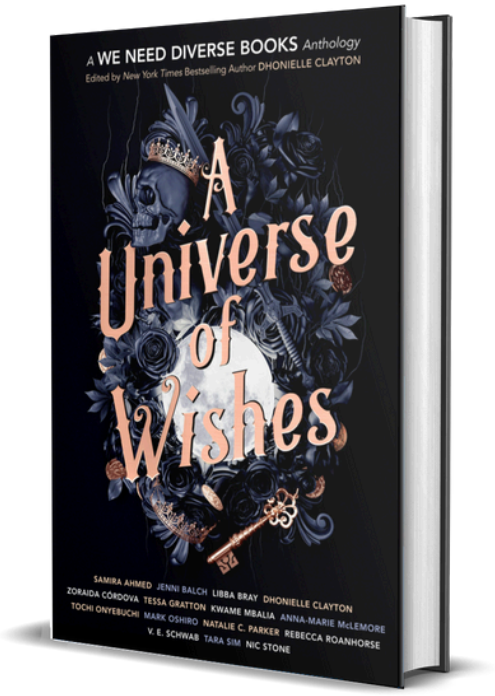
EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

A Universe of Wishes



ABOUT THE BOOK:

From **We Need Diverse Books**, the organization behind *Flying Lessons & Other Stories*, comes a young adult fantasy short story collection featuring some of the best own-voices children's authors, including New York Times bestselling authors Libba Bray (The Diviners), V. E. Schwab (A Darker Shade of Magic), Natalie C. Parker (Seafire), and many more. Edited by Dhonielle Clayton (The Belles).

In the fourth collaboration with We Need Diverse Books, fifteen award- winning and celebrated diverse authors deliver stories about a princess without need of a prince, a monster long misunderstood, memories that vanish with a spell, and voices that refuse to stay silent in the face of injustice. This powerful and inclusive collection contains a universe of wishes for a braver and more beautiful world.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS:

Samira Ahmed
Jenni Balch
Libba Bray
Dhonielle Clayton
Zoraida Córdova
Tessa Gratton
Kwame Mbalia
Anna-Marie McLemore
Tochi Onyebuchi
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V.E. Schwab
Tara Sim
Nic Stone

EDITED BY:

Dhonielle Clayton

WE NEED DIVERSE BOOKS

Penguin Random House

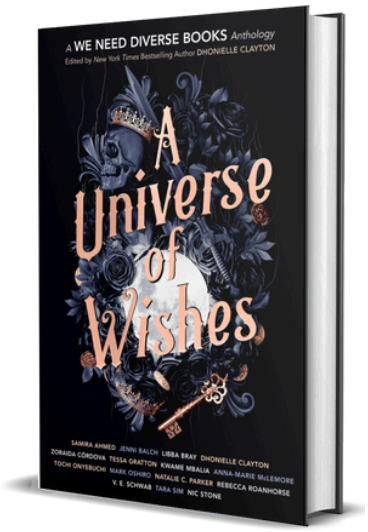
EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

A Universe of Wishes

ABOUT THE EDITOR:

Dhonielle Clayton is Board Chair of We Need Diverse Books. She is the co-author of the Tiny Pretty Things series and *New York Times* bestseller *The Belles* and its sequel *The Everlasting Rose*. She grew up in the Washington, DC suburbs on the Maryland side and spent most of her time under her grandmother's table with a stack of books. A former teacher and middle school librarian, Dhonielle is co-founder of CAKE Literary, a creative development company whipping up decidedly diverse books for a wide array of readers. She's got a serious travel bug and loves spending time outside of the USA, but makes her home in New York City, where she can most likely be found hunting for the best slice of pizza.





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ABOUT THIS GUIDE



The **Common Core Standards** push readers to look closer when reading a text including examining key ideas & details, craft & structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas. *A Universe of Wishes* includes opportunities to look at allusion, themes, comparisons & contrast, figurative language, and more which allow the reader to deeply delve into the text. This teaching guide includes discussion questions and English language arts activities **to be used in grades 9-12** as this text is read as a whole group, small group, or a combination. This guide could also be modified to be used with a student who is reading the novel independently.

The Common Core Anchor Standards in English Language Arts that can be addressed using the discussion questions and activities in this guide are:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10

Read and comprehend complex literary texts independently and proficiently.

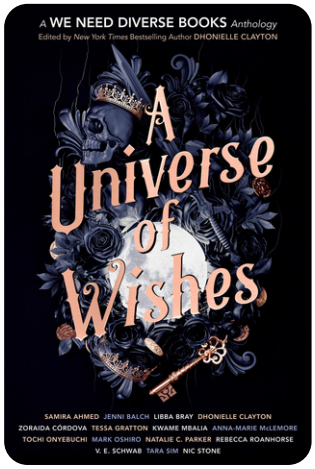
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & CLASSROOM EXTENSIONS



Use these questions and activities to extend your students' thinking and experiences with *A Universe of Wishes*.

The discussion questions are written as if they are being asked to students while the activities include instructions for the educator.

Foreword by Dhonielle Clayton

Discussion Questions:

- What is Dhonielle Clayton's and We Need Diverse Books' purpose of this anthology?
- Why did Dhonielle's love of reading dwindle? How will the We Need Diverse Books goals hopefully lead to less loss of reading for readers of color?

A Universe of Wishes by Tara Sim

Discussion Questions:

- What time period do you believe this story is taking place during? What in the text supports your inference?
- Why is going to a morgue different (page 4) than the other times Thorn has taken magic from the dead?
- Sage questions if Thorn is being respectful to the dead. Do you believe that Thorn has the right to take the magic from the dead?
- How did the author alter the Greek Titans myth to fit within the story?
- Why would the quarry owners not want everyone to know about the magic (page 21)?
- What do you think the hidden magic within the dead in "A Universe of Wishes" represent in our world?

A UNIVERSE OF WISHES EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Wishes have rules and consequences. Have students first create a list of the rules shared within the story. Then as them to think about these rules and try to come up with a wish they believe would be granted within the world of the story and would not have unknown negative consequences.

Have them write their wish in the center of a piece of paper with a colored marker within a circle. Then have the class take part in a gallery walk (or it could be done by passing the papers around) where they view the wishes of their peers and comment if they believe the wish follows or breaks the rules or would have any unknown negative consequences.

After everyone has commented on everyone's wishes, return the original wish to its owner and give them the opportunity to revise the wish. Then have them write a response to the question: "What wish would you make in the world that would fit within the rules and would not have negative consequences? Use comments from your peers and evidence from the story to support why your wish would be okay within the story's parameters."

The Silk Blade by Natalie C. Parker

Discussion Questions:

- If the Silk Bridge is a metaphor for their nation, what adjectives would you use to describe their nation?
- How did Willadoor's emotions, when it comes to confidence in the task, change from when she was chosen to take part to arriving at the Silk Bridge (page 34) to entering the Garden Palace (page 37)?
- How are you able to infer about Willadoor's personality, her past, her family, etc. using the clues throughout "The Silk Blade"?
- Why is meditation just as important as stretching before physical tasks (page 39)?
- The Bloom is looking for balance with his consort. It is defined in the story as the blade to his bloom and the strength to his grace. What other comparisons could be made to represent the balance the Bloom is looking for?
- How is the final trial different than the others up to the Garden Palace?
- How do the two competitors, Rabi and Bluethorn, compare to each other?

THE SILK BLADE EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

This short story ends on a cliffhanger. Ask your students to write (or outline/summary, if time doesn't allow for writing of a complete story) what they think would happen next. Remind them to keep their stories within the parameters of "The Silk Blade" and what the reader learns about the traditions, characters, etc.

The Scarlet Woman by Libba Bray

Discussion Questions:

- Gemma starts off the story talking about how her grandmama hopes that she is "marriageable" (pg 54) and shares that she failed to become "a young lady" (page 57). What about herself does she think makes her unmarriageable and not a young lady, and how are these ideas rooted in misogyny?
- Gemma's interactions with Mr. Dwight included many microaggressions towards her because of being a woman. What microaggressions did you observe? What does his usage of them show you about Mr. Dwight and his prejudice?
- Why do you think Fee avoided Gemma (page 69) when she got to New York?
- How does the figurative description of the New York Public Library (page 71) embody what a public library is like?
- If you were stuck in a library in 1897, what book would you choose to read?
- Why does Gemma believe the Hassan family is extraordinary (page 76)?
- What allusions to classic literature did Bray include in *The Scarlet Woman*? How did these allusions add to the overall story and meaning?
- What do you think happens next?
- Does this story lead you to want to read the *Gemma Doyle* series?

(See Extension Activity on the following page)

THE SCARLET WOMAN EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Noor Hassan imagined an exhibit based around women who have been erased from history. Have your students curate this exhibit with Noor. Have them research for women who have not been included traditionally in history books and choose one for their contribution to the exhibit. They would then choose 3-5 images, items, etc. for their historical figure and write captions for each. Then the exhibit can be put together, either electronically or physically, and each person can present about their chosen individual and what they curated for the exhibit.

Cristal y Ceniza by Anna-Marie McLemore

Discussion Questions:

- Mother Alicia says, "The palaces have their own wolves… Plenty of dangers disguise themselves in fine clothes. (page 90)" Though she meant this literally within the story, how can this warning take heed in other situations?
- Why does fear lead to desperation and desperate acts? How is this idea present within *Cristal y Ceniza?*
- When she arrives at the ball, what are some ways that she shows that she is obviously out of her element (page 95)?
- Why does she, and her tía, believe that these monarchs may listen (page 96)?
- In what way is the situation within this story similar to many refugees within our world?
- Why did the prince join her?

CRISTAL Y CENIZA EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Many allusions to Cinderella are held within this story. Ask students to compare and contrast the two stories, including characters, setting, events, conflict, purpose, and theme. First, have them do a basic comparison and contrast using a Venn diagram or a T-chart. Once they have all the elements compared and contrasted, ask them to write a literary analysis of the two stories.

NOTE: This activity will also work for Córdova's *Longer Than the Threads of Time*, but with Rapunzel instead of Cinderella.

Liberia by Kwame Mbalia

Discussion Questions:

- Why is it so important to learn about family traditions and recipes and stories while you can? Why also are recordings of people's voices important, not just on a personal level but for sociology?
- How do you think Kweku felt about having to leave to save himself and set up for a future?
- What would a ship need to include to take to a new colony on a different planet?

(Discussion Questions continued on the following page)

Liberia by Kwame Mbalia

Discussion Questions (continued):

- Why would a ship like the Liberia only accept the young (page 115)?
- Harry is very focused on the missions; so much so that he seems to forget that his crew are people who have needs. Why is it important to take care of your people even when there is an important mission?
- How is prepping for emergencies different than when emergencies happen? How did what happened on page 126 illustrate this difference?
- Why is the harvest so important, both to Kweku and to New Africa?

LIBERIA EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Kweku says that the name Liberia is fitting for their ship. Have your students spend time learning about the country Liberia, including its history, traditions, and people. Then have them use their research to support Kweku's claim.

A Royal Affair by V.E. Schwab

Discussion Questions:

- Alucard thinks of an old tale about "the dangers of getting lost trying to find what has been, and wasn't anymore" (page 139). What does that lesson mean?
- "They say that blood binds tightest, that family matters most" (page 149). This is said both in this story and in our world; however, should family matter most if the family is hurtful? How does this story support your thoughts?
- Why does Alucard and Rhys's affair need to be kept a secret? What would have happened if Alucard declared his love for Rhys in front of the royals? Why would his brother and father choose to send him away over letting him love a prince?
- Why is bone magic illegal (page 158)?
- Does this prequel entice you to want to read the series?

The Takeback Tango by Rebecca Roanhorse

Discussion Questions:

- Can artificial intelligence be a friend and how is the idea of this both positive and scary?
- What is the irony behind her ship being named "My Heart Will Go On"?
- How is the Imperium empire like empires within our history?
- Vi uses the idea that the Imperium didn't leave people much choice on what they had to do to survive to justify her stealing. Do you believe that this is a justifiable reason to turn to crime?
- Vi believes that "nothing civilized could build itself on the backs of so many of my people murdered." Do you agree with this statement? Disagree? Both? Explain.

(See Extension Activity on the following page)

THE TAKEBACK TANGO EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

There is much debate within the art and history world about the ethics surrounding artifacts and human remains being displayed in museums. As students to research the debate surrounding this; remind them to research both sides as they will be taking part in a debate and won't know their sides until after the research stage. After research is completed, randomly assign groups on both sides of the debate and allow time for them to put their heads together to come up with their arguments and counterarguments. Then have the two groups debate with you as the moderator. Finally, ask students to write an analysis of the debate, allowing them to put their own thoughts into the final paper.

Dream and Dare by Nic Stone

Discussion Questions:

- Being a woman is more than just being feminine. How does that word simplify and wrongly define a woman?
- Why would Dare feel like she needed to run away?
- Dream says that too many are "too consumed with chasing the future to enjoy the present." How do you see this sentiment in your daily life?
- How does "Dream and Dare" allude to the "What are Little Boys & Girls Made of?" nursery rhyme?
- How do you think you would smell to the monster?
- Being a dreamer seems like a negative attribute and most who say that is what Dream is see it as flaky and adorable, but it is so much more than that. How is being a dreamer positive and powerful?
- What signs were there that Dare is the monster?

DREAM AND DARE EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

- Although Dream and Dare are so different, they also align in many ways. Have students create a comparison and contrast graphic organizer highlighting these similarities and differences; make sure they include text evidence to support their analysis.
  - Ask students to answer: How do these similarities and differences cause them to be a great fit for each other?

Wish by Jenni Balch

Discussion Questions:

- Lane is in awe of the beauty of Vale, but Ariadne has stopped noticing her surroundings because, as humans, we lose sight of the beauty of our surroundings over time. What is something beautiful where you live that you find as normal but know that others would marvel at?
- Why is it important to read contracts before you sign or agree to anything?
- Do you believe "everything is dangerous" (page 225)?
- How is Ariadne's illness like Lane's curse?

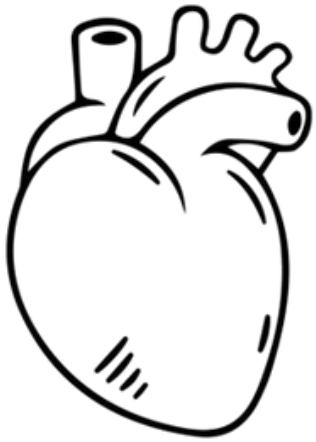
The Weight by Dhonielle Clayton

Discussion Questions:

- What are some ways that the center embodied the idea of their mission to make their clients feel like it is a completely immersive experience?
- Grace believes that every question has an answer (page 233). Do you believe that every question has an answer? Are there any questions you don't think have answers?
- How would you answer the question, "How many people have you loved?" Do you think you include different types of love like familial love and friendship?
- On page 238, Marcus shares some of his favorite things and is quite specific about what they are. What are some of your favorite things?
- Would you want to do this procedure?

THE WEIGHT EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- Complete Grace's and Marcus's hearts showing what you think the results were. Make sure to use what was shared on page 246 and text evidence throughout the story.
- Complete your own Heart Scale Center procedure! Fill in your heart (see image below) with names of your loves.
- Before completing these activities, reread the different types of inscriptions shared on page 244 and 246 to be specific in how you write each name. Decide how you are going to indicate deepness, freshness, scabs, etc.



Unmoor by Mark Oshiro

Discussion Questions:

- Memories hold so much—good and bad. Why are all memories important to keep?
- Do you think Felix's choice of unmooring his memories was the right one in his situation? Why or why not?
- How did Mirella's demeanor change throughout the story? Why do you think it did?
- Many would say that Arturo and Felix had a normal high school romance, but Arturo also was manipulative and emotionally abusive. What made Arturo's behavior more than just part of a "normal high school romance?"
- What happened at the end?

The Coldest Spot in the Universe by Samira Ahmed

Discussion Questions:

- The risk of going after the supply ship ended in the death of many at the beginning of this story. Was this risk worth it? Why or why not? And more generally: When are risks worth taking?
- Using the clues given throughout the story, what city did this story take place in?
- This story holds within it many different themes. What themes do you think the author was trying to portray in the story?
- Both Razia's speak of how humans are complicated and how specifically they did horrible and wonderful things. How are humans both terrible and beautiful?
- What did the author mean by "tyranny of demography" (page 285)?

THE COLDEST SPOT IN THE UNIVERSE EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- The apocalyptic events within the story happened because of human miscare. Throughout the story, there are many examples given of how humans didn't care for Earth. However, we are living before this story takes place, so we still have time! Have students choose one of the mistreatments of Earth that was mentioned and come up with an action plan for what could be done to fight the problem they chose. Students can use the Simplex Problem Solving Process .



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The Beginning of Monsters by Tessa Gratton

Discussion Questions:

- How would being able to make new bodies or parts of bodies change the world?
- How is Insarra embody greed?
- How did the author use juxtaposition for rhetorical effect when it came to Insarra and Irsu? Why was this comparison used?
- Why do you believe the author used "an" for Isru's pronouns?
- How is creating art for yourself different than being commissioned? How was this seen in this story (page 314)?
- What are the differences between what Elir's ama believes and what the Cult of Hopeful Design believes? What is the line between hope and possibilities and atrocities like what was found in the catacombs?

Longer Than the Threads of Time by Zoraida Córdova

Discussion Questions:

- What kind of magic would you want if you had magic?
- How was Fabian's magic powerful, even if he didn't feel like it was?
- What would you miss if you were in Danaë's situation and what would you have brought to her if you were Fabian?
- What does Fabian not ignoring Danaë like others do (and eventually saying he'd trade places with her) tell you about him as a person?
- Is Danaë 16 or 82?
- Who is the villain of this story? Explain your reasoning.

Habibi by Tochi Onyubuchi

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think the author chose to write this short story in letters?
- How are Omar's and Quincy's lives similar even though they seem so different on the surface? How are both failed by the system?
- Quincy asks, "do kids like us get to be heroes?" What do you think he means by this? What do you believe?
- Why would Omar choose to take part in a hunger strike?
- Throughout the story, it speaks of those who aren't afraid of death when fighting for a cause. Why do you think there are those that are willing to put their life on the line? How do they get to this decision?

IMPORTANT NOTE:

If you are feeling suicidal or in emotional distress: Please call or text the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **988** or reach out through chat by visiting **988lifeline.org/chat**.

A Universe of Wishes Anthology

Discussion Questions:

- Writing a short story is different than writing a novel. What would you say is the biggest difference you noticed between short stories and novels? Why is it so important for a short story to get its setting and characters set quickly?
- What are some themes that were present throughout the anthology? Use evidence from multiple stories to support your answer.
- What do you think the editor was looking for when she was picking stories for this anthology?

A UNIVERSE OF WISHES ANTHOLOGY EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- The stories within A Universe of Wishes are filled with figurative language and descriptive language to lend to imagery for the reader.
  - First, if needed, introduce different types of figurative language, including having students complete a graphic organizer defining each type and giving an example
  - Then, specifically focus on similes.
  - Discuss with students how similes add to the imagery of a story.
  - Then, send students on a Simile Hunt! Have them find similes throughout *A Universe of Wishes*.
  - After each student (or group of students) have found similes in the work, compile them all as a class.
  - Once the class list is completed, have students choose a simile then do a quick write for 5 minutes using the simile as their guide for what to write about. The simile must be included.
  - Extension: Other forms of figurative language are included in the book, as well. The scavenger hunt can be expanded to include other types. Similes are just the most common in the book.
- While all stories in the anthology are speculative, there are some that are clearly fantasy and others that are clearly science fiction. First, define these two genres and what makes them different. Then sort the stories from throughout the anthology into the two genres, explaining why they fit in the genre chosen.

PRAISE FOR *UNIVERSE*



★ **"Some authors place their characters in worlds where oppression is no more, allowing for a cathartic imagining of how life could be for those with marginalized identities; others immerse the reader in dystopian landscapes where they paint inspiring portraits of resistance. There will be something in this collection for every fan of the genre to enjoy."**

— Kirkus Reviews

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GUIDE CREATION



This guide was created by Kellee Moye, a middle school librarian in Orlando, FL. Kellee is the author of various teaching guides for all levels; the co-author of the blog Unleashing Readers; Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE (ALAN) 2024 President and past ALAN member; a past jury member then co-chair of the Schneider Family Award Jury; a past member then chair of the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Book Award committee; and a member of ALAN, AASL, and ALA. Kellee can be reached at Kellee.Moye@gmail.com.

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