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TENNIS STAR TEACHERS' GUIDE

Tennis Star Raewyn Caisley

Tennis Star is the first in the new Lothian Sports Fiction series and it will be enjoyed by a wide range of young readers. This engaging story is about young Nathan Taylor, who plays tennis and happens to look very much like a former world number one champion. The style and tone of the story is very accessible to the intended audience and the language used is most authentic. Nathan and his friends like to muck about down at the tennis courts and they have a lot of fun pretending they are superstars. Each one takes a tennis champion to emulate because of some similarities in their appearance, however Nathan is VERY like the young Richard Krafter, and because of this, his aunt, who is a great entrepreneur, gets him a role in an advertisement where he plays the younger version of the star he looks so like. This changes Nathan and he begins to enjoy the attention and play the part of the hero, getting altogether carried away by the adulation and forgetting his friends. His mum, with whom he has a very close relationship and understanding, particularly since his father left home, can see what is happening to her son. She arranges a very important meeting that brings Nathan back to realise the important things in life once more ...

The action and unfolding of the story will also engross those who read only if the subject interests them.

Reading

Look at the opening of the novel and answer the following questions:

- Where are we?
- What is taking place?
- Who is telling the story?
- What atmosphere is established from the first lines?

- What type of story is Tennis Star!?
- From what and whose perspective is it told?
- Find passages that are taking place in a character's head or imagination.
- In what ways did looking like someone famous have good aspects and bad aspects for Nathan Taylor?
- Where is his dad?

(*what a great guy, coming over just to show some support for his friend*) (26).

- Does Nathan mean this?

- What is involved in preparing for a game for Nathan?
- What are some of the steps that can be taken to relieve stress?
- Why was it that Nathan never expected to be in a final? (28)
- What makes Nathan smile twice on page 29?
- What makes Nathan want to give his three friends a big hug? (34)
- What caused the reversal in Nathan's form? (51)
- What did Nathan do at the end of the match with Max Denuchi? (56)
- What should he have done? (56)
- How does *the novelty wear off*, for Nathan? (64)
- Why?
- How does Nathan react to being seen everywhere and being famous? (91)

Look at the beginning of Chapter 7

- Why is everyone gathered?



9780734407757 | PB

TENNIS STAR TEACHERS' GUIDE

- What is Nathan being used for? (92)
- How is Nathan affected by making the ads and being on TV? (94)
- Auntie Glenda *owned my soul* (95). What does Nathan mean?
- Why was it that *being around Mum made me uncomfortable?* (98)

It was a set-up

- Explain what Nathan means here at the beginning of Chapter 10.
- What had Nathan lost in his relationship with his mother?
- How did he get it back?

On page 106, looking back, Nathan analyses the way he was behaving and says: *I reckon you could put it down to three things*

- List these three things.

- What does Nathan say in response to Richard Krafter's question: *So why did you decide to get so aggro on court?* (130)

Style

- Look at the way in which this story is told.
- What is the tone of the novel?

Vocabulary

- From the story, find and make a list of words that are typical of those used by boys of Nathan and his friends' age.
- What is the *ulterior motive* referred to on page 21?
- Use the following words in sentences to show you understand their meaning: *imploded* (20) *adulation* (60), *siblings* (87)
- Explain the difference between: *blond* (10) / *blonde* (37); *practise* (87) / *practice* (114).

The author uses plays on words in this story.

- Find some instances and talk about them and what they achieve.

I had to smile at the irony in that one (29)

- What is irony? Explain in detail the significance of the title of this novel

Sayings, expressions and references

Explain the meaning of the following, and if possible, their origin:

- *I did know they weren't totally falling on their sword though* (22)
- *... you've got to strike while the iron's hot.* (23)
- *We both knew the score* (23)
- *It was the biggest comeback since Lazarus.* (53)

What is meant by:

- *... and history began to repeat itself?* (72)
- *...sitting lotus style ...* (92)
- *I didn't want to risk someone else forcing me to hold a mirror up to myself* (106)

Jargon

Terms such as *downsize*, and *fiscally speaking* (29) can be called jargon.

- What is jargon?
- What purpose does it serve?

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TENNIS STAR TEACHERS' GUIDE

- Find further instances.

Language

The author uses many graphic images to make her word pictures vivid:

- *The crowd erupts like Mt Etna* (page 8)
- *... fuming like a thirteen-year-old car whose radiator was about to pop ...* (109)
- Look for further instances and use such language in your own writing.
- Find places where the author describes physical signs of getting worked up.
- There are many examples of body language in the text. Find some and examine words used to convey it and consider its place in writing.
- Comment on the language used in this novel.

Characters

- Who is the main character?
- Do a profile of him indicating what he is like as a person, his attributes and what motivates him.
- Consider how you were able to write what you did, for instance what does Nathan tell us about himself?

Nathan's mum is portrayed as a very special person.

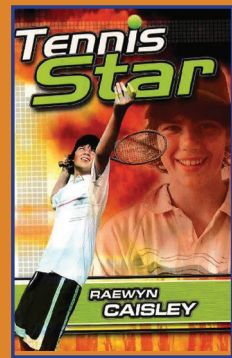
- Draw a pen portrait of her showing her qualities and the relationship she has with her son.
- Who are Nathan's friends?
- List them and jot down a few words beside each that appropriately describes them.
- Who is Richard Krafter?
- Write a piece on Auntie Glenda and Uncle Don covering their personalities and role in the novel.

Speaking/Listening

- Tell the story in your own words
- Why do people want to emulate famous people and copy them?
- Discuss the business of pretending and what it involves and why we do it.
- Talk about the following subjects as they appear in the text:

behaaviour	perspective	ego
self-esteem	self-confidence	authenticity
having fun	reacting to pressure	feelings & how they are portrayed
the importance of dreams	turning points in life	support of others
friends	reality	relationships
regrets	forgiving	saying sorry

- How important is attitude in what we do?
- What are role models?
- Talk about the importance of sport.
- How can tension be let off?
- How people take out their anger.
- Discuss the power of ads.
- What does being famous entail?
- How can events change you?
- Examine the use of contrasts in writing.
- There are several places where people give good advice – find instances of this and talk about



9780734407757 | PB

TENNIS STAR TEACHERS' GUIDE

them.

- What makes you get embarrassed?
- Conduct an interview with Nathan.
- Act out the scene on pages 101-102.
- Choose another portion from the text and act it out as a group.
- Find instances where Nathan looks back on what he should have done.
- Outline the scheme Nathan's mum hatched to enable him to see how he had changed and what he what he was like.
- Talk about Richard Krafter's words: *In the end it comes down to you.*
- Look at the ending of *Tennis Star!* by Raewyn Caisley and make some comments about it.

Writing

- Jot down what you know by the end of the first chapter.
- Write about the things that are important in life.
- As Nathan, write in your private journal what you have learned by the conclusion of the story.
- Write about an incident when, on looking back, you didn't do the right thing.
- Write about a time that you got carried away. Why did this happen?

About the author

Raewyn Caisley was born in New Zealand but now lives in Fremantle with her husband Terry and little boy Jack. She has lived in Australia for eighteen years and is the author of fifteen books for children.

Notes written by Nancy Mortimer