

NAME: _____



Activity One

The setting of **When You Reach Me** certainly makes for an intriguing backdrop for this novel. Not only does New York City offer any number of fascinating sites (museums, sky scrapers, parks, etc.) but a host of intriguing characters as well (the laughing man, the boys who hang out by the garage...) Frank Sinatra's song, **New York, New York** included these lyrics:



*I want to wake up in that city that doesn't sleep
If I can make it there I'll make it anywhere*

Below are a number of the landmarks of this famous city. Your task is to choose one of these selections and create a **brochure** advertising it for tourists. Your brochure should include relevant facts about this landmark, as well as something of its history. Be sure to include relevant information regarding tours (the times, cost, etc.) Your brochure should also include at least one picture.

**“New York is a granite beehive,
where people jostle
and whirl like molecules
in an overheated jar.”**
~ Nigel Goslin

Prominent New York City Landmarks

The Statue of Liberty

The Empire State Building

Grand Central Terminal

Ellis Island Immigration Museum

Staten Island Ferry

American Museum of Natural History

Central Park

Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Museum of Modern Art

Rockefeller Center

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Activity Two

Casting Director

- **This activity can be done with students working in small groups.**

Imagine you are the casting director for a movie company planning to do a film version of this novel. You are to cast all of the major roles for the movie and must choose one of the following two scenarios.

- a)** For the list of characters in the box below, choose an appropriate Hollywood actor to fill each role and write a brief explanation as to why you chose this particular actor.

OR

- b)** For the list of characters below, choose an appropriate person from your own school to fill each role and write a brief explanation as to why you chose this particular person. For this assignment, you might choose fellow students (including yourself), teachers, principal, custodian, etc.

Roles

- **Miranda**
- **Annemarie**
- **Sal**
- **Julia**
- **Jimmy**
- **Miranda's mom**
- **Richard**
- **Marcus**
- **the laughing man**
- **Dick Clark**
- _____
- _____



Activity Three

Put it on Film

- To be done in groups of four or more.
- For this Activity video equipment is necessary.

One of the fascinating things about putting book to film is in the many different interpretations of a scene that are possible. To illustrate this, you may wish to check out a number of student-made clips of scenes from novels that are posted on *YouTube*.

The task of your production team is to recreate a particular scene from this novel. Choose your scene carefully. Factors to consider:

- **length** (2–3 minutes — 2–3 pages is advised)
- **number of characters** (i.e. the scene in Miranda’s classroom might be impractical because of the number of people involved.)
- **setting** (i.e. the scene where the laughing man saves Sal from being run over would be impractical because of the setting.)
- **dialogue** (i.e. too much can be difficult to memorize for the actors; too little might make the scene a bit boring)

Your task is to create a short scene from the novel and present it to the class on film. A script must be written before filming, roles assigned, rehearsals scheduled. You may wish to present the film in Readers Theater format.

Be sure that when you are presenting your finished project to the class that it is your best effort. Don’t be afraid to do multiple takes until most of the rough edges are removed.

Have fun!

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Activity Four

Game Shows

One of the more exciting plot lines running through this novel is Miranda's mother's upcoming appearance on **The \$20,000 Pyramid**. This game show as hosted by Dick Clark ran from 1973 to 1988. It also spawned a number of other similar pyramid shows which were hosted by such personalities as John Davidson and Donny Osmond.

Game shows have long been a popular format for network television. During the past decades, such popular shows as **The Price is Right**, **Hollywood Squares**, **Deal or No Deal**, **Family Feud**, and **Wheel of Fortune** have attracted millions of dedicated viewers.

Some shows, such as **The \$20,000 Pyramid** and **Jeopardy**, depend on the knowledge and quick wit of the contestant. Other shows, are more for fun: **The Gong Show**, **Let's Make a Deal**. Still, others require a specialized knowledge base: **Don't Forget the Lyrics**, **The Price is Right**. Still others — like the game shows in Japan — require nerves of steel.

Your task is to invent your own game show. You may pattern it after an existing program (with an interesting *twist* or two), or you may invent a completely new one from scratch.

Give your program a name. Suggest an appropriate host (and possible guests). Describe in detail the format of the show and tell why you think it will be a huge hit.

Pyramid Trivia:

Dictator of North Korea, **Kim Jong-Il**, was a contestant on **The \$20,000 Pyramid** in 1974.

Versions of **The \$20,000 Pyramid** included amounts of \$25,000 – \$50,000 – \$100,000.

William Shatner, of Star Trek fame, once threw a chair across the stage of **The \$20,000 Pyramid** after giving an inappropriate clue. **Betty White** became a popular celebrity in the 1980's version of this show.



Activity Five

An Alternate Ending

- **This activity can be done individually or in small groups.**

The conclusion of ***When You Reach Me*** is very memorable. Not only does it tie-up a few loose ends (i.e. the identity of the laughing man; the reason for Sal keeping his distance from Miranda), but it is very moving and dramatic as well. The conclusion also leaves the reader wondering about other issues (i.e. Miranda's future relationship with her friends Julia, Marcus, Sal, Annemarie). Will Miranda's mother really go to law school, and if so, how will she cope with this added responsibility? Will Miranda's mom and Richard get married?

What, though, if Rebecca Stead had woken up on the wrong side of the bed on the day she wrote the novel's concluding chapters? What if it didn't end the way it is described in these pages, but had taken another *turn in the road*? What, for instance, if Marcus' long-laid plans had not gone according to plan....?

Although we will never know the answers to these questions, you will be given the opportunity of putting your imagination to work in coming up with what might have happened if the author's imagination had worked its way in an entirely different direction.

Working alone or in a group, brainstorm possible alternative endings to the novel. Remember to consider all of the principal characters. From your list of ideas, choose one ending to present to the class. Write a detailed synopsis of your alternate conclusion presenting as much detail as possible. After presenting it to the class, you may wish to get their input as to additional changes that might be made to further improve your alternative ending.

Have fun!

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Activity Six

Time Travel

- **This activity can be done individually, in pairs or a small group.**

Imagine that you were in Marcus' position and had the ability to travel through time. Marcus obviously felt it was most important that he journey back through time to the date when he accidentally caused Sal to be killed by the delivery truck. What else, though, might he have done with his knowledge and powers?

Might he have changed something else from his own life — or perhaps in the life of someone he knew — or even that of an historical figure?

Now, put yourself in Marcus' shoes. You have the power to travel through time and change an event from the past — for good, of course.

What would you change and how would you go about changing it? Don't forget, that sometimes a change you might consider for the best may not turn out as planned. For example, if you return through time to save the life of a world leader, perhaps that same individual would have forced the country into a horrendous war.

Time Travel

Once confined to fantasy and science fiction, time travel is now simply an engineering problem.

MICHIO KAKU

As a twist to this assignment, think of something you might wish to bring back in time with you that would give you or a loved one an advantage (you may only bring one object with you).

What would you do with this knowledge and power? Be creative. Brainstorming ideas with others can be helpful.

Your report should be at least a half-page in length.