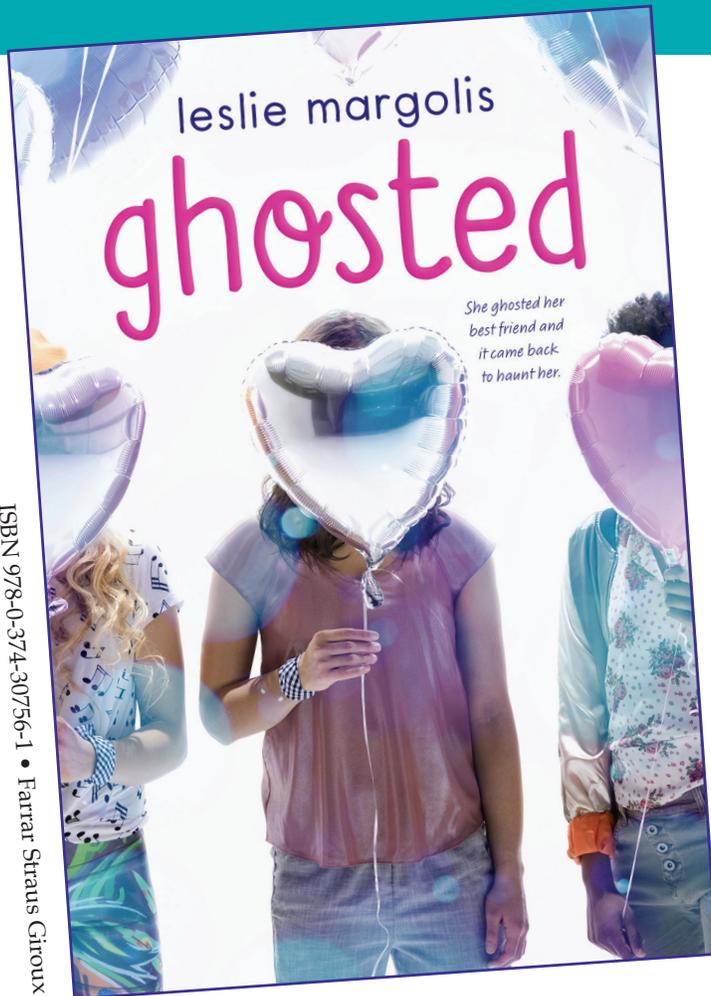


# discussion guide



## ghosted BY leslie margolis

AUTHOR OF  
*We Are Party People,*  
*If I Were You,*  
and the Maggie Brooklyn Mysteries

The more horrible I am,  
the more people fear me,  
and the more people fear me,  
the more they respect me.

**T**hirteen-year-old Ellie Charles has everything going for her: She's the smartest, prettiest, best-dressed, and most popular kid at Lincoln Heights Middle School. She's also the meanest, by design. Ellie has sharp edges, which she uses to keep herself at the top of the social food chain. But one night, just hours before her school's winter dance, a frightening accident leads her to encounter a ghost who just might change everything. This ghost, dressed all in black, makes Ellie visit her own past, present, and future—reliving her parents' divorce, her struggles in school, and worst of all, her massive falling-out with her best friend, Marley. Can what Ellie sees inspire her to change her ways?

In this clever mash-up of *A CHRISTMAS CAROL* and *MEAN GIRLS* readers will find a powerful story of friendship, forgiveness, letting go, and growing up.

[lesliemargolis.com](http://lesliemargolis.com) [mackids.com](http://mackids.com)

The Common Core State Standards addressed by the discussion questions and activities in this guide are noted throughout. For more information on the Common Core, visit [corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org).

# discussion questions

Unless otherwise noted, all discussion questions are aligned with the following standards:  
**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1**

- ✿ How does Ellie Charles describe herself in chapter 1? What examples does she give to support her perceived social status?
- ✿ Ellie reveals that she secretly enjoys making people cry and instilling fear in her peers. How is this character trait evident in her behavior at the dance committee meeting? How does Ellie benefit from her behavior in the meeting?
- ✿ Who is Reese and how does she interact with Ellie as the backdrops for the dance are being shared with the dance committee?
- ✿ Though Ellie has ordered all cell phones turned off at the committee meeting, her cell phone rings. Who is calling Ellie? What is revealed about the relationship between Ellie and the caller?
- ✿ Ellie designates the lion's share of the preparation for the dance to other committee members. What one task does she insist on doing herself? What happens as a result of Ellie taking care of the task?
- ✿ When does the Girl in Black appear in the story? Describe her attitude toward Ellie.
- ✿ As the story shifts from a middle school gym to a time in Ellie's past, the style of the story shifts from realism to fantasy. Cite examples from the text that indicate the move into the realm of illusion.
- ✿ Why did Ellie react with dread when she visited the scene of a younger Ellie and her friend Marley making friendship bracelets on the floor of Ellie's bedroom?
- ✿ Ellie relives the night her mother and father split. Her father tells the younger Ellie goodbye. The older Ellie sees this scene as the moment her dad said goodbye to fatherhood. In what ways are Ellie's feelings about her father accurate?
- ✿ Ellie's parents separate just a few days before Christmas. How are Marley and her fathers supportive of Ellie and her mom during this difficult time?
- ✿ Describe Ellie's personality shift when Christmas gifts are exchanged. Why does she react so strongly to the present from her mother?

- ✿ Who is Nicky Braun and how does the scene with Nicky and Ellie at the father-daughter dance influence Ellie's perspective?
- ✿ Ellie sees middle school as an opportunity to reinvent herself. While Marley is away at summer camp, what steps does Ellie take to become a different, less vulnerable version of herself?
- ✿ Ellie's best friend, Marley, is the one holdover from Ellie's past life. Give examples from the story that illustrate the growing divide in Ellie and Marley's friendship as Ellie develops a new personality.
- ✿ As an older Ellie looks at a younger Ellie, she realizes that Marley never betrayed her. What does Ellie do to Marley that is the ultimate betrayal in a friendship? Why do you think Ellie acted in this manner?
- ✿ What is the fallout for Marley after Ellie's cruel behavior on social media?
- ✿ After demeaning Serena by "testing" her, Ellie reflects that, "Making other people feel bad and weak distracts me from my own pain." Discuss how Ellie's statement about herself reveals the true source of her cruelty and how her approach affects her relationships.
- ✿ What new insights does Ellie gain upon reliving the scene in the gym with the dance committee when the mural was destroyed?
- ✿ Compare Nikka Prune's behavior to Ellie with Ellie's behavior toward others. How are the two characters similar? What makes them different from each other?  
**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3**
- ✿ As Ellie "visits" the scene of her vacationing in Hawaii, she realizes her behavior toward her mother mirrors the way Ellie's father treats her. Why do you think Ellie treats her mother this way?
- ✿ What does Ellie discover about the Girl in Black when the two girls fast-forward to senior prom? What does the Girl in Black share about her life after her friendship with Ellie?
- ✿ What lessons does Ellie learn on her journey to her past, present, and future that alter her current behaviors? How do these lessons change her life and relationships?

The discussion questions and activities in this guide were created by Leigh Courtney, Ph.D. She teaches in the Global Education program at a public school in San Diego, California. She holds both master's and doctoral degrees in education with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.

# activities

## POV

*Ghosted* is written from Ellie's point of view. We hear about her thoughts and feelings in the present day and as she reviews her life with the Girl in Black. Her mean girl side is especially apparent in the scene where the theater kids are sharing the murals they created for the middle school dance. Reese attempts to stand up to Ellie and her atrocious behavior. Imagine what Reese was thinking and feeling during this scene. Using information from the book and some creativity, rewrite the scene in the gym between Reese and Ellie from Reese's point of view.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3**

## Anti-Bullying Skits

Ellie is a bully. She has gained this status from selecting targets to torment and manipulating bystanders to support her actions. Work in small groups to create short skits about bullying. Make sure to include characters that represent a bully, a target, and bystanders. Present a problem and a solution in your scene. Share your skits with the class and discuss the solutions illustrated in each scene.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.4**

## Poster Power

Create anti-bullying posters that convey a strong message through a short phrase and a graphic. What words could you use to reject bullying while promoting positivity? Hang your posters in your classroom and around the school after they are designed.

## Turning Point

The Girl in Black escorts Ellie through several pivotal scenes in Ellie's past, present, and future. Which encounter was the most transformative for Ellie? Write an opinion piece about what you believe to be the most significant scene Ellie visited and the valuable lesson she learned. Include reasons and examples for your opinion.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1**

# understanding symbols

Symbols are used in *Ghosted* to convey the importance of specific themes and emotions. Think about the story's symbols listed below. What does each one represent? What role does each play in Ellie's journey of self-discovery?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2

The symbol	What it represents	The significance of the symbol
Ellie's quilt		
The sourdough bread		
The purple bike		
Ursula the unicorn		

name: \_\_\_\_\_

# be a text detective

Ellie's behavior changes throughout *Ghosted*. Choose five different adjectives to describe Ellie's behavior in the story. Find portions of the text to support the adjectives you selected.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1**

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