

An Educator and Librarian Guide

HOPE WINS

*A Collection of Inspiring
Stories for Young Readers*

Tom Angleberger • James Bird

Max Brallier • Julie Buxbaum • Pablo Cartaya

J. C. Cervantes • Soman Chainani

Matt de la Peña • Stuart Gibbs

Adam Gidwitz • Karina Yan Glaser

Veera Hiranandani • Hena Khan

Gordon Korman • Janae Marks

Sarah Mlynowski • Rex Ogle

James Ponti • Pam Muñoz Ryan

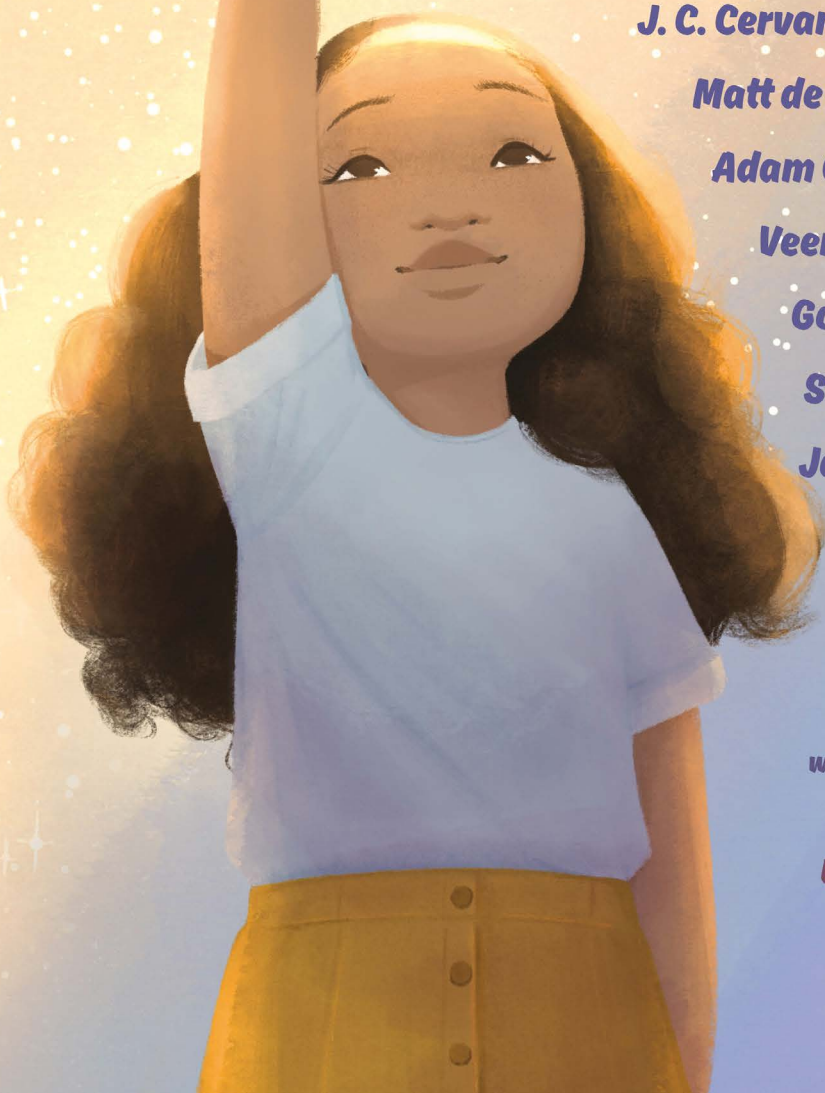
Ronald L. Smith

Christina Soontornvat

R. L. Stine

with cover art by **Vashti Harrison**

EDITED BY ROSE BROCK



NOTE FROM COURTNEY



Dear Educators,

My whole life I have looked to stories to find hope—fictional stories of wizards, princesses, vampires, and pirates. In these stories I saw kids and teens doing incredible things for others and inspiring hope in the world around them. I DREAMED that I could be that important and do so many adventures like them. I spent most of my childhood and teenage years reading these fictional stories, hoping and dreaming for my own quiet life to become something special like theirs. What I didn't realize then, or until I was much older, was that I did not need to be magical or mythical or fight battles with bow and arrow or shining swords to save the world, to be special and for my life to have meaning. Real people do these things everyday. And they do this by small moments of love, of joy, and of hope. When reading *Hope Wins*, I was reminded of this fact and wished that a young Courtney, who was searching for meaning and an understanding of the world around her, could have had a collection of real stories like the essays in *Hope Wins* to help me see the hope and magic in the real world, and in real people as well.

Editor Rose Brock brings together the incredible authors of magical, fictional books, and allows them to share with readers young and old what hope means to them and where they have found it in their lives. Some of these stories made me laugh and some made me cry—but all of them reminded me of the complex beauty and importance of hope. How it is all around us, sometimes easy to spy, other times hiding behind some of the most different times in our lives. How it comes in many forms and faces.

I hope that reading this collection of stories and using this guide to connect with it brings both you and your students this same hope I found in it. That the stories and your conversations with your students and community illuminate to you all that hope can be found around us. How important it is that we find it in ourselves and share it with others. Because I believe that hope is the light that brightens the world around us and pushes away the darkness. In this book and with this guide, I hope you all find that light.

What does hope mean to me personally? Where do I find it most? Contributor James Bird was able to say it for me better than I ever could. For me, “Hope is truly everywhere you look for it. Hope isn't something you do for yourself. It's what you do for others. To hope is to care. To care is to give. To give is to help. And to have hope for the future, we need to help one another right now. We are all in this together. H-O-P-E. I believe it stands for Helping. Other. People. Everyday. Let's spread hope. Let's cover the entire planet in hope” (Brock 39).

—Courtney Walker
Plano, TX

"Remember that no matter what happens, hope wins."

—Hope Wins introduction by Rose Brock

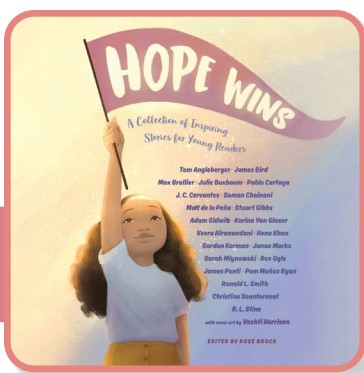
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"These personal essays, whose authors embody myriad worldviews and represent a widely intersectional spectrum, provide a much-needed window into how hope can flourish in hardship, and stress the importance of perseverance and a supportive community."

—Publisher's Weekly

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Also Available as an Audiobook!

COMMUNITY READ PROGRAM IDEAS

Host a community-wide read with your school or a group in your school community.

- **Why is *Hope Wins* a good Community Read?** The stories in *Hope Wins* are perfect for readers of all ages and lend themselves to conversations about the world and reflections on ourselves. Educators or librarians can use *Hope Wins* as a community-wide read. With the format of short stories, it can be adapted and used by reading groups in many ways. Invite families to read the book together, select a few essays to share together, or allow readers to select their own essays.
- **Provide activities.** The community read can include activities for families to do at home together and then one or more events for the community to come together to share and promote hope.
- **Encourage reading aloud.** At home, encourage families to either read the book aloud together or to pass the book around while reading one or two essays at a time. Families can then use the discussion/reflection questions (below) to have conversations about the essay together.
- **Host a Sharing Hope night at your campus.** After families have read the book or some of the essays, invite the community to come together to share their own stories of hope. This could be done on a virtual platform or in person at the school or a community center. As many of these stories can be personal, allow for the option to not share out loud but to still personally reflect and listen with the community.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Sort the stories by their major themes/message.** For example: “Everything I Needed to Know I Learned in a Thai Restaurant,” “Sweet Surprise,” and “I Am the Greatest” deal with feeling different because of being a different race or ethnicity. “What’s in a Name” and “The Coolness Equation” both deal with struggling to define who you are at a young age.
- **Create a cover for the story as if it were its own book.**
- **Have students or groups select an essay to create a screenplay for.** Have them write a script based on what happens in the essay. If possible, have them act and record it using a variety of technology options.
- **Write your own *Hope Wins* essay.** Essay format could vary: Poem, video essay, photo essay, written essay, etc. See the whole-book discussion questions below for prompt ideas.
- **Based on your favorite essay, explore those authors!** What books has that author written? Create a to-read list from your favorite *Hope Wins* authors.
- **For older readers: next, read *Hope Nation!***

REPRODUCIBLES

Hope Wins Reflection Sheet

Directions: While reading *Hope Wins*, pause after each essay to reflect and fill out the information in the chart. At the end of the book, reflect on the different essays, and go back and pick which essays you would give these superlative awards. Add the superlative to the first column, after the essay information.

Superlatives:
The story that most:
Connected with me at this time in my life
Opened my eyes to something I have never experienced
Made me laugh
Made me emotional
Made me realize something new about myself
Made me see a new perspective

	Major Themes of the Essay	The quote(s) from the essay that demonstrate(s) where that author found hope or how they define hope	Personal connection to the essay
Essay Title: Author: Pages: Superlative:			
Essay Title: Author: Pages: Superlative:			

[Download Worksheet](#)

Worksheet for reflecting on entire book or a selection of an essay

- **Have students fill this out as they read the entire book.**

This could be a practice in annotation—have the students look for the information for the first two columns while reading, annotating as they read.

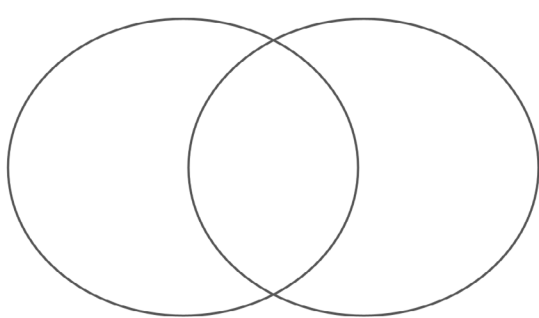
- **Have students select a certain number of essays to read using the worksheet.**

Educators could divide the book up, having students or groups read a certain set of essays. If you want to continue the reading, allow students to share with the class their favorite essay, trying to “sell” it to the other students to be their next to read. Then for the next round, students can select their next set of essays to read based on their classmates’ recommendations. This can continue for as many rounds as desired.

Two Essay Compare and Contrast Worksheet for *Hope Wins*

Directions: Select two essays from *Hope Wins* to compare and contrast using the Venn Diagram. Include the following items and anything else that you would like to include:

- Theme
- Main Idea
- Where the author found hope
- Personal connections to the story



[Download Worksheet](#)

Worksheet for comparing and contrasting two essays

- If educators are just wanting to have students read two essays, this could be used for that. Or if students are reading more than two, it could be used as a reflection opportunity where students can use their compare and contrast skills. The two essays could be selected by the educator or the student, or educators can give a prompt for the students to select the two essays, like “Choose the two essays that you most connected with to compare and contrast in this worksheet” or “Select the essay you connected with the most and the essay that showed you a new perspective and compare and contrast them using this worksheet.”

READY-MADE DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

Questions and Themes for the Whole Book and Each Essay

Whole-book discussion/reflection topics

These could be used for essay prompts, class conversation starters, or prompts for families to talk about when reading at home.

- **Where does hope live in your family, your community, your school, and your heart?**
- **When was a time you most needed hope and someone helped you find it?**
- **When was a time when it was difficult to have hope? How did you find it despite this difficulty?**
- **Where do you find hope most often? Is it in a person? A book? A special place?**
- **How does hope help you deal with difficult times?**
- **When is a time in your life that hope won?**
- **How will YOU inspire hope in others?**

Quick Links to Questions and Themes for Each Essays

- **Everything I Need to Know I Learned in a Thai Restaurant** by Christina Soontornvat
- **The Coolness Equation** by Adam Gidwitz
- **This Can't Be Happening to Gordon Korman** by Gordon Korman
- **I Am the Greatest** by James Bird
- **Bones** by J.C. Cervantes
- **The Day the Hot Dog Truck Came to Town** by Max Brallier
- **Sweet Surprise** by Hena Khan
- **Letter to My Daughter on Her Eighth-Grade Graduation** by Pablo Cartaya
- **Hope in the Halls of Catholic School** by Karina Yan Glaser
- **Helpful Tips for the Worst Week of Your Life** by Stuart Gibbs
- **The Adventures of Me and Supersquirt** by Sarah Mlynowski
- **Panic! At the Movies** by Julie Buxbaum
- **What's in a Name?** by James Ponti
- **Colors of June** by Rex Ogle
- **On Hopes and Dreams** by Janae Marks
- **Major Malfunction** by Tom Angleberger
- **Hope I Don't See a Ghost** by R.L. Stine
- **Victory After Defeat** by Soman Chainani
- **My Favorite Photograph** by Veera Hiranandani
- **The Boy in the Back of the Class** by Ronald L. Smith
- **The Friend Who Changed My Life** by Pam Muñoz Ryan
- **There's More to Playin' Ball Than Just Playin' Ball** by Matt de la Peña

READY-MADE DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

Questions and Themes for the Whole Book and Each Essay

“Everything I Needed to Know I Learned in a Thai Restaurant”

by Christina Soontornvat

Themes

- Not fitting in, hard work, not judging a book by its cover, racism, xenophobia, immigrants

Discussion/reflection questions

- The author states, “the most important things I learned weren’t taught to me in a classroom. They were taught to me in a restaurant dining room” (*Hope Wins* 1). Where have you learned the most life lessons outside of the classroom?
- The author talks about how food can be unifying. Have you ever experienced this in your life? If so, who did it bring together and how?

“The Coolness Equation”

by Adam Gidwitz

Themes

- Not fitting in, wanting to be “cool”/what it means to be “cool”, jealousy, being a follower

Discussion/reflection questions

- What is your definition for “cool”? Has this definition changed at different times in your life?
- Do you struggle with wanting to fit in and be “cool”? Adults: has this feeling ever gone away? Does it get easier? Share with your students your experiences.

“This Can’t Be Happening to Gordon Korman”


by Gordon Korman

Themes

- Writing, school, personal gifts, making the most out of a situation, working hard, finding your passion

Discussion/reflection questions

- Adults ask kids all the time what they want to be “when they are older,” Do you think that you have to wait to be what you dream until you are an adult yourself? What can you learn from Korman being published when he was just in middle school?
- Korman says that “sometimes [hope] falls into place before you even know what it is you’re hoping for” (Brock 26). How did this happen for him? Has there ever been a time that this has happened to you?



“... and so, starting tomorrow, everyone’s going to write a novel.”

—From “This Can’t be Happening to Gordon Korman” by Gordon Korman



[Return to Essay List](#)

READY-MADE DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

Questions and Themes for the Whole Book and Each Essay

“I Am the Greatest”

by James Bird

Themes

- Family, poverty, feeling different, Native American culture, perseverance, finding your strengths, resilience

Discussion/reflection questions

- Bird says that, “Everyone gets knocked down. Everyone loses. Everyone . . . every single one of us will taste defeat.” Then he challenges you, the reader, to “see if you are as good as I am at getting back up after being knocked down. Because if you never quit, you’ll never fail” (Brock 39). Take him up on the challenge. Think about times when you have been knocked down. Did you get back up? Did you keep trying? If not, what might have happened if you did?
- Did Bird’s mom teach him a lesson by just telling him something? How did she teach it to him instead? Why do you think that was more effective than just telling him? When is a time that you learned something best from experience like the author?

*“I met hope when
I was three years old.
It is one of my very
first memories.”*

—From “I Am the Greatest”
by James Bird

“Bones”

by J.C. Cervantes

Themes

- Dreams, teachers/librarians, belonging, reading, writing, finding yourself

Discussion/reflection questions

- How does the essay being written in poetry format affect the story or how you felt while reading it? How would it have been different if it were not written as a poem?
- What does the title “Bones” mean? What do bones represent to Cervantes?

“The Day the Hot Dog Truck Came to Town”

by Max Brallier

Themes

- Discovering your personal identity, being comfortable in who you are, what it means to “be cool,” family, acceptance, being yourself

Discussion/reflection questions

- Brallier, like most people, wanted to be “cool” while growing up, and even admits to still wanting to be cool. Do you think that most people, even adults, feel this way? Why do you think that? Is it OK to want to be “cool”?
- What do you think it means to be “cool”? Is it something that you want to be? Is “cool” different to everyone?

[Return to Essay List](#)

READY-MADE DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

Questions and Themes for the Whole Book and Each Essay

“Sweet Surprise”

by Hena Khan

Themes

- Fitting in, cultural representation, assimilation, split identities, diverse literature

Discussion/reflection questions

- Khan talks about trying to “straddle” two cultures her whole life, something that many people also struggle with. Is there two parts of yourself, maybe your culture like Khan, that you struggle to balance?
- Khan talks about how she began writing books that showed her culture for others to learn about it. Why do you think it is important to learn about cultures different than our own? Why does having books like Khan writes, that connect with readers from all backgrounds that show her culture, matter so much? What would happen if we only had and read books about one culture?

“Letter to My Daughter on Her Eighth-Grade Graduation”

by Pablo Cartaya

Themes

- Family, coping with the pandemic, perseverance, growing up, resilience, bullying

Discussion/reflection questions

- Who in your life gives you hope for the world like Cartaya’s daughter gives him? What do they do that gives you that hope?
- The pandemic was hard on the whole world—every single person struggled in different ways. Thinking about the struggles you personally went through, what did you learn from that time? How did it help you grow? Was it hard for you to feel hope during this time?

“Hope in the Halls of Catholic School”

by Karina Yan Glaser

Themes

- Growing up, moving, fitting in, acceptance, friendship

Discussion/reflection questions

- Glaser shares that she “know(s) what it’s like to be new and invisible and uncertain and . . . how much it means to have someone reach out” (Brock 86). When is a time someone reached out a hand of friendship to you, or when you did it for someone else? What did it mean to you?
- Glaser had many worries about the clothes that she wore in school, which is something a lot of people think about. Do you believe that the clothes you wear are important? Why do you think that so many people feel the same worry?



“Hope wasn’t something I spent a lot of time thinking about when I was growing up. If I had a word to describe childhood, it would be survival.”

—From “Hope in the Halls of Catholic School”
by Karina Yan Glaser



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READY-MADE DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

Questions and Themes for the Whole Book and Each Essay

“Helpful Tips for the Worst Week of Your Life”

by Stuart Gibbs

Themes

- Loss, grieving, family, love, supporting others, mental health

Discussion/reflection questions

- You do not have to have suffered from the death of a loved one to use the amazing six tools that Gibbs shares. Think about each tool and how you might use it in any difficult time in your life. How could you also use them to help others?
- Knowing how to be there for your loved ones or help them can be hard. Gibbs shares that some things people told him, he did not like to be told. But he was not mad at them. Why? How can you use this mindset in your everyday life?

**“This is a sad story,
but it has a
happy ending.”**

—From *“Helpful Tips for the Worst Week of Your Life”* by Stuart Gibbs

**“When I was a kid,
there was nothing
I wanted more than
a baby sister.”**

—From *“The Adventures of Me and Supersquirt”*
by Sarah Mlynowski

“The Adventures of Me and Supersquirt”

by Sarah Mlynowski

Themes

- Family, divorce, siblings, decision-making, inspiration, moving

Discussion/reflection questions

- A lot of people dream of moving to new places, and some never want to move. What is something hopeful that can come from each? Do they each also come with some things that are difficult?
- Mlynowski made a very big decision to split up from her sister, which had both wonderful and difficult sides to it. When you make a decision, how do you know if it is the right one? Is there always a right choice?

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READY-MADE DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

Questions and Themes for the Whole Book and Each Essay

“Panic! At the Movies”

by Julie Buxbaum

Themes

- Neurodivergence, fear, anxiety, fitting in, seeking help

Discussion/reflection questions

- When was a time that you thought you were the only one feeling or thinking something, and you found out that you were not alone? How did it make you feel to learn that others felt the same way?
- Have you ever been feeling something, but, like Buxbaum, hadn't developed the vocabulary to explain it to others? A time when you didn't know how to ask for help or share what you were feeling? What did that feel like? How did you, or could you, get help?

“What's in a Name”

by James Ponti

Themes

- Identity, independence, divorce, family structures

Discussion/reflection questions

- What do you think most defines who you are? Your actions? Your name? Your appearance? Your words? Why?
- What's in a name? Does your name matter? What does it stand for to you and to others?

“Colors of June”

by Rex Ogle

Themes

- Bullying, family, death, terminal illness, regret, coping

Discussion/reflection questions

- Ogle was able to find hope and peace even in a terrible loss and great sadness. How does doing this help us? Why is it important to still have hope, even in the hardest times?
- When Ogle finds out about his grandmother's illness, he says something that he doesn't really mean and instantly regrets. Has this even happened to you? Why do you think we do this? Does it make us bad people?

“On Hopes and Dreams”

by Janae Marks

Themes

- Dreams, goals, perseverance, believing in yourself

Discussion/reflection questions

- Marks says, “When you have a goal and hit a roadblock, think of it as an opportunity.” (Brock 134). What do you think this means? Have you ever had a “roadblock” that became an opportunity?
- Marks says that sometimes your biggest dreams can change, even in just an instant. Do you think that means they weren't real? Does it mean you failed if you do not reach that dream or change your mind on it? Have you ever changed your mind on a big dream you had?

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READY-MADE DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

Questions and Themes for the Whole Book and Each Essay

“Major Malfunction”

by Tom Angleberger

Themes

- Neurodivergence, understanding oneself, self-acceptance, being true to yourself

Discussion/reflection questions

- What is a “superpower” that you have? Something that makes you different and special and gives you a unique way of seeing and existing in the world? Is it ever hard to have that superpower?
- Angleberger learned that what he thought was a “malfunction” in himself was really just him being neurodivergent. He says that he learned it doesn’t have to be fixed, but maybe he might need a little help. Do you think that everyone needs help with some things in life? What is something you might need help on? What might you be able to help someone else with?

“Hope I Don’t See a Ghost”

by R.L. Stine

Themes

- Hoping against something, different types of hope, the supernatural

Discussion/reflection questions

- Stine looks at hope from a very different view than the other authors. What angle does he reflect on hope from?
- Is hope still “hope” if it is against something? How is it different or the same if you are hoping against something from happening?

“Victory After Defeat”

by Soman Chainani

Themes

- Fate, getting back up after defeat, resilience, believing in oneself

Discussion/reflection questions

- When is a time that you had given up or were close to giving up, but by standing back up and continuing on were able to do something amazing?
- What lesson did the Chainani learn from his “failures” or “defeats” that he would not have learned otherwise?

“When I was a kid, my dad used to call me ‘America’s Storyteller’ because I couldn’t open my mouth without it turning into an epic, dramatic tale, usually involving unicorns or dinosaurs.”

—From “Victory After Defeat”
by Soman Chainani

READY-MADE DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

Questions and Themes for the Whole Book and Each Essay

“My Favorite Photograph”

by Veera Hiranandani

Themes

- Identity, being “different,” inner strength, happiness

Discussion/reflection questions

- Hiranandani discusses how she was the only person at both of her schools with her unique background, but was treated differently at each school. She says she discovered that “the responsibility of inclusivity lies with the majority because they have more power.” What does she mean by this? Have you experienced this in your own life, whether it was you being treated differently or seeing others treated differently?
- Hiranandani poses the questions, “When have you been the happiest? The most free? More you than you’ve ever been? That’s what gives you the ultimate strength to push past something difficult. It’s the strength you build in those moments that helps get you through. That strength is gold” (Brock 160). What was that moment for you? How has it given you strength to face adversity or difficulties in your life?

“If I had to choose one photograph to represent my childhood, it would be this one . . . surrounded by four of my closest friends at the time, and we’re all in the same class.”

—From “My Favorite Photograph”
by Veera Hiranandani

“When I was a kid in middle school, I used to sit in the back of the classroom and read fantasy books.”

—From “The Boy in the Back of the Class”
by Ronald L. Smith

“The Boy in the Back of the Class”

by Ronald L. Smith

Themes

- Self image, being “cool,” confidence, overcoming fears

Discussion/reflection questions

- Smith talks about how some things seem silly to others (maybe, or especially, adults), but they are very real and important to you. When is a time that you felt something that was a big deal to you was not being understood or appreciated by others? Why do you think this happens?
- Like most people, Smith struggled with worrying about his appearance as a child. It took a while for him to realize that “it’s who you are on the inside that really matters” (Brock 167). Do you struggle with worrying about your appearance? Do you think that most people or even all people do? If you were not worried about your appearance, how do you think that your life would change?

[Return to Essay List](#)

READY-MADE DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

Questions and Themes for the Whole Book and Each Essay

"In fifth grade, my family moved across town. I was filled with the hope of my own room, a nice teacher, and with any luck, friends . . . [but] I hated being the new kid at school."

*—From "The Friend Who Changed My Life"
by Pam Muñoz Ryan*

"The Friend Who Changed My Life"

by Pam Muñoz Ryan

Themes

- Fitting in, bullies, fear, courage, friendship

Discussion/reflection questions

- In her story, Ryan shares that she got into a physical fight to confront her bully. This helped to solve her problem. Some people believe that you should never use violence, and others believe that it should be used in self-defense or standing up for yourself like in this story. What do you believe about physical violence? Is it ever OK?
- Ryan learned lessons from both her friend, Mary Lou, and her bully, Theresa. What did she learn, and how did they make that impact on her?

"There's More to Playin' Ball than Just Playin' Ball"

by Matt de la Peña

Themes

- Opportunity, life paths, family, difficult choices

Discussion/reflection questions

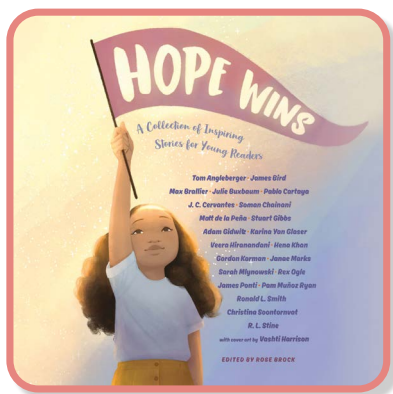
- De la Peña says that he expresses himself in both his writing and in basketball. How do you express yourself? Do you have different ways? Do they express different parts of you?
- Do you think de la Peña made the right choice to stay home? If you had the same opportunity, what would you choose? How do you know if you have made the right choice in moments like this?

"I'd just taken the first flight of my life, and my ears were no longer working."

—From "There's More to Playin' Ball than Just Playin' Ball" by Matt de la Peña

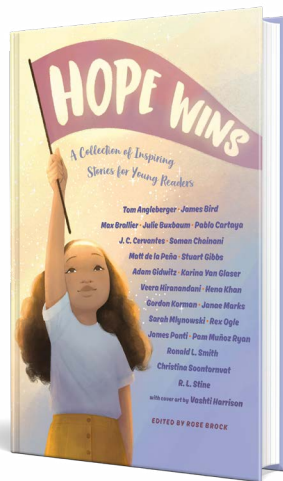
DIFFERENTIATION

SCAFFOLDING AND SUPPORT IDEAS



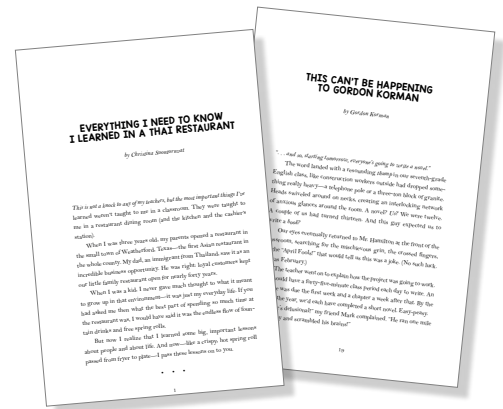
Listen to Sample

Spotlight using the audiobook

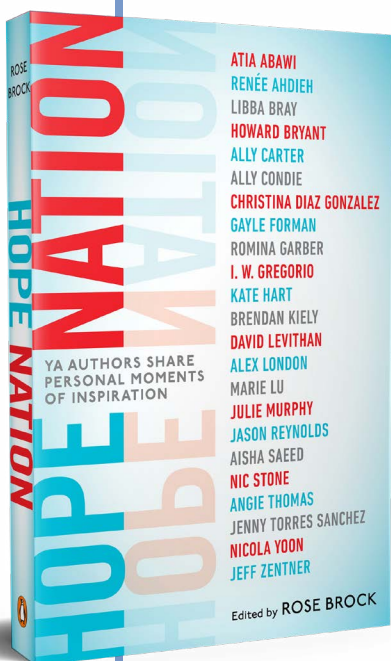


Read Sample

Instead of having to fill out the worksheet, students can highlight the "answers" in their books. This can support students who may struggle with time or typing.



Break the book down, and allow students to just read one or two stories instead of the whole book.



Also Edited by Rose Brock

★ "... For every reader who wonders what to do when everything seems impossible."

-Booklist, starred review

"A salve when days are bleak."

-Kirkus Reviews

"An important and inspiring read for thoughtful teens."

-School Library Journal