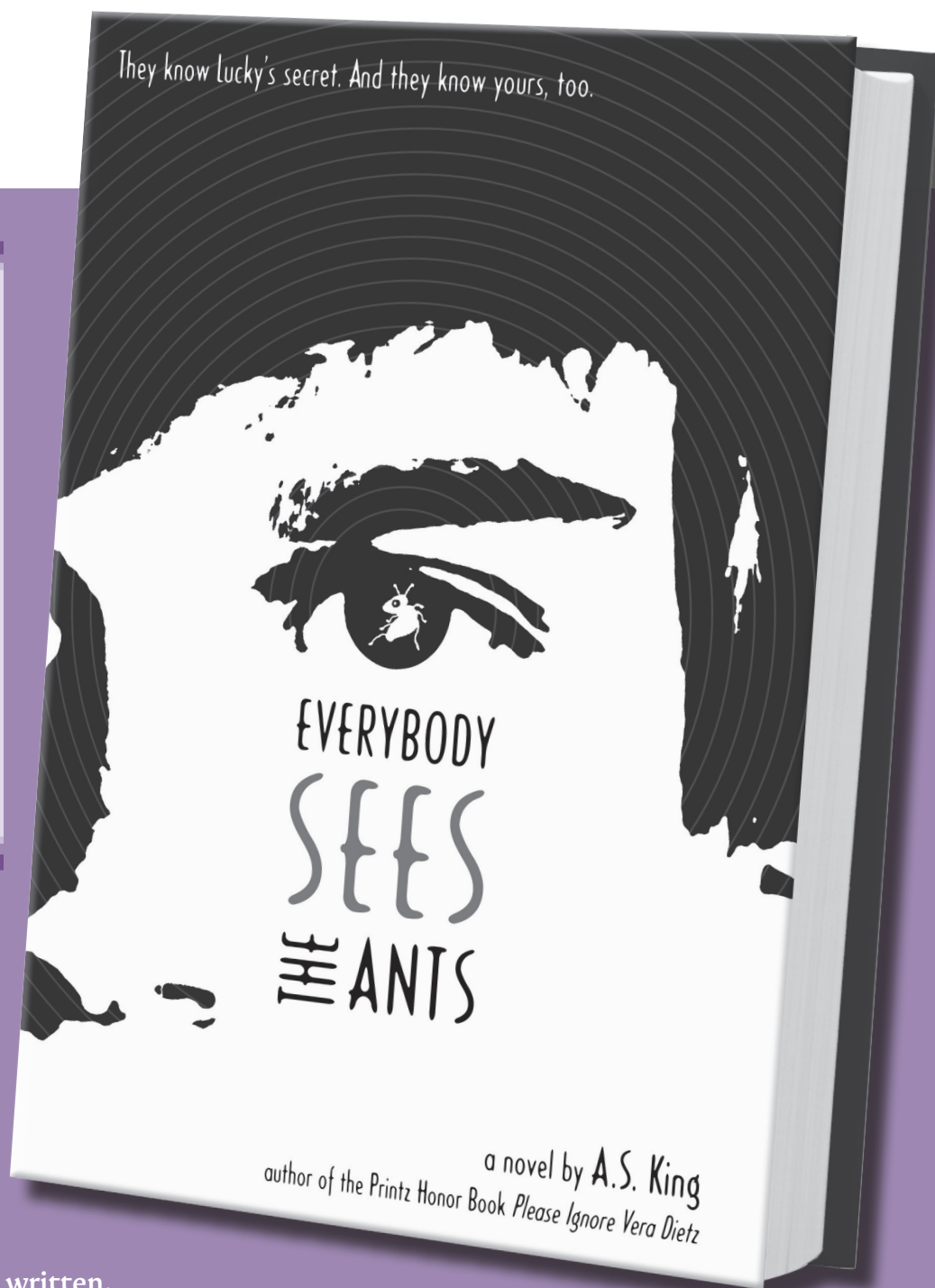


EVERYBODY SEES THE ANTS



curriculum connections

- ❖ Literature
- ❖ Psychology
- ❖ Vietnam War

thematic connections

- ❖ Bullying
- ❖ Family
- ❖ Abuse

Ages: 15 & up

By
A.S. King

★ “Blending magic and realism, this is a subtly written, profoundly honest novel.” —*Booklist*, starred review

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Take a closer look at the narrative structure of this novel, which intermingles flashbacks and dream sequences with conventional first person narration. How do these different storytelling strands complement each other? What does each reveal about Lucky's state of mind?
2. Nader McMillan isn't the only bully in this novel. Identify the others. How are they alike? How are they different? Who are their targets? Compare and contrast how each victim responds to being bullied.
3. Lucky and his granddad have never met, yet they are exceptionally close. When did their extraordinary relationship begin? Why did it begin? Is Lucky helping his granddad, or is Granddad helping Lucky?
4. Lucky calls his mother a squid and his father a turtle. Why? Do you agree with his characterization of his parents? How did Lucky get his own name? What makes it ironic? What makes it appropriate?
5. Aunt Jodi has a number of unappealing qualities. What do you think are her worst? What are some of her strengths? By the end of his Arizona visit, how has Lucky's understanding of his aunt changed?
6. How does Lucky meet Ginny? What makes them such an unlikely pair? How does Ginny respond to the stresses in her own life? Do you think she would understand if Lucky told her about visiting his granddad and the ants? How does the play *The Vagina Monologues* improve both Ginny and Lucky's lives?
7. What is the significance of the items Lucky brings back from his visits with Granddad Harry? How did Lucky acquire them? Do

you believe he really brought them back from his dreams or that there is a more logical explanation for Lucky finding them when he wakes up? Why or why not?

8. After you've finished the book, return to the title, *Everybody Sees the Ants*. What does it mean? When did Lucky start seeing the ants? What role do they play in his life? Do you agree that everyone sees ants? If so, why, and do you think the ants present themselves in different ways to different people?

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Historical

As a whole class project, dig deeper into the long history of prisoners of war (POWs) and soldiers designated as missing in action (MIA). Which wars still have MIAs? Have there always been POWs and MIAs? Long after the Vietnam War ended, Lucky's grandmother believed that her missing husband was somehow still alive. What resources are now available for families of missing soldiers? Start your research by visiting the U.S. Department of Defense's website about POWs and MIAs, <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo>.

Lucky's grandfather served in the Vietnam War as a result of a lottery. What further information about the Vietnam-era draft lottery can you find? How did it work? Whom did it cover? Do your students think it ought to be reinstated? If possible, invite a potential draftee from the Vietnam era (men who are now in their 60's and mid-50s) into your classroom to discuss his experience with the lottery.

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Anti-Bullying

Be sure your students understand the following definition of bullying:

Behavior that is intended to harm or disturb, or the individual targeted feels harmed, disturbed, or embarrassed.

Behavior that occurs repeatedly and over time, not just once.

Behavior that exploits an imbalance of power. (Keep in mind that power can be based on ethnicity, religion, gender identification, sexual preference, language skills, intelligence, size, age, social status, wealth, appearance, wardrobe, and many others factors.)

Assign a weeklong study of daily newspaper and major news websites. Ask your students to keep a log of all the articles that report bullying or harassment incidents. Remind them that there is no age limit for bullying and bullies.

Take a hard look at bullying in your own area. Encourage your students to examine their own experiences with bullying and to discuss the problem openly with their friends and caring adults. With the help of counselors or guidance professionals, lead a candid discussion with your class about the prevalence of bullying in your school. Brainstorm ways to prevent bullying. Prepare an action plan to present to the administration.

WRITING PROMPTS

Everybody Sees the Ants is beautifully written and full of lines that your students may want to ponder. Gathered below are several provocative

quotations. Ask your students to pick his or her favorite and then write a short essay that addresses the following questions: Where does the quote appear in the novel? What is its meaning? What is its significance? Why is it your favorite?

A skinny man up a tree speaking to Lucky (page 23):
“It’s a dream son. You can go anywhere you want.”

Lucky’s father speaking to Lucky (page 29):
“Fighting is for sissies,” he says. I wish I could tell him how much I disagree. I wish he would fight for himself and win me.”

Lucky to himself (page 51): “Ants appear on the concrete in front of me. Dancing ants. Smiling ants. Ants having a party. One tells me to hang on. *Don’t worry, kid!* he says, holding up a martini glass. *It’ll be over in a minute!*”

Lucky imagining his father’s thoughts (page 28):
“*Why are you asking me this? I never figured out what to do about my own bullies. How am I supposed to know what to do with yours?*”

From an old letter that Granddad Harry sent his wife (page 40): “*Here they learn what hate is, and I am so sad that they might never know love because hate came first.*”

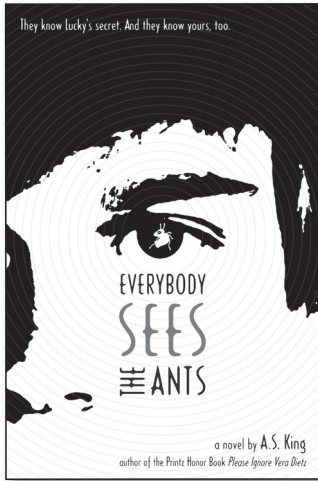
Lucky to himself (page 36): “If I was going to die, then I wanted to die without secrets. I tried to tell Granddad about the banana incident and what Nader did to snitches.”

Lucky with Ginny (page 183): “I just want to keep feeling this nice, warm sensation of friendship. I realize that I’ve never felt this before.”

Lucky wondering about his granddad (page 223):
“Is he asking me to give up my life’s mission? Or is he telling me that this *isn’t* my life’s mission?”

Granddad Harry to Lucky (page 255): “You’re not coming here,” he says. “You’re escaping *there*. Big difference.”

about the book



EVERYBODY SEES THE ANTS
by A.S. King
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Lucky Linderman didn't ask for his life. He didn't ask his grandfather not to come home from the Vietnam War. He didn't ask for a father who never got over it. He didn't ask for a mother who keeps pretending their dysfunctional family is fine. And he didn't ask to be the target of Nader McMillan's relentless bullying, which has finally gone too far.

But Lucky has a secret—one that helps him wade through the daily mundane torture of his life. In his dreams, Lucky escapes to the war-ridden jungles of Laos—the prison his grandfather couldn't escape—where Lucky can be a real man, an adventurer, and a hero. It's dangerous and wild, and it's a place where his life just might be worth living. But how long can Lucky keep hiding in his dreams before reality forces its way inside?

Michael L. Printz Honor recipient A.S. King's smart, funny, and boldly original writing shines in this powerful novel about learning to cope with the shrapnel life throws at you and taking a stand against it.

praise for *Everybody Sees The Ants*

- ★ "Blending magic and realism, this is a subtly written, profoundly honest novel." —*Booklist*, starred review
- ★ "King remarkably channels fifteen-year-old Lucky, creating one of the most believable teen male characters in young adult fiction....This unique coming-of-age story will hold tremendous appeal for reluctant male readers." —*VOYA*, starred review
- ★ "A smart, funny, and passionate novel that embodies the idea that 'It Gets Better'—when you take action."
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review
- ★ "King's heartfelt tale easily blends realism and fantasy."
—*SLJ*, starred review

about the author



A.S. King is the author of *Everybody Sees the Ants* and the Edgar Award nominated, Michael L. Printz Honor Book *Please Ignore Vera Dietz*, described as "deeply suspenseful and profoundly human" by *Publishers Weekly* and picked as one of *Kirkus Reviews'* Best Books for Teens 2010. She is also the author of *The Dust of 100 Dogs*, described as "undeniably original" by *Booklist* and picked as an ALA Best Books for Young Adults. Recently returned from Ireland, where she spent over a decade living off the land, teaching adult literacy, and writing novels, King now lives deep in the Pennsylvania woods with her husband and children. Her next YA novel, *Ask the Passengers*, about acceptance, small town gossip, and airplanes, is due in Fall 2012. Learn more at www.as-king.com.

Author Photo © Tophier King

