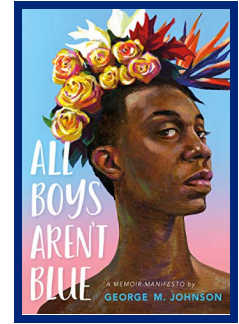




All Boys Aren't Blue

Instructional Resource Guide



Suggested Grade Levels: 11-12

Author: George M. Johnson

User's Guide

Designed for use with high school students, these writing prompts provide opportunities for students to develop a deeper understanding of the following topics/standards:

- + RI.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- + RI.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
- + RI.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.
- + RI/L.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
- + SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- + W.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- + W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

Important Note: Many of the prompts investigate the experiences of marginalized identities; therefore, offering students a choice of prompts allows them to select one that resonates with them the most.

About the Author

George M. Johnson is an award-winning Black non-binary writer, author and activist located in the Los Angeles, California area. George has written for major outlets including Teen Vogue, Entertainment Tonight, NBC, The Root, BuzzFeed, Essence and The Grio. They were listed on The Root 100 Most Influential African Americans in 2020 and the Out 100 Most Influential LGBTQ People in 2021. George is also a proud HBCU alum twice over and a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated.

About the Book

This young adult memoir weaves together the trials and triumphs faced by Black queer boys. Both a primer for teens eager to be allies, as well as a reassuring testimony for young queer men of color, *All Boys Aren't Blue* covers topics such as gender identity, toxic masculinity, brotherhood, family, structural marginalization, consent and Black joy. Johnson's emotionally frank style of writing will appeal directly to young adults.

Discussion Questions

- + How has Johnson been negatively impacted by gender stereotypes? How have you been impacted by them? How can the damaging effects of gender stereotypes be reduced? [Standard RI.1 & SL.1]
- + "Masking is a common coping mechanism for a Black queer boy. We bury the things that have happened to us, hoping that they don't present themselves later in our adult life. Some of us never realize that subconsciously, these buried bones are what dictate our every navigation and interaction throughout life." (p. 31)
 - o Cross-text connection: Read "[We Wear the Mask](#)" by Paul Laurence Dunbar. In what ways does this poem connect to *All Boys Aren't Blue*? [Standards RI/L.6 & SL.1]

- + “As a Black queer person, I’ve died hundreds of times. Will likely die hundreds more times before my physical death. That is the lesson of death, though — from death comes rebirth. A rebirth in thinking, in processing, in living.” (p. 291)
 - o How does the author’s metaphor of death relate to their experiences in the book? How does this metaphor explain the evolution of their identity? [Standards RI.4 & SL.1]
- + “You’ll find that people often use the excuse ‘it was the norm’ when discussing racism, homophobia, and anything else in our history they are trying to absolve themselves of. Saying that something was ‘a norm’ of the past is a way not to have to deal with its ripple effects in the present. It removes the fact that hate doesn’t just stop because a law or the time changed. Folks use this excuse because they are often unwilling to accept how full of phobias and -isms they are themselves—or at least how they benefit from social structures that privilege them.” (p. 100)
 - o Johnson discusses how some people dismiss aspects of our history and their impact on today in their book. How is this idea reflected in current events? [Standard SL.1]

Writing Prompts

- + “As a Black queer person, I’ve died hundreds of times. Will likely die hundreds more times before my physical death. That is the lesson of death, though — from death comes rebirth. A rebirth in thinking, in processing, in living.” (p. 291)
 - o Write an essay in which you identify a time in the book that Johnson “died,” but not physically. Describe the situation, including who was involved and what factors contributed to Johnson’s “death.” Then, explain how this situation led to “a rebirth in thinking, in processing, [and/or] in living.” [Standards RI.1, RI.3 & W.2]
- + “Masking is a common coping mechanism for a Black queer boy. We bury the things that have happened to us, hoping that they don’t present themselves later in our adult life. Some of us never realize that subconsciously, these buried bones are what dictate our every navigation and interaction throughout life.” (p. 31)
 - o Write your own definition of masking based on Johnson’s experiences and descriptions in the book. Then, create an illustration that could accompany your definition. [Standards RI.4 & W.2]
- + Johnson had a loving and mostly supportive relationship with their family and a chosen family when they moved away from home to college that included their fraternity — “The person [boy] who had struggled to find friends for so long finally had a whole group of people they [he] could call their [his] brothers.” (p. 279)
 - o Pick one person from the book who became Johnson’s chosen family and think about how that person is similar and different to somebody in your life that you consider family—even if they aren’t related by blood. Write an essay in which you compare and contrast Johnson’s chosen family member to your selected person. Consider the development of the relationships and how each person impacts others’ well being. [Standards RI.3 & W.2]
- + “When people ask me how I got into activism, I often say, ‘The first person you are ever an activist for is yourself.’ If I wasn’t gonna fight for me, who else was?” (p. 102) Write a letter in which you advocate for something that is important to you. Consider who the appropriate audience for the letter is and tailor your letter to that audience. [Standard W.1]