

Common Core State Anchor Standards Aligned Educator Guide for Grades 3 to 7

THE MANY FORTUNES OF MAYA

Age Range: 8 to 12

Grade Level: 3 - 7

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About the book:

Maya turns to her trusty “wheel of fortunes” for guidance on the toughest questions—like why her best friend suddenly feels far away, or when her Daddy will move back home. But can Maya find the courage to write her own fortune?

Maya J. Jenkins is bursting with questions:

Will she get the MVP award at this year’s soccer banquet?

Who will win the big grill off between Daddy and Uncle J?

When will she pass the swim test and get a green bracelet?

For answers and a dose of good luck, 12-year-old Maya turns to her Wheel of Fortunes, a cardboard circle covered with the small slips of wisdom she’s collected from fortune cookies.

But can the fortunes answer her deep-down questions? The ones she’s too scared to ask out loud? Like, where did Mama’s smile go, the real one that lit up everything around her? When will Daddy move back home? And most of all, does she have enough courage to truly listen to the voice in her heart?

★ “...emotionally tinged first-person voice offers fresh observations about parental tensions and changing friendship dynamics.” -- Publishers Weekly (starred review)

★ “Maya’s journey as she learns to adjust to life’s curveballs and listen to her inner truth will keep readers hooked from start to finish.” -- Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

About the author:

Nicole D. Collier, Ph.D. writes middle-grade novels that illuminate the challenges and rewards that come from learning to be true to yourself. She taught fourth grade before becoming an author and leadership coach. A self-proclaimed ever-victorious woman, Nicole runs, dances, and turns cartwheels on sunny days. She’s the author of *Just Right Jillian* and *The Many Fortunes of Maya* (HarperCollins/Versify). Access nicoledcollier.com to learn more about Nicole and her many projects.



Pre-reading discussion:

- Consider the illustration on the front cover of the book. Consider the title’s color and type of font. What does this typeset suggest about the overall theme of the book?
- Identify the items depicted at the lower portion of the image. Predict the significance of these objects to the overall theme of the story.
- Describe the girl featured in the illustration. How is she feeling? How do you know?
- Predict what this story is going to be about.

Post-reading discussion:

No one knows I still play my flute. My parents think I've abandoned it the way kids leave behind old toys, but I would never abandon Flicker. It's just that I don't want Daddy to wonder where my heart is. It's with soccer. With him (pg. 2-3).

- Maya is playing a selection from the *Barber of Seville*, a very famous Italian opera composed in the early 1800’s. She is clearly a talented flutist. Explain why she plays Flicker, her flute in private. Why is she hiding her talent in this way?
- On her Wheel of Fortunes, Maya landed on *You have firm convictions – stand strong behind them*. The word *convictions* means belief, position, and opinion. Which conviction is Maya referencing when repeating the fortune aloud to “lock it in (pg. 3)” – her passion for music, dedication to the game of soccer, or her love for her father? Explain your answer.

Post-reading discussion continued:

They've been whispering about something for days. Whatever it is, it can't be good. I try not to feel angry in advance, but it's too late. The heat is already rising in my chest (pg. 56-7).

- Examine Maya's confusion regarding the terms *separation* and *divorce*. Compare and contrast the two. Tell how *separation* and *divorce* are similar and different.
- *Separation* is typically a temporary arrangement, one in which the parents take time to time to work on personal things. Tell how spending time apart to sort through issues can be ultimately beneficial to a couple's relationship.
- Though Maya seemed surprised when her parents announced their separation, she had witnessed subtle clues suggesting that her parents were not happy in their relationship. Which is better for a married couple – to act happy together or to be truly happy together? Explain your answer.
- Do Maya's parents love her? Will a separation change their devotion to her? How do you know?

There it is. Another chance to tell him the truth, that I've been playing all along. That I miss playing out loud, and that I would love to play with him any day (pg. 180).

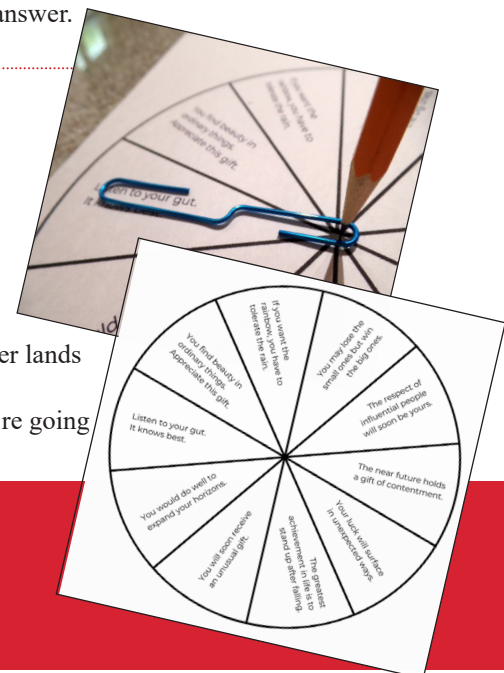
- To be *authentic* means to be honest with oneself and others, to communicate your needs, and to be truthful about things you love. Explain why Maya resists being authentic about her love of music.
- What motivates Maya to play Flicker in private?
- Is earning the MVP of her soccer team Maya's goal or her father's?
- Consider the definitions of the words *conviction* and *authentic*. Is it possible for a person to be authentic without owning a sense of conviction? How so?
- How does Maya's lack of conviction for playing the flute impact her happiness and well-being?

"There's a whole world out there, Maya. I want you to live it. The world according to Maya! Not according to your daddy. Not me. You. What do you want" (pg. 195)?

- Explain what Mama meant in saying, "It's not fun being trapped in someone else's vision of things" (pg. 195). Give reasons why she knew this to be true in her own life, as well as in Maya's.
- Identify ways Maya let her father's dreams for her overtake those she held for herself.
- How did Mama know that, by focusing solely on [excelling in soccer] Maya was not being her authentic self? Explain how Mama recognized this behavior pattern in Maya.
- Determine what Daddy would want for Maya – to play soccer or be content in the pursuit of her own dreams and passions? Would he love her any less if she did not play soccer? Explain your answer.

Project: The Many Fortunes of YOU!

- Print the gameboard found on the following page on cardstock.
- Review the fortunes printed on the sections on the board.
- Create a spinner by opening the paper clip to lay flat at the center of the game board. Place one of the curved sides at the center midpoint of the game board.
- To create a spinner, place the sharpened point of pencil at the midpoint of the circle inside the curved side of the paper clip.
- Spin the paperclip. Read the fortune the spinner lands on. Read the fortune the spinner lands on. Consider how the fortune connect with events taking place in your life.
- Write a short essay exploring ways that fortune relates to who you are and what you're going through.



The Many Fortunes of YOU!

