

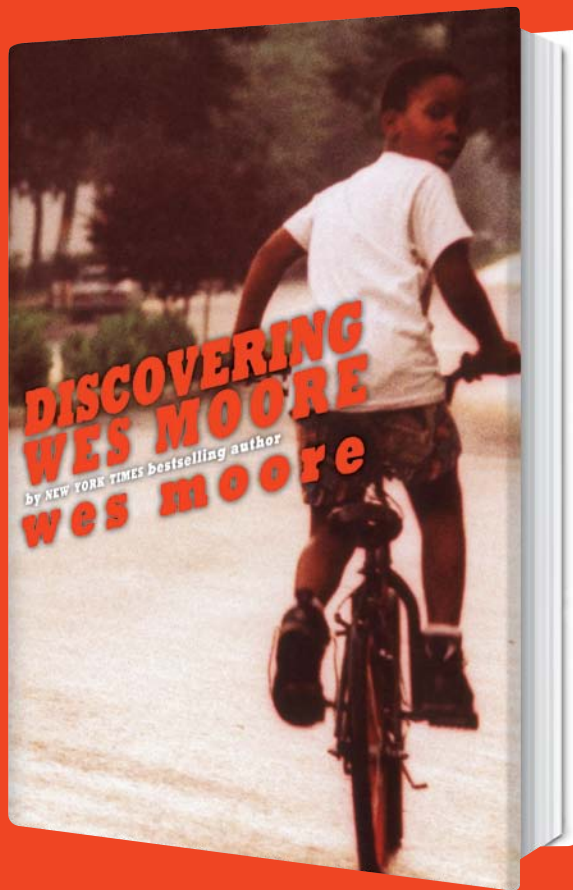
Educator Guide

**DISCOVERING
WES MOORE**
by NEW YORK TIMES bestselling author
wes moore

Includes
Connections to
Common Core State
Standards



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ABOUT THE BOOK

Through the telling of events from his own life, Wes Moore explores the issues that separate success and failure. He also counterpoints his story with another man, someone who shared the same name, was almost the same age, grew up fatherless in a similar Baltimore neighborhood, but is serving a life sentence for murder. Compelled to write to the other Wes, the author was surprised to receive a reply. And so began a friendship, as letters turned into visits and the two men got to know one another. This compelling story about the challenges of growing up and the responsibility for the choices we make, is sure to inspire.

Grades 7 up 
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Author photograph courtesy of The OWN Network

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wes Moore is a graduate of Johns Hopkins University and was a Rhodes Scholar. He served as a paratrooper and captain in the U.S. Army in Afghanistan and as a White House Fellow in the U.S. Department of State. He was named one of the top young business leaders in America and has appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine, which featured him in the article “The New Greatest Generation.” His first book (and the inspiration for this adaptation), *The Other Wes Moore*, became an instant *New York Times* bestseller. Currently, he is the host of *Beyond Belief* on the Oprah Winfrey Network. Wes lives in New Jersey with his wife and daughter. This is his first book for children.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the following manner:

Before Reading	After Reading	Statements
		Relationships between parents and their children are always complicated.
		It is impossible to change your destiny.
		Acknowledging poor choices forgives past indiscretions.
		People are always a product of their environment.

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

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 7.2.; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 7.1., 7.2., 7.3.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- At the opening of *Discovering Wes Moore*, readers observe Wes’s mother becoming enraged after Wes hits his older sister; in your opinion, why does his mother react so strongly? Do you think her reaction is warranted? Why or why not? In what ways does this early lesson offer Wes an understanding of her expectations of him?
- Describe Wes Moore, not just what he looks like, but his personality. What makes him a dynamic person? Is he the type of individual you would want to befriend? Why or why not?
- In what ways does Wes’s mother’s immigration to the United States as a child impact her philosophies regarding opportunity, education, and work ethic? Do you think her expectations would have been different had she not had this experience? Why or why not?
- While a student at Riverdale Country Day School, Wes feels torn between two worlds, yet not really a part of either. What makes this time in Wes’s life so particularly difficult? Have you ever been in a similar situation? If so, what did you do to overcome it?
- Explain the significance of the title, *Discovering Wes Moore*. In your opinion, does it accurately describe the events and relationships portrayed in the book? Does it have more than one meaning?

- Wes states, “I had spent so much of my childhood feeling out of place. I’d allowed other people to dictate my expectations of myself.” (p. 76) Consider Wes’s statement; do you think it’s common for people to allow the expectations of others to drive those that we have for ourselves? Why or why not? In what ways does this behavior lead to problems?
- *Discovering Wes Moore* is told as a first-person memoir; how would Wes’s story be different if someone else were telling it? How do you think changing the point of view would make the story different? Why?
- While in South Africa, Wes learns about the path Xhosa boys take to become men, and offers, “Back home manhood isn’t guided or celebrated through a formal ceremony. There’s no official passage from childhood to adulthood. In fact, it feels like we enter adulthood almost by accident.” (p. 101) Consider Wes’s thoughts; what can be inferred by his statement? What behavior can you think of that equals manhood?
- Using the phrase, “This is a story about . . .,” supply five words to describe *Discovering Wes Moore*. Explain your choices.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 7.1., 7.2., 7.3.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Making Thematic Connections

Consider the following themes of *Discovering Wes Moore*: sacrifice, loyalty, courage, and perseverance. Select one of the themes and find examples from the book that helps support this theme. Create a sample Life Lesson Chart using the model at www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson826/chart.pdf.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 7.2.

Finding Meaning by Exploring Setting

In *Discovering Wes Moore*, life in Baltimore, the Bronx, and military school help set the stage for the evolution of Wes’s character and development. Offer students the opportunity to explore the integral role the memoir’s diverse settings play in Wes’s life by completing the following:

- Consider the variety of settings for *Discovering Wes Moore*; why is each of these places important to the development of Wes? Using the descriptions provided in the memoir, illustrate the three places you believe to be most important to his story. In addition to the illustrations, include a short explanation of the significance of each, and why you believe it is important.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 7.1.



Exploring *Discovering Wes Moore* through Writing and Research

- In *Discovering Wes Moore*, readers learn that the early death of Wes's father profoundly impacted Wes's childhood and teen years. Do you believe Wes's lack of a strong male role model is to blame for the poor choices he makes? Are young men without a father figure more inclined to struggle with adolescence and more prone to get into trouble? Why or why not? Compose a short persuasive essay offering your position on this issue. While considering Wes's experiences, use textual evidence to provide specific examples to support your case.
- In *Discovering Wes Moore*, part of Wes's story focuses on his connection and relationship with his family and the people that matter the most to him. Consider your most special relationships. What makes these individuals so important? Compose a personal journal entry where you share their thoughts, and be sure to answer the following questions:
 - Who are the individuals who mean the most to you?
 - Why is that particular relationship so special?
 - What's the greatest sacrifice you've made for the people you love?
 - In what ways have the changes you've experienced in your life affected those to whom you are closest?

Ask for volunteers to share their writing with the class.

- Being named a Rhodes Scholar was one of the highlights of Wes's academic life. Using library resources and the Internet, research the origin and history of the Rhodes Scholarship program, be sure to consider the following:
 - Who founded the Rhodes Scholarship Program?
 - When was it founded?
 - What was the purpose?
 - What are the criteria for selection?
 - Who are some of the most famous or influential world leaders who have received this distinguished honor?

After gathering facts, create an original slideshow that highlights newly acquired knowledge using a presentation product such as Prezi or PowerPoint.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 7.1. and Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 7.1., W. 7.2., W. 7.3.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 7.1. and Writing: Production and Distribution W. 7.4.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge W. 7.4.



Considering Character—Create a Biopoem

The purpose of this strategy is to help students demonstrate knowledge of a character in *Discovering Wes Moore* by following written prompts to complete a poem about the individual. Students can be given the prompts to follow on a worksheet or alternatively, students may create an original slideshow using PowerPoint or Movie Maker.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 7.1. and Craft and Structure R.L. 7.5., R.L.7.6.

Biopoem:

Line 1: First name

Line 2: Three traits that describe the character

Line 3: Relative of _____

Line 4: Admirer of _____ (three things)

Line 5: Who feels _____ (three things)

Line 6: Who needs _____ (three things)

Line 7: Who fears _____ (three things)

Line 8: Who gives _____ (three things)

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

Line 10: Resident of _____

Line 11: Last name



Essential Quotes Analysis

The language that an author uses in his work is essential to getting across the intended meaning. Select four quotes from *Discovering Wes Moore* that seem to signify key ideas that the author hopes readers take from the text. These might be quotes spoken by characters or might be from the narration, and page numbers should be included with the quotes. Have students develop a chart with the following four columns: 1. Quote, 2. Page Number, 3. Relevance to the Novel, and 4. Intended Meaning for Readers

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 7.1.

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

Prepared by Rose Brock, a teacher, school librarian, and doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University, specializing in children's and young adult literature.

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