



A COMPREHENSIVE TEACHING
GUIDE TO THE WORKS OF
**GAYLE
FORMAN**



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, WRITING PROMPTS, AND EXTENSION ACTIVITIES
ALIGNED TO COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR GRADES 9-10.



DEAR EDUCATOR:

In our multi-layered, multi-connected society, the books teens are choosing to read are not only more likely to have an impact on their thoughts and actions, they are also more likely to share those thoughts and express those actions than ever before. Gayle Forman's books are wonderfully vivid, layered, and rich with the sort of emotions that today's teen feels. The content in her novels is perfect for a small or large class discussion, an independent reading assignment, or a creative writing task.

The questions and activities in this guide align with Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts for grades 9-10, but Standards for other grades may also apply. Gayle Forman's books are usually recommended for ages 14 and up, but most of these questions and activities can be easily adapted for middle school readers.

Gayle Forman's books are popular with teens due to their themes of love, romance, heartbreak, friendship and fate. Using discussion questions, writing prompts and activities, this guide helps educators use her books to encourage students to dig deeper: to read closely, to evaluate what they've read, to participate in class discussions and to complete individual writing and creative projects.



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About the Author

Gayle Forman is an award-winning author and journalist whose articles have appeared in numerous publications, including *Seventeen*, *Cosmopolitan*, *The Nation*, and *The New York Times*. She lives in Brooklyn with her family. For more about her, visit her website at www.gayleforman.com.

THIS GUIDE ADDRESSES THE FOLLOWING COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR GRADES 9-10:

Reading: RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.5, RL.9-10.9

Writing: W.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.3, W.9-10.4, W.9-10.5, W.9-10.9, W.9-10.10

Speaking and Listening: SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.6

Language: L.9-10.1, L.9-10.2, L.9-10.3

Visit the [Common Core State Standards website](http://CommonCoreStateStandards.org) to read about the individual standards:
www.corestandards.org/the-standards.

If I Stay and *Where She Went* are companion novels; exploring them together as a class offers extensive opportunities for investigating theme, character, structure, point of view and plot across both volumes. The following questions can facilitate class discussion, or alternatively, be used as individual writing prompts. However used, students need to provide reasons and note evidence from the text to support all answers.



IF I STAY

In the blink of an eye, everything changes. Seventeen-year-old Mia has no memory of the accident; she can only recall what happened afterwards, watching her own damaged body being taken from the wreck. Little by little she struggles to put together the pieces—to figure out what she has lost, what she has left, and the very difficult choice she must make. Heartwrenchingly beautiful, this book will change the way you look at life, love, and family.

★ “Both brutal and beautiful, this thought-provoking story will stay with readers long after the last page is turned.”—*School Library Journal*, starred review

IF I STAY: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION/WRITING

What's it all about?

What are the themes of the book? (Possibilities: choice, sacrifice, grief and loss, family, music.) Which of the themes are “major” and which are “minor”? Choose two themes and analyze them over the course of the novel. How are these themes connected? Do they apply to a single character, or to multiple characters? When do they emerge and how do they develop as the story progresses?

Mia's voice

Discuss the use of point of view in the story. To continue the first person, present tense point of view that's introduced in the opening scene, the author has Mia narrate the story in an unusual way. Why might the author have chosen this technique instead of writing the entire story from the third person point of view? How different would the story have been if someone else had been telling it? Choose an important passage from the book and rewrite it from another character's point of view.

What about Adam?

Discuss Adam's feelings about asking Mia to stay. Is Adam's request the reason she decides to live? Is Adam's request selfless? Find passages that describe Adam's character and his relationship to Mia.

Mia's world

What do readers learn about Mia and her relationship with her family, and with Adam, in the pages before the accident? How are these initial observations confirmed in the rest of the book? How does the author use the other characters to reinforce what we believe about Mia and her family and friends? Do you feel Mia's choice more difficult because of what you know about her family?

Who's in charge?

When Gran and Gramps are at the hospital, a nurse tells them that Mia is “running the show.” Is it Mia's choice to live or die? Does Mia believe this? What do other characters believe? Explain how the flashback scenes help us understand Mia's thoughts about living or dying.

What would YOU do?

Write a brief opinion essay that addresses the question “What would you do if you were Mia?” What are the pros and cons of staying? What is the most difficult part of the choice? What challenges will arise from the choice made? Provide argumentative statements in the text that support your view and opinion.

Sacrifice vs. choice

Discuss the meanings of “sacrifice” and “choice.” How are they different? How are they similar? Is sacrifice part of your definition of love? What is the best way to make a difficult choice? How do you feel after you've made an important choice? What decisions must Adam and Mia consider? Are these choices or sacrifices?

What a tragedy

Compare and contrast a point in your life when you felt in control of your future with a time when you felt powerless. What coping skills do you have to help deal with personal tragedy? How would/has tragedy changed you?

WHERE SHE WENT

It's been three years since the devastating accident...three years since Mia walked out of Adam's life forever. Now living on opposite coasts, Mia is Juilliard's rising star and Adam is LA tabloid fodder, thanks to his new rock star status and celebrity girlfriend. When Adam gets stuck in New York by himself, chance brings the couple together again, for one last night. As they explore the city that has become Mia's home, Adam and Mia revisit the past and open their hearts to the future—and each other.



★ “Pitch-perfect ... a moving, skillfully crafted novel.”—VOYA, starred review

WHERE SHE WENT: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION/WRITING

The rest of the story

How did you feel about reading more of Mia and Adam's story? Were you glad to read a continuation, or would you rather have had the story be finished at the end of the first book? Why did the author decide to keep telling the story? Do the events of this book affect how you understood the first book? How and why?

Adam's turn

This book is told from Adam's point of view. Why did the author switch to his point of view in this book? Does that help us understand Adam better? To like him better? Is the tone of the book different? How? Because the narrator is a boy? Do you see the character of Mia differently, through Adam's eyes? Could this story be told by anyone other than Adam or Mia?

Same old story?

Does this book have the same themes as the first one? What themes are new to this book? (Possibilities: hope, reunion, anger, reconciliation.) Identify the way the themes play out for both characters.

Past and present

The chapters in this novel alternate between Adam's current life and his relationship with Mia both pre- and post- accident. How does this structure contribute to understanding their breakup and its impact on Adam? Discuss how this structure was similar to, and different from, the structure used in *If I Stay*.

Mia + Adam

Compare and contrast the characters of both Mia and Adam over the course of the two novels. How did they change? Did the changes make them more likable? More believable? If you could talk to them, what kinds of questions would you ask? Could you be friends with either or both?

Collateral Damage

Many chapters in this book open with selected lyrics from *Collateral Damage*, Shooting Star's break-out album. What does the title mean? How do the lyrics relate to each chapter and to what has been revealed so far about the end of Adam and Mia's relationship?

To be continued

After *Where She Went* ends, the author included an album review and song lyrics for a solo album that Adam released three years after he and Mia meet again in New York. Evaluate what the song lyrics tell readers about Adam and Mia's current relationship. Is this device more or less effective than if Adam had narrated an epilogue? Is the ending hopeful? Why or why not? Do you feel that the story of Mia and Adam is at a natural end, or would you like to read another book about them?

IF I STAY AND WHERE SHE WENT: INDEPENDENT ACTIVITIES FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Six word story

Retell each book using only six words. (See examples at: www.sixwordstories.net.)

Tweet, tweet

Create a fake Twitter profile and feed for Adam's band, Shooting Star.

Hooray for Hollywood

Make a book trailer for one or both of the books OR a mock music video for the song *Collateral Damage*.

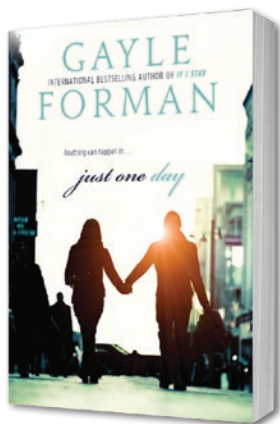
The rest of the story

Imagine you are a reporter and choose one of two assignments: interview Mia when she awakes from the coma OR interview Adam on the release of his solo album. Provide both questions and answers.

Share your playlist

Imagine that you are one of the characters in *If I Stay* (not Mia or Adam) and create a playlist that will help you deal with Mia's critical situation. Include an explanation for your selection of each song.

Just One Day and *Just One Year* are companion novels; exploring them together as a class offers extensive opportunities for investigating genre, theme, setting and character across both volumes. The following questions can facilitate class discussion, or alternatively, be used as individual writing prompts. However used, students need to provide reasons and note evidence from the text to support all answers.



JUST ONE DAY

Allyson Healey's life is exactly like her suitcase—packed, planned, ordered. Then on the last day of her three-week post-graduation European tour, she meets Willem. A free-spirited, roving actor, Willem is everything she's not, and when he invites her to abandon her plans and come to Paris with him, Allyson says yes. This uncharacteristic decision leads to a day of risk and romance, liberation and intimacy: 24 hours that will transform Allyson's life.

★ “Offering mystery, drama, and an evocative portrait of unrequited love, this open-ended novel will leave fans eagerly anticipating the companion story.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ “Reading like a teen version of Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*, this tale of romance and mystery engages readers and will cause them to examine their definitions of love and self-identity.”—*School Library Journal*, starred review

JUST ONE DAY: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION/WRITING

Glancing at genre

Discuss different book genres. (Possibilities: fantasy, historical fiction, romance, mystery, realistic contemporary fiction.) What are the common characteristics of realistic contemporary fiction? Is it easier to “connect” with characters if they seem like people you could know? Can this also be categorized as a romance?

You've got a friend

One of the ways the author introduces us to Allyson is through her friendship with Melanie. What do we learn from their interaction in the first few chapters of the book? How have things changed between them when they meet after a semester of college? Why is it important that they make peace with each other? Do you think they'll be friends when they graduate college?

Allyson's side of the story

Allyson is easily understood to be the main character of the book since the story is told in the first person. What are the limitations of using first person narration to tell the story? Does that limit the reader to sharing only Allyson's opinions and reactions? Can you get a true reading on Allyson's character if you are only seeing her thoughts and not those of her friends? In your opinion, would the story be better if the author had used the third person? Why or why not?

Authentically Allyson

When her Shakespeare class is discussing *Twelfth Night*, Allyson tells Professor Glenny that the main source of tension and humor in the story is: “No one is who they pretend to be.” How does this theme pertain to *Just One Day*? List examples of characters and how they are not who they pretend to be. Is it easy for Allyson to change into Lulu? Why or why not? When does she feel like Lulu and when does she feel like counterfeit Lulu?

Life's a journey

Travel is an important theme in the book, and many different settings provide the backdrop. List all of the different places Allyson goes throughout the book. How are her travels a metaphor for her inner journey, her personal growth? Near the end of the book she wonders, “if the point of this crazy quest I'm on wasn't to help me find Willem. Maybe it was to help me find someone else entirely.” Is this realization a surprise to her? To readers?

Willem + Allyson

Readers only know Willem through Allyson and what she observes and relates. Does this limit how deeply you can understand Willem's character? What clues does his behavior give you about who he really is? Why does Allyson trust him? What questions do you have about Willem at the end of the book? Is the ending in character? Why or why not? When she opens the door at the end of the book, Allyson says: “Hi Willem. My name is Allyson.” How is this telling of Allyson's personal journey through the book?

JUST ONE YEAR

When he opens his eyes, Willem doesn't know where in the world he is—Prague or Dubrovnik or back in Amsterdam. All he knows is that he is once again alone, and that he needs to find a girl named Lulu. They shared one magical day in Paris, and something about that day—that girl—makes Willem wonder if they aren't fated to be together. He travels all over the world, from Mexico to India, hoping to reconnect with her. But as months go by and Lulu remains elusive, Willem starts to question if the hand of fate is as strong as he'd thought...



★ “An alluring story that pushes beyond the realm of star-crossed romance”
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

JUST ONE YEAR: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION/WRITING

Pick a favorite

In this book, the author lets Willem tell his story, which is parallel to Allyson's story. Do you identify with one of the two characters more? Which one? Why? Does the author do anything to make you prefer one or the other, or do the stories seem equal?

Finding Willem

Discuss Willem's personal growth through the course of the novel. What parts do fate and choice have in his character's evolution? How is the search for Lulu intertwined with his search for self? How does the author reveal Willem's vulnerabilities to the reader? Is Willem likable? Sympathetic?

Parallel lives

Unknowingly, Allyson and Willem both spend a New Year's Eve on the same beach in Mexico. They both hear the singer talking about “tabula rasa,” or wiping the board clean. Compare the scenes in each book, especially in light of the books' themes of fate. How does each react to the singer's advice?

Shakespeare said it

Both *Just One Day* and *Just One Year* begin with a quote from William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Read these aloud and decide how both are thematically appropriate for each book. Discuss the roles of acting, Shakespeare and the stage in each book and as insight into the characters. How does the author give readers a contemporary appreciation for Shakespeare?

Family matters

Explain how Willem's parents' love story and life together impact Willem's world view. For example, he believes his father's truth that “it's all about accidents.” How important is it to the growth of Willem's character that he travel to India to see his mother? Describe the changes in their relationship.

Fate and destiny

Kate says, “Nothing happens without intention.”
Willem says, “Accidents. It's all about the accidents.”

Discuss how belief in one or the other of these statements could direct someone's actions. Is Willem's behavior consistent with someone who believes fate is driving? Looking back at both of the books, do you think the author sees things Kate's way, or Willem's? How do Willem and Allyson's ideas about fate, luck and free will evolve during their year apart?

JUST ONE DAY AND JUST ONE YEAR: INDEPENDENT ACTIVITIES FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Lights, camera, action

Find and watch a contemporary movie retelling of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, and then read the original play. Write a paper comparing the two versions and connecting the story to *Just One Day* and *Just One Year*.

Eavesdropping

Practice writing dialogue by imagining the conversation between Allyson and Willem following their kiss after she comes to his flat at the end of the books. What kinds of things do they say to each other? Do they make any promises? Apologies?

New edition

Suppose the publisher of the books decides to reissue them with new covers, and asks you to provide the new cover designs. Also design a third cover, just in case the author would decide to continue their joint story. How can you artistically portray some of the books' themes?

On the wall

Create a mock-up of a bulletin board for Allyson when she goes away to college, using images, photographs, mementos and quotes. What types of things would she want to see every day? What is most important to her? It can be an actual bulletin board, a sketch/diagram, or something designed on the computer.

On the stage

In chapter 19 of *Just One Year*, Willem and his new friend Kate enjoy a Mexican road trip filled with philosophical conversation. Rewrite this scene as an actor's monologue for Willem to use at an audition. Bonus points for performing it for the class!

13 THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT GAYLE



1. I'm a woman. There seems to be some confusion about my gender, which I find disturbing if you've seen my author photo.
2. I used to be a journalist. My first job was for *Seventeen* magazine.
3. When I was little I wanted to grow up to be the sun. I was devastated to learn this was not a career option.
4. Adam from *If I Stay* was inspired by my husband, Nick. No, you cannot meet him.
5. Willem from *Just One Day/Year* was inspired by some Dutch guy who dumped me. (Willem is my revenge.) No, you don't want to meet him.
6. I bombed my SATs. I still did okay in life.
7. I was once an extra in a Bollywood movie. (And yes, that's where I got that part of *Just One Year* from.)
8. I have been to 64 countries. I used to travel a lot. I once wrote a book about it. Favorite country visited: India. Least-favorite country: Tonga. (Sorry, Tonga.)
9. I can bake a batch of cupcakes from scratch in under 20 minutes.
10. The worst job I ever had was as a data-entry clerk. Honorable mention to hotel maid and traveling flower seller girl.
11. I have learned, and forgotten, three foreign languages. Regretfully, French is not one of them.
12. I took three years off to travel before college.
13. As a teen, I was so obsessed with Molly Ringwald that I started biting my lip like she did and now I have a permanent scar. And this is why I am a YA author.

