

One Book, One School Suggestions for Reading *ALONE* Together

Build Community

Invite all members of the school community to read along with students. Include faculty, administration, operations staff, cafeteria workers, coaches, bus drivers, custodians, and of course, parents/guardians. Encourage the adults to read at school and keep the book visible where students can see it. Seize opportunities to engage students in conversation, whether formally, in planned discussions, or informally, passing through the lunch line or boarding the bus. Provide access to the book in multiple formats for differentiated access (audiobook, print, electronic).

Engage Across the Curriculum

Integrate discussions and activities inspired by the book across all departments and courses. Encourage faculty to read in advance to discover themes or topics that resonate with course standards or essential learning goals.

Example prompts*:

ADVISORY/HOMEROOM:

The title of the book is *ALONE*. Is being alone the same as being lonely? What causes loneliness? What are some ways people may feel alone while still surrounded by others? How might animal companions impact people's experience of being alone or loneliness? If a person is away from other people but with an animal, are they still alone? Download the [ALONE Reading Guide](#) for a comprehensive list of discussion questions and extension activities.

STEM:

Survival is hampered by the loss of power and running water, and Maddie has to get creative to meet her basic needs. What are the basic requirements of human survival? How do power grids work? What are the impacts of power outages on everyday functions in contemporary society? What do we take for granted? What other kinds of technologies might be utilized to assist in times of emergency? What are the scientific principles behind force-flushing a toilet? What causes extreme weather events? What are some ways Maddie addresses her challenges that you might approach differently?

**These prompts and activities work well across multiple disciplines, so encourage faculty to read through all of them and collaborate to invent more.*

LANGUAGE ARTS:

Maddie takes great comfort in reading and poetry, and the novel itself is written in verse. Why do you think poetry resonates for Maddie where fiction frustrates her? How does the verse enhance the story? What literary devices and devices of sound can you identify within the poetry? How do the poems work together to create the larger narrative? Write a poem or poems that explore an experience you've had where you were completely alone or felt deep loneliness. Choose a line from a favorite poem in ALONE and write an original poem that incorporates that line. Write a poem that is an emulation of a poem or song you love.

SOCIAL STUDIES:

The town of Millerville is evacuated, leaving Maddie alone. What are some push/pull factors that can cause people to choose or be forced to make geographical changes? How do different agencies and levels of government work together during emergencies to handle mass events? What kinds of needs do you imagine people would have in the event of an unexpected disaster? What are some current events where you have seen examples of coordinated responses from multiple agencies? SPOILER PROMPT: What might have been going on within the government to cause the "massive land grab" mentioned in the final poem? What historical precedents can you think of that compare to this fictional situation? What are other stories (fiction, non-fiction, personal) where people have relocated? Why might some people choose not to leave when others do?

WORLD LANGUAGES:

In the back of the paperback edition, the author explains how she revised the novel from prose into verse. In interviews, she says writing the story in poetry brought her back to her "native language." She felt more fluent in poetry than prose. How can a person be more or less fluent within the same language? How does your understanding of fluency compare to her experience? When do you feel most fluent in the languages you speak and the languages you are learning? Can a person be fluent in something other than a language? What are ways in which you consider yourself fluent?

VISUAL ARTS:

The cover art on the book is by the artist Pascal Campion. What mood does it suggest? What does the cover foreshadow and what does it omit? Maddie expresses her feelings and entertains herself by making art. Why do humans create as a way of expressing themselves? How does the act of making art teach the artist about their own ideas, emotions, or curiosities? Brainstorm themes from the story (loneliness, survival, perseverance, family, friendship, etc.). Using found objects that Maddie might also have had access to, make a two or three-dimensional piece that explores a theme you feel curious about. Be intentional about how you use the elements and principles of art in your piece. (Bonus: look up Pascal Campion's work. What do you notice about the elements and principles of art in the work he makes?)

PERFORMING ARTS:

Novels in verse are necessarily sparse and require collaboration between the author and the reader, just like a play script or sheet music. Why is that collaboration crucial? Why is a play script or a musical score incomplete until it is performed? How is a novel in verse incomplete without a reader? Write/compose/choreograph a new scene that doesn't exist in the story, but could. Consider exploring an aspect of the story from another character's point of view or imagining what might happen after the story ends. Perform the work once it is completed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION/PHYSIOLOGY:

Maddie makes the decision to build her physical fitness before she goes exploring beyond her little town. How might her health and fitness impact her overall ordeal? Do you think she would be more or less fit after the evacuation or before when she was with her family? Why? What variables would impact her health? What are the nutritional challenges of a diet of canned foods? Why must she prioritize finding potable water? What are the impacts of sleep on a healthy brain? How do diet and exercise impact mental health and well-being? What are the impacts of stress and stress hormones on a person's overall health? What are the chemicals involved in a fight-flight-freeze response?

Create Special Events

Find ways to incorporate the book into daily routines: Use morning announcements to read a quotation or poem from the book, offer a book-derived question of the week, create an *ALONE* trivia contest.

Work with students to generate lists of discussion questions that range from personal, text-to-self questions (What might you have done differently in Maddie's situation?) to higher-order questions (How do human beings' relationships with technology make us vulnerable? Powerful? Dangerous? Limitless?).

Organize formal and informal opportunities for students to share their work with one another and with the adult members of the community (reading lunches, literature circles, book clubs, performances, morning meetings, open houses, town halls). Facilitate discussions and demonstrations of learning. Be sure to invite adults to participate and share their own learning and thoughts about the book. Let students see life-long learning in action.

Engage with the Author

Research the [author](#) and learn about what motivated her and [what went into creating ALONE](#). Explore her [website](#) and click on [interview and video links](#). Take advantage of the [teaching resources](#) provided. Have students generate questions they want to be sure to explore when the author visits. (Note: if students write to the author in advance of the visit, have them use a parent/guardian email address or have teachers collect questions and correspond on behalf of

students. Student email addresses typically have filters that prevent the author from responding.)

Design the visit schedule to maximize opportunities for learning and collaborating. Consider booking small group writing workshops in addition to larger assembly presentations. Invite select students to eat lunch with the author (raffles or essay contests can work well for this). Plan for a book signing at a time that allows any interested students to meet her one on one and have their books personalized.

Conclude and Celebrate

Reflect on the extraordinary experience created by the individual participation of every member of the school community.

Celebrate all the new relationships developed from the shared experience of reading and learning together.

Invite suggestions for improving the process or doing it differently next time. Collect input from the community on book titles that might work well for One School One Book for next year.

Remember that your work matters. You are creating lifelong readers and learners. You are changing lives, and you are building a richer, stronger community because of your efforts.