

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

# DEVIN RHODES IS DEAD

AGES 12 & UP/ GRADES 6 TO 12 ISBN: 978-1-934133-59-0

WRITTEN BY: JENNIFER WOLF KAM

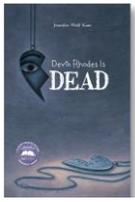
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*High school freshman Cass is conflicted about her love/hate relationship with her best friend, Devin, and about her death. How did Devin's body end up at the bottom of Woodacre Ravine? Was Cass really responsible? Is concealing the truth haunting Cass or is it the ghost-like spirit of her dead friend?*

*Told in alternating before-and-after chapters, Cass details life leading up to the mysterious events that led to Devin's "wrongful death." The turbulent adolescent changes that challenge Cass and Devin's friendship will seem familiar and real to middle-grade and young-adult readers. The mystery about what happened to Devin and if she is really reaching out from beyond the grave will have readers on the edge of their seats.*

GUIDE CREATED BY DEBBIE GONZALES





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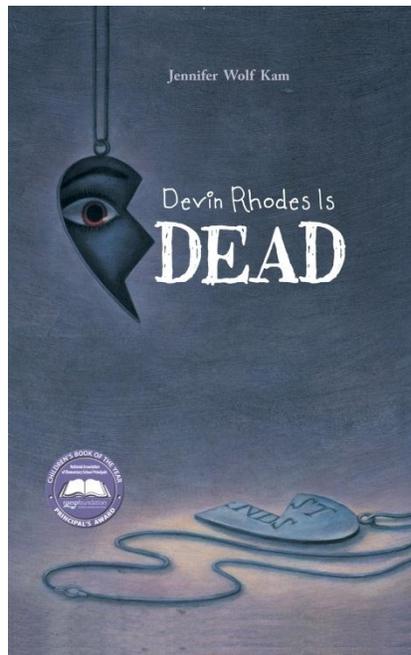
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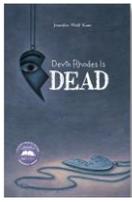
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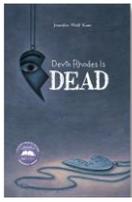
## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

***Of course Devin’s parents don’t know it was my fault – my fault that her broken body was found at the bottom of Woodacre Ravine (After, 2).***

- ♥ Negligence, responsibility, and blame are synonyms for the word ‘fault’.
  - Consider these synonyms in relation to Cass’s perception of the role she played in Devin’s death. Explain her negligence and level of responsibility from her point of view.
  - Identify the individual who deserves to assume blame. Explain why this is so.
- ♥ Irony is a literary technique illustrating aspects of the plot that are apparent to the reader yet unknown to the character. Consider the opening scene for *Devin Rhodes is Dead*. Note the intimacy of the scene, the staging of Cass beside Mrs. Rhodes. Discuss the use of irony in this scene. Tell what the reader knows about the characters in the scene, yet Cass is completely unaware.
- ✍ Cass states “Only I can say for sure what happened between Devin and me – what led to this (2).” Tell how this line is the starting point for Cass’s emotional journey. Explain how this line sets up the plot of the entire story, how everything that transpires in the story is based upon this line.

***“I just hope” – Gina takes a deep breath – “I just hope she didn’t suffer.” Lizzy grabs onto her, and the two of them sob together. It’s what best friends do (After, 17).***

- ♥ Interpret the phrase ‘It’s what best friends do’ from Cass’s point of view.
- ♥ What do Gina and Lizzy’s emotional reactions to Devin’s death reveal about their character?
- ♥ Throughout the story Gina and Lizzy were portrayed by Devin as being the enemy. Explain why using details from the text.
- ✍ On page 149, Marcus describes his relationship with Chad as being ‘symbiotic.’ In a general sense, the word ‘symbiotic’ is defined as an interdependent relationship. In the biological sense, symbiotic organisms live together, yet are not necessarily beneficial to one another. Compare and contrast the relationship Gina and Lizzy share with that of Cass and Devin using the two definitions of the word ‘symbiotic’ as reference.

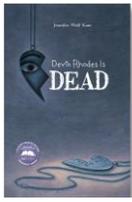


***A pain, an awful pain, slams into my head. It thumps against me and spreads to my temples. The feeling grows, strengthens, and my head sinks. Instinctively, I grab onto the charm on my necklace (After, 18).***

- ♥ Explain why Cass instinctively grabs the charm on her necklace. Tell what that action signifies.
  - ♥ Is concealing the truth regarding her role in Devin’s death haunting Cass or is it the ghost-like spirit of her dead friend doing so?
  - ♥ If Devin is a ghost, is she intent on haunting or helping Cass? Explain your answer using details from the text.
- ✍ Cite and analyze scenes in which Cass experiences a physical reaction to Devin’s presence. State how these moments help to guide Cass’s character development. Explore Devin’s intent in these scenes. Is she haunting or helping? How so?

***“Here we go,” said Mr. Cordeau. He put mine on first. His hands were heavy on my neck, and he breathed in and out quickly through his nose, I imagined his forest of nose hair blowing in a musky breeze. “How’s that feel?” he asked (Before, 23).***

- ♥ Foreshadowing is a literary device which serves as an advance sign or warning of what is to come in the future. Explain how this scene serves to foreshadow upcoming events in the story.
  - ♥ Explain the irony of Mr. Cordeau’s interest regarding how the necklace feels.
  - ♥ On page 45, Mrs. Rhodes blushes at the mention of Mr. Cordeau’s name. Explain her emotional response in the scene. What does her reaction suggest about Mrs. Rhodes’s relationship with Mr. Cordeau.
  - ♥ Later in the story, Mrs. Rhodes says, “We all make mistakes, Cass. Stupid, selfish, mistakes (131).” What sorts of mistakes is Mrs. Rhodes referring to? Explain your answer.
- ✍ Explore the theme of mistakes and their consequences that weaves throughout the story. Consider mistaken intentions, judgment of character, and self-perception. Cite examples from the text to support your observations.



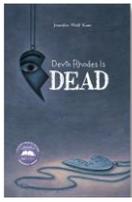
***“I knew it,” she said. She held her best friend charm up to my face. “I guess this means nothing to you (Before, 127).”***

***How much power does Devin have (After, 129)?***

- ♥ In your own words, define the term ‘personal power.’
  - ♥ The first quote is pulled from the scene in which Devin forces Cass to claim that she hates Lizzy and Gina. Tell how Cass surrenders her personal power to appease Devin in this scene.
  - ♥ The second quote occurs when Devin, as a spirit, alters the physical world by opening a magazine to a particular page. Though Cass is questioning the limits of Devin’s ghostly abilities, could she be referencing Devin’s power over Cass as a whole? How so?
  - ♥ Explore scenes in which Devin controls Cass’s personal power. Describe the consequences of Cass allowing Devin to control her. From Cass’s perspective, explain what is lost and what is gained by allowing Devin to do so.
- ✍ Write a narrative piece exploring the notion of the loss and gain of personal power. The piece may be fictional or autobiographical.

***They were almost there when Devin turned around and looked at me again. “Sure you don’t want to join us, Cass (Before, 136)?”***

- ♥ Explain why this scene serves as a defining moment for Cass.
  - ♥ Who owns the most personal power in this scene – Devin, Cass, or Chad? How so?
  - ♥ Explain why, in this moment, Devin invites rather than commands Cass to join them.
  - ♥ What if Cass had decided to join Devin and Chad? How would that alter the chain of events that occurred that night?
  - ♥ Regret is defined as a feeling of sadness over something that has happened or been done. Consider the effect regret has on Cass’s character.
- ✍ Trace the rise and fall of Cass’s self-worth throughout the story. Cite examples of her shifts in character. Show who or what empowered and/or deflated her personal power.

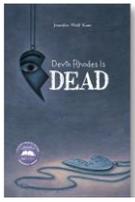


***“I use a pick,” I said. “You know, at least with my right hand.” I pressed my left hand against the bench. I wasn’t ready for him to see the calluses I did have (Before, 147).***

- ♥ A metaphor is a figure of speech which makes a hidden comparison between two things or objects that are different yet have some common characteristics between them. Explore the use of the words ‘pick’ and ‘calluses’ as metaphors.
  - Cass says she uses a pick with her right hand, her dominant hand. Consider ways that Cass ‘picks’ at her self-worth with dominant thoughts.
  - Examine how Cass permits Devin to pick at her self-worth.
  - Calluses are thick, hardened layers of skin that develop when your skin tries to protect itself against friction and pressure. Describe how Cass has hardened her emotions in an effort to conceal her perception of the truth.
- ♥ Consider the change in Cass that occurs after she risks sharing her musical talent with Marcus. Describe the effect Marcus’s praise has on Cass’s self-image.
- ♥ Tell of ways that Cass limits her own abilities. Describe the risks and benefits of doing so.
- ✍ Write a personal narrative exploring the notions of self-limiting behavior and of taking responsibility for one’s life experiences. Tell what is gained and lost in these two ways of living.

***I brought my hand up to my neck and held the chain between my fingers. Then I let go of the charm. It fell back down onto my neck, cool and comfortable. But I was letting go. This is how it all started, I think. I was letting go of Devin (Before, 162).***

- ♥ The word ‘release’ is synonymous with the notion of letting go. Release is defined as allowing or enabling one to escape from confinement; to be set free. Tell how releasing the charm serves as a metaphor for Cass’s emancipation.
- ♥ Explain how the words ‘cool and comfortable’ serve as metaphors for the change in Cass’s character.
- ♥ Tell why Cass thinks that the act of letting go of the charm ‘started’ the tragic chain of events.
- ♥ Explore the following quotes in which the notion of ‘letting go’ is repeated. Search for the quote in the text. Study the scene and discuss the act of letting go as it affects Cass and Devin’s character and relationship.

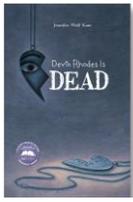


- “I don’t know because I left her. I – I left her there alone. I let it happen.” I take a deep breath. “I let her go (After, 202).”
- “I sucked on my lip. “Let it go, Devin,” I finally said. “They’re just trying to help (Before, 208).”
- Then Devin, for the first time in forever, actually listened to me. She let go. She let go of my arm. I felt the release in slow motion, like in a movie, where I watched us separate, saw the actual, official act of our friendship ending (Before, 209).

✍ Craft a personal narrative exploring the transformational effects of letting go. Tell of a time you chose to release control of something or someone. How did the act feel? What were the risks involved in doing so? What was gained? What was lost?

***The charm sits in my hand. It’s so small, so light, the same as its twin that hangs from my neck. My palm closes around it (After, 210).***

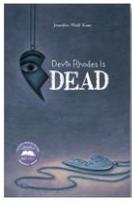
- ♥ What does the act of closing her palm around the charm reveal about Cass’s character at this moment? What does this act communicate with regard to Cass’s feelings about Devin at this point in the story?
- ♥ Consider the unifying significance of the friendship heart charms as they pertain to various plot points and characters.
  - Explore the connection of Mr. Cordeau and the creation of the charms.
  - How were the charms used to exclude Lizzy and Gina?
  - Explain how they reveal the truth about Mrs. Rhodes and Mr. Cordeau’s relationship.
- ♥ Forgiveness, love, friendship, compassion, and broken-heartedness are synonymous with the symbol of a heart. Tell how these themes are represented throughout the story.
- ✍ Explain the symbolism of the friendship charm necklaces. Describe the metaphorical significance of the heart shaped charm pieces puzzling together at the end of the story.



## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS » READING: LITERATURE

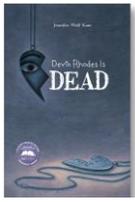
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1	Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.5	Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1	Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
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.
CCSS.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.
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.



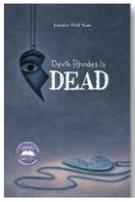
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3	Analyze how complex 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.9-10.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone .
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).
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS » WRITING

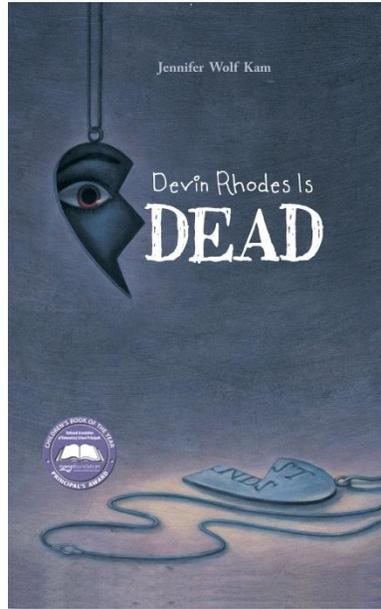
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.1	Write arguments focused on <i>discipline-specific content</i> .
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.2	Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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