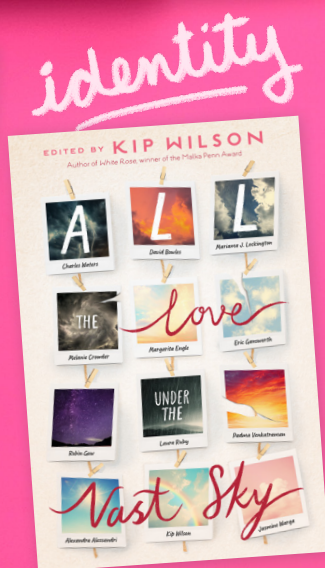
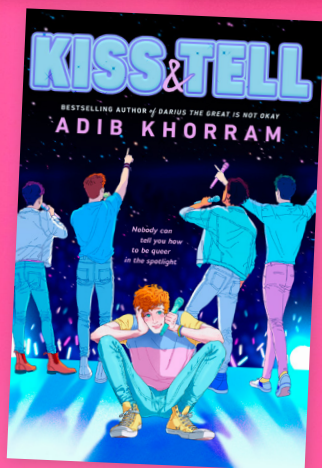


Culturally Responsive Teaching Through

ROM-COMS

Eight Romances & Rom-Coms to engage your students hearts and minds!



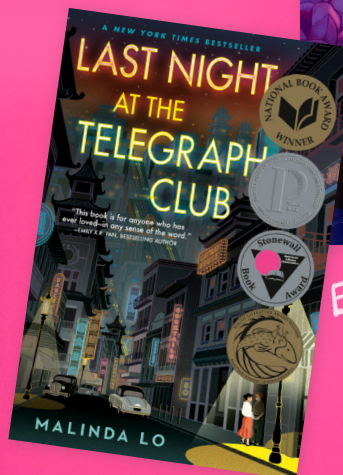
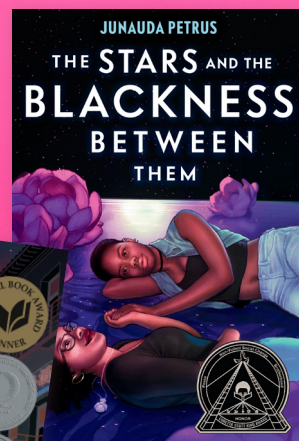
MEET-CUTE



Enemies
↓
Lovers



★ Star-crossed ★

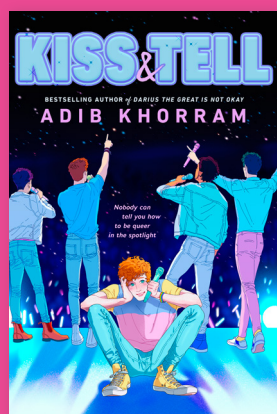


Windows + mirrors

DEAR EDUCATORS,

Teens love a good love story. It speaks to the emotions and lived experiences they are going through as they sit in your classrooms and libraries. What better way to engage these readers on broader topics and bring culturally responsive teaching to them than with romance and rom-com novels? That is why we're so excited to be partnering with Julia Torres on this educator resource to help bring culturally responsive lessons to life in your classroom around this genre. These novels span a variety of tropes in the genre and hopefully offer something for everyone. We hope this introduces new ideas on how to not only bring these books into your classroom, but also on how to bring more genres into your classroom as well. The table of contents is below. Click each item to jump to that section or scroll down to read through the guide as needed.

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KISS & TELL
By Adib Khorram
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PAYAL MEHTA'S ROMANCE REVENGE PLOT
By Preeti Chhibber
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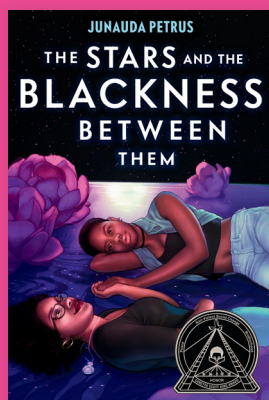
GIVE ME A SIGN
by Anna Sortino
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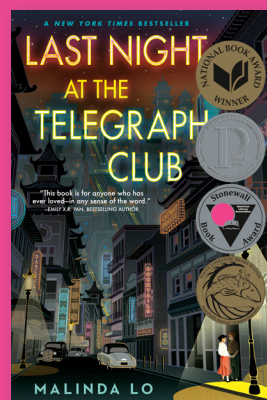
HER GOOD SIDE
by Rebekah Weatherspoon
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ALL THE LOVE UNDER THE VAST SKY
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THE STARS AND THE BLACKNESS BETWEEN THEM
By Junauda Petrus
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LAST NIGHT AT THE TELEGRAPH CLUB
By Malinda Lo
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THE DAVENPORTS
By Krystal Marquis
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WHY TEACH YA ROMANCE IN THE CLASSROOM?

Up until the present day, most literary romantic relationships taught in language arts classrooms have been examples taken from “classic” texts: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*,, *Anna Karenina*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, and the list goes on. None of these stories address the loves and losses teens today find themselves involved in and are trying to endure. None of these stories contain characters from historically marginalized or underrepresented groups. The argument is often made that these stories are universal, but the question remains: universal for whom? Love stories written by and centering those from historically marginalized groups are living and loving too and have been for just as long. The #DisruptTexts grassroots movement (2018) developed as a way to get educators to think more critically about the kinds of books young people are reading so that performative scholarship (pretending to read a book in order to pass assignments) doesn’t take the place of authentic reading engagement.

Additionally, in “Love matters: the case for an inclusive, contemporary approach to romantic themes and texts in subject English” (Nichols, 2023), researcher Sue Nichols advocates for the use of contemporary genre literature to present

students with “multiple perspectives [in] engaging, nuanced narratives in which characters navigate identities, relationships, and ideas about love.” This is needed because there is such a divide between the social world of today’s adolescents and the classic literature presented to them for study in their academic pursuits. Though it is possible for them to develop an appreciation for classical literature, contemporary literature serves as both a mirror into their world and as a window for the experiences of others they might meet as they move beyond their known community (“Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors,” Sims Bishop 1990). It is our job as educators to defend a young person’s right to read and to read books of their own choosing. As Nichols states, “The high value placed on particular kinds of literary analysis and critique, together with assumptions about the kinds of texts that will enable such treatment, means that only a tiny percentage of the current published corpus makes its way into class.” And so we see that our own biases are keeping young people from being exposed to the full spectrum of love in human life in all its iterations. As such, these biases pave the way for adults who will repeat the cycle and do the same.

This guide was written by **Julia Torres**. Julia is a nationally recognized veteran language arts teacher, librarian, and teen programs administrator in Denver, Colorado. Julia facilitates teacher development workshops rooted in the areas of anti-racist education, equity and access in literacy and librarianship, and education as a practice of liberation. Julia’s work has been featured on NPR, Al Jazeera’s *The Stream*, PBS Education, KQED’s *MindShift*, *Rethinking Schools*, *Learning for Justice* magazine, *School Library Journal*, *American Libraries* magazine, and many more. She is a Book Love Foundation board member, Educator Working Group member, Book Ambassador for the Educator Collaborative, and cofounder of #DisruptTexts. Her coauthored title *Liven Up Your Library: Design Engaging and Inclusive Programs for Teens and Tweens* is just the first of many forthcoming publications for librarians and educators.

WHY TEACH YA ROMANCE IN THE CLASSROOM?

CONTINUED

In this collection, there are titles that foster authentic reading engagement through culturally relevant stories and settings, relatable characters, and realistic narrative structures. Explore celebrity and queer culture through a love story involving high drama, rebound relationships, and breakups and makeups that take place in the limelight with Adib Khorram's *Kiss & Tell*.

Another queer love story is Junauda Petrus's *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them*, which tackles love through grief, loss, and terminal illness. Preeti Chhibber's *Payal Mehta's Romance Revenge Plot* teaches how shrinking one's identity in order to be loved by someone is a surefire way to learn that authenticity is what makes others love us most. *All the Love Under the Vast Sky* is an anthology that spans identity, folklore, and genre across a variety of poetic forms. *Give Me a Sign* by Anna Sortino offers readers the opportunity to look at love as it develops for those in the Deaf community, normalizing nonverbal communication and learning lessons about disability advocacy along the way. Rebekah Weatherspoon's *Her Good Side* is a friends-to-lovers tale for all of those who have had love staring them in the face all along but were unable or unwilling to see it. For those who love historical fiction, *The Davenport* by Krystal Marquis features the lives and loves of Black Americans of comparative wealth and privilege through four young women who take charge of their futures in a time when it is not common for them to do so. Malinda Lo's *The Telegraph Club* provides readers with the chance to learn about two girls falling in love in the 1950s when such a thing was dangerous.

Reading the books in this collection will allow readers to empathize, explore, and expand their understanding of what it means to fall in love in all kinds of places, times, and cultural contexts.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[YA Romance Archives - Book Riot](#)

["Love matters: the case for an inclusive, contemporary approach to romance themes and texts in subject English" by Sue Nichols](#)

[Readability and the Common Core's Staircase of Text Complexity](#)

ROMANCE IN LITERATURE AND THE ELA CLASSROOM: A BRIEF HISTORY

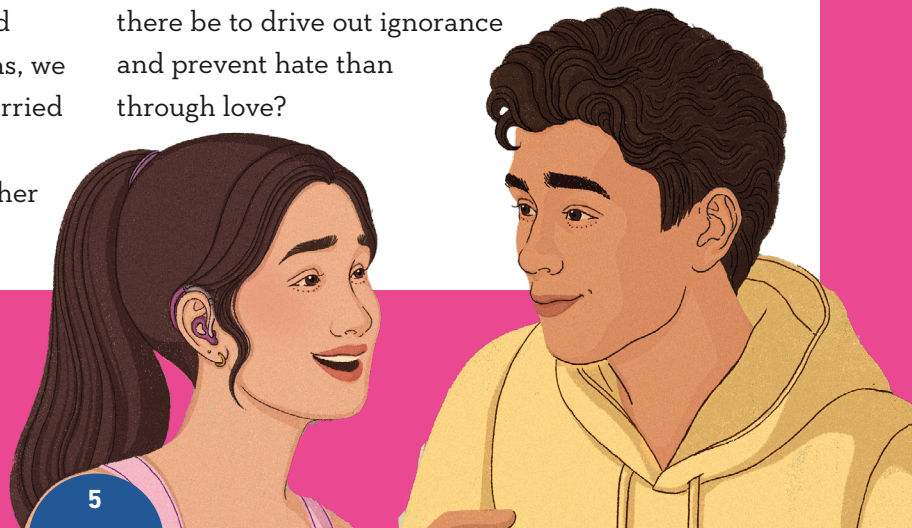
Some of the earliest romance titles were stories that presented an archetype for how love should feel and how those in love might act, as being in love has often been seen as one of the most quintessentially human experiences. Most of us, at some point in this human experience, desire to feel loved—romantically or platonically—or to find a person whom we deem as deserving of our love. Historically, in the Western world, some of the earliest written stories would have characters and plotlines that were based on ideals of [courtly love](#). In fact, many courtly love traditions and tropes still exist in the stories and movies we read and watch today. From the Middle Ages and courtly love traditions, storytellers moved on to Shakespearean depictions of love, many of which contained archetypes from antiquity and classical Greek-Roman mythology.

The Greeks and Romans gave us the tales of Persephone and Hades, Orpheus and Eurydice, Eros (Cupid) and Psyche, Paris and Helen, and so many more. In the Eastern world and in other cultures outside of Western society (which brought its ideals about love around the world through colonization), love archetypes already existed in the stories of Layla and Majnun, Heer and Ranjha, Yusuf and Zulaikha, and countless others. In the Americas, we can learn about Glory of the Morning, who married her French fur trader husband and went on to become a powerful socio-political figure after her husband's death.

But in educational settings, language arts classes have historically focused on romances from classic European tales, including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Oedipus Rex*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, and none of which end well. This collection differs in that the love stories included offer a fresh and modern take on love as well as opportunities for viewing the world through the lens of young lovers who are introspective and self-reflective.

Young people today are critically conscious global citizens. It has been reported by the National Center for Education Statistics¹ that 54.8 percent of all students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools identify as Hispanic, Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, or two or more races. Therefore, there is a need not only for representation in literature but also for authentic stories—sometimes involving degrees of romance and intimacy—that reflect the lived realities of young people in classrooms today. YA romance offers an enticing avenue through which to explore our world. In a world that sometimes feels full of division and intolerance, what better way could there be to drive out ignorance and prevent hate than through love?

¹<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2023/2023144.pdf>



OVERARCHING QUESTIONS

How can you tell if a situation is true love?

How is love a healing force when loved ones confront a terminal illness?

What are some ways we can develop self-love while loving someone else?

Are cultural differences a barrier to true love?

Can love be determined or impacted by fate and destiny?

How is loss a part of the process of falling in love?

Can two people fall in love if they speak and communicate using different languages?

How have marriage and courting customs changed over time?

How does the process of love evolve when it is forbidden?

OVERARCHING THEMES

Identity (sexual, gender, racial, ethnic)

Mental health

Social justice

Family dynamics

Coming-of-age experiences

Body image

Grief

Relationships

Bullying

Substance abuse

Political activism

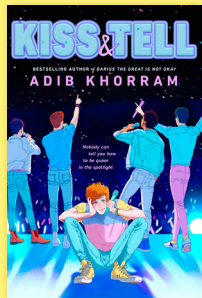
Social and political power

Communication

Culture



INDIVIDUAL BOOK THEMES



LGBTQIA+ identities, adolescent exploitation in the entertainment industry, social media, love, friendship, loyalty, stereotypes.



Friendship, family (including extended and chosen families), love, stereotypes, prejudice, cultural assimilation, identity (ethnic, social, cultural, racial, gender, etc.)



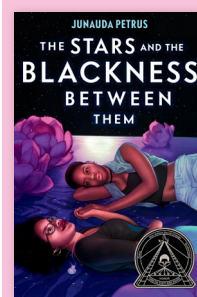
Deafness, (dis)ability advocacy, belonging, identity, love, community, advocacy, discrimination, communication.



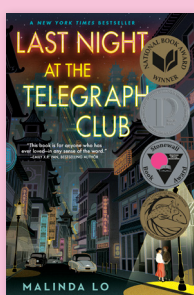
Self-discovery, friendship, self-confidence, communication and vulnerability, positive self-image development.



Family, LGBTQIA+ identities, folktales/folklore, settler colonialism, mythical creatures, ceremony, grief and loss, first love.



Illness, wrongful convictions, love, astronomy, astrology, magical realism, spirituality, mortality, religion, Afrofuturism, Black feminism (womanism)



Racism, homophobia, McCarthyism, conformism and cultural assimilation, microaggressions, racism, cultural and ethnic identity, gender nonconformity.



Courtship, love, family, industrialization, segregation, education, social progress, socio-economic mobility, resistance, and community organizing.

HOW TO TEACH WITH THESE TITLES

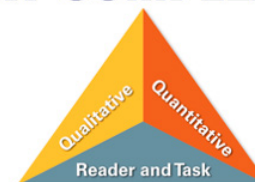


A Note about Reading Fluency and Reader Engagement: When considering which titles to invite in language arts classrooms, it is important to remember that the educational experience, just as the experience of reading, is personal and should be as unique to individual students as possible. Some learners thrive in an environment where they are challenged to read stories set in unfamiliar settings and learn new vocabulary and forms of expression that are not used in their everyday lives. For others, when reading is a struggle, being assigned to read a book they cannot relate to on any level (linguistically, culturally, or intellectually) can be a recipe for failure. All students deserve to be set up for success when the act of being open to learning in and of itself demands vulnerability. Striving to create learning environments where all students feel comfortable accessing stories and the lessons within them is a move toward true access and inclusion. When the stories with which students are presented are inclusive and representative of many identities and experiences, we meet students where they are rather than expecting them to see the world (and cultural perceptions of love) through the narrow view a dominant culture creates for them.

For the purposes of this guide, the following applies:

- 1 = most accessible for a reader
- 4 = most demanding for a reader

TEXT COMPLEXITY



Qualitative evaluation of the text:

Levels of meaning, structure, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands

Quantitative evaluation of the text:

Readability measures and other scores of text complexity

Matching reader to text and task: Reader variables (such as motivation, knowledge, and experiences) and task variables (such as purpose and the complexity generated by the task assigned and the questions posed)

Credit: corestandards.org

TITLE	QUALITATIVE DEMANDS	QUANTITATIVE DEMANDS	READING COMPLEXITY (ACCESSIBILITY RATING)
Kiss & Tell	Medium	Low	2 (670L)
The Stars and the Blackness Between Them	Medium	High	4 (890L)
Give Me a Sign	Low	Medium	2 (720L)
Payal Mehta's Romance Revenge Plot	High	Medium	3 (740L)
Last Night at the Telegraph Club	High	High	4 (900L)
Her Good Side	Low	Low	1 (690L)
The Davenports	High	Medium	3 (720L)
All the Love Under the Vast Sky	Medium	Medium	3 (NP)

HOW TO TEACH

WITH THESE TITLES

CONTINUED

Two Instructional Approaches: Much has been written about lit circles and book clubs as instructional pathways when introducing choice novels into the language arts classroom. They are a departure from the traditional whole-class novel approach (wherein the whole class reads the same book at more or less the same pace). The titles in this collection are of varying levels of complexity and require varying degrees of language and context decoding skills in order to fully understand and enjoy them. For lit circles or book clubs, consider the following arrangements for one 3–5 week choice unit:

NUMBER OF MEMBERS	NUMBER OF DIFFERENT TITLES	READING COMPLEXITY (ACCESSIBILITY RATING)
6	2	3 members at level 1 or 2 or 3 members at level 3 or 4
4	1	1, 2, 3, or 4
4	4	2 members at level 1 2 members at level 2 or 2 members at level 3 2 members at level 4

READER'S ADVISORY: Part of why teens love reading romance so much is that they are at an age where many of them are discovering their romantic inclinations or feelings. It's all new and that is exciting! However, in an academic setting, educators can be reluctant to bring books into classrooms that may have material discussing physical intimacy or language that could make them vulnerable to [censorship or reconsideration requests](#). One way to navigate this is to adopt some language for discussing the level of physical intimacy described in a given text so that readers know what they are opting to read before diving in. Managing expectations and anticipated reactions to content is an important part of teaching young readers to select texts and align reading choices with their tastes and personal interests.

For the purposes of this guide, each book has a Reader's Advisory section to help you as an educator or librarian have the language and tools to connect the right book with the right reader.



A NOTE ABOUT FANFIC: This guide would be remiss without mentioning the fact that many modern teen readers love reading fanfic. Though YA romance and fan fiction are not the same, there is some crossover. So, both are important for educators to know about. Fan fiction delves into unexplored areas of different fandoms and television shows, some of which feature unconventional romantic pairings and sexual content. Students often look for continuations of stories they love in fan fiction archives, and many are amateur writers of fan fiction themselves.

For more information about fanfic as a genre of romance writing, see the following resources:

Goldmann, J. E. (2022). *Fan Fiction Genres: Gender, Sexuality, Relationships and Family in the Fandoms »Star Trek« and »Supernatural«* (1st ed.). transcript Verlag.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv371c888>

[How Fanfiction Helped Me Come to Terms With My Queer Identity: Vice.com](#)

ABOUT KISS & TELL

Hunter never expected to be a boy band star, but, well, here he is. He and his band, Kiss & Tell, are on their first major tour of North America, playing arenas all over the United States and Canada (and getting covered by the gossip press all over North America as well). Hunter is the only gay member of the band, and he just had a very painful breakup with his first boyfriend—leaked sexts, public heartbreak, and all—and now everyone expects him to play the perfect queer role model for teens.

But Hunter isn't really sure what being the perfect queer kid even means. Does it mean dressing up in whatever The Label tells him to wear for photo shoots and pretending never to have sex? (Unfortunately, yes.) Does it mean finding community among the queer kids at the meet-and-greets after K&T's shows? (Fortunately, yes.) Does it include a new relationship with Kaivan, the drummer for the band opening for K&T on tour? (He hopes so.) But when The Label finds out about Hunter and Kaivan, it spells trouble—for their relationship, for the perfect gay boy Hunter plays for the cameras, and, most importantly, for Hunter himself.

KISS & TELL

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *DARIUS THE GREAT IS NOT OKAY*

ADIB KHORRAM

Nobody can
tell you how
to be queer
in the spotlight

Just a Friend

Friends to Lovers

Stuck Together

READER'S ADVISORY

Great for fans of *What If It's Us* by Becky Albertalli and Adam Silvera or *Heartstopper* by Alice Oseman. Contains more than one scene involving physical intimacy as well as detailed and direct language describing physical intimacy and body parts.

WHY SHOULD I TEACH THIS?

This alternatively formatted novel uses first-person narrative with fictional interviews, emails, text messages, think pieces, tabloid blog posts, and more in a riveting story about young love in the spotlight and the joys and perils of fame for openly gay (and all) adolescents. The love stories in the novel are appropriately tantalizing and will keep even the most reluctant readers turning pages to know what happens next. Educators will appreciate opportunities to talk about homophobia in pop culture and exploitation of minors in the entertainment industry, as well as how the book's format contributes to its realism and believability. Teen readers will fall in love with the characters as they traverse the highs and lows of teenage romance in the spotlight and all that it entails, as well as what it means to love across cultural, racial, and ethnic differences.

★ "A THOUGHT-PROVOKING PLEASURE
READ THAT HITS ALL THE RIGHT NOTES."

—BCCB, STARRED REVIEW

CLICK HERE
FOR BOOK
RESUME!

THEMES/TOPICS ADDRESSED

LGBTQIA+ identities, adolescent exploitation in the entertainment industry, social media, love, friendship, loyalty, stereotypes

IDENTITY REPRESENTATION INCLUDED

Vietnamese, Iranian American, Brazilian, Indian Canadian, LGBTQIA+, Gay, Bisexual

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How much access should the public have to information about a celebrity's private life?
2. What are some of the unique pressures that LGBTQIA+-identifying individuals who also identify as BIPOC face? See Merriam-Webster's definition of "intersectionality."²
3. How might public perception of gay teens in the spotlight impact their freedom to live and express themselves as they choose?
4. Is it fair for someone to have to be considered a role model just because they're in the spotlight?

SAMPLE LESSON

Using your resources and the following list of topics (or one that you identify), create a journal article, a podcast episode on YouTube, or a vlog using the lens of an [investigative journalist](#).

TOPICS

Celebrity gossip, LGBTQIA+ representation in the media, teens in the entertainment industry, celebrity objectification, adultification of minors.

Alternatively, create a [mini zine](#) (or online zine) that educates readers about your chosen topic.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [Readers' Poll: The Best Boy Bands of All Time](#)
- [12 Celebs Who Came Out At A Young Age, And 13 Who Came Out Way Later In Life](#)
- [PFLAG National Glossary](#)

² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intersectionality>

PREETI CHHIBBER



Enemies to Lovers

The Out-of-Leaguer

Love Triangle

Just a Friend

READER'S ADVISORY

Great for fans of *Frankly in Love* by David Yoon or *Perfectly Parvin* by Olivia Abtahi. Contains kissing in one or more scenes; no physical intimacy on or off the page.

WHY SHOULD I TEACH THIS?

Payal Mehta's Romance Revenge Plot will keep readers wanting to turn each page as Payal's love life and love of self unravel and are rebuilt again in delightful ways. This uniquely personal and universal novel reads like a '90s rom-com, with text messages woven throughout the prose to add realism and readability. In the classroom, educators will have the opportunity to teach about themes from life and love that cross cultural experiences and span the globe, just like people of the South Asian diaspora. For those identifying as Desi or familiar with Desi culture (Desi comes from the Sanskrit word "desh" meaning "country" but has evolved to signify a person of South Asian birth or descent who lives abroad), the story is full of cultural and linguistic references that will be resonant and familiar. Readers will delight in the opportunity to learn more about Desi cultural aspects through Payal, and in today's global, cross-cultural landscape, many will relate to the questions the story raises about love between people of different cultural backgrounds.

**"WITTY BANTER AND ENDEARING SIDE CHARACTERS
CREATE A LOVING ODE TO TEEN ROM-COMS."**

—BOOKLIST

ABOUT PAYAL MEHTA'S ROMANCE REVENGE PLOT

Payal Mehta has had a crush on popular, athletic, all-around perfect Jonathan Slate ever since he smiled at her in freshman-year Spanish class. At a party during spring break of her junior year, Payal finally works up the courage to ask Jon to hang out. However, her romantic plans are derailed when he vomits on her Keds. Twice. But when Jon offers to take her out to lunch as an apology, Payal is convinced this is the start of their love story.

Over chalupas and burritos at Taco Bell, Payal's best jokes are landing as planned. Jon is basically choking on his Coke—and then it happens. "Do you have a boyfriend?" Payal is (finally) about to get the guy. And then he tries to set her up with his Indian friend. Payal's best friends, Neil Patel and Divya Bhatt, are just as mad about the microaggression as Payal is, but they think she's a little too hung up on him.

Determined to teach Jon a lesson by making him fall for her, Payal ropes in her archnemesis, Philip Kim, to help. It's the perfect plan. Minus Philip's snarky, annoying quips and lack of faith in its success. But as Payal lies to the people she loves, hides the too-Indian parts of herself in front of her crush, and learns that *maybe* Philip isn't the worst, she starts to wonder if what she's been looking for has been scowling at her all along . . .

CLICK HERE
FOR BOOK
RESUME!

THEMES/TOPICS ADDRESSED

Friendship, family (including extended and chosen families), love, stereotypes, prejudice, cultural assimilation, identity (ethnic, social, cultural, racial, gender, etc.)

TOPICS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Desi: South Asian diasporic peoples, cultures and languages of the Indian subcontinent (Gujarati, Punjabi, Marathi, Hindi, and Urdu), microaggressions, immigrant diasporic identities and experiences.

IDENTITY REPRESENTATION INCLUDED

Indian American, Korean American, LGBTQIA+

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. Should you have to censor yourself to be in partnership with someone?
2. How is family love, or the love of friends, different from or similar to romantic love? Consider [THIS](#) resource.
3. How does infatuation (or a crush) differ from love?
4. Can romantic love develop between two enemies or friends?

SAMPLE LESSON

Make your own social experiment. If you choose to, and as Payal does, connect your topic to the subject of love. As all scientists, even social scientists, do, first identify a hypothesis, then create goals for the project, a process, and an intended outcome. Do some research into the background of your situation. After your experiment, create a report (which could be in the form of a vlog or podcast) with your findings.

- [Social Experiments and Studies in Psychology.](#)
- [Great Ideas for Psychology Experiments to Explore](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

*Read all of the book's chapter notes. They are important to understanding some of the Hinglish (Hindi+English), Desi culture, and Hindi references.

- [The Micropedia of Microaggressions](#)
- [A primer on South Asians and Desis - by Anil Dash](#)
- [“No, but where are you really from?” Experiences of perceived discrimination and identity development among Asian Indian adolescents](#)
- [30 Unforgettable Teen Romance Movies From The 90s & 2000s](#)
- [13 Best Bollywood Rom-Coms: All the Modern Bollywood Romance Movies to Watch Right Now](#)



About *Give Me a Sign*

Lilah is stuck in the middle. At least, that's what having a hearing loss seems like sometimes—when you don't feel “deaf enough” to identify as Deaf or hearing enough to meet the world's expectations. But this summer, Lilah is ready for a change.

When Lilah becomes a counselor at a summer camp for the deaf and blind, her plan is to brush up on her ASL. Once there, she also finds a community. There are cute British lifeguards who break hearts but not rules, a YouTuber who's just a bit desperate for clout, the campers Lilah's responsible for (and overwhelmed by)—and then there's Isaac, the dreamy Deaf counselor who volunteers to help Lilah with her signing.

Romance was never on the agenda, and Lilah's not positive Isaac likes her that way. But all signs seem to point to love. Unless she's reading them wrong? One thing's for sure: Lilah wanted change, and things here . . . they're certainly different than what she's used to.

The Out-of-Leaguer

Just a Friend

Reader's Advisory

Great for fans of *This Is Kind of an Epic Love Story* by Kacen Callender or *The Summer I Turned Pretty* by Jenny Han. Contains kissing in one or more scenes; no physical intimacy on or off the page.

Why should I teach this?

Advocacy doesn't have to be strictly for the groups we identify with or belong to. This sweet love story provides a frame for Lilah's self-discovery and acceptance as she finds her community and Deaf identity. Educators will appreciate the nuanced way in which the author depicts challenges faced by people who are deaf or hard of hearing, such as the rejection of learning ASL by hearing parents and caregivers of deaf children, dealing with microaggressions and discrimination from those who are not Deaf, or the decision whether or not to get cochlear implant surgery. Readers will love the sweet way that Lilah and Isaac journey from friendship to love and the way Lilah grows in confidence as she gets to know Isaac and the two discover their feelings for each other.

★ **“CELEBRATES DEAF CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN THIS ENDEARINGLY FUNNY SLOW-BURN ROM-COM.”**

—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, STARRED REVIEW

CLICK HERE
FOR BOOK
RESUME!

Themes/topics addressed

Deafness, (dis)ability, advocacy, belonging, identity, love, community, discrimination, communication.

Identity representation included

Deaf or hard of hearing, blind, Latine

Essential questions

1. What pressures do people face when they are caught between two worlds? *Ex. Lilah identifies as Deaf, but isn't as deaf as some others in the community.*
2. How do individuals learn to lean on their communities in circumstances where they cannot understand what is being said around them and are not fully able to express themselves?
3. What are some challenges those in the Deaf community face when navigating the world of the hearing?
4. What are some of the cultural nuances unique to the Deaf community that are important for those with full hearing abilities to understand?
5. Gray Wolf is a camp for Deaf and blind children and teenagers. What is the importance of creating spaces where disabled people can connect and find community?

Sample lesson

Create a Deaf pride awareness social media campaign in collaboration with one or more people from your community who identify as Deaf or hearing impaired. You may consider offering your services as a videographer or interviewer or, if you identify as part of the Deaf community, documenting your experiences with any of the themes from this novel. Consider focusing your social media campaign by having multiple segments highlighting separate topics or involving separate individuals. Representation is an important part of sharing the stories of Deaf communities. Be sure to include people from different cultural backgrounds and of different ages, ethnicities, and experiences with deafness.

Additional resources:

- [I'm deaf, but we can still talk | Rebekah Afari | TEDxExeter](#)
- [Teens Talk: Being a Deaf Student with Mariangela Acosta](#)
- [National Association of the Deaf - Tips for More Effective Advocacy](#)



Meet-Cute

Falling for the Underdog

Friends to Lovers

Just a Friend

READER'S ADVISORY

Great for fans of *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* by Jenny Han or *Instructions for Dancing* by Nicola Yoon. Contains at least one scene involving sexual content as well as euphemistic language for physical intimacy and body parts.

WHY SHOULD I TEACH THIS?

Her Good Side is a sweet story about two unlikely lovers who discover they are perfect for one another. Like *Beatrice and Benedick* in Shakespeare's famous play *Much Ado About Nothing*, love comes to Bethany and Jacob slowly as they discover mutual interests and their mutual ability to bring out the best in each other. Educators will appreciate the opportunity to explore love as a catalyst for self-transformation and discovery. Readers will see themselves and their worlds reflected in the multicultural and ethnically diverse school environment the characters inhabit and will feel all the feels as the characters ride a roller coaster of emotions. *Her Good Side* also has a lot of classic romance storytelling elements: verbal sparring, misunderstandings and intrigue, and lovers who might seem to be improbable partners at first but wind up being exactly what each lover needs.

★ "CELEBRATES AWKWARD HIGH-SCHOOL EXPERIENCES, UNEXPECTED ROMANCES, AND STELLAR SUPPORT SYSTEMS."

—BOOKLIST, STARRED REVIEW

ABOUT HER GOOD SIDE

Sixteen-year-old Bethany Greene, though confident and self-assured, is what they call a late-bloomer. She's never had a boyfriend, date, or first kiss. She's determined to change that, but after her crush turns her down cold for homecoming—declaring her too inexperienced—and all her backup ideas fall through, she cautiously agrees to go with her best friend's boyfriend, Jacob. A platonic date is better than no date, right? Until her friend breaks up with said boyfriend.

Dumped twice in just two months, Jacob Yeun wonders if he's the problem. After years hiding behind his camera and a shocking summer glow-up, he wasn't quite ready for all the attention or to be someone's boyfriend. There are no guides for his particular circumstances, or for taking your ex's best friend to the dance.

Why not make the best of an awkward situation? Bethany and Jacob decide to fake date for practice, building their confidence in matters of the heart.

And it works—guys are finally noticing Bethany, and Jacob is growing more confident. But things get complicated as their kissing sessions—for research, of course!—start to feel real. This arrangement was supposed to help them in dating other people, but what if their perfect match is right in front of them?

CLICK HERE
FOR BOOK
RESUME!



THEMES/TOPICS ADDRESSED

Self-discovery, friendship, self-confidence, communication and vulnerability, body positivity, love.

IDENTITY REPRESENTATION INCLUDED

Black American, Korean American, LGBTQIA+



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. With respect to love and romance, can “practice make perfect”?
2. How do you suppose self-esteem is linked to external attractiveness?
3. How can social media impact a person’s dating life and experiences?
4. How can falling in love help someone realize their full potential?



SAMPLE LESSON

Situations where friends pretend to be lovers and then actually find themselves falling in love aren’t so uncommon. In fact, many of the longest-lasting couples state friendship as the basis for their enduring relationships. Create a survey or series of interview questions to ask couples around you about how they met and what keeps them together. Try to make the questions as neutral as possible and consider using item types like a [Likert](#) scale to have individuals within couples rate their satisfaction with respect to several indicators. Then, create a presentation or short vlog about your findings. What patterns do you see? What questions still remain?

- [Sample Oral History Questionnaire](#) (adapt to create a couple’s oral history questionnaire)
- [6 Teen Couples vs 1 Fake Couple | Odd Man Out](#)

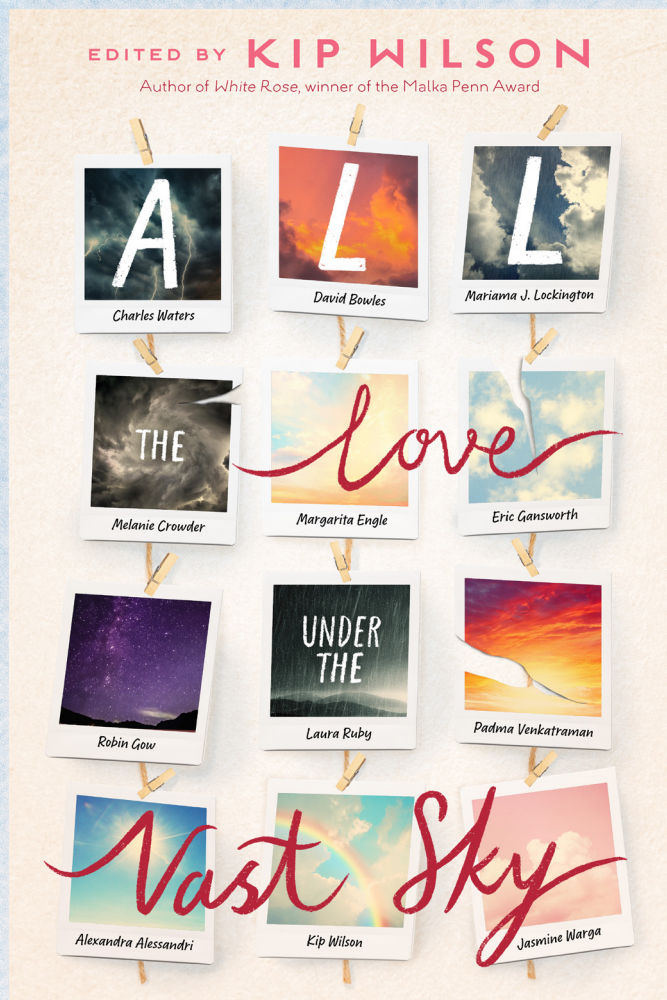
As an alternative to this assignment, write your own meet-cute love story where two people who might initially seem to be an unlikely or “[odd couple](#)” (two people who appear to the outside world to have lots of differences or be opposites but actually have quite a bit in common) meet and fall in love. It can be as short or long as you like, but don’t forget to use the [plot pyramid](#) to give your story some structure.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Yes, Teens Can Fall in “Real” Love | Teen Vogue](#)
- [Why Do Opposites Attract in Relationships?](#)
- [The Science Behind the Meet-Cute - Writer Unboxed](#)

EDITED BY **KIP WILSON**

Author of *White Rose*, winner of the Malka Penn Award



Wild Dream

Star-Crossed Lovers

Just a Friend

The Out-of-Leaguer

Love Triangle

READER'S ADVISORY

Great for fans of *All Signs Point to Yes* or *Meet Cute: Some People Are Destined to Meet*. Contains at least one scene involving sexual content as well as language for physical intimacy and body parts.

**"OFFERS SOMETHING FOR EVERY READER.
LOVE WINS IN THIS ENJOYABLE,
WELL-EXECUTED ANTHOLOGY."**

—KIRKUS REVIEWS

ABOUT ALL THE LOVE UNDER THE VAST SKY

Twelve short stories in verse by bestselling and award-winning authors that explore the highs and lows of love—romantic, platonic, familial, and self-love.

Love can be many things—all-consuming, fleeting, vengeful, selfless, toxic, uplifting, and always, a core part of the teen experience that leaves an indelible mark. This enchanting, genre-crossing anthology delivers something for every reader with unique characters, global settings, and a dazzling mixture of myth and historical, speculative, and contemporary fiction.

Love is complicated, and this anthology embraces the messiness and the joy of all kinds of love.

Contributors include:

- Alexandra Alessandri
- David Bowles
- Melanie Crowder
- Margarita Engle
- Eric Gansworth
- Robin Gow
- Mariama J. Lockington
- Laura Ruby
- Padma Venkatraman
- Jasmine Warga
- Charles Waters
- Kip Wilson

CLICK HERE
FOR BOOK
RESUME!



WHY SHOULD I TEACH THIS?

This delightful anthology takes readers through time and space, across continents and cultural and social movements. Each poem is a love story of a different nature that is both unique and universal. Educators will teach about short stories in verse as a unique way to get readers to focus on the emotions of characters and details of their experiences that might be missed in regular prose. Teen readers will be drawn to the unique settings and clues to each character's journey as they uncover them poem by poem. This is a truly unique anthology with a poem for every reader and student/author of poetry.

THEMES/TOPICS ADDRESSED

Family, LGBTQIAP+ identities, folktales/folklore, settler colonialism, mythical creatures, ceremony, grief and loss, first love.

IDENTITY REPRESENTATION INCLUDED

LGBTQIAP+, Black, German, Mesopotamian, Cuban (Taíno), Mesoamerican, Indian/South Asian, Indigenous (Native American), Colombian American

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

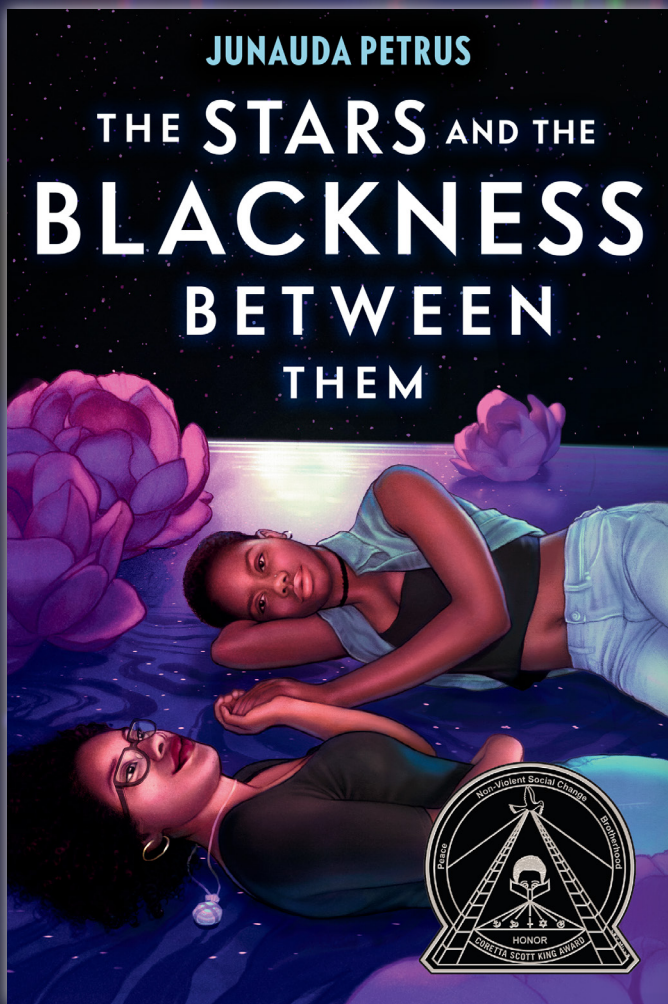
1. What is the benefit to readers of telling a story through poetry?
2. What are some poetic devices poets use to heighten emotional intensity?
3. What makes a work of historical fiction or fantasy seem believable?
4. How do writers create distinct characters within the scope of a single story told in verse?

SAMPLE LESSON

Create a short story that is either a) historical fiction b) magical realism or c) realistic fiction. Your story should have a beginning, middle, and end, though not necessarily occurring in linear or chronological order. Then, write at least four poems that capture the key moments of your story, such as the exposition, rising action, climax, and denouement. When writing poetry, remember that it is not necessary to rhyme and try experimenting with some of the same formats the anthology's authors used.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [How I wrote a novel in verse - Scottish Book Trust](#)
- [Every Student Can Be a Poet](#)



ABOUT THE STARS AND THE BLACKNESS BETWEEN THEM

Port of Spain, Trinidad. Sixteen-year-old Audre is despondent, having just found out she's going to be sent to live in America with her father because her strictly religious mother caught her with her secret girlfriend, the pastor's granddaughter. Audre's grandmother Queenie (a former dancer who drives a white convertible Mercedes and who has a few secrets of her own) tries to reassure her granddaughter that she won't lose her roots, not even in some place called Minneapolis. "America have dey spirits too, believe me," she tells Audre.

Minneapolis, USA. Sixteen-year-old Mabel is lying on her bed, staring at the ceiling and trying to figure out why she feels the way she feels—about her ex Terrell, about her girl Jada and that moment they had in the woods, and about the vague feeling of illness that's plagued her all summer. Mabel's reverie is cut short when her father announces that his best friend and his just-arrived-from-Trinidad daughter are coming for dinner.

Mabel quickly falls hard for Audre and is determined to take care of her as she tries to navigate an American high school. But their romance takes a turn when test results reveal exactly why Mabel has been feeling low-key sick all summer, and suddenly it's Audre who is caring for Mabel as she faces a deeply uncertain future.

Forbidden Love

Wild Dream

Star-Crossed Lovers

READER'S ADVISORY

Great for fans of *Nothing Burns As Bright As You* by Ashley Woodfolk or *If Tomorrow Doesn't Come* by Jen St. Jude. Contains more than one scene involving physical intimacy as well as detailed and direct language describing physical intimacy and body parts.

A CORETTA SCOTT KING HONOR BOOK

★ **"A COSMICALLY COMPELLING READ."**

—KIRKUS REVIEWS, STARRED REVIEW

CLICK HERE
FOR BOOK
RESUME!

WHY SHOULD I TEACH THIS?

This sweet, soulful, magical tale tells the story of two girls in love and the forces both internal and external that might tear them apart. The text alternates between character perspectives and combines poetry and prose. Educators will gravitate toward the lyrical language and magical realism, as well as the nonlinear storytelling. The romance invites readers to consider larger questions about life and death, love, and all that we are willing to sacrifice to feel and sustain that magnetic attraction that draws two people together despite the odds that what they feel won't last. Teen readers will appreciate the novel's unconventional structure, relatable characters, and nonlinear storyline, which is unpredictable and engaging. There is no other story quite like this one and yet the story of two star-crossed lovers is as old as time.

THEMES/TOPICS ADDRESSED

Illness, wrongful convictions, love, astronomy, astrology, magical realism, spirituality, mortality, religion, Afrofuturism, Black feminism (womanism)

IDENTITY REPRESENTATION INCLUDED

Lesbian, LGBTQIA+, Bisexual, Black, Trinidadian (West Indian)

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How can we learn to see Black identity experiences and depictions of them as expansive rather than limited?
2. How might belief in astrology help uplift the spirits of all those from historically marginalized communities?
3. What are some stories of our ancestors that give strength and guidance?
4. How can Afrofuturism and nonlinear storytelling help expand a reader's understanding of Black identities and experiences?

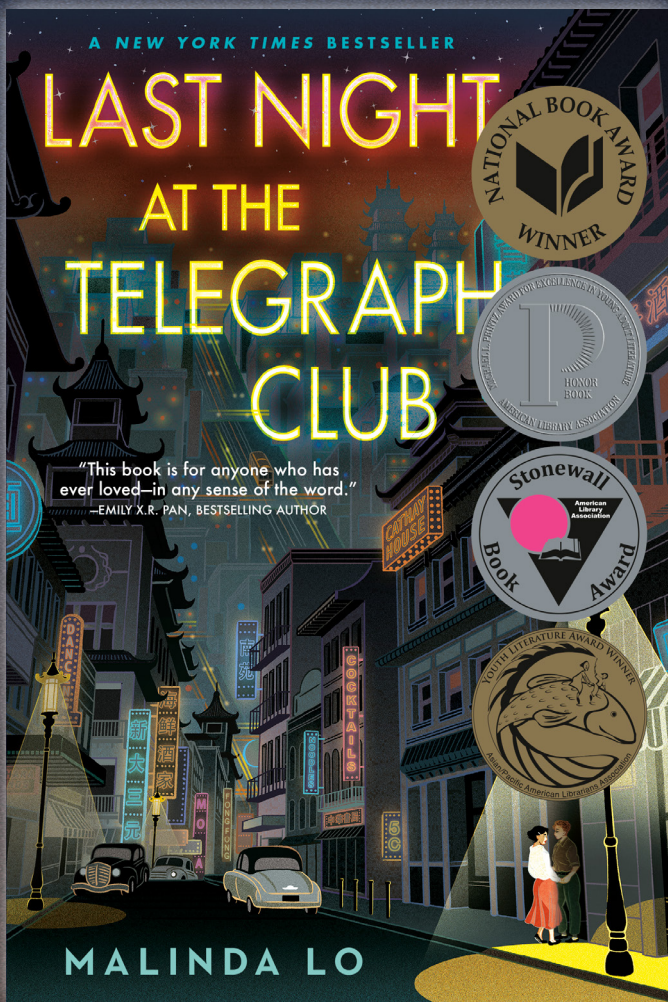
SAMPLE LESSON

Create a poetry cycle connecting poems from some of the authors mentioned throughout the book and in the author's acknowledgments: Audre Lorde, Assata Shakur, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Octavia Butler, June Jordan, Nina Simone, Queen Latifah, and more. What common themes can you identify? Can you write some of your own poems to speak back to theirs?

Alternatively, choose a Black author, living or dead, and write a letter to them just as Mabel did. Bonus points for reading about and responding to the prison writings of authors like: Etheridge Knight, Leonard Peltier, George Jackson, Angela Davis, or others.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- <https://www.readingoctavia.com/>
- [Afrofuturism | Chicago Review Press](#)



Forbidden Love

The Brooder

ABOUT LAST NIGHT AT THE TELEGRAPH CLUB

Seventeen-year-old Lily Hu can't remember exactly when the feeling took root—that desire to look, to move closer, to touch. Whenever it started growing, it definitely bloomed the moment she and Kathleen Miller walked under the flashing neon sign of a lesbian bar called the Telegraph Club. Suddenly everything seemed possible.

But America in 1954 is not a safe place for two girls to fall in love, especially not in Chinatown. Red-Scare paranoia threatens everyone, including Chinese Americans like Lily. With deportation looming over her father—despite his hard-won citizenship—Lily and Kath risk everything to let their love see the light of day.

READER'S ADVISORY

Great for fans of *The Edge of Being* by James Brandon or *Destination Unknown* by Bill Konigsberg. Contains more than one scene involving physical intimacy as well as detailed and direct language describing physical intimacy and body parts.

WHY SHOULD I TEACH THIS?

Why should I teach this? This meticulously researched historical novel offers a window into another time, place, and people while aptly inviting readers into a critical analysis of connections between the past and present. The romance in the novel is taboo in more than one culture, which levels up the spice factor and will keep readers engaged. Educators should offer this text as an important analysis of both queer history and the anti-communist movements that continue to shape America. This is a history frequently soft-censored when it is not brought into classrooms. Teen readers will gravitate to the romance and stay for the story and vivid characters all while learning about history that has informed the climate they experience today.

**A NATIONAL
BOOK AWARD
WINNER**

**A STONEWALL
BOOK AWARD
HONOR**

**A PRINTZ
HONOR BOOK**

**AN APALA
AWARD
WINNER**

★ **“A MUST-READ LOVE
STORY ... ALTERNATELY
HEART-WRENCHING AND
SATISFYING.”**

—BOOKLIST,
STARRED REVIEW

CLICK HERE
FOR BOOK
RESUME!

THEMES/TOPICS ADDRESSED

Racism, homophobia, McCarthyism, conformism and cultural assimilation, microaggressions, cultural and ethnic identity, gender nonconformity

IDENTITY REPRESENTATION INCLUDED

Gay, LGBTQIAP+, Asian, Chinese

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What are some external forces or social norms that pressure individuals to conform to gender norms?
2. How can individuals resist the gender binary both with respect to physical appearance and lifestyle choices?
3. What is the relationship between ignorance, hysteria, and discrimination?
4. What are some factors that lead individuals to hide aspects of their identity in order to survive within a dominant culture?

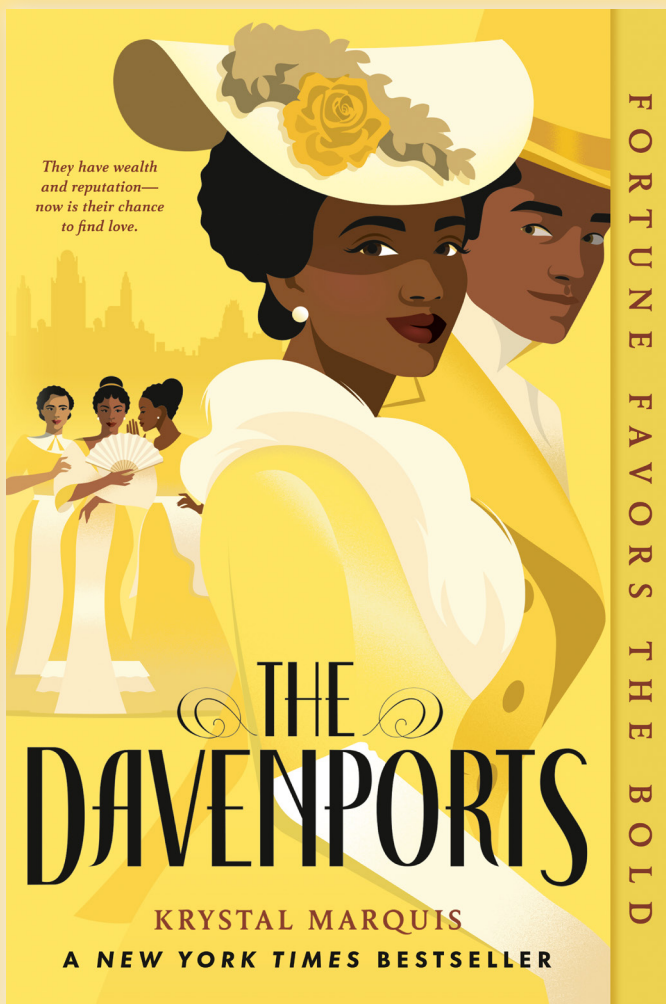
SAMPLE LESSON

Using your resources, research the [Lavender Scare](#) and [McCarthyism](#). What connections do you see to today's immigration reforms and targeting of immigrant, migrant, and refugee populations? How does your research connect to today's targeting of the queer community, especially trans and gender-nonconforming people? Create a visual Venn diagram or social media reel explaining your findings.

Alternatively, you may explore the [Lesbian Herstory Archives Audio/Visual Collection](#), choose an artifact (or a group of two or three) and explain how they are connected to the characters in *Last Night at the Telegraph Club*. How did people identifying as homosexual during the Lavender Scare and McCarthy era pave the way for events or individuals that came later?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- <https://lexicon.library.lgbt/>
- [LGBTQ+ Government Workers - LGBTQIA+ Studies: A Resource Guide.](#)
- [QUEER HISTORY TOUR - Resilience Archives](#)



Forbidden Love

Just a Friend

Friends to Lovers

The Out-of-Leaguer

READER'S ADVISORY

Great for fans of *Ida*, *in Love and in Trouble* by Veronica Chambers or *For Lamb* by Lesa Cline-Ransome. Contains kissing in one or more scenes; no physical intimacy on or off the page.

WHY SHOULD I TEACH THIS?

The Davenports offers an entertaining and engaging window into the lives of Black people of power and privilege during a time in American history fraught with social unrest and division. The four romances draw readers in through alternating character perspectives and personalities. For those who are familiar with the history of African American entrepreneurship and excellence, there are fun Easter eggs, with the appearance of notable figures from Black history and key events. Additionally, though romance is the hook that pulls readers in, Marquis offers readers additional impact through the opportunity to learn about history in a way that is approachable and relatable. Educators can use the text to teach students about historical movements, people, and events that were notable for their time but also formed the blueprint for understanding present-day African American cultural and socio-political movements.

**A BLACK CAUCUS OF THE
AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
(BCALA) AWARD WINNER**

**★ "SHOULD BE
WIDELY SHARED."**

—BOOKLIST, STARRED REVIEW

**CLICK HERE
FOR BOOK
RESUME!**

ABOUT THE DAVENPORTS

The Davenports are one of the few Black families of immense wealth and status in a changing United States, their fortune made through the entrepreneurship of William Davenport, a formerly enslaved man who founded the Davenport Carriage Company years ago. Now it's 1910, and the Davenports live surrounded by servants, crystal chandeliers, and endless parties, finding their way and finding love—even where they're not supposed to.

There is **Olivia**, the beautiful elder Davenport daughter, ready to do her duty by getting married . . . until she meets the charismatic civil rights leader Washington DeWight and sparks fly. The younger daughter, **Helen**, is more interested in fixing cars than falling in love—unless it's with her sister's suitor. **Amy-Rose**, the childhood friend turned maid to the Davenport sisters, dreams of opening her own business—and marrying the one man she could never be with, Olivia and Helen's brother, John. But Olivia's best friend, **Ruby**, also has her sights set on John Davenport, though she can't seem to keep his interest . . . until family pressure has her scheming to win his heart, just as someone else wins hers.

Inspired by the real-life story of the Patterson family, *The Davenports* is the tale of four determined and passionate young Black women discovering the courage to steer their own path in life—and love.

THEMES/TOPICS ADDRESSED

Courtship, love, family, industrialization, segregation, education, social progress, social mobility, resistance, and community organizing.

SUBJECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The Great Migration, Jim Crow laws, Chicago and American Midwest automobile industry, C.R. Patterson & Sons, African American haircare industry history, Black people of the African diaspora (London, St. Lucia), Black working class vs. the “Talented Tenth,” Springfield Massacre, *The Defender* magazine, lynch laws, women’s education, Black American women in business, Black American men in politics, NAACP, HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), Harlem Renaissance, Chicago Great Central Market, Madam C. J. Walker.

IDENTITY REPRESENTATION INCLUDED

African Americans, Black people of the African diaspora

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How does education impact a person’s life choices?
2. What role can romance play in driving a character to reach their full potential?
3. What were some of the customs around dating and courtship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?
4. How did Black Americans one generation removed from the enslavement of Africans build community, uplift one another, and overcome the injustices and violence that surrounded them?

SAMPLE LESSON

Using your resources, create a periodical of African American life from a decade in history between 1890 and 1920. Include common newspaper section headings like: Front Page, Business and Finance, Opinion, Sports, Advice Column, Classified Ads, Society, Politics, and perhaps even a vignette or serial. Your journal may feature some appearances of real-life people and figures, *but should be mostly your own creation with articles written by you. Do not copy and paste already published pieces from the past.* In order to narrow the scope of your project, consider limiting your journal’s area to a specific geographic region (such as the Greater Chicago area). Use the following resources to help you identify the kinds of news stories that happened during this time:

- <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>
- [PBS Learning Media: 1895 A Turning Point in Black History](#)

As a modification to this assignment, consider making your periodical topic specific, such as: a journal for African American ladies, a literary journal, a journal for political and social activists, a promotional catalog of automobiles and/or carriages with descriptions, or a promotional catalog of African American haircare products and services that would have been available at the turn of the twentieth century.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Author’s End Note
- [Crash Course Black American History Preview](#)
- [How accurate is ‘The Gilded Age’s’ history of New York’s Black elite? We checked - The Columbian](#)
- [How 20th-Century Black Business Leaders Envisioned a More Just Capitalism](#)
- [The Civil Rights Act of 1964: A Long Struggle for Freedom: The Segregation Era \(1900-1939\)](#)
- [Driving Forces: 5 African American Pioneers in Automotive History](#)