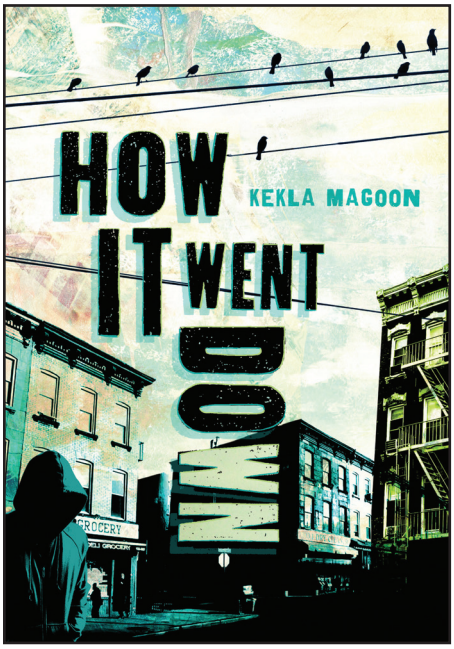
A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

HOW IT WENT DOWN

FOR USE WITH COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS



Ages 14–18 • Grades 9–Up
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ABOUT THE BOOK

No one really knows the truth about the circumstances of the night a black teenager, sixteen-year-old Tariq Johnson, is shot down by a white gunman, Jack Franklin. The witnesses' stories differ about key details, and the teens don't tell everything they know or everything they saw. The petty jealousies between the gang members, the manipulation by the reporters, the lack of investigation undertaken by the police, and the grief suffered by Tariq's family and friends all play a role in hiding the truth. But one thing is clear—a boy has been shot, and the man who shot him walks free.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KEKLA MAGOON is the author of several books for young adults, including *37 Things I Love* and *The Rock and the River*, winner of the Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe Award. She is a New York City–based writer, editor, speaker, and educator.

To attain specific Common Core grade-level standards for their classrooms and students, teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities in this guide to their classes' needs. You know your kids best!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the neighborhood in which Tariq and his family live. How does the neighborhood play a role in Tariq's death?
2. What issues does Noodle have with Tariq? What is Noodle's reaction to Tariq's death? How does Tariq's death affect Noodle's relationship with Jennica?
3. Why is it important for Will (aka eMZee) to lead a double life? Who is Will trying to make happy? How does his tagging help him?
4. How does Vernesha, Tariq's mother, show strength in the face of Tariq's death? What does she mean when she says, "Anger would be more bearable than this sorrow"?
5. Why is Brick so intent on Tyrell joining the gang? What methods does Brick use to harass Tyrell?
6. Why does Jennica accept $100 to talk to the reporters? How does Noodle feel about Jennica talking to the press? What is ironic about Noodle's reaction based on what he does when Brick asks him to?
7. Why does Brian Trellis think Tariq is dead because of him? What role does Brian play in Tariq's death?
8. What misconception does Kimberly have about Reverend Sloan? How does Reverend Sloan tempt Kimberly?
9. What is Tina's reaction to Tariq's death? How does she help save his reputation? How does Tyrell help Tina free herself of some of her grief?
10. How does Will's stepfather, Steve, finally begin to understand Will's need to stay connected to Underhill?
11. Why does Tyrell visit Junior in jail? What does Tyrell learn that helps him make a decision about joining the Kings?
12. How does Jennica begin to put her life back together after she breaks up with Noodle? What role does Tariq's death play in changing her life?

CCSS: L.9-10.1; SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4

WRITING ACTIVITIES

DEATH CHANGES LIVES

Tariq's death impacts everyone who knew him—as well as people Tariq didn't know. As a class, brainstorm a list of people who were impacted by Tariq's death. Then, working in small groups, have students create a collage that includes a written message from each of the people impacted, including visual elements that reflect the individual and show how Tariq's death impacted that person. In the collage, students should also show how all the people that are impacted are connected in some way. Each group should present their visual to the class.

CCSS: L.9-10.1, L.9-10.2; RL.9-10.1; W.9-10.1, W.9-10.4

CHARACTER ANALYSIS OF TARIQ JOHNSON

Ask students to work with a partner to brainstorm everything they know about Tariq, based on what his friends and family say about him. Then students can choose to write a eulogy for his funeral, an obituary about his life, a newspaper article about the shooting, or other creative writing to convey the personality and character of Tariq. Have students share and post their writing in the classroom.

CCSS: L.9-10.1, L.9-10.2; RL.9-10.1; W.9-10.1, W.9-10.4

FICTION MIMICS LIFE

There have been several high-profile cases of racially motivated shootings reported in the news across the United States in recent years. Working in small groups, ask students to research one or more of these incidents and compare it with Tariq Johnson's death using a Venn diagram. Ask students to select one of the two cases and brainstorm ways the senseless death in the story could have been avoided. Again in their small groups, have students create a script that addresses an alternate scenario. Have students practice and present their scripts to the class as a precursor to continued discussion of the news events and the story.

CCSS: L.9-10.1, L.9-10.2; RL.9-10.1; W.9-10.1, W.9-10.4

FRIENDSHIPS TILL DEATH

Junior, Sammy, Tyrell, and Tariq were childhood friends, and they made a pact never to join the 8-5 Kings. The boys all made sacrifices for one another—even after Junior and Sammy joined the Kings. Ask students working in groups of four to write a poem for four voices about the experiences these four friends shared. Poems should include alternating voices of the boys as well as other shared lines between the voices. Have students practice and present their poems to the class.

CCSS: L.9-10.1, L.9-10.2; RL.9-10.1; W.9-10.1, W.9-10.4

Common Core activities written by Susan Geye, Everman ISD Coordinator of Library Services.