

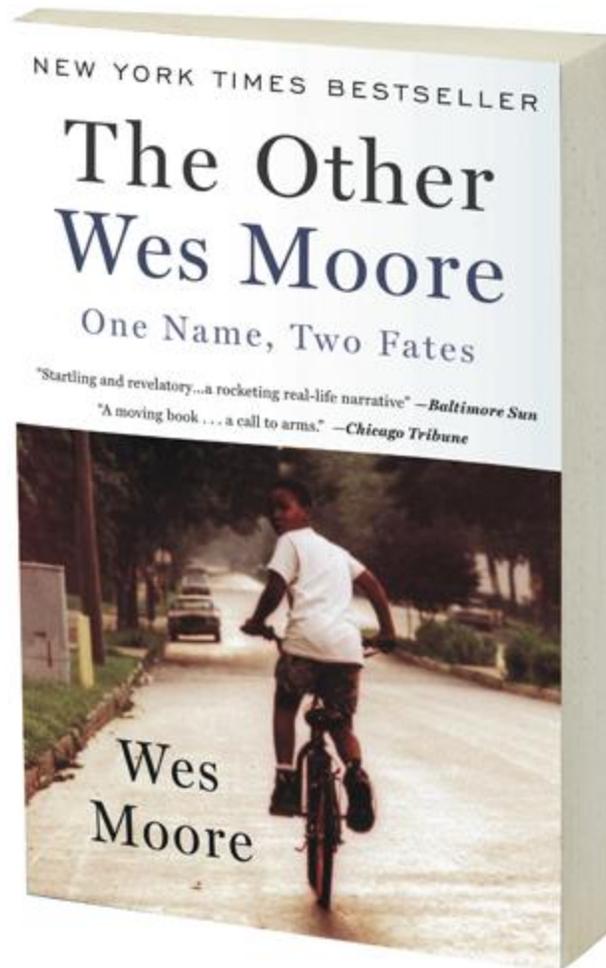
Faculty Guide

The Other Wes Moore

By Wes Moore

Office of New Student Orientation

Common Reading 2012



The Other Wes Moore

This guide has been developed in an effort to assist all faculty members to incorporate the common reading book into your fall 2012 courses. This guide contains contributions from members of the Common Reading Selection Committee, as well as representatives from departments across campus.

Chapter Summaries: *The Other Wes Moore*

Part One

Chapter 1: Is Daddy Coming with Us? (1982)

“Author” Wes

During a game of chase with his sister Nikki, three-year-old Wes caught her for the first time. Without knowing what do to next, he punched her. His mother Joy’s angry and sudden reaction to him hitting his sister was confusing to him. While Wes hid in his room, he heard his father, Westley, trying to calm his mother down. Westley reminded Joy that Wes did not know hitting a woman was wrong or why Joy felt so strongly about it. Years later, Wes would finally understand why his mother reacted in that way.

Joy emigrated to the U.S. from Jamaica with her family when she was very young and had to learn how to fit into American society: “she studies the other kids at school like an anthropologist, trying desperately to fit in.” The things she experienced as she assimilated into a new county and culture created in her a passion for justice. She joined an activist group while attending American University in Washington, D.C., where she met her first husband, Bill. Though their relationship started off well, it went downhill when Bill’s recreational drug and alcohol use became an addiction. Even though they had a child together (Wes’s older sister, Nikki), Joy left Bill after a particularly violent encounter ended with her battered, but determined. Joy met Westley, her second husband, when she was hired as a writing assistant for his radio show. They married, and had two children together, Wes (the author and Shani.

Wes’s father coming to speak to him that day about punching his sister is one of the two memories he has of his father; the other is from the day his father died. Westley had not been feeling well all day, and eventually had to be taken to the hospital. The doctors however did not know what to do for his symptoms and sent him home. Later that evening, he collapsed and ultimately, passed away from acute epiglottitis. His death affected the entire family, and was a confusing time for young Wes.

The “Other” Wes

Wes had never met his father. His mother, Mary, was his sole provider. During this time Mary was enrolled at Johns Hopkins University, but after only earning 16 credits, the budget for Pell Grants was cut and Mary lost the funding to continue her education. Her job as a secretary was just enough to take care of her family and home, but she was going to have to withdraw from college. Though Wes was still young, he knew something had upset his mother, and made her tell him what

had happened and why she was so upset. Mary explained the situation and also how important it had been to her parents that she attends college.

When Mary got pregnant at sixteen with her first son (Wes's older half-brother, Tony), her mother Alma made her promise she would still go to school. However, Alma's kidneys were failing and she passed away after an unsuccessful kidney transplant. Her father, Kenneth, was an alcoholic and did not take Alma's death well, so Alma's parents moved in to help raise Mary and her seven siblings.

After Mary met Wes's father, Bernard, she was pregnant within a few months with Wes. Unfortunately, Bernard was similar to Tony's father and was an alcoholic without a steady job. Bernard only tried to be involved in Wes's life on time, but he was extremely drunk so Mary did not allow it.

At the time the story opens, Wes and Mary lived in a section of Baltimore that had never fully recovered from the civil rights riots of the 1960s. Tony lived primarily with his grandparents or with his father. Despite no longer being able to attend college, Mary wanted desperately to find a way to get her family away from those dangerous streets.

On the night Mary received the bad news about her Pell Grant, she decided to take Wes to his Grandmother Mamie's house so she could relax with some friends. When they arrived, Wes ran inside and encountered a man he had never seen before. The man drunkenly sitting on his mother's couch was Wes's father. Mary introduced them for the first time.

Chapter 2: In Search of Home (1984)

The "Other" Wes

Wes's brother Tony lived with his father in the Murphy Homes Projects, a very dangerous, dirty, and drug-infested area. Though Tony was just six years older than Wes, he was very protective of his younger brother. "[Wes] loved his brother, but had learned to ignore his occasional 'do as I say, not as I do' tirades. Tony, by contrast, was desperately trying to give his little brother information he thought he needed, the kind of information that Tony never got." Tony had already developed a fierce reputation, and he hoped Wes would make better choices than he had.

Wes had a good friend named Woody, and they both played football for the Northwood Rams. Wes said that wearing that jersey made him feel proud and like he belonged. Being athletic and succeeding in football soon became important to him, and unfortunately his performance in school declined as result. Wes and Woody played football often in their neighborhood, and it was not uncommon to get a pickup game going.

One day, Wes played defense a little too close for one boy's liking. An argument started, and the boy punched Wes in the face. Everyone was stunned. Wes ran home, and Woody ran after him to make sure he was okay. Woody found Wes in his kitchen with a knife. Despite Tony's warnings to keep out of trouble, he had also taught Wes to never let someone get away with hurting your

pride: “rule number one: If someone disrespects you, you send a message so fierce that they won’t have the chance to do it again.”

Woody tried to stop him, but Wes ran outside to confront the boy, not even noticing that police officers had shown up. Wes ran at the boy, but was tackled by one of the officers. Wes and Woody were both arrested and taken to jail. Knowing he could not call his mother, Wes called Tony. Tony’s father agreed to pick him up. Wes was back home before his mother got there; she didn’t find out for years that he had been arrested that day.

“Author” Wes

Joy was not coping with the death of her husband well. Her parents offered for Joy and her children to move in with them in their house in the Bronx whenever she wanted. Joy decided to take them up on their offer, and three weeks later, they were leaving Maryland.

Joy grew up in the Bronx, and had fond memories of that time. She remembered it as a safe, family-oriented community, and was excited to move her family away from Baltimore. However, as they got closer to their new home, it was evident things had changed in the Bronx. Drugs and violence had crept in, and it was no longer the tight-knit community it had once been.

Joy’s father, Josiah, was a minister’s son, and her mother Winell was a member of the congregation of his church in Jamaica. They fell in love, and began to plan a life together. Josiah wished to follow in his father’s footsteps, but knew he must get an education first. He came to America to attend Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. After completing his education, he sent for his wife and children, and they made their home in the Bronx.

After settling into his grandparent’s home, Wes quickly realized their results were stricter than his mother’s. He decided to seek out ways to get out of the house and made some friends. Wes found some guys playing basketball at a court with no nets and quickly realized they were older and better than him, and that they played hard. He decided to stick it out and ended up making new friends. “The basketball court is a strange patch of neutral ground, a meeting place for every element of a neighborhood’s cohort of young men... We were all enclosed by the same fence, bumping into one another, fighting, celebrating. Showing one another our best and worst, revealing ourselves – even our cruelty and crimes – as if that fence had created a circle of trust. A brotherhood.” Wes’s first experience at the court would lead to many more.

“Author” Wes

Joy made the decision to send her children to private school after seeing how poor the public school system had become. She worked multiple jobs to manage the cost and relied on her parents to watch the children before and after school while at work. Wes became friends with Justin, bonding because they lived close to each other, but also because they were two of the only black kids at their school.

Attending the private school had an impact on Wes’s reputation. His neighborhood friends teased Wes for attending a “white” school, and his school friends did not understand why their conversations about summer homes and video game systems were alienating to Wes. In an effort to combine his two worlds, Wes’s uncle suggested he invite friends from school to play baseball with his neighborhood friends. The game ended after only a few innings when arguments between the two groups turned into fist fights.

“I was becoming too ‘rich’ for the kids from the neighborhood and too ‘poor’ for the kids at school. I had forgotten how to act naturally, thinking way too much in each situation and getting tangled in the contradictions between my two worlds.” His grades and confidence began to slip, and his mother began to threaten to send him to military school. Despite having the same circumstances as Wes, Justin was one of the top performing students in their grade, and he warned Wes to get it together because he thought Joy was serious. Wes never believed his mother would send him to military school.

The “Other” Wes

Mary and Wes were now living in Baltimore County, in an attempt to distance themselves from the streets of Baltimore City. Tony was already deep in the drug game, with people working for him. He had recently been shot, right around the same time that Wes failed sixth grade and had to repeat it. These events solidified Mary’s decision to move.

While Wes knew what Tony did to earn money was wrong, he was also envious of the nice clothes and things he was able to buy with his money. One day, he saw a kid “wearing a headset right out of the Janet Jackson ‘Control’ video. When he asked how he could get one of those, the kid explained that all Wes had to do was wear one and speak into it whenever he saw the police come by, and he would get paid for it. Wes knew this part of the drug game Tony warned him to stay away from, but the money sold Wes.

Wes had tried marijuana only once, stealing his mother’s stash on a day he skipped school, and shared it with Woody and some friends. It made Wes feel terrible and all he wanted was for the effects to wear off. His mother thought that would be punishment enough, but it was not enough to keep Wes from accepting the job as lookout. “...he realized how time seemed to stop when he was high, how the drug made him forget everything else. And he understood, faintly, how addictive that feeling could be, and how easy it would be to make some money off selling that feeling to people who needed it.”

Part Two: Choices and Second Chances

Chapter 4: Marking Territory (1990)

The “Other” Wes

Wes had begun selling drugs, which was making him plenty of money. He explained his cash flow and expensive purchases by telling his mother he had become a successful DJ in the neighborhood. While Mary believed him, Tony did not. One day he came by the house and noticed Wes’s room had changed a lot, and a tower of new shoe boxes convinced Tony that Wes had gotten into the drug game.

Tony confronted Wes about it, and the boys ended up fighting on the front lawn. Mary broke it up, and Tony decided to give up trying to tell Wes to stay away from the drug game. Tony’s accusations persuaded Mary to investigate further, and one day found shoe boxes filled with drugs in Wes’s room. Realizing Wes has been lying about his income, she flushes the drugs down the toilet.

Upon arriving home and realizing what his mother had done, Wes became very angry. He left his mother’s and headed to his older girlfriend’s house. “Wes complained to her about his mother’s abuse of his privacy. His girlfriend sympathized. Before she realized what she was doing, she’s agreed to make her home his new headquarters.”

“Author” Wes

Wes has been struggling in school, and Joy has started to believe his teachers’ suggestions, that Wes must have a learning disability because he is unable to retain information. However, as she listens to Wes rap the lyrics to a song he just heard a few days earlier, she realizes he is just not working hard enough. What Joy didn’t know was that Wes rarely attended class. At the time, Nikki was also struggling with school. She attended three different high schools in four years. Shani was the prodigy of the family, with reading scores higher than her older siblings.

Wes was very protective of his family, particularly of Shani. Once when she was punched in the face, Wes threatened the person who did it as well as her older brother, and Shani was never bothered by theme again. Wes and his “Aunt BB” – a long-time friend of his grandparents and Wes’s godmother who lived with the family – were both very protective of their family.

Wes’s fierce attitude was just one of the things he learned from his friends on the streets of the Bronx. He learned about hip hop music and the way it reconciled his two worlds, as well as the “facts of life” and the realities of gang violence. He also learned how to tag (spray paint your nickname or symbol on public property).

One day, Wes met up with his friend Shea, a drug runner. Shea was working on a corner and Wes sat down to hang out with him. Shea suggested they tag the wall they were sitting by, and Wes agreed, spraying his tag “KK” with a circle around (which stood for Kid Cupid). Almost immediately, a police car pulls up and catches the boys as they try to run away. They are put in handcuffs and thrown in the back of the police car. Wes is very upset, and realizes this is not the life for him. He does not want to disappoint his mother, and is angry at the defiant way Shea is treating the

policemen. Wes, on being arrested: “I became aware of how I had put myself in this unimaginably dire situation – this man now had control of my body; even my own hands had become useless to me. More than that, he had control of my destiny – or at least my immediate fate. And I couldn’t deny that it was my own stupid fault. I didn’t have the energy for romantic rebellion – the possibility of losing all control of my life was like a depthless black chasm that had suddenly opened up in front of me.” When the policemen decide to let them go, Wes is thankful and sears to himself that he will never be in a situation like that again. However, just a week later, Wes is out tagging again.

Chapter 5: Lost (1991)

“Author” Wes

After a conversation with Wes’s school dean, Joy learned Wes was being put on academic and disciplinary probation for his bad grades, class absences, and an incident with a smoke bomb. She was already incredibly upset with Wes when Shani starts screaming that Wes punched her in the lip.

Though splitting his sister’s lip had been an accident, Wes knew his mother would not see it that way. He waited for her to start screaming at him, and was surprised when she slapped him across the face instead, and then again. Wes remained quiet and motionless. Joy left the room and made the decision to send Wes to military school.

He arrived at military school with a defiant attitude, and the appearance that he was ready to take whatever came at him. But inside, he felt confused and betrayed by his mother. He ran away four times in the first four days of being there. Wes had heard there was a train station nearby, but could not figure out how to get there. One day, his squad leader, Sergeant Austin came to him and gave him a map. Austin told him it was a map to the train station, because if Wes didn’t want to be there, they didn’t want him there.

That night, Wes set out to follow the map Austin had given him. He realized the map was taking him in directions he had never been, and that he was now lost. Just as he broke down, he heard laughter and watched as Sergeant Austin and the rest of his squad came out of the trees. Wes had been tricked. He was taken to the Colonel’s office. Though new students (“plebes”) were not allowed to call home for at least one month, Colonel Batt realized if he didn’t make an exception, Wes would not make it.

Wes called his mother and begged to come home, but she reminded him that too much had been sacrificed to get him there. What Wes didn’t know was that his mother had written every friend and family member she had to ask for money, and his grandparents had given up all of their money, in order to send him to school. The next day, Wes noticed Colonel Batt speaking to one of the men that had helped bring Wes back to school. Colonel Batt came over and informed him that the man wanted to speak with Wes. “In spite of myself, I was impressed. I had never seen anything like that before. I had never seen a man, a peer, demand that much respect from his people. I had seen Shea demand respect in the neighborhood, but this was different. This was real respect, the kind you can’t beat out of people. That’s when I started to understand that I was in a different environment... It was a different psychological environment, where my normal expectations were

inverted, where leadership was honored and class clowns ostracized.” Unbeknownst to Wes, his mother had requested the man, Captain Ty Hill, look out for him and serve as his mentor.

The “Other Wes

Wes attended high school in West Baltimore, out in the county. Wes and his god brother Red typically spent the long ride flirting with girls on the bus. One day, Wes met Alicia, and they began hanging out a lot. Within two months, Alicia told Wes she was pregnant. He hoped Alicia was wrong, but the physical evidence soon became undeniable. “In Baltimore in 1991, 11.7 percent of girls between the ages of fifteen and nineteen had given birth. [Wes] also didn’t feel burdened by the thought that early parenthood would wreck his future plans – because he didn’t really have any future plans... But in some unspoken way, he did sense that he was crossing a point of no return, that things were about to get complicated in a way he was unequipped to handle.

When he called Tony to tell him about his situation, Tony laughed when he realized that with their mother having given birth a year earlier, giving them a little brother, and his girlfriend having recently given birth, giving Wes a nephew, Wes was now going to have a brother, nephew, and son all about the same age. Though Wes didn’t want to tell his mother right away, Tony let it slip at their brother’s 1st birthday party. Mary was initially quiet, but ultimately continued on with the party, unsurprised by this development.

Alicia’s pregnancy did not step Wes from meeting other girls. He soon had regular meetings with a girl who did not live in his neighborhood, but whose cousin did, so she was around often. One night, the girl realized how late it was and demanded Wes walk her to the door so she could hurry home. Once outside, a man began yelling at her and it was clear that she had something going on with this person, too. Wes tried to stay out of it, but the man grabbed him and beat him up.

Wes got away and ran inside to grab his gun. The commotion caused a crowd, and one of Wes’s friends also ran out with his gun. Wes and his friend began to chase the man, who they learned was named Ray. Based on the direction Ray was running in, Wes realized he must be the “cousin” his girl had told him she had in the neighborhood. They began shooting at him as they ran, and eventually Ray was hit. Wes headed home and slammed the door in the crying girl’s face.

Mary demanded to know what was going on, but Wes refused to talk to her. She called Tony, who headed toward the house. Wes cleaned himself up and his his gun, just in time for the police to come to his house. Wes was arrested and put in the police car as witnesses were questioned. Minutes after the police pulled away with Wes in the car, Tony arrived. Mary could only tell him that Wes was already gone.

The “Other” Wes

It’s graduation day at Northern High School. For many students and their families, it is the first graduation they have ever attended. Woody is the only one of Wes’s good friends to have completed the requirements to graduate. Wes, White Boy, and many others stopped going to school years earlier. Though graduation rates in Maryland were among some of the highest in the country, in Baltimore City only 38 percent of students who began high school actually earned their diploma.

Wes was in jail for six months after shooting Ray. He was charged with attempted murder because no major organs were hit by the bullet, and because of his age, he was tried in juvenile court. Once he got out of jail, he went back to school, but that didn’t last long. Wes was way behind his classmates, and when Alicia gave birth to their child, he stopped going altogether. While Alicia took care of their baby, Wes lived with his Aunt Nicey, who agreed to let him stay only if he worked or attended school. His lack of education and training, plus his criminal record, made finding a job very difficult. Though he was promising Nicey he was trying to look for a job, Wes was really operating a drug crew. He had a good crew, from the lookouts to the “muscle” (members carrying weapons to protect the crew). On a good day, his crew could pull in over \$4,000.

One day, “Wes stood on the corner in Dundee Village. He no longer lived there, but he had a little operation there – he would bring drugs into the county because he could sell them for a higher premium than in the city. He was surrounded by some guys from his crew... He had to get moving, but he lingered. He liked the feeling of holding down a corner with his boys. It was the one place he felt safe, or at least in his element.” They were approached by an unfamiliar man. Despite several red flags that the man could be a cop, Wes sold him cocaine. When Wes took the money, he noticed the man’s hands were smooth and clean (a sign he was not from the streets). Just a few minutes later, Wes was arrested for selling drugs to a police officer.

“Author” Wes

Wes had been at Valley Forge for three years, and had transformed from one of the most disruptive students to one of the most respected. He was a platoon sergeant, cadet master sergeant, and the youngest senior noncommissioned officer in the entire corps. He had finally learned how to respect himself and others.

Wes was not only committed to better himself personally, but academically and athletically. The financial burden military school had placed on his mother was lessened in his second year when he began receiving academic and athletic scholarships. He was the only sophomore starter on the basketball team, and colleges and universities had started taking notice of his skills. He spent his summers at basketball camps, speaking with coaches and other prospects. Despite his obvious talent, his family warned him to keep thinking about college. His uncle lectured him about always having a back-up plan, and how education could help him in that.

Though he wanted to keep dreaming of the NBA, the talk with his uncle and a letter from his old friend Justin brought things into perspective. Justin informed him that their friend Shea had been arrested on serious drug charges and was going to prison. Justin also shared that his mother

was dying, which made Wes question his environment. Even though he enjoyed military school now, it upset him that he was unable to be a support for his friends and family. He felt like military school was a “bubble” that had been his protection from the problems in the world he grew up in.

This idea was further solidified for Wes when he experienced racism and violence in the town by the school. As he Dalio, a fellow platoon sergeant, walked to a local pizza parlor, they began to get harassed by a car of drunken kids. Though Wes and Dalio tried to ignore and avoid them, the group shouted a racial slur at Wes and threw a bottle at him. The bottom hit him in the mouth, breaking one of his front teeth and cutting his gum. “My mouth was aching. I was beside myself with anger – and still confused and embarrassed. Embarrassed to be called a nigger in front of my comrade. And embarrassed by my reaction. Because after being called a nigger and having my tooth broken, I’d decided to flee back to campus. Should I have stayed there in the middle of the street, waiting for the boys to come back, somehow gotten them out of their car, and tested them blow for blow? Part of me was aghast when I decided that the answer was no.” His instincts were to fight back but he had learned in the past few years that the odds were not in his favor. He chose to lead his fellow platoon sergeant back to school through a safer route, away from the street. Though Dalio did not know where they were, Wes did. “The irony of the situation forced me to smile, featuring my newly cracked tooth. Years earlier, I had run through these same woods with all of my might, looking for safety, trying to get away from campus. Tonight, I ran through the same woods looking for safety, but in the other direction.”

Part Three: Paths Taken and Expectations Fulfilled

Chapter 7: The Land that God Forgot (1997)

“Author” Wes

As Wes approached graduation from Valley Forge, his athletic skills became his focus. He was even featured in a New York Times article, and colleges avidly recruited him. However, as he began to play against the nation’s top talent, he realized a disparity between his potential and theirs. “When you step on the court with players like Kobe Bryant or six foot eight point guards who can dunk from the free throw line, your mind begins to concentrate on your other options,” like education.

Though he had never enjoyed reading, Wes eventually came to love when he read books with characters he could relate to. He learned from such people as “The Fab Five,” Colin Powell, and Malcom X. “As I started to think seriously about how I could become the person I wanted to be, I looked around at some of the people who’d had the biggest impact on my life. Aside from family and friends, the men I most trusted all had something in common: they all wore the uniform of the United States of America... I thought about Rear Admiral Hill, the former superintendent of the Naval Academy, who served as the president of Valley Forge in my last three years of high school. Admiral hill... always made it point to know the names and stories of as many cadets as he could. He also taught me an important lesson about leadership: it always comes with having to make tough decisions.

The various leaders he had encountered at Valley Forge had helped him learn about leadership and decision making. All of these influences helped Wes decide to stay at Valley Forge for junior college in order to go through the early commissioning process and become a second lieutenant in the Army.

At age 18, Wes became the regimental commander for the 70th Corps of Cadets, which made him the highest-ranking cadet in a corps of 700+ students. He would now take on a role that would likely have him leading people twice his age. He was also required to become a qualified paratrooper. Though he and his fellow airmen were incredibly nervous to jump out of a plane, they obeyed their training and made a successful jump.

The "Other" Wes

Though he didn't want to believe it, Wes realizes Cheryl, the mother of his third and fourth children, is a drug addict when he finds her high from heroin while pregnant. After he is sure she has not overdosed, he leaves the house, realizing he is tired of the drug game, and of being arrested, and of watching drugs destroy his family and community. After walking a long way, he ends up at his friend Levy's house.

Levy had decided to leave the game a couple months ago. Wes told him he was ready to get out, too. Levy talked to him about Job Corps, a program that helps people get their GED and gives them vocational training. Wes is ready to try anything, so he goes with Levy to get more information about the program. Two weeks later, he is on his way to the Job Corp campus in another county in Maryland.

When Wes arrives, he sees dorms, lawns, basketball courts, and everything else he imagines is on a college campus, which he has never visited before. He rooms with Levy, and gets off to a great start. He completes his GED in one month, and is soon helping others study. Wes has become a leader among the Job Corps participants. When he is asked to select vocational training, he chooses carpentry. He enjoys the work and the teacher, and thinks it suits him. He builds a play house for his daughter, which is by far the most advanced project in the class. Wes graduates from Job Corps in just seven months.

When he gets back to Baltimore, eh finds some temporary work landscaping and working on homes. After those jobs end, he works in food service. However, none of these jobs pay more than \$9 an hour and Wes begins feeling frustrated. Alicia and Cheryl are both demanding more money, and he feels obligated to give his mother money since she is basically raising his and Cheryl's children. One day, as he leaves his food service job at the mall, he stops by his old neighborhood. He picks up a package that contains the ingredients to make cocaine. "While at the Job Corps Center, Wes had problems floating off the soft country air of Laurel. A year after graduating, he realized they had not disappeared – they'd simply returned to Baltimore, waiting for him to come back. In his absence, they'd compounded. Tears welled in Wes's eyes but never fell. He'd realized long ago that crying does no good." Though he wants to stay out of the game, he feels like he doesn't have a choice if he wants to provide for his family.

Chapter 8: Surrounded

The “Other” Wes

Mary is watching the evening news, and a story stops her in her tracks. A few days earlier, four masked men broke into a jewelry store and ordered everyone to get down. One of the people in the store was Sergeant Bruce Prothero, a veteran of the Baltimore City police department who worked as a security guard at the jewelry store to help support his wife and five children. He was forced down with everyone else as the masked men stole \$438,000 worth of jewelry and watches. Once they had what they wanted, they ran out to the getaway car.

Prothero ran after them but didn't see them. He crouched down behind a car to plan his next move, and didn't see one of the masked men pull out a gun before he was shot three times at point blank range. He was able to stumble back toward the jewelry store but died before police got to the scene.

Police were extremely determined to catch the suspects since they had killed a fellow officer. A break in the case came quickly when one of the suspects tried to sell some of the stolen watches to a drug dealer that had a wiretap on his phone. When police tracked him down, he admitted to being involved but insisted he was not the shooter. The next day, another suspect was caught, but he also insisted he was not the shooter, and that he had been unarmed. Mary was deeply saddened when her sons' faces flashed across the television screens the remaining suspects.

Police search Mary's house and question her on her sons' whereabouts. She has not heard from them in days, and police grudgingly accept her explanation, but do not leave the Moore family alone. A cousin's wedding is disrupted a few days later, and all of the family members questioned. Unbeknownst to the family or the police, Tony and Wes had escaped to an uncle's house in Philadelphia.

It does not take long for police to catch up to them. They catch Tony first, as he walks out the door of his uncle's house, followed by Wes, when he comes down the stairs a moment later. They're arrested and put in jail along with the other two suspects. Tony and the other two perpetrators were found guilty and sentenced to life in prison without parole. Wes insisted he was not there the day of the robbery and murder, so he took his case to trial. The jury found Wes guilty and sentenced him to life in prison without parole. “The guards placed their hands on Wes and shuffled him away. The hands of the state would stay on him for the rest of his life. Wes had spent much of his adolescence incarcerated, and he knew that occasional bids in the pen were part of the game. But he'd never figured this. Maybe it was because he'd never thought long term about his life at all. Early losses condition you to believe that short-term plans are always smarter. Now Wes's mind wandered to the long term for the first time. Finally, he could see his future.

“Author” Wes

After completing his junior college requirements and becoming a second lieutenant in the Army Reserve, Wes returned to Baltimore. He had been accepted at Johns Hopkins University, much to the delight of his mother, who was living there again. Though he was not originally sold on the idea

of attending Johns Hopkins, his adviser at Valley Forge put him in contact with the assistant director of admissions and Wes agreed to have lunch with him. He challenged Wes's assumptions and perceptions of the school, and encouraged him to apply.

Wes applied thinking he wouldn't get in because his standardized test scores were lower than the school's admission standards. However, months later Wes received notice that not only had he been accepted, but he would receive scholarship money to attend. "Have an advocate on the inside – someone who had gotten to know me and understood my story on a personal level – had obviously helped. It made me think deeply about the way privilege and preference works in the world, and how many kids who didn't have 'luck' like mine in this instance would find themselves forever outside the ring of power and prestige."

While at Johns Hopkins, Wes interned with Mayor Schموke, the mayor of Baltimore. One day, the mayor asked Wes what he planned to do after he graduated. Wes didn't really know. Schموke talked to Wes about the Rhodes scholarship, how he had received it, along with other influential people in the United States, such as President Bill Clinton. He encouraged Wes to apply, but before doing so, to make sure he understood the history behind the scholarship. Since Wes was preparing to study abroad in South Africa for the semester, the mayor suggested he take that time to explore the idea.

Wes arrived in Langa, South Africa, in January, and was taken to what would be his home for the next six months. He was greeted warmly by "Mama," and her two children, Zinzi and Viwe, who were members of the Xhosa tribe. During his time there, he learned a lot from his host family, including the concept of *ubuntu*, the Xhosa word for humanity. *Ubuntu*, a way of life supported by their leaders, like Nelson Mandela, helped Wes frame his entire experience in South Africa.

While in South Africa, Wes became good friends with Zinzi. A few weeks before Wes was to return to America, Zinzi explained that he was also about to embark on a journey. His journey would be into manhood, which was a four-week trip into the wilderness with Xhosa elders. When young men go on the trip they are circumcised to symbolize the removal of childish cloaks. As they spend the rest of the weeks healing, they learn the history of the Xhosa people and lands. They also learn the values of good husbands and fathers. Upon their return, they dress all in white and are treated to a large feast. They are treated as men, with respect and admiration from their families and community.

Though Wes could not imagine the painful ritual Zinzi was about to undergo, when he saw a young man in the village dressed in all white, he understood where the man's confidence came from and respected the journey. Wes understood that even though he did not have the same journey, he was also on the road to becoming a man.

Facts about *The Other Wes Moore*

Places in *The Other Wes Moore*

In *The Other Wes Moore*, the narrator and the man in prison who shares his name are affected by the places they have lived and the things they have experienced. Both men have known life in poverty, but in the case of the narrator, his family is able to offer him alternatives and ways out of

the poverty. Both men begin life in Baltimore, but “the other Wes Moore” never has the opportunity to see much beyond the projects there. Wes, the narrator, grows up in South Bronx, where his family invests in him to get him out the projects and on a path to success.

Important locations to Wes, the narrator:

South Bronx

When Wes’ family moves to the Bronx, they find a neighborhood drastically changed from the place their mother knew growing up. Crack cocaine has taken over and brought with it violence and decay.

A collection of photos taken by photographer Ricky Flores looks at the Puerto Rican community in the South Bronx during the 1980s and 1990s. Many of those photographed have already died, some from AIDS and some from violence:

<http://www.lifelounge.com.au/photography/news/south-bronx-during-the-80s-and-90s-by-ricky-flores.aspx#gallerytop>

This 9-minute Youtube video is a collage of Ricky Flores’ images of people and places in the South Bronx:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7sJLaX6vq4>

Mel Rosenthal’s photos of South Bronx in the 1970s shows buildings being razed:

<http://library.duke.edu/exhibits/melrosenthal/index.html>

Riverdale Country School

While living in the Bronx with his grandparents, Wes is sent to the exclusive Riverdale Country School. The beautiful campus pictured here stands in sharp contrast to the streets where Wes lives.



Valley Forge Military Academy and College

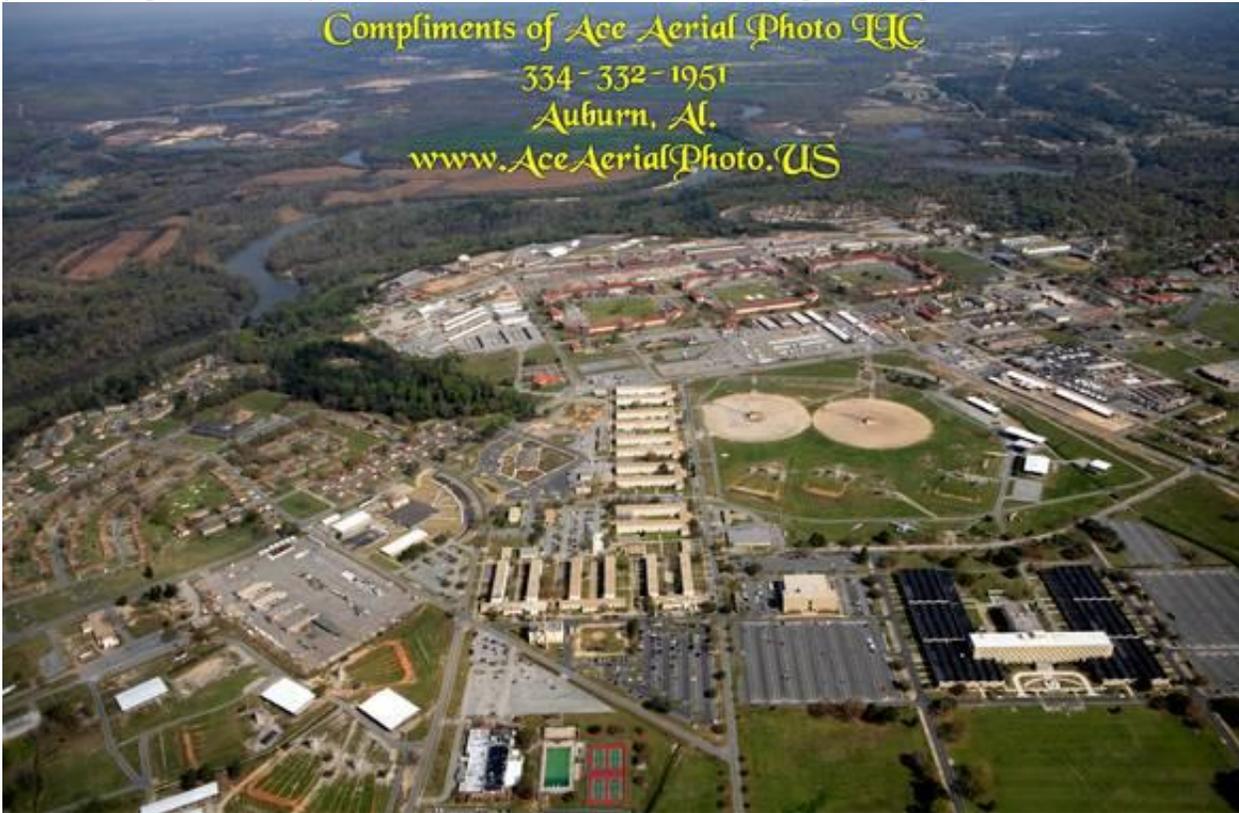
Wes does not succeed at Riverdale. His mother fears for his future as the streets draw him in. She uses all of her resources to send him to boarding school at Valley Forge Military Academy. His experience there turns his life around.

To get a feel for life and activities at Valley Forge, you can check out a wide array of photo galleries here:

<http://www.vfmac.edu/About/PhotosandMultimedia.aspx>

Fort Benning

From Valley Forge, Wes enters military service. When he writes about his first experience parachuting from an airplane, Wes is stationed at Fort Benning in Georgia.



Johns Hopkins

Wes Moore completes his first two years of college at Valley Forge. From there, he transfers to Johns Hopkins, a major university located in Baltimore, known for its medical school. The picture below provides a glimpse of the campus:



Two Baltimores

Wes has the opportunity for two internships with City Hall in Baltimore while a student at Johns Hopkins. As he writes about the experience, he discusses the existence of “two Baltimores” (159). Tourists are familiar with Inner Harbor and Camden Yards. Those places in Baltimore are far away from the city the poor experience.

Inner Harbor, the popular tourist destination:

http://baltimore.about.com/od/landmarksattractions/ss/InnerHarborGuide_9.htm

Camden Yards, home of the Baltimore Orioles:

[http://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotos-g60811-d104307-w2-Oriole Park at Camden Yards-Baltimore Maryland.html#35541610](http://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotos-g60811-d104307-w2-Oriole_Park_at_Camden_Yards-Baltimore_Maryland.html#35541610)

South Africa

For his final semester at Johns Hopkins, Wes studies abroad in South Africa. His visit there is 10 years after the end of Apartheid, and he is urged to view the country through the lens of its violent and racist history as well as its hopeful present.

Here are two ways of looking at images of South Africa. First, this collection from National Geographic highlights the diverse landscape:

<http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/countries/south-africa-photos/>

This collection shows the diversity of the population of South Africa:

http://www.southafrica.info/pls/cms/show_gallery_sa_info?p_gid=2363&p_site_id=38

Important Locations to the “Other Wes Moore”

Wes Moore, the man currently serving life in prison at Jessup Correctional Institution in Maryland, has seen very limited landscapes.

West Baltimore

Wes’ experience of Baltimore has been limited to a variety of housing projects in decaying urban neighborhoods. This is a photo of the Murphy Homes Project, where Wes’ older brother Tony lived. This housing has since been razed.



Here are two other views of the neighborhoods of West Baltimore



Woodland Job Corps Center

When Wes does leave Baltimore, he goes to the Woodland Job Corps Center to earn his GED and develop job skills. This takes him to a more rural area. This photo shows the center as well as some of the training opportunities:



North Philadelphia

After the Brown Jewelry Store robbery, Wes and his older brother, Tony, run away from Baltimore to North Philadelphia, where they hope to evade arrest. It was a neighborhood like this one where Wes and Tony spent their last days before arrest:



Common Reading Program Essay Contest

Eligibility:

- Contest is open to new students beginning classes in summer or fall of 2012 only.

Guidelines:

- Select **ONE** of the following writing prompts listed below as the topic for your essay.
- Length of essay must be between 900-2000 words. Keep in mind the quality of the essay is more important than the quantity.
- All entries must be submitted electronically as an e-mail attachment using Microsoft Word to ctanker@uakron.edu
- ***Contest Deadline is Friday, November 16, 2012 at 4:00 PM***

Winners:

Contest winners will receive Gift Cards to the store of their choice.

- 1st place - \$ 150
- 2nd place - \$ 100
- 3rd place - \$ 50

Writing and Grading Guidelines:

Submissions for the essay contest should display the following features:

- a clear point, showing the significance of the topic
- a clear focus, developed with details and specifics
- a mastery of grammar structures
- voice, reflection, and significance
- a general understanding of the book
- Does it answer the chosen prompt?

No one item is more important than any of the others (an equal mixture).

Cover Page:

The first page of your essay submission should include the following information:

- Your First and Last Name
- Student ID number (this number is printed on the back of your Zip Card)
- Writing Prompt that you have selected to respond to
- Date

Writing Prompts:

*Select **ONE** of the following writing prompts as a topic for your essay.

Environment, education and expectations

Wes Moore the author (Wes 1) explores the relationship between three factors he believes influence a child: environment, education and expectations. Each of these had an impact on both of these men in different ways and at different times. Consider your experiences: which of these three factors had the greatest influence on your success? Was it the environment (your neighborhood, your faith community, your school)? Your education (a particular teacher, challenging subject matter, overcoming an educational struggle)? Or the expectations of parents, teachers, siblings, extended family, or mentors? Do any of your experiences parallel those in the book?

Structure and discipline

Wes Moore 1 spent time in schools that provided a great deal of structure and discipline. In addition, his mother and grandparents also worked to provide Wes with a strong sense of these. Wes Moore 2 had considerably less structure and discipline in his life, from either his family or his school. Do structure and discipline help create habits that lead to success? Or do they limit us? Describe your experiences growing up with or without structure and discipline, explaining the impact of these on the type of person you are today. How do you see discipline and structure impacting your future as a student and after college?

Stereotypes

At the end of the book, Wes Moore 1 describes a ritual his South African friend goes through in which he learns what it means to be a man. Moore reflects on the difference in perception of young people in the United States and South Africa: “Our young men—along with our young women—are our strength and our future. *Yet we fear them.* This tall South African [his friend Zinzi] wore his manhood as a sign of accomplishment; a badge of honor....His community welcomed him.”

Have you ever witnessed stereotyping based on your, or someone else’s, age, race, gender, ethnicity or other characteristic? How do these stereotypes affect you and others? What in our culture perpetuates these negative stereotypes? What actions can individuals take to counter these stereotypes?

Similar circumstances The author claims that he and the Wes Moore 2 began life in similar circumstances. “Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police.” Do you agree with his assertion? Compare and/or contrast one aspect of their childhood, such as their experiences with police, the absence of their fathers, their neighborhoods growing up or any other element, and explain how that influenced the future for each of these men.

Common Reading Program Essay Prompts Continued

Social and educational policies The author discusses several social welfare and educational policies that shaped both boys' lives. For example, Pell grants, need-based federal grants for college, were reduced in the 1980's leading Wes Moore 2's mother to end her college career. The Job Corps program Wes Moore 2 enrolled in was intended to provide education and training for low-income applicants in order that they may find better jobs. In addition to scholarships, the G.I. Bill, which covers college expenses for veterans, helped pay for Wes 1 to go to Johns Hopkins.

Research one of the social welfare or education programs discussed in the book and argue if it is effective in achieving its goal based on the qualified resources you find. You must provide proper citations (APA or MLA) to support your argument.

Common Reading Activity Suggestions for SSS Courses

1. Discuss someone from your home town who seemingly had the same opportunities as you but chose a different path. How has their life choices differed from yours and what impact do you think your choices will have on your future?
2. Wes Moore took the time to learn more about himself by traveling abroad. Pick a country outside of the United States that you may be interested in studying abroad at and answer the following questions:
 - a. Does the University of Akron currently offer a study abroad opportunity to this location?
 - b. What is the predominate religion of this country?
 - c. What is this countries government?
 - d. What is the current population?
 - e. What is the education system like?
 - f. What is the economy like?
3. One of the major themes in this book is education and the importance of attending a school that has great academic support. Wes Moore was able to attend a military school which added to his education and separated him from those who weren't fortunate enough to follow the same path. Answer the following questions about your high school:
 - g. What is the GreatSchool ratings for your high school? If you went to a private school then the GreatSchool ratings may not be available, if this is the case please provide the community rating for your institution.
 - h. Please compare this rating to at least 2 other high schools within your local area.
 - i. What are some of the implications of your findings?
 - j. As you begin your first year of college how well do you feel like your high school education has prepared you for your classes in college?
4. Wes Moore is dedicated to giving back and serving the community. Volunteer for at least 1 hour at a non-profit organization off campus and answer the following questions:
 - k. Where did you volunteer? For how long?
 - l. What is the mission of this organization?
 - m. What did you do for your volunteer hour(s)?
 - n. How can people benefit from your volunteer efforts?

Common Reading Activity Suggestions for SSS Courses Continued

5. The idea and importance of family was a major theme in this book. Thinking about your own family, use an artistic method to answer the following questions. An artistic method could be a poem, photos, drawings, power point etc. Please keep in mind that our family can be those we are born with or the family we make along our journey in life.
- o. Who in your family do you consider to be your main source of support?
 - p. If you need to laugh, who in your family would you turn to?
 - q. If you had a problem in school, who in your family would you turn to?
 - r. If you wanted an open and honest opinion about a situation you are dealing with, who would you turn to in your family?
 - s. If you had to pick an animated character to describe the role you plan in your family, who would that character be and why?

Class Reading Group Questions

1. Do you believe in fate (things that are meant to be), or do you think “free will” (the decisions we make as individuals) determines our destiny? Think of an important experience in your life and trace it backwards. To what extent was the outcome determined by “fate”? To what degree did your free will lead you into and/or through this situation?
2. Think about your family. How would you describe the roles each member plays? Who makes the important decisions? Who handles the finances? How are tasks around the home divided (or assigned)? What expectations are placed on the children, in terms of daily responsibilities and in terms of long-term goals? Was college a “given” for you, or did you *defy* your family’s expectations by choosing to attend college? How has your family shaped you into the individual you have become?
3. What is a “stereotype”? Have you ever been the victim of stereotyping? What aspects of your identity did this stereotype capture, and what aspects did it obscure? How did this characterization (or mischaracterization) of you affect your sense of self? Where do cultural stereotypes come from, and why do they persist? How do these stereotypes limit our perceptions of others in our community?
4. Conduct an internet search. Are there others with whom you share your name? Who are they, where are they, and how similar—or different—do your experiences seem to be? What do you think your life would be like if you were in that person’s shoes?

Follow-up (post-reading) questions:

1. After reading this book, revisit your assumptions about fate and free will. Has your understanding of “fate” changed at all? What role do you think fate played in the lives of the two Wes Moors? Which of their experiences were determined by their own free will? How much *control* did each of the Moore’s have over the decisions he made?
2. Think about the families presented in the book. How would you describe the norms and values espoused by each of the families? What values do the families share in common, and on what points do they differ? In what ways does each family reflect, contradict, or bend the norms and expectations of the community surrounding it? In what ways do these norms and expectations shape the path each Wes Moore ultimately takes?
3. How has reading this book affected your understanding of stereotypes? In what ways have your views been confirmed, and in what ways have they been challenged? How might this change in perception affect your actions in the future?

Basic Writing Questions & Prompts

1. What impact did your father not being there have on you or your childhood? (page 4)

2. Did your mother/father ever catch you doing something you were told many times NOT to do? What was it? What happened? Explain. (page 5)
3. How did you learn what was acceptable and what was not? Be specific and explain. (page 6)
4. Explain how you were given your name. What does it mean? Why is it spelled the way it is? From where does it originate? (page 7)
5. The United States has been known as “the melting pot.” What does this mean to you? Describe and explain. (page 8)
6. Many people believe that they alone can change the person they love. Joy did with her first husband. Why do you believe this to be true or not true? Explain. (page 9)
7. Was there a “term of endearment” that you were called instead of your name as Wes was called Main Man by his father? Explain. How did it make you feel? (page 11)
8. Have you ever witnessed the death of someone as Wes witnessed his father’s passing? Describe the ordeal and its effects on you, then and now? (page 13)
9. Mary Moore (the other Wes’ mother) has dreams of furthering her college education, but news of the Pell Grant funding being cut ends that dream. How would you feel if you were told that there were no funds for your college education? What would you do? How are you funding your college education? Explain. What does achieving a college education mean to you? (page 17)
10. Mary Moore describes her neighborhood and the streets she has walked on and looked at for most of her life. Describe what you see as you walk around and look at your neighborhood. (page 18)
11. Are you the first in your family to attend college? What does this mean to you? Your family? Explain. (page 20)
12. Mary Moore viewed education as “her escape in more ways than one.” Can you explain what she meant by this? What does it mean for you? Do you have an escape? Describe

Basic Writing Questions & Prompts Continued

in. (page 23)

and
expla

13. True love was felt by Wes' Grandma Mamie. What does true love feel like? Describe. Have you felt true love? (page 24)
14. Did you ever do something you got in big trouble for, but your mother/father did not find out about it until years later? What? Explain. Explain how the truth finally came out? What were the consequences, then and now? (page 35)
15. The 'what if' haunted Joy Moore. Do you have any "what ifs?" Describe and explain. (page 36)
16. Joy Moore decides to move back in with her parents after her husband's untimely death. This meant moving from the family home in Maryland to New York. Have you and your family ever experienced a major move? Explain and describe. (page 37)
17. After returning to her childhood home, Joy Moore finds things have changed from how she remembered it. Have you ever experienced this feeling when returning to a place you haven't been to in a while? Explain and describe. (page 40)
18. Wes describes his first outing away from his new home. Describe the differences you noticed between your previous home and your new one. (page 43)
19. Describe your first attempt at making new friends in your new environment. How did you meet your new friend(s)? Where? Was it difficult? Easy? (page 44)
20. Riverdale County School, the private school where Wes was sent, was where Wes got lost? Where did you get lost? Describe and explain. (page 48)
21. Justin became Wes' new best friend. How did you meet your best friend? Describe the circumstances as well as your best friend. (page 48)
22. What was the biggest bit of "nonsense" that ever came out of your mouth as Wes told a group of boys "how he ran things" at Riverdale. Describe and explain. How did you "juice" up the story? Did your best friend back you up as Justin backed up Wes? (pages 49-50)
23. Justin and Wes knew the rules of riding the subway. What were some of the rules you learned to live by when you were younger? Describe and explain. (page 51)
24. "The street lights blinking on were a silent siren." What was your silent signal? Describe and explain. (page 55)

Basic Writing Questions & Prompts Continued

25. Mary Moore moved her son and herself out of Baltimore because of the drugs and because she has lost Tony to the streets. She didn't want that to happen to Wes, and Wes failed sixth grade. Starting over in a predominantly middle class working neighborhood outside of Baltimore was her answer to make things better for her son. What are your or your family's reasoning for moving or getting an education? (page 57)
26. Wes found a "sweet set-up" when he asked a boy standing on the corner wearing a "cool" headset. Did you ever come across such a set-up that brought you more than you originally asked for? Describe and explain. (page 58)
27. Wes had his first experience with illegal substances at an early age (before they moved out of Baltimore). He skipped school with some friends and thought a trash can was a good looking girl. It was a painful experience in many ways. Why? How? Explain. Have you ever had a painful/embarrassing experience? (page 60)
28. Mary Moore hoped this experience taught Wes to stay away from drinking and other addictive substances. Do you have an addictive personality? How? Are you getting help? Consider this question...What non-chemical dependencies do you have? Explain. (page 62)
29. Are we accountable to other people as well as ourselves? How? Why? Explain and describe. (page 66)
30. Wes became obsessed with the rainbow of Nikes. What are you obsessed with? Describe and explain. (page 66)
31. Tony gave his younger brother advice..."leave the stuff alone." Have you ever received advice from a sibling? Did you heed it? Why or why not? What was the advice, and what happened? (page 70)
32. Have you ever experienced the "do as I say not as I do" scenario? Explain. (page 71)
33. What is a hypocrite? Do you know one? Have you been one? How? Why? (page 71)
34. Explain what Tony meant when he told Wes "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. Right?" Can this saying be applied anywhere in your life? Describe and explain. (page 72)
35. Have you ever been caught in a lie? Explain. (page 73)

Basic Writing Questions & Prompts Continued

36. Is it okay for a parent to search a child's room? Yes? No? Why or why not? Explain. (page 74)
37. Were you or your parents ever told you might have a learning disability? Did you? What? How? Explain. What did do you about the news? (page 77)
38. Wes considered himself a class clown. What about you? Explain. (page 77)
39. Did you ever fight to defend someone else as Wes defended Shane? Explain. (page 78)
40. Describe your first encounter with a police officer. (page 81)
41. Did you ever change schools to enhance your academic or athletic career? Explain. (page 89)
42. What sacrifices has a parent or anyone else made to get you where you are today? Explain. (page 95)
43. "It's time to stop running." Wes' mother told him after his first attempt to run away from Valley Forge Military Academy. Explain what she meant and how can you use this same advice in your life? (page 96)
44. Becoming a father depressed Wes. Can you imagine what it would be like to become a parent at such a young age? Explain. (page 100)
45. Have you ever had the urge to jump out of a plane (skydive/parachute)? Explain and describe. (page 129)
46. Wes feels that The Autobiography of Malcolm X is a rite of passage for young black men. Have you read this book? What do you think? Explain. Read it and then explain. (page 131)
47. How can YOU become the person YOU want to be? Explain. (page 132)
48. What is your opinion of tattoos? Do you have any? Want any? What? Why? Is there meaning behind what you have or want? Describe and explain. (page 139)
49. Have you ever thought about studying abroad? Where? Why? Explain. Research the International Program here at The University of Akron. What have you learned? (page 164)

Basic Writing Questions & Prompts Continued

50. Describe the most beautiful sight you have ever seen out of a car window when driving. (page 164)
51. Wes thought he knew what poverty looked after having lived in the Bronx and in Baltimore until he arrived in Langa, South Africa to live with his host family for six months. Do you know what poverty looks like? Smells like? Describe and explain. (page 166)
52. While in Langa, Wes was told by his mother that the police were looking for a man with his name who had shot a police officer. How would you have felt finding out someone had your name and had blemished it? How would you feel knowing the man with your name had done something so heinous? Explain. (page 168)
53. Research your name. Is there someone living in the United States who has the same name as you? How many? How does this make you feel? Have you ever been confused with someone who had the same name as yours? Explain. (page 168)
54. The epilogue describes Wes' day, every day, while incarcerated. He has no control over what is happening with his family or with anything else in the "outside world." How would losing your control affect you? (page 173)
55. Wes says that sometimes "it seems as if the world doesn't exist outside our city, our block, our house, our room." He believes decisions are made "based on what we see in that limited world." What changed for Wes was that he found himself "surrounded by people...who kept pushing" him to see more than what was right in front of his face. What "boundless possibilities of the wider world and the unexplored possibilities within" you do you see? Explain. (page 179)
56. Tavis Smiley has added a "Call to Action" in this text, and that is to "ask yourselves...to read the words in this text and absorb their meaning in order to create your own plan to act and leave a legacy." Describe your plan and what kind of legacy would you like to leave behind. (page 186)

1. Wes Moore feels that his book is meant to show how “our destinies can be determined by a single stumble down the wrong path, or a tentative step down the right one” (xiv). Have you ever made a choice or a decision that later appeared as a turning point in your life? What is the significance of that moment? Write an essay exploring the significance of making such a choice.
2. At one point during one of their meetings in prison, both Wes Moore’s discuss whether they are a product of their environments or their expectations, either their own or those others have of them. Is there a clear answer provided by the book to this question? What do you think?
3. Write an essay in which you discuss the importance of the role fathers, authority figures, or guides play in their children’s lives. Do you think they can be different for boys and girls? Having read this book, how would you say the absence of a father affects young children?
4. *The Other Wes Moore* speaks specifically about the importance of hip-hop to the author and the role it played in his life. Write an essay in which you discuss the importance of popular culture in the lives of young adults. In what ways, for instance, do you think popular culture reflects social values that young adults endorse? How does popular culture create lifestyles that appear desirable? Does popular culture convey political and/or social messages that shape youth ideologies?
5. In chapter seven Wes Moore talks about how he got hooked into reading and realized that “the written word isn’t necessarily a chore but can be a window into new worlds” (131). In many ways one can see the significance of reading, literacy, and staying in school in the author’s life. Write about the importance of books in your life or the significance of staying in school.
6. What does it mean to be a “man” to the two Wes Moore’s? How is it different for the two young men? Is there a rite of passage from childhood to manhood? Write about the transition to manhood or adulthood and its significance.
7. As we see from reading *The Other Wes Moore*, family and community are important in shaping these young men’s lives. Write an essay exploring the significance of family support and the sense of community it provides.
8. Moore’s book describes a street culture that attracts young men –especially the ones who are at risk and living precarious lives. What are the values of this culture, whether positive or negative, and why might young men find it so attractive?
9. Wes Moore’s unexpected meeting with someone who shared his name and similar childhood experiences gave him an insight into the lives of his generation. What can you learn about your own life through reading this story? How does reading about others’ lives give us a better understanding of our own?
10. What is the significance of the section and chapter titles? How do they reflect the ideas conveyed?