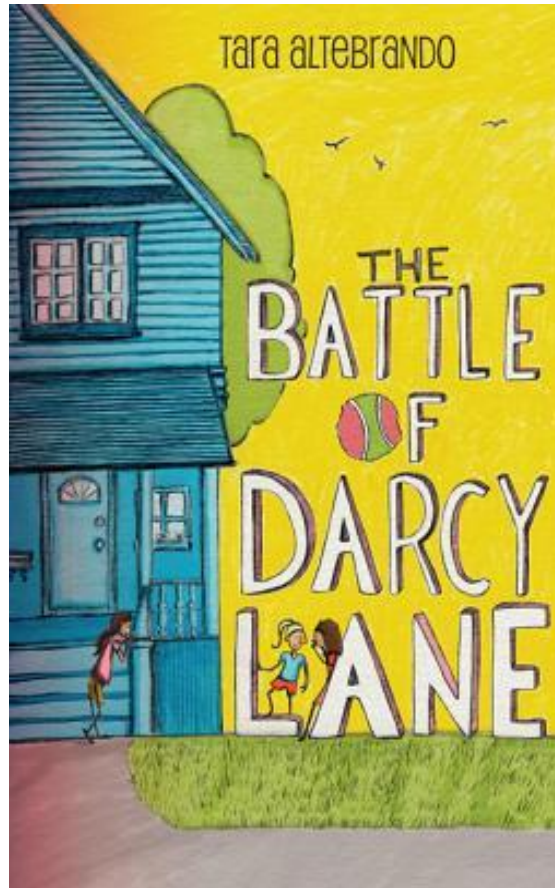


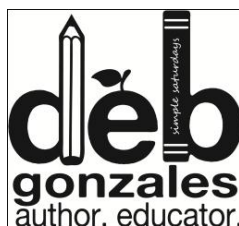
# A Core Curriculum State Standards Aligned Discussion & Activity Guide for



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Published by Running Press Kids

Guide Created by Debbie Gonzales



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## The Educational Activity Guide Format

The format of this guide follows a 4 week course of study. *The Battle of Darcy Lane* has been divided into four sections. Each section is comprised of discussion questions and follow-up activities. The lessons in this guide are suitable for independent readers or group settings.

### Journaling

After engaging in group discussion, students are asked to respond to one of the questions posed in each course section by journaling. A Journal Response and Comprehension Rubric are available on page 5, which is helpful in assessing understanding and personal connection to the discussion questions and the story.

Journals can be purchased or can be personalized by making them out of everyday materials. Instructions for making hand-made journals are presented in the two Ehow.com links below.

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_5760860\\_make-journal-out-paper.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_5760860_make-journal-out-paper.html)

[http://www.ehow.com/video\\_4951964\\_make-paper-journal-school.html](http://www.ehow.com/video_4951964_make-paper-journal-school.html)

### Reading Assignment Bookmarks

Personal bookmarks are printed on the following page. Listed on these bookmarks are the designated chapter groupings and a space allotted for Target Completion Dates. A suggested format for a group or individual novel study is to assign weekly Target Completion Dates for students to finish reading prior to the weekly book discussion session.

#### Procedure:

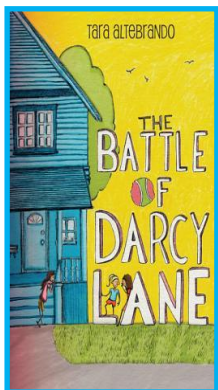
- Print book marks on cardstock – one per student in novel study group.
- Trim the edges of bookmark.
- Give to student with the directions to:
  - Write their name on it.
  - Copy Target Completion Dates in designated space below assigned chapters to be read.
  - Keep the bookmark in the book for reference through the course of the novel study.



Altebrando, Tara. *Battle of Darcy Lane*. S.I.: Running Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-0-7624-4948-4  
[www.taraaltebrando.com](http://www.taraaltebrando.com)    [www.debbiegonzales.com](http://www.debbiegonzales.com)

## Personal Bookmarks for *The Battle of Darcy Lane*

A Guided Reading  
Bookmark for



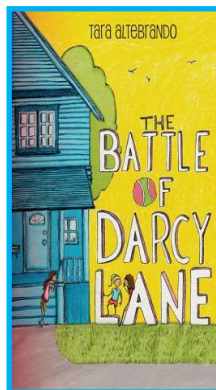
Chapters 1—6

Chapters 7—12

Chapters 13—18

Chapters 19—24

A Guided Reading  
Bookmark for



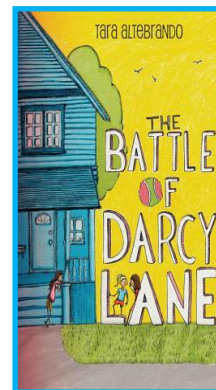
Chapters 1—6

Chapters 7—12

Chapters 13—18

Chapters 19—24

A Guided Reading  
Bookmark for



Chapters 1—6

Chapters 7—12

Chapters 13—18

Chapters 19—24



## Journal Response and Comprehension Rubric

Use this rubric to assess the students' abilities to complete journal activities. Share this assessment with students prior to completing the journal-writing lessons to illustrate the assessment process. You can also use the rubric as a basis for discussion and feedback with each student.

**Student name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

1. The student writes journal responses in complete sentences. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The student writes three or more sentences to answer questions. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The student responds to questions by self-questioning, retelling, predicting, or assuming the role of a character. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The student's experiences and opinions are clear. \_\_\_\_\_
5. The student works with a peer to share journal responses and to develop a combined response when requested. \_\_\_\_\_

Excellent 4	Very Good 3	Fair 2	Poor 1
The student completes the task with no major errors.	The student completes the task with only a few major errors and some minor errors.	The student completes the task with some major errors and many minor errors.	The student fails to complete the task.
The student demonstrates a full understanding of the concepts.	The student demonstrates a strong understanding of the concepts.	The student has difficulty understanding the concepts.	The student does not understand the concepts.



## Discussion Questions for Chapters 1 to 6

*"There goes the neighborhood!" I said, and we laughed in a fake-stuffy, rich person sort of way. This was pretty much how you played Millionaire (8).*

- Explain why the game of Millionaire is appealing to Julia and Taylor. Tell why acting fake and stuffy is fun to the girls.
- Is Julia's comment about Alyssa's arrival to the neighborhood mean? How so?
- Does the fact that Julia and Taylor are playing a game give them an excuse to say condescending things about others? Explain your answer.

*I looked away and did that eye-rolling thing again. I had a feeling there was going to be a lot of eye rolling now that Taylor was all gaga for Alyssa (14).*

- Tell what the gesture of eye-rolling means.
- Define the term 'all gaga.'
- Do you think that Julia is trying to persuade Taylor to exclude Alyssa in some way? How so?
- Is Alyssa trying to persuade Taylor, as well? Explain your answer.
- Who has the most influence on Taylor at this point in the story? Why do you think this is so?

*I looked at the opening credits on the screen and, sure enough, they were watching End of Daze. The credits seemed pretty creepy with their pulsing black type and a weird dry landscape in the background. "But I want to watch this (20)."*

- Julia describes the *End of Daze* credits as being creepy and weird. If her response to the credits is off-putting, why is she interested in watching this program?
- Explain why some programs are more suited to be viewed by grown-ups only.
- Mom seemed to disapprove of the fact that Taylor was being allowed to watch *End of Daze*. Explain why.
- Julia decided not to 'battle' with her parents in a fight to be permitted to watch the show. Explain what she means by this.

*"Maybe it's you that's stupid," Alyssa said.*

- Explain why Julia cares about developing a relationship with Alyssa.
- Explain why Alyssa is so condescending and mean to Julia.
- Is there a place for cruelty in a friendship? Tell why or why not.



## Battles and War – A Study of Point of View

*With Peter right there also thinking the game – and the name – seemed dumb, I felt brave. “Cold War would be a better name,” I said. “Russia’s sort of stupid (27).”*

**Objective:** To examine the characters’ points of view regarding their conflicting relationships.

**Materials:**

- Paper
- Pencil
- *The Battle of Darcy Lane*



**Procedure:**

- Discuss following definitions of the three types of war:
  - **Hot War** – actual warfare. All talks have failed and the troops are battling.
  - **Warm War** – talks are still going on and there would always be a chance of a peaceful outcome but troops fully are mobilized and battle plans are being put into operation ready for the command to fight.
  - **Cold War** – neither side will fight the other - the consequences would be too appalling - but they did battle for their beliefs one would use a weaker, more dependent entity to fight in their behalf.
- Examine these definitions of war through the point of view of the three primary characters. Tell how they would define their battles with one another in the story.
  - Consider how Julia might describe her conflict with Taylor and Alyssa.
    - Is she experiencing a Hot, Warm, or Cold War with the other girls?
    - State specific examples to support your view.
  - Consider the definitions of war from Taylor’s point of view.
    - Is she experiencing a Hot, Warm, or Cold War with the other girls?
    - State specific examples to support your view.
  - Consider the definitions of war from Alyssa’s point of view.
    - Is she initiating a Hot, Warm, or Cold War against Julia?
    - State specific examples to support your view.
- Choose one character’s perception of war and write an opinion piece supporting a point of view with reasons and information.



## Discussion Questions for Chapters 7 to 12

*It felt wrong to be watching a television show in the woods – and also wrong to be watching End of Daze against my parents’ orders – but it was thrilled in a butterflies-in-stomach way (51).*

- What do you think about Julia’s decision to go against her parents’ wishes and watch *End of Daze* with Peter in the woods?
- Tell why watching this program is so important to Julia.
- Julia mentions that she will not allow her parents to stop her from growing up. What does watching *End of Daze* and growing up have to do with one another?

*“What?” Alyssa sniffed a perfume sample in her magazine. “It’s true.”*

*“But you don’t say it!” Taylor shook her head, but she was smiling (57).*

- Are there times when it is best to leave truthful, yet cruel, comments unsaid? Explain.
- In this scene, is Alyssa behaving any differently than Julia and Taylor were while playing Millionaire? How so?
- Tell why Taylor smiled while correcting Alyssa.
- Explain why Alyssa consistently puts Julia down. What is her motive? What does she gain from this?

*“Yeah. But mostly it was everybody making veiled threats, nobody really wanting to confront each other for real. A ton of psychological game-playing and power grabs (63).”*

- The word threat can be defined as a bluff, intimidation, a warning and/or a menace. Which of these synonyms describe Julia and Taylor’s relationship? Explain your answer.
- A veiled threat occurs when an individual is threatened without actually saying threatening things, but it can be understood what they really mean. Could it be, though Alyssa’s threats are obvious, Julia serves as a veiled threat to Alyssa in some way? How so?
- Define power grab.

*Thinking back on how things used to be, it was hard to believe that Taylor was still the same person I’d had sleepovers with over winter break, and told all my secrets, like how I once tried to practice kissing using my own hand. It wasn’t that simple though. “They live on our same street (74).”*

- Is it more important for neighbors to be friends or be friendly? What’s the difference?
- What is the difference between a neighbor and a friend?



*Alyssa was in the pool and climbed up onto an inflatable tube and splashed me. It was cold, but I jumped right in.*

*Alyssa was laughing when I surfaced. “You seriously still hold your nose (85)?”*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

*Wendy and I raced each other and tried to do cartwheels, and I told her all about The Haunted Pond and she was totally into it. I told her, too, about how I now officially had a crush on Peter and how we had been sneaking his Dad’s iPad out to watch End of Daze (93).*

- Compare the mood and tone of both of these poolside scenes. In what ways are they the same?
- Contrast the mood and tone of both of these poolside scenes. How are they different?
- Compare and contrast Alyssa and Wendy.
  - Are there ways that the two are similar? How so?
  - List the ways that they are different.
- With which girl can Julia relax and have fun with? Support your opinion by citing specific actions or dialogue.
- Alyssa is highly critical of Julia, and Julia is highly critical of Wendy. Explain why these girls behave this way?
- Of the three girls, who is the most accepting and carefree? How so?
- Of the three girls, which would you like to have as a friend? Explain your answer.



## Cicada Connection – Phrase Puzzles

*The thing that everyone found so completely fascinating about these cicadas was that they lived in the ground and only came out to make a big mess and mate every seventeen years (21).*

**Objective:** To use the information gained from reviewing text, illustrations, and video to solve puzzles depicting various stages of the cicada life cycle.

**Materials:**

- Pencil
- Review Page found on page 11
- Phrase Puzzles found on pages 12 - 13
- Phrase Puzzle answers found on page 14

**Procedure:**

- Read through the information provided on the Review Page.
- Watch the videos linked to the Review Page.
- Study the graphics offered on the Review Page.
- Use information found on the Review Page to answer the Phrase Puzzles. Note that each letter beneath the block grid must be used to solve the puzzle.
- Note the hint provided beside each Phrase Puzzle. Read the corresponding excerpt posted on the graphic to discover the missing phrase.
- Check your work using the Phrase Puzzle answer sheet.



Cicada Life Cycle found on Reverent Irreverence at <http://reverentirreverence.blogspot.com>



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[www.taraaltebrando.com](http://www.taraaltebrando.com) [www.debbiegonzales.com](http://www.debbiegonzales.com)

## Phrase Puzzle Review Page

### Video Viewing:

[The Life Cycle of the Cicada](#) with Trent Bruce

[Cicadas: 17 years in 7 minutes](#) with Kevin Ambrose

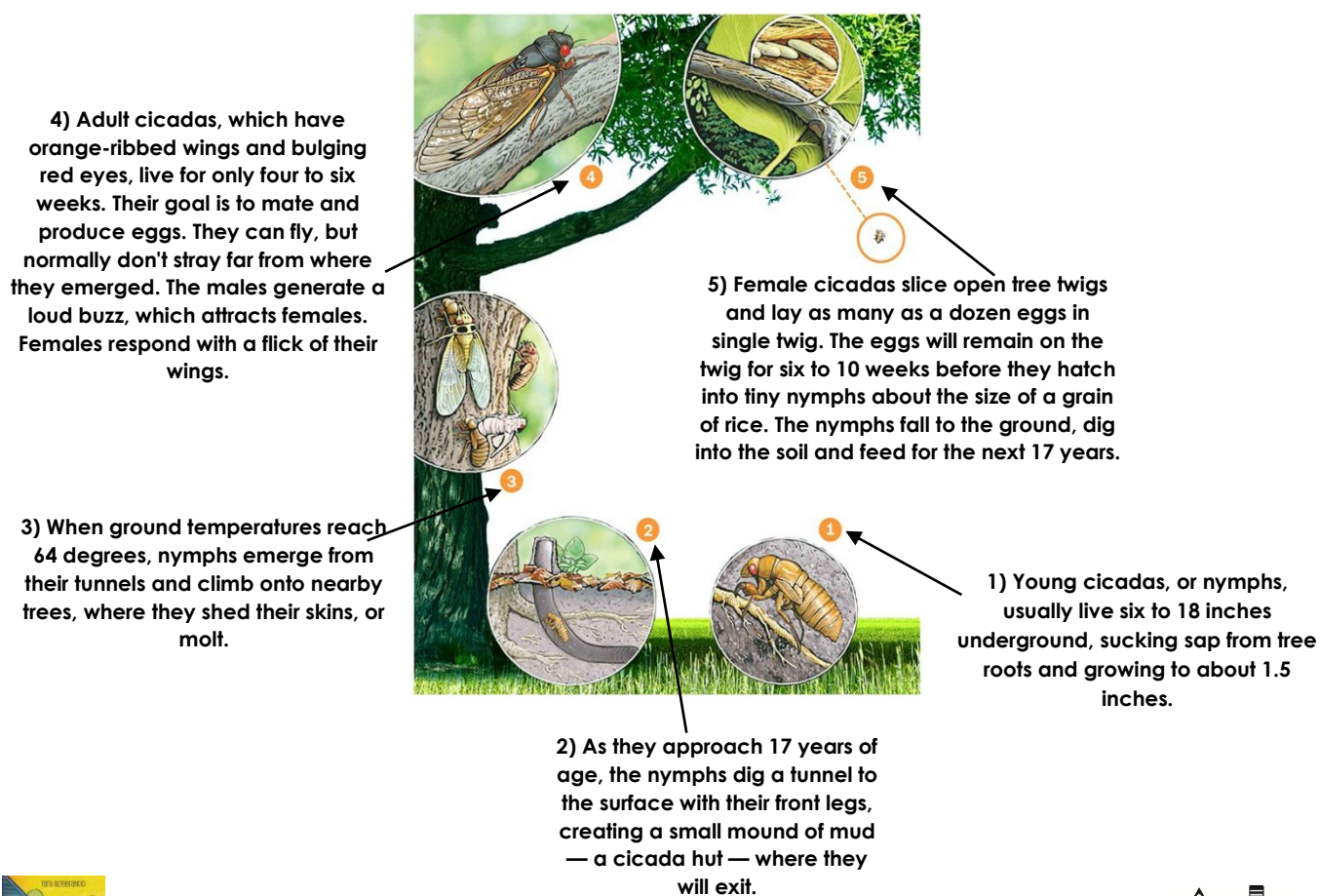
[Cicadas Emerge in Virginia](#) with the Washington Post

### Website/Article Viewing:

[Periodical Cicadas Life Cycles & Behavior](#) with bugsosu.edu

[General Periodical Cicada Information](#) with www.magicicada.org

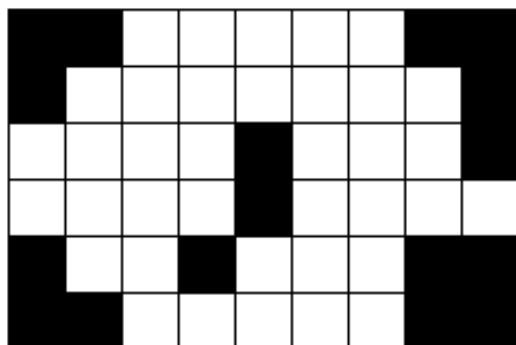
### A Cicada's Rise and Fall by Patterson Clark for the Washington Post



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[www.taraaltebrando.com](http://www.taraaltebrando.com) [www.debbiegonzales.com](http://www.debbiegonzales.com)

## Phrase Puzzles

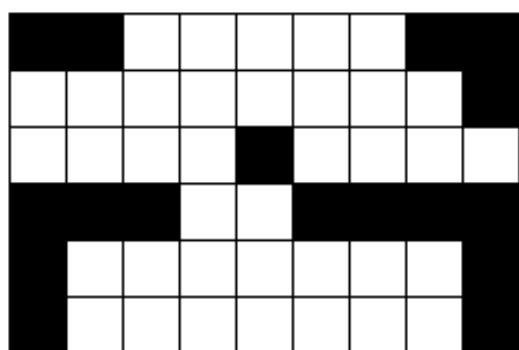
**Sample Phrase Puzzle** - HINT: Read excerpt number 4 from the graphic and find the missing phrase.



V F O  
A E F S  
C L Y E L A  
I W D A I T R  
L N O C U D O S  
O T I E S K X U R



V F O  
A E F S  
C L Y E L A  
I W D A I T R  
L N O C U D O S  
O T I E S K X U R

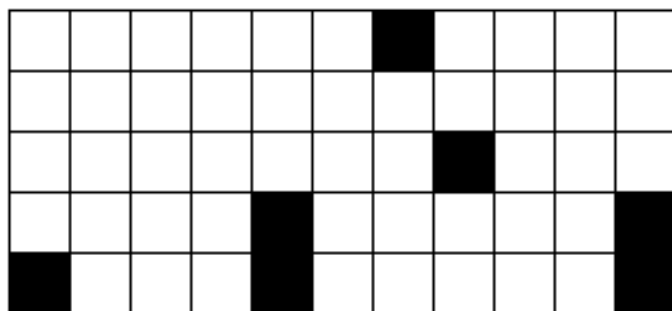


D  
N A R A U  
F E M R E S S  
E U T L B E E  
L A T E O A C T  
G O M T A L T Z Z



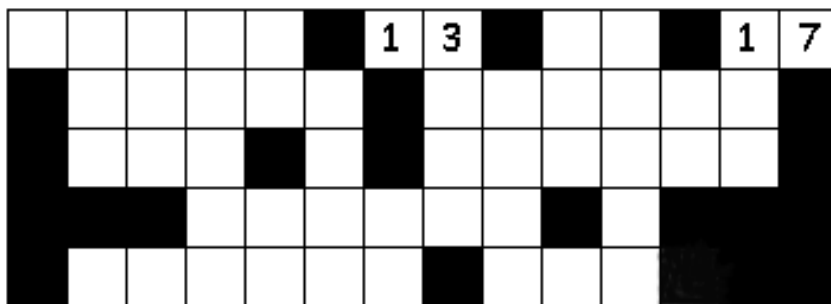
HINT: Read excerpt number 4  
from the graphic found on page  
10 to find the missing phrase.





R N D T S S  
F U O K N G O U N  
N A D M H G R E E A P  
S Y M E I R R O T S D  
U N C P R S O L I V E

HINT: Read excerpt number 1 from the graphic found on page 10 to find the missing phrase.

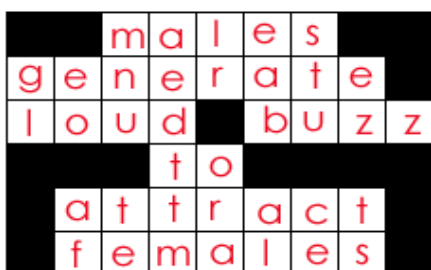


C N  
Y I A A D Y N T  
C I C R S E H T P  
D E E A A A N D U O H L  
A F T G R L L T U M A E S

HINT: Read excerpt number 2 from the graphic found on page 10 to find the missing phrase.

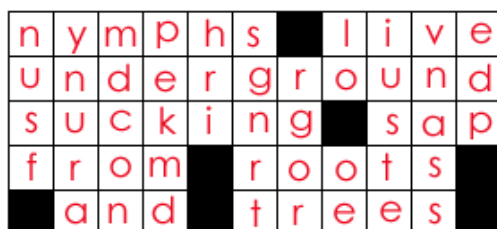


# Phrase Puzzle Answers



HINT: Read excerpt number 4 from the graphic found on page 10

D  
N A R A U  
F E M R E S S  
E U T L B E E  
L A T E O A C T  
G O M T A L T Z Z



HINT: Read excerpt number 1 from the graphic found on page 10 to find the missing phrase.

R N D T S S  
F U O K N G O U N  
N A D M H G R E E A P  
S Y M E I R R O T S D  
U N C P R S O L I V E



HINT: Read excerpt number 2 from the graphic found on page 10 to find the missing phrase.

C N  
Y I A A D Y N T  
C I C R S E H T P  
D E E A A A N D U O H L  
A F T G R L L T U M A E S



## Discussion Question for Chapters 13 to 18

*Peter said, “She’s just jealous, you know (104).”*

- Explain why Alyssa might be jealous of Julia.
- Tell why Peter was able to identify Alyssa’s jealousy and not Julia.
- Have you ever experienced a situation like this? When someone treats someone badly out of jealousy? Explain the details and the outcome of that situation.

*Alyssa came in and sat at the kitchen table. She was wearing per pajamas under a light hoodie, and something about that made me sad for her (115).*

- Alyssa seems weak and sad at this moment. Julia could choose to treat her badly, and yet does not. What does that say about Julia’s character?
- What do you think happened that caused Alyssa’s mother to drop her daughter off so suddenly at night in this way?
- Could it be that, whatever the reason for the sudden drop off, the situation contributes to Alyssa’s meanness? To her jealousy? How so?

*So she didn’t actually want to rat me out, she just wanted me to know that she could (116).*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

*Whatever they were talking about, it couldn’t be good. Because I had ratted Alyssa out, hadn’t I (117)?*

- Consider both situations in light of secrecy and friendship.
  - In what ways have the girls treated each other in a similar manner?
  - In what ways have the girls treated each other differently?
- Explain how, in this instance, Alyssa issued a veiled threat to Julia.
- Discuss how this situation could be considered a battle in a Cold War.

*There were bugs on the ground along the path, and I walked on tippy-toes to avoid them – each one easily bigger than my thumb. I felt bad for them, flapping around there, looking for mates without a clue as to what was really going on around them, oblivious to the fact that everybody hated them and that as soon as they mated and laid eggs, they would die (123).*

- Earlier Julia said that people were fascinated by the arrival of the cicadas. In the quote above she states that everybody hated them. Julia is assuming that she knows how ‘everybody’ feels about cicadas. Is her assumption correct? How so?



- Consider assumptions that she held regarding Peter's attraction to Alyssa. Were her assumptions correct? Explain your answer.

*I liked the way I knew exactly what to do and started to wish the world were more like an orchestra, everyone knowing their role (130).*

- Tell what issues would be solved for Julia if the world was orchestrated in this way.
- Tell what roles would be defined and explain how someone would know that their role is.
- Who decides what roles people place in life and according to whose point of view of equality?

*"Everyone says girls get nutty." He made that crazy gesture by the side of his head. "They get boy-crazy and mean and stuff. I didn't think it would happen to you, but if it did, I thought it would at least be a few years from now (145)."*

- Peter accused Julia of being mean. Julia has accused Alyssa and Taylor of being the same thing – mean. Could it be that Julia's behavior has been much like that of the other girls? That she has become the very thing that she dislikes in them? How so?
- Define boy-crazy.
- Consider the conflict between Julia, Alyssa, and Taylor with regard to being boy-crazy. Do their problems stem from being boy-crazy, or do other issues contribute to their troubles? Explain your answer.
- Could it be that Julia is responsible for some of the troubles she's encountering? How so?



## Musical Analysis

*I selected the Swan Lake Suite, op. 20: Scène, picked up my clarinet, and started to play (70).*

*We were learning to play a set of pieces called The Carnival of Animals for the big concert, and the music was so lovely and so sad that I had a hard time holding it together (144).*

**Objective:** To analyze and describe emotional responses to classical music selections.

### Materials:

- Pencil
- Musical Analysis Graphic Organizer (page 18)
- Writing supplies (computer or paper and pencil)
- YouTube selections (access the links below):
  - [Aquarium from The Carnival of Animals](#) by Kolleen Kobussen
  - [The Swan Lake Suite](#) by Tchaikovsky

### Procedure:

- Closely listen to both pieces of music, several times, if need be.
- Using the section labeled Part 1 of the Musical Analysis Graphic Organizer:
  - Describe the music. What does it sound like?
  - Describe your emotional response to the music. How does the music make you feel?
- Using the section labeled Part 2 of the Musical Analysis Graphic Organizer:
  - Using the information gathered in Part 1, compare the musical pieces by listing their similarities.
  - Using the information gathering in Part 2, contrast the musical pieces by listing their differences.
- Use the information gathered in Part 1 and Part 2 to write a narrative piece describing your reactions to *Aquarium* from the *Carnival of Animals* and the *Swan Lake Suite*. Listed below is a tag cloud full of descriptors to serve as inspiration for you!

smooth **raging** soft **harsh** *lyrical* **melodic** **SOMBER**  
**JOYFUL** relaxing **POWERFUL** inspirational **energetic**  
*dark* light **ARTISTIC** rhapsodic *silvery* airy mellow



## Musical Analysis Graphic Organizer

### Part 1:

Describe **The Swan Lake Suite**

*Emotional  
Response*

Describe **Aquarium**

*Emotional  
Response*

### Part 2:

List the similarities.

List the differences.



## Discussion Questions for Chapters 19 to 24

*“My mom’s so sorry but she totally forgot you get you a ticket. And they’re not selling them at the door (155).”*

- Explain why Julia lied to Wendy.
- Describe how Wendy would feel if she knew that Julia didn’t want her around.
- Discuss how Julie is being ‘nutty’ and ‘mean’, as Peter predicted, in this scene.
- Is Julia becoming more like Alyssa and Taylor as result of this action? How so?

*I thought about Wendy and felt bad about making fun of her, even if only in my head, for stickers and wanting to play duets. At least she was passionate about stuff. Like I was, like Laney was. Peter, too.*

*Alyssa and Taylor didn’t seem passionate about anything.*

*Not even Russia, not really (159).*

- Earlier, Julia’s mom said that she didn’t have anything in coming with Taylor’s mother. Is this what Julia is doing in this scene? Considering what she has in common with Wendy, Taylor, Alyssa, and Peter? How so?
- The word passionate means to be enthusiastic, excited, and eager. What sort of things are you passionate about?
- Do you find that people who are passionate about life are more fun to be with? How so?
- If you were able to give Julia advice about her choice of friends, what would you tell her?

*I’ve got this, I repeated in my head and got back into the zone and stayed there – bouncing, clapping, throwing, turning, shacking, catching. Like I’d been born knowing how to do it (172).*

- Being in the ‘zone’ means to have total concentration and dominance over whatever is being pursued. Could Julia have been in the zone if she kept her focus on Alyssa’s game and not her own? Explain your answer.
- Explain ways that being passionate and being in the zone have in common.
- Tell how the actions described in the quote above mirror stages of the cicada life cycle.
- Julia said that she felt like she’d been born knowing how to play the game of Russia. Discuss how this comment is much like the cicada life cycle – how nymphs and adult cicadas are born knowing what to do.



*My parents cheered.*

*Alyssa's mother said, "Unbelievable," and went inside (176).*

- Consider the parental reaction to the outcome of the Russia competition.
  - How are they similar?
  - How are they different?
- Predict what Alyssa's mother might have said to her daughter after the competition was over.

*She shook her head, pressed her lips together, and wiped tears away with one hand. "I could kill them." Her voice was deep and shaky. "I could seriously kill them."*

*I should have felt the same way. I knew that. But I didn't (191).*

- Explain why Julia isn't as angry like her mother is in this scene.
- Discuss the shift of awareness that has taken place within Julia.
- Like a nymph into an adult cicada, tell how Julia has grown emotionally over the summer.
- Will the lessons she's learned last a lifetime? Explain your answer.
- How about you? Have you been affected by Julia's story? How so?
  - Have you realized some things about your relationships?
  - About being mean?
  - About finding commonalities and passions?



## Create a Character Board

*I'd beat Alyssa at her game, and it hadn't changed anything.  
And nothing I could do ever would (191).*

**Objective:** To develop an understanding of characterization by examining conflict and interconnectedness.

### Materials:

- 3 copies of the Character Analysis graphic organizer (page 22)
- Character Connectivity graphic organizer (page 23)
- Pencils, markers, pens
- Poster board and graphics
- *The Battle of Darcy Lane*

### Procedure 1: Character Analysis

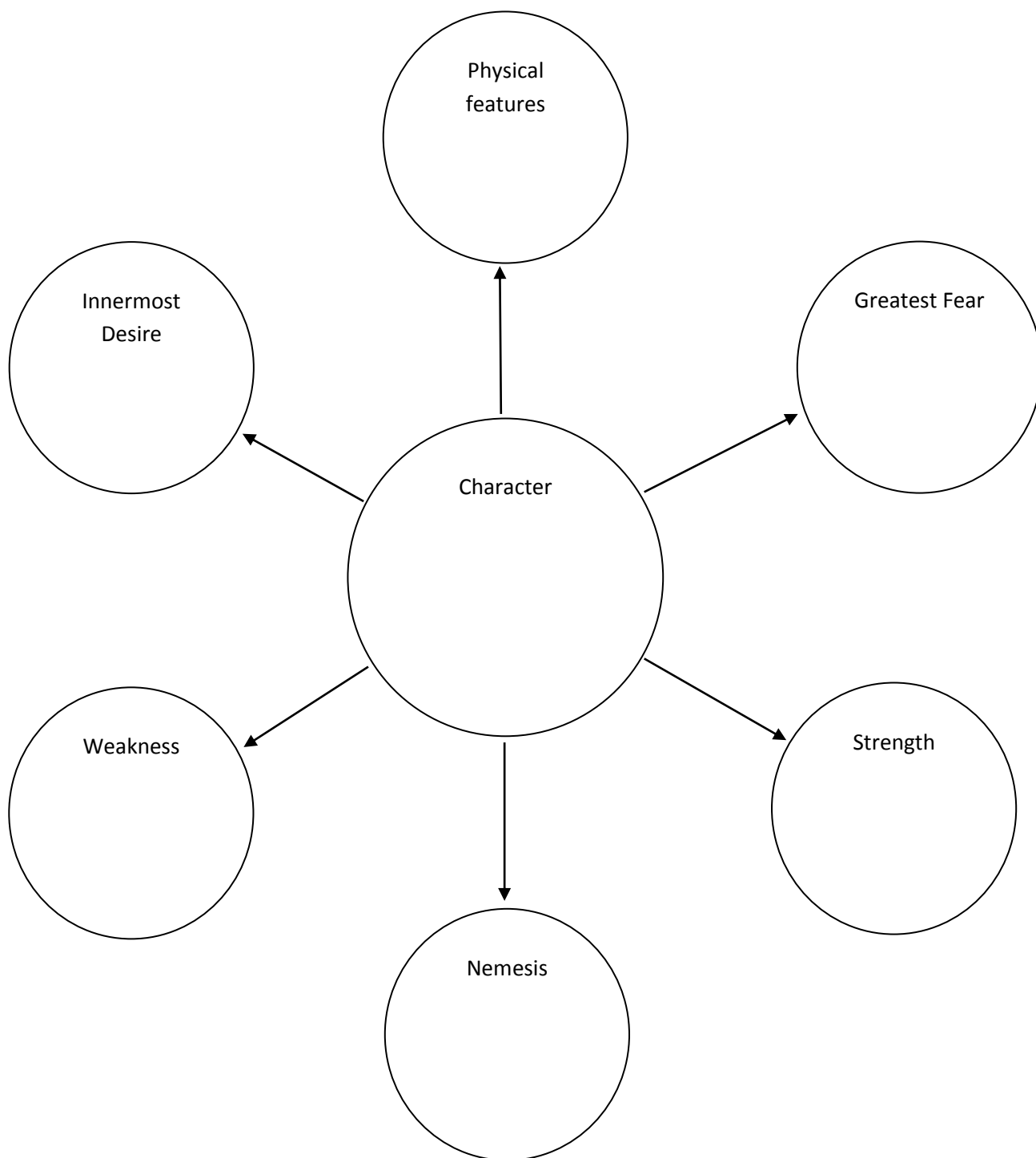
- Print 3 copies of the Character Analysis graphic organizer, one for each girl.
- Use the graphic organizer to develop a deeper understanding of Julia, Taylor, and Alyssa's characterization.

### Procedure 2: Character Connectivity

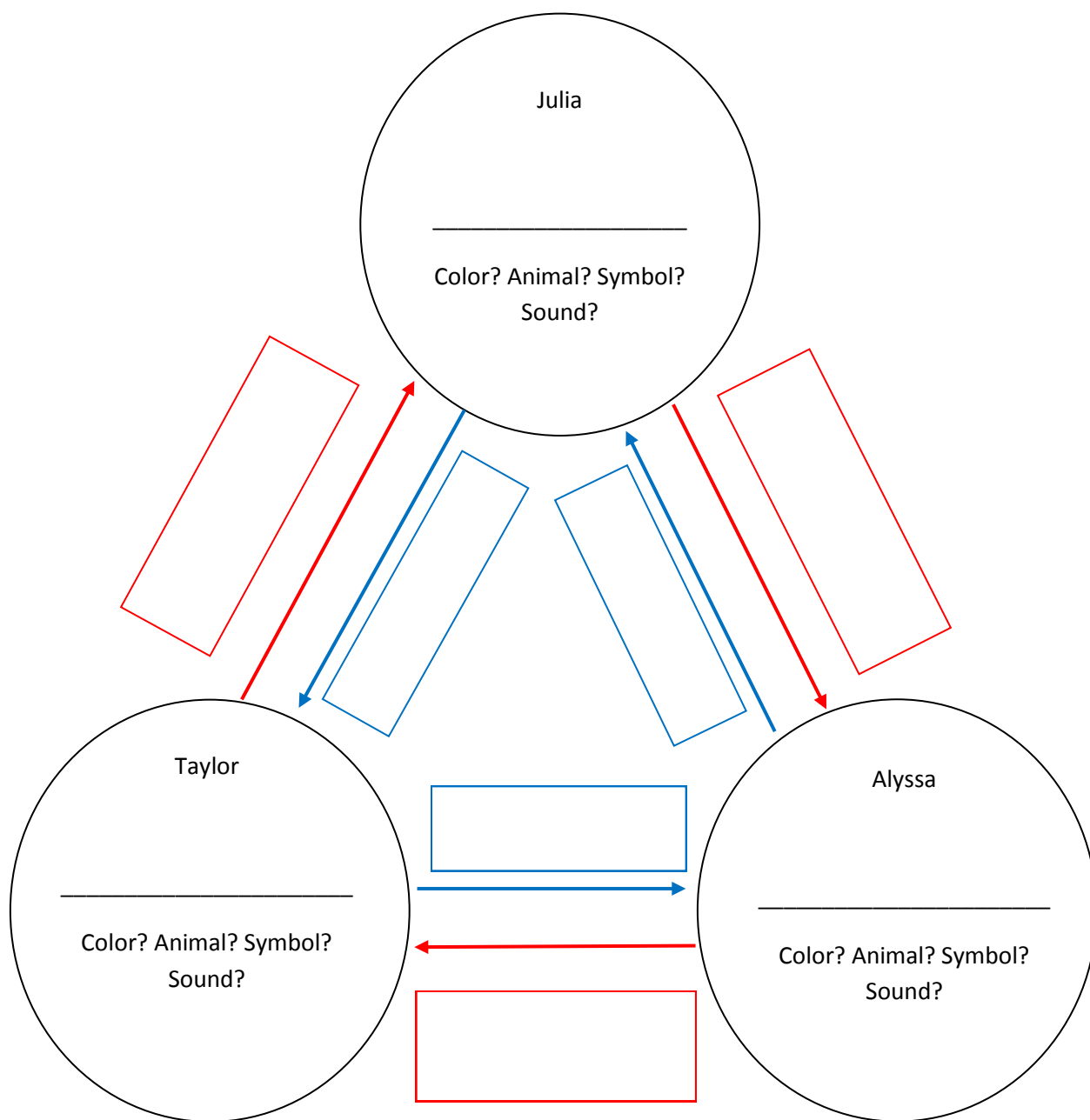
- Print one copy of the Character Connectivity graphic organizer.
- Consider the character printed in a specific circle in a symbolic sense. Make notes in the circle, as well.
  - Is there a color that reveals characterization?
  - An animal?
  - A symbol?
  - A sound?
- Follow the red or blue arrows connecting the characters. In the color-coded rectangle beside the arrow, describe their relationship.
  - Be specific and descriptive.
  - Consider the characters' conflict, trouble, and flaws.
    - What do they want?
    - What is keeping them from what they want?
  - Consider their talents, strengths, differences, and commonalities.
- Using the poster board, graphics, pictures, markers, and any other art supplies create a character board using the information gathered in the graphic organizers.



## Character Analysis Graphic Organizer



# Character Connectivity Graphic Organizer



## A Conversation with Author Tara Altebrando



***The Battle of Darcy Lane* is your Middle Grade debut, but you are well versed in writing YA fiction. Did you face any challenges while writing in a younger voice for a younger audience?**

It took a bit more work for me to get into the mindset of a twelve-year-old since my memory of twelve is not as clear as my memory of sixteen or seventeen, and I don't have any girls that age that I am very close with. I've been keeping diaries since I was about ten, though, so I had an old Snoopy diary to flip through. But because I didn't write as often as I would have liked—I wrote "Sorry!" on an awful lot of pages—I talked to friends about their twelve-year-old daughters and, when I finished a draft, had two reads from girls who were in the right age group to see if the book was resonating. Luckily, it seemed to but I definitely made some revisions based on their feedback. Also, my YA novels typically have a love story, so it was a fun new challenge write about boy-girl friendship and unformed sort of dreamy romantic feelings.

**Taylor is a fascinatingly complicated character. The way she acts, in turns, cruel and kind to Julia keeps readers guessing whether the two will end up friends or enemies. Did Taylor start out that way, or did she change throughout your writing process?**

Taylor definitely became more nuanced during the revision process, based on a note from a friend who read an early draft. I had to work hard to include clues about Taylor and Alyssa that the reader would pick up on—even when Julia didn't—so that they weren't just mindless mean girls. Taylor's the rope in this tug-of-war between Julia and Alyssa. She feels powerless and doesn't really know who she wants to win, which sort of justifies her hot and cold behavior. In her own way, she's struggling with all the same issues as Julia, trying to figure out where she belongs.

**One interesting aspect of Julia's summer is the return of the seventeen-year cicadas. What made you choose this unusual event to coincide with Julia's especially difficult summer?**

I have a handful of vivid memories from when the seventeen-year-cicadas emerged in my neighborhood when I was about twelve, so I decided to add that in as a fun detail, just sort of randomly. But then in the writing it became much deeper, of course; the cicadas suddenly contributed a great deal to the atmosphere of the book and the emergence of the bugs became a sort of metaphor for Julia's emergence out of childhood and into adolescence.



**Julia's mother is a major part of her daughter's life. She's definitely aware of Julia's friendship woes, and sometimes takes action—like enrolling her in camp—to get her away from the Taylor-Alyssa duo. What was your inspiration for Julia's mom, and for their close relationship?**

Julia's mother is very much based on my own, because as much as my mother was my biggest supporter, she was also not afraid to criticize my behavior or point out that I had a role in contributing to whatever drama I was living. It was really important to me that Julia's mom not come off as perfect, though, so there are some glimpses of her own flaws with her friends and also, she gets swept up in the Russia drama almost against her own will. She doesn't like the girls that don't like her daughter, but she's trying to find a way to keep her own emotions in check...until, of course, she can't. The book is dedicated to my daughters, who are much younger than Julia, but if I have a relationship with them when they are older like the one Julia has with her mom, I feel like I will have done something right.

**One of the most truthful aspects of *The Battle of Darcy Lane* is your portrayal of how friends can hurt each other. Alyssa and Taylor aren't stereotypes of "bullies," but they find a million little ways to make Julia feel beneath them. What advice do you have for readers who are dealing with a similar kind of situation?**

I would suggest looking at the ways in which you might be contributing to the situation and examining your thoughts about whoever is putting you down. Do you like them? Are you giving them power? Are *you* being cruel, in your own way? Can you find a way to just walk away and move on?

Also, it's absolutely true what Julia's mom says about "the friend thing": "It really does get easier, I swear." It eventually becomes more effortless to find people you genuinely like, and also to just coexist peacefully alongside people you don't connect with.

**Julia's Russia game against Alyssa makes for a satisfying—and suspenseful—climax to their rivalry. What made you choose that particular ball game as their means for battle?**

I spent the summer of my twelfth year playing Russia for hours on end with my own two mean-girl-neighbor-friends. I initially wrote and shopped this book to publishers with the title *Russia*, and the first version was just thirteen short chapters, each one corresponding to a move of the game. On the path to publication, the book then became much more multi-faceted and the game became less the focal point but I liked the way it helped to highlight the competitive aspects of friendship and also liked the way it allowed me to bring some Cold War ideas and images into the story.



**One common theme of *The Battle of Darcy Lane* is waiting. Julia has to wait for the cicadas to come, for her new room, and, of course, for her big Russia face-off against Alyssa. Her anticipation and anxiety really capture the feeling of wondering what it will be like to grow up. What were you waiting for when *you* were twelve? Did you have the same desires as Julia?**

I was waiting to feel like I belonged somewhere. Waiting for a boy that I maybe kind of liked to like me back. Waiting to grow up. Waiting for a kiss. Waiting for more independence/freedom. So yes, very much like Julia.

**Julia does not get everything she wants by the story's end, yet the ending still feels hopeful. What would you like readers to take away from the conclusion?**

I want them to get the sense that Julia, who will absolutely face more challenges in these relationships and others, has come out of the summer with a new confidence about the fact that not everyone you meet in life is going to like you—or vice versa—and that's okay.



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## Core Curriculum State Standards

### English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Literature

		Discussion Questions	Battles & War	Cicada Connection	Musical Analysis	Character Board
RL.4.1	Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.	✓	✓			✓
RL.4.2	Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.	✓	✓			
RL.4.3	Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).	✓	✓			✓
RL.4.7	Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RL.4.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, in the grades 4–5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RL.5.1	Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.	✓				
RL.5.2	Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.	✓	✓			
RL.5.3	Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).	✓	✓			✓
RL.5.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4–5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RL.6.1	Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	✓	✓			✓
RL.6.2	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.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
RL.6.3	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.	✓	✓			✓



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## English Language Arts Standards » Writing

		Discussion Questions	Battles & War	Cicada Connection	Musical Analysis	Character Board
W.4.1	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.	✓	✓			
W.4.1a	Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.	✓	✓			
W.4.1b	Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.	✓	✓			
W.4.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.	✓			✓	
W.4.3a	Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.	✓			✓	
W.4.3d	Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.	✓			✓	
W.4.3e	Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.	✓			✓	
W.4.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	✓	✓		✓	✓
W.4.5	With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.	✓	✓		✓	
W.4.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.	✓	✓		✓	
W.5.1	Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.	✓	✓			
W.5.1a	Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.	✓	✓			
W.5.1b	Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.	✓	✓			
W.5.1d	Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.	✓	✓			
W.5.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.	✓			✓	



## English Language Arts Standards » Writing (cont.)

		Discussion Questions	Battles & War	Cicada Connection	Musical Analysis	Character Board
W.5.3a	Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.	✓			✓	
W.5.3e	Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.	✓			✓	
W.5.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	✓	✓		✓	✓
W.6.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.	✓	✓			
W.6.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.	✓			✓	
W.6.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	✓	✓		✓	✓

## English Language Arts Standards » Speaking &amp; Listening

SL.4.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 4 topics and texts</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	✓	✓		✓	✓
SL.4.1a	Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.	✓	✓		✓	✓
SL.4.1b	Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.	✓	✓		✓	✓
SL.4.1c	Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.	✓	✓		✓	✓
SL.4.1d	Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SL.4.4	Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.	✓	✓		✓	✓
SL.4.5	Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.				✓	✓

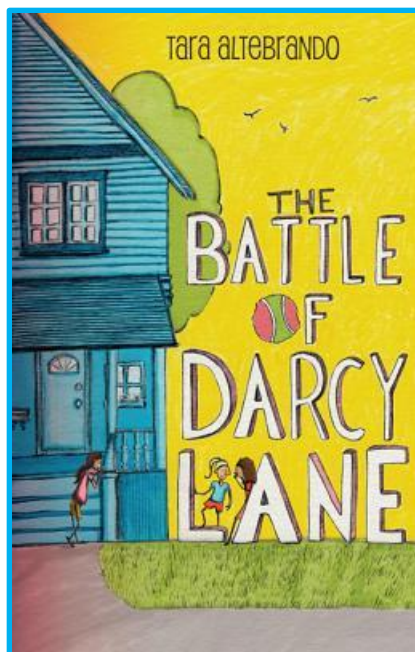


## English Language Arts Standards » Speaking &amp; Listening (cont.)

		Discussion Questions	Battles & War	Cicada Connection	Musical Analysis	Character Board
SL.5.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 5 topics and texts</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SL.5.1a	Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.	✓	✓		✓	✓
SL.5.1b	Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.	✓	✓		✓	✓
SL.5.1c	Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.	✓	✓		✓	✓
SL.5.1d	Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SL.5.4	Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.		✓		✓	✓
SL.5.5	Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.				✓	✓
SL.6.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 6 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SL.6.1a	Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.	✓	✓		✓	✓
SL.6.1b	Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.	✓	✓		✓	✓
SL.6.1c	Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.	✓	✓		✓	✓
SL.6.1d	Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.	✓	✓		✓	✓
SL.6.2	Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



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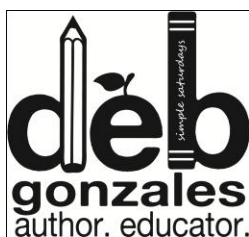
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