

# DO THE CRIME, DO THE TIME BEHIND BARS. BUT ONCE YOU'VE BEEN IN, IT CAN BE TOUGH TO STAY OUT.

The Common Core State Standards for Reading divides student reading achievement goals into four areas as follows:

## Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

## Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

## Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

## Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

## WRITING ABOUT UNBARRED

The Common Core State Standards for Writing focuses on three types of writing:

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

The following sets of discussion questions and prompts for each title in The Contest series are intended to support these key areas in small group discussions and in written responses.

## STUDENT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR *DUTY OR DESIRE*

1. Key ideas and details: Chrissie is initially reluctant to confront the police and pursue justice for her violent attack. What reasons does she give? What events and ideas cause her to change her mind?
2. Craft and structure: Alejandro's mantra for avoiding his old gang and setting his life on the right track is "Don't engage, walk away, follow the plan." Identify a moment in the book when he decides to go against his own rule.
3. Integration of knowledge and ideas: Chrissie is slow to gain trust in Alejandro and quick to feel jealous or betrayed. Think of another story in which a character struggles to put trust in others. How is that character's situation similar to Chrissie's? How is it different? What common experiences do you think that character might share with Chrissie?
4. Range of reading and level of text complexity: Alejandro and Chrissie were both victims of police brutality, and as a result, they're wary of involving the police to bring justice, even when they're in danger. What would you do if you were in their situation? Some of Chrissie's friends and family urge her to seek justice from higher up in the law enforcement system. If someone you cared about was in Chrissie's or Alejandro's situation, what would you advise them to do?

## WRITING PROMPT FOR *DUTY OR DESIRE*

1. Imagine that the video captured in the final scene results in an indictment and trial for the two abusive officers. If you were the prosecuting attorney, how would you open your case to help the jury see the victims' point of view? How would you convince the jury that the officers were not merely doing their duty to "protect and serve"? That they committed a crime? Try writing your opening statement, making reference to the evidence that backs up your case.

## STUDENT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR *FIGHT OR FLEE*

1. Key ideas and details: At first, Hinton proclaims his love for his girlfriend, Olivia, but in chapter seven he tells her he never loved her. What reason does he give later for turning on her?
2. Craft and structure: Hinton believes that Clay murdered his father and that he'd do anything to maintain his power as kingpin of the family gang. Identify a moment in the book where Clay's actions confirm that Hinton is right about him.
3. Integration of knowledge and ideas: Hinton wants out of the family drug trade business, but he comes to see his only options as fighting Clay for the top spot or escaping his fate by committing suicide. Think of another story in which a character feels trapped between two unappealing options. How was that character's outlook like Hinton's? How was it different? Do you see alternate options that either character didn't?



4. Range of reading and level of text complexity: Some people seem to agree with Hinton's suspicions about Clay but won't admit it, for fear of their own jobs and lives. Have you ever been afraid to call out your suspicion about someone or something because of the consequences it might have for you? How did you decide what to do in that situation?

### WRITING PROMPT FOR *FIGHT OR FLEE*

1. Hinton leaves the Youth Correctional Center determined to avoid the life of crime, and build a healthier future with Olivia, with tools he gained through Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. If you were Hinton, what kind of plan would you have to start moving toward that future? Write a letter to Olivia from Hinton's perspective, reflecting on his past and looking forward to their future together.

### STUDENT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR *FRIEND OR FOE*

1. Key ideas and details: At first, Ian considers himself Orlando's best friend and acts as his ally. When does Ian first feel betrayed by Orlando and begin forming his plans for revenge?
2. Craft and structure: Most of Ian's victims never realize they're being played, until it's too late. Identify a moment in the text when someone is rightly suspicious of Ian's motives and actions.
3. Integration of knowledge and ideas: Ian is driven mad when he feels betrayed by Orlando. Think of another story in which a character seeks revenge for a betrayal. How is that character's experience similar to Ian's? How is it different? Do you think it's more or less justified?
4. Range of reading and level of text complexity: Ebony had known Ian for a long time, and she trusted him, but she wasn't quick enough to take action when she suspected what he was up to. If you were nervous about the motives or actions of someone you thought you trusted, what would you do? Would you confront that person? Would you take different steps to keep yourself safe while alerting others to your concerns?

### WRITING PROMPT FOR *FRIEND OR FOE*

1. Imagine that Orlando realized how betrayed Ian felt and wanted to try to set things right between them. Write a letter to Ian from Orlando's perspective, explaining why you made the decisions you did about the band and building on your history of friendship to make peace.

### STUDENT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR *HEART OR MIND*

1. Key ideas and details: When Rodney and Jawahir ride the light-rail train together, they're concerned that they'll start more trouble if people see them sitting and talking. How do they conceal their conversation?
2. Craft and structure: Rodney and Jawahir are so desperate in the face of their warring cultural groups that they choose to end their story tragically. Identify a moment in the book that hints at or warns of their fate.

3. Integration of knowledge and ideas: Countless books and movies have featured star-crossed lovers such as Rodney and Jawahir. Think of another story in which two people from enemy groups are drawn together, against all odds, by love. How was the conflict between their groups similar to the tension between the African Americans and Somalis in *Heart or Mind*? How did those characters find ways to be together?
4. Range of reading and level of text complexity: Jawahir faces judgment and punishment by her family and friends, who don't approve of Rodney. She has to choose between her romance with him or her loyalty to her culture. Have you ever been in a situation where following your heart meant disobeying or disappointing your family? How did you or how would you weigh that decision?

### WRITING PROMPT FOR *HEART OR MIND*

1. In chapter seventeen, Rodney's uncle, Larry, warns him that "People only hear what they want to hear, that's the whole problem. People got to walk around in somebody else's shoes." What does Larry mean by that? Do you agree? Do you think it's possible to "walk around in somebody else's shoes"? Write about how you interpret Larry's statement, whether you think it's true, and why, using reasoning from your own experience.

### CommonCoreConnections

#### Key Ideas and Details

- Determining themes or central ideas; summarizing
- Story elements

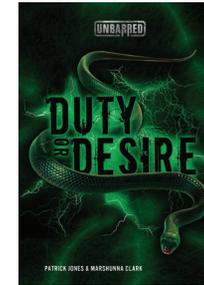
#### Craft and Structure

- Meanings of words and phrases

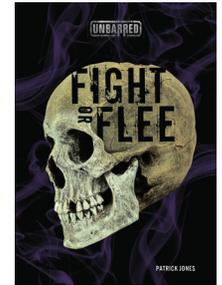
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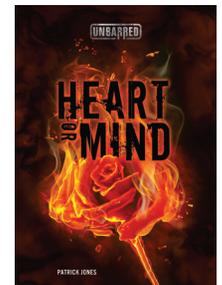
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