



Reading Guide
High School



Safe Haven does not discriminate on the basis of sex, gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation in its educational programs and activities.

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GERI Discussion and Activity Guide

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Safe Haven Ministries is a comprehensive domestic violence and human trafficking agency located in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The team at Safe Haven believes that violence and human trafficking are completely preventable. We believe that we can inspire our community and others to unite in ending violence.

Grow Engage Read Imagine (GERI) is a grant-funded initiative of Safe Haven Ministries. This reading initiative seeks to use books to heal, teach, and empower. We want to give caregivers and parents tools and resources to help them have important conversations with their child(ren).

The selected books are age-appropriate and rooted in child development theory, best reading practices for children, and best practices in violence prevention education. The main topics explored include:

Bullying
Boundaries & Consent
Communication
Community
Creativity & Imagination
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
Empowerment / Leadership

Family & Family Structure
Feelings & Emotions
Friendship
Representation
Respect
Self-Esteem

When we normalize equality, promote healthy relationship skills, build awareness, step in to help others, and connect teens to trusted adults, we are working towards a world free from violence. Parents and Caregivers play an important role in preventing violence.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calls the ideas above “protective factors.” View the “[Moving Forward](https://youtu.be/FJDwe2RkOqo)”¹ video on YouTube or visit the Veto Violence website² to learn more about protective factors. You can also check out the CDC’s website³ to learn more about the research behind strategies for preventing violence.

¹ <https://youtu.be/FJDwe2RkOqo>

² <https://vetoviolenecdc.gov/apps/main/home>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/>



"Moving Forward"
video

Important Note for Caregivers

Violence is a sad reality in our world, and many people in our community experience violence regularly. Some of the books included in the GERI collection contain stories that show different forms of harm. Safe Haven's goal is not to show or promote violence for entertainment or shock value. Our first goal is to support families as they learn and talk about important topics like **Bullying, Boundaries, Consent, Communication, Community, Creativity, Imagination, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Family, Feelings, Emotions, Friendship, Representation, Respect, and Self-Esteem**. We know that these issues deeply impact our community. It is our hope that we can all work together to nurture safe and supportive communities for everyone.

When Your Child Wants to Share

It is difficult to imagine that anyone would want to harm a child. But the truth is that there are many people who will. Sometimes, talking to children about topics addressed in the GERI books can lead to a child opening up about violence or abuse they have experienced. We call this “**making a disclosure**.”

It's usually difficult to receive this disclosure, but it's important to remember that this is a result of your support. The child felt safe enough to tell you. This is important because, all too often, children and teens don't initially disclose abuse out of fear.

Below are four important steps you can take following a disclosure:

1. Thank them for trusting you, and let them know you believe them.
2. Let them know that what was done to them was not their fault and that you're sorry they were harmed.
3. Keep them away from the person who harmed them.
4. Seek professional help to support them.

Self Care

When reading and discussing GERI books, remember your own self-care. If the conversation starts to feel overwhelming, be honest with your child(ren) and tell them you need to take a break, and you can talk again later. Reach out to someone you trust to talk about how you are feeling.

Having conversations about any type of violence can feel heavy. If you have experienced violence or abuse, it can be especially difficult to talk to your child(ren) about topics that remind you of your abuse.

A trigger is a connection to a traumatic event that may cause a deep and emotional reaction. Triggers can be smells, colors, songs, touches, and even certain words. Triggers can be anything, and there is no way to fully prevent a potential trigger.

Having these conversations with your child(ren) can bring up difficult feelings. These feelings are normal. To address these challenges, try building a system of support that helps you as you begin to explore more of these topics in depth with your child(ren). These additional supports will aid in processing those hurtful reminders and understanding the responses you may have to them.

Support may look like:

- Calling hotlines that specialize in domestic violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking
- Reaching out to advocates at local domestic and sexual violence agencies
- Having a friend, a family member, or a partner that you can speak with
- Putting a pause on the discussion until you're emotionally ready to continue

You aren't alone, and you don't have to go through it alone. At the end of this guide, you will find information on resources in your community.

Safe Haven is a place to visit/call/text for help and support.

**Safe Haven Ministries
2627 Birchcrest Dr. SE (8a-5p)
616-452-6664 (24/7)
Webchat is available at shmgr.org (24/7)**

High School



Discussion & Activity Guide

The 9th - 12th Grade Discussion and Activity Guide pairs with Grow Engage Read Imagine (GERI) books for children between ages 14 and 18. The guide includes a brief description of each book and its main topics. There are discussion questions to help guide ongoing conversations with your child(ren) and fun activities designed to promote healthy relationships, boundaries, and positive social norms.

After Reading a **geri** Book
Please Scan This Code.
Thank You!



SCAN ME

Saints and Misfits

by S.K. Ali

Description: Janna sees three types of people in her life: saints, who move the world forward, misfits, who just don't fit in, and monsters, like the person at her mosque who everyone thinks is untouchable. Through this novel, Janna tries to navigate her place with her father's "brand new family," her mother and older brother, her crush Jeremy, and the secret that plagues her.

Topics: Communication; Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI); Abuse/Violence; Empowerment; Family/Family Structure; Social Norms

Discussion Questions

1. **(Chapter 1–5)** How does Janna's perception of saints, misfits, and monsters evolve throughout the story? Can someone embody all three roles simultaneously? Use examples from the book to support your answer.
2. **(Chapter 5–10)** Compare Janna's relationship with her father's new family versus her mother and brother. How do these dynamics shape her identity? (Chapter 5–10).
3. **(Chapter 10–15)** Mr. Ram emphasizes the importance of intention behind actions. Reflect on his statement: "Why we do an action is what determines its quality." How does this advice resonate with Janna's experiences? .
4. **(Chapter 20–25)** Janna struggles with her silence about Farooq's actions. How does rape culture and victim-blaming influence her decision to stay quiet? How does she find empowerment later in the story? .

Activities



← Watch a Short Film

[Hijab & Me](#): This short documentary from the TrueTube channel on YouTube follows the lives of three young Muslim women. These women share their experiences and beliefs around the hijab and growing up Muslim. (9mins)

Need a Laugh? →

[Embarrassing Hijab Stories](#): BuzzFeed shares some embarrassing yet funny stories from Muslim women. 5mins



The Hate U Give

by Angie Thomas

Description: Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter lives in two worlds: her urban neighborhood and her fancy suburban prep school. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses a fatal shooting of one of her childhood best friends at the hands of a police officer. Soon afterward, this death was a national headline. Some label them a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and gangbanger. Protesters take to the streets. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person who can answer that is Starr.

Topics: Community; Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI); Abuse/Violence; Empathy; Empowerment/Leadership; Friendship; Social Norms

Discussion Questions

1. **(Chapters 4–8)** Starr struggles with code-switching between her neighborhood and prep school identities. How does this affect her sense of self? Have you ever felt like you had to act differently in different spaces?
2. **(Chapter 10)** Khalil teaches Starr what Tupac Shakur’s “THUG LIFE” acronym means. What does it mean, and how does it connect to systemic racism in Starr’s community?
3. **(Chapters 12–15)** Starr struggles with whether to speak out about her friend’s death. What factors influence her decision, and what would you do in her place?
4. **(Chapters 18–20)** How do Maverick’s lessons about community and resilience shape Starr’s activism? How does his rose garden symbolize hope amidst struggle?
5. **(Final Chapter)** At the end of the book, Starr names victims of police violence. Why is remembering their names so important to her and society as a whole?

Activities

Musical Connections

The Hate U Give makes many references to the late hip-hop star Tupac Shakur. One reference in particular is the symbolism of Maverick’s rose garden. Look up the poem “A Rose That Grew in Concrete” and answer the following

1. What do you think is the meaning of this poem?
2. How does it show up in our story?
3. Does it have anything to do with “THUG LIFE”?

Learn More About Code Switching

Starr feels exhausted, having to be one person at school and another person at home. For more insight around Starr’s feelings, check out Teen Vogue’s article, *The Mental Health Cost of Code Switching on Campus*. Read the article and think about how various characters “code switch” throughout the story. How does this impact them emotionally and socially?

After Reading a **geri** Book
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The Perks of Being a Wallflower

by Stephen Chbosky

Description: Charlie is just starting high school and writing singular, unique, hilarious, and devastating letters to an unknown recipient. Caught between trying to live his life and run from it, Charlie is set on a strange course. He must learn to navigate the world of first dates, mixtapes, family drama, new friends, sex, drugs, and the Rocky Horror Picture Show. This is a time when all he needs is the right song on a perfect drive to feel infinite.

Topics: Community; Empathy; Friendship; Social Norms; Communication, Creativity/Imagination; Feelings/ Emotions; Family; Social Norms, Violence/Abuse

Discussion Questions

1. **(Chapters 5–10)** Charlie often observes life rather than participating in it. What are the benefits and drawbacks of being a “wallflower”? How does this change over time?
2. **(Chapters 12–15)** Bill tells Charlie, “We accept the love we think we deserve.” How do Charlie’s relationships reflect this idea, particularly with Sam and his sister?
3. **(Chapters 20–25)** Charlie experiences trauma and healing. How do Charlie's friendships help him process his past experiences?
4. **Through the course of the story**, we learn that several people in Charlie’s life have dealt with some form of domestic and sexual violence. How do you think this realization has impacted Charlie’s view of the world?
5. **(Final Chapter)** By the end of the book, Charlie begins to participate more actively in his life. What inspires this change, and how can we apply this lesson to our own lives?

Activities

Create a Soundtrack:

Create a playlist of at least 4 songs that represents key moments in Charlie’s journey.

Write a Letter:

Write a letter to your future self about how you are participating in life right now.

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The Poet X

by Elizabeth Acevedo

Description: Xiomara Batista lives in Harlem, where she has just discovered slam poetry. She uses slam to understand her mother's religion and her own relationship to the world, where she feels unheard and unable to hide. After growing new curves, Xiomara learns to let her fists do the talking — but she still feels like she has plenty to say and fills pages with poems. After Xiomara is invited to join the slam poetry club at her school, she's afraid to join without her mami finding out, but she can't stop thinking about performing her poems.

Topics: Empathy; Empowerment/Leadership; Friendship; Social Norms; Communication; Creativity/Imagination; Feelings/Emotions; Representation; Abuse

Discussion Questions

1. Xiomara uses poetry to express herself when words fail her in conversations with others. Why do you think poetry is such a powerful outlet for her?
2. In **"Confirmation Class" & "Father Sean"**, religion plays a big role in Xiomara's life through her mother's expectations and Father Sean's guidance. How does Xiomara reconcile her personal beliefs with those imposed on her?)
3. In **"At Poetry Club"**, slam poetry becomes a turning point for Xiomara's self-expression. How does performing in front of others help her grow emotionally?
4. In **"In Front of My Locker"**, Xiomara struggles with societal expectations about her body and behavior as a young woman. How do these pressures affect her confidence and relationships? Can you relate to any of these challenges?)
5. **By the end of the book**, Xiomara takes control of her narrative by sharing her poetry openly with her family and friends. What can we learn from this act of courage?

Activities

Slam Poetry Workshop:

Write your own poem inspired by Xiomara's journey, focusing on themes like identity, self-discovery, and self-acceptance.

TED Talk Reflection:

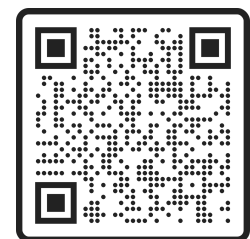
Watch Elizabeth Acevedo's TEDxTalk on using poetry to confront violence against women and discuss its connection to The Poet X.

[I use my poetry to confront the violence against women | Elizabeth Acevedo | TEDxMidAtlanticSalon](#)

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Speak: The Graphic Novel

by Laurie Halse Anderson, illustrated by Emily Carroll

Description: "Speak up for yourself—we want to know what you have to say." From the first moment of her freshman year at Merryweather High, Melinda knows this is a big fat lie, part of the nonsense of high school. She is friendless—an outcast—because she busted an end-of-summer party by calling the cops, so now nobody will talk to her, let alone listen to her. Through her work on an art project, she is finally able to face what really happened that night: She was raped by an upperclassman, a guy who still attends Merryweather and is still a threat to her.

Themes: Sexual Assault, Consent, Mental Health

Discussion Questions

1. Melinda uses art as a way to process her trauma when words feel impossible to express. Why do you think art helps people heal? Have you ever used art or another creative outlet during difficult times?
2. In **"Little Writing On The Wall" Page 317**, Melinda writes "Stay away from Andy Evans" on a bathroom stall, sparking responses from other students who share similar experiences. What does this moment reveal about solidarity among survivors?
3. In **"Closet Space" Page 79**, Maya Angelou becomes an important figure for Melinda during her healing process. Why do you think Melinda connects so deeply with Maya Angelou's story?
4. The **final chapter** of the book shows how society often silences survivors of sexual assault through victim-blaming or disbelief. How can we create safer spaces for survivors to share their stories without fear of judgment?
5. **By the end of the story**, Melinda decides to speak up about what happened at the party despite her fear of backlash from peers and adults alike. What gave her the courage to finally tell someone??

After Reading a **geri** Book
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SCAN ME

Speak: The Graphic Novel

Activities

Art Heals

Melinda was able to use her art class as a way to help her process the trauma of her assault. Drawing and creating sculptures was a way for her to speak to a world that was not listening. Use any medium of art to make something that reflects this message from Speak: "I survived. I'm here."

Who is Maya?

Melinda finds a poster of Maya Angelou while hiding away one day. Do some research into the life of Maya Angelou and answer the following:

1. Why did Melinda connect to Maya?
2. What is Maya Angelou's significance in the story of Speak?
3. Do you think Maya is a good role model for Melinda? Explain.

Consent & Relationships

In safe and healthy relationships, partners respect each other's boundaries, especially in sexual situations. In our comic, Melinda has her consent taken away from her when she is sexually assaulted. Go check out Amaze.org's YouTube channel for the video called *Sexual Assault, Consent, and Sexual Harassment: What's the difference?* The video breaks down what each of these means and what steps you can take if you are experiencing harm.



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Glossary of Terms

Boundaries	Limits and rules we set in our relationships to make sure they stay healthy and safe
Consent	Permission for something to happen or agreement to do something
Disclosure	Something (such as information) that is made known or revealed
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I)	Promotes the fair treatment and full participation of all people, especially in the workplace, including populations who have historically been under-represented or subject to discrimination because of their background, identity, disability, etc.
Domestic Violence	A pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner.
Gender Equity	Respecting all people without discrimination, regardless of their gender, and addressing gender inequalities that limit a person's ability to access opportunities to achieve better health, education, and economic opportunity based on their gender.
Inclusive	Including all people or groups involved in something
Marginalization	Discrimination and exclusion because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions.
Sexual Violence	Any sexual act committed or attempted by another person against an individual who has not freely given consent or is unable to consent or refuse. This includes both unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment.
Social Norms	The unwritten or unspoken rules that influence how people in a society behave.

Find GERI Books In Your Local Library!

Most books are also available as audio books and E-books using your library's App.
(with a library card)

No Library Card? Get one at your local library!

Accepted forms of ID include: Driver's license, State ID, Military ID, International Drivers license, State ID, Passport, Non-US Consular ID, Residential alien card, State issued tribal ID, Job corps ID, Prison issued ID
If no form of ID is available please **contact your library's Patron Experience Manager.**

GERIGR.ORG



Complete GERI Collection Book List

(Several titles also available in Spanish)

Pre-K Books

Counting On Community by Innosanto Nagra
Giraffes Can't Dance (*las Jirafas No Pueden Bailar*) by Giles Andreae
Hug Me (*Abrázame*) by Simona Ciraolo
La Catrina: Emotions by Patty Rodriguez
Missing Daddy by Mariame Kaba
The Color Monster (*El Monstruo de Colores*) by Anna Llenas

K-3rd Grade Books

The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi
My Three Best Friends and Me, Zulay by Cari Best
All Are Welcome (*Todo El Mundo Cabe Aqui*) by Alexandra Penfold
Mango Moon (*La Luna Mango*) by Diane de Anda
Don't Touch My Hair! by Sharee Miller
Julian is a Mermaid (*Sirenas*) by Jessica Love
The Day You Begin (*El Dia en Que Descubres Quien Eres*) by Jacqueline Woodson

4th - 8th Grade Books

Front Desk by Kelly Yang
Harbor Me by Jacqueline Woodson
Consent (For Kids!) (*El Consentimiento (¡Para Niños!)*) by Rachel Brian
House On Mango Street (*La Casa en Mango Street*) by Sandra Cisneros
Maybe He Just Likes You by Barbara Dee
Tight by Torrey Maldonado
The Prince and the Dressmaker (*El Príncipe y la Modista*) by Jen Wang

High School Books

Saints and Misfits by S.K. Ali
The Hate U Give (*El Odio Que Das*) by Angie Thomas
Speak: The Graphic Novel (*Habla*) by Laurie Halse Anderson
The Poet X (*Poet X*) by Elizabeth Acevedo
The Perks of Being a Wallflower (*Las ventajas de ser invisible*) by Stephen Chbosky

Additional Resources

This guide was created with the intent to give people who care for children and youth the tools to talk about subjects that often are avoided. Having these kinds of conversations can seem challenging at times. Do your best to speak to kids from a place of concern and care.

If you or someone you know has experienced or is experiencing violence or abuse, the following local resources can provide free and confidential support:

Local

Safe Haven Ministries

Website: www.shmgr.org

24/7 Hotline: 616- 452- 6664

YWCA West Central Michigan

Website: www.ywcawcmi.org

24/7 Hotline: 616-454 -9922

Children's Advocacy Center of Kent County

Website: www.cac-kent.org

Telephone Number: 616-336-5160

Hispanic Center of Western Michigan

Website: www.hispanic-center.org

Telephone Number: 616-742-0200

National

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN)

Website: <https://www.rainn.org/>

24/7 Hotline: 800-656-4673