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FOLLOW

# WILLIAM H.G. BUTLER MIDDLE SCHOOL

a graphic novella about  
mass school shootings

Created by Literary Safari Media

With a  
discussion guide  
for students,  
parents, and  
educators





 Faruq Kareem	 Alyce Kim	 Stephen Lane	 Danielle Le Grange
 Sara Leibowitz	 Molly Lewis	 Kevin Liang	 Jon Logan
 Isabella Lopez	 Dominique Lucas	 Ethan Marshall	 Elijah Matthews

8<sup>TH</sup>  
GRADE





williambutlerms Congratulations to the 8th grade graduating #classof2018! #butlerstrong #goWarriors! #lastdayofschool #yearbook #gonebutneverforgotten



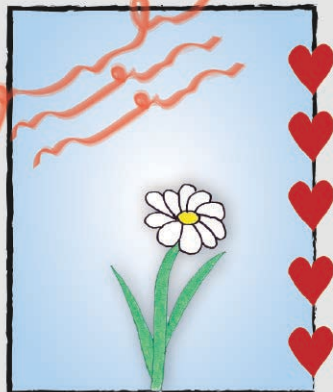
**Kevin Liang**

*"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." – Wayne Gretzky*



**Jon Logan**

*"Dream as if you'll live forever. Live as if you'll die today." – James Dean*



**Ethan Marshall**

*October 8, 2004 - March 15, 2018*



**Elijah Matthews**

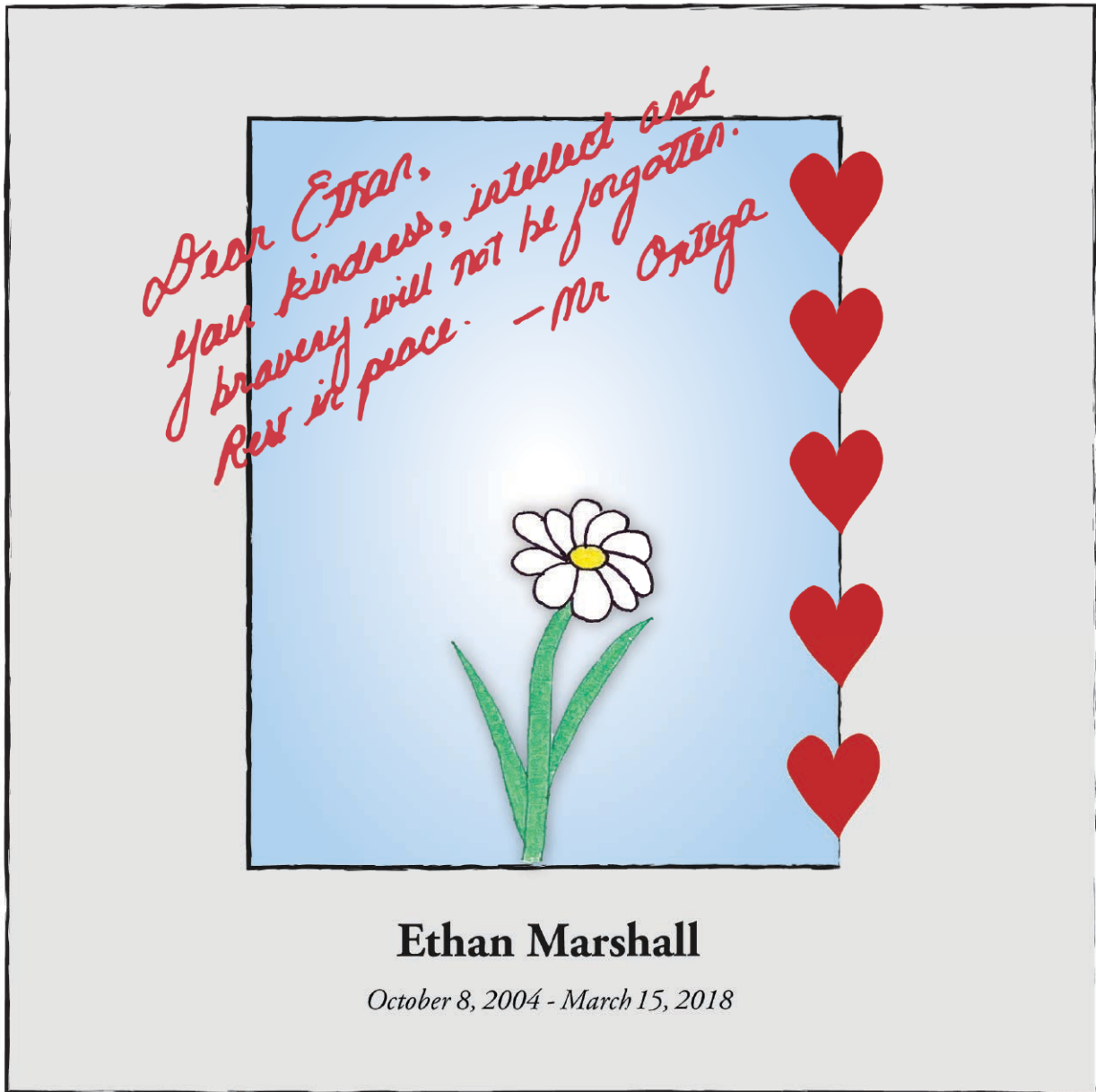
*"Let us pick up our books and our pens, they are the most powerful weapons." – Malala Yousafzai*



williambutlerms Thanks to our Yearbook Club for their thoughtful tribute to the innocent lives we lost in the tragic shooting at our school on 3/15/18. #🌻 #NeverAgain



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**williambutlerms** Mr. Ortega's message is a tribute to every child we lost on 3/15: Faith Abbot (G7), Jordan Carpenter (G6), Alyce Kim (G8), Ethan Marshall (G8), Sofia Perez (G7), Charley Tasso (G7), Hakeem Zia (G6). [#EnoughIsEnough](#)

June 28



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It was only when a student asked me if I would be willing to give my life for him—the way Janusz Korczak walked into the gas chambers with his children during the Holocaust—that I realized I needed to take action. Over and over again, history teaches us that change begins with the individual. The time has come for me to bring the insights I've gained as an educator into the political sphere.

## Goodbye Mr. Ortega

Retiring History Teacher, 7th and 8th grade

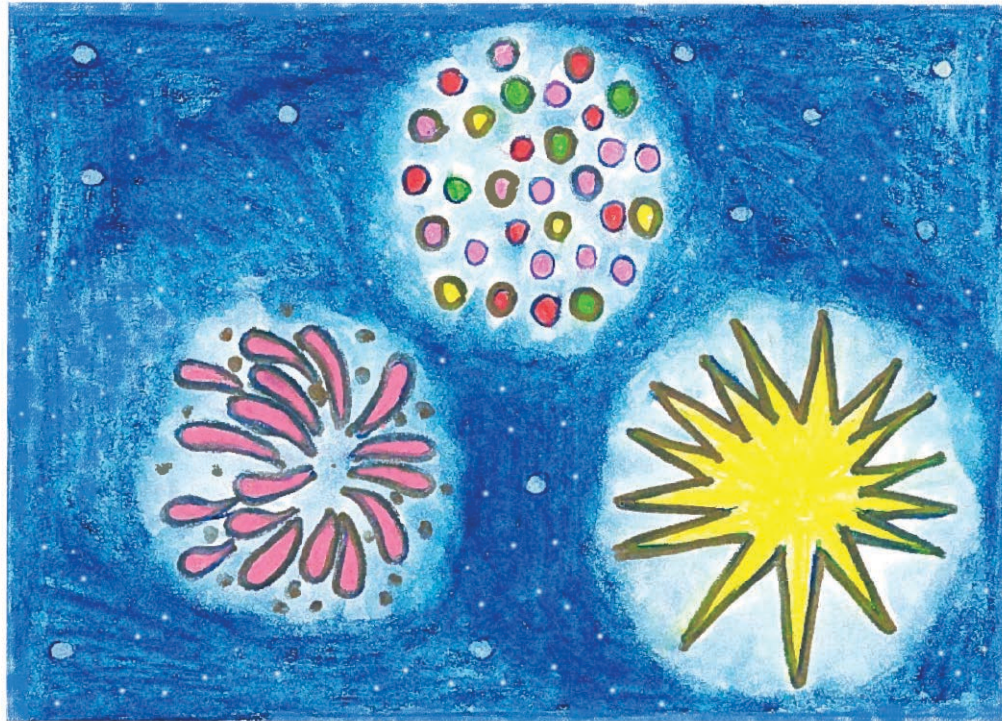


**williambutlerms** Change is in the air. We wish Mr. Ortega good luck on his run for state legislature & in his new job as National Coordinator at Rock the Polls. [#armmewith](#) [#teachersmatter](#) [#honorthemwithaction](#)

July 3



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*WHAT, TO A SURVIVOR, IS THE FOURTH OF JULY? THE SOUND OF FIREWORKS, THE BLAST OF GUNSHOTS, THE SILENCE OF LOSS.*



**williambutlerms** In solidarity with those who continue to cope with the trauma of the tragic event at our school this year, we are cancelling tonight's town-wide fireworks show.  
[#fireworks](#) [#MyStoryMyWay](#) [#PTSD](#) [#mentalhealth](#)

July 4



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## Goodbye Ms. Tan

Retiring 6th, 7th, and 8th grade Math Teacher



Q: You're retiring from teaching. What's next for you?

A: I really just feel it's time for a change. I will be joining the Greenleaf Zoo and Wildlife Preserve as an Assistant Animal Handler for endangered reptiles while pursuing my Master's in Zoology, so that I can one day become a zookeeper.



**williambutlerms** Brave teachers like Ms. Tan were the 1st line of defense in the active shooter attack at our school. She will be dearly missed, but we know that she will thrive in her new job. (Field trip, anyone?!) #safeschools #teacherlife

July 5



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**williambutlerms** Our Summer Teacher Training Institute is on! This year, all our district K-8 teachers will be certified in The MELISSA™ Method, which prepares schools for the threat of an aggressive intruder event. #ALICEmeetMELISSA

July 10





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**THE MELISSA METHOD**  
Agency • Kindness • Empowerment • Organization • Creativity • Sustainability • Innovation

## THE POWER OF EXPONENTS

**SOLVE**

At recess, 5th grader Liam notices his classmates, twins Danika and Sal, are both wearing Messi t-shirts and sitting alone. He invites them to play soccer with him and his friends. Danika and Sal are instantly cheered up. As a result, they are inspired to be kind to 2 additional classmates each during Math class. For the remaining 3 periods of the school day, each child who has received an act of kindness is inspired to be kind to two more classmates who have not yet received one. By 3 pm, when the school bell rings, how many children will have given an act of kindness?

PEOPLE

TIME (CLASS PERIODS)

Rec. P1 P2 P3 P4

EST. 1853



williambutlerms Part of the MELISSA™ Method is implementing #socialemotionallearning in all subjects including math. If the impact of empathy and kindness can be measured, could we prevent future tragedies and change our school culture for the better?

July 12



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**williambutlerms** Kendo will be part of all our Phys Ed classes this fall. Today, Ms. Taylor will introduce ALL teachers to the mindfulness benefits of this traditional martial art of Japanese fencing. #butlerstrong #kendo #futurereadyschools

July 13



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TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPLIES

SAVE 25%

Wound Lock

Stops bleeding in <15 secs.

Single Pack: \$100

Pack of 20: \$1500

Gunshot Proof



**williambutlerms** Thanks to our generous PTA, each classroom's first aid kit will now include six Wound Lock syringes so that our teachers can stop bleeding from gunshot wounds on the spot. [#classroomsupplies](#) [#teacherwishlist](#)

July 18



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TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPLIES

**SALE**  
**3GB** BUCKET AT + ROOM  
School Intruder Defense Kit

One 5-Gallon Bucket of River Rocks

30 Mini Baseball Bats

Classroom Weapons Kit

Two Industrial Broom with Metal Dust Pan

Back to School Special \$99!



**williambutlerms** Turning off the lights, shutting the door, and hiding is no longer enough. Now we can fight back.  
[#armmewith](#) [#safeschools](#) [#gokit](#) [#thankyouPTA](#)  
[#notonemore](#)

July 19



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**TARGETED SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

**\$8,000**

**BEAST BUNKER**  
*Bulletproof*  
*A Tank on Land*

**Safety Tree**  
Model # 031518

- Protects against active-shooters & mother nature
- Fits 25 students
- Includes 911 Emergency satellite phone

Calming Chamomile Lollipop Dispenser

Clean Air Ventilation System

Armor-plated 8" Shutter

Cozy Interior with Benches

Available in customizable kid-friendly models: Yurt, Rocket Ship, Castle, and more!



**williambutlerms** We are grateful to Ms. Marie Marshall, CEO of Shop & Drop, for donating 35 shelters to our school in memory of her son Ethan Marshall (10/8/04—3/5/18).

[#schoolsafety](#) [#butlerstrong](#)

July 20

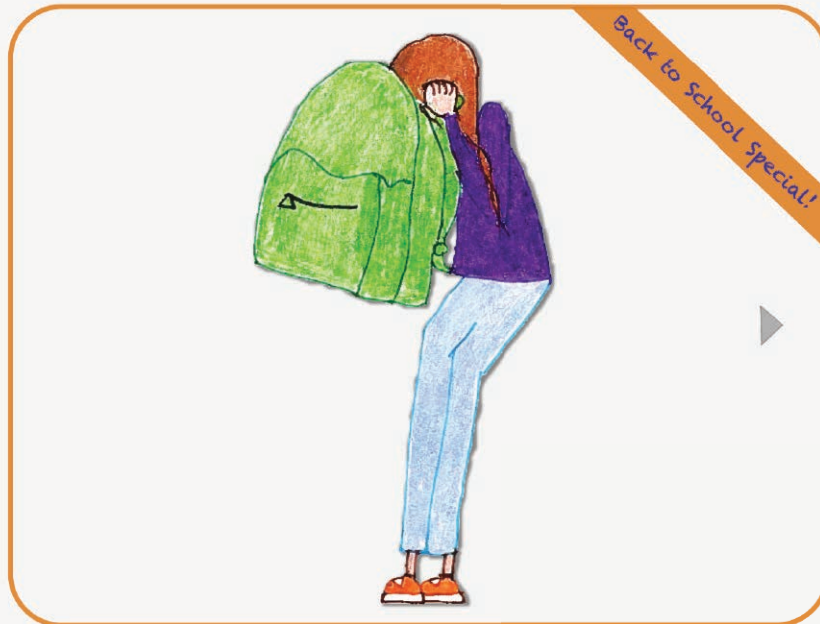


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SERENGETI.KOM

Securables  
Bulletproof Backpack  
★★★★☆ 243 \$114.29



Securables Bulletproof Backpack, Reinforced Lumbar support, Built-in solar powered phone charger

Color (4) Green ▼	QTY. - 1 +	Purchase 
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williambutlerms We've updated our K-12 Back to School Supply List. Our first new addition—a bulletproof backpack. #safetyfirst #backtoschoolshopping #safeandstylish

July 24



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SERENGETI.KOM

Securables  
Bulletproof Sweater Vest  
★★★★☆ 146 \$159.99



Securables Bulletproof Sweater Vest, Fleece-Lined, Waterproof, Looks and feels Scottish wool

Color (7) Ruby ▾	Size XS ▾	QTY. - 1 +	Purchase
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williambutlerms Our updated 2018–2019 School Supply List recommends having your child covered with this bulletproof sweater vest. #butlerstrong #schoolsupplies #safeandstylish

July 26



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 SERENGETI.COM

Securaboos  
Bulletproof Nap Blanket  
★★★★★ 197 \$119<sup>99</sup>



Securaboos Bulletproof Nap Blanket, One size, Woolly comfort for your little one. Pillow not included

Color (2) | QTY. | Purchase

Mint ▼ | - 1 +



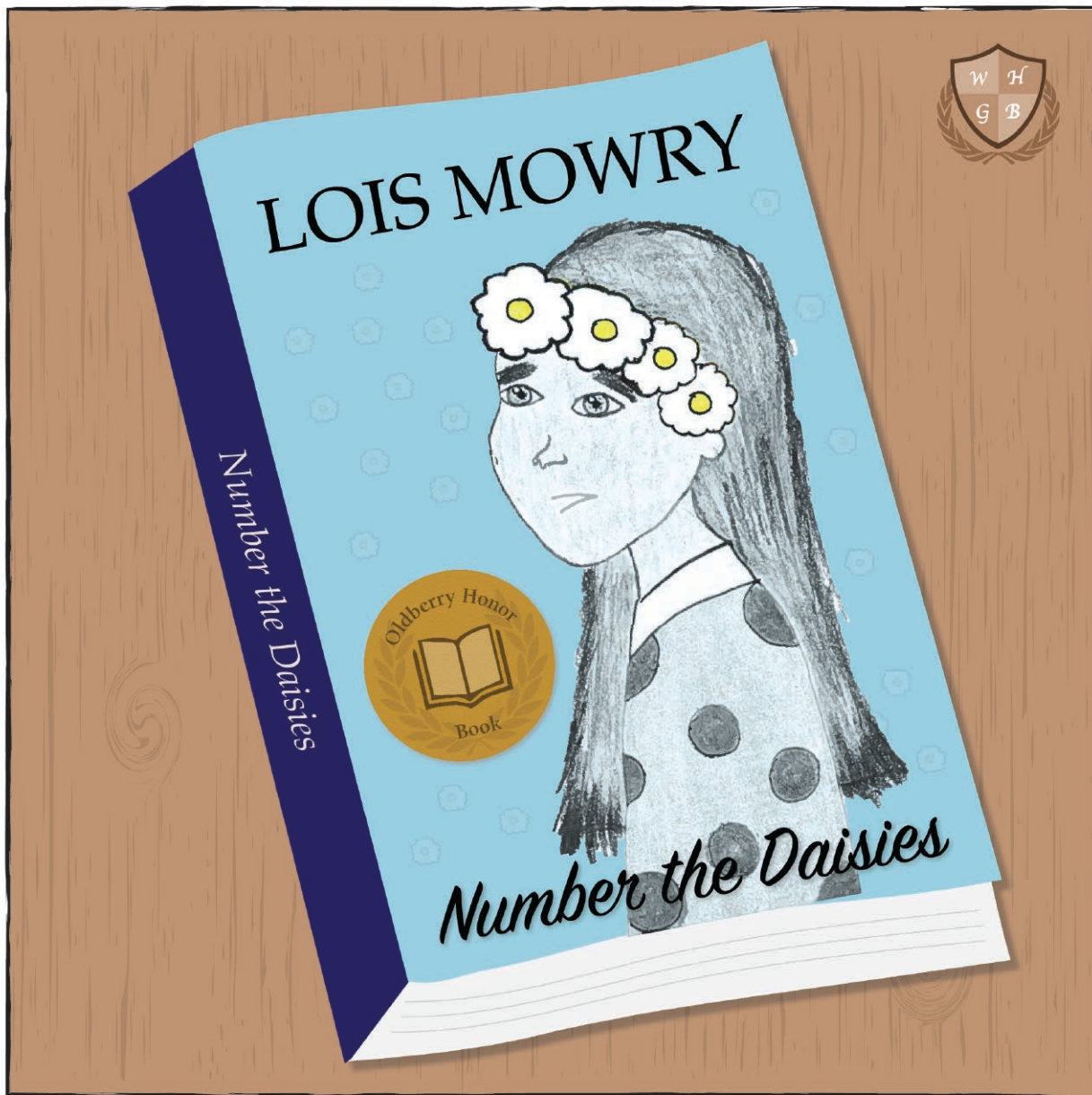
**williambutlerms** Every child has a right to sleep safe & sound during nap-time. Check your email for 20% off at Serengeti.com on all the items featured on our feed this week. [#backtoschoolshopping](#) [#protectourchildren](#)

July 27





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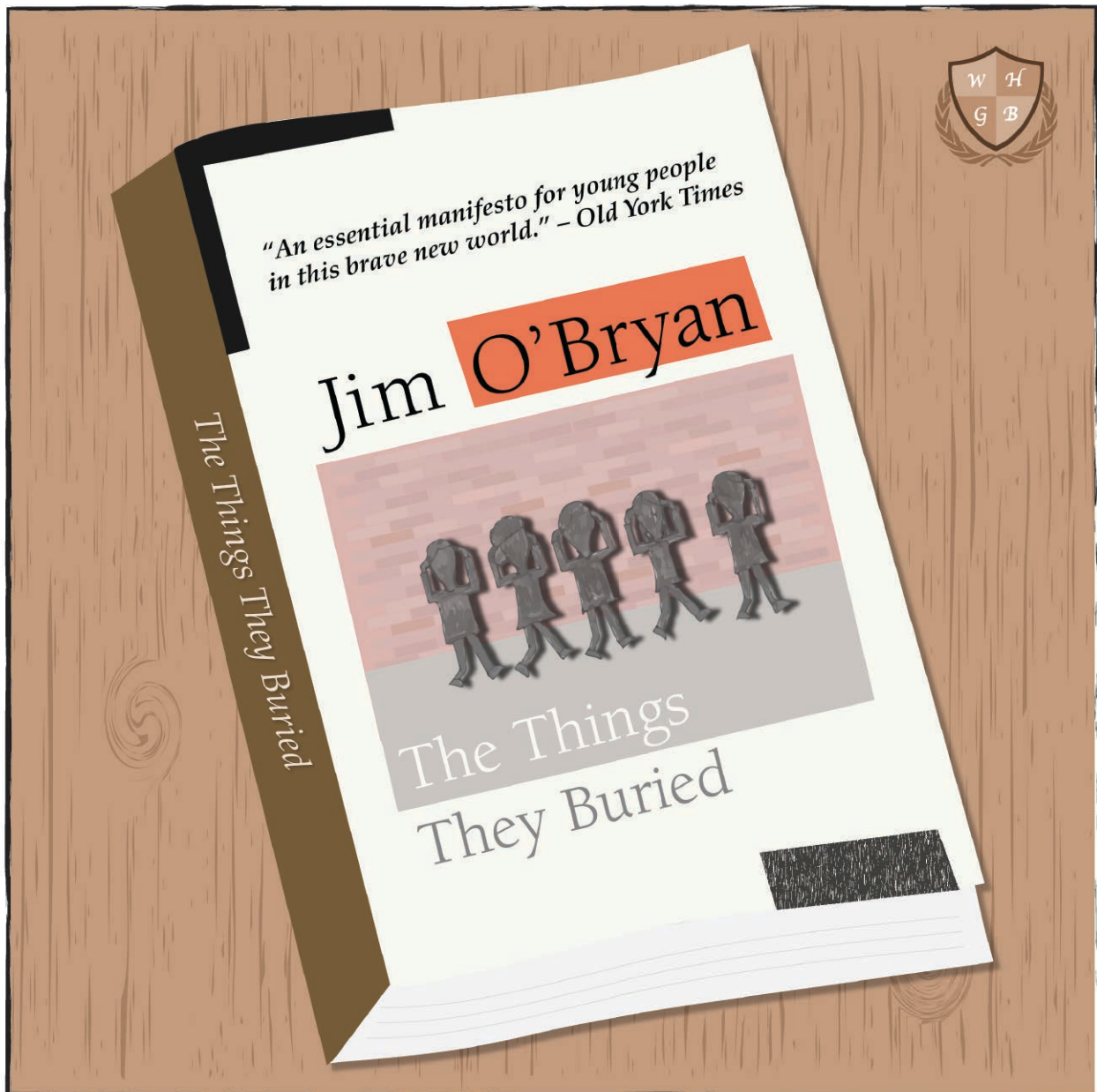


**williambutlerms** We are launching an All-School Read program. Our first pick introduces us to ten-year-old AnnMarie whose favorite teacher resists the State and stands up for the right to create weapon-free schools. [#booksforchange](#)

July 31



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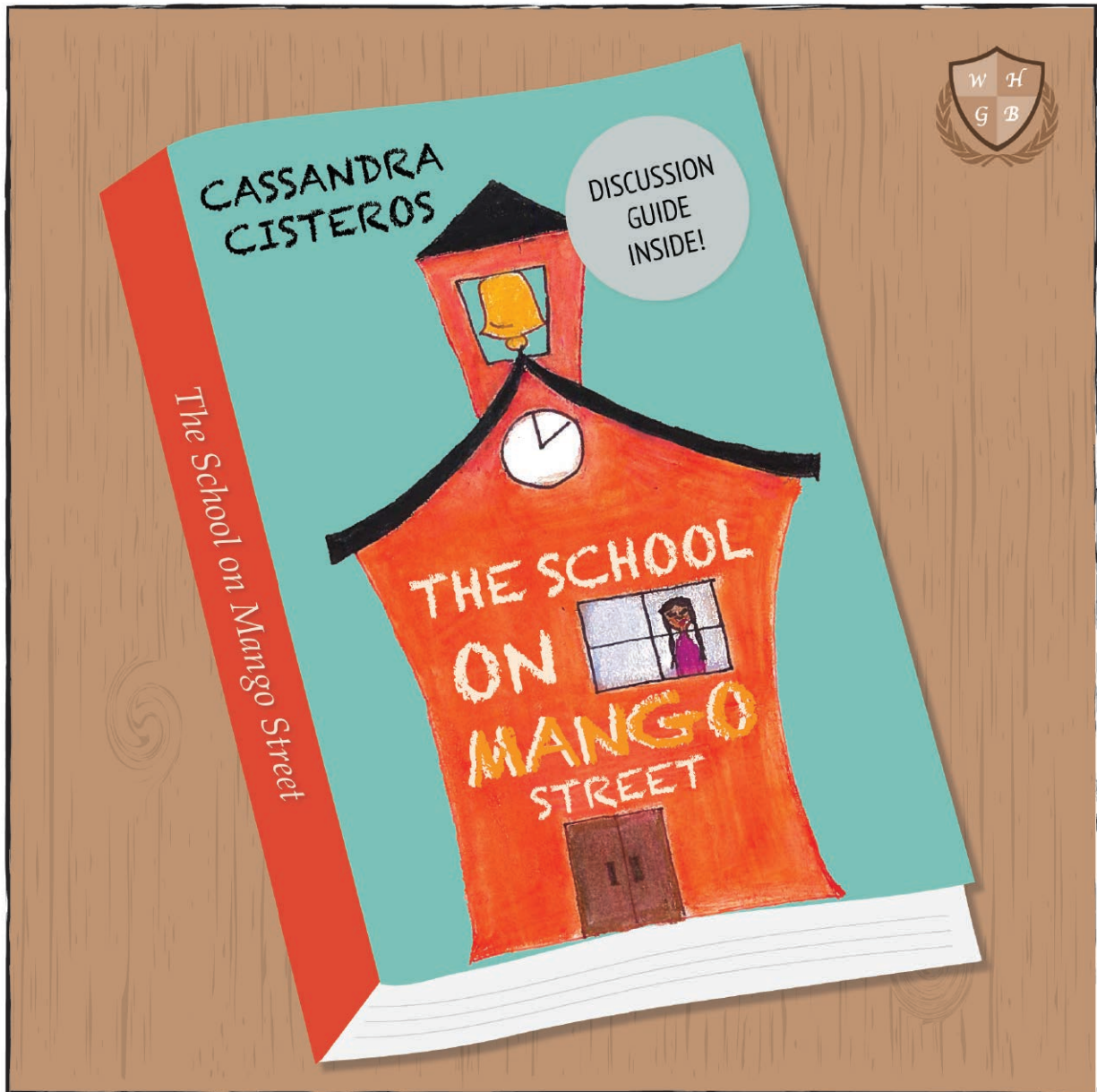


**williambutlerms** Our 2nd pick, THE THINGS THEY BURIED, is a collection of short stories based on the author's experiences as a student at Holumbine, the site of one of the deadliest school shootings in American history. [#oneschoolonebook](#)

August 1



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**williambutlerms** Our final book is THE SCHOOL ON MANGO STREET. In it, we meet Desperanza Moderno, a girl who uses poetry to express her emotions about coming of age in a school plagued by bullying and violence. [#booksforchange](#)

August 2



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## Day 1 - Survival Bootcamp

WHGB Orientation 2018



**williambutlerms** We are launching an All-School Read program. Our first pick introduces us to ten-year-old AnnMarie whose favorite teacher resists the State and stands up for the right to create weapon-free schools. [#booksforchange](#)

August 7



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## Day 2 - Hide and Peek

WHGB Orientation 2018

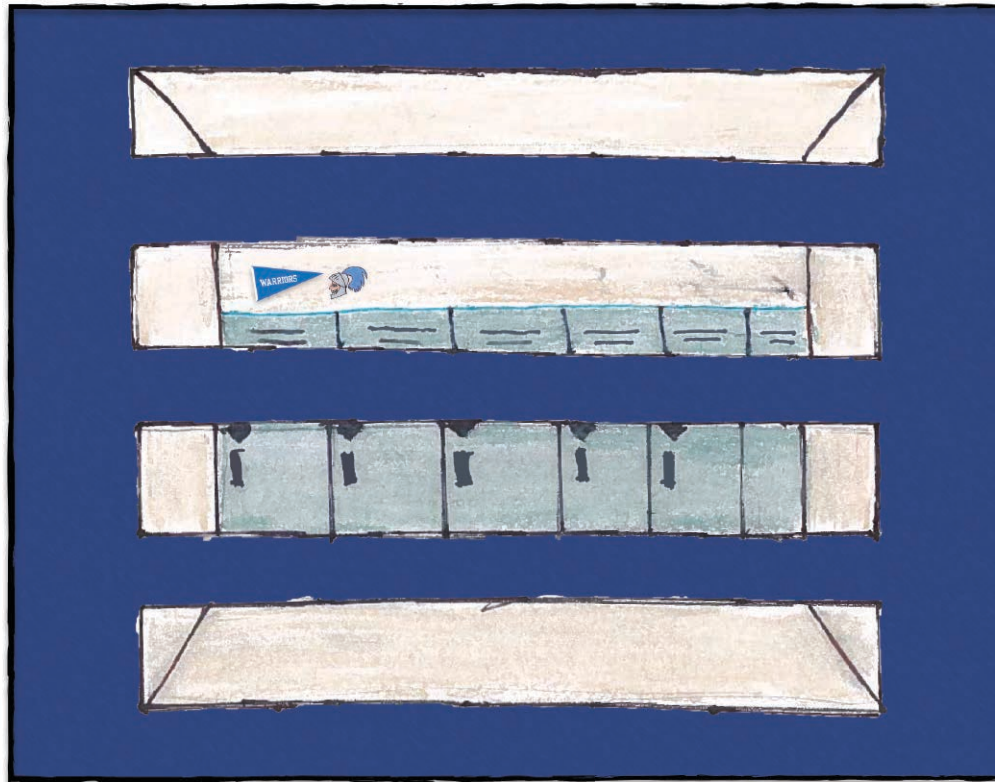


**williambutlerms** Day 2 of our Survival Bootcamp featured a school-wide game of Hide and Peek designed to test each student's endurance and creativity through playful simulations of an active shooter event. [#gamebasedlearning](#)

August 8



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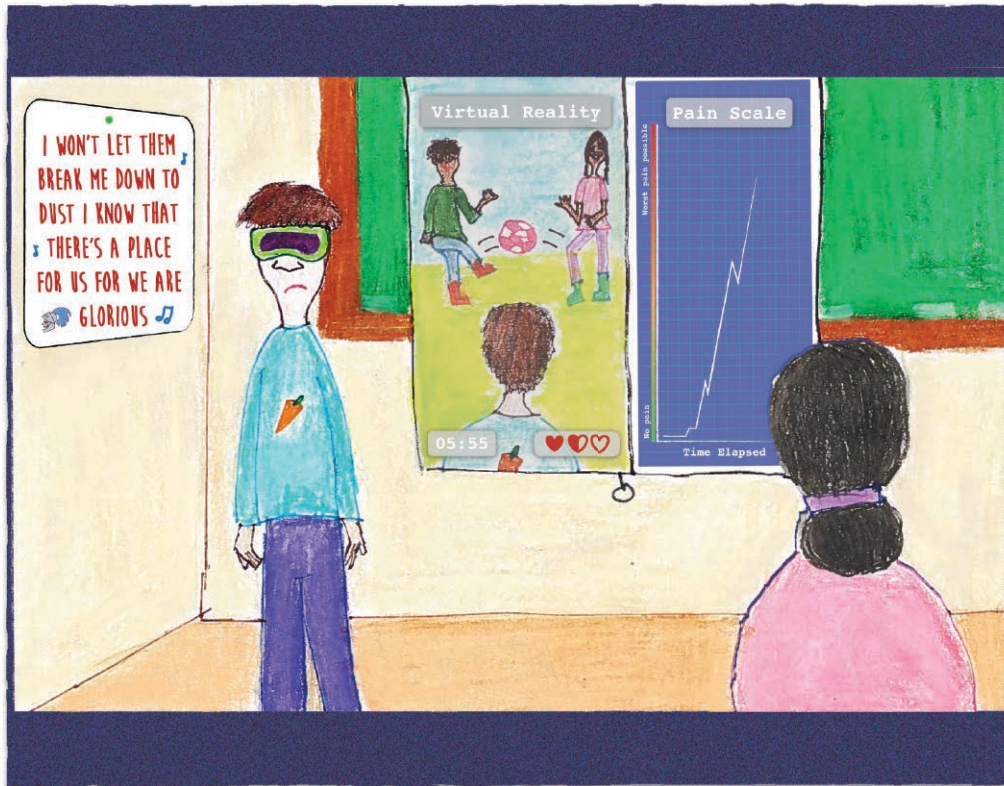
Day 2 - Peek

WHGB Orientation 2018



**williambutlerms** Day 2 of our Survival Bootcamp featured a school-wide game of Hide and Peek designed to test each student's endurance and creativity through playful simulations of an active shooter event. [#gamebasedlearning](#)

August 8



### Day 3 - VR Ball

WHGB Orientation 2018



**williambutlerms** Survival Bootcamp ended with a game of VR Ball. This [#virtualreality](#) game of soccer quantifies the pain of social exclusion and is designed to build empathy. [#gamebasedlearning](#)

August 9



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# WILLIAM H.G. BUTLER MIDDLE SCHOOL

Discussion Guide for  
Students, Parents and Educators





## A NOTE TO READERS FROM TOBY MURPHY

When I first started teaching, I was afraid to be vulnerable. I kept many of my thoughts, opinions, and even failures to myself. I wanted my students to see me as a source of strength during uneasy times. Although this wasn't a message that was given to me by school districts, communities, or federal mandates, it felt implied in the job description of a teacher.

Over the past 12 years as a middle school teacher, I have learned that students respect us more when we are vulnerable; when we share our hopes and fears with them; when we show them our human side; when we discuss difficult topics with them.

When it comes to mass school shootings, I believe the same rules apply. Although I admit I am hesitant after a tragedy occurs in discussing this topic with my students. I often wonder if it's my job to do so.

*William H.G. Butler Middle School* was created by Literary Safari in the Summer of 2018 in the format of Instagram posts from a fictional middle school. It was inspired by research and news articles on mass school shootings in America over the past decade. By crossing various genres and mediums, this short work of illustrated fiction challenges the very definition of what a text is, raising poignant questions about today's climate in schools and shedding light on the impact of mass school shootings in our culture and society.

I created this companion discussion guide to offer ideas for how to use this story as a tool to foster dialogue in classrooms across the country between students and teachers, in homes across the country between children and parents, and even, in schools across the country between teachers and school administrators.

Change may take time, but it starts with one conversation at a time.



Toby Murphy has taught middle school language arts in New Jersey for the past 12 years. He received his Masters in Teaching English through the University of New Hampshire and his Supervisory Certificate through New Jersey City University. He has served as a Master Teacher through the National Education Association and BetterLesson Master Teacher Project and conducted numerous professional development workshops. [🐦 @tobymurphy](https://twitter.com/tobymurphy)



# A Discussion Guide for Students

## MAKING PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

Read the story (shouldn't take more than 30-45 minutes) and use these questions to invite middle school and high school students to make connections between the text, their own experiences, and the world outside their community.

- What is the overall message of this story?
- Which Instagram posts did you find most effective in communicating the overall message of the story? Why?
- Why could this work of fiction be considered dystopian? What aspects fit the genre?
- How would you classify the tone of the piece? Does it match with your feelings on these issues?
- What are your overall feelings and reactions to school safety as presented in the story? Are they accurate or similar to your experience? How would you react to the types of drills and procedures in the story?
- Do any sections of the story compare to your own experience? How would you feel or react if your school had these procedures in place?
- How does the story being told through the perspective of the school affect the overall message? Would the story be different if it were told through individual student, teacher, administration accounts?
- Do you have people in your life that you can talk to about issues surrounding school safety?
- What does empathy mean to you? Do you feel students, and teachers and parents, in your life are empathetic?

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## MAKING TEXT CONNECTIONS

The 21 Instagram-style installments of William H.G. Butler Middle School are divided into seven weeks. Reflect upon the key themes that emerge in each week, using the questions below.

Week 1: June 26 - June 28

- Should the students who have died be mentioned in the William H.G. Butler Middle School yearbook? How does this help the school cope or not cope? What messages does this send?
- What's appropriate and not appropriate to include in a yearbook?
- Butler Middle School's social media hashtags are #GoWarriors and #ButlerStrong. What hashtags could be used to represent your experience at school?

Week 2: July 3 - July 5

- How do you think Mr. Ortega should respond to the student who asked him about giving up his life? Is it fair for students to expect teachers to do such a thing? How would you define the role of teacher?
- Was cancelling the Fourth of July show the right decision? If so, what would be other ways those with PTSD could experience the holiday?
- Should teachers and schools publicly discuss their stance on political issues like gun control?





# A Discussion Guide for Students

## MAKING TEXT CONNECTIONS (Cont.)

Week 3: July 10 - July 13

- The MELISSA Method stands for Mindfulness, Empowerment, Leadership, Instinct, Simulation, Support, and Agency. What do these qualities mean to you and how do you think they could change your experience in school?
- What is mindfulness? Why is mindfulness important in daily life? How can mindfulness help in traumatic situations? How could the students at Butler Middle School use mindfulness to help cope with living in the aftermath of this tragedy?

Week 4: July 18 - July 20

- How would you react to having school supplies such as a wound lock, a classroom weapons kit, and a safety tree in your classroom? Would they make you feel less or more safe?
- Are there any additional items you would like to see included or anything else that would make you feel safer in school?

Week 5: July 24 - July 27

- What message, whether explicit or implicit, is being sent with items like bulletproof backpacks and vests?
- How could these items change the feelings of starting a new school year? Would items like these be considered proactive or reactive?

Week 6: July 31 - August 2

- The books included have been inspired by actual titles. What books could you use to create new titles related to these issues?
- Which books would you use as a school wide read and why?

Week 7: August 7 - August 9

- The creators of *William H.G. Butler Middle School* were inspired by the Holocaust when creating this part of the story. Why do you think that might be the case?
- Would challenges like “Make Your Own Stretcher” or a game like “Hide and Peek” make you feel less or more safe? More or less comfortable in your school?

### PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

1. Create a character of a student, parent, or teacher from William H.G. Butler Middle School, and write 2-3 posts from their personal Instagram feeds. How would the content change as the perspective changes from the school to a specific person?
2. Imagine a student who could be bullied in your school. Create an empathy map for this person, and think about how your school community can make this individual feel safe and belonged.
3. *The President Sang Amazing Grace* was written by singer-songwriter Zoe Mulford in response to gun violence. If this story were to have a soundtrack, what songs would you include and why?





# A Discussion Guide for Parents

Host a book club discussion around *William H.G. Butler Middle School* with your spouse, partner, or a group of parents and caregivers. You might also consider organizing a Town Hall type program through your local PTO, and inviting teachers and district administrators to attend.

## MAKING TEXT CONNECTIONS

- What does the word tragedy mean to you? Share your thoughts on what makes a tragedy and what is tragic about the story *William H.G. Butler Middle School*.
- Teachers are the frontline of defense for students in the story. How did their stories make you think differently about school's role and challenges around safety in these times?
- What should the role, if any, of teachers be to teach about topics such as school shootings, lockdown drills, school safety, and gun violence?
- Safety becomes a priority for William H.G. Butler Middle School after its tragedy. What feelings does the story evoke for you in the sections about school safety and school supplies?
- How do items like bulletproof backpacks and vests change the tone of back to school shopping? How could they change the discussions you have with children? How did reading that part of the story make you feel?
- Students engage in safety drills in the last section of the story. What safety drills do your own children engage in, and how do you talk to the school administration, teachers, and your own child about them? What questions do you have, or does the story raise?
- Empathy is a repeated theme in the story, whether it is through the MELISSA Training, or the video game that children play in the last installment of the story. What are ways you work to develop empathy in your children?
- What ways should or could students be allowed to express their feelings on bullying, gun violence, mass school shootings, and lockdown drills?
- William H.G. Butler uses Instagram as a way to communicate with parents, and the community at large. Is this similar to how you receive information regarding school safety? What type of information would you like to receive that you have not? If your school district were to use a medium like that, how would it help, or hurt, the relationship with parents? What is dystopian about using social media to communicate?
- How can you, as a parent, work with your school to create a safe environment for the discussion of school shootings with your children?
- How can parents work with schools to continue the dialogue around these issues? What is missing from conversations you have had with schools?

## HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

Many parents have hopes and fears about school. Using specific types of caregivers, including yourself, list as many hopes and fears as they may have. Working with a partner, discover commonalities among their hopes and fears. Based on these, what actions can we take to continue fostering their hopes and what actions can we take to diminish their fears?





# A Discussion Guide for Educators

Storytelling is a helpful doorway through which difficult subjects can be discussed. The questions below can frame a discussion that takes place between teachers and administrators over a luncheon or professional development of *William H.G. Butler Middle School*.

## MAKING TEXT CONNECTIONS

- How do you approach the topics of school safety, mass school shootings, and lockdown drills in your classroom? With your colleagues? With your family?
- Do you feel as though you have the ability and freedom to discuss these topics with your students?
- Should teachers and schools discuss their stance on political issues like gun control?
- How did reading the story make you feel? What sections most resonated for you? What feelings did it evoke for you?
- The characters of Mr. Ortega and Ms. Tan (July 3 - July 5) were based on research about real-life teachers. Do you think they should be commended for their decisions? Did they make a good decision? Would you make a similar decision?
- What are the expectations you feel are placed upon you in these times as an educator?
- What could the MELISSA method (July 10 - July 13) look like in your classroom or school?
- School supplies appear in the July 18 - July 20 posts of the story. How did this part of the story make you feel?
- Would game based learning, such as “Hide And Peek” (August 7- August 9) help or have emotional consequences?
- What challenges would arise were the procedures, drills, etc. implemented in the story to become reality for you? How would you react if you were to asked to do these?
- How could you use this story as a teaching tool in your classroom? Which dystopian works of literature could you pair it with?
- What hashtags or posts from the story stand out to you as the most powerful and why?
- What additional tools, resources, etc. are needed to continue the dialogue? Which books and games from the #ArmMeWith Campaign can be used in your classroom and how?

## HANDS-ON-ACTIVITY

Many students (and parents, teachers, administration, etc) have hopes and fears about school. Using specific types of people, including yourself, list as many hopes and fears each may have. Working with a partner, discover commonalities among their hopes and fears. Based on these, work as a group to identify what actions can we take to continue fostering their hopes and what actions can we take to diminish their fears?



*The format of William H.G. Butler Middle School is very clever, both in terms of subject matter and the Instagram “delivery system.” It’s rife with hashtags and feels connected to our techno-cultural moment ... and what makes the whole thing work is the deadpan satire of the piece, which is so cutting!*

—Josh Neufeld, Eisner and Harvey Award  
nominated comics journalist

**William H.G. Butler Middle School** is an Instagram-style graphic novella which explores the impact of mass school shootings on America's schools, children, and families. Pair it with **#ArmMeWithBooks** and **#ArmMeWithGames**, our lists of book and game recommendations from award-winning authors, librarians, game designers, researchers, and educators.



Literary Safari is a NYC-based studio that produces thoughtful and inclusive award-winning media for children and families everywhere. It is committed to using storytelling as a powerful tool of change. Its clients have included Sesame Learning, Unesco, Benchmark Education, Scholastic, E-Line Media, and Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and its literacy app HangArt was recognized as one of Common Sense Media's Best of EdTech in 2016.