

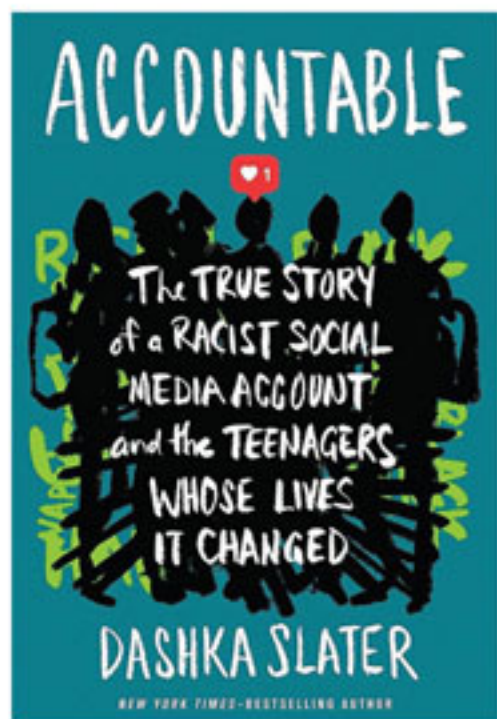
Reading ^{with} Relevance

Building INDEPENDENT READERS and THINKERS

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

Accountable

A book by Dashka Slater

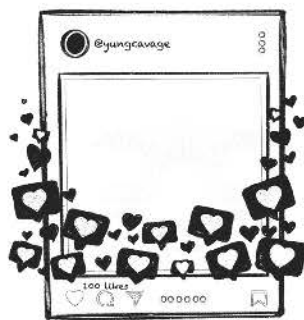


Recommended for:
Grade Levels
9-12

A tool to inspire change

This literacy curriculum is constructed around an authentically engaging novel that builds students' literacy skills and supports their social and emotional development. 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 standards-aligned 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!



Why Accountable

Meet the students of Albany High School—a diverse group of young people growing up in a small, progressive Bay Area town—and witness the explosive fallout across the school community after a student-run racist social media account targeting Black students is discovered. We chose this book for its powerful attention to timely social and emotional themes: impacts of social media, hate speech & edgy humor, anti-Black racism, harm & trauma, justice & accountability, and self-reflection & growth. Students will find themselves urgently engrossed in this complex, nuanced story about the intersection of old wounds and new technologies; this curriculum will help students make connections between the events at Albany High and their own digital citizenship.

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
- 16 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 text

Session 1

pages 1-35

centripetal (pg. 1): adj., the force that pulls or pushes an object toward the center of a circular path, keeping it moving in a circle

periphery (pg. 1): n., the outer edges or boundaries of something

torrent (pg. 9): n., a strong and fast-flowing stream of something, such as water, rain, or information

frenetic (pg. 11): adj., fast and energetic in a wild and uncontrolled way

intermediary (pg. 14): n., someone or something that acts as a middle person or goes between two parties

accolades (pg. 15): n., praise, recognition, or awards given to someone for their achievements

demarcation (pg. 17): n., the act of establishing clear boundaries

retrospect (pg. 22): n., looking back or reflecting on past events or experiences

juxtaposition (pg. 30): n., placing two or more contrasting elements, ideas, or objects side by side to highlight their differences

scourge (pg. 33): n., something that causes great suffering or harm, often widespread or intense

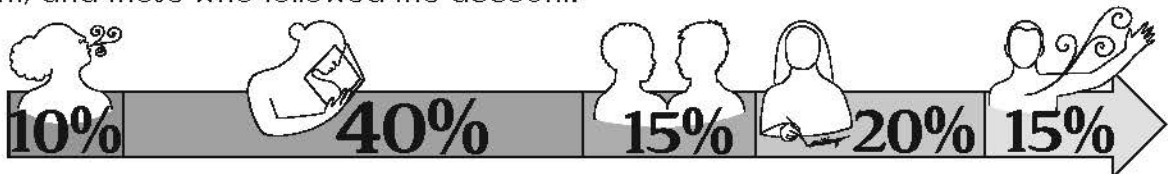
Vocabulary

Today's Theme

Today's theme is **social acceptance**. As we get to know the central characters in this story, we learn how important their social worlds are to them. While they take different approaches, both Charles and Andrea seek a sense of belonging. Charles uses edgy humor to maintain his status within his friend group, while Andrea does what she can to fit in with the other girls in her school. For most teenagers, social bonds are essential for finding safety, comfort, and a sense of belonging. Ask your students to consider their own social worlds. What do they gain from their social connections? What might they feel is missing from those connections? Have they ever found themselves in a position to behave in ways they're not comfortable with for the sake of social acceptance? Have they ever stood up against the behavior of their friends?

Story Setup

Accountable is a nonfiction retelling of a series of events that began in 2017, when high school students in the small Bay Area town of Albany discovered a private Instagram account used to post racist images of a number of students, most of whom were Black girls. The author, a Bay Area resident herself, uses this book to explore the experiences and perspectives of the students involved, including those who were directly targeted by the posts, those who created the account, and those who followed the account.



During Reading

McMansion (pg. 7): A disparaging term to describe houses considered to be oversized and lacking in architectural style or quality. While these houses might suggest wealth, they are often criticized for being cheaply built and looking the same as many other houses.

League of Legends (pg. 10): a popular multiplayer online battle-based video game

envelope pushers (pg. 10): “pushing the envelope” refers to testing the limits of what is considered acceptable; being edgy

Lululemon (pg. 12): a popular and expensive brand of yoga clothing

Discussion Questions

- What is the author’s message in the prologue?
- Why would Albany be considered “diverse” to some people but not others?
- What was the experience like for Black girls attending school in Albany?
- What does Andrea’s hair represent for her?
- What is Charles’ home life like? What kind of effect do you think this could have on him?
- Do you agree with Alexander that depression is a “bad habit” (pg. 15)? Can a person choose to be or not to be depressed?
- What do you think about Ana and Charles’ friendship? Do you think the jokes that Charles makes with Ana are okay? What is Ana’s internal dilemma with these jokes?
- If Wyatt and Jon were the “punching bags” of the group, what do you think keeps them from walking away?
- Why is teasing considered “guy stuff”? What consequences could this have?
- What do you think of Murphy’s decision to show Lolia and Sita the Instagram account? How do you think it feels for Lolia and Sita to see this?
- What makes symbols like the noose so powerful?

JUST A JOKE

- For many young people, teasing among friends is commonplace, even including jokes that push the boundaries of social acceptability. Ana and Andrea both recall the racially-charged jokes Charles and his friends often made. The girls let this “edgy humor” slide within their friend group, even though they would have found it offensive from others.

Why do you think the girls chose not to push back about jokes about their race when made by members of their friend group?

- » How can a person determine when teasing is actually harmful? Whose responsibility is it to prevent harm from offensive jokes?
- » How did the racial and gender dynamic at Albany High School affect the girls’ ability to speak up?
- » Have you ever let offensive humor slide when maybe you shouldn’t have? How did this make you feel?

SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE



- In the prologue, the author suggests that all the harm caused by the @yungcavage Instagram account could have been avoided if anyone associated with it had called out the posts as offensive. Although standing up may seem simple to do, the author points out this felt impossible because it meant being “thrown out of orbit” (pg. 1) and losing social acceptance.

How do the boys use offensive humor, teasing, and bullying to establish their social hierarchy?

- » What makes it so hard to stand up against this kind of humor? What risks does a person who speaks up have to be willing to take?
- » What do you think would have happened if one of the boys had called out Charles and his friends for their offensive jokes?
- » Have you ever spoken up against offensive humor? What were the consequences of speaking up?

Extension Activity

Although the posts made on the @yungcavage account were clearly offensive, none of the boys spoke up against them. Today’s activity asks students to imagine what might have happened if one of the boys had called out the problematic content, and how Charles may have responded. Support your students to write a dialogue in which one of the boys speaks up to Charles about the images he posted.

Handout:

- » Interrupting Harm

Name: _____

Friend

Charles

Friend

Charles

Although the posts made on the @yungcavage account were clearly offensive, none of the boys spoke up against them. Imagine what might have happened if one of the boys had called out the problematic content. Given what we know about the boys' social group, also consider how Charles may have responded. Write a dialogue in which one of the boys calls Charles out for the images he posted.

Interrupting Harm

Appendix

Additional Activities

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Our Story

We are a collective of progressive educators on a mission: sharing and scaling the program we've built for (and with!) our students over the last decade, to inspire relevant reading experiences, heartfelt conversations, and instructional breakthroughs in classrooms across the nation. We wrote *Reading with Relevance* because we couldn't find the tool we needed to effectively teach our students. Most of the young people in our classrooms not only came to us two to four years below their grade level, but also with very real social and emotional struggles that sometimes felt more important than school. We came to believe that meeting students' social and emotional needs was the key to unlocking their academic potential.

Reading with Relevance leverages student interest in highly engaging social and emotional learning activities to develop crucial academic skills: reading fluency, comprehension, and critical thinking. We turn barriers to learning into the very tools that accelerate literacy.

Training and Professional Development Services

While lesson plans are designed to be easily facilitated by classroom teachers and after-school staff alike, our 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!

Online: www.movingforwardinstitute.org

Email: info@movingforwardinstitute.org

Phone: 510-658-4475

Mail: 1425 Park Ave
Emeryville, CA 94608

Follow us on Twitter: @RelevantReading

If your students liked *Accountable*. . .

they might love some of our other book selections! We suggest that you check out *The 57 Bus*, *The Hate U Give*, or *The March Trilogy*. Please visit our website today to browse our full selection of socially and emotionally rich novel-based curricula.