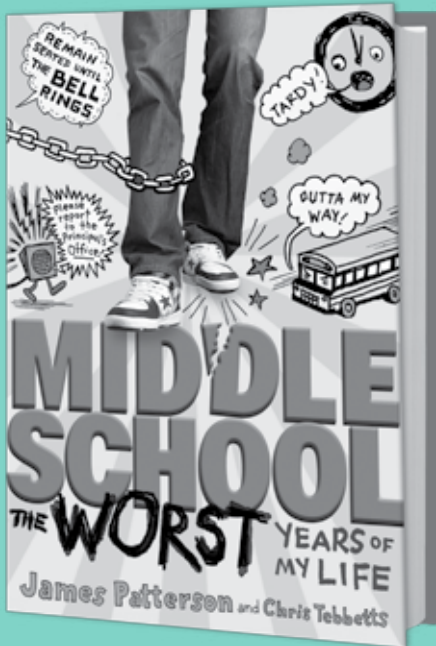
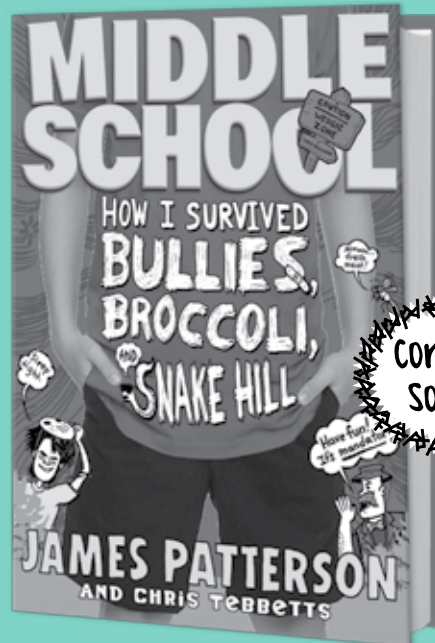
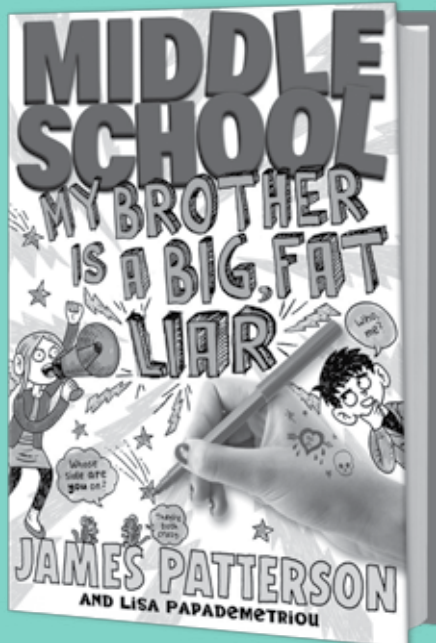


JAMES PATTERSON'S MIDDLE SCHOOL SERIES



CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- BULLYING
- FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
- PEER PRESSURE



Hi
I'm Rafe!



BEFORE YOU OPEN THE BOOK (PRE-READING ACTIVITIES)

Okay, I know nobody wants to do any work before reading my books, but really, if you just skim through the connections below, these books will be more fun to read for you and your students!

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

English/Language Arts

In the two and a half years readers have known Rafe, he has matured and changed considerably. He has learned lessons about friendship, judging others too quickly, taking a stand for his beliefs, gaining trust, showing mutual respect, and other valuable lessons. Ask students to select one of the ways Rafe has matured and trace that lesson through the series, showing how people and situations led Rafe to a better way of handling himself. Students can convey the information through journal entries, letters to the people who prompted the change, essay format, or poetry, such as a poem for two voices.

Art

The illustrations in the Middle School series bring life to Rafe's and Georgia's stories. The illustrations tell a part of the stories that words cannot convey. Using poster board, ask students to work with a partner to generate a list of Rafe's Top Ten (or so): Biggest Accomplishments from 7th grade, Worst Events at Camp Wannamorra, Reasons Georgia is a Pain (or Not), or another topic from one of the books in the Middle School series. Then have them illustrate each item, using the same kind of irony and humor Rafe uses in Chapter 4 of *Get Me Out of Here*. Display the Top Ten lists with illustrations in the classroom.

Math

Rafe counts 112 rules in the Student Code of Conduct. Students can write a variety of math problems using this and other facts from the book. For example, students can

count the number of rules Rafe broke compared to the total number of rules to determine the percentage of rules he broke; students can also figure the average number of points Rafe made in a certain period of time or the average number of points per rule he broke. Ask each pair of students to write three word problems based on the factual information given to them in the book. Then have pairs exchange their problems with another group and solve the problems.

Social Studies

Students at Hills Village Middle School and Cathedral School of the Arts, and even Camp Wannamorra, naturally migrate towards peers like themselves: students like Jeanne Galletta and Georgia who excel in academics, Miller and Doolin who lead a band of troublemakers, athletes who play sports, and outsiders who are considered social misfits. These individual groups could be defined as a clique. Ask students to define the word clique, and then make a list of cliques in their school, church, or other settings. Have students in small groups discuss the benefits and disadvantages of cliques in a school setting. Have these groups share with the whole class the themes they discuss.

Social Studies – *Get Me Out of Here*

With all the recent stories in the news about cyber bullying, could the fake web page that Zeke and Kenny posted using Rafe's name get them in serious trouble? Ask students to define the term cyber bullying, to investigate cyber bullying laws in their state, to research the consequences of cyber bullying, to ascertain if there are school policies that protect students, and to find statistics and stories about actual cases. Then, armed with information, encour-

age students to initiate a public awareness program in their school and community.

Science – Get Me Out of Here

Increasingly, our planet is becoming polluted; our natural resources are being depleted. Ms. Ling’s project provided a good exercise in making students aware of what they use and throw away. In small groups ask students to investigate “going green” and what that means for an individual or family. Ask students to keep a list for a week of every item they use that becomes garbage. Students may even choose to save their trash for a week, so they can see the volume and weight. By exploring the amount of waste students and their families produce each day, students can better understand the enormous impact of trash on the environment. After their lists are generated, and students become aware of how much trash they accumulate, ask students to brainstorm ways they can reduce, reuse, and recycle. Have students investigate local recycling options and make plans to initiate and operate a school recycling program.

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Family Relationships

While Rafe causes his mother considerable grief, and Georgia rarely causes her mother a minute of grief, Rafe’s mother remains supportive of both of her children. How does she influence Rafe’s choices? How does she defend Georgia? What illustrates the mutual respect Rafe, Georgia and their mother show each other? How do Rafe and Georgia interact with each other? What role does Grandma Dotty play in the family?



Bullying

Rafe and Georgia are bullied by the Miller brothers, the Princess Patrol, Kenney and Zeke, the Killer, and Doolin’ and his wrecking crew. Chapter 55 in *The Worst Years of My Life* poses an interesting question; “Is it bullying if you’re bullying the bully?” On page 135 in *How I Survived Bullies, Broccoli, and Snake Hill*, Rafe wonders “if bullies ever feel bad for what they do, and if they don’t, why not?” When does being mean go too far? What, if any consequences, do bullies suffer for their bullying tactics? How can adults help stop bullying? How do adults sometime contribute to bullying?

Motivation

Rafe dreads going to middle school, but by implementing Operation R.A.F.E. and Operation: Get a Life!, he stays motivated to attend school even though his school work is below average, and he is being bullied. Even at Camp Wannamorra, Rafe’s life is miserable because of the actions of others. What occurs in each situation that finally motivates Rafe to step up and succeed? What motivates the other characters to action? How does Rafe motivate others?

Friendship

Rafe is thrilled when Matty befriends him on the first day of school, and Norman becomes his friend at camp. What do Matty and Norman teach Rafe about friendship? What does Rhonda teach Georgia about friendship? How does Jeanne prove to Rafe and Georgia that she is their friend? What are the characteristics of true friendship?

Peer Pressure

Everyone responds to peer pressure—at least occasionally—but some kids are more likely to submit to negative peer pressure, while others are better able to resist and stand their ground. Rafe obviously responds to negative peer pressure and finds himself in trouble for the actions initiated by others. Why is Rafe so easily swayed? Why is Georgia not swayed? Ask students to discuss what factors influence students who conform to the pressure, students who apply the pressure, and students who stand their ground.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Worst Years of My Life

1. One of Rafe's biggest challenges is the harassment of Miller the Killer. What could Rafe do to get on the good side of a kid who only has bad sides? What are some of the strategies Rafe employs? Why don't they work to help keep Miller off Rafe's back?



2. Rafe sees the Student Code of Conduct as a long list of all the ways he probably will get in trouble before the end of the school year (page 21). What other ways could he view the handbook? Why do students choose to or choose not to behave appropriately at school? What impact does a Student Code of Conduct have on student behavior?
3. Why does Rafe risk telling Jeanne Galletta about Operation R.A.F.E.? What does he hope to gain by confiding in her?
4. How does Rafe break his no-hurt rule by his antics on Halloween? Who does he hurt? What decision does he make as a result of the pain he inflicts?

5. What is Rafe's opinion of Mrs. Donatello? Why is Rafe wrong about Dragon Lady Donatello? How does he discover the error in his judgment?

Get Me Out of Here

1. Leaving your home and moving means being the new kid in a school where you don't know anyone—always a difficult situation. How does Rafe adjust to his new school? What are Rafe's biggest fears about moving to the city? What are his biggest disappointments about leaving Hills Village?
2. Matty, Zeke, and Kenny are all involved when Rafe gets busted for "art-napping," but they do not come to his aid, and Rafe does not tell on them. Why is Rafe so willing to take the fall and suffer the consequences for the school bullies and his trouble-making, so-called friend? After losing his mother's trust, what does Rafe do to begin to earn her trust back?
3. When Rafe tells the truth about whose backpack held the stolen pen, Matty turns on him, and, even worse, Matty uses private information Rafe shared in order to humiliate Rafe. What is Rafe's immediate response?
4. Going to Hills Village on a bus by himself demonstrates that Rafe has courage even though he is running away from his problems. How does this mirror the constant irony of Rafe's life?
5. How does Rafe react to the news of his father's life and death? How will it help Rafe to know the truth about his dad? What role does Rafe's father's uncle play in Rafe discovering the truth about his dad?
6. How is moving back to Hills Village a positive move for everyone in Rafe's family? What do they learn from their time spent in the big city?

My Brother is a Big Fat Liar

1. In this story, Rafe's sister Georgia suffers as a result of her brother's reputation. What steps does she take to overcome the teachers' negative attitudes towards her? What, if anything, changes as a result of her efforts?
2. Both the Princess Patrol and Mini-Miller are bullies. How do their bullying tactics differ? What effect does their bullying have on Georgia? How does she put a stop to the torment?



3. What happens that forces Georgia to acknowledge Rhonda as a friend instead of being embarrassed by her? How does Georgia's change of heart change her friendship with Rhonda?
4. Georgia and her friends from Airbrook Arts form a band, but Rafe says they stink. How do they improve from horrible screeching to an encore performance at the school dance? How does Rhonda contribute to the band's success?
5. What do Rafe and Georgia come to understand about each other and their relationship? What does Georgia learn about her family as a result of the discovery that she is adopted? How does her mother stand up for her at school?

How I Survived Bullies, Broccoli, and Snake Hill

1. Rafe's problems seem to go with him wherever he goes. What problems does Rafe have at Camp Wannamorra that he also had at both the schools he attended?
2. Rafe states on page 8, "... this was the Worst Summer of My Life. But it was also—weirdly—the best." How was his summer the worst ever? How was it weirdly the best?
3. What connection does Rafe make with Norman, the Booger Eater? How does Rafe's first impression of Norman change? What does Rafe learn about himself as a result of his relationship with Norman?
4. What actions does Rafe take to make changes in "the way it's always been" at Camp Wannamorra? What role do his fellow cabin mates play in Rafe's attempts to make changes? How does Georgia help Rafe?
5. Why does Sherwood refuse to address the bullying issue, calling it "all in fun" and razzing, instead of mean and cruel? How does Sherwood's refusal to deal with the problem backfire and cause more problems? How is Sherwood a bully?
5. How is Rafe the hero of Camp Wannamorra? Why doesn't he tell his mom or anyone else the truth about what really happened?

