

TEACHER'S GUIDE: GRADES 6-12

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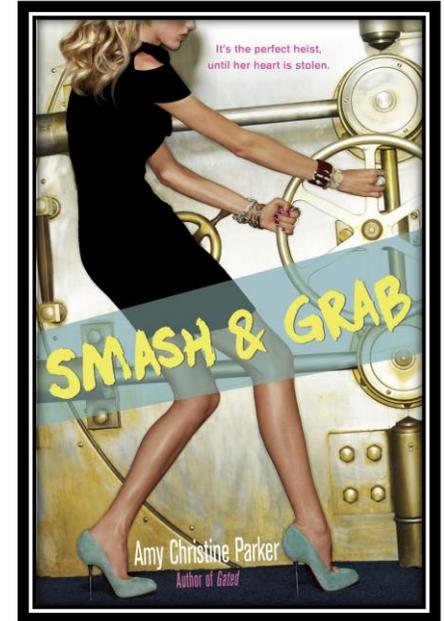
Random House Children's

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SMASH & GRAB

By Amy Christine Parker



SYNOPSIS

Ocean's Eleven meets the star-crossed lovers of *West Side Story*. Grab some popcorn and get ready for an adrenaline-filled heist!

LEXI is a rich girl who loves a good rush. Whether it's motorcycle racing or BASE jumping off a building in downtown Los Angeles, the only times she feels alive are when she and her friends are executing one of their dares. After her father's arrest, Lexi doesn't think twice about going undercover at his bank to steal the evidence that might clear his name. She enlists her hacker brother and her daredevil friends to plan a clever heist.

CHRISTIAN is a boy from the wrong side of the tracks. The local gang has blackmailed him and his friends into robbing banks, and he is desperate for a way out. When the boss promises that one really big job will be the last he ever has to do, Christian jumps at the chance for freedom. In fact, he's just met a girl at the bank who might even prove useful. . . .

Two heists. One score. The only thing standing in their way is each other.

Told in alternating points of view, this caper is full of romance and fast-paced fun. Hand to fans of *Perfect Chemistry*, *The Conspiracy of Us*, and *Heist Society*.

PRAISE FOR

SMASH & GRAB

"Fans of Julia Durango's *The Leveller* and Jennifer Lynn Barnes's *The Fixer* will flock to this novel for its cool *Ocean's 11* references and strong, layered main characters. VERDICT Purchase where spy thrillers fly off the shelves."

—*School Library Journal*

"An exciting novel that will inspire young readers to rise above misfortune. As Christian and Lexi live in the moment, they also discover that finding love can happen any time—even when you're jumping off a building."

—*Teen Reads*

"This is a perfect summer read. A bit of intrigue, a bit of love, and a smidgeon of blockbuster action."

—*125 Pages*

"The characters were well-developed and thought out. This is an action-packed book that will leave you guessing until the very end. Highly recommended."

—*Christina Farley, Bestselling author of the GILDED series*

"I loved the chemistry, the plot, and the friendships, and the West Side Story feel. I would definitely recommend *Smash & Grab!*"

—*Take Me Away to a Great Read*

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.7 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.8

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.8 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.8

Smash & Grab takes place in and around many well-known Los Angeles locations. Have students research the City of Los Angeles in order to complete the following project:

Travel Brochure/Promotional Video/PowerPoint: Have students create a tri-fold travel brochure, promotional video, or PowerPoint presentation about Los Angeles that includes the following information

- 5 Popular Tourist Destinations. Give a short 3-4 sentence description of each as well as admission costs, operating hours, websites, and social media links. Include photos/visuals.
- 5 Iconic LA Restaurants—Give a short 3-4 sentence description of each as well as a recommendation based off of each restaurant's menu of something to try. Include photos/visuals and social media links.
- 5 LA Activities to try—Give a short 3-4 sentence description of the activity, the cost, and when/where it is available as well as social media links. Include photos/visuals.



PRE-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This book is about teens robbing a bank. Do you think teens are capable of pulling off a crime like this? Why or why not?
2. If someone has a good reason to commit a crime, does it make the crime less wrong? Why or why not?
3. Do you think a person's class (how much money they have or their perceived position in society) can affect their decisions or opportunities? How about their race? Why or why not?
4. What is a white collar crime? How is it different from a regular crime?
5. Should white collar crimes have lesser penalties than other crimes? Why or why not?
6. How would it make you feel to discover one or both of your parents committed a crime? Do you think it is possible for a parent to keep something like that secret from their kids?
7. Friendship and trust play very important roles in this book. If you ever had to do something as extreme as robbing a bank, who would ask to be a part of your heist team and why?
8. Is it possible to have a romantic relationship with someone you can't trust? Why or why not?

TERMS TO KNOW BEFORE READING

Define the following with students before reading:

- Mortgage Fraud
- Heist
- Smash & Grab
- Internship
- White Collar Crime
- Dye Pack (in banking security terms)



DUAL POINT OF VIEW PARTNERED WRITING ACTIVITY

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.5 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.5 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.5

SMASH & GRAB is written in alternating points of view—from both Christian and Lexi's perspectives. This method of telling a story comes with a unique set of challenges, but can be perfect for collaboration between two writers because it demands (especially when done in first person) two distinct voices. Using SMASH & GRAB for inspiration, have students partner up to create their own short story either about a heist or some other idea that sparks their imagination. The students will develop the story/plot together then choose a character to write as, then alternate telling the story chapter by chapter. Before writing use the following sites to help prepare students:

Writing from Multiple Points of View:

[Novel Writing Help](#)

[Writers in the Storm](#)

Plotting:

<http://blog.janicehardy.com/2008/02/plotting.html>

Tips:

Students should plot brainstorm together first using [the storyboard method](#)—brainstorm ideas first on Post Its or notecards to settle on general plot arc, brainstorm possible/probably scenes that will need to be included in the story, and finally divide up scenes so each partner has nearly the same number of scenes to write.

Each writer will write one complete scene at a time.

Partners should each write a scene then read each other's work before moving on to the next set to sync up the plot.

Both characters need to have a complete character arc—meaning that each character has a need/desire to fulfill and a force

CHARACTER CREATION WALL/ACTIVITY

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.3B CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3B CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3B

Needed for this activity:

- **Clothing of varying types:** fancy dresses, frayed jeans, athletic wear, costumes borrowed from the drama department or donated by parents—the key is to have a variety of styles.
- **Interesting accessories:** a pocket watch, a pair of funky sun glasses, sparkly heels, a sports helmet, a journal, hats, costume jewelry, etc.
- **Pictures of faces** of varying ages, races, cultural backgrounds.
- **Descriptive Character Words** such as loner, athlete, reporter, adventurer, etc.

Hang or tack the above items to a wall/board in the classroom. Encourage students to contribute items.

Mystery bag: Collect especially surprising or unique items that aren't to be seen ahead of time by students. This could be an old key, a trinket from a quarter machine, a guitar pic, a crumpled copy of poem, a locket, a strange antique picture, etc.—the more unique or unexpected, the better.

Once the board is up and the mystery bag is filled, discuss character development with students. Then have students choose things from the board to create a character. Last, each student will pick an item from the mystery bag without seeing it first. This is their wild card character piece and must be incorporated into their character in some way.

Students will then fill out a [character profile](#) using the items they have to create a unique character and his/her backstory. This character can be the inspiration for the above story writing activity or students can create a week's worth of daily journal entries written from the character's POV.



Assimilation vs. Pluralism

Immigration Debate & Essay

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.4

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1

California and Los Angeles County contain the largest population of Latinos in America. Christian, one of the main characters in *Smash & Grab* and his heist team are part of that population. As third generation Mexican Americans some of them have assimilated into American culture and lost much of their Mexican heritage (Christian doesn't speak Spanish and has a Caucasian father). Discuss with students the following concepts in regards to immigration:

Assimilation: immigrants and minorities conform to already-established established customs and attitudes.

Pluralism: the nation should expect ethnic, religious, and cultural groups to exercise their individuality and help strengthen ever-evolving national customs and attitudes.

(Above definitions taken directly from *Teaching Tolerance*)

Then pose the following question: Should immigrants have to become like us or should our concept of what constitutes who we are be constantly evolving and changing? Should Christian try harder to keep in touch with his heritage?

Use the following [lesson plan from Teaching Tolerance](#) to fill out a polarity map in order to understand the two sides of this issue then have students develop arguments either for or against pluralism.

Students should then take the points they developed during the debate to write an argumentative essay in favor of either assimilation or pluralism using the following guidelines:

Paragraph One: Write at least 4-5 good sentences introducing the topic.

Paragraph Two: Write at least 4-5 good sentences that develop your argument.

Paragraph Three: Write at least 4-5 good sentences that refute the opposing side's argument.

Paragraph Four: Write at least 4-5 good concluding sentences that tie up your argument.

Bonus: This exercise is especially timely given the 2016 Presidential Campaign. Have students discuss where both candidates would stand on this issue and why.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.9A CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9A

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9A

Amy Christine Parker gets most of her ideas from real life current events and news stories. [Read and listen to the true story that inspired SMASH & GRAB](#) about a teenage girl and her brother who are recruited by their father to help him rob banks.

Using a [Venn Diagram](#), have students list how the originally story is alike and different from the book.

MAP OUT SMASH & GRAB

After reading *SMASH & GRAB*, have students create a map of Los Angeles (either by hand or using a program like [Smart Draw](#)) that has each Los Angeles landmark or area mentioned in the story clearly labeled.

