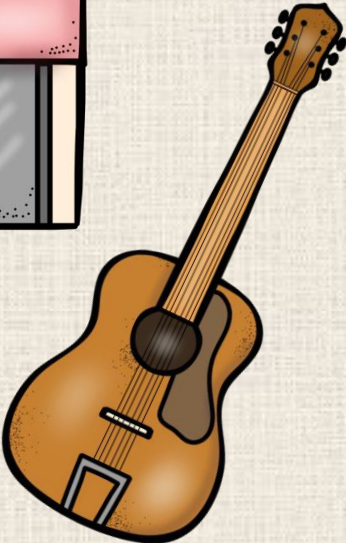
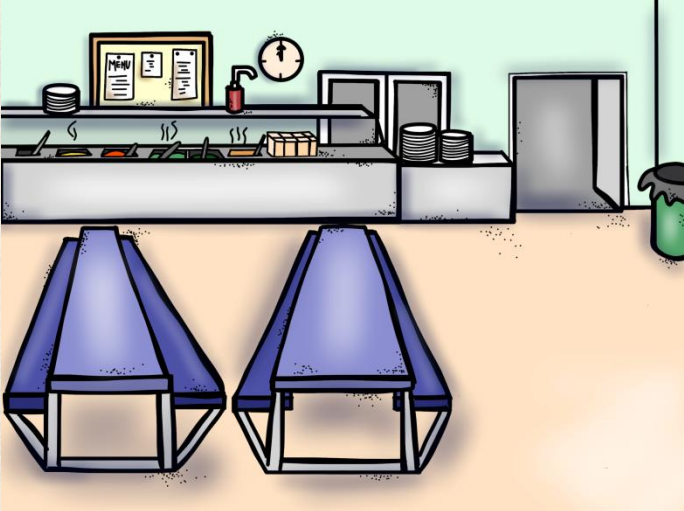
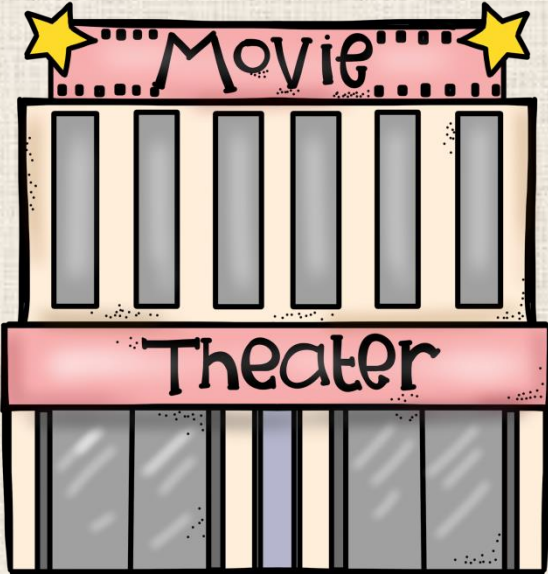
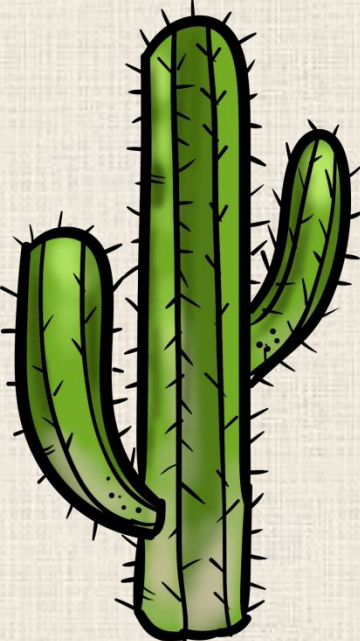


# Activities for Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus

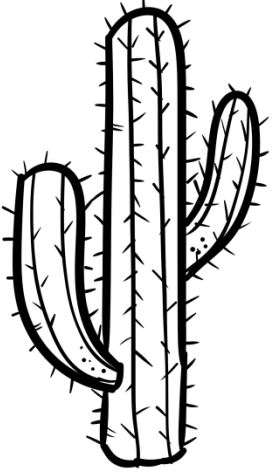


[Get the Google Slide  
Version of these  
organizers.](#)

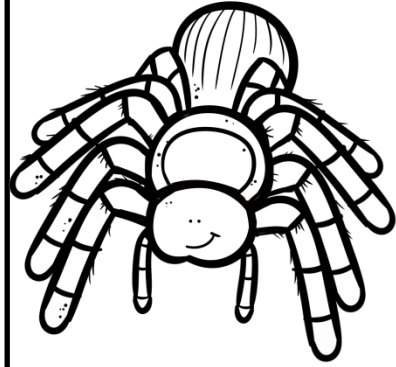
# Activity #1 - Symbols



# Symbols for Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus



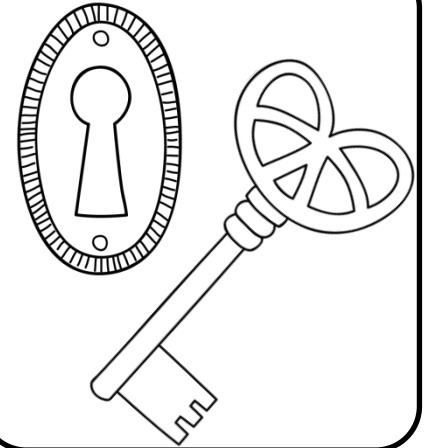
saguaro cactus



tarantulas

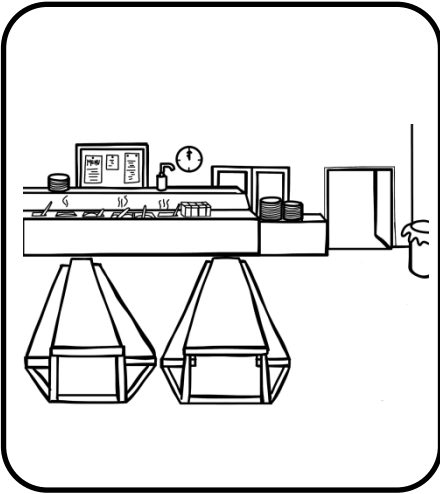


necklace with a  
turquoise stone

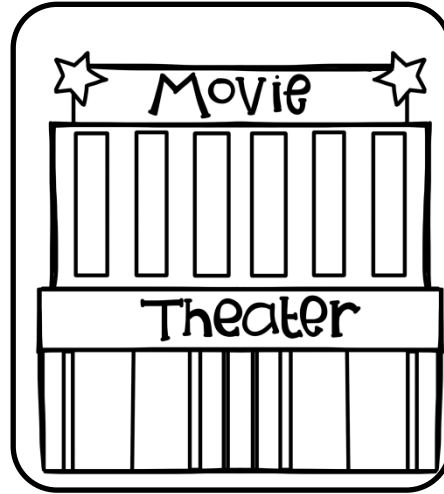


locked desk

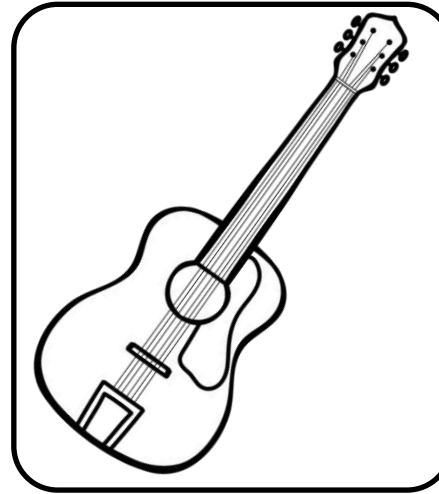
# Symbols for Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus



cafeteria



movie theater

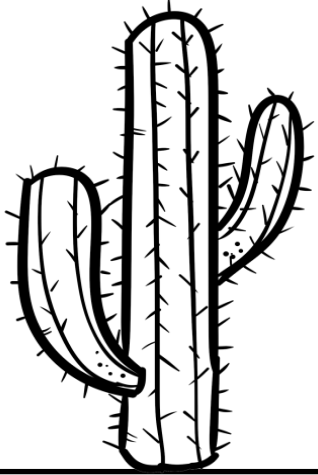


guitar found in shed



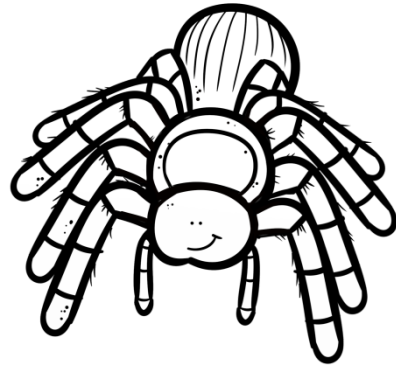
Queen of Sheba

# Symbols for Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus Answer Key



saguaro cactus

The saguaro cactus is one of the most important symbols of the story. The title of the book comes from this symbol. Aven compares her life to the life of the cactus. Since the cactus can live to be over 200 years old, many things happen in its lifespan. Because Aven will live just a fraction of the time the cactus does, she feels it shouldn't be important that the kids at school are afraid of her, but this event is important and it does matter to her.



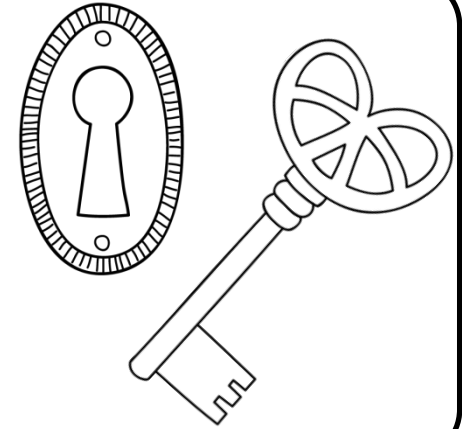
Tarantulas

Zion and Aven find a box of books about tarantulas. She asks the boys to take the box to her apartment. Aven reads through the books as well as many others and spends time searching for tarantulas near her home. She even gets her dad involved in the search. Denise tells Aven that there hasn't been any tarantulas at Stagecoach Pass in years. Later Aven learns her birth mother was fascinated by tarantulas. Aven thinks she sees a tarantula scurrying into its hole when she goes up to hill to watch the fireworks. The reader gets the feeling that the spirit of Aven's mom is tied to the tarantula.



necklace with a turquoise stone

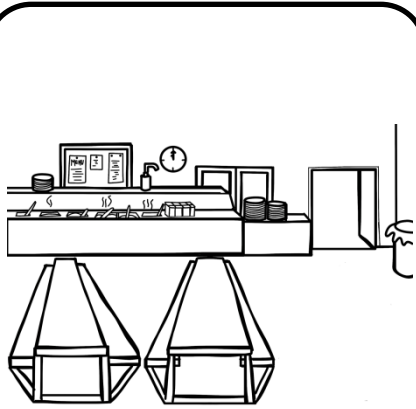
The necklace is an added piece to the mystery that Aven solves. She finds it in the desert. Later Aven finds a sketch of the necklace. Then, she learns the necklace belonged to her birth mother. It was her favorite piece of jewelry. Josephine, Aven's grandmother, put her mother's ashes along with a little wooden cross and the necklace in the desert. Aven wears the necklace at the festival making the connection personal.



locked desk

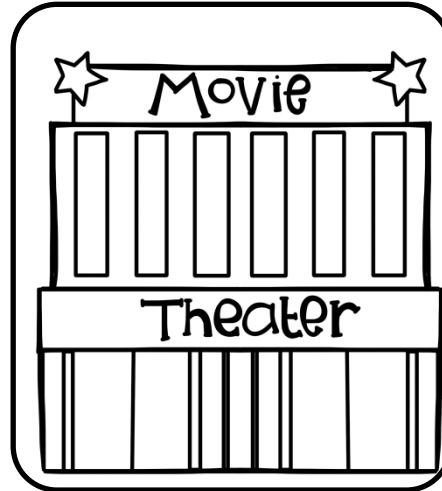
The locked desk becomes a large part of the plot of the story. Instead of breaking into the desk, Aven searches for a key. When she finally finds it, the mystery is solved. The answers to the questions Aven has begun to be solved.

# Symbols for Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus Answer Key



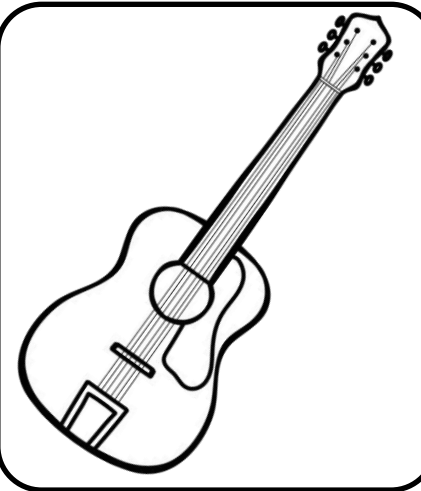
Cafeteria

Because the cafeteria is a social place, Aven, Connor, and Zion avoid going. They feel they are misfits and don't belong there. In the last scene of the book, the three friends enter the cafeteria together. This is a sign that they have overcome their fear of being "different."



movie theater

Like the cafeteria, the movie theater is a frightening place for Connor. He feels the barking sounds he makes disrupts the movie for others. Connor avoids going to the theater for this reason. When Aven's mom arranges the entire theater for the friends, this is an event to be celebrated because Connor can do something that everyone else does.



guitar found in shed

Aven finds a guitar with the initials A.B.C, carved on the back in the shed. This, like the necklace, belonged to Aven's birthmother. The guitar becomes a piece of the mystery Aven must solve. When Aven plays the guitar, at the festival it is like a tribute to her mother.



Queen of Sheba

Aven gets the nickname Sheebs because her parents felt like she acted like the Queen of Sheba when they first adopted her. For the first two years of her life, everyone waited on Aven. Her adopted parents had to teach Aven how to take care of herself.

# Activity #2 - Comparing Characters



Melody  
[cerebral palsy]  
from  
*Out of My Mind*



Percy Jackson  
[learning disability]  
from  
*The Lightning Thief*



Auggie [genetic  
disorder] from  
*Wonder*



Max [learning  
disability] and Freak  
[morquio  
syndrome] from  
*Freak the Mighty*



Phillip [blind] from  
*The Cay*



David [autism]  
from  
*Rules*



Sadako [leukemia]  
from  
*Sadako and the  
Thousand Paper  
Cranes*



Natalie [autism]  
from  
*Al Capone Does My  
Shirts*

## Activity - Comparing Characters

I have included two pages for students to write brief summaries of characters. Since different students are familiar with different books, book/movie trailers are a great way to introduce the characters. Below are links to trailers. These links were all active in November 2017 when this post was written. If one is removed from Youtube, you should be able to find a replacement pretty easily.

## Health Problems

[Out of My Mind](#) - Melody has Cerebral Palsy.

[Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes](#) - Sadako got leukemia after the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

[The Cay](#) - Phillip was blinded shortly after his ship the *Hato* was torpedoed by Germans.

[Freak the Mighty](#) - Kevin, known as Freak, has Morquio syndrome. This causes the outside of his body to grow slower than the inside.

[Wonder](#) - Auggie has a rare facial deformity he calls "mandibulofacial dysostosis", more commonly known as Treacher Collins syndrome, and a cleft palate.

## Learning Differences

[Rules](#) - David has autism.

[Al Capone Does My Shirts](#) - Natalie has autism.

Note: *Rules* and *Al Capone Does My Shirts* would be great books to compare and contrast as both are told from the perspective of siblings living with a brother/sister with autism.

[Fish in a Tree](#) - Ally has dyslexia.

[The Goldfish Boy](#) - Matthew suffers from severe obsessive-compulsive disorder. He hasn't been to school in weeks.

[The Lightning Thief](#) - Percy has a learning disability.

## Additional Organizers

On the next pages, you will find two organizers that are designed to compare and contrast two characters. Select any two characters from books your students have read. One page has spaces for students to compare four characters.



# Characters with Health Problems

Melody  
from Out  
of My Mind



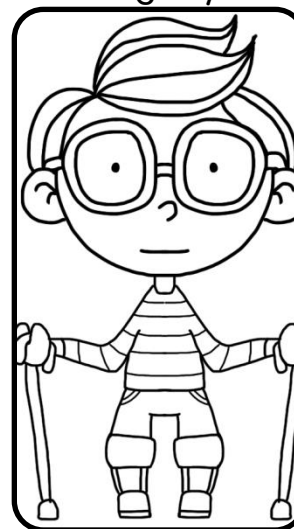
Sadako from  
Sadako and the  
Thousand Paper  
Cranes



Phillip  
from The  
Cay



Kevin from  
Freak the  
Mighty



Auggie  
from  
Wonder



Challenge

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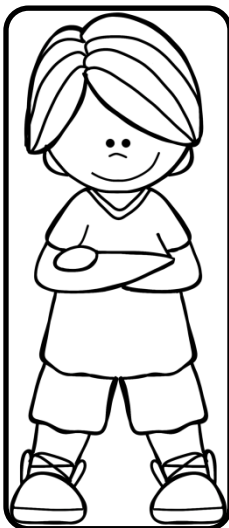
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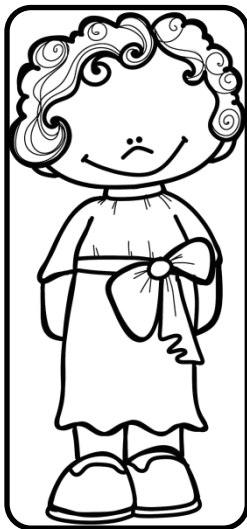
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# Learning Differences

David from Rules



Natalie from Al Capone Does My Shirts



Ally from Fish in a Tree



Matthew from The Goldfish Boy



Auggie from Wonder



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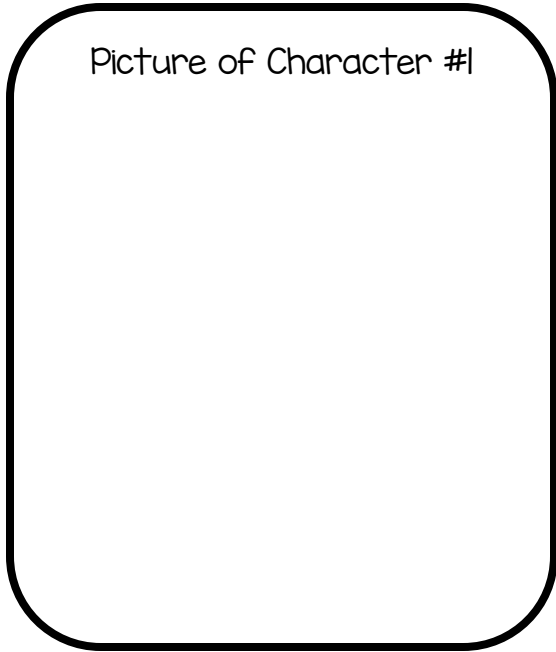
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Compare two characters.

Picture of Character #1



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Character's Name

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Character's Name

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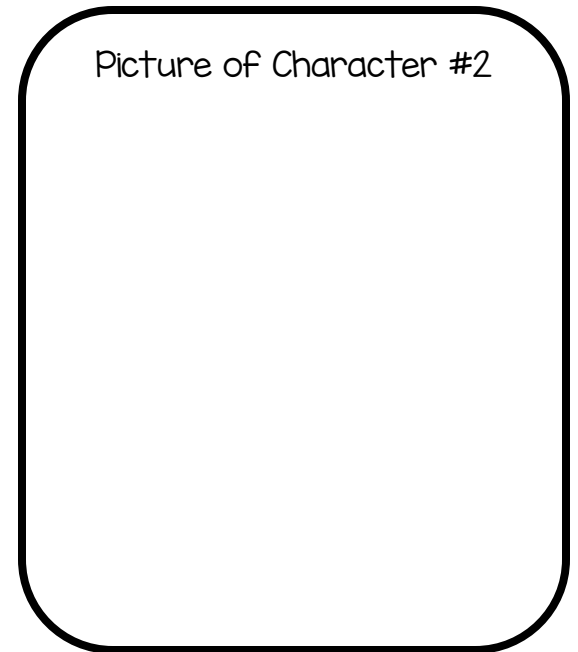
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Picture of Character #2



# Comparing Characters

Book Title

Character's Name

Book Title

Character's Name

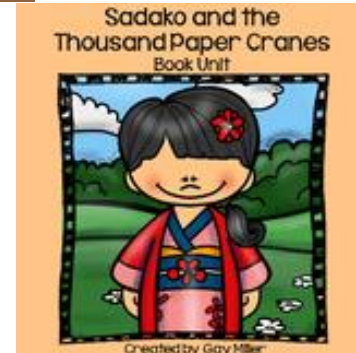
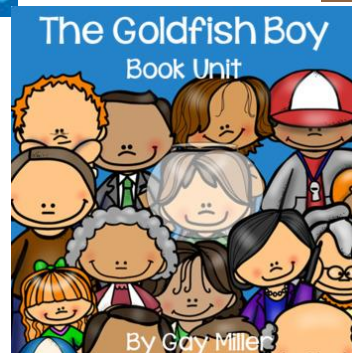
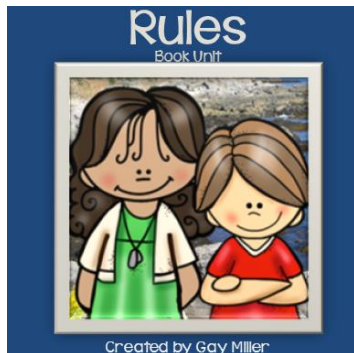
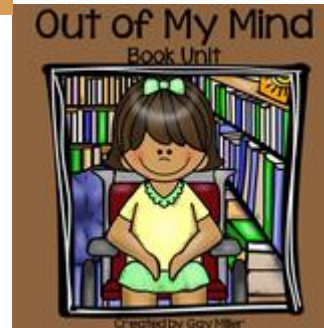
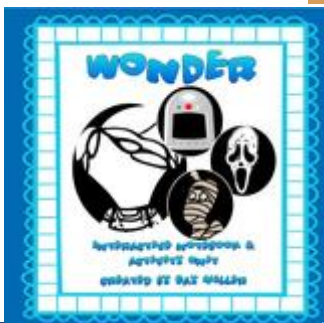
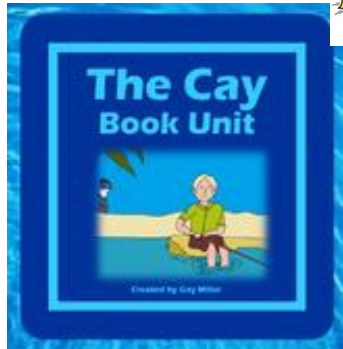
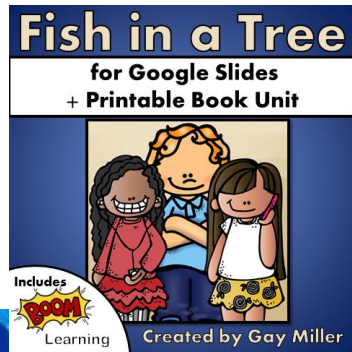
Similarities

Differences

# Comparing Characters

Character Description			
Conflict			
Resolution			

Each of these books help students better understand people who face challenges. Some of these characters face learning challenges such as Ally in *Fish in a Tree* with dyslexia. Others have health problems such as Kevin in *Freak the Mighty* with Morquio syndrome or Melody in *Out of My Mind* with Cerebral Palsy. All stories will tug at your heartstrings.



## Image Credits



## Activity #3 - Dealing with Bullies

Have students create a poster, skit, video, and so on that shows the effects of bullying. Students can research statistical information to add to their campaigns.



# Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus

*Digital + Printable Book Unit*



Includes

Google Slides

hosted at  
**boom**  
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Created by Gay Miller

Check out the novel study on Teachers Pay Teachers.

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