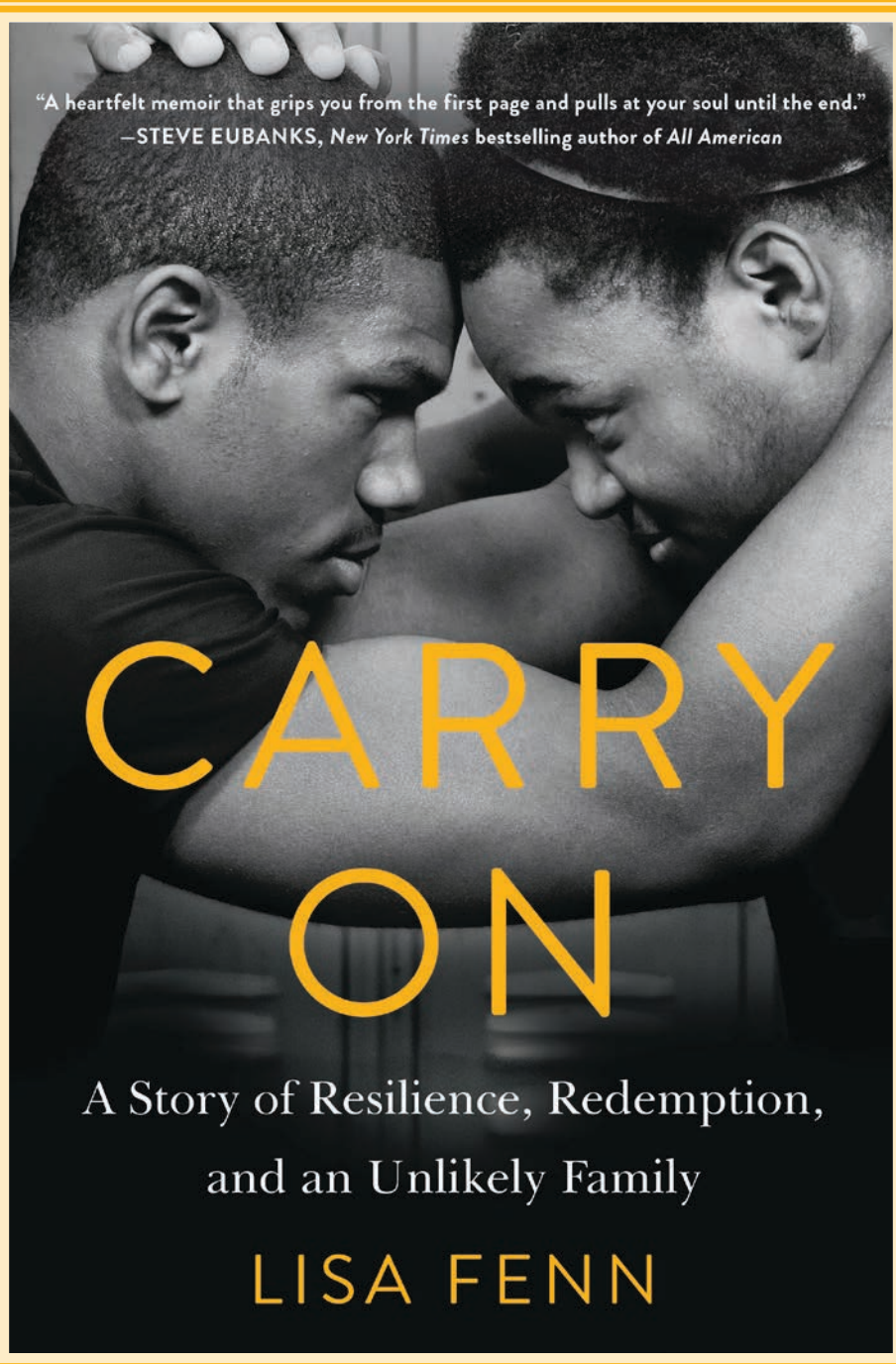

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO



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About the Book

In 2009, award-winning ESPN producer Lisa Fenn returned to her hometown of Cleveland to pursue a feature story about two wrestlers at the worst of Cleveland's inner city public high schools: Dartanyon Crockett, the team's best wrestler, was homeless and legally blind as a result of Leber's disease; Leroy Sutton, a strong wrestler himself, had lost both his legs when he was run over by a train at the age of 11.

Brought together through wrestling, the two young men developed a brother-like bond as they worked to overcome their disabilities. It was the singular nature of their friendship that stood out to Fenn as she developed the piece for ESPN—and over the course of the next five months, she formed such a profound connection with both boys that she would dedicate the next five years of her life (and beyond) to ensuring their success and well-being.

But the following years weren't easy as both Dartanyon and Leroy faced the challenges of the next stages in their lives. In this personal and emotionally affecting memoir, Lisa recaptures the experience of learning about, meeting, and ultimately creating an extended family with Dartanyon and Leroy, and tells a heartfelt story about the transformative power of love and faith.

In using Lisa Fenn's *Carry On* in your classroom, students will consider larger questions like, What does it take to learn someone else's story? How can you best make a connection with people of different backgrounds and circumstances? What kind of impact could these connections have?

About the Author

Lisa Fenn is an Edward R. Murrow and six-time Emmy Award-winning feature producer, who reported on major league sports for thirteen years with ESPN. A graduate of Cornell University, she continues to produce sports stories and write about the redemptive power of love. Lisa resides in Massachusetts with her husband and two young children.

Discussion Questions

CHAPTER 1: PRAYING FOR A CHAMPION

- What are the differences between St. Edward High School and Lincoln-West High School?
- What kinds of challenges, circumstances, and obstacles do Lincoln-West students need to overcome?
- How did Torry Robinson find Dartanyon?
- Why is Dartanyon's duffle bag significant? What does it signify to Coach McKinney?
- How does wrestling help the student-athletes of Lincoln-West deal with the circumstances in which they live?

CHAPTER 2: THE NEW KID

- Describe the accident that led to the loss of Leroy's legs. What are some of the circumstances that may have contributed to the accident?
- What was Leroy's demeanor during and in the immediate aftermath of the accident? Were you surprised by his reaction?
- How did the friendship between Leroy and Dartanyon begin?
- Both Coach Robinson and Leroy experience suicidal ideation. With what kinds of pain and hardship are they dealing?

CHAPTER 3: ROAD TO ESPN

- For what two jobs did Lisa fill out applications? Why those two?
- How did Lisa's job interview with ESPN go? What were the variety of ways in which she stood out in it?
- Did faith transform Lisa?
- What qualities does Lisa possess that allowed her to fit in at ESPN?

CHAPTER 4: THE CALL

- How does Lisa learn about Leroy and Dartanyon?
- How does Coach Robinson approach Lisa? What does he say to her that is so striking?
- Why does Dartanyon only remember his losses? What does that say about how he views his life thus far?
- What is the relationship like between Dartanyon's parents?
- Why is Lisa's father uncomfortable as she begins to build a relationship with Leroy and Dartanyon? How does Lisa feel about his concerns?

CHAPTER 5: PLAYING FOR TRUST

- Lisa grew up "eight miles and half a world away" from Lincoln-West High School. How was her experience growing up different from that of many students at Lincoln-West? What is her father's opinion of this divide? How does Lisa try to bridge it?
- What kind of experience does Lisa have while at Dartanyon's and Leroy's school?
- Why does Dartanyon resist the accommodations he is offered at school?
- Why does Leroy resist talking and interacting meaningfully with Lisa? Why does he hold himself in reserve?

- Describe Big Ma: what is she like? What kind of household does she run?
- Do you think the attention from the *Akron Beacon Journal* Leroy received in the aftermath of his accident was beneficial to him?
- How does Leroy's relationship with his mother evolve over the course of his accident and recovery?

CHAPTER 6: DESTINED FOR GREATNESS

- In what ways do Leroy's and Dartanyon's silences mirror each other? How are they similar in what they don't communicate to others?
- Why does Arthur teach Dartanyon self-defense?
- How does Leroy and Dartanyon's friendship improve morale at school? How do other people feed off their energy?
- Why do you think Leroy and Dartanyon make such good friends?

CHAPTER 7: IMPASSE

- In what ways has Lisa's naiveté about the realities of Leroy and Dartanyon's poverty been shown so far in the text?
- How is Lisa's story evolving as she tries to uncover the story of Leroy and Dartanyon?
- For as much as Lisa is a person of faith, Leroy talks about how he lost most of his in the aftermath of his accident. Why does Leroy say he loses his faith?

CHAPTER 8: ELEPHANT IN THE HOOD

- Dartanyon and Leroy are often purposefully vague in their answers to Lisa's questions. Do you think the boys are shielding Lisa from things she will never be able to understand?
- During the weightlifting tournament, Dartanyon's belongings were stolen and Fenn goes about helping him replace them. In doing so, she goes entirely against the training journalists receive to maintain a distance from their subject. Does her violation of those professional ethics bother you, as a reader? Do you empathize with her actions? What do you think you would have done in her shoes?
- How does Lisa start to overcome the racial and economic differences that set Leroy and Dartanyon's lives apart from the life she had growing up?

CHAPTER 9: WHAT WOULD YOU DO FOR A FRIEND?

- When you learn that Dartanyon only has one photo of himself during his own childhood, does that change your opinion about his childhood? Why or why not?
- What is the significance of Dartanyon walking beside Leroy to get his diploma?
- When it aired on ESPN, what kinds of responses did Lisa's *Carry On* piece get?
- What are your impressions of Lisa's father at this point?

CHAPTER 10: NEW LIVES

- Speaking of the donations Leroy and Dartanyon have received to help improve their futures, Lisa says, “You have been given the gift of space and time in which to work hard so that you can create stable, productive lives for yourselves.” Why does Lisa say this kind of gift is more significant than money? Do you agree with her assessment?
- When Dartanyon fills out his emergency contact information, he puts Lisa’s name down. How does he describe her relationship to him?
- Why does Dartanyon begin to like judo? What abilities does he have that help him take to the sport so quickly?

CHAPTER 11: THE GENTLE WAY

- What complications arise once Dartanyon starts college? How is Arthur involved?
- Is Dartanyon a good fit for judo? Why or why not?
- What does Lisa learn about parenthood and families while she’s involved in the lives of Leroy and Dartanyon?

CHAPTER 12: TRANSITIONS

- How does Leroy settle into college? Is his experience different than Dartanyon’s?
- Why does Dartanyon miss his eye test? How does this moment highlight complications stemming from poverty and need that most people don’t think about?
- What is Dartanyon’s call-up to the Paralympic team like?
- While their lives are transitioning in different ways, both Leroy and Dartanyon have missteps. What are the similarities and differences between how each of them adapts?
- In this chapter we learn the truth behind Dartanyon’s academic struggles: he is actually far behind his peers in terms of learning level. How does his particular case highlight a larger problem within the Cleveland public school system?

CHAPTER 13: THE DARK AGES

- In what ways are both Dartanyon and Leroy struggling in school?
- How does Lisa try to help them into financial responsibility and proficiency?
- In this chapter, Lisa wonders if she expected too much of the boys as she tried to help them into better futures. Do you think she did? Why or why not?
- How does Lisa account for poverty finding Leroy and Dartanyon?
- What is Dartanyon’s process for qualifying for the London 2012 Paralympic games?

CHAPTER 14: LONDON

- Why wasn’t Arthur at the Paralympic opening ceremony?
- How did Leroy help Dartanyon in London? In what ways were their roles reversed from when they were in high school?
- What is Dartanyon’s bronze medal match like? How does he win?
- After his bronze medal win, Dartanyon says he will remember every detail, which contradicts his earlier assertion that he will not remember wins but only remember losses. What sparks the change?

CHAPTER 15: THE REAL EDUCATION

- How does Leroy finally get help for his PTSD? How does he feel about finally being diagnosed with it?
- On page 283, Leory says, “I think I would much rather change this world than walk on it.” How would you describe Leroy’s attitude to his disability? In what ways has it evolved from the beginning of *Carry On*?
- What is Leroy’s father like? Is Lisa able to see past her prejudices while she talks with him?
- What is Leroy’s meeting like with his father? Does it go as he expected it to?
- To what does the chapter title refer? Why is it significant?

CHAPTER 16: UNLIKELY FAMILY

- Why did Lisa’s father’s views on race evolve as the text went on? Do you think this learning experience was difficult for him?
- Why does it ultimately not matter how and why Leroy and Dartanyon became friends?

Writing Prompts

- In what ways is *Carry On* a story of faith?
- In what ways is poverty more than an economic/income problem? How does *Carry On* show that there’s more to poverty than just money?
- How do sports and participation in sports help Dartanyon and Leroy, both in terms of achievement and personal growth?
- How does *Carry On* define families? OR: In what ways does the definition of family evolve in *Carry On*?
- The eponymous ESPN special is available to watch online. After watching it, what is it like seeing Dartanyon’s and Leroy’s story as opposed to reading it? Do different things catch your attention?

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