



An Educator's Guide to LAURIE HALSE ANDERSON

Building Resilience through Young Adult Literature

The activities in this guide align with
Common Core State Standards
and fit into the curriculum for grades 9–10

PenguinClassroom.com



DEAR EDUCATOR:

Laurie Halse Anderson's young adult novels offer a respectful and honest view of the difficult issues faced by teens today. Wildly popular with teens and teachers alike, Anderson's novels tackle deep, devastating topics such as rape, eating disorders, sexual abuse, violence, bullying, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

While some people see contemporary realistic fiction for teens as "problem literature," the organizing principle of this guide is different. Some time ago, an educator told Anderson that these books are best described as "resilience literature," and we agree with that categorization. Resilience is the ability to persevere or cope when faced with stress or trauma. We demonstrate resilience when we adapt, stabilize, or reorganize after suffering. These books are best understood by reading them as a collection of stories that emphasize the resilient nature of teenagers.

We hope this guide inspires more educators to tackle literature that addresses powerful and realistic challenges faced by modern teens. Why? When educators deeply discuss and reflect on difficult circumstances faced by an individual or fictional character, offer students an example of how to consider the larger world and how we all might improve it.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

This guide is designed as a comprehensive teaching tool for educators who use Anderson's novels in the classroom. Teachers who use only one of the novels will find discussion questions, research projects, and essay prompts specific to each novel.

In addition, the guide is designed so that educators may also utilize literature circles in the classroom, allowing more than one of these books to be used simultaneously. In this model, each student selects one of the books to read independently. During class time, groups are divided into reading groups for each novel. Common Core curricular objectives ask that students read and comprehend complex literary texts independently and proficiently. Both student choice in reading and small group discussion contribute to a positive experience for students. You will find pre-reading activities that can apply to all of the novels as well as post-reading prompts that invite cross-text comparisons.

These books are extraordinary because they allow all readers—teens and adults, students and teachers—to rehearse their own imaginary responses to the traumas described in each novel. All schools should already have a system in place for reporting bullying, expressing concerns about a child's safety, and offering support for the mental well-being of their students. If you as an educator do not already know the resources available in your school or local area, this is an excellent reminder that you are a primary resource for students who might need help. Please consider posting hotline information for youths in crisis and promoting crisis intervention services in your local area.

A selection of national hotline services:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline—1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Veteran's Crisis Line—1-800-273-8255 and Press 1
- RAINN (Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network)—www.rainn.org
- National Sexual Assault Hotline—1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
- The Trevor Project (for GLBTQ youth)—1-866-488-7386
- National Eating Disorder Association: nationaleatingdisorder.org

We believe that focused readings of these texts will help students identify resilience in the characters and themselves. Fictional characters can offer a safe opportunity for teens to discuss issues that for too long have been unspeakably difficult to bring to light. Thank you for your continued support of our titles.

Penguin School & Library

This guide was created by Heather Richard, a high school English teacher who has spent more than a decade putting young adult literature at the core of her curriculum. When not teaching at a vocational school, she is busy writing novels, working in youth services at a library, and finishing coursework toward a master's degree in Writing for Children.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

BRAINSTORMING

Moderate a brainstorming session about the following questions:

- What is resilience?
- Identify and describe fictional characters in books, film, or television that you would argue are resilient.
- Who are some real-life people you know who are resilient?

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Break into groups and discuss first impressions about the book.

If students selected a book from various options, ask them to defend or explain their choice. If the class is reading one book, tell them why you chose that specific book. Then, ask students to come up with first impressions about the book:

- What can you learn about the book from the title and cover art?
- What can you learn about the story from the jacket copy?
- Inside the book, read the author's dedication page. Can you draw any conclusions about the author from the dedication?
- Then look at the next page. What is there? Why is it there—what is its function? What do you think it means?
- What is this book going to address? How do you know?

INTERCONNECTED WEB

Choose one social problem (see the list for examples):

- depression
- sexual assault or rape
- child abuse
- eating disorders
- bullying
- drug use
- reckless driving
- cutting/self-mutilation
- post-traumatic stress disorder
- teen pregnancy
- sexism
- traumatic brain injury
- family dysfunction

Write the word or phrase on the center of a whiteboard. Then ask students to come up, one by one, and identify something they think contributes to the problem. Have students draw a line connecting the two words/phrases. Continue until a variety of contributing factors have been identified, and a web has been created. When the web becomes sufficiently complicated, emphasize to students how the interactions between many factors contribute to the rise of a social problem.

EXTENSION

Have students write on the following prompt, emphasizing that whether or not something is a problem is related to our own personal views. Use the following sentence starters:

“One of the most pressing issues faced by teenagers in our area is . . . ”

“Some factors that contribute to that problem are . . . ”

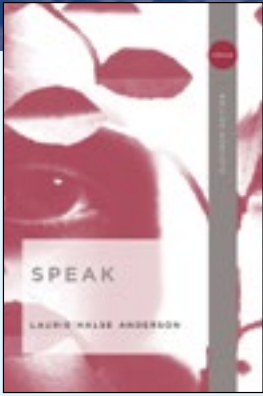
FIRST CHAPTERS

Give students the opportunity to read the first chapter.

Break into small groups and have students discuss the social problem that is the main concern of the novel they have chosen. How do they know? Cite specific textual evidence.

A major component of the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard is that students will “Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.” Reading these novels independently correlates directly to the Reading Literature strand CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.10. For the purposes of this guide, all correlations to CCSS will be made at the 9-10 grade level.





SPEAK

The following questions may be used to guide group discussions or as written essay prompts. [Discussion questions are all correlated to Reading Standards CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2; and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3. When used in discussion, they correlate to ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1,3,4,6; when used as essay prompts, they correlate to Writing Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1.]

1. There are a number of references to fairy tales in this book. Discuss by citing moments that remind you of fairy tale stories.
2. What does it mean to be a good friend? Who are Melinda's friends? Is Melinda a good friend? Cite examples from the text to support your ideas.
3. Why does the author include report cards? What do the report card grades tell you about Melinda?
4. Internal conflict occurs within a character's psyche. At one point, Melinda says "I think it's some kind of psychiatric disorder when you have more than one personality in your head . . . The two Melindas fight every step of the way" (132). Discuss this conversation and other moments when Melinda is conflicted.
5. Melinda makes a list of "The First Ten Lies They Tell You in High School" (5-6) and "Ten More Lies They Tell You in High School" (148). Make your own list of ten lies they tell you in high school. Are they the same or different?
6. Review the conversation Melinda and Rachel have in the library. What kinds of things do they speak out loud? What kinds of things do they write to each other? Discuss why some things are easier to say and some things are easier to write.
7. Melinda's father says, "by the end of the summer, this tree will be the strongest on the block" (187). How can this apply to Melinda? Discuss the symbolism of what happens to this tree and compare it to what happens over the course of a year in Melinda's life.
8. Reread the last scene of the book. Discuss exactly what you think Melinda tells Mr. Freeman. Why does she feel moved to finally speak?

CREATIVE CONNECTIONS

Correlates with CCSS Writing Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1 (writing narratives)

Senior Year

Imagine Melinda as a teaching assistant. Write a scene where she gives students an assignment. What kind of assignment would she give? Look back at Mr. Freeman's introduction to the tree assignment (p. 12). Would her approach be similar or different?

RESEARCH TO BUILD AND PRESENT KNOWLEDGE

Correlates with CCSS ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7 and 8 (research)

Banned Books Week: Each year, the American Library Association participates in Banned Books Week. Laurie Halse Anderson's books, including *Speak*, have been challenged in many different places. Research the history of censorship in libraries. Be ready to answer the following questions:

- What is the difference between "banning" and "challenging" a book?
- What are the reasons offered when challenging a book?
- Why does the American Library Association speak out against censorship?

Extension Activity: Choose one picture book that has been challenged in the past year. Read it, discuss as a group, and decide under which (if any) restrictions that book should be included in school libraries.

ART SPEAKS TO OTHERS

Mr. Freeman asks students to create art: "Say something, express an emotion, speak to every person who looks at it" (12). Choose one of the artists or authors mentioned in the book. Select one example of their work to research and analyze. Write a paper that offers biographical information on the creator, explains the creator's creative process, and analyzes its success as a piece of art. How does their art "speak to every person"?



PROM

Educators Note: Anderson’s novel *Prom* is a different sort of resilience literature. In tone, *Prom* is much more humorous than the other novels covered in this guide. This book is an excellent option for exploring the same themes of flexibility, resilience, and personal strength, while not focusing on a protagonist who is depressed or wounded by his or her circumstances.

The following questions may be used to guide group discussions or as written essay prompts.

[Discussion questions are all correlated to Reading Standards CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2; and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3. When used in discussion, they correlate to ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1,3,4,6; when used as essay prompts, they correlate to Writing Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1.]

1. Describe the mood of the first few pages of the book. How does Anderson create the mood in this section? Try to discuss language, tone, setting, and characters.
2. How is this story like the familiar story of Cinderella? How is it different?
3. Teenagers often end up with lousy, low-paying jobs. Discuss the kinds of work teens do in this book and in your area. Is Ashley’s job really that bad?
4. Many schools include the coronation of a court during prom—usually with a king and queen. What do you think of that practice? Write an editorial for the local newspaper that supports or discourages a prom court.
5. The relationship between Ashley and TJ changes over the course of the novel. Cite evidence that shows why it changed.
6. Laurie Halse Anderson often creates playlists for her novels. Consider the playlist at the end of *Prom*. What are the similarities between the songs on her list? What are your top ten songs for a prom? Find a willing teacher (or other adult, preferably a generation older), and ask what songs they remember enjoying at high school dances or proms.
7. Moving on from a less-than-ideal situation is one indicator of resilience. Discuss Ashley’s decisions at the end of the book. Do you think they are wise choices? Who else “moves on” by the end of the book?
8. If you could give one piece of advice to Ashley Hannigan, what would it be? If Ashley could give one piece of advice to you (or to her little sister Adrian), what do you imagine it would be?

RESEARCH TO BUILD AND PRESENT KNOWLEDGE

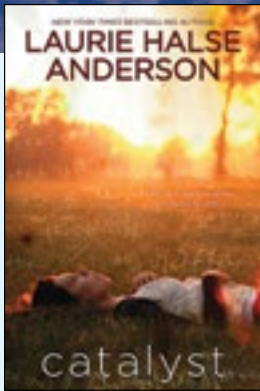
Correlates with CCSS ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7 and 8 (research)

Every year high school students and their families spend enormous amounts of money on prom activities. Research the cost of local proms and how much people spend, on average, for this one activity. Do you think it is worth the cost? Why or why not?

CREATIVE CONNECTIONS—NARRATIVE WRITING

Correlates with CCSS Writing Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1 (writing narratives)

Wedding Bells! Use your imagination to write a scene from Junie and Charles’s wedding from Ashley’s perspective. Be sure to stay true to her tone and style as you describe the ceremony and party afterward.



CATALYST

The following questions may be used to guide group discussions or as written essay prompts. [Discussion questions are all correlated to Reading Standards CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2; and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3. When used in discussion, they correlate to ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1,3,4,6; when used as essay prompts, they correlate to Writing Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1.]

1. In the beginning of the novel, Kate's main concern is to get into her ideal college, MIT. Why does she want to go there? Why is her singular drive so problematic?
2. Early in the novel, Teri gets into a fistfight at school because she is being bullied. Why don't Kate and her friends step up in her defense? Is this the first time Teri has been teased? Why is it continuing?
3. Consider all the chapter titles. Choose several and explain why those words are used for that particular chapter. What does the last chapter title—Covalent Bonding—imply about Teri and Kate?
4. Teri and Kate keep important secrets. Discuss the different reasons each of them keeps those secrets.
5. After the accident, Kate doesn't want to talk, though Mitch encourages her to share how she feels. Instead, she, Sara, and Travis paint the room. Why? Why does Mitch leave? What do you think of Teri's response to the room?
6. When Kate finds the funeral director in her kitchen, she says, "He doesn't look like a funeral director. He looks normal. This is a terrifying thought. You could walk past somebody like this in the mall, and you would never know he handles dead bodies all day" (178). Why is this so disconcerting to Kate? Contrast how "normal" the funeral director is with how "abnormal" Kate's life has become.
7. Kate's image of Teri changes as the story goes along, and ultimately she compares Teri to titanium. How has their relationship changed? How has their relationship changed them?
8. Near the end of the book, Kate tells her brother, Toby, about their mother's funeral (see 200). How does this story help us understand Kate's obsession with running?
9. Discuss how the title of the book focuses the reader's attention on certain events. Why did Anderson choose this specific chemistry term as the title?
10. There are many hints that Teri is a strong, resilient, resourceful young woman. Discuss those traits and compare them to Kate. Who seems more capable? Why?

CREATIVE CONNECTIONS—NARRATIVE WRITING

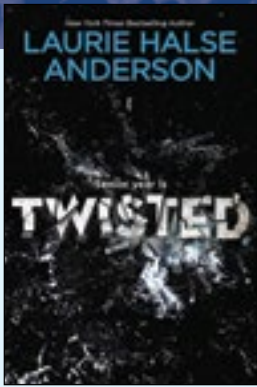
Correlates with CCSS Writing Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1 (writing narratives)

GOOD KID, BAD KID

In *Catalyst*, Kate often mentions the conflicting feelings between "Good Kate" and "Bad Kate." Using the contrasting viewpoint, write a list of things Kate might do, say, feel, or think as "Good Kate" vs. "Bad Kate." For an added challenge, create two lists for Teri as well.

UNTOLD STORY

Imagine a scene in which Teri tells Kate about the circumstances that led to her decision to pretend Mikey was her brother.



TWISTED

The following questions may be used to guide group discussions or as written essay prompts. [Discussion questions are all correlated to Reading Standards CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2; and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3. When used in discussion, they correlate to ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1,3,4,6; when used as essay prompts, they correlate to Writing Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1.]

1. In the beginning of the book, Tyler decides not to beat Chip at arm wrestling. Why? What does this tell us about Tyler? Contrast this to how he treats Chip in the cafeteria when he “returns” the blanket. How has Tyler changed?
2. Tyler makes a number of poor decisions. List as many as you can think of, and rank them in terms of seriousness. Try to figure out if he has made up for them by the end of the book. Be sure to discuss cheating in school, guns, and the initial crime of graffiti.
3. What is the role of gossip in this school?
4. Consider the scenes when Tyler describes the way students dress. Do you think a school should have a dress code? What are some of the problems and benefits of restricting clothing choices in schools?
5. Look at the list of excuses Tyler’s mom gives on page 56. What is she trying to do in this moment? Why is she sticking up for her husband? Her last comment is “you have to give him a chance.” Does Bill deserve another chance?
6. Fantasizing about committing crimes is very different than following through with it. What was Tyler’s plan A? What drove him to that kind of desperation? Why didn’t he follow through?
7. Describe how Tyler and his father are similar. How are they different?
8. The novel opens with Tyler on the roof, on his last day of work. Compare his interaction with Joe in the opening chapter to the one in chapter 65, where he is also on the school roof. How do these moments compare to chapter 58, where Tyler is working on the roof of his house and his father climbs up to give him pliers?
9. By the time he enters senior year, Tyler is big and strong. If that transformation happens before the book opens, what transformation occurs during the book?
10. At the end of *Twisted*, Laurie Halse Anderson writes about the many boys who sent her letters over the years. She explains that “This book [*Twisted*] is in no way based on any of the stories they shared, but I hope it echoes and reflects their struggles and triumphs.” What does she mean by that? In other words, why do you think she wrote this book?

CREATIVE CONNECTIONS—NARRATIVE WRITING

Correlates with CCSS Writing Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1 (writing narratives)

WRITE CHAPTER 79:

Write a scene that describes Tyler’s graduation day. What happens that day? How have his parents and sister changed? Tie your answer to what you know has happened in the book.

RESEARCH TO BUILD AND PRESENT KNOWLEDGE

Correlates with CCSS ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7 and 8 (research)

Tyler is given “community service” as part of his punishment for vandalism. Find out more about community service programs for juvenile offenders, and find information about “restorative justice” programs. What are their benefits and drawbacks?





WINTERGIRLS

The following questions may be used to guide group discussions or as written essay prompts. [Discussion questions are all correlated to Reading Standards CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2; and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3. When used in discussion, they correlate to ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1,3,4,6; when used as essay prompts, they correlate to Writing Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1.]

1. Two of the first things readers often notice about the format of *Wintergirls* are the crossed-out words and the numbers beside food references. Why does the author use these devices? What do they show the reader about Lia?
2. Cassie's mother is eager to talk to Lia, saying that she is "the only person who could help her understand why" (161). Does Lia really know why Cassie became bulimic? What does Lia mean when she says that the real question is: why not?
3. By the end of the novel, we know that Lia's point of view is distorted. How is her view of herself unrealistic? Is her view of other people also distorted? Provide evidence or examples from the text.
4. While Lia's parents are encouraging her to be healthy and eat normally, Jennifer, her stepmother, is concerned that Emma is becoming too plump. Why does Anderson choose to have this subplot in the story? How does this complicate Lia's life?
5. Near the end of the book, in a major turning point, Lia cuts herself, and Emma finds her. Lia says, "The screams of my little sister shatter the mirrors" (226). Explain the significance of that quote. What does she mean when she says the mirrors have shattered?
6. Lia is haunted by the secret that Cassie called her on the night she died. Near the end, Lia has one last conversation. Reread their conversation on page 273. They both apologize for different things. What regrets do they have? Could answering the phone have saved Cassie? Why or why not?
7. What is the key to Lia's survival? What makes her want to live?
8. The last line of the book is "I am thawing." The book is set in the winter months, and there are a number of references to the notion of being a "Wintergirl." In what physical and emotional ways are Lia (and Cassie) frozen?

CREATIVE CONNECTION—NARRATIVE WRITING

Correlates with CCSS Writing Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1 (writing narratives)

LITTLE BITS OF YOU

At one point, Lia says "bits of me are scattered all over town: the graveyard, school, Cassie's room, the motel, and standing in front of the sink in my mother's kitchen" (181). Write a poem or narrative that explains where "bits of you" are scattered. Be creative and use sensory details to describe what and where represents you.

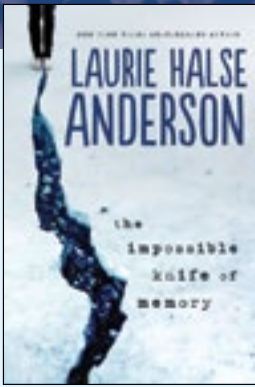
THE UNWRITTEN LETTER

Early in the book, Lia considers reaching out to Jennifer, saying "I open my mouth, but steam rushes in and boils away the words." Write three different letters from Lia's point of view: one to her parents, one to Cassie, and one to Emma. Adopt the strikethrough style, if you wish, but be sure to focus on the differences between those relationships.

RESEARCH TO BUILD AND PRESENT KNOWLEDGE

Correlates with CCSS ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7 and 8 (research)

While it is true that the characters who suffer in *Wintergirls* are female, there is growing concern about teenage boys and eating disorders. Research the incidence of eating disorders in teenage males. What are some of the unique challenges boys face if they have an eating disorder? Write an informational pamphlet and ask your school to distribute it to school nurses and coaches. Make posters to increase awareness of male eating disorders, and find and share local or national resources for the treatment of eating disorders.



THE IMPOSSIBLE KNIFE OF MEMORY

The following questions may be used to guide group discussion or as written essay prompts. [Discussion questions are all correlated to Reading Standards CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2; and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3. When used in discussion, they correlate to ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1,3,4,6; when used as essay prompts, they correlate to Writing Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1.]

1. While the focus of this book is on Hayley's family problems, no one in the novel seems to be without significant challenges. What kinds of issues are the supporting characters facing? How well do they cope? Be sure to discuss Finn, Gracie, Trish, and Jonas, the boy who is bullied after the lockdown drill. Why is he in the story (see chapter 65)?
2. Early in the book, Hayley says a teacher has them compare a burly Odysseus to a wrinkled, small Mother Theresa. Research both figures. Who is the hero? Why? Then think about veterans who earn a Purple Heart in battle. What does that award symbolize? Are they heroes?
3. Roy says of Hayley's father: "His soul is still bleeding. That's a lot harder to fix than a busted-up leg or traumatic brain injury" (101). What does he mean? Support your answer by reviewing the sections of the book that reveal the memories that haunt Hayley's father. What do these memories explain about his behavior?
4. Hayley's father teaches her a number of strategies to employ when she is feeling stressed. Discuss how or why they might be successful. What strategies have you tried when you are stressed?
5. Hayley says there are only two types of people in the world: zombies and freaks. What does she mean? If you had to divide the world into types of people, how would you describe the world? Why?
6. In the novel, Hayley's father has a number of guns. Is he a responsible gun owner? Why or why not? Do the issues described in this novel change your views about gun rights?
7. Review Andy's discussion with the students in Chapter 70. Is his information correct? What do you think of his interpretation of the facts? What does he mean by "Politics beats out freedom, honor, and service every time" (282)?
8. The final chapter begins this way: "If this were a fairy tale, I'd stick in the 'Happily Ever After' crap right here" (365). Is the final chapter a fairy-tale ending? Why or why not?
9. Andy says, "Killing people is easier than it should be . . . Staying alive is harder" (282). Given that statement, what do you make of the end of the novel?

CREATIVE CONNECTIONS—NARRATIVE WRITING

Correlates with CCSS Writing Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1 (writing narratives)

1. Think about an important memory from your life. Write the story of that day with particular attention to visual details, the way Hayley remembers the visual details of her father's red swim shorts. If possible, find someone who was there and see if your recollection is the same.
2. Write a scene in which Hayley is struggling with math in college and has to call Finn for help. What does he say to help her? Is it easy or hard for her to accept his help?

RESEARCH TO BUILD AND PRESENT KNOWLEDGE

Correlates with CCSS ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7, 8, 9 (research)

Research the kinds of support systems available to veterans, particularly in America. What services seem to be available for people who are no longer on active duty? Are those sufficient? Share what you find with your classmates and your wider community.

RESILIENCE LITERATURE: INCORPORATING INFORMATIONAL TEXTS WITH ANDERSON'S WORK

The Common Core State Standards encourage the reading of both literary and informational texts. The careful selection of informational texts to use with Anderson's fiction not only addresses the standard requirement that students read informational texts (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10) but also allows students to explore how different materials approach the same topics (see CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7—diverse formats and media).

THE POWER OF TELLING A STORY

In her *New York Times* review of *The Impossible Knife of Memory*, Jo Knowles, another author of realistic fiction for youth, writes "Anderson exposes the secret hurts far too many teenagers carry every day. Her protagonists battle their demons privately, sinking deeper into isolation and despair until they realize that the only way to survive is to tell their stories."

Reading: Read Knowles' entire review of the book.

Writing: Use this quote to develop a thesis about the book you read. Do you agree or disagree with Knowles's analysis that telling one's story is a key to survival? Why or why not? Does this apply only to the protagonist or does it also describe some of the other characters?

Extension Activity: Talk to other people about the Anderson books they read. Do all of Anderson's protagonists battle their demons privately? Is this consistent throughout Anderson's work?
(source: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/12/books/review/laurie-halse-andersons-impossible-knife-of-memory.html?_r=0)

NEWS PUBLICATIONS

Reading: Have students use a major newspaper to seek out one recent article about one of the social issues in the book.

Writing: Write a letter to the newspaper encouraging more coverage of the specific topic, providing several reasons why attention is important at this time.

Extension Activity: Look at every issue from the last year of a major news magazine to notice what social problems receive headlines. Do the same for a year from the 1980s (or any other time period). Have the problems changed dramatically? What trends do you notice?

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

Reading: Have students select a specific outreach organization to investigate. Encourage students to find that organization's promotional materials: read websites, peruse written material, and watch videos that are used in the promotion of social service organizations.

Writing: Write a pamphlet or create a poster for a social services organization. Coordinate with the guidance department to make the material accessible to students.

Extension Activity: Make a 30-second Public Service Announcement that identifies the problem and offers real-life help for someone who is suffering (hotline, website, etc).

FILM STUDIES

Multimedia: Select a film that is geared toward a teenage audience and addresses a social issue. Discuss how the film approaches the issue and whether or not it is effective in making the viewer believe that the problem is real and important. Compare it to the emotional power of the Anderson book.

Writing: What do you prefer? Have students write a persuasive essay on the power of film versus the power of a book. Require students to provide evidence from both the book and the film to support their contention.

Extension Activity: (Note: *Speak* was made into a film. Teachers may want to do a comparative analysis of the adaptation.) Explain to students that publishers do not currently use a standard rating system to categorize content in books, then ask students to articulate their understanding of the movie rating system. Provide students with the guidelines for the MPAA film rating guide, and explain your district's rules about films in classrooms. Using the text as their springboard, have students argue which rating the book would get if it were made into a film. Have students point to certain scenes to prove their point. Vote on whether or not the school would let a film with the same content be aired in the classroom. If the answer is no, why are films and books so different?

COMPARING TEXTS

The following questions can be used in discussions or as essay prompts. Each requires that two different texts be compared, so these are excellent resources for classes utilizing literature circles.

SURVIVAL: A THEME

In each of Laurie Halse Anderson's books, the main character may be described as a survivor. Using specific evidence from the text, explain what the protagonist endured, how the character managed to survive, and how they change over the course of the text. Focus on the character's relationships with others as well as how he or she changed internally.

BATTLING DEPRESSION

Many of the characters in Anderson's books consider suicide: Tyler, the main character in *Twisted*; Lia, the main character in *Wintergirls*; Andy and his daughter Hayley in *The Impossible Knife of Memory*. The majority of people with suicidal ideation (suicidal thoughts) do not follow through on them.

Compare and contrast any two characters who have suicidal ideation (from the same or different texts).

Look back at the moments in the story when they seem most vulnerable and depressed.

Why do each of them consider suicide?

Why don't they follow through?

Who or what seems to offer each of them hope?

Use evidence from the text to support your ideas.

COLLEGE PLANNING

College is a topic of discussion in every book by Anderson. Discuss the different books and compare the different characters' college plans. Which is most similar to your plans for future education? Be specific about the similarities and differences in your college plans.

Writing: Reflect on the purpose of the college essay. Why do colleges ask for a writing sample in the form of a college essay? What does a college essay reveal about a potential student?

Extension Activity: Use the internet (or *The Impossible Knife of Memory*, p 197) to search out examples of prompts that colleges use for their application essays. Choose one carefully and write an essay that you think might get you into the college of your dreams, even if you have other plans for your future. If you can't find one you like, propose an alternative question to the teacher and write the essay answer.



// In several of my books, I try to connect to other pieces of literature. Hopefully these references provide insight into the story, and inspire deeper discussions.

In *Speak*, I mention *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* several times. And Melinda has to read *Scarlet Letter*.

***Prom* is connected thematically to the familiar *Cinderella* story.**

With *Twisted*, I used the last name of Miller as an homage to Arthur Miller. In my mind, Tyler is the literary grandson of Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*.

***Wintergirls* rests on the myth of Persephone and Demeter: the daughter is stolen away into hell, the mother plunges the world into winter as she searches for her girl.**

In *The Impossible Knife of Memory*, the journey of returning vets and the struggles they overcome is that of *The Odyssey*. //

LAURIE HALSE ANDERSON

is the *New York Times* bestselling author who writes for kids of all ages. Known for tackling tough subjects with humor and sensitivity, her work has earned numerous national and state awards, as well as international recognition. Laurie was honored with the 2009 Margaret A. Edwards Award given by the YALSA division of the American Library Association for her "significant and lasting contribution to young adult literature . . ." Mother of four and wife of one, Laurie lives in Northern New York, where she likes to watch the snow fall as she writes.



LET THE CRITICS **SPEAK** FOR THEMSELVES:

★ "Anderson . . . stretches her wings by offering . . . a male protagonist . . . one of the most poignant and gripping scenes in young-adult literature."

—Kirkus on *Twisted*

"Anderson explores the complicated nature of perception and memory, and how individuals manage to carry on after experiencing the worst . . .

ONE OF ANDERSON'S STRONGEST

and most relevant works to date."

—*School Library Journal* on *The Impossible Knife of Memory*

"Catalyst is a **DEFTLY FASHIONED CHARACTER STUDY** of a seldom explored subject in YA fiction: the type-A adolescent."

—Amazon.com Review on *Catalyst*

"Anderson's novels . . . speak for the still-silent among us, and force all of us to acknowledge the real and painful truths that are too dangerous to ignore."

—*New York Times* on *The Impossible Knife of Memory*

"Anderson expresses the emotions and the struggles of teenagers perfectly."

—*School Library Journal* on *Speak*

"IN A STUNNING FIRST NOVEL,

Anderson uses keen observations and vivid imagery to pull readers into the head of an isolated teenager."

—*Publishers Weekly* on *Speak*

"Once again, Anderson's taut,

CONFIDENT WRITING

will cause this story to linger long after the book is set down."

—*School Library Journal* on *Twisted*

"Anderson illuminates a dark but utterly realistic world . . . this is

NECESSARY READING."

—*Booklist* on *Wintergirls*