5	45 Min	Zero	CASEL	MCCR	Up to 15
SESSIONS	PER SESSION	TEACHER PREP	SEL FRAMEWORK	READING STANDARDS	STUDENTS

READING STANDARDS • MARYLAND COLLEGE AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS (MCCR) • GRADES 6–8

SKILL	HOW NO JUDGING ALLOWED DELIVERS THIS	SAMPLE DISCUSSION PROMPT
Close Reading and Textual Evidence	Students cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly and what is inferred from character actions and choices	*"What in the story makes you think the character felt that way?"*
Theme Analysis	Students determine the theme of a text and analyze how it is developed through character choices, conflicts, and story events	*"What did the character learn? What can we learn from that?"*
Character Analysis	Students analyze how characters respond to challenges and how their choices and interactions drive plot and consequence	*"How did the character change from beginning to end?"*
Making Inferences	Students draw inferences from the text and use textual evidence to support their understanding of character motivation and feeling	*"What did the character feel even though the story didn't say it directly?"*
Point of View	Students analyze how an author develops the point of view of characters and how different perspectives shape the story and its meaning	*"How would this story change if told from another perspective?"*
Collaborative Discussion	Every session uses text-based evidence and structured discussion, building skills in listening, responding, and supporting ideas with evidence	*"Build on what your classmate said. Do you agree or see it differently?"*

SEL STANDARDS • CASEL • FIVE CORE COMPETENCIES

COMPETENCY	HOW NO JUDGING ALLOWED DELIVERS THIS	SAMPLE DISCUSSION PROMPT
Self-Awareness	Students examine character emotions and connect those experiences to their own developing sense of identity and emotional history	*"Have you ever felt the way this character felt?"*
Self-Management	Students examine how characters manage stress, pressure, and difficult emotions and evaluate those responses against their own experiences	*"What could the character have done to manage that feeling differently?"*
Social Awareness	Students examine multiple perspectives, practice empathy, and analyze how social context and community pressures shape characters' choices and responses	*"How might the character's background shape how they see this situation?"*
Relationship Skills	Students analyze relationship dynamics in the story, examining trust, loyalty, peer pressure, and the long-term consequences of choices made within relationships	*"Was that a healthy choice for the friendship? What would a healthier choice look like?"*
Responsible Decision-Making	Students trace consequences of character choices and evaluate the factors that influence decision-making under pressure	*"What could the character have done differently? What might have changed?"*

SESSION-BY-SESSION STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

	SESSION	READING STANDARDS MET	SEL COMPETENCY	ACTIVITY
1	**Enter the Story** Read together. Meet the characters. Set the room.	Close reading, Character analysis	Self-Awareness	Feeling Charades
2	**Feel With Them** Explore what the characters felt and why those feelings make sense.	Character analysis, Point of view	Self-Awareness, Social Awareness	Emotion Timeline
3	**Choose Wisely** Analyze the choices the characters made and what those choices cost.	Theme analysis, Making inferences	Responsible Decision-Making	Choice Road
4	**Connect to You** Bring it home. Share connections out loud, on paper, or with a partner.	Theme analysis, Collaborative discussion	Relationship Skills	Silent Write + Voice It
5	**Grow Together** Reflect on what shifted. Name it. Celebrate it.	Theme analysis, Collaborative discussion	Self-Management	One Word Wall

WHAT STUDENTS GAIN

- **Emotional Vocabulary**
  Ability to identify, name, and articulate their own emotions and the emotions of others
- **Decision-Making Framework**
  Practice evaluating choices and consequences before acting, using character decisions as a safe starting point
- **Structured Discussion Skills**
  Experience in text-based academic discussion with turn-taking, active listening, and evidence-based responses
- **Stress and Emotion Management**
  Exposure to strategies for managing difficult emotions through the lens of character choices and outcomes
- **Critical Reading Skills**
  Strengthened ability to analyze theme, character, and cause and effect through close reading
- **Perspective-Taking Ability**
  Strengthened capacity to consider how situations look and feel from another person's point of view
- **Relationship Awareness**
  Greater awareness of what healthy relationships look like and how personal choices affect others
- **Confidence in Their Own Voice**
  A structured, judgment-free space to share personal connections to text, building academic and social confidence

WHAT EDUCATORS SAY

> *"Our young people have become excited about reading, thoughtful in their decisions, and positive in their interactions."*
>
> **VICTORIOUS HALL**
> FORMER 8TH GRADE ACADEMIC DEAN
> OXON HILL MIDDLE SCHOOL
> PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD

> *"[No Judging Allowed's] interactive sessions create a welcoming environment where students feel seen, heard, and valued, fostering a strong sense of belonging while encouraging them to meet rigorous academic expectations."*
>
> **JONAS N. STRICKLAND, M.DIV., MLIS**
> CERTIFIED SCHOOL LIBRARIAN
> DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Reading standards: Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards (MCCR) for English Language Arts, Grades 6–8. SEL alignment: CASEL Five Core Competencies. This document is intended for use by Baltimore County Public Schools administrators and counselors.

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