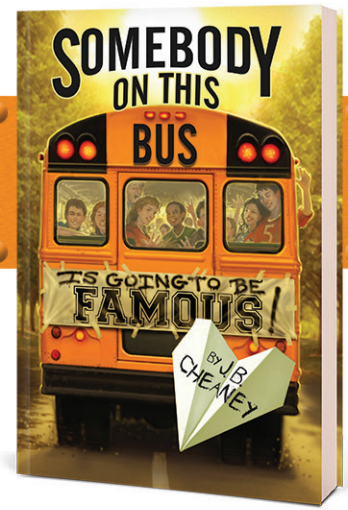


EDUCATOR GUIDE

Somebody on This Bus Is Going to Be Famous by J.B. Cheaney

A Common Core State Standards—Aligned Activity Guide for Grades 5, 6, 7



PREPARED BY WE LOVE CHILDREN'S BOOKS

ABOUT THE BOOK

Somebody on this bus is going to be famous. Can you guess who it is? A school bus is its own community, with allies and enemies, dramas and mysteries that intertwine with classes, extracurricular activities, and growing up. This novel starts at its ending: with a bus crash, and we are introduced to our cast of characters—students who share the same bus ride every day. The reader learns each character's story and sees how they all converge. Funny and insightful, this novel is also a compelling page-turner. Clear, sharp prose combines clarity of description with artful turns of phrase to create a novel that children will relate to instantly, and which yields lasting impressions that will linger with the reader.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

J.B. Cheaney was born sometime in the last century, in Dallas, Texas. She did not want to be a writer—all the years she was growing up, her ambitions belonged to the theater. But since a life onstage didn't pan out, building a stage in her head, where she gets to play all the parts, has been a pretty good substitute. She's the author of two theater-related novels (*The Playmaker* and *The True Prince*) as well as *My Friend the Enemy* and *The Middle of Somewhere*. This is her first novel for young adults. She resides in the Ozarks of Missouri with her husband and no dogs or cats.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Read the title of this book to the class and examine the cover. What kind of book do students think it will be? Will it be funny or serious? Why? What about the title or cover makes them feel this way?

Explain to students that the book they are about to read is told from the points of view of multiple characters. Do students think that writing a book in this style would be more difficult than one with a single point of view? Why or why not?

A mystery lies at the heart of *Somebody on This Bus Is Going to Be Famous*. Have students ever encountered a real mystery in their own life? Discuss what it was, and if they ever solved it.



VOCABULARY WORDS

Have students keep a list of interesting and unfamiliar words they encounter while reading the book; the list should include the page number and the meaning of the word based on context. Then have students look up the words in the dictionary and compare the definition to their own. Have students share their favorites. Working as a class, come up with synonyms and antonyms for these words. Discuss why students think the author used this specific word and not one of the synonyms. If this word was used by one of the children in the book, does it seem appropriate to their character? Why or why not?

RL 5.4, 6.4, 7.4

RF 5.4

SL 5.1, 6.1, 7.1

L 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6

POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

PHRASES

Somebody on This Bus Is Going to Be Famous employs a compelling mix of metaphor, simile, and other figurative speech. Have students keep a list of the favorite phrases they encounter, noting the page number and transcribing enough of the passage to provide context to the phrase. Break students into pairs and have them create a table that lists the figurative speech in the first column and explains what the phrase means based on context in the second column.

RL 5.4, 6.4, 7.4

SL 5.1, 6.1, 7.1

L 5.4, 5.5, 6.4, 6.5, 7.4, 7.5

CHARACTER MAP

There are four main ways in which an author develops a character: the physical description, what the character says, what the character does, and what others say about the character. Have each student select a character from the book and, citing specific evidence from the text, create a character map using these four categories. Break students into small groups to discuss their character maps. Which category provides the most important information about a given character? Based on these discussions, have students create a list of five different words that best provide a summary of their character. Come together as a class and ask for volunteers to share their five word summaries. Have the rest of the class try to guess which character is being described.

RL 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 7.1

W 5.4, 6.4, 7.4

SL 5.1, 6.1, 7.1

THEMES

The important underlying ideas in a novel are called themes. A theme is usually not expressed directly—readers must figure it out from the events, characters, and settings of the story. Working as a class, ask students to list the themes in *Somebody on This Bus Is Going to Be Famous*. What themes span all the characters? Are any specific to one character? Have each student choose one theme to explore in an essay. The essay should cite specific evidence from the text to illustrate elements of the plot, characters, and setting that contribute to the understanding of the theme. Break students into pairs and have them exchange their papers and revise them based on this peer feedback before submitting a final copy.

RL 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.5, 7.1, 7.2

W 5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.10, 6.1, 6.4, 6.5, 6.10, 7.1, 7.4, 7.5, 7.10

SL 5.1, 6.1, 7.1

L 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3



FRIENDSHIPS

In *Somebody on This Bus Is Going to Be Famous*, one of themes is the different sorts of friendships or alliances that the characters develop with each other. Break students into pairs and assign them a character. Citing specifics from the text, have students create a chart of all the connections their character forms. The chart should include the following information: Who is the friendship with? What reason does each character have for forming the friendship? Do they have a common goal? How does their friendship evolve? Was this friendship a surprise to the reader? Have each group present their conclusions to the class and discuss the results.

RL 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5, 7.1, 7.2, 7.6

W 5.4, 6.4, 7.4

L 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3

NARRATIVE VOICE

One of the fun things about *Somebody on This Bus Is Going to Be Famous* is that it is told from multiple viewpoints. This means that we get to see the world through the eyes of different characters. As a class, discuss how the author is able to use these different points of view to move the story forward. What effect does changing the point of view have on the reader? Which viewpoint did students like the best?

RL 5.1, 5.5, 5.6, 6.1, 6.5, 6.6, 7.1, 7.6

SL 5.1, 6.1, 7.1

NARRATIVE VOICE, WRITING EXERCISE

In *Somebody on This Bus Is Going to Be Famous*, the point of view character changes as we move through the story. For example, we see the fight between Matthew and Spencer from Matthew's point of view. As a class, discuss the pros and cons of writing a book from multiple points of view. Have each student choose an event in the book and retell it from the point of view of a different character. Break students into pairs to exchange their work, and revise it based on peer input. The final versions can be bound in a collection for distribution to students.

RL 5.1, 5.3, 5.6, 6.1, 6.6, 7.1, 7.6

W 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.10, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.10, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.10

SL 5.1, 6.1, 7.1

L 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3

WRITING MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

The bus accident that concludes the book is a major event in the lives of all the children, but impacts each one in a slightly different way. Have students write a short paragraph about this incident from the point of view of each of the main characters, being sure to include the responses of: Jay, Spencer, Shelly, Miranda, Kaitlynn, Alice, Bender, Matthew, and Igor. Have students exchange their writing with another student to review, and revise based on peer input before submitting a final copy.

RL 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.6, 6.1, 6.6, 7.1, 7.6

W 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.10, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.10, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.10

SL 5.1, 6.1, 7.1

L 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3



PLOT STRUCTURE

Somebody on This Bus Is Going to Be Famous tells its story in an unusual way: the very first chapter tells how the story ends, and then the reader is taken back nine months and follows the story back to the ending. As a class, discuss why the author chose to tell the story this way. Are there any other books students have read that take a similar approach? Have students seen any plays, movies, or TV shows that are structured this way? Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this approach.

RL 5.1, 5.5, 5.9, 6.1, 6.3, 6.5, 7.1, 7.3
SL 5.1, 6.1, 7.1

PLOT SUMMARIES

Have students imagine they work at a publisher and they are writing a summary of this book to be featured on the book's jacket and on websites to make people want to read *Somebody on This Bus Is Going to Be Famous*. The summary should list the overall plot of the book, as well as major themes it addresses. Have them conclude with a fictional quote from a celebrity mentioned in the book or appropriate to one of the characters.

RL 5.2, 5.5, 6.2, 6.5, 7.2
W 5.1, 5.4, 5.10, 6.1, 6.4, 6.10, 7.1, 7.4, 7.10

READER'S THEATER

Come together as a class to identify the pivotal scenes in the book that students feel are the best choices to be read aloud. Break students into groups and assign them one of the scenes. Have the groups perform their scenes in the order they appeared in the book. Encourage students to use distinctive voices when reading their character's part. Discuss how the experience of seeing and hearing the events read by individuals differ from reading it silently.

RL 5.7, 6.7, 7.7
SL 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 7.2

ISSUES AND ANSWERS

At different times, many of the characters confront something that troubles them. Have students select one of these confrontations and write a close analysis of it. Describe the background of the conflict, the confrontation itself, and the emotional growth of the characters involved. How is the conflict resolved? Do the characters solve this issue once and for all, or is it an issue that will continue? Break students into pairs and have them share their work. Have students revise their papers based on peer feedback before turning in the final copy.

RL 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2
W 5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.10, 6.1, 6.4, 6.5, 6.10, 7.1, 7.4, 7.5, 7.10

TWISTS AND TURNS

At the end of the story, there is plenty of unfinished business remaining. Will Alice and her family flee? Will Igor get into contact with his father? Working as a class, make a list of plotlines that are not resolved at the end of this book. How do students imagine that these events will be resolved? Which plot twists surprised students the most?

RL 5.1, 6.1, 6.3, 7.1
SL 5.1, 6.1, 7.1



I LOVE A MYSTERY!

Somebody on This Bus Is Going to Be Famous is filled with mysteries, both big and small. In the end, all these mysterious elements come together to create the story as a whole. There are small mysteries, like the theft of the wheelchair, and there are large mysteries, like what happened at the 1985 graduation. Working as a class, make a list of the mysteries, big and small. How do they intersect with each other? How are they part of a bigger picture? Do all the mysteries get solved? Make a map of all the mysterious elements, illustrating what they are and how they are connect with each other. Is there one overarching mystery that every mystery is a part of? Be sure to cite specifics from the text when discussing.

RL 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3

SL 5.1, 6.1, 7.1

