



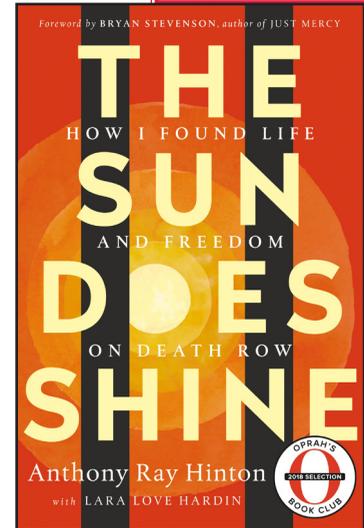
The Sun Does Shine

How I Found Life and Freedom on Death Row

by **Anthony Ray Hinton**
with **Lara Love Hardin**

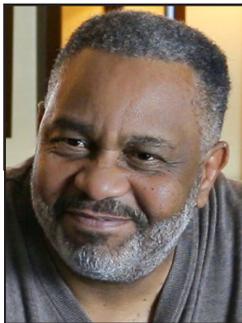
“No one I have represented has inspired me more than Anthony Ray Hinton, and I believe his compelling and unique story will similarly inspire our nation and readers all over the world.”
—Bryan Stevenson, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Just Mercy*

Common Core
Aligned



288 pages

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TO THE TEACHER

The Sun Does Shine is a powerful examination of both our flawed justice system and of one man's personal resilience and faith. In 1985, Anthony Ray Hinton was arrested and charged with two counts of capital murder in Alabama. Stunned, confused, and only twenty-nine years old, Hinton knew that it was a case of mistaken identity and believed that the truth would prove his innocence and ultimately set him free. But with an incompetent defense attorney and a different system of justice for a poor Black man in the South, Hinton was sentenced to death by electrocution. He spent his first three years on death row at Holman State Prison in despairing silence—angry and full of hatred for all those who had sent an innocent man to his death. But as Hinton realized and accepted his fate, he resolved not only to survive, but to find a way to live on death row. For the next twenty-seven years he was a beacon—transforming not only his own spirit, but those of his fellow prisoners, fifty-four of whom were executed mere feet from his cell. With the help of civil rights attorney and bestselling author of *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson, Hinton won his release in 2015. With a foreword by Stevenson, *The Sun Does Shine* is an extraordinary testament to the power of hope sustained through the darkest times. Destined to be a classic memoir of wrongful imprisonment and freedom won, *The Sun Does Shine* tells the story of Hinton's dramatic thirty-year journey and shows how you can take away a man's freedom, but you can't take away his imagination, humor, or joy.

This Teacher’s Guide is divided into two sections. The first, “**Guided Reading Questions,**” will help students with reading comprehension and appreciation. These questions can be used as a guide for annotating the text, journal responses, or discussion. The second section, “**Writing and Research Prompts,**” consists of analytical writing and research prompts and is subdivided into genres based on the Common Core Writing standards. Teachers will be able to incorporate the argumentation prompts into Socratic seminars or class debates if they wish to focus on Speaking and Listening standards.

The questions and activities in this teaching guide were written to support standards-based instruction. *The Sun Does Shine* meets the standard for **Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity** for grades 9-12. Since American Literature, American History, and Government are most commonly taught at the 11-12th grade level, CCSS for 11-12 grade level students were used in this guide. However, the text and guide could easily be adapted for 9-10 grade CCSS.

A complete list of the Common Core State Standards can be found at <http://www.corestandards.org/read-the-standards/>.

PRAISE FOR
THE SUN DOES SHINE

“An urgent, emotional memoir from one of the longest-serving condemned death row inmates to be found innocent in America. . . . Woven into vivid descriptions of life behind bars are flashbacks to the author’s childhood, court transcripts, police documents, news clippings, and correspondence that reveal the roles racism, poverty, and fear played in creating a deeply biased criminal justice system that punishes the poor and people of color. . . . A heart-wrenching yet ultimately hopeful story about truth, justice, and the need for criminal justice reform.”

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

“A troubling, moving, and ultimately exalting journey through the decades Hinton lived under the threat of death while an unjust system that refused to acknowledge mistakes failed him repeatedly. . . . Even more powerful than the crushing terror of serving a death sentence while innocent are Hinton’s refusal to be diminished by it and his unwavering commitment to forgiveness. Lighting unfathomable places, Hinton’s gripping story asks readers to do the same.”

—*Booklist* (starred review)

“Illuminating and emotionally powerful, simple and complex, and destined to become a classic in American prison literature.”—*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

“Nelson Mandela spent twenty-seven years in prison for opposing a racist system in South Africa. Anthony Ray Hinton spent thirty years on death row because a racist system still exists in America. Both emerged from their incarceration with a profound capacity to forgive. They are stunning examples of how the most

horrendous cruelty can lead to the most transcendent compassion. *The Sun Does Shine* is both a cautionary tale for all who think that a great nation can easily forget its past and inspiring proof of the inability to condemn a man's capacity for hope, love, and joy. An amazing and heartwarming story, it restores our faith in the inherent goodness of humanity."—**Archbishop Desmond Tutu**

"This story reads like an epic novel and it is all true. . . You will, throughout the book, try to imagine yourself—falsely accused, and in a five-by-seven cell for thirty years. [Hinton] is a remarkable storyteller and when you read [his book] you'll be swept away."—**Oprah Winfrey**

"How Hinton survived those long years is a story of resilience and imagination, of faith and the support of his mother and friends. He speaks of his rage over his conviction, and of ultimately coming to forgive those who wronged him."
—*The New York Times*

"An important story and an inspiring one. . . . Hinton shows readers how he held onto his faith, created friendships and sustained hope throughout his fight for freedom. While Hinton's optimism and perseverance are inspiring to anyone who reads *The Sun Does Shine*, the importance of this memoir lies in its account of one man's suffering at the hands of racial bias within the American criminal justice system."—*The Denver Post*

GUIDED READING QUESTIONS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Chapter 1. Capital Offense

1. Hinton describes his trial as "a legal lynching." What are the connotations of the term *lynching*? Why do you think Hinton uses this word to describe his trial?
2. Explain the significance of Hinton's lawyer's comment, "I eat \$1,000 for breakfast" (page 7). What does this suggest about his priorities?
3. What role do you think racial profiling played in Hinton's arrest and conviction? Provide evidence from the text to support your opinion.
4. Why did Hinton choose to testify on his own behalf? What does his testimony reveal about him?
5. Explain why Hinton observes, "the best chance for my life was to get sentenced to death" (page 14).

Chapter 2. All American

1. According to Hinton, how did life change after Alabama schools were integrated?
2. What happens to Hinton at the baseball game? Why do you think the college scout ignores him?
3. How do Lester and Hinton respond when a car they don't recognize approaches? Based on their response, what can you infer about racial violence in Alabama?

4. What causes Hinton to say, “It’s strange what you can get used to” (page 24)?

Chapter 3. A Two-Year Test Drive

1. Why did Hinton begin working in the coal mine? Why did he quit?
2. Describe the dreams Hinton had about his future. Why did these dreams seem out of reach?
3. According to Hinton, what was his weakness? Who is Reggie and why was he angry with Hinton?
4. Why do you think Hinton decided to not return the car he took for a test drive until two years later? What do you think this mistake taught him?
5. How does Hinton’s mother respond when he tells her the truth about the car?

Chapter 4. The Cooler Killer

1. What is the author’s purpose for including excerpts from newspaper articles in this chapter?
2. Explain why Hinton’s Fourth of July conversation with Lester ends up being an example of irony.
3. Where was Hinton on the night of July 25, 1985? Describe the evidence that supports his alibi.
4. Based on the newspaper reports, do you think that the three murders are linked? Give evidence to support your answer.
5. Why isn’t Hinton concerned when two police officers show up at his house?
6. Is the excerpt from the *Birmingham Post Herald* article “Holdup Suspect Charged with Slayings” biased or unbiased? Explain your answer.

Chapter 5. Premeditated Guilt

1. Why do you think the police detective wants Hinton to sign a blank piece of paper? Why does Hinton refuse to sign it? What do you think would have happened if he had trusted the police?
2. Find evidence in the text suggesting that racism played a role in the arrest and treatment of Anthony Ray Hinton.

Chapter 6. The Whole Truth

1. What is a public defender? What evidence suggests that Sheldon Perhacs does not want to work with Hinton?
2. What is the result of Hinton’s polygraph test? Why don’t the polygraph results help Hinton prove his innocence?
3. Explain the problems with the state’s case against Hinton.
4. What keeps Hinton from getting a strong legal defense (including a strong ballistics expert to counter the state’s ballistics report)? What does this suggest about who receives justice and who does not?
5. What does Hinton realize when his older brother refuses to help by loaning him \$15,000?

Chapter 7. Conviction, Conviction, Conviction

1. Why does Hinton think Reggie testified against him and helped the police frame him for murder?
2. What problems does Hinton notice in Reggie's testimony? What happens during Reggie's cross-examination?
3. Hinton questions whether he should have run from the police that came to arrest him. What do you think he should have done?
4. Explain what happens when the ballistics expert Perhacs hired testifies in Hinton's defense.

Chapter 8. Keep Your Mouth Shut

1. What emotions did Hinton feel after he was convicted of murder?
2. Describe Hinton's transport to Holman Prison. What is his emotional state at this time? How does he interact with the guards? What does he notice about his surroundings?
3. Describe Hinton's arrival at Holman. How has his wrongful conviction changed him?

Chapter 9. On Appeal

1. What does Hinton tell his mother about life in prison? How does the reality of prison differ from the lies he tells his mother?
2. How does Hinton first hear about Bryan Stevenson? How does Hinton initially feel about Stevenson?
3. Hinton used vivid imagery to describe what life is like on death row. Point out the details you found particularly effective in conveying the atmosphere of death row.
4. Examine the letter that Hinton received from Perhacs dated April 11, 1989. Do you think the letter is sincere? Provide evidence to support your opinion.

Chapter 10. The Death Squad

1. How does Hinton find out that fellow prisoner Wayne Ritter has been executed?
2. What details does Hinton share that suggest he has empathy for Michael Lindsey?
3. What message are the incarcerated men trying to send when they bang on their cells during an execution?
4. Why does Hinton tell Lester not to let Perhacs talk to his mother?
5. What message does Hinton ask Lester to deliver to his mother after he is executed? What does this request tell you about Hinton's priorities?
6. Who is Santha Sonenberg and what message does she bring Anthony Ray Hinton?

Chapter 11. Waiting to Die

1. What is ironic about Judge McGregor's instructions to the jury in Hinton's trial?

2. Explain the epiphany Hinton has while he is in prison. What does he realize? What choice does he decide to make?
3. Why does Hinton decide to try to comfort the man he hears crying?
4. What does Hinton mean when he says, “God may sit high, but he looks low” (page 116)?

Chapter 12. The Queen of England

1. What specific things did Hinton pray for while he was in prison? Why didn't he simply pray to be released from jail?
2. What is *judicial override*? Do you think states should be allowed to have a policy of judicial override?
3. How does Hinton start to build a community with the other death row prisoners?
4. What does Hinton realize about his imagination? What does his fantasy about meeting the Queen of England reveal about his personality?

Chapter 13. No Monsters

1. In Sonenberg's petition for a new trial, she lists thirty-one reasons why Hinton has a right to a new trial. Which of these reasons do you find the most compelling? Explain your answer.
2. What does Hinton mean when he observes, “I didn't know any monsters on the row” (page 133).
3. How did the State respond to Hinton's petition for a new trial?
4. What does Hinton find out about his friend Henry? Why is he surprised to hear about Henry's family? How does he respond to Henry after he knows about his past?
5. Why does Hinton decide to start a book club?

Chapter 14. Love Is a Foreign Language

1. What does the saying “You get more flies with honey than with vinegar” mean? How does Hinton put this principle into practice?
2. The word *grace* is often defined as being *unmerited favor*. How does Hinton demonstrate grace towards others? How does being given or shown grace affect them?
3. How does Hinton convince the warden, Charlie Jones, to let him start a book club?
4. How do the prisoners demonstrate community after the death of Henry's father?

Chapter 15. Go Tell It on the Mountain

1. Why do you think Hinton says “it didn't really matter” (page 151) if the incarcerated men in his book group were innocent or not?
2. Why does Hinton think, “Death row had been good for Henry” (page 153)?
3. Why do you think the passage quoted from *Go Tell It on the Mountain* meant so much to Henry?

4. What does Hinton tell the other prisoners that he will do if he gets released from prison? In what ways has *The Sun Does Shine* accomplished this mission?

Chapter 16. Shakedown

1. Throughout the book, Hinton mentions the final words (or, in some cases, the final silence) of the incarcerated people who are executed while he is on death row. How are the last words of men who were a part of book club different? What does this suggest about Hinton's influence on his prison community?
2. Describe the process that is known as "shakedown." Why do you think this ritual exists? Do you agree with Hinton that their normal guards behaved the same as the visiting guards when they went to a neighboring prison?
3. Why does Hinton say, "there's no racism on death row" (page 161)? Why does he say, "There was no past and no future on the row" (page 162)? Do you agree with these assessments?
4. Why do you think Hinton chose to begin this chapter with an epigraph of Henry Hays's last words? How do these words help frame the content of the chapter?
5. Why does Henry fire his lawyer? What does this tell you about the principles that Hinton lives by?

Chapter 17. God's Best Lawyer

1. Why do you think Bryan Stevenson decides to personally represent Hinton?
2. At their first meeting, Stevenson addresses Hinton as "Mr. Hinton" instead of "Anthony" and then tells Hinton to call him by his first name. What does this interaction say about Stevenson?
3. Why do you think Hinton requests that Stevenson hire a ballistics expert who is an, "honest, racist, Southern, white expert" (page 172)? Why are each of these characteristics important?
4. After Hinton meets with Stevenson, he offers a prayer of gratitude that includes this statement: "I trust things to happen in your time, so I'm not going to ask you why you didn't send him earlier" (page 172). Has anything good come out of the time Hinton has spent wrongfully imprisoned?

Chapter 18. Testing the Bullets

1. What does Hinton mean when he writes, "*Hope* can be a four-letter word in prison" (page 176)?
2. Contrast the attitude and actions of Bryan Stevenson with Sheldon Perhacs.
3. What causes Stevenson to promise that he will get Hinton released from prison?
4. What does Stevenson plan to do if the State does not agree to a "non-adversarial resolution" (page 180)? Why do you think he plans to take this route?
5. What evidence does Stevenson uncover that makes Hinton realize it looks as if the state of Alabama "purposely sent" him to death row (page 181)?
6. Why do you think Hinton decides to forgive the people that wrongfully and intentionally accused, convicted, and imprisoned him?

Chapter 19. Empty Chairs

1. Why does Hinton believe the State delays his Rule 32 hearing? Do you think he's right?
2. Summarize Hinton's reasons for being against the death penalty. Do you agree or disagree with his reasoning?
3. Why does Hinton say that, in his fantasies, he never imagined himself with children?
4. What is the outcome of Hinton's Rule 32 hearing? Were you surprised by this outcome? Explain your answer.
5. Why does Hinton reflect that, "the thought of book club made me sad" (page 195)?
6. What keeps Hinton from giving in to despair after the death of his mother? How do the other prisoners comfort him when he is grieving?

Chapter 20. Dissent

1. Why does Stevenson contact the media and Amnesty International about Hinton's legal case?
2. Why do you think Judge Garrett keeps Hinton's case instead of passing it on after he retires?
3. What causes Stevenson to remark that Hinton's case is "the worst example of corrupt, unjust administration of the death penalty anywhere" (page 207)?
4. When Hinton reads Bryan Stevenson's op-ed opposing the death penalty and Troy King's op-ed in favor of the death penalty, what lines or ideas does he notice? Do you agree with his statement that, "A person could believe in the death penalty and still believe it should be ended, because men are fallible and the justice system is fallible" (page 211)?
5. What details suggest that the guards at Holman believe that Hinton is innocent?
6. Why isn't Hinton upset when he learns that the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals denied his appeal?

Chapter 21. They Kill You on Thursdays

1. Summarize the legal "pinball" that Hinton endures as his case gets moved up and down the justice system.
2. How does Hinton demonstrate that he cares about Stevenson?
3. What options does Stevenson give Hinton after the court denies his appeal? What are the possible outcomes of each option?
4. Why does Hinton choose to have Stevenson present his case to the United States Supreme Court?

Chapter 22. Justice for All

1. Explain the Supreme Court's ruling on Hinton's case.

Chapter 23: The Sun Does Shine

1. Why is Hinton's re-trial delayed?

2. What does Hinton say that he wants to tell the young incarcerated men he sees in the county jail?
3. What do you think caused Judge Petro to drop the charges against Hinton? Why do you think he filed his decision quietly and electronically instead of announcing it?
4. Hinton’s release from prison was covered by numerous media outlets. Watch the video of his release after you read this chapter. How did watching his release compare to reading about it?
5. What did you expect Hinton’s first night of freedom would be like? Were your predictions correct?

Chapter 24. Bang on the Bars

1. What does Hinton do the year after he is released from prison?
2. Were you surprised to read that Hinton decided to stay in Alabama? Explain his reasons for staying a resident of the state that wrongfully incarcerated him for thirty years.
3. Hinton reflects, “Freedom is a funny thing. I have my freedom, but in some ways, I am still locked down on the row” (page 239). Summarize the ways that being incarcerated left emotional scars on Hinton.
4. According to Hinton, what did death row teach him? What has reading his story taught you?

WRITING AND
RESEARCH PROMPTS

EXPLANATORY/
INFORMATIONAL PROMPTS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.5 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2.9

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2 (a-f) Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

1. Hinton observes: “in Alabama, justice isn’t blind” (page 6). Research the founding, mission, and projects of the Equal Justice Initiative, Bryan Stevenson’s nonprofit organization. Why did Stevenson feel there was a need for the EJI? What are some of the EJI’s most significant achievements?
2. *The Sun Does Shine* is dedicated to Buhlar Hinton, Anthony’s mother. Examine the influence that Buhlar had on her son’s life. How did her “unconditional love” help mold the person he has become?
3. The subtitle of *The Sun Does Shine* is *How I Found Life and Freedom on Death Row*. Examine the development of the themes of life and freedom in the book, paying close attention to this paradox of finding life and freedom on death row.

4. Hinton's book alludes to the irony of the quote on the Jefferson County Courthouse: "Equal and exact justice to all men of whatever state or persuasion." Research the factors that impact a person's ability to receive "equal and exact justice," carefully documenting your sources. What role does socioeconomic status play in the justice system? What role does race play? What other factors significantly influence judicial outcomes?
5. In chapter 2, Hinton reflects on his childhood in Birmingham, Alabama. Research the civil rights history of Birmingham. Why did it earn the nickname "Bombingham"? Examine what the text reveals about the ways that growing up during the civil rights movement impacted Hinton.
6. After Hinton is released from work detail in 1983, he makes a list of his priorities. Examine the way these priorities continue to guide and define his life even after he is wrongfully sent to death row.
7. Hinton begins to study the law and constitution while he is incarcerated, noting "I had studied the amendments to the Constitution in high school but definitely needed a refresher course" (page 132). How much do you know about criminal justice and constitutional law? Research an area of the law that you think is important for students to understand and present your findings.
8. In the Afterword, Hinton gives a list of all the men and women who sit on death row in America. He urges readers to "Read their names. Know their stories" (page 243). Choose one of the names (preferably from your state, if you live in a state that allows the death penalty) and research their story. Write a research paper about their background, trial, and conviction, trying to present their story with an acknowledgment, as Hinton and Stevenson suggest we should, that they are "more than the worst thing they have done".
9. One of the messages of Hinton's book is the idea that, "No one is beyond redemption" (page 176). Analyze this quote in the context of *The Sun Does Shine*. How does Hinton show the reader that the people he encounters are not "beyond redemption"?
10. In his famous slave narrative Frederick Douglass wrote about the significance of being taught to read as an enslaved child, observing: "Once you learn to read, you will be forever free." Examine the ways Hinton's book club changes the lives of the men on death row. Research the benefits of reading literature. Why is access to books and literacy so important?
11. Throughout the book, it is clear that Hinton has a strong personal faith. Analyze the ways that Hinton's faith guides his actions and response to circumstances.
12. Hinton discovers that his gift of imagination gives him a way to mentally escape the confines of prison. Research the power of meditation, visualization, and mindfulness to help navigate and overcome stressful situations.
13. Read one of the books from Hinton's book club: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, *Your Blues Ain't Like Mine*, or *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and write an analytical essay connecting the themes of both books.

14. Hinton says that when he was a teenager dealing with racism in rural Alabama, he realized he had a choice to either get angry or to have faith and love. How did this choice impact the rest of his life?

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1 (a-e) Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

1. Hinton was born in Alabama in 1956 and was sentenced to death row in 1985. The state of Alabama has a long, often painful legacy of civil rights struggle. Research civil rights in Alabama between 1956-1985. What significant events formed the background of Hinton's childhood and young adulthood?
2. Throughout the book, Hinton repeats a quote from Stevenson's book *Just Mercy*: "We are all more than the worst thing we have done." Do you agree with this statement?
3. When the police show up at Hinton's mother's house to arrest him, he recalls his mother's teaching that "If you haven't done anything wrong you have no reason to fear and certainly no reason to run. . . . There was nothing to be afraid of" (page 45). Yet, recent incidents involving police shootings and violence have raised public awareness about problems in law enforcement. Do you believe we should trust the police? Provide evidence to support your opinion. If you do not believe the police should be trusted, propose a possible solution to this problem.
4. Writing about being transported to Holman Prison, Hinton reflects, "I was chained and shackled like a slave being taken to auction. I was cargo" (page 81). Later, he refers to the state's attempt to keep him incarcerated as a "lynching" (page 185). Both of these phrases allude to the history of slavery in the south. Research the connection between slavery and mass incarceration. Why are people of color incarcerated at higher rates than others?
5. Hinton points out, "There is no postconviction help once you are condemned" (page 86). Research this issue and debate whether convicted prisoners should receive access to information on how to appeal their conviction or sentence.
6. Hinton describes the living conditions of life on death row. Research the conditions of death row prisoners in your state (if your state does not practice the death penalty, research a neighboring state's policy). Do death row prisoners have access to things like air conditioning, heat, hot water, books, exercise, television, or counseling? How often are they allowed visitors? The epigraph for chapter 21 is a quote by Fyodor Dostoyevsky: "The degree of civilization in society can be judged by entering its prisons." If this is true, what does your state's prison system say about the degree of civilization in society?
7. In the Afterword, Hinton quotes Stevenson: "the moral arc of the universe bends towards justice, but justice needs help. Justice only happens when good people take a stand against injustice" (page 243). What injustice are you willing to take a stand against? Write a persuasive speech educating others about the issue and urging them to take action.

8. Do you believe that Hinton is entitled to compensation from the state for the years he spent wrongfully imprisoned? Write a persuasive letter to a member of the Alabama state legislature making a case for your position: <https://www.aclualabama.org/en/how-to/get-involved-alabama-legislature>.
9. Analyze Stevenson’s op-ed “The Debate Over Death: Against” from *The Birmingham News* (found on pages 209-211). What rhetorical strategies does Stevenson use? How effective is his argument?
10. When Stevenson presents the case for a reexamination of Hinton’s conviction, the judge counters that “proof of innocence” is not a legally recognized reason to overturn a conviction or reopen a trial. What is required to overturn a conviction? Should proof of innocence be sufficient to warrant the reexamination of a conviction? Research the pros and cons of making it easier for people to seek a new trial and take a position on the issue based on your findings.
11. Hinton writes that Stevenson, “spoke of justice and of mercy and of a system that was so broken it locked up children and the mentally ill and the innocent” (pages 175-176). Research Stevenson’s book *Just Mercy* and write an op-ed about the issues raised in the book. (Note: a film adaptation is scheduled to be released January 2020.)
12. At one point, Hinton observes that some of the prisoners on death row were “real slow, almost childlike” and “didn’t know why they were on death row” (page 148). How does the legal system treat people with intellectual disability? Research the work that Stevenson’s organization Equal Justice Initiative has done related to the death penalty and intellectual disability.
13. Hinton notes, “If you couldn’t afford to get an attorney for your trial or appeal, it seemed like you would never be able to prove you were innocent” (page 134). What role does money play in our justice system? What role does it play in our prison system? What reforms are needed to lessen the chance of an innocent person being convicted simply because they can’t afford adequate legal representation?

NARRATIVE PROMPTS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3 (a-e) Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

1. In the Foreword, Stevenson writes that Hinton’s story helps us understand what it means to “survive, to overcome, and to forgive.” Explain what reading this book taught you about survival, overcoming adversity, and forgiveness. How will you incorporate these lessons into your life?
2. In prison, Hinton realizes that, “Despair was a choice. Hatred was a choice. Anger was a choice,” but he also sees that “hope,” “faith,” “love,” and “compassion” are choices (page 115). Think about a time when you had to choose how you responded to pain, tragedy, or injustice. How did you choose to respond? What were the ramifications of that choice? If you could go back, would you make the same choice again?

3. After his conviction, Hinton thinks about all the things he will miss after he is incarcerated, noting: “No one can understand what freedom means until they don’t have it” (page 114). Reflect on your own life and priorities and write a descriptive narrative about the things you would miss the most if your freedom was taken from you.
4. Hinton discovers that his gift of imagination gives him a way to mentally escape the confines of prison. What role have daydreams and fantasy played in your own life?
5. At the end of the book, Hinton observes: “It’s hard not to wrap your life in a story—a story that has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A story that has logic and purpose and a bigger reason for why things turned out the way they did” (page 241). Try to reflect on your own life as a story. What is your purpose? What is the bigger reason for why things have turned out the way they did?
6. Remembering his first meeting with Stevenson, Hinton writes, “There are some people you meet, and you know they are going to change your life forever. Meeting Bryan was like that” (page 169). Recall your first meeting with someone who has changed your life. What do you remember about that initial meeting? How did this person change your life?
7. Hinton’s guiding principle in organizing the book club for death row is, “Everybody feels something different when they read the same thing. You just have to see what made people feel something and then talk about that” (page 153). Have a book club discussion or write a personal essay about *The Sun Does Shine* using this technique of sharing and talking about what the book made you feel. Find specific passages that meant something to you and explain why you chose them.
8. Hinton writes, “I knew if the mind could open, the heart would follow” (page 153). Reflect on a time when you had an open mind, and explain how this led to a change of heart. What caused you to question your belief or idea? What new understanding led to a change of heart?
9. Hinton observes that he “wasn’t going to judge” another prisoner because he “didn’t know his story” (page 141). Think about a time when your initial assumptions and judgments about someone changed after you learned their story or got to know them. What did your experience teach you about prejudice? How did it change the way you perceive people who are different from you?

READING BEYOND THE BOOK

As demonstrated in *The Sun Does Shine*, mounting evidence shows that innocent people have been sentenced to death and that serious legal errors infect the administration of capital punishment. Since 1973, 163 people have been exonerated and released from death row. For every nine people executed in this country, one innocent person on death row has been identified and exonerated.

Research the history of the death penalty in your state and discuss your findings. Examine the use of the death penalty in other countries (including the death penalty for juveniles and the mentally disabled), and compare with the United States. Has reading *The Sun Does Shine* affected your feelings about the death penalty? If so, how?

LINKS OF INTEREST

EJI—The Equal Justice Initiative
Video on Hinton’s release from Jefferson County Jail
60 Minutes—“Life After Death Row”
Bryan Stevenson TED Talk “We Need to Talk About an Injustice”
Oprah Winfrey SuperSoul Podcast “Conversation with Anthony Ray Hinton”
The Marshall Project: Nonprofit Journalism about Criminal Justice

FOR FURTHER READING

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Antony Ray Hinton spent nearly thirty years on death row for crimes he didn’t commit. Released in April 2015, Hinton now speaks widely on prison reform and the power of faith and forgiveness. He lives in Alabama.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE’S AUTHOR

Amy Jurskis is the author of numerous teaching guides, including *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot and *American Tapestry* by Rachel Swarns. She holds a BA in English from the University of Georgia and a MAT from Agnes Scott College. She currently serves as English Department Chair at Oxbridge Academy in Palm Beach, Florida.

NOTES

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