

ALL

The story of
a boy called
Finch and
a girl named
Violet.

THE

a novel



BRIGHT



PLACES

Jennifer
Niven

Includes Common Core State
Standards Correlations
RHTeachersLibrarians.com



EDUCATORS' GUIDE



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ABOUT ALL THE BRIGHT PLACES:

Theodore Finch is fascinated by death, and he constantly thinks of ways he might kill himself. But each time, something good, no matter how small, stops him.

Violet Markey lives for the future, counting the days until graduation, when she can escape her Indiana town and her aching grief in the wake of her sister's recent death.

When Finch and Violet meet on the ledge of the bell tower at school, it's unclear who saves whom. And when they pair up on a project to discover the "natural wonders" of their state, both Finch and Violet make more important discoveries: It's only with Violet that Finch can be himself—a weird, funny, live-out-loud guy who's not such a freak after all. And it's only with Finch that Violet can forget to count away the days and start living them. But as Violet's world grows, Finch's begins to shrink.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

All the Bright Places is Jennifer Niven's first book for young adult readers, but she has written four novels for adults—*American Blonde*, *Becoming Clementine*, *Velva Jean Learns to Fly*, and *Velva Jean Learns to Drive*—as well as three nonfiction books—*The Ice Master*, *Ada Blackjack*, and *The Aqua Net Diaries*, a memoir about her high school experiences. Although she grew up in Indiana, she now lives with her fiancé and literary cats in Los Angeles, which remains her favorite place to wander. For more information, visit JenniferNiven.com, GermMagazine.com, or find her on Facebook.



EDUCATOR PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Labels.

Think about the ways that you and your classmates might sometimes label each other—jock, nerd, freak, rich kid, artsy, druggie, overachiever, etc. What are some of the labels that are common at your school? How do you think others label you, versus how you label yourself? To what extent do your labels define you?

Wandering.

Talk with your peers about how you usually navigate your city or town, from home to school or work. Do you drive, ride a bike, use public transportation, or walk to get from point A to point B? Do you use a navigation app to help you get exactly where you are going, or do you build in extra time to wander around and explore your route? What are some of the benefits of wandering?

Bullying.

Free-write about a time when you, or one of your friends, have been hurt by bullying. Are there peers or friends in your circle who will stand up to the bully? Who are the adults in your life you can trust to help? How do you think schools should address the problem of bullying?



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

1. The Italian poet Cesare Pavese is one of the writers whom Finch quotes regularly. After Pavese committed suicide in 1950, a poetic sequence was found among his writings, called “Death Will Come and Will Wear Your Eyes.” An English translation of the text is available online from the Poetry Magazines online archive, poetrymagazines.org.uk, that includes three separate poems from the sequence.

Divide students into at least three groups, with each group responsible for explicating one of the three poems in Pavese’s sequence. After close-reading and analyzing the poem, each group will create a visual presentation that displays the poem and any additional information useful for understanding it, then present the explication to the class. When all three poems have been presented to the class, ask each student to write an individual reflection on the meaning of Pavese’s poem and how it has changed his or her understanding of *All the Bright Places*.

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CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.WRITING 9
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AND LISTENING 1, 4, 5
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.LANGUAGE 4, 5, 6



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS (CONT.)

2. Finch first quotes Virginia Woolf by borrowing a line from her suicide note: “I feel we can’t go through another of those terrible times” (p. 75). Later, he and Violet delight in sharing multiple quotes from Woolf’s *The Waves*, which becomes a significant work for both of them throughout the novel.

Ask students to use library resources and the Internet to research Virginia Woolf’s life, literary work, mental illness, and eventual suicide. Using information from these sources, as well as textual evidence from *All the Bright Places*, students will write an essay that addresses the overarching question: How does the biography of Virginia Woolf connect to the story of Finch and Violet?

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3. During a school counseling session, Mr. Embry asks Finch, “What do you know about bipolar disorder?” but Finch rejects his suggested diagnosis, observing that “The thing I know about bipolar disorder is that it’s a label. One you give crazy people” (pp. 271–272). To Finch, “Labels like ‘bipolar’ say *This is why you are the way you are. This is who you are.* They explain people away as illnesses” (p. 272).

Have students use library resources and the Internet to research clinical definitions, causes, and symptoms of bipolar disorder. Using information from their research, students will work in groups to create a chart that includes the major characteristics of bipolar disorder and its symptoms. Then students will use textual evidence to complete the chart by explaining whether and how different aspects of Finch’s behavior show signs of bipolar disorder. Each group of students will present its findings to the class, using the chart as a visual aid, to explain the group’s answer to the question: Do you think Finch suffers from bipolar disorder?

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CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.LANGUAGE 1, 6

4. Early in their relationship, Finch tells Violet, “You were up on the ledge because you didn’t know where else to turn and what else to do. You’d lost all hope” (p. 59). Both Finch and Violet struggle with suicidal thoughts when they meet, but as the days go by, Violet begins to progress through her sadness.

Ask students to use library and Internet resources to research grief, depression, and mental illness. Then have students consider how their research connects to Violet’s feelings and experiences in the novel. Divide the class into two groups and stage a formal debate, using evidence from their research and the text, to argue both sides of the statement: “By the end of the novel, Violet no longer struggles with mental illness.”

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CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SPEAKING AND LISTENING 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.LANGUAGE 1





CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. *“And then I do something I swore I’d never do. I sign up for Facebook just so I can send her a friend request.”* (pp. 37–38)

Since Facebook is one of the ways Finch and Violet first begin to communicate, think about what each of their profile pages might look like. Use evidence from the text to create a fake Facebook page for either Finch, Violet, or one of their friends. Include pictures, hobbies, quotes, friends, status updates, or anything else that would make your character’s Facebook profile complete.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.READING 1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.WRITING 3, 5, 6, 9
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.LANGUAGE 1, 2, 3

2. *“At each site, we leave something, almost like an offering. . . . Also, it’s a way to prove we’ve been there, and a way to leave a part of us behind.”* (pp. 43–44)

If you were going geocaching, what items would you leave behind to represent you and your journey? Assemble a collection of items you would take geocaching. Share with a partner the history and significance of each item, and why you would choose to leave it behind. Then visit geocaching.com to learn more and determine if you are able to participate in a geocache either by hiding or finding one.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.WRITING 6
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SPEAKING AND LISTENING 1

3. *“On the way back to Violet’s house, I think up epitaphs for the people we know. . . . ‘What would yours say, Ultraviolet?’ ‘I’m not sure. . . . What about yours?’”* (p. 138)

While Finch finds writing epitaphs for other people entertaining, he knows exactly what he wants his epitaph to say. Consult a dictionary or reference source for a thorough definition of the word “epitaph.” What would you want your own epitaph to say? Write a draft version of your epitaph, then share it with a group. Were there any similarities between the epitaphs? What did you learn about yourself or your peers from this exercise? Using your own reflections and feedback from your group, revise your epitaph.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.WRITING 3, 4, 5
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SPEAKING AND LISTENING 1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.LANGUAGE 1, 2, 3, 4

4. Violet creates an online ‘zine with the purpose that *“somewhere they can be unlimited and fearless and safe, like in their own rooms.”* (p. 189)

Work in a group to create your own version of a ‘zine, similar to the one Violet created (the real *Germ Magazine*, based on Violet’s idea in the book, is online at germmagazine.com). What will you call your own magazine? What types of content and categories will you include? Who will contribute to your magazine? Design your ‘zine on the Web or on paper and develop content for articles, photos, and features, then share printed copies or the Web address with your peers.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.WRITING 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SPEAKING AND LISTENING 1, 2, 5
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.LANGUAGE 1, 2, 3



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

5. *“He studies the map, shakes his head. His hand moves over the paper. By the time he’s done, he’s made pen marks across the entire state, circling every town he knows of where there’s a wonder. . . .”* (p. 100)

“One of the things I want to create is a Wander section where readers can send in pictures or videos of their favorite grand, small, bizarre, poetic, nothing-ordinary sites.” (p. 249)

Use a combination of library and Internet resources to research places of interest around your town, city, or state where you might someday wander like Finch and Violet did. Use either a printed or digital map of your area to mark the places you want to see. Choose at least five different “wonders” and mark them on your map, then research to learn more about them and how you could someday visit. For each place, write a short travel blurb to attract more tourists to the destination and include it with your map.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.WRITING 2, 4, 7, 8
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SPEAKING
AND LISTENING 2
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.LANGUAGE 1, 2, 3

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS CORRELATIONS:

While each question indicates a connection to a specific Common Core Reading Literature standard, overall participation in a book discussion supports the Common Core Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration standard (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1) as well as Common Core Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4). All discussion questions can easily be adapted to connect to the Common Core Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details standard (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.RL.1) by asking students to cite specific textual evidence to support their analyses.

6. *“As the song plays on the turntable, I hear one of my own that’s taking shape. . . .”* (p. 231)

Create a playlist of music that reflects Finch and Violet’s story. The playlist can represent any aspect of the novel you choose; for example, it might be your interpretation of Violet’s favorite songs, or it could be a playlist of songs that reflect Finch and Violet’s relationship, or even songs that show Finch’s changing state of mind. Organize the playlist however you like, whether chronologically, thematically, or another way. For each song on the playlist, include the song title, artist, year, and a few sentences of explanation for your song choice, using evidence from the text as appropriate. Finish by creating an album cover for your playlist, either digitally or on paper.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.READING 1, 7
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.WRITING 1, 2, 4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SPEAKING
AND LISTENING 2, 5

7. *“Then he hands me a pen and a pad of Post-its. ‘Want to try?’”* (p. 291)

Set a timer for three minutes and then use a pen and a pad of sticky notes to write down every word or phrase that you think of in those three minutes, putting each note on the wall as you go. When your time is up, step back and consider all of the words that you’ve written. Use a print or online dictionary to check for multiple meanings of each word. Then rearrange the words into ideas, phrases, sentences, or even poetry. Read your new work out loud and make any revisions. If possible, take a picture of your sticky note composition, then rearrange the words again to make something new.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.WRITING 5
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.LANGUAGE 3, 4, 5