: Arthur A. Levin Books
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GENRE: Realistic Fiction, Sports, mystery
SETTING: The setting is Iowa, during modern times.

SUMMARY:
Trent Reedy’s book about the consequences of troops being deployed to Afghanistan is a well-written realistic fiction mystery in which Mike Wilson, a 10th grader from Iowa, finds himself trying to figure out who is mailing him letters written by his dead father. His father died years earlier while deployed with the Iowa National Guard in Afghanistan. Mike struggles with typical high school issues such as fitting in, working to help pay the family’s bills, and wanting to play football. His mother won’t allow him to play the sport, despite his love of the game. Mike also faces discrimination, due to his friendship with a Muslim student.

In each letter he receives his father gives him a mission to accomplish. These missions vary from trying to ask a girl out on a date, acing his school work, getting a driver’s license, to encouraging him to do the right thing, even if it isn’t popular. Mike eventually figures out that Derek, one of his father’s military buddies who just happens to be the man Mike works for, is involved. He is able to unravel who is sending the letters and how his father died. As a result of these events, he confronts his mother about her behavior over the years. Both of them conclude that Mike’s father would not want them putting their lives on hold because of his death, and Mike ends up saying goodbye to his father through a letter he writes and then symbolically burns.

BOOK TALK:
A tenth grade student named Mike Wilson finds himself struggling with his father’s death and his apathy toward getting involved with life, when he suddenly starts receiving letters from his deceased military father. His father was killed years earlier in Afghanistan, where his Iowa National Guard unit had been deployed.

Mike has had to step up to help out around the house with his sister since his mother is now working two jobs and has been emotionally remote for the last eight years. Amid classes, working on his father’s friend’s farm every afternoon, and football practice—which he is hiding from his mother—he now has to figure out the letters, complete the missions his father assigns, and deal with his own romantic interests for a Muslim student. Does he really want to know what happened to his dad, or is he opening a can of worms that he cannot control? Read If You’re Reading This to see if Mike makes the right decisions and can live with what he discovers.

BOOK REVIEW:
AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:

AUTHOR'S NAME: Trent Reedy
Author’s Website: http://www.trentreedy.com

Other books written by the author:
Divided We Fall
Words in the Dust
Stealing Air

Other information: Reedy was born and raised in Iowa, went to college and was a member of the Iowa National Guard when he was deployed to Afghanistan. His experiences during his deployment are woven into the fabric of his stories.

SIMILAR BOOKS/BOOKS WITH A SIMILAR THEME:
The Impossible Knife of Memory by Laura Anderson
Sunrise Over Fallujah by Walter Dean Myers
Parvana’s Journey by Deborah Ellis
The Breadwinner by Deborah Ellis

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
1. Why do you think Marcelo didn’t deliver the letters in person? Do you agree with his decision? (Chapter 1)

2. When his mother meets Isma, she declares, “She’s one of them.” What did Mike’s mother mean, and why do you think she felt this way? (Chapter 8)

3. In chapter 23, Mike’s life is starting to fall apart. He confides in Derek, and Derek throws out a tidbit of information. What information does Derek let slip, and how does Mike handle it?

4. His father assigns him various missions through the letters he receives. How does Mike complete the missions, and how do you think they affected his decisions throughout the book?

5. Put yourself in Mike’s shoes. How would you handle his situation? What would you do differently and why?

ACTIVITIES WITH STANDARDS:

Language Arts

- Mike writes a letter to his father at the end of the book. Write a letter to Mike’s dad for him. Think about why Mike wrote the letter and cite examples from the book to get your point across in the letter. Make the letter at least four paragraphs in length containing at least three examples.
8.RL2.1 Cite the textual evidence that strongly supports the analysis of what a text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Social Studies

- Research the United States’ involvement in the war on the Taliban in Afghanistan.
  Create a timeline of the War in Afghanistan.
  Why was the United States there? When? What were their roles?
  National Guard troops were deployed from many different states. Why were they used? What states sent the most National Guard troops?

6-8 LH4.2 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgement in text.

RELATED INTERNET SITES:

[Britannica Article](http://www.britannica.com) on Afghanistan War

[Iowa National Guard Involvement](http://www.iowanationalguard.org)

**Challenging Words**

- conspiracy (Chapter 5 - p. 56)
- camaraderie (Chapter 5 - p. 55)
- magazine (Chapter 5 - p. 61)
- mission (Chapter 5 - p. 66)
- providence (Chapter 9 - p. 111)
- disciple (Chapter 11 - p. 131)
- carnage (Chapter 11 - p. 130)
- Iwo Jima (Chapter 22 - p. 239)
- integrity (Chapter 23 - p. 253)