The Forest of Hands and Teeth

A novel by Carrie Ryan
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From all of us at Junior Library Guild, we wish you and your students good reading and great learning . . . with JLG Selections and JLG Guides.
# The Forest Of Hands and Teeth

by Carrie Ryan

JLG Guide written by Frank Coffin

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About the Author

CARRIE RYAN was born and raised in Greenville, South Carolina. In high school, she played field hockey and soccer, competing for a year on a boys’ team until the school founded a team for girls. She enjoyed reading anything and everything, and made her first attempt at writing (a short story).

Ryan attended Williams College in Massachusetts, where she played field hockey and lacrosse for the Ephs (pronounced eefs for Ephraim Williams, whose estate helped fund the college in 1793.) Ryan takes some pleasure in mentioning that the Ephs’ mascot is a purple cow. She also became active in student government.

After graduating from Williams, Ryan moved to Middleburg, Virginia, where she worked at the Foxcroft School, a school for girls in grades nine through twelve. There she finished her first book and wrote a second. Unable to interest an agent or publisher in the books, she turned to the study of law. She graduated from Duke University Law School and currently practices in the area of estates and trusts.

Still, Ryan continued to be interested in writing, and eventually her fiancé persuaded her to write the kind of tale that she loved, full of action and adventure—and zombies. The result was The Forest of Hands and Teeth, Ryan’s first published novel.

Carrie Ryan now lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, and plans to continue writing novels set in the same or similar worlds.

The Forest of Hands and Teeth is an April 2009 Junior Library Guild Y Level Selection.

To learn more about the author of this selection, how she came to write and publish her first novel, and how she creates her work, visit her Web site:

www.carrieryan.com
**Building Background Information**

**Understanding Zombies, Pandemics, and Genres**

DO YOU BELIEVE in zombies? What *is* a zombie, anyway? A zombie is a fictional creature, a being not really alive but not dead either, often referred to as “the undead.” In most books and movies, zombies are slow-moving monsters in various states of mutilation or decay. They usually have only one goal—to attack humans and thus create more zombies. True to the mythology of these creatures, in *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*, author Carrie Ryan places readers in a world in which zombies pursue people in order to bite and infect them, thus turning them into fellow zombies.

Although not real, the idea of zombies has some historical basis. The voodoo cults of Haiti combined some Christian rituals, West African religions, and magic brought to Haiti with enslaved peoples. The voodoo cults believed in many kinds of strange spirits, including corpses that can be brought back to life. To them, a zombie (sometimes spelled *zombi* or *zonbi*) was a being without a will of its own, always doing the bidding of its master. The legend may have had its beginnings in rites in which voodoo priests injected certain poisons into the skin of people, who then suffered near-paralysis for several hours.

Zombies have been wildly popular in books and movies throughout the years. *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) is probably the most famous zombie movie, from which many others have sprung. In recent years, supernatural themes that include creatures such as vampires, mummies, and zombies have become the rage again. Tense and exciting, these tales please audiences whether or not they believe in creatures from beyond the grave.

One of the more thrilling elements of this kind of story is the possibility of spreading the evil infection. In *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*, anyone who is bitten by a zombie soon becomes one. The horror of becoming one of these beasts, or of having this happen to a loved one, provides extra dread, because the person is doomed to wander the earth forever, neither truly alive nor truly at rest.
The story, set in the future, takes place sometime long after an infectious organism has run wild in the world, turning much of the population into zombies. The reality is—zombies aside—that history has had some terrifying nationwide, or even worldwide, infections that could not be stopped. Such an infection is known as a *pandemic*. There have been pandemics of the plague, cholera, influenza, and other viruses—so the hint of real biology in the spread of the zombie “bug” just adds to the suspense.

To learn more about real pandemics and how they spread, have students visit an American Museum of Natural History online exhibit: [www.amnh.org/exhibitions/epidemic/section_08/index.html](http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/epidemic/section_08/index.html)

**Fourteenth-century plague victims** (public domain)

**Name That Genre**

In *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*, as Mary faces her environment, she tries to make sense of her world and her relationships, not unlike any young person anywhere or at any time. Though her world is strange to us, some of its problems are not. The mix of elements in the book makes it hard to classify it simply in terms of genre—there are elements of horror, of fantasy, of science fiction, and of romance. What keeps the story moving, though, is the non-stop action as Mary and her friends and family stay ahead of the zombies. Although there are aspects of many genres in the book, the action and adventure of this tale is what keeps you turning pages.

Beyond the genre, this book is a good example of archetypal literature. An *archetype* is a repeated pattern that shows up often in literature. *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* is the story of a quest, one of the most common kinds of stories told throughout time. Think of *The Wizard of Oz*, King Arthur’s legends, *Star Wars*, and other famous stories of people on a journey to find something or to solve a problem. In this guide, you will see a boxed element called *Thinking About Archetypes* that will be a valuable tool in understanding the elements of this powerful kind of literature.

To find suggestions for further reading, go to page 39. There you will find other books that may interest those who enjoy this one.
Prereading Activities

Book summary: Sometime in a distant future, Mary lives in a fenced world. Outside the fence, the Unconsecrated mill and moan in agony, trying to get through to the humans, to infect them with the same undead disease they carry. Guardians patrol the fences, protecting the people. When a human does get bitten, the Guardians must execute or cast that person out into the Forest of Hands and Teeth, because he or she will soon turn into a zombie—as happened to Mary’s parents. Mary thinks constantly of her mother’s dreams of the ocean, dreams that give Mary hope of a better world beyond the forest. In the meantime, she must hide her affection for Travis, who is betrothed to Cassandra. When all seems lost—with no imminent marriage and with her brother refusing to help her—Mary goes to live in the Cathedral with the Sisters who control the society. Mary wonders at some of their secrets and the rumors about a world beyond the fences. When the fence is breached, masses of Unconsecrated take the town. Mary, Jed and his wife Beth, Cassandra, Travis, Travis’s brother Harry, and a small boy named Jacob must flee down the mysteriously marked fenced pathways that lead to—what?

Understanding Genre: Action/Adventure

1. Explain in your own words what you would expect to find in an action/adventure novel.

Answers will vary but may include: chase scenes, searches, villains, conflict of good vs. evil, obstacles and physical challenges, etc.

2. Based on the summary above, what will create the action and adventure in The Forest of Hands and Teeth?

Answers will vary but may include: zombies trying to bite people, people running for their lives, Mary and her friends trying to find a way out, etc.

3. What do you expect to be the most exciting parts of the book?

Answers will vary but may include any of the ideas above

4. What questions about the situation would you want the story to answer?

Answers will vary.
Prereading Activities

Making Predictions
Read this partial summary of the plot and make predictions based on evidence from the text and/or from your prior knowledge or personal experience.

Although Harry is interested in Mary, Mary thinks more about his brother, Travis, who is training to be a Guardian and is promised to Mary’s best friend, Cassandra. During a skirmish, Travis is hurt, and as Mary tends to him, her feelings grow stronger, much to the disapproval of Sister Tabitha. A stranger arrives, apparently from the unused paths near the town, and then disappears after taking refuge with Sister Tabitha. When the fence is breached and the Unconsecrated take the town, Mary and others take flight down these paths, trying to escape the ever-pursuing zombies and find a place of safety.

1. What do you think will happen in the relationships of Mary, Harry, Travis, and Cassandra?

| I predict: | Answers will vary. |
| What is the basis of your prediction? | Answers will vary. |

2. How will the group escape the slow-moving but relentless zombies?

| I predict: | Answers will vary. |
| What is the basis of your prediction? | Answers will vary. |

3. “I want to read further so I can . . .”
   Set a purpose for reading based on your predictions above.
   Answers will vary.
Before You Read
Introducing Vocabulary
Define each of the words below, paying attention to the part of speech indicated. Then complete each sentence with the correct word. You may need to change the form of the word.

necessitate (v.) to make necessary or required
inevitable (adj.) impossible to avoid
blasphemy (n.) disrespect for sacred things
chastise (v.) to punish or scold someone
impending (adj.) about to happen

1. Late as usual, my mom ___ chastised ___ me for forgetting to set my alarm last night.
2. Every autumn, the ____ impending ____ arrival of winter filled my father with gloom.
3. She was disappointed that her travel plans would ___ necessitate ___ several flight changes.
4. In our town, saying you’re not interested in sports is a kind of ____ blasphemy ____.
5. It was ____ inevitable ____ that budget cuts would affect our school programs.

After You Read
Analyzing the Writing: Point of View

1. Define first-person point of view in written works.

   The story is told from the perspective of one character who uses “I” and “me” to describe the action and feelings

2. How does first-person point of view help you get to know Mary more deeply?

   We get to know what she thinks and feel what she feels.

3. Why does first-person point of view often give a strong sense of voice to writing?

   Because it is written in the way the character would tell the story out loud.

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Getting to Know the Characters
Readers form ideas about the characters from the perspective of what Mary thinks and sees. Read each excerpt below and explain what it suggests about Mary’s view of the character.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Mary’s view</th>
<th>What I learned about the character or Mary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>“…while a part of me wonders if our lifelong friendship could ever grow to be something more…” (page 5)</td>
<td>Answers may vary but could include: She is hopeful but wary. She yearns for love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travis</td>
<td>“It is his attention that I have been trying to catch throughout the summer, his friendship I have wanted to turn into something more.” (page 5)</td>
<td>Answers may vary but could include: She is drawn to Travis and wants to have him love her in return.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>her brother Jed</td>
<td>“I search his eyes for the tenderness I once knew but all I find is sharp edges.” (page 22)</td>
<td>Answers may vary but could include: She is hurt and disappointed and needs her brother's acceptance. Her brother is angry at her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister Tabitha</td>
<td>“She inhales sharply and I can see her lips tighten into a single line.” (page 30)</td>
<td>Answers may vary but could include: Sister Tabitha is harsh and does not like Mary much</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responding to the Story

1. Why do you think the author began with stories that Mary’s mother used to tell about the ocean?

   **Answers may vary but could include:** Because she wants the reader to feel what Mary feels about the possibilities of life beyond the village and the forest. To set up the journey to come.

2. Name three consequences for Mary’s life that occur as a result of what happens to her mother. **Answers may vary but could include:**
   1. She is now alone.
   2. She feels responsible for her mother’s condition.
   3. Her brother is angry and rejects Mary as his sister.
3. Why does Jed not permit Mary to come live with him and his wife?

Answers may vary but could include: Because he is angry that Mary let their mother become one of the Unconsecrated. He feels he needs to protect his wife and unborn child.

4. Based on what happens between Mary and Sister Tabitha, what prediction can you make about Mary’s life in the Cathedral?

Answers may vary but could include: Mary isn’t likely to want to stay there, and she and Sister Tabitha will continue to not get along.

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**Thinking About Archetypes: Plot**

One of the most common plots in literature is that of the journey or quest. Think of stories you’ve read in which the main character, or protagonist, leaves home to go looking for something. The search, or quest, can be for internal things, such as personal meaning or acceptance, or external things, such as treasure or a person. Often the journey is riddled with dead ends, obstacles, and discoveries.

List some books you have read or know about that use the archetype of the journey or quest as the main plot. Answers will vary. Some might list: *Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, Star Trek, Harry Potter books, The Wizard of Oz, King Arthur, various fairytales, myths and legends.*

What journey do you think Mary will be going on? Some answers may include: She will go to find the ocean; she will find a world beyond the forest; she will go into the forest; she will find true love beyond the village, etc.
Before You Read

Introducing Vocabulary: Unique Usage

In *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*, the author uses certain terms in unique ways. These words have a particular meaning in the world of the book. Define each of the following terms as they are used normally. Then explain the special meaning each has in the story. Use the back of this page if needed.

1. guardian  Someone who protects others in some fashion.
   Guardian  One whose duty it is to watch the fence for a breach.

2. cathedral  A large, important church.
   Cathedral  The central location of power in the village, where the Sisters are.

3. sisterhood  A group of women with shared beliefs, goals, or community.
   Sisterhood  The group of powerful women in the Cathedral.

4. infected  Contaminated by something, usually a disease.
   Infected  One who has been bitten by an Unconsecrated being.

5. outsider  Someone who is not included, not part of society.
   Outsider  Someone from beyond the village.

6. unconsecrated  The opposite of something sacred that is set aside; the impure.
   Unconsecrated  The zombies who live in the forest; the undead who prey on the villagers.

7. forest  A large area of trees and plants.
   Forest  The area surrounding the village, supposedly the remainder of the world.

Explain why the author chose to name the forest “The Forest of Hands and Teeth.”

Answers will vary, but could include: Because the forest is inhabited by beings who scratch and claw and bite at others in an effort to capture, eat, or infect them. It has the effect of being really dark and scary.
Making Predictions
1. Read the first two pages of Chapter V (pp. 38–39). Describe what has happened.

   Mary is called upon to tend to the injured stranger, who turns out to be Travis.

2. Make a prediction about how this occurrence will affect Mary’s life.

   Answers may vary, but a common one will be that Travis and Mary fall in love.

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Review your prediction about how Mary’s life will be affected by Travis’s wound. What happened in these chapters to support your prediction?

   The two of them become very close and realize that they are betrothed to the wrong person.

What new prediction(s) can you make since reading these chapters?

   Answers will vary.

Analyzing the Writing:
Using Effective Verbs
To convey meaning more effectively, writers use verbs that add power and specific detail to their descriptions. Sometimes these verbs add variety; sometimes they supply even more sense of what is taking place. Each of the following examples could use the verb say or says instead of the more specific one the author chose. For each, explain what the verb used provides that using the more general say or says would not.


2. “Mary,” he whispers. (p. 39) It shows that the sound is low and soft.

3. “Mary!” Cass calls out. (p. 44) It shows that the voice is loud.
4. “I’m sorry,” he finishes. “I just . . .” (p. 47) It shows that he is coming to a conclusion.

5. “Yes,” I respond, language feeling strange in my mouth after so many weeks of silence. (p. 48)
   It shows that she is answering something that has been spoken already.

6. “Why would they lock me in if it was just someone hurt?” he breathes. (p. 56)
   It adds that he may be in pain or whispering under his breath.

7. “I—I—” I stammer. “I thought we didn’t know what caused the Return.” (p. 63)
   Stammering usually shows surprise or confusion.

**Getting to Know the Characters**

1. How does the author show Sister Tabitha’s disapproval of Mary?
   Answers may vary but may include: She doesn’t allow Mary to keep seeing Travis.
   She warns Mary often and even grabs and shakes her.

2. Give two examples showing that Travis understands what Mary thinks and feels.
   Answers may vary but may include: He tells her everything will be all right; he holds her. He asks her to tell him about the ocean.

3. In what ways are Harry and Cass alike?
   Answers may vary but may include: They are good people who are less emotional and more practical than Mary and Travis. They don’t question things so much.

4. What does the Outsider represent to Mary?
   The possibility of life beyond the Forest of Hands and Teeth

**Responding to the Story**

1. Mary faces two major issues as Chapter VIII concludes. What are they?
   That she loves Travis and will not give him up and that she is compelled to leave the village to find the world beyond.
2. How do Sister Tabitha’s actions reinforce Mary’s rejection of the community’s beliefs?

Answers may vary but may include: Sister Tabitha tells Mary that she will have to let go of her dreams and desires if she stays at the Cathedral. It is a life of service and commitment, but not one of love.

Social Studies Connection

There have been real cases of large-scale infection throughout history. Some of them, like the Black Plague in the Middle Ages, were mysteries at the time. Others were recognized but could not be controlled by available medicine. Learn more about the Influenza Pandemic of 1918 (during World War I) that took more lives than the war.

What keywords would you use in an Internet search to find out about this topic?
Influenza; 1918; flu; epidemic; pandemic; major illness; etc.

In what ways was the situation similar to what seems to have happened in Mary’s world?
Once the disease began to spread from one person to another, there was almost nothing that could be done about it. It struck anyone: young or old, rich or poor.

The risk Travis faces, as Mary’s mother did, is the risk of infection by the Unconsecrated. Explain how this process seems similar to infections that can occur in the real world.
Going into unknown areas or less-civilized places puts people more at risk to catch a disease. Being around others who carry the disease puts you more at risk, too.
Analyzing the Writing

Writers add a sense of reality to characters by making them more complex. Even Sister Tabitha, who seems to represent everything Mary dislikes, is not merely a simple character. Explain how each of the following passages add depth and reality to the character of Sister Tabitha.

1. “Prayer is always the best medicine,” she says and then she comes to the bed and with a tenderness I never thought possible she pulls the sheet down from Travis's body in order to examine his wounds. (page 40)

   Sister Tabitha is kind and caring for those who are weak and need help.

2. “Your mother used to tell you stories about life before the Return,” she says. “But did she ever tell you of murder? Of the pain and anguish? The heresy and hypocrisy? Wars, deceit, selfishness? Of people allowing human beings to die of hunger outside in the cold when they had warmth and food?” (page 67)

   Sister Tabitha is afraid of what can happen because she has seen it before.

3. Sister Tabitha tucks a strand of hair back from my face, her hand resting on my cheek the way my mother used to do. “I am trying to keep you safe, but you must help me.” (page 69)

   She has a special motherly feeling toward Mary, but Mary’s ways cause conflict.

Thinking About Archetypes: Conflict

Common conflicts can be found in archetypal literature. Often the conflict has to do with family members: children who have problems with a parent or parents (including missing parents), with siblings, or with the family in general. Think of fairytales that use this conflict: Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, etc. How does this conflict show up in The Forest of Hands and Teeth?

   Mary has to decide which is more important: her village or family or her desire to find love and a new world. She chooses to leave the village, even if it means leaving her brother behind.

Another common conflict is a kind of test or trial that transforms the protagonist, usually involving the transition from childhood to adulthood. How does this conflict show up in Mary’s story?

   Yes. Mary has to leave her childhood behind and become a leader of the small group that goes down the paths.
Chapters IX–XII
(Impending Marriage)

Before You Read
Making Predictions
At this point in *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*, two large issues dominate Mary’s life. She has deep feelings for Travis, yet she is committed to the Sisterhood. An Outsider, Gabrielle has somehow made her way to the village. Make predictions about what will happen next regarding these two relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About Travis, I predict:</th>
<th>What is the basis of your prediction?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About Gabrielle, I predict:</th>
<th>What is the basis of your prediction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
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</table>

Introducing Vocabulary
Using Context Clues
Find each of the words below by reading the page on which it is located. Read the passage in which the word appears and try to figure out its meaning by using the context of the passage. Use a dictionary to check your definitions.

1. somber (page 80) **sad and serious**
2. culmination (page 85) **the ending of something**
3. ramrod (page 91) **a strong, straight bar or pole**
4. dormant (page 93) **sleeping or inactive**
5. acquiesce (page 100) **to give in to or agree**
After You Read
Checking Predictions
Reread your predictions. Were they confirmed by the story? What information in these four chapters affected the outcome of your predictions?

Answers will vary.

Getting to Know the Characters
1. Why does Sister Tabitha agree to let Mary leave the Sisterhood?

She knows that Mary really is not suited for life in the Sisterhood. She says that Mary would best serve the community as a wife and mother.

2. How does the surprise about Brethlaw affect the relationship between Cass and Mary?

It changes their friendship. Cass becomes stronger and tells Mary she cannot have Travis. They are no longer close friends.

3. How does Mary respond to Travis's statement that he has heard stories of a life beyond the forest also?

She can hardly believe what she is hearing. He feels just as she does about finding the other part of the world. She is happy and surprised.

4. Why does Mary return to the underground areas of the Cathedral?

She is compelled to find out all she can while she is still in the Cathedral. She knows that once she is wed to Harry, she will never have access to the secret chambers.

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Analyzing the Writing

Similes
The author sometimes uses a simile to show how Mary feels about something. A simile is an expression using “like” or “as” to compare two things. Consider each of the similes below and explain what the comparison reveals about Mary’s emotion at the moment.

1. I am surprised that I don’t growl like a wounded animal cornered by dogs. (page 77)
   
   It shows that she feels hurt and vulnerable, unable to defend herself from what is happening.

2. But this kiss with Travis—it’s like waking up and being born and realizing what life is and can be. (page 93)
   
   It shows that she feels new, hopeful.

3. The air is damp, moldy, and my own breath sounds like a windstorm to my ears. (page 102)
   
   She is breathing hard and loud.

4. And I continue to pace at the top of the hill, waiting for Travis to come claim me, time slipping around me like water over a rock. (page 111)
   
   It shows that time flows but she stays where she is.

Making Connections
1. Mary lives in a very different world than we do. Yet we recognize her feelings. What qualities about her are like those of young people from any age or place?
   Answers will vary.

2. Mary faces an uncertain future. Which of her uncertainties are similar to those of people you know?
   Answers will vary.
Before You Read
Making Predictions
Time is running out for Mary before she must marry Harry. What do you think will happen?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I predict:</th>
<th>What is the basis for your prediction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
<td>Answers will vary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After You Read
Checking Predictions
In what ways was your prediction correct? What factors that you did not know about affected the accuracy of the prediction?

Answers will vary.

Mastering Vocabulary
Words with Latin Origins
Latin, the ancient language of the Romans, gave English many base words and combining forms. Examine the Latin root of each of the following words. Then write a brief definition of each word as it is used today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Latin root and meaning</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fidelity (page 116)</td>
<td>fides, faith</td>
<td>Being faithful to someone or something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compression (page 128)</td>
<td>comprimere, to squeeze</td>
<td>The act of being pressured/squeezed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decapitates (page 130)</td>
<td>caput, head</td>
<td>Cuts one's head off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sanctuary (page 132)</td>
<td>sanctus, sacred</td>
<td>A safe place, a church main area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sustenance (page 135)</td>
<td>sustinere, to hold</td>
<td>What keeps one alive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carnage (page 135)</td>
<td>caro, flesh</td>
<td>Human destruction, death, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Getting to Know the Characters**

1. Why does Sister Tabitha tell Mary that her mother prayed to have a baby after many failures?  
   *Probably to let Mary know of her mother’s sacrifice and desire to have her.*

2. Why does Mary consent to be Bound to Harry when she loves Travis? **She feels she has no choice. Travis has not come for her and she doesn’t want to hurt Cass.**

3. What does Harry’s behavior during the attack on the town demonstrate about him? **He is brave and mature, knows what to do in an emergency. He is also compassionate in that he saves Jacob.**

4. As Sister Tabitha’s life ends, how does she conduct herself? **She gives up her life in order to protect the other Sisters.**

5. Why doesn’t Mary tell Cass about where Gabrielle came from and why she turned? **Cass doesn’t want to know about any of that. She prefers to deny the need to know about or to find the other world beyond the village.**

---

**Science Connection**

Gabrielle is different from other Unconsecrated. She is faster and stronger. The villagers worried that the Unconsecrated were changing. They wonder if Gabrielle could be the result of mutation.

In the real world, a mutation is a change in the genetic material known as DNA. Sometimes mutations cause changes that are for the better—and sometimes for the worse.

Use your library or the Internet to find out what kinds of things cause mutations to occur.

---

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Analyzing the Writing
Sometimes writers use *figurative expressions* to convey meaning. Figurative expressions are words or phrases used in a manner other than their usual or literal sense. Most of us frequently use figurative expressions in everyday speech. Explain what each of the following figurative expressions means.

1. I am *at war with myself*. (page 115) **It means I am feeling conflicted about**
   something, that I feel 2 different ways about something.

2. But I still *stand my ground*, unwilling to let her see the effect she has had on me. (page 116)
   **It means I won’t change my mind.**

3. All of this takes place *in the space between heartbeats* and I back away from the window . . . (page 126)
   **It takes place in a very short period of time.**

4. I think I see that flash of red again but I can’t be sure that it isn’t *my mind playing tricks on me*. (page 136)
   **It means that what I am seeing may not actually be what is happening.**

Responding to the Story
1. How does the action in these chapters shift from Mary’s internal thoughts to the external world?
   She now has to respond to what is going on around her and put
   her feelings into action, one way or the other.

2. Did you read these chapters more slowly or more rapidly than you had read earlier ones? What accounts for the difference?
   Answers will vary, but most students will say that they read it more quickly because
   of the action of the events and to find out what was going to happen next.

3. Do you think there is any chance that the townspeople can repel the attack and regain control of the village? Explain your response.
   Answers will vary.

   Answers will vary.
Before You Read
Making Predictions
Forced out of the town, the band straggles down the paths. What personal conflicts do you think may occur between characters as the group moves?

Answers will vary, but may include: Mary and Cass will be competing for Travis’s attention; the group may disagree on where to go and what to do.

After You Read
Checking Predictions
What new information changed the situation? How did it affect your predictions?

Answers will vary.

Mastering Vocabulary
Applying Language
You can learn the meaning of a word by looking it up or discovering it from context clues. Yet you will not have mastered the word until you can use it correctly on your own, in either written or spoken form. Use whatever means you wish to understand the meanings of the following words. Then use each in an original sentence.

1. comprehensible (page 149) (meaning: understandable)
   Sentences will vary.

2. at bay (page 152) (meaning: at a distance, away)
   Sentences will vary.

3. clamoring (page 159) (meaning: making a lot of noise)
   Sentences will vary.

4. desolate (page 165) (meaning: bare and uninhabited)
   Sentences will vary.

5. dexterity (page 168) (meaning: skill, ability, especially with hands)
   Sentences will vary.
Analyzing the Writing
Information from Dialogue
Throughout most of the story, we get information from Mary's point of view through
her interior thoughts. In some sequences, however, factual information comes from
what the other characters say. These speeches may offer new information or describe
the feelings of characters from points of view other than Mary's. Explain what each of
the speeches below adds to the story that could not have come from Mary herself.

1. “It’s gone” is all Jed says. “There’s no going back.” (page 150) Jed also feels that
their only choice is to leave the village.

2. Harry's cheeks flash red. “My father was the chief of the Guardians and he said
nothing of this!” (page 151)
Harry is angry that he didn't know enough to be prepared.

3. “Cass makes a good point,” Travis says. “If we take the left branch, there’s no way
she can follow us.” (page 162)
That all of them are in agreement about where to go next.

4. “Beth is dead,” [Cass] says, not even bothering to look up at me. (page 170)
Mary couldn't know what happened to Beth until Cass tells her.

Responding to the Story
1. How does what happens to Beth change Jed? He understands now the decision
Mary had to make about their mother and how difficult it was.

2. The group seems trapped at the moment. What would you do in their situation?
Answers will vary.

3. Do you have an idea what the strange letters are that Mary keeps finding? Why
doesn't she have an idea?
Answers will vary.
Chapters XXI–XXIV  
(The Village)  
pages 181–219

Before You Read  
Making Predictions
The group seems to be lost and trapped in the maze of pathways. How do you think they will escape from this situation?

Answers will vary.

On what evidence do you base this prediction? Answers will vary.

After You Read  
Checking Predictions
Did your prediction prove to be correct? What other evidence could you have used to make your prediction?

Answers will vary.

Mastering Vocabulary  
Words with Multiple Meanings
Many words in English have more than one meaning. Understanding which meaning intended by an author is a key to comprehension. Below are words from these chapters that could have more than one meaning. For each, identify two possible meanings. Then place a checkmark in the box with the meaning the author intended in the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning 1</th>
<th>Meaning 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reconcile (page 184)</td>
<td>To return to a friendly state ✓</td>
<td>To become consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elaborate (page 188)</td>
<td>To go into detail about something</td>
<td>Made with detail and variety ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dedicated (page 189)</td>
<td>Devoted to a cause</td>
<td>Designed for one purpose ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quiver (page 193)</td>
<td>A bag that holds arrows</td>
<td>To shake rapidly ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milling (page 215)</td>
<td>Moving about aimlessly ✓</td>
<td>Grinding into grain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Analyzing the Writing
Varying Sentence Length
One technique the author often uses in The Forest of Hands and Teeth is varying the length of sentences. Especially when the pace of action is fast, she uses short sentences and even partial sentences to speed the reader along. Consider the contrast between short and long sentences in the following passage:

But I do not wait.
The afternoon sun is slipping through the sky when I'm forced to my knees, my breath heavy in my chest—my body protesting, spent and exhausted. The others finally catch up, panting.
“‘It has to be here,’” I tell them.
And that is when I see the village through the trees. (pages 186–187)

Explain why the following sentences make you want to keep reading.

1. Until I hear someone yell. Until I hear my brother shout “Run!” Until I feel Travis's hand grasp my arm, the sound of glass breaking by my head. (page 189)
   It shows one action right after the other as Mary experiences them.

2. But still he comes for me. His eyes locked on to me. (page 191)
   We want to see what happens next because Mary and Travis are so connected.

3. This child could be my brother's. It could be my mother's. It could be Travis's and mine. Someone was her father. Someone held her as I do now. (page 194)
   These sentences build meaning and add to Mary's desire to hold onto the child.

4. This is the last photo. A girl I have never seen. Who existed before the Return. In the ocean safe with her mother. (page 211)
   The chopped fragments are like what Mary would be thinking.

Responding to the Story
1. Why does Mary seem almost sympathetic to Gabrielle at times?
   She identifies with Gabrielle because the girl escaped from the village, which is what Mary wants to do, too.

2. What is your reaction toward the descriptions of the hideous Unconsecrated?
   Answers will vary.
3. Why does Mary sometimes feel as if she should let the Unconsecrated get her? Answersto vary but may include: she is tired and nearly ready to give up; she wants to join her parents.

4. In what ways does the relationship between Mary and Travis change during their time in the village? They become like husband and wife. It is stronger because they are together apart from the others.

5. What effect do the clothing and photographs Mary finds have on her? They make her want to find the woman in the photo. She almost loses herself in over identifying with the woman.

**Math Connection**

Mary is on the verge of understanding the numbering system on the paths. You recognize them as Roman numerals. Roman numerals are letters that represent numbers. The system was in common use throughout the days of the Roman Empire and in Europe until the tenth century CE.

Find information about Roman numerals and complete the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roman</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XIV</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCX</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LVII</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>XVII</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DCCL</strong></td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MMIX</strong></td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beginning about 900 CE, Roman numerals were increasingly replaced by the Arabic numerals we use today (which are based on a Hindu system). What disadvantages of the system of Roman numerals led to their replacement? Answers will vary but mainly it is a difficult system in which to do calculations.
Before You Read
Making Predictions
Even though she is with Travis, Mary feels restless. What do you think will happen now?

I predict: Answers will vary.

What is the basis for your prediction? Answers will vary.

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Reread your predictions. How were they confirmed or refuted by the story?

Answers will vary

Getting to Know the Characters
1. In these chapters, we get to see and hear Travis and better understand him as a character. Use the Venn diagram below to compare and contrast him with his brother, Harry. ANSWERS WILL VARY. Some possibilities are shown below.

Chapters XXV–XXIX
(Another Breach)
pages 220–258

Travis

Harry

Injured, slow

Mature and responsible
Brave

both

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2. Why does Travis say he is not sure either he or Harry will be enough for Mary? What does he mean by that?

Mary is very changeable. She wants more than another person can provide for her because she wants to find out about the world.

---

**Analyzing the Writing: Action**

Most of these four chapters consist of heart-stopping suspense as the Unconsecrated break into the house, and Mary and Travis escape. Summarize the action in Chapters XXV through XXIX in ten brief sentences or phrases.

Answers will vary, but should be in chronological order.

1. __________________________________________

2. __________________________________________

3. __________________________________________

4. __________________________________________

5. __________________________________________

6. __________________________________________

7. __________________________________________

8. __________________________________________

9. __________________________________________

10. __________________________________________

11. Which part of these chapters was most exciting or compelling to you? Be specific.

Answers will vary.

__________________________________________

12. What is the importance of the old newspaper that Mary finds in the attic?

Answers will vary, but may include: She realizes that this worldwide infection affected many nations and people, more than she could have known. She sees photos of NYC and its buildings. She knows that what her mother told her is true.

__________________________________________
Making Connections
*The Forest of Hands and Teeth* is set in a dark future. Do you believe the health of the world’s population as a whole will improve or decline in the future? What factors influence your opinion?

*Answers will vary.*

---

**Thinking About Archetypes: Characters**

One of the most interesting elements of archetypal literature is characterization. Certain kinds of characters commonly are part of the cast within the story. The following list is but a sampling of kinds of characters. Read the description and then decide which, if any, character in *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* represents that archetype. Then use this material to write an essay: “Character Archetypes in *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*.”

The **hero/orphan/pilgrim**: the main character who is abandoned or alone and must undertake the journey

- Mary (and the others to a lesser degree)

The **martyr**: the one who puts others’ needs and safety above his or her own and often gives sacrificially—often his or her life—to help further the cause

- Travis

The **innocent**: the inexperienced person or child who needs protection and guidance in order to grow up

- Cass and Jacob

The **mother figure**: the one who provides comfort, guidance, wisdom, and help when needed; is sometimes too protective or controlling

- Sister Tabitha

The **monster(s)**: the person, people, creatures, or force that is threatening the others in the story and sets up the main conflict

- The Unconsecrated

The **warrior**: the courageous one who is willing to fight and take on directly the evil that threatens; is sometimes the same character as the hero or martyr, but not always

- Harry (and Jed and Travis)
Before You Read

Making Predictions
All the survivors are now on the same platform. What do you predict will happen as the story continues?
Answers will vary.

______________________________

After You Read

Checking Predictions
Did you anticipate correctly what would happen next? What surprises did these four chapters bring?
Answers will vary.

______________________________

Mastering Vocabulary

Synonyms
A synonym is a word with the same, or nearly the same, meaning as another. Writers choose particular words for many reasons. Some may want the shade of meaning that a synonym may supply. Other words may provide a better rhythm or sound in a sentence, or be more realistic if used in dialogue. Determine the meanings of the following words, and supply a one-word synonym for each. Use the context of the passage in which the word appears to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Synonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pronounced</td>
<td>apparent, obvious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consuming</td>
<td>eating, devouring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dispatch</td>
<td>kill, destroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desiccated</td>
<td>dried out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meager</td>
<td>small amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deluge</td>
<td>flood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analyzing the Writing
Sensory Language
Sensory language is language that appeals to one of the five senses. Words that create images or impressions that appeal to the senses of sight, sound, hearing, touch, and taste make the scene on the page seem more vivid and real.

The air is so dry it crackles, drowning out the moans of the Unconsecrated. (page 266)

In this example, the senses of touch and hearing are called into play. We feel the dry air. We hear the crackle of the flames.

Find at least two examples of how the author uses each of the following senses in these chapters:

Answers will vary. Many examples will work for each.

Sight
1. ____________________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________________

Hearing
1. ____________________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________________

Touch
1. ____________________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________________

Foreshadowing
Foreshadowing is a technique in which writers give hints of what may be coming in the story. As you look back at the events in these chapters, what hints has the author provided that foreshadow what Travis might do as the fire closes in on the platform?

Travis is the first one to express the need to have one person break through the Unconsecrated so the others can make it. Reminders of Travis’s injuries and his feelings that he will only slow down the group.

How does foreshadowing help you make predictions about what may occur in the novel?

Answers will vary.
Responding to the Story
1. When they are again united on the platform, Cass accuses the group, saying that everything is always about Mary—for Harry, for Travis, and for all of them. How much truth is there in this statement?
   A lot of truth. Mary is at the center of all their lives.

2. What role does the fire play in moving the story forward?
   It forces them back on the journey.

3. Were you surprised at the way the group escaped the platform? Why or why not?
   Answers will vary.

4. Why does Travis make the choice to act as he does?
   Because he knows he will only slow them down.

5. Why does Mary insist on taking the final action toward Travis?
   She feels it is her responsibility as the one who loves him most.

Social Studies Connection

Current Events
Each year in the western United States, wildfires destroy thousands of acres, hundreds of homes, and often take humans’ and animals’ lives. How do these fires get started and why are they so difficult to control?

Use newspapers, magazines, or the Internet to learn more about wildfires—both the negative and positive aspects of them. You may wish to visit a library and ask a librarian to help you perform a periodical search.

Compile data on the place, time, size, cause, and result of some of these fires. Use the chart like the one at the right to keep track of your data. Then write a summary of your findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forest Fires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Chapters XXXIV–XXXVI
(The Ocean)
pages 289–308

Before You Read
Making Predictions
In these final chapters, Mary comes to the end of the fences. What do you think awaits her on the other side? How will the novel end?
Answers will vary.

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Reread your predictions. Did the story end as you thought it would? In what ways was it different?
Answers will vary.

Analyzing the Writing
Characterization
All the major characters in The Forest of Hands and Teeth are dynamic characters—they each change as a result of things that happen to them in the story. For each of the following characters, describe a few of the changes that take place as a result of the struggles they faced. Answers will vary.

Mary

Travis

Harry

Jed

Cass


**Responding to the Story**

1. Why did Mary feel compelled to go on beyond the fences?  
   *Because she thinks the code means she is supposed to go. She wants to find the others in the outer world.*

2. Why did Jed follow her?  
   *She is all the family he has left.*

3. What really happens to Mary as she has her dream?  
   *She is swept ashore where someone has been killing Unconsecrateds as they try to land.*

4. Were you surprised that the Mudo exist in the area around the ocean?  
   *Why or why not?*  
   *Answers will vary.*

5. What do you think will happen to Mary in the future?  
   *Answers will vary.*

**Making Connections**

Zombies, of course, are not real, but they are Mary’s main challenge in the novel. What “real” challenges does she face that are similar to the challenges that you or many young people face?  

*Answers will vary.*
Wrap-up

Reviewing Predictions
Turn to page 6 of this guide and review your first predictions. Complete the chart on that page.

Analyzing the Writing
1. How would you describe the writing style to someone who has not read the book? (Focus only on the style, not the events of the plot.)
   
   *Answers will vary. Some will say it is fast-paced and exciting or suspenseful.*

2. Author Carrie Ryan says that she would like to write more books with similar stories. Would you like to read them? Why or why not?

   *Answers will vary.*

Thinking About the Genre
Action/Adventure

1. Do you have to believe in zombies or the possibility of zombies to find the book exciting? Why or why not?

   *Answers will vary.*

2. How does the story depend on its futuristic time setting? Could the story have been set in an imaginary place or in a fictional past?

   *Answers will vary.*

3. There are elements of many genres in this book: horror, romance, fantasy, science fiction, and action/adventure, to name a few. Which genre would you say the book best fits? Support your answer with details from the story.

   *Answers will vary.*
Thinking About the Story Elements

Explain each of the following story elements as they apply to *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*.

1. Using the section headings in this Guide (see the Table of Contents), summarize the story. Write a synopsis, or story summary, on a separate sheet of paper.

2. Stories often have a sense of **rising action** that reaches a high point, or **climax**, followed by a **resolution**. What do you consider to be the climax of the story and why? Is the tale resolved? Does Mary achieve her dreams?
   
   **When Mary and Jed get past the last gate, and Jed is killed.**

   __________________________________________________________

3. Is this book really about monsters? What do you think is the purpose of the book? What do you think is the theme of the book?
   
   **Answers will vary.**

   __________________________________________________________

Making Connections

1. Through first-person point of view, we get a deep look into Mary’s life. What do you have in common with her? In what ways is she different from you? Would you have responded to situations the same way she did?
   
   **Answers will vary.**

   __________________________________________________________

2. Fear is a powerful motive in *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*, yet we probably could guess from the beginning that the Unconsecrated are not going to get Mary. What is it that makes people enjoy reading these kinds of books?
   
   **Answers will vary.**

   __________________________________________________________

3. Though you do not live in a world with zombies trying to get through fences to get you, what can you learn from this book? What will you take from it into your own life?
   
   **Answers will vary.**

   __________________________________________________________
Library Applications

Research

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Have students learn more about the way the government responds to health threats by researching the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Have students learn about:

- The CDC’s history and mission
- Various branches of the CDC
- Research programs and studies of the CDC
- Funding sources and support
- Citizen and consumer information available from the CDC
- Important current issues to the CDC

The CDC maintains an extensive Internet presence, which can be accessed via any search engine. Also, CDC publications and bulletins are available at most libraries. Students may wish to focus on a particular medical topic of interest and do research on that, using the CDC resources. Guide students in effective research skills, including locating and evaluating sources, especially on the Internet.

Writing/Technology

The Dreams of Our Ancestors
Mary’s life is deeply affected by her mother’s dreams. She learns, however, that she did not know as much about her mother as she would have liked to. Ask students to choose a parent, guardian, other relative, family friend, or other significant person in their life about whom to write a life story. The life story should be more than a chronology. It should include:

- General biographical information about the subject
- The dreams and goals the subject had as a young person
- Significant memories and important moments that the subject recalls
- Stories, customs, and beliefs gained from the subject’s ancestors
- What the subject values most in life now
- The subject’s advice to this generation

The product should be written, but there is no reason that it could not be accompanied by photographs, artwork, or even videos or audio recordings of the subject. The intention is to discover and preserve the mind of one generation for the next.
Sharing with Younger Students

Storytelling
Storytelling is an important part of The Forest of Hands and Teeth, not only in the narrator’s first-person execution of the tale, but also in the role that Mary’s mother’s stories play in motivating her. Help students understand this ancient form of passing information by having them become storytellers for younger students. Have them:

- Choose appropriate stories for the age group. (The Coyote tales of the American Southwest, for example, offer excellent material for storytellers. Students might also write or share stories from their own lives.)
- Practice reading the tales aloud until they can be retold in student’s own words.
- Learn to speak dramatically, using tone, volume, and pauses to make the tale-telling as much a part of the entertainment as the tale itself.
- Engage the audience, using eye contact, movement, and gestures to capture and hold attention.

Good storytelling is acting, so another option might be to have pairs or groups of students act out or present a story as a playlet, even including simple props or costumes. Audio or video examples of storytelling might help students understand the art.

Using Local Resources

Fun in Your Own Backyard
Mary hungers to see the ocean and risks her life to find out what it’s like. Have students create a multimedia presentation about your local area for someone who had never been there. Students could present:

- Photographs
- Video clips on computers (if available)
- Maps (topographical, geographical, political)
- Points of interest
- Historical facts
- Posters

The intention is to give a sense of what life is like in your area to a complete stranger. Local libraries, Chambers of Commerce, tourist bureaus, and students’ own knowledge are all sources of information.
Suggestions for Further Reading

_The Forest of Hands and Teeth_ is Carrie Ryan’s first book, although she has other works in progress. Action/adventure novels involving supernatural and post-apocalyptic themes are numerous and popular today. Here are some suggestions you might like to check out:


   (sequel to come: *Catching Fire*, September 2009)


About archetypes in literature:

### Correlations to National Standards

**For Grades 9–12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>Standard Number</th>
<th>Standard Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K–12.1</td>
<td>Reading for Perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K–12.2</td>
<td>Reading for Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K–12.3</td>
<td>Evaluation Strategies</td>
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<td>NL-ENG.K–12.4</td>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K–12.5</td>
<td>Communication Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K–12.6</td>
<td>Applying Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K–12.8</td>
<td>Developing Research Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL-ENG.K–12.12</td>
<td>Applying Language Skills</td>
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<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>NM–NUM.9–12.1</td>
<td>Understand Numbers, Ways of Representing Numbers, Relationships and Number Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies: World History</td>
<td>NSS–WH.5–Era 4</td>
<td>Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter 300–1000 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies: World History</td>
<td>NSS–WH.5–Era 5</td>
<td>Intensified Hemispheric Interactions, 1000–1500 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies: United States History</td>
<td>NSS–USH.5–12</td>
<td>Contemporary United States (1968 to Present)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education &amp; Health</td>
<td>NPH–H.9–12.2</td>
<td>Health Information, Products and Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education &amp; Health</td>
<td>NPH–H.9–12.5</td>
<td>Using Communication Skills to Promote Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>NM–PROB.PK–12 .4</td>
<td>Monitor and Reflect on the Process of Mathematical Problem Solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>NS.9–12.3</td>
<td>Life Science</td>
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<td>Science</td>
<td>NS.9–12.6</td>
<td>Science in Personal and Social Perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>NA–T.9–12.1</td>
<td>Script Writing by Planning and Recording Improvisations Based on Personal Experience and History, Imagination, Literature and History</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>NA–T.9–12.2</td>
<td>Acting by Assuming Roles and Interacting in Improvisations</td>
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