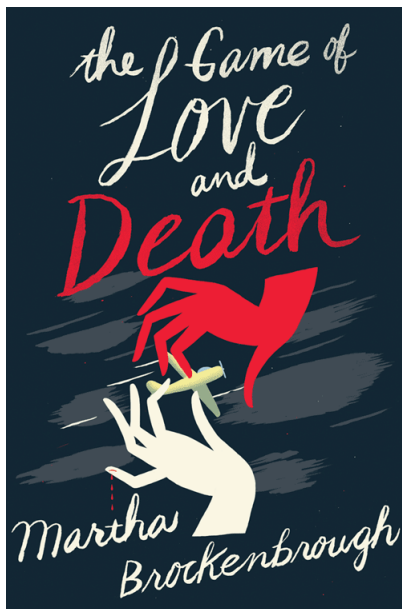


A Curriculum Guide for Educators & Readers

Aligned to the Common Core Grades 9-12



Discussion points, activities, and writing prompts to help educators use *The Game of Love and Death* as a classroom read aloud or as a selection for independent reading. Great for book clubs, too!

About the Author

Martha Brockenbrough grew up in Seattle, where she played the viola in string quartets and symphonies. She has worked as a newspaper reporter, teacher, and entertainment journalist. A lover of games, she also wrote questions for *Cranium* and *Trivial Pursuit*. She founded National Grammar Day, volunteers with *Readergirlz.com*, and lives in Seattle with her family of musicians and their two tone-deaf dogs.



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About the Book

Flora and Henry were born a few blocks from each other, innocent of the forces that might keep a white boy and an African American girl apart; years later they meet again and their mutual love of music sparks an even more powerful connection. But what Flora and Henry don't know is that they are pawns in a game played by the eternal adversaries Love and Death, here brilliantly reimagined as two extremely sympathetic and fascinating characters.

Can their hearts and their wills overcome not only their earthly circumstances, but forces that have battled throughout history?

In the rainy Seattle of the 1930s, romance blooms among the jazz clubs, the mansions of the wealthy, and the shantytowns of the poor. But what is more powerful: love? Or death?

Common Core Aligned for Grades 9-12

9–10th grade: ELA. RL.9–10.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9; W.9–10.3a–e,4; SL.9–10.1,4,5; L.9–10.1,2,4a,c,d; RH.9–10.1,2,4; WHST.9–10.7,8,9

11–12th grade: ELA. RL.11–12.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9; W.11–12.3a–e,4; SL.11–12.1,4,5; L.11–12.1,2,4a,c,d; RH.11–12.1,2,4; WHST.11–12.7,8,9

Before You Read

1. Take a close look at the front cover illustration of *The Game of Love and Death*. Describe all of the elements you see.
 - a. Can you make any predictions of the time period or setting of the novel?
 - b. Can you predict what this book might be about?
 - c. What from the illustration and title of the book supports your prediction?
2. Read the text on the jacket flap. What do you learn about the book from this blurb? What words or phrases stand out to you?
3. List at least five questions that you have about this novel after looking at the cover and jacket copy.
4. Look closely at the design of the book: the colors, text, cover illustration, and word choice. How would you describe the design of the book?

5. Who do you think is the intended audience of this book? If you saw this book on a shelf, would you want to read it? Why or why not?

Write one paragraph describing your thoughts about the book, and include one question you have that you hope to learn the answer to when you read. Share your paragraph with the class.

Chapters 1-10

1. The novel opens on Friday, February 13, 1920. Although Friday the 13th is considered one of the unluckiest days of the calendar, February 14 is Valentine's Day—a day of love. Why do you think Brockenbrough chose to open her novel on this day?
 - a. The first chapter acts as a prologue to the rest of the events of the story starting in 1937. What is a prologue?
 - b. Compare and contrast the following details from Chapter 1:
 - The two players' homes
 - Love's blood versus Death's tear
 - "Have courage" versus "Someday"
2. *The Game of Love and Death* is set in Seattle, Washington. Conduct a brief Internet search for photographs and historical information about Seattle in 1937.
3. Henry likens baseball's rhythm and connection to that of a love story. How so?
4. Explain the quote "There were things all around that you couldn't see, and these things had power" using the novel's text as evidence to support your explanation.
5. When Flora is in the air she feels as if she is "part of something infinite and immortal." How do you think this might relate to Death's message to her player? How does her longing to connect with her parents also play into Flora's desire to fly planes?

Who is Henry?

Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent Henry, on a large piece of paper.

Using Chapters 1–10 as evidence, write any known details about Henry inside the outline.

Outside the outline, discuss and write any questions about Henry that you might have.

6. Create a chart comparing Henry and Flora's lives. Be sure to include evidence from Chapters 1–10 on not only where they live but also the people in their lives, their personal interests and their place in society. How do Henry and Flora's experience on the Charles Lindbergh field trip differ? Why?

7. Make a list of the many details about the Game revealed in Chapter 4.

- a. Describe the origin and significance of the dice.
- b. What constitutes a victory?
- c. What are some restrictions?
- d. Describe the guises chosen by Death.

8. Create the Thorne family tree and include any and all known details about each member of the family, using Chapters 1–10 as evidence. Include description of the state of Henry's relationship to each member of the family. Provide direct quotes to support your description where possible.

9. What is Ethan and Henry's assignment for the *Inquirer*?

- a. Why does Ethan need Henry to accompany him on all assignments?
- b. What does Captain Girard note is the "real story" at the airfield? Why are newspapers not interested in the "real story"?
- c. Describe Henry's reaction to seeing Flora for the first time.
- d. "Her name, it suggests she is rooted to the earth, but in truth, the girl has the heart of a bird." Seeing as Love takes on the guise of a bird quite often, what might this quote tell about Flora's true nature and a possible outcome of the Game?

10. Create Flora's family tree and include any and all known details about each member of her family, using Chapters 1–10 as evidence.

- a. Include description of Flora's relationship to each member of the family. Provide direct quotes to support your description where possible.

Who is Flora?

Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent Flora, on a large piece of paper.

Using Chapters 1–10 as evidence, write any known details about Flora inside the outline.

Outside the outline, discuss and write any questions about Flora that you might have.

- b. On the night Death visited Flora, Nana “slept lightly, listening from some ever-alert corner of her mind for the sounds that would indicate the child’s parents had returned home. The old woman would wait forever to hear those sounds again.” Explain this quote, based on what is known about Flora’s parents.
- c. Flora believes her gloves were her mother’s. Use textual evidence to explain where the gloves came from.
11. Write a diary entry about the events at the Domino on Saturday, March 28, 1937. Choose one of the following points of view:
- a. Henry
 - b. Ethan
 - c. Flora
12. Create a screenplay-like script for the scene when Henry and Flora meet in 1927. Include all of the dialogue written in the novel, taking creative liberties and fleshing out where necessary. Superimpose the spoken dialogue with the lyrics to “Walk Beside Me.” Be sure to have a definite beginning and end to the scene.

Literary Threads

In Chapter 4, Death shares the guises she will use throughout the Game: that of a seventeen-year-old girl with dark hair and the black cat. Love often takes shape as a suited gentleman or a bird or winged creature.

Throughout Chapters 1–10, find the evidence of these two clever shape-shifters as they observe Henry and Flora.

Making Connections

Music is an essential element in *The Game of Love and Death*.

Conduct a search on YouTube and listen to excerpts from Edward Elgar's *Enigma Variations* and George Gershwin's "Summertime" as performed by Billie Holiday. How would you describe each piece of music? How do each of these pieces provide insight into the characterization of Henry and Flora?

If you were to choose one type of music as your favorite, what would it be? Which song would you say best represents you and your character? How so?

Further Historical Research

Conduct Internet and library research on one of the following real-life figures of Henry and Flora's world.

- Amelia Earhart
- Ozzie Nelson
- Charles Lindbergh

Your research should include who they were, what their place in history was, and how they fit into the plot of this novel.

Chapters 11-20

1. Why does Death visit Spain? How is her visit connected to the Game? Describe the connection between Death and the young man. Why do you think she warns him? Why do you think she spares his life?

2. What does Mr. Thorne want Ethan and Henry to investigate regarding James Booth and Hooverville? Besides the story, what else is driving Mr. Thorne? What does this drive say about this character?

3. With the prospect of Helen's arrival and the news of his scholarship, how are pieces of Henry's life "falling into place all around him"?

- a. What could be positive about Helen's arrival for Henry's future?
- b. Why does Henry feel, however, that "someone has planted a bomb in his life and lit a fuse"? How might this statement fit in with the Game?
- c. Can you predict the impact that these two pieces of news might have on Henry's desire for Flora?
- d. Why has Death disguised herself as Helen?

4. Describe Hooverville using excerpts from the text to support your description.

- a. Conduct an Internet search for photographic images of Hoovervilles. Does Brockenbrough's depiction support the photographs?

- b. What do you think Will means when he says they want "a chance, not charity"?

- c. Why does Henry feel a sort of kinship with the men of Hooverville?

5. In a group of three, each student should take on a role: Henry, Annabel, or Flora. Create four still statue images depicting the bicycle crash scene from Chapter 14.

Who is Helen?

Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent Helen, on a large piece of paper.

Using Chapters 12–20 as evidence, write any known details about Helen inside the outline.

Outside the outline, discuss and write any questions about Helen that you might have.

Who is James Booth?

Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent James, on a large piece of paper.

Using Chapters 12–20 as evidence, write any known details about James inside the outline.

Outside the outline, discuss and write any questions about James that you might have.

For each image, choose a quote from the text to use as a caption. Perform all four images in sequence, along with the captions, for the rest of the class.

Literary Threads

There is no doubt Brockenbrough had a delightful time when she crafted Death in the disguise of Helen.

Throughout Chapters 12–20, Helen’s dialogue, turns of phrase, and innuendo just drip with deathly imagery.

Revisit these chapters to find examples of this literary device throughout.

6. Death visits Love in Hooverville in an effort to convince him to end the Game. Why do you think she might want to propose such an idea?

a. Death says, “Let me have her now and I won’t take any others from either player.” What might she mean by this?

b. What is Love’s reaction?

c. Death reacts by traveling to Lakehurst, New Jersey. What does she do there? How does this action possibly affect the Game?

7. In regard to Helen, Henry thinks, “Maybe this was what a person was supposed to get used to. Maybe accepting it was what it meant to grow up.” What does he mean by this? Provide textual evidence of Henry attempting to “accept” Helen.

Making Connections

Henry is torn between who others believe he should be with (Helen) and who he wants to be with.

If your family had to choose whom you would love, what kind of person do you think they would choose? Is this the kind of person you would choose, too? If not, how are they different? How are they similar?

Further Historical Research

Conduct Internet and library research on one of the following real-life events of Henry and Flora's world.

- Hoovervilles
- The bombing of Guernica
- The Hindenburg tragedy

Your research should include what these events were, their place in history, and how they fit into the plot of this novel.

Chapters 21-31

1. The Game rules clearly state that Love cannot interfere directly with the hearts of the players, so Love sets his focus on Ethan, while in the guise of James Booth. Why? How could Henry affect the Game?
2. Every time Henry and Flora interact it is evident that opposing forces are at work. Both would need to sacrifice much in order to gain each other. This is especially clear in Flora—her actions, her speech, her thoughts. Looking closely at the following scenes, create a chart as to the opposing forces (pros and cons) plaguing Flora. In each scene, predict whether Love or Death is winning the Game.
 - a. The scene at the airstrip when they first met
 - b. The bicycle scene with Annabel
 - c. Various scenes the Domino
 - d. On the fire escape
3. Henry and Flora are not the first literary star-crossed lovers to have a scene on a fire

Literary Threads

Throughout the novel, Brockenbrough depicts Death as a ravenous predator who is always hungry, while Love doesn't need to eat unless in disguise and trying to fit in.

Search the text to find many examples of Death's predatory hunger, whether in guise or not.

Why do you think Brockenbrough chose this characterization for Death? Why do you think Love doesn't need to eat? Look closely at the text to support your opinion.

escape/balcony. Read the balcony scene from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and the fire escape scene in *West Side Story*.

- a. How are these two scenes similar to Henry and Flora's?
 - b. How do they differ?
 - c. Do you think Henry and Flora's story will end in the same way as Romeo and Juliet's or Tony and Maria's? How so?
4. Visit YouTube.com and listen to Billie Holiday singing "Easy Living." Listen closely to the lyrics. Using the couples from *The Game of Love and Death*, as examples, do you think love is easy living? Should it be? If Love wins, it means the players choose to sacrifice everything. Is that easy? Write about love and the ease of relationship in regard to the following couples:
 - a. Henry and Flora
 - b. Flora and Grady
 - c. Henry and Helen
 - d. Ethan and James
5. Russian novelist Vladimir Nabokov once said, "The writer's job is to get the main character up a tree, and then once they are up there, throw rocks at them." How does Brockenbrough do just this in the scene with the tax collectors?
 - a. Rewrite this scene as a screenplay, superimposing the lyrics from "Easy Living" where you see fit.
 - b. Rewrite this scene so that Flora retains the money and has the upper hand.
 - c. Does this scene with the tax collectors make the Game's odds tip in favor of Love or Death? Use the text as evidence to support your opinion.
6. Why does Love believe he should kill Grady and how does he justify it?
 - a. Describe how Love uses love to his advantage to manipulate the scene in the bakery.

Who is Grady?

Draw an outline of a human figure, which will represent Grady, on a large piece of paper.

Using the text as evidence, write any known details about Grady inside the outline.

Outside the outline, discuss and write any questions about Grady that you might have.

- b. What does Death mean when she says, "You are not me"?
 - c. Explain why the bakery scene ends in a triple murder, despite Love and Death trying to stop it.
 - d. Does this scene provide any further insight into the characters of Love and Death and their complicated relationship? How so?
 - e. How does the death of Grady affect Flora, Henry, and the Game?
7. When Henry arrives at the Domino to find the club closed, Sherman says, "Go home, son. You look like something a cat coughed up." Given Death's guise as a cat, explain the deeper meaning in this statement.
8. Conduct a library or Internet search on "what is heartbreak?"
- a. Take note of the symptoms of heartbreak.
 - b. Does Henry exhibit signs of heartbreak? Which symptoms does he have? On a scale of 1–10, 10 being the greatest level, how would you diagnose the severity of Henry's heartbreak based on the research you have conducted?
9. One technique in the craft of literature is to bring all of the main characters of a story together in one room at a party or another event. Brockenbrough uses this technique when Henry, Ethan, James/Love, and Helen/Death all attend the Majestic to hear Flora sing.
- a. Illustrate the scene at the Majestic with all of the characters around a table and Flora onstage. Choose one piece of text from this scene to place as a thought above each character's head to encapsulate their experience.
 - b. On page 155, Helen/Death and James/Love continue their debate about Helen of Troy and the cause of the Trojan War. Helen claims, "Love killed all those people." James disagrees and states, "The war did that. War. War is the machine of death." If you were at that table, who would agree with? Write your agreement in support of Death or Love.
 - c. Why might Love and Death have left the Majestic early? How would that benefit the Game for either side?
 - d. At the conclusion of Chapter 31, what do you think the score of the Game is? Who is winning? Support your answer with examples from the text.

Further Historical Research

Conduct Internet and library research on the following real-life figure of Henry and Flora's world.

- Bessie Coleman

Your research should include who she was, what her place in history was, and how she fits into the plot of this novel.

Chapters 32 -41

1. Can love flourish if pride exists, too?
Use the events of Chapter 32 to form your own opinion.
2. Death shows such humanity and care in the death of Marion, Flora's nana. Take note of the evidence of gentleness in Death's actions and speech. Does this scene change your perception of Death?

Literary Threads

It rains quite often in Seattle. However, Brockenbrough also uses rain to punctuate emotional moments throughout the novel.

Find at least three rainy scenes and analyze how rain is used to give insight to emotion.

- a. Death maintains the guise of Marion, "not wanting to kill the woman's hope." Up until this moment, hope had only been attributed to life and love. What does this tell you about Death?
- b. How does Death, in a way, bring Henry and Flora closer together on the night that Nana dies?
- c. What do you think Nana's quilt symbolizes? Why do you think Death stops time to complete it? Do you think Death added the hidden message for Flora? Why or why not?
- d. Explain Flora's statement, "If the world made any sense at all, time would stop when someone died. Just for a moment, just to mark the loss" in relation to the scene of Nana's death.

3. Love's interest in Ethan appears to not only be connected to the Game. How does Love try and make Ethan realize who he is and have courage? Why do you think Love takes such an interest in Ethan?
4. What is the Book of Love and Death?
 - a. How is Death the great unraveler of stories?
 - b. Do you agree that "to be written into story" is how the lost live on? Explain using examples from the novel, in addition to your own life or the lives of those around you.
5. Explain what Henry refers to as life in 4/4 time. How could life with Flora be more equated to jazz music?
6. What is Ethan's new philosophy on life? Where do you think this change in thought came from?
 - a. Ethan says of love, "It's all I've ever really wanted. But I don't know that I'd ever call it good." What do you think he means by this? Do you think Henry feels the same?
 - b. Why do you think love is often considered bittersweet?
7. Why is Flora arrested? Why is Henry arrested?
 - a. How are Flora and Henry treated differently based on their gender and the color of their skin?
 - b. What is Henry's plan in regard to bailing Flora out of jail? How does his plan backfire?
8. "Someday" means two very different things to Flora and to Henry. Explain their different views.
 - a. Rewrite the lyrics to "Someday" from Flora's point of view.
 - b. Whose point of view, Flora's or Henry's do you think is more realistic? Why?
9. Retell Chapter 39 in your own words in whatever format you choose: screenplay, song lyrics, etc.
10. Now that Nana is gone, the Domino is really the only thing keeping Flora in Seattle. Do you think love is strong enough to keep her there?

- a. How do you think the destruction of the Domino will play into the outcome of the Game?
- b. Explain how "someday had arrived."

Chapters 42-55

1. Mr. Thorne's reaction to Henry's arrest is very narcissistic, focusing mainly on himself and how he is affected. Explain.
 - a. Write THREE non-narcissistic questions Mr. Thorne could have/should have asked Henry.
 - b. What is Henry's punishment?
 - c. Why does Henry say he feels sorrier for Ethan?
 - d. What is Ethan's reaction to the punishment? Why do you think he desperately wants Henry to ask for a second chance?
 - e. What is Henry's plan? How does Henry's plan play into Love's plan?
2. Rewrite Chapter 43 from either Love's or Death's point of view. With only a little over a month left in the Game, what are their states of mind? What are their strategies?
3. Henry finds himself literally cornered by Love and Death and forced to make a choice. What choice does he make?
4. In Chapters 45–55, Death unleashes three new and possibly Game-winning strategies. Explain each of these strategies in your own words. What effects do they have?
 - a. Ethan and Love's Book
 - b. The letter to the editor
 - c. The purchase of a plane for Flora

Making Connections

Henry tells Flora, “shouldn’t isn’t the same as can’t” Explain what this statement means in your own words.

- a. What does it mean in relation to Flora and Henry?
- b. Is there some situation in your own life where this statement applies?
If so, what?

Further Historical Research

It becomes increasingly clear that the color of Henry and Flora’s skin creates a real obstacle for their love. In 1937 such interracial relationships were considered immoral and in many states illegal. In fact, interracial marriage wasn’t uniformly protected in the United States until a 1967 Supreme Court decision (*Loving v. Virginia*). Conduct Internet and library research on the following:

- The history of interracial relationships in America
- *Loving v. Virginia*
- Famous interracial relationships—<http://listverse.com/2011/01/25/10-fascinating-interracial-marriages-in-history/>

Using your research, create a “book” like that of Love’s. Include as much information as possible as a kind of inspiration from the future for Henry and Flora.

Chapters 56-71

1. Why does Death kill Amelia Earhart? How does this further her chances in the Game? Explain what is possibly meant by “the attractive cage of love.”
2. Death does not read all of Love’s book to Ethan, but conceals some parts. Why?
 - a. What parts does she keep secret?
 - b. What parts does she share?

- c. Why does Death decide not to kill Ethan?
 - d. What is Ethan's reaction to the book's information? How does he take action?
- 3. What is Love's plan with the real Helen? How does this affect the Game?
- 4. Henry goes to the airstrip to tell Flora of the Game. What is his plan, based on how she reacts? How do Henry's and Flora's interpretation of the Game and being "pawns" differ?
- 5. What is Flora's epiphany about Love and Death in Chapter 64? Explain in your own words, using text to support your answer.
- 6. Death won the Game. How?
 - a. What is the state of mind of Death after her victory?
 - b. Why does she continue to "play the Game" after it is won?
- 7. It is said that Love is hope and Death is certainty. How do Henry's actions prove this?
 - a. In the plane, Brockenbrough writes of Flora "She turned toward Death, her face vulnerable, full of hope." If Love is hope, what does this mean for Flora and Death's victory?
 - b. Why does Flora remind Death of the Spanish flower seller and the German zeppelin pilot?
- 8. "The end, for everyone, was the same. It was the choices made in the face of that, the ones made with a full heart, that could and did live on." Explain this statement in regard to Flora's final moments in the face of Death. Do you believe this statement to be true? How so?
- 9. Flora suddenly sees Death as Love does, and cannot hate her. Describe Death in this way.

10. Love makes a very powerful statement that ends up changing Death's mind about killing Flora. What does he say? Why do you think this changes her mind?

Making Connections

Henry's *someday* notes provide hope in the darkest of times.

Create your own list of *someday* notes to serve as your own hope and inspiration for the future.

These notes can be anonymously shared on a classroom bulletin board or display.

Additionally, you can create your own lyrics for a song called "Someday."

Chapter 72

1. Describe the lives of each character since the Game ended. How have they changed?

- a. Death
- b. Love
- c. Flora
- d. Henry

2. Explain the statement "Someday had come. It had come in many versions. This was the final one."

- a. What are some of the somedays that Henry and Flora have lived?
- b. How would you describe their life together?

3. Explain the symbolism in having both Love and Death present at the deaths of Flora and Henry. Death and Love act as symbiotic partners in this final chapter. How so?

Literary Threads

Throughout *The Game of Love and Death* Brockenbrough refers to the moon and its many phases. In this final chapter she writes, "Oh, the moon. Everywhere the same and yet different, and so worth finding as it traveled overhead each night, scoring the passing days in the sky."

Find at least three scenes throughout the novel that contain a description of the moon. What is going on in the lives of the characters in these scenes? What do you think the moon might serve as a metaphor for?

After You Read

Below are a few final project ideas for the conclusion of *The Game of Love and Death*.

1. Read the "Advance Praise" quotes from other authors on the back cover. Choose one and write a 500-word essay supporting what they said about *The Game of Love and Death* using textual evidence as support.
2. Several themes run through *The Game of Love and Death*.

fate/choice	someday	have courage
hope/uncertainty	how love and death are intertwined	
"I see you"	people on the edges	class/race
"where there is power there's most likely corruption"		sacrifice/risk

Choose one of these themes on which to base a 500-word essay.

- a. How is this theme evident in the characters and events of the novel?
 - b. What can readers take away from *The Game of Love and Death* in relation to this theme?
3. Create a book trailer for *The Game of Love and Death*. Carefully choose music, visuals, and words to create an overall feel for the book.
 4. Watch the video of University Bookstore's *The Game of Love and Death* event. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qu3rGKoVsAc> You can watch the event in its entirety, but Martha Brockenbrough begins to speak at 12:09. Take notes on what she says about the fabric of the novel and her inspiration.