“The Other Wes Moore” shares the life stories of two individuals and the various people in their lives. The two Wes Moores, along with their friends and family members, experience different “losses,” to differing degrees, throughout the book. These “losses” include the loss of a family member, the loss of youth and innocence, the loss of freedom, and the loss of time amongst others.

Similarly, both Wes Moores and the people in their lives demonstrate various forms of faith and experience redemption in very different ways. Religion, hope, trust, second chances, and forgiveness are all reoccurring examples of faith and redemption that emerge throughout the book.

This section examines the themes of “Loss,” “Faith,” and “Redemption” through the lenses of both Wes Moores, the individuals in their lives, and the students participating in this curriculum. Throughout this section, students will have multiple opportunities to scaffold their understanding of these themes, critique and evaluate passages from the book, and to make connections that inform their own lives.
### Common Core Standards Addressed in this Section:

- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- Come to discussions prepared having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

- Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, and presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.

- Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

- Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

These discussion questions are designed to encourage students to think deeply about the scenarios and ideas presented in “The Other Wes Moore.” Specifically, these discussions will build students’ reading comprehension skills, allow them to connect the book to their own lives, provide opportunities for them to learn from their classmates, and increase their critical thinking skills.
Teacher Tip: Remind your students about the theme of “Loss, Faith, and Redemption” and encourage them to respond with that theme in mind. Although these discussion questions will guide the conversation, the teacher should ensure that all comments are grounded by the overarching theme so that students’ understanding of “Loss, Faith, and Redemption” is reinforced.

Read the following prompts and have a discussion with a partner, small group, or entire class.

1. What does it mean to have faith in something? What are things that you have faith in?

2. What does redemption mean? Have you ever experienced redemption? Share your example of redemption with the class.

3. Can you think of other stories you have read or movies you have seen that involve themes of faith?

4. Can you think of other stories you have read or movies you have seen that involve themes of redemption?

5. Have you yet identified any examples of faith and redemption in “The Other Wes Moore”? Share them with the class.

6. On page xiii, Wes writes, “But even the worst decisions we make don’t necessarily remove us…” What does this quote mean and how does it relate to the theme of redemption?

7. On page xiv, Wes writes that, “Life and death, freedom and bondage hang in the balance of everything.” Does this quote relate to the themes of faith or redemption? How so or why not?

8. After getting in trouble on page 10, Wes is sent to his room. As he waits for his mother to punish him, Wes says he was, “Mentally running through my nonexistent options for escape.” In this example, what are the ways in which Wes might have been able to redeem himself?

9. Describe the scene in the kitchen when Wes loses his father? What is his reaction? What are the two memories he recalls of his father?

10. The “other” Wes has a different memory of his father, describe it. How are his memories different from those of the author?

11. Talk about the sadness that both Wes Moores share when it comes to their fathers? How are their losses similar? How are they different?

12. What do you think is going through Mary’s mind when she sees her two sons wanted for arrest on the television? How did you feel when you read that Wes and Tony might be responsible for this crime?
The Power of “Loss”

The individuals in “The Other Wes Moore” lose things at different points in the book. In this activity, students will think about what it means to lose someone or something and the ways that loss affects a person.

Teach Prior to Activity:
Sequencing refers to the ways that an author shares events with readers in a particular order. Events are typically sequenced in the chronological order in which it happens or in step-by-step order such as a cooking recipe.

Objectives:
• Students will understand the theme of “loss” by identifying examples from the book and their own life.
• Students will be able to articulate the impact that different losses had on their life.
• Students will demonstrate their ability to sequence items in the correct chronological order.

Individual Work:
1] Name two specific examples from the book in which an individual lost something. Draw a diagram or chart to show how the two examples were similar and different. Be sure to name the person with the loss, the thing they lost, and the page from the book that talks about the loss.

2] Think about what it means to lose something and make a list of the things that you have lost in your lifetime. Write as many things that come to mind on your list.

3] How many of the items from your list were physical objects like house keys or an ipod? How many of the losses from your list involved other things such as a lost loved one, lost time, or loss of faith?

4] Complete the following chart by first identifying a particular loss and then specifying the ways in which that loss affected your life. Be sure to list the consequences of that loss in the correct chronological sequence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The thing I lost:</th>
<th>The impact the loss had on my life:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ex. Ipod        | • I didn’t have music for the bus ride home  
|                 | • I had to save money for over three months  
|                 | • I didn’t have money to go to the movies with friends  
|                 | • I finally saved enough money and bought a new ipod  
|                 | • I took better care of my new ipod  |
The Facts and Opinions of Faith and Redemption

Common Core Standards Addressed in this Activity:

- Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

- Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

- Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

Teach Prior to Activity:

- Readers should differentiate between Fact and Opinion as they read different texts so that they can formulate their own understanding of the material they read. A fact is a piece of information that can be proven to be true and cannot be disagreed with. An opinion, however, is an individual’s belief or personal position. Opinions can be supported by facts but they cannot be proven to be true or false. For example, “Wes attended Valley Forge Military Academy” is a fact and, “Enrolling Wes in Valley Forge Military Academy was a great decision” is an opinion.

Objectives:

- Students will know the difference between fact and opinion.

- Students will be able to identify examples of fact and opinion from “The Other Wes Moore.”

- Student will articulate specific facts and create opinions related to the theme of “faith” and “redemption.”

This activity will continue to explore the themes of “faith” and “redemption.” Students will use passages from the book and discuss the roles these themes play in resolving different situations.
Individual Work:

1) There are several ways in which the themes “faith” and “redemption” emerge in the book. Keep these two themes in mind and read the following examples:

- On page 3, the two Wes Moores share an understanding that they are going to mourn absences of their fathers in different ways.

- On page 36, Wes’s mom gives a financial gift to help emergency aid providers avoid making the same mistake that caused the death of Wes’s father.

- On page 122, we read how the wooded area surrounding Valley Forge played dual roles in this story. First it posed as an obstacle for Wes and then it was a haven.

- On pages 135–137, Wes describes his experience as paratrooper jumping out of the plane and the different things he had faith in as he prepared to jump.

- On page 168, Wes asks his South African host mother how she was able to forgive the pain of apartheid and she responds, “Because Mr. Mandela asked us to.”

2) With these examples in mind, or others that you think of, write three facts from the book related to the theme of faith.
   a. 
   b. 
   c.

3) With these examples in mind, or others that you think of, write three opinions from the book related to the theme of faith.
   a. 
   b. 
   c.

4) With these examples in mind, or others that you think of, write three facts from the book related to the theme of redemption.
   a. 
   b. 
   c.

5) With these examples in mind, or others that you think of, write three opinions from the book related to the theme of redemption.
   a. 
   b. 
   c.
Common Core Standards Addressed in these Writing Activities:

- Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

- Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level and concerns.

- Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

- Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

- Use various types of phrases (noun, verb, adjectival, adverbial, participial, prepositional, absolute) and clauses (independent, dependent; noun, relative, adverbial) to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations.

- Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.

- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

- Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

- Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

- Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

This section will increase students’ comprehension of “The Other Wes Moore” through the writing process. Specifically, students will be asked to develop written responses to prompts in different formats, for different purposes, and for different audiences.
Teacher Tips:

• Begin by ensuring students understand the prompt and introduce them to the rubric so that they know what they are striving for in each scoring category.

• Use the K/W/L Chart, Venn Diagram, or other graphic organizer of your choice to help students to organize their thoughts in a pre-writing activity.

• Give students a few vocabulary words that you would like them to use in their writing.

• Ask students to use their pre-writing when they write their first draft. Be sure to ensure that they follow the prompt, use correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

• Partner two students together and ask them to edit each other’s work. Ensure that they know how to give and receive technical and critical feedback.

• Set a clear expectation and due date for them to submit their final draft.

1| A persuasive writing piece encourages others to think or act in a certain way. In the book, the “other” Wes Moore is found guilty of murder and we learn that he will spend the rest of his life in prison. Imagine that Wes is scheduled to meet with a judge to discuss the possibility of parole. Write a six paragraph essay that attempts to persuade the judge that Wes Moore deserves to spend the rest of his life in prison or an essay that persuades the judge that Wes deserves a chance at redemption and that he should receive a reduced prison sentence.

• Pre-writing: Think about the task and select the position you plan to take in your essay. Re-read the book and identify five reasons that support your position.

• Draft: Write your six paragraph essay. Be sure clearly explain your position in the first paragraph. The second through fifth paragraphs should be spent explaining your position. Remember to use facts and opinions from the book to support your position. Use compelling language to try to persuade the reader that your position is worth acting on. In your sixth paragraph, conclude your essay by re-stating your position and highlighting your supporting evidence.

• Final Version: After you have reviewed your draft and received feedback from a peer, parent, or teacher, write a final version of your essay.

2| A creative writing piece is an opportunity for students to use their imaginations to create new characters, settings, words, and scenarios. On page 118, Wes talks about his military school being a “force field” and how he felt as if he was in a bubble being kept from the outside world. In this writing activity, students will be asked to write a four paragraph creative story describing what life might really be like if they “lived in a bubble.”

• Pre-writing: Write notes about what your bubble might look like (it does not need to be sphere shaped; you might choose to create a “bubble” that looks more like a glass box). What are some of the things you would be protected from if you lived in a bubble? What are some things you would be deprived of if you lived in a bubble?

• Draft: Use your pre-writing notes to write a four paragraph creative writing story about your life in a bubble. Use your imagination to create your story. Use adjectives and imagery to describe your life. Be sure to explain the pros and cons of living in the bubble. Lastly, give your story a title.

• Final Version: After you have edited your draft, write the final version of your essay.
### Common Core Standards Addressed in this Section:

- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- Come to discussions prepared having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

- Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, and presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.

- Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

- Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

- Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

- Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

- Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

- Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

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Now that students have read different passages from “The Other Wes Moore” and have completed various discussions, activities, and written assignments, they will now have the opportunity to engage in a debate with their peers.
Teacher Tips: • Explain the purpose of the debate to students and model appropriate debate discourse and transitional phrases such as, “I respectfully disagree with that because…” “You make a good point about ____________, I hadn’t thought about that before.” “Can you clarify what you mean?” “Your response made me think about ____________.” These transitional phrases encourage students to be active listeners, to articulate their own opinion in response to others, and require that they utilize details from the book to support their position.

• Modify the debate format by alternating between partner/small group debates and debates with the whole class.

• For more experienced debaters or in “competitive” debates, teach students about a few debate strategies such as:

“Ad Hominem” means “against the man.” Through this strategy, students should “attack” their opponent’s position or credibility. For example, a student might argue that Wes’s mother made a great decision to send Wes to the Valley Forge Military Academy. Since the opposing position might lack substantial evidence, since Wes experienced great success at the school, they might argue that a family member from the opposing position taught at a military school and therefore they have a biased position. Teachers can also teach students strategies for avoiding this “attack” such as restating the facts from the book supporting their position and directly asking their opponent to provide “hard” facts from the book as well.

A “Red herring” occurs when an irrelevant idea or piece of information is entered into the debate as a “distracter.” For example, if someone holds the position that the police officer should have arrested Wes after he was caught spray painting public property, they might add, “but since the city jails are so crowded, they let him go. This is why we should have more jails in the city.” The opposing position should know that the issue of overcrowded jails, in this case, is a “red herring” because it offers up new information that isn’t directly related to the debate question. This is also an opportunity to teach students to avoid speculation and ways to challenge opponents who offer speculative evidence.
The purpose of these debate questions is to increase students' critical thinking and to strengthen their ability to critique, evaluate, and form an opinion based on the passages they have read.

1. On page 15, Wes talks about the faith his father put in the hospital. Do you think the hospital deserved that type of faith? What do they do to earn, or not earn, it?

2. Do public schools deserve our faith? Use examples from the book and your own experiences to defend your position.

3. Should convicted criminals be given to opportunity to redeem themselves and re-enter society?

4. The murdered police officer from the story left behind a wife and five children. How do you think they feel about this book being written? Do you think the author does a good job respecting them, their loss, and the memory of their husband/father?