

LOST IN THE MIDDLE

A GRAPHIC NOVEL ABOUT LOSS AND WHAT
WE FIND ALONG THE WAY

DISCUSSION IDEAS AND PROMPTS FOR
EDUCATORS AND YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

[LOST IN THE MIDDLE]

INTRODUCTION

Lost in the Middle is a new graphic novel for middle school students. Since early 2020, students' lives have been disrupted by a global pandemic. As educators, you know all too well young people were especially affected; unable to attend school or spend time with friends, isolated from all they loved, while surrounded by uncertainty and loss. If they didn't directly experience such frightening situations, they indirectly absorbed traumatic words and images through adult conversations and the media. *Lost in the Middle* illustrates how young people are keen observers of the world and each other. They talk about navigating tough times, how to get back on their feet, and the importance of offering and receiving help from friends and caring adults.

Kai's origin story begins with "The Golden Sweater," and continues on in our new graphic novel. Although it is not necessary to read these books before **Lost in the Middle**, students and educators may want to revisit them.

- ⚡ "The Golden Sweater" focuses on the newness of loss and how young people 'get their bearings' in a world without that significant person in their lives. This story also shows how Kai's mom is adapting to her new world.
- ⚡ "The Girl with The Locket" centers on a new experience for Kai—a weekend camp for young people. While he is somewhat anxious about meeting new people, it doesn't take him long to make friends with Elle, who struggles to talk about the death of her sister. Kai reaches out to her and finds that he has something to share with others who are just like him.
- ⚡ In "The Fishless Lake," Kai worries that some memories of his father are slipping away. His mother reminds him of one of their family traditions—the annual fishing trip that Kai and his dad took every September. Although they don't catch any fish, they do capture countless warm memories, shared stories, and a way to keep family traditions alive and evolving as Kai grows.



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INTRODUCTION

As an 8th grade middle school student, Kai continues to evolve since the death of his father. A great deal has changed in the world and some of his friends are facing their own challenges. Kai has learned to draw on his strengths and wants to share this newfound strategy with his peers. Together they learn what they have in common, even though their situations are unique. They recognize how they can support each other and problem-solve as a community—helping everyone through the tough times. Several questions guided the development of this new graphic novel:

- ⚡ How do young people experience loss and grief—individually and as a community?
- ⚡ How can young people actively participate and contribute to making positive changes in their lives during times of stress, trauma, or loss?
- ⚡ What examples and future possibilities exist for families, schools, and communities to engage young people as valued social helpers, knowledge-bearers, and active contributors, rather than mere receivers of social-emotional content or learning programs provided to them by adults?

Lost in the Middle is an honest depiction of long-ago and recent losses including a parent, sibling, and school sports star; a grandmother's illness; moving and starting a new school; a beloved teacher's departure, and the usual day-to-day school dramas—all against the backdrop of a post-pandemic world. Their communal grief and collective support create an environment that is not all sadness and tears at Fourth Avenue Middle School. There is joy in their relationships, fun, and creativity as they start a new project that promises to help new classmates. They stumble, get up, succeed, and learn the value of friendships and understanding each other. As you read *Lost in the Middle*, we encourage you to have open conversations with your class.

We hope you and your students enjoy the ride!



[LOST IN THE MIDDLE]

THE STORY

Lost in the Middle focuses on a diverse group of middle school students, their families, and teachers, and how they are affected by losses—a cross-country move, a new school, the departure of a beloved teacher, death, and separation. Sometimes the losses are very personal, but there are also losses the school community shares. Individuals and families need healing and connection. Each of Kai's friends allow us into their lives—we listen to their conversations and innermost thoughts. These young protagonists offer their spot-on insights to the adults in their lives, who are facing their own challenges. There is not one way or a quick way to grieve. Readers will see how these young people learn from each other as they move through some of life's greatest challenges. Asking for help is not easy. Accepting help, especially if we haven't asked for it, is much harder.

Kai is preparing for a new transition in his life—graduating from middle school. He sees changes all around friends who are trying to fit in, and old friends who are not sure their relationships are as solid as they once were. There are stressors, tension, and losses. Kai and Elle decide to do something to help their classmates. They learn, along with their peers, that they are not alone—it takes a community to tackle life's challenges.

Lost in the Middle offers wisdom and hope as it shows how young people and the adults in their lives come together and support each other at difficult times. Students will gain new insights and deeper meaning from their own experiences. At its core, the novel is a story of friendships and how the support of others allow young people to face life's challenges, among them, the loss of those who are important to us. **Lost in the Middle** delivers the unshakable belief that in the face of life's most trying circumstances, one can survive, with the strength and support of the community. Readers will realize that they are not alone, even during trying times.

Helping others has benefits for the giver as well as the receiver. Responding to others with kindness and caring has physiological benefits: the heart rate slows; pleasure circuits in the brain are activated, and we become more resilient to stress; and the immune system becomes stronger.

The caring support of people in our lives allow us to survive during difficult times. We need to have people in our corner, listening to our concerns, but not necessarily telling us what to do. When people are available to others, to honestly listen without judging, we are not alone. We feel their support.



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FOR THE CLASSROOM

As you prepare to read *Lost in the Middle* in your classroom, recognize that some characters' experiences may remind students of situations in their own lives (loss, illness, and isolation as a result of the pandemic, personal or community traumatic events).

This graphic novel has elements of humor, intrigue, and how new and existing friendships can be tested. The foundation of the story is centered on the ways people in school communities reach out to each other. Whether children are exposed to a single event such as the loss of a peer or teacher, or if the entire school is witness to a national tragedy, schools, teachers, and community organizations are ideally positioned to support children during such difficult times. Even if your students are not directly affected by such events, they may hear about them from their families or classmates and can be affected in a variety of ways.

As you know, something remarkable happens after students read a story. They share their reactions and talk about characters and themes. The story is a bridge that links words and imaginings that both adults and young people can share and explore. It is the story and the sharing that make it just a little easier to talk about difficult subjects.



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BEFORE YOU READ

We have a few considerations for you.



First, take time to read the graphic novel. Think about the visuals, words, and themes, what do they mean to you and your students?



There may be parts of the story that have great significance for you and are worthy of self-reflection before exploring.



Decide if you will read the book aloud with your students, or hold small group discussions after they read parts of the book by themselves.



Be open and allow students to 'find' their voices and tell you what they think. Remember, there isn't a right or wrong way to interpret the story. As you know, depending on a student's personal experience, they may be hesitant to express their own emotions and thoughts.



After you read the book, think about the themes that come to mind.



What experiences in the book are similar to your students, school, or community?



Ask yourself, "What can my students learn from the story and the characters?"



Consider asking your students what they would say to the protagonists if they were friends.



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PROVIDING A SAFE PLACE IN THE CLASSROOM

The suggestions below will help keep the classroom a safe space. An important first step is to appreciate how the topics in this story affect you as well.

- Be aware of how your experiences, reactions, and thoughts may influence how you teach the material in the book.
- Allow ample time for students to talk with each other and for teachers to check in with them at the end of the day.
- For after-school programs, be sure that there is an opportunity for socializing after the conversation, allowing further support and discussion.
- Recognize that a wide range of reactions (physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, social, or spiritual) to difficult situations is expected and natural. Reassure students that these responses are common.
- Be aware of how your students react and cope with potentially uncomfortable subjects. Keep the lines of communication open through your availability and accessibility, and be honest and supportive.
- Recognize young people who may be in the greatest need and if you have concerns about a student, speak to someone about them.

"LOST IN THE MIDDLE" THEMES

- The impact of loss and traumatic events on the lives of young people. This holistic response includes physical, behavioral, cognitive, social, and emotional reactions.
- Collective grieving and resilience. Recognizing that helping others while helping ourselves has significant consequences that are positive and growth-promoting.
- Friendships and relationships. Helping others, acceptance, and how trying times affect our relationships with others.
- Making meaning. How we grow and learn even from the most challenging times. Seeking meaning builds resilience.
- Remember: Using literature for personal exploration and growth is a creative process; each student will bring their own unique experiences, worldview, and talents to the material. This is also a fluid process, changing and evolving.

IDEAS FOR YOUR CLASSROOM OR AFTER - SCHOOL PROGRAM

There are many ways to use **Lost in the Middle**. Students may choose to read the graphic novel alone. Parents of young middle schoolers may decide to read along with their children. Others may be introduced to the book in the classroom or by a mental health professional. Young people who have experienced a personal loss may need additional guidance and support. The following section offers some ideas for students, families, schools, and professionals.

- ⚡ Introduce the **Lost in the Middle** characters to your class. To help your students learn about these characters, assign several chapters (1 - 5) of **Lost in the Middle**. For discussion, divide the class into two groups. Ask one group to describe the characters from their appearance and actions only. Then ask the second group to describe the characters only using the dialogue. Ask the class to compare and contrast their ideas.
- ⚡ Ask students to identify themes relevant to their own experiences.
 - How do they differ from the characters in the story and in real life?
 - What themes and concepts are important to them?
 - Capture their thoughts through writing, drawing, or talking.
- ⚡ Explore how the characters respond to loss and grief in the book.
 - How do they react—physically, emotionally, and cognitively?
 - What do others do? Friends, family, teachers, coaches?
 - How do their reactions compare to real life?
 - How do these experiences affect relationships at home and school?
- ⚡ Ask students to describe the healing and self-care strategies they use for themselves.
- ⚡ Ask them to describe how they help others during tough times.
 - What works, and what doesn't?
- ⚡ Who can they go to for help, support, and an ear for listening?
 - What keeps them going?
- ⚡ Respond to the authors' words with their own words, artwork, music, or videos.
 - Keep a journal.
 - Write an essay, poem, or story.
- ⚡ Ask students what they have learned since the pandemic.
 - About themselves?
 - About their families?
 - About their friends?
 - About the world?
- ⚡ Ask students how they help others.
 - Share their ideas.
 - Create a project.
 - What is their best talent or skill? What do they do best?



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GENERAL PROMPTS FOR DISCUSSION AND JOURNALING

RESILIENCE

People build resilience over time. Kai used his strengths, and the support of those around him, to help him grieve the death of his dad. Our experiences and the people in our lives contribute to this dynamic building process. And it's never too late to start. Resilient people are aware of the stressors in their lives, keep problem-solving strategies on hand, know who supports them, and are creative, curious, and willing to explore new ideas.

Prompts for discussion or journaling:

- Which of the above characteristics of resilience do Kai and his friends demonstrate?
- What other characteristics of resilience can you see in the characters of these stories?
- If resilience is like a muscle, how can you build it?

GRIEF

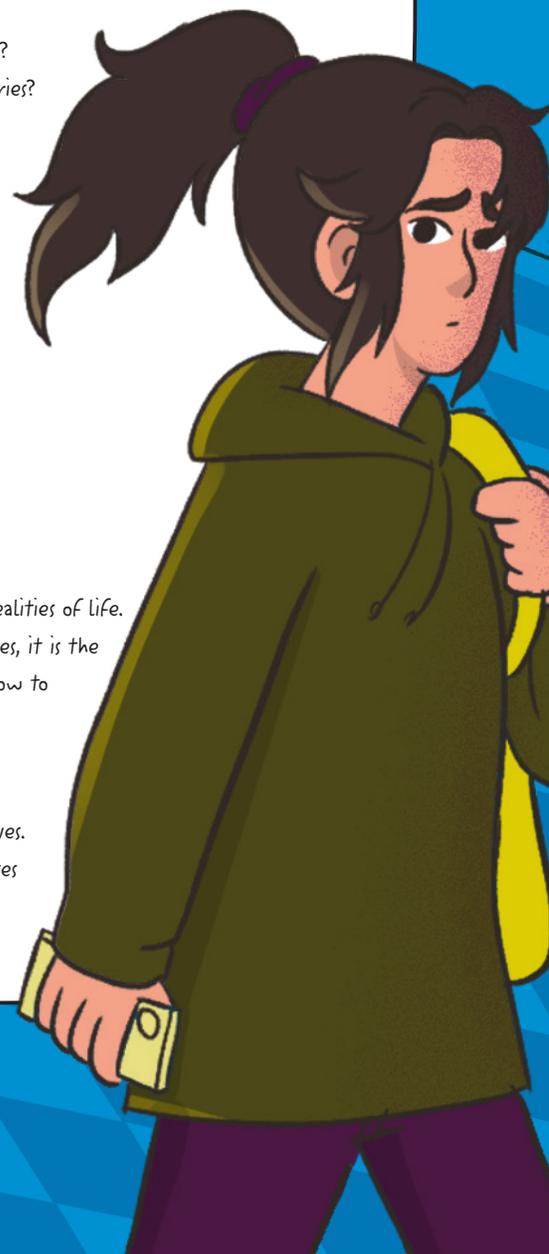
Grief is the natural response to death and other kinds of losses. It affects every part of us—our thoughts and feelings, our bodies and behaviors—with feelings of anger or sadness, and everything in between. Grieving helps us make a positive adjustment to a world without the person who has died. Grief is not a singular moment in time, it is both universal and unique and stays with us as we grow and mature.

Conversations around and about death are difficult for everyone.

Many people, usually caring adults, think young people should be protected from the harsh realities of life. They're too young. They won't understand. They'll be too sad. They'll get over it. Many times, it is the adults who struggle to begin conversations with young people, and they often don't know how to continue it.

Everyone grieves in their own unique way, shaped by our previous experiences, our bonds to significant others, the nature of the loss experience, age, and the support of people in our lives.

- Is Kai able to talk to others, both adults and young people in his life, about the losses he has experienced?



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GENERAL PROMPTS FOR DISCUSSION AND JOURNALING

COLLECTIVE GRIEF AND HEALING

Since 2020, students, teachers, and schools have been keenly aware of a heavy atmosphere of death and loss. The deaths of Chadwick Boseman and Kobe Bryant confronted children and teens with the tragic loss of their hero and superhero. In 1986, seven astronauts, among them a school teacher, were killed in the Challenger explosion, an event witnessed by an estimated 40% of US students. Many adults and young people remember these events and the collective grief that followed in the days and months afterward. These times often present us with turning points and teachable moments, important opportunities that help young people understand loss, grief, empathy, and compassion. Young people grieve, even for those they've never met, and even for heroes, real or fictional.

- What does Kai receive from his mom, Nora? From Elle? From Cam? Mr. Benny? His friends?
- Kai often remembers the words of wisdom from his father, especially during difficult moments. Whose words do you remember? How do those words support you?
- Think about the people in your life. Are you a helper to others? In what ways?
- How can your network of friends and family affect your life at school? At home?



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GENERAL PROMPTS FOR DISCUSSION AND JOURNALING

Other prompts can be paired with plot points and themes:

Make a list of people who support you. Then write a plan for connecting with them (writing, talking, visiting).

Describe ways you are kind to yourself.

How do you comfort yourself? How do you like to be comforted by others?

What is your superpower, your strength, perhaps something that people turn to you for?

List some ways you have turned a negative experience into a positive call to action.

Write about a time you helped a friend stay hopeful.

Write about a time when you learned to ask for help.

Think of a difficult-to-reach character in "Lost in the Middle." What message would you like that person to hear?



Towards the end of the book, Kai says:
"Because even when we feel **lost in the middle**—we're not lost forever. We can always still find each other." What do you think he means?

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PROMPTS AND QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO GRAPHIC NOVELS

Students will interpret visual and textual evidence in different ways. Any discussion should focus on both images and text. Consider the following to guide your discussion.

- Review key graphic novel terms before discussing **Lost in the Middle** —“panels,” “gutters,” “spreads,” “speech balloons,” and “captions.”
- Ask students to describe the cover of the book, and before reading the book itself, ask them to discuss what they think they will be reading about. Repeat this activity after they have read the book, then follow up with this question/activity, “What would you draw for the cover?”
- Ask why they think the book is titled **Lost in the Middle**.
- Describe the characters’ facial expressions on several different pages and panels—then ask students to identify what the characters might be thinking?
- Explore climactic moments (images or words) in the book to discuss or predict what will happen next.
- Why do some of the word balloons have jagged edges, or other styles of emphasis?
- What happens in the gutters (the spaces between the panels)?
- Students can also write or draw an explanation of what happens in balloons between two important panels in a graphic novel.
- Ask students to describe the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors of a character.
- Pay attention to body language, facial expressions, the shape of the dialogue balloon, etc.

More **Lost in the Middle** Learning Activities and Projects

Students will:

- Explain the value of helping others.
- Identify resources in their school and community.
- Experience being an active participant in their school/community.

Evidence of Understanding:

Discuss the following with the class:

- Describe why working together is important.
- Who/what did this project help?
- Name some other projects you can do at home, in school, or in your community.
- How did you feel when you were participating in the service activity?

Lost in the Middle illustrates how we all respond to challenging and uncertain times. Grieving after loss enlists many skills—listening, comforting, empathy, and support.

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4 REEL

Jx

CHAPTER-SPECIFIC THOUGHT STARTERS AND PROMPTS

The prompts (or thought-starters) below can spark writing and conversation. Kai and his friends might seem familiar to you, in fact, some of their situations also might seem recognizable, maybe even from your own life.

Student instructions: Each time you choose a prompt, set a timer for four minutes, and remember to keep your hand moving and writing.

You can use these prompts individually or in small groups.

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Chapter 1: A MESSAGE FROM CAM

THEMES: Separation, loss, fear of the unknown, uncertainty, adapting, friends, new school and new friends, longing for old friendships and familiar settings.

THE SCENE: Cam is in his car, sad and looking back through the windshield at his friends waving goodbye. Cam texting in the group chat: "Miss you guys already!"

Ughh. I'm kinda freaking out.
I'm losing all my old friends... What if I don't make any new ones? Being the new kid is the worst!
At LEAST I have Kai... but he already has friends and stuff!!
What would you say to the new kid at your school or on your street?
Really, say it out loud.
It would mean the world to a new kid like me!

LISTEN TO CAM



PROMPTS FOR TALKING OR WRITING:

- Write about being connected to someone by an invisible thread. Describe that person and how you know that thread is there.
- Write or draw a map of your friends, people you can reach out to when you need to talk or just have fun. Put yourself in the middle of the page and draw lines connecting you and your friends. It doesn't matter where they live! Keep adding new friends to your map.

Keep the map or list available and refer to it when you are facing tough times.

- List three words or sentences on what it means to be a new kid.
- What would you say to that new kid at your school or in your town or on your block?
- Saying goodbye and meeting someone new is difficult; saying thank you feels better. Create a gratitude list by naming three friends (new or old) and what you are grateful for.
- Write about a time when you wanted to be seen but weren't.
- Write about a time you didn't want to be seen but were seen.



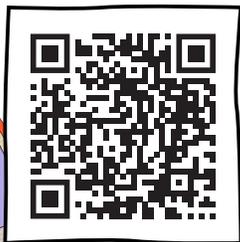
[LOST IN THE MIDDLE]

Chapter 5: A MESSAGE FROM MILA

THEMES: forgiveness, guilt, embarrassment, misunderstanding, confusion, honesty, tension among friends, not knowing what to say or do for a grieving friend, or a classmate having a difficult time at home.

THE SCENE: Alex looks frustrated and leaves the gym, as Mila is apologizing and trying to get her to stay.

LISTEN TO MILA



Alex is my BEST friend,
but it is SO hard to be there for her right now.
I've never lost anyone like she lost Adrian.
... I just don't know what to say or do.
Maybe you can help?

Get a piece of paper and write about a time that
you helped a friend who felt... well, hopeless.
Maybe you can slip it into my locker later?

* Consider creating
Mila's locker to collect
notes from students.

PROMPTS FOR TALKING OR WRITING:

Describe a time of forgiveness or forgiving.

- Mila is feeling guilty for not understanding her friend Alex. Choose three words that you could say to help her.
- Write your recipe for forgiving yourself.
- What do you say or do when you don't know the right words?
- Describe a time you helped someone else hold on to hope.



[LOST IN THE MIDDLE]

Chapter 6: A MESSAGE FROM ELLE

THEMES: Finding comfort, using words for solace, gratitude, remembering, and memories.

THE SCENE: Elle is in Mr. Benny's classroom holding her memory journal after just scribbling down a memory of Simone.

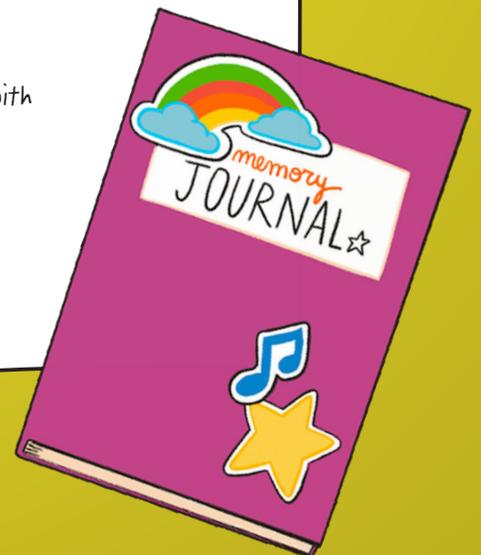
I NEV-ER leave home without this thing!!
It was actually Kai's idea to start writing down the memories... thanks, Kai!
Sometimes when I am having a bad day, and I miss Simone A LOT, like a lot... I crack a lemonade and I read this journal.
Maybe you have memories of being with someone who died, too.
Steal our idea! Start a journal of your own and write down three of those memories.

LISTEN TO ELLE



PROMPTS FOR TALKING OR WRITING:

- Name three things that matter to you. Choose one and write about it.
- Describe an unexpected gift.
- Describe the most memorable or special gift you ever received.
- Describe a kindness you experienced or witnessed.
- Describe a time you felt appreciated.
- Describe three "best" times you had with someone who is no longer alive.



[LOST IN THE MIDDLE]

Chapter 8: A MESSAGE FROM ALEX

THEMES: Loss, anger, feeling hurt, misunderstood.

THE SCENE: Alex rolls her eyes and walks away from Mila who's trying to get her attention in the school hallway (this is after Mila's post on @4Reel).

TEXT: "Alex was upset. Anything related to Adrian was a trigger. And that included being around Mila. Especially after her last post."

LISTEN TO ALEX



Adrian died. Which means basketball
is now dead to me, too.
Mila doesn't get it. This isn't something
I can just "get over."
All I'm trying to do is protect myself
from getting more... hurt.
Have you ever avoided something, or someone,
that you love? Because it hurt too much?
Write your own 4Reel comment about it.
I could use the help.

PROMPTS FOR TALKING OR WRITING:

- Describe a time you protected yourself from hurt.
- Describe a time when you learned to ask for help.
- What would you say to a friend in Alex's situation?
- Describe "the smoke" that gets in the way of seeing clearly.
- Describe a time when the truth hurt AND helped.
- Describe a time when you gave someone a second chance.



[LOST IN THE MIDDLE]

Chapter 9: A MESSAGE FROM JAXON

THEMES: Frustration, anger, pushing someone away, coping, secrets.

THE SCENE: Jaxon abruptly stops drawing in Kai's notebook and shoves it back at him.

LISTEN TO JAXON



Kai is always trying to get into my business.
It's so annoying!
He's always asking questions I don't feel like
talking about.
I just want to draw, especially when
I'm angry or upset.
Next time you feel mad, try it out.
Like... draw something that makes you feel
better. Or paint or sing... Or don't...
Whatever! It was just an idea!

PROMPTS FOR TALKING OR WRITING:

- What do you do when you are upset or angry? Make a list of actions or thoughts that make you feel less upset or angry:
 - Is it creative, artistic or musical? Describe it...
 - Connected to nature or being outdoors?
 - Physical activity, like a sport?
- Expand your list by asking friends to join in and share ideas.
- Make a list of 10 things you can do that appeal to you to bring calm and relief.
- Think about the lyrics to your favorite song, and name, and write about three ways they connect to your life.
 - Make a playlist, by yourself or with a friend.
- Think about Jaxon (or a bullying character in a movie or TV show) who is hiding insecurities and doubts underneath their exterior. What short message would you like that person's brain to receive?



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Chapter 9: A MESSAGE FROM MR. BENNY

THEMES: Forgiving and forgiveness, telling someone bad or sad news.

THE SCENE: Mr. Benny is standing alone on stage in an empty gym, after telling everyone at the pep rally he is leaving the school.

LISTEN TO MR. BENNY



Salut.
Believe it or not, adults aren't perfect. Including me, Mr. Benny. It completely broke my heart to give the kids this news, that I knew would break their hearts. Picture yourself in my shoes, giving bad news to someone you cared about. How would you start? No, really! What are the first three words you would say to them?

PROMPTS FOR TALKING OR WRITING:

- Describe a time of forgiveness or forgiving.
- Write your recipe for forgiving yourself.
- If you have to tell someone bad or sad news, what are the first three words you would say to them?



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Chapter 12: A MESSAGE FROM KAI

THEMES: Support, listening, being present, gratitude, aloneness.

THE SCENE: Kai sharing his story and recording the first 4Reel post since it has been unpaused.

LISTEN TO KAI



I feel SOOOOOO much better.
I am so glad I finally told everyone at school my story.
Opening up can be... well... tough... Especially about something so personal. But as hard as it is, it can make you feel less alone.
At least, it did for me and my friends.
Who do you go to when you need help? Or someone to just listen?
Try recording a video of what you'd say to them. Maybe we'll post it on @4Reel.

PROMPTS FOR TALKING OR WRITING:

- Where or to whom did Kai and his friends go for help, support, and listening?
- Who do you go to for help, support, and listening?
- Have you ever been surprised, really surprised, when someone listened to you?
- How do you know who you can talk to? What does this person say or do?
- Make a list of three things, even tiny things, that you are grateful for. You can say the list out loud, write it on paper or put it on your phone. You can create the list alone or with another person.
- Being alone can sometimes be scary. Other times, it's what we want or need. Write about how you refuel – by being alone, with others, or a combination of both.



Appendices

A. Online Resources. Many websites explore service projects, here are a few:

"MLK National Day of Service"

Observed each year on the third Monday in January, MLK Day is the only Federal holiday designated as a national day of service to encourage all Americans to volunteer to improve their communities.

<https://americorps.gov/newsroom/events/mlk-day>

United We Serve Through national service and volunteerism, Americans are afforded new ways to engage with their communities and foster a sense of constructive action, civic participation, and belonging.

<https://americorps.gov/about/what-we-do/united-we-serve>

National Day of Service and Remembrance.

<http://911day.org>

Classroom and School Activities:

Use the resources above for service ideas appropriate for middle school, as a class or group, and decide which service project might be adapted to your school.

As much as possible, students should lead the planning and decision-making parts of the project.

Ask students to reflect (by thinking, speaking, and/or writing) about their experience.

B. Books and Websites: In addition to books about Kai's Journey, the books and websites below also address the qualities of empathy, listening, challenges, and uncertainty.

Heart-Mind Online

Heart-Mind Reading List (elementary school)

Heart-Mind Reading List (middle school)

Free Little Library Club

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES (not specific to Lost in the Middle)

Finding Sanctuary: Everyone needs a special place, to think, write, draw, to listen to music. It can be a physical space or a place you think about. Here are a few tricks to find yours:

Sit comfortably: feel your skin, muscles, and even your bones as you sit on a chair (or the floor). Put your feet on the floor in front of you, your head lifted to the sky.

Now imagine an inner landscape or place you can visit any time. Call it your sanctuary (or haven, or shelter). It brings you a feeling of relief and a sense of calm, anytime you need it.

When you think of a sanctuary that you know or would like to know, begin with the five senses:

What do you see? Describe it.

What can you touch? Feel it. Green trees or grass, a field of flowers.

What do you hear? The words, music, or nature sounds?

What do you smell? What is the aroma, food, or nature?

Can you taste anything, and what is it?

Let the picture of that special place come to you, and sink in.

When you see it and feel it, walk around in it. Take a good look from every angle.

Name it and keep it in your invisible toolbox, or draw or paint it, take a photo of it, and keep it in your room or on your phone.

Coming together:

Write about some of the ways you hold onto hope.

Write about a time you held onto hope. What or who helped you do that?

Finding strength:

What is your superpower, your strength, perhaps something that people turn to you for?

Write about a time when you were braver than you thought you could be.

Describe ways you have turned a painful or difficult experience into a positive call to action.

Ladders and Trees: Sometimes a metaphor can help us understand and find new ways to heal and grow.

Think of a wooden ladder. Each rung of the ladder holds a coping skill, growing or healing strategy; it can help you climb out of a dark and isolated place and finally see the sky, clouds, and all.

Or, think of a tree and its branches growing out of the trunk.

Draw or write a list of options, which could consist of activities, thoughts, or people, for the rungs of your coping ladder or the branches of your coping tree.

Be specific as you brainstorm:

Who are the people you can reach out to? Remember that they may not know you need their support unless you tell them, so ask them!