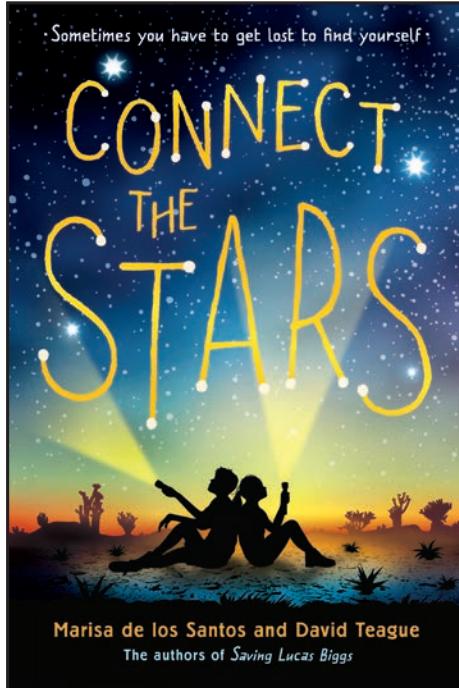


CONNECT THE STARS

By Marisa de los Santos
and David Teague

Discussion Guide



About the Book

Audrey Alcott knows every time someone is lying, so middle school is already hard enough when her best friend betrays her. Now Audrey is at her breaking point. Her parents hope a summer away will change her mind, but Audrey is ready to give up on people entirely.

Aaron Archer is a walking encyclopedia. But while he can remember anything he's ever read or heard, he's not always sure how to put the pieces together. When one of his schemes gets him into trouble at school, Aaron's parents decide to send him someplace where he can't rely on facts alone.

Audrey and Aaron end up at the same wilderness camp—a six-week intensive trek through the desert. When the unthinkable happens, it'll take everything they have to survive. And somewhere along the way, Audrey and Aaron begin to see that sometimes facts don't tell the whole story . . . and sometimes, to find the truth, you have to look beyond the lies.

Discussion Questions

- Describe Audrey at the beginning of the story, including her attitude toward lying. How does that attitude interfere with her relationships? Analyze how her experiences at the wilderness camp change her viewpoint and her interactions with others.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-7.3

- Aaron also grows throughout the story. What is he like at the beginning and how does it limit him? Why doesn't his team win the quiz bowl? Describe the factors that change him in the wilderness. What's he like at the end of the book?
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-7.3

- Talk about the friendship between Audrey and Aaron. How are they alike and how are they different? What shared experiences make them friends? What do they like about each other? *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-7.3*

- Why do you think the authors used two points of view? How different would the novel have been if it was from just Aaron's or Audrey's viewpoint? Discuss the choice of first-person narration versus a single third-person narrator and the advantages of each.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-7.6

- Kate and Louis connect early on. Describe their problems and their strengths. What aspects of their personalities draw them together? How do they help each other?
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-7.3

- What makes the Fearless Four work well together as a team? In their trip to find Daphne, what qualities does each of the four bring to the group that makes it succeed? How do their personalities complement each other?
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-7.3; RL 5-6.5

- Jare turns out to be a more complex character than he first seems. What are your early impressions of him? How does the incident when he breaks his leg show a different side of him? How well does he do in leading the group and teaching them wilderness skills? Discuss whether he should have intervened more in the disputes between campers.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-7.3; RL 5-6.5

- Jare says to all the kids, "You had it rough back home" (p. 277). How did Daphne and Randolph have it rough? How do they treat their fellow campers? Why do you think they act that way? Describe their relationship with each other.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-7.3

Discussion Questions continued on the next page . . .

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Discussion Questions (continued)

9. Aaron's teacher asks him to analyze the poem "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams (p. 52). Why is understanding poetry hard for Aaron? Reread the poem and talk about the significance it takes on for the Fearless Four. Find places in the text where they talk about what it means. Discuss whether you agree with them and why.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-7.3, 4

10. What does the desert setting add to the story? How much would it change the story to set it in a different place? Describe some of the benefits of being in the desert and some of the drawbacks. Analyze several descriptive passages of its beauty, looking carefully at the words and images used.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-7.1, 4

11. In talking to Kate about her grandmother, Aaron says that, even knowing how insignificant humans are in the scope of time, "You love her *anyway*. Which is maybe the whole point" (p. 193). What does he mean? Find places later in the story when the characters think or talk about the "anyway" and discuss what it means to them.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-7.2, 4

12. Discuss why the book is titled *Connect the Stars*. Find places in the text about stars and connections, including "connecting the dots." What kind of connections do Audrey and Aaron make in the course of the story? What is each of them searching for?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-7.2

Extension Activities

1. **Fearsome Four Trip Texts.** The Fearsome Four plan to meet later in the summer. Have students use the format of text messages to create an exchange among the four of them in which they plan their visit and rehash their experiences at camp. *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-7.3; W.4-7.3*

2. **Read All about It.** The authors make many references to writers, books, and poems, including in the book's dedication. Have students go through the book to find examples and compile a list as a class. Split students into small groups and have each group research one of the references. They should report back to the class about it, including where it's mentioned in the text and, if possible, how it enriches the story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4-7.2; W.4-7.7

3. **Take the Challenge!** Audrey is excited by the El Viaje a la Confianza brochure (p. 48). Have students design a brochure for a similar camp but in a national park setting. They should research national parks and choose one. They will then decide where in the park the teens should hike, what skills they will need, and what possible dangers exist. Have the students write and illustrate the brochures and share them with the class. (You can find a brochure template here: www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/printing-press-30036.html.) *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-7.2, 7*

4. **Diagram the Dangers.** The campers face an array of dangers as they go along. Have students create a timeline that shows the sequence of dangers. It should list the danger, who was involved, and the chapter(s) in which it occurred. Have students then compare what they included and discuss the differences among their timelines. *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5-6.5*

About the Authors

Marisa de los Santos is the *New York Times* bestselling author of many novels for adults, including *Love Walked In*, *Belong to Me*, and, most recently, *The Precious One*. **David Teague** is the author of the picture books *Franklin's Big Dreams* and *The Red Hat*, as well as the middle-grade novel *Henry Cicada's Extraordinary Elktonium Escapade*. Together, they are the authors of *Saving Lucas Biggs* and *Connect the Stars*. Married for over twenty years, Marisa and David live with their two children, Charles and Annabel, and their Yorkies, Finn and Huxley, in Wilmington, Delaware.

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Discussion guide written by Kathleen Odean, librarian, author, and Common Core workshop presenter.

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