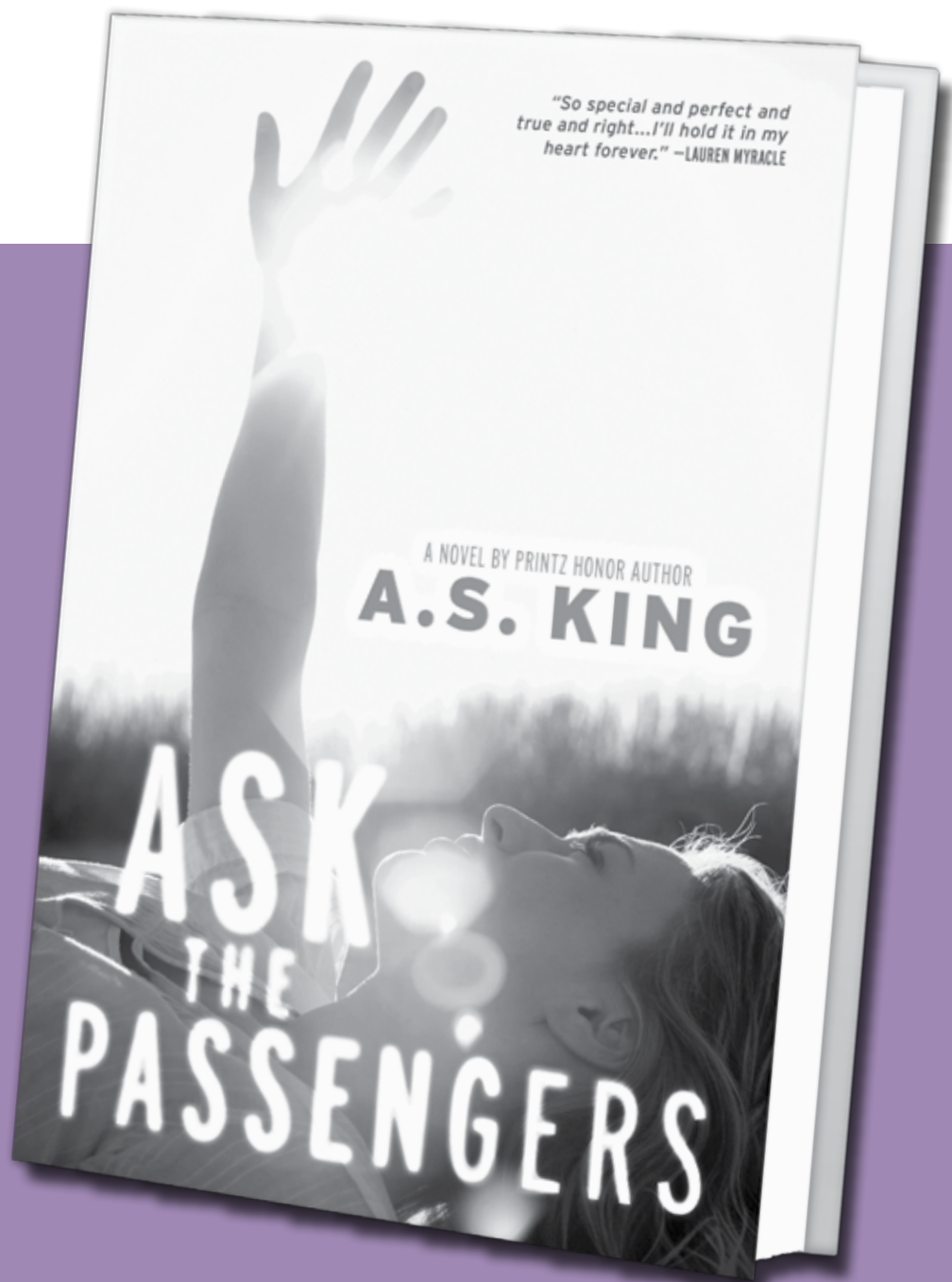


ASK THE PASSENGERS

Curriculum connections

- ❖ Sexual Identity
- ❖ Prejudice
- ❖ Addiction

Ages: 15 & Up



by
A.S. King

THEMES:

Sexual Identity

Bigotry/Prejudice

Addiction

Sibling Rivalry

Acceptance/Tolerance

Power of Love

Peer Pressure

Bullying

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How would you describe Astrid's relationships with each of her family members? In what ways are these relationships dysfunctional? In what ways are they healthy?
 - Throughout the book, Astrid makes reference to what "they say" or what "they think". Who do you think "they" are? What do you think "they" would say after reading this book?
 - Why does Astrid send her love to the airplane passengers flying above her? What are the results? Are they helpful or detrimental to Astrid? Do they affect her at all?
 - Someone's external perceptions of a person don't always match that person's internal truths. Discuss how this concept applies to the character of your choice.
 - "I think about Kristina and Justin and their secrets that I've sworn to keep. I think about how I have different secrets hidden from different people in different areas of my life." How do Astrid's secrets change over time, and what impact do they ultimately have on how she handles acknowledging her sexuality?
 - On page 124, Astrid speaks about definitions. How do people define Astrid and the people around her, and how do those definitions change over time? How does Astrid define herself, if at all? Do you think definitions are a useful or detrimental tool?
 - Discuss the similarities between the Allegory of the Cave (p. 190) and Astrid's journey towards publicly acknowledging her sexuality.
 - "Everybody's always looking for the person they're better than." How does this thought relate to the role of equality in the book? How does Astrid handle the idea that she is "less than" her friends, family, and peers?
 - Dee presents Astrid with an ultimatum about coming out. In what ways was this helpful to Astrid? In what ways was it harmful?
 - Discuss the power of loving yourself. How has Astrid's journey given you perspective on who you are and the relationships you have with others?
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ACTIVITIES:

Journalism

Astrid is active in her school's literary magazine. Ask students to create their own class literary magazine. Encourage them to report on current events related to the themes of the book, conduct character interviews, and seek out real-life interviews.

Philosophy or Drama

Astrid's favorite class discusses Socratic paradoxes. As part of their experience, students are allowed to dress in period attire and debate among themselves and other students at school. Arrange for your students to partake in this type of school-wide event.

Journal

Create a journal in which students speak to issues that would cause them to send their love to the passengers (or any other person).

Debate

Divide students into two teams. One team will advocate for open and public acceptance of sexual preference. One team will advocate for keeping sexual preference private. Then ask the teams to switch sides and argue the opposite position.

Current Events

There is much coverage in the press about issues pertaining to open acknowledgement and acceptance of different kinds of sexuality. Ask students to break into small groups, research a current event related to this topic, and present it for discussion among the class.

ASK
THE
PASSENGERS

about the book



ASK THE PASSENGERS
by A.S. King
978-0-316-19468-6

Astrid Jones desperately wants to confide in someone, but her mother's pushiness and her father's lack of interest tell her they're the last people she can trust. Instead, Astrid spends hours lying on the backyard picnic table watching airplanes fly overhead. She doesn't know the passengers inside, but they're the only people who won't judge her when she asks them her most personal questions...like what it means that she's falling in love with a girl.

As her secret relationship becomes more intense and her friends demand answers, Astrid has nowhere left to turn. She can't share the truth with anyone except the people at thirty thousand feet, and they don't even realize she's there. But little does Astrid know just how much even the tiniest connection will affect these strangers' lives—and her own—for the better.

also by A.S. King

Praise for *Everybody Sees the Ants*



- ★ “A subtly written, profoundly honest novel about a kid falling through the cracks and pulling himself back up.” —*Booklist*
- ★ “One of the most believable teen male characters in young adult fiction.”
—VOYA
- ★ “Smart, funny, and passionate.”
—*Publishers Weekly*

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about the author



A.S. King is the author of the highly acclaimed novel *Everybody Sees the Ants* and the Edgar Award nominated, Michael L. Printz Honor book *Please Ignore Vera Dietz*. She is also the author of *The Dust of 100 Dogs*, an ALA Best Book for Young Adults. After returning from Ireland where she spent over a decade living off the land, teaching adult literacy, and writing novels, King now lives deep in the Pennsylvania woods with her husband and children. Learn more at www.as-king.com.



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Educator guide prepared by Michelle Franz.