

- **Intended Audience**

College Prep English 10

- **Brief summary and educational significance**

“Jason Reynolds' *Long Way Down* won a 2018 Newbery Honor, Coretta Scott King Author Honor, and Michael L. Printz Honor. Written in free verse, it tells the story of an African American teen boy at a crossroads. Determined to avenge his 19-year-old brother's death, Will, age 15, takes his brother's gun out of their shared bedroom to kill the person he's certain is the murderer, but it's a long way down in the elevator. Almost the whole novel takes place in the span of the 60-second ride from the seventh floor to the lobby, as Will's past and "The Rules" he's learned about being tough flash before him, aided by conversations with the ghosts of friends and relatives who were victims of gun violence. “(Common Sense Media).

- **Purpose of teaching the work and how it will be used**

Jason Reynolds, an award winning African American author, narrated this 336 page novel in free verse poetry form that engages students into the story immediately. Including this novel into the core curriculum only further diversifies the author and character types that students are reading throughout the year. This novel provides students with a view of teens that come from different backgrounds and circumstances. It will allow students to see the different challenges that some face outside of our Wyoming community in order to become more aware and empathic of others.

As part of the Wyoming strategic plan, it has been identified that Wyoming wants students to be critical and creative thinkers and engaged learners. This novel will accomplish both of those tasks. Students will be asked to make several text-to-world connections, think critically, and engage within a text that fosters academic and personal growth.

One question sits at the center of the story: is revenge worth it? At what cost?

Students will explore this question (along with many others) during their reading of the novel and connect these questions to the world today. Students will read, write and discuss ideas on community, cycle of violence, revenge, and resilience by focusing on four main essential questions during our unit.

- How does a person's community (where they are from, who they surround themselves with, their “people”, etc.) influence their individual choices? How do our communities shape the way we view the world around us?

- Why is it so difficult to break cycles of violence in individuals, families, communities, and society? How do we see violence encouraged in mainstream media/entertainment?
- What fuels/drives revenge? How can revenge be considered both helpful and harmful?
- How does how we react to struggle/hardship help define who we are? How do these tough moments help build resilience? At what point is sheer resilience not enough in the face of extreme hardship/adversity?

Since this novel is written in free verse students will be analyzing a variety of literary techniques that Jason Reynolds uses throughout the novel: simile, metaphors, personification, repetition, imagery, allusions, anagrams, hyperboles, onomatopoeias, line breaks, and themes.

- **Potential problems**

Multiple incidents of shootings, death, and grief are recalled and described. There's infrequent strong language, adult drinking, and smoking by teen and adult ghosts. Topics about grief, loss, gun violence, and sound decision-making can lead to some potentially uncomfortable topics, but approached with warning and purpose should be subsided. (Common Sense Media)

- **Addressing potential problems**

Although the book is a work of fiction, Jason Reynolds writes in a way to connect to students who normally refuse to read novels. His characters are real, raw, and relatable to many of my students. If there is a potential problem with the content of the novel, a student will be provided with alternate non-fiction articles covering the overall topics found in the novel: community, cycle of violence, revenge, and resilience.