

A COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNED DISCUSSION & WRITING PROMPT GUIDE FOR



WRITTEN BY BETHANY CRANDELL

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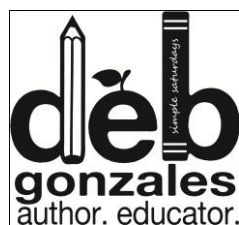




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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & WRITING PROMPTS

“It’s unbelievable,” I say, and realize I’m laughing, too. “But at least you look like a hottie. Can you imagine how much it would suck if you were mistaken for some deformed freak...like Quasimodo?”

Rather than the laughter I expect. All I get is an earful of deafening silence. What the hell? I take in the faces of everyone around me – every open jaw and wide eye gaping at me (20).

- 📖 Tell why Cricket finds herself laughing along with the group. What does this action reveal about her motivation? What does she want?
 - 📖 Explain why Cricket states that it is important to “look like a hottie.”
 - 📖 Tell why Cricket “expects” laughter after making the comment.
 - 📖 Consider Cricket’s reaction to the “deafening silence” and shocked expressions. Why did the silence catch her off guard?
 - 📖 Explain why the group responded to her words in the way that they did.
- ✍️ Examine this scene from Cricket’s point of view. Craft a narrative telling why, according to her state of being at this point in the story, the comments were not out of line. Explain why her words were perfectly acceptable from her frame of reference.

I feel my cheeks warm with embarrassment as I scrub the leftover sauce. “Thanks,” I say with false amusement. “I guess I’m a bigger mess than I realized.”

“Yeah, maybe you are,” he says, leaning close enough so I can see my reflection in his eyes. “But that’s when life starts getting good, right? When it’s messy (58).”

- 📖 Tell why Cricket was falsely amused when Quinn pointed out that she had pizza sauce on her cheek. Why didn’t she think it was funny?
 - 📖 Explain why Cricket values the advice given in the *Cosmo* magazine. What does this say about her authenticity or personal values?
 - 📖 Is it possible that Cricket might not be aware of her messy shortcomings? Explain how this could be.
 - 📖 Explain what Quinn means in the phrase, “But that’s when life starts getting good.” How can life’s messiness bring about goodness?
- ✍️ Consider the phrase “...he says, leaning in close enough so I can see my reflection in his eyes,” in both a literal and connotative sense. Explain how this line alludes to both Cricket’s and Quinn’s character growth.



Claire plunges into the pool with the grace of a hippo, while I'm left to wonder what sort of universe I'm living in. Girls with no legs win Olympic medals and girls whose asses have just eaten their own bathing suits aren't made fun of.

"Cooome on, Cricket!" Meredith calls from the pool's edge. She's dragging her hands through the water while her legs dangle in the water below her. "The waaaater is great!"

"Uh, yeah. Okay." I shimmy off my cutoffs, and am just pulling my tank top over my head, when I see Meredith face-plant into the water. "Oh, my God! Is she okay (93)?"

- 📖 Examine the lines above. Tell how they reveal a shift in Cricket's character.
- 📖 Note the author's transitions between paragraphs. Tell how the final line in one paragraph connects the opening line in the next. Explain how these transitions contribute to Cricket's character development.
- 📖 Explain why Cricket becomes concerned when Meredith dives into the water. What happened to make Cricket care enough to attempt to rescue her? Why does she care?
- ✍️ Answer Cricket's question. What sort of universe is she living in? What sort of universal truths define it? Support your position with examples from the text.

Up until the kiss I wanted nothing more than to escape this freak farm. But now everything is just so damned complicated (105).

- 📖 Entangled, troublesome, and problematic are synonyms for the word 'complicated.' Define Cricket's complications. Citing examples for each.
 - Tell of ways that her situation is entangled. Entangled with whom? How? Why?
 - Troublesome for her in what ways?
 - List the problems the kiss has created for Cricket.
- 📖 Discuss how Cricket's complications affect others. Quinn? Rainbow? Katie? Her father?
- 📖 The term 'freak' is defined as a monstrosity, oddity, and grotesque. Consider the term 'freak farm.' Describe the images the term brings forth in your mind. Is *Camp I Can* a freak farm? How so?
- 📖 The definition of the word 'irreverent' is showing a lack of respect for people or things that are generally taken seriously. Consider Cricket's attitude toward the campers of *Camp I Can*. Is her attitude irreverent? How so?
- ✍️ Describe your reaction to Cricket's attitude regarding *Camp I Can* and its campers. Is it possible to have compassion for someone who, apparently, has none for others? How so? Reveal what Cricket's attitudes have taught you about your own. Can you find compassion for her point of view? Explain your answer.



“Whoa. You’re overthinking this. Obviously there’s no magic formula that’s going to make it all disappear. You said some pretty stupid shit and he’s really pissed. It’s definitely going to take some time. But you can own up to it and make sure it never happens again. ‘Just doing it’ simply means you commit to being the person you want to be and ... doing it (123).”

- 📖 Examine Colin’s words. Do you find truth in them? How so?
- 📖 Explain what the term ‘own up’ means.
- 📖 The definition of commit means to pledge or bind. Explain what the word means in regard to Cricket’s situation with Quinn and *Camp I Can*. What issues does she need to commit to? What types of changes will this sort of commitment bring about?
- 📖 Colin tells Cricket that she ‘simply’ needs to commit to being the person she wants to be. The word ‘simply’ is defined as being straightforward or a plain manner. Classify the issues Cricket needs to commit to. State the level of simplicity required to make such a commitment. What will be lost, if she does so? What will be gained?
- 📖 To be authentic is to be real, sincere, and to be free of pretense. Discuss which characters are ‘authentic’ at this point in the story.
- ✍ Risk being honest with yourself. Explore avenues of your life in which you have been less than authentic. Can you commit to being the person you want to be? If so, how will you go about just doing it? If not, why not?

“Not always.” His heavy gaze moves away from me. “I’ve never actually said this out loud, but I hated him for a long time.” He pauses like he’s waiting for me to react, but I don’t. “My parents waited on him hand and foot,” he continues. “I felt like the invisible boy – like I wasn’t special enough for them. It was stupid” – he shrugs – “but it was how I felt, even though my parents assured me it wasn’t true (164).”

- 📖 Explain how Quinn, the handsome, kind, outgoing, friendly, and genuine character that he is, could feel insignificant in his home.
- 📖 He confessed that he once hated his brother who was born with Down’s syndrome. Explain why he has never told anyone this truth before.
- 📖 Examine why Quinn feels safe enough to share his pain with Cricket at this point in the story. Is this something he would risk doing when he first became attracted to her? Why or why not?
- ✍ Consider Cricket’s and Quinn’s character development. Tell how they have gradually changed from being single dimensional to more complex characters. Consider how ‘being real’ affected their development. Cite moments in the story to support your observations.



“I’m not telling you what to do,” which means she is, “But I want you to keep something in mind. There’s no right or wrong way to hurt. Everybody does it their own way. It’s how we respond to pain that tells the kind of person we are. And I know you’re a good person, Constance. A very good person. Now come here and give me a hug before I leave (227).”

- 📖 If Carolyn’s theory regarding a person’s response to pain being a reflection of the kind of person they are, why did Cricket’s father emotionally retreat? Explain why he kept the memories of Cricket’s mother secret. Discuss the motivation behind this action.
- 📖 Consider Quinn’s response when he overheard Cricket speaking to Katie on the phone. Did he emotionally retreat, too? If so, what does this response to pain and anger reveal about Quinn?
- 📖 Carolyn states that “Everybody does it in their own way.” If so, then is the feeling and response to emotional pain part of the human experience? Furthermore, is the feeling and response to emotional pain part of what makes people authentic?
- 📖 Explain the roles of compassion, forgiveness, and understanding with regard to an individual’s response to emotional pain.
- ✍️ Respond to Carolyn’s statement that there is no right or wrong way to hurt. Do you agree or disagree with her? How so? Cite examples from the text to support your opinion.

There is nothing politically correct about Summer on the Short Bus, nor is there an intentional message of inclusion in these pages. This story is merely a stage for honest characters to evolve realistically (no matter how ugly), something we don’t see enough of these days (Author’s Note, 247).

- 📖 Political correctness is defined as agreeing with the idea that people should be careful to not use language or behave in a way that could offend a particular group of people. Examine the author’s intention to portray honest characters void of the restraints of being politically correct.
- 📖 Words such as sincere, truthful, and frank are synonymous with the notion of being honest. Can honesty be ugly? Can sincerity be rude or painful or disrespectful? How so? Cite moments in the story to support your position.
- 📖 Inclusion relates to a regular education classroom that is made up of typically developing students and those with special needs. The word inclusion is synonymous with the idea of involvement, acceptance, and admittance. Discuss why the author chose not to focus on the message of inclusion. Examine her intention to portray the characters in an authentic way rather than being politically correct.
- ✍️ Examine the author’s intent to ‘create a stage for honest characters to evolve realistically.’ Do you agree that this sort of realistic evolvment is needed in literature? How so? Cite examples from the text in support of your position.



COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Literature

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1	Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
CSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.2	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.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3	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.
CSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3	Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3	Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

English Language Arts Standards » Writing

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.



CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
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AUTHOR: BETHANY CRANDELL

[HTTP://ROOKIERITER.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://rookieriter.blogspot.com)

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