



the
Lilies

the past is always present

Discussion Guide

About the Book



One of Us Is Lying meets A Good Girl's Guide to Murder in this don't-dare-to-look-away dark academia thriller that explores how secrets can rot an institution—and the people who uphold it—from the inside out.

Everyone wants to be a Lily.

At Archwell Academy, it's the ticket to a successful future. But like every secret society, there is something much darker beneath the surface... sometimes girls disappear.

When four Archwell students find themselves trapped in a time loop, they must relive their worst memories, untangling the Lilies' moldering roots and unraveling the secrets at the core of their school ... before they destroy their futures forever.

About the Author

Quinn Diacon-Furtado is a writer and creator who explores gender, magic, intuition, and memory across multiple genres. A 2022 Lambda Literary Fellow, they have a BA from the University of Virginia and an MFA in creative writing for children from Hollins University. They are best known for their portrayal of Danny Zuko in a 1998 summer camp musical revue of *Grease*.

About this Guide

The Common Core Standards push readers to look closer when reading a text including examining key ideas & details, craft & structure, and integration of knowledge & ideas. Diacon-Furtado's novel *The Lilies* includes opportunities to look at symbolism, cause & effect, racial & patriarchal prejudice, and more which allow the reader to deeply delve into the text. This teaching guide includes discussion questions to be used as reading check-ins, writing prompts, or classroom discussions in grades 10-12.

The Common Core Anchor Standards in English Language Arts, Social Justice Anchor Standards, and National Health Education Standards that can be addressed using the discussion questions and activities in this guide are:

English Language Arts

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10

Read and comprehend complex literary texts independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.8

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate information while avoiding plagiarism.

Social Justice Anchor Standards

Identity 3

Students will recognize that people's multiple identities interact and create unique and complex individuals.

Diversity 10

Students will examine diversity in social, cultural, political and historical contexts rather than in ways that are superficial or oversimplified.

Justice 12

Students will recognize unfairness on the individual level (e.g., biased speech) and injustice at the institutional or systemic level (e.g., discrimination).

Justice 13

Students will analyze the harmful impact of bias and injustice on the world, historically and today.

National Health Education Standards

5.12.8

Evaluate the effectiveness of health-related decisions.

8.12.6

Evaluate the process, outcomes, and impact of advocacy efforts at the individual, interpersonal, community, societal, and environmental levels.

Discussion Questions

Use these questions as reading check-ins, writing prompts, or classroom discussions throughout *The Lilies*.

1. Predict: Why do you think the author chose to start the book with the bell hooks quote?
 - Check your prediction at the end of the book.
2. Drew reveals that the Death card in Tarot can be the sign of new beginnings and endings (page 1). How is death both a beginning and an end?
3. Would you have made the same choice as Drew even though it meant transferring senior year? Why or why not?
4. Drew notes that the 1999 Encyclopedia found in the library are “some pretty old source materials” (page 4) and Veró mentions that most past reference information is outdated, including being patriarchal and racist (page 7). How can you check your references to ensure that they are reliable and valid?
5. Throughout the first few chapters, we learn about Charlotte in bits and pieces. Using the clues each character gives, looking specifically at the word choice they choose to describe her (ex. “lurking around” [page 6], “her big mouth” [page 7], etc.), how do you think the characters felt about Charlotte? What text causes you to make this inference?
6. Drew mentions that Ms. Katz is the only teacher who uses their correct pronouns (page 12). What does this tell you about Ms. Katz and the other teachers at the school?
7. Rory shares: “Some people would call this chronic anxiety. But I don’t have time for all of that. I stay on top of the feelings with my own special remedies... They keep my head above water. An Archwell woman is the master of her own mind. For us, therapy is a crutch.” (page 19). How does her take on her anxiety help spread a toxic message about mental illness? How can this toxic cycle of misunderstanding mental illness be stopped?
8. Many school policies around the country have been questioned for their inequity, both racial and patriarchal. On page 35, Blythe is not allowed to enter a test even though other students, specifically a white student, was allowed to, showing an example of inequities in policies. What other Archwell policies that are shared throughout the book have inequities?
 - **Extension:** What policies do you see at your school that are not equitable?
9. Veró uses a pseudonym when creating her art. Why do artists, of all types, use pseudonyms? What are the benefits? Disadvantages?

10. Mrs. Holloway believes you should separate the art from the artist, which means studying literature without looking at the prejudices and issues a writer may have, while Veró and Ms. Katz both believe that if you are going to teach literature with a problematic author, that information should be part of the teaching. Which do you believe?
 - Ms. Katz also mentions that the canon needs to evolve. Do you agree with Ms. Katz? Why or why not?
11. Although art literally talks to Veró, what does the idiom “art speaks” mean to you? What is a piece of art that has spoken to you?
12. Charlotte mispronounces Veró’s name (page 91). Although Veró does not say anything, the reader knows that it grates on her. Why would someone not correct when someone mispronounces their name? Why is it so important to pronounce names correctly?
13. What is the author symbolizing by the memories rotting when they must be revisited more than one time?
14. Veró accuses Chancellor Archwell of being a TERF (trans-exclusionary radical feminist). What does the Chancellor do to show that she is a TERF? Why is it harmful to be a self-proclaimed feminist but then exclude trans women?
 - **Extension:** What does Drew mean by “TERF behavior is about suppression. It’s about control. It is about wanting to maintain a façade” (page 165)? How does Chancellor Archwell fit this definition?
15. How did Veró’s installation go wrong? Although she meant well, it ended up being a betrayal. She later describes it as “misguided savior bullshit” (page 298). How is what she did both well meaning and misguided? How could she have done it differently? How do you help a cause without acting like a savior?
16. Drew describes Veró as the Queen of Swords from their tarot deck: beautiful, ambitious, but able to cause harm. What tarot cards would you assign to each of the characters in the book? Why?
17. Why do the Lilies use the infinity symbol?
18. Blythe, during her conversation with Charlotte (page 192), mentions that Charlotte is not the only one who has “had to put on a mask to fit in. To survive.” What are examples throughout the book of different characters having to mask who they truly are to fit in and survive?
19. Veró states (page 216), “You love all this creepy exclusionary bullshit because it’s the only way you can feel special. You’re out here talking about who ‘fits’ at Archwell and who doesn’t. Have you noticed that the pattern of who ‘fits in’ here falls perfectly in line with white supremacist patriarchy?” How does the legacy and nepotistic aspect of Archwell Academy feed into this pattern? What other aspects of the Academy fit this definition?
20. In chapter 18, Rory finally begins to see her complacency in everything and she asks: “Am I the hero? Or the villain?” Which do you think?
 - Does your analysis of Rory change once you have experienced her memory in chapter 24?
21. Do you agree with Veró’s mother’s statement?
 - “Resentment doesn’t do anything but make a person miserable. You have to learn to accept the past and move on... You can still fight for a better future -but you have to accept that the past is gone.” (page 267)

22. Blythe explains about generational trauma on page 288. How is Rory's mother's abuse an example of generational trauma?
23. The conclusion of *The Lilies* shows a perfect example of the butterfly effect, which is the idea that a small change can make a difference. What did the characters change in the past and how did it affect the present?
24. Each of *The Lilies* main characters ended up aligning exactly with a character from the past. For example, Rose witnessed Lillian's disappearance just as Drew witnessed Charlotte's. Which characters from the present align with which characters in the past? How so?
25. What does the closet symbolize throughout the book?
26. Throughout the book, in addition to the four different points of view, there is another voice present: the italicized chapters. Who is the writer of these chapters? Why do you think the author chose to include their voice in addition to the four main characters?
27. What is the author's purpose in including four points of view to our main narrative? What do these points of view add to our experience as a reader?
28. What is the main theme of the book? What message do you think the author was trying to portray for the reader?

This guide was created by Kellee Moyer, a middle school librarian in Orlando, FL. Kellee is the author of various teaching guides for all levels; the co-author of the blog [Unleashing Readers](#); Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE (ALAN) 2024 President and a past member of the ALAN Board of Directors; a past jury member then co-chair of the Schneider Family Award Jury; a past member then chair of the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Book Award committee; and a current member of ALAN, AASL, and ALA. Kellee can be reached at Kellee.Moye@gmail.com.