

# The Testing by JOELLE CHARBONNEAU



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## About the Book

After the Seven Stages of War, the world is almost destroyed, and the Earth is devastated from chemical warfare. The few people that remain set up colonies in different parts of the country to revive what once was the United States. In order for the new leadership to select the most dedicated, intelligent, and resourceful young people to attend University, those chosen must pass a series of tests before their final selection. Cia and Tomas are two of the five people chosen from their colony, and they are sent to the capital city to begin The Testing. However, once they leave their colony, Cia and Tomas discover that every movement and every word they speak is monitored, and when the tests begin, they realize that to fail any portion of The Testing will cost them their lives. With only the clothes on their backs and three carefully selected survival items, they set out on a 700-mile journey across the treacherous terrain, fighting for their lives and a chance to study at the University.

## Author Bio

Joelle Charbonneau began telling stories as an opera singer, but these days she finds her voice through writing. She lives near Chicago, Illinois, with her husband and son. Visit her website at [www.joellecharbonneau.com](http://www.joellecharbonneau.com).

## The Common Core State Standards

(CCSS) are included with the discussions and activities. You can locate the standards at: [www.corestandards.org/the-standards](http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards).

### Connect to the Curriculum

#### Common Core State Standards

ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1

Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

ELA-Literacy.RL.7.3 Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

ELA-Literacy.W.7.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

ELA-Literacy.W.7.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

ELA-Literacy.W.7.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

ELA-Literacy.L.7.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

## Geography

What remains of a post-apocalyptic United States is known as the United Commonwealth. Using clues from the text, ask students to draw a map and locate the colonies and cities that survived the horrors of the Seven Stages of War (page 78). Students can brainstorm a list of clues: for example, Chicago is 700 miles west of the capital, Tsou City, and the Five Lakes Colony is located in the region of the Great Lakes. Have students write a one-page response explaining possible reasons that the remaining cities and colonies were able to survive the Seven Stages of War. Post maps and responses around the room.

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## Theater Arts

The final stage of the test could be cast as a TV reality show much like *Survivor*. In small groups, ask students to write a script based on one of the incidents that occurred during the final stage of testing. To map out their script, ask students to use a plot diagram including exposition, introduction of the setting and characters; obstacles, forces that block the character from achieving his/her goal; turning points, key events that move the story forward; climax, the moment the action comes to a head in the battle between good vs. evil; and resolution, the final scene that ties the story elements together. Upon completion of their script, have students cast their production and perform for the class.

## English/Language Arts

The characters in *The Testing* bring life and conflict to the story. Ask students to define the terms *protagonist* and *antagonist*, *static* and *dynamic characters*, and *round* and *flat* characters, stating the purpose of each type. Then ask students to make a chart with six columns (one for each of the character types) and to list the characters and their traits in the story under the appropriate column. Have students randomly draw a character name and ask them to write a character analysis referring to the six characterization categories, citing evidence from the text. Have students share their analyses in small discussion groups.

ELA-Literacy.RL.7.6

Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

## Science

Cia's father is a scientist who has developed methods for growing plants in depleted earth and for cleaning toxic water to make it clear and safe. Ask students to investigate current technology that helps keep the earth green. Have students select one of the technologies and explain how the technology would be helpful in keeping the earth safe for future generations.

## Writing Activities

### Common Core State Standards

ELA-Literacy.W.7.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

ELA-Literacy.W.7.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

ELA-Literacy.W.7.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

ELA-Literacy.L.7.1

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

## Journaling Through the Test

Ask students to select one of the main characters and to keep a journal of his or her experience at the Testing center.

## Officially an Official

In small groups ask students to write a talk show interview with one of the testing officials discussing how the official came to be in that position.

Have each group practice and present their interviews to the class.

## Apocalyptic Poetry

Using images, words, and phrases from the text, ask students to write a poem about the devastation and destruction of the world during the Seven Stages of War. Then have a poetry reading and allow students to share their poetry. Students may choose to add appropriate background music to reflect the mood and tone of the piece.

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## Discussion Questions

### Common Core State Standards

ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

ELA-Literacy.SL.7.4

Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1

Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

ELA-Literacy.L.7.1

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

1. What traumatic event(s) killed so many people and left the land so desolate?
2. Cia desperately wants to be selected for The Testing, but she realizes "that you can't always get what you want" (page 2). How does this realization hold true for her throughout her Testing ordeal? What is ironic about this statement?
3. How do Cia's parents treat her differently? Why is her mother so hard on her? What does her relationship with her father reveal about his character?
4. How does Cia's father keep Zeen safe, even though it makes Zeen angry? How does her father's warning about The Testing save Cia's life? Why does she feel betrayed when her father tells her what he remembers of his Testing experience?
5. What prompts Cia to finally trust Tomas? What does she tell him? How is her trust rewarded? How does her knowledge help them?
6. What does Michal risk by sharing information with Cia? Why is he willing to help Cia? Who else lends her a helping hand as she makes her journey to Tsou City?
7. What is the cost of failing a test during The Testing? How do Cia and Tomas come to understand this? Why do the Testing officials allow and even encourage such fierce competition?
8. When Tomas selects the three items he can carry with him, he considers what Cia might have chosen so that he does not duplicate her selections. Why doesn't Cia consider what Tomas might select when she makes her choices?
9. Why does Cia finally decide to drink the liquid in the vial that is supposed to help her keep secrets from the Testing officials? How does Tomas ensure that his memory won't be wiped out? How does the liquid help Cia?
10. On page 290, Will justifies his decision to deceive his teammates and kill, so he can win. What is Cia's reaction to Will's disclosure? Why doesn't Tomas like or trust Will even before Will reveals his true character?
11. What does Cia learn about herself as a result of The Testing? How does the experience change who she is?
12. After the tests are over and Cia and Tomas are selected, what does Cia discover on her Transit Communicator? What does she hear?

*This guide was created by Susan Geye.*