

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Disney • HYPERION BOOKS

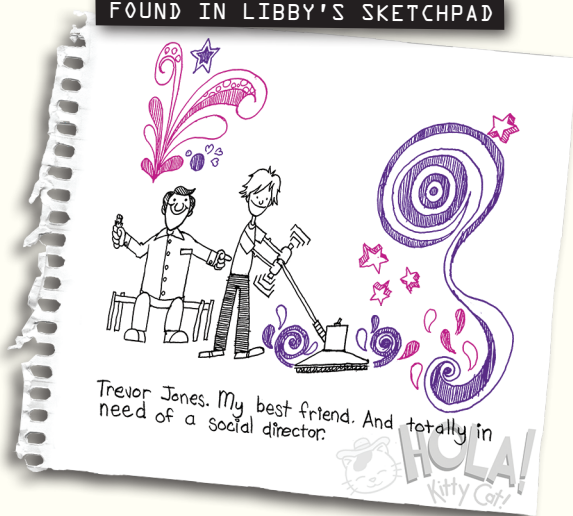
ABOUT THE BOOK

A documentary crew has descended upon Westside Middle School to detail the life of an average seventh grader named Trevor Jones and his classmates. Using one-on-one interviews and “discarded” drawings, notes, lists, pamphlets, and doodles, they piece together a far-from-average story. Mostly, it is upper average, along with moments of extreme average, highlighted by several minutes of total awesomeness. Find out what happens when Trevor is forced to do something he has never done before: be epic.

COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT

This guide is aligned with the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCR) for Literature, Writing, Language, Speaking and Listening. The broad CCR standards are the foundation for the grade level-specific Common Core State Standards. Each question and activity in this guide includes a reference for the CCR strand, domain, and standard that is addressed. To support instruction, also reference the grade-level specific Common Core State Standards to scaffold the questions for your students.

FOUND IN LIBBY'S SKETCHPAD



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

READING, WRITING, AND RESEARCHING

Pre-reading Activity

As a pre-reading activity, have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the following manner:

BEFORE READING	AFTER READING	STATEMENTS
		Being friends with someone for a lifetime can be difficult.
		New kids always struggle to fit in at school.
		Bullies behave the way they do to seek attention.
		Parents always know what's best for their kids.

Instruct students to complete the guide by placing a “+” sign in the box next to the statements with which they agree and a “0” next to those with which they disagree. They must commit to agreement or disagreement—there are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.2; S.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.3. Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. S.L. 4.1., 4.2., 4.3. S.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.3. Key Ideas and Details R.L. 6.2.; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 6.1., 6.2., 6.3.

Writing and Research

The following questions may be utilized throughout the novel study as reflective writing prompts, or alternatively, they can be used as targeted questions for class discussion and reflection.

- 1 Consider the novel's title; in what ways does it capture the themes of the book?
- 2 *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid* is told from third-person point of view with added multiple first person "interviews"; how would the story be different if there were a single narrator telling it? Do you think changing or limiting the point of view would make the story better or worse? Why?
- 3 Describe Trevor. What makes him a dynamic character? Is he the type of person you would want to befriend? Why or why not?
- 4 Consider the novel's cover art and the interior illustrations. Do you find them appealing? In what ways are the images represented symbolic for the events that transpire throughout the course of the book?
- 5 In your opinion, why does Molly behave the way she does? Do you think her father is to blame for her choices? Why or why not?
- 6 Consider Trevor's growth throughout the course of the novel. How does the title of *Not-Yet-Epic Kid* ultimately come to be the appropriate designation for him?
- 7 For what reasons do you think Trevor feels so connected to Libby? How would you characterize the relationship between the two of them, and how does it change over the course of the novel?
- 8 Consider the unusual cast of secondary characters; who did you like the most? The least? For what reason? Of all of the characters, who did you feel was most similar to you due to his/her personality or experiences?
- 9 Using the phrase, "This is a story about..." supply five words to describe *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid*. Explain your choices.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1., 4.2., 4.3. R.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.4., R.L. 6.1., 6.2., 6.3. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas. C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.7., 4.9, R.L. 5.7., 5.9. Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1., 4.3., R.L. 5.1., 5.3. S.L. 6.1., 6.2., 6.3. C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. W.4.4., W.5.4., W.6.4.

Extended Writing and Research Prompts

In *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid* the story focuses on Trevor and his relationships with his family, friends, and peers. Consider your most special relationships. What makes these individuals so important to you? Compose a personal journal entry and be sure to answer the following questions:

- 1 Who are the individuals who mean the most to you?
- 2 Why is that particular relationship so special?
- 3 What's the greatest sacrifice you've made for the people you love?
- 4 In what ways have the changes you've experienced in your life affected those to whom you are closest?

To culminate, ask for volunteers to share their writing with the class.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1., 4.2., 4.3. R.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.4. R.L. 6.1., 6.2. and Writing: Production and Distribution C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. W.4.4., W.5.4., W.6.4.

Throughout the course of the “documentary,” readers are offered great insight about Trevor’s experiences in *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid*. Assume the role of Trevor and draft a diary entry detailing what you experienced and witnessed. To prepare, create an outline using the five W’s (who, what, when, where, and why). Remember to write in the first person and give special attention to sensory imagery (what you saw, smelled, heard, etc.).



Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1., 4.2., 4.3. R.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.4. R.L. 6.1., 6.2. and Writing: Production and Distribution C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. W.4.4., W.5.4., W.6.4.

Some of the characters in *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid* are not as they appear. Consider the importance of appearances and the need for disguising one's self—what might be a rationale to do so? What are the ramifications and consequences of such a choice? Select one character from the novel and write a short analysis of his/her choice to use a disguise.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1., 4.2., 4.3. R.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.4. R.L. 6.1., 6.2. and Writing: Production and Distribution C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. W.4.4., W.5.4., W.6.4.

In *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid*: readers witness some of the students mature and grow throughout the course of the novel. Based on your observations, which character do you believe demonstrates the greatest growth? Compose a short, persuasive essay offering your position on this issue. While considering your selected character's experiences, use textual evidence to provide specific examples to support your case.

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LITERARY ELEMENTS ANALYSIS

Use the following activities to allow students to show their understanding of various literary elements in *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid*.

Thematic Connections

Making thematic connections: consider the following themes of *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid*: Ingenuity, Loyalty, Bravery, and Tolerance. Select one of the themes and find examples from the book that helps support this theme. Create a sample Life Lesson Chart using the model at: http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson826/chart.pdf.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details
C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1., 4.2., 4.3. R.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.4. R.L. 6.1., 6.2.

Setting

Though it's primarily set at Westside Middle School, consider the variety of settings within the school for *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid*. Why is each of these places important? Using the descriptions provided in the book, illustrate the four places you believe to be most important to the story. In addition to the illustrations, include a short explanation of the significance of each, and why you believe it is important.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details
C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1., 4.2., 4.3. R.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.4. R.L. 6.1., 6.2.



CONSIDERING CHARACTER

The purpose of this strategy is to help students demonstrate knowledge of a character in *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid* by following written prompts to complete a poem about the individual. Students can be given the prompts to follow on a worksheet or alternatively, students may create an original slideshow using PowerPoint, Prezi, or Movie Maker.

“I AM” Poem

FIRST STANZA:

I am (name the character)
I wonder (something the character is actually curious about)
I hear (an imaginary sound the character might hear)
I see (an imaginary sight the character might see)
I want (something the character truly desires)

SECOND STANZA:

I pretend (something the character actually pretends to do)
I feel (a feeling about something imaginary)
I touch (an imaginary touch)
I worry (something that really bothers the character)
I cry (something that makes the character very sad)
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

THIRD STANZA:

I understand (something the character knows is true)
I say (something that the character believes in)
I dream (something the character might actually dream about)
I try (something the character really makes an effort to do)
I hope (something the character actually hopes for)
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

Biopoem

Line 1: First name _____

Line 2: Three traits that describe the character _____

Line 3: Relative of _____

Line 4: Lover of _____ (three things)

Line 5: Who feels _____ (three things)

Line 6: Who needs _____ (three things)

Line 7: Who fears _____ (three things)

Line 8: Who gives _____ (three things)

Line 9: Who would like to see _____ (three things)

Line 10: Resident of _____

Line 11: Last name _____

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details

C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1. R.L. 5.1. R.L. 6.1. and Craft and Structure R.L. 4.5., 5.5., 6.5., R.L. 4.6., 5.6., 6.6.

Advice Column

Ask students to describe one of the problems faced by a character in *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid* and write advice to him/her. Students may choose to be serious or humorous. Use the letter format common to newspaper advice columns, where the person with the problem writes for advice and the advisor writes back. Often the person seeking advice “disguises” his or her name with a descriptive name associated with the problem.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details

C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1., 4.2., 4.3. R.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.4. R.L. 6.1., 6.2.

Fortune Cookies

Have students imagine they are dining with three characters from *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid*. Have them create fortune cookie statements for each character, making sure they explain which character received the fortune and why it is fitting.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details
C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1., 4.2., 4.3. R.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.4. R.L. 6.1., 6.2.

Gift-Giving

Have students select five or more gifts that would be perfect to give to one of the characters in *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid*; while these gifts can be tangible or intangible, they should be things that he/she would really want or need. Be sure each gift includes an explanation for the gift and why it is appropriate for the character.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details
C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1., 4.2., 4.3. R.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.4. R.L. 6.1., 6.2.

If These Walls Could Talk

Ask students to create a conversation between one of the characters in *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid* and some intangible thing (justice, love, goodness, greed, etc.) or his/her conscience. Have them script the conversation as dialogue, making sure they use appropriate punctuation.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details
C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1., 4.2., 4.3. R.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.4. R.L. 6.1., 6.2.

Essential Quotes Analysis

The language that an author uses in his work is essential to getting across the intended meaning. Select four quotes from *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid* that seem to signify key ideas that the author wishes readers to take from the text. These may be quotes spoken by characters or may be from the narration, and page numbers should be included with the quotes. Have students

develop a chart with the following four columns: Quote, Page Number, Relevance to the Novel, Intended Meaning for Readers.

The intended meaning should have relevance not only to the characters in the text, but to the lives of anyone who reads the book.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1., 4.2., 4.3. R.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.4., R.L. 6.1.,6.2., 6.3. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas. C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.7., 4.9, R.L. 5.7., 5.9.

Character Report Card

Ask students to examine the ethical nature of a character's actions and choices in *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid*. Have them set up a "report card" using a chart and include the following eight categories: respect, responsibility, cooperation, caring, integrity, self-control, honesty, and effort. In addition, include a teacher's comments section. In each category, give the character a letter grade that you believe he/she deserves based on actions and choices made in the book. In "comments," use two specific pieces of evidence from the novel to explain/support the grade.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1., 4.2., 4.3, R.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.3. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas. C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.7., 4.9. R.L. 5.7., 5.9. R.L. 6.7., 6.9.

Character Analysis T-shirt

Select a favorite character from *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid* and create a character analysis T-shirt. Identify the literary elements used by the author to describe the character, and then create a visual representation of the character traits. The front of the shirt must include the book title, author's name, and the character's name, picture, and description. The right sleeve must list the character's strengths and the left sleeve should list the character's weaknesses. List internal and external conflicts, figurative language, and the story's climax on the back of the T-shirt.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1. R.L. 5.1. R.L. 6.1.

Character Trait Silhouette

Working with others, create a character trait silhouette about your favorite or least favorite character in *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid*. Begin by tracing an appropriately sized member of the group onto butcher paper. The silhouette must be “life-size.” The traced silhouette should reflect physical traits of the character, so modify as you draw. Next, cut out the silhouette and include ten values from your list. These need to be the *most important traits* of your character. For each trait, a quote that supports the description needs to be included. Inside the silhouette, include symbols that represent your character’s interests, personality, beliefs, skills, or profession.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details
C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1. R.L. 5.1. R.L. 6.1.

Character “To Do” List

Remind students that like us, literary characters have tasks they need to complete. Selecting a character of their choice from *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid*. Students are to create a list of the most important tasks at hand for that character, with explanations as to why those tasks are so necessary.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details
C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1. R.L. 5.1. R.L. 6.1.

INSPIRED ART

Music is often used to connect people to each other and the world at large. Select a favorite character from *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid* and create a CD with an original playlist that is representative of the experiences that character undergoes throughout the novel. Create original art for the jewel case and on the interior, and after including appropriate artist information, offer an explanation for the selection of each song.

In small groups, have students select a favorite scene from *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid* and create either a digitally or manually illustrated graphic novel for that scene. Using a digital comic strip creator (<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/Comix/> or <http://infinitecomic.com/> for example), have students begin by using the strips to create storyboards for their scene. Have students select original art, images, and graphics. Alternatively, students could assume the roles of two of the characters with each one's personality and voice and have them interact with each other by creating an extension of a scene from the novel. As part of the evaluation component, consider panel size and number of panels, transitions and layouts, artwork, writing, and lettering.

Theater Activity

Using the following directions, have students demonstrate an understanding of text structure by retelling and sequencing a scene from *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid*.

Directions

- 1 Read *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid* with the class. After reading the novel, have students complete a story analysis graphic organizer or a SWBS chart as a way to make observations about the characters, setting, conflict, and plot.
- 2 To enhance understanding, take a well-known story (perhaps a fairy tale) and model writing a Reader's Theater Script as a whole class activity. After discussing dialogue and performance, divide the class into small groups that will create an original script using a chapter from *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid* book as inspiration.
- 3 Allow students ample time to rehearse, and be sure to conference with each group to answer or clarify any questions they may have.

- 4 Finally, it's showtime! Allow students to create costumes, props, and sets for the final Reader's Theater performance. Groups will perform for other teams of students. For additional fun, consider filming each performance to share with the whole class.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details

C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.1., 4.2., 4.3. R.L. 5.1., 5.2., 5.4., R.L. 6.1., 6.2., 6.3.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas. C.C.S.S.E.L.A. Literacy. R.L. 4.7., 4.9, R.L. 5.7., 5.9.

Sample SWBS Chart

To help students identify basic literary elements, as well as major plot points in *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid*.

Directions

As a whole class, model the process of the SWBS chart using a familiar story (perhaps a well-known fairy tale). After checking for understanding, have students select a favorite scene from *The Classroom: The Epic Documentary of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid* and complete the SWBS chart to check for understanding of major literary elements and plot points of the novel in preparation for writing their Reader's Theater piece.

SOMEBODY (Character)	WANTED (Goal)	BUT . . . (Problem)	SO . . . (Solution)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

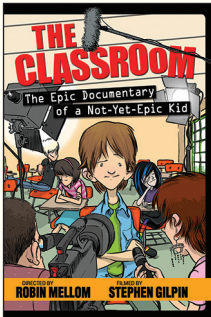
Robin Mellom used to teach middle schoolers and now writes about them. (Any resemblance between fictional characters and her previous real-life students is purely coincidental. Probably.) She is also the author of *Ditched: A Love Story*. She lives with her husband and son on the Central Coast of California. Learn more at www.robinmellom.com.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

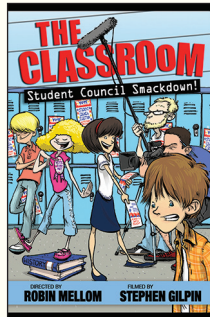
Through a freak incident involving a school bus, a Labrador retriever, and twenty-four rolls of toilet paper, **Stephen Gilpin** knew that someday he would be an artist. He applied himself diligently and many years later, he has found himself the illustrator of around thirty children's books. He lives in Kansas with his wife and kids. Visit his Web site at www.sgilpin.com.

BOOKS BY ROBIN MELLOM



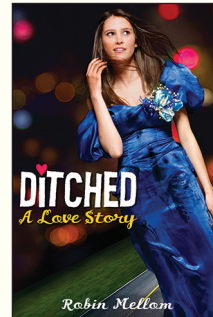
The Classroom
The Epic Documentary
of a Not-Yet-Epic Kid

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The Classroom
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Smackdown!

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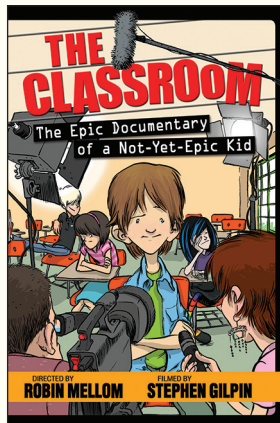


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This guide was created by Dr. Rose Brock, a teacher and school librarian in Coppell, Texas. Dr. Brock holds a Ph.D. in Library Science, specializing in children's and young adult literature.

Many more discussion guides can be found on the Disney • Hyperion Books Web site at www.disneyhyperionbooks.com.



THE CLASSROOM

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