



BRIAN BUCKMIRE

COME HOME SAFE

A Novel



EDUCATOR GUIDE

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For young adults, ages 12 and up

Written by Jennifer Guyor Jowett

*“Not everything that is faced can be changed;
but nothing can be changed until it is faced” (94).*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

BRIAN BUCKMIRE is a senior staff NYC public defender in the Criminal Defense Practice and Homicide Defense Task Force at the Legal Aid Society, representing indigent clients in Brooklyn, NY. He is the anchor for *Law and Crime Daily*, a nationally syndicated show covering the hottest cases and controversies from courtrooms nationwide. He is also a legal contributor for ABC and has covered events like the deaths

of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd, the trials against Harvey Weinstein and R. Kelly, and many more. In addition, he serves on the board of trustees for Coney Island Prep, a charter school in South Brooklyn. Born in Toronto, of Caribbean heritage, Brian and his wife Victoria, and their son Reid live in New York.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

These pre-reading activities allow students to draw from pre-existing knowledge so that they are better able to make connections within the novel.

1. Take a temperature gauge by having students stand on a line that marks their agreement/disagreement with the quote, “Knowledge is power, and preparation keeps you safe” (9). Discuss their reasoning. Ask students to place themselves on the line again after discussing (and again after reading), noting changes.
2. List several of the figures quoted at the beginning of each chapter. Ask students what they know about each of them in a discovery of prior knowledge.
3. Show students an image of the cover. Ask them to make predictions about the novel. Have them consider the color choices, the position of the characters, minimal facial features, and the use of birds.

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PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever been in the wrong place at the wrong time or witnessed someone who has? Discuss what this felt like.
2. What does the right to remain silent mean to you?
3. When you find yourself in a chaotic situation, what do you do to calm yourself?
4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the quote, "Knowledge is power, and preparation keeps you safe" (9)?
5. Have you ever been accused of doing something you didn't do? Describe your reaction.

DURING READING

Cultural -isms

An -ism is a prejudice or way of treating someone based on what you believe to be true about them because of their personal characteristics, like ageism, sexism, racism, and so on. For example, how do Olive's and Reed's ages play into their interactions with the officers? Would it matter if they were younger? Older? What other -isms are affecting these situations? Use this chart as a starting point and give examples of the -isms you find within the novel. Add other -isms you notice.

-ism	Quote example with page number
Racism	
Ageism	
Classism	
Sexism	
Ableism	

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JOURNAL

It can be difficult to read and process what happens to Reed and Olive. Keep a journal of your reactions while reading. Be sure to include your thoughts, what you are feeling, and what makes you feel that way, as well as any quotes to document your response.

POST-READING QUESTIONS

Part 1

1. Which officer is more responsible for what happens to Reed during their initial interactions on the train? Explain your reasoning (chapter 2).
2. Reed's father advised him to not negotiate from a position of weakness (34). How does this impact what happens to Reed when the officers take him from the train?
3. Why do you think both Olive and Reed are able to maintain a calm demeanor during their interaction with the police while on the train? If you don't agree that they do, explain your response with evidence from the text (chapter 3).
4. Why do you think the officers decided to question Reed? Explain your thoughts using textual evidence (chapter 3).
5. Reed believes that the more he is pressured to give up his right to remain silent, the tighter he should hold on to it (38). What is your reaction to this belief? Explain why you might make/not make the same decision.
6. What makes Olive speak up so courageously when the officers tell her to stop recording with her phone? (45–46)
7. Why did Reed's father tell him he's being powerful in the moment if he does not resist arrest (47)?
8. Explain the symbolism behind Reed's choice to drop the Invoke Your Rights card on the subway platform (65). Why did the author choose to have it fall there and not somewhere else (in the train, for example)?
9. How do you think Reed's father is feeling as he tries to talk through what happened to his son (chapters 8–9)?
10. For whom is the hug more powerful, Reed or his dad (86)? Explain your answer.

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POST-READING QUESTIONS PART 2

Part 2

11. Assess Olive's decision to call 911. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this decision (138)?
12. Why don't the siblings start recording the situation at the café sooner? Be sure to include whether you think they should have (chapter 6).
13. Discuss Olive's decision to hand over her phone (153). In what ways do you think this helps/hinders the situation?
14. Why do Olive and Reed have such differing reactions to their interactions with the officers (chapter 7)?
15. What made the most difference in diffusing the situation at the café? Explain your reasoning (chapter 7).
16. Why is it important that Olive's mom closes the law book to have a conversation with her daughter (166)?
17. Review the questions Olive asks her mother: If I was fully White, would you tell me the same thing; Is that something you'd tell me no matter what I looked like; Why should I be less so I can be safe; etc (170). What answers would you give?
18. Do you agree with Olive's assessment that experiences help someone to be better when she's discussing Judge Walker (174)? Why might this be true?
19. Compare and contrast how Olive's mom responds to Olive with how Reed's father responds to Reed as the parents are helping the siblings process what happened.
20. Why do you think it's easier for Olive to move on than it is for Reed (epilogue)?
21. The author acknowledges that he doesn't have the answer in the author's note. What are your thoughts? What answers do you have?

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POST-READING ACTIVITIES

Debate

Definition: to turn over in one's mind, to think about options in order to reach a decision.

Olive participates on the debate team (6). Decide whether the woman who accuses Olive of stealing her phone should be prosecuted. Have a mini-debate using evidence from both the novel and your own research. One side should argue for prosecution and the other side should argue against. Debate builds excellent teamwork, research, and listening and speaking skills.

Debate Structure: Each side should prepare an opening statement that highlights its claims, cross-examination questions to ask the other team, briefs that contain evidence for each claim, and closing statements that summarize the claims. Divide students into teams of four with each team taking one side of the debate. Each member of the team takes a role (opening statement, cross-examiner, evidence-gatherer, closing statement). All members of a team should work together to complete each area of the debate.

Debate Day Format	
Opening Statements	Each team has three minutes to present its opening statement containing all points members are trying to prove.
Cross-examinations	Each team's cross-examiner has ten minutes to ask questions of the opposing team. Questions should be directed at points made during the opening statement in an effort to disprove/ further clarify those points. This is the only person to question the evidence-gatherer on the opposing side.
Evidence-gatherer	Each team's evidence-gatherer responds to the questions asked by the cross-examiner. This person uses evidence gathered to prove/further clarify the team's points. This is the only person to respond to the cross-examiner.
Closing Statement	Each team has two minutes to present evidence in a review of what the team presented during the debate This is a reminder to the audience of the important points of the debate.

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LETTER WRITING

Write a letter to one of the real people behind the quotes that start each chapter. What would you most want to know about them? What advice would you ask for?

THIS IS FOR POEM

Using *The Undeclared* by Kwame Alexander as a mentor text, compose a This Is for... poem to one of the real historical figures mentioned at the beginning of each chapter. Explore the use of anaphora to select a repeating phrase to use within your poem.

EXPOSITORY ESSAY

The titles at the beginning of each chapter are based on quotes attributed to significant historical figures. Research the situation where one of these statements was delivered. Choose one and write an essay giving the context of the quote and its significance to civil rights in America.

ART

Reed spends time putting items from his backpack away, “trying to create some kind of order to reduce the chaos in his brain” (71). Create an art project that reflects disorder and order.

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

Imagine you are one of the eyewitnesses on the train or at the café. What would you tell the police?

Educator's Guide created by Jennifer Guyor Jowett. Jennifer is a middle grade English and literature teacher, the author of *Into the Shadows*, and a contributor to Ethicalela's Open Write and various literary blogs. She enjoys reading, writing, traveling, dogs, and chocolate (in any order).