

"A twisty, inventive, philosophical,
and romantic story about finding,
losing, and understanding love."

— GAYLE FORMAN,
author of *If I Stay*



AGAIN

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e. lockhart

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *WE WERE LIARS* AND *GENUINE FRAUD*

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Resources for Teachers:

AGAIN AGAIN BY E. LOCKHART

A Junior Library Guild selection

In this novel full of surprises from the *New York Times* bestselling author of *We Were Liars* and *Genuine Fraud*, E. Lockhart ups the ante with an inventive and romantic story about human connection, forgiveness, self-discovery, and possibility.

“Lockhart takes her penchant for plot twists to a new level, with a narrative that explores the idea of the multiverse, those infinite worlds loosed by paths taken and not taken. Key scenes are imagined and then reimaged, laying out an iterative feast of ideas about art, possibility, and the creative process for readers hungry for big concepts.”

—Publishers Weekly



Pre-Reading Activities

Explore the concept of the multiverse:

- *Again Again* centers on the idea of multiple universes or possible worlds. Here is a short essay on the subject that provides a nice vocabulary for discussion of the novel: “Splitting Image: The Alternate Realities of the Multiverse” by Jennifer Oellette, published in *Nautilus*. nautil.us/blog/splitting-image-the-alternate-realities-of-the-multiverse
- This fun video explains the philosophical concept Philosophy Tube’s “Are Possible Worlds Real? Modal Realism 1,” by Oliver Thorne. [youtube.com/watch?v=QlXasO7COh0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QlXasO7COh0)

Explore some art:

- *Again Again* features descriptions of many exhibits at “The Factory,” an art center inspired by the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, also known as MASS MoCA, which can be explored online. massmoca.org/exhibitions/
- Some of the exhibits Lockhart describes are inspired by the mind-bending Museum of Jurassic Technology, which has a significant amount of material online. mjt.org/exhibits/exhibitsnew.html
- Adelaide is a Lego artist. Here’s an article about some of the amazing work people are doing with Lego bricks. creativebloq.com/inspiration/lego-art-1233496

Creative exercises:

- Look over chapter 15. Have each student take some items from their bag or wallet, as Adelaide does. Photocopy the items, and have them use collage to create a new ID for themselves. What does this new identification say about you that your other identification does not? What can you learn from looking at each other’s new IDs?
- Have the students write a paragraph describing themselves in third person. Now invite the students to cut up their words and use them to create a new shape, making breaks mid-

sentence. Invite them to change some words. Choose certain words and sounds to repeat. Look for rhythms, and rework the text to emphasize or repeat those rhythms. Look for echoes in the sounds of the text, and rework it to add more echoes. Be creative about where you break your lines, surprising your audience with what follows. Voilà! Poetry from prose.

- Adelaide makes Lego dioramas of her life. Invite students to use Lego bricks (if available) to create a scene or landscape that portrays some aspect of their lives. The limitation of the form means they have to think in terms of essentials.
- Adelaide also builds a set-design model that’s decidedly non-naturalistic. Invite students to create a model to represent some moment in *Again Again*, using non-naturalistic imagery. Ask them to use the grandiosity of their own minds to create a scene that reflects themes they respond to in the novel.
- Toby and Adelaide film and score a vegetable battle. Students with access to the technology might use the app Stop Motion Studio to film vegetable battles of their own.

Discussion Questions

1. One of the topics Lockhart explores is identity. Look at the scene between Toby and Adelaide in chapter 20. What is Toby saying about his identity? Do you agree? Next, have a look chapter 15, where Adelaide has a new piece of identification made. What are the markers of your own identity, to you? What about to others? Does the way others view you influence the way you view yourself? Why or why not?
2. Here’s an essay Lockhart wrote about a turning point in her own life. latimes.com/books/jacketcopy/la-ca-jc-e-lockhart-20140413-story.html. Have there been any turning points in your life? In *Again Again*, do you see any turning points in Adelaide’s?
3. Addiction is overtly explored in topic of this novel, since Toby is a recovering addict. But how does it show up on a deeper level? What might Adelaide be addicted to? What are some

other things people become addicted to besides drugs?
Behaviors? Foods? Feelings? Other people?

4. Lockhart splits lines, making some of the prose look like poetry. But is it? You might work with this definition: “Poetry is a type of literature based on the interplay of words and rhythm. . . . In poetry, words are strung together to form sounds, images, and ideas that might be too complex or abstract to describe directly.” literaryterms.net/poetry/ Using that definition, so is anything in *Again Again* a poem? Why or why not? Some pages to consider: the description of Toby on page 25; the description of Adelaide weeping on pages 51–52; the work of art described on pages 123–124; Toby’s texts on 167–168 and Adelaide’s speech on 220–223. What happens if we analyze one or more of these passages as we do poetry? If the talk about poetry is productive, consider reading Jason Reynolds’s *Long Way Down*, Kwame Alexander’s *The Crossover* and Elizabeth Acevedo’s *The Poet X*, all excellent young adult verse novels.
5. Look at the conversation between Adelaide and Mikey Double L on pages 80–82. It is out of chronological order. What effect does that choice have on the meaning of the scene? How does that out-of-order conversation connect to other themes you see in the novel?
6. On pages 104–105, Kaspian-Lee discusses her definition of beauty, which is different from Adelaide’s. What are some ways we might define beauty? Are any of those definitions problematic? Are any of them culturally determined? Do you think there is a relationship between beauty and tragedy, as Kaspian-Lee asserts? Why or why not?
7. Adelaide projects fantasies onto Jack that are linked to his disability, and Jack rejects those at several points in the novel. What are those fantasies? Why does Jack reject them? See for example, pages 177–178. The opening chapter of Ronald J. Berger’s *Introducing Disability Studies* is a good introduction to the conversations happening around disability and it is available online: rienner.com/uploads/50b7cb7fb3c4d.pdf. After reading it, you might return to the question of identity, this time in relation to Jack. How does he see himself? Is it different from how the world sees him?
8. Adelaide sets boundaries with Toby at a number of points in the novel. Have a look at chapter 14. When are boundaries good to have between people? Are there times when boundaries are problematic? What are some examples of you setting boundaries in your own life? Have you ever had difficulty setting a boundary? What are some tools we can use to set boundaries with people?
9. On pages 214–216 we see Adelaide’s design for *Fool for Love* in multiple universes. What do these designs tell us about the play, even if we haven’t read it? What do these designs suggest Adelaide thinks about love?

Companion Reads

Multiverse fiction:

Here are some recommended young adult novels with the premise of multiple alternate worlds:

Fair Coin by E.C. Myers

Before I Fall by Lauren Oliver

A Darker Shade of Magic by V.E. Schwab

Jane, Unlimited by Kristin Cashore

Tandem by Anna Jarzab

Multiple worlds are explored in both the DC and Marvel comics, most popularly in *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*.

Common Core Standards

Intertextuality:

- *Again Again* describes numerous works of art at “The Factory,” inspired by artists including Paul Ramirez Jonas, Samara Golden, Mark Dion, and Mary Corse, as well as the work at the Museum of Jurassic Technology.
- The novel references the philosophical work being done on the concept of possible worlds.
- The Sam Shephard play, *Fool for Love* (an Obie winner and finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in drama), is a mentor text for the heroine, interpreted and reinterpreted in her in different universes.

Textual Complexity:

- A complex structure: *Again Again*’s multiple universes and parallel timelines require interpretive effort on the part of the reader, who is invited to create meaning by making inferences. In addition, the novel includes text-message conversations, dialogue, letters, conversations rendered out of order, and split lines.
- *Again Again* has multiple levels of meaning and textual ambiguity. Nothing is an absolute fact, since things happen differently in the alternate universes. The novel engages with the question of how identity is shaped by experiences and the stories we tell about ourselves.

E. Lockhart

The author holds a PhD in English and comparative literature from Columbia University (1998) with a focus on 19th-century British novels. She is the author of ten other YA novels and has been a finalist for the *LA Times* Book Prize, the Printz Award and the National Book Award. More teacher resources on her various books, including videos, can be found here: emilylockhart.com/teachers.