

HATE LIST



Thematic connections

- ❖ Grief
- ❖ Family
- ❖ Relationships
- ❖ School

Curriculum connections

- ❖ Psychology
- ❖ Social Science
- ❖ Literature
- ❖ Art

Ages 15 and Up

By Jennifer
Brown

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Hate List began almost as a joke. How did it become so deadly?
2. Is it hard to tell the difference between a hero and a villain? In the first chapter Valerie wonders: “Was I the bad guy who set into motion the plan to mow down half my school, or the hero who sacrificed herself to end the killing?” [p. 7] How does she answer that question? How would you?
3. Why was Valerie so attracted to Nick? Was she blind to his dark side? Did she draw out his good side? Why did she continue to love him even after the shooting? What kept her from visiting his grave?
4. How supportive was Valerie’s relationship with her mother before the shooting? How did it change afterwards? In what ways did the tragedy draw them closer?
5. “When it comes to reading people,” Valerie fears, “I’m an F student.” [p. 50] She had been thinking of Nick, but who are the other people in her life she thoroughly misreads? Pay special attention to her brother. When does Valerie finally understand his true feelings about her?
6. Discuss the changing nature of Valerie’s relationship with Jessica Campbell. Why was Jessica on the Hate List? After the shooting, why does Jessica reach out to Valerie? Why is Valerie reluctant to befriend Jessica? Why doesn’t Jessica just give up on Valerie?
7. When does Valerie’s father make his first appearance in the novel? Why can’t he forgive his daughter for her involvement in the shooting? Why is it easier for his girlfriend to be more understanding?
8. “The best way I can describe the feeling was that it was miraculous,” is how Valerie describes how she felt at her first painting class. [p. 249] What miracle is she experiencing? How does it help her emotional recovery?
9. “My son may have been the shooter,” Nick’s mother tells reporters, “but he’s still a victim.” [p. 280] What do you think she means by that? Do you agree?

ACTIVITIES

1. *Hate List* is a work of fiction, but, sadly, fatal school shootings have occurred in all regions of the country. Break your students into small work groups, each assigned to further research one of these real-life tragedies. Their findings can be presented to the whole class as brief oral reports. Encourage each study group to pay particular attention to the emotional aftermaths: did the survivors ever feel “normal” again?
2. Imagine Angela Dash was investigating an incident at your school. After dividing your class into reporter/editor pairs, challenge each team to imitate her journalistic style as they produce an article about an actual or invented incident in your school.
3. The tragedy at Garvin High kicks off a media frenzy. As a whole class project, keep a running log of the sensational stories that are currently playing out in the press. How long does the incident stay in the news? When possible, compare and contrast newspaper reports with television coverage. Which is more factual? Which is more emotional?
4. After the shooting, Garvin High adopts strict new security measures. Do your students think they were warranted? Would they feel safer in such an environment? Investigate your own school district’s security policies. Have they been tightened in recent years? Invite a school administrator or security officer to discuss your district’s efforts to protect students from harm.
5. Nick loved Shakespeare, especially *Romeo and Juliet*. As Valerie rereads their e-mails after the shooting, she realizes that he was beginning to blur the line between fact and fiction. Encourage your class to blur it even more. What if *Romeo and Juliet* had been able to exchange e-mails? Ask your students to write their own versions of that correspondence.
6. Valerie and Jessica create highly individualized memorials to the victims of the Garvin High shooting. How does your community recall painful periods from its own past? Ask your students to search for war memorials, plaques, fountains, statues, and other nearby commemorative markers. How prominent are they? What is their purpose? Is it achieved?

about the book



Hate List
By Jennifer Brown
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Five months ago, Valerie Leftman’s boyfriend, Nick, opened fire on their school cafeteria. Shot trying to stop him, Valerie inadvertently saved the life of a classmate, but was implicated in the shootings because of the list she helped create. A list of people and things she and Nick hated. The list he used to pick his targets.

Now, after a summer of seclusion, Val is forced to confront her guilt as she returns to school to complete her senior year. Haunted by the memory of the boyfriend she still loves and navigating rocky relationships with her family, former friends and the girl whose life she saved, Val must come to grips with the tragedy that took place and her role in it, in order to make amends and move on with her life.

about the author



Jennifer Brown spent most of her childhood in Missouri and now lives there with her husband and three children. She is a humor columnist for the *Kansas City Star* and a two-time winner of the Erma Bombeck Global Humor Award. *Hate List* displays yet another side of her talent. It is her first novel, and she is working on more. www.JenniferBrownYA.com

Praise for *Hate List*

“This compelling novel will leave teens pondering the slippery nature of perception and guilt.” —*Booklist*

“Brown creates a compelling narrative that drives readers forward ... Authentic and relevant, this debut is one to top the charts.” —*Kirkus*