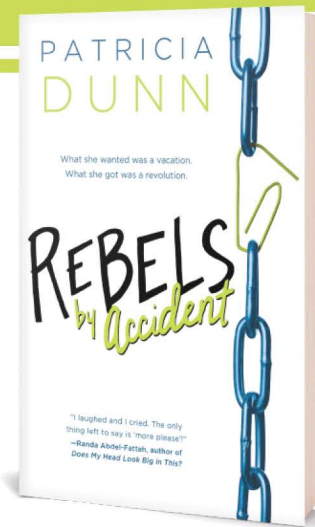


Rebels by Accident

By Patricia Dunn

A Common Core State Standards-Aligned Educator's Guide for **Grades 9,10,11, and 12**

Note: The activities in this guide align with Common Core State Standards for English language arts and history/social studies for grades 9, 10, 11, and 12, but standards for other grades may also apply.



About the Book

After Mariam and her best friend Deanna attend their first high school party and end up in jail, Mariam's strict parents send her to live with her grandmother in Cairo, Egypt, for the rest of the school year. In a stroke of good luck for Mariam, Deanna's mother decides to send her along as well. When they get to Egypt, they discover that Mariam's *sittu* (grandmother) is actually a warm, energetic woman, and not as strict as they expected her to be. Instead of being confined to their room and paying for their misdeeds, the girls find themselves soaking up the exotic sights and sounds of Egypt. They explore the pyramids, try new foods, and let the language and beauty of the culture wash over them. However, there is unrest bubbling under the surface. Egypt is on the brink of revolution, and a girl named Asmaa calls the people to protest against their president. Deanna and Mariam unexpectedly find themselves in the middle of it all, taking part in demonstrations and running from tear gas. Set against the background of the Egyptian revolution of 2011, Patricia Dunn's *Rebels by Accident* is nevertheless full of humor and romance. Teen readers will find it an appealing and informative read.

About the Author

Patricia Dunn has an MFA in creative writing from Sarah Lawrence College, where she also teaches. The Bronx-raised rebel and former resident of Cairo is now settled in Connecticut with her husband, teenage son, and toddler dog. Patricia was the managing editor of MuslimWakeUp.com, America's most popular Muslim online magazine from 2003–2008, and her writing has appeared in *Global City Review*, where she edited the post-9/11 International Issue; Salon.com; *Christian Science Monitor*; *The Village Voice*; *The Nation*; and *LA Weekly*, among other publications.

Praise for the Book:

"The Next Best
Young Adult Novel."

—The Huffington Post

"An important and
enjoyable read."

—Kirkus Reviews

Pre-Reading Questions and Activities

- What do students know about Egypt, its people, and culture? The book students are about to read deals with a historic event: the Egyptian revolution that began on January 25, 2011. To give students context, have them read a summary of the uprising, including its causes, the participants, responses to it, etc. Summaries can be found in several places online, including Wikipedia and PBS.org.
- This book deals with protests and demonstrations that grow into a revolution. Why do people hold demonstrations in this country? What kinds of things are they protesting? What are they trying to achieve? Have students ever been involved in a protest or demonstration?

Vocabulary Words

While they are reading the book, instruct students to record words or phrases that they are not familiar with, or that are used in an interesting way. Have them write down what they believe the meaning of the word or phrase is from context. Then have them consult reference materials to identify the precise meaning, the part of speech, and the etymology of the word or phrase. Come together as a class and compare lists. What phrases and words appeared the most? Analyze how specific word choices impact the tone of the story.

RL 9-10.4, 11-12.4

L 9-10.4, 9-10.6, 11-12.4, 11-12.6

RH 9-10.4, 11-12.4

Arabic Words

While they are reading the book, have students keep an eye out for the Arabic words that are scattered through this book. Instruct them to copy the word or phrase when it first appears, the sentence from the book, and the page number. Have students use the Internet to look up the pronunciations and hear recordings of these phrases. Can they work these words and phrases into conversation during class? Come together as a class and review their word lists. Why do students think the author chose to use Arabic in these cases in this book?

RL 9-10.4, 11-12.4

L 9-10.4, 9-10.6, 11-12.4, 11-12.6

Post-Reading Discussion Questions and Activities

Shorter Research: Lead a Discussion

The revolution described in *Rebels by Accident* had many causes and changed Egypt profoundly. In this exercise, students will do a short research project on a specific aspect of the revolution and then lead a class discussion on their new area of expertise. Break the class into groups and assign one of the following topics to each group. Working independently, have students draw on at least three primary and secondary sources available on the Internet or from the library. Students should record the sources they used and check to be sure these sources are credible. As a group, have the “student experts” synthesize all the information from these different sources into a concise summary of the topic to present to the class, including multimedia elements for emphasis. After the presentation, each member of the group will pose a question and lead a class discussion about it.

Educator's Guide

Topics:

- Events that triggered the protests
- The role of social media in organizing the protestors and publicizing their cause
- The role of then-26-year-old Asmaa Mahfouz in the revolution
- Socioeconomic conditions that precipitated the revolution
- Results and ramifications of the revolution
- The role of young people in the protests, uprisings, and revolution

Other research topics may be specified based on student interest and class curriculum.

RL 9-10.1, 11-12.1

SL 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.4, 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.4

RH 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.4, 9-10.9, 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.4, 11-12.7, 11-12.8, 11-12.9

WHST 9-10.2, 9-10.4, 10.7, 9-10.8, 9-10.9, 9-10.10, 11-12.2, 11-12.4, 11-12.7, 11-12.8, 11-12.9, 11-12.10

Research Project

In this exercise, students will conduct an in-depth research project in order to investigate more deeply an aspect of the revolution portrayed in *Rebels by Accident*. Through initial fact-finding, each student should develop a question or topic for further research. Break students into pairs and have them work together to refine their ideas. Have each student discuss their thesis with the instructor or another adult before beginning the project.

SL 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 11-12.1, 11-12.2

RH 9-10.1, 9-10.4, 9-10.9, 11-12.1, 11-12.4, 11-12.7, 11-12.8, 11-12.9

WHST 9-10.2, 9-10.4, 9-10.5, 9-10.7, 9-10.8, 9-10.9, 9-10.10, 11-12.2, 11-12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.8, 11-12.9, 11-12.10

Arab Spring

The democratic uprisings that spread through the Arab world in 2011 are often referred to as the “Arab Spring.” Using at least three sources, have students write an essay explaining what the Arab Spring was, where it began, and where it spread. What political, economic, and social conditions were people reacting to? What impact did this movement have on Egypt and how did events in Egypt affect the rest of the Arab world?

RH 9-10.1, 9-10.3, 9-10.4, 9-10.9, 11-12.1, 11-12.4, 11-12.7, 11-12.8, 11-12.9

WHST 9-10.2, 9-10.4, 9-10.5, 9-10.7, 9-10.8, 9-10.9, 9-10.10, 11-12.2, 11-12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.8, 11-12.9, 11-12.10

Current Events

Have students spend a week or two tracking current events in Egypt via authoritative print and digital sources. Students then will write a brief paper on the current political, social, and cultural climate in Egypt today. Are there any echoes of the revolution and revolutionary movements present in current events?

W 9-10.2, 9-10.4, 9-10.7, 11-12.2, 11-12.4, 11-12.7

RH 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.4, 9-10.9, 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.4, 11-12.7, 11-12.8, 11-12.9

WHST 9-10.2, 9-10.4, 9-10.5, 9-10.7, 9-10.9, 9-10.10, 11-12.2, 11-12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.9, 11-12.10

Educator's Guide

Pictures and Stories of Revolution

One of the strengths of *Rebels by Accident* is the way it puts a human face on historical events, such as the protests in Tahrir Square. Using the Internet or other resources, locate images from the Egyptian revolution. Have students select one that they find compelling and incorporate it into a new short story about Mariam and Deanna inspired by this image.

W 9-10.3, 9-10.4, 9-10.5, 11-12.3, 11-12.4, 11-12.5

SL 9-10.5, 11-12.5

Choose Your Own Title

Come together as a class and have students discuss the title of the book. Why is it called *Rebels by Accident*? What does this title mean? What characters in the story could this title apply to? Does it have any broader application to the world events that form the backdrop for the book? Next, ask students to work on their own to come up with an alternate title for the book. Discuss these suggestions as a class. What inspired each title idea, and what aspect of the book does it reflect?

RL 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 11-12.1, 11-12.2

SL 9-10.1, 11-12.1

Character and Friendship

When Mariam goes to Egypt, her best friend Deanna is sent with her. As a class, discuss Deanna's role in the story. Why do students think she was included by the author? What does her character contribute to the narrative? How do her personal experiences work with Mariam's to tell the story and illustrate the themes of *Rebels by Accident*?

RL 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.3, 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3

SL 9-10.1, 11-12.1

Plot Timeline

Break students into pairs and have them make a timeline of what they feel are the most important plot elements in the book. Come together as a class to discuss their projects and create one integrated timeline incorporating all the students' input. Identify the most significant events that moved the story forward. Which events were part of the story created by Patricia Dunn, and which are historical events incorporated into the narrative?

RL 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.5, 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, 11-12.5

SL 9-10.1, 11-12.1

Surprises

This book is full of surprises and revelations—some pleasant, some disturbing. Have students select three of these events as the focus of an essay. Citing specifics from the text, have them describe the surprise or revelation and discuss how it impacts the story. What techniques does Patricia Dunn use to create the effects she achieves?

RL 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.5, 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, 11-12.5

W 9-10.2, 9-10.4, 9-10.5, 9-10.10, 11-12.2, 11-12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.10

Differences and Similarities

As students read the book, have them look for the things that are different between Egypt and America. It could be something big, like the political situation, or tiny details, like the sound the police sirens make in Egypt. Come together as a class and discuss these differences. What function do they serve in the story? Are they part of the main themes of the book or used to increase reader immersion? Now discuss things that are the same between the two cultures. What do these similarities and differences tell us about human nature and circumstances?

RL 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.6, 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, 11-12.5

SL 9-10.1, 11-12.1

Contemporary Egyptian Culture: What It's Like

Emily Dickinson once wrote, "There is no frigate like a book." Books can transport readers to new places and provide a chance to experience a new point of view. *Rebels by Accident* gives the reader a look inside Cairo and shows us that Egypt is more than mummies and pyramids. Have students write an essay summarizing what they learned about contemporary Egyptian culture from this book. What surprised them the most? How was it different from what they expected? What elements did they admire? What did they dislike? Be sure they support their statements with evidence from the text.

RL 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.6, 11-12.1, 11-12.2

W 9-10.1, 9-10.4, 9-10.5, 9-10.10, 11-12.1, 11-12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.10

Humor and Romance

Despite being set against a backdrop of revolution, this book is very funny at times. It also contains elements of romance. As a class, review the book and point out some of the funnier sections, as well as discussing the romantic narrative. Why do students think the author chose to tell her story in this manner?

RL 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.3, 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3, 11-12.5

SL 9-10.1, 11-12.1

Themes

As a class, compile a list of the major themes that appear in this book and briefly discuss them. Next, have each student select a theme and trace its development through the course of the story. Summarize the events that illustrate this theme, being sure to cite specifics from the text. How is it expressed? Do multiple characters express it? What is the significance of this theme overall? How does the student feel this theme applies to his or her own life?

RL 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.3, 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.3

W 9-10.1, 9-10.4, 9-10.5, 9-10.10, 11-12.1, 11-12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.10

SL 9-10.1, 11-12.1

Visit the Common Core State Standards website to read about the individual standards listed here:
www.corestandards.org/the-standards

Educator's Guide

Internet Resources

Type “Egypt January 25 2011” or “Egyptian Revolution 2011” into a search engine, and you and your students will find a wealth of information about this recent historical event. Sifting through the large amount of information is an exercise in itself. Here are a few recommended sites from various perspectives both popular and political to get you started.

Wikipedia

Read Wikipedia to get a basic overview of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, including background, causes, and methods of protests.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian_Revolution_of_2011

YouTube: Asmaa Mahfouz

This video is mentioned in *Rebels by Accident*. Shared via Facebook, Asmaa’s video blog recording was so powerful and so popular that it drove Egyptians by the thousands into Tahrir Square and caused the Egyptian government to block Facebook.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgjIgmDsEuk>

TIME Magazine Video: “Egypt’s Protests Explained”

Good video summary of causes and events of January 25, 2011.

http://content.time.com/time/video/player/0,32068,764257619001_2044755,00.html

PBS’s FRONTLINE

Two great timelines from the PBS program FRONTLINE: “Revolution in Cairo: Day to Day” and “Timeline: What’s Happened Since Egypt’s Revolution?” Both of these have excerpted quotes and mixed media that provide immediacy to the revolution as it happened, as well as an explanation of the aftermath up to September 2013.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/revolution-in-cairo/day-to-day/>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/foreign-affairs-defense/egypt-in-crisis/timeline-whats-happened-since-egypts-revolution/>

Mother Jones Magazine: “What’s Happening in Egypt Explained”

This article/page contains extensive online coverage and news updates as they were received at the time.

<http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2011/01/whats-happening-egypt-explained>

The Huffington Post: “Egypt Revolution 2011: A Complete Guide to the Unrest”

The website’s complete coverage at the time, broken into “easily digestible nuggets” of information to help people understand what was happening.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/30/egypt-revolution-2011_n_816026.html

Teacher's Guide prepared by We Love Children's Books