

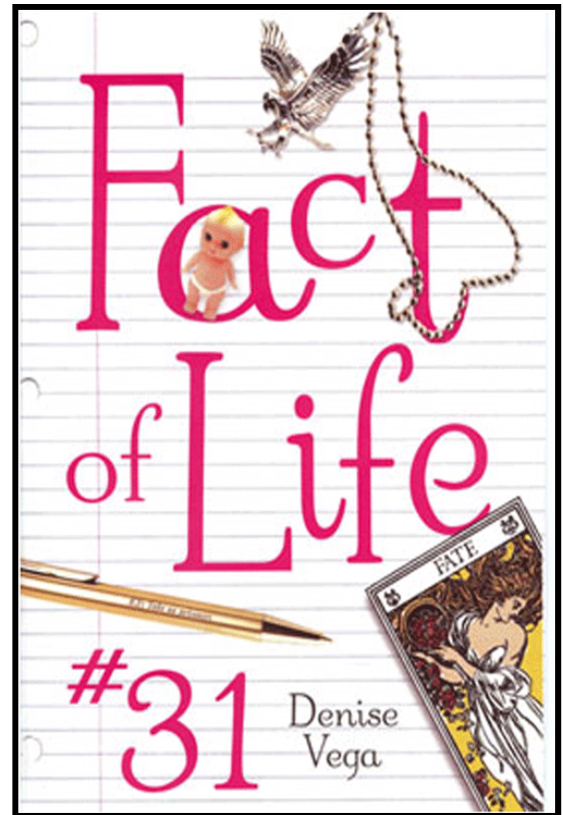
Unit Guide

Fact of Life #31

By Denise Vega

"...athletic, artsy, oddball Kat is an unusual protagonist who doesn't easily fit into type, and many readers will welcome her strong individuality and believable growth."

-Booklist



978-0375843099, Laurel Leaf: Reprint edition

16-year-old Kat Flynn prides herself on going with the flow. She's a little different. (She practices yoga in the school halls to center herself.) But that's okay. She loves her job at Abra's midwifery, where she helps expectant mother's plan their births and labor/delivery playlists. She's an avid runner, training for the Danskin triathlon. And in her spare time she draws and paints, sharing it all with her best friend, Christy Buchanan.

There are only a few things disrupting Kat's flow, her strained relationship with her practically perfect mother, Abra, the perfect Libby Giles, who makes her feel invisible and the fact that her crush, Manny Cruz, has no idea who she is. But all that changes sophomore year, when her crush turns into a connection and she finds herself in the middle of the Perfect Couple's drama.

When Kat and Manny develop a relationship that turns romantic, she is all too happy to keep it to herself, until she realizes Manny's reasons for keeping them a secret is very different from hers. She tries to go with the flow, but Christy keeps pointing out all the reasons why her secret relationship isn't so cool. She ignores the little voice that agrees with Christy, resulting in a huge fight where she says some hurtful things. To make things worse, the perfect Libby comes to Abra for help and bonds with Abra in a way Kat never has. She feels even more alienated from Abra and feels even more vindicated in her strong dislike of Libby.

When she finds an unexpected friend, in Mitch Lowry, Libby's ex boyfriend, and starts to get to know Libby outside of school, Kat has to re-examine some of her assumptions about Mitch, Libby, Abra and herself. When Kat finally finds her voice and stands up to Manny and Abra, she realizes she's a strong person as well as a strong athlete. She takes responsibility for her actions and words, and mends her relationships with Christy, Manny & Abra. By letting go of her assumptions, Kat discovers that Abra and Libby aren't so perfect after all and maybe they were "trying to find [their] way, just like [her]."

Note from Denise Unit plans may be copied for classroom/library use only. If you would like to use them in another context, please contact 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 journal (blog) entry from one 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 his/her 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 class discussion, students will demonstrate knowledge of the pros and cons of a hospital birth and home birth use facts and examples.
-  Given research and class discussion, students will demonstrate knowledge of the historical and social impact of teen pregnancy by writing (and/or sharing) information using facts and examples.
-  Given research and class discussion, students will demonstrate knowledge of the historical and social impact of technology on labor and delivery by writing (and/or sharing) information using facts and examples.

Note from Denise! This unit is designed to provide classroom activities for literary concepts that are universal to most district curriculum. 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 3 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. Have student identify the part of speech and define the words using synonyms. (Have students review page reference(s) to determine appropriate definition or definitions.) Then have the students write one paragraph using 3-5 of the words.

NOTE: Words with multiple references may include a variation of the printed term.

VARIATION: Select 5-10 grade appropriate words to be defined each week throughout unit.

Transcendent p.4	Dialogue p. 25	Throngs p. 53, 92, 193	Violated p. 100
Gables p. 5	Swig p. 25	Ford p. 54	Cued p. 100
Dormer p. 5	Depressing p. 26	Delirium p. 58	Cohesion p. 101
Petrified p. 5	Pathetic p. 26	Grimace p. 60	Quavered p. 102
Cringed p. 7, 271	Proximity p. 27, 133	Tallied p. 62	Averted p. 102
Shimmying p. 8	Transitioning p. 30, 252	Vantage p. 69	Crevice p. 103
Ricochet p. 9	Comatose p. 30	Regurgitate p.	Elusive p. 107
Relish p. 9	Embellished p. 30	Disfigurement p. 76	Peon p. 108
Croon p. 10	Daunting p. 30	Inane p. 77	Flustered p. 108
Rumpled p. 10	Emphasize p. 31	Subclass p.78	Furrowed p. 109, 167
Intoned p. 11	Pronounced p. 31	Aura p. 55	Acutely p. 109
Scurried p. 11, 53	Blasphemous p. 31	Regimen p. 78	Poufs p. 109
Instinctively p. 11	Wallow p. 35, 238	Culinary p. 79	Leeway p. 115
Slinking p. 12, 98	Scowled p. 36, 95, 115, 148	Measly p. 80, 83	Abide p. 121
Tentative p. 13	Authoritative p. 41	Dilemma p. 80	Segued p. 126
Murmuring p. 13	Insightful p. 42	Avowed p. 86	Trounce p. 130
Extraordinaire p. 15	Tome p. 42	Interrogate p. 87	Manipulator p. 131
Mingled p. 17	Appendage p. 42	Flourish p. 87	Elated p. 133
Collided p. 17	Array p. 44	Rendezvous p.90	Flanking p. 133
Barreling p. 17, 261	Hideous p. 44	Traumatized p. 92	Horrendous p. 140
Humiliation p. 17, 29, 30, 125, 245, 268	Enacting p. 45	Drenching p. 93	Appalled p. 140
Prodding p. 17	Endowed p. 46	Acknowledge p. 93	Impromptu p. 140
Disastrous p. 19	Obtuse p. 46	Essence p. 94	Tainted p. 143
Incompetent p.19	Vicinity p. 47	Raved p. 94	Astonishing p. 147
Interlaced p.19	Luscious p. 47	Protesting p. 95	Compelled p. 159
Prowess p. 19	Virtually p. 49	Scowled p. 95, 115, 148	Bristled p. 164
Anonymous p. 22	Engrossed p. 50	Crouched p. 97	Strategically p. 165
Obliterated p. 22	Muttering p. 50	Decipher p. 98	Extracurricular p. 165
Invisibilize p. 22	Trolling p. 52	Systematic p. 99	Peering p. 166
Vintage p. 24	Venturing p. 53	Mangle p. 99	Perspective p. 166



Mischievously p. 169	Billowing p. 201	Dominated p. 252	Hyperventilating pp. 276, 351
Idly p. 176	Flailed p. 203, 207	Twittered p. 252	Rhythmic p. 277
Careening p. 177	Pulsating p. 205	Craning p. 258	Sordid p. 277, 286
Definitive p. 177	Banister p. 206	Ballistic p. 260	Awry p. 277
Exquisite p. 184	Incognita p. 214	Masochism p. 262	Placate p. 297
Morphed p. 190, 343	Oasis p. 216	Sinew pp. 263, 345	Penance p. 301
Asinine p. 190	Spiffed p. 230	Entwined p. 263	Trudging p. 305
Swaggering p. 191	Utter p. 231	Accented p. 264	Jutted p. 310
Constrict p. 191	Exasperation p. 234	Misnomer p. 264	Quota p. 311
Riveted p. 193	Nape p. 237	Adrenaline p. 268	Warily p. 313
Audible p. 194	Assaulted p. 240	Resolve p. 268	Rectify p. 315
Illuminated p. 199	Excruciating p. 250	Skittered p. 270	Foyer p. 325
Erupted p. 199	Nauseous p. 250	Stalked p. 271	Ruefully p. 344
Amplified p. 200	Agonizing p. 251	Huff p. 271	Ratcheted p.344
Sashayed p. 200	Entranced p. 251	Salivating p. 274	

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 section, revisit the terms as a class and discuss relevance.

Contraction	One of usually a series of rhythmic tightening actions of the uterine muscles	p. 3, 10
Cosmic	Characterized by greatness especially in extent, intensity, or comprehensiveness	p. 9
Doula	A woman experienced in childbirth who provides advice, information, emotional support, and physical comfort to a mother before, during, and just after childbirth	p. 6
Fedora	A low soft felt hat with the crown creased lengthwise	p. 24
Midwife	A person who assists women in childbirth	p. 3
Midwifery	A health care profession where providers give prenatal care to expecting mothers, attend the birth of the infant, and provide postpartum care to the mother and her infant	p. 6
Triathlon	An athletic contest that is a long-distance race consisting of three phases (as swimming, bicycling, and running)	p. 5, 21
Trimester	Any of three periods of approximately three months each into which a human pregnancy is divided	p. ?
Umbilical Cord	A cord arising from the navel that connects the fetus with the placenta and contains the two umbilical arteries and the umbilical vein	p. 13
Zen	A Japanese sect of Mahayana Buddhism that aims at enlightenment by direct intuition through meditation	p. 9



Literary Terms

Throughout the unit, introduce one or two literary terms (dividing 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	PAGE NUMBERS
Plot	<i>Exposition</i> – introductory material that creates the tone, gives the setting, introduces the characters and supplies other facts.	pp. 10-12, 15, 19, 20, 24-25, 30, 44, 47, 87
	<i>Conflict</i> – the opposition of persons or forces that gives rise to the dramatic action in the story.	pp. 71-71, 175, 177, 201, 297-298
	<i>Crisis/climax</i> - the point of highest dramatic tension or major turning point in the action.	pp. 221-226, 228-230, 269
	<i>Resolution</i> – point in the story at which the primary dramatic complication is worked out.	pp. 325, 332-227, 361, 365
Character	<i>Static</i> – character does not change throughout the story, the reader knowledge of the character does not grow. <i>Developing</i> – character undergoes some kind of change because of the action of the plot.	pp. 110, 114, 147, 159, 197, 215, 247, 270, 289, 316, 325
	<i>Flat</i> – embodies one or two qualities, ideas, or traits. They are types rather than individuals. <i>Round</i> – characters are more complex and often display inconsistencies and internal conflicts found in most real people.	pp. 12,14, 18, 20, 22, 31, 41, 95-96, 100, 109, 140, 145-146, 172, 179, 201, 217, 239, 330
Setting	The time, place and circumstance in which something occurs or develops; time or place of the action.	pp. 7, 14, 17, 29,-30
Theme	An implicit or recurrent idea.	Inferred throughout
Point Of View	A position or perspective from which something is considered or evaluated.	pp. 20, 64, 141, 289, 321, 365
Tone	Attitudes toward the subject and toward the audience implied in the literary work; style or manner of expression.	Humor/Sarcasm: pp. 18, 21, 50, 76, 57, 61, 75, 82, 92, 95, 102, 117, 213, 242, 248, 267, 272, 291, 322, 329, 342, 351, 353, 356, 363, 373
Figurative Language	Metaphor - a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two unlike things, without using the word “like” or “as”.	
	baby : oversized otter pops p. 5 fields : grassy fingers p. 107	
	Kat : cat p. 12 studying : mental aerobics p. 116	
	umbilical cord : ribbon p. 15 hands : divining rods p. 121	
	arm : scarf p. 19 Abra : hokey throwback p. 127	
	Kat : tree p. 21 car : cocoon p. 142	
	Libby : bush p. 21 queen : Libby p. 168	
	Christy : magnet p. 24 empress : Libby’s mom p. 168	
	BFR : report card p. 26 steam : sheets p. 190	
	Kat & Manny : Social Galaxies p. 92 keg : fire p. 191	
	Mitch : Ice Man p. 202 feelings : emotional triathlon p. 239	



TERM	DESCRIPTION/TYPES	PAGE NUMBERS
Figurative Language	Simile - makes an explicit comparison between two things by using words such as like, as, than, appears, and seems.	
	voice : breath	p. 10 Christy & Glen : single person p. 74
	blankets : hills and valleys	p. 10 Kat : bamboo shoot p. 83
	lump : Kat	p. 12 Eric : magnet p. 82
	umbilical cord : snake	p. 13 Ford Escape : cat p. 99
	Tabor High School : alien territory	p. 17 Manny : running god p. 109
	bowling pins : humans	p. 17 feelings : basketball p. 178
	run : fix	p. 17 Manny with other girls : skewer in my gut p. 179
	guys : clothes	p. 22 beer foam : white lava p. 192
	eyes scanning : kid tapping heads	p. 47 throngs : vines p. 193
	Kat : child when...	p. 57 head : squeezed in vice p. 217
	legs : lead	p. 70 Libby : celebrity p. 256
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. 109
Symbol/ Symbolism	Something that is itself and also stands for something else.	Pen: 28, 66, 140, 83-84, 90-92, 185, 186, 223, 234, 257, 271 Hawk: 111, 183, 185, 186
Motif	Recurrent images, words, objects, phrases or actions that tend to unify the work.	Fact of Life: 42, 64, 69, 89, 96, 108, 113, 130, 136, 139, 149, 159, 164, 186, 207, 223, 233, 297, 304, 317, 365, 371 Fate Goddess: 29, 281, 283, 295, 327, 356, 362, 372 Mural: 40, 42, 94, 147, 181, 255, 289, 290, 332



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 print-out.

Character

After completion of the book, have the class 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 diary/blog entries describing early adulthood for the character. They can use their list of interesting things to know for story starters.






TEEN CHARACTERS: Kat, Christy, Libby, Mitch, Manny, Glen

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: Kat, Christy, Libby, Mitch, Manny, Abra

VARIATION: Have students pick a character they least identify with or like.

-  You start hanging out with someone you've been crushing on for a long time.
-  You're best friend accuses you of changing after going out with your crush.
-  You get in a huge fight with your mom/dad and tell them how you really feel about them.
-  You are publicly embarrassed by a close friend or boy/girl friend.
-  You get in a huge fight with your best friend and think you are in the right.

Symbol/Symbolism

As a class identify and discuss various symbols used throughout the story (including motif). Have the student pick one symbol/motif and design a movie poster or CD/Album cover that represents both the actual symbol as well as what it represents, using both imagery and language. Display completed posters/covers 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.

-  Early in the book Kat struggles with being her own person but also wanting to be recognized, e.g. wondering if Libby Giles knows who she is. She says there is a difference between being anonymous and being invisible. What's the difference? Which one does she think she is? How do you think this influences how she sees Libby? Mitch? Manny?
-  Throughout the book Kat continually compares herself to Abra. Or asks herself, "What would Abra do?" What does this tell you about Kat? What does it tell you about her relationship with Abra? Describe Abra and Kat's relationship.
-  How did Kat's work at the midwifery shape her relationship with Abra? What is the importance of Kat's birth drawings?



- 🕒 What prompts Kat to start writing her “Facts of Life?” How do they influence her journey to become her own person?
- 🕒 Kat has a very close connection to her sister, Lucy. She also has a strong commitment to running. How do these personal accomplishments help her find her way?
- 🕒 Why does Kat start out keeping her relationship with Manny a secret? When and why do you think her feelings change?
- 🕒 False assumptions surface throughout the story. What false assumptions does Kat make about Abra, Mitch, Manny & Libby? What false assumptions did they make about her? Did they discover their assumptions were wrong? If so, how?
- 🕒 How does Libby’s relationship with Abra make Kat feel? How does she handle these feelings? What is the outcome?
- 🕒 In her public life at school, Kat is anonymous but unique – yoga girl. In her private life, especially with Abra, she goes with the flow. When Kat stands up to Manny, she takes an important step toward giving herself a voice. What did she risk by making this decision? How did she handle the consequences?
- 🕒 Kat’s friendship with Christy has always been rock solid and a refuge. Why did Kat attack Christy? Why did it take her so long to apologize?
- 🕒 By the end of the book, Libby and Kat are developing a friendship. What kind of friends do you think they are? What kind of relationship do you think they will have going 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.


- 🕒 High School is full of unspoken social boundaries, some real, many imagined. By answering Mitch’s rhetorical question, “What are you lookin’ at?” Kat crosses one of these boundaries. Do you feel like your school has certain unwritten rules that you are supposed to follow? If so, do you go with the flow or make your own rules?
- 🕒 Despite her best efforts, Kat continually made assumptions about many of the people in her life. Think of a time when you made an incorrect assumption about someone you didn’t know. Did your assumption end up hurting you or the other person? How did you find out your assumption was wrong? If you still make assumptions about people, why do you think you do?
- 🕒 Which parts of the book could you relate to the most? Which parts were the least like your life?
- 🕒 Kat often compares herself to Libby Giles. Is there someone you continually compare yourself, too? Why? How does it make you feel about yourself and the other person?
- 🕒 Throughout the book Kat struggles to define and redefine her relationship with Abra. Why do you think it so hard for teens to talk to their parents and for their parents to hear them (and vice versa)? How do you handle conflict with a parent?
- 🕒 If you found out someone you trusted pretended not to know you, what would you do? How would you feel? Would you be able to give them a second chance like Kat did?
- 🕒 Have you ever “gone with the flow” rather than saying what you really think or feel? Why? How did you feel after?
- 🕒 Everyone has a Manny or “Minnie” Cruz. Did you ever befriend or go out with your impossible crush? If so, did he/she live up to your fantasy? Why did you think it was impossible in the first place?
- 🕒 What was your favorite Fact of Life in the book? Come up with your own fact of life and share it if you want!

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.

- 🕒 Imagine you have a job. You made a harmless but embarrassing mistake at work.
Discussion Points: What would your first reaction be? Would you let it effect whether or not you kept your job? How would you feel around the person/people who caught you making the mistake?
- 🕒 Someone you thought was your friend pretended not to know you or dissed you in public.
Discussion Points: How would you feel? Would you say anything or keep your feelings to yourself? Why or why not? In addition to unspoken social boundaries in high school, there is often a labeling system used to group people *together* or separate them. Identify and define 5-10 labels used in your school and how they influence students and their interactions.
Discussion Points: How is someone deemed “popular” or “unpopular”? Why do most people automatically accept *these* labels? Do you generalize other students into groups? If so, how does this effect how you interact with people?



 You are singled out by a “popular” person in an unexpected way. Using the points following points, discuss how you would respond if you were approached in a friendly manner. Then discuss how you would respond if you were approached in a negative manner, e.g. teased. Are your responses the same or different?

Discussion Points: How would you respond? Would you be judgmental? Suspicious? How do you think other people would perceive your interactions with this person?


 You are singled out by a “unpopular” person in an unexpected way. Using the points following points, discuss how you would respond if you were approached in a friendly manner. Then discuss how you would respond if you were approached in a negative manner, e.g. teased. Are your responses the same or different?

Discussion Points: How would you respond? Would you be judgmental? Suspicious? How do you think other people would perceive your interactions with this person?


Interdisciplinary Connections

Social Studies

The following two 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.

 Have students research the history of hospital births (When did they begin? Why did they start? Were they initially safe? Infant mortality rate then versus now?), the pros/cons of a hospital birth versus a home birth (episiotomy, the use of a fetal heart monitor, moving around during labor v. remaining prone in a hospital bed. etc.) How does the general public view home birth? How does the medical community view home birth? Are these accurate views? Why or why not?

VARIATION: After completing the research, divide the class into two groups. Have the groups debate having a hospital birth versus a home birth.

 Have students research the current rate of teen pregnancy. Has the rate increased or decreased in the last 15 years? If yes, why? What is the impact of so many teen pregnancies? (Economic, educational, social) How does the general public view teen pregnancy? How does the general public view teen sex? How does the media treat teen pregnancy? How does the media treat teen sex? Are they the same?

Technology

Have students research how modern medical technology has changed labor and delivery. How has this technology impacted labor and delivery (safety, cost, women’s perception of labor and delivery, women’s treatment in labor and delivery, women’s experience of labor and delivery)? Are any of the impacts negative? If so, which ones and why?

Resources

Teen Pregnancy

http://www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/14332_1159.asp
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/teenagepregnancy.html>
<http://www.womenshealthchannel.com/teenpregnancy/index.shtml>
<http://www.childrensaidssociety.org/youthdevelopment/carrera?gclid=COjn8MODrZgCFSMgDQodrExRmw>

Midwifery

<http://www.midwiferytoday.com/>
<http://www.acnm.org/>

Parent-Child Relationships

http://www.actforyouth.net/documents/Fact_Sheet_Parent_child_sep_pgs.pdf
<http://life.familyeducation.com/parenting/teen/42917.html>
<http://www.more4kids.info/598/improving-parent-teen-relationships/>
<http://www.depelchin.org/fw/main/Parent-Teen-Relationships-347.html>

Self Esteem

<http://health.discovery.com/centers/teen/mentalhealth/esteem.html>
http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/parenting/self_esteem.shtml



Plot: Comic Strips

Exposition

Conflict

Plot: Comic Strips

Crisis

Climax
