

COMMON CORE STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS RESOURCE

The following Common Core Standards are addressed throughout the reading passages, discussion questions, role play activities, and writing suggestions found within this resource.

Reading

6.RL.2 - Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

6.RL.3 - Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

6.RL.10 - By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

7.RL.2 - Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

7.RL.4 - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

7.RL.10 - By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

8.RL.2 - Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

8.RL.3 - Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

8.RL.10 - By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Writing

6.W.1 - Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

6.W.2 - Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

6.W.3 - Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

6.W.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

6.W.10 - Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

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Speaking and Listening

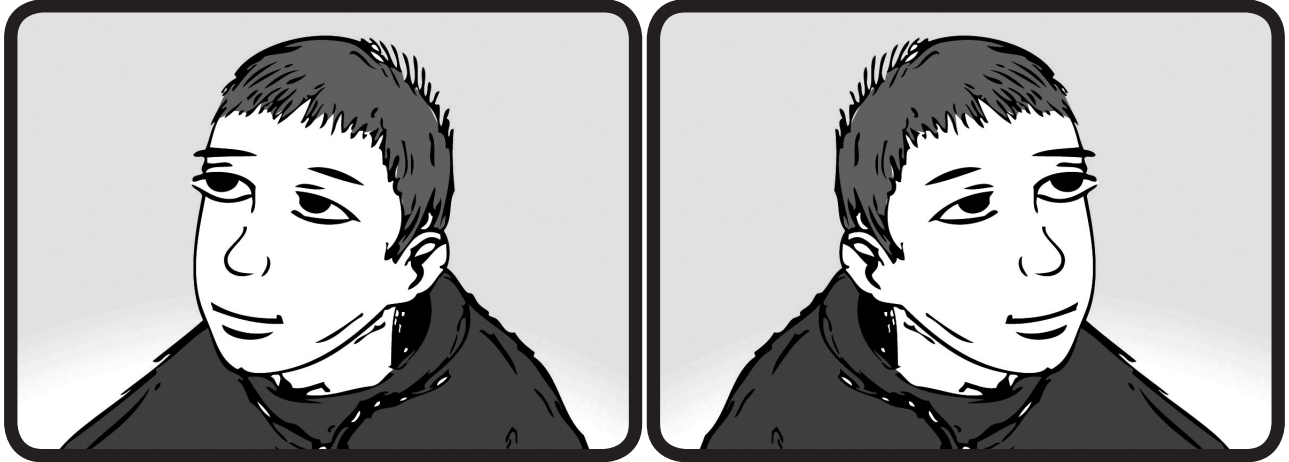
- 6.SL.1 - Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- 6.SL.3 - Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.
- 6.SL.5 - Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.
- 6.SL.6 - Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.
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- 7.SL.3 - Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
- 7.SL.5 - Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points.
- 7.SL.6 - 6.SL.6 - Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.
- 8.SL.1 - Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- 8.SL.3 - Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.
- 8.SL.5 - Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.
- 8.SL.6 - Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Language

- 6.L.3 - Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
- 6.L.4 - Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- 6.L.6 - Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
- 7.L.3 - Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
- 7.L.4 - Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 7 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- 7.L.6 - Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
- 8.L.3 - Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
- 8.L.4 - Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- 8.L.5 - Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- 8.L.6 - Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Two Sides to Every Story²

**An Examination of Ethics, Dilemmas, and Points of View
through Discussion, Writing, and Improvisation**



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Illustrations by **Jeff Richards**

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About This Book

Our lives are rife with difficult decisions and hard-earned lessons. It is easy to assign these experiences to the realm of adulthood when, in fact, we start dealing with them at a relatively early age. Perhaps it's the realization that we can cheat on a test, the question of whether or not to insult another person, or the struggle to choose between right and wrong when the lines are impossibly blurred. These experiences, and many others like them, are the foundations and first steps in building the characters that we eventually possess.

We have created this book with that knowledge in mind. Its 15 stories have been written to interest and entertain students. But more importantly, each story has been structured around an important lesson or a difficult decision. These aren't simple, by-the-book right versus wrong choices, either. The details surrounding each lesson or choice obscure an obvious choice with shades of gray, encouraging the child to sort through their own thoughts, opinions, and feelings before rendering a decision or determining the most important lesson.

Each story is supplemented with four unique follow-up lesson plans, each developing important skills. Discussion Questions challenge readers to rethink and analyze stories, emphasizing important lessons and introducing new perspectives. Role-Playing Variations give children an opportunity to express themselves creatively while interpreting and reflecting on their experiences with each story. Writing Suggestions develop language arts skills and deepen the value of each tale, pushing the student to create new stories of their own. Student Comments ask students to reflect upon deeper questions, applying the lessons learned from each story to their own lives and experiences, connecting them to the lessons and decisions in a new way.

The end result is 15 distinct units that challenge readers to look at life's often difficult decisions and lessons from multiple perspectives, allowing them to make more informed choices and observations. We hope that your students take these important skills and developments into their own lives and use them to better write their own stories across the pages of the world.

How to Use This Resource

The stories can be assigned for independent or small group reading. They can also be read aloud by either teacher or students. After finishing a story, use the Discussion Questions to get students talking. The questions don't need to be asked in any particular order. They should be a starting point from which students can direct the flow of conversation. Feel free to add your own questions and variations.

Each story's Role-Playing Variations offer improvisation activities of varying depth. These pages are written to the teacher, providing general guidelines for each activity. They can be assigned as is, or you can modify them to better suit the specific personality of your classroom.

Writing Suggestions can be assigned as homework or desk work. Encourage students to make each prompt their own. The suggested approaches are just that – suggestions. They are meant to get the student thinking creatively. The expression should be completely up to them. Again, feel free to modify existing prompts or to introduce your own.

And finally, the Student Comment pages are one-page essays that aim to deepen the student's connection with each story. These are 'big picture' questions designed to open up student perspectives, and to encourage application of lessons learned and decisions made to their personal experiences.

Note: It's important to explain to students that there are no right and wrong answers when it comes to this resource. They shouldn't hesitate to share their honest thoughts and opinions, even if their stance is morally or ethically controversial. When more points of view are expressed, discussion is greatly enriched.

The Chemistry of Love

The bell rings. Mr. Bink rises from his desk and shuffles to the bare podium perched in front of the desks. Bink stares out through thick lenses and down a wide nose, steel-gray eyes stern and acute. He begins his lecture.

Bryce watches the class visibly stiffen as Bink's high-pitched voice washes over them. One or two of the students giggled on the first day of class. The instant and extreme punishment that answered the laughter had quickly and clearly taught the first lesson – no one laughs at Bink.

Mr. Timothy R. Bink has been terrifying students at Hillock High for as long as anyone can remember. Universally considered the meanest teacher in the building, Bink is also known as the toughest. Advanced Placement Chemistry is no cakewalk to begin with. Add Bink and multiply by 23 unprepared students, and you have the compound for the most difficult class in history.

Bryce scored too low on the Chemistry entry exam and had to settle for College Preparatory Chemistry with Mrs. Stanton. But he exchanged one of two study halls for a position as Mr. Bink's teacher's aide. Why would he submit himself to such a woeful position? There are two reasons. Despite his nature, Mr. Bink was known to write college admissions recommendation letters for his aides. Bryce plans on attending college, and that recommendation would carry a lot of weight at Hillock State.

After a few moments of unsuccessfully trying to figure out the contents of Bink's lecture, Bryce turns his attention to the other reason for being in this room: Veronica Cameron. If Bink was the scariest thing about Hillock High, Veronica was the prettiest. With her long blonde hair, tan skin, and white teeth, she looked like a character plucked from a movie screen. Bryce had fallen for Veronica on the first day of high school, nearly four years ago. He had seen her coming down the hallway and time had slowed. Oh, he had fallen all right, and fallen hard. While staring at her electric smile, Bryce had walked directly into Hillock's impressively full trophy case. The impact knocked him out cold.



"Bryce!" Mr. Bink's squeal snaps Bryce from his daydream. All eyes, including the sky-blues of Veronica, are locked on Bryce. Despite the threat of severe reprimand, several smiles crack, unable to help themselves. Bryce feels his face flush a deep shade of red.

"I believe I assigned you several tasks to complete before the next bell," Bink continues. "I strongly suggest you begin. Unless you'd prefer to complete them in detention this afternoon?"

As Mr. Bink turns back to the class, Bryce drops his head. Had Veronica noticed that he was staring at her? Was she thinking about how big a dope he was right now?

Of course she isn't, Bryce thinks to himself. *She hasn't paid any attention to you in four years. Why start now?* Bryce had tried everything – secret notes slipped into her locker, flowers and candy grams on Valentine's Day; he'd even managed to get her phone number and send her an anonymous text message – which she'd never answered. Yes, he'd tried everything. Everything except actually walk up and talk to her, that is.

Bryce sighs as he opens Mr. Bink's grade book. *It's hopeless*, he thinks. *I'll never get a girl like Veronica to notice me. I'd have a better chance of passing AP Chemistry.* He begins transferring grades from the book to a laptop computer.

As his fingers fly over the keys, pecking the fate of each student into the system, Bryce keeps track of who is currently passing and who is failing. Far more pass than fail, he notes, but everything hinges on the final exam. The all-important test, which takes place next week, factors as 25 percent of the final grade. Everybody has a chance to make or break their Chemistry grade with the final exam.

A slight flutter roils Bryce's stomach when he sees Veronica's name. His fingers feel light and numb as he keys in the first few grades. He's so lost in thoughts of her that it takes him a moment to notice the grades blinking across the screen. They are shockingly low. He blinks twice and looks to the grade book to make sure he hasn't made a mistake. To his horror, he hasn't. He works and reworks the math in his head. If Veronica doesn't get an A on the final exam, she will *fail* AP Chemistry.

The bell rings. Students bolt for the door like racehorses out of the gate. Bryce watches Veronica's yellow backpack turn the corner into the hall and tries to swallow the lump in his throat. *Does she have any idea how much trouble she's in?*

"Did you complete the grade transfer?" Mr. Bink inquires from his desk. He opens a thermos and pours a cup of some foul-smelling soup.

"Yes sir." Bryce hastily enters the final numbers and saves the document. He gathers his things, hands the grade book and computer to Mr. Bink, and stumbles to the door in a haze.

"A moment, if you would." Bryce turns to regard Bink. "As you spent the first part of class in an idle state, I think I can borrow a few minutes of your lunch period for one last task, yes?"

It isn't a question. "Of course, Mr. Bink."

"Take this to the library and make me 23 copies." Bink shoves a stack of papers at Bryce. "If you aren't back in ten minutes, you will spend the rest of your lunch period removing gum from the bottom of my desks."

Bryce takes the papers and heads for the door. "Yes sir."

He is at the library before he realizes it. His mind is racing with the implications of Veronica's failure. He knows that she plans on going to Hillock State to play soccer. If she fails chemistry, she would have to stay another year! *She would be stuck here*, Bryce thinks. *And I'd be stuck at State without her.*

He punches the machine's keys and it begins spitting out copies. A future without Veronica is a future of horror. It would be like working as Mr. Bink's aide for a lifetime. The copier beeps and Bryce grabs the stack of warm paper. It's only then that he realizes what he's holding.

He is copying Mr. Bink's final exam. He's holding Veronica's salvation in his very hands.

I could take a copy. I could give it to Veronica. No, that's cheating. I could get in enormous trouble for doing something like that. What if Mr. Bink found out? No recommendation letter for me. I might even be expelled.

The library door opens. Bryce turns as Veronica walks into the room. As she slides past him on her way to a study table, her eyes meet his, just for an instant. His heart swells.

I'll never get a girl like Veronica to notice me. Until I do something worth noticing.



Point of View

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think Bryce will decide to do? How will he arrive at this choice? Will there be any negative consequences as a result? Positive consequences? Support your answers with details from the story.
2. What would you do in Bryce's position? Why?
3. Is there an honest way for Bryce to help Veronica? Come up with a plan in which he can still get her to notice him while honestly informing her of her risk of failing chemistry.
4. Have you ever been tempted to do something wrong for a good reason? What did you do? Explain your reasons for doing so.
5. Does love ever lead people to do bad things? Explain your answer.



Improvisation

Role-Playing Variations

1. Act out a scene in the library in which Bryce gives the test copy to Veronica. Let the students improvise dialogue and reactions. Give several students an opportunity to play the roles of Bryce and Veronica. Discuss the portrayals as a class.
2. Imagine that Bryce and Veronica are caught cheating. Act out a conference between Bryce, Veronica, and Mr. Bink. You might also include Bryce and Veronica's parents.
3. Have students deliver a short monologue in character as Mr. Bink. Encourage them to dress up in costume and create their own unique mannerisms for their portrayal.
4. Break students into pairs. Let them prepare and write a scene set three years after the events of the story. Bryce and Veronica are meeting for dinner. They discuss the events that unfolded in the library and after, and how they changed as a result. Let students decide such details as the nature of Bryce and Veronica's relationship, the choice Bryce made, and Veronica's final grade in chemistry.



1. Write two lists: the pros of giving Veronica a copy of the test and the cons of doing so.
2. Write a short story from the perspective of Mr. Bink. What is this legendary teacher really like? What makes him tick? Does he enjoy his infamy or despise it?
3. The story mentions secret notes that Bryce put in Veronica's locker. Write one of these notes. Describe Bryce's emotions without revealing who he is.
4. Imagine that Bryce decides to copy the test and deliver it to Veronica. Write the library scene from her point of view. Establish how she feels about Bryce when he first approaches her. Does she know who he is? How do her feelings change after he reveals his plan? Does she go along with it? How does everything pan out for her and for Bryce?
5. Write an article for the school newspaper that covers the scandalous discovery of Bryce and Veronica's cheating scheme. Explain how they were caught and what punishment they will receive. Include interviews with the two students, along with Mr. Bink and other interesting individuals.

