

About *THE TURING MACHINISTS*

At seventeen, Del's world seems to be falling apart. He's managed his Asperger's well, has a solid group of friends in his special needs class at school, and even manages to get by among people who don't understand his brand of communication. But his parents are splitting up, and Del is certain he can save his family. To do it, he decides he needs to live out his father's dream of musical stardom. He gets together with some of his friends and they form The Turing Machinists, an all-Asperger's rock band. But they'll need help – and Del seeks that help in the form of his neighbour, a reclusive rock legend who would rather have nothing to do with the music scene.

About M.E. REID

Born in Chatham, New Brunswick, **M.E. Reid** has lived in Cold Lake, Alberta; Edmonton, Alberta; Petawawa, Ontario; and West Germany. She currently lives in Kitchener, Ontario, and is the mother of two children with autism (one with Asperger's). *The Turing Machinists* is her first book for young adults.

Curriculum

Grade 9, 10, 11, 12 English (Reading and Literature Studies)

Grade 11, 12 Social Sciences Humanities (Psychology, Sociology, Challenge and Change in Society)

Student Objectives

After reading *The Turing Machinists*, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a tolerance for and better understanding of differing states of mental health.
- Demonstrate an understanding of personal conflicts, both within themselves and with others, and how an altered mental state may affect these conflicts.
- Apply and exhibit new skills in adaptability, coping, and time management.
- Familiarize themselves with specific mental illnesses and disorders, and understand how to behave towards people affected by them.
- Describe factors (misconceptions, portrayals in the media, etc.) that may contribute to the negative image of mental disorders and conditions, and what they may do to address and reduce such issues.
- Understand how behavioral and emotional changes may indicate a disorder or condition, and how to respond to them.

Getting Started

1. Discuss with students what knowledge they may already have regarding Asperger's Syndrome and Autism Spectrum Disorder.
2. Consider providing some brief background information on Alan Turing, providing context for why the characters of the book may so easily relate to him.

Discussion Questions

1. How do the writing style and structural devices simulate the thought process of Del? (Chapter 1)
2. So far, how have the characters met, or exceeded your expectations of individuals with their condition? (Chapter 1)
3. Is it fair of Bea to make that accusation? Why would she go in that direction? (Page 22, Chapter 2)
4. Is Del's father behaving appropriately? Given Del's condition, do you think he would have been more accepting by now? (Chapter 2)
5. Is Del's father being reasonable? Why might he feel this way? (Chapter 3)
6. What sort of bonds do the classmates have? Why might Del hesitate to call them friends despite knowing personal details about each of them? (Chapter 4)
7. Why might Del feel responsible for his parents' situation? (Chapter 4)
8. How has Del's behavior differed from your prior knowledge of people with his condition? (Chapter 4)
9. How are Del's motivations changing? (Chapter 6)
10. What signs are there of the group beginning to move outside their comfort zone? (Chapter 6)
11. How has Del's focus widened. Is he more accepting? (Chapter 7).
12. Is Del more socially adept than he thinks, given his ability to speak freely online, and ever-improving ability of speaking in person? (Chapter 7)
13. What have Del and Jeddy's mothers bonded over? (Chapter 8)
14. Why is Del not listening here? Is he in denial? Is it fair of Tammy-Lynn to get mad? (Chapter 8)
15. Why does Del decide against the band playing in the finals? How has he changed? Do you think he will maintain these changes? (Chapter 10)