

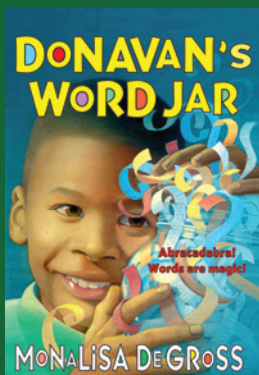
Sampler

Reading ^{with} Relevance

Building Independent
Readers and Thinkers

A Teacher's Guide For
Donavan's
Word Jar

by Monalisa De Gross



Recommended for:
Grade Levels 2-3

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.

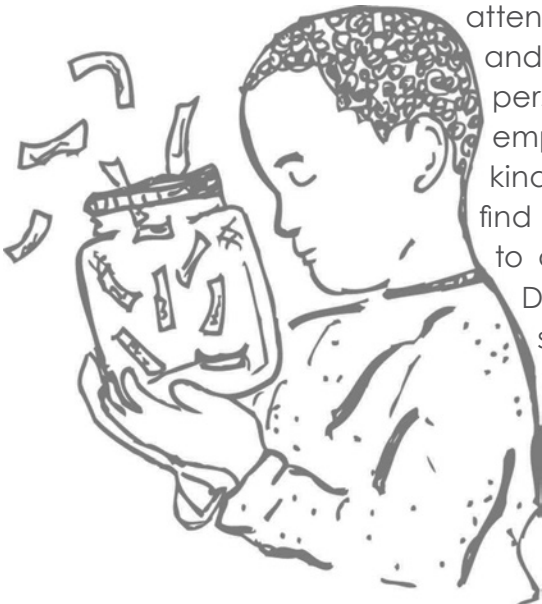
Developed, field-tested, and refined in our own tutoring and mentoring programs, this standards-based curriculum has inspired persistently low-performing students to engage with literature, make meaning in their lives, and improve their English language arts skills. Now, *Reading with Relevance* is available 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 Donavan's Word Jar

Donavan's Word Jar is the story of a young African-American boy, Donavan, on a search to solve his dilemma - he has too many words to fit in his word jar collection! We chose this novel for its powerful

attention to some rich social and emotional themes: perseverance, family, empathy, education, and kindness. Students will find themselves relating to and being inspired by Donavan's search for a solution; this curriculum will help students build connections between Donavan's life story and their own lives.



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.
- Seven individual lesson plans, including vocabulary, discussion questions, journal prompts, extension activities, and all handouts.
- An assessment to monitor student progress.
- Regular checkpoints to help teachers assess their students' progress on ELA standards.
- A culminating essay-building 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 6 reading sessions. The session number and pages appear at the top of each session.

Session 1
pages 3-14

Vocabulary

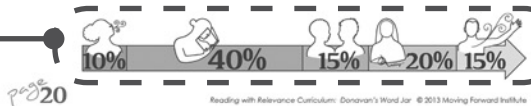
- collect** (pg 4): v., to gather things together to keep
- nutrition** (pg 7): n., the parts of food that give our bodies energy
- firm** (pg 12): adj., strong, secure
- snooping** (pg 12): v., looking into something that is not yours

Today's Theme

Today we learn that Donovan is **passionate** about his habit of collecting words. Take a moment to ask your students what they are passionate about. Do they have hobbies or interests that make them feel as excited as Donovan gets about new words? Do they love reading and words the way that Donovan does?

Story Setup

Since this is the start of the book, you will want to go over some basic background information about the book. This novel is about a young boy's love of words and the amazing collection of words he keeps in a jar. Have students explore the book a little. What do they notice on the cover? Does the cover give any clues to what the story might be about? Discuss what a collection is with your students. What kinds of things can people collect? Ask your students if any of them have collections that they keep.



Session 1: pages 3-14

During Reading

boutique (pg 9): n., a small shop
pincers (pg 10): pincers are a type of tool used to grip things firmly
trillions (pg 9): n., a really big number. A number followed by twelve zeros (1,000,000,000,000)

Discussion Questions

- What grade is Donovan in?
- What are some things that Donovan's friends collect?
- How is Donovan different from the other kids in his class?
- What do you think about Donovan's excitement about words?
- Where does Donovan find the words to add to his collection?
- Was Donovan mean to his sister? Do you think it was okay for Donovan to be mean to Nikki because she was nosy?

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.

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.

Guide at a Glance

Donavan's Word Jar

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 3-14

Journal Prompt

READING

- Donavan loves being able to read and learn new words. **What is something that you love about reading?**
 - How did you feel when you first learned to read?
 - Why is it important to know how to read?

COLLECTING

- Donavan and his friends all have things they collect. **If you could collect anything in the world, what would it be?**
 - Why would you collect this item?
 - What makes it special?
 - Do you have something you already collect?

Checkpoint

- Students should demonstrate a growing 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

Students will build word jars of their own. Have students color and decorate their word jars from the handout. Tell the students they will be collecting words just like Donovan and they will need to keep their word jars handy every time they read. Encourage students to put jars of words from the story in their jars even if they aren't on the vocabulary list. Each session, encourage students to add more words to their word jars.

Session 1: pages 3-14

Name: _____

My Word Jar

You're going to build a word jar, just like Donovan. Color and decorate this word jar and keep it with you every time you read from this book. "Collect" words by writing them in this word jar. Put lots of words in your jar even if they are not on the vocabulary list! If you don't know what a word means, you can write it in your word jar and then ask a teacher or tutor.

Lesson Plan Part Two

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

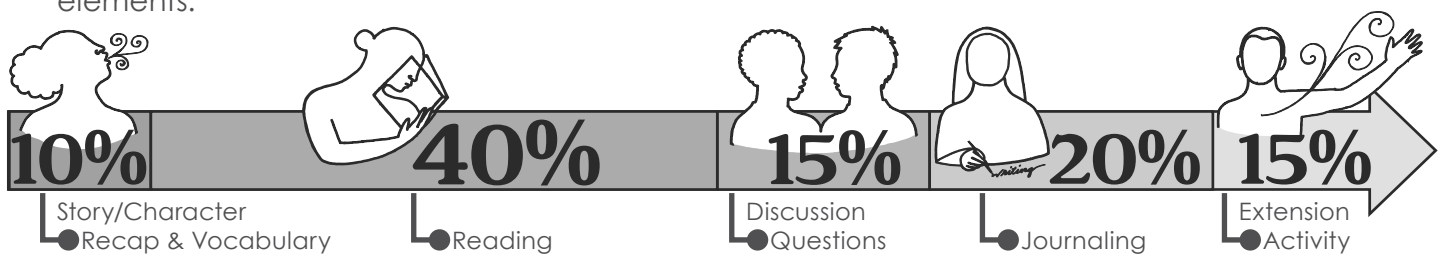
Journal Prompt:
Thoughtful journal prompts provide an opportunity for students to connect the story to their own lives while developing their writing skills.

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 Donavan's Word Jar

Timing & Structure

This curriculum includes 7 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 reading fluency levels. If you are unable to facilitate small reading groups, consider breaking students into small groups for discussions and other activities.

Creating Reading Groups

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.

Before Starting a Session

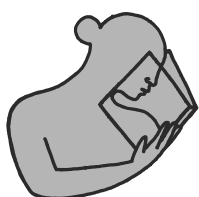
Each lesson plan begins with a section that clearly describes the social and emotional themes highlighted in the day's reading. This is provided as an instructional resource to help you set your intentions about the social and emotional learning goals for each of your sessions. This is also an excellent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

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 to take place last time?" 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.



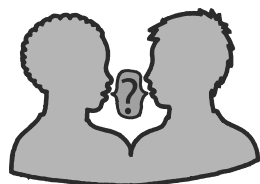
Reading

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

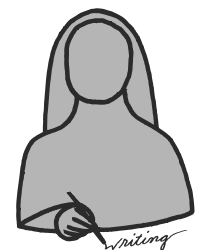
There may be times when unfamiliar themes, references, slang, or historical context are present during the reading. If you feel that it is important to provide definitions or context for your students, this information is included in the "During Reading" section of each lesson.

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



Journals are designed to provide a safe space for students to develop and share their thoughts and ideas while also presenting an opportunity to develop critical thinking and improve on writing skills. After discussion, students will respond to a journal prompt, designed to help them to 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. Encourage your students to write as many full sentences as they can to respond to questions.

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.

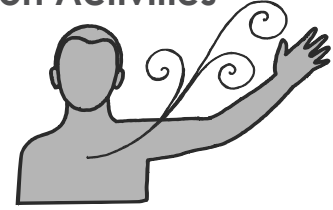
Checkpoints are included throughout the guide to help support students and instructors, ensuring that students understand the material and are building appropriate skills. Checkpoints can be used to adapt a lesson or activity for students' varied strengths and interests and are intended to offer additional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

At the end of the program, 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, an end-of-program evaluation may be used to collect students' feedback on this reading program.

This reading program culminates with students completing a final exercise about various aspects in the novel where they finish sentences to complete an essay. Students will complete sentences about the plot and social-emotional aspects of the story. This will build on their work throughout the guide. Help them see how they are completing a full essay so they can be proud of their work!

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 completing their work and have a solid understanding of the story and its characters.

Extension Activities

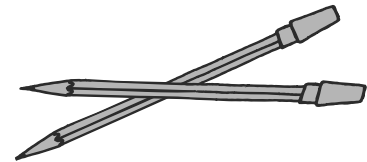


Checkpoints

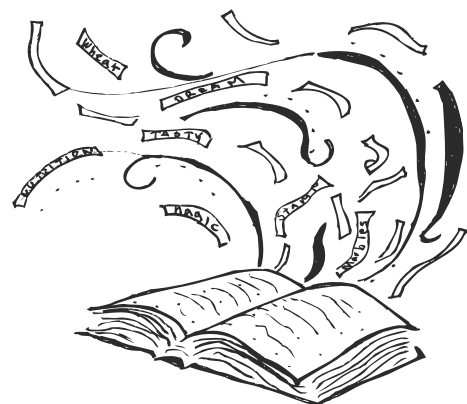


Student Assessment & Evaluation

Supporting the Final Essay



Final Portfolio



About the Book

Donavan's Word Jar

Story Summary

Donavan's Word Jar is the story of **Donavan Allen**, a curious and ambitious 3rd-grade boy. Donavan is unique amongst his 3rd-grade classmates because he collects words. He discovers words in everyday situations, writes them down on slips of paper, and adds them to his word jar. Donavan encounters a dilemma when his word jar fills up, sending him on a search for a solution to this problem. He asks advice from his mother, father, and teacher before finally discovering a solution while visiting his grandmother. In the end, Donavan decides to share his words with people who can use them, and he learns that words can have a powerful effect on people.

Donavan's Word Jar is the first children's book written by Monalisa DeGross. DeGross was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. The characters in this story were named after DeGross' own children: Donavan and Nikki. In addition to being a children's book author, DeGross also works in a library in Baltimore and is a local playwright.

About the Author



Social and Emotional Themes

Because the novel covers a few potentially sensitive topics for students, we want to prepare you with some information about, and ways to address, these topics.

When Donovan's mom goes out, Donovan has to stay to watch his little sister even though he doesn't want to and is a bit young to be a babysitter. Your students may also have various responsibilities at home (such as caring for younger siblings). You can ask them to think about how they demonstrate responsibility and how they feel knowing they can be trusted with contributing to the family.

Responsibility

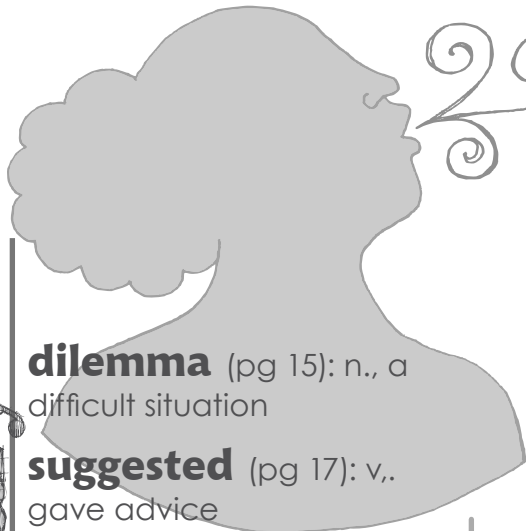
Donavan visits his grandma who lives alone in a retirement community since losing her husband, Donovan's "Grandpop." Many students may have experienced the loss of a grandparent or someone else close to them. If a student approaches you about loss in her or his family, listen empathetically, and remind the student that it's natural to feel sad when we lose someone. You might encourage her or him to write about the way she or he feels.

Loss



Session 2

pages 15-23



Vocabulary

dilemma (pg 15): n., a difficult situation

suggested (pg 17): v., gave advice

solution (pg 17): n., an answer to a problem

advice (pg. 18) n., a helpful piece of information

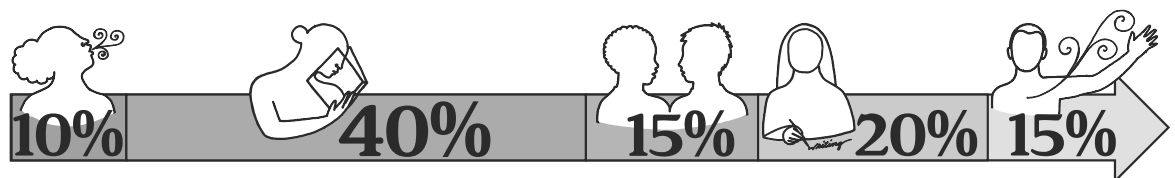
definitive (pg. 19) adj., certain

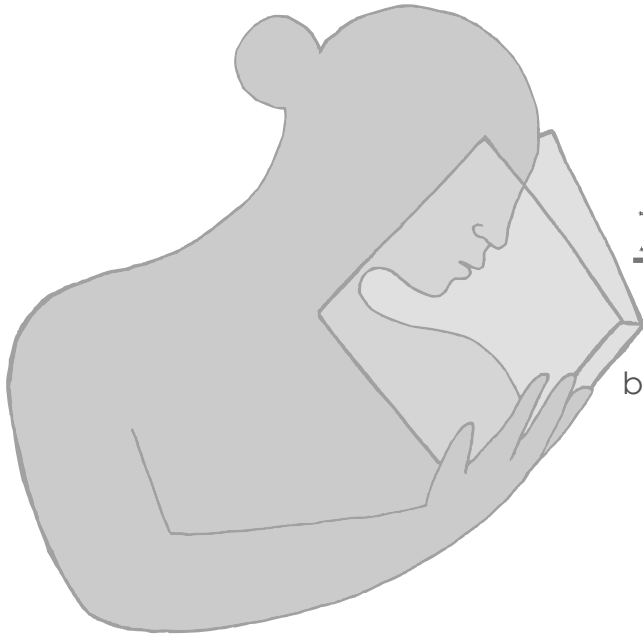
Today's Theme

Today's theme is **problem-solving**. Donovan has a problem with too many words in his jar, so he goes to people he trusts for advice. Have students think about how they problem-solve. Do they brainstorm a list of ideas? Do they think quietly about it? Do they ask other people? Have them consider the people in their lives who they can trust to help with problems.

Session 1 Recap

Donavan, the main character, is in Mrs. Panky's 3rd-grade class. While other students in the class collect objects such as stamps and marbles, Donovan is unique because he likes to collect words. The word collection started one morning at breakfast when Donovan noticed an interesting word on the back of the cereal box – "nutrition." Donovan liked the way it sounded, so he began to take notice of new words around him in everyday life. For every new word, Donovan writes it down on a strip of paper and puts it in his jar. Donovan keeps this jar in his room, up high so his little sister Nikki will not reach it, and it becomes a prized possession.





During Reading

workshop (pg 20): refers to a wood workshop where Donovan's father is able to build crafts

A stylized, grey-toned illustration of two people's heads in profile, facing each other as if in conversation. A speech bubble containing a question mark is positioned between their mouths.

Discussion Questions

- What is Donovan's problem?
- What are the solutions people suggest to Donovan?
- Do you think these are good suggestions? Which one do you think is the best?
- How does Donovan feel about these "solutions"?
- If you were Donovan, what would you do?

Journal Prompt

PROBLEM-SOLVING

- Donavan has a problem: too many words to fit in the jar. Think about a problem you've had in your life. How did you solve it?

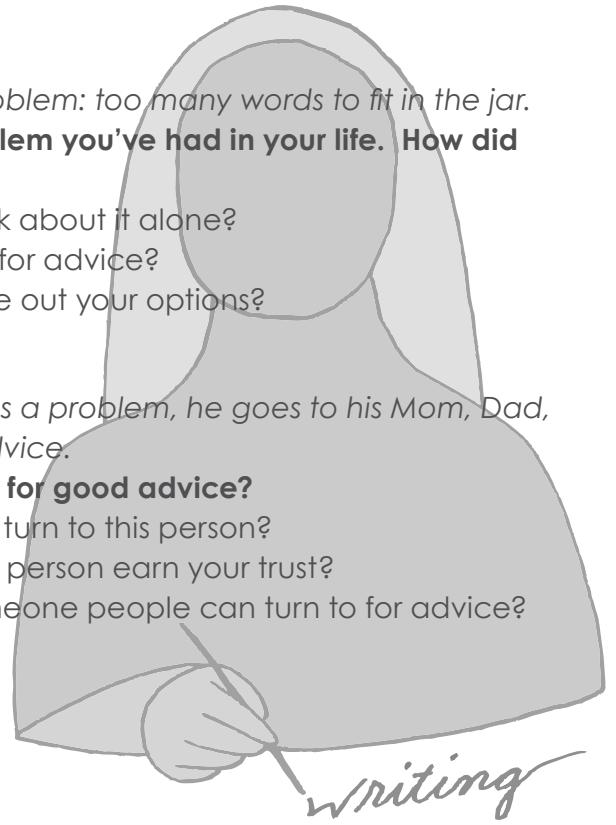
- » Did you think about it alone?
- » Did you ask for advice?
- » Did you write out your options?

ADVICE

- When Donavan has a problem, he goes to his Mom, Dad, and teacher for advice.

Who do you turn to for good advice?

- » Why do you turn to this person?
- » How did this person earn your trust?
- » Are you someone people can turn to for advice?



Extension Activity

Donavan's word jar is very special to him. Today's activity allows your students to think about what item is equally special to them in their lives. Help your students complete the "Special to Me" handout.

Materials:

- » Special to Me Handout

Name: _____

Name of Special Item

Drawing of My Special Item

What makes this special to me is . . .



Donavan's word jar is very special to him. Everyone has something that is special to them! Write about something that is special to you, and explain why it is so special.

Special to Me

Session 5

pages 48-60

Vocabulary

disappointment (pg 48): n., the feeling of being let down

worth (pg 51): n., the value of an object

uneasy (pg 51): adj., uncomfortable

gruff (pg 57): adj., low and harsh

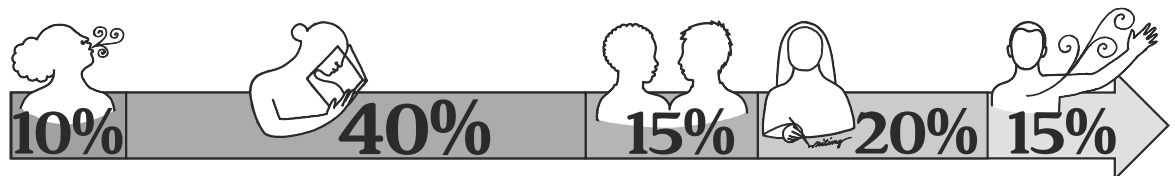
compromise (pg 58): n. an agreement between two or more people

Today's Theme

Today's theme is **compromise**. Donavan doesn't want to give away any of his words like his grandma suggests, but he sees two people arguing in the senior apartment lounge, and he gives them the word "compromise" to think about so that they can come to an agreement. It seems like Donavan is compromising a bit, too, by giving a word away! You can ask students to think about a time when they needed to compromise so that both people could be happy with the result. Why does compromise work? What happens when we don't compromise?

Session 4 Recap

Donavan is finally able to visit his grandma at her apartment and ask her advice about the word jar problem. When Donavan gets to the apartment building, he signs in and rides the elevator to his grandma's floor. Describing the apartment, we learn that Donavan's grandmother collects various items as well. Before Donavan is able to ask her about the word jar problem, the two sit down to a nice lunch.





During Reading

bamboozle (pg 49): v., to deceive or trick somebody

emporium (pg 49): n., a large store

kaleidoscope (pg 49): n., a kind of toy. It is an optical illusion toy, with a tube of continually changing patterns of shapes and colors

persnickety (pg 52): adj., overly particular, fussy, hard to please

cantankerous (pg 52): adj., disagreeable

hassock (pg 56): n., a thick cushion used as a footstool or for kneeling



Discussion Questions

- Is Donovan's Grandma impressed by his word collection? How do you know?
- What is Grandma's suggestion for Donovan's word jar problem?
- Why do you think Donovan feels he can't give away his words? Is this selfish?
- What are Miz Marylou and Mr. Bill Gut arguing about?
- What word does Donovan give to Miz Marylou and Mr. Bill Gut?
- Did Donovan's word help solve the argument in the lounge? How? Why?

Journal Prompt

DISAPPOINTMENT

- Donovan is disappointed when his grandma is not able to find a solution to his word jar problem.

When is a time that you have been disappointed?

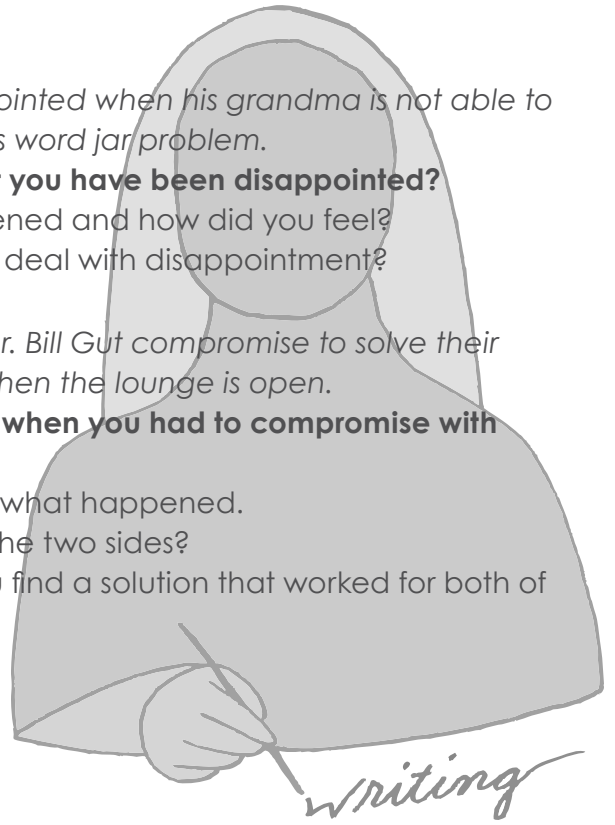
- » What happened and how did you feel?
- » How do you deal with disappointment?

COMPROMISE

- Miz Marylou and Mr. Bill Gut compromise to solve their argument about when the lounge is open.

Think about a time when you had to compromise with someone else.

- » Write about what happened.
- » What were the two sides?
- » How did you find a solution that worked for both of you?



Checkpoint

- **Students should support their opinions with reasons, facts, and details.**
 - » Student writing must support ideas with examples from the book or from their personal experiences. Try using a linking word, like *because*.
 - » For example, use the sentence frame, "I think _____ because _____."

Extension Activity

Today, students will pretend that they are friends of Donovan. They will each write a letter to Donovan, sharing their ideas for how he should resolve his word jar dilemma. Make sure that they include at least one thing they like about Donovan's word collection!

Materials:

- » Letter to Donovan Handout

Name: _____

Dear Donavan,

When you asked for my opinion about how to solve your word jar dilemma, I felt _____. If it were my dilemma, I would solve it by _____.

I think this would be a good solution because _____.

I know that your word collection is important to you because _____.

The thing I like the best about your collection is _____.

You have a hard decision to make about what to do! I hope my idea is helpful.

Sincerely,

Pretend that you are Donavan's friend and he has asked for your opinion about how he should resolve his dilemma. Write a letter where you explain your idea for a solution. Be sure you include at least one thing you like about Donavan's word collection!

Letter to Donavan

Appendix

Additional Activities

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There's so much more!



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