***Wild Life*** by Cynthia DeFelice

Here in Louisiana, your first hunt is a big deal to many of the boys growing up. It’s exciting and important to so many. The same can be said for Erik in *Wild Life*. He finally earned his hunting license in New York and already had plans for his first hunt that weekend with his best friend. His plans are cut short though when both of his parents are called into duty by the Army Reserve. This means that Erik must stay with his grandparents, Oma and Big Darrell, in North Dakota. This wouldn’t be so bad except for Big Darrell’s gruffness towards Erik, going so far as to yell at him when Erik mistakenly tries to open an upstairs door he’s not allowed in. Erik’s breaking point, however, is when Big Darrell refuses to let Erik keep Quill, a dog he rescued, until the owner arrived. Because he has such an instant bond with the dog, Erik decides to run away with Quill instead of waiting for the owner to get her. With only a hunting rifle and a dog by his side, can Erik really last in the cold North Dakota wilderness?

*~ Booktalk by Jennifer Torkkola*