

CURRICULUM GUIDE



TIPS FOR MAGICIANS

BY CELESTA RIMINGTON

Tip One:
Never Repeat
a Trick

HARRISON BOONE used to sing. His mom was a famous soprano who performed in all the great theaters. But when she died unexpectedly last year, the music stopped for Harrison, too. He finds comfort in practicing magic tricks to become a master magician.

If only Harrison knew the right magic to stop his dad from hitting the road for a new job and sending him to live with his aunt Maggie in an art village named Muse in the southern Utah desert. The residents of Muse believe in a magical entity that used to grant wishes to the winner of the town's annual art contest, but the muse hasn't been seen in years. Can Harrison connect with his inner artist, find the missing muse, and win the wish that will give him back a normal life?

A grieving boy, his best friends, and a stray dog work magic in this lyrical and hopeful story.

"A sweet, touching, easy read." —KIRKUS REVIEWS



celestarimington.com
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The Common Core State Standards addressed by the discussion questions, activities, and worksheets in this guide are noted throughout. For more information on the Common Core, visit corestandards.org.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Unless otherwise noted, discussion questions address the following standards: [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1](#)

- ✦ Before reading, study the cover illustration and the titles of each of the four parts of the story as listed in the table of contents. What predictions do you have about the characters, setting, problem, and the genre of the story?
- ✦ Harrison compares the pitiful look his friend Kennedy gives to a withering houseplant to the way that people look at him. What has happened in Harrison’s life that would cause others to look at him with pity? How might this life event affect how Harrison feels and behaves?
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3](#)
- ✦ Why does Harrison adopt the persona of “Harrison the Magnificent?” What qualities does this persona bring to Harrison’s everyday life?
- ✦ Compare and contrast the way that Harrison and his father cope with the death of Harrison’s mother. How are their coping strategies similar? How are their strategies different from one another?
- ✦ Describe Aunt Maggie. What qualities does she have that make her a good person to help Harrison through a difficult time? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3](#)
- ✦ Give a detailed description of the setting of Muse, Utah.
- ✦ Harrison’s mom had a unique connection to the people who lived on the Mall in Washington D.C. The idea of a muse is introduced to Harrison when he visits an outdoor art exhibit on the Mall with his mom. How is the idea of a muse explained to Harrison by James?
- ✦ Describe the character of Chloe and why Harrison doesn’t feel that he has to be “Harrison the Magnificent” when he is around her.
- ✦ Harrison’s dad is off on a tour and often communicates with his son by text. How would you describe the texts between Harrison and his dad? What is the difference between the tone of Harrison’s messages and the messages his dad sends?
- ✦ Harrison discovers that he already knows two people who have won wishes from the muse in the past. Who are these wish recipients?
- ✦ The Red Cliffs Amphitheater in Muse is one of the places that Harrison’s mother performed. What unusual things happen in and around the amphitheater when Harrison visits with his aunt Maggie and later when he goes to the amphitheater to hunt with Marco’s falcons?
- ✦ Describe Chloe, Marco, and Harrison’s submissions to the art contest. What are the meanings behind each of their art projects and performances?
- ✦ Sadness and loss are themes woven throughout the story. Harrison, his dad, and aunt Maggie struggle with the loss of Harrison’s mom. The town feels the loss of the muse who awards wishes through the annual art contest. The townspeople speculate that the muse is sad from the commercialization of the art contest. What important events transpire at the end of the story to turn the sadness and loss into healing and happiness?
- ✦ After solving the mystery of the muse, Harrison makes a wish. Describe his wish and how it affects the sadness he carries. How did magic play a role in his wish?

- ✦ What did Marco wish for when he won the contest years ago? Why do you think he didn't wish for his stutter to disappear? How would you describe the nature of wishes in this story? What would you wish for if the muse could grant you a wish?
- ✦ What is the significance of Marco's connection to hawks and falcons, Chloe's devotion to a pack of dogs, and Harrison's concern for the dog he names Obsidian? What do Marco, Chloe, and Harrison's relationships with animals reveal about their characters? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3](#)
- ✦ In your opinion, what do you think was the most important lesson that Harrison learned through the process of moving to Muse, entering the art contest, and acting upon his wish? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2](#)

ACTIVITIES

PERSONAL NARRATIVE

The story is divided into four parts: tips for magicians, tips for artists, tips for musicians, and Harrison's tips for life. The four parts begin with a quote that connects to the theme and action of each section of the story. Read through the four quotes and select one that connects to something you have felt or have experienced. Write a personal narrative about a time in your life when your selected quote captured the events or emotions in your life. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3](#)

DESERT LANDSCAPE

Harrison is struck with how different Muse, Utah, is from his home outside Washington, D.C. Read the description of the desert setting in chapter four. Use the details about Aunt Maggie's neighborhood to create a colorful illustration of the setting in the story. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.7](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.7](#)

MEMORY BOX

Create a memory box of items that are important to Harrison. Think back through the novel and make a list of significant objects that represent key events in Harrison's story, such as a deck of cards, a paintbrush, and a piece of obsidian. Collect these items or design models or drawings of these objects to be placed in a shoebox. Meet with a partner to share memory boxes and to retell the important parts of the story by discussing the items you chose. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2](#)

BOOK TRAILER

Design a book trailer for *Tips for Magicians* with a group using iMovie, Animoto, or another movie application. Think about what images, story details, and music you would include in your book trailer. Remember that the book trailer should be designed to make others want to read the book, so make sure to avoid story spoilers! [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1](#)

The discussion questions, activities, and worksheets in this guide were created by Leigh Courtney, Ph.D. She teaches in the Global Education program at a public elementary school in San Diego, California. She holds both masters' and doctoral degrees in education, with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.

A WORK OF ART

Harrison considers several different ideas for submissions to the art contest in Muse. What type of art project would you design for the contest? Complete the entry form with your idea. Include a sketch of your creation. Add a brief description about what this art project means to you.

MUSE ART FESTIVAL

Contest Entry Form

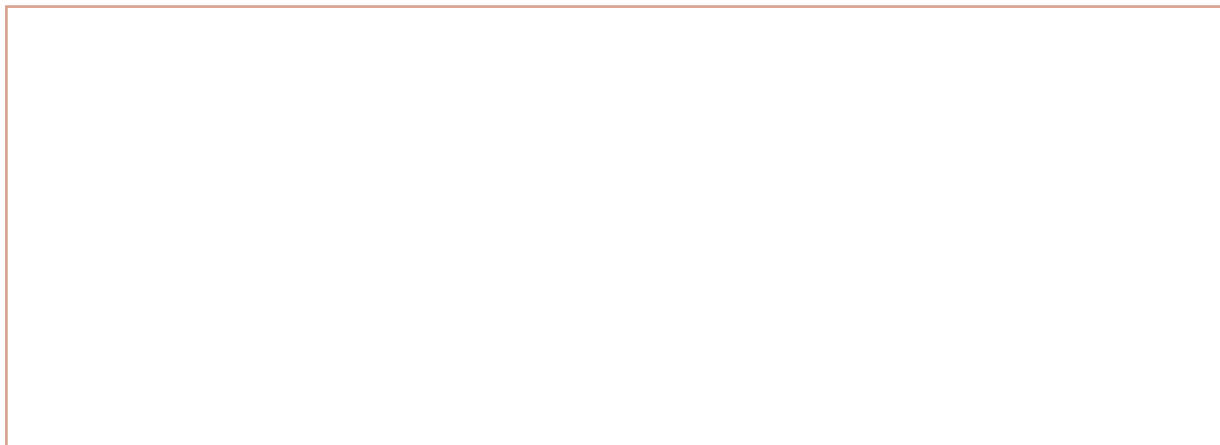
NAME: _____

AGE: _____ GRADE: _____

ENTRY TITLE: _____

MEDIUM: _____

SKETCH OF ART PROJECT:



DESCRIPTION AND MEANING OF YOUR ART PROJECT: _____

CHARACTER SIMILES

Similes are comparisons that use the words “like” or “as.” Think of an adjective that best describes each of the following characters in the story. Then think of something that the adjectives you selected can be compared to. Make sure that your comparisons have enough details to convey the nature of each character.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3

Example:

OBSIDIAN Adjective: fast

Sentence: The stray dog Harrison calls Obsidian is as fast as a jackrabbit in avoiding capture.

HARRISON Adjective: _____

Sentence: _____

CHLOE Adjective: _____

Sentence: _____

MARCO Adjective: _____

Sentence: _____

AUNT MAGGIE Adjective: _____

Sentence: _____

HARRISON'S DAD Adjective: _____

Sentence: _____

HARRISON'S MOM Adjective: _____

Sentence: _____

CHARACTER GROWTH

Harrison faces many challenges after his mom passes away. Think back through the novel to identify how Harrison changes from the beginning of the story to the end. What drives each change? How did these changes impact the other characters in the story? Complete the chart using bullet points and phrases to capture your observations of Harrison's growth. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3](#)

	<i>BEGINNING OF THE STORY</i>	<i>MIDDLE OF THE STORY</i>	<i>END OF THE STORY</i>
Describe Harrison at each section of the novel.			
What drove the changes Harrison experienced at each juncture?			
How did these changes impact the other characters in the story?			