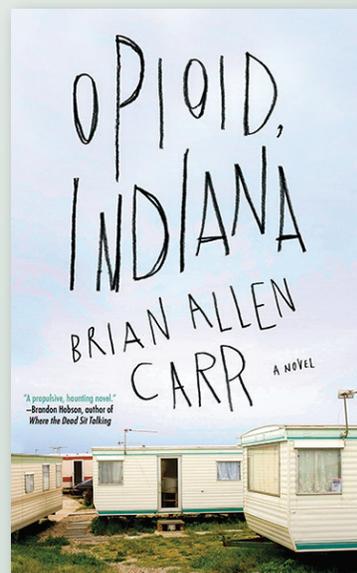
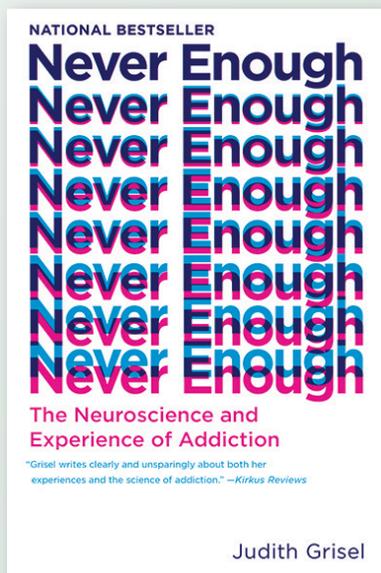
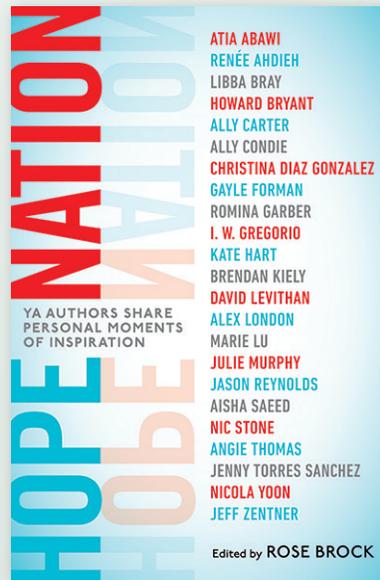
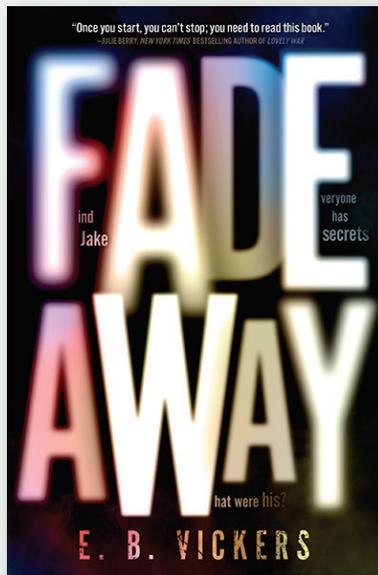


THEMATIC GUIDE  
STUDENT WELLNESS

Building Teacher Knowledge Around  
Mental Health and Addiction  
HIGH SCHOOL



## CONTENTS

■ INTRODUCTION.....	2
■ ABOUT THE TITLES IN THIS COLLECTION.....	3
■ PREPARING FOR THE TEACHER BOOK STUDY.....	4
PRE-READING.....	4
SELF-INVENTORY.....	4
■ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHER BOOK CIRCLES.....	5
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS.....	5
ROLES, GOALS, AND NORMS.....	6
DISCUSSION PROTOCOLS.....	7
CHECK-INS.....	7
■ CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS.....	8
CLOSE-READING.....	8
CREATIVE WRITING.....	9
DISCUSSION SEMINAR.....	9
■ ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE.....	10

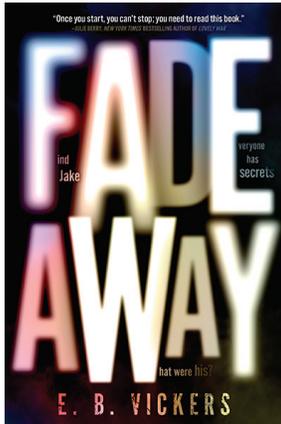
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## ■ INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “the fastest-growing drug problem in the United States isn’t cocaine, heroin, or methamphetamines. It is prescription drugs, and it is profoundly affecting the lives of teenagers.” The COVID-19 global pandemic compounded the problem as adolescents found themselves anxious and isolated from their peers and other systems of support. What is the teacher’s role in addressing this epidemic of addiction? Today’s educators are increasingly aware that their impact extends beyond the classroom, and that teaching with a whole-child approach is critical if they want their students to succeed.

The books in this text set build teacher knowledge around the topics of mental health and addiction, as well as provide opportunities for students to engage, reflect, and connect. These texts are excellent choices for teacher book circles, where educators can connect the research and stories to their own students and classrooms. Teachers can choose to read one or a combination of texts in this set, and can apply any number of the activities in their book circles and classrooms. The goal is to recognize the impacts of addiction on our students and our schools, and to promote a classroom culture where students feel safe, supported, and understood.

## ■ ABOUT THE TITLES IN THIS COLLECTION



### Fadeaway

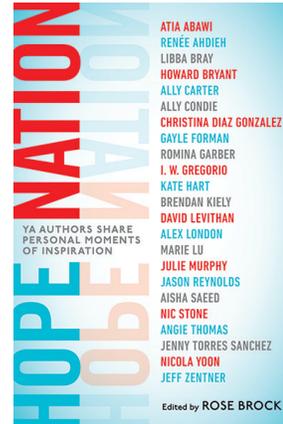
E. B. VICKERS

978-0-59-318019-8

Hardcover | Knopf Books for Young Readers  
400 pages | \$17.99 | Lexile: HL720L

Also available: E-BOOK

In *Fadeaway*, by E. B. Vickers, a high school star athlete suffers in silence while attempting to live up to everyone else's expectations.



### Hope Nation

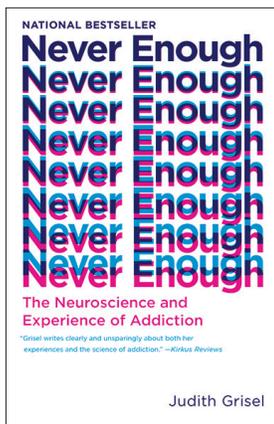
Edited by ROSE BROCK

978-1-52-474185-3

Trade Paperback | Penguin Books  
288 pages | \$10.99 | Lexile: 940L

Also available: AUDIO DOWNLOAD, E-BOOK

In Rose Brock's *Hope Nation*, popular YA authors present teens with messages of resilience, acceptance, and, most of all, hope.



### Never Enough

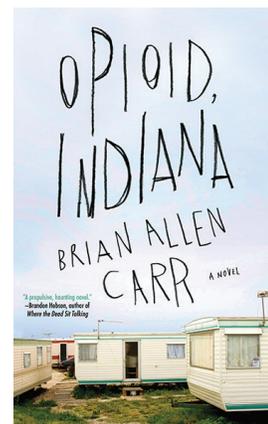
JUDITH GRISEL

978-0-52-543490-0

Trade Paperback | Anchor  
256 pages | \$18.00

Also available: AUDIO DOWNLOAD, E-BOOK

The memoir *Never Enough* explores author Judith Grisel's journey through addiction and recovery, offering insights into the role communities can play in addressing this crisis.



### Opioid, Indiana

BRIAN ALLEN CARR

978-1-64-129078-4

Trade Paperback | Soho Press  
224 pages | \$16.00

Also available: E-BOOK

Brian Allen Carr's *Opioid, Indiana* follows Riggle, a teenage orphan who struggles to survive in a Middle America full of poverty, polarization, and addiction.

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE TEACHER BOOK STUDY

The following activities help educators prepare for a book study by building knowledge around addiction and mental health.

### PRE-READING

Build background knowledge around the widespread increase in prescription drugs and addiction among teenagers. Read and annotate a research article with takeaways and classroom connections. Be prepared to discuss annotations in a teacher book circle, professional learning community, or other peer collaboration opportunity. One tool that works well for reading, annotating, and discussing research articles is the “connect, extend, challenge” protocol. While reading, note any connections to previous knowledge as well as any new learning, or extensions. Finally, note any challenges that might still be puzzling. Four publications that lay groundwork for reading and discussing the texts in this guide are listed below.

- “Rise in Prescription Drug Misuse and Abuse Impacting Teens”  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/rise-prescription-drug-misuse-abuse-impacting-teens>
- “New Recommendations Steer Doctors Away from Opioids to Treat Pain in Adolescent Athletes”  
<https://www.acsm.org/news-detail/2021/07/14/new-recommendations-steer-doctors-away-from-opioids-treat-pain-youth-adolescent-athletes>
- “NYU Study Examines Top High School Students’ Stress and Coping Mechanisms”  
<https://www.nyu.edu/about/news-publications/news/2015/august/nyu-study-examines-top-high-school-students-stress-and-coping-mechanisms.html>
- “Improving Access and Care for Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Conditions”  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/10/19/fact-sheet-improving-access-and-care-for-youth-mental-health-and-substance-use-conditions>

### SELF-INVENTORY

Complete a self-assessment of your own knowledge about drug use and addiction. One assessment tool from the National Institutes of Health is the National Drug and Alcohol IQ Challenge (<https://tinyurl.com/hsguidekahoot>). The digital quiz tests knowledge on topics in this text set, including opioids, brain research, the causes and effects of drug use, and the abuse of synthetic and substitute substances. Teachers can quickly score their answers, then engage in reflection and action planning. Later, the assessment may be used as an engaging way to open a discussion with students.

## ■ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHER BOOK CIRCLES

The following activities provide teacher study groups with activities and routines for talking about the books in this guide. Groups may choose any number or combination of these practices as they delve into discussion in person, online, or in a hybrid environment.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The texts in this set provide multiple topics for book circle discussions. The following questions connect to one or more of the texts and can serve as discussion starters, whether group members read the same or different titles in the set. In addition, group members may formulate their own questions while reading, and can bring these back to prompt discussion.

1. *Never Enough* characterizes addiction as “cutting across geographic, economic, ethnic, and gender lines with little variation” (p. 3). Where have we seen this to be true in school? How do we characterize athletes, honors students, and students from specific cultures in ways that prevent us from recognizing problems? What assumptions must we address to take an equitable stance toward understanding and addressing drug use and addiction?
2. In *Fadeaway*, Jenna calls Jake “a white male who just happens to be good at sports” and “whose face will look good on a missing person poster” (p. 36). In *Opioid, Indiana*, Riggle is sure a dime bag will get a user put in jail, “unless maybe you’re white” (p. 68). And in *Hope Nation*, a young girl asks, “Has there ever been a time you just wish you could change the color of your skin” (p. 260). How does race shape our expectations, reactions, and concerns about drug use in school and in society?
3. Riggle refers to himself as “Struggler” throughout *Opioid, Indiana*. What are the various struggles Riggle faces, and what are the contributing factors? In *Never Enough*, the author asserts, “We all know someone struggling with a merciless compulsion” (p. 3). What are some of the struggles our students and their families are currently facing, and how do they relate to addiction?
4. In *Hope Nation* and *Opioid, Indiana*, authors point to school shootings and other acts of violence as triggers for anxiety and possibly addiction. What fears do our students live with on a daily basis? How are these fears similar to and different from what we faced as adolescents? How are we as adults combating these concerns, and how can we use empathy and modeling to teach teens healthy methods for addressing anxiety?
5. Teen characters in both *Fadeaway* and *Opioid, Indiana* have parents who died. How are Jake and Riggle affected by their parents’ deaths? How have we seen the loss of a parent impact our own students? What can we as educators do to address their unique needs?

6. *Hope Nation*, *Fadeaway*, and *Opioid, Indiana* all address the topic of pain and pain management in adolescents. How can adults such as doctors, coaches, or parents unknowingly contribute to medication reliance in young people? How can these same adults help teens address the issue of self-medicating?
7. In *Never Enough*, the author describes the deceptive way opiates affect the brain, leading those who are dependent to take desperate measures. How does this align with Jake's oxycodone addiction in *Fadeaway*? How can understanding the science of addiction help educators help students?
8. At the end of *Fadeaway*, author E.B. Vickers tells readers, "You are enough. Your worth doesn't come from the court, or your paycheck, or your number of likes or followers" (p. 383). Yet Judith Grisel's memoir is titled *Never Enough* due to the way our brains process drugs and addiction. What messages about success are we sending to our students? Is success gained by athletic prowess and advanced classes, as in *Fadeaway*? Or is it defined by money, cars, and other possessions, like in *Opioid, Indiana*? How can we help teens of all abilities, interests, and backgrounds pursue their own interests and develop significant skills like perseverance and resilience?
9. When Riggle in *Opioid, Indiana* is suspended for vaping, he asks, "How...is that supposed to teach me a lesson? I'm getting a vacation" (p. 12). Is taking students out of school the best way to address vaping or other substance issues? How do we help students like Riggle, who have no parents or resources at home?
10. In *Never Enough*, Judith Grisel discusses the impact of marijuana on her reasoning and motivation, and how the brain eventually requires more to feel relaxed. How might the ongoing debate about marijuana be affecting attitudes towards drugs in general?

### ROLES, GOALS, AND NORMS

In order to ensure focus, engagement, equity, and respect of diverse viewpoints, set roles, goals, and norms for collaboration. Together as a group, create a list of goals for the book study. This can be accomplished by asking each participant to write down one or two personal goals they have for the book study, identify patterns and similarities, and then vote on a final list of two to three the group will focus on. Using the same process, devise a set of group norms in order to establish an environment where each voice is heard and considered. Norms might include "share airtime" and "refer to text when possible." Some book circles find it helpful to establish roles in order to share accountability and promote engagement. Sample roles might include a facilitator who asks the questions or leads the protocol, a timekeeper who keeps the discussion moving, a scribe who records significant ideas, and a summarizer who synthesizes the discussion and helps the scribe decide what to record. These roles can either remain in place throughout the book study, change at each meeting, or discontinue once the book study is running smoothly.

## DISCUSSION PROTOCOLS

In *Fadeaway*, Coach B advises Jake that talking to others is a crucial step in addressing his issues. The same can be said of adults in collaborative scenarios like a book study. In order to promote high-level discussion with equal talk-time, utilize a research-based discussion protocol. Such protocols are simple in structure yet effective for engagement and applicable in the classroom. The “connect, extend, challenge” routine outlined in the “Building Knowledge” section of this guide is one such strategy that works for the first meeting of a teacher book circle. In three separate rounds, colleagues can take turns sharing their connections, extensions, and challenges.

Another protocol that works well for peer discussion is “Save the Last Word for Me.” In this routine, participants use note cards to record a quotation or excerpt that made an impression while reading, followed by a brief explanation. One at a time, participants share their text excerpt but not the explanation. Group members then take turns discussing the chosen excerpt as the original participant listens and then shares how the group has changed or extended their original explanation. In one final discussion protocol, “Text Rendering,” participants highlight one significant word, one significant sentence, and one significant passage in the assigned section of text. Taking turns, group members share their word and their reasoning. Next, individuals share their sentences and, in a final round, their passages. Groups can select one of the protocols to use at each book circle meeting, or they can use a different one each time. The meetings might end by discussing the success of the routines and how they might be applied with students. Additional discussion protocols can be found at <https://nsrfharmony.org/protocols/>.

## CHECK-INS

In *Never Enough*, author Judith Grisel explains the connection between environmental stressors and addictive behavior. Recognizing the many stressors impacting students, teachers now often start class with “mindful moments.” Teachers can start book study meetings in the same fashion. Using a simple “check-in” strategy, participants take turns using a word or phrase to reveal how they are arriving at the meeting. For example, teachers may say “enthusiastic” or “stressed.” In sharing one another’s arrival status, educators may better empathize and respond to colleagues’ interactions during book circle discussion. Alternatively, participants can be provided a few minutes of quiet to look over their reading notes. For more information on mindfulness as a useful tool for teachers, see [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/seven\\_ways\\_mindfulness\\_can\\_help\\_teachers](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/seven_ways_mindfulness_can_help_teachers).

## ■ CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

Effective book circles empower teachers to reflect on their practice and apply their learning in the classroom. In addition to the ideas shared by colleagues throughout the book study, the following classroom strategies are aimed at addressing the topics of drug use and addiction.

### CLOSE-READING

The close-reading process focuses on excerpts or “chunks” of text, promoting interpretation that is deep, rather than wide, and fostering critical thinking skills. Multiple passages in this text set provide students with an excellent opportunity to unpack themes, craft, and structure. One big idea across all four texts is the support structure often unavailable to students who live in poverty or broken homes. Choose a short passage students have already read. One possible excerpt for close reading is page 55 of *Opioid, Indiana*, where Riggle reflects on his childhood. He says, “I wanna be a dreamer...I wanna look off at sunshine and think up fantasy jobs to do for myself.” Another excerpt with similar interpretations is on page 102 of *Fadeaway*, where Jake insists, “Without that ball in my hands, I’m nothing. Nobody.” In both passages, teens confront the limited expectations and goals for children who live in poverty or with no parental support.

Once the passage is selected, ask students to perform multiple reads. After each read, one of the following questions can be discussed with a partner or group and answered in writing. After the first read, students answer the question, “What is happening in the text?” (What is the plot?) The second read takes a deeper dive. Students address the question, “What is this passage beginning to be about?” (What patterns are beginning to emerge or continuing to develop? What seems to be the author’s purpose?) Finally, after the third read, students focus on diction, syntax, and other writer’s craft, answering, “Which words and phrases contribute to the text’s meaning and tone?” For all three questions, students must return to the text and cite evidence. As an extension, students might watch the first episode of *Maid*, an award-winning, limited series on Netflix. The episode immerses viewers in the seemingly insurmountable cycle of poverty and addiction facing many rural Americans. Afterward, discuss how two different artistic mediums address this topic and deepen understanding of the text. For more information on close reading, view the following Douglas Fisher video: <https://tinyurl.com/DFisherHS>

### CREATIVE WRITING

In *Fadeaway*, Jake, his brother Luke, and his mentor Coach B use poetry to self-reflect and deal with pain in a healthy manner. Similarly, in *Hope Nation* and *Opioid, Indiana*, storytelling is a tool for processing grief, pain, poverty, and more. In the classroom, students can address struggles and anxiety by writing daily in a classroom journal. Post prompts encouraging them to write freely about their worries, their schoolwork, or whatever is on their mind. Writing might also mimic the style of authors from this text set. For example, students can compose a personal essay about the meaning of hope, write a poem, create a myth, or pen a letter to someone with whom they feel uncomfortable speaking. Teachers from any content area can use these creative writing samples as a way to get to know and start dialogue with students in an informal and nonthreatening manner. One resource for journal prompts can be found at [https://www.edutopia.org/sites/default/files/edutopia\\_50\\_writing\\_prompts\\_all\\_grade\\_levels.pdf](https://www.edutopia.org/sites/default/files/edutopia_50_writing_prompts_all_grade_levels.pdf)

### DISCUSSION SEMINAR

In *Opioid, Indiana*, Riggle reflects on addiction. He says “sometimes you feel so terrible that all you know is that you need something, and when people feel that way, they go out looking” (p. 134). Challenge students to conduct a seminar that explores the causes of drug use and addiction using one or more texts from this set. The discussion will promote text analysis, encourage student voice, and inform teacher understanding of students’ struggles. Prior to the seminar, discuss with students what an ideal discussion looks and sounds like, including participation, active listening, and respect of multiple viewpoints. Ask students to set a class goal, such as “I will contribute to the discussion at least one time,” as well as a personal goal, such as “I will mention a classmate’s name and extend on or disagree with his thinking.”

During the discussion, take a facilitator’s role. Ask a low-risk opening question to encourage total class participation in a round-robin response, such as “Using one word only, what are teenagers looking for?” This question might be provided the night before. Its purpose is to identify the text’s main ideas. Then, move to a core question for the purpose of analyzing text details, such as “In *Fadeaway*, Jake texts several close contacts that ‘it’s not your fault.’ Who is most responsible for what happens to Jake? Support your claim with evidence from the book and/or from your own knowledge, experience, and beliefs.” End the discussion with a closing question that promotes personalization, such as “What connections or takeaways did you derive from the book?” or “How does addiction impact our community?” Ask students to evaluate their own and their classmates’ speaking, thinking, and listening. Did they meet their class and personal goals? What should the class do differently in the next seminar discussion? How did the seminar deepen understanding of the class text?

### ■ ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE

Laura Reis Mayer is an instructional coach and National Board Certified Teacher in Asheville, North Carolina. She has taught middle, high school, and college English, speech, drama, and literacy. As consultant to various education organizations, she develops and facilitates professional learning on high-quality curriculums, college and career ready standards, and educational equity. She has written more than twenty teacher guides for various publishers.



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