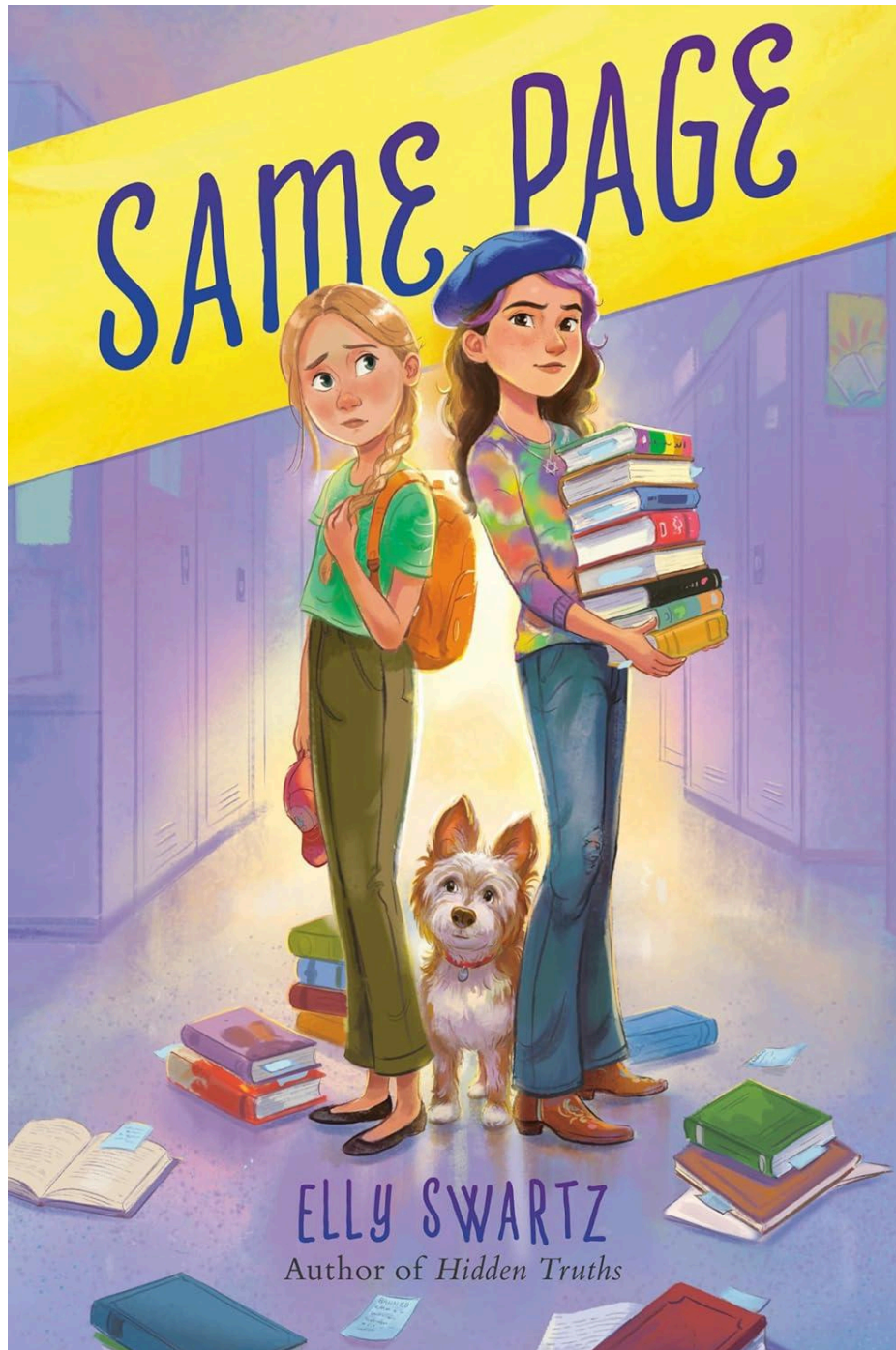


Teacher's Guide

SAME PAGE

By Elly Swartz



Praise for Same Page

“As I read Same Page, I said to myself multiple times: “I wish I were Bess’s librarian. I’m proud of her for standing up for the rights of readers. I’m grateful she cares so deeply and passionately about story and advocates for libraries, librarians, and readers. Thank you for being a Book Warrior, Bess!”

- JOHN SCHU
TEACHER-LIBRARIAN
NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF
LOUDER THAN HUNGER

“Same Page is a powerful, heartfelt story of a brave girl’s campaign against book-banning and other forms of intolerance. Once again, Elly Swartz has written a beautifully crafted novel that readers will find both relatable and inspiring.”

- BARBARA DEE, AUTHOR OF TEAR
THIS DOWN AND UNSTUCK

“This is the book the world needs now. Fast-paced, relatable, unputdownable...”

- LIZA WIEMER, BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF THE ASSIGNMENT

“A timely, and relevant story readers will enjoy and learn from.”

- BECKY CALZADA,
CO-FOUNDER TX FREEDOM FIGHTERS

About the Book

From the beloved author of *Hidden Truths* comes a novel about take-charge sixth grader Bess Stein, who brings together friends and a group of rockstar librarians called the Book Warriors to fight a book ban happening at her middle school.

Bess Stein is more than ready to be 6th grade class president. She's got tons of ideas—including a book vending machine—and her new friend June is beside her as vice-president. Together, they're unstoppable!

But when the books the girls want included in the vending machine come under fire, Bess is stunned. How can one person believe they have the right to decide what other people can and cannot read? It turns out that June's mom is leading the fight, and now everything's a mess.

Bess misses June—but she wants to make sure kids who might like these books get the chance to read them, even if it means she and June can't be friends. With such different opinions, will they ever be on the same page?

At its heart, this is a story about friendship, allyship, and doing the right thing even when—or especially when—the right thing is hard to do. It asks the questions that I believe kids (and grown-ups) are asking today. What happens when you and your friend are not on the same page? What if it's about something big? Something that goes to the very core of who you are? Can you still be friends?



About the Author

Elly Swartz is the acclaimed author of six middle grade novels: *Finding Perfect*, *Smart Cookie*, *Give and Take*, *Dear Student*, *Hidden Truths*, and *Same Page*. Swartz's books reflect her commitment to raising awareness about mental health and neurodiversity. Her debut novel, *Finding Perfect*, was named one of the Best Children's Books About Mental Health by the Child Mind Institute, *Dear Student* was recommended by *Parents Magazine* and won the PA State Award for Middle Grade, and *Hidden Truths* has received starred reviews from Kirkus and from School Library Journal, is a Kirkus Best Books of 2023, an Amazon Best Book for November, an Amazon Editors' pick, The Week Junior Book Club pick, a Project LIT Book Club selection, and a winner of a 2023 Nerdy for Middle Grade Fiction.

Swartz travels the country meeting with thousands of students each year to empower their own personal narrative. Swartz resides in Massachusetts. Connect with her at ellyswartz.com, on Twitter @ellyswartz, and on Instagram or Threads @ellyswartzbooks.



To attain specific Common Core grade-level standards for your classroom, teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities in this guide to your students' needs. You know your kids best!

Pre-reading Questions

Allyship

- What does it mean to be an ally? Break into small groups and discuss.
- List the different ways a person can be an ally.
- When you finish reading *Same Page*, cite the ways that Bess, June, and Knox were and were not allies and to whom.
- In the story, June says this, “I mean, most of the books that were pulled aren’t even about kids like us.” P. 84. In your small groups discuss this quote. Do you think June was acting as an ally when she said this? If not, what could she have done or said differently to have been an ally in that moment?
- After reading *Same Page*, think of times that you were an ally? Discuss.

Activism and Advocacy

- Is there a difference between activism and advocacy?
- Give examples of each.
- Return to this question when you finish reading, *Same Page*. Provide examples of activism and advocacy from the story.
- Think about what you learned about activism and advocacy in the story. What are some examples of where you see this in your world?

Bravery

- Bess says, “Being brave isn’t about doing stuff when you’re not scared; it’s about doing stuff when you are.” P. 130. Do you agree or disagree? Write a few sentences explaining your answer.
- Share a time when you felt scared and you acted anyway or a time when you felt scared and didn’t act. Looking back, would you have done anything differently now? Explain why or why not.

Success

- Write a short definition of success.
- Bess’s mom in, *Same Page*, says, “Success isn’t measured by the minds you change, but by the courage it takes to speak your truth.” P. 196. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer in a few sentences.
- Using Bess’s mom’s definition of success, find examples in the text when Bess, June, and Knox were successful.

CCSS ELA - Language L6.1, L6.2, L6.3, L6.4, L6.5
CCSS ELA - Reading: Literature RL6.1, RL6.2, RL6.4
CCSS ELA - Speaking and Listening SL 6.1, SL 6.3, SL 6.4
CCSS ELA - Writing W6.1, W6.2, W6.4

Post-reading Discussion Questions and Activities

Activism and Poetry

- Come up with a working definition of activism.
- Think of a cause that is important to you. It can be something big that impacts many (making the world safer/kinder/greener) or something small that impacts one (being a good sibling/doing your homework/ spreading happiness). Size doesn't matter. It simply has to mean something to *you*. Remember, even the smallest of actions can make a big difference.
- As a class, listen to [The Activators](#), a kids podcast about activism hosted by 8 year old actor and activist Leo Abelo Perry. This is a wonderful reminder that kids can make a difference. As you listen, jot down or sketchnote ideas about the power of your voice and how you can achieve something when you set your mind to it!
- Now write a poem in the style of June's poem, *Shining the Light*.
3 paragraphs - each with 4 lines.
The paragraph can begin with the words: "I won't" (Like June's) or "I will."
Either way, you are creating a poem about committing to change.

Shining the Light

By June Myer



I won't be quiet
Silent no more
I will shine the light
And open the door

I won't be idle
Let hate take hold
I will shine the light
And dare to be bold

I won't pretend
Ignore what's true
I will shine the light
And speak up for you

- Extension Activity: Illustrate your poem using paper or digital tools.

Communication

- In a few sentences, share what it means to communicate effectively?
- Explain how the following can be used to communicate effectively or ineffectively.
 - Actions
 - Written Words
 - Silence
 - Speeches
 - Active Listening
 - Assumptions
- Do you think the audience matters when you are communicating? For instance, would you communicate differently if you are talking to a friend, to someone who has hurt you, or to a group? Explain.
- Below are some examples of ways Bess and others in the story communicated their feelings and messages in *Same Page*. Do you think these means were effective? In a few sentences explain why or why not? In your opinion, what could they have done differently?
 - Leaving books around town with blue sticky notes in them
 - School board meeting speeches
 - Audience contributions at the school board meeting
 - Student council meeting
 - Bess's text to June after the volleyball incident: Hope your head is ok. (with sad hurt emoji), p. 168
 - June asks Bess: "Does loving someone who does bad things make you a bad person?" p. 178
 - "You are! You're just letting fear boss you around. Tell you that you can't speak up. Can't do the right thing. But you can." P. 109
 - June and the girls in the bathroom p. 227:
"You guys, stop," I hear June say.
I hold my breath. Waiting.
Then, "Stop? Are you kidding me? Shut up, June. You finally did something smart by ditching that loser. Don't ruin it now."
My body's shaking.

The door to the bathroom opens and I hear them leave.”

Understanding Opposing Viewpoints

- *Same Page* is a story about many differing points of view. Some align. Some don't. Find examples in the story of different points of view (POV) and record them in the table below.

<i>Character</i>	<i>POV</i>	<i>Scene, page number(s)</i>
Bess		
June		
Emmy		
Knox		

- With a partner or small group, role play the scenes containing the examples you have found.
- Now it's your turn to write. Recreate one of the scenes from another character's point of view. How does it change the story?

Opinion Writing/Reporting/Podcasting

- When you are engaged in opinion writing, you share your personal opinion. When you are reporting, you share only the facts - absent our personal opinion.
- In Chapter 29, Bess and the Book Warriors speak out at the school board meeting about the book challenges happening in their community.
- Now it's your turn. Choose to create either an opinion piece or a piece where you report objectively about book challenges. Then choose one of the forms below to share your work.
 - Podcast
 - Presentation to the class
 - Speech at a school board meeting
 - Vlog
 - Article for a newspaper

The author in Same Page has a style of writing that often contains personifications, metaphors, or similes. Determine whether the quotes below are a simile, metaphor, or a personification. Then illustrate one of these quotes. You can use art tools or digital tools.

- “Don't let fear steal your voice.” P. 243
- “The [books] that take us on an adventure, the ones that teach us about the past, the ones that teach us about each other, the ones that open our minds, and the ones that open our hearts.” P. 185
- “I thought hate was loud and scary, like monsters.

Turns out I was wrong.

Hate is quiet and wears a cardigan.” P. 1, prologue

- “Together, we are strong vines.” P. 144
- “My heart’s racing.” P. 128
- “But this isn’t just a different opinion. It’s not as though I like bananas and she likes blueberries. I mean, how could we not be on the same page about this—something so important and so obvious? How could I have thought she was a good person all this time if she believes something that no good person would ever believe?” p. 141
- “We each have to decide for ourselves where the line in the sand is.”P. 142

Gratitude ~ Thanksgiving Day List of Important Things

- Define what it means to be grateful.
- In *Same Page*, Bess creates a Thanksgiving Day List of Important Things.
- Create your own Thanksgiving Day List of Important Things. Do this again six months from now. How has your list changed? Explain why.

Same Page Bingo

- Let’s play Bingo! Go back to the book, *Same Page*, and fill in the Bingo card below.
- As a class, do this fun activity together. The first one to fill in their card, gets to pick the next class read aloud.
- As an individual, once your Bingo card is completed, pick 2 of the rectangles below and in a short paragraph, explain your answers.

A character who shares a similar interest	A character who confuses you	A character whose actions you agree with
A character with a different interest	A character you would want to get to know better	A character who made you mad
A character from whom you could learn something	A character with whom you empathize	A character you would want as a friend

What’s on your page? Are you on the Same Page as your friends? Do you have to be?

- In the story, Bess says, “How could someone I like, someone I care about, someone I thought was my friend, not be on the same page about this? How could she think things

that are so hurtful, so wrong, and so opposite of anything I could ever believe?” Pp 87-88.
Break into small groups and discuss this quote.

- In these same groups, using words and/ or illustrations, create a page for: Bess, June, Knox, Emmy, and Zee. On this page, include their likes/dislikes/traits/interests/hobbies
- What do you notice about the pages you have created for each character? Are there parts of their pages and lives that overlap with the other characters? What do you notice that is similar? What is different?
- Now come together as a class and have each student create their own page. Include their likes/dislikes/traits/interests/hobbies.
- Then look at everyone’s pages and discuss the following:
 - Are you and your classmates on the same page?
 - Where do you and your classmates’ pages overlap?
 - Do you think 2 people can ever be on the exact same page? Explain.
 - Can you be friends with someone who is not on the same page as you? Explain in what circumstances it would matter to you if someone was or was not on the same page.
- Extension: Host a family event at school where parents/guardians are invited in to see their child’s work. Students could even ask their parents/guardians for examples of when they have or have not been on the same page with their friends or share strategies for what to do in those situations.

What’s Your Slogan?

- In *Same Page*, Mr. Jasper, the librarian, wears a t-shirt that says: Ban Hate. Read Books.
- Now it’s your turn. Create your own slogan about something that matters to you.
- Next put it on a t-shirt or make it into a sticker for your water bottle or computer.
- Extension: Come together as a class or a school and create a slogan that represents your community.

Quotes to Discuss

- What do the quotes below mean in the context of the story?
- How do they contribute to the story’s themes, setting, or plot?
- What do the quotes below mean to you personally?

“I thought hate was loud and scary, like monsters.
Turns out I was wrong.
Hate is quiet and wears a cardigan.” P. 1, prologue

“In the end, we will remember not the words of our
enemies, but the silence of our friends.” —Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.” P. 34

“The point isn’t about having only books that are like us. It’s about having books that are like everyone!” P. 85

“The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference.” —Elie Wiesel” P. 91

“You are! You’re just letting fear boss you around. Tell you that you can’t speak up. Can’t do the right thing. But you can.” P. 109

“I already know that silence is loud.” P. 110

“No one’s life is perfect, June. No matter how it looks on the outside.” P. 120

“Being brave isn’t about doing stuff when you’re not scared; it’s about doing stuff when you are.” P. 130

“I mean, if people don’t want to listen, then information can’t inform, and the truth can’t educate. So how do I change people’s minds?” P. 143

“Does loving someone who does bad things make you a bad person?” P. 178

“Bess, we’re not here to persuade others to think the way we do....We’re here to persuade them to respect our right to think differently.” P. 186

“Don’t let fear steal your voice.” P. 243

Enrichment Activities

Mindfulness

- In *Same Page*, Bess practices kindness meditation. Hers goes like this: “May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I be safe. May I be peaceful. May I be strong.” P. 45. Why do you think Bess does this? Explain your answer.
- Find a moment in the story where Bess practiced her kindness meditation. Draw or write how Bess felt in the moments before she practiced her kindness meditation and then how she felt after. Write a few sentences explaining how the kindness meditation changed how Bess was feeling.
- Now create your own kindness meditation.
- How does it make you feel to practice your kindness meditation?
- Extension activity: As a class, write a letter to your principal explaining your work on kindness meditation and the benefits it can have for all students. Then suggest a call to action for your whole school. For instance, perhaps as a community, your class can spearhead a school-wide kindness meditation that you can do together each morning.

STEAM Challenge

- As a class, collect recyclable materials.
- Together, design and build a Little Free Library or book vending machine for your classroom or school with these materials.
- Decide on a location and audience for the library.

- Use the [engineer design process](#) to create the library.
- Make a list of the books you would like to include in the library or vending machine. The goal is to be inclusive.
- Now, stock your book vending machine or Little Free Library.
 - with books from your school's library
 - with books from your classroom library
 - with books donated from the community
- Extension activity: Design posters and/or social media posts using paper or a digital tool to advertise your Little Free Library or book vending machine.

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 CCSS ELA - Writing W6.1, W6.2, W 6.3, W6.4, W6.5

Contributors

This guide was written by author Elly Swartz and educators Anna Kontos and Dr. Rayna Freedman.

As an educator for over twenty-five years, Anna Kontos has served in both public and independent schools as a classroom teacher, literacy coach, English department head, and learning specialist. She has spoken at a number of conferences on a variety of topics ranging from conducting successful student-led conferences, to reimagining the hero's journey through literature, to designing comprehensive, school-based word study programs that enhance all students' reading and writing. Anna holds a B.A. in Psychology from Dartmouth College and M.Ed.in Language and Literacy from Harvard Graduate School of Education. Anna currently supports and consults with individual students, families, and schools to promote positive outcomes for children both inside the classroom and beyond.

Dr. Rayna Freedman is a 5th grade teacher at the Jordan/Jackson Elementary School in Mansfield, MA. She has taught grades 3-5. Rayna has a B.S. in Education from the University of Vermont and a M.Ed in Educational Technology from Lesley University. She received her doctorate through Northeastern in teaching, learning, leading, and curriculum. She is a Google for Education Certified Trainer, Google Level 1 and 2 certified educator, an Ed Tech Teacher consultant, BrainPOP certified educator, Magic School AI Pioneer, Trainer, and Certified Educator, Flip Ambassador, Fablevision Ambassador and Wakelet Ambassador. She is also a member of the Reynolds Center TLC faculty. Rayna has presented for ISTE, Ed Tech Teacher, MassCUE, Vietnam Technology Conference, CUE Nevada, NYSCATE, Tech and Learning, Medfield Digital Learning Day, FETC, BPLC, and BLC. She believes in student agency and the power of building relationships and community.