

# the Tension of Opposites

## A Reader Guide

**Title:** The Tension of Opposites

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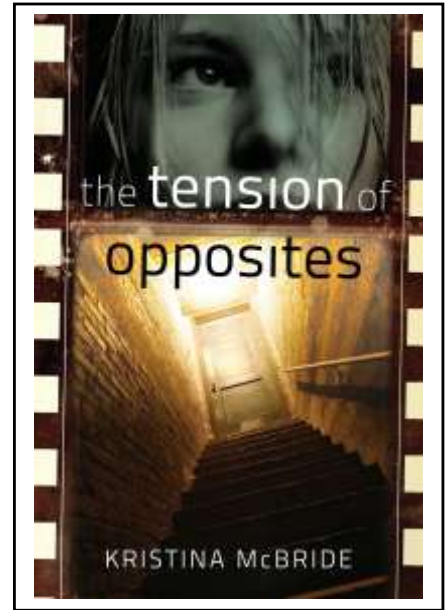
**This reader guide may be duplicated for classroom, book club, or related purposes.**

**About the Book:** It's been two years since Noelle disappeared. Two years since her bike was discovered, sprawled on a sidewalk. Two years of silence, of worry, of fear.

For those two long years, her best friend Tessa has waited, living her own life in a state of suspended animation. Because how can she allow herself to enjoy a normal high school life if Noelle can't? How dare she have other friends, go to dances, date boys, without knowing what happened to the girl she thought she would share everything with?

And then one day, someone calls Noelle's house. She's alive.

A haunting psychological thriller taken straight from the headlines, *The Tension of Opposites* is a striking debut that explores the emotional aftermath of a kidnapping on the victim, and on the people she left behind.



**Author Biography:** Kristina McBride has dreamed of being a published author since she was a child and across the street from a library. After graduating with a bachelor's in English Education, Kristina taught high school English for eight years. In 2005, just after having her first child and completing her Master's in Education, Kristina decided to quit teaching and take a crack at her dream. Kristina lives in Centerville, Ohio with her husband and two young children, stealing as many moments as she can to write, write, write.

### Questions for Discussion (or essay response):

- What do the two images on the cover represent? Is the girl Tessa or Noelle/Elle? Why?
- One of the main themes of *The Tension of Opposites* is friendship. Define what friendship means to you. Where have you seen or experienced the tension of opposites in a relationship?
- In the beginning of the book, Tessa has been consumed by survivor's guilt for the past two years. Is this a reasonable feeling for her to have? Explain how she deals with her guilt and how you think you would react in a similar situation.
- What do you think Tessa and Noelle's friendship would be like if Noelle had never been kidnapped? What about Tessa's relationship with Max?
- How is Tessa pulled by the tension of opposites? How is Elle pulled by the tension of opposites? List several examples. Explain a time in your life when you have felt pulled by the tension of opposites.
- Define love. What are the different types of love modeled in *The Tension of Opposites*? Think of all the different characters and relationships. Which types of love can be considered healthy? Which cannot?
- Think of a time when you have lost something important to you. How did that loss change you as a person? Did anything positive come from that loss?
- In one scene, Elle plays the song, *Outa Me, Onto You* by Ani DiFranco. What types of music best define the person you are? How do your moods affect the music you listen to? How important is music to your daily life?

### Writing Exercises:

- Write a scene where two friends who are at odds about something come together to work things out – or not – you decide. Think about tone of voice, body language, and facial expression. Try to SHOW instead of TELL how each character is feeling. Use dialogue to cue the reader in to details about the conflict between the two characters.
- Journal from one character's perspective. You must include an entry from before the kidnapping, just after the kidnapping occurs, on the date of the one-year anniversary, and the day Noelle comes home.
- Newspaper Article: Choose to report on the kidnapping or the return. Your article must have a headline and a byline, a detailed article, and a minimum of two illustrations.

### Activities and Projects:

- Using one of the following types of media (music, video, powerpoint, collage, photography), define one of the following themes from the novel *The Tension of Opposites*:

The Tension of Opposites

Friendship

Love

Self-Awareness

Coping with Loss (or Change)

This could easily be turned into a writing assignment by requiring each student to write a paper explaining his or her individual project. This would be a good project for presenting to the entire class. Encourage students to get creative, and to use multiple forms of media if they can (music and photography on a powerpoint, for example).

- Create a book trailer for *The Tension of Opposites*.

Examples of YA book trailers for reference:

The Class of 2K10 Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0H79WFPYpc>

Candor by Pam Bachorz: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyXkLnLobho>

For details on how to create a trailer, visit Pam Bachorz's blog:

<http://www.pambachorz.com/blog/2009/7/14/making-a-professional-book-trailer-on-a-budget.html>

### Research:

- *The Tension of Opposites* was inspired by real life events. Often, life imitates art, and vice versa. Find an example where life and art (movie, book, comic, song) tell a similar story. Research the real-life event documented in the work of art, and write a compare and contrast essay highlighting the main points of each event.

### Cross-Curriculum Tie-Ins:

- Photography: Students will compile a list of antonyms and then photograph things that symbolize the words they have listed. They will turn in a portfolio that will showcase the way the tension of opposites is evident in our world.

### Related Reads:

- *Living Dead Girl* by Elizabeth Scott
- *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold
- *13 Reasons Why* by Jay Asher