Reading with Relevance.
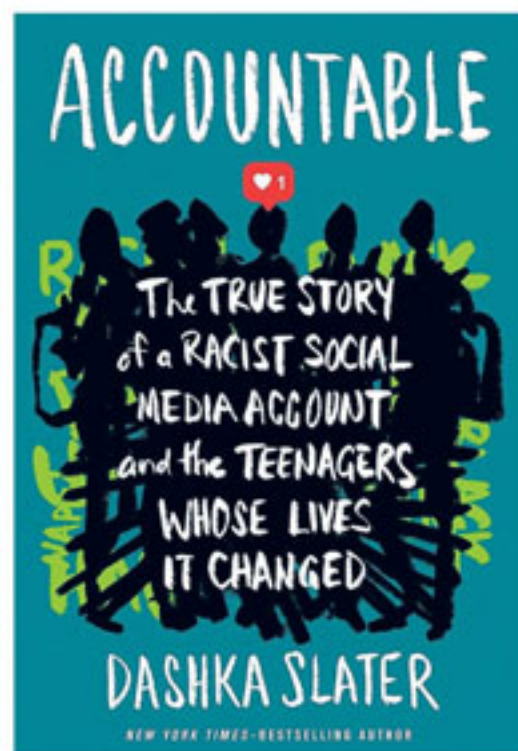
Building Independent Readers and Thinkers

Your student workbook for

Accountable

A book by Dashka Slater

ACCOUNTABLE

The True Story of a Racist Social Media Account and the Teenagers Whose Lives It Changed

DASHKA SLATER

NEW YORK TIMES–BESTSELLING AUTHOR

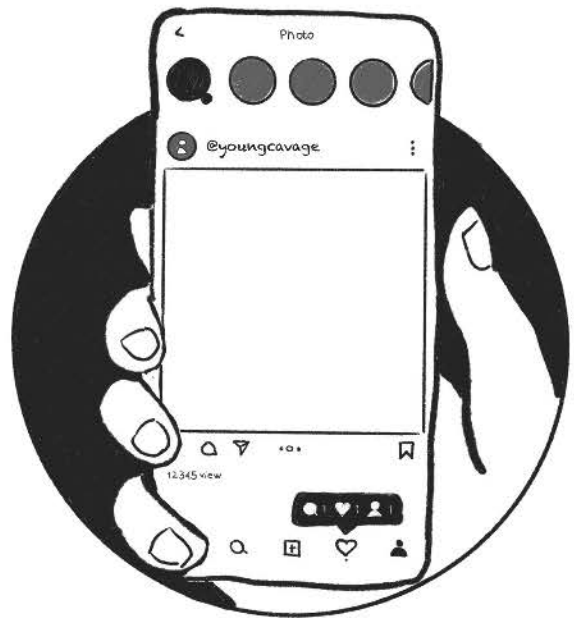This workbook belongs to:

About the Book
Accountable

Story Summary

Accountable **is a book of creative nonfiction, exploring a series of events that started in 2017—** when high school students in the small Bay Area town of Albany discovered a private Instagram account used to post explicitly racist images targeting people of color throughout the school community. The fallout and ensuing tensions rocked the affluent, liberal town and swept national news headlines. The book traces the perspectives and experiences of many of the teenagers involved: including those who were directly targeted by the posts, those who created the account and its content, and the bystanders who followed the account. The author, Dashka Slater, spent four years researching the events in order to provide an incredibly nuanced account of what took place, piecing together details from court documents, sworn declarations, police reports, text messages, diaries, photographs, videos, social media posts, letters, emails, and public testimony, as well as firsthand observations and interviews with many of the people involved. In retelling the story from multiple perspectives, *Accountable* asks readers to examine questions of justice, healing, empathy, and accountability.

About the Author

Dashka Slater is a writer, poet, journalist, novelist, and children's author. She lives in Oakland, CA. Her last young adult book, *The 57 Bus*, was an award-winning *New York Times* Bestseller, earning the Stonewall Book Award, which recognizes exceptional merit relating to the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender experience.

Session 1

Theme: Social Acceptance

Guiding Question: *For most teenagers, social bonds are essential for finding safety, comfort, and a sense of belonging. Consider your own social world. Have you ever behaved in ways you're not comfortable with for the sake of social acceptance? Have you ever stood up against the behavior of your friends?*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Vocabulary

Write a complete sentence for each of the following vocabulary words. Use the definitions provided to make sure you are using these words correctly!

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

_____

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

_____

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

_____

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.
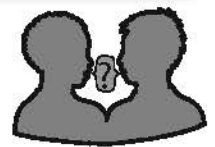
Read pages 1-35

While You Read:

As you read, keep track of unfamiliar words, inspiring quotes, and questions you have.

_____

_____

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Reading Context:

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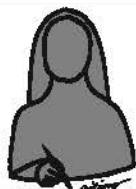
Discussion Questions

Write your response to each question below using a complete sentence.

● What is the author's message in the prologue?

_____

_____

_____

● 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?

_____

_____

_____

● What makes symbols like the noose so powerful?

_____

_____

_____

Journal Prompts

Choose one of these prompts to respond to in at least one full paragraph of writing.

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?

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
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Extra Activities
for
Exploring the Book

How did the @yungcavage account impact:

the students who created the account and its content?

the students who followed the account?

the students who were targeted by the account?

other students in the school community?

Albany High School teachers and administrators?

the families of the account creators and followers?

the families of the targeted students?

the families of other students in the school community?

Ms. Geoghegan describes Albany High School as an ecosystem, in which all parts are interconnected. Consider the ways the @yungcavage account affects all parts of the school community.

School Ecosystem