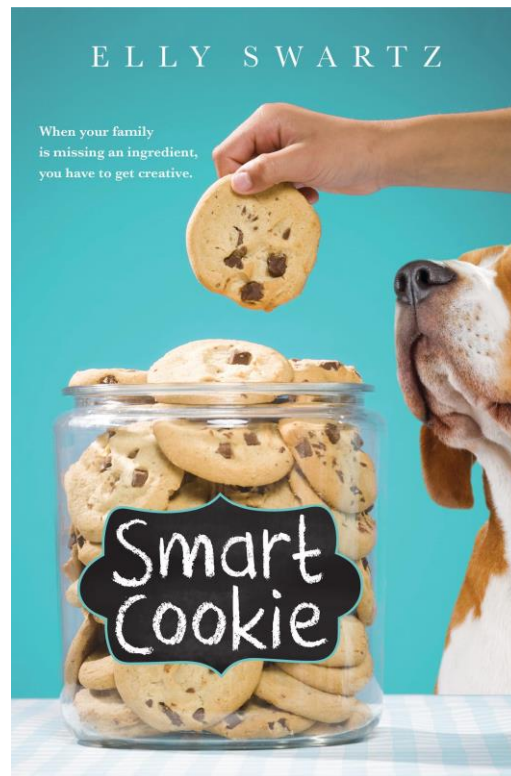


*A Teacher's Guide For*

# **SMART COOKIE**

## **About the Book**



### **SMART COOKIE**

*~When your family is missing an ingredient, you have to get creative.*

Sometimes you need to keep a few secrets.

Frankie knows she'll be in big trouble if Dad discovers she secretly posted a dating profile for him online. But she's determined to find him a wife, even if she ends up grounded for life. Frankie wants what she had before Mom died. A family of three. Two is a pair of socks or the wheels on a bicycle or a busy weekend at the B&B where Frankie and Dad live. Three is a family. And Frankie's is missing a piece.

But Operation Mom is harder to pull off than Frankie expects. None of the Possibles are very momish, the B&B's guests keep canceling, Frankie's getting the silent treatment

from her once best friend, and there's a maybe-ghost hanging around. Worst of all, Gram and Dad are definitely hiding secrets of their own. If a smart cookie like Frankie wants to save the B&B and find her missing piece, she's going to have to figure out what secrets are worth keeping and when it's time to let go.

## ***About the Author***



Elly Swartz is a middle grade author who loves writing, Twizzlers, and anything with her family. Her debut novel, *FINDING PERFECT* (2016) is about a twelve-year-old girl named Molly, friendship, family, OCD, and a slam poetry competition that will determine everything. Then in *SMART COOKIE* (Scholastic 2018) you meet the spunky and big-hearted Frankie who is all about family with a dash of mischief and mystery! And in 2019, say hello to Maggie in *GIVE AND TAKE*. If you want to connect with Elly or learn more about what she's working on, you can find her at [www.ellyswartz.com](http://www.ellyswartz.com) or on Twitter @ellyswartz.

## **General Discussion Questions and Activities**

### **Thematic Questions**

1. Sitting at the cemetery with Dad and Gram on Mom's birthday, Frankie wonders "how many people one person gets in a lifetime" and if there is "some sort of cap on heart space."
  - a. Why do you think Frankie wonders about these questions at this point in the book?
  - b. How do you think Frankie's response to her questions would change from the start of the story to the end of the novel?

c. How would you respond to Frankie's questions? Explain your answer.

2. Throughout the novel, Frankie discovers that traditions are an important part of her life. Discuss 2-3 traditions that are unique to Frankie and the Greene family? What makes something a tradition? Do you have any special traditions? If so, please describe one. If not, is there one that you would like to start?

3. There are many characters in SMART COOKIE who keep secrets. Gram keeps her feelings for Mr. Caldwell a secret. Dad and Annie keep their relationship a secret. Jess keeps her family challenges a secret. And Frankie is keeping Operation Mom a secret. Just to name a few.

- a. In what ways can secrets be harmful? In what ways can secrets be purposeful?
- b. Pick a character. Identify their secret and reason for keeping it. Do you agree with the choice they made or do you think they should have revealed their secret sooner? Explain your answer.

### Readers' and Writers' Craft:

1. The author effectively uses compound adjectives to describe Frankie's world. For example, *double-fisted-like-I-mean-it* hug, *you're-not-in-trouble-but-this-is-still-embarrassing* talk, *spill-the-beans* honest, *dead-people-live-here* air. Choose 5 nouns and describe them using the compound adjective technique.

2. The author includes Frankie's letters to Mom throughout the novel. Why do you think she chose to use this technique? What do you as a reader learn from those letters? Choose one of the following pairs and write a letter in Frankie's Dear Mom style.

Writer	Recipient
Jess	Dad
Gram	Mom
Dad	Frankie

3. In SMART COOKIE, Frankie often misunderstands characters' intentions or actions. For example, Frankie assumes Jessica's decision to be called Jess is because she is too cool to be referred to by her childhood name, when, in actuality, Jess's choice is based on the hurt she felt when her dad left the family. When Jess finally shares this, Frankie is better able to empathize and understand. Being able to take the perspective of others helps to minimize these sorts of misunderstandings and hurt feelings and allows space for empathy.

One's first conclusion is not always the correct one! Challenge yourself to move beyond your first conclusion by coming up with five different reasons why a person might:

- Not speak on the first day of school.
- Not attend a sleepover party.
- Wear the same clothes to school.
- Spend all day sleeping.
- Be crying.
- Leave school early.
- Be unkind or cruel to others.

**Scavenger Hunt** – Search the pages of SMART COOKIE and find idiosyncrasies about each character. How does Frankie describe her herd?

Character's Name	Idiosyncrasies	Page number
Mom	Noseless smiley face	124

Now it's your turn. Imagine your herd. Make a list of their idiosyncrasies.

Your Herd	Idiosyncrasy 1	Idiosyncrasy 2

## **Important Quotes to Consider:**

After reading the book, find one of the quotations below and consider what it means and how it functions in the context of the story.

“Sometimes to fix your family, you need to keep a few secrets.” p. 1

“Seems lately a lot of our conversations are filled with empty holes of things not said.” p. 97

“It’s okay for us to disagree, Francine. I love you and I love Gram, but sometimes we’re going to think differently. That’s not a bad thing.” p. 141

“I turn out my jacket pockets. And the charm bracelets fell onto the pavement.” p. 149

“In that moment, I know we’re the same. She did the things she did for her mom, and I did what I had to for my dad.” p. 227

“For the first time in a very long time, I realize that’s what Dad and I are and have always been. A family. Even if we can fit on a bicycle.” p. 259

## **Big Project - Who’s in Your Herd?**

It’s time to talk about YOUR herd.

Think about the concept of a “herd” based on SMART COOKIE. What is the purpose of a herd? Who gets included in a person’s herd? How should a person’s herd make them feel?

Based on your definition, make a list of people who you would include in your herd.

**Now it’s time to choose one of the following Who’s In Your Herd projects.**

### **I. Your herd’s playlist**

For each member of your herd, choose a song that you think best represents that person and/or your relationship with that person. You can pick a song based off its lyrics, sound/musicality, shared memory attached to that song, etc. Write an explanation for each of your choices.

Example from SMART COOKIE

Gram - *I Did it My Way* Frank Sinatra

Gram is my person. She is the one I go to when I want to be surrounded by love and strength and really good cookies. But she collects stuff. Lots of stuff. And I don’t really get that. She says it’s just her way.

## II. Your herd's social media accounts

Choose a social media platform of your liking: Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook. Then design an account for your herd. You should not create a REAL account.

For **Instagram**, choose a username that best represents your herd, and then choose at least 10 pictures that provide a glimpse into your herd and/or individual members of your herd. For each photo, provide a sentence explaining why you chose to include that photo and/or provide a caption that explains the significance of the photo in terms of your herd.



### *SmartCookies*

Gram's rainbow-colored stone box hides her secrets, her love, her life. She writes, "I love you infinity," signed, like Mom did, with a nose-less smiley face. She is the head of our herd. The smartest cookie.

For **Twitter**, choose a username that best represents your herd and write ten 140-character tweets that provide a glimpse into your herd and/or an individual member of your herd.

@smartcookies  
Who are my people? #missingmom  
Two is a pair of socks. #family  
Pink roses arrived. #secrets

## III. Your herd's ode/poem/song/ rap

Write a poem that captures the essence of your herd--what makes them special, what makes them unique, what you value about each member. You can write an ode, a sonnet, a rap, a free verse poem, whatever type of poetry makes most sense to you. You can have each member "write" his/her own stanza, have each stanza be about a characteristic of your herd, etc.

## IV. Your herd's time capsule

In a vessel of your choosing, place an item (or a picture of an item) for each member of your herd that represents that person in some way. It can be a photo, object, or even a scent that reminds you of that person. The item can be something symbolic as well (i.e. a rock to represent someone's strength). In your time capsule, also include a page with a sentence explaining each item as well as a few sentences explaining what you would want the discoverer of your capsule to learn from your herd.

The questions in this guide align to the following Common Core State Standards.

**Common Core Standards 4-7**

CCSS ELA - Language L4-7.2, L4-7.3, L4-7.5

CCSS ELA - Reading: Literature RL4-7.1, RL4-7.2, RL4-7.3, RL4-7.4, RL4-7.5, RL4-7.6

CCSS ELA - Speaking and Listening SL4-7.1, SL4-7.3, SL4-7.4, SL4-7.5; SL4-7.6

CCSS ELA - Writing W4-7.1, W4-7.2, W4-7.3, W4-7.4, W4-7.6

*This guide was written by author Elly Swartz and educator Anna Kontos. As an educator for over twenty years, Anna has served in both public and independent schools as a classroom teacher, literacy coach, English department head, and learning specialist. Anna holds a Masters in Education in language and literacy from Harvard.*