

Study Guide

Nothing but the Truth by Avi

LEXILE NP*

The Novel at a Glance**MORE ABOUT THE WRITER**

Avi has written more than two dozen books for young people, including historical novels, sports novels, and mysteries. His books are known for their colorful characters and engaging, complex plots. His work is often hard to categorize, though, for he likes to experiment. He has placed a fictional character in a historical situation and has mixed historical fact with elements of mystery, science fiction, and ghost stories. His contemporary young-adult novels, such as *Nothing but the Truth*, deal with real problems that young people face. In whatever he writes, he admits, he wants his readers to feel and to think about issues they have to face.

Avi keeps in touch with his young audience by traveling around the country and visiting schools. He sometimes shows his manuscripts, heavily marked up by his editor, to students with disabilities similar to his dysgraphia. Then he encourages all of his listeners to follow their dreams.

BACKGROUND

Nothing but the Truth has an unusual format. Avi calls his collection of diary entries, letters, memos, newspaper articles, and transcripts of conversation a “documentary novel.” Like film or TV documentaries, it pulls together separate bits of information to present a complete picture. Each document represents the point of view of only one or two characters. It’s up to you to look at all the evidence and come to your own conclusions.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Philip Malloy, the fourteen-year-old main character, is a talented runner but an indifferent student, with a tendency to be smart-alecky. He is set on annoying his English and homeroom teacher, whom he views as a bore and the cause of his problems.

Margaret Narwin is Philip’s veteran English and homeroom teacher. Her approach is somewhat old-fashioned, but her dedication has earned her the respect of most students and school administrators.

Dr. Gertrude Doane is the principal of Harrison High School.

Dr. Joseph Palleni is the assistant principal.

Dr. Albert Seymour is the superintendent of schools in Harrison.

Bernard Lunser, Philip’s original homeroom teacher, makes mocking comments about school regulations that encourage Philip’s irreverence.

Coach Jamison, Philip’s track coach, is a strong believer in following the rules and being a “team player.”

Allison Doresett is a ninth-grade girl whom Philip wants to impress.

Susan Malloy, Philip’s mother, is concerned about her son but is not always sure how to help him.

Nothing But the Truth *continued*

Benjamin Malloy is Philip's father and a former track star. He takes vicarious pleasure in Philip's running ability, but work problems distract him from his family concerns.

Ted Griffen, a neighbor who is running for the school board, builds his campaign upon Philip's story.

Jennifer Stewart, the education reporter for the Manchester Record, researches and writes an article about Philip's suspension from school.

Jake Barlow, the host of a radio talk show, champions Philip's patriotism and brings his story to a national audience.

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT: INCREASING FLUENCY

You develop fluency with new words by using the words themselves. To increase your vocabulary, look up each day's words in a dictionary and then use the words in sentences of their own. Your sentences might focus on a character or event from the novel.

Ch. 1–10

ambition, p.5
strategy, p. 7
symbolic, p. 12
bickering, p. 27
vigilant, p. 46
stamina, p. 46

Ch. 11–12

insolence, p. 50
counterproductive, p.63
condone, p. 83

Ch. 13–15

confidential, p. 89
elemental, p. 105
squelches, p. 116
raucous, p. 120
animosity, p. 129

Ch. 16–19

evenhanded, p. 148
prudent, p. 166
candid, p. 175