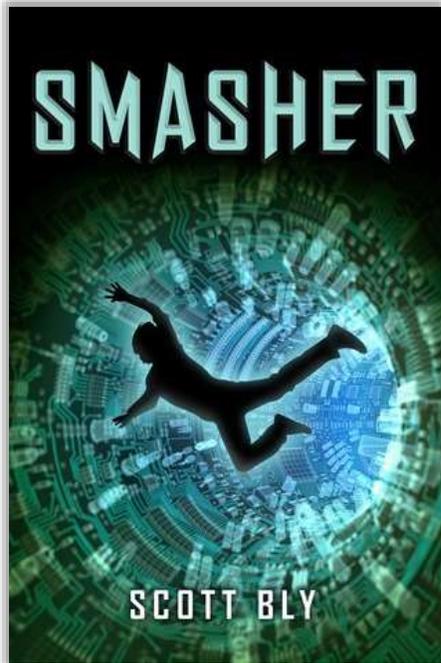


Smasher

By Scott Bly



He's not quite sure how, but the word "survival" has suddenly taken on a whole new meaning for twelve-year-old Charles. One day, he is pinned to the ground with a frog stuffed in his mouth, trying to outwit three (very heavy!) bullies. The next day, he finds himself following a mysterious girl named Geneva through a Resonant Gap, hurtling through space and time to a city half-a-world away and five hundred years into the future! The fate of the entire human race is at stake, and, apparently, everything depends on Charles.

According to Geneva, Charles is the one person who may be able to stand up to Gramercy Foxx, a filthy rich, ultra-powerful, and incredibly evil businessman poised to brainwash all of humankind by deploying a combination biological-computer virus. Only Geneva, who recently escaped from one of his experimental labs, sees Foxx for the monster he really is, but she isn't strong enough to stop him alone. Although Charles seems like only a scrawny math nerd on the outside, on the inside he has an incredibly rare ability that no longer exists in the year 2042: He can harness the power of the Hum, the energy source that flows through and between all things. Now Charles has only twenty

days to learn everything he can about modern technology so he can help his new friend Geneva infiltrate Foxx's fortress-like TerraThink building, deactivate the virus, and restore order to the future. Will they find a way to stop Foxx before it's too late?

About the Author

First-time author Scott Bly earned a degree in filmmaking from the University of Southern California and went on to make movies, write screenplays, serve as an IT consultant, teach computer courses, and develop educational computer games for kids. A few years ago, while chatting with the vice president of Blue Sky Press (as he was repairing her computer!), he was inspired to channel his love for computing into a time-traveling, technology-driven thriller for middle-grade readers. Today Bly lives in Santa Monica, California, and enjoys traveling around to libraries, bookstores, and schools to visit with his *Smasher* fans.

Getting Started

You can find *Smasher* at your local or school library, or at local or online bookstores. It's also available as an ebook.

While You're Reading

Every good story is full of captivating characters, timeless and timely themes, significant settings, pivotal plot points, and vivid vocabulary that combine to engage our brains and our hearts. In this section of the website, you will find activities that invite you to dig deeper into each of these literary elements for a better understanding and enjoyment of the book.

To aid your investigation, save our "Writing While You Read" guide (see pages 17 and 18), with helpful tips on keeping a reading journal and annotating a book while you read.

Respond to the following prompts in your reading journal as you read (or re-read!) Parts I and II of *Smasher*:

- The key way a writer helps his or her readers connect with a story is through its characters. Which qualities, behaviors, and choices do you think make some characters more appealing than others? To help you answer this question with specific evidence from the book, use the Character Grid you'll find on pages 19 and 20 below (and you can make extra copies of page 20 if you need them). Tuck it inside your book, and, each time you meet a new character, take a minute to jot down the name and your initial observations about him or her on your Character Grid. Be sure to revisit your Grid every few chapters or so, too! There may be more ideas you want to add as you get to know each character better.
- Unfortunately, Charles has gotten used to the way Felton, Seamus, and Rodrick tease and torture him. Enduring their bullying has gotten to be such a regular part of Charles's life that he's even gotten pretty good at outrunning them (3). However, when Geneva arrives in Eamsford and sees these bullies holding Charles down and trying to stuff a live frog down his throat, she immediately jumps into action. Geneva helps Charles escape because she knows he doesn't deserve this kind of treatment. No one does. Have you ever witnessed or experienced bullying? What happened, and how did it make you feel? How did you react? If you were able to talk to Charles, how would you suggest that he prevent or protect himself from bullying?
- How does life in LAngeS 2042 compare to life in 1542 Eamsford? Draw a Venn diagram (see pages 21 and 22 below) in your journal to help you visualize the similarities and differences between these two settings. In which place does Charles seem most comfortable? How so? If you are interested in learning even more about the world Charlie comes from, find out what life was like in Tudor England (see page 9 below).
- When Gramercy Foxx introduces his plans for "The Future" to "twelve of the most influential businesspeople in the world," they are certainly impressed, but they are also concerned about how this new product will fit into existing society. They urge him to give the marketplace and consumers time to adjust: "We'll have to prepare for this, Foxx. Change of this



nature must be evolutionary, not revolutionary” (29-30). What is the difference between evolutionary and revolutionary change? Is one more preferable than the other? Why? If possible, include a real-world example from history to support your answer.

- According to Geneva, Mr. Foxx is “marketing [The Future] as if it can make your life perfect! But he’s taking away free will. When people look into a computer screen, the system infects them like a virus” (36). Once people are infected by The Future, Mr. Foxx will be able to control their minds and actions. At this point in your study of the novel, it is important to stop and consider just how dangerous The Future is. What exactly is free will? Why is it so important? What would your life be like if you didn’t have it?
- What is the Hum, and how can masters of the Hum use it? In what way(s) is the Hum good and useful? In what way(s) can the Hum be dangerous?
- Charles quickly discovers that the Hum is almost nonexistent in 2042 LAngeS, which is really surprising to him. Back home in Eamsford 1542, he could feel the Hum flowing around him everywhere he went. Based on what you have read so far, why do you think the Hum is so weak in the future? Do you see this as a problem? Why (or why not)?
- As you may have noticed, several of the characters and places in *Smasher* have unusual names that seem to give us a hint about their characteristics. For example, what characteristics would you associate with a person who has the name Gramercy Foxx? You might think of the way a fox character is portrayed in traditional fables and myths: a cunning, mischievous, and often dangerous trickster. Then you might ask yourself, “Does Mr. Foxx possess similar qualities? How so?” Which other names in this novel have seemingly significant meanings? How so? For a start, consider Jane Virtue, Geneva, LAngeS, and InterNext!
- How do you see Charles, whom Geneva has affectionately given the nickname “Charlie,” beginning to change the longer he is in LAngeS? Are these changes positive or negative? How can you tell? Include some specific examples from the book to illustrate.

Respond to the following prompts in your Reading Journal as you read (or re-read) Parts III-V of *Smasher*:

- Why do you think Mr. Foxx behaves the way he does? What is his problem? Why is he so bitter? Do you feel sympathetic toward him in any way? Why (or why not)? Be sure to include specific evidence from the book to support your answer.
- Near the beginning of the novel, Geneva tells Charlie “I’m just a machine pretending to be a real person” (37). However, the longer he knows her, the more Charlie realizes just how human his new friend seems to be even though she is a high-tech robot. In what way(s) does Geneva affect your understanding of what robots are capable of doing and being? How so?
- The closer Mr. Foxx gets to releasing The Future, the more Jane Virtue, John McCallum, and Mr. Ramirez begin to second-guess their allegiance to him. All three have a gut feeling that something isn’t right, but they choose to ignore it. Why do you think Virtue, McCallum, and Ramirez don’t trust their instincts? What do they gain by working for Mr. Foxx? Are these gains worth setting aside their own values and beliefs? Why (or why not)?



- After Geneva gets captured, Charlie manages to make it back to their hideout with his puppy. He is so exhausted and scared that he considers giving up and letting Mr. Foxx win. Then he realizes he still “[has] work to do. The Future [is] his own family’s hideous creation. It [is] his responsibility to destroy it” (193). Why do you think Charlie feels obligated to do everything he can to make sure Mr. Foxx doesn’t succeed? If you were in

Charlie’s position, what would you do? Why?

- When Charlie finally manages to break into the TerraThink building, he challenges Mr. Foxx to admit the truth about The Future: “What you’re doing is against nature. . . . You’re taking away freedom!” (233). Mr. Foxx, though, doesn’t agree: “Against nature? This is nature! Survival of the fittest—I’m the fittest! [. . .] Freedom has been an illusion since the invention of the credit card! People are already slaves to capitalism and consumerism. [. . .] I don’t need to justify anything. I know the difference between good and evil. It simply doesn’t apply to survival” (233). What does Mr. Foxx mean by this? In what way(s) is his assessment of human behavior correct? In what way(s) is he wrong?
- In Chapter 68, Charlie encounters someone he thought he’d never have the chance to speak to again. Who is this person, and how does she change Charlie’s understanding of the Hum, Mr. Foxx, and the true future of humankind?
- Once you have finished reading *Smasher*, look back at all of the notes you have collected on your Character Grid (see pages 19 and 20 below). Which characters have changed over the course of the novel? Which characters have stayed the same? Why? Consider Charlie in particular. What do you think he has learned about himself, and how will his approach to life going forward differ as a result?
- The storyline of *Smasher* revolves around a very challenging philosophical question: Is free will an [inherent](#) right, built into the very fabric of our universe? In some ways, it may be surprising to encounter such a difficult and multi-faceted question in a science fiction novel. However, some might argue that one reason science fiction is such a popular genre is because it allows readers to explore difficult questions in a world that is distinct and apart from their own. Doing so feels less threatening somehow.

Now that you have had a chance to consider the concept of free will from several different perspectives (particularly those of *Smasher*’s main characters), what theme or message would you say author Scott Bly is trying to get across to his readers? How do you know?

- Why do you think there are so many books—for readers of all ages!—about time travel and life in the future? What is so appealing about these topics?

Getting to the Root



English is a living language. It changes and grows all the time. One of the best ways to understand the history of the English language and to unlock the meanings of unfamiliar words is to learn Latin and Greek word parts. As you study biology, you will learn more and more of these word parts, and once you know them, you will begin to recognize them in all kinds of words—and you'll find that your knowledge of those word parts will help you decipher the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Roots are the "base" of plants, and Latin and Greek roots form the base of many English words. For example, the Latin root *audi* means "to hear." How many modern English words can you think of that include the root *audi*?

Next, take a look at each word part below. Beside each part is a word from *Smasher* containing that word part. You can find the word in context on the page number in parentheses.

- **traum** – **traumatized** (3)
- **inter, rog** – **interrogator** (8)
- **im, mers** – **immersive** (13)
- **pseud, onym** – **pseudonym** (40)
- **in, noc** – **innocuous** (136)
- **meta, physi** – **metaphysical** (232)

1. Can you determine the meaning of the root from your knowledge of the word beside it?
2. If not, think of other words that you know that also contain that root. What do those words have in common? Based on that common element, can you figure out the meaning of the root?
3. If you're still stumped, check out this [list of Latin and Greek roots](#).
4. Now that you know the meaning of the root, how many words can you generate that use the root?
5. Once you understand the meaning of the root, you'll find that even your understanding and appreciation of familiar words will deepen and grow when you think about how that root works in those words.

Words, Words, Words

Smasher is full of great words. Below is a list of some of the words from the book that may be unfamiliar to you, along with the page number on which each word appears in the story. Be sure to follow the steps below for other words in the book that are new to you.

- extent (7)
- remnant (12)
- OS, Operating System (14)
- intuitive (15)
- prodigy (19)
- incomprehensible (24)
- deregulation (30)
- corrupted (32)
- synthesis (37)
- reclusive (46)
- integrity (50)
- cacophony (75)
- complacent (75)
- dire (92)
- inadequacies (112)
- vulnerable (122)
- diversion (123)
- emanated (138)
- fathom (148)
- transmogrify (196)
- omnisciently (213)
- condescend (241)
- immobile (242)
- infinite (244)
- prominent (248)



Before you look these words up in a dictionary—or ask someone what they mean—try working through the following steps:

1. Generate a list of other words that share one or more of the same word parts. What do the words on the list have in common? Are there any clues from those commonalities that you can use to help figure out the meaning of the unknown word? Hint: Some word parts—as they appear in English words—have multiple meanings as we look back at the Latin and Greek, in part because of changes that have occurred in the words over the years. For example, does the "ped-" in "pedestrian" mean the same thing as the "ped" in "pediatrician"? Where there is possible confusion, or when you don't see familiar word parts, context clues (see step 2) are extremely important.
2. Go back and reread the word in its context. This context includes the sentence in which you find the word, but you should also read one or two sentences both before and after the appearance of the word. What context clues do you find that might unlock the meaning of the word for you?
3. Make your best guess at the meaning of the word.
4. Look up the definition in [a dictionary](#). Be sure to also look for information about the word's origin. This information will often contain the Latin or Greek word from which the word is derived.
5. How close was your guess?

Explore

Our world is full of connections—between people, places, and events. In this section of the website, you will find activities that uncover some important connections—in robotics, astrophysics, history, and mythology—between *Smasher* and our world.

Robotics



Equipping Robots with Artificial Intelligence

Once Charlie realizes that Geneva can camouflage herself as well as a gecko, scale walls barehanded, and time travel, he is convinced that she is “some kind of angel” (37). Geneva immediately sets him straight: “Angel? No! I’m an invention! No different than a table or a carriage. I’m made of more metal than flesh and blood. Robots were invented to help people. I’m a machine that follows directions. I only seem human” (37). Charlie can hardly believe what he is

hearing! As we find out later in the book, Geneva is a bit misguided about her true nature; nevertheless, she is the product of a highly advanced combination of engineering and computer programming skills.

As you know, *Smasher* takes place in the year 2042, which isn’t that far away. Are we really so close to having robots like Geneva living and working among us? Let’s find out!

Activities

- [Watch this video to learn about how robots are made and what they are designed to do.](#)
- [Trace the history of robotics and how robot designs have evolved over time.](#)
- [Compare the capabilities of utilitarian versus humanoid robots.](#) Which type of robots are we more likely to encounter in real-life? Why?
- [Explore how computer programmers are working to design neural networks that mimic the human brain so computers can think, learn, and adapt on their own.](#) Researchers are already designing neural networks to create virtual assistants (like Siri, Cortana, and Alexa) and [self-driving cars](#). Could these advances in artificial intelligence someday be integrated with robotics technology to create humanoid robots or robotics-enhanced humans like Geneva? How so?
- Remember those tiny spider bots that flush Geneva and Charlie out of their hiding places toward the end of the book? Real-life advances in bioengineering and robotics are making such creations more and more possible. Consider [this pollinator bee](#), or this flying and swimming robot called a [Robobee](#) that mimics the capabilities of diving sea birds.

- If this information has inspired you to join in this creative and cutting edge field, [find out what it takes to become a robotics engineer.](#)

Now that you know more about robotics engineering and artificial intelligence, think about author Scott Bly's vision of what robots in 2042 LAngeS can do. How much would you say is based on scientific fact? How much is the author's imagination?

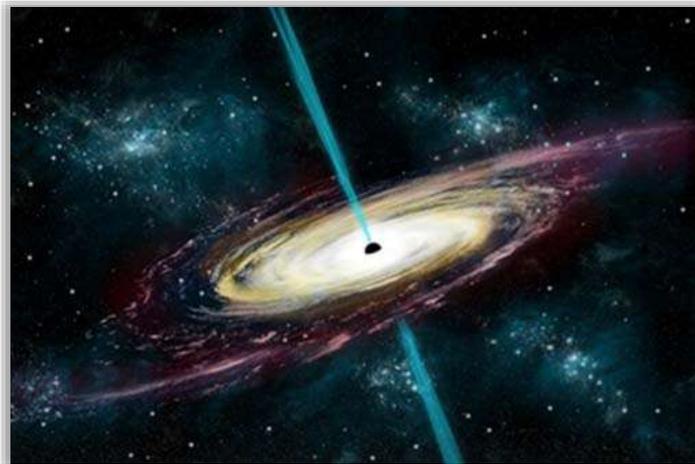
Deep Space Exploration

Unraveling the Mysteries of Black Holes

Without Geneva, Charlie isn't sure he can get home to 1542 Eamsford, and he desperately needs his grandfather's help to defeat Gramercy Foxx. In Chapter 48, Charlie closes his eyes in deep concentration and envisions Geneva opening a portal to bring him to the future: "Her arms in a circle, she had touched her fingers together. *Smasher*. Particles inside her accelerated in a circle around her arms until they *smashed* into each other. A black hole" (164). Charlie suddenly realizes that Geneva brought him to LAngeS through a black hole! Could black holes actually make time travel possible one day?

Activities

- [Identify the types and characteristics of black holes.](#)
- [Find out how black holes are detected](#) and [how often astronomers find new ones.](#)
- [Learn how a Gamma ray telescope enables astronomers to pinpoint the location of black holes.](#)
- [Take an imaginary field trip to outer space to learn how black holes anchor our cosmos.](#) If you like puzzles, be sure to check out the word find at the bottom of this Web page!
- [Get a sense of how black holes work by conducting this easy at-home experiment.](#)
- [Check out these NASA photos of real black holes.](#) What do you notice about the shapes and colors?
- [Test your knowledge of black holes with this printable board game.](#)
- [Consider whether it could be possible to time travel using black holes or some other means.](#)



Based on what you have learned, what do you think black holes can tell us about how our universe grows and changes over time? Do you think figuring out how black holes work will enable humans to travel through time someday? Why (or why not)?

History

Real Life During England's Tudor Era

According to the opening lines of Chapter 1, Charlie is from a "Remote Mountain Hamlet Outside the Village of Eamsford, 1542" (3). Other than that, the book offers very few clues about the world in which Charlie was raised before Geneva brings him to LAngeles. Let's find out more about what life was like when the Tudors were on the English Throne!

Activities

- [Trace this timeline of major historical events during the Tudor Era in England.](#)
- Impress your family and friends with [these Tudor Era trivia facts!](#)
- [Meet the monarchs in the Tudor family line.](#) Why do you think [Queen Elizabeth I](#) is one of the most talked about monarchs in world history?
- Compare how children [learned](#) and [played](#) during this time period to the way you do these things today. How do you think a family's situation in the [Tudor social structure](#) affected the way children were educated and raised?
- [Learn the rules of the joust](#), one of Tudor England's favorite sports, and try your hand at [this online jousting game](#).
- Pinpoint the defining characteristics of Tudor [food](#), [fashion](#), and [architecture](#). Where do you see the influence of Tudor style in the world today?
- [Meet William Shakespeare](#), one of the Tudor Era's most famous authors.
- Consider the [popular beliefs and superstitions](#) that shaped people's worldview during during the Tudor dynasty. How does this information help you better understand the way Charlie's family was treated in Smasher?

In your journal, draw a Venn diagram (see pages 21 and 22 below) to help you visualize the similarities and differences between Tudor England and LAngeles. Then reconsider how author Scott Bly depicts Charlie's adjustment to life five hundred years in the future. Does Charlie's smooth transition into Geneva's world seem possible and realistic to you? Why (or why not)?

World Literature

Opening Pandora's Box... Over and Over Again

For the climax of *Smasher*, the book's author borrows a famous magical object from an ancient Greek myth: Pandora's Box. Charlie must use the box in a particular way in order to defeat Mr. Foxx once and for all. You have probably heard of Pandora's Box before, but do you know why? Keep reading to learn more about the myth that introduced Pandora's Box to the world.

Activities

- [Read the myth of Pandora's Box retold in today's language.](#)
- Over the centuries, many writers and artists have been inspired to create new works with this myth in mind. Scott Bly, author of *Smasher*, is one example. For another, [examine this painting of Pandora](#) and consider the moment at which the artist has chosen to depict this mythical figure. What do you notice about the colors, textures, and overall style of this piece? What do you think the artist hopes to communicate about Pandora and/or her situation?
- Learn more about [life in ancient Greece](#) and [the Greek Pantheon of gods and goddesses](#) upon whom many myths are based. How many do you recognize?
- To dig even deeper into this topic, [complete this self-paced short course on Greek mythology.](#)

Versions of Pandora's story have been handed down through the ages, and even now Pandora's Box serves as a powerful symbol in humanity's collective consciousness. This means that people in many walks of life all around the world have heard of Pandora's Box and know what it is, even if they aren't familiar with the original Greek myth. What do you think makes this symbol so memorable? In what way(s) do you see Bly's use of Pandora's Box as fresh and creative?

Create

An important part of learning is having the chance to produce something of your own. Here you will find engaging projects that connect with the novel and that allow your creative abilities to shine.

Be a Bioengineer

The more he gets to know Geneva, the more amazed Charlie is by everything she can do. Shortly after his arrival in LAngeS, as he is hanging from a ladder outside a window in the TerraThinc building, Charlie accidentally becomes hypnotized by Mr. Foxx. Luckily, Geneva is watching and springs into action: "Fast as lightning, Geneva [darts] down the ladder. She [flips] her feet toward the sky and [catches Charlie], defying gravity as casually as if she were standing right-side up on solid ground. The skin of her fingers and toes [ripples] into millions of microscopic hooks, each entangling the electrical fields of the molecules of Charles's skin and the ladder" (33-34). To Charlie's surprise, Geneva even has a "Gecko mode" (34)!

Did you know that real-life bioengineers are working to develop similar technology right now? In a brand new field of study called [biomimicry](#), researchers are working to imitate nature by modeling materials, structures, and systems on animals and insects as well as biological processes and systems. [Here are just a few examples of the innovative designs they have created in the last few years.](#) (Be sure to scroll down to check out the gecko feet adhesives!) [Some researchers are even creating robotic replicas of existing animals and insects that are designed to join living animal groups and film their daily activities and interactions.](#) In all of these ways, bioengineers are identifying a problem, observing nature for possible solutions, and designing solutions with the safety and longevity of our planet, and all of its inhabitants, in mind.



Now that you know what biomimicry is all about, it's time to put on your bioengineer's hat and give design thinking a try!

Activities

If you were a bioengineer in the field of biomimicry, what kind of creature, structure, or process would you like to imitate in nature? What problem would you like to solve, or what ability would you like to enhance? Why?

Take some time to sketch your design. Consider not only the outer appearance

but also the special skills, adaptations, or construction that would help your design make a unique and meaningful contribution to the world around us. Feel free to combine elements from several different creatures, structures, or processes to create your own hybrid robot! Remember, "Gecko mode" is only one of Geneva's special abilities!

If you'd like to dig even deeper, ask a parent or other trusted adult to help you do some online research for information on the creature(s), structure(s), or process(es) you've selected. This will help you refine your design and consider how a bioengineer would go about making it a reality. Then [visit this Virtual Robotics Lab](#) or [try out some of these other projects](#) for even more hands-on experience with robotics design, construction, and use.

Storyboard a Scene from *Smasher*

As you read Scott Bly's *Smasher*, do you ever stop to imagine how the setting, characters, and action sequences would look and sound on the big screen? Audiences love seeing their favorite stories and characters brought to life, so filmmakers are always looking for exciting, plot-driven books to turn into live-action or animated movies.

When filmmakers find a book they would like to adapt for film, they begin with scripting and storyboarding scenes so the director, actors, set designers, costume makers, film score composer, and camera crew can visualize how the story will unfold on screen. Storyboarding is an essential step in the filmmaking process because it ensures that no one gets off track or wastes resources during filming. Storyboarding is also really fun because everyone involved with the film gets the opportunity to be creative, try out lots of possibilities, and work together to find the best possible way to tell the story.

Activity

Imagine you are in charge of scripting and storyboarding your favorite scene from *Smasher*. Before you begin, [learn a little more about how storyboarding works](#) and [how to use a variety of camera shots in your scene](#). Then review the scene in your book and jot down some notes about how you think the setting, characters, and actions should look and sound.

When you are ready, start mapping out your camera shots on post-it notes (or small scraps of paper), so you can easily reorganize them. Once you are satisfied with the organization and variety of your camera shots, make more

detailed drawings of each camera shot using the panels on [this free storyboarding template](#). For an added challenge, add notes for camera cues, dialogue, and sound effects underneath each panel.

If you enjoy this activity, ask a parent or other trusted adult to help you look for library books, tutorial videos, or local classes where you can learn and practice more storyboarding techniques. [You could even consider a career as a storyboarder!](#)

Launch Your Own Vlog

In the early chapters of *Smasher*, we meet Jane Virtue, a “young vlogger” in whom Mr. Foxx “[recognizes] the flush of idealism, the hope for a better world” (45-46). In fact, on her first day on the job at TerraThinc, Jane tells Mr. Foxx, “My integrity is everything to me . . . I will not write or report anything I don’t believe is true” (57). People follow Jane’s vlog, *The Daily Virtue*, because they trust her to be honest. In addition, because they can see and hear Jane as she delivers information, viewers feel more connected with her, as though they know her personally.

In real life, vlogging has become a very popular way of sharing information and ideas. Making a vlog is a lot like writing a newsletter, newspaper column, or public-facing diary with one big exception: Vloggers share their ideas and activities through a live-action video, rather than written words alone. This helps to build a stronger connection between the vlogger and his or her audience. A vlogger typically focuses on a particular area of interest (like music, art, crafting, politics, fashion, gaming, popular culture, or an academic discipline) and posts new content regularly. A vlogger also chooses a style (conversational, formal, or somewhere in between) depending on the subject matter and the audience with which she or he hopes to connect. Best of all, vlogs are really easy to make, publish, and maintain from home.

These days even kids are getting in on the vlogging action! In fact, you may have heard of—or even follow!—some popular kid vloggers like [Kid President](#) (See especially his video “25 Reasons to be Thankful!”) or [Evan from EvanTube](#). Hopefully, these young entrepreneurs will inspire you to give vlogging a try, too! Here are some suggestions to help you get started:

1. **Be Focused.** Choose your area of interest and narrow in on a concept, project, or demonstration you can easily cover in 3-5 minutes. Make a brief outline of the ideas, information, and/or examples you want to cover in your vlog entry. Then practice what you plan to say in front of a mirror, using your outline as a guide. (Remember, your audience will lose interest if you read directly from a script or your vlog entry goes too long.)
2. **Be Clear.** To ensure your audience can see and hear you at all times, you’ll need to have good lighting, a steady camera, and a confident speaking voice. Find a well lit area for filming and prop your video camera (an MP3 player or cell phone will work well, too!) at your eye level, and avoid standing too far away, so the built-in microphone will pick up your voice. You could also ask a friend or family member to record you, as long as it won’t give you the giggles to have someone else in the room!
3. **Be Yourself.** No matter how nervous you feel, don’t allow yourself to go into robot mode! The people watching your vlog entry want to get to know the real you, so try to relax and let your personality shine through. Speak into the camera just as you would to classmates at school. Feel free to use whatever body language feels natural for you as well.
4. **Be Creative.** Find ways to personalize your vlog entry to make it more interesting. What clothing will you wear? What colors, props, or scenery will viewers see in the background? How would adding some music or sound effects add some audio energy? Remember, your goal is to capture and hold your audience’s attention!

5. **Be Safe.** If you would like to post your vlog entry online, you must first ask a parent or guardian for permission and assistance. In many cases, doing so makes the vlog available to everyone with access to the Internet, so you must be sure you are not sharing personal information (full name, address, school name, e-mail address, or phone number) that could put your safety—or anyone else’s—at risk. Also, everything you write or share online is a reflection of you, and should be treated as both permanent and public. Your parent or guardian will help you make wise decisions about how you want to be perceived by others, including classmates, teachers, and family members, as well as potential schools and employers, that might one day see the interactions you have had online.

After you have given vlogging a trial run, be sure to share your vlog entry with family and friends. Ask for their feedback and consider what you would do differently next time. If you plan to continue vlogging on a regular basis, ask a parent or other trusted adult to help you explore launching your own YouTube channel or setting up a private video sharing system for friends and family.

Reflect & Connect Prompts

In Duke TIP’s online Book Club, the “Connect” prompts provide an opportunity for students to share their ideas about the book with other Duke TIP students. You may choose to record your responses to these questions in your Reading Journal, or you can use them to talk about the book with friends or classmates who have also read it.

Bully Battles

In the book’s opening chapter, we find Charles flat on his back in the mud, pinned to the ground by three very heavy bullies who have just stuffed a live frog in his mouth. This is clearly not Charles’s first run-in with Felton, Seamus, and Rodrick, either. Although “Charles [is] faster and usually [gets] away . . . this time he [has slipped] on the riverbank” (3). Luckily, Geneva shows up to help him, or who knows what might have happened! She distracts the bullies and helps her new friend “Charlie” get away safely.

Why do you think bullying is so common? In what way(s) is it difficult to stand up to bullies—either by yourself or on someone else’s behalf?

Right on Time

As soon as they arrive in LAngeS, Geneva takes Charlie directly to the TerraThinc building to help her spy on Gramercy Foxx. He is more than willing to help! That’s why he came through the Gap with her, after all. Still, the experience is almost overwhelming for Charlie; there are so many astonishing new sights, sounds, and ideas in the future. As she watches her new friend trying to adjust, Geneva knows she must “wait for the right moment to let him know the truth” (28).

Have you ever had an important idea or secret you had to keep to yourself, like Geneva? How did you go about finding the “right” time and person with whom to share it? Tell us about it!

Sticker Shock

Over the first few chapters of *Smasher*, we quickly learn that Gramercy Foxx is up to something big, and—contrary to popular belief—it isn't good! He has gained the public's trust and admiration to "set an unstoppable machine into motion. . . . For years Foxx [has] been ratcheting up the public's need to have ever-increasing collections of products. He [has] diverted the public's attention from truly important events and slowly turned news into entertainment. . . . It all [adds] up to a perfect storm of blitz advertising" (39-40). Now consumers around the world are in a frenzy to buy Foxx's newest product, The Future, even though they know nothing about how it works or what it is designed to do.

In what way(s) does the consumer frenzy in 2042 LAngeS lead you to look differently at how people spend their time, money, and energy in our world today? What similarities and differences do you see in terms of how products and services are advertised to—and used by—consumers? Do you think our world is in danger of becoming like LAngeS? Why (or why not)? Be sure to share at least one example to support your answer!

Sneak Peek at the Future

Which aspect of life in 2042 LAngeS do you find the most interesting, exciting, or surprising? Would you like to live in author Scott Bly's vision of the future? Why (or why not)?

Powering Down

Once Charlie gets a sense of what life in 2042 LAngeS is like, he "wonder[s] if technology really [is] a change for the better. Charlie [hasn't] once noticed the moon or stars since [he] left home. No wonder the Hum had been forgotten here" (97). VidFons, tablets, and immersive screens constantly demand people's attention.

In your opinion, do the benefits of technology outweigh the drawbacks or vice versa? How so? Based on your own observations and experience, in what way(s) do you see technology making our world a better place? In what way(s) do you see technology holding us back?

Forward Thinking

In *Smasher*, author Scott Bly has a distinct vision of what our world will be like in the not-so-distant future. Dreaming about the future, as you know, is a highly popular pastime among writers and filmmakers! Does reading this novel make you think of any other future-themed books or movies you have enjoyed? Which one? Tell us a little about the story (no spoilers, please!) and what you like about it. What connections do you see with the characters, conflict, setting, or plot of *Smasher*?

Flying Under the Radar

Spoiler Alert: If you haven't finished the book, stop reading here and come back later!

When he finally breaks into Gramercy Foxx's office, Charlie knows there is only one way to win. He mumbles to himself, "Please, please underestimate me" (217). If he can manage to convince Foxx not to see him as a serious threat, Charlie may be able to put his grandfather's plan into motion.

Have you ever tried to keep your special abilities a secret, like Charlie, so you could surprise and impress someone? How so? Were you successful? Tell us about it!

A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed

Spoiler Alert: If you haven't finished the book, stop reading here and come back later!

Near the end of the book, when Charlie finally finds Geneva again, he feels “powerless. . . . His best friend [lies] dying. He [has] never had a real friend before. And now he [cannot] even bring her a sip of water” (226). Charlie wishes there were something—anything!—he could do to help Geneva.

Have you ever had a friend or family member who desperately needed help you were unable to give? What happened? What was this experience like for you? What did you learn from it?

Keep Reading

A few thoughts on books and reading...

"When I have a little money, I buy books; and if I have any left, I buy food and clothes."—
Erasmus

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."—Dr. Seuss

"Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read."—Groucho Marx



What's next?

We hope that you enjoyed reading *Smasher*, by Scott Bly. Check your email for information about our next book club selection. In the meantime, if you are looking for a new best friend—and aren't inside a dog—here are some books you might enjoy. Don't forget to use the tips from "Writing While You Read" (see pages 17 and 18) to deepen your enjoyment and understanding of these books too.

- *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*, by Robert C. O'Brien
- *Rasco and the Rats of NIMH*, by Jane Leslie Conly
- *All Four Stars*, by Tara Dairman
- *The Stars of Summer*, by Tara Dairman (sequel to *All Four Stars*)
- *The Tell-Tale Start* and other books in "The Misadventures of Edgar & Allan Poe" series by Gordon McAlpine
- *Masterminds*, by Gordon Korman
- *My Near-Death Adventures*, by Alison DeCamp
- *The Scavengers*, by Michael Perry
- *A Single Shard*, by Linda Sue Park
- *The Island of Dr. Libris*, by Chris Grabenstein
- *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library*, by Chris Grabenstein
- *The Lost Kingdom*, by Matthew J. Kirby
- *Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures*, by Kate DiCamillo
- *The House of Power*, by Patrick Carman
- *Rivers of Fire*, by Patrick Carman
- *The Dark Planet*, by Patrick Carman
- *The Phantom Tollbooth*, by Norton Juster
- *Navigating Early*, by Clare Vanderpool
- *The Apothecary*, by Maile Meloy
- *The Apprentices*, by Maile Meloy (sequel to *The Apothecary*)
- *The City of Ember*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The People of Sparks*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The Prophet of Yonwood*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The Diamond of Darkhold*, by Jeanne DuPrau
- *The Mysterious Benedict Society*, by Trenton Lee Stewart
- *Chasing Vermeer*, by Blue Balliett
- *The Lightning Thief*, by Rick Riordan
- *Fever 1793*, by Laurie Halse Anderson
- *Treasure Island*, by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, by Brian Selznick



Writing While You Read

Have you ever read every word on a page, and turned every page, but when you finished reading, you couldn't remember anything that you had read? If so, you're not alone! Reading can be relaxing, but sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that reading is passive, when it should be active. This doesn't mean you need to run while reading – that might not be a good idea. Writing as you read, however, makes reading active. This process involves some effort, but the payoff for that effort is a deeper understanding and greater enjoyment of the books that you read.

Two strategies for being an active reader are keeping a reading journal and annotating your books.

How do I keep a reading journal?

Below are some suggestions of things that you might write in your reading journal. Experiment with them. You may find that one strategy works really well for you, while others don't work at all. There's really not a right or wrong way to keep a reading journal, as long as you use it as a place to explore your thoughts, reactions, and questions as you read.

What Do I Write?

Write a brief summary, in your own words, at the end of each chapter or section. Include the main ideas or concepts of the chapter, major events in the plot, and any new information that you learn in the chapter.

Do you meet a new character? If so, what is the character like? How do you know? What are the reasons behind what that character says and does? How is the character like other characters in the book? How is the character different? Does this new character remind you of characters you've read about in other books?

Does the setting change? If so, how does the new setting compare and contrast with the previous one? Why does the setting change?

Create your own title for the chapter. If the book includes chapter titles, you might write about why the author has chosen that particular title for the chapter. How does it relate to the main ideas or concepts, major events, and character action in the chapter?

Respond to the chapter. What is the most interesting thing in the chapter? What did you learn that you didn't know before? Do you agree or disagree with the choices the author is making about plot and character? Why or why not? What do you think is going to happen next? How can you connect what is happening in the book to other things you've read? To other things you know? To your own experience?

Identify words that you don't know. Some of these words may just be new to you; others may be jargon, terminology that is used in a particular field or academic discipline. Look these words up in a dictionary, write down their definitions in your notebook, and be sure you understand their meanings and how the author is using them. Often these words are some of the most important in the reading.

Make note of passages where you are confused and/or have questions, and be sure to include a page number. Once you finish the chapter, you can return to the passages. Perhaps further reading clarified the confusion. If not, you know exactly which points in the text to further research or to ask questions about.

Write down striking or unusual use of language. Often writers use particular words, expressions, or sentences in ways that we wouldn't have thought to use them, and the effect can really jump off the page at us. If you come across a passage that seems really cool to you, write it down in your reading journal.



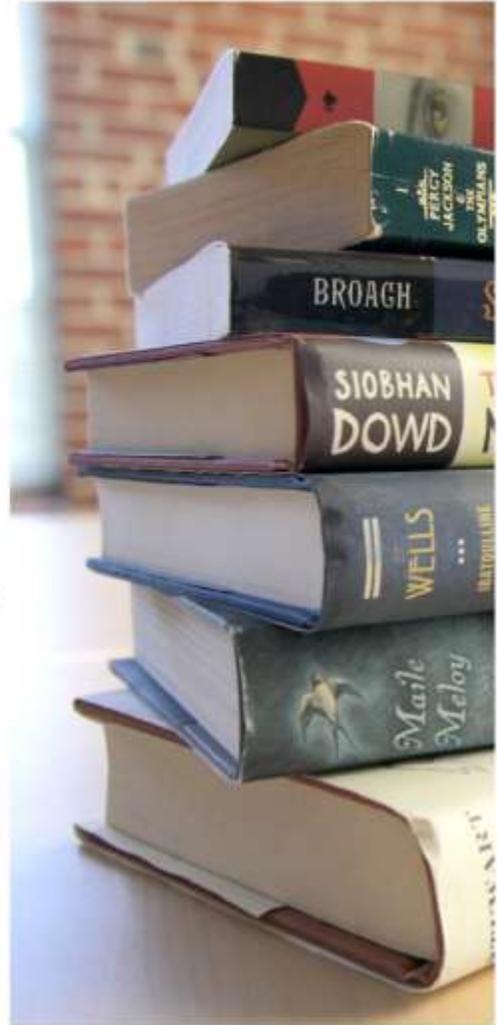
Throughout the online book club activities, you will find activities that are specifically labeled "Reading Journal." When you see that label, read the writing prompt, and respond to it in your reading journal. These prompts will usually ask you to write about a personal connection to what you've been reading. For example, a journal prompt might ask you to write about a time when you found yourself in a situation that is similar to a situation of one of the characters in the book.

To Write or To Type, That is the Question!

Your reading journal doesn't have to be a hard-copy, hand-written one, but there are some advantages to using an old-fashioned journal:

- The physical act of writing promotes a stronger memory for new words, phrases, and strategies you will be learning
- The hard copy notebook can evolve into a collage, a scrapbook, even a work of art that represents your creative, messy, overflowing mind!

How and where you keep a reading journal is much less important than actually doing it! So find an old notebook that may be buried in your desk, ask mom or dad if you can buy an inexpensive composition book, or create a new folder on your home computer and get started!!



How do I annotate a book?

As the word suggests, annotating a book involves making notes or other types of marks that help you focus on particular words or passages that seem important, are often repeated, relate to other things you've read, or simply interest you as a reader. An active reader annotates a text by doing any or all of the following:

UNDERLINING

Specific words that convey significant events or elements of the story's characters, plot or theme

VERTICAL LINE ALONG THE MARGIN

This helps the reader quickly find an important passage underlined, or to highlight a paragraph or other section too long to underline.

✱ ASTERISK/STAR/DOODLE ✱

Placed in the margin, this device is reserved for the most important, special ideas, events or elements of the book. There would be no more than a dozen of these in the entire book; by flipping through, one could easily find once again the most significant passages in the text.

4. NUMBERS

Placing numbers in the margin can help count a set of related points or ideas the author is listing.

P.#32 PAGE NUMBERS

Often indicated by "p. #" or "Cf. #" next to the number, this indicates an idea or element is connected to another on different page of the book, and should be considered together.

CIRCLES

These serve the same function as underlining key words or phrases, but may be reserved for the **BIGGEST** ideas or facts in the book.

Of course, all of these strategies involve marking in the book. So if you're planning on annotating your book, we recommend that you have your own copy – librarians take a very dim view of writing in books that belong to the media center/library!



Names, Places, & Faces...Oh, My!

Keeping Track with a Character Grid

When reading a new book, it can be helpful to keep track of the characters you meet and what you think about them. This Character Grid is one way to do just that!

Characters in books (or movies!) are often very like people you meet every day in real life. You may notice the way a character dresses, talks, thinks, behaves, or makes new friends. As you record your ongoing thoughts here, remember that some characters will change and grow depending on what happens to them—or whom they meet—as the story progresses. These are called **dynamic** characters. On the other hand, some characters stay the same no matter what happens to them. These are called **static** characters. Whether a character is willing to change and grow can affect the kind of person he or she turns out to be in the end, and it can also influence how we, as readers, feel about that character.

For example, Marlin, from the movie *Finding Nemo*, starts out as an overprotective dad who doesn't believe his son Nemo should try new things because he might get hurt. As the movie progresses, though, Marlin makes new friends, like Crush and Dory, who help him learn to guide and encourage his son without keeping him from experiencing the fun life has to offer. By the end of the movie, Marlin has changed his way of thinking about how to be a "good" dad. This not only makes him a dynamic character but also makes us like him better and want him to succeed as a parent. (If Marlin had not changed his ways, we might have ended up being frustrated by him.)

INSTRUCTIONS:

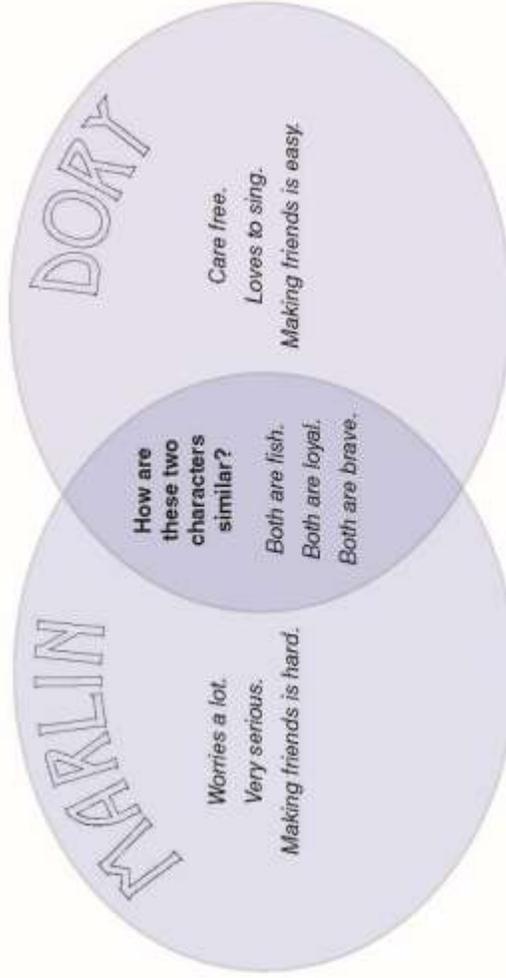
1. Tuck this Character Grid into your book or Reading Journal. Then, each time you meet a new character in the book, take a moment to write down his or her name on the grid and answer the "As You Are Reading" questions. (If you run out of writing room, feel free to create your own grid or answer these questions in your Reading Journal!)
2. Once you have finished the book, go back through your grid and answer the "After You Have Finished the Book" questions. As a way of wrapping up, consider: With which character(s) did you connect most strongly? What does this tell you about yourself?

Character's Name	As You Are Reading...		After You Have Finished the Book...	
	Where/When do you meet this character?	Describe this character's appearance and behavior.	What stands out to you about this character's name, behavior, or choices?	Why is this character important to the story overall?
			Is this character static or dynamic ? What evidence from the book tells you so?	

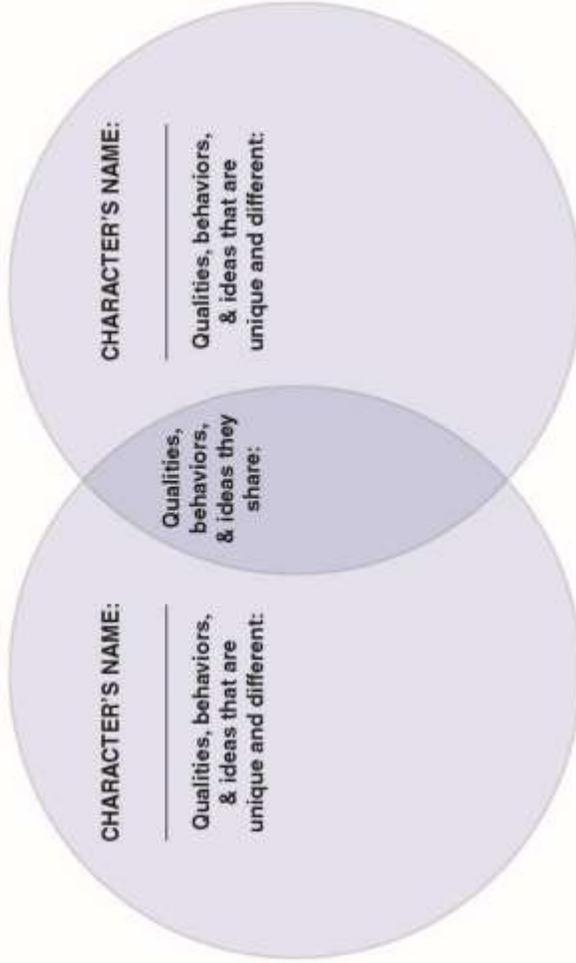
Side-By-Side Comparison with a Venn Diagram

Creating a Venn Diagram can help you visualize and make sense of the similarities and differences between two or more things. For example, as you are reading a book, you could use a Venn Diagram to compare key characters, places, or events.

A basic Venn Diagram is made up of two, partially overlapping circles. Let's say you wanted to compare two characters. In the outer part of each circle, you would write one character's name and list the qualities, behaviors, and ideas that make him or her unique and different. In the space where the circles overlap, write down characteristics the characters share. If we were comparing Marlin and Dory, from the movie *Finding Nemo*, here is how our Venn Diagram might look. (If you've seen this movie, try adding some observations of your own!):



Now you are ready to draw your own Venn Diagram in your Reading Journal! To get started, try something like this:



If you want to compare more than two characters, places, or events, simply add additional circles to your Venn Diagram. Be creative! Just pay attention to the places where your circles overlap and look for similarities there. Here are some other possibilities:

