

NOT EVEN PARIS — Teacher Packet

Intended for grades 9–12 (approximate Lexile 700–900); suitable for whole-class or literature-circle use in contemporary realistic fiction or coming-of-age units.

- Standards-Alignment Chart
- Discussion Questions Tied to Literary Elements
- Writing Prompts or Short Projects
- Vocabulary or Close-Reading Activities
- Brief Teacher Guide with Recommended 3-Week Pacing
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Standards-Alignment Chart (Common Core ELA, Grades 9-12)

Standard	How the Novel Supports It	Example Classroom Use
RL.9-10.1 / RL.11-12.1 Cite strong textual evidence	Students track Jolene’s shifting feelings about Matt and about herself	Close-read the math-class scenes and the party confrontation; require direct quotes
RL.9-10.3 / RL.11-12.3 Analyze complex characters	Jolene’s growth from Paris to her return; Logan as foil; Matt’s mixed signals	Character-change chart comparing pre-Paris and post-Paris Jolene
RL.9-10.2 / RL.11-12.2 Determine themes	Themes of self-worth, the limits of romantic fantasy, and how environment shapes identity	Discussion or short essay on whether Paris “fixes” Jolene
W.9-10.1 / W.11-12.1 Write arguments	Students evaluate Jolene’s choices and the reliability of her perspective	Argument: Is Jolene’s view of Matt accurate, or is she projecting?

SL.9-10.1 Collaborative discussion	Social dynamics and unrequited feelings invite structured debate	Socratic seminar on popularity, friendship, and romantic expectations
L.9-10.4 Vocabulary in context	Contemporary teen voice and emotionally loaded language	Context clues from key scenes (crush, rejection, return)

Discussion Questions

Character & Motivation

- In the early math-class scenes, how does Jolene interpret Matt's words and actions? Where does the text suggest she may be over-reading them?
- How does Logan function as a contrast to both Matt and Jolene's other classmates? What does their friendship reveal about what Jolene actually needs?

Setting & Change

- What does Jolene expect Paris to do for her? What actually changes (and what doesn't) by the time she returns?
- How do the social rules at Winchester Canyon High School compare with what Jolene experiences in Paris? Which environment feels more honest to her, and why?

Theme

- The novel repeatedly shows the gap between the romantic stories Jolene reads and her real life. Where is that gap most painful, and where is it useful?
- By the end of the book, has Jolene's sense of her own worth shifted? Use specific moments before and after Paris to support your answer.

Point of View

- What do we learn from Logan's short POV sections that Jolene's narration doesn't fully show? How does that affect your reading of their friendship?

Writing Prompts & Short Projects

1. Argumentative paragraph: "Jolene's crush on Matt is more about the idea of being chosen than about Matt himself." Agree or disagree with at least two pieces of textual evidence.

2. Before/after analysis: Compare one pre-Paris scene and one post-Paris scene that show how Jolene sees herself. What has changed, and what has stayed the same?
3. Creative response: Rewrite the final party confrontation from Matt's point of view. What might he be thinking that Jolene doesn't see?
4. Friendship focus: Explain how Logan's presence affects Jolene's decisions. Would the story be different if he weren't there? Use specific examples.
5. Short project – Expectation vs. Reality chart: Students create a two-column chart. Left side: what Jolene believes will happen if she goes to Paris (or if Matt likes her). Right side: what actually occurs. Include brief quotes.

Vocabulary & Close-Reading Activities

Suggested close-reading passages:

- The first math-class scene (Jolene overthinking Matt's words)
- Jolene telling Matt she might go to Paris
- A Paris scene that shows her adjusting (or failing to adjust) to a new environment
- The party scene where she finally confronts Matt
- A Logan POV section for contrast

Activity: Students choose one passage and identify three moments where Jolene's internal narration and the external action don't fully match. They explain what that gap reveals about her character.

Sample vocabulary-in-context words (drawn from emotional or social scenes): unrequited, hierarchy, projection, self-consciousness, aftermath, compatibility.

Brief Teacher Guide & Pacing

Recommended use: 3–4 weeks as a whole-class novel or literature-circle text in a unit on coming-of-age, identity, or contemporary realistic fiction.

Suggested 3-week pacing:

- Week 1 (Ch. 1–18 approx.): Establish the crush, the social world of the high school, and the decision to go to Paris. Focus question: What does Jolene believe Paris will solve?
- Week 2 (Paris chapters through return): Track what actually changes. Writing prompt #2 or the expectation/reality chart.

- Week 3 (Return through end): The party, the confrontation, and the final chapters. Socratic seminar or argumentative writing on whether Jolene has grown.

Content note for teachers: The book includes realistic teen emotional drama, mild references to alcohol and drug use, offhand mentions of self-harm, and awkward romantic/social moments. These are generally low-intensity but worth previewing for your specific school community. The author note in the front of the book already flags them.

Assessment ideas:

- Short reading checks on key plot points and character motivations
- One analytical paragraph using textual evidence
- Completion of the expectation-vs-reality chart or character-change tracker
- Participation in discussion

Content & Sensitivity Guide

Not Even Paris – Teacher Content Overview

This contemporary YA novel follows Jolene, a high-school ballerina, as she navigates an unrequited crush, social dynamics at school, a year studying ballet in Paris, and her return home. The tone is realistic and often humorous, with a focus on internal emotional experience.

Content notes:

- Unrequited romantic feelings and social awkwardness
- Mild references to teen alcohol use and inconspicuous drug use
- Offhand mentions of self-harm (not depicted)
- Ballet-related self-consciousness and body awareness
- Family tension (particularly between sisters)
- Awkward or vaguely uncomfortable social/romantic moments

These elements are generally low-intensity and integrated into ordinary teen experiences rather than presented as central plot drivers. The book does not contain explicit sexual content, graphic violence, or sustained depictions of substance abuse. Teachers may still wish to preview the party scenes and any moments of social humiliation depending on their school community.

The author's note in the front of the book already flags these topics. This guide is intended to help teachers decide on suitability and prepare for discussion.

Differentiation Options

For students who need more support:

- Provide sentence starters for argumentative writing (“One reason Jolene misreads Matt is...” / “Evidence from the math-class scene shows...”).
- Offer a partially completed Expectation vs. Reality chart with two examples already filled in.
- Allow oral responses or partner discussion before writing.
- Use shorter passage selections for close reading (1–2 pages instead of full scenes).

For students ready for extension:

- Ask them to compare Jolene’s narration with one of Logan’s POV sections and analyze what each reveals.
- Have them track a secondary character (Mary, Piper, or Caradine) and explain how that character functions as a foil.
- Invite a short creative piece: a scene from Matt’s or Caradine’s perspective during a key moment.

Visual / alternative options:

- Character-change timeline (drawn or digital) instead of a written chart.
- Annotated passage option: students highlight and label moments of misinterpretation directly on a printed excerpt.

English learner addition:

- Allow illustrated vocabulary notes, partner reading of close-reading passages, or oral rehearsal of ideas before writing.

Culminating Project Menu

Students choose one:

Option A: Analytical Essay (recommended default)

Write a 3–4 paragraph essay responding to one of the following:

- How does Jolene’s time in Paris change (or fail to change) the way she sees herself and her relationships?
- To what extent is Jolene’s crush on Matt based on who he is versus what he represents?

Option B: Expectation vs. Reality Portfolio

Create a multi-scene portfolio (at least four moments) that tracks what Jolene expects versus what actually happens. Include brief analysis for each entry and a short concluding reflection.

Option C: Creative + Reflective

Rewrite one key scene (the Paris decision conversation, the party confrontation, or a Logan interaction) from another character's point of view. Follow it with a one-paragraph reflection explaining what your version reveals that the original narration does not.

Sample Responses / What Strong Work Includes

For the argumentative paragraph on Jolene's crush:

A strong response will:

- Make a clear claim (e.g., Jolene often projects romantic meaning onto ordinary interactions).
- Use at least two specific moments with brief quotes or close paraphrase.
- Explain how the evidence supports the claim rather than just summarizing the plot.
- Acknowledge some complexity (Matt does show occasional interest or kindness).

For the Expectation vs. Reality chart:

Strong entries identify a concrete belief Jolene holds, cite or describe the scene where it appears, and accurately note the actual outcome without over-interpreting.

Pacing Alternatives

2-week intensive option (literature circle or fast whole-class):

- Days 1–3: Early chapters through the decision to go to Paris. Focus on the crush and social world.
- Days 4–6: Selected Paris chapters and the return. Focus on change vs. continuity.
- Days 7–8: Party and final chapters. Culminating writing or discussion.
- Days 9–10: Project work and sharing.

4-week expanded option:

- Week 1: Establish characters and the crush (Ch. 1–10 approx.).
- Week 2: Paris experience.
- Week 3: Return and shifting dynamics.
- Week 4: Climax, resolution, and culminating project with revision time.

Connections to Other Texts

Titles that pair well thematically (identity, unrequited feelings, coming-of-age, or change through a new environment):

- *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell (social outsider experience and first love)
- *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo (identity, family, and self-expression)
- *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Sáenz (friendship, self-understanding, and change)
- Short story option: “The Flowers” by Alice Walker or selected coming-of-age stories from *Fresh Ink* or similar YA anthologies (for shorter paired reading)

These can be used for comparison discussions or as choice extensions.

Simple Assessment Rubric

(For the main analytical writing assignment)

Criteria	4 – Strong	3 – Proficient	2 – Developing	1 – Beginning
Claim & Focus	Clear, specific claim that addresses the prompt	Clear claim with minor drift	Claim is vague or only partly addresses the prompt	No clear claim
Evidence	2+ well-chosen pieces of evidence with accurate reference to the text	Adequate evidence, mostly accurate	Limited or loosely connected evidence	Little to no relevant evidence
Analysis	Explains how evidence supports the claim; shows insight	Explains the evidence with some insight	Mostly summarizes; limited explanation	Little or no analysis

Clarity & Conventions	Clear organization and mostly correct conventions	Generally clear with minor errors	Some confusion in organization or frequent errors	Difficult to follow
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Teachers can adjust point values or convert to a total-score scale as needed. The rubric prioritizes evidence and analysis, which aligns with the Common Core reading and writing standards targeted by these materials.