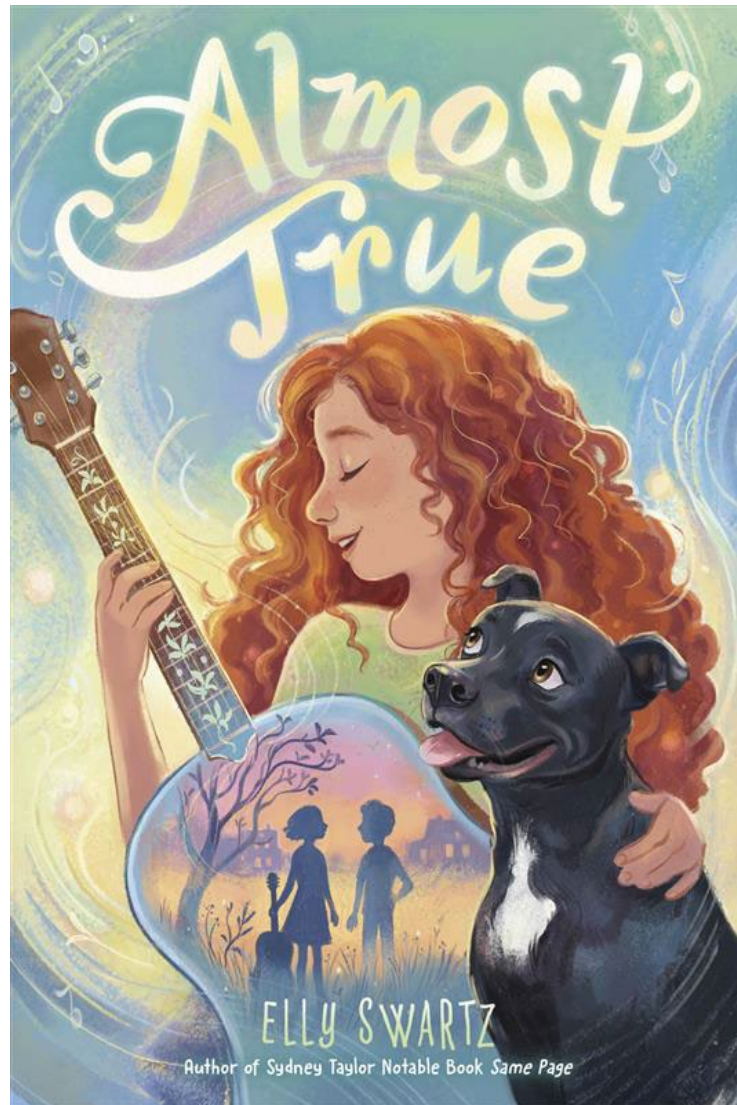




Teacher's Guide

Almost True

by Elly Swartz





Praise for Almost True

**"A ROLLER COASTER OF A NOVEL THAT'S FAST-PACED,
HEARTFELT, AND FULL OF SURPRISES."**

**—KATE MESSNER, NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF
THE TROUBLE WITH HEROES**

"A WILD RIDE FROM START TO END. I LOVED IT!"

—COLBY SHARP, FIFTH-GRADE TEACHER

**"A HEARTFELT MIDDLE-GRADE NOVEL ABOUT FINDING THE
COURAGE TO FACE THE TRUTH."**

—ANDREA CHILDES, LIBRARIAN

"GORGEOUSLY WRITTEN AND CHOCK-FULL OF TIMELY THEMES."

**—LINDSAY CURRIE, #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE
SECRET BOOKSTORE SLEUTH SOCIETY**

"A FAST-PACED, TIMELY BOOK . . .

READERS WILL BE HOOKED FROM THE FIRST PAGE TO THE LAST."

—JARRETT LERNER, AUTHOR OF A WORK IN PROGRESS



About the Book

A tween girl's picture-perfect life is turned upside down when her genius inventor Mom turns out to be a fraud—but with the help of an unexpected new friend and her love of music, she begins to learn how to stand on her feet again—in this heartwarming novel with a surprise twist ending from beloved author Elly Swartz.

Meet Grace Millstein. A guitar-playing, sixth grader who loves her life. She has the perfect friends at her fancy prep school, a caring family, and the best mom, Jade. A genius inventor, Jade recently discovered a new technology that predicts how viruses will mutate. Now, everyone in town wants to invest in her company.

But just after her twelfth birthday, Grace learns a terrible truth. Turns out, Grace's mom is a fraud. Her business is a shell of lies.

Grace's perfect life is gone.

Forced to start over, the only good thing about her new neighborhood is the mysterious boy who keeps popping up wherever she goes. But Grace's new friend is keeping secrets, too. Big ones. And unless Grace learns to embrace herself—and the past she's hiding—she might never learn the truth about either of them.



About the Author

Elly Swartz is the award-winning author of seven middle grade novels about friendship, family, and growing up. Written with heart, her books reflect a commitment to raising awareness about mental health, neurodiversity, and acceptance. Her stories—*Almost True*, *Same Page*, *Hidden Truths*, *Dear Student*, *Finding Perfect*, *Smart Cookie*, and *Give and Take*—invite young readers to see themselves and others in a new light.

Same Page was named an ALA Sydney Taylor Book Award Notable and recommended by *The New York Times*, while *Finding Perfect* was recognized by the Child Mind Institute as one of the best children's books about mental health. *Dear Student* won the Pennsylvania State Award for Middle Grade, and *Hidden Truths* earned starred reviews from *Kirkus* and *School Library Journal*, was named a Kirkus Best Book of 2023, an Amazon Best Book (Nov. 2023), and has been nominated for 3 state awards.

Elly lives in Massachusetts. She is married with two grown sons, a grandson, and two pups. She loves connecting with readers online at ellyswartz.com, and on Instagram, Bluesky, and 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 students best!



Resources Included in This Guide

Trivia – pages 6-9

Questions to check in with readers to be sure they are retaining key information from the story as you read, or used after you read for a Trivia Quiz Bowl.

Before You Begin – pages 10-11

Discussion questions and activities to get you ready to enjoy the novel

Throughlines – pages 12-13

Activities to keep track of the story and characters as you read

As You Read – pages 14-15

Activities to maintain engagement throughout the novel

After You Finish – pages 16-21

Discussion questions and activities to help you reflect on the novel

Templates – pages 23-31

Printable sheets to support the activities in this guide

Trivia

Trivia

Questions to check in with readers to be sure they are retaining key information from the story as you read, or used after you read for a Trivia Quiz Bowl.

Chapter 1 – One Big Lie (p. 1)

Finish the quote: “I knew she was a ..._____.”
“I knew she was a liar.”

Chapter 2 – Maybe (pp. 2-6)

Who says, “Oh, Grace, I need to borrow your phone for a sec. It’s important”?
Grace’s mom

Chapter 3 – Suede Sneakers (pp. 7-11)

Why did young Grace start tucking the notes her mom wrote into a box under her bed?
To keep the monsters away

Chapter 4 – Love and Pop-Tarts (pp. 12-17)

What is a Unalome?
A Buddhist symbol on Grace’s guitar (Bonus: It symbolizes the road to enlightenment.)

Chapter 5 – Hall of Loud Voices (pp. 18-27)

Who is Harry?
Grace’s anxiety (named for her grandfather)

Chapter 6 – The Real Grace Millstein (pp. 28-33)

What does Lu show Grace on her phone?
A TikTok video calling Grace’s mom a fraud and a cheat

Chapter 7 – Words Like Swords (pp. 34-40)

What does Grace give Ladybug to help her cope with all the yelling?
Noise cancelling headphones and a playlist to listen to

Chapter 8 – Loser, Liar, Thief (pp. 41-45)

What does Grace learn about “debt”?
It is the large amount of money the family owes but doesn’t have.

Chapter 9 – Bang! Bang! Bang! (pp. 46-52)

What letters are on the back of the jackets of the people who arrive at Grace’s house in the middle of the night?
FBI

Chapter 10 – My Compass (pp. 53-58)

Who says, “Grace, honey, you’re overreacting”?
Grace’s mom, Jade

Trivia

Chapter 11 – Goodbye, Matilda (pp. 59-62)

For Grace, what is the hardest part of cleaning out her locker?

Taking down the pictures of her with Gemma and Lu

Chapter 12 – Strangers (pp. 63-68)

What does Grace offer to sell to help the family?

The guitar she got for her birthday

Chapter 13 – Four Boxes (pp. 69-72)

What outdoor task does Grace complete before leaving for Gram's house?

She cuts off all of her mom's roses.

Chapter 14 – Overheard (pp. 73-78)

What does Gram call her "therapy"?

Baking

Chapter 15 – Blank Page (pp. 79-86)

Who is the first person to call Grace "Summer"?

Max

Chapter 16 – Unopened (pp. 87-94)

What is Next Chapter?

The second-hand store Gram takes Grace and Ladybug

Chapter 17 – Summer Stone (pp. 95-100)

How does Grace physically transform into Summer Stone?

She cuts her hair and dyes it black.

Chapter 18 – Invisible (pp. 101-108)

Where does Grace/Summer see Max on her first day at Plainville Middle?

In the courtyard

Chapter 19 – Monster (pp. 109-114)

Who says, "It's surprising what you miss when you leave a place"?

Max

Chapter 20 – Froster Embers (pp. 115-119)

Who compliments Grace/Summer on her guitar playing during lunch?

Dakota

Chapter 21 – Part of Me (pp. 120-125)

Grace opens the door on Halloween expecting trick-or-treaters. Who does she see instead?

Her mom

Trivia

Chapter 22 – Bleachers (pp. 126-134)

What is special about November 8?

It is Three Forever Day – a holiday Grace, Gemma, and Lu made up.

Chapter 23 – Triangle Peanut Butter and Jelly (pp. 135-140)

How does Miguel make Summer Stone famous?

By posting a video of her playing her song (Bonus: The name of the song is “What Is Left of You.”)

Chapter 24 – A Good Loop (pp. 141-145)

Who is Oliver Benz?

The tough judge on Melody Masters

Chapter 25 – Ugly Imitation (pp. 146-149)

When Grace reads Lu’s mean online comments, she is relieved about one thing. What is it?

Lu doesn’t say anything mean about Max.

Chapter 26 – Someone Else (pp. 150-155)

Grace lists four things she knows about Max. How many do you remember?

He loves guitar and songwriting.

He used to live in the neighborhood.

His favorite snack is Oreos.

He is great with dogs.

Chapter 27 – Who is Max Alpine (pp. 156-158)

How are Max’s dad and Grace’s mom connected?

Max’s dad invested in Grace’s mom’s company.

Chapter 28 – A Dead Guy (pp. 159-164)

Finish Max’s quote: “We can be ghosts and..._____.”

“We can be ghosts and friends.”

Chapter 29 – Miss This Me (pp. 165-169)

Where does Grace hide her new guitar?

In the basement storage unit, next to Gramps’s guitar

Chapter 30 – Just Like Her (pp. 170-174)

What gift does Gram give Grace and Ladybug?

Aprons

Chapter 31 – One Annoying Boy (pp. 175-179)

Who says, “You’re making a funny face”?

Ladybug

Trivia

Chapter 32 – Just One Thing (pp. 180-186)

What is the two-word message Max wants Grace to deliver?

Pickle pie

Chapter 33 – Things Forgotten (pp. 187-191)

Finish the chorus of Grace's new song:

Own the air I breathe. The steps I take.

The mistakes I make.

The flaws I hate.

My fears and..._____

My fears and imperfections

Chapter 34 – Already Dead (pp. 192-198)

What big revelation does Grace have about herself after composing on her grandfather's guitar?

It is time to stop hiding as Summer.

Chapter 35 – One More Thing (pp. 199-204)

What does Max give Grace before he leaves for good?

His lucky guitar pick (Bonus: The pick is purple.)

Chapter 36 – Holes and Missing (pp. 205-208)

Who puts in a request for Gram's chocolate chip cookies?

Gemma

Chapter 37 – Better-Better (pp. 209-212)

Grace's mom has changed her mind about something big. What is it?

She is going to plead guilty.

Before You Begin

Before You Begin

Discussion questions and activities to get you ready to enjoy the novel

Pre-reading discussion questions on the book's main themes

Trust

- What does it mean to trust someone? Break into small groups and discuss.
- List the different ways a person can earn another's trust.
- List the different ways trust can be broken.

Identity

- Who gets to define your identity? Is it you? Your parents? Your friends?
- Does your identity change over time? If so, how and why?
- Reflect on your own life. Are there times when others have tried to define you? Did you let them? If so, why? If not, why not?

Resilience

- What does it mean to be resilient?
- Share a time when you felt resilient or when you felt you wish you had been more resilient. Looking back, would you have done anything different now? Explain why or why not.

Forgiveness

- Write a short definition of what it means to forgive.
- Do you think all actions are or should be forgivable?

Before You Begin

Pre-reading activities to get you ready to enjoy the novel

Judge a Book by Its Cover

You know the old adage to never judge a book by its cover, but we all do. Take some time to study the beautiful cover of *Almost True*, with art by Jen Bricking and design by Michelle Cunningham. Be careful to look at the details. Then make some predictions about the novel. Here are some questions to get you started:

- What genre of story are you expecting? Contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, mystery, horror? Something else?
- Who do you think the images inside the guitar are? How will they figure into the story?
- When do you think the story is set – in modern times, in the past, or in the future?
- Where do you think the story is set – in a city, small town, a rural area? Or is it a fantasy story set in an imaginary place?
- What do you think the title means?

Write down your predictions and set them aside to revisit after you finish the book.

Get to Know Elly Swartz

Author Elly Swartz has published seven novels for young readers. Head to her website to learn a bit about her books and her life: <https://ellyswartz.com/>

Throughlines

Throughlines

Activities to keep track of the story and characters as you read

Rhyming Couplets

For Grace, writing songs is a way to deal with anxiety and express herself. There are four original songs within the novel. To tap into your own inner songwriter, start with the simplest rhyme scheme – the couplet. A couplet is made up of two lines with similar rhythm (or *meter*) that rhyme at the end. Here's an example from the first song in *Almost True*:

“Promises made of sea glass and sand
The crash of the waves while I held your hand.” (p. 20)

As you go through *Almost True*, write a rhyming couplet for each chapter reflecting something important about that chapter. Feeling ambitious? You can write more than one!

Character Cards

As you meet new characters in the novel, create a Character Card with key information. As you get to know each character, you can add to your card. You can even include a sketch of what you think the character looks like. (Templates for these *Character Cards* are included in this guide, but you can also use quarter sheets of paper or 4x6 index cards.)

How People Lie

The first chapter is titled One Big Lie and introduces lying as a theme in the book. Think about the ways people hide the truth and the possible consequences of lying.

As you read the book, keep track of the lies told by the characters, how those lies are communicated, the justification for the lies, and the results of those lies. (There is a *Lies and Liars* template included in this guide.)

When you get to the end of the book, reflect on the lies told and the motivation for those lies. Break into small groups and discuss if lying is ever justified, using evidence from the text.

Collect Quotes

Elly Swartz writes prose filled with beautiful descriptions and profound ideas. As you read, collect pieces of text that might help you with your own writing. Be on the lookout for rich sensory language, metaphors and similes, and ideas that warrant reflection. For example, on page 24, Mr. Murphy says, “The only thing we can control is the effort we give, the heart we share, and the music we play.” This quote is the perfect lens for viewing Grace’s struggles in the novel. (There is a *Quote Collection* template included in this guide.)

Throughlines

Harry

Grace names her anxiety Harry, and he figures prominently throughout the book. Keep track of when Harry appears in the novel and look at how he is described. By the end of the story, you will have a fuller understanding of what anxiety is and how it affects people. (There is a *Harry, Grace's Anxiety* template included in this guide.)

Change the POV

Almost True is told in first person, through Grace's eyes. We learn all about her thoughts and emotions. How would a scene change if it was told from a different character's point of view? As you read, look for scenes that might be dramatically different if explored by a different character. Rewrite the scene with the new point of view. Here are a few to get you started, but you can apply this technique to many scenes in the book:

- When Grace sees the TikTok video about her mom, from Lu's point of view (pp. 32-33)
- When Jade tries to explain away her crimes to Grace, from Jade's point of view (pp. 56-57)
- When Grace and Ladybug bring Donut home, from Gram's point of view (pp. 88-90)
- When Jade comes to see Grace on Halloween, from Dad's point of view (pp. 124-125)
- When Grace and Max visit Max's dad, from Max's dad's point of view (pp. 196-198)
- When Grace texts Gemma, from Gemma's point of view (p. 207)

As You Read

As You Read

Activities to maintain engagement throughout the novel

Chapter 4, Love and Pop-Tarts – “...rules are the guideposts of life.” (p. 12)

As a class, brainstorm rules that really can serve as “guideposts of life.” You could start with The Golden Rule as an example. Are there others that should guide how we interact with the world? Make a class list and add to it as you go through the novel.

Chapter 4, Love and Pop-Tarts – *Unalome*

This Buddhist symbol is on the headstock of Grace’s new guitar. Research what the swirling lines symbolize and think about its meaning. What principles would you want reflected in a symbol on something important to you? Design a graphic that would represent those principles. Make an annotated drawing of the symbol, explaining its meaning.



Chapter 5, Hall of Loud Voices – *Countering Harry with Mindful Breathing*

We first meet Harry, Grace’s anxiety, on page 19 when Grace overhears her parents arguing. She tries taking a deep breath to steady herself. One deep breath generally isn’t enough to calm anxiety. Instead, try *Mindful Breathing*.

Hold up your left hand with the fingers splayed out wide. Use the index finger of the right hand to trace along the fingers as you breathe slowly in and out. Inhale as your right index finger goes up the outside of the left thumb, and exhale as you go down the thumb. Inhale as you trace up the left index finger, and exhale as you go down. Continue, ending on the outside of your left pinky. The combination of the deep, slow breaths with the tactile sensation is soothing and helps settle the brain. Try this as a class and see if you can sync up your breathing and all calm together.

Chapter 5, Hall of Loud Voices; Chapter 14, Overheard; Chapter 23, Triangle Peanut Butter and Jelly; Chapter 33, Things Forgotten – *Four Songs*

Almost True contains four of Grace’s original songs. As you reach each one, reflect on the emotions that Grace is conveying. Design a square graphic for each one that Grace could use to accompany the song on an online streaming platform. Post your ideas for all to appreciate. (There is a **Grace’s Songs** template included in this guide.)

Chapter 10, My Compass – *Your Own Compass*

Gramps told Grace that music is her compass, saying “It’ll steer you and steady you, Gracie. You’ll never lose your way as long as the music is in you.” (p. 58) What is your compass – the thing that can steady you when you feel lost? Draw a compass rose and add an illustration of your personal compass to the center. Post them in the classroom to see how many different ways your classmates find their paths.

As You Read

Chapter 19, Monster; Chapter 36, Holes and Missing – *Missing*

Almost True explores what it feels like to miss people and places.

- On page 111, Max comments to Grace, “It’s surprising what you miss when you leave a place.” Grace knows this feeling also, having left her old life behind.
- On page 205, Grace lists people she misses (Max and Gramps, Mom, Gemma and Lu) and the holes they have left.

Think about a person or place you miss. Craft a way to express how you feel about that loss. You might write a song like Grace. Or you could write a poem, story, or letter. You might create a series of comic panels, a painting, or a dance. Tap into your own creativity and express how you feel.

Chapter 22, Bleachers – *Design Your Dance Outfit*

So, what would you wear to the dance at Plainville Middle? Design *your* perfect outfit – the one you would wear if you didn’t care what anyone else thought. You can try your hand at fashion illustration. Look for examples online of how the pros draw their designs.

Chapter 37, Better-Better – *Write the Next Chapter*

Almost True ends with some key plot points unresolved. We don’t know:

- what will happen with Grace and her mom
- the outcome of the *Melody Masters* audition
- how things will go with Gemma
- how Grace will move forward without Max’s friendship

Choose one of these points (or another storyline you feel is left unresolved) and write a new last chapter that resolves that question.

After You Finish

After You Finish

Discussion questions and activities to help you reflect on the novel

Post-reading discussion questions

Questions about the major themes in the book

Trust

- In *Almost True*, how was trust earned and broken between Grace, Gemma, and Lu, between Grace and her mother, and between Grace and Max?
- If you were in Grace's life, would you advise her to trust Gemma, Lu, or her mom again?

Identity

- Reflecting on the story, provide examples of times when the characters' identities were defined by themselves, and times when they were defined by others. What situations caused these defining moments?

Resilience

- Besides Grace, which character in *Almost True* shows resilience?
- What can help a kid be resilient in the face of adversity?

Forgiveness

- Cite examples from the text when Grace, Jade Wren, Gemma, Lu, and Max have asked for forgiveness. Now cite examples of when they have been forgiven. Would you have forgiven them in those situations? Discuss in small groups.
- After reading *Almost True*, do you think all actions are or should be forgivable? Has your answer changed from before you read the book?

Questions about specific points in the book

1. Do you think Grace will ever forgive her mother? If a person close to you lied about something so big, could you forgive them?
2. Are Gemma and Lu? Are the sins of the mother also the sins of the daughter?
3. Grace names her anxiety, Harry, after her grandfather. If you were going to name your anxiety, what would you call it and why?
4. *Almost True* explores loss in many different ways – death, ghosting by friends, betrayal by a parent. Do all losses feel the same to Grace? If not, how do they differ?
5. There are four songs that Grace writes in the story (pages 20-21, 76-77, 135-136, and 191). How does the tone of each song and the lyrics reflect the changes in Grace as the story unfolds?

After You Finish

6. If you were a blank page like Grace in Plainville and had the chance for a do-over, would you take it? If so, who would you become? What would you change?
7. Grace has to unlock her phone and turn it over to the FBI. Her thoughts at that moment, “Humiliation pulses through my body as my private world is forced open. All my texts. All my pics. All my music.” (p. 51) How would you feel if you had to give your phone and all it holds over to a stranger? Mad? Embarrassed? Scared? What secrets are hiding in your phone?
8. In the song, Almost True, Grace writes:
*It’s almost true, I’m almost there.
A life of Grace, a song to share.
Own the air I breathe.* (p. 191)
What do you think she means?
9. Why do you believe that Grace can see Max? Is it her wild imagination? A superpower? Empathy? Powerful connection?
10. How does Grace’s relationship with her mother influence her decision to become Summer Stone?
11. How are Grace Millstein and Summer Stone different? How are they alike? Which one would you befriend and why?
12. In the story, Gemma says, “Everything in Lu’s life is about Chapman and reputation and the right clothes, right school, right friends, right parents.” (p. 10) Is Gemma right? Is this all that matters to Lu? If so, why was Lu ever part of the Three Forever? And why do you think these things matter so much to her?
13. What role does the dog Donut fill in Grace’s journey?
14. Why do you think Max wants Grace to have his lucky pick?
15. “Mom’s big on rules. She’s constantly telling me, ‘Grace, rules are the guideposts of life.’ No phones at the table. Lights out at ten. Homework before texting. Or the stuff she just calls rules, like green juice and a banana every day. Rejection is the world telling you to get creative. Never let them see you scared.” (pp. 12-13) What do you think of Grace’s mom’s philosophy on rules, especially in light of the BIG mistakes Jade has made? Does Grace really need these rules to navigate her life?
16. In the song, What is Left of You?, Grace writes:
*There is no one color. No one shoe.
No one person. Just one you.
The colors mesh. The shoe drops.
What is left of you?* (p. 135)
What do you think she means? And what do the words we choose to share, say about who we are and what we are going through?

After You Finish

17. Why do you think Grace's mother kept pursuing her business even when things seemed to be going wrong? Why is it so hard to admit when our plans don't go as we hoped?
18. After the story broke about Jade Wren, Gemma and Lu stopped talking to Grace. Consider both sides for a moment. What would you do if you were Grace? And what would you do if you were Gemma or Lu?
19. Grace says to her mother, "And trust *you*?' I practically choke on these words. 'Are you serious? I'll never trust you again. Not now. Not ever.'" (p. 56) Why does trust take such a long time to build and such a short time to break?
20. At the end of the story, Grace finally reads her mom's letters. What do you think happens next? Does Grace reach out to her mom? Would you?

After You Finish

Post-reading enrichment activities

So, were you right?

Take a look back at the predictions you made based on the cover. Were you right about any of the aspects of the book?

- Did you expect the girl with the long red hair and the girl inside the guitar to be the same person?
- Did you expect there to be a fantasy element with Max?
- Did you think the dog would play a bigger role in the story?
- Did you expect there to be an adorable little sister?
- How do you interpret the title now that you have read the book?

Gather Your Couplets

Now that you have at least 37 rhyming couplets, you have the start of a longer poem. Put them all together to be your first draft and then refine the couplets until you have a poem that tells Grace's story in your own way.

Before and After Jade

Grace's life takes an abrupt turn and many things change when she learns about her mother's crimes on page 37. Fill out the *Before and After Jade* template in this guide to reflect those changes. Which change would be the hardest for you to handle?

Before and After Max

Another abrupt change happens on page 158 when Grace figures out the truth about Max, shattering her whole understanding of her friend. It also marks a change in their relationship. Look back at the interactions Grace and Max have before page 158 and then look at their interactions after page 158. How are they different? How are they the same? (You can use the *Before and After Max* template in this guide to help you organize your thoughts.)

Who I Really Am

Grace struggles with her identity throughout the novel. There is the Grace others see – first a musician and good friend from a wealthy family, then the daughter of a liar and a fraud. How does she define who she is on the inside? Explore this idea of identity by making a self-portrait diptych. Take a sheet of drawing paper and fold it in half lengthwise. Draw the outline of your face with the fold going down the middle. On one side, draw what the world sees on the outside. Fill in the other half with illustrations or words that show what is important to you – your hobbies, aspirations, dreams, relationships, whatever fills out who you truly are.

After You Finish

Things I Love About...

Several times in the novel, Grace makes a list of things she loves and things she doesn't love about a person – Gram (p. 75), Ladybug (pp. 87-88), Max (p. 110), Summer Stone (p. 116), and Gramps (p. 168). You'll notice that the things she doesn't love are still kind, never mean-spirited. If you and Grace were friends, what would she put on a similar list for you?

Social Media: Pros and Cons

Social media showed the world Grace's mom's crimes, but it also showed the world Grace's talent. As a class, put together a list of the pros and cons of social media for middle school kids. Is it all bad as some adults say?

Some places in this country (school districts, municipalities, states) are looking at ways to restrict kids' exposure to social media. Break into small groups and come up with regulations that are reasonable to you. Write them up and share them with the class. Compare your ideas with the proposals from other groups.

A Sequel?

Pretend the publisher has approached you to write a sequel to *Almost True*. Who would you choose to be the main character? Who would be in the supporting cast? Would you introduce any new characters? What challenge would your main character face? How would they resolve it? Write a summary of your idea. Post everyone's ideas so you can see your classmates' creativity.

Celebrate the Novel

Three Forever Day might have changed for Grace, but you can create your own *Almost True* celebration. Here are some ideas:

- Refreshments – Gram's baking should give you plenty of book-linked inspiration (strudel, snickerdoodles, blueberry muffins, sugar cookies, pumpkin bread, apple cake), sandwiches cut in triangles, hot cocoa with marshmallows
- Gallery – Post all of the work you and your classmates have created while reading *Almost True*
- Talent Show – Hold your own *Melody Masters* and enjoy the talents of your classmates
- Trivia Contest – Use the trivia questions included in this guide (or write some of your own) to see who remembers the most details.
- Take a Poll – Do you believe in ghosts? Did reading *Almost True* change your mind? Post the results.
- Guitar Lessons – Ask a local music store to bring some guitars so you and your classmates can try playing.

After You Finish

- Make Your Own Lucky Charm – Max’s lucky charm is a guitar pick, but anything can be a charm if you can hold it and channel your own inner luck. Put out some art supplies that can be used to craft a small charm to bring you luck. Some ideas:
 - Smooth stones and paint pens
 - Beads and wire
- Library Card Sign-Up – Invite your local public library to come and sign families up for library cards.
- Thank you notes to Elly Swartz – Set up a station with pretty paper and pens for writing thank you notes to the author. You can scan them and email them to her at elly@ellyswartz.com or mail them as a class to Elly Swartz, 13 Steeple St, Suite 202-86, Mashpee, MA 02649

Contributors

The *Almost True* Teacher Guide was written by Sara Hudson and the discussion questions were created by Dr. Rayna Freedman, with contributions from author Elly Swartz to both the guide and the questions.

Sara Hudson has worked in children's literature for over twenty years, first as a teacher and then as a program developer and manager at the national literacy nonprofit, Read to Them. She is currently a bookseller and freelance writer in Richmond, Virginia.

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.

Templates

The following pages contain templates that coordinate with the activities described above. The templates included are:

- Character Cards
- Lies and Liars
- Quote Collection
- Harry, Grace's Anxiety
- Grace's Songs
- Before and After Jade
- Before and After Max

Character Card for
Almost True
by Elly Swartz



Name:

Age:

Chapter when first introduced:

Relationship to other characters:

Add more information and/or a drawing on
the back of this card.

Character Card for
Almost True
by Elly Swartz



Name:

Age:

Chapter when first introduced:

Relationship to other characters:

Add more information and/or a drawing on
the back of this card.

Character Card for
Almost True
by Elly Swartz



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Character Card for
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Almost True by Elly Swartz

Lies and Liars



Almost True explores lying and its ramifications. Keep track of the instances of lying in the novel.

Character	Lie told and page number	How lie was communicated	Motive for lie	Effect of lie on others

Almost True by Elly Swartz

Quote Collection

Keep track of interesting pieces of text to reflect on later.



Page Number	Quote	What is special about the quote?

Almost True by Elly Swartz

Harry, Grace's Anxiety

Keep track of the references to Harry in the book.

How does Grace describe how she feels? How does she try to cope with those feelings?



Page Number	How Grace describes Harry	How Grace tries to deal with Harry

Almost True by Elly Swartz

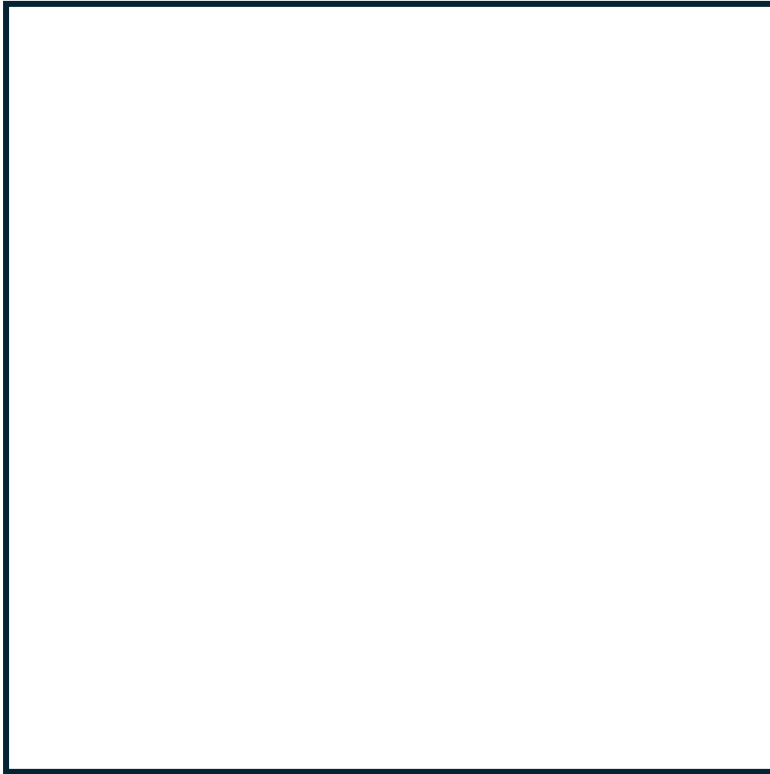
Grace's Songs

Describe your reaction to Grace's songs.
Design a square graphic to go with each one.



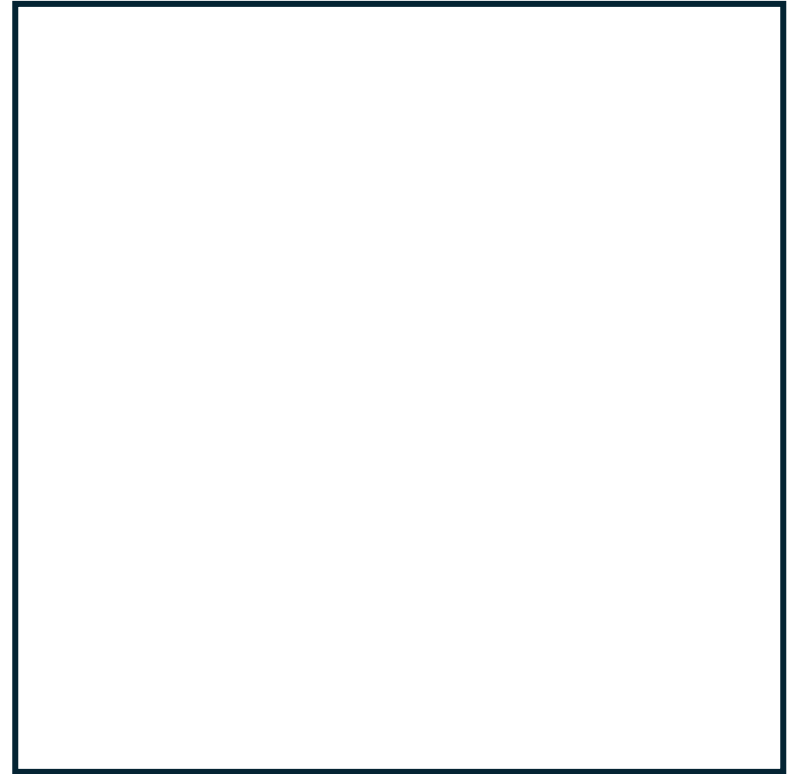
Ocean Sleeps

Reaction:



Goodnight, Ladybug

Reaction:



Almost True by Elly Swartz

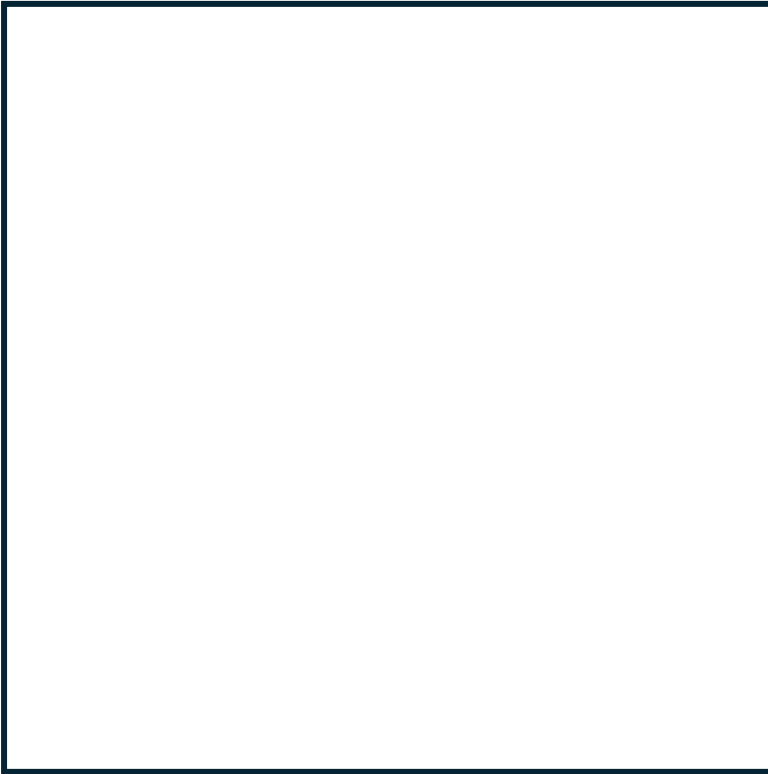
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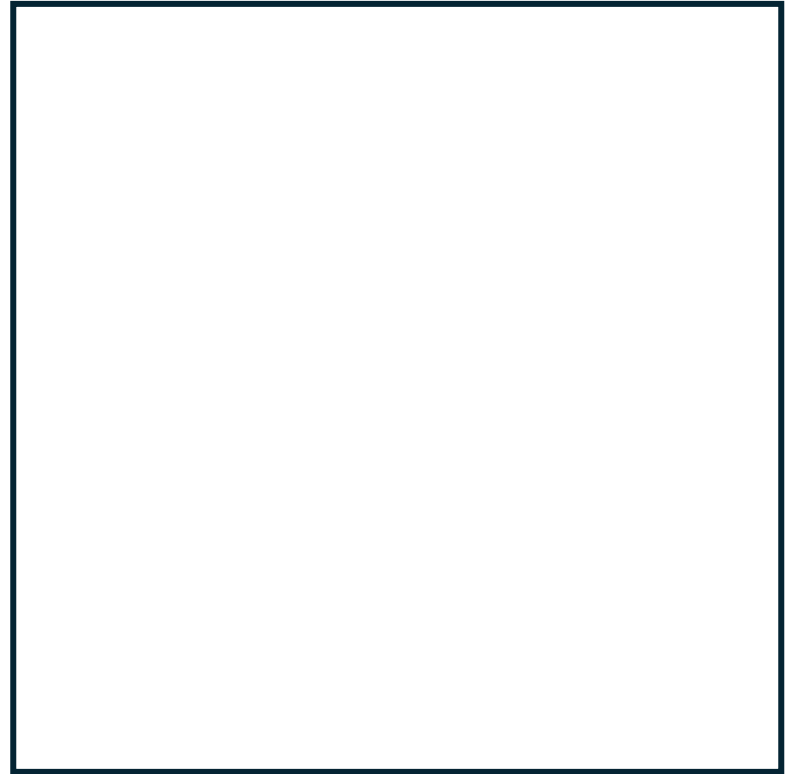
What Is Left of You?

Reaction:



Almost True

Reaction:



Almost True by Elly Swartz

Before and After Jade

Grace's life shatters on page 37. What changed? What did Grace learn from those changes?



	Before page 37	After page 37	What Grace learned
House			
Family			
Friends			
School			
Music			

Almost True by Elly Swartz

Before and After Max

Look back at the interactions between Max and Grace.

Describe their relationship before and after page 158. How did their relationship change?



Before page 158

Pages:

84

92

108

110

117

131

137

After page 158

Pages:

160

183

194

199