

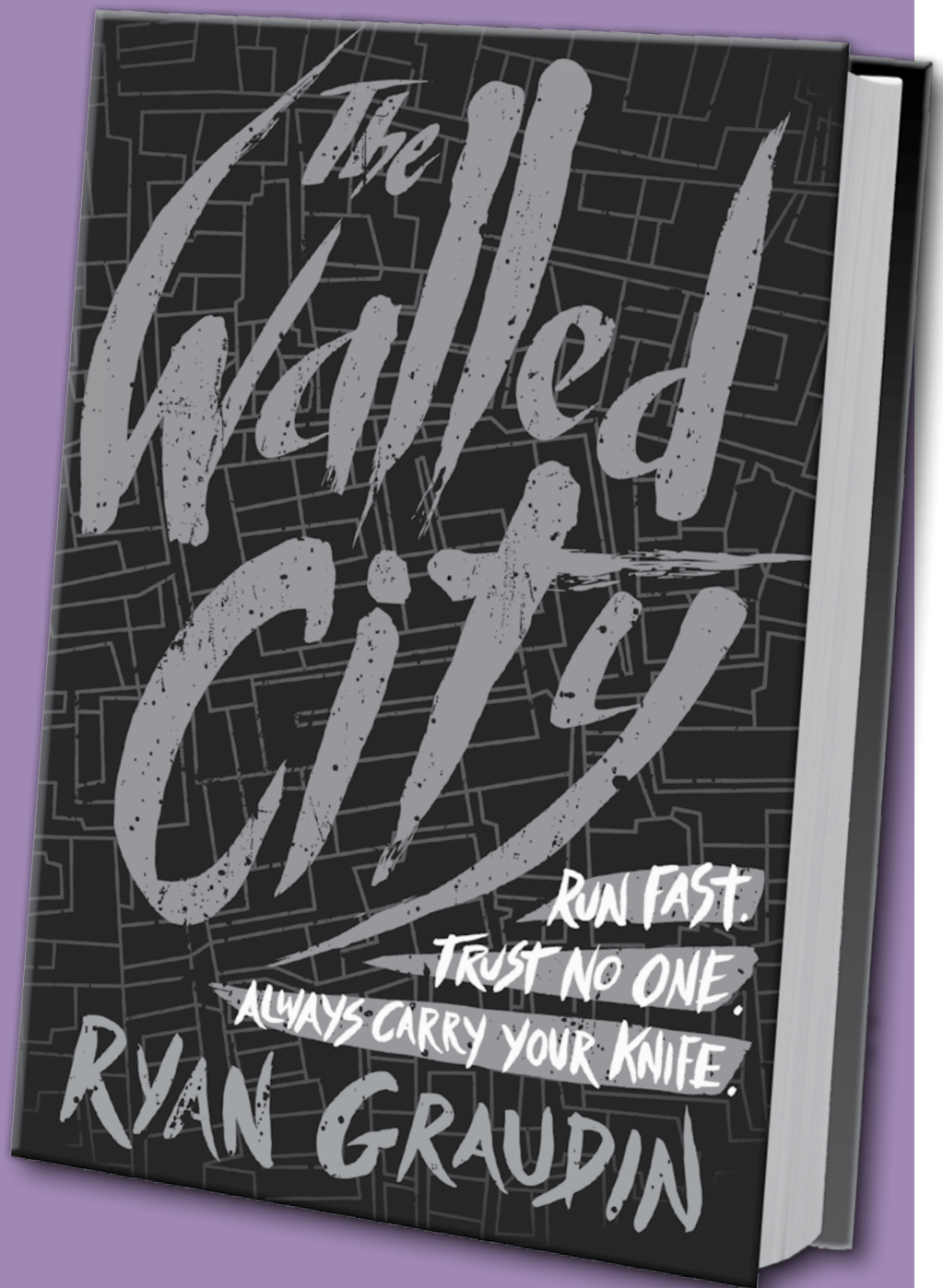
The Walled City

Curriculum connections

- ❖ Literature
- ❖ Social Issues
- ❖ Social Studies

Ages: 15 & Up

by RYAN
GRAUDIN



EXPLORING *THE WALLED CITY* THROUGH WRITING AND RESEARCH

The following questions may be utilized throughout the study of *The Walled City* as reflective writing prompts or alternatively, they can be used as targeted questions for class discussion and reflection.

1. As the novel opens, Jin Ling tells readers that “There are three rules of survival in the Walled City: Run fast. Trust no one. Always carry a knife.” How does Jin Ling’s offering of her “rules of survival” in the Walled City help establish the tone of the novel? In what ways does it also set the stage for how each of the characters must fight to survive? Have each group orally present their “Collage of Voices” to the class.
2. Describe the role the Brotherhood plays for those that inhabit the Walled City. In your opinion, why is their organized crime permitted by the authorities outside of the Walled City? What makes ending their activity ultimately worthwhile to the police?
3. Dai’s father calls Hak Nam Walled City a “recipe for humanity’s darkest ingredients—thieves, whores, murderers, addicts—all mashed into six and a half acres.” Why does Dai’s forced two years of existence in this “Hell on Earth” prove to be ironic given his father’s earlier threats?
4. When Jin Ling reveals to readers that she is a girl, she states, “To be a girl in this city—without a roof or family—is a sentence.” Consider this. What makes that reality so tragic? How does each of the other narrators use disguise to serve them as well?
5. Besides the protection they provide, what do Kuen’s boots symbolize? How does Jin Ling’s statement that “these boots have to be from City Beyond” help readers understand her limited background of the rest of the world? Given her lack of experience in cities, how is she so savvy in the operations of the Walled City?
6. After witnessing Sing’s escape attempt and ultimate recapture, Jin Ling reflects, “That girl. The fire in her eyes. She could’ve been me. My sister. Any one of us.” In what ways does this experience strengthen her resolve to recover her sister at all costs?
7. As Dai introduces himself to readers, he states, “I’m not a good person.” How does the death of his brother serve as a catalyst in changing him and how he chooses to live?
8. While witnessing Kuen punishing Lee for the loss of his boots, Dai remarks, “I feel kind of bad for Lee, but not bad enough to do anything about it. I can’t afford to get involved in other people’s problems. Not when I’m running out of time to solve my own.” What can be inferred about Dai’s unwillingness to assist Lee? Do you believe his choice is the right one? Why or why not?
9. Upon her arrival at the brothel, Longwai tells Mei Yee, “There is no escape. Forget your home. Forget your family. You’re mine now.” After witnessing Sing’s punishment, how do Longwai’s words impact the girls imprisoned at the brothel? Though they risk their own lives, why do these young women choose to ultimately aid Dai and Mei Yee?
10. Compare the ambassador’s gift of the bonsai Cyprus tree to that of the seashell that Dai gives Mei Yee. In what ways are these gifts symbolic of their expectations of a life with her? What does her rejection of an offer of a “life” with the ambassador indicate about her sense of self-worth and hope for her future?
11. Though it is never directly stated in the novel, Chinese history and culture are a strong influence on this epic novel. What are some of the specific elements that indicate such a connection? In your opinion, do these details enrich the overall story? Why or why not?
12. How does the revelation that Jin Ling is a female impact Dai? Do you believe it changes how he chooses to interact with her? Using textual examples, support your position.

13. At the conclusion of her story, Mei Yee states, “Some scars stay with you...But they are healing. Step by step. Day by day. Choice by choice. I’m tearing down the bars and bricks. I’m becoming new.” In what ways is Mei Yee’s statement indicative of the experiences of Jin Lin and Dai as well?
14. Considering the additional information detailed in the “Author’s Note”, what did you find most interesting? Disturbing? Worth further investigation?

INTERDISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATIONS

1. *The Walled City* presents its readers with an extraordinary world whose unrelenting barriers to the outside world hold its denizens as firmly as any mountain ranges, oceans, or border guards. Provide students with the opportunity to explore these investigations of the novel’s setting:
 - Utilizing large sheets or rolls of paper and markers, assign student pairs or groups to construct a map of the Walled City in 15-20 minutes. This should include major locales described within the city. Once time has elapsed, discuss as a class each group’s maps:
 - What are the undisputed commonalities about each map, and what elements of the novel establish them as certain?
 - What elements vary greatly in their representation on the maps? How does each group’s reading of the novel shape their view?
 - How might alterations in the setting alter the events in the novel itself? For example, might changing the setting to a township in South Africa, or a Native American reservation, or a tribal community in a remote area of the world have altered the characters or the key events in the novel? Why or why not?
2. The Walled City is an allegory for slums in any number of cities around the world, where inhabitants do their best to carry out normal lives amidst

overcrowding and community cooperation, hardship and opportunism, poverty and charity, desperation and hope. Assign students—individually, or in pairs or groups—to explore photo essays of other slums around the world, and from those to create their own “photo essay” or “photo journal” around one of these (or other) themes from the novel. Be sure to require students to utilize proper source citation when gathering their images:

- **Kowloon, Hong Kong:**
www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2139914/A-rare-insight-Kowloon-Walled-City.html
- **Kibera, Kenya:**
maureenruddyburkhart.com/kibera
- **Clichy sous Bois, France:**
www.10-online.com/2011/10/10/chene-pointu-clichy-sous-bois-france/?lang=en
- **Dar Al-Salaam, Egypt:**
www.businessinsider.com/egypts-dar-al-salaam-slum-pictures-2013-6?op=1
- **Norilsk, Russia:**
www.lensculture.com/articles/elena-chernyshova-days-of-night-nights-of-day#slide-33
- **Altos de Cazuca, Colombia:**
www.globalpost.com/dispatch/colombia/090812/fleeing-violence-slums
- **Khlong Toei, Thailand:**
weblog.iom.int/slumming-snapping-smiling
- **Vele di Scampia, Italy:**
www.demotix.com/news/3324504/italy-severe-decay-sails-scampia-naples/all-media
- **Rocinha, Brazil:**
sandrajoe.com/2013/04/18/favela-da-rocinha-slums-rio-de-janeiro
- **Dharavi, India:**
www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/02/03/photo_essay_indias_real_world_slumdogs
- **Ferentari, Romania:**
theprotocity.com/ferentari-bucharests-post-socialist-ghetto

3. Organized crime syndicates like the Brotherhood of the Red Dragon readily prey on depressed communities like the Walled City, which provide a ready market for their business activities and where political leaders and law enforcement can easily be manipulated.

- As a short research assignment, assign students to investigate organized crime around the world and their activities. Encourage them to develop a profile that includes dealings in both illegal and legal activity, and to distinguish criminal activities between violent crime, vice, financial crimes, and so forth. Have them provide a short presentation to the class, to include an assessment of why their activities are able to succeed in their respective communities—what are the conditions that make those ventures lucrative?
- Next, assign students to investigate the factors that allow organized crime groups to operate with relative impunity. This would obviously include recruitment or bribery of legal authorities, but also how they ingratiate themselves to the communities they exploit—how do they convince members of the community that they better their world?

4. *The Walled City* compels its readers to consider the horrors and tragedies of contemporary human trafficking. Have students pursue these investigations of human trafficking and its effects:

- The novel helps to make clear that children are often the victims of this practice, and illustrates many of the ways in which they are victimized. Have students research some of the elements of the problem that are not as obvious.
 - What are the cultural factors that contribute to this problem in regions where women and children are enslaved?
 - What are the ways in which human trafficking is interwoven with other illicit trades, such as narcotics, weapons, counterfeiting, or the sex industry?

– What are the regional variations to this problem? In what ways is it just a problem in the developing world, and in what ways is it a global problem?

- Have students investigate organizations and practices that are working to deter human trafficking. They should not only focus on the objectives of these organizations and the practices that make them successful, but also on their limitations and the barriers to achieving their goals.
- As a service project, have your students organize a human trafficking awareness program at your school. This may include connecting with a larger organization (such as the Polaris Project), developing a website or a social media project, or fundraising to help organizations battling against human trafficking.

To learn more about human trafficking, visit these recommended resources:

International Justice Mission:

www.ijm.org

Polaris Project: www.polarisproject.org

and National Human Trafficking Resource Center:

www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/national-human-trafficking-hotline/the-nhtrc/overview

U.S. Department of Homeland Security:

www.ice.gov/human-trafficking

Cast (Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking):

www.castla.org

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime:

www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html

Sex Workers Project:

sexworkersproject.org/info

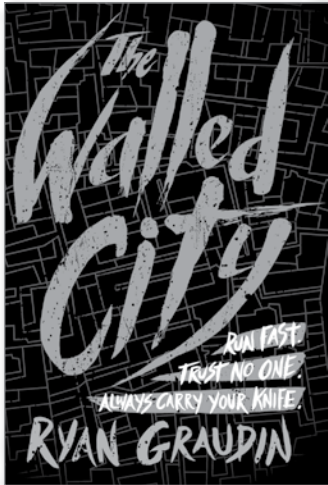
Stop It: Initiative Against Human Trafficking:

sa-stopit.org/human-trafficking-information

Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking:

www.stophumantrafficking.org

about the book



The Walled City

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Also available in downloadable
audio and ebook formats

There are three rules in the Walled City: Run fast. Trust no one. Always carry your knife. Right now, my life depends completely on the first. Run, run, run.

Jin, Mei Yee, and Dai all live in the Walled City, a lawless labyrinth run by crime lords and overrun by street gangs. Teens there traffic drugs or work in brothels—or, like Jin, hide under the radar. But when Dai offers Jin a chance to find her lost sister, Mei Yee, she begins a breathtaking race against the clock to escape the Walled City itself.

praise for *The Walled City*

“With gritty, vehement details, *Walled City* looms large, like a fourth character, its alleyways as twisted as Longwai’s mind... Readers, rapt, will duck for cover until the very last page.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“Graudin is gifted at employing simile and other literary devices to describe the gritty surroundings and Hak Nam’s criminal inhabitants, including one man with a voice “like a junkyard dog.” The result is three stories deftly entwined into a fast-paced, striking tale—partly inspired by the now-destroyed Kowloon Walled City in Hong Kong—as Dai and Jin learn to trust one another with their lives.” —*Publishers Weekly*

“This dark and gritty thriller doesn’t pull any punches, taking readers into a world of fear, danger, and deprivation. Dai, Jin Ling, and Mei Yee each tell their part of the story in nonconsecutive chapters, slowly plaiting a single tale from their multiple narratives. Vivid descriptions add color and infuse the story with realism...This complex, well-written novel is full of tension, twists, and turns, and teens will not be able to put it down.” —*School Library Journal*

about the author



Ryan Graudin grew up in Charleston, SC, with a severe case of wanderlust. When she’s not traveling, she’s busy photographing weddings, writing, and spending time with her husband and wolf-dog. She is the author of *The Walled City* and *All that Glows*. Visit her online at ryangraudin.com