

*HOLLYWOOD HIGH: ACHIEVE THE HONORABLE*

Reading Guide And Curriculum: A Study Of Adolescence

By Amy Kaufman Burk

Dear Reader and Educator,

*Hollywood High: Achieve The Honorable* is autobiographical fiction, based on my first year of high school. Tenth grade opened my world on several levels, with the high-voltage intensity intrinsic to the teenage years.

As an ex-adolescent, a therapist for over twenty years and a mother of three adults, I've experienced the adolescent years from several vantage points. The changes that take place during high school are astonishing in both breadth and depth – ego development, cognitive development, physical development, hormonal development, psychosexual development, moral development, object relations. Adolescence is characterized by warp-speed change. As the journey unfolds, the teenager holds the potential either to grow stronger or to sustain damage.

When I wrote this reading guide, I tried to avoid clinical jargon. With the exception of a few basic terms, I used “plain” English. I chose my language carefully, with respect for the many useful approaches to understanding adolescents, and for the different vocabulary of diverse theoretical perspectives.

Thank you for your interest in *Hollywood High: Achieve The Honorable*.

Amy Kaufman Burk  
Doctor of Mental Health

CHAPTER 1

“The Wrong Galaxy”

Caroline Black begins tenth grade, her first year at Hollywood High School. She meets Kayla, another new girl. This chapter takes place in their English class, taught by Mr. Cohen.

CHARACTERS

Caroline Black: protagonist, scared in her new school, white.

Mr. Cohen: gifted English teacher.

Kayla Davidson: will become Caroline's closest friend at Hollywood High, Black.

Kurt Christianson: obnoxious, sexually harasses Kayla.

Andrea “Elvia” Krause: changes her name every year, dresses in black.

Kevin “Dreads” Sherwood: likes Elvia.

Sharon Greenberg: uptight, braids.

Mort Holloway: always forgets to bring a pencil.

Egbert “Presto” Petrovich: surfer

#### ADOLESCENCE

Hallmarks of adolescence are extreme anxiety in a new situation and feeling intensely out of place (in the “wrong galaxy”).

#### DISCUSSION

What do you learn about Caroline’s internal structure in this chapter?

(Sits in the front row; thinks constantly; ridiculously polite; extremely intuitive; open to friendship; sees the talent in the person who carved up her desk and is mortified by her own admiration.)

Caroline has a large stake in presenting herself as perfect, which can lead to her being annoying and prissy. Yet, she also has hidden fires, tremendous flexibility and unusual strength.

Can you find evidence for these qualities in the first chapter?

What do these qualities indicate about her level of ego development?

What makes Mr. Cohen an effective teacher for this age group?

(His ability to set limits, show respect for his students, uses humor.)

#### CHAPTER 2

##### “The Library”

Caroline goes to the Hollywood High library and witnesses a knife fight. One boy is cut in the face. Another boy stands on a desk, chanting “The Duke.”

#### CHARACTERS

Caroline

The Duke (Duke Hunter): new character, leader of a gang.

Tom: new character, member of The Duke’s gang, cut during the fight.

Drake: new character, The Duke shouts, “I’ll kill Drake!” (The reader knows nothing about Drake at this point. Drake is also referred to as Silver Lamé, and will become the novel’s antagonist.)

#### ADOLESCENCE

The word “library” conjures up images of quiet, reading, tranquility, studying. This chapter portrays a situation quite different from the connotations of the chapter’s title. The title and content of the chapter are deliberately mismatched.

This mismatch is also typical of the adolescent experience. The places from childhood that used to feel comfortable now feel like a mismatch. Adolescents often struggle to find an environment where they fit in, and teenagers often feel most

uncomfortable in their own skin. These feelings can stem from a difficult environment, from the adolescent's internal state, or both.

#### DISCUSSION

How do you understand this mismatched feeling from a psychological perspective? (Think about ego development, identity vs. role confusion, syntonetic and dystonic personality traits, an integrated ego.)

From the perspective of adolescent development, how do you understand Caroline's fear in a dangerous situation, and her simultaneous attraction?

#### CHAPTER 3

##### "Silver Lamé"

During her next free period, avoiding the library, Caroline goes to the lawn in front of the school, and is approached by Silver Lamé (Drake), a pimp. She flees to her guidance counselor's office, and begins to form a strong connection with Mrs. Richardson. Caroline agrees to tutor The Duke (the student stomping on the desk in Chapter 2).

#### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Mrs. Richardson: new character, Caroline's guidance counselor

Silver Lamé: new character, actual name Drake, first mentioned in Chapter 2.

#### ADOLESCENCE

Like all adolescents, Caroline's ego is uneven – a clunky jigsaw puzzle of mature and immature pieces.

Adolescents often view the world in polarities – good/evil; friend/enemy; support/danger.

#### DISCUSSION

What are Caroline's ego strengths and ego deficits? (Caroline overthinks everything.)

What characteristics are important in a high school guidance counselor? Do you think Mrs. Richardson does a good job establishing her relationship with Caroline?

#### CHAPTER 4

##### "The Duke"

Caroline meets The Duke for their first tutoring session. Although they seem like opposites, they form a bond. Caroline realizes that The Duke needs glasses, and takes him to meet Mrs. Richardson.

#### CHARACTERS

Caroline

The Duke

Miss Orville: new character, Caroline's Latin teacher. Caroline tutors The Duke in Miss Orville's classroom.

Mrs. Richardson

#### ADOLESCENCE

Adolescents are drawn to others who are different. They are fascinated by peers who bring their deeply buried fantasies to life.

#### DISCUSSION

The Duke and Caroline seem like opposites. In their first meeting, however, they forge a strong connection. How are The Duke and Caroline alike? How are they different?

What attracts each of them to the other?

What does their connection reveal about their ego structures?

#### CHAPTER 5

"Make The Change"

Caroline and her parents attend an entertainment industry event, an opening of a musical theater production. Caroline is upset by the values of the entertainment industry. At the end of the production, she commits to leaving Laurel Academy and staying at Hollywood High School.

#### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Leah Black: new character, Caroline's mother (a psychiatrist).

Geoff Black: new character, Caroline's father (an Oscar winning cinematographer).

Millie Charlemagne: new character, an actress.

#### ADOLESCENCE

The hyper-emphasis on physical appearance in the film industry, where Caroline is growing up, exacerbates the normative self-consciousness of adolescence.

## DISCUSSION

What does Caroline reveal about her relationship to the environment in the film industry?

How do Caroline's feelings about the film industry influence her decision to "make the change"?

Confusion and rebellion are hallmarks of adolescents and are important in the consolidation of identity. Even in a stable environment, emotional shifts and changes cause teens to feel off balance. How does it affect adolescent ego development when the home or school environment is a mismatch for the teenager's core identity?

## CHAPTER 6

### "Girls' Bathroom"

Caroline walks into the girls bathroom at school, and finds a group of girls beating up another girl. Elvia (from Caroline's English class) breaks up the fight. Kayla realizes what's going on and comes into the bathroom to make sure her friend is safe. Caroline and Kayla's friendship grows stronger.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline

Kayla

Elvia: in Caroline's English class, always wears black, changes her name every year.

Della: new character, leader of the girls beating up Nellie.

Nellie: new character, beaten up.

## ADOLESCENCE

During adolescence, nothing feels familiar – your body, your voice, your emotions, your relationships, your family, your religious beliefs. Even the girls' bathroom is a dangerous, unpredictable place. The world feels alien, but most of all, the person feels like an alien. The self (ego) feels dystonic instead of syntonic.

## DISCUSSION

What do you learn about Caroline, Kayla and Elvia – their characters and their object relations?

## CHAPTER 7

### "Varsity Basketball Sheiks"

Caroline joins the girls varsity basketball team. She meets the captain, Irene, who will become one of her closest friends. Their coach, Mrs. Cuthbertson, paints her face with bright colors and wears a tutu.

#### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Mrs. Cuthbertson: new character, Caroline's basketball coach, always wears a tutu.

Irene: new character, captain of the basketball team, will become one of Caroline's close friends.

Shawna and Lureen: new characters, two girls on the team. They will play a more prominent role in Chapter 33.

#### ADOLESCENCE

During adolescence, teens find themselves taking risks. Some of those risks are unhealthy while others are healthy. Learning the difference between healthy and dangerous risks is a task of adolescence.

#### DISCUSSION

Why is joining the basketball team an important step in Caroline's emotional development?

How does risk-taking behavior relate to the adolescent's developing an internal locus of control?

#### CHAPTER 8

"The Intellectual Icon"

Caroline completes a creative writing assignment for Mr. Cohen, about a girl growing up in the film industry. Caroline's "story" is actually autobiographical.

#### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Mr. Cohen

#### ADOLESCENCE

During adolescence, people solidify their belief systems, the core values that guide them through life. For some, this belief system is a religion; for others, it's a set of principles. Adolescents can become extremely judgmental as they build a code of morality, identify right and wrong. Being excessively judgmental is a step in the formation of a fully developed conscience.

#### DISCUSSION

How does "the intellectual icon" influence Caroline's internal development?

How does Caroline’s childhood provide the groundwork for her personality as an adolescent?

## CHAPTER 9

### “Kayla, Irene, Gary, Vincent”

Irene introduces her friends — Gary Mulligan and Vincent Takayama — to Caroline and Kayla. The five students form the foundation of their friendship in this chapter. They will become Caroline’s friendship group at Hollywood High.

#### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Kayla

Irene

Gary: new character

Vincent: new character

#### ADOLESCENCE

During adolescence, friends begin to take over some of the roles that previously belonged to the parents.

#### DISCUSSION

How would you describe each of Caroline’s new friends?

How would you describe their style as they interact?

What draws them together?

## CHAPTER 10

### “Dethroned Princess”

Flashback to Caroline in ninth grade at Laurel Academy, a wealthy college prep school. Caroline rebels against the values of her school’s beauty contest. The reader is introduced to Valerie Hartnet, the social queen of Laurel Academy.

#### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Valerie Hartnet: new character, social queen of Laurel Academy, will become one of Caroline’s closest friends.

Lelia Dane: new character, Laurel Academy’s renowned bad girl.

Mr. Hammer: new character, Laurel Academy Headmaster.

Tory, Maren, Vicki: new characters, Caroline’s group of friends at Laurel Academy.

## ADOLESCENCE

School is an enormous part of an adolescent's daily life, and the environment at school influences ego development.

## DISCUSSION

How does school influence ego development, social development and brain development during adolescence?

(Socialization, internal locus of control, judgment, observing ego, conscience, brain changes in the frontal lobe, intellectual growth in terms of inductive/deductive reasoning, abstract thinking).

Do you think Laurel Academy or Hollywood High is a better fit for Caroline?

In an earlier chapter, The Duke describes Caroline's speech as sounding "like a dictionary." She uses the words "expendable" (definitely a "dictionary" word) and "marijuana" (instead of "pot," "dope," or any other vernacular). How does her speech reflect her internal psychological structure?

Caroline's inner fire reveals itself in the petition she circulates at Laurel, in her interaction with Mr. Hammer, and in her choice to stay at Hollywood High. How is her behavior indicative of her internal development?

## CHAPTER 11

### "Very Strange Girl"

Mrs. Richardson (Caroline's guidance counselor) helps The Duke obtain glasses. Caroline realizes that The Duke is intelligent. Miss Orville, Caroline's Latin teacher, offers her classroom to The Duke so he can study.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline

The Duke

Miss Orville

## ADOLESCENCE

During high school, there is tremendous pressure to conform. Being "strange" is not a compliment for a teenager. Yet, many adolescents (either covertly or overtly) feel strange.

## DISCUSSION

Both Caroline and The Duke are extremely perceptive.

What does Caroline learn about The Duke in this chapter?

What does The Duke learn about Caroline?



Why does The Duke call Caroline “very strange”? Can you explain her brand of “strange” in psychological terms?

## CHAPTER 12 “Leaving Laurel”

Flashback to the previous year, 9th grade. Caroline tells Leah and Geoff (her parents) that she wants to leave Laurel Academy and attend Hollywood High School.

### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Leah Black: Caroline’s mother.

Geoff Black: Caroline’s father.

### ADOLESCENCE

Family relationships have a strong influence on adolescent development. Even when the teenager fights against the parents, having a safe and supportive home promotes healthy development.

### DISCUSSION

What qualities make a safe and supportive home for an adolescent?

How do Caroline, Leah and Geoff relate as individuals and as a family?

What are Leah and Geoff’s strengths and weaknesses as parents?

## CHAPTER 13 “Fall Music And Dance Recital”

Kayla sings at Hollywood High’s music and dance recital. The audience is impressed by her talent.

### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Kayla

Gary

Irene

Vincent

## ADOLESCENCE

Having a gift like Kayla's voice is a powerful influence on identity formation, and experiencing another person's gift can be a powerful influence as well.

## DISCUSSION

Why is Caroline deeply moved by witnessing Kayla's voice tame her audience? (Adolescents carry the beast within, impulses ready to jump out and wreak havoc.)

How does Kayla's gift affect her friends? How does her gift affect her audience?

How does music affect the brain and aggression?

## BLOG POST

This chapter was based on an actual event. One of my classmates at Hollywood High, Aprile Millo, grew up to sing with the Metropolitan Opera. This chapter was based on the first time I heard her sing. That concert remains one of the most moving performances I've ever experienced. With Aprile's permission, I published a blog post ("Aprile Millo, Opera and Hollywood High School") describing that concert. Here's the link: <https://amykaufmanburk.com/2014/10/24/aprile-millo-opera-and-hollywood-high-school/>

## CHAPTER 14

### "That One's Mine"

Caroline, Gary and Kayla meet at the International House Of Pancakes, where they run into Silver Lamé/Drake. Drake is having a meal with The Blond (whose name is J.D.)

## CHARACTERS

Caroline

Kayla

Gary

Silver Lamé/Drake

The Blond/J.D. : new character, one of Drake's prostitutes.

## ADOLESCENCE

Adolescents are often drawn to danger, even teenagers with a sturdy ego.

## DISCUSSION

Why are adolescents prone to risk-taking behavior?

Caroline realizes how dangerous Drake is, but she still has no idea what he wants until Gary explains. How do you understand this juxtaposition within her, simultaneously savvy and naïve?

(Part of this is straightforward: Caroline is ignorant of the world of prostitution. However, another part has to do with her ego structure. Caroline tries to think her way through life; Drake's behavior is not rational, not bound by a conscience, and therefore makes no sense whatsoever to Caroline. Her conscience and intellect both work overtime; she needs to live, not just think about living.)

## CHAPTER 15 "Sweet Sixteen"

Caroline attends Valerie Hartnet's 16th birthday party, a lavish event at Valerie's Beverly Hills mansion.

### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Valerie

Mrs. Hartnet: new character, Valerie's mother.

Nicole, Angela, Katie, Trish, Bronwyn: new characters, Valerie's friendship group at Laurel Academy.

Celia Compston: new character, Valerie's best friend, a Manhattan socialite (who turns out to be Valerie's girlfriend, revealed in Chapter 22 when Valerie comes out).

### ADOLESCENCE

Feeling alienated is a hallmark of adolescence.

### DISCUSSION

In this chapter, Caroline feels alienated in part because of the environment at Valerie's party, and in part because of her own internal issues. Can you break down her feelings of alienation, and identify where each piece comes from?

## CHAPTER 16 "Ray"

Kayla introduces her friends to Ray, her first boyfriend.

### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Kayla

Gary

Irene

Vincent

Ray: new character, Kayla's first boyfriend.

## ADOLESCENCE

Falling in love and discovering sex are powerful and empowering experiences. Adolescents often have trouble distinguishing between their fantasies/wishes about a person, and the actual person. This can lead to relationships that are extremely intense, and then blow up overnight.

## DISCUSSION

Are your feelings toward Ray the same as Kayla's feelings? Why or why not? (It's typical of adolescent development that Kayla falls in love with Ray, and doesn't realize she barely knows him.)

Whether or not someone is sexually active, sex and sexuality play important roles in high school. The first boyfriend or girlfriend is an important step in development. What makes sex so important during this time?

## CHAPTER 17

"Waterford Crystal And Edible Underwear"

Caroline, Kayla, Irene, Vincent and Gary gather at Irene's house. At school, Caroline and her friends meet The Duke and his gang.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline

Kayla

Gary

Irene

Vincent

Ray: Kayla's boyfriend.

The Duke

Doraine: new character, The Duke's girlfriend.

Jay: member of The Duke's gang.

Tom: member of The Duke's gang, cut in the knife fight in Chapter 2.

Lelia Dane: Laurel Academy's supreme bad girl (introduced in Chapter 10)

## ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is a time when many parts of the ego begin to coalesce to form a mature identity. The teenager can feel like a jigsaw puzzle, with detached pieces scattered all over the floor.

## DISCUSSION

Can you identify pieces of Caroline's ego that she is trying to integrate into her identity?

What does Caroline do in this chapter that indicates a new stage of development?

(She introduces her friends to The Duke's friends.)

What do we learn about Caroline's feelings about being "different"?

Why is it important to both The Duke and Caroline to continue working together?

## CHAPTER 18 "Jeremy"

Jeremy, a gay student at Hollywood High, is assaulted by a group of football players. Caroline and her friends discuss the assault, and discover homophobia among them.

### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Gary

Kayla

Irene

Vincent

Jeremy: new character, gay, assaulted in a homophobic hate crime.

### ADOLESCENCE

Bullying is extremely prevalent, and can trigger serious emotional issues – depression, anxiety, suicidality.

### DISCUSSION

How does the experience of being on the LGBTQ+ spectrum affect ego development during the teen years?

How do theories of bullying and pack mentality apply specifically to adolescent ego development?

(Keep in mind that bullying has a harmful impact on everyone involved: the target, the bully, the witnesses. Think about stages of moral development, and how the different stages affect the way people handle a situation involving bullying.)

How do psychology theories of bigotry apply to adolescent development?

Why does the superego break down in a crowd, causing people to watch rather than intervene?

## CHAPTER 19 "Art Supplies And Jaguars"

Valerie calls Caroline to apologize for her friends' behavior at her birthday party. Caroline invites Valerie to join the next Saturday night gathering with her Hollywood High friends.

#### CHARACTERS

Caroline  
Valerie

#### ADOLESCENCE

Teens are often surprised by the disconnected feelings they carry about the different parts of themselves. They don't feel emotionally cohesive. They can present an external façade, and feel quite different inside.

#### DISCUSSION

During Valerie's phone conversation with Caroline, both are surprised at different points. What do these surprises reveal about their characters?

As she speaks to Valerie, Caroline often finds her thoughts going in a different direction from her words. What does this reveal about Caroline's ego development?

#### CHAPTER 20

##### "Get Out Of Your Head"

Caroline tells The Duke about Silver Lamé, whose name is Drake. The Duke agrees to help Caroline deal with the situation.

#### CHARACTERS

Caroline  
The Duke

#### ADOLESCENCE

Caroline's overuse of her intellect results in her being extremely mature in some aspects of her ego, and underdeveloped in other aspects.

#### DISCUSSION

Caroline's relationship to her own intellect is both a gift and a weakness. How does this quality reflect her ego development, ego strengths, ego deficits?

#### CHAPTER 21

##### "The Dream"

Caroline has a recurring nightmare.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline  
The Blond

## ADOLESCENCE

Caroline attempts to analyze her own dream. She is using her knowledge from her psychiatrist mother, and her own hyper-drive intellect. Caroline does not turn to her mother for help, and she does not tell anyone about her dream.

## DISCUSSION

What feelings come up around the dream that push Caroline to keep it a secret?

How does dream theory apply in this situation?

If you were Caroline's therapist, what questions would you ask her about her dream?

## CHAPTER 22

"Valerie"

Valerie joins Caroline and her friends on Saturday night. Valerie tells them her secret, that she is gay.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline  
Valerie  
Kayla  
Gary  
Irene  
Vincent  
Leah Black  
Geoff Black

Gretchen and Janet: new characters, a lesbian couple, friends of Caroline's parents. This is their only appearance in the novel.

Celia Compston: Valerie's girlfriend (introduced in Chapter 15).

## ADOLESCENCE

Secrets can be an important part of adolescent development, and these secrets are often related to identity, guilt, aggression, shame, sex and sexuality.

## DISCUSSION

Valerie feels she has to hide that she is a lesbian from her family and from her friends at Laurel Academy.

What are possible ways that keeping her secret could affect her emotional health?  
What are possible ways the support from her new friends could influence her ego development?  
How do secrets relate to ego development during adolescence?  
What makes a secret healthy or unhealthy?

## CHAPTER 23 "Undercover"

There is a drug bust at Hollywood High, and Ray's secret is revealed. He's an undercover narcotics officer, and he disappears as soon as the drug bust takes place. Kayla, who had no idea of Ray's true identity, is devastated.

### CHARACTERS

Caroline  
Kayla  
Mrs. Richardson  
Geoff Black

### ADOLESCENCE

Many adolescents feel like they are living undercover -- presenting themselves in one way, while feeling completely different on the inside.

### DISCUSSION

So far, two characters in the story are living undercover: Valerie and Ray.  
How does Valerie's letting go of her cover promote healthy development?  
What are some ways that Ray's lying to Kayla might affect Kayla's ego development?

## CHAPTER 24 "To Trina"

Caroline and The Duke confront Drake at the International House Of Pancakes.

### CHARACTERS

Caroline  
Kayla  
Gary  
Irene  
Vincent  
The Duke  
Doraine  
Tom: member of The Duke's gang.



Jay: member of The Duke's gang.

Trina: new character, The Duke's cousin who died of an overdose.

## ADOLESCENCE

During adolescence, boys and girls begin turning to their peers instead of their parents. Sometimes adolescents should turn to their parents; other times, turning to their peers is a healthy decision.

## DISCUSSION

Do you think Caroline tries to solve her problem with Drake in a healthy way, or do you think she should tell her parents?

Caroline's relationship with The Duke is growing deeper and stronger. How does their relationship promote their ego development?

What does Caroline accidentally reveal about her tremendous ambivalence toward the film industry? What is the role of ambivalence in healthy adolescent development?

At some point during adolescence, many teenagers long to go back to a younger age. Caroline has one of those moments in this chapter. What does this moment reveal about her?

(She longs to go back to Laurel's predictability. She is frightened of her own impulses, which she can't control with her intellect.)

## CHAPTER 25

### "Ignoring Manners"

Valerie tells her mother and her brother, Lincoln, that she is a lesbian. Her mother and brother are unsupportive — critical (Mrs. Hartnet) and silent (Lincoln). Valerie, deeply hurt and angry, drives to Caroline's house in the middle of the night. Leah (Caroline's mother, a psychiatrist) helps Valerie begin the process of conflict resolution with her family.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline

Valerie

Lincoln: new character, Valerie's brother.

Mrs. Hartnet: Valerie's mother.

Leah Black: Caroline's mother.

## ADOLESCENCE

Valerie's coming out to her new friends starts an emotional chain reaction, which reflects her internal ego development.

## DISCUSSION

Why is it so important in Valerie's development for her to come out to her family?

What causes Valerie's family to splinter?

What allows Valerie and Mrs. Hartnet to begin the process of reconnecting?

Do you think Leah does a good job helping Valerie and Mrs. Hartnet? Why or why not?

## CHAPTER 26

### "A Slice Of Innocence"

Caroline is again in danger from Drake. She tells her parents she wants to learn self-defense.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline

Leah Black

Geoff Black

## ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is a time of losing many kinds of innocence, and each time involves both a loss and a concurrent gain of autonomy.

## DISCUSSION

What kind of innocence does Caroline lose in this chapter?

How does Caroline's decision to take a self-defense class reflect a new kind of ego strength?

Leah and Geoff have different reactions to Caroline's decision to learn self-defense. What do you learn about each as a parent?

## CHAPTER 27

### "Laurel Holiday Party"

Caroline, Kayla and Irene attend the Laurel holiday party at Valerie's house.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline

Valerie

Kayla

Irene

Vicki, Maren, Tory: Caroline's friends from Laurel Academy.

Mr. Finnemore: new character, Caroline's social studies teacher at Laurel Academy.

Mr. Hammer: Laurel Academy Headmaster.

Lelia Dane: Laurel Academy's #1 Rebel.

Nicole, Angela, Trisha, Bronwyn, Katie: Valerie's friendship group at Laurel.

## ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is a time of intense focus on appearance. Most girls focus on outfits, hairstyles, make-up, weight. Caroline's focus on appearance takes a different form: she is extremely invested in appearing perfectly "in control" at all times.

Adolescence is also a time of taking risks. For Caroline, attending the Laurel holiday party is a risk.

## DISCUSSION

Why is it so important to Caroline to appear perfect? Is this a strength, a weakness, or both?

Why is it essential to healthy development to try new things during adolescence, step out of your comfort zone?

How does attending the Laurel holiday party promote Caroline's development?

Most people wouldn't give a thought to singing Christmas carols. Yet, for Caroline, this is a big step. How do you understand the importance of this moment for Caroline?

## CHAPTER 28

### "Metaphors And Similes"

The Duke is arrested for shoplifting a soda. The Duke tells Caroline that Doraine is pregnant.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline

The Duke

Miss Orville

## ADOLESCENCE

There are gradations of risky behavior. "Acting out" is a hallmark of adolescence, and many adolescents find themselves in dangerous situations.

## DISCUSSION

How do you understand The Duke's behavior in terms of adolescent development?

The Duke and Caroline are quite angry at each other in the beginning of this chapter, but they end up more strongly bonded than before.

What personal qualities allow them to forge a stronger friendship?

Caroline shows an unusual ability to keep her head through The Duke's tantrum.

What does this demonstrate about her ego strength?

## CHAPTER 29

### "Self-Defense"

Caroline takes a self-defense class.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline

Linda and Quincy: new characters, Caroline's self-defense instructors.

## ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is a time of huge growth in abstract thinking, and increased capacity for insight. Taking a self-defense class will have a strong impact on Caroline's emotional development, on several levels.

## DISCUSSION

Why is taking a self-defense class an important step in Caroline's ego development?

When Caroline is asked why she is taking the self-defense class, her own answer surprises her.

What is important about her answer?

How does this demonstrate her growing ego capacity?

Why do you think Caroline's recurring nightmare returns when she commits to taking the self-defense class?

Why does the nightmare stop (temporarily) after she completes the class?

## CHAPTER 30

### "Surfing"

Valerie surfs in Maui (Hawaii) with her mother and brother. Lincoln (her brother) brings up the topic they're all avoiding: Valerie is gay.

## CHARACTERS

Valerie

Mrs. Hartner: Valerie's mother

Lincoln: Valerie's older brother

## ADOLESCENCE

Coming out on the LGBTQ+ spectrum can be an active catalyst for change in both the individual and the family. Each step in a family's journey influences each person's individual development on many levels, as well as the family system as a whole.

## DISCUSSION

How would you describe Lincoln's role in the Hartnet family?

How would you describe Mrs. Hartnet's character?

## CHAPTER 31

"J.D."

The same group of athletes who beat up Jeremy (Chapter 18) have attacked another student, J.D. Caroline realizes that J.D. is The Blond, the subject of her recurring dream, one of Drake's prostitutes.

## CHARACTERS

Billy (J.D.'s boyfriend), Johnston, Gren, Stephan, Hal: new characters, J.D.'s friendship group

## ADOLESCENCE

Bullying is a serious issue, throughout the nation. Students on the LGBTQ+ spectrum are often targets.

## DISCUSSION

How does bullying influence ego development?

How does Caroline react when she realizes that J.D. doesn't have a name?

How does a name influence an individual's identity?

In an eye-blink, bullying can move from mean, to dangerous, to life-threatening. From a psychological perspective, how do you understand the capacity of bullies to engage in something so violent?

Do you think Mrs. Richardson handles this situation well? Why or why not?  
How does she demonstrate her ability to understand teenagers?

## CHAPTER 32 “War”

Caroline enrolls in a ceramics class, taught by a man who sleeps with his students. To her surprise, Caroline finds that she likes the group of students at her assigned table in the class.

### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Lacey Tract: new character, popular girl, beautiful, cheerleader.

Elton Spinrad: new character, renames himself after the rock star Elton John.

Moishe Levy: new character, a recent immigrant from Israel, a Hasidic Jew.

Manny Villacorta: new character, a recent immigrant, Mexican, gang member.

Warren “War” Lock: new character, Caroline’s ceramics teacher.

### ADOLESCENCE

In her ceramics class, Caroline (an intellect in hyper-drive) is seated at a table with Lacey (a cheerleader), Elton (obsessed with the singer Elton John), Manny (a Mexican immigrant) and Moishe (an Israeli immigrant).

### DISCUSSION

Lacey steps forward as a leader. What are her leadership qualities?

## CHAPTER 33 “An Unidentified Something”

Basketball practice is disrupted by Shawna and Lureen, two girls on the team who continually get into fistfights with each other. Caroline is shocked when she is benched by her coach. Caroline figures out another layer of meaning in her recurring nightmare (the rush from feeling dangerous).

### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Irene

Girls Basketball Team

Mrs. Cuthbertson: basketball coach.

Shawna and Lureen: girls on the basketball team who are locked in battle (first mentioned in Chapter 7).

## ADOLESCENCE

When Mrs. Cuthbertson benches her, Caroline feels tremendous shame. At the end of the chapter, Caroline recovers her sense of humor, which reconnects her in a stronger bond to her teammates. Both shame and humor play key roles in adolescent development.

## DISCUSSION

What is the role of shame in adolescent development?

What is the role of humor in adolescent development?

Why does the Mrs. Cuthbertson bench Caroline? What do you think of the coach's decision? How does this affect Caroline?

Do you think Mrs. Cuthbertson is an effective coach for adolescents? Why or why not?

## CHAPTER 34

### "The Professor"

Caroline's friends from her ceramics class interrupt Miss Orville's Latin class to ask Caroline for tutoring.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline

The Duke

Miss Orville

Lacey: popular, cheerleader, beautiful.

Elton: renamed himself after the rock star Elton John.

Manny: recent immigrant from Mexico, in a gang.

Moishe: recent immigrant from Israel, Hasidic Jew.

## ADOLESCENCE

Respect and honor are important in all stages of life, but they can also serve as active catalysts for emotional development in adolescence. In this chapter, Caroline's ceramics class respects and honors her and in turn, she respects and honors The Duke.

## DISCUSSION

How does Caroline's ceramics class honor her?

What does she do to honor The Duke?

How does Caroline's respect influence The Duke's view of himself?

What does Miss Orville's reaction show about her ability to understand teenagers?

## CHAPTER 35

### "To Not Have A Name"

Caroline goes with her father to a showing of a film at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts And Sciences.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline

Geoff

Chip Harley: new character, an actor.

Mel Fein: new character, a producer.

Marcie Carmichael: new character, an actor.

## ADOLESCENCE

Solidifying identity is a vital task of adolescence. Caroline is shaken to the core, realizing the impact of J.D.'s living without a name.

## DISCUSSION

Why is a name important in adolescent development?

(Think about J.D.'s not having a name, Elvia's changing her own name, the role of nicknames like "Dreads" and "Presto.")

## CHAPTER 36

### "The Beach"

J. D. dies of head injuries from being assaulted (Chapter 31). Caroline's friends and J.D.'s friends meet at Caroline's family beach house to conduct a memorial service for J.D.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline

Valerie

Kayla

Gary

Irene

Vincent

Billy: J.D.'s boyfriend.

Stephan: in J.D.'s group of friends.



Hal: in J.D.'s group of friends.  
Gren: in J.D.'s group of friends.  
Johnston: in J.D.'s group of friends.

#### ADOLESCENCE

Even the most constrained, cerebral adolescents like Caroline are scared of their own impulses, and have issues with impulse control.  
(Outwardly, Caroline is 100% in control, but she presents herself as excessively perfect. In fact, she is too controlled, which shows the extent of her fear.)

Adolescents feel invincible, and the first death of a peer is a harsh reality check.

#### DISCUSSION

Why is J.D.'s memorial service so important to all of these adolescents?

How does the first death of a peer impact adolescent development?  
(Think about the sense of immortality adolescents carry. This sense of invincibility promotes healthy development, and is simultaneously extremely dangerous.)

#### CHAPTER 37

##### "Opposite Directions"

Caroline and The Duke argue over The Duke's homophobic reaction to J.D.'s death.

#### CHARACTERS

Caroline  
The Duke  
Miss Orville

#### ADOLESCENCE

Fighting with friends is often a part of the teen experience. Sometimes the fight is resolved, and the friendship continues. Sometimes, people go their separate ways. Both outcomes can be important in adolescent development.

#### DISCUSSION

From the perspective of ego development, how do you understand the similarities and differences between Caroline's behavior and The Duke's behavior?

Miss Orville speaks to The Duke in a way that is extremely tough. What is her message to The Duke?

Through the novel, two teachers (Miss Orville and Mr. Cohen) and one guidance counselor (Mrs. Richardson) strongly influence Caroline's life.  
How would you describe each of these characters?

What qualities are important for a teacher or counselor working with adolescents? Do you think Miss Orville, Mr. Cohen and Mrs. Richardson have those qualities?

## CHAPTER 38

### “Laurel’s Glossy Goddess”

Valerie and Gary attend Laurel Academy’s St. Patrick’s Day Dance. Valerie comes out to Nicole, her best friend at school.

#### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Valerie

Gary

Nicole: Valerie’s best friend at Laurel Academy.

Hance: new character, Nicole’s boyfriend.

#### ADOLESCENCE

Adolescents often feel like they need to put up a façade in order to be accepted. They are afraid of being targeted or ostracized if they show their true selves.

#### DISCUSSION

Valerie feels a tremendous inner push to come out. What does this indicate about her ego strength?

Nicole’s reaction is fueled by her unconscious. Suppose you were Nicole’s therapist. Imagine talking to Nicole in treatment, going through her reaction with her, line by line, to help her understand which feelings were directed at Valerie, and which were about her father.

## CHAPTER 39

### “Friendship”

Valerie’s week at school, following her coming out at the Sophomore Prom, was a nightmare. Caroline, Gary, Vincent, Irene and Kayla rally around her with support.

#### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Valerie

Kayla

Gary

Irene

Vincent

Mr. and Mrs. Mulligan: new characters, Gary’s parents.

## ADOLESCENCE

The healing power of friendship is immense, and has a strong impact on adolescent development.

## DISCUSSION

How do Valerie's friendships promote her healthy development?

Why is it important that Valerie speak the word *gay*?

Valerie's worst fears about her school's reaction come true. Initially, Valerie feels broken, then she begins to regroup. Can you track her internal progression?

Different people support Valerie in different ways. Their support strengthens her ego, and promotes healthy development. Characters to think about are Mrs. Hartnet, Lincoln, Caroline, Leah, Kayla, Vincent, Gary, Mr. Hammer, Miss MacIsaac, Lelia Dane, Maren/Vicki/Tory, Mr. and Mrs. Mulligan.

How does each person influence Valerie's emotional progression?

Coming out on the LGBTQ+ spectrum takes tremendous courage. How does it influence ego development to keep that a secret, or to come out?

## CHAPTER 40

"Talent Show"

Jeremy, recovered from being assaulted (Chapter 18), performs in the school's talent show. A group of football players threaten to beat him up, onstage, in front of the audience. The Duke stops them, which leads to his being kicked out of his own gang.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline

Kayla

Gary

Irene

Vincent

Jeremy

The Duke

Tom

Jay

Football Players

## ADOLESCENCE

During adolescence, LGBTQ issues can rise to the surface, as sexual and gender identity take on new layers of meaning.

## DISCUSSION

How would you describe the brands of homophobia in different characters in the novel?

(Characters you can think about are Vincent, Kayla, The Duke, Valerie's family, Nicole, the girls at Laurel Academy, the boys who assault J.D./Jeremy.)

The Duke makes several choices in this chapter, with enormous ramifications (standing up for Jeremy, aligning with a gay boy, siding with police officers, ejection from his gang).

How do these choices reflect The Duke's developing internal structure?

Caroline has a huge stake in maintaining an outward appearance of perfection. At the end of this chapter, she allows herself to cry in a public place. How does this reflect her changing ego structure?

## CHAPTER 41

"Empowerment"

Drake attempts to rape Caroline, who protects herself with self-defense. The Duke, Kayla, Tom and Jay rush to protect her and care for her after the attempted rape. Caroline realizes the meaning of her dream. The Duke and Doraine invite Caroline and her friends to their wedding.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline

Kayla

Drake

The Duke

Tom

Jay

Doraine

Mrs. Richardson

Leah

Geoff

## ADOLESCENCE

Sexual assault during adolescence can influence ego development and sexual development.

## DISCUSSION

If you were treating an adolescent who had been sexually assaulted, what issues would you look for?

*Please Note:*

*As therapists and educators, we help others with their issues, and sometimes forget to deal with our own. If you are a survivor of an assault and you are in the process of healing, please give your own self the same respect you'd give to a patient or student. Do you have the support you need for your healing process? If not, please contact a rape crisis center, or talk to a therapist.*

## CHAPTER 42 "Kayla's Moment"

Kayla shuts down Kurt's sexual harassment by firing squirt guns filled with indelible paint. The entire English class applauds.

### CHARACTERS

Kayla  
Kurt  
Caroline  
Gary  
Mr. Cohen  
Students in their English class

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Sexual harassment is a sad reality that too many people experience. When *Hollywood High: Achieve The Honorable* takes place (1973-1974), people considered sexual harassment a fact of life, and accepted it without question. There were no rules or laws to protect Kayla from Kurt's behavior. At the time, Mr. Cohen's empowering Kayla to protect herself would have been viewed as extraordinary.

### ADOLESCENCE

Sexual harassment during adolescence can affect ego development.

### DISCUSSION

How would Kayla's initial feelings of helplessness in the face of Kurt's harassment affect her ego development?

How would Mr. Cohen's support affect her?

How would her own defending herself and the class's reaction influence her development?

## CHAPTER 43 "Family"

Mrs. Compston (Celia's mother) calls Valerie's mother to tell her that Valerie is gay and to suggest she see a doctor to cure her. Valerie reveals to her mother and to Lincoln that Celia was her girlfriend, and that they broke up. Mrs. Hartnet and Lincoln fully support and accept Valerie.

#### CHARACTERS

Valerie

Lincoln: Valerie's brother.

Mrs. Hartnet: Valerie's mother.

Mrs. Compston: new character, Celia's mother.

#### ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is a time of growing autonomy. At the same time, family support is vital to healthy adolescent independence.

#### DISCUSSION

How does Valerie's journey with her family affect her ego development? (Chapters 22, 25, 30, 38, 39, 43)

#### CHAPTER 44

"Not One Bit Sorry"

The Duke and Doraine are married. They join Caroline and her friends at their Saturday night gathering, where they meet Valerie. The Duke describes his court date (for shoplifting) and the judge lets him off with community service. Caroline reveals to her friends that she was expelled from Laurel Academy. Doraine goes into labor.

#### CHARACTERS

Caroline

Kayla

Gary

Irene

Vincent

Valerie

The Duke

Doraine

#### ADOLESCENCE

Many adolescents feel like they are hiding important parts of themselves from friends, from parents, even from themselves.

(Examples: Caroline, The Duke, Valerie)

## DISCUSSION

From the perspective of adolescent development, what's the difference between a healthy secret (in the service of autonomy) and an unhealthy secret (motivated by fear)?

Caroline has an overactive conscience, but she is “not one bit sorry” for breaking the rules at Laurel. Do you think this is healthy, unhealthy, or both?

## CHAPTER 45 “A True Scholar”

In her English class, Caroline recites “Love Is Not All,” by Edna St. Vincent Millay. The poem mirrors Caroline’s growth and development throughout the novel. Caroline finally realizes she is interested in dating Gary, who has been waiting for this moment. Caroline decides to write a book about J.D.

## CHARACTERS

Caroline  
Gary  
Kayla  
Mr. Cohen  
Elvia/Andrea  
Dreads  
Presto  
Sharon  
Mort  
Kurt

## ADOLESCENCE

Many adolescents are stereotyped by their peers.

## DISCUSSION

From a psychological vantage point, why are adolescents so drawn to stereotypes?

Some stereotypes are racial, sexual and gender-based. Some are about other kinds of assumptions.

What does it say about a person if he/she is a prostitute (J.D.), the leader of a gang (The Duke), extremely academic (Caroline), on the LGBTQ+ spectrum (Valerie), a cheerleader (Lacey)?

Caroline’s viewing J.D. as a “true scholar” replaces the intellectual icon. How does this demonstrate Caroline’s emotional growth over the course of the novel?

