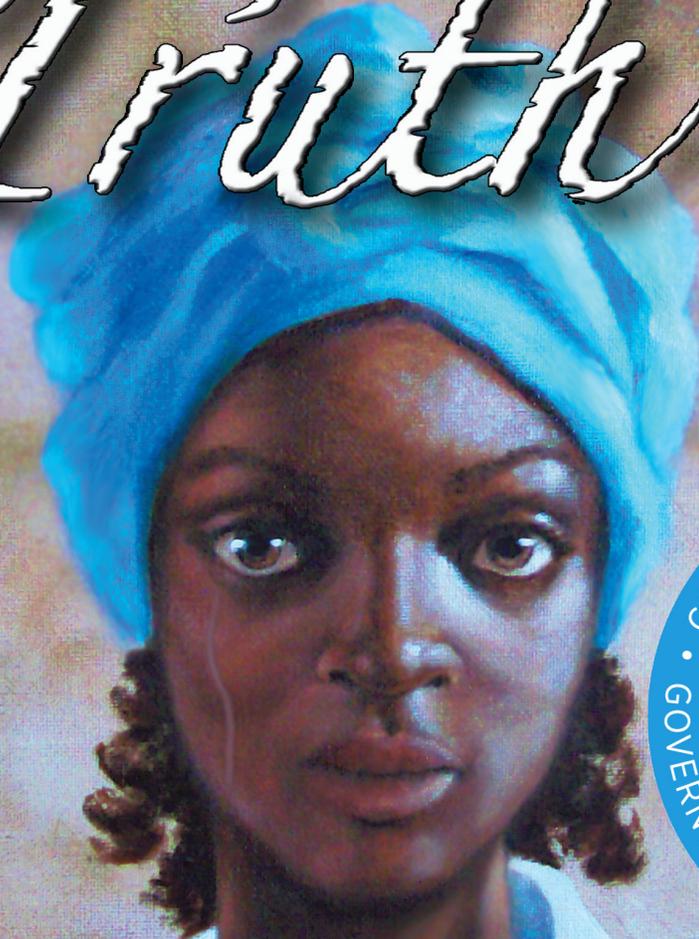


# STUDY GUIDE

# The Gospel of Truth



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## Introduction and Overview

This study guide can be used as a traditional novel study as you journey through the book or you can pick and choose specific activities based on your group's needs and interests. Activities can also be identified by the following icons:



Character



Historical



Point of View  
(POV)



Reflect



Creative  
Writing



Poetic  
Devices



Theme



Wisdom

**SECTION I:** Suggested questions and activities, as they relate to the narrative, are listed in the order they appear in the novel.

**SECTION II:** Activities are grouped by topic and include blackline masters.

**SECTION III:** Additional Resources



Eastman Johnson, *A Ride for Liberty – The Fugitive Slaves*, c. 1862 (Brooklyn Museum)

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## SECTION I: Questions and Activities (by poem)

In this section, each poem and page number is listed along with its related questions and activities. Because there are no chapters in *The Gospel Truth*, poems are grouped to suggest possible breaks. Icons appear before their topics and keywords are in italicised capitals to help navigation and focus.



### **Yellow Bird**, p. 8

POETIC DEVICES: Why do you think the author begins with a poem about Rufus?



THEME: The theme of the novel is established right from the start. What is it?

*Hope Is The Thing With Feathers - Poem by Emily Dickinson (excerpt)*  
*'Hope' is the thing with feathers—*  
*That perches in the soul—*  
*And sings the tune without the words—*  
*And never stops—at all—*



### **Two Truths**, p. 10

POV: Compare how Phoebe and Tessa relate to the bird.



THEME: Explain the two *TRUTHS* that Phoebe realises.

THEME: *Safest place to be is in a cage — Acting dead...that hope that is.* What does Phoebe think about *HOPE* and *FREEDOM* at this point?



### **The Way of Things**, p. 12

HISTORICAL: What does this poem tell us about the way things are for these characters? What does it mean to *die inside*?



CHARACTER: Why does Master Duncan make everyone watch when Will gets punished for running?



REFLECT: *Big Will bleeding / but we all be scarred.* In what way are bystanders *scarred*? Have you ever been a bystander to a fight or a bullying situation? How did it feel? What did you do or what could you have done?



### **Training** (Master), p. 15

CHARACTER: Why doesn't Master Duncan sell Will?



POV: Compare how Phoebe and Master see Will.

**Hush, Now**, p. 17

CHARACTER: What do we learn about Phoebe in this poem?

**Shad and Bea**, p. 19

POETIC DEVICES: How is Bea compared to bees/hornets? What do those comparisons tell us about her?



CHARACTER: We meet Shad and Bea. What do their actions and words tell us about their personalities?



POETIC DEVICES: Discuss these three symbols and what they imply.

*My face feel like I stuck it over the steam / but the kettle ain't even whistling yet.  
Shad be that stick if I ever saw one— / all long and lean, / ready to stir things up.  
Bea a real hornet's nest.*

**What I Can Do** (Shad), p. 22

CHARACTER: What is he proud of? How does he feel about Phoebe? What is he worried about?

**Miss Tessa's Reading Lesson**, p. 24

What are Phoebe's responsibilities at the plantation?

CHARACTER: What does Phoebe tell us about Tessa?

**Lesson's Learned**, p. 26

CHARACTER: What is Phoebe's secret?

**If**, p. 27THEME: What is Phoebe's *HOPE*?**Taste of Home**, p. 28*Yellowbird turn her black bead eye from me — / from what she fear — / to what she want*

WISDOM: How did Phoebe figure out what Yellowbird needed?



REFLECT: What motivates and inspires you? What would you say is a better form of motivation — fear or desire? Why?



**Curing Barn**, p. 30

How does watching Phoebe and Yellowbird inspire Shad?

POV: Both Shad and Will see slavery differently. Describe each one's perspective.



**Healing**, p. 33

Why does Phoebe make Yellowbird work for her food?

WISDOM: Time heals.

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**Collecting Words**, p. 35

CHARACTER: Why does collecting and knowing these words matter so much to Phoebe?



THEME: *'Cause a slave can't have words. / Or hope. / But I do. / I got both, / buried deep in the hollow part of me.*



REFLECT: Do you remember learning how to read? How did it feel?



CREATIVE WRITING: Word Jar — Start a word jar using the blackline master (page 32) for each student, a large bulletin board with a jar drawn on it, or an actual jar for the class. Collect words like Phoebe does. Include favourite words, powerful words, descriptive words, or learn/add a new word a day.



Illustration of a Cedar Waxwing

**Stranger**, p. 37

CREATIVE WRITING: This is Phoebe's sit spot, her special place of escape where she feels safe and calm — where is your favourite place? Describe it using your senses.



WISDOM: Be wary of strangers.

**The Hunt** (Tessa), p. 39

CHARACTER: What do we learn about Tessa by the way she talks about Johnny and Doctor Bergman?

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**A Phoebe Sighting**, p. 41

POETIC DEVICES: *Sitting there in his red vest, / his dark hair slicked back, / looking like a spring robin. / One that gots no idea the cat be on the prowl.*



CHARACTER: What does Phoebe notice about Dr. Bergman? How are they similar?

**Hatching a Plan**, p. 44

Why doesn't Phoebe know what he means when he says Cedar Waxwing?

CHARACTER: *Missus smile but it don't reach her eyes, / it wallow on the bottom of her face like water in a rowboat.*

**Blowing Smoke** (Master), p. 46

Is Bergman impressed with the Master's bragging?

POETIC DEVICES: IDIOM: blow smoke

**Five Generations** (Master), p. 48

POETIC DEVICES: SYMBOL: Master carries a small vial of seed. What does it represent?



CHARACTER: What is Master worried about? Who does he blame? What does he hope?



**Sweet and Sour** (Bea), p. 50

CHARACTER: Bea has a lot to say about other characters. What do we learn about:

Shad: *We both know that fool couldn't track a chicken in a coop.*

Phoebe: *Like a slender sapling / how even with that scar running cheek to jawbone, / she's a beauty.*

Missus: *What's beautiful, her actions.*

CHARACTER: Bea is a cook, but still a slave. What power does Bea have?



WISDOM: *Cutting the outside... don't change the inside. What is.*

WISDOM: *When she serving bitter, sour words, / he choose sugar, any day.*



**My Phoebe** (Bea), p. 52

CHARACTER: What is Bea worried about? What does Bea tell us about Missus and Phoebe? In what way is Bea like a mother bird?



WISDOM: *Scared make us look. / Scared make us listen. / Scared make us run. / It's the nature-knowing that saves us. / You gotta listen to scared.*

Why does Bea think that it is good to be scared?



**Rescue** (Phoebe), p. 55 / **Burned** (Phoebe), p. 57

CHARACTER: What do we learn about Shad and Phoebe's relationship? What do we learn about Shad's character?



WISDOM: *If you play with fire, you gonna get burned.*



Female cook in her kitchen, Virginia (USA), early 1850s. [Harper's New Monthly Magazine (Jan. 1856), vol. 12, p. 177]

**Chit Chat**, p. 59

What are some reasons that Doctor Bergman is not happy on the trail?

**To See a Bird**, p. 60

WISDOM: What nature lessons does Momma pass on to Phoebe?



REFLECT: Why is it important to believe in something wholeheartedly?

**Deep in the Woods** (Tessa), p. 62

CHARACTER: What is Tessa's reason for coming? What does this tell us about her temper, her relationship with her mother and with Phoebe?

**Hot on the Trail** (Tessa), p. 64 / **Squawking**, p. 66

CHARACTER: How does she see Phoebe? What is she really hunting?

**Birds Watching**, p. 68

WISDOM: What has Phoebe learned from birds about danger?

**Rained Out**, p. 70

CHARACTER: Contrast Tessa and Phoebe in the rain.

**Feeding Time**, p. 72

HISTORICAL: What have we learned about the life of children who are slaves?



POETIC DEVICES: IDIOM: *Better the devil you know than the devil you don't.*

**Noah**, p. 74

POV: What does Phoebe mean when she says *he ain't learned yet?*

**A New Word**, p. 76

HISTORICAL: What is an abolitionist? It's Phoebe's first time hearing it — and maybe yours as well. What is a paddyroller?



CHARACTER: *I have the right ... to protect my property / And Shad and me smile and nod at our Master, / grateful.* How do Shad and Phoebe feel about Master and SLAVERY in this scene?



**On the Prowl** (Tessa), p. 78

CHARACTER: Mother's opinion, temper, character, and their relationship



**My Phoebe** (Tessa), p. 80

CHARACTER: What is Tessa's relationship with Phoebe?

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**Drawing Lesson**, p. 82 / **What Is**, p. 84

What does finding the nest make Phoebe realise?

How does Bergman surprise Phoebe?

What is Phoebe's way of dealing with what can't be changed, fixed, or undone?



**Weeding Out**, p. 85

CHARACTER: What is Doctor Bergman's and Tessa's relationship?

---



**Canada**, p. 86

Phoebe is listening to both sides of an argument — what points does each boy make?

What finally convinces her that Canada exists?



THEME: TRUTH: *If you can't believe in it, you never gonna see it. / But Shad, being blind to what is, don't make it false.*

POV: Write out both sides of an argument.



**One Day**, p. 89

What secret has Phoebe kept from Shad?

**Nest**, p. 90

What is the significance of Doctor Bergman putting back the nest? (Foreshadow)

**Something**, p. 92

What does it mean to be a watcher? *Seeing the world eyes wide open / when most white folk too busy seeing themselves.*



WISDOM: *Listening to the wisdom of wing and feather / when most people stay deaf to the song.*



THEME: PREJUDICE: *but he still a white man.*



CHARACTER: What makes Phoebe uncomfortable around Bergman?



**Make Him** (Tessa), p. 93  
THEME: What *POWER* does Tessa have?



**Song of Wood and Field**, p. 95 **Mimicking**, p. 97  
HISTORICAL: What were working conditions like for slaves that worked in the fields?



POV: Compare and contrast how Phoebe and Tessa see slavery. Why are their interpretations so different?



**Hand-Me-Down** (Tessa), p. 99  
CHARACTER: Relationship with Phoebe, her self importance



**Divine Right**, p. 101  
HISTORICAL: How did the slave owners justify slavery?



**Secret Songs**, p. 103  
HISTORICAL: What are the double meanings found in the slave songs?

**Divining Wrong**, p. 105  
What does Divine Right mean? What does Divining mean? Explain this poem's title.



CHARACTER: This is the first time Phoebe questions the "truth" her master/mistress has been preaching. Why is this a turning point for Phoebe?

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**What I Desire** (Bergman), p. 106  
CHARACTER: We have been guessing at the Doctor's intentions. Now we are inside his head. How does he really feel about Tessa? What does he really want?

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**Black-Eyed Susan**, p. 108  
CHARACTER : Describe Missus and Tessa's relationship.



POETIC DEVICES: SYMBOL: What flowers are Missus and Tessa, and finally Bea, discussing and are they really talking about the flowers?

**Without Miss Tessa**, p. 110/ **Alone with Doctor Birdman**, p. 111  
Phoebe found Tessa annoying while birdwatching, why might she be worried to go alone?



**Momma's Birds**, p. 112 / **Peanuts**, p. 113

POETIC DEVICES: SYMBOL: Peanuts were mentioned previously in *My Phoebe* (page 80). How might this connect with the peanuts in this scene? What lesson does Momma teach Phoebe besides where to find peanuts?



**A Song for Me**, p. 115

CREATIVE WRITING: Phoebe experiences a sense of wonder when the bird lands on her. Describe a time, in as much detail as you can, when you felt a sense of wonder.



REFLECT: The birds remind Phoebe of special times with her mother. What is one of your favourite memories with someone special?

---



**Two Phoebes** (Bergman), p. 118

CHARACTER: how is Phoebe like a bird?



**Our Little Secret**, p. 120

CHARACTER: What is suspicious about Doctor Bergman?



POETIC DEVICES: How do we know that Phoebe is feeling anxious? What shows it?



CREATIVE WRITING: We learn about characters by what they say, what other's say about them, and how they look and act. We know Phoebe is anxious in this scene. How would you describe a character (through their body language and actions) to *SHOW* he/she was feeling: relaxed, lonely, confused, shy... choose another feeling.



**The Promise**, p. 122

CHARACTER: Why does Phoebe agree to help Bergman?



REFLECT: Does she trust him?

REFLECT: Why does he trust her?



**Drawn**, p. 124

CHARACTER: What does Phoebe realise about herself thanks to Bergman's drawing?

**Storm Coming** (Shad), p. 126

Shad's intuition is telling him something just ain't right. What is intuition?

**A Gift**, p.128

How was the drawing a gift to Phoebe?

**Broke** (Master), p. 129

CHARACTER: What words does he use to describe his slaves? What is Master Duncan worried about?

**Hot Water**, p. 131

THEME: CHOICE: Phoebe mulls over her situation with Bergman. With every “but” she argues against herself.



CREATIVE WRITING: Write about a choice you had to make and show the flipside.

**Whippoorwill**, p. 133

HISTORICAL: Describe the setting in the quarters.



WISDOM: What does Phoebe realise as she hears the whip-poor-will?

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**Night Whispers**, p. 135

What is Will’s reaction to seeing Bergman? Why?

**Pea Pods**, p. 138

CHARACTER: Shad is being overprotective of Phoebe. She doesn’t know why, do you?

**If You Ask Me** (Bea), p. 140

As the cook, Bea is aware of many things. What has she observed and revealed in this poem?

WISDOM: *No man cares about / whether your china got roses or not / your dress got ruffles or not / or your hair got ringlets or not / the best way to impress a man / any man / is through his stomach.*

---

**Seat of Honor** (Tessa), p. 142

THEME: What is Tessa’s POWER?



**Troubles**, p. 144 / **Hot and Bitter**, p. 146

POV: Clearly Ella Mae does not like Phoebe. Why?



THEME: What *PREJUDICE* does Phoebe face?



**My Phoebe** (Shad), p. 148

POV: This is the third *My Phoebe* poem (Bea's is page 52, Tessa's is page 80). Compare how each one describes Phoebe. Why does each person feel she is *my* Phoebe?



CHARACTER: In what ways are Shad and Phoebe similar?

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**On His Plate** (Bea), p. 151

What has Bea revealed about the state of things at Whitehaven?

Why isn't she happy to have saved Phoebe from punishment for breaking the plates?



WISDOM: *when Master in trouble / we all is.*



**Answers**, p. 154 / **Who**, p. 155 / **Courage**, p. 157 / **The Risk** (Bergman), p. 159

WISDOM: What question does the owl ask for Phoebe?



HISTORICAL: What is Bergman risking? What is the penalty for helping slaves?



WISDOM: *If you wait the answer done come to you.*

**What I Know** (Bergman), p. 160 / **Words of a White Man** (Bergman), p. 162 / **The Plan**, p. 164

What does Bergman give them?

They must trust each other to keep the meeting *SECRET*. What happens if Master finds out?



WISDOM: How does the sound of the mourning dove help Phoebe?



**Stained**, p. 166

POETIC DEVICES: SYMBOL: Phoebe compares secrets to her blood stain. Why?



**Connecting the Dots** (Shad), p. 168

CHARACTER: Shad calls himself a tracker. How is that different than a watcher?



**Seeping Out** (Bea), p. 170

WISDOM: *Truth gonna seep out.*

**Different** (Bea), p. 172 / **To Know**, p. 174 / **Reminders** (Bea), p. 175  
What secret does Bea tell Phoebe?



CHARACTER: What does Phoebe worry about?

*To know what I ain't ... to wonder what I is, / and if that is why Momma left me.*  
What does it mean to "protect someone from the truth"?



POV: Why does Missus hate Phoebe?

**White Lies**, p. 177  
What is a white lie?

*Nothing's changed / except now you know.*  
Why would knowing change everything for Phoebe?



THEME: PREJUDICE: Why would Bea say white men are all want and nothing but trouble?



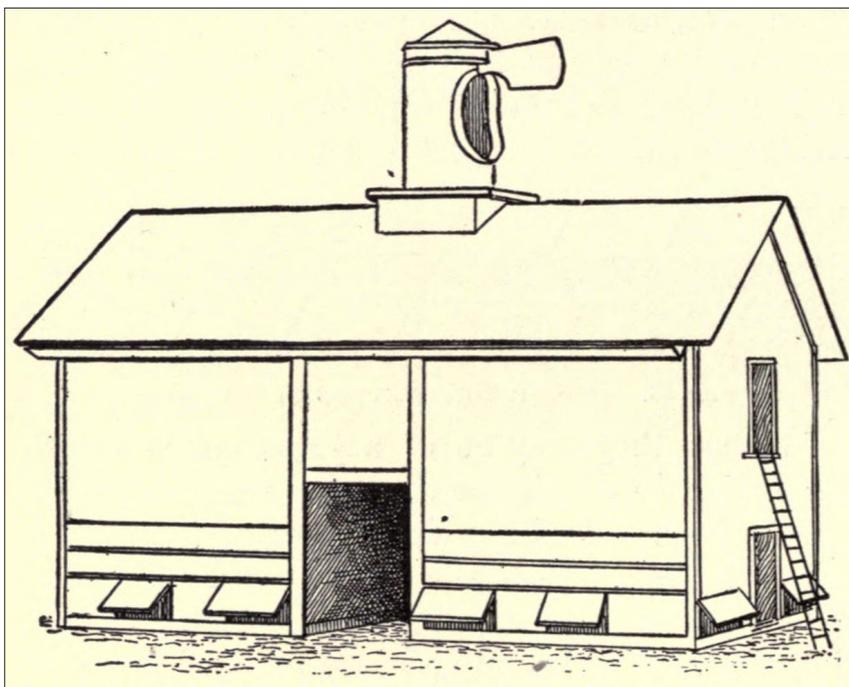
**Heads or Tails** (Shad), p. 179 / **Smoke and Fire** (Shad), p. 181  
**Count on it** (Shad), p. 183 / **Options** (Shad), p. 185

CHARACTER: How is Shad's cockiness and confidence both a strength and his downfall?



**Morning Lesson**, p. 187 / **The First Lash** (Shad), p. 188 / **Four Stripes**, p. 189  
CHARACTER: What happens to Shad's confidence in this scene?

**Same**, p. 191 / **Crazy Man**, p. 193  
Why is Phoebe relieved to see Master looking the same as always?



Ventilated Barn, Wisconsin.  
*Tobacco leaf: its culture and cure, marketing and manufacture*  
(Orange Judd Company, 1897),  
archived by University of  
California Libraries.



**Lucky Pup**, p. 195 / **New Clothes**, p. 196 / **Thanks to Me** (Shad), p. 198  
 CHARACTER: How is Shad acting — how has he changed since the whipping?

How is foreshadowing used in this scene?



WISDOM: *Fancy pants and new shoes don't change the fool that's wearing them.*



**The Least I Can Do** (Master), p. 200  
 CHARACTER: What is Master's opinion of Shad?



POETIC DEVICES: IDIOM: *Too big for his britches.*

Why is Master apprehensive about Shad having initiative?

What's the difference in connotation between the least I can do and the least I will do.



**Smoke and Mirrors** (Tessa), p. 202  
 POETIC DEVICES: IDIOM: What does the title mean?



THEME: Why isn't Tessa continuing with her parents' plans to win over Bergman?

Discussion opportunity: *INDEPENDENCE*



**Bedtime**, p. 204 / **Secrets**, p. 205  
 POETIC DEVICES: SYMBOL: What metaphor is Phoebe using for secrets. What might be another good metaphor or simile for a secret?



POETIC DEVICES: EXTENDED METAPHOR: Phoebe never mentions spiders directly, but uses spider words:

*Secrets got a way of keeping you up at night,  
 Scuttling in the corners of your mind,  
 Weaving webs of worry under your eyes.  
 My mind crawling with them,  
 itching while I lay helpless.*



CREATIVE WRITING: Write an extended metaphor (see pages 50-51).



**Playing with Fire** (Tessa), p. 207 / **Burning** (Tessa), p. 209 / **First Time**, p. 211

POETIC DEVICES: IDIOM: *If you play with fire, you gonna get burned.* How is Tessa's decision dangerous? In what way does she get burned?



CHARACTER: What do her actions tell us about her? What does her reaction to his rejection tell us about her?



CHARACTER: How does Phoebe feel knowing Tessa didn't get what she wanted for the first time?



**Her** (Tessa), p. 212 / **Mother Said** (Tessa), p. 214

CHARACTER: Why does Missus want to get rid of Phoebe? Why would Tessa want to get rid of Phoebe?

What secret does Tessa think she has discovered?

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**Leaving**, p. 216 / **Strange** (Master), p. 218

What secret does Missus suspect and how do you know that?

Look up 'birdbrained'. Why does Master assume Bergman is 'birdbrained'?

**Bird Brained**, p. 219

What is Phoebe's definition of bird brained?



CHARACTER: What has she come to realise about her Master?

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**Noticed** (Tessa), p. 220

CHARACTER: What has Tessa finally noticed?



**Mine** (Master), p. 222

THEME: PREJUDICE: *But then, you can't make sense of a woman's whim.*

What has Master acknowledged to himself in this poem?



**Daughter** (Tessa), p. 224

CHARACTER: *You are your father's daughter.* What does Master Duncan mean by that?

CHARACTER: In what way is Tessa being like her mother as well?



THEME: PREJUDICE: *I told your mother / nothing good comes of women reading.*



**Master's Mood**, p. 226 / **Study**, p. 227 / **Four Letters**, p. 229

POV: Why isn't Phoebe thrilled to be able to finally read the ledger and figure out where her mother was sold?



**One Letter**, p. 231

POV: What realisations does Phoebe come to as she reads that letter?



**Dry Wood** (Shad), p. 233 / **Nuts and Seeds** (Shad), p. 234

CHARACTER: What has Shad discovered? What do you think he'll do with what he found?



**Day of Rest** (Bea), p. 236 / **Most Saturday Nights**, p. 238

HISTORICAL: What happens in the quarters on a Saturday night?



**My Best Friend**, p. 240

CHARACTER: Why doesn't Phoebe confide in Shad if he is her best friend?



**A Sliver of Hope** (Shad), p. 242

THEME: What is Shad's secret and what does he *HOPE*?

**Truth**, p. 244

What does Shad's secret reveal to Phoebe?



**Bold** (Tessa), p. 246

THEME: In what ways has Phoebe been growing stronger and bolder throughout the novel? What ways has she already asserted her *INDEPENDENCE*?

Negroes bought in 1846				Negroes sold			
Oct-10 <sup>th</sup>	Rachel	..	450 00	Dec-30 <sup>th</sup>	Rachel	total	600 00
Dec-22 <sup>nd</sup>	Lampson	..	535 00	Jan-20 <sup>th</sup>	Lampson	..	725 ..
Jan-18 <sup>th</sup>	Lear	..	600 ..	Jan-27 <sup>th</sup>	Lear	..	650 ..
Sept-25 <sup>th</sup>	Joseph	..	450 ..	Feb-5 <sup>th</sup>	Joseph	..	775 00
Oct-29 <sup>th</sup>	Washington	..	475 ..	Jan-4 <sup>th</sup>	Washington	..	700 ..
Oct-16 <sup>th</sup>	Reubin	..	500 ..	Jan-18 <sup>th</sup>	Reubin	..	725 ..
Oct-5 <sup>th</sup>	Joseph	..	540 ..	Dec-11 <sup>th</sup>	Joseph	..	620 ..
Dec-17 <sup>th</sup>	George	..	450 ..	Jan-16 <sup>th</sup>	George	..	625 ..
Sept-18 <sup>th</sup>	Betty	..	400 ..	Jan-26 <sup>th</sup>	Betty	..	625 ..
Dec-17 <sup>th</sup>	Catherine & child	..	520 ..	Jan-28 <sup>th</sup>	Catherine & child	..	650 ..
Dec-14 <sup>th</sup>	Matilda	..	475 ..	Jan-4 <sup>th</sup>	Matilda	..	600 ..
Nov-14 <sup>th</sup>	Cloey	..	325 ..	Jan-4 <sup>th</sup>	Cloey	..	400 ..
Nov-27 <sup>th</sup>	Lydia	..	406 ..	April 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Lydia	..	300 ..
Oct-5 <sup>th</sup>	Presilla	..	265 ..	Jan-4 <sup>th</sup>	Presilla	..	600 ..
Feb-13 <sup>th</sup>	Jim	..	240 ..	Jan-25 <sup>th</sup>	Jim	..	300 ..
..	Clator	..	400 ..	.. 27 <sup>th</sup>	Clator	..	465 ..
..	William	..	625 ..	Feb-19 <sup>th</sup>	William	..	650 ..
.. 16 <sup>th</sup>	Dolly	..	540 ..	March 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Dolly	..	575 ..
			8196 00				10585 00

Slave trader ledger of William James Smith, 1844-1854. The original is housed in *The Littlejohn Collection* at Wofford College, in the Sandor Teszler Library.

**Whole Truth** (Shad), p. 248

THEME: *Shad always speaks the truth. / Just not all of it.* Is Shad fooling himself or is he really speaking the *TRUTH*? Does speaking the truth mean saying all that you know?



CHARACTER: Shad turned in the bag he found, what were his intentions?  
Why is Shad hurt by Phoebe's half truth?

**What I Know**, p. 250

*Bea ain't here to protect me, / Miss Tessa ain't here to command me, / And Shad ain't here to distract me / from what I gotta do. / Only I don't know what that is, / just yet.*



THEME: CHOICE: Phoebe is at a moment of decision in this scene. Because she is alone, she is making it independently. Why is that important? What is she choosing between? Why is it important that she is alone when she decides?

Why is she the only one who knows how to get the bag of escape tools to them?



REFLECT: Describe a decision you have made or one you are discerning now. List the choices, the possible outcomes and the pros and cons for each option.

**Keeping Her**, p. 252

Explain why despite all the ways Phoebe keeps Yellowbird alive — she's keeping her from really living?



THEME: What *TRUTH* does she realize here and what does she do as a result?



POV: Compare how Phoebe perceives the bird at the beginning, middle, and end.



WISDOM: Why does it comfort Phoebe to think of momma birds as she throws Yellowbird into the dark unknown? Why is feathered hope a good description for Yellowbird?

WISDOM: Why is Yellowbird's song meaningful?

**Tracking Truth** (Shad), p. 254

THEME: Shad knows that Phoebe's book was a secret kept, what *TRUTH* does he realise in this scene?

**What I Have to Do**, p. 256

*Wind whistles through the barn, / rattling dead leaves in the rafters.* Note the use of sensory details in the setting. (See the Setting the Scene worksheet on page 35)

THEME: CHOICE: What is Phoebe choosing to sacrifice in this scene?

**I Don't Know**, p. 258

POETIC DEVICES: ALLITERATION: *Skirts hiked, I cut through the dark field / leaves lashing at my legs.*



THEME: CHOICE: Sometimes we don't know what others will do, we make decisions not knowing the outcome. What helps her decide?



REFLECT: Phoebe goes beyond the border of all that she has ever known. She is afraid of all that unknown before her. When have you felt afraid of the unknown? What inspires Phoebe to go on? What inspires you?

**Fire** (Shad), p. 260

CHARACTER: Shad realises Phoebe started the fire. He plans on ratting her out. What is his intention?

**The Route**, p. 262

POETIC DEVICES: IDIOM: *Burning bridges*

**Crossroads**, p. 263

THEME: CHOICE: Often when we make a decision we experience doubt. What are Phoebe's doubts at this point? What makes you doubt your decisions?



POETIC DEVICES: IDIOM: *At the crossroads*

**Bird's Eye View**, p. 265 / **Wagon**, p. 267 / **The Call**, p. 269

WISDOM: At this moment of crisis, Phoebe relies on the wisdom of her mother and of birds. How does what she knows about birds help her in this situation?

**Out of the Shadows**, p. 270 / **Right** (Shad), p. 271

POV: Shad finally gets praised by the Master, why isn't it making him happy?

**Underestimated** (Master), p. 273

CHARACTER: Master's perception of Phoebe

CHARACTER: What does Master's actions and thoughts tell us about him?

**Running**, p. 275 / **One Shot** (Shad), p. 277 / **Take the Reins** (Shad), p. 279

CHARACTER: What does Shad realise about the Master's intentions? What does he realise about his own? What action is the result?

**Enough**, p. 280 / **Kicking the Stars**, p. 282 / **Broken**, p. 283 / **Within Reach**, p. 285

CHARACTER: Shad's greatest fear is to be left behind — by Will and by Phoebe. When Shad picks up the gun what is his intention?

**Sure Thing**, p. 286

POV: What does Phoebe mean when she calls Master a 'sure thing'?

**From Me** (Shad), p. 287

THEME: CHOICE: Shad is at a crossroads in this scene. What are his choices? What reasons support them?

**Reeling In** (Master), p. 289POETIC DEVICES: IDIOM: *Hook, line and sinker*

CHARACTER: In what way does Master manage to manipulate Shad?

**Decision Made**, p. 290

THEME: CHOICE: What decision does Phoebe make in this moment?



POETIC DEVICES: SIMILE: Voice cracking like a speckled shell

**Gospel Truth**, p. 291THEME: What *TRUTHS* does Phoebe speak about what she is and what she is not? Why is Shad's gun getting heavier?



**At Least** (Shad), p. 293

THEME: What *TRUTH* does Shad realise about Master in this scene?



**The Nerve** (Shad), p. 295

POV: What does Shad realise about himself? What action does that inspire?



REFLECT: QUOTE: *The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.* — Edmund Burke



**At Last**, p. 296 / **Black Hole**, p. 297 / **Shadows**, p. 298/ **Catching Up**, p. 300

POV: Does Phoebe know who Shad was aiming for?



REFLECT: Who do you think he was aiming for? Why is it important that Will came back and that Shad tells him to go on ahead?



**Sorry**, p. 302

POV: What are Shad's regrets?

What does Phoebe finally tell him?



**Choices**, p. 304

CHARACTER: Why does Phoebe feel responsible for Shad being there? Why doesn't Will hold her responsible for that?



THEME: What are Phoebe's *CHOICES* at this crossroads?



REFLECT: How do her past decisions and actions help her make this choice now?



POV: What does she decide and was it a difficult choice for her?



**The Road** (Bergman), p. 306

HISTORICAL: What is the Fugitive Slave Act and what did it mean for enslaved people?

HISTORICAL: What is the Underground Railroad? How did it change things for enslaved people?

**Hope** (Bergman), p. 307*Each of us doing what we can / with what we have / for the person God put in our path.*QUOTE: *Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.* — Theodore RooseveltQUOTE: *Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.* — Margaret Mead

REFLECT: No amount of empathy or act of kindness is too small. What can you do to help the person in your path today?

**Ohio River** (Bergman), p. 309 / **Lost**, p. 311

HISTORICAL: Why doesn't Bergman give them directions all the way to Canada?

THEME: Phoebe is worried about leaving without Bergman, but what *HOPE* does she discover? Compare this *HOPE* to the one Phoebe felt at the start of the novel in Two Truths:*Acting dead in the bottom of its cage / so as it don't end up that way. / That's hope, that is.***Strangers and Friends**, p. 313

HISTORICAL: Why will they be on wanted posters? (See example on page 24.)



CHARACTER: How is being shoved out in a boat a good symbol for her feelings about escaping? Even though she has to leave Bergman, how has knowing him given her hope?



HISTORICAL: Why do they need a password?

**Courage**, p. 315THEME: Discuss Phoebe's examples of *COURAGE*.REFLECT: *Alls we need is the courage / to take one step at a time. / And that's the gospel truth.*QUOTE: *The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.* — Lao Tzu

REFLECT: Describe a time when you relied on your courage. What were you worried about? What gave you the courage to keep going?

# 100 DOLLS. REWARD.

## RAN AWAY

From me, on Saturday, the 19th inst.,

**Negro Boy Robert Porter,**  
aged 19; heavy, stoutly made;  
dark chesnut complexion;  
rather sullen countenance,  
with a down look; face large; head low on the  
shoulders. I believe he entered the City of  
Washington on Sunday evening, 20th inst. He  
has changed his dress probably, except his  
boots, which were new and heavy.

I will give \$50 if taken and secured in the  
District of Columbia, or \$100 if taken north  
of the District, and secured in each case and  
delivered before the reward shall be good.

**Dr. J. W. THOMAS.**

**Pomunky P. O., Charles Co., Md.**

Notice seeking return of a runaway slave called Robert Porter, circa 1855.

## SECTION II: Activities (by topic)

In this section, activities are grouped by topic and include blackline masters. The following adjustments can be made to use with groups of any size or for individual study:

- \* Small Groups - Assign one specific character or pairing to each small group
- \* Large Groups - Recreate the template on a bulletin board or flipchart
- \* Individuals - Create a booklet of handouts for each student



### Tracking Traits

Students will track what they observe about the people at Whitehaven.

- \* Use this as a brainstorming activity to develop a character for creative writing.



### Compare and Contrast

Using the Venn diagram, students will compare and contrast two characters.

- \* Do it as an icebreaker activity where they must interview a peer or a family member for their point of view.



### Just Between Us - Wheel / Grid

Students will infer what characters think about each other.



- \* Use this as a reflection activity by putting yourself in the centre and the important people in your life around you.



### Plot Formula

*Somebody (character) wants (desire) because (motive) but (obstacle) so (plot points #1, 2, 3...)*

Following the above Plot Formula, students deconstruct a scene and see how that character's motive drives plot by filling the chart for *The Gospel Truth*. Who wants what? Why? What is stopping them? What choice and action do they make next?

- \* Do it a few times with one character to see what happens next or do it for a few different characters. Do their wants change as the story moves forward?



### Setting the Scene

Using the chart, students will collect examples of imagery in the novel: vivid details describing the sights, sounds, smells, taste, or feel of the setting.



- \* Use this chart as a brainstorming tool for them to write a descriptive paragraph of their favourite setting as a creative writing activity.



### Themes

*The Gospel Truth* has many themes. Using the templates, students can track themes as they appear and develop in the story.

- \* Suggested themes: Hope, Power, Prejudice, Independence, Truth, Courage, and Choice.

**The Poet's Palette**

A poet creates art with words, sound, and meaning. This handout helps students understand the devices and purposes of each element.

**Poetic Devices**

This worksheet defines each device: Repetition, Alliteration, Consonance, Assonance, Onomatopoeia, Personification, Simile, and Metaphor. It can be used to gather examples of each one from *The Gospel Truth* or as a prompt for students to create their own.

**Wise Words**

Looking at samples of poetic language that concisely convey deeper meanings, students analyse the meaning behind: Titles, Bea's Words of Wisdom, and Idioms.

**Rich Symbols**

Students examine the use of metaphor and simile and the recurring symbol of Yellowbird.

**Extended Metaphor Activity**

Students learn about extended metaphor and use the brainstorm sheet and guidelines to write their own.

**Creative Writing Activities**

Writing Activities involving: POV, Characterisation, Setting, and Sensory Detail.

**Extension Activities**

- \* Collecting Words: Word of the Day, Word Jar, or Word Collage
- \* The Sequel
- \* Drama – My Truth
- \* Historical fiction
- \* For the Birds
- \* Research Project

**Bird Wisdom**

Much of Phoebe's learning comes from being a watcher — from observing the birds and how they survive. In looking back at these poems about the birds, students will explore what Phoebe learns and try to figure out what kind of bird it is.

**Reflections**

Students are given prompts for deeper reflection on themes, quotes, and their own experiences. Topics include:

- |                        |                         |                 |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| * On Being a Bystander | * The Power of Words    | * On Decisions  |
| * On Motivation        | * Bea's Words of Wisdom | * On Doubts     |
| * On Belief            | * Memories              | * Hope and Help |
| * The Unknown          | * The Other Side        | * On Courage    |



## Tracking Traits

Be a “Watcher” like Phoebe. What do you observe about the people at Whitehaven? Add to the character’s Tracking Trait file as you read and discover things about them. List the page number where you found this information.

<b>Character’s Name:.....</b>		
<b>Physical description:</b>	<b>Personality:</b>	<b>Want and Needs:</b>
<b>Power/Role at Whitehaven:</b>	<b>Strength:</b>	<b>Weakness:</b>
<b>This character’s fears:</b>		<b>This character’s secret/s:</b>
<b>What others tell us about this character:</b>		<b>This character’s actions tell us:</b>

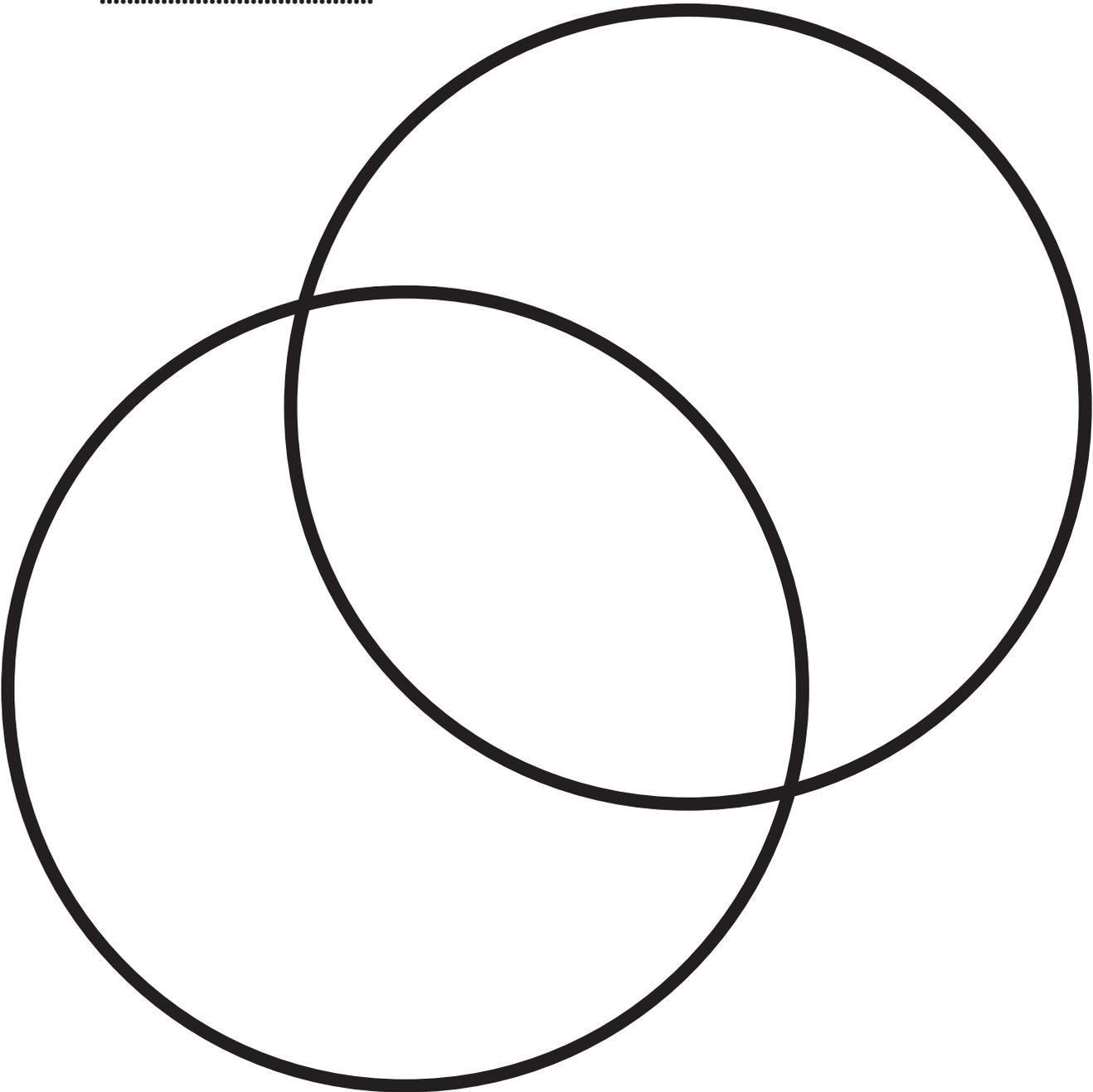


## Compare and Contrast

Choose two characters and fill out the Venn diagram. Compare how they are similar (in overlap) and contrast how they differ in each circle.

**Character One:**

.....



**Character Two:**

.....



## Just Between Us – Grid



Infer what characters think about each other. How are they similar, and how do they challenge each other?

	Phoebe	Tessa	Master	Bea	Shad	Bergman
Phoebe						
Tessa						
Master						
Bea						
Shad						
Bergman						

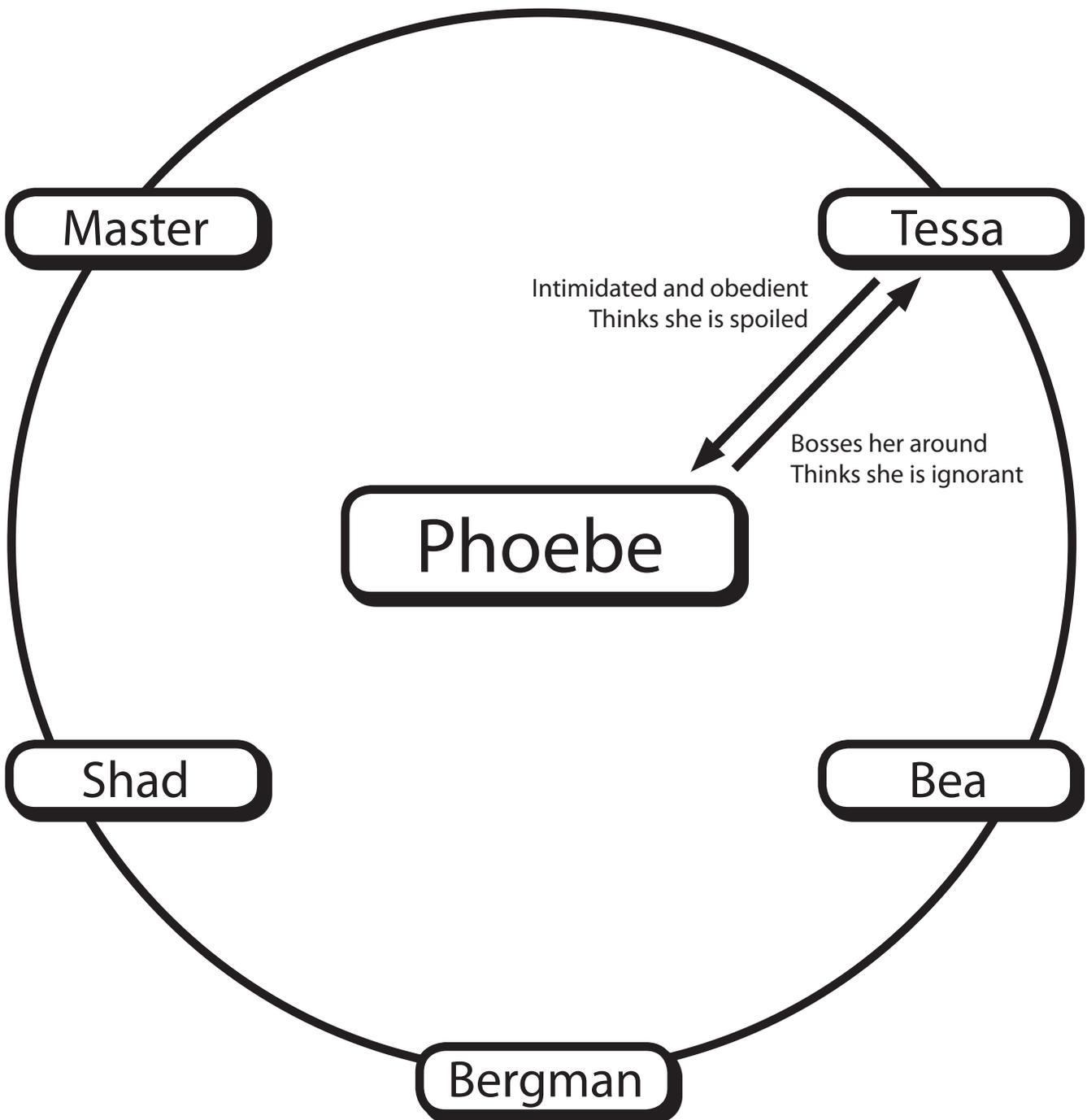


## Just Between Us – Wheel

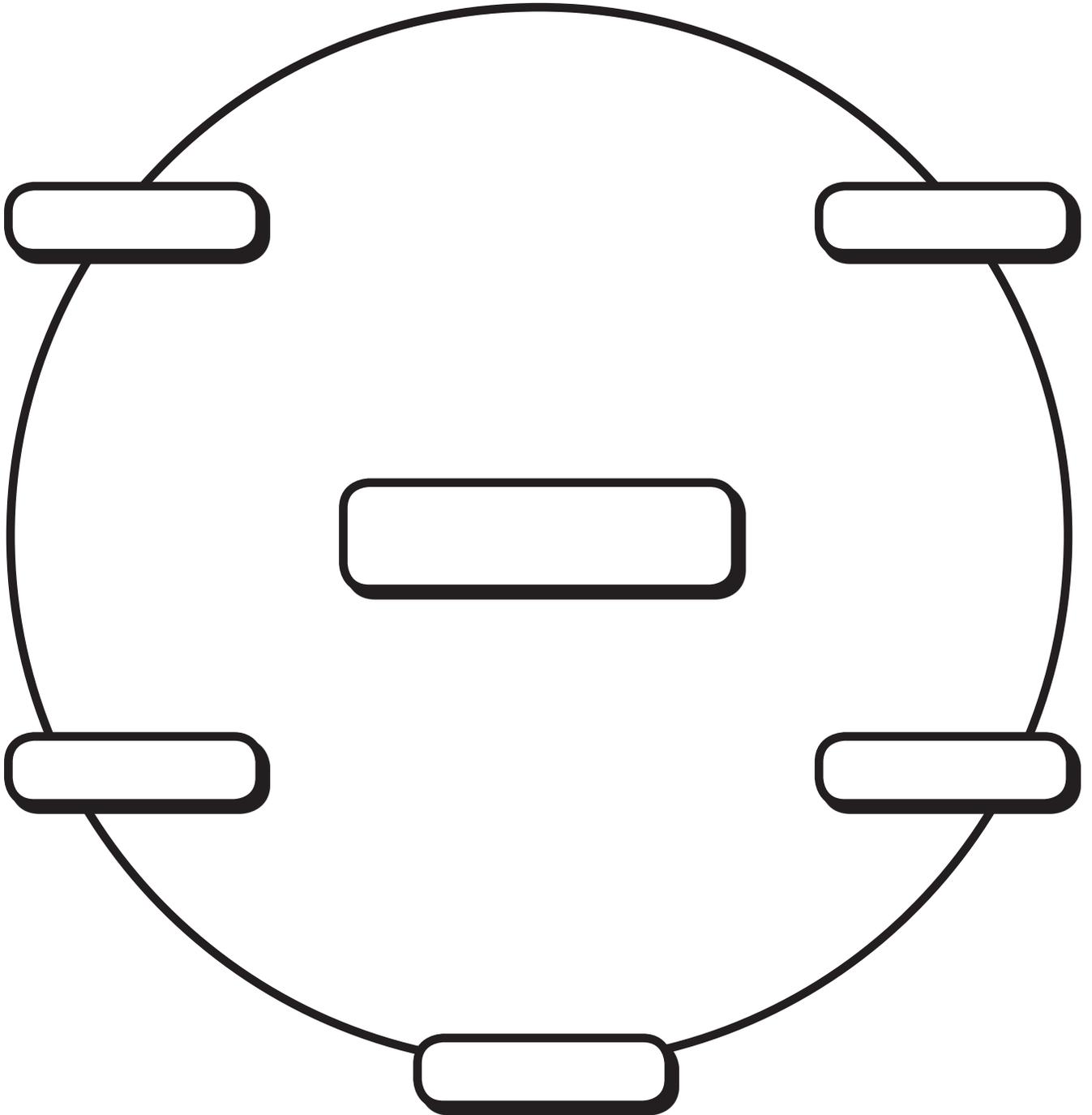


Infer what characters think about each other. They can complete Phoebe's for each person around the wheel (some will have multiple arrows and may even change as the story continues.) Then try it with another character in the centre.

\* Use this as a reflection activity by putting yourself in the centre and the important people in your life around you.



## Just Between Us – Wheel



**Word Jar**





## Plot Formula

Plot is not complicated. In fact, it's a pretty simple formula.

### Ingredients:

1. Character
2. Desire
3. Motive
4. Obstacles
5. Reaction

### Formula:

Somebody (character) wants (desire) because (motive) but (obstacle) so (plot points #1, 2, 3...)

All you need is a CHARACTER who wants or needs something (DESIRE) for a strong reason (MOTIVE). The story gets interesting when they can't have it (OBSTACLES) and SO they make a choice and react. What they do often makes their problem even worse... and the story even better.

Now think about some of your favourite stories:

- \* Katniss wants to win the Hunger Games because she'll die if she doesn't but that means killing her friend, Peeta so they work together to change the games.
- \* Frodo wants to destroy the ring because it's evil and will destroy Middle Earth but the evil ring is turning even friends against him, so he tries to carry it alone.
- \* Harry wants to belong and be loved because he is an orphan, but he is also a wizard, so he tries to hide his magic skills to fit in with the only family he's got, the Dursley's.

Can you think of others?

Fill out the Plot Formula chart (page 34) for scenes in *The Gospel Truth*.

Who wants what? Why?

What is stopping them?

What choice and action do they make next?

Do it a few times with one character to see what happens next or do it for a few different characters. Do their wants change as the story moves forward?

## Plot Formula Chart

<b>Who</b>	<b>Wants</b>	<b>Because</b>	<b>But</b>	<b>So</b>
<b>Character</b>	<b>Desire</b>	<b>Motive</b>	<b>Obstacle</b>	<b>Plot point</b>



## Setting the Scene



*The Gospel Truth* is told in free verse poetry, that means there isn't much space for detailed descriptions of settings as in other novels. Caroline Pignat manages to give the readers a sense of life at Whitehaven through the specific and vivid details she mentions. As you read, be a Watcher like Phoebe. Look for any mention of the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or feel (imagery) of the setting and list them in the chart below.

See
Hear
Feel
Smell
Taste



## Themes

*The Gospel Truth* has many themes. Using the templates track themes as they appear and develop in the story. The suggested themes are:

Hope  
Power  
Prejudice  
Independence  
Truth  
Courage  
Choice

You can use the compilation sheet (page 37) or the full sheet templates (pages 38-45).

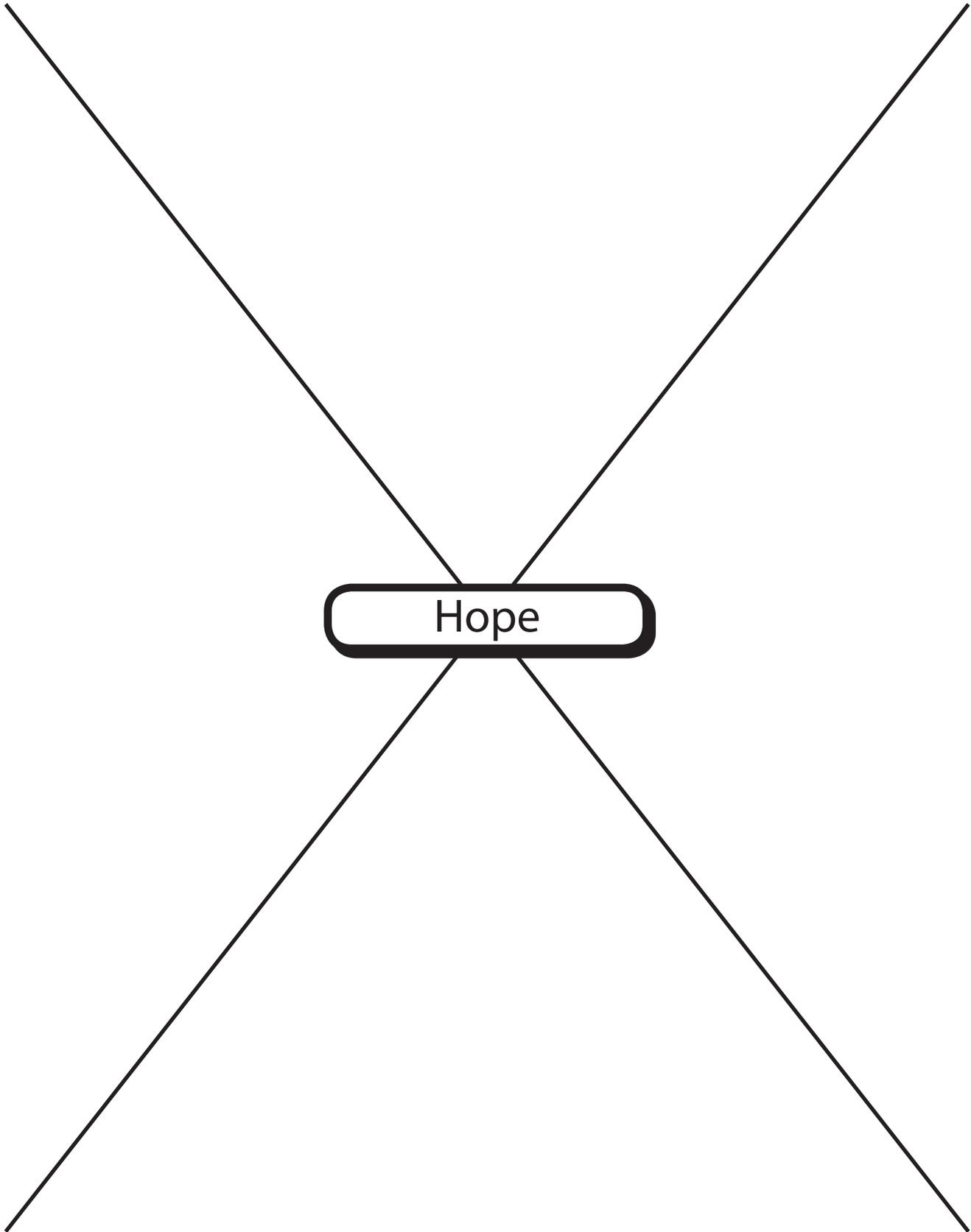
For the full sheet templates, quadrants can be broken into:

- \* Symbols
- \* Examples
- \* Quotes from the novel
- \* Specific characters
- \* Specific scenes
- \* Text to Self
- \* Text to Text
- \* Text to World

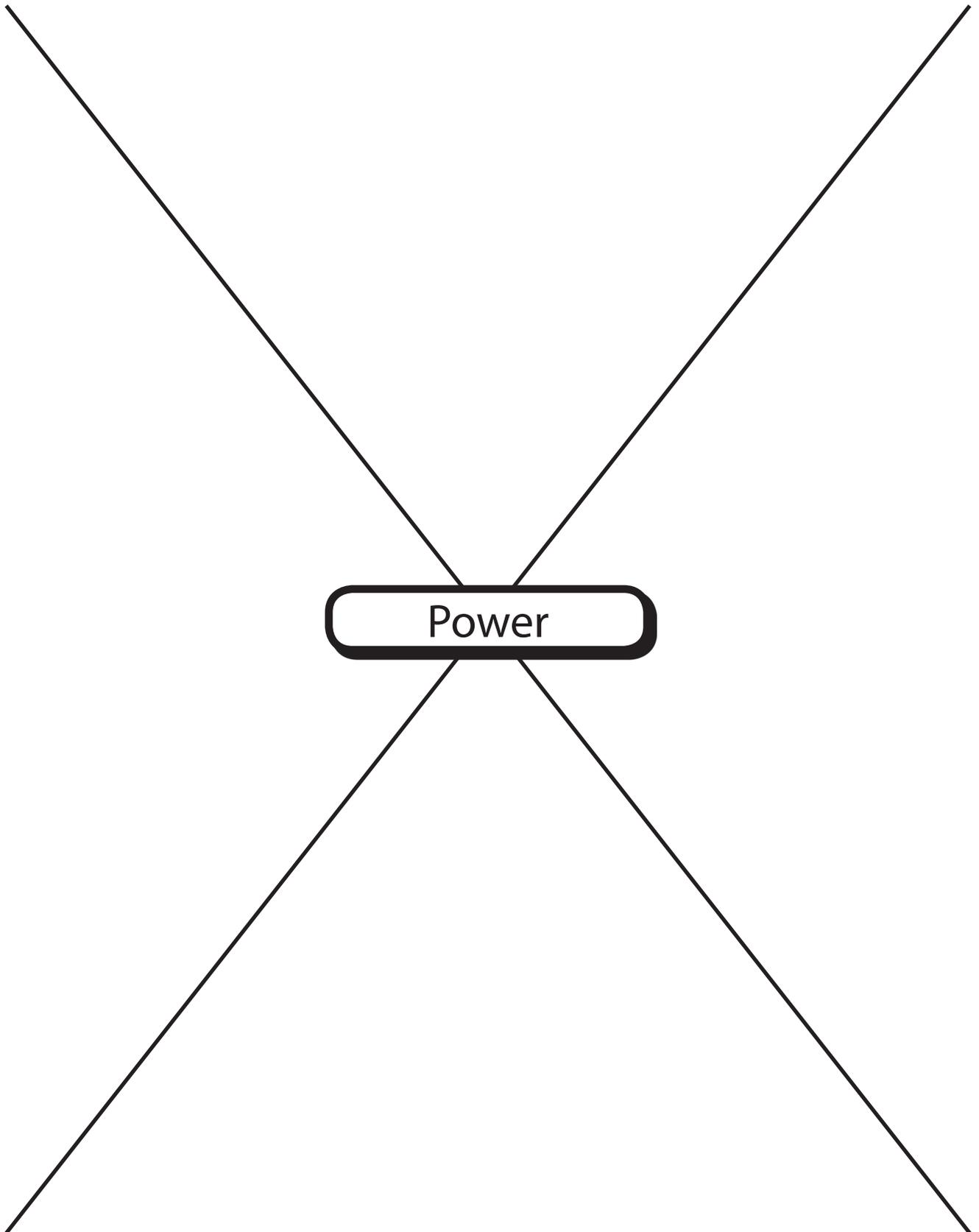
## Themes

Hope	Power
Prejudice	Truth
Courage	Choice
Independence	

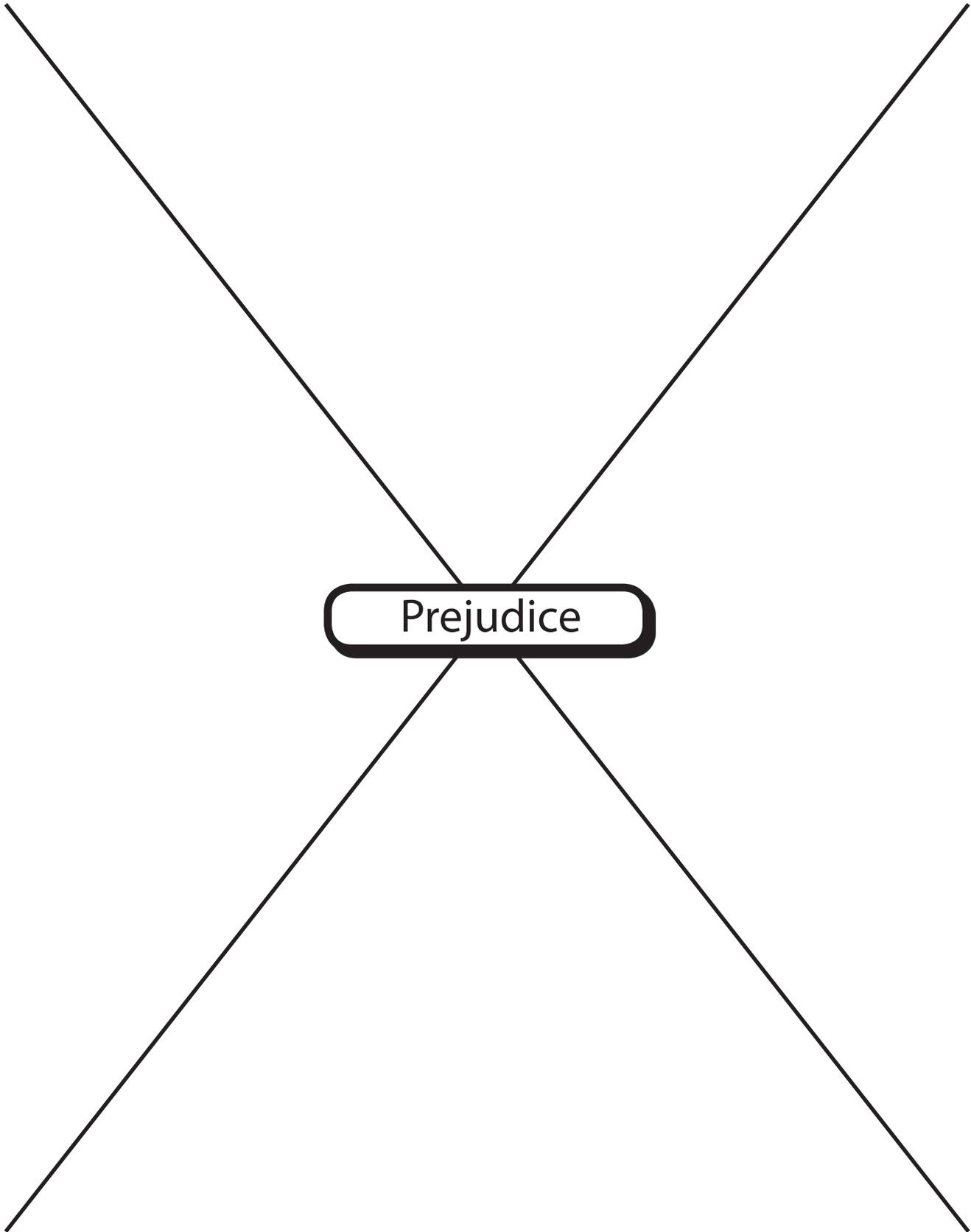
## Themes



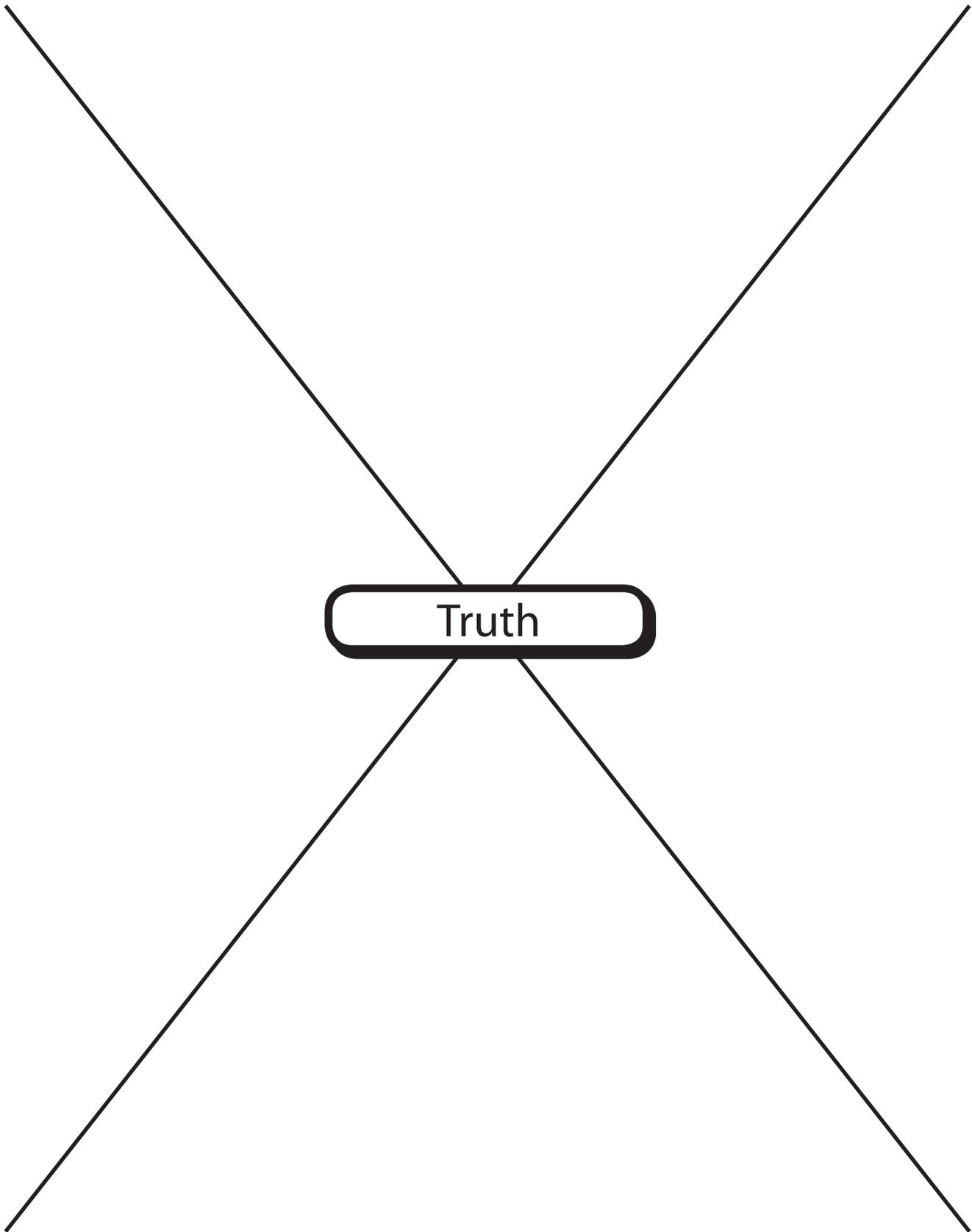
## Themes



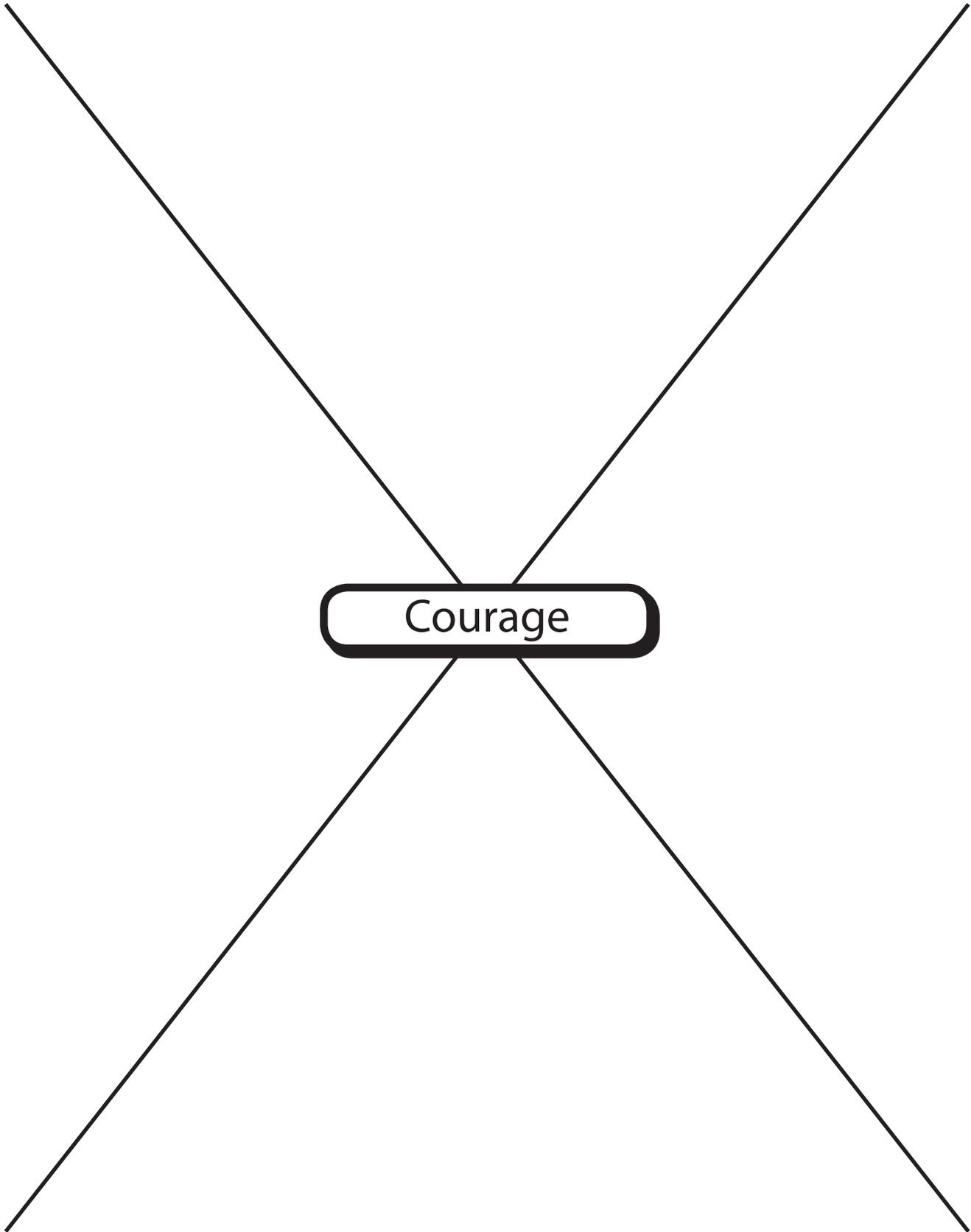
## Themes



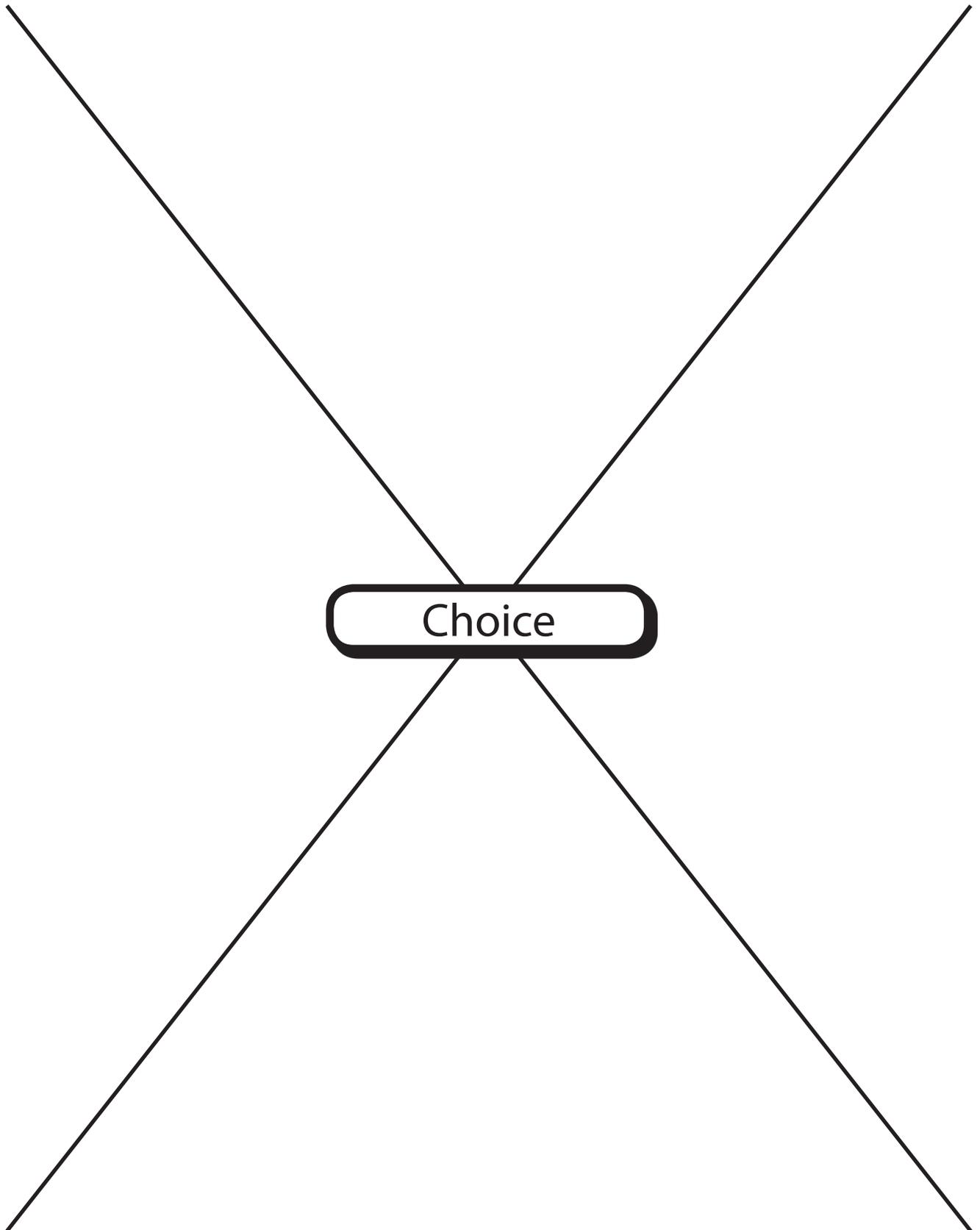
## Themes



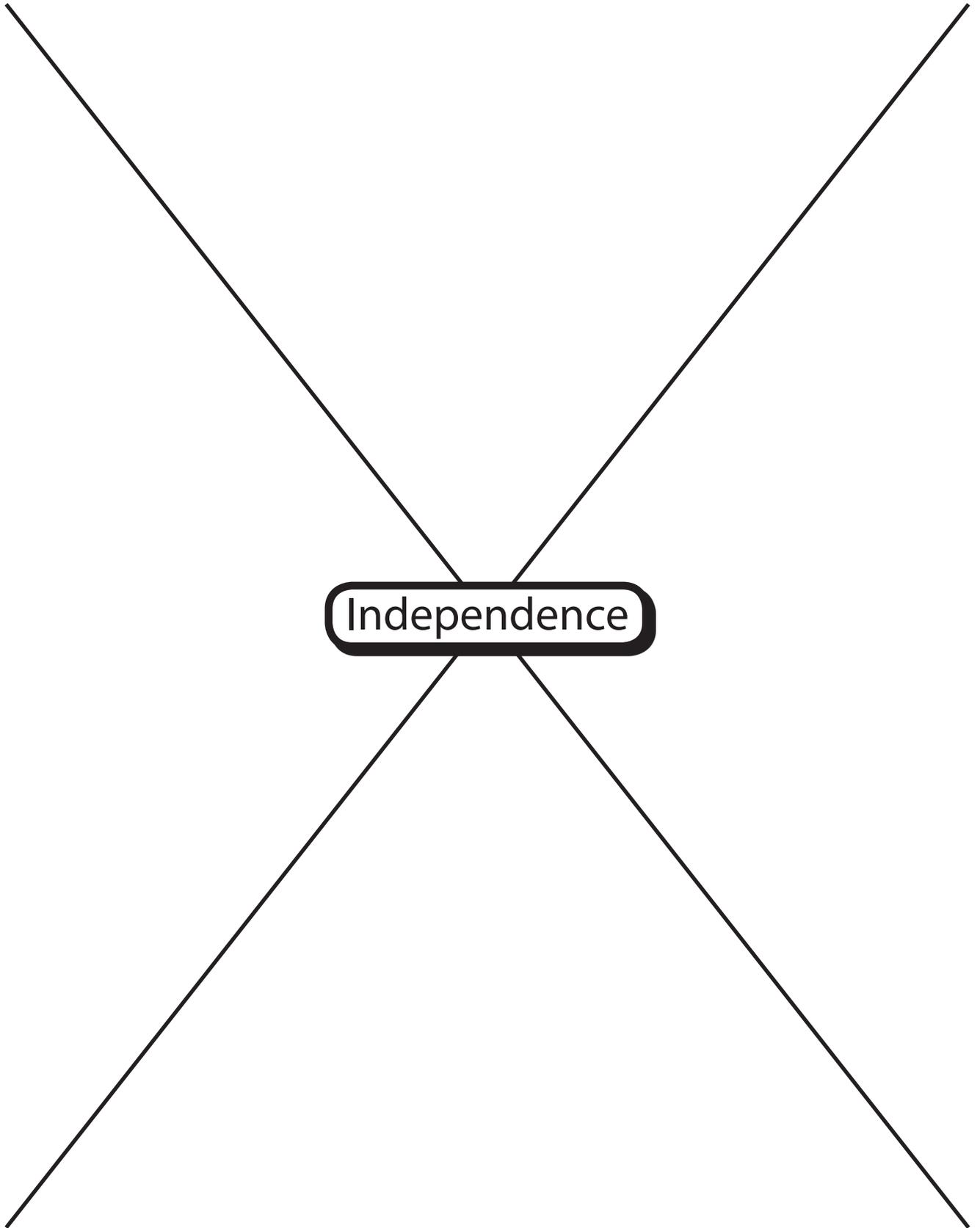
## Themes



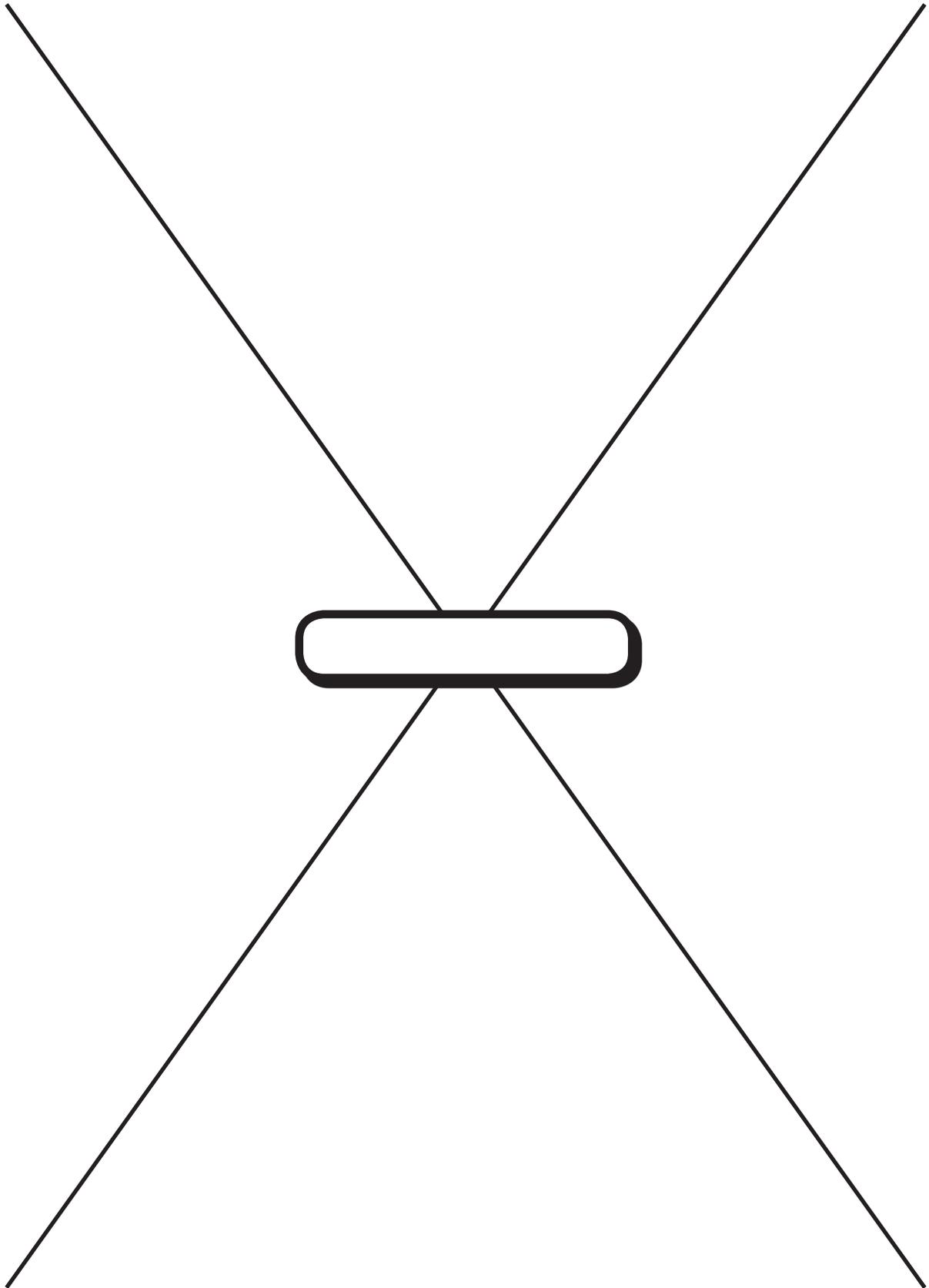
## Themes



## Themes



## Themes





## The Poet's Palette

Poetry, like art, is subjective. Not everyone likes the same style or form. People will even get into hot debates over what IS considered art. Some say it has to follow rules, others say breaking the rules and being creative IS what makes it art. But just as a visual artist uses tools like paint, brushes, and a canvas to create, a poet creates art with *WORDS*, *SOUND*, and *MEANING*.

### WORDS

There isn't a lot of space for wordiness in any good writing – but poets, especially, must choose the best words.

*I wish our clever young poets would remember my homely definitions of prose and poetry; that is, prose = words in their best order; poetry = the best words in their best order.*

– Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Poet, 1827

As well as choosing the best words, poets must decide how to best lay them out using white space and line breaks to emphasise what's most important.

- \* First and last words are most important so don't waste those spots on weak words like "the" or "a".
- \* Break your lines on purpose.
- \* Use enjambment – when you continue the sentence (on purpose) on the next line. Too many lines that end with a period give a singsong effect.

### SOUND

Poetry is pleasing to the eye (whitespace and line breaks) and to the ear. It's meant to be read aloud. Using sound as art in your poem happens through poetic devices such as:

- \* Rhyme – at the end of a line, or within a line (internal rhyme) – but not all poems rhyme.
- \* Metre – patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables gives beat and structure. Think of a sonnet as a "waltz" (very structured) and free verse as "contemporary" or "hip-hop" dancing.
- \* Repetition – used on purpose to elaborate something.
- \* Alliteration – repeating the first sound of a word.
- \* Consonance – repeating consonant sounds within a word.
- \* Assonance – repeating vowel sounds within a word.
- \* Onomatopoeia – words that "are" the sound, like Boom!

### MEANING

Sensory details or *IMAGERY*, helps engage the reader. But where fiction is loose or wordy, a poem is compact and dense. Sometimes it needs to be read a few times to savour its richness. Density in a poem is achieved through figurative language like metaphors and similes.



## Poetic Devices

Repetition – repeating specific words, phrases, or structures for emphasis.


Alliteration – repetition of the first consonant sounds: *the feathered fellow flew.*


Consonance – repeats the consonant sounds: *first/last hill/dale.*


Assonance – repeats the vowel sounds (consonants sounds are different): *late/make slap/dash.*


Onomatopoeia – words that sound like what they mean: *crack, splat, whirr.*


Personification – giving human characteristics to an animal, object or idea: *the bike whined in protest.*


Simile – makes a comparison between two unlike things: Uses *like* or *as*: *Her tears fell like rain.*


Metaphor – an implied comparison where a thing is said to be something else: *Her tears are sad rain.*




## Wise Words

Caroline Pignat uses poetic language throughout the novel to convey deeper meanings in just a few words. What do you think the deeper meaning is behind the following Titles, Idioms, and Bea's Words of Wisdom?

### TITLES

- \* Curing Barn (p. 30)
- \* Blowing Smoke (p. 46)
- \* Divining Wrong (p. 105)
- \* Drawn (p. 124)
- \* Broke (p. 129)
- \* On his Plate (p. 151)
- \* Connecting the Dots (p. 168)
- \* White Lies (p. 177)

### IDIOMS

- \* *better the devil you know than the devil you don't* (p. 73)
- \* *too big for his britches* (p. 200)
- \* *burned bridges* (p. 262)
- \* *hook, line, and sinker* (p. 289)

### BEA'S WORDS OF WISDOM

- \* *Time heals.* (p. 33)
- \* *cutting the outside, / but it don't change / the inside. / What is.* (p. 50)
- \* *When she serving bitter, sour words, / he choose sugar, any day.* (p. 51)
- \* *Scared make us look. / Scared make us listen. / Scared make us run. / It's the nature-knowing that saves us. / You gotta listen to scared.* (p. 52)
- \* *If you play with fire, you gonna get burned.* (p. 58)
- \* *No man cares about / whether your china got roses or not / your dress got ruffles or not / or your hair got ringlets or not / the best way to impress a man, / any man, / is through his stomach.* (p. 141)
- \* *When Master in trouble / we all is.* (p. 153)
- \* *If you wait, the answer done come to you.* (p. 154)
- \* *Truth gonna seep out.* (p. 171)
- \* *Fancy pants and new shoes / don't change the fool that's wearing them,* (p. 196)



## Rich Symbols

Poetic language often uses symbols because they convey deep meaning in just a few words. A symbol represents something beyond what it is literally. It encourages us to make comparisons and come to our own conclusions about how these things are similar.

A recurring symbol in the book is Yellowbird. How might she be a symbol for Phoebe's experience? Compare how Phoebe perceives the bird at the beginning, middle, and end. If Yellowbird represents Phoebe, what might the cage and Rufus represent?

Metaphors and Similes are both ways to imply similarities between two things. A simile says one thing is "like" another (or uses as \_\_\_ as a \_\_\_\_.) A metaphor says that it IS the other thing. They are used throughout the novel, for example in *Shad and Bea*, (p.19-21):

*Bea a real hornet's nest.*

*Shad be that stick if I ever saw one—  
all long and lean,  
ready to stir things up.*

*My face feel like I stuck it over the steam  
but the kettle ain't even whistling yet.*

Or in other places such as:

*I can disappear like a tree in a forest. (p. 24)*

*sitting there in his red vest,  
his dark hair slicked back,  
looking like a spring robin.  
One that gots no idea the cat be on the prowl. (p. 41)*

*We grew up together,  
Phoebe and I.  
Two peanuts in a shell. (p. 80)*

*voice cracking like a speckled shell, (p. 290)*



## Extended Metaphor Activity

*“Hope” is the thing with feathers –  
That perches in the soul –  
And sings the tune without the words –  
And never stops – at all*

– Emily Dickinson

*Secrets got a way of keeping you up at night,  
scuttling in the corners of your mind,  
weaving webs of worry under your eyes.*

*My mind crawling with them,  
itching while I lay helpless.*

– Phoebe, Secrets (p. 205)

Each of these excerpts is an extended metaphor. They show how two things share similarities and extend the metaphor for a few lines. Note that Dickinson never uses the word “bird” or that Phoebe never uses the word “spider.” They imply the similarities and use descriptive words to show it.

### Write an Extended Metaphor Poem.

1. Start with the brainstorm (found on page 51)
2. Choose an abstract idea, something you can’t touch or know with your five senses (like: freedom, friendship, hope, fear, etc.). Then choose a concrete symbol that best represents it. This is something we can feel or smell or see and it helps us better understand the abstract concept.
3. Using a Venn diagram brainstorm how these two are similar to each other.
4. Brainstorm a list of related words – like Phoebe’s spider words: *scuttle, weaving, crawling, itching*.
5. Write your poem – don’t worry about rhyming. The focus should be on the metaphor and making it meaningful.



## Extended Metaphor Brainstorm

Choose a specific item (something concrete and tangible) to complete each sentence:

If I were a tool, I'd be a \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_.

If I were an instrument, I'd be a \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_.

If I were an animal, I'd be a \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_.

If I were a song, I'd be a \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_.

One word to describe my life right now is \_\_\_\_\_.

List five more concrete things that fit that word choice:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

One word to describe my family right now is \_\_\_\_\_.

List five more concrete things that fit that word choice:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

What best represents:

Your closest relationship \_\_\_\_\_.

Your biggest fear \_\_\_\_\_.

Your family dynamic \_\_\_\_\_.

Your school career \_\_\_\_\_.

How you see yourself \_\_\_\_\_.

Your faith \_\_\_\_\_.

Your hopes for the future \_\_\_\_\_.



## Creative Writing Activities



### POINT OF VIEW

#### Activity 1:

*The Gospel Truth* shows life through the eyes of very different characters. What is *EMPATHY*? Why is it important to see things through another's point of view? Think of a person that pushes your buttons, who gets under your skin or causes you problems. Write from their point of view. Try to be as realistic and honest as you can. What's it like to be them? What do things look like from their perspective? Why do you think they act the way they do?

#### Activity 2:

What's your favourite movie or book? Write a scene from your favourite movie in different character's points of view.

#### Activity 3:

Here are the facts: **Marie's** wallet was left on her desk. **Luke** saw **Jenn** take it. Luke told **Mr. Turner** who called **Jenn's mom**.

We don't know any of the characters' intentions or opinions. We don't know their personalities or reputations. Choose one of the bold names and write as if you are that character. Fill in the blanks and add a backstory. What do they think? Why?

### CHARACTERISATION

We learn about characters by what they say, what other's say about them, and how they look and act. Read *Our Little Secret* (p. 120). How is Phoebe feeling? How did you know?

What body language and actions would *SHOW* that a character was feeling:

- \* Relaxed
- \* Lonely
- \* Confused
- \* Shy
- \* [Choose another feeling]

Choose one and write that scene.

### SETTING

Phoebe's sit spot by the tree is her special place of escape where she feels safe and calm — where is your favourite place? Describe it using some of your senses.

### WONDER AND AWE

Phoebe experiences a sense of wonder when the bird lands on her hand in *A Song for Me* (p. 115). Describe when you felt a sense of wonder, using as much specific, sensory detail as you can.



## Extension Activities

### Collecting Words

*Word of the Day, Word Jar, or Word Collage.* Encourage students to actively seek out and savour new words like Phoebe does. Include favourite words, powerful words, descriptive words, or learn/add a new word a day. Use a bulletin board, the word jar (page 28), or an actual jar in the classroom.

### The Sequel

Invite students to research the Underground Railroad and write what happens next on Phoebe's journey.

### Drama – My Truth

Prepare a script where students write and perform a short monologue as each of the six narrators.



### Historical fiction

Invite students to research and write a short story set in a different time period.



### For the Birds

Birds play a prominent part in this novel. Phoebe knows a lot about the birds, but not their true names. Can students identify the birds by their call and her descriptions? Go on a bird-watching expedition with the class. What birds are right in our own backyards?

### Research Project

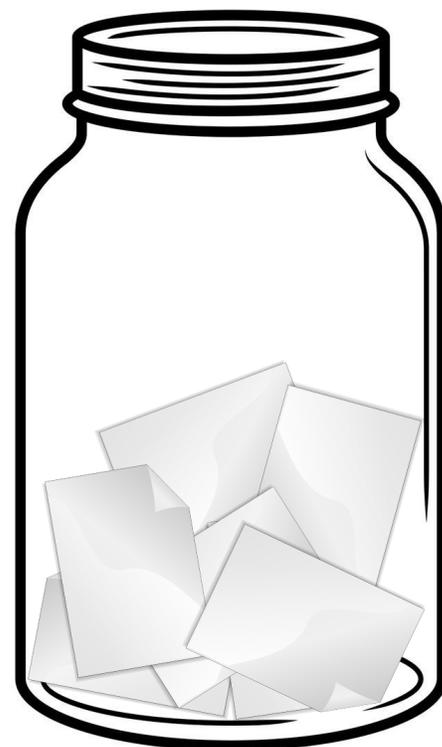
Using the historical details from the novel as a catalyst, encourage students to go deeper with their research and present what they discover to the class.

Suggested topics might include:

- \* The Underground Railroad
- \* The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850
- \* A Timeline of Slavery
- \* Racism
- \* Abolitionists
- \* Life on a Plantation
- \* The Civil War
- \* Slavery Abolition Act, 1833

Historical Figures such as:

- \* Frederick Douglass
- \* William Still
- \* Josiah Henson
- \* Harriet Tubman
- \* Harriet Beecher Stowe
- \* Alexander Milton Ross
- \* Abraham Lincoln





## Bird Wisdom



*listening to the wisdom of wing and feather  
when most people stay deaf to the song.*

– Phoebe, Something (p. 92)

Lots of Phoebe’s learning comes from being a watcher — from observing the birds and how they survive. Look back at these poems about the birds. What does Phoebe learn from them? Based on its song and description, can you figure out what bird it is?

- \* Taste of Home (p. 28)
- \* Stranger (p. 37)
- \* To See a Bird (p. 60)
- \* Birds Watching (p. 68)
- \* Momma’s Birds (p. 112) / Peanuts (p. 113)
- \* Two Phoebes (Bergman) (p. 118)
- \* Whippoorwill (p. 133)
- \* Who (p. 155)
- \* Bird Brained (p. 219)
- \* Keeping Her (p. 252)
- \* Bird’s Eye View (p. 265) / Wagon (p. 267) / The Call (p. 269)

What lessons or wisdom have you learned from observing nature? Think about things like:

- \* Seasons
- \* Cycles
- \* Seeds
- \* Flocks
- \* Packs
- \* Survival
- \* Abundance
- \* Environment



Illustrations from L-R: the Eastern Phoebe, Great Horned Owl, and Yellow Warbler.



## Reflections

### On Being a Bystander

*Big Will bleeding  
but we all be scarred.*  
– The Way of Things (p. 12)

In what way are bystanders “scarred”? Have you ever been a bystander to a fight or a bullying situation? How did it feel? What did you do? What would you do differently?

### On Motivation

What motivates and inspires you?

Read *Taste of Home* (p. 28). What would you say is a better form of motivation — fear or desire? Why?

### On Belief

Why is it important to believe in something wholeheartedly? *To See a Bird* (p. 60).

### The Unknown

Phoebe goes beyond the border of all that she has ever known. She is afraid of all that unknown before her. When have you felt afraid of the unknown? What inspires Phoebe to go on? What inspires you? *I Don't Know* (p. 258).

### The Power of Words

Do you remember learning how to read? How did it feel? *Collecting Words*, (p. 35)

### Bea's Words of Wisdom

Review the list of Bea's Words of Wisdom (page 48 of the study guide).

Write a reflection on two of them.

Or tell us about your favourite inspiring words of wisdom.

Or describe someone who is a wise mentor to you.

### Memories

The birds remind Phoebe of special times with her mother. What is one of your favourite memories with someone special? *A Song for Me* (p. 115).

### The Other Side

Phoebe mulls over her situation with Bergman in *Hot Water* (p. 131). With every “but” she argues against herself. Write about a choice you had to make and show the flipside...

But...

### On Decisions

Describe a decision you have made or one you are discerning now. List the choices, the possible outcomes and the pros and cons for each option. *What I Know* (p. 250).



## Reflections: *continued...*

### On Doubts

Often when we make a decision we experience doubt. What are Phoebe's doubts at this point in *Crossroads* (p. 263)? What makes you doubt your decisions?

### Hope and Help

*Each of us doing what we can  
with what we have  
for the person God put in our path.*  
– Bergman, Hope (p. 307)

*Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.*  
– Theodore Roosevelt

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world;  
indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*  
– Margaret Mead

No amount of empathy or act of kindness is too small. What can you do to help the person in your path today?

### On Courage

*Alls we need is the courage  
to take one step at a time.  
And that's the gospel truth.*  
– Phoebe, Courage (p. 315)

*The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.*  
– Lao Tzu

Describe a time when you relied on your courage. What were you worried about? What gave you the courage to keep going?

## SECTION III: Resources

Although *The Gospel Truth* is a work of fiction and the characters are fictional, their experiences are based on historical fact and a lot of research.

### Primary Sources

The best sources are primary sources. Imagine being able to hear what it was really like from someone who has been there. Sometimes you can find those voices in old newspaper articles, letters, or journals. It was considered unnecessary and often illegal for slaves to read or write. In fact, people were charged and punished for teaching them.

Fortunately, The Library of Congress has a collection of over 2,000 interviews with former slaves which have been transcribed as spoken. *Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives* is a book and DVD that shares photos and excerpts from those narratives, offering vivid details about slave life.

Other sources like, *Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* by Benjamin Drew and autobiographies like *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs, *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northrop and *The Life of Josiah Henson* by Josiah Henson help us see their world through their eyes.

### Excerpts from *Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives*:

- \* *None of us was 'lowed to see a book or try to learn. Dey say we git smarter den dey was if we learn anything, but we slips around and gits hold of dat Webster's old blue black speller and we hides it 'til way in de night and den we lights a little pine torch and studies dat spellin' book. We learn it too.*
- \* *I never know my age — master gets out a big book and shows I's 25 year old.*
- \* *Got one pair of shoes a year, when they wore out we went barefoot.*
- \* *Dining room was big and had windows open, I had to fan the flies and gnats off the missus' food.*
- \* *I took care of white children at the Big House and fed little Negro children in boxes and troughs under the house — corn meal mush and beans. They'd gather around like horses, pigs and cows.*
- \* *He whipped me for eating a biscuit I found. Used the cat-o-nine tails and rub salt in the cuts.*
- \* *Most of us have great desire to read and write. Many owners were harsh if they caught us trying to learn. If a white man tried to educate a negro slave — \$50 fine and jail sentence. Our ignorance was the greatest hold the South had on us.*
- \* *None of us was allowed to see a book and try to learn. We hides that Websters blue back speller and lights a little pine torch and we learn it too.*
- \* *All we is freed for is to starve to death.*
- \* *No use running from bad to worse, hunting better.*
- \* *It's the gospel truth. It sho is.*

### Additional resources:

Classroom guide for *Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives*

<http://content.time.com/time/classroom/unchained/pdfs/student.pdf>

Photo collection at The Library of Congress - *American Memory: Voices from the Days of Slavery*

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/vfssp.html>

## Historical Facts

### Home Life

- \* Young slaves were given to the Master's children as playmates and would later become house slaves.
- \* By age 12, most children worked in the fields. However, a few stayed on to work in the house.
- \* Slops (cornbread mixed with buttermilk or pot likker – a broth made from cooking greens) were set out in troughs at which small children fed either with hands or shells used for spoons.
- \* At Saturday night dances in the slave quarters, they danced all night long, clapping hands, beating pans, blowing quills, or picking the banjo.
- \* Drums were banned from slave gatherings in much of the South once slaveholders realized they could be used for communications. So they used body percussion known as "patting juba" "juba beating" or "jubilee beating" – slapping out rhythms on the thighs and feet.
- \* Slave cabins were located in "the Quarters" behind and at a distance from the Master's house. Even house servants usually slept outside the Big House in the slave quarters. Except for valets and maids who usually slept on the floor by their master's or mistress's bed or on pallets in the hallway.

### Auction

- \* Between 1800 and 1860 1 million slaves were forcibly transported to other locations. About 1/3 of slave families were split apart, 1/5 of the kids were sold away from one or both of their parents.
- \* They changed their name to master's last name every time they were sold.
- \* Fancy trade was when light-skinned females were sold specifically as concubines for wealthy white southern men.

### Escape

- \* The penalty for being caught trying to escape from their masters was physical punishment or death. Despite the risk, about 50,000 slaves tried to run each year.
- \* Slave patrols, called "patrollers" or "pattyrollers" by slaves, were on the prowl for slaves who had run away.
- \* Most fugitives were men in their prime.
- \* Winter was the best time to escape as the Ohio River was frozen, slaves often had free time around Christmas, but travelling in the cold was difficult.
- \* Wanted posters and rewards encouraged local people to aid in catching escaped slaves. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 made it illegal *NOT* to turn them in.

## Historical Facts

### The Underground Railroad

The Underground Railroad was a complex network of people, men and women, black and white, American and Canadian who worked together to help slaves escape to freedom. The term underground was in reference to their actions being considered illegal in the South because they were “stealing property”.

### Dr. Alexander Milton Ross

Dr. Alexander Milton Ross, a Canadian abolitionist, posed as an ornithologist while visiting Southern plantations. Under the guise of birdwatching, “the Birdman” secretly met with enslaved people and gave them information and a few supplies to help them start their journey. In his writing, he mentioned giving them a compass, pistol, knife, shoes, and \$20 to the leader and as much food as they could carry.

In his role as “ticket agent” for the Underground Railroad, he would make arrangements for slaves to meet “conductors,” people who, like Harriet Tubman, played key roles in helping fugitive slaves move from one “station” or safe house to the next. It was dangerous work for all involved.

Dr. Ross had several warrants for his arrest and generous rewards were offered to anyone who might turn him in. At one point, he was arrested by a colonel because a slave, last seen with Dr. Ross on Saturday, had gone missing. The colonel put him in handcuffs, cursed him and tried to excite the crowd into hanging him. Dr. Ross was locked up with rats until his trial. But during the trial, Joe showed up and said he’d “sprained his ankle”. Dr. Ross was let go. Two years later, he saw Joe, a free man, working as a waiter in Boston.

### For more information visit:

The Library of Congress - Voices from the Days of Slavery  
[www.memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/index.html](http://www.memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/index.html)

Underground Railroad Regional Interpretive Center for the Greater Niagara Region  
[www.freedomcrossingniagara.com/index.php](http://www.freedomcrossingniagara.com/index.php)

The Underground Railroad Conductor  
[www.undergroundrailroadconductor.com](http://www.undergroundrailroadconductor.com)

National Geographic - The Underground Railroad: Journey to Freedom  
[www.education.nationalgeographic.org/media/underground-railroad-journey-freedom/](http://www.education.nationalgeographic.org/media/underground-railroad-journey-freedom/)

## Recommended Reads

### Underground Railroad and Slavery Fiction for young readers:

*Chains* by Laurie Halse Anderson

*Crossing to Freedom* by Virginia Frances Schwartz

*A Desperate Road to Freedom: The Underground Diary of Julia May Jackson* by Karleen Bradford

*Elijah of Buxton* by Christopher Paul Curtis

*I Came as a Stranger* by Bryan Prince

*If I Just Had Two Wings* by Virginia Frances Schwartz

*My Name is Henry Bibb* by Afua Cooper

*Nightjohn* by Gary Paulsen

*Underground to Canada* by Barbara Smucker

### Free verse novels:

*Counting Back from Nine* by Valerie Sherrard

*The Crazy Man* by Pamela Porter

*Jeremy Stone* by Lesley Choyce

*Libertad* by Alma Fullerton

*Love that Dog* by Sharon Creech

*Loose Threads* by Lori Ann Grover

*Make Lemonade* by Sonya Sones

*Nix Minus One* by Jill MacLean

*Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse

*Yellow Mini* by Lori Weber

### Multiple POV:

*Bifocal* by Deborah Ellis & Eric Walters

*Egghead* by Caroline Pignat

*Flipped* by Wendelin Van Draanen

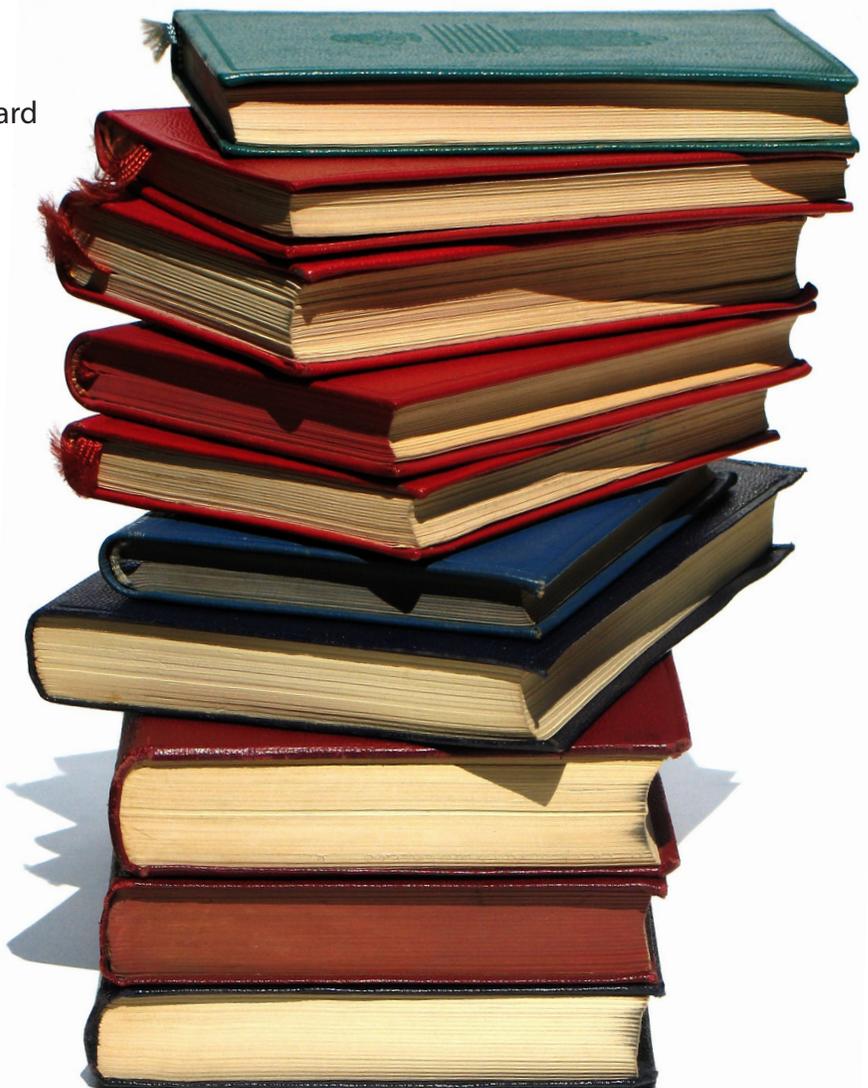
*I am the Cheese* by Robert Cormier

*The Pigman* by Paul Zindel

*Shooter* by Caroline Pignat

*Taking Flight* by Sheena Wilkinson

*Yellow Mini* by Lori Weber



## About the Author

### Biography

Caroline Pignat is the two-time Governor General's Award winning author of several highly acclaimed young adult novels. Her historical fiction, contemporary, and free verse novels use multiple points of view and varied forms to engage readers of all ages.

As a Writer's Craft student, Caroline wrote a short story that years later became *Greener Grass*, the first of a critically acclaimed series, and went on to win the 2009 Governor General's Award for Children's Literature. *The Gospel Truth* won Caroline her second Governor General's Award in 2015.

A high school teacher, she teaches grade 12 Writer's Craft and spends her afternoons in Writing Workshops, Author Visits, feeding the birds, or deep in her next work-in-progress. For more information about Caroline, visit: [www.carolinepignat.com](http://www.carolinepignat.com).



### Bibliography

*Shooter* (Razorbill, 2016)  
*Unspeakable* (Razorbill, 2014)  
*The Gospel Truth* (Red Deer Press, 2014)  
*Timber Wolf* (Red Deer Press, 2011)  
*Wild Geese* (Red Deer Press, 2010)  
*Greener Grass* (Red Deer Press, 2008)  
*Egghead* (Red Deer Press, 2007)



For more information and resources visit:

**Red Deer Press**

[www.reddeerpress.com](http://www.reddeerpress.com)