

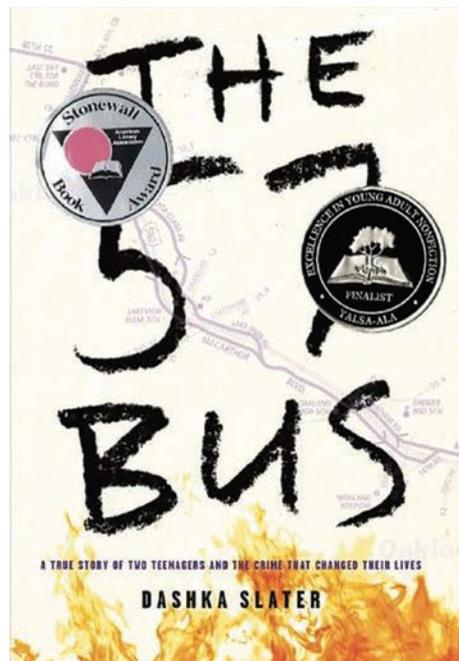
Reading ^{with} Relevance

Building INDEPENDENT READERS and THINKERS

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

The 57 Bus

A book by Dashka Slater



Recommended for:
Grade Levels
9th-12th

A tool to inspire change

This literacy curriculum is constructed around a content-rich book that builds students' literacy skills and supports their character development and self-confidence. Students are motivated to read because they relate to the strong, diverse, and resilient characters featured in our selected novels and because each session gives them the opportunity to connect what they've read to their own lives.

Developed, field-tested, and refined in our own tutoring and mentoring programs, this Common Core Standards curriculum has inspired persistently low-performing students to engage with literature, make meaning in their lives, and improve their English language arts skills. Now, *Reading with Relevance* is available to help you dig deep into the social, emotional, and academic needs of your students, whether in your classroom, after-school program, or youth development agency!



This teacher's guide includes:

- A facilitator's guide with tips and resources for implementing the curriculum.
- A map of Common Core Standards addressed through this program.
- Sixteen individual lesson plans, including vocabulary, discussion questions, journal prompts, extension activities, and all handouts.
- Two assessments to monitor student progress throughout the program.
- Regular checkpoints to help teachers assess their students' progress on ELA standards.
- A culminating essay-writing unit.
- An appendix with additional teaching resources and activities to continue exploring this novel.

This book explores the true-life story of two teens growing up in the same city, but in completely different worlds: Sasha is a white, agender teen from a middle class family who attends a small private school, while Richard is a black, male teenager from a low-income family who attends a large public one. It takes just a moment of overlap for both of their lives to change forever: Sasha is left severely burned, and Richard faces two hate crime charges. We chose this book for its careful exploration of timely social and emotional themes: segregation, gender, justice, forgiveness, community, and empathy. This curriculum will inspire students to build connections between this national news story and their own lives, unpacking the complex ways that race, class, and gender shape our identities and experiences.

Session 1

Pages 1-20

Vocabulary

lumbers (pg. 4): v., moves slowly or awkwardly

surreptitiously (pg. 4): adv., in a way that tries to avoid being noticed

estuary (pg. 6): n., the tidal mouth of a large river, where the tide meets the stream

pretension (pg. 7): n., trying to impress someone

traversing (pg. 7): v., the use of affect to try to impress someone

unquellable (p. 17): adj., cannot be suppressed

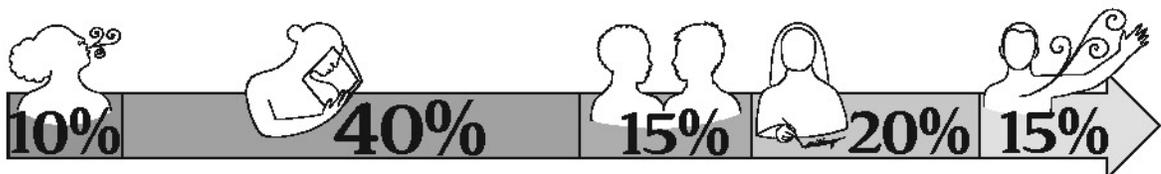
pilfering (pg. 19): v., stealing

Today's Theme

Today's theme is **identity**. As we begin the book, we meet Sasha, who doesn't fit neatly into society's narrow boxes for gender identity, but isn't necessarily sure at first where they fit. Sasha is on a quest to discover their identity — a deeply felt sense of who they are. Knowing ourselves better is a critical part of our experiences growing up, and the identities we define for ourselves are a big part of how we build connections and relationships with others. As you begin the day's reading, ask your students to reflect on important aspects of their own identities. How do they define, describe, and identify themselves? How do their identities help them connect with others?

Story Setup

The 57 Bus is a nonfiction retelling of an incident that took place on November 4, 2013, when a teenage boy, Richard, lit another teenager's skirt on fire while they both rode an Oakland bus. The author, an Oakland resident herself, uses this book to tell the story not only of that day, but of the experiences which led up to and resulted from this single, life-changing moment in the lives of the two teenagers.



During Reading

“Protections normally given to juveniles” (pg. 5): Our nation’s laws treat people under the age of 18 less harshly than adults. However, a judge or district attorney can decide that a juvenile should be tried as an adult, meaning they lose these protections and face much harsher sentences if convicted.

gallium (pg. 12): an element on the periodic table, similar to other metals like aluminum

“diacritical marks, with lots of umlauts, accents, and tildes” (pg. 14): Diacritical marks are marks placed over a letter to give it a certain emphasis; umlauts (öü), accents (àáê), and tildes (ãñ) are examples of diacritical marks.

pronoun (pg. 14): A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun — for example, I, you, he, she, it, they, we. In English, some pronouns are gendered (he/she, his/hers), but in other languages, this isn’t always the case.

larping (pg. 17): larp stands for live action role-playing

Charles Darwin and Ursula K. Le Guin (pg. 18): Charles Darwin was a 19th-Century English scientist known for his contribution to our understanding of evolution. Ursula K. Le Guin was a 20th- and 21st-Century American fantasy and science fiction writer.

Discussion Questions

- What do you learn about Sasha and Richard from the opening scene on the bus? How did it feel to begin the book with this horrible incident?
- What does the author mean when she says Oakland “feels like a small town”? Did this surprise you?
- What are some of the contradictions you’ve noticed about Oakland as a city?
- How do Richard and Sasha represent the segregation present in Oakland?
- What do you think about the fact that Sasha and Richard live in such different worlds, while growing up in the same city? Does this remind you at all of your own community?
- What did you learn about Sasha from the poem-like Tumblr chapter?
- The author says that using the pronoun they “might feel awkward at first, but you’ll get used to it” (pg. 15). What makes it “awkward” to call Sasha they instead of he or she?
- What parts of Maybeck remind you of your school? Which aspects are different?

IDENTITY

- *Sasha is on a quest to discover their identity — gender is just one part of that, but of course it is an important part.*
Think about your own identity. What makes you you? How do you identify?
 - » Begin by brainstorming a list of the ways you identify yourself. Which parts of you are important to who you are? Your list can include “big” things (like “I am Muslim”), but also “small” things (like “I am an excellent waffle maker”).
 - » Review your list and consider: Which of these things are core to who you are? Which might change over time? How have these parts of me changed and evolved already?
 - » Which parts of your identity do you wish people understood better, or knew more about?

TWO WORLDS

- *The author describes Oakland as a city of contrasts — where people experience the city as two very different worlds, based on their income. This stark contrast around income inequality isn’t unique to Sasha and Richard’s city; this is a reality in cities across the nation.*
How does income inequality create two separate and very different worlds of experience for people?
 - » How would you describe the two contrasting Oaklands presented by the author? How do these two worlds affect Richard and Sasha?
 - » How does this phenomenon impact your own community? In what ways do you see people divided, based on their income?
 - » What do you think about this? How does it make you feel to think about the divides you’ve seen? What can you, or others, do to make an impact around this important issue?



Checkpoint

- **Students should demonstrate a strong command of the standard written conventions of English, while establishing and maintaining a formal writing style.**
 - » Students should use capital letters appropriately, end each sentence with a period, and use other punctuation accurately. Student writing should be formal in style, rather than conversational.
 - » For example, “[I can relate to the experiences of the main character, Junior, who has faced so many obstacles.”

Extension Activity

The author uses posts from Sasha’s Tumblr page to give us a glimpse into their character. The resulting poem reveals quite a bit about Sasha’s personality, likes, and dislikes. Have students follow the prompts to create their own poems, sharing important insights into their personalities, likes, and dislikes.

- Materials:**
- » Tumbblings Handout

Name: _____

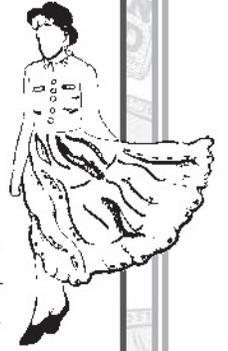
Favorite vegetable: _____

Favorite animals: _____

Favorite type of movie: _____

Favorite _____

Three best qualities?



Of course I like _____

Anybody who _____

I like _____

I dislike _____ (same as above) _____

I like _____

I (something I do well) _____

I'm good at _____

If the whole world was listening, I might just rant about _____

I like _____

I don't like _____ (same as above)

I don't really _____

Ideal vacation spot: _____

Thinking of things to get me? Try this:



The author uses posts from Sasha's Tumblr page to give us a glimpse into Sasha's inner world. The resulting poem reveals quite a bit about Sasha's personality, likes, and dislikes. Follow the prompts to write a poem that shows off your personality! What are your likes and dislikes? What are your talents? What would you want people to know about the real you?

Tumblings

Appendix

Additional Activities

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Get to Know MFI

Moving Forward Institute is a nonprofit publisher of social justice educational materials. The organization was created by the founders and staff of Moving Forward Education, a multi-generational tutoring and mentoring organization aimed at fostering academic and emotional success for underserved students in California. Since our founding in 2003, MFE has provided tutoring and mentoring services to thousands of students and has trained hundreds of young adults to enter careers in the educational field. This reading curriculum was developed by our leadership team and its advisory group, including credentialed teachers and college professors. This program has been successfully facilitated throughout California by achieving powerful and measurable results for students and schools. To learn more about our organization, or our research and data, please contact us today.

Our Purpose

At Moving Forward Institute, we know that students can be successful learners when their social and emotional needs are met.

We empower educators to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students by using culturally-relevant and gender-responsive reading curricula.

Training and Professional Development Services

While lesson plans are designed to be easily facilitated by classroom teachers and after-school staff alike, our in-person training and professional development services will ensure fully effective implementation of the literacy curricula.

Additionally, we offer technical support, classroom observation, and program evaluation services to help your program be successful. Contact us for more information about these services!

Contact Us

Contact us today to learn more about how the Moving Forward Institute can support your students and staff!

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Follow us on Twitter: @RelevantReading

If your students liked *The 57 Bus* . . .

*...they might love some of our other book selections! We suggest that you check out *The Sun is also a Star*, *The Hate U Give*, or *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Please visit our website today to browse our full selection of socially and emotionally rich novel-based curricula!*