

Teacher Resource Guide

The Best Friend Bracelet

About the Book

At Hurston Middle School, best friendship is a big deal. And Zariah Brown makes the best friendship bracelets in town. Business is booming; Zariah can hardly keep up with orders.

The problem is, Zariah doesn't have a best friend of her own. As the entire seventh grade gears up for their big Pajama Jam weekend, it seems as if everyone else is paired up except her.

So Zariah pours her heart and soul into making the ultimate friendship bracelet, using a set of beads gifted to her by a mysterious woman. But the bracelet turns out to be a tiny bit . . . magical. In fact, anyone who puts it on instantly becomes Zariah's best friend! Now all she has to do is find the perfect best friend and get the bracelet on them! Easy, right?

It turns out finding the ideal friend isn't so simple, and things quickly spin out of control. Will Zariah ever find her true BFF, or is she destined to be alone forever?

About the Author

Nicole D. Collier writes warm-hearted stories about learning to be true to yourself. Her work to date centers smart, creative girls who discover the power of courage, compassion and inner wisdom. She often explores themes of identity, family and friendship, while depicting the many faces of love.

Her debut, *Just Right Jillian* (HarperCollins/Versify, 2022), was nominated for several state book awards and was named a CCBC and Bank Street College Best Book of the Year. Her sophomore project, *The Many Fortunes of Maya* (HarperCollins/Versify, 2023), earned starred reviews from Kirkus and Publishers Weekly, is a Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection, and was selected as a Book All Young Georgians Should Read. *The Best Friend Bracelet*, (HarperCollins, 2024) is her first book with a hint of magic.

Nicole grew up just south of Atlanta, GA, the only child of an accountant and a public school librarian. A graduate of Atlanta Public Schools, she taught fourth grade before becoming an author and personal development coach.

She is a proud Rattler, a graduate of Florida A&M University (FAMU). She also earned an M.S. from Florida State University (FSU), a Ph.D. from the University of Georgia (UGA), and is a National Writing Project Teacher Consultant via the Red Clay Writing Project.

A self-proclaimed ever-victorious woman, Nicole has been known to run, dance, and turn cartwheels on sunny days. The empty-nester currently resides in St. Petersburg, Florida, with her husband, Phillip.

Standards Covered in this Guide

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.7, 4.10
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.10
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 6.7, 6.10

The Best Friend Bracelet

Theme

The theme of a book is the idea woven throughout the story. The theme is not just specific to this story, but it is an idea that can be applied to other texts and to life in general.

One way to think about the theme is that it is an idea plus an opinion. In other words, it is the author's specific opinion about the central idea of the story.

Example: A story might focus on the idea of justice.
Theme: Justice alone is not the theme, instead the theme might look at this big idea:
What are the proper consequences for people who do the wrong thing?

When you consider the themes of The Best Friend Bracelet, it is also important to make connections between this story and other stories, and connections between this text and yourself.

Text-to-Text Connections - Have students brainstorm other books they have read with similar themes. How are they similar? How are they different?

Text-to-Self Connections - Have students think about a time in their lives when they can relate to the characters in the book.

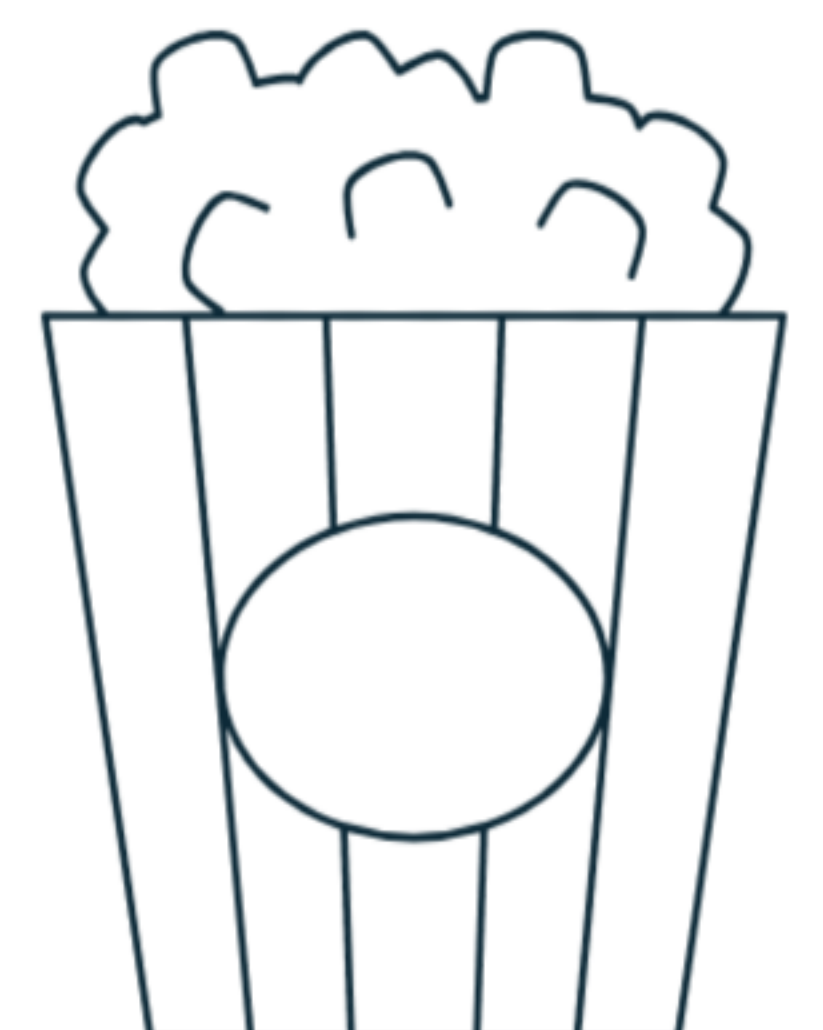
Consider this quote in Chapter 5, "When everyone in school is talking about something you aren't doing, alone starts to feel lonely." Do you have a time in life when you can relate to this feeling?

The Best Friend Bracelet has themes related to friendship, self-empowerment, self-awareness, social media, and creativity. As students discuss possible themes in the book, have students look for evidence in the story to support these themes. Students can use the space in each box to record their text evidence for the three themes that most stand out to them.

Theme:

Theme:

Theme:

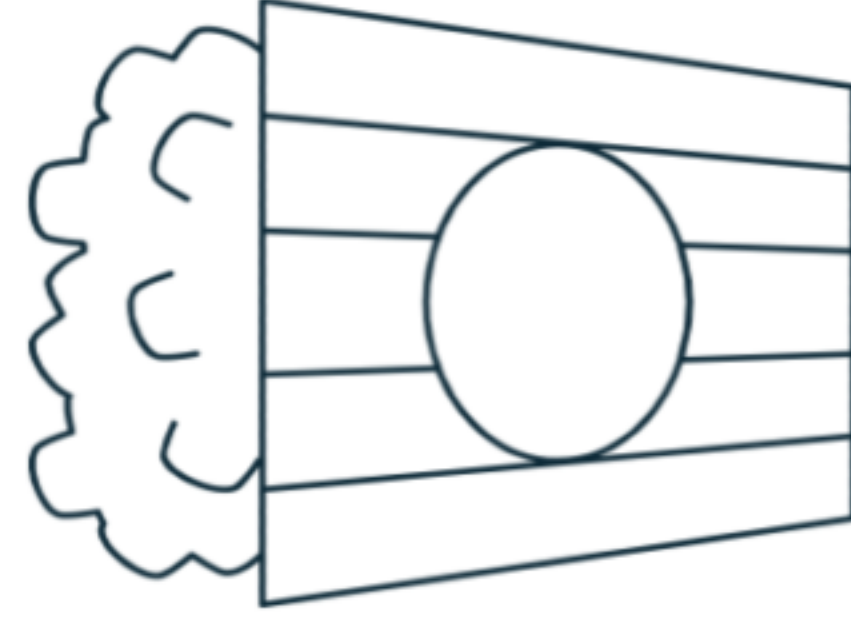


The Best Friend Bracelet

by Nicole D. Collier

The Best Friend Bracelet may contain words that are new for you. Use this list as a bookmark and while you are reading, use context clues to investigate the meanings of these words. Since some of the vocabulary in the book is specific to chick hatching, you may need to look up some of the definitions. On the back of the bookmark, write down other new words you find in the book.

cerulean
corridor
disdain
eclectic
elaborate
foraging
grimace
interrogating
intrigued
phantom
pivot
relentless
talisman
vicious

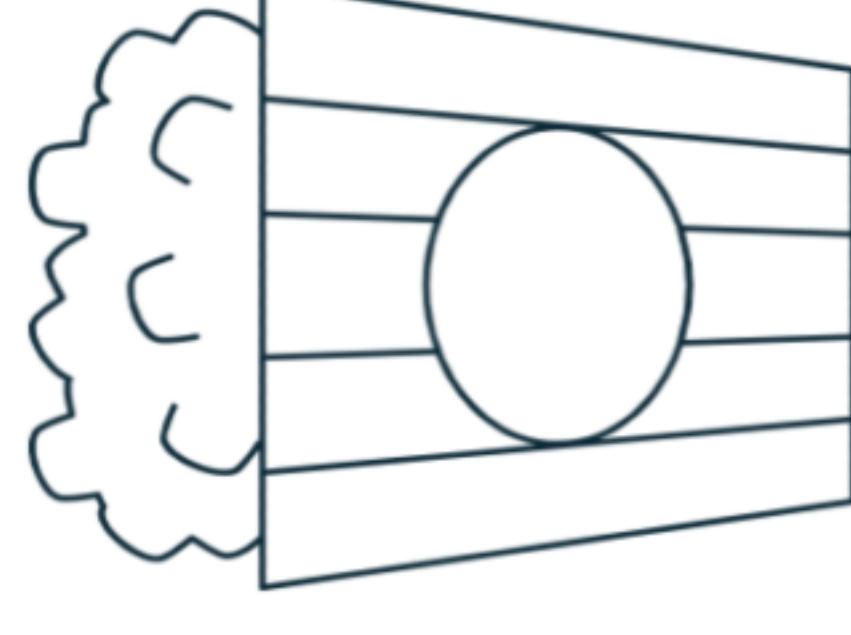


The Best Friend Bracelet

by Nicole D. Collier

The Best Friend Bracelet may contain words that are new for you. Use this list as a bookmark and while you are reading, use context clues to investigate the meanings of these words. Since some of the vocabulary in the book is specific to chick hatching, you may need to look up some of the definitions. On the back of the bookmark, write down other new words you find in the book.

cerulean
corridor
disdain
eclectic
elaborate
foraging
grimace
interrogating
intrigued
phantom
pivot
relentless
talisman
vicious

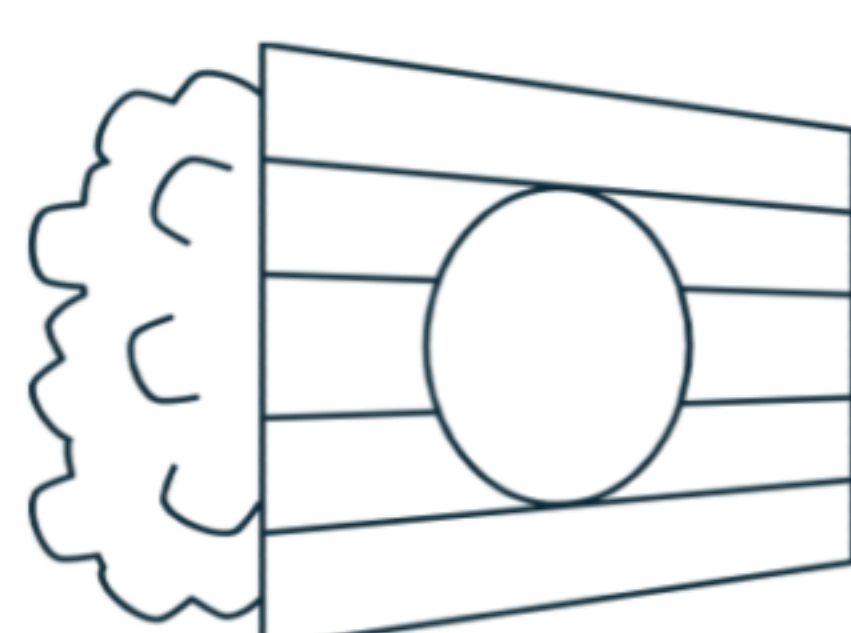


The Best Friend Bracelet

by Nicole D. Collier

The Best Friend Bracelet may contain words that are new for you. Use this list as a bookmark and while you are reading, use context clues to investigate the meanings of these words. Since some of the vocabulary in the book is specific to chick hatching, you may need to look up some of the definitions. On the back of the bookmark, write down other new words you find in the book.

cerulean
corridor
disdain
eclectic
elaborate
foraging
grimace
interrogating
intrigued
phantom
pivot
relentless
talisman
vicious



The Best Friend Bracelet

Reading Response Questions

Note for Educators:

Below you will find a list of reading response questions to use while you are reading **The Best Friend Bracelet**. Additionally, the three questions below are useful to use throughout the story to help readers make inferences about the story, gather evidence to use when making predictions, and to deepen their understanding of the story.

- How do you see Zariah being true to herself?**
- What aha moments have you noticed Zariah having?**
- What advice has Zariah received from other characters?**

A few ideas for incorporating these questions into your reading of *The Best Friend Bracelet*:

- Have students keep a journal and answer questions as they read.
- Utilize Think-Pair-Share and discuss these questions throughout the reading.
- Select a couple of questions for students to write a longer written response. This is an opportunity for students to cite evidence in their writing to support their answers.

“I turn a slow 360 in the hallway to make double, triple sure no one’s looking over my shoulder.” This is the very first sentence in the book. After reading the first sentence, what feelings and thoughts do you have as a reader? (Ch 1)

On the first page of the story Zariah shares that, “Having best friends is a big deal.” Do you agree or disagree with her statement? Why? (Ch1)

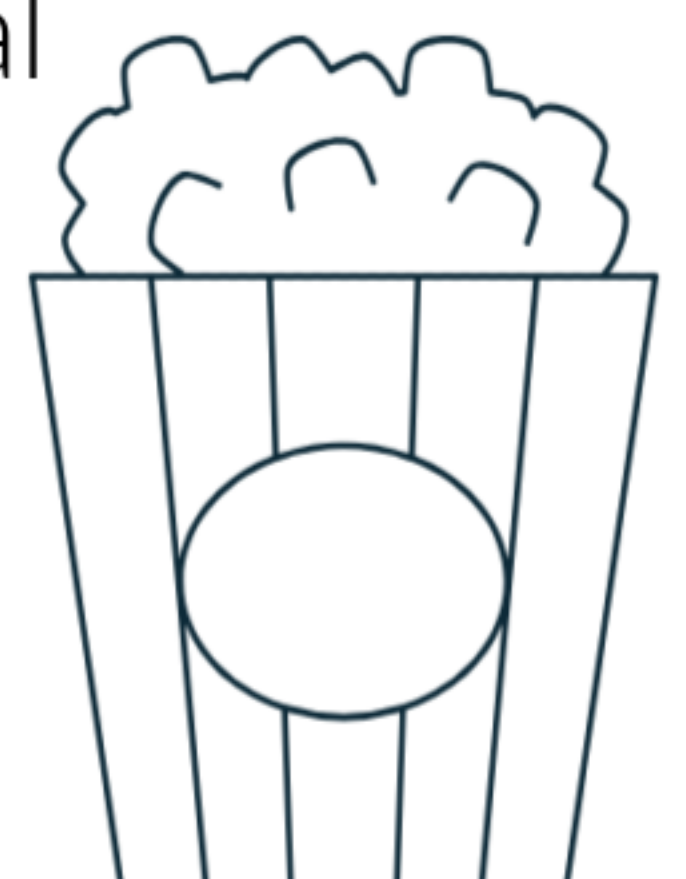
Mr. Clearwater gives Zariah a message before she leaves homeroom, “Likes do not translate to real friends.” What do you think this means? Do you agree or disagree with his message? Why? (Ch 2)

At lunch Trista confronts Zariah and asks for her money back for the bracelet Zariah made. Do you think Zariah should refund the money? Why or why not? (Ch 3)

When Zariah describes what she thinks it means to have a best friend, she says, “Your best friend knows the truth. Your truth.” What do you think it means to have a best friend? (Ch 5)

“I scan the room. On LookBook, I can count on a bunch of likes, comments, and tags. But now that it’s time for one-on-one, there’s nobody.” How do you think social media compares to real life? In what ways is it better? In what ways is it more challenging? (Ch 8)

Why is Zariah not excited about making the bracelet that Kaira is going to order? (Ch 9)



The Best Friend Bracelet

Reading Response Questions

Do you think Zariah should take the order from Kaira and make the bracelet for Naomi?
Why or why not? (Ch 10)

At Flaming Heart, Dr. Arvita tells Zariah, "Desire is a magnifier. Your true heart will flame the fire." What do you think Dr. Arvita means? What lesson do you think Zariah needs to learn from this message? (Ch 11)

If you were giving Zariah advice about whether she should schedule the teaser video to post on October 6th, what would you tell her? (Ch 13)

What unexpected event happens during the fire drill? What do you predict will happen next? (Ch 15)

What seems to happen every time someone puts the new bracelet on? (Ch 17)

Do you think the test Zariah is trying out with Bella and the viral bracelet is a wise decision? Why or why not?
(Ch 19)

Let's play Zariah's game! "What would be your superpower in a zombie apocalypse?" (Ch 22)

When Theo agrees to work with Zariah for real, she does it on one condition...Zariah has to convince Theo's mom they are best friends. Why do you think Theo wants to convince her mom that she is best friends with Zariah? (Ch 24)

As Zariah thinks about who she wants to give the bracelet to, she ponders this question, "What makes an ideal friend, anyway?" Now that you've read more of the story, What do you think makes an ideal friend? (Ch 23)

If you had to use one word to describe Zariah's afternoon at Alaia's house, what would you use? (Ch 28)

Zariah's favorite movie is **The Little Mermaid**. In what ways is Zariah like Ariel? (Ch 29)

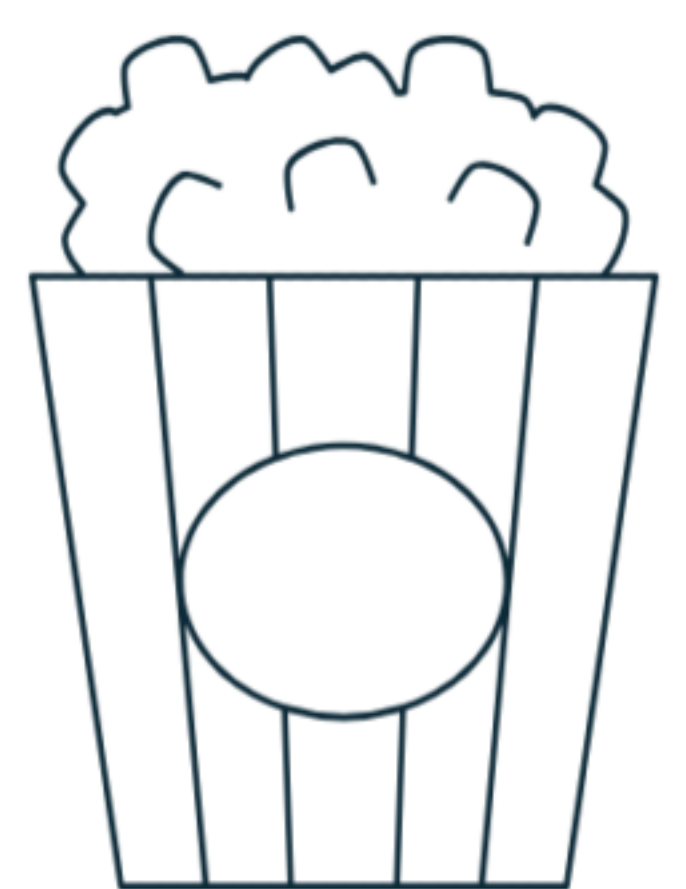
Theo shares with Zariah the story behind her name and her family. What impact do you think her life so far has on Theo's desire not to have any friends? (Ch 33)

Why do you think Theo was willing to share her biggest disappointment with Zariah? How do you think that disappointment affects her friendship with Zariah? (Ch 35)

Why do you think Zariah wants to call Mrs. Davis privately? (Ch 37)

Now that you've read more of the story, do you agree or disagree with Zariah's statement, "Everyone needs friends." Why? (Ch 39)

Carla talked to Zariah about how she was feeling about the Pajama Jam. Do you think that conversation will change Zariah's Pajama Jam plans?
What would you do? (Ch 44)



The Best Friend Bracelet

Ready, Set, Record!

In her Language Arts class, Zariah has to create a podcast episode. Now it's your chance to do the same! You're going to create a podcast about The Best Friend Bracelet. You can think about whether you'd like it to be a book review, an interview, or something else

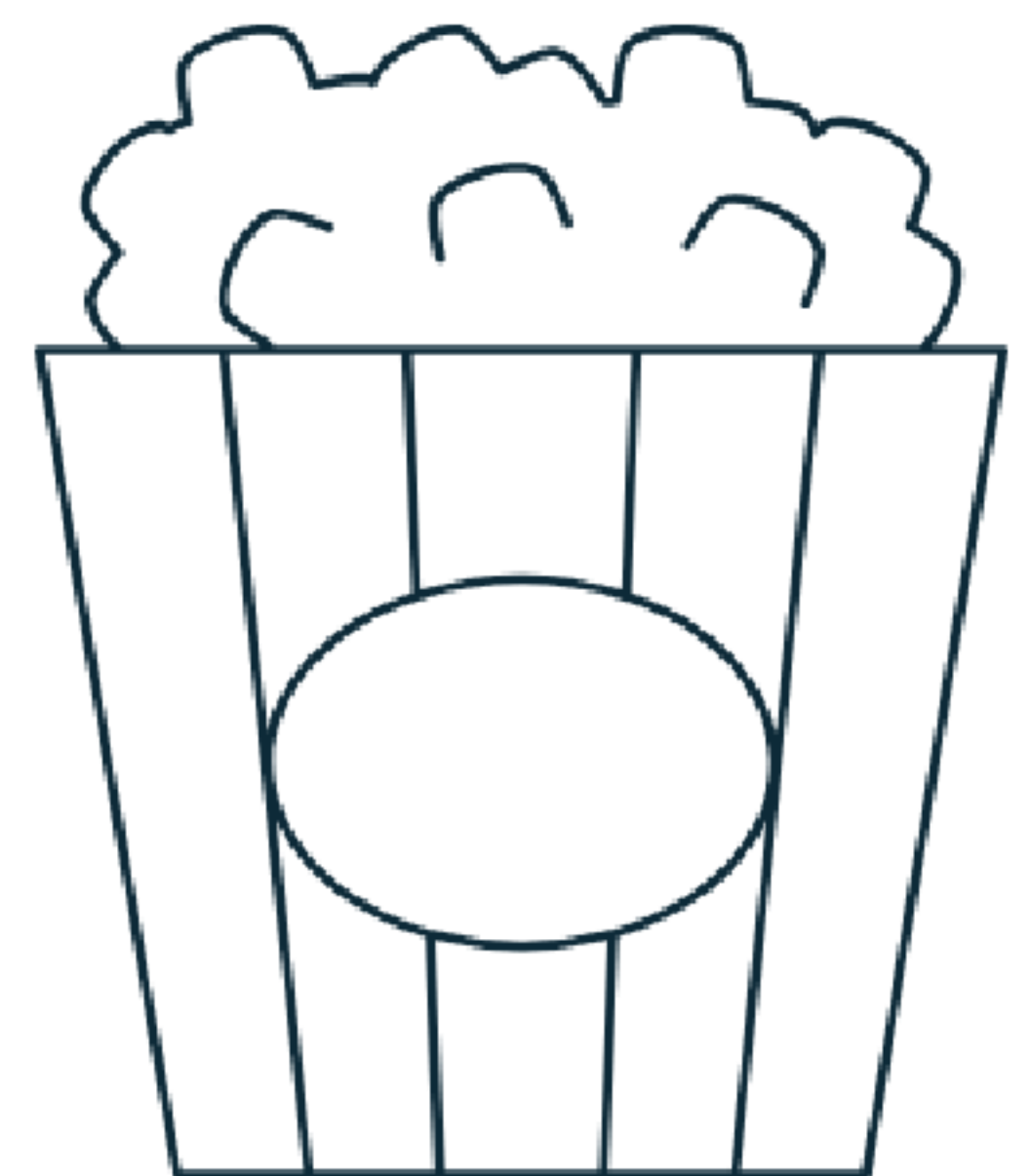


entirely. But, as you are working on your podcast, think about Willow's advice to Zariah..."What do you want your podcast to do?"

Popcorn! Get Your Popcorn!

Throughout the book Zariah experiments with a number of different flavor profiles for her favorite snack...popcorn! Your job is to create a plan to open up a popcorn stand featuring all the flavors Zariah enjoys, plus any you'd like to create! You'll need to create a menu board, advertising, pricing, a sketch of what the stand will look like, etc. Be as creative as you want when designing your popcorn stand!

How would Zariah design this popcorn container?



Cartography

Cartography is the science or practice of drawing maps. There are several scenes in the story that take place in the caf, so it's your turn to be a cartographer. Using what you read in the story, create a map of the caf showing where different groups of kids sit at lunch. If you know the names of where kids sit and anything about them, you can add that as well. Think about the details you read in the story that you can add to the map to bring it to life.

Research!

Social media and phones played a big role in Zariah's story. Now it's time to do some research! Based on your research, pick one of the following questions to answer. Be sure to cite evidence in your response.

**What age should kids get a phone?
What age should kids use social media?
Should kids have phones in schools?**

The Best Friend Bracelet Lit Circles

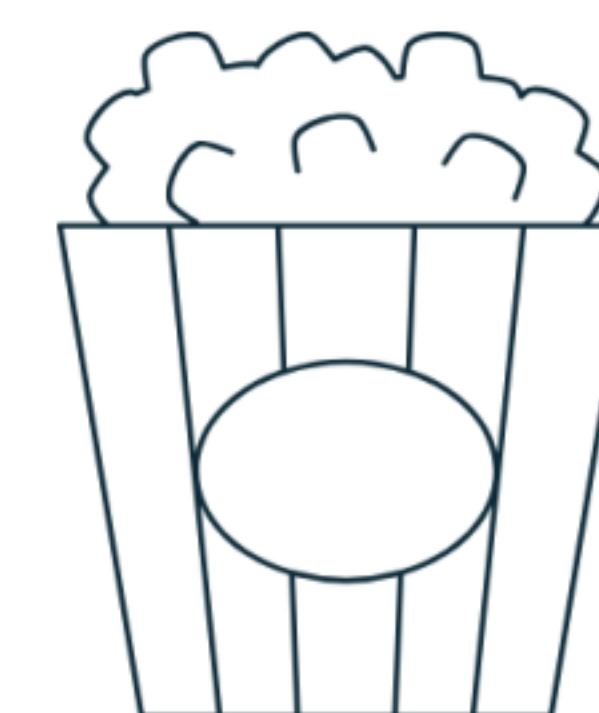
Break up the book according to how many days you have to read and do lit circles. Each student will need a copy of this page for each of the sections. While reading the section, students will use the space below to record the information related to their role. For each section have a different person in the group select one of the roles listed below:

Artist - This person will create a visual representation of the section read.

Literary Observer - This person will look for literary elements in the section to share with the group (similes, metaphors, plot, setting, etc)

Question Master - This person will create questions about the section to ask the group.

Quote Detective - This person will find 3-5 quotes in the section for the group to discuss.



Note: If students are in groups larger than four, additional roles can be created.