As Wes reflects on his life during a trip to South Africa he writes, “His tribe’s influence in making him a man was obvious and indelible. At that moment, I realized the journey I took was never mine alone either.” This realization from the end of “The Other Wes Moore” illustrates the fact that Wes’s peers, parents, family, and community all had positive influences on him.

The theme of “Peer, Parent, and Community Support” refers to the people and the ways in which Wes’s life and his decisions were heavily influenced by the people he surrounded himself with. Similarly, the “other” Wes Moore was also influenced by the people in his life.

Through this theme, students will be prompted to consider the roles different people played in Wes Moore’s life, recognize the importance of having people to support them, and identify the peers, parents, and community members who support them in their daily 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.

- 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.

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 “Peer, Parent, and Community Support” 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 “Peer, Parent, and Community Support” is reinforced.

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

1| How do your peers/friends support you?

2| Give an example of how your parents and family support you? Provide as many examples as possible.

3| What role does your community or neighborhood play in supporting you?

4| How would your life be different if you did not have the support of peers, parents, or your community?

5| How would your life be different if you had additional support from peers, parents, or your community?

6| On page 36, we learn that Wes’s mother slept in the living room to protect the kids from a possible intruder. What other things did she do to protect her children?

7| Discuss the role of family in this book. How was Wes’s relationship with his sister similar and different from Wes’s relationship with his brother Tony?

8| After moving to New York, Wes meets new friends and bonds with them on the basketball court. How did these peer relationships influence Wes?

9| Re-read pages 50–51 and explain how drugs negatively impacted Wes’s community.

10| How did their grandmothers impact the lives of both Wes Moores?

11| Look at the organizations listed at the back of the book. Have you ever heard of these organizations? If you are a member of one or more of these groups, share your experiences. If not, which organization sounds the most interesting to you and why?

12| Who are the people in your life that have a positive influence on you? Explain why they are important to you and your future.

13| After being accepted to Johns Hopkins, Wes writes, “Having an advocate on the inside, someone who had gotten to know me and understood my story on a personal level, had obviously helped. It made me think deeply about the way privilege and preference work in the world, and how many kids who didn’t have ‘luck’ like mine in this instance would find themselves forever outside the ring of power and prestige.” What does this quote mean and how does it relate to the theme of peer, parent, and community support?
INTERVIEW A LEADER

In this activity, students will be asked to identify someone they see as a “leader.” Students will first define what makes a person a leader. They will then construct a series of questions they would like to ask a leader from their life. In conclusion, students will be asked to interview that person and report their key findings.

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:

A Cluster Diagram is a type of graphic organizer that helps students to group, or cluster, their thoughts around a central topic. Cluster diagrams are often used as a pre-writing activity to encourage students to brainstorm ideas, words, or subtopics directly related to the main idea.

Objectives:

- Students will complete a cluster diagram with the essential qualities they look for in a leader.

- Students will define the term “leader” and identify the leaders that possess the qualities they value.

- Students will interview a leader of their choice.

- Students will share what they learned from their interview with the class.

Individual Work:

1] In “The Other Wes Moore” we learn about the leaders that had positive influences on the author. We also learn how Wes, himself, becomes a leader in different contexts. Consider what it means to be a leader and write one leadership quality you value in each blank box of the following cluster diagram.

2] Now that you have identified the qualities you look for in a leader, select a leader from the past or present who embodies each of the nine qualities you identified in the previous item.

3] Identify a leader from your own life that you would like to interview. When selecting this leader, be sure to select a person that you have access to. For example, it might be wonderful to interview the President of the United States, but you will likely find it
very difficult to actually interview our country’s President. For this reason, think of leaders in your school such as a principal, assistant principal, or teacher. Other examples of leaders you might choose to interview are your sports coaches, afterschool activity leaders, or a leader from your community, family, or church. Create a list of the ten questions you would like to ask that leader.

4| Contact that person to request a day and time to interview him/her. You can either interview the leader in person, by phone, or by e-mail.

5| Following your interview, prepare a fifteen minute presentation to share your findings with an audience. Your presentation should include a brief introduction of the person you selected, the leadership qualities they possess, the reason you chose to interview him/her, and a few key findings from your interview.
TAKING ACTION ACTIVITY

Community support plays a big role in “The Other Wes Moore.” We learn about the positive and negative ways that both Wes Moores are affected by their different communities. Through this activity, students will create a plan to take action within their own community, or school, to make a positive impact on others.

**Common Core Standards Addressed in this Activity:**

- Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

- 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.

**Teach Prior to Activity:**

A *T-Chart* is a graphic organizer that groups two aspects of an item or topic into separate columns. These charts get their name from the fact that they look like a capital letter “T.” T-charts are commonly used to illustrate opposites such as fact/opinion or good/bad.

A *strategic plan* is a description of a goal and the specific steps and timeline necessary to accomplish the goal.

**Objectives:**

- Students will identify the different communities they belong to.

- Students will identify the positive and negative aspects of those different communities.

- Students will create a strategic plan to positively impact their communities.

**Individual Work:**

1. In “The Other Wes Moore,” we learn about the neighborhoods that both Wes Moores lived in. We also learn about their school, religious, and family communities. List at least three of the different communities you belong to. In addition, list one or two of the leaders for each of those communities. For example, you might say that you belong to your school community and two of its leaders are Mrs. Rivera, the principal and Mr. Anderson, your teacher.

2. Focus on one of the communities you listed for the previous item and complete the following T-Chart with positive and negative aspects of that community.
Now that you have identified a specific community you belong to and some of the positive and negative aspects of that community, you will develop a strategic plan to impact that community in a positive way. Answer the following questions to begin work on your strategic plan.

A. I want to positively impact my community by:
   
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________

B. I will work with the following community leader(s) to make a positive impact:
   
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________

C. In order to make this happen, I will take the following steps:
   
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________

D. I would like to successfully accomplish this goal by (set date):
   
   ___________________________________________________________________________________

E. I will know I have accomplished my goal when (describe what will be different or better about your community):
   
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
### 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.
A persuasive writing piece encourages others to think or act in a certain way. In “The Other Wes Moore,” we discover the people who emerged as role models for the author. Write a five paragraph persuasive essay that identifies Wes Moore’s most influential role model. Use evidence from the book to support your position and encourage your readers to agree with you.

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.

• Pre-writing: Think about the ways that a role model can positively shape a person’s life. Generate a list of the people that had a positive impact on Wes Moore’s life. As a part of your list, include specific examples of the ways that person impacted Wes.

• Draft: Now that you have thought about the impact a role model can have and you identified specific examples of the role models in Wes’s life, write a five paragraph persuasive essay. First, introduce the role model that you believe, had the biggest impact on Wes’s life. Second, use examples from the book to support your position. Third, remember to use compelling language to persuade your readers to agree with you. Finally, conclude your essay by summarizing your position.

• Final Version: After you have reviewed your draft and received feedback from a peer, parent, or teacher, write a final version of your five paragraph 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 169 Wes talks about the Xhosa ritual when boys spend four weeks with the elders and learn what it means to be a Xhosa man. Today, you will write a four paragraph creative writing essay and create a ritual. Your essay should explain who would participate in the ritual, the purpose of the ritual, how long the ritual would take, and where it would take place.

• Pre-writing: Think about the rituals that you have seen or participated in such as a wedding, funeral, or graduation. Also, think about the ritual that Wes describes
on page 169. Write a few ideas for a ritual you would like to create. Think about the purpose, participants, and location of the ritual. Write your notes in the following chart:

- **Draft:** Use the chart you created for the pre-writing to help you write a four paragraph creative writing essay. Your first paragraph should introduce the name and purpose of the ritual. The second and third paragraphs should provide information about the participants, duration, and location of the ritual. Your fourth paragraph should conclude the essay.

- **Final Version:** After you have reviewed your draft and received feedback from a peer, parent, or teacher, write a final version of your four paragraph creative writing essay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF RITUAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who are the participants?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How long would the ritual take?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 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.

#### 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.
“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 “distractor.” 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| Do you think Wes's brother, Tony, is a good role model? Why or why not?

2| On pages 36–38 Wes writes about his mother’s decision to move from Maryland to New York City. Do you think this was a good decision?

3| Do you agree or disagree with the way Wes’s mother reacted after he experimented with drugs? What do you think is the most effective way to respond to a child who takes drugs or drinks alcohol?

4| On page 71, Wes mentions that he skipped school and, “My sister, always the loyal accomplice, never snitched.” Do you think Wes’s sister made a good decision by not snitching on Wes for cutting school? Why or why not?

5| After catching Wes and Shea spray painting public property on pages 83–84, the cops give the boys a lecture and let them go free. Is this an example of community involvement? How or how not?

6| When Sergeant Austin gave Wes a map to escape from Valley Forge on page 91, did you think he was being a supportive peer? Did your opinion change after reading what happens on pages 92–93.

7| On page 161, Wes writes, “For the rest of us—those who snuck in despite coming from the margins—the mission has to be to pull up others behind us. That’s what Paul White did for me, and it changed my life.” What does this quote mean and do you agree with it? Defend your position.

8| After living in South Africa, Wes reflects, “Here, burgeoning manhood was guided and celebrated through a rite of passage. At home, burgeoning manhood was a trigger for apprehension.” What does this quote mean? Do you agree or disagree with Wes?

9| On page 179, Wes writes, “What changed was that I found myself surrounded by people—starting with my mom, grandparents, uncles, and aunts, and leading to a string of wonderful role models and mentors—who kept pushing me to see more than what was directly in front of me, to see the boundless possibilities of the wider world and the unexplored possibilities within myself.” Although Wes was fortunate to have positive role models in his life, do you think it is possible for someone to be successful without peer, parent, or community support?