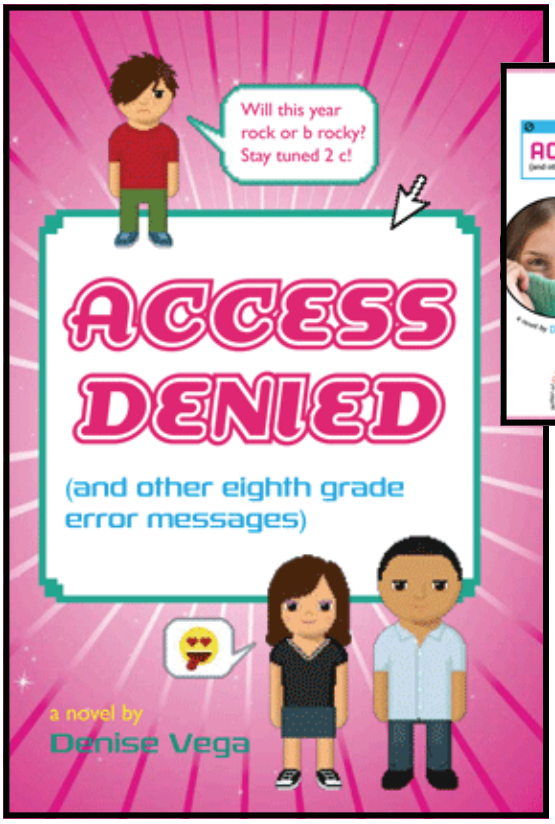
Unit Guide

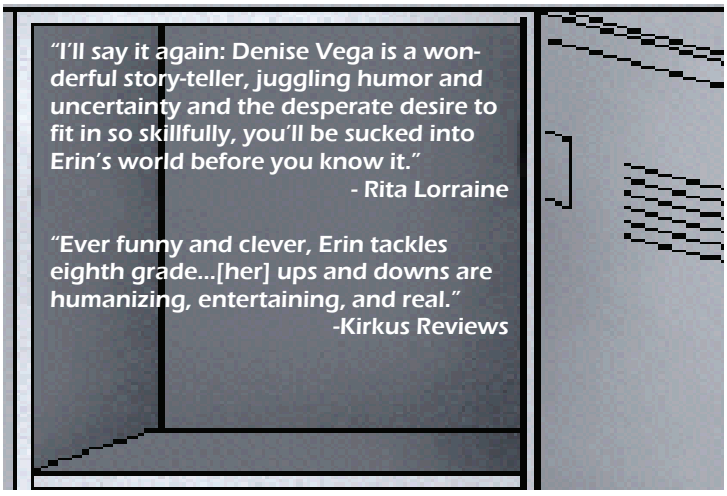
978-0316034500 , Little, Brown Books for Young Readers



ACCESS DENIED

(and other eighth grade error messages)

By Denise Vega



Computer whiz Erin Swift is ready to start eighth grade. The Year of Humiliating Events (aka, seventh grade) is behind her and she's looking forward to another year in I-Club, playing basketball with her best friend (and former crush), Mark Sacks and being on the same track with her BFF, Jilly. But eighth grade comes with a new set of problems and even more questions -- Will she still be the web guru in I-Club? Will she get her period unprepared? Why can't she talk to her mom like she used to? Why is she suddenly checking herself out in the mirror?

When new girl Reede Harper shows up as her locker partner, Erin's life takes another turn. Reede doesn't look like other eighth graders and she doesn't follow the rules either. Even though Erin disapproves of her behavior, she's also a little envious. Why can't she break a few rules sometimes?

Tired of waiting for her parents--especially her mother--to figure out she's not a kid anymore, Erin decides to take matters into her own hands and puts herself in a situation where she not only hurts herself, but the people she loves too.

As Erin navigates the rocky terrain of her first boyfriend, her first breakup, and a personal tragedy, she discovers that growing up means growing out of her own world to embrace the larger world around her—which means embracing pain and joy and possibility.

Note from Denise

This unit guide may be copied for book club and classroom use only. If you would like to use it in another context, please contact the moderator at moderator @denisevega.com.

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Unit Objectives

- Given a list of terms, students will demonstrate understanding of unfamiliar vocabulary by defining and using the terms in a paragraph.
- Given a list of literary terms, definitions and examples, students will demonstrate knowledge of the basic elements of literature by discussing the terms and citing examples from the book.
- Given a discussion of voice and point of view, students will demonstrate understanding by creating a fictionalized blog entry from one character's point of view.
- Given reading and discussion of the book, students will demonstrate comprehension of the story by answering three questions in writing using facts, examples from the book, and/or personal stories to support their answers.
- Given discussion questions and group roles, students will demonstrate the ability to work in a group by establishing roles and reaching a group consensus.
- Given a conflict scenario and group roles, students will demonstrate the ability to apply conflict-resolution by identifying a scenario resolution and reaching a group consensus.
- Given research and group discussion, students will demonstrate knowledge of the current rate —as well as social, economic and legal impact — of teenage drinking/smoking by writing (and/or presenting) their findings using facts and examples.

Note from Denise This unit is designed to provide classroom activities for literary concepts that are universal to most district curriculums. Activities can be modified to fit various age groups and curriculum requirements. It is not intended as a day-to-day lesson plan.

For group activities, groups should assign roles of discussion leader, scribe, and presenter. For groups with more than three people, any of the three roles can be shared among the remaining members. The leader is responsible for keeping the discussion on track and ensuring all students contribute to the discussion. The scribe is responsible for taking notes on the discussion and/or capturing information related to the activity, e.g. summarizes group's answer for discussion questions. The presenter presents a discussion summary or the scribed task to the class.

Activities

Vocabulary

Have students choose 15 terms from this list. Each student identifies the part of speech and defines the 15 words using synonyms. Have the students write one paragraph using 3-5 of the words.

lingo p. 1	technology p. 20	marionette p. 32	bizarre p. 50
humiliating pp. 1,4,28,51	attendance p. 23, 24	amazement p. 38, 107	stuttered p. 53
misguidance p. 3	scowled p. 24, 26, 103	reflective p. 35, 78	convincing p. 54
thwacking p. 3	explanation p. 24	honing p. 37	reprieve p. 56
unsupervised p. 3	custodian p. 24, 32	cosmetic p. 37	fashionista p. 56
technically p. 4	satisfaction p. 24, 26	appliqués p. 37	obsessed p. 54, 64
concentrated p. 4, 37, 85, 98	dreaded p. 24, 56	posterity p. 38	glancing p. 56
embarrassing pp. 4, 51, 56,	introduce p. 24, 57	suspiciously p. 38, 68	niggle p. 57
effective p. 5	accomplish p. 24	contaminated p. 39	engraved p. 57
reverberated p. 5	electronic p. 25	hermetically p. 39	slumped p. 58
maturity p. 5, 26, 29, 78	surrounded p. 25	protective p. 39	psyche p 58
shuffling p. 6, 80	registered p. 26, 81	stance 39	fluttered p. 58, 77
unbearable p. 7	dissing p. 26, 31	feminine p. 39	dominated p. 58
aroma p. 7	appearance p. 26, 56	hygiene p. 39	demonstrate p. 59
wafting p. 7	brilliant p.26	chauffeuring p. 39	relieved p. 59
muttered p. 7, 26, 42, 48	skimming p. 26	lumbering p. 30	peering p. 60
dibs p. 12	worshipping p. 28	swish p. 42	hesitantly p. 60, 103
lurched p. 7	interrupted p. 29, 104	duffel p. 42	awkwardly p. 60, 80
screeched p. 13	twinge p. 30, 36	disposal p. 43	appetite p. 61
cringed p. 14, 86	annoyance p. 30	marveling p. 44, 59	distracted p. 65
sophisticated p. 14, 53, 274	immune p. 30	flatters p. 47	hilarious p. 66
triumphantly p. 15	exception p. 30	equivalent p. 47	clenched p. 66
anticlimactic p. 15	surge p. 30	definitely p. 47	animated p. 68, 88, 127
mischievous p. 18, 58	furrowed p. 31, 101	casually p. 48	clutched p. 68
collided p. 18, 181	authority p. 31	prostrate p. 48	clusters p. 68
encountered p. 18	self-centered p. 31	jolt p. 48	familiar p. 69
dramatically p. 19	unobservant p. 31	superior p. 48	rapped p. 69
erupted p. 19	bystander p. 31	modestly p. 49	functioning p. 69
surveyed p. 19	complicated p. 31	especially p. 49, 107	miscellaneous p. 70
innovator p. 20	barreled p. 31	faltering p. 50	guru p. 70

embedded p. 70	sync p. 97	hunched p. 127	extraordinaire p. 232
capabilities p. 70	swarmed p. 101	launched p. 127	mustering p. 232
influence p. 72, 73, 101	throng p. 101, 232	bickering p. 132	abandoning p.232
competent p. 72	exaggerated p. 102	defiantly p. 132, 225	consequences p. 237
compliment p. 72, 84	jut p. 102	interactive p. 132	mimicked p.238
conspiracy p. 73	strutted p. 102	intersection p. 133	trudged p. 242
scurried p. 78	shimmied p. 103	implied p. 147	fiercely p.242
ultra p. 78	collapsed p. 103	lingered p. 148	flinching p.242
foyer p. 78	narrowed p. 103, 118, 124	undercurrent p. 152	striding p. 246
hustled p. 79	impression p. 105	wistful p. 163	ruefully p. 255, 273, 275
practically p. 79, 112	bolted p. 105	wrangle p. 164	visualization p. 261
veered p. 80	lounging p. 105	paranoid p. 169	vague p. 263
desperate p. 81	unveiling p. 106	incident p. 170	barge p. 264
assumed p. 81	irritated p. 109	deliberate p. 170	stammered p. 265
confident p. 83	reamed p. 112	sauntered p. 180	wavered p . 266
nudging p. 83, 100, 122	chimed p. 112	traitor p. 182	sneer p. 266
disorganized p. 84	expression p. 112	enthralled p. 187	fumbled p. 267
brainstorm p. 84	disbelief p. 112	flustered p. 187	quivery p. 267
intimate p. 84	stubbornness p. 114	cowered p. 199	glinted p. 267
awesome p. 84	random p. 95, 114	exhilarated p. 200	illuminating p. 269
ratty p. 85	logical p. 116	hoarsely p. 204, 272	tentatively p. 273
etiquette p. 86	mimicking p. 118	apprised p. 211	drone p. 275
grimaced p. 87, 236	haunt p. 118	inclined p. 212	exasperated p. 276
momentarily p. 94	solemn p. 118	amateur p. 218	
obviously p. 94	predict p. 119	wafted p. 222	
examined p. 96	rigid p. 122	spewed p. 225	

Defined Terms

Discuss relevant terms prior to each reading section. Have students make note of how these terms relate to the story, e.g. context, setting, theme, plot, character development. After reading assigned the section, revisit the terms as a class and discuss relevance.

Word	Definition	Page #
podcast	A program (audio or video) made available in digital format for automatic download over the Internet.	1, 2
JavaScript	A scripting language developed by Netscape to enable web authors to design interactive sites.	2, 88
MySpace	The name of a social networking site (SNS) that consists of a network of member's profiles, web logs, photos, e-mail, forums, groups, and more.	3
wireless network	Describes any computer network where there is no physical wired connection between sender and receiver, but rather the network is connected by radio waves and/or microwaves to maintain communications.	10
internet	An electronic communications network that connects computer networks and organizational computer facilities around the world.	20
webmaster	A person responsible for the creation or maintenance of a web site especially for a company or organization.	20
streaming video	A technique for transferring data such that it can be processed as a steady and continuous stream. With streaming, the client browser or plug-in can start displaying the data before the entire file has been transmitted.	23
plug-in	Hardware or software module that adds a specific feature or service to a larger system. The idea is that the new component simply "plugs in" to the existing system rather than being a separately installed program.	36
memory card	An electronic storage disk commonly used in consumer electronic devices such as digital cameras, MP3 players, mobile phones, and other small portable devices. Types of memory cards include PCMCIA, CompactFlash, SD Card, MiniSD, xD-Picture Card.	70

Literary Terms

Throughout the unit, introduce one or two literary terms. (Divide up based on reading schedule.) As a class, discuss term definitions and examples. After reading the associated section, discuss again, this time identifying examples from the book. Discuss how these elements affected the story. *See **Extensions** on p.5 for classroom activities.*

NOTE: The examples cited below are not all-inclusive. Teachers/students will likely find more examples. In addition, not all terms can be identified in specific places but are inferred throughout the story.

Term	Description/Types	
Plot	*Exposition* = introductory material that creates the tone, gives the setting, introduces the characters and supplies other facts.	pp. 6, 8, 19, 25, 31, 36, 48, 53, 80, 113, 127, 135, 147
	Conflict = the opposition of persons or forces that gives rise to the dramatic action in the story.	pp. 108, 112, 127, 138, 180, 186, 192, 206, 210, 211, 220, 224
	Crisis/climax- the point of highest dramatic tension or major turning point in the action.	pp. 231, 235
	Resolution = point in the story at which the primary dramatic complication is work out.	pp. 254, 265, 271, 275, 278
Character	*Static* = character does not change throughout the story, the reader knowledge of the character does not grow. *Developing* = character undergoes some kind of change because of the action of the plot.	pp. 27, 33, 44, 82, 93, 108, 114, 139, 237, 246, 254-255, 261- 262, 271, 275, 278
	Flat – embodies one or two qualities, ideas, or traits. They are types rather than individuals. *Round* – characters are more complex and often display inconsistencies and internal conflicts found in most real people.	pp. 35, 54, 85, 87-88, 103-106, 109, 115, 127, 173, 197-198, 220
Setting	The time, place and circumstance in which something occurs or develops; time or place of the action.	pp. 41-42 (the Y) pp. 36, 68, 208 (computer lab) pp. 11, 13-14, 16 , 52, 99, 111-112, 122-123, 131, 169, 242 (bus stop) pp. 93-95, 130-131, 246-247 (school bathroom) pp. 1-5, 37-39, 85-87, 144-145, 147-148, 174, 219 (family kitchen) p. 43 (Mr. F.'s house)
Theme	An implicit or recurrent idea.	inferred
Point Of View	A position or perspective from which something is considered or evaluated.	pp. 16, 91, 123, 255, 268, 275
Tone	Attitudes toward the subject and toward the audience implied in the literary work; style or manner of expression.	pp. 38, 45, 56, 58, 60, 66, 70, 75, 79, 80, 93, 94, 98, 144, 205, 234, 255, 279
Figurative Language	***Metaphor*** - a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two unlike things, without using the word "like" or "as."	
	insides : stone	p.3
	mom : spy	p. 49
	Blake : tour guide	p. 80
	words : needles	p. 119
	voice : steel	p. 138
	phone : raft	p. 235
	truth : kid waving	p 271
	clouds : after thoughts	p. 270

Figurative Language	***Simile*** - makes an explicit comparison between two things by using words such as like, as, than, appears, and seems.	
	scene : music video talking : sitting on push pins swaying bodies : sea Mr. F : science experiment guilt : monster legs : rubber	p. 139 p. 192 p. 225 p. 215 p. 242 p. 253
Irony	The use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning; incongruity between the actual result of a sequence of events and the normal or expected result.	P. 136, 246
Symbol/ Symbolism	Something that is itself and also stands for something else.	*Tootsie Pops:* pp. 113, 121, 135, 250, 267, 272, 277
Motif	Recurrent images, words, objects, phrases or actions that tend to unify the work.	***Tootsie Pops***: pp. 2, 18, 113, 121, 216, 220, 240, 269

Extensions for Literary Terms

Plot

Have students create a comic strip or cartoon squares to depict the plot of the story, using one to three squares for each element (exposition, conflict, crisis/climax, resolution). Encourage students to be creative and have fun! *See **page i** for printout*.

Character

After completion of the book, the class can examine the character traits of two to five of the teen characters in the book. In small groups (three to four), have students brainstorm a list of major characteristics and actions of one of the characters discussed. Each group should have a different character. Each group should also create a list of things that would be interesting to know about the character. Individually, have the student write a short story or series of blog entries describing early adulthood for the character. They can use their list of interesting things to know for story starters.

TEEN CHARACTERS: Erin, Jilly, Mark, Blake, Reede, Jeff, Rosie, Carla, Bus Boy

Point of View/Voice

Have each student create a fictionalized blog entry from one character's point of view. The students select a character and one of the following situations about which to write. Have the students share their blogs with the class and discuss voice and point of view.

CHARACTERS: Erin, Jilly, Mark, Blake, Reede, Rosie, Mrs. Swift, Mr. Foslowski,
VARIATION: Have students pick a character they least identify with or like.

- Your boy/girl friend breaks up with you and you are still into him/her.
- An old crush starts to show interest in you but you don't like him/her anymore.
- Your best friend starts behaving differently, e.g. ditching you, lying to his/her parents
- You catch your child in a serious lie.
- Your parents catch you in a serious lie.

Symbol/Symbolism

As a class identify and discuss various symbols used throughout the story (include motif). Have the students pick one symbol/motif and design a movie poster that represents both the actual symbol as well as what it represents, using both imagery and language. Display completed posters for review by the rest of the class.

Theme

As a class, identify the main theme(s) of the book. Brainstorm commercials that sell an idea rather than a product, e.g. Live Above the Influence, Just Say No, etc. Discuss audience and the purpose of these commercials. In small groups (three to four), have students write a commercial for the theme of the book. If the class identifies more than one theme, have different groups explore different themes. Have each group act out their commercial for the class.
VARIATION: If the technology is available, have students create their own commercial using video and/or Microsoft PowerPoint.

Discussion Questions

Group Discussion

After completing the book, have students discuss three of the following questions in small groups (three to four.) Each group should discuss a different set of questions. Students should support answers with facts, examples from the book, and/or personal stories. Have each group present to the class and solicit group feedback.

- Erin finds that she can't talk to her mom like she used to, but she talks to Mr. F easily. Why do you think that is? What changed in Erin's and her mom's relationship?
- Early in the book, Erin is IM'ing Mark. He confides in her that his mom screens PG-13 movies, too. She is very grateful and tells him thank you but doesn't tell him why because she imagines, "... If I said all that he'd either barf on his keyboard or run screaming from the room." Why does Erin react this way? What does this say about her attitude toward her friendship with Mark?
- Throughout the book Erin explores her feelings about her appearance. She starts wearing make-up and picking out outfits she feels flatters her looks. Why? Do you think this makes her shallow or less genuine? Why or why not?
- Erin becomes enamored with Reede. Even though she disapproves of a lot of her behavior at the same time she envies her. "She's way cool without even trying." Why does Erin feel this way? How does she deal with it?
- After Mr. F's death, Erin is overcome with grief. She shouts at her parents and lashes out at Jilly & Rosie. Why does she do this? How does she feel after she does it? What does she do to cope with her grief and move forward?

Essay

After completing the book, have students choose three of the following questions to answer in writing. Students should respond in full paragraphs. Students should support answers with facts, examples from the book, and/or personal stories.

- When Erin decides to lie to her parents, she's convinced it's ok because she believes it's an important step toward becoming her own person. What did she risk by making this decision? How did she handle the consequences of her decision?
- When Erin gets caught in a lie, she blames both her parents and Reede. Why does she think they are responsible? Why is she so unwilling to see and take responsibility for her actions?
- After Mr. F's death, Erin is overcome with guilt. Why does she feel guilty? How does she handle it?
- When some girls are making fun of Erin and the "underwear incident," Serena stands up for her. Why does Serena do this?
- When Erin finally takes responsibility for her own actions, does her guilt go away? Why or why not? If not, what does she do to deal with her feelings? Does it help? Why or why not?

Problem-Solving

In small groups (three to four people) discuss one of the following. Each group should have a different scenario. Have the group write a short essay describing the problem, summary of the discussion, and the group's solution. As a class, each group will present their essay and solicit group feedback.

- A friend asks you to go somewhere without your parent's permission and you really want to go.

  Discussion points: Would you get your parent's permission first? Why or why not? If they said no, would you lie to your parents so you could go? Why or why not? If your parents said no, what other solutions can you think of besides lying? Under what circumstances, if any, would it be okay to lie to your parents?

- You are at party where most of the people are drinking and alcohol is offered to you.

  Discussion points: Would you drink? Why or why not? Is it perceived as cool to drink? Do you care what people think of you? Why or why not? Do you care that it is against the law? Why or why not? Would you consider the physical/emotional consequences of drinking? Why or why not?

- Your friend asks you to lie for him/her so he/she can break a family rule. (Includes lying to your own parents as well as your friend's parents.)

  Discussion points: Will you lie for your friend? Why or why not? Would you always say no or are there certain scenarios where you would be ok with lying? How does it make you feel that your friend asked you to lie?

- You make a choice that has negative consequences for yourself and others.

  Discussion points: Do you take responsibility for your actions? Why or why not? Do you care that your choice hurt someone else? Why or why not? What does it mean to you to make a responsible decision? How would an adult know that a teen is capable of making a responsible decision?

- Someone you don't like/don't get along with, is getting teased/mistreated.

  Discussion points: Do you intervene? Why or why not? Does your previous relationship effect how you respond to the situation? How would you define social responsibility? Do you think it applies to everyone? Why or why not? Under what circumstances, if any, would it be ok to do nothing?

Interdisciplinary Connections:

The following research projects can be done individually or as a group. Final results can be submitted as a short paper, a podcast, video or Microsoft PowerPoint presentation, and should include facts and examples.

Social Studies

Have students research the current rates of teen smoking and/or drinking. Has the rate increased or decreased in the last 10 years? If yes, why? What is the impact of so many teen smokers/drinkers? (Economic, health, social, legislation) How does the general public view teen smoking/drinking? How do you think most teens view smoking/drinking? How does the media treat teen smoking/drinking? How are they the same? How are they different?

Technology

Have students research how social networking technology (Facebook, MySpace, texting, IM'ing) has changed how teens communicate with each other. How has this technology impacted language (grammar, speech, etc.), interpersonal relationships (communication, perceptions/expectations of responses, e.g. Is it easier to interpret meaning when face-to-face or via a text? Do you expect an immediate response when sending a text? If so, how do you react when you don't get an immediate response?) and personal privacy? Are any of the impacts negative? If so, which ones and why?

Resources

Teens & Smoking

http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4559
http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/facts/default.aspx?id=search_drugGeneral
http://www.smokingstatistics.org/
http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/smoking.htm
http://www.thetruth.com/facts/

Teens & Alcohol

http://www.dontserveteens.gov/dangers.html
http://www.learn-about-alcoholism.com/effects-of-teenage-drinking.html
http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/facts/drugs-alcohol.aspx
http://www.madd.org/about-us/about-us/statistics.aspx

Teens & Grief

http://www.griefworksbc.com/AdolescentGrief.asp
http://www.hospicenet.org/html/teenager.html
http://www.good-grief.org/resources.html

Plot: Comic Strips

Exposition

Conflict

Plot: Comic Strips

Crisis

Climax