

Middle school meets magic in this hilarious and heartfelt novel about a girl whose life flips when she wishes on an enchanted candle—perfect for fans of Sarah Mlynowski and Wendy Mass.

BULLYING vs. community **KINDNESS** featuring comedy, a curse, “innocent” pranks, and a magic candle.

SYNOPSIS: Since birth, Sage Sassafras has been plagued by the Contrarium Curse, aka the Curse of the Opposites, and it has pitted her against tall, rich, basketball star, Priscilla Petty. When Priscilla lands dunk shots, Sage throws bricks. When Priscilla has a good hair day, Sage gets tangles, and when Priscilla’s father lands a big promotion at work, things go really sour for Sage’s daddy.

So when Noodler, the biggest search-engine company in the world, challenges students at Goldview K-8 to the Doodle for Noodler art contest, Sage is determined to win fame before Priscilla can, and thereby change her reputation from *infamous to famous*. Plus, with a little help from the magic candle she received on her 12th birthday, she believes she can turn her family’s luck around! Sage makes the ultimate wish—she asks for a curse-reverse. But are wishes always wise?

In a *Freaky-Friday*-ish realization that the grass isn’t always greener, the consequences of her wish take a funny yet terrible turn. Now, and she has to team up with her frenemies to figure out how to break the curse and its reverse for good, or else she’ll be doomed to a life of opposites forever!

CRITICAL PRAISE:

“A thoughtful look at curse versus choice and an encouragement to youngsters to make their own paths.”—*Kirkus Review*

“Friendship, magic, and pink lightning—this book is a wish come true!” —*Lauren Myracle*

“Tomsic demonstrates that wishes have a power of their own, no matter the good intentions behind them. [Sage has a] colorful group of friends whose engaging dialogue and ever-evolving relationships capture the essence of middle-school interaction.” —*ALA Booklist*

“Sage is a believable feisty twelve-year-old, who has been trying to outrun her family’s tarnished reputation for as long as she can remember, and her vulnerability to the preening Priscilla is keenly relatable.” —*BCCB*

“This sweetly magical novel is a lesson in kindness. There is magic in all of us.” —*Kristen Gilligan, owner, Tattered Cover Book Store*

“A heartfelt and humorous story about the ups and downs of middle school, touching on the ways acts of forgiveness can change an entire community. *The 12th Candle* is a wish come true!” —*McCourt Thomas, Head of Youth Services, Lyons Regional Library District*

“An enchanting and heartfelt story for anyone who has ever tried to wish away their problems!” —*Ida Olson, Library Media Specialist, McCormick Junior High School*

The activities and discussion questions included in this guide can be used with [The 12th Candle](#) as a whole class read-aloud, small reading groups, or with individuals who are reading the book. The activities are aligned with Common Core State Standards and the corresponding standards can be found at the end of the guide.

Discussion Questions

- We are introduced to the Contrarium Curse early on in the book. The Curse is a big part of Sage’s life. Why does Sage let the Curse define her?
- How does the Contrarium Curse control Sage and her family?
- From the moment Priscilla and Sage are introduced, the reader sees how the two characters treat each other. Early on, Priscilla bullies Sage. Think about how Sage reacts to the actions and taunts of Priscilla. Discuss if you were in Sage’s place, is that a good way to react? Would you do the same thing or change her reaction?

- Sage discusses the words famous and infamous. What is the difference between the two? What is Sage in the story and what does she aspire to be?
- Sage always blames everything on the Curse, but do you think everything can be explained by it?
- What are some characteristics about Minerva and her shop that made you suspicious?
- Minerva describes being twelve years old as the most special year because you're "in the in-between". She goes on to say, "it's when you're in between the sweet innocence of childhood and the dynamic energy of the teenage years" and even saying it's magical. Do you agree with that statement? Why or why not?
- Sage makes the statement, "hope is a dangerous thing." Why is she afraid of being too hopeful? What is your opinion of that statement?
- Sage has very conflicted feelings about her father. What are the positive things she lets the reader know about her father? How do these conflict with what we know about her father?
- Sage's father's decision has left a big impact on her family. Name some of the events that happen as a result of his decision.
- Notice how the wishes don't always come out the way Sage intended them to occur. Why do you think that happens?
- Some of the wishes Sage make have an impact on Priscilla, the biggest one involving an insect. Sage's initial reaction to seeing Priscilla so upset after the incident is different than even she thought it would be. Talk about what happened and why Sage reacted the way she did.
- Sage is really conflicted about telling Bailee the truth. Is she making the right decision? Is it ok to sometimes not tell the whole truth when you know it will hurt someone?
- As the curse reverse continues, what are some examples of how Sage stays true to who she is instead of acting more like Priscilla?
- This story is full of magic, but Miss Tammy believes "people can make their own magic". What do you believe?
- Being truthful is really important in this story. Talk about how Sage learns how to say her own truths and receive truths from others.

Extension Activities

Science Activities

Lightning Learning

While lightning is primarily white, did you know it can actually take on any color of the rainbow? The color of lightning is actually based on what is happening in the atmosphere around the storm and the

temperature of the lightning. Do a search to find out what makes the following lightning colors appear and match the colors to the correct answer!

| | |
|--------|--|
| Blue | happens in cold temperatures when haze, dust, and moisture (rain/snow) is in the air |
| Pink | dust and smoke are in the air |
| Purple | hail is often present |
| Yellow | high humidity and a lot of rain |
| Red | a lot of dust is in the air and not a lot of precipitation will fall |

Bonus question: Why is it *pink* lightning that occurs in The 12th Candle?

Answers:

Blue: hail is often present

Pink: happens in cold temperatures when haze, dust, and moisture (rain/snow) is in the air

Purple: high humidity and a lot of rain

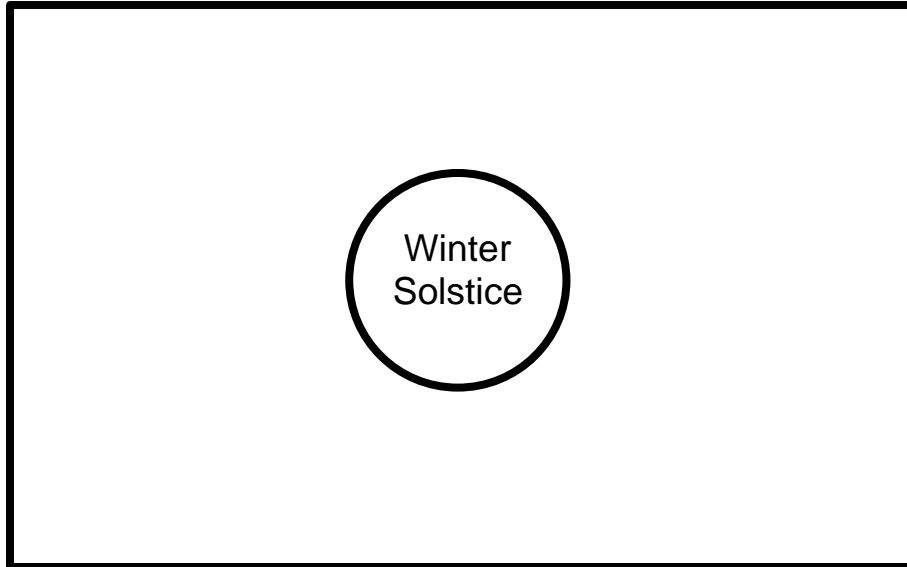
Yellow: a lot of dust is in the air and not a lot of precipitation will fall

Red: dust and smoke are in the air

The Winter Solstice Impact

An important part of The 12th Candle is the Winter Solstice. Let's learn more about the winter solstice!

1. Create a circle map on your paper. Draw a circle in the middle of the paper and label it "winter solstice".



2. Watch the following two videos and collect facts on your circle map. Facts can be written anywhere on the map.

Video 1: <https://bit.ly/2M6LZRv>

Video 2: <https://bit.ly/2KDh7oy>

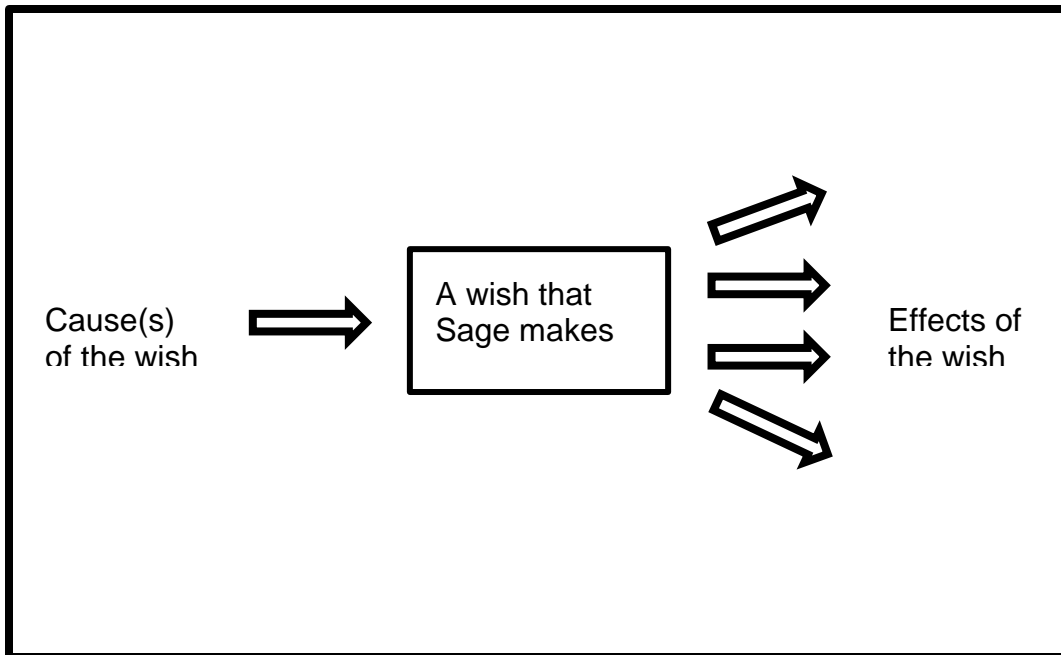
3. The Winter Solstice was important in The 12th Candle. Look at your map and the facts you wrote. Why do you think the author chose to have the story happen at the time of the Winter Solstice? Circle three facts that support your reasons.

Language Arts Activities

The Cause and Effects of Wishing

Sage gets a magic candle for her 12th birthday. While Sage is able to make actual wishes with this candle, these wishes often come with outcomes that aren't always expected.

Pick a wish that Sage makes. Think about what caused her to make the wish? What were the effects of the wish? Organize your thoughts by creating a thinking map:



A Closer Look at *Contrarium*

A Contrarium of Characters

The Contrarium Curse plays a big role in this story. Let's first think about the word *contrarium*!

Contrarium definition: opposite, reverse/contrary

Sage is best friends with Bailee and is enemies with Priscilla. There are also many supporting characters that also have an impact on Sage. Pick two characters to compare and contrast. Think about characteristics that they share and characteristics that are contrariums of each other! Organize your thinking using a double bubble thinking map.

What color and shade does it make you feel? Color it in if possible with that shade or write it down. Trade with someone else and repeat, except write your color shade on a post it and add it to the quadrant. Do your color shades match up?

Wonky Wishes

Even though Sage and Bailee think through the wishes carefully, they still don't turn out the way they think they will. Does that surprise you?

Think about a wish you would like to make come true. Write it down on the top of your paper. Divide your page in half. Write down some of the good things that could come as a result of your wish.

Then think about some possible negative outcomes that could possibly occur and write them on the other half.

Trade your wish with others. Can you find some other wishing loopholes in your classmates wishes?

Exploring Theme

A theme that runs through The 12th Candle is perspective. Throughout the story, Sage must always look at events and people with perspective. How one event is played out can have different meanings to different characters. Characters themselves can also be viewed in multiple perspectives. The 12th Candle reminds us to think about all sides of things before making certain judgements.

The following activity can be done together as a class while reading the novel as a read-aloud or small groups of readers can complete together. It also can be a reflection on the novel that is worked on after reading.

1. Brainstorm a list of events that can be analyzed by looking at them in different perspectives. Characters can also be included. Some ideas:
 - * how the curse affects the two families
 - * the way Sage thinks people will react vs the way they actually do (think Bailee and the cricket incident)
 - * Sage's friendship with GiGi
 - * different sides of characters (ex. Sage's dad, Priscilla)
2. Choose 5-6 important ideas and put them on chart paper. Write the idea at the top of the page and then divide the page in half (T-chart).
3. Split the class into 5-6 groups and do a theme walk.
4. Set a certain amount of time the groups have at each chart. Have students write different perspectives about the event/character on the chart. Write one idea on the left side, the opposite or different perspective on the other side.
5. After the set time, switch to the next chart and see if any additional ideas can be added.

6. After each group has had the chance to see each chart, what do readers notice about the different perspectives? What can you say about the theme of perspective?

Social Emotional Learning

How do your words matter?

The 12th Candle also had moments where bullying was present. Sometimes the bullying came as a physical altercation, meaning an action occurred in a situation that caused it to be called bullying. Other times, it was a verbal altercation, meaning words were used that made someone feel poorly about themselves.

As Sage tells us in the story, “words matter”. Let’s use words to solve these issues.

* note, this is whole class activity, but it can be modified to use in small groups*

1. Brainstorm some situations in the book where bullying occurred and make a list. The situations can be physical or verbal. Try to brainstorm a list that is at least the same number as half the number of students in class.
2. Write the situations down and cut them apart. Hand them out to students.
3. Have students stand up and mingle around the classroom. Students who have a situation paper in their hands should raise their hand. The other half who do not have a piece of paper, look for a raised hand. When the students finds someone with a raised hand, give a high-five and form a partnership.
4. The student with the situation paper should read it out loud. Partners can work together to come up with a solution using words. How can words fix a solution? Make your words matter!
5. After a solution is made, shake hands and thank each other for the work that was done. Then it’s time to find a new partner! Students with a situation paper, raise a hand again and look for a new partner. See how many ways words matter - how many ways a situation can be solved with words.
6. After groups have had multiple interactions, come back together as a class. After working on using words to solve problems, come up with answers to the question *how do your words matter?*

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

About the Author:



Kim Tomsic is a gesticulator, word wrangler, and exclamation point lover! She was born on an American military base in Italy and has lived in various parts of the United States. This forced her to survive as the new-kid at many schools, so now she is a declared extrovert and enjoys helping others connect. Although Kim admires nice shoes, she's super-awkward in heels and can usually be found in flip-flops and on her way to a yoga class. Kim is the author of *The 11:11 Wish*, *Guitar Genius*, and *The 12th Candle*. <http://kimtomsic.com/>

This guide was developed by Michele Knott, M.S.Ed in Literacy Education. Michele is a K-4 Literacy Specialist and Coach who works and resides in the northwest suburbs of Chicago. She blogs for educators and librarians at www.mrsknottsbooknook.blogspot.com.