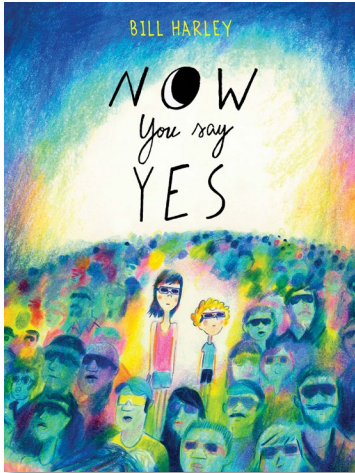




PEACHTREE

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

Includes Common Core Standards Correlations



## Now You Say Yes

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Also available as an e-book

Ages 10–14

Lexile / F&P GRL Z, Gr 5–9

### ABOUT THE BOOK

When her adoptive mother dies, fifteen-year-old Mari is desperate to avoid being caught up in the foster system. Again. And to complicate matters, she is now the only one who can take care of her super-smart and on-the-spectrum nine-year-old stepbrother, Conor. Is there anyone Mari can trust to help them? Certainly not her mother's current boyfriend, Dennis. Not the doctors or her teachers, who would be obliged to call in social services. So in a desperate move, Mari takes Conor and sets out to find their estranged grandmother, hoping to throw themselves at the mercy of the only person who might take them in.

### THEMES

Family | Orphans & Foster Homes | Adolescence & Coming of Age | Runaways

### BEFORE YOU READ

The following activities will reinforce these skills: read, record, and discover. You can do the activities together as a class or ask each student to do them individually.

- Draw three columns on a piece of chart paper. (Leave the last column empty until the book has been read.)
- Ask the students to look at the cover of the book and predict what they think will happen in the book. Record responses in the first column of the chart paper.

- Read the summary of the book and ask students to predict what else they think will happen. Record responses in the second column of the chart paper.

### AS YOU READ

- Read the book chapter by chapter, stopping after each chapter for reflections and questions. The students will answer two questions per chapter. CCSS.ELA.RL.1, 2, 3, 6, CCSS.ELA.SL.1, 2, 3
- Give each student some sticky notes to document changes in predictions. The children should cite pages to place in the third column on the chart. CCSS.ELA.RL.4
- Collect new vocabulary words. Make a list of them on the chalkboard. Continue to add to the list as you read. CCSS.ELA.RL.4

### AFTER YOU READ

- Discuss what your students discovered after reading the book. How did their opinions change from the beginning of the story to the end? Take a look at the sticky notes and the chart paper and talk about the differences. Then record what happened in the final column of the chart paper. CCSS.ELA.RL.5, 6
- Discuss the following questions at the end of each chapter. Ask if anyone would like to share their thoughts. CCSS.ELA.SL.1, 2, 3

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS BY CHAPTER

### Chapter 1

1. What does *stimming* or *stim* mean? What do you think that would look like?
2. “People pretend to ignore Conor, which means they stare at him when they think no one will notice.” Have you ever done this to someone? Has someone ever done this to you?

### Chapter 2

1. The narrator of the book says that “most of the time [Dennis] laughs at the wrong things.” What do you think that means?
2. Mari and Conor’s mom is in the hospital. Can you make a prediction about what might happen next? What clues make you think this?

### Chapter 3

1. In this chapter we realize how important rules are to Conor. Can you name one or two examples of when we see this?
2. How do you think Mari feels when she hears Dennis talk about her? Why?

### Chapter 4

1. When Mari is trying to think of another family to take them in, she knows she does not want to go back into “the System.” What is “the System” and why do you think Mari would not want to go back (think about Conor as well as you answer this question)?
2. When Stephanie told Mari that wineglasses break easily but she doesn’t, how do you think Mari felt?

### Chapter 5

1. Who do you think Mari is talking about at the beginning of the chapter? The answer she keeps coming back to. The person she said “I wanted to hurt you” to?
2. Why do you think Mari pays the fare for the man who doesn’t have his bus pass? What would you have done?

### Chapter 6

1. When Mari tells Conor about their mother, she tells him in the car using her gentlest voice. Why does she do that? Is that a smart decision?

2. Mari feels angry about everything in this chapter. Have you ever felt this way? What do you do to make yourself feel better?

### Chapter 7

1. Why does Mari not want to stay with Dennis? Do you think she is right?
2. The chapter ends with a knock on the door. Who do you think it is? How do you think Mari is feeling?

### Chapter 8

1. Why does Mari choose to lie to Nosy Rosie instead of telling her the truth about her mother? Would you have chosen to do this? Why or why not?
2. *Epiphany*. What does this mean? Please define epiphany using your own words. Tell us about a time when you had an epiphany.

### Chapter 9

1. In this chapter we discover the title of the book. Why do you think the author chose this title?
2. When Mari gets in the car, she says it “smells like her mom.” Have you ever had a memory that was triggered by a smell? Would you like to share it?

### Chapter 10

1. When Mari sees the flashing lights behind her, she is sure that she is caught. How do you think she feels at that moment?
2. Mari is excited to see the signs for Rancho Cucamonga, but when she finally sees Rancho Cucamonga, she’s disappointed. Why is she disappointed?

### Chapter 11

1. Mari says she feels like she “came from some other planet.” What does that mean and why do you think she feels that way?
2. Conor is upset when Mari decides to take a different route. Do you think it is smart that she veered away from the original plan? Why or why not?

### Chapter 12

1. Mari experiences a lot of “firsts” in this chapter. Can you find at least two and explain why it is a first for Mari?

2. Music plays a large role in this book, and especially in this chapter. Why do you think that is? What role do you think the music plays?

### Chapter 13

1. Why does Mari make the detour to see the Grand Canyon? Explain.
2. Should Mari listen to the voicemail? What do you think Dennis is going to say? Make a prediction.

### Chapter 14

1. Mari is torn. In this chapter she says that she “wants someone to care. She wants no one to care.” What do you think this means? What do you think she really wants?
2. Watching Conor stimming is hard for Mari. Why do you think it is hard for Mari? Please explain.

### Chapter 15

1. Looking out over the Grand Canyon, Mari realizes that her mom never saw this. How do you think this makes her feel?
2. At the end of the chapter, Mari steps off the path. Can you predict what is going to happen next? What clues make you think this?

### Chapter 16

1. Conor throws the phone in the Grand Canyon. Is that smart? Why or why not?
2. Why does Mari shout “Bye!” to the man before they leave the park? Would you have done that? Why or why not?

### Chapter 17

1. In your own words, define the word *guardian*. Explain how Mari is Conor’s guardian.
2. “Conor is magnificent in his obsession.” What does this sentence mean? Do you think it is true? How?

### Chapter 18

1. Why do you think their dad left?
2. How would you feel if you were Mari and Conor, camping out like you were the only two people in the world?

### Chapter 19

1. What adjectives would you use to describe Sky?

2. Make a prediction about what you think is going to happen next. Explain.

### Chapter 20

1. Mari agrees to take Sky with them on their road trip. Is this a good idea? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think Mari trusts Sky?

### Chapter 21

1. Sky gives Mari “conspiratorial smile.” What do you think that is?
2. At the end of the chapter, do you think Mari does the right thing with Sky? Why or why not?

### Chapter 22

1. Why does Conor look Mari in the eye for the first time?
2. What do you think about Mari cutting all her hair off? Was Mari’s hair a vital part of who she was?

### Chapter 23

1. Mari says that she doesn’t even know who she is. Have you ever felt like this? How would you describe yourself?
2. Mari says softly to herself, “Mom. Mom. Mom.” What makes her say this?

### Chapter 24

1. Why does the man in the gas station hold on to Mari’s credit card?
2. What adjectives would you use to describe Michael, the man who pays for Mari’s gas?

### Chapter 25

1. Why do Mari and Conor need glasses to look at the eclipse? What kind of glasses do they need? Research the answer.
2. Who is Woody Guthrie? Listen to one (or two) of his songs.

### Chapter 26

1. With only a little money left, Mari and Conor buy burgers and fries at the snack bar. Is this irresponsible?
2. Have you ever said something you regret to someone you love? Do you understand how Mari is feeling right now?

### Chapter 27

1. What kind of reaction did Mari get when she put on the tank top?
2. What does *despair* mean to you? What does despair mean in the chapter?

### Chapter 28

1. What is a metaphor? Can you think of a metaphor?
2. Why does Mari start crying? What is the “everything” that she is crying about?

### Chapter 29

1. Why does Mari offer to have the family sit with them?
2. Can you make a prediction about what is going to happen next?

### Chapter 30

1. Mari’s mom once said to her that home “is where you don’t have to explain yourself.” What does that mean? Do you agree with that statement?
2. Does trust just happen? Or is it earned? Do you decide to trust someone, or do you give it instinctively?

### Chapter 31

1. Mari thinks what is “unsaid on the shirt is what matters.” What does that mean?
2. Why does Mari let her guard down with this family?

### Chapter 32

1. When Mari takes her glasses off and looks around, she realizes that everyone is broken. What does that mean? Do you agree or disagree?
2. Why doesn’t Mari want the family to leave?

### Chapter 33

1. What does the word *flummoxed* mean? Define it.
2. Why does Mari not want Dennis to take care of them?

### Chapter 34

1. How do you think Conor feels about people calling him “crazy” or a “freak”?
2. Why would Mari choose her grandmother’s brooch to destroy?

### Chapter 35

1. When Mari walks back to the car and finds the police officer examining it, how do you think she feels?
2. After the police officer tells Mari to “stay right here,” what does Mari do? Do you think this is a good decision? Why or why not?

### Chapter 36

1. The tollbooth, the lack of money, and having something wrong with her headlight are major concerns for Mari. How do you think she is feeling?
2. Mari and Conor only have a dollar and a half tank of gas left. Do you think they will be able to make it? Why or why not?

### Chapter 37

1. How hard is it for Mari to ask for help?
2. What do you think Conor is talking about in the porta potty?

### Chapter 38

1. They have two hundred miles to go. Do you think they can walk that far?
2. Make a prediction. What do you think will happen next?

### Chapter 39

1. What made Mari not ask the first family for help?
2. Why do you think the second family says “yes” to giving them a ride?

### Chapter 40

1. How does Conor decide to accept a ride from the family?
2. Why do you think Mari opened up to this family?

### Chapter 41

1. Do you think their grandmother is going to be happy to see them? Why or why not?
2. The book ends with their Nana letting them know she is happy they came to her. What do you think will happen next? What will their life look like?

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### LANGUAGE ARTS

- Ask students to use one adjective to describe each of the following characters: Mari, Conor, Stephanie (Mom), Dennis, and Sky. CCSS.ELA.L.1
- Discuss with the class if there is anything within the story that students connect with. Have students write about a time when they felt the same way as one of the characters in the book. CCSS.ELA.W.1, CCSS.ELA.1, 2
- When finished with the book, instruct students to choose two of the new vocabulary words. Ask them to use each word in a sentence. CCSS.ELA.FS.2, 3, CCSS,ELA.L.1, 2
- Ask your students to make a list of the five items they would take with them if they had to leave their house in a hurry. Have them explain why they would choose those five items. CCSS.ELA.W.1, CCSS.ELA.1, 2

### SCIENCE

- In small groups, have students learn more about the four different types of eclipses (total, partial, annual, and hybrid). Research and share your findings with the class. CCSS.IT.1, 2, 3, 5, 9
- In the book, Mari and Conor need to find special glasses to use in order to observe the eclipse. In class, have your students design and create glasses they can use to observe an eclipse. CCSS.SL.1, 2, 3. IT.2, 3, 7

### MATH

- Ask students to create a division and/or multiplication word problem using the different amounts of money mentioned in this book. Share the problems with the entire class. CCSS. MATH.OA

### ART

- Mari and Conor follow a map at the beginning of the trip to get them across the country. Ask your students to draw a map from their house to school, making sure that they label landmarks and calculate distances. CCMS.MD.3, 4

updated 8/23/22

### GEOGRAPHY

- Take your class on a virtual cross-country adventure. Have your students keep a journal of places they could visit: national parks, museums, monuments, etc. CCSS.ELA.W.1, IT.1, 2, 3, 5, 7 & 9.
- Mari and Conor take a detour to visit the Grand Canyon. Talk with your class about other national parks. Have them break into small groups and research different parks, sharing their information with the class. CCSS.ELA.W.1, IT.1, 2, 3, 5, 7 & 9.

### MUSIC

- Music plays a very important role in this book. Have your students study the different musicians that are mentioned in this book and, as a group, discuss why the author chose these different artists. What is important about each of them? CCSS.ELA.W.1, IT.1, 2, 3, 5, 7 & 9.

### REVIEWS

“A grand journey measured in both physical and emotional distance.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“This poetically written and economically plotted hero’s journey by Harley (the Charlie Bumpers series) makes a heartwarming, hopeful case for self-forgiveness and second chances.” —*Publishers Weekly*

“As hopeful as it is heartbreaking, the novel *Now You Say Yes* follows a siblings’ search for a place in the world.” —*Foreword Reviews*

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Bill Harley** is a storyteller, songwriter, author, and playwright best known for his work with children and families. Considered by fans and peers alike to be one of the best storytellers in the country, his work is a celebration of commonality and humanity, delivered through comic narrative songs and confessional spoken pieces. A prolific recording artist, Bill has produced thirty-five award-winning recordings.

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