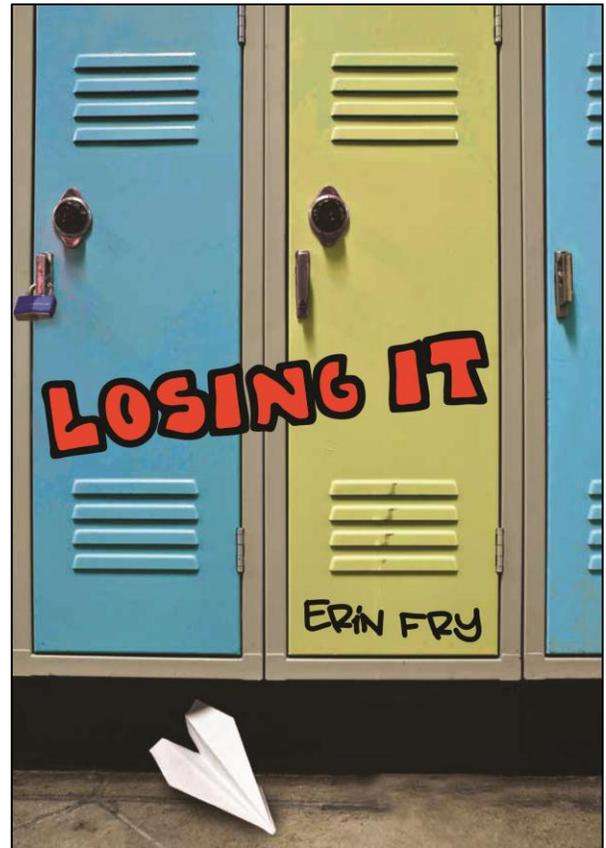


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LOSING IT

by Erin Fry



Teacher's Guide for 5th Grade

For more resources,
go to www.erinmfry.com.

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Notes to the Teacher

These activities and handouts are meant to supplement your students' reading of *LOSING IT*, by Erin Fry. You are free to use them as you'd like and, of course, copy them for your students. You are also welcome to share them with colleagues.

In addition to being an author, I am a teacher and published curriculum writer. I have written for educational publishers and textbook companies, creating standards-based lesson plans and assessments. It's my hope that you will find these resources useful as you read *LOSING IT* with your students.

Summary

After his father has a stroke, Bennett Robinson—an overweight teen who lost his mom to cancer at age five—has to move in with his know-it-all Aunt Laura who makes it her personal mission to get him healthier. After some excruciating morning runs with his *uber*-fit uncle, Bennett decides to try-out for the cross country team, a move that alienates his best friend. As taunts from a persistent school bully escalate, a cute girl in English gets friendlier, and his father's insurance money threatens to pull the plug, Bennett begins to see running as more than just as a sport, more than just a way of losing weight, but as his way of standing up for himself.

Themes

Bennett's story is one that many young people can relate to. As you read this with your class, you may find it helpful to discuss the different themes that are present: teenage obesity, health and fitness, bullying, standing up for oneself, friendship, forgiveness, and acceptance.

Persuasive Writing

The writing assignment at the conclusion of the curriculum guide can be done using only information from the novel. However, there are wonderful resources available online for students to further research this topic. Consider having your students examine the articles on the following sites:

Scholastic.com: Should states ban junk food in schools?

<http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=10853>

Yahoo Voices: Should schools allow the sale of junk food?

<http://voices.yahoo.com/should-schools-allow-sale-junk-food-6976784.html>

Vocabulary

Vocabulary Activity Suggestions

List of Words and Definitions

Context Clues Activity

Vocabulary Map

Vocabulary Activity Suggestions

- Have students complete the **Vocabulary Map** handout (included) for each word.
- Have students
 - copy the sentence from LOSING IT in which each vocabulary word is found.
 - look up and write a brief definition based on that sentence
 - draw a simple illustration that represents that definition
- To review the words, use a **BINGO board** (easy to find or make). Have students
 - randomly fill in the board with the vocabulary words (Note: they may have to use some words more than once.)
 - cross off each word as you read the definition aloud
 - call out BINGO if they cross off an entire line of words
- Consider playing a game such as **Vocabulary Taboo** to help students remember the vocabulary words. To play, divide the class into two teams and seat them on opposite sides of the classroom. Bring two chairs to the front of the room so that each chair faces one team and has its back to the blackboard or white board. One member from each team sits in their team's chair. Write a vocabulary word on the board so that the student seated in the chair cannot see. The teams have one minute, using only verbal clues, to get their seated teammate to say the word written on the board. The only rule is that they CANNOT say the word written on the board, in full or part. The first student in the hot seat to utter the word scores a point for their team. When the round is over, two new team players are rotated into the hot seat and a new word is written up. The first team to score X number of points wins. You can also play this game in pairs or make it more challenging by providing a few key words under each vocabulary word that each team CANNOT use when giving their clues.

Vocabulary List

1. wary (p. 15)
2. terminal (p. 21)
3. assert (p. 28)
4. smug (p. 36)
5. waft, v. (p. 52)
6. grimace (p. 52)
7. scrutinize (p. 59)
8. dwindle (p. 71)
9. cackle (p. 73)
10. brisk (p. 109)
11. survey, v. (p. 126)
12. dignity (p. 154)
13. ruthless (p. 161)
14. contagious (p. 168)
15. engrossed (p. 168)
16. hesitant (p. 184)
17. charade (p. 205)
18. dehydration (p. 208)
19. contemplate (p. 220)
20. sneer (p. 241)

Vocabulary Definitions

1. **wary** (p. 15) cautious, suspicious, alert for problems
2. **terminal** (p. 21) causing death
3. **assert** (p. 28) state something as being true; to insist
4. **smug** (p. 36) highly satisfied with oneself
5. **waft, v.** (p. 52) to move lightly as if by wind or waves
6. **grimace** (p. 52) a twisting of the face to show disapproval or disgust
7. **scrutinize** (p. 59) to examine very closely
8. **dwindle** (p. 71) to make or become less
9. **cackle** (p. 73) to laugh or chatter noisily
10. **brisk** (p. 109) energetic or quick
11. **survey, v.** (p. 126) to look over or examine closely
12. **dignity** (p. 154) the state of being honored or respected
13. **ruthless** (p. 161) having no pity, cruel
14. **contagious** (p. 168) able to be passed on by contact between two people
15. **engrossed** (p. 168) interested
16. **hesitant** (p. 184) slow to act
17. **charade** (p. 205) an act that is fake, pretend
18. **dehydration** (p. 208) to lose water or body fluids
19. **contemplate** (p. 220) to give careful thought or attention
20. **sneer, n.** (p. 241) an expression of hostility

Context Clues Activity

Directions: Read the sentences from LOSING IT below. Infer the meaning of the underlined word based on clues given in the sentence. An example is done for you.

Example: When she saw me, she would look away, flash a wary half smile, and hurry off like my oversize belly was a disease and it might be contagious.

Wary might mean unfriendly or uncertain, since she thinks his oversize belly is contagious.

1. I know what must be running through her mind: *I told you so* and *I knew this would happen*. She's always so smug and sure of herself.

Smug might mean _____

2. I want to say, *Just tell your dad how you feel*. But that would be kind of hypocritical. Do I ever speak up and say how I'm feeling?

Hypocritical might mean _____

3. I scrutinize every inch of him. Has he moved? Are his hands in exactly the same place as last night?

Scrutinize might mean _____

4. Fortunately, they're in trouble a lot . . . and they cut school pretty frequently, so chances are good that within a week, their numbers will start to dwindle.

Dwindle might mean _____

5. "You have to drink when you run, Bennett. No wonder your head hurts! Most headaches are caused by dehydration, you know."

Dehydration might mean _____

6. For a second, I won't look at her. I contemplate ignoring her altogether and stomping back up to my room.

Contemplate might mean _____

VOCABULARY MAP

| Word | Context (Sentence From Book and Page #) | What It Is: Synonym | What It Isn't: Antonym | Connection: (How This Word Relates to Something You Already Know) |
|-------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Pre-Reading Activities

Activities to activate students' prior knowledge and prepare them to read

Anticipation Guide

Tough Choices Activity

Pre-Writing: Teenage Obesity

Informational Reading: Bullies at School

Anticipation Guide

Each of the statements below has something to do with either the story or the characters of LOSING IT.

Which of these statements do you believe is TRUE? Put an X by the sentences you AGREE with. Be ready to explain your choices.

1. _____ It's okay to eat a hamburger and fries sometimes as long as you stay active every day.
2. _____ Really overweight kids shouldn't run a lot until they lose some weight first.
3. _____ The best way to handle a bully is to ignore him or her.
4. _____ If your family has health insurance, even if someone gets really hurt or sick and has to be in the hospital for a long time, you don't have to worry about paying for it.
5. _____ Only really old people have strokes and heart attacks.
6. _____ Adults always know what's best for kids, even if kids don't always agree with what adults tell them to do.

Note to the Teacher

Depending on your class and time constraints, the activity on the following page can be run a few different ways:

- **PAIR-SHARE:** Place students in pairs. Give each pair a copy of the Tough Choices handout on the next page. Introduce each situation and have pairs discuss what they believe to be the correct choice. Call on volunteers to share what they chose and encourage students to respectfully disagree with each other. Promote discussion by pointing out strong arguments made by certain groups and asking other groups if they agree or disagree.
- **FOUR CORNERS:** Label each of the corner of your room with the letters: A, B, C, and D. Place each situation on an overhead projector or PowerPoint presentation. Read through the situation and the choices. Then, instruct students to go stand in the corner of the letter for the choice they most agree with. In those small groups, allow students to form arguments to support their choice. Call on volunteers from each corner to share each group's reasoning. Then, ask if anyone would like to change corners and explain why. Tally students to see what the most popular answer is.
- **CONSENSUS:** Assign the Tough Choices handout for homework. Then in class the following day, place students in groups of three. Read each situation and explain that groups must come to a consensus—agreement—about what is the best choice for that situation. Allow groups time to discuss their choices. Call out each letter and have a volunteer from each group stand if that group chose that letter. Encourage volunteers to argue why their choice is best. Try to get the class to agree on a choice, if possible.

Tough Choices Partner Activity

Directions: In LOSING IT, Bennett has to make some difficult decisions. Read each of the following situations with your partner. Decide which response you think is the BEST and write WHY in the space that follows. Be prepared to share your choice with the class.

SITUATION A: You and your friend eat at the same place every day for lunch. One day when you show up, a group of trouble-making kids sits down next to you. Soon, they start harassing you and threaten to take your lunch. What do you do?

- A. Ignore them and hope that they'll stop.
- B. Stand up to them. Tell them they can't tell you where to sit. You might get in trouble if they start a fight, but sometimes you have to stand up for yourself.
- C. Go tell the lunch duty supervisor that these kids are bugging you and hope that she takes care of it.
- D. Move to another spot; it's easier to give in than try to fight bullies.

Why did you choose your answer?

SITUATION B: You decide that you are going to try a new sport at school. You're really excited about it, but nervous, too. But when you tell your best friend about it, he/she gets really weird and says you shouldn't do it. In fact, you end up in a big fight and don't speak to each other. What do you do?

- A. Forget joining the sport. Your friendship is way more important than some stupid activity.
- B. Stick with your original plan. If your friend is really your friend, he or she will eventually see how important this is to you and get over whatever is bothering them.
- C. Try to compromise; ask your friend if there is a sport that they'd like to join with you. Even if it isn't your first choice, it's something you guys can do together.

Why did you choose your answer?

SITUATION C: You're forced to stay with your aunt for a while. You can't stand her---she's kind of bossy. One morning, she decides to put you on a no-sugar, low-fat diet and set up a daily schedule of workouts for you. What do you do?

- A. Tell her to forget it; you don't have to follow her rules.
- B. Go along with the plan in front of her. But when she's not looking, sneak some Oreos and potato chips. And take your cell phone on the workouts to get in some good texting.
- C. Give her plan a shot. You'd like to try to get a little healthier anyway. She might be bossy, but her plan isn't necessarily a bad one.

Why did you choose your answer?

Teenage Obesity

A lot of kids and teenagers in the United States struggle with **obesity**. Obesity is a condition in which someone has gained an unhealthy amount of body fat, usually 20% or more over what their weight should be. Being obese puts a person at a higher risk for illness, disability, and death.

Today, about 1 out of every 5 teens (ages 12 to 19) is obese. Bennett, the main character in LOSING IT, is fictional. But if he were a real teenager, he would be one of these kids.

Pre-writing activity: In the space below, write a paragraph in which you answer the following question:

What are some challenges that an overweight teenager might face?

Note to the Teacher

Bennett, the main character in *LOSING IT*, is consistently the target of bullying at school. Unfortunately, he's not alone. Bullying is existent and prevalent in most schools and most grade levels. The following activity and informational text provide additional content about bullying and can be used to supplement your students' reading of *LOSING IT*.

The article included is compiled from several sources. Following the article are four questions that ask students to reflect on and analyze what they've read.

The answers to those questions are as follows:

1. **B. Bullying takes many forms and affects a large number of students.** Though the other three answers are all points from the article, only answer B best summarizes the main idea of the passage: that bullying is widespread and can occur in many different ways.
2. **B. to strike back against.** The next sentence gives a clue to the meaning of this word by pointing out that victims sometimes act violently against those who have bullied them.
3. **D. Some experts believe that nearly one out of every three students has experienced some form of bullying, and over half have witnessed a bully in action at school.** This sentence best shows that a large number of students are affected by bullying.
4. **C. A student who posts a rumor about another student on Facebook.** Based on the definition given in the article—bullying which takes place over the internet, through texting, or other digital means—a post on Facebook is the best example of cyberbullying.

In addition, the resources below provide in-depth lesson plans and activities that can help you address the topic of bullying with your students.

Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center, Classroom Toolkits

<http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/activities/toolkits/>

Pacer Center's Teens Against Bullying

<http://www.pacerteensagainstbullying.org/#/act/peer-activities/bullying101.html>

The Bullying Project

<http://bullyingproject.com/curriculum/>

Pre-writing: Bullying

Because of his weight and appearance, Bennett becomes the target of the taunts and threats of a school bully.

Approximately 13 million kids in America will experience some form of bullying this year. Bullying can occur in different ways: physical, verbal, and social. Bullies use both words and actions to hurt others. Bullying even happens over cell phones, on Facebook, or on Twitter.

Discussion: Your teacher will break the class into small groups of 3 to 5 students. Appoint one student in your group to take notes. As a group, consider these questions and be ready to report your ideas to the class.

- What is bullying? Give at least one example of a situation in which bullying is occurring.
- Why might a kid be bullied?
- Why might a kid be a bully?

Pre-writing activity: In the space below, write a paragraph in which you answer the following question:

If you saw another student being bullied, what would you do? Why?

Informational Reading: Bullies at School

Studies focused on bullying at school are not encouraging; they reveal a problem that confronts more students at all grade levels in more areas of their lives than ever before. In fact, some experts believe that nearly one out of every three students has experienced some form of bullying, and over half (56%) have witnessed a bully in action at school.

Who are these bullies? And what kinds of kids are they likely to target? What effect are they having on our campuses, playgrounds, and busses? And what, if anything, can be done to stop them?

What is bullying?

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior toward another person—the target. These behaviors include making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, or excluding a person from a group. In addition, three other characteristics define bullying:

- an imbalance of power—this power can be real or perceived, but bullies use their strength or influence to cause harm, to control, or to manipulate
- an intent to cause harm—bullying is not accidental; bullies plan to damage their victims
- repetition—most bullying is not isolated but takes place repeatedly

What are some different types of bullying?

All of us have been teased by a friend. But when the teasing becomes hurtful and persistent, it crosses the line into bullying. Teasing, however, is only one form of bullying. There are many others. Though bullying can be any action that is unwanted and aggressive, bullying generally falls into three categories.

- Physical—actions such as kicking, shoving, or hair pulling that mean to inflict pain or damage; can also include taking a victim's property
- Verbal—threats, name-calling, teasing, or writing that is mean or degrading
- Social—hurting someone's reputation or their relationships with others; includes spreading rumors, leaving someone out on purpose, embarrassing another person publically, and **cyberbullying**—bullying which takes place over the internet, through texting, or other digital means

Who is likely to be bullied?

Anyone can be the target of a bully. However, certain characteristics make some kids more likely to be a target. These groups of kids might include:

- students who are perceived as different, such as those who are overweight, new to a school, who wear glasses, or seen as not being “cool”
- kids who are seen as unable to defend themselves
- students with lower self-esteem

- those who are less popular or have fewer friends
- students with physical or learning disabilities

What are some of the effects of bullying?

Bullying affects not only the victim, but also the bully and even bystanders who witness repeated bullying. The biggest impact undoubtedly, though, is on the person who is the target of the bullying. Targets of bullies may suffer from:

- increased depression and anxiety, and feelings of loneliness
- changes in sleeping and eating patterns
- decreased academic achievement and lower school participation

Sometimes, students who are the target of a bully will **retaliate**. This could involve acting out violently against those that they believe have bullied them.

Why do kids bully others?

There are many reasons that a kid would bully another kid. Sometimes, the aggressive behavior has been modeled for them. Others use bullying to try to raise their social standings with their peers. Nearly one in five students admits that they are responsible for bullying someone else. Bullying also has long-term effects on the kids who continually commit these aggressive acts as well. These effects include:

- a greater likelihood of abusing drugs or alcohol later
- an increased chance of dropping out of school
- a greater probability of having a criminal conviction later in life

How can bullying be stopped?

On any school day, roughly 160,000 students in the United States stay home due to fear of a bully. These students are being denied their right to an educational environment in which they can feel safe and in which they can participate actively and without fear.

It takes an entire community working together to create a place where bullies can't exist. But there are things that we can all do to minimize the effects of bullying.

- Don't give bullies an audience. If you see an incident occurring, move away quickly and let an adult know what's going on.
- Don't be an aggressor. Remember that everyone is different. Helping your friends accept others' differences instead of belittling them is a good way to combat bullying.
- If you are the target of a bully, try telling him or her to stop in a calm, clear voice. Then, walk away and let an adult know what just happened.
- Help out a kid who is a target. Let him or her know that they have a friend and that they aren't alone.

(Sources: www.stopbullying.gov, <http://www.education.com/reference/article/why-do-kids-bully/> and www.bullyingstatistics.org)

Questions to answer after you've read "Bullies At School."

1. Which of the following best summarizes the main idea of this article?
 - a. Most kids have been bullied at some point in their lives.
 - b. Bullying takes many forms and affects a large number of students.
 - c. The best way to fight bullying is to tell an adult when you see it happening.
 - d. Bullies choose targets who don't have many friends or who are seen as different.

Sometimes, students who are the target of a bully will retaliate. This could involve acting out violently against those that they believe have bullied them.

2. Which of these is the best definition for the underlined word?
 - a. to forgive a crime
 - b. to strike back against
 - c. to spread rumors or lies
 - d. to intentionally hurt oneself
3. Which of the following statements from the passage above best illustrates that bullying is a widespread problem in schools?
 - a. Targets of bullies may suffer from increased depression and anxiety.
 - b. Bullying affects not only the victim, but also the bully and even bystanders who witness repeated bullying.
 - c. Bullying can include making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, or excluding a person from a group.
 - d. Some experts believe that nearly one out of every three students has experienced some form of bullying, and over half have witnessed a bully in action at school.
4. Based on the passage's definition, which of the following would likely qualify as an example of cyberbullying?
 - a. A student who trips another student on the school bus.
 - b. A student who threatens another student over the phone.
 - c. A student who posts a rumor about another student on Facebook.
 - d. A student who writes an insulting note about another student and then passes it around at school.

Guided Reading Activities

Activities that can be assigned as students read the book

Connector

Discussion Leader

Food and Exercise Log

Chapter Discussion Questions

Connector

Date: _____

Pages Read: _____

Directions: As you read, find connections between Bennett's story and the world you know. This means connecting the reading to:

____ your own life

____ other people or problems

____ other books or stories

____ things that have happened at school

____ events you've heard about in the news

Fill in the chart below:

| Event or detail from the story (include page #) | Your connection |
|--|-----------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Discussion Leader

Date: _____

Pages Read: _____

As you read your assigned pages with your group, think about the **big ideas** of today's reading.

First, write down three main things that happened.

1.

2.

3.

Now, write down some questions that your group might have about today's reading.

1. Why . . . _____
_____?

2. How . . . _____
_____?

3. If _____
_____?

Note to the Teacher: Food and Exercise Log

Consider having your students keep a food and exercise journal throughout their reading of LOSING IT. A sample EXERCISE JOURNAL might look like this:

| EXERCISE JOURNAL | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Monday | | | |
| Tuesday | | | |
| Wednesday | | | |
| Thursday | | | |
| Friday | | | |
| Saturday | | | |
| Sunday | | | |
| Total Weekly Time | | | |

Encourage them to log any activity that has them up and moving around: sports, P.E., walking, running, biking, playing outside, etc.

A sample FOOD JOURNAL might look like this:

| FOOD JOURNAL | Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner |
|---------------------|------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Monday | | | |
| Tuesday | | | |
| Wednesday | | | |
| Thursday | | | |
| Friday | | | |
| Saturday | | | |
| Sunday | | | |

At the completion of the novel, have your students reflect on their habits with these questions:

Examine your food journal. Write a sentence that evaluates your intake of the following: Fruits? Vegetables? Fast food? Proteins? Whole grains? Are you eating too much or too little of any one food category? What is one area of strength in your eating? What is one area of weakness? Write two sentences that summarize your overall thoughts as you look at your food journal.

Now, examine your exercise journal. Are you getting enough exercise? The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) recommends 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Are you meeting that guideline? If not, why not? What can you do to improve?

Chapter Discussion Questions

Chapter 1: Belly Button Stains, Baseball, and 9-1-1

1. Describe the relationship Bennett has with his dad. How might his mom's death have affected this relationship?
2. Hypothesize—or make a realistic guess—about what happened to Bennett's dad at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 2: Is Your Dad Dead?

1. What are Bennett's feelings toward Aunt Laura? Why does he feel this way?
2. Describe Aunt Laura's feelings toward Bennett's dad.

Chapter 3: Waiting, Waiting, Waiting

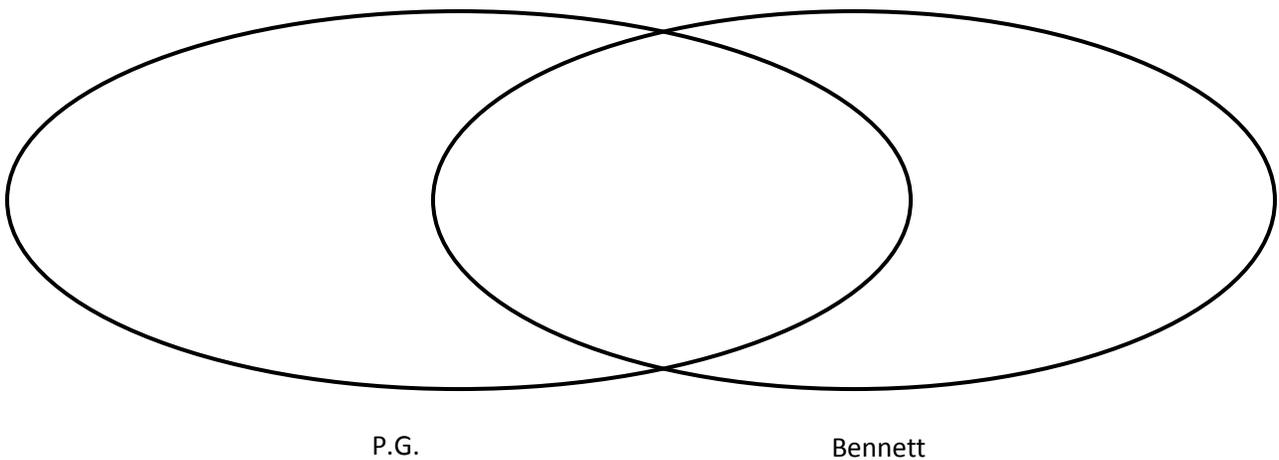
1. Bennett uses the phrase "like vines in a sterilized jungle," (page 29) to describe what he's seeing in the hospital. What are the two things he's comparing? What kind of picture does it create in your mind?
2. How is Aunt Laura's arrival to the hospital different than the Gomez's arrival? Give at least two examples from this chapter that show how Aunt Laura and the Gomez family are different, including how Bennett feels when he sees them.

Chapter 4: The Big Aunt Laura Takeover

1. Why is Aunt Laura Bennett's only choice as a guardian?
2. List three or four specific things you know about Bennett so far. You can include things about his life, his personality, or his appearance.
3. Why doesn't Bennett insist that he stay with his dad instead of going home with Aunt Laura?

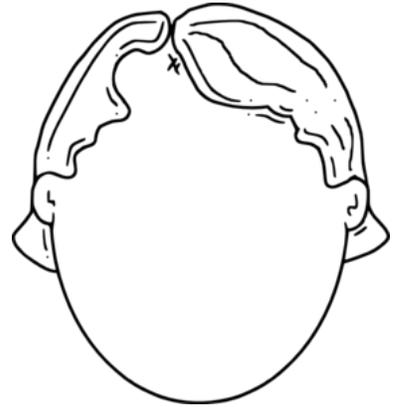
Chapter 5: When a Dodgers Fan Meets a Giants Fan

1. What does the kindergarten playground scene tell us about P.G.'s character?
2. Where the circles overlap in the Venn diagram, write at least two things Bennett and P.G. have in common. Where the circles separate, write at least one way each character is different.



Chapter 6: Deflated

In the outline of the head shown below, fill in a facial expression to indicate how you think Bennett is feeling in this chapter. Then, draw a speech or thought bubble. In one or two sentences, summarize how he might answer the question, “So, how are things going?” Your response should start with the pronoun “I” since you’ll be writing from Bennett’s perspective.



Chapter 7: Operation: Get Bennett Healthy

1. Why does Bennett enjoy spending time with Josh?
2. Discuss why Bennett gets angry with Aunt Laura at breakfast. Do you think he was right or wrong to get angry with her?

Chapter 8: Hope

1. Why do you think this chapter is entitled, “Hope”?
2. What is the significance of the last two sentences of this chapter?
3. Do you notice a change in Bennett? If so, identify at least one way that he has changed since his dad has had the stroke.

Chapter 9: Control Freak

Use three words to describe the mood at the end of this chapter. How is it different from the mood in the last chapter?

Chapter 10: Aunt Laura, One. Bennett, Zero.

1. What is Bennett's reaction to his aunt's plan to have him exercise with his uncle? Why? Does Bennett have a right to be angry?
2. Imagine you are Aunt Laura. Draw the same outline of the head you drew for Chapter 6. Draw a thought bubble. Then, write two sentences, both starting with the pronoun "I" in which you tell how Aunt Laura might explain to Bennett why she's making him exercise.

Chapter 11: Fat Boy

1. What is Bennett's reaction to Luis's taunts at lunch?
2. What do you think Bennett *should* have said to Luis? Write one to sentences in which you say what you WISH Bennett would have said to Luis.

Chapter 12: Shrink

1. What does Uncle Jim suggest to Bennett?
2. Do you think that it will be as easy as Uncle Jim makes it sound? Why or why not?

Chapter 13: When the Money Runs Out

Explain the new problem that Bennett and his dad face in this chapter.

Chapter 14: Cross-Country Flyer

Do you think someone overweight like Bennett can be successful in a sport like running cross country? Why or why not?

Chapter 15: Go—For—It

Why would someone who is overweight like Bennett be uncomfortable in a locker room?

Chapter 16: Cute Girl Calls Fat Boy

1. What is P.G.'s advice to Bennett about Luis? Do you think it's good advice?

2. Why do you think Taylor might have called Bennett? Predict why she called and what will happen when he calls her back.

Chapter 17: The Longest Mile Ever

1. Why do you think Bennett is so determined to complete this morning run? What does this reveal about Bennett's personality?
2. Why is P.G. disappointed in Bennett at lunch? Do you think it's fair of P.G. to feel this way?
3. Why does Bennett dump the Oreos in the trash? What does throwing away a package of cookies mean to him?

Chapter 18: The Cross-Country Question

1. What is the significance of Bennett's dream?
2. What do you think of P.G.'s advice to Bennett about Luis? Should Bennett stand up to him? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think Bennett doesn't confide in P.G. about cross country? Do you think this was a good or a bad decision?
4. Describe your first impression of Kendra. Give at least one example from the book to support your description.

Chapter 19: *Loco* P.G.

Imagine you are P.G. Draw the same outline of the head you drew for Chapter 6. Draw a thought bubble. Then write two sentences, both starting with the pronoun “I” in which you explain why P.G. reacted the way he did when he learned Bennett was going to run cross country.

Chapter 20: Commitment

1. Why is Bennett getting angry with P.G.?
2. How has Bennett’s attitude toward cross country changed by the end of this chapter? Why?

Chapter 21: In a Rut

1. How does Bennett react when his father says, “You . . . don’t . . . understand”? Do you think it was a fair reaction?
2. Describe Bennett’s feelings about his mom. Do you think they are reasonable?

Chapter 22: “Date” Night

1. What disorder does Maddy have? Describe how this disorder affects her movements.
2. Why do you think Bennett feels comfortable around Maddy? Do you think he would have felt that comfortable before his dad’s stroke? Why or why not?

3. How much has the relationship between Bennett and Taylor changed?

Chapter 23: Run. Eat. Sleep. Repeat.

1. Bennett says that what he feels now when he sees Luis is acceptance. Why does that feeling scare him?
2. Bennett questions how he should have handled Luis in the library. Re-write the end of this scene. How should Bennett have handled it differently?

Chapter 24: When the Gun Goes Off . . .Run!

1. How does Bennett feel about having his Aunt Laura at the race? About his dad not being there?
2. Describe how Bennett feels during this race. Why do you think he doesn't stop and walk?
3. How does this chapter illustrate a significant change in Bennett?

Chapter 25: Counting Down the Days

1. Why does Aunt Laura think P.G. is upset with Bennett about cross country? Do you think she's right?
2. In what ways does this scene show a different side to Aunt Laura than Bennett has seen before?

Chapter 26: Love Notes and Side Cramps

1. Do you think it was a good idea for Bennett to stand up to Luis? Why or why not?
2. What does P.G.'s response reveal about why he's angry with Bennett? Do you think he has a right to be angry? Why or why not?

Chapter 27: Dodging Crap

1. Why do you think Bennett finally stands up to Luis? What do you think will happen now that he has?
2. Have you ever had a day like Bennett's having? In 1-2 sentences, describe how you feel during a really rotten day.

Chapter 28: The Last Straw

1. Since Vindeep and Calvin are not running in the next race, how does this affect the team? What does it mean for Bennett?
2. Why do you think this news is suddenly "the last straw" for Bennett?
3. In the last paragraph of this chapter, Bennett turns and walks away from his team. Predict what you think will happen because he's made this choice.

Chapter 29: Want. Food.

1. Why do you think Bennett eats the cake, the cheese crackers, and the candy when he gets home, after so many weeks of eating healthier foods and trying to take care of his body?
2. What is on the flyer that Bennett finds? Why does this make him so angry?

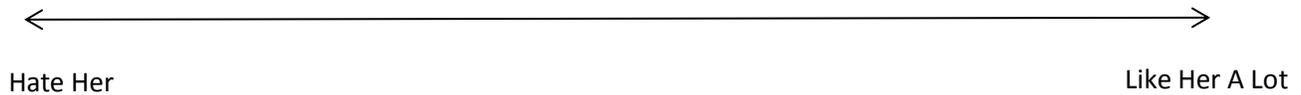
Chapter 30: When a Dodgers Fan Needs a Giants Fan

1. Were you surprised that P.G. showed up? Why or why not?
2. Do you think Bennett should have accepted his apology so easily?
3. What do you think of the advice that P.G. gives Bennett about the cross country team?
4. What kind of coach do you think P.G. will make for Bennett? Give one example from the book to support your answer.

Chapter 31: Forgiveness

1. Why does Aunt Laura say she was so angry with Bennett's dad?
2. Do you think this conversation will change things between Bennett and Aunt Laura? Why or why not?
3. How are they going to pay for Bennett's dad's rehab?

4. Draw the following spectrum. Place an X showing how you felt about Aunt Laura at the beginning of the book. Then, place a circle showing how you feel about Aunt Laura now. Describe in two sentences why you placed your marks where you did.



Chapter 32: Operation: Get Bennett Faster

1. Why do you think Bennett hasn't gone to swim parties in the past? Why do you think he's willing to go the one at Mark's house?
2. List three words to describe how you think Bennett felt watching his dad.

Chapter 33: Plate Time

1. The picture frame that Bennett's aunt and uncle give him has a quote by John Wooden. Who was John Wooden?
2. Re-read the quote by Wooden. What do you think it means? How might it apply to Bennett's running on the cross country team?

Chapter 34: When a Guy's Gotta Pee . . .

1. When Luis taunts Bennett in front of the bathroom, Bennett doesn't back down. How is this different from the way Bennett reacted to Luis at the beginning of the book?

2. Why do you think Bennett stands up for Luis in front of the principal and assistant principal?
3. Describe at least two ways that Bennett has changed since the beginning of the story until now.

Chapter 35: The Rock

1. How does Bennett feel when he sees his dad at his race?
2. What effect does the Meadowbrook kid with the shaggy hair have on Bennett at the start line? How does he respond?
3. After reading the last line of this chapter, predict what you think happens next.

Chapter 36: Finishing What I Started

1. Why is finishing this race so important to Bennett?
2. How does he manage to beat the kid from Meadowbrook?

Chapter 37: Fast Boy

1. What do you think the Meadowbrook kid might have been thinking when Bennett first called out his name after the race?
2. Do you think Bennett will keep running? Why or why not?

Post-Reading Activities

Activities to help students process the main ideas of the book

Similes and Metaphors

Persuasive Essay

Story Map

Culminating Activity Ideas

Similes and Metaphors

A **simile** is a comparison between two unlike things. It uses the words LIKE or AS.

As you read these two examples, note what two things are being compared:

*The poor dog's **water dish** was as dry as **a bone**.*

*I tried to be as quiet as **a mouse** while I was in the library.*

Metaphors make a comparison between unlike things. They don't use the words LIKE or AS; they are less direct.

As you read these two examples of metaphors, note what two things are being compared:

*Your **voice** is **music** to my ears!*

***Jake** was an impassable **wall**, slamming every tennis ball back at his opponent easily.*

Similes and metaphors are both known as **figurative language**. Any time you describe something by comparing it with something else, you are using figurative language.

In LOSING IT, the author uses a lot of figurative language to describe the world around Bennett.

Read the sentences below. On the blank, write an S if the comparison is a **SIMILE** or an M if it a **METAPHOR**. Then, underline the two things being compared.

1. ____ With the room temperature at ungodly hot and my body resembling that of a walrus, pushing up off the couch requires a lot of grunting . . .
2. ____ She smelled like a rosebush. Or maybe sixty of them. Her shiny, pointy nails dug into my arms like thorns.
3. ____ It seems as if everywhere I look there are gunmetal gray machines with cords hanging like vines in a sterilized jungle.
4. ____ At least three monitors blip steadily while about three dozen cords snake from him to scary-looking machines.
5. ____ And like a herd of antelope startled by a pack of hungry lions, the whole class would take off running up that awful hill.
6. ____ But mostly, I'm just deflated, like a tire who's met a nail.

7. ____ My heart feels like a brick.
8. ____ You've heard the rumors, dude. A switchblade as big as a banana.
9. ____ But nobody seems to notice or care that I'm as flexible as a tree trunk.
10. ____ This is a no-brainer for me. I head toward the turtles in the back.
11. ____ I feel like a Pepsi bottle that's been shaken up.
12. ____ I probably resemble a hippopotamus in running shoes.
13. ____ Forget belly button stains: the sweat pours off of me in waterfalls.
14. ____ Jameel is quick as lightening, hauling my dad upright.
15. ____ They're running like a well-oiled machine.

Now, create your own similes. Use these clues to get you started. Remember that your comparisons should be between two UNLIKE things that have a similar quality.

1. The sun that morning was as bright as _____.
2. When the race started, she ran like _____.
3. He's been working out so much, he's as strong as _____.
4. When she heard she'd won the competition, her face went as white as _____
_____.
5. The two sisters often fight like _____.

Persuasive Essay

You will write an essay in which you argue FOR or AGAINST one of these statements.

Schools should ban the sale of junk food on campus.

Given the health risks, overweight kids should not be allowed to join sports teams until they lose weight.

If a student has been found guilty of bullying another student, they should not be allowed to attend any school but must take online classes or do independent study.

You must use some examples from your reading of LOSING IT. You may also do additional research using books in the library or the internet. Then, decide where YOU stand on this issue.

You will then write a persuasive essay. Your essay must include:

AN INTRODUCTION:

- Begin with an interesting HOOK
 - a quotation (words from somebody else)
 - a fascinating question
 - an interesting or controversial fact/statistic
- Identify the MAIN TOPIC of your essay and your POSITION

BODY:

- Use a transition to begin the paragraph (First, Most importantly)
- State your first MAIN ARGUMENT
- Add supporting details for this argument from LOSING IT or your research
- Use a second transition (Secondly, Also) and state your next MAIN ARGUMENT
- Add supporting details for this argument from LOSING IT or your research
- Use a final transition (Finally, Next) and state your last MAIN ARGUMENT
- Add supporting details for this argument from LOSING IT or your research

A CONCLUSION:

- Begin with a summary transition (In conclusion, In summary, Overall)
- Restate your POSITION on this topic
- End with A) a question that will keep readers thinking; B) a call for action; or C) a memorable quotation.

Story Map

Main character:
A few words to describe him:

Setting:

Main problem of the story:

Other problems:

A main event of the story:

A main event of the story:

A main event of the story:

How the problem is resolved:

The ending:

Culminating Story Ideas

Consider the following activities and projects as you complete the reading of this novel.

Healthy Food Fest

Have students brainstorm a list of “Bennett’s Favorite Foods” and “Aunt Laura’s Favorite Foods.” Bennett’s list might include Butterfingers, Oreos, cheeseburgers, and French fries, while Aunt Laura’s might include celery sticks, apples, whole grain pancakes, and turkey sandwiches on wheat bread. Then, challenge students to research recipes that are healthy but still taste good. A few online resources that can help: <http://www.eatright.org/kids/> and <http://foodfitforkids.com/>.

Get Up and Move

Have your class organize a 1K (about .6 miles) walk/run on their school campus. Set a date and have them design a course on campus. Invite other classrooms to participate. Decide if you are going to make this a fundraiser and who you are going to raise the money for (Note: Some options that stem from the book might include the *American Diabetes Association*, or an organization that battles childhood obesity such as the *Alliance for a Healthier Generation* or *Let’s Move!*) Brainstorm what responsibilities will need to be taken care of that day: start line, finish line, course set up, water, clean-up, etc. Encourage students to train with their friends before race day.

A Healthier Me

Brainstorm as a class specific ways that students can make a change in their daily lives to become healthier and more active. Ideas might include walking to school instead of driving; substituting soda with water or milk; watching less T.V. or playing less video games; taking the stairs instead of the elevator; going for a hike or walk with their families; making their lunch instead of buying it; eating breakfast; etc. Give each student a piece of large white construction paper and have them create a poster that encourages students in their school to adopt a healthier lifestyle. Poster requirements might include: a title, a catchy slogan, a large colorful illustration, and a caption with at least one piece of information they’ve learned from reading the book.

Language Arts Common Core Standards

GRADE 5

READING OF LITERATURE

RL.5.2. Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text. (*Chapter Discussion Questions*)

RL.5.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes. (*Context Clues Activity, Similes and Metaphors Activity*)

READING OF INFORMATIONAL TEXT

RI.5.2. Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text. (*Bullying At School Reading and Questions*)

RI.5.4. Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a *grade 5 topic or subject area*. (*Bullying At School Reading and Questions*)

RI.5.8. Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s). (*Bullying At School Reading and Questions*)

WRITING

W.5.1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information. (*Persuasive Essay*)

Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.

Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.

Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., *consequently, specifically*).

Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

W.5.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.) (*Persuasive Essay*)

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

*SL.5.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 5 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. (Tough Choices Activity)*

Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.

Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.

Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.

LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

L.5.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 5 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. (Context Clues Activity)

Use context (e.g., cause/effect relationships and comparisons in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

L.5.5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. (Similes and Metaphors Activity)

Interpret figurative language, including similes and metaphors, in context.