

SAVVAS

Sampler

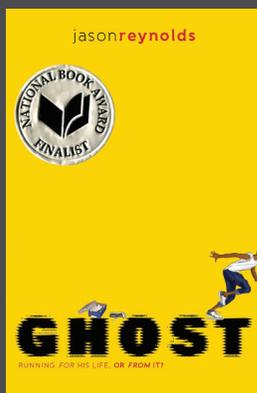
Reading ^{with} Relevance

Building Independent
Readers and Thinkers

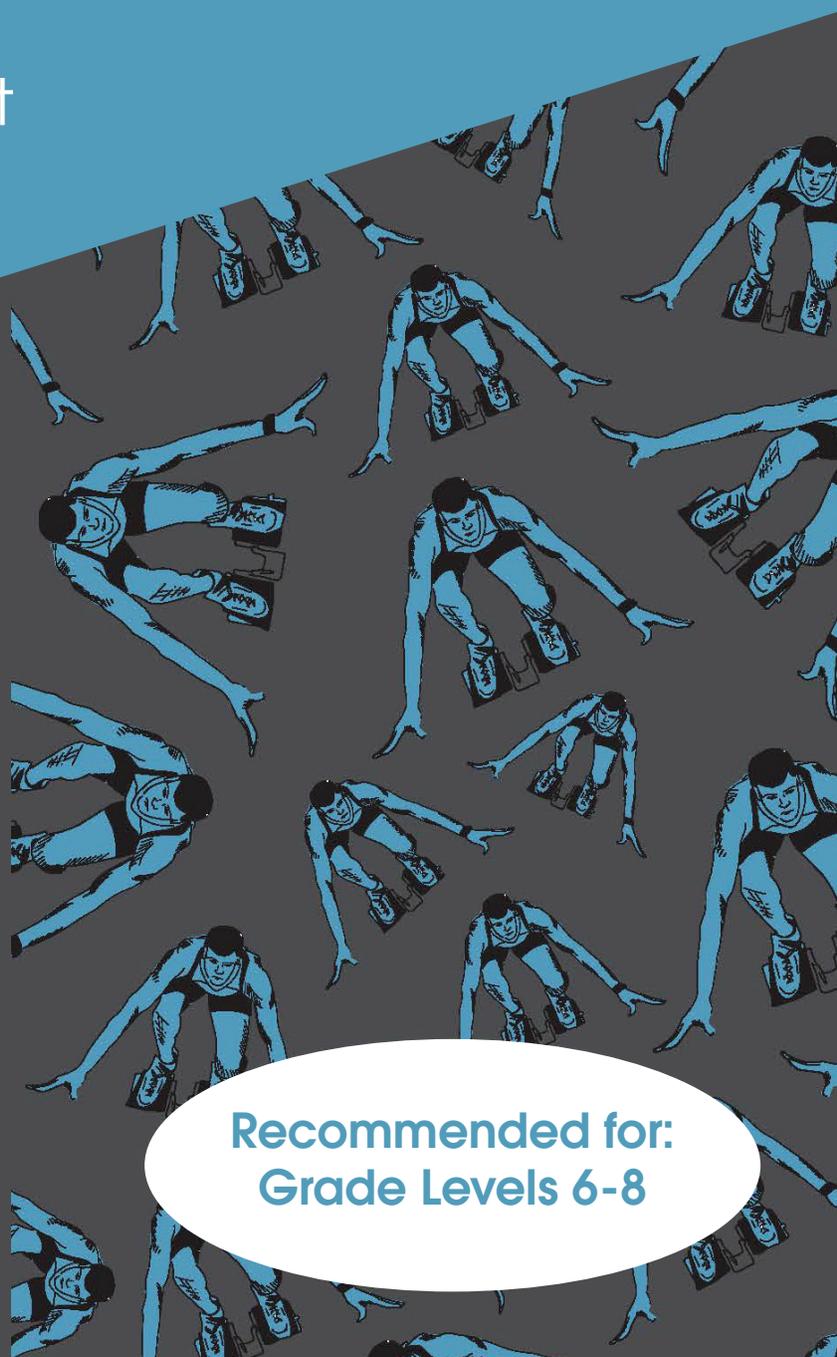
A Teacher's Guide For

Ghost

by Jason Reynolds



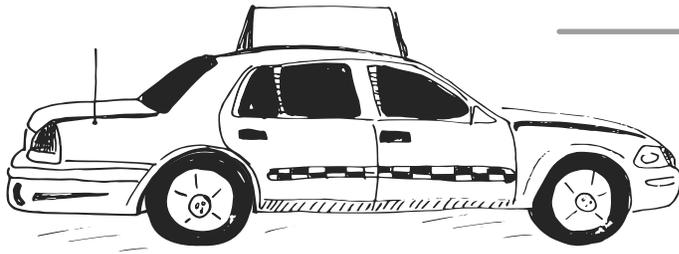
Recommended for:
Grade Levels 6-8



A tool to inspire change

This literacy curriculum is constructed around a content-rich novel that builds students' literacy skills and supports their character development and self-confidence. Students are motivated to read because they relate to the strong, diverse, and resilient characters featured in our selected novels and because each session gives them the opportunity to connect what they've read to their own lives.

Developed, field-tested, and refined in our own tutoring and mentoring programs, this standards-based curriculum has inspired persistently low-performing students to engage with literature, make meaning in their lives, and improve their English language arts skills. Now, *Reading with Relevance* is available to help you dig deep into the social, emotional, and academic needs of your students, whether in your classroom, after-school program, or youth development agency!



Why Ghost?

This novel tells the story of Castle, a seventh grade boy running from his problems, and his past. When a local track coach discovers Castle's natural talent for sprinting and takes him under his wing, Castle discovers both the challenges and the joys of joining an elite track team. We chose this book for its careful exploration of some powerful social and emotional themes: poverty, bullying, sports, friendship, and overcoming trauma. This curriculum will inspire students to build connections between Castle's redemptive life story and their own.

This teacher's guide includes:

- A facilitator's guide with tips and resources for implementing the curriculum.
- A map of academic standards addressed through this program.
- Ten individual lesson plans, including vocabulary, discussion questions, journal prompts, extension activities, and all handouts.
- Two assessments to monitor student progress throughout the program.
- Regular checkpoints to help teachers assess their students' progress on ELA standards.
- A culminating essay-writing unit.
- An appendix with additional teaching resources and activities to continue exploring this novel.

Lesson Plan Part One

Vocabulary:
Selected vocabulary from the reading is provided at the beginning of each session.

Session Number & Reading Pages:
The guide is divided into 9 reading sessions. The session number and pages appear at the top of each session.

Session 1
pages 1-7

Vocabulary

- mature** (pg. 4): v., grown up in some way
- devour** (pg. 4): v., to eat quickly
- morph** (pg. 5): v., change

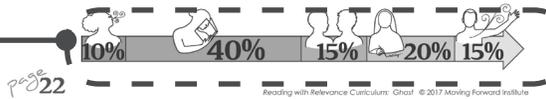
Today's Theme

The main theme of today's session is **fear**. Castle and his mother endure a harrowing experience when his father's alcoholism leads him to act out violently. Castle and his mother find a person they trust to help them in that scary moment. Talk with your students about the emotion of fear. How do they feel fear in their bodies? How can fear linger long after they've found safety? Who helps them when they feel scared? During the discussion, you might explain to your students that Castle experienced a trauma, and traumatic experiences sometimes stay with a person long after the event itself has ended.

Note: Be aware that some students may have similar stories—either of abusive parents or parents in prison—that they would like to share. Listen carefully and encourage students to journal or speak to appropriate school personnel, like a counselor.

Story Setup

Ghost tells the story of Castle Cranshaw, a seventh grader who eats a lot of sunflower seeds and can run really fast. Castle, who prefers to be called Ghost, joins a track team, and it changes his life. The book was published in 2016 by Jason Reynolds.



Session 1: pages 1-7

During Reading

hard of hearing (pg. 2): unable to hear well

rubbing off on (pg. 2): having an impact on

Guinness Book of World Records (pg. 2): A reference book that is published every year, starting in 1955, that records the achievements of both humans and nature. Guinness World Records is now known as the premier authority to catalog and verify world records.

buck (pg. 3): a dollar

Discussion Questions

- What does Castle like to eat?
- What do Castle and his father have in common?
- How does Castle feel about his father?
- How did Castle respond the night of the violent incident with his father?
- How do you think he and his mother were feeling that night?
- Where do Castle and his mother go to find safety?
- Where would you go if you needed to be somewhere safe away from home?
- Who are some people in your life that you could trust to help you in a crisis?

Timing Reminder:

A timing reminder shows the percentage of time that should be spent on each section of the lesson plan.

Story Setup/Session Recap:

A short description of the previous session's reading allows facilitators to quickly recap the important details.

Today's Theme:

Themes for each session are highlighted to allow the facilitator to prepare for meaningful dialogue with students.

Reading/During Reading:

Provides background and contextual information for the instructor that may be necessary for students to understand the reading.

Discussion Questions:

Targeted discussion questions allow facilitators to invite meaningful conversations with students.

Guide at a Glance

Ghost

Lesson Plan Format

Provided here is an overview of the lesson plan layout. Each lesson plan is arranged in two double-spread formats to match the flow of the session. Each of these elements is explored in greater depth in the following section, *How to Facilitate*.

Session 1: pages 1-7

Journal Prompt

FEAR

- As we are getting to know Castle Crenshaw, we learn about a pivotal moment in his life: the night that his father, drunk and out-of-control, yells at him and shoots at him and his mother. Take a moment and put yourself in his mother's shoes.
- How do you think she would describe the events of that evening?**
 - What happened? How would Ma have seen the actions and events that took place from her perspective?
 - What was Ma thinking and feeling as these events unfolded?
 - Why do you think she decided to fight back that night?

HABITS

- Castle's life centers around a series of habits, like going to Mr. Charles' store every day, and picking up his regular snack of sunflower seeds. Some people have really strong habits, while others don't.
- What are some of your habits--things you do every day?**
 - Do you bite your nails? Walk home the same way every day? Play video games right after school?
 - How compulsive do you feel about these habits? Do you have to do these things each day? How do you feel if you don't?
 - Do you have any habits you would like to change?

Checkpoint

- Students should demonstrate a command of the standard written conventions of English.
 - Use capital letters appropriately: to start sentences, when referencing the book title, and when using proper nouns (like the names of characters or places). Remember to end every sentence with a period as well.
 - For example, "I can always ask my mom or Mrs. Anderson for help."

Extension Activity

Castle loves reading the Guinness Book of World Records, and is fascinated by the accomplishments of others. Someday, he hopes to set a record for his sunflower seed eating. In this activity, students will complete an application for their own personal records they would like to set!

Materials:

- World's Greatest Handout

Page 24

Session 1: pages 1-7

Name:

NAME: _____
(LAST) (FIRST) (MIDDLE)

MY WORLD RECORD-SETTING TALENT: _____

DESCRIBE THIS TALENT: _____

WHAT MAKES MY TALENT-ONE-OF-A-KIND: _____

WHY I THINK THIS IS SO COOL AND RECORD-SETTING: _____

Page 25

Lesson Plan Part Two

Checkpoint (where included):
Ideas for monitoring progress are provided for instructors to effectively assess student work.

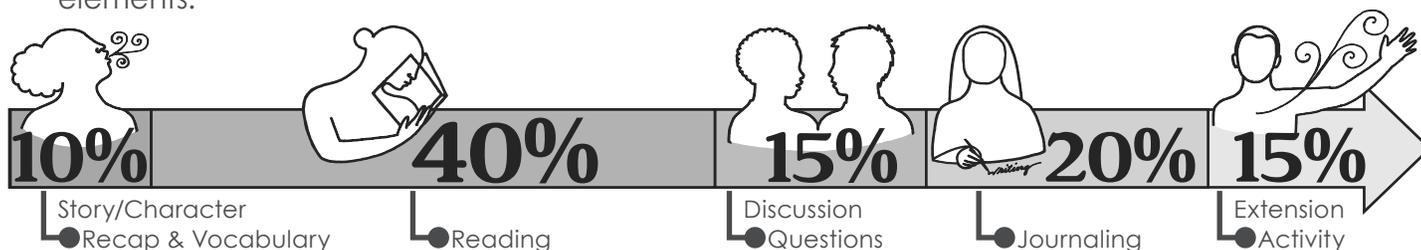
Journal Prompt:
Thoughtful journal prompts provide an opportunity for students to connect the story to their own lives while developing their writing skills.

Extension Activity w/ Handout:
Help bring the story to life with creative extensions. Each handout is ready for students to use independently.

How to Facilitate Ghost

Timing & Structure

This curriculum includes 10 individual lesson plans. Each of these lesson plans may be condensed or expanded to meet your students' reading levels and your classroom or program structure. While we don't define the time constraints for each element of the lesson plan, we do recommend dividing your time in the manner shown below. Please feel empowered to modify this suggested time allocation to best meet the instructional needs of your students. Despite varying session lengths, this reading curriculum should always include the following elements:



This program can be facilitated in a small reading group or in a larger after-school or school-day classroom setting, however, you will need to embrace different instructional practices depending on your group size. If you are able to create small reading groups, we suggest grouping students by their fluency levels. If you are unable to facilitate small reading groups, consider breaking students into small groups for discussions and other activities.

Take a moment to read the "Today's Theme" section that precedes each lesson. Then, write your vocabulary words on the board with the definitions before you begin teaching; the best time to do this is right before the session starts so students have ample time to see the words. A list of vocabulary words will be provided for each session, and you may choose a few to focus on each week. You should also prepare any materials required to complete the day's extension activity.

Each lesson plan begins with a section that clearly describes the social and emotional themes highlighted in the day's reading. This is provided as an instructional resource to help you set your intentions about the social and emotional learning goals for each of your sessions. This is also an excellent opportunity to self-reflect on your own relationship with the novel's themes.

Creating Reading Groups

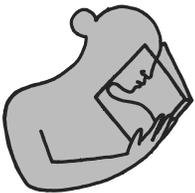
Before Starting a Session

Today's Theme

Story Recap & Vocabulary



Recap the story using the “Story Recap” section of your lesson plan. Begin by asking the students to share with you and each other what happened during the last session’s reading. Remind the students of the characters you have encountered; you can ask quick questions like, “Who are the main characters?” and “What were some of the major/most exciting events from the last section we read?” Point out what vocabulary words will be introduced in the upcoming chapters and remind students to look for these words while reading. Please encourage students to copy the day’s vocabulary words into their journals.



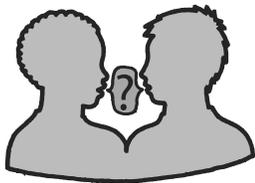
Reading

During this time, students will read the assigned pages defined in each lesson. You may have students read aloud in small groups or in a larger group, you may have students follow along while you read, or you may have students complete silent, independent reading. During training, you will be provided with a “Guided Reading Best Practices Manual,” including tips on how to facilitate this portion, depending on your facilitation structure.

During Reading

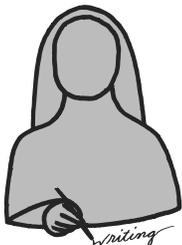
There may be times when unfamiliar themes, references, slang, or historical context are present during the reading. If you feel that it is important to provide definitions or context for your students, this information is included in the “During Reading” section of each lesson.

Discussion Questions



After you finish reading, ask the questions provided in the “Discussion Questions” section of your curriculum. These questions include reading comprehension, critical thinking, and social/emotional skill-building topics that will prepare students to connect with the story, write in their journals, and complete extension activities.

Journal Prompt & Writing



The journal prompts are designed to provide a safe space for students to develop and share their thoughts and ideas while they develop critical thinking and improve on writing skills. After discussion, students will respond to journal prompts designed to help them connect the story to their own lives. Each lesson includes two journal topics to choose from. You may use one or both, depending on your students and program.

Each lesson plan includes an extension activity students can complete independently. These activities are designed to be fun and engaging while helping students to improve their writing, vocabulary, critical thinking, and other English language arts standard skills.

Checkpoints are included throughout the guide to help support students and instructors, ensuring that students understand the material and are building appropriate skills. Checkpoints can be used to adapt a lesson or activity for varied strengths and abilities of students and are intended to offer additional benchmarks for student improvement.

Twice during the program, near the mid-point and at the end of the novel, students will have the opportunity to complete a short assessment to demonstrate their comprehension of the novel's plot and characters. Also, included in the Appendix is an end-of-program evaluation that may be used to collect students' feedback on this reading program.

This reading program culminates with students writing a final essay about the novel. Encourage students to use their previous journal entries and completed extension activities to think through their essays and find necessary information to support their opinion. There are sample graphic organizers in the Appendix that may be helpful for your students in the writing process.

Ask students to identify their favorite journal entries and/or completed activities and worksheets. Students should choose items that best demonstrate their understanding of the book and show their best work as readers and writers. Portfolios can be used as part of the final evaluation and to assess student improvement. This is a great way for students to show that they have risen to the challenge of writing complete paragraphs, demonstrated organization in their writing, and have a solid understanding of the story and its characters.

Extension Activities

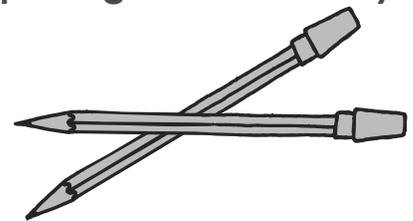


Checkpoints



Student Assessment & Evaluation

Supporting the Final Essay



Final Portfolio

About the Book

Ghost

Story Summary

Ghost tells the story of **Castle Crenshaw**, a naturally gifted runner whose life is changed when he is recruited for his city's elite middle-school track team. Running isn't new to Castle, as he has been running his whole life — first from a father aiming a gun at him in a rage, and since from a series of problems, mistakes, and bad choices. Joining the team is a chance for Castle to use his talents in a new way, to build community with peers struggling with their own challenges, and to benefit from the mentorship and guidance of Coach Brody — a former Olympian now passionate about fostering opportunities for a new generation of athletes. Ultimately, track helps Castle focus and teaches him valuable lessons about friendship, confidence, honesty, and trust.

Jason Reynolds did not always like to read and write. His aunt would give him books each Christmas for years, and for many years Reynolds threw the books on a shelf untouched. When he discovered poetry in sixth grade, he began to realize that books could be awesome. He studied English at the University of Maryland and then moved to Brooklyn to live out his writing dreams. He says on his website he “moved to Brooklyn because somebody told me they were giving away dream-come-true vouchers.” Reynolds worked hard, and his first solo novel, *When I Was the Greatest*, was published in 2014. His goal is to write books that are not boring with kids like him, who may not like reading, in mind.

About the Author



Social and Emotional Themes

Because *Ghost* covers several potentially sensitive topics for students, we want to prepare you with some information about, and ways to address, these topics.

Castle's father is in prison because he shot at his son and wife. This moment takes a hold on Castle's psyche; he is unable to sleep in his bedroom because of his traumatic memories. The trauma causes him anxiety and pain, and it makes him feel different from other kids. You may have students in your class who have experienced various forms of abuse, or hold their own trauma around their experiences at home. If they want to share their story, listen with compassion. Be aware of the laws around mandatory reporting and know your responsibilities for reporting suspected child abuse.

Domestic Abuse

Castle's father is currently serving his sentence in prison. His mother is a single mother, who takes online classes and works at the hospital. As a result, Castle spends a lot of time alone and unsupervised. Castle is painfully aware of his father's absence. He thinks of his father when he eats sunflower seeds. When he apologizes for stealing shoes, he wishes he could get an apology or some of the other emotional support he needs from his father. You may have students who have similar experiences with absent parents. This novel presents them with an opportunity to connect with Castle and think through their own relationships with their parents.

Absent Parent

Coach Brody takes all the newbies out to dinner at a Chinese restaurant, and asks them to share one thing about themselves that not a lot of people know. Although Castle is used to keeping his father's role in his life a secret from everyone, he feels a great sense of relief when he shares with the group. Throughout the book, Castle also challenges Coach's trust in him when he makes mistakes; despite these missteps, Coach continues to trust and believe in Castle. This continued trust is in part because of Castle's obvious remorse for his mistakes. This book gives students the opportunity to see a character with a good heart make big, yet understandable, mistakes. Talk to students about the weight secrets can have on a person's heart and mind as well as the ways we should behave to keep the trust of those we love.

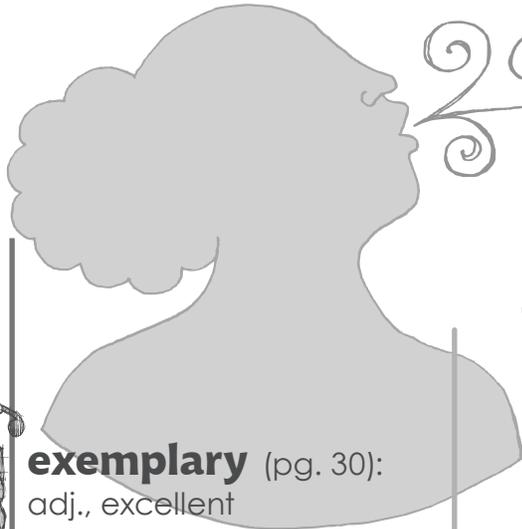
Secrets and Trust

Poverty Castle lives in an area of his city called Glass Manor — an area filled with poverty. Most nights, Castle eats food his mother brings home from her cafeteria job. They do not own a car, and so walk or take the bus to get around. Castle laments that he wears no-name shoes and his clothes never fit properly. He cannot afford to buy running shoes or work out clothes for track practice. His life is different, in this way, from some of his teammates. Castle's mother challenges many stereotypes about black single mothers living in poverty. She is working hard to better her life and does her best for her son. Some of your students may live in poverty or know someone who lives in poverty. This novel may allow some students to see themselves and other students to empathize.



Session 3

pages 29-51



Vocabulary

exemplary (pg. 30):
adj., excellent

disbelief (pg. 36): n.,
surprise, having a hard
time believing

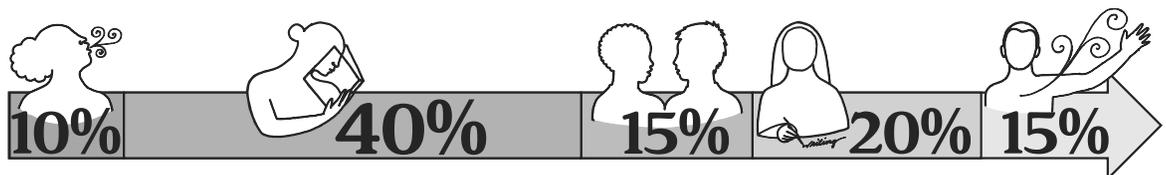
antsy (pg. 43): adj., full
of anxious energy

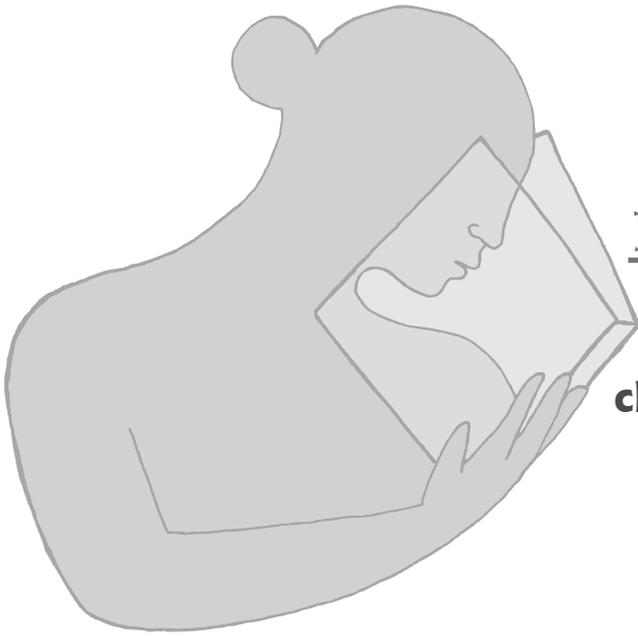
Today's Theme

The theme of today's session is **bullying**. Brandon Simmons is Castle's main bully, but Castle also notes that he is teased by a variety of people because of his name and his socioeconomic status. Brandon's teasing reaches a point where Castle can no longer take it, and Castle fights Brandon. You can use this scene as an opportunity to engage in a serious discussion with your students about bullying. What can we learn from this situation? How could it have been prevented? What could Brandon and Castle both have done differently? Students may feel that telling a teacher is not always the most effective way to deal with a bully. In response to that, work with students to brainstorm nonviolent ways to respond to bullying. You can especially encourage students to show up as each other's allies.

Session 2 Recap

In the previous session, Castle gets his sunflower seeds and goes to watch a track practice. He observes Lu, Sunny, and Patina run. Lu's arrogance presents like a challenge to Castle, and he decides to run against Lu. They tie. Coach Brody is astounded by how fast Castle runs and asks him, and later his mother, if he can join the track team. Castle's mother agrees as long as Castle behaves and keeps his grades up.





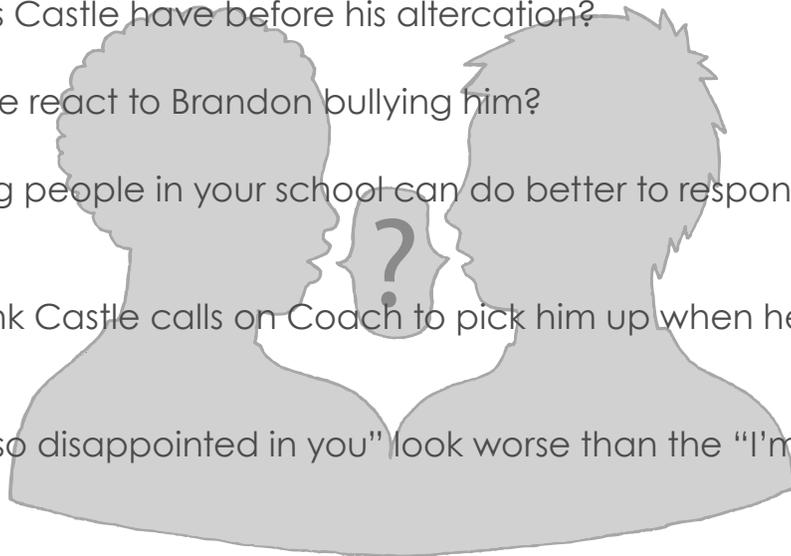
During Reading

rap sheet (pg. 29): slang for an official criminal record

chump (pg. 33): someone who is easily tricked

Discussion Questions

- Why does Castle refuse to sleep in his room? How does he feel about this space?
- What goal does Castle have before his altercation?
- How does Castle react to Brandon bullying him?
- Is there anything people in your school can do better to respond to bullying?
- Why do you think Castle calls on Coach to pick him up when he is suspended?
- Why is the “I’m so disappointed in you” look worse than the “I’m mad” look?
- What advice does Coach give Castle about life? What do you think this means?



Journal Prompt

BULLYING

- Brandon bullies Castle on a regular basis, but on this day, Castle decides to literally fight back.

Do you think Castle was right to fight Brandon? Why or why not?

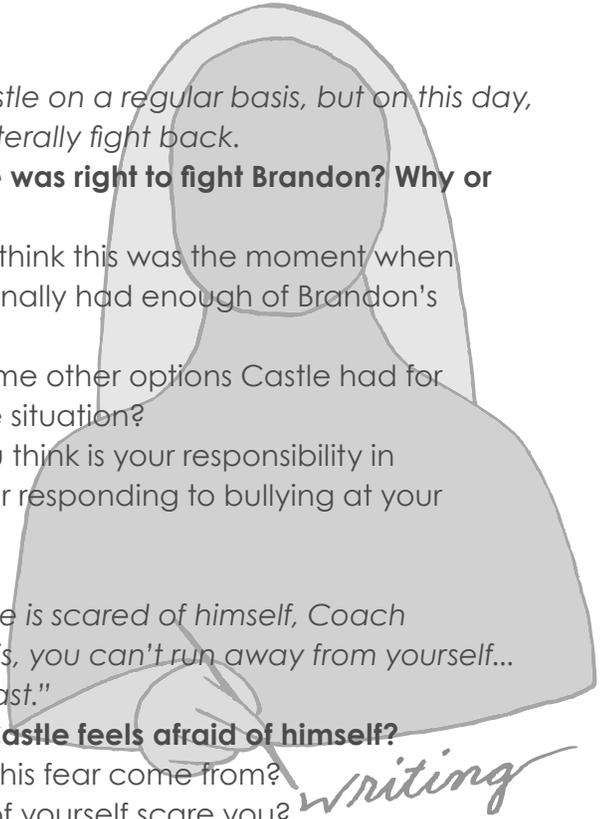
- » Why do you think this was the moment when Castle had finally had enough of Brandon's bullying?
- » What are some other options Castle had for handling the situation?
- » What do you think is your responsibility in preventing or responding to bullying at your school?

SCARED

- When Castle says he is scared of himself, Coach responds, "Trouble is, you can't run away from yourself... ain't nobody that fast."

Why do you think Castle feels afraid of himself?

- » Where does his fear come from?
- » What parts of yourself scare you?
- » How can you use your fear to grow?



Checkpoint

- Students should start each journal entry by introducing the topic of their writing.
 - » Construct a clear topic sentence.
 - » For example, "Today, I am going to write about _____."

Extension Activity

Today, students read about a moment when Castle just snaps, and lashes out physically at Brandon in response to his bullying. This activity asks students to put themselves in the shoes of Castle's close friend. What advice would they have for Castle after this very bad day?

Materials:

- » Text Talk Handout

Name: _____

The form is a large smartphone graphic with a dark grey background. It contains six text message bubbles arranged in a vertical sequence. The bubbles alternate in color: white, light grey, white, light grey, white, and light grey. Each bubble has a small tail pointing to the right, indicating it is a message received. The bubbles are empty, intended for students to write their responses to the text talk prompt.

Castle snaps, and lashes out physically at Brandon in response to his bullying. Today, you'll put yourself in the shoes of Castle's close friend. What advice do you have for Castle after this very bad day? What would he say to you? How would you respond? How would your text conversation read?

Text Talk

Session 7

pages 122-135

Vocabulary



prearranged (pg. 122):
adj., put together ahead of
time

bawked (pg. 123): v.,
exclaimed

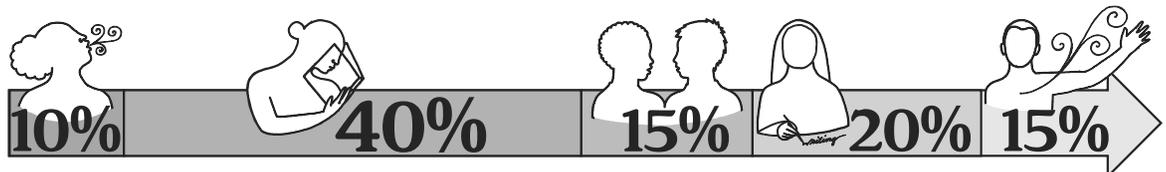
doled (pg. 130): handed
out, passed out

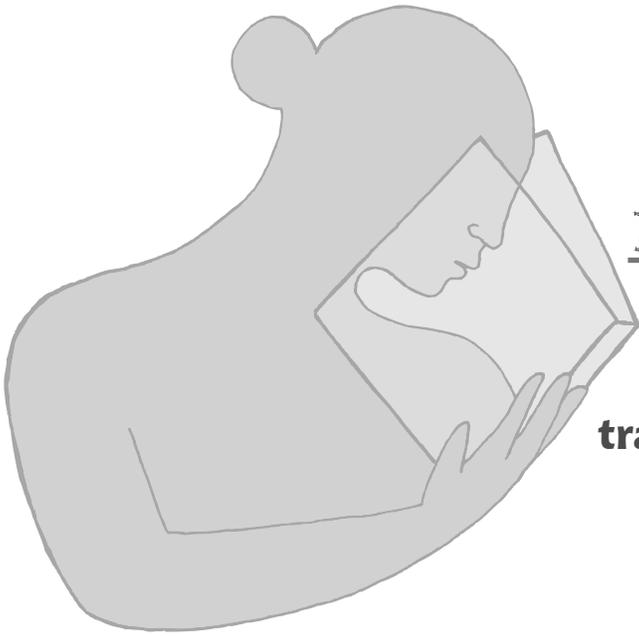
Today's Theme

The theme of today's session is **vulnerability**. At the restaurant, Coach instructs the newbies that they must share a secret that most people do not know with each other in order to earn their meal. Although these teammates might seem very different from one another on the surface, when they open up and share their vulnerabilities, they make surprising connections, finding that they can really understand and relate to one another. Encourage your students to think about the reality that everyone has secrets and vulnerabilities that lie under the surface, and that these truths might help them make deeper connections and form more diverse friendships. How do they make space for others to share their vulnerabilities? How do they choose to share their own secrets?

Session 6 Recap

In the previous session, Castle attends track practice after stealing the shoes from Everything Sports. He runs his first long run with the team, with Coach riding in the Motivation Mobile behind him. He feels accomplished even though he finishes last. But he lies to Coach about where he got the shoes. Then, Castle stops by Mr. Charles' store. Mr. Charles checks in on Castle to make sure he is okay. Castle wanders around his neighborhood, stopping to watch a bit of a basketball game, and reflects on his life before it is time to go to the Chinese restaurant with the other newbies.





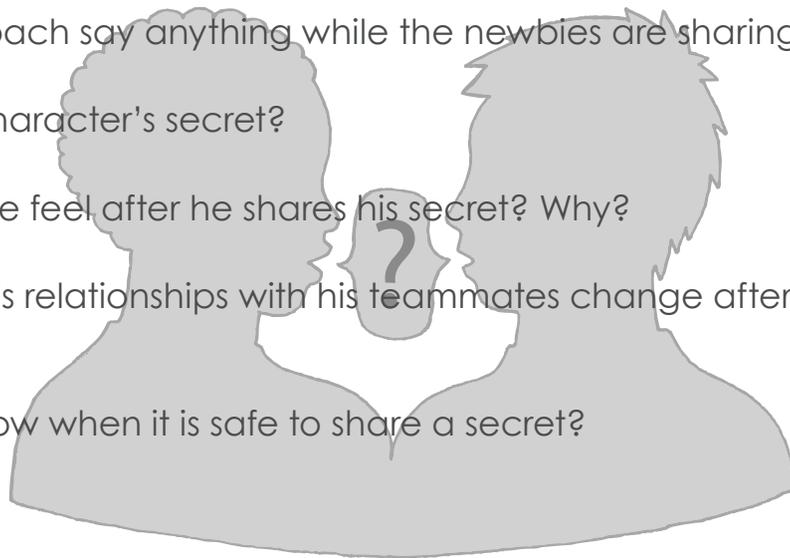
During Reading

Peking duck (pg. 124): a recipe from Beijing in which the duck has thin, crisp skin and is covered in bean sauce

trap (pg. 128): slang for “mouth”

Discussion Questions

- How does Castle feel when he arrives at the Chinese restaurant? Why?
- What does Coach have the newbies do before they can eat their food?
- Why doesn't Coach say anything while the newbies are sharing?
- What is each character's secret?
- How does Castle feel after he shares his secret? Why?
- How did Castle's relationships with his teammates change after sharing their secrets?
- How do you know when it is safe to share a secret?



Journal Prompt

SECRETS

- All the characters, including Coach, share a secret at the dinner at the Chinese food restaurant.

What do you think about Coach's secret sharing exercise?

- » Why do you think the players felt comfortable to share their vulnerabilities?
- » How did the secret-sharing change the relationships on the team?
- » Who do you trust with your secrets? Why?

SENSITIVITY

- Coach gently accuses Lu and Castle of asking inappropriate questions. He does this to protect the group from divisions and in doing so, encourages the boys to be more sensitive to their teammates when they are being asked to be vulnerable.

Some people believe sensitivity is a sign of weakness. Do you agree? Why or why not?

- » How do you think Coach wanted Castle and Lu to react to his feedback?
- » Why might it be important to show sensitivity?
- » Write about a time when you showed sensitivity. How did it feel?

Checkpoint

- Students should end journal entries with a concluding sentence that follows from the main idea or opinion presented.

- » Student writing should focus on a central idea, and this idea should be clearly referenced not only in a topic sentence, but also at the conclusion of the writing passage.
- » For example, "In conclusion, I think that _____."

Extension Activity

One of the effects of Coach's trust exercise over dinner is that Castle's assumptions about his teammates are challenged. It is harder to maintain preconceived notions about a person once you get to know them. In this activity, students will use the "Appearances and Assumptions" worksheet to compare potential assumptions about the characters and themselves alongside what they learn to be true.

Materials:

- » Appearances and Assumptions Handout

Name: _____

Character	What assumptions might people make about this character?	What do you know about this character that challenges those assumptions?
Castle		
Sunny		
Lu		
Patty		
Coach		
Mr. Charles		
Castle's Mom		
You		

One of the effects of Coach's trust exercise over dinner is that Castle's assumptions about his teammates are challenged. It is harder to maintain preconceived notions about a person once you get to know them. In this activity, you will use the "Appearances and Assumptions" worksheet to compare potential assumptions about the characters (and yourself!) alongside what you learn to be true.

Appearances and Assumptions

Appendix

Additional Activities

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There's so much more!



For more information, go to
[Savvas.com/ReadingwithRelevance](https://www.savvas.com/ReadingwithRelevance)

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