

Mark Goldblatt

TWERP

FINDING THE WORM

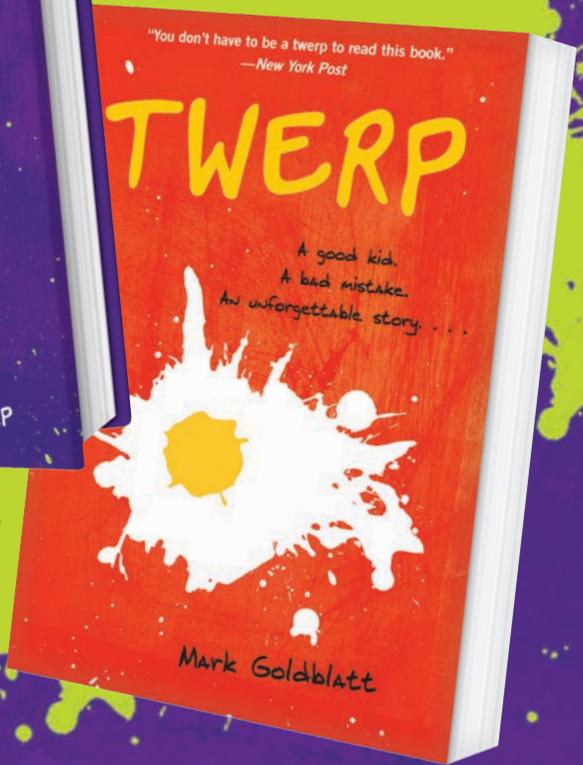
Educators' Guide

INCLUDES
COMMON CORE
STANDARDS
CORRELATIONS

Grades 4-7



HC: 978-0-385-39108-5
GLB: 978-0-385-39109-2
EL: 978-0-385-39110-8
CD: 978-0-553-55244-7



PB: 978-0-375-97145-7
HC: 978-0-375-97142-6
GLB: 978-0-375-97143-3
EL: 978-0-375-97144-0
CD: 978-0-8041-2158-3

ABOUT THE BOOKS

In this story set in Queens, New York, in 1969, sixth grader Julian Twerski, better known as Twerp, is a more gifted student than most of his neighborhood friends, but a big mistake lands him in a weeklong suspension. Mr. Selkirk, his English teacher, thinks that Julian may gain more from keeping a journal about the terrible thing that he and his buddies did to Danley Dimmel than from studying *Julius Caesar*. Ironically, a sudden interest in Shakespeare leads Julian to tell the one story his teacher wants to hear, and gives him the courage to step up and convince his friends to apologize to Danley.

The neighborhood friends are in seventh grade in *Finding the Worm*, and most are preparing for their bar mitzvahs. They still enjoy silly pranks, but their lives become much more serious when Miss Medina, the school guidance counselor, tells them that their friend Quentin has a brain tumor. To make matters worse, Julian is accused of something he didn't do and finds himself with another writing assignment. Julian struggles to write an essay on good citizenship as he deals with questions of fairness and what it means to be tested. Quentin's death teaches Julian and all the neighborhood kids important lessons about love, friendship, and the true qualities of manhood.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the element of conflict in a novel. Ask students to explain the difference between internal and external conflict. Identify the conflicts in *Twerp* and *Finding the Worm*. How are the conflicts resolved? The climax is the turning point in a novel. What are the climaxes in the two novels?

The neighborhood friends include Quentin, Lonnie, Eric, Howie, Shlomo, and Julian. Describe each guy from Julian's point of view. Why does Julian call Quentin "the heart of the block"? (*Finding the Worm*, p. 14) Cite specific scenes or quotes that support Julian's belief. Who is the ringleader of the group? What is the difference between a ringleader and a bully? Discuss whether the incident with Danley Dimmel is an act of bullying.

Loyalty is another theme in the novels. Discuss Julian's loyalty to his friends. How do matters of the heart threaten the gang's loyalty to one another at times? How is this resolved?

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Tell students that friendship is an underlying theme in *Twerp* and *Finding the Worm*. Have students think about the qualities of friendship. Then have them use the word FRIENDSHIP as a spine word for an acrostic poem. Remind them that each line must relate to the spine word. Then have them share their poems in class.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 5–7.4.

Julian says, "Getting a thumbs-up from Lonnie meant more to me than getting an A on an English assignment." (*Twerp*, p. 28) Discuss why Julian allows Lonnie to control his actions. Explain what Julian means when he says, "Lonnie might not be the greatest student, but he's the quickest thinker I know." (*Finding the Worm*, pp. 8–9) Cite evidence from the novel that Julian is correct about Lonnie. The entire gang tries to make Quentin's last days enjoyable. How is the better side of Lonnie revealed through Quentin's illness?

Explain the following metaphor: "Sometimes when you brace yourself for a storm, you get a gentle breeze." (*Twerp*, p. 16) What is the storm that Julian anticipates? Why does he call it a gentle breeze? How does he deal with the outcome of his action?

Contrast Jillian's mom with the other mothers in the novels. Explain why Jillian is so upset when Lonnie says in *Twerp* that he is embarrassed when his mother talks. Discuss why Mrs. Fine is Julian's favorite of his friends' moms.

How does reading *Julius Caesar* give Julian the courage to ask Jillian for a date in *Twerp*? Explain how Jillian betrays Julian. Contrast this betrayal to the way Howie feels when Julian sits with Beverly on the field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Julian is a gifted student. Explain how being gifted is a plus and a minus for Julian among his friends. Discuss how Julian's need to belong causes him to make bad decisions. At the end of *Twerp*, Julian wants to apologize to Danley Dimmel. Does the writing assignment cause him to reach this decision? How does he talk the entire gang into apologizing? Why is it appropriate for Lonnie to do the talking? Explain how apologizing makes Julian feel "good and right and whole." (*Twerp*, p. 274)

Julian is accused of defacing the painting of the Bowne House in *Finding the Worm*. Why don't Principal Salvatore and Miss Medina, the guidance counselor, believe Julian when he says he isn't guilty? How does his reputation contribute to the accusations?

Debate whether this is fair. Principal Salvatore tells Julian that he must write an essay about good citizenship. Explain Julian's reasoning: "If I wrote the essay, it would be like saying I did it." (p. 47) Why does Howie finally confess to messing up the painting?

In *Finding the Worm*, Miss Medina tells the gang that Quentin has a brain tumor. Why does she encourage them to keep a journal about their feelings? Rabbi Salzberg tells Julian about Quentin's prognosis. The rabbi explains his reason: "Because memorizing your haftarah and living your haftarah are two different things." (*Finding the Worm*, p. 342) Discuss how Julian lives his haftarah in Quentin's last days. At what point do the other friends realize that Quentin is going to die?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Mr. Selkirk tells Julian that his journal entry about Quentin's eyebrows sound like a "Jewish Tom Sawyer." Read "Tom Sawyer Whitewashing the Fence" on the following website: pbs.org/marktwain/learnmore/writings_tom.html. Then have students read "Quentin's Eyebrows" (*Twerp*, pp. 28–46). Write an essay that draws a parallel between Tom Sawyer and Julian. Encourage peer editing for clarity, spelling, and grammar.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas. RL. 6-7.9; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.2; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 5-6.5.

Julian's class goes on a field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in *Twerp*. He likes the work of Caravaggio, a painter who has been described as "rebellious and dangerous." Study the works of Caravaggio on the following website: caravaggio-foundation.org. Discuss how his works reflect a rebellious nature. Have students write a two-page paper that Julian might write that explains why he is drawn to the "horror" of the paintings. Write a final paragraph that explains why a horror movie is scarier than "horror" in art.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.2; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-7.9.

Explain to students that an analogy is the relationship between two sets of things. Ask students to explain the following analogy: "The difference between sixth grade and junior high is like the difference between a

Julian is studying for his bar mitzvah in *Finding the Worm*. Why is Julian such a challenge to Rabbi Salzberg? Explain why Julian asks the rabbi if there is a heaven. Why does the rabbi tell Julian that he should become a lawyer? Rabbi Salzberg says, "It's not a test if you can't fail." (*Finding the Worm*, p. 101) What does he mean by this? How does Shlomo's game of pinball exemplify this point?

What is Julian's reaction when he learns that Beverly is the one who painted the picture of the Bowne House? Explain why the Bowne House is so important to Beverly. Lonnie ties Quentin's sneakers high in a tree at the Bowne House. Explain why Julian thinks this is a

fishbowl and an aquarium." (*Finding the Worm*, p. 28). Then have them write an analogy that Julian might use to explain the difference between childhood and manhood.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Draft and Structure RL. 5-7.4; Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 5-7.5.

Rabbi Salzberg tells Julian, "The bar mitzvah does not make a man." (*Finding the Worm*, p. 96). Discuss the moment in the novel when Julian appears to understand manhood. Then have students write a free verse poem that Julian might write, titled "Growing Up." Have students read their poems aloud.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.1; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 5-7.4; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 5-7.4, SL. 5-7.6.

A guy from the New York Yankees brings Quentin an autographed picture of Bobby Murcer. This is Julian's favorite player, not Quentin's. Learn more about the Make-A-Wish Foundation (wish.org/wishes). Allow students to work with a partner and ask them to request a wish on Quentin's behalf. Write a cover letter to attach to the wish request.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.3; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 5-7.4; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-7.7.

tribute to Quentin, but disrespectful to the Quakers. Why does Julian decide to take the sneakers down?

Discuss the gang's reaction when they first see Quentin on the day he comes home from the hospital. How does Beverly give them the courage to greet him? Discuss how Quentin shows his appreciation to Julian for pushing back his bar mitzvah. What does this say about Quentin's character? Debate whether this makes Quentin a man in Julian's eyes.

Explain why Beverly is so anxious to race Julian. Why is he reluctant? Why does he finally agree to a race? Discuss Beverly's reaction when she learns that Julian allowed her to win. How do they resolve the issue?

How does placing Quentin's special words in his sneakers high in the tree outside his apartment help Julian and Beverly come to terms with Quentin's death? Discuss the idea that life sometimes isn't fair. What examples of unfairness does Julian face throughout the novel? Read his final essay to the principal. (pp. 294–295) How has Julian's view on what's fair changed throughout the course of the novel?

Discussion Questions correlate to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 5-7.1, RL. 5-7.2, RL. 5-7.3; Craft & Structure RL. 5-7.4, RL. 5-7.5, RL. 5-7.6; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 5-7.1, SL. 5-7.3; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 5-7.1; Knowledge of Language L. 5-7.3; Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 5-7.5.

Bobby Murcer comes to Quentin's funeral and tells Julian, "Just hold on to what's important." (*Finding the Worm*, p. 327) Divide the class into small groups and ask them to take the role of Julian, Lonnie, Howie, Eric, Shlomo, or Beverly and discuss the important things about Quentin.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 5-7.3; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 5-7.1, SL. 5-7.3; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 5-7.4; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 5-7.1; Knowledge of Language L. 5-7.3.

Have students learn the appropriate conduct when making a shiva call to Quentin's family by reading the following article: myjewishlearning.com/life/Life_Events/Death_and_Mourning/Burial_and_Mourning/Shiva/How_to_Make_a_Shiva_Call.shtml. Then ask for volunteers to role-play Quentin's parents, Quentin's friends and their parents, Danley Dimmel, Principal Salvatore, and Miss Medina. Prepare reminiscences of Quentin to share with his parents.

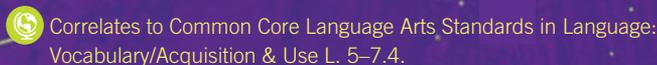
Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-7.7; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 5-7.4, SL. 5-7.6; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 6-7.1; Knowledge of Language L. 5-7.3.

VOCABULARY/USE OF LANGUAGE

The vocabulary in the novels isn't difficult, but students should jot down unfamiliar words and define them by taking clues from the context.

In *Twerp*: *josh* (p. 48), *egotistical* (p. 59), *marinating* (p. 112), *perspective* (p. 120), *humiliating* (p. 125), *philosophical* (p. 156), *persuasive* (p. 163), *patriarchs* (p. 180), *passive* (p. 202), *barrage* (p. 262), and *disintegrated* (p. 265)

In *Finding the Worm*: *distraction* (p. 7), *humongous* (p. 16), *careening* (p. 17), *persevere* (p. 37), *inert* (p. 38), *irrelevant* (p. 42), *contempt* (p. 162), *chauvinist* (p. 204), and *seized* (p. 279)

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Language:
Vocabulary/Acquisition & Use L. 5–7.4.

INTERNET RESOURCES

The Bowne House Historical Society
bownehouse.org

Star of David Memorial Chapels: Jewish funeral and burial customs
jewish-funeral-home.com/Jewish-burial-customs.html

About Religion: What Is a Bar Mitzvah?
Judaism.about.com/od/lifeevents/a/whatisabarmitzvah.htm

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MARK GOLDBLATT is a lot like Julian Twerski, only not as interesting. He's a widely published columnist, a novelist, and a professor at the Fashion Institute of Technology. Visit him online at MarkGoldblattKids.com.

Prepared by Pat Scales,
Children's Literature Consultant, Greenville, SC

Random House Children's Books
School and Library Marketing
1745 Broadway • New York, NY 10019 • 2/15

Art © 2015 by Joanna Szachowska