

Educator's Guide for NOTHING LEFT TO BURN

DEAR EDUCATOR:

Patty Blount's novels look closely at the issues teens face today. In *Nothing Left To Burn*, main characters Amanda Jamison and Reece Logan deal with the loss of family – loss through death, through separation and even through prison. The novel provides students and educators with opportunities to devise imaginary responses to real-life situations in a safe setting. Being able to relate to fictional characters frequently encourages teens to open up about the challenges they're facing. If you think a student is at risk or in danger, please share and contact any of these resources for help:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline—1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Suicide.org
- Your state's local hotline

The following activities and questions were designed for you to use *Nothing Left to Burn* in your classroom or student literature club.

FOR DISCUSSION

One of the main themes in *Nothing Left To Burn* is the *need to belong*. Explain the sociological implications of belonging to groups and define terms like *in-groups*, *out-groups*, and *reference groups*. Ask students what groups and units they belong to and identify which are in-groups, out-groups, or reference groups. Ask students to consider how their own identity is directly shaped by their groups.

Throughout *Nothing Left to Burn*, Reece is slowly writing a farewell letter to his father that expresses the pain and resentment he feels. Identify and discuss the specific statements in Reece's letter that indicate his state of mind.

From the first chapter, we learn both Amanda and Reece have *family* issues. Throughout the novel, both characters often describe their idea of an ideal family. Discuss the concept of an ideal family portrayed in books, movies and television and ask students to contrast to their own families. How are they different? How are they the same? Is there such a thing as 'the ideal family?'

Throughout the story, Amanda shares her foster kid rules. Are there rules in biological families? Discuss.

At the end of the story, both Reece and Amanda have to make a choice that risks the one thing each character wants more than anything. Describe their choices and ask students to determine if Amanda and Reece made the right choices.

At the end of the story, Reece finally admits to hiding his dad's gun under his bed. Have students discuss gun ownership, shooting statistics, and the right to bear arms. Was Lieutenant Logan a responsible gun owner? Does this story change your mind about this right?

Throughout the story, characters make references to *heroes*. Ask students to describe what a *hero* is and how pop culture molds their definitions. Ask students to name someone they consider a hero and describe why. Did reading *Nothing Left To Burn* change their perceptions of what it means to be a hero?

