



THE EDWARD R. BYRNE SCHOOL

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2025-26 ELA Summer Packet

WELCOME EIGHTH GRADE

Name: _____

Class: _____



Welcome to 8th Grade English Language Arts!

Our 8th grade ELA teachers have attached a required assignment that will count for the 1st Marking Period. We look forward to a productive and successful year of learning with you and your child.

Text: "Bronx Masquerade" by Nikki Grimes

We have picked "Bronx Masquerade" by Nikki Grimes because it explores how the challenges we face today help shape your future.

Nikki Grimes (b. 1950) was born in Harlem and spent some of her younger years in foster homes. At age 13, she gave her first public poetry reading at a local library named after the poet Countee Cullen. She was already steeped in the works of Cullen and other Black poets of the era known as the Harlem Renaissance. These poets, she says, have been the primary influences in her work. Grimes has written prose and poetry for adults, children, and young adults, winning many honors and awards for her work.

As you read, we want you to think about the following question- How do the challenges you face today help to shape your future?

Finally, you *will* need to read this text and do the accompanying assignments in order to receive homework credit. This assignment will be collected via Google classroom at the beginning of the school year.

Happy reading!

Student Name: _____

Class: _____

**** THIS PACKET IS DUE SEPTEMBER 5TH, 2025****



Part I: Read "A Bronx Masquerade". We suggest that you annotate as you read.

Part II: Complete the "Assessment Practice" multiple choice questions (page attached)

Part III: Answer the following short response question. You should be using RADEC short response protocol to support and explain your thinking.

Which character's perspective do you think is presented most effectively in the *Bronx Masquerade*? Explain

Suggested Novels for Summer Reading (optional): Read one of the following novels from the list provided. This is a great opportunity to keep students engaged in reading while continuing good reading practices.

- *The Outsiders*- Novel by S.E Hinton

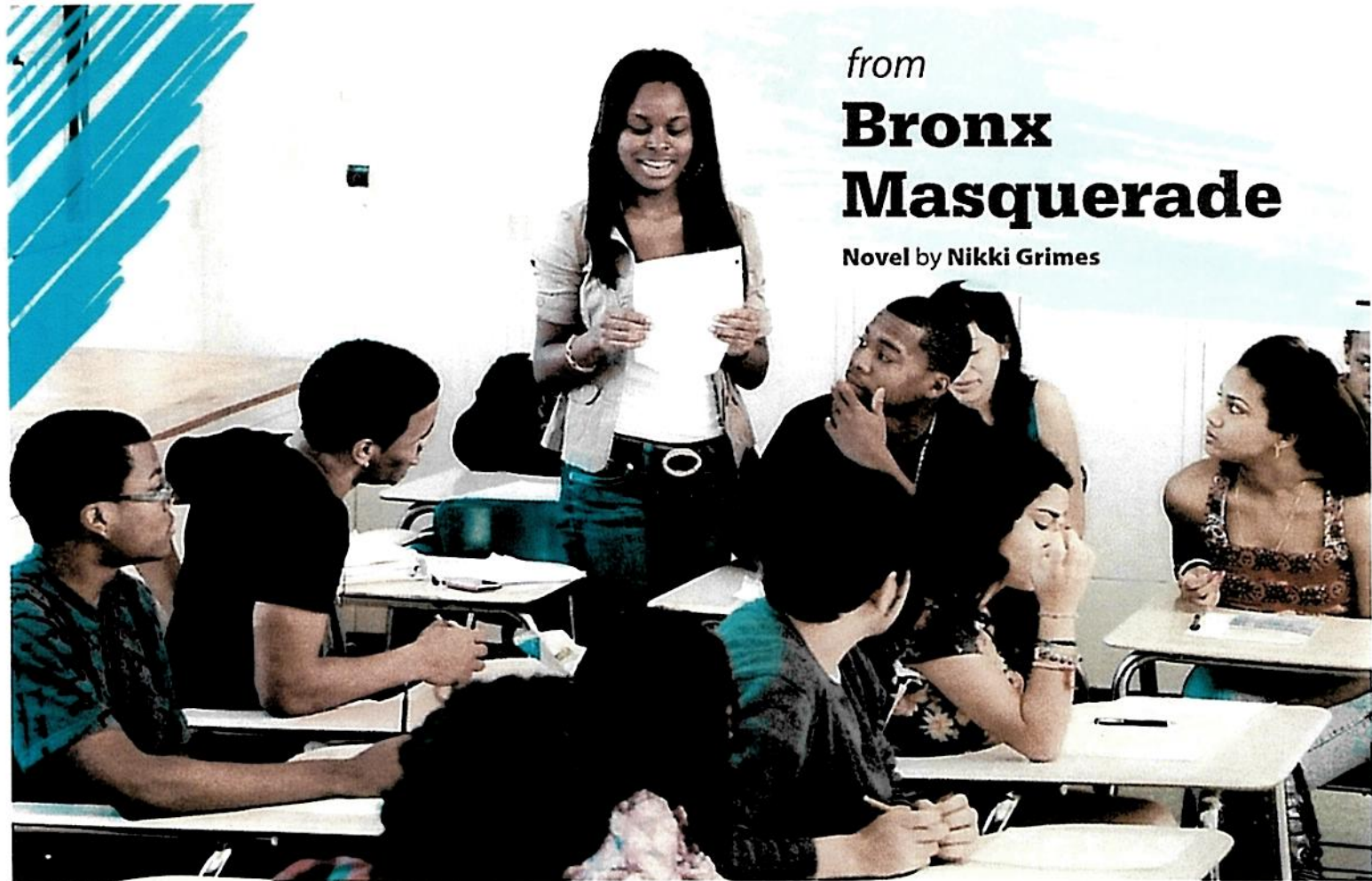
This novel explores the tensions, fears, and frustrations of gang life from a teenage boy's point of view

- *The House on Mango Street*- Novel by Sandra Cisneros

Told in a series of vignettes, this is the story of a twelve-year-old Esperanza Cordero. Growing up in the Hispanic quarter of Chicago, she wonders who she will become

- *Hush*- Novel by Jacqueline Woodson

Evie Thomas's family has been forced to move to a new place and change identities. Her family's drastic behaviors are only adding to her stress as she tries to find her way in a new city.



from
**Bronx
Masquerade**

Novel by Nikki Grimes

When Mr. Ward's students start reading their poems on "Open Mike Fridays," they're surprised by what they learn about themselves and their classmates.

NOTICE & NOTE
As you read, use the side margins to make notes about the text.



Diondra Jordan

- 1 If only I was as bold as Raul. The other day, he left one of his paintings out on Mr. Ward's desk where anybody could see it. Which was the point. He sometimes works at Mr. Ward's desk during lunch. The wet paintbrushes sticking up out of the jar are always a sign that he's been at it again. So of course, anybody who glances over in that direction will be tempted to stop by and look.
- 2 This particular painting was rough, but anyone could tell it was Raul. A self-portrait. He'll probably hang it in class. Back in September, Mr. Ward covered two of the classroom walls with black construction paper and then scattered paper frames up and down the walls, each one a different size and color. Now half the room looks sort of like an art gallery, which was the

ANALYZE PERSPECTIVES

Annotate: Mark sentences in paragraphs 1–2 that suggest Diondra's perspective regarding Raul.

Infer: What do these sentences suggest about the way that Diondra thinks about Raul?



Close Read Screencast

Listen to a modeled close read of this text.

tirade

(ti-rad) *n.* A *tirade* is a long, angry speech.

ANALYZE CHARACTERIZATION

Annotate: Mark details in paragraphs 3–4 that help you understand Diondra's character.

Interpret: Why doesn't Diondra want her schoolmates to know about the art she creates?

idea. We're supposed to use the paper frames for our work. Whether we put up poems or photographs or even paintings is up to us, so long as the work is ours and we can tie it in with our study of the Harlem Renaissance.¹ I guess Raul's self-portrait fits, since we've been talking a lot about identity. He'll probably put it up next to his poem. You should have seen him hang that thing. You'd think he was handling a million-dollar masterpiece the way he took his time placing it just so. If you look close, you can see the smudges where he erased a word or two and rewrote it. Mr. Ward must be in shock. He can never get Raul to rewrite a lick of homework or anything else. And don't even talk to him about checking his spelling! He'll launch into a **tirade** on you in a minute. "What?" he'll snap. "You think Puerto Ricans can't spell?" Forget it. Anyway, I dare you to find one misspelled word in that poem of his! Maybe it's a visual thing. Maybe he wants his poem to look as good as his self-portrait. And it is good.

I've never tried doing a self-portrait, but why not? I could maybe do one in charcoal. I like drawing faces in charcoal. I've been drawing since I can't remember when. Not that anyone

¹ **Harlem Renaissance:** Between the end of World War I and the 1930s, Black writers, artists, scholars, and musicians fled the repression of the Jim Crow South and moved to Harlem in New York City. The influential literary and cultural movement that began there is known as the Harlem Renaissance.

here knows that, except Tanisha, and she found out by accident when she came to my house to study once and saw a couple of drawings hanging in my room. Mom loves my watercolors and she hung one in the living room, but it isn't signed. Nobody ever mentions it, especially not my father. He's not too wild about my art. Mostly, he's disappointed, first off that I wasn't born a boy, and second that I won't play ball like one. I'm six feet tall, almost as tall as he, and he figures the height is wasted on me since I don't share his dreams of me going to the WNBA. I keep telling him not to hold his breath.

- 4 I hate always being the tallest girl in school. Everybody expects me to play basketball, so they pick me for their team, throw me the ball, and wait for me to shoot. Big mistake. I fumble it every time. Then they have the nerve to get mad at me, like I did it on purpose! But basketball is not my game. I have no game. I'm an artist, like Raul. The difference is, I don't tell anybody. I refuse to give them new reasons to laugh at me. The Jolly Green Giant jokes are bad enough.

- 5 Yeah, it's definitely time to try a self-portrait. I think I'll paint myself in front of an easel. With a basketball jersey sticking up out of the trash. Then I could hang it in Mr. Ward's class. See if anybody notices.

Don't forget to
Notice & Note as you
read the text.



ANALYZE PERSPECTIVES

Annotate: In paragraph 5, mark the elements that Diondra plans to include in her self-portrait.

Analyze: How do these elements confirm what you already know about Diondra's perspective regarding herself?



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OPEN MIKE

If

By Diandra Jordan

- 6 *If I stood on tiptoe
reached up and sculpted
mountains from clouds
would you laugh out loud?*
- 7 *If I dipped my brush in starlight
painted a ribbon of night
on your windowsill
would you still laugh?*
- 8 *If I drew you adrift
in a pen and ink sea
in a raging storm
would you laugh at me?*
- 9 *If I planted watercolor roses
in your garden
would you laugh then?
Or would you breathe deep
to sample their scent?
I wonder.*

Tyrone

ANALYZE CHARACTERIZATION

Annotate: Mark the words and phrases that show what Tyrone thinks about the readers.

Draw Conclusions: What do Tyrone's comments reveal about his personality?

- 10 If the sista read any faster, I'd be looking for her Supergirl cape. Talk about nervous! Diandra's hands were shaking the whole time she was holding that poem. She sure spooks easy for somebody so tall.
- 11 "Yo!" I said. "Take a deep breath. Ain't nobody going to hurt you here." She smiled a little and tried to slow down. But I swear that girl burned rubber getting back to her seat when she was through. I guess she's not exactly used to the limelight.
- 12 She's got plenty of company. Four more kids read their poetry for the first time today. They were shaking in their boots, but it was all good. I only had to tell one of them to loosen up. Guess you could call that progress!



Devon Hope

- 13 Jump Shot. What kind of name is that? Not mine, but try telling that to the brothers at school. That's all they ever call me.
- 14 You'd think it was written somewhere. Tall guys must be jocks. No. Make that tall *people*, 'cause Diondra's got the same problem. Everybody expects her to shoot hoops. The difference is, she's got no talent in that direction. Ask me, she's got no business playing b-ball. That's my game.
- 15 I've got good height and good hands, and that's a fact. But what about the rest of me? Forget who I really am, who I really want to be. The law is be cool, be tough, play ball, and use books for weight training—not reading. Otherwise, everybody gives you grief. Don't ask me why I care, especially when the grief is coming from a punk like Wesley. Judging from the company he keeps, he's a gangsta in sheep's clothing. I don't even know why he and Tyrone bother coming to school. It's clear they don't take it seriously, although maybe they're starting to. That's according to Sterling, who believes in praying for everybody and giving them the benefit of the doubt. I love the preacher-man, but I think he may be giving these brothers too much credit. Anyway, when I hang around after school and any of the guys ask me: "Yo, Devon, where you going?" I tell them I'm heading for the gym to meet Coach and work on my layup. Then once they're out the door, I cut upstairs to the library to sneak a read.
- 16 It's not much better at home. My older brother's always after me to hit the streets with him, calls me a girly man for loving books and jazz.
- 17 Don't get me wrong. B-ball is all right. Girls like you, for one thing. But it's not you they like. It's Mr. Basketball. And if that's not who you are inside, then it's not you they're liking. So what's the point? Still, I don't mind playing, just not all the time.

VOCABULARY

Use Context Clues: The word *grief* often means "deep sadness." However, by using context clues, the reader can determine that Devon uses the word to mean something other than that in paragraph 15.

Interpret: What does Devon mean by the phrase "everybody gives you grief"?

hunker

(hūŋk-er) *v.* To *hunker down* means to stay in a place and focus on a task for a period of time.

snicker

(snĭk-er) *n.* A *snicker* is a superior, partially suppressed laugh.

**NOTICE & NOTE****AHA MOMENT**

When you notice a sudden realization that shifts a character's actions or understandings, you've found an **Aha Moment** signpost.

Notice & Note: In paragraphs 19–20, mark words and phrases that show a change in Devon's attitude.

Predict: How might this realization change things for Devon?

confide

(kən-fīd) *v.* To *confide* means to share private or secret information.

18 This year is looking better. My English teacher has got us studying the Harlem Renaissance, which means we have to read a lot of poetry. That suits me just fine, gives me a reason to drag around my beat-up volumes of Langston Hughes and Claude McKay. Whenever anybody bugs me about it, all I have to say is "Homework." Even so, I'd rather the brothers not catch me with my head in a book.

19 The other day, I duck into the library, snare a corner table, and **hunker** down with *3000 Years of Black Poetry*. Raynard sees me, but it's not like he's going to tell anybody. He hardly speaks, and he never hangs with any of the brothers I know. So I breathe easy. I'm sure no one else has spotted me until a head pops up from behind the stacks. It's Janelle Battle from my English class. I freeze and wait for the **snickers** I'm used to. Wait for her to say something like: "What? Coach got you *reading* now? Afraid you're gonna flunk out and drop off the team?" But all she does is smile and wave. Like it's no big deal for me to be in a library reading. Like I have a right to be there if I want. Then she pads over, slips a copy of *The Panther & the Lash* on my table, and walks away without saying a word. It's one of my favorite books by Langston Hughes. How could she know? Seems like she's noticed me in the library more often than I thought.

20 Janelle is all right. So what if she's a little plump? At least when you turn the light on upstairs, somebody's at home. She's smart, and she doesn't try hiding it. Which gets me thinking. Maybe it's time I quit sneaking in and out of the library like some thief. Maybe it's time I just started being who I am.

OPEN MIKE

Bronx Masquerade

By Devon Hope

21 I woke up this morning
exhausted from hiding
the me of me
so I stand here *confiding*
there's more to Devon
than jump shot and rim.
I'm more than tall
and lengthy of limb.
I dare you to peep
behind these eyes,
discover the poet
in tough-guy disguise.
Don't call me Jump Shot.
My name is Surprise.

TURN AND TALK

Turn to a partner and discuss how Diondra's and Devon's poems help to express the thoughts and feelings they share in the other parts of the text.



ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How do the challenges you face today help to shape your future?

Review your notes and add your thoughts to your Response Log.

Assessment Practice

Answer these questions before moving on to the **Analyze the Text** section on the following page.

1. This question has two parts. First, answer **Part A**. Then, answer **Part B**.

Part A

What does Diondra want to avoid revealing to others?

- ☐ A how ashamed she is of her basketball skills
- ☐ B how much she sees herself as an artist
- ☐ C how much she wants Raul to be her boyfriend
- ☐ D how embarrassed she is about the way Mom reacts to her art

Part B

Select the statement that best supports the answer to Part A.

- ☐ A "If only I was as bold as Raul." (paragraph 1)
- ☐ B "Mom loves my watercolors. . . ." (paragraph 3)
- ☐ C "Everybody expects me to play basketball. . . ." (paragraph 4)
- ☐ D "I'm an artist. . . . The difference is, I don't tell anybody." (paragraph 4)

2. How does Devon react when he sees Janelle in the library?

- ☐ A He is suspicious of her reason for waving at him.
- ☐ B He tries to hide under his table.
- ☐ C He worries that she will tease him for reading.
- ☐ D He is annoyed that someone from his class is there with him.

