

The greatest risk is not taking one.



EVERY
THING



EVERY
THING

a novel

nicola yoon

DISCUSSION GUIDE

INCLUDES COMMON CORE STANDARDS CORRELATIONS

ABOUT THE BOOK

This innovative, heartfelt novel tells the story of a girl who's literally allergic to the outside world. When a new family moves in next door, she begins a complicated romance that challenges everything she's ever known. The narrative unfolds via vignettes, diary entries, texts, charts, lists, illustrations, and more.

MEET MADDY: *My disease is as rare as it is famous. Basically, I'm allergic to the world. I don't leave my house, have not left my house in seventeen years. The only people I ever see are my mom and my nurse, Carla.*

But then one day a moving truck arrives next door. I look out my window, and I see him. He's tall, lean, and wearing all black—black T-shirt, black jeans, black sneakers, and a black knit cap that covers his hair completely. He catches me looking and stares at me. I stare right back. His name is Olly.

Maybe we can't predict the future, but we can predict some things. For example, I am certainly going to fall in love with Olly. It's almost certainly going to be a disaster.



Grades 7 and up
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

NICOLA YOON grew up in Jamaica and Brooklyn. She currently resides in Los Angeles with her husband, who created the artwork on these pages, and her daughter, both of whom she loves beyond all reason. *Everything, Everything* is her first novel.



Photograph by Sonya Sones

Discussion Questions

COURAGE

Early in the novel, Carla tells a disbelieving Maddy, “You’re the strongest, bravest person I know. You better believe that” (p. 33). Later, she reminds her, “Be brave. Remember, life is a gift” (p. 141).

- How do you define bravery?
- Why do you think Carla believes Maddy is brave? Do you agree with her?
- When does Maddy demonstrate her bravery? When have you had to be brave?

Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.5

COMMUNICATION

Until she turns seventeen, nearly Maddy’s entire life is mediated through her computer and the use of social media, and she interacts with very few people face to face. Maddy first begins a friendship with Oliver through email, and their relationship progresses over IM before they ever meet in person.

- What effect does technology have on Maddy’s life and relationships?
- How does technology influence her developing relationship with Olly?
- Why do you think Yoon, as the author, includes the transcripts of Maddy’s IM conversations with Olly, and what effect does her choice have on the story?

Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.5, CCRA.R.6, CCRA.R.7, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1

GRIEF

In a conversation with Olly, Maddy describes her feelings about the loss of her father and brother as “sadness that’s not quite sadness, and then guilt” (p. 97).

- Why do you think Maddy describes her feelings this way?
- How do you think Maddy copes with the deaths of her father and brother, and why? How does Maddy’s mother show or hide her own grief?
- Describe the different ways in which their family tragedy affects Maddy and her mother.

Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1

RISK

As Maddy tries to decide if she should meet Olly, Carla advises her: “Everything’s a risk. Not doing anything is a risk. It’s up to you” (p. 68).

- Consider Maddy, her mother, Carla, Olly, and his family. What are the different risks each of these characters takes throughout the novel?
- What are their reasons for taking these risks? Do you think their decisions are ultimately worth the risk?

Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1

LYING

When Maddy meets Olly’s friend Zach, he sees through her deception but reassures her, “I’ve been lying about myself for so long. I know what it’s like” (p. 217).

- What are some lies each character tells?
- Why do they feel they must lie rather than tell the truth? How do these deceptions affect the people around them?
- Is lying always wrong, or is it possible that some lies can be justified? If so, why?

Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1

CHOICES

Maddy wonders, “Maybe there’s a version of your life for all the choices you make and all the choices you don’t” (p. 305).

- In which areas of her life are Maddy’s choices limited?
- What choices does Maddy make for herself, and why do you think she chooses that way?
- What are the consequences of these choices?
- Does Olly have the power of choice in his life more than Maddy?

Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1



ALIVE

Having tasted freedom for the first time when she goes to Hawaii with Olly, Maddy realizes: “I was happy before I met him. But I’m alive now, and those are not the same thing” (p. 181). Later, she asserts, “There’s more to life than being alive” (p. 300).

- What do you think Maddy means when she says these things?
- How do you think her ideas about happiness, and about staying alive, have changed over the course of the book?
- What is the difference between being “happy” versus being “alive”? Is it possible to be both?

☉ **Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.5

REGRET

After Maddy escapes from her house, Carla tells her, “You’re not living if you’re not regretting” (p. 186).

- What does Carla mean when she gives Maddy this advice?
- How do you think it influences Maddy’s decisions?
- How does Maddy experience regret throughout the novel? Do you agree with Carla’s statement?

☉ **Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.5

IDENTITY

When Maddy discovers the truth about her health, she struggles to find her new identity: “Now I don’t know anything. I don’t know who I’m supposed to be in my new world” (p. 297).

- How does Maddy’s character develop throughout the book?
- Which pieces of her identity have changed, and what aspects of her character have remained the same?
- Why does Maddy no longer know who she’s supposed to be? Who do you think she’s supposed to be?

☉ **Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1



LOVE

Throughout the book, Maddy and the people around her wrestle with various definitions of love. By turns, Maddy decides that “love can’t kill me” (p. 149); “love is a terrible thing and I want nothing to do with it” (p. 242); “love makes people crazy” (p. 300); and “love is worth everything” (p. 302).

- How does Maddy’s struggle to define love reflect her character development throughout the novel?
- Given Maddy’s competing definitions of love, which one do you think is most accurate? How do you define love?

☉ **Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.5

FORGIVENESS

One of Maddy’s last messages to Olly reads, “By the time you read this you will have forgiven me” (p. 298).

- Which characters in the novel seek forgiveness, and for which actions?
- What role does forgiveness play in their relationships?
- If you were in that character’s place, would you be willing to forgive? Why or why not?

☉ **Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1

EVERYTHING

In Maddy’s last “Life Is Short™” spoiler book review, she summarizes her favorite book, *The Little Prince*: “Love is worth everything. Everything” (p. 302).

- How does Maddy’s book review reflect her character development over the course of the novel?
- How does it relate to the book’s title, and what is its significance?
- Do you agree with Maddy’s review?

☉ **Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.3, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.5



Pre-Reading Questions

FRIENDSHIP Think about your closest friends.

- How did you first meet them?
- How did your friendship develop?
- How do you communicate with one another?
- What do you have in common, and what are your differences?

CHOICES Consider the many choices you make each day, from the moment you wake up until you go to bed at night.

- Do you decide what to eat? What to wear? Where to go? How to get there?
- Do you decide how you'll spend your time, and who you'll spend it with?
- Do other people in your life influence your decisions, or make them for you?
- How important is it for you to have the power of choice?

RISK Think about a risk, either big or small, that you've taken in your life.

- What was the nature of the risk? What might have happened if you had made a different decision about taking that risk?
- What reasons made you ultimately decide to act the way you did?
- Looking back, do you think the consequences were worth the risk?

LIFE Reflect on your life and your most meaningful experiences.

- When do you feel most truly alive?
- Are there people, places, or things that you wouldn't want to live without?
- What would you be willing to risk to keep them?

Mother-Daughter–Themed Discussion Questions

Carla asks Maddy, “Do you girls really find it so easy to lie to your mamas?” (p. 66).

Daughters: How do you think Maddy would respond to Carla's question? How would you respond to it?

Do you ever feel pressure to lie?

Mothers: Do you identify with Carla's position? Why do you think Carla asked Maddy that question?

 **Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1

Maddy writes to her mother: “You are smart and strong and kind and selfless. I couldn't have wished for a better mom” (p. 168).

Daughters: How does Maddy's mother demonstrate these characteristics? By the end of the novel, do you think Maddy would write different words to her mother? If you were to describe your own mother's best qualities, what words would you use?

Mothers: Do you think that Maddy's mother deserves this praise? If your daughter were to describe you, what words would she use? How would you describe your daughter?

 **Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.3, CCRA.L.5

Maddy comes to a realization: “loving someone as fiercely as my mom loves me must be like wearing your heart outside of your body with no skin, no bones, no nothing to protect it” (p. 242).

Daughters: What situations lead Maddy to this realization? Do you agree with her assessment?

Mothers: Do you agree with Maddy? If you were to describe loving your daughter, what simile would you use?

 **Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.5

Carla reassures Maddy, “Mamas don't know how to hate their babies. They love them too much” (p. 254).

Daughters: Do you agree with Carla? What would you do in Maddy's situation? Has there been a time when you worried your mother wouldn't forgive you?


Mothers: Do you agree with Carla? How do you respond in situations that require forgiveness?

 **Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1

When Maddy leaves her mother, she writes: “She cried then, but still she let me go, and that has to count for something” (p. 301).

Daughters: Do you think Maddy will return to her mother? Will they be able to rebuild their relationship? Why or why not?

Mothers: What advice would you give Maddy about her relationship with her mother? Have you ever had to let go, even when you didn't want to?

 **Correlates to Common Core Anchor Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1



Additional Activities



“MADELINE’S DIARY” (p. 17)

As you read *Everything, Everything*, keep a journal like Maddy does. Record your responses to each chapter in prose, verse, drawing, or another form of your choosing.

- Correlates to Common Core Standards: CCRA.R.10, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.W.10, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.3

“You can find the meaning of life in a book.” (p. 89)

Which books have you read that have helped you find meaning in your life? Compile a list of your top five books and write a “Life Is Short” spoiler book review for each of them in Maddy’s style.

- Correlates to Common Core Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.10, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.1.2, CCRA.L.3

“Sometimes I reread my favorite books from back to front. I start with the last chapter and read backward until I get to the beginning.” (p. 162)

Reread *Everything, Everything* the way Maddy describes. Write a reading journal entry about the differences you noticed when reading backward, and what new insights you gained when viewing each character’s development in reverse.

- Correlates to Common Core Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.W.9, CCRA.L.1

“It’s early, but there are still so many people doing so many things—walking or talking or sitting or standing or running or riding bicycles. I don’t quite believe they’re really real.” (p. 181)

Go for a walk in your neighborhood, pretending that you’re in Maddy’s shoes. What sights, sounds, and smells do you notice? How would these experiences affect you if you’d never encountered them before? Write a journal entry reflecting on these things as if they are brand-new to you.

- Correlates to Common Core Standards: CCRA.W.3, CCRA.W.7, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.3

“**prom•ise** (‘präməs) n. pl. **-es. 1.** *The lie you want to keep.* [2015, Whittier]” (p. 194)

Review the different definitions that Maddy includes in her “Madeline’s Dictionary” entries. Choose ten words that hold special meaning for you, and create your own personal dictionary definitions for them.

- Correlates to Common Core Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.5

“I know the places in my heart, but the names have all changed.” (p. 248)

Consider Maddy’s map of her heart on p. 249, then draw a map of your own heart, labeling each of the significant places.

- Correlates to Common Core Standards: CCRA.W.4, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2

“When I was younger one of my favorite activities was imagining alternate-universe versions of myself.” (p. 296)

Imagine yourself in an alternate universe, as Maddy does. Create a photo montage to illustrate how your life would be different—the places you’d go, the things you’d do, and the characteristics that would define you. Share your alternate-universe version of yourself with a friend.

- Correlates to Common Core Standards: CCRA.W.8, CCRA.W.9, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1

“I relax into my seat and reread *The Little Prince*. And, just like every time I’ve read it before, the meaning changes.” (p. 301)

Use your local library to find and read a copy of *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. After you’ve read it, write a journal entry about what meaning the story holds for you. Later, reread the story and write about whether the meaning has changed for you like it did for Maddy.

- Correlates to Common Core Standards: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.9, CCRA.R.10, CCRA.W.9, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.3e Standards CCSS.RL.4-7.1