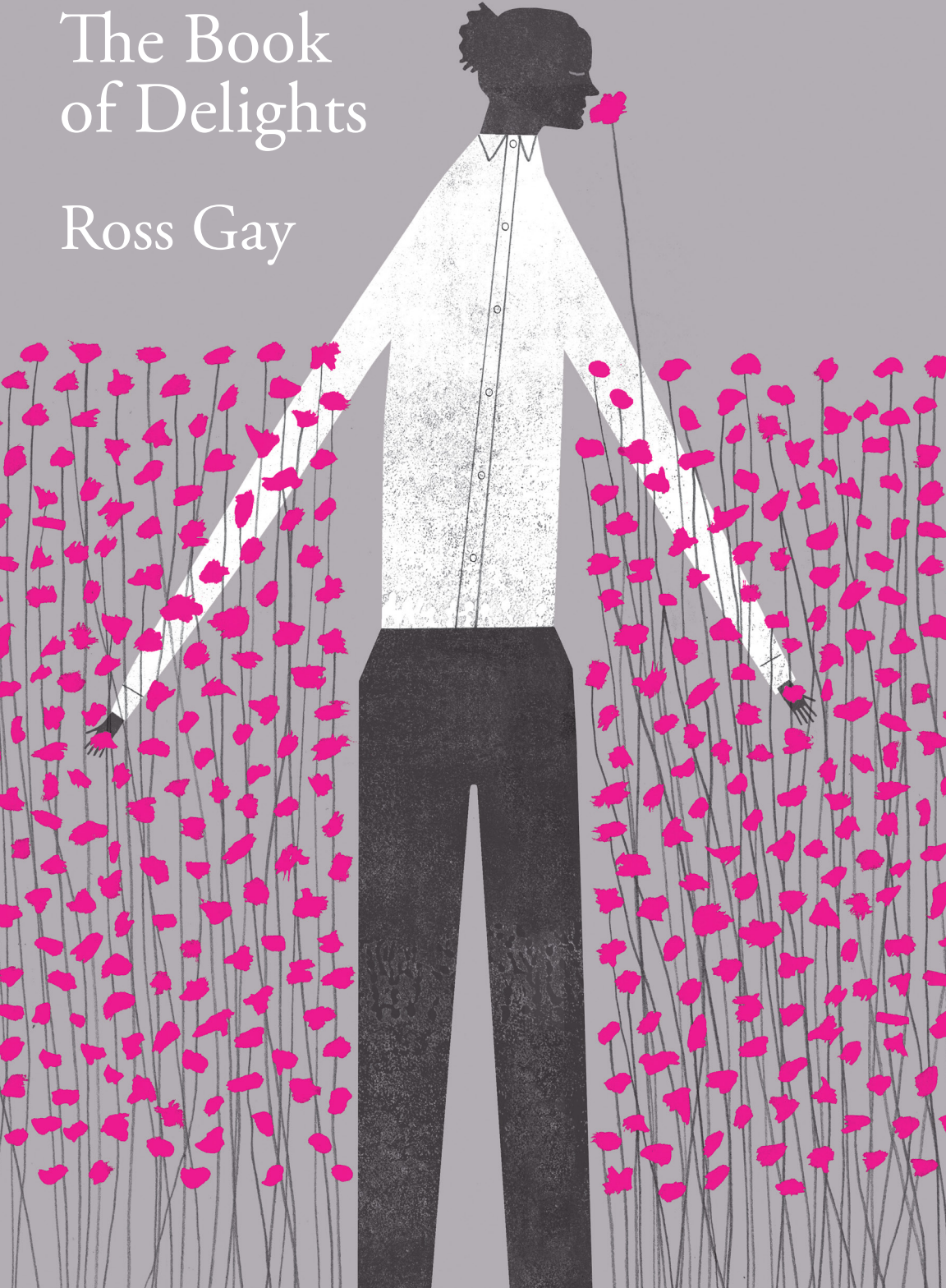


One Maryland One Book 2021

Teacher's Guide

The Book of Delights

Ross Gay



WHAT IF EVERYONE READ THE SAME BOOK AT THE SAME TIME, THEN CAME TOGETHER TO TALK ABOUT IT?

When we read a great book, we can't wait to share the experience with others. That's one of the joys of reading. In this spirit, Maryland Humanities created One Maryland One Book to bring together diverse people in communities across the state through the shared experience of reading the same book.

Now in its fourteenth year, One Maryland One Book remains Maryland's only statewide community reading program. Each year, the selection process is guided by a common theme. The theme for 2021 is "Hope."

The Maryland Center for the Book at Maryland Humanities partners with public libraries, high schools, colleges and universities, museums, bookstores, correctional facilities, and other organizations to bring book-centered discussions and other related events to communities across Maryland. But One Maryland One Book is not just about reading or literature; it is also about bringing people together for meaningful dialogue.

The book selected for 2021 is *The Book of Delights: Essays* by Ross Gay.

GRAB YOUR COPY

Find a copy of *The Book of Delights* at your local library or bookstore and get reading! What if a copy of *The Book of Delights* finds you? If you're out and about, you might find copies of the book in unexpected places. Our Wandering Books can be found in a myriad of public spaces from bus stops to doctor's offices to coffee shops. If you find a copy, it's yours for a short time. Register the book online so we can see how far it travels (instructions are included inside the book). Read it, review it, and

then leave it somewhere for someone else to find and enjoy.

REACH OUT

Each year, more than 15,000 Marylanders read the One Maryland One Book selection. How many of those people are your friends or family? Use the book to jumpstart a meaningful conversation in person or virtually with an old friend or to make a new one.

PULL UP A CHAIR

We invite you to join Maryland Humanities and thousands of other Marylanders at one of the many book discussions and related events happening around the state and online from mid-September to mid-November, including the author tour in October. To find One Maryland One Book programs in your area, go to onemarylandonebook.org and click on Events. Be sure to check for the dates of Ross Gay's appearances this fall.

After each One Maryland One Book program you attend, please visit omobfeedback.org and share your thoughts by taking our brief survey.

For all the latest information, "like" or follow us:



facebook.com/MDCenterfortheBook



[@MDHumanities](https://twitter.com/MDHumanities)



[@MDHumanities](https://www.instagram.com/MDHumanities)

Feeling inspired after reading Ross Gay's essayettes and ready to write about your own delights? Visit our website to learn how to submit your essayette. It may be featured on our website and social media channels.

FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



We are thrilled that you are joining Maryland Humanities for the fourteenth year of One Maryland One Book, Maryland's largest reading and discussion program. Since 2008, readers across Maryland have enjoyed reading and discussing the One Maryland One Book title, selected by a juried panel composed of distinguished members from Maryland's literary community. Literature brings joy and reflection along with the opportunity to gain a better understanding of ourselves while offering a glimpse into the lives of those near and far.

Each year we explore the power of literature through discussions and events across the state. Thousands of Marylanders connect in their communities to read and discuss the chosen book through book clubs, libraries, high schools, colleges, museums, senior centers, correctional facilities, and more. Whether you read with us every year or are new to the program, welcome!

A few years ago, poet Ross Gay decided to give himself a year-long assignment: write a daily essay about something that delighted him. A "discipline," he called it. These essayettes, drafted quickly by hand rather than on a computer, became *The Book of Delights*, our book for this year. This collection of musings and personal stories reflect the joy he finds in butterflies and flowers, music, a friend's "reckless" use of air quotes, a high-five from a stranger, and the universal language of babies. His essayettes also touch on race and privilege, a friend's cancer remission, and our inevitable death, yet Gay's approach when reflecting on things sad or unpleasant, always allows for a glimmer of hope. This compilation of 102 essayettes illuminate the many things that tie us together as humans and fellow citizens.

We encourage you to pick up a copy of *The Book of Delights* and join the conversation at one of our many public discussion events across the state, whether in person or virtually. A program of the Maryland Center for the Book at Maryland Humanities, One Maryland One Book is made possible each year through the generosity of our sponsors and community partners. We greatly thank them for their support. Find out how to get involved at onemarylandonebook.org.

Please join us!

Mary Hastler, Board Chair
Lindsey Baker, Executive Director



Photo Credit Natasha Komoda

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

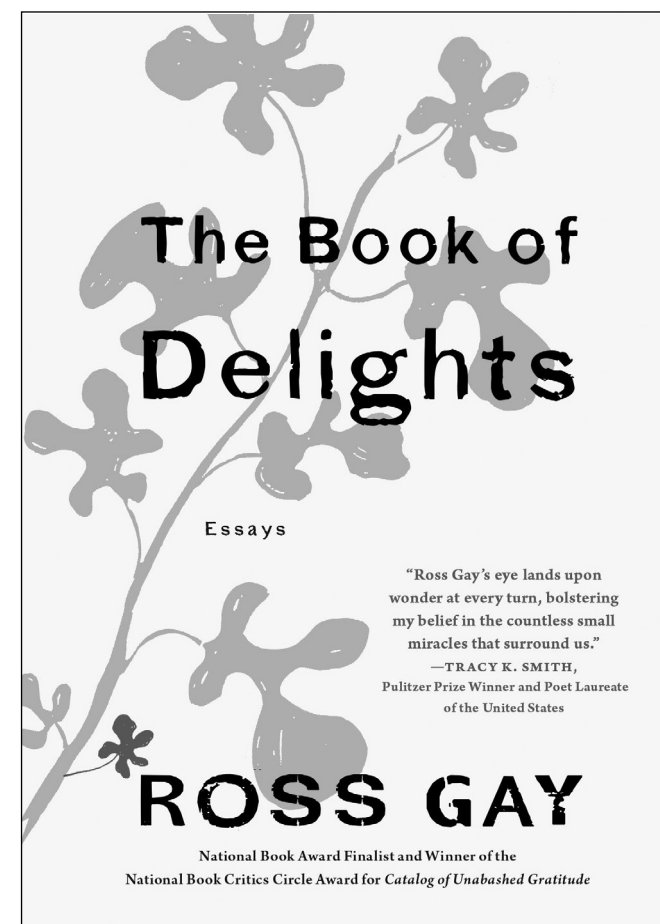
Ross Gay is the author of *The Book of Delights*, a genre-defying book of essays, and four books of poetry, including his most recent, *Be Holding*, a love song to legendary basketball player Julius Erving—known as Dr. J—who dominated courts in the 1970s and '80s as a small forward for the Philadelphia 76ers. Gay is a founding editor, with Karissa Chen and Patrick Rosal, of the online sports magazine *Some Call it Ballin'*. A founding board member of the Bloomington Community Orchard, a non-profit, free-fruit-for-all food justice and joy project, Gay has received fellowships from Cave Canem, the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference, and the Guggenheim Foundation. He teaches at Indiana University.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Reprinted from the book's back cover

In *The Book of Delights*, one of today's most literary voices offers up a genre-defying volume of lyric essays written over one tumultuous year. The first nonfiction book from award-winning poet Ross Gay is a record of the small joys we often overlook in our busy lives. Among Gay's funny, poetic, philosophical delights: a friend's unabashed use of air quotes, cradling a tomato seedling aboard an airplane, the silent nod of acknowledgement between the only two black people in a room. But Gay never dismisses the complexities, even the terrors, of living in America as a black man or the ecological and psychic violence of our consumer culture or the loss of those he loves. More than any other subject, though, Gay celebrates the beauty of the natural world—his garden, the flowers peeking out of the sidewalk, the hypnotic movements of a praying mantis.

The Book of Delights is about our shared bonds, and the rewards that come from a life closely observed. These remarkable pieces serve as a powerful and necessary reminder that we can, and should, stake out a space in our lives for delight.



MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION COMMON CORE STANDARDS

RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

RH.11-12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

RH.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text.

RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

RI.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.3 Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

RI.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

RI.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance the point of view.

SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL.11-12.1c Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.11-12.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

GENERAL THEMES:

empathy; grief; self-reflection; friendship; coming-of-age; memory; love; parent-child relationships; acceptance; racism; social justice and resistance; reverence and respect for nature; everyday intimacy

SPECIAL NOTE: The following essayettes may not be school appropriate. They are also highlighted in the left column of the Guiding Questions section that follows.

Just a Dream, Pecans, "Love Me in a Special Way," Not Grumpy Cat, An Abundance of Public Toilets, Scat, Get Thee to the Nutrient Cycle!, and Coco-baby

BEFORE READING QUESTIONS

- What responsibility/responsibilities do humans have to the natural world? Be as specific as possible in your response, using real-world examples.
- What responsibilities do humans have to one another? Be as specific as possible in your response, using real-world examples.
- What do our interactions with strangers and acquaintances reveal about our character?
- How does a person's experience with race and racism shape their perspective? Explain your answer with support from your own experiences with race.
- In your own words, define the word *delight*. Support your definition with an example of something you find delightful.
- What is the value of self-reflection?

BEFORE READING ACTIVITY

Dictionary and Etymology (Extension of one of the Before Reading Questions)

Have students:

- Look up multiple different definitions for the word *delight*
- Research the etymology of the word *delight*
- Reflect on their own connotations of the word and their personal use of it

DELIGHTS #1 – 10

1. My Birthday, Kinda
2. Inefficiency
3. Flower in the Curb
4. Blowing It Off
5. Hole in the Head
6. Remission Still
7. Praying Mantis
8. The Negreeting
9. The High-Five from Strangers, Etc.
10. Writing by Hand

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Why does Ross (author/narrator) call his birth a “miracle impossibility?”
- What type of delights does he notice on his 42nd birthday?
- How do you think age influences what one finds delightful?
- How does socioeconomic status impact one’s ability to be inefficient and the consequences of said inefficiency?
- Analyze Ross’s dream where he chooses not to stop for a veggie burger so he can race to catch a flight. What is the deeper understanding this dream aims to convey?
- How does Ross’s interaction with Don Belton’s house convey that physical space holds memory? What is a physical space that holds memory for you?
- Describe Ross’s childhood understanding of “blowing things off” (11). What emotions did it evoke? How has his understanding of this changed as he’s gotten older?
- How is the phrase “hole in the head” (14) typically used? Summarize the story of Lyles Station. Why do you think Ross includes a detailed description of the hole in Lyles’s head? What do these two different images of “hole in the head” reveal about what we think about racism compared to the actual impacts of racism?
- How does Lyles’s story connect to Black Americans’ skepticism towards institutions of medicine and science?
- By Delight #5, Ross is already reflecting on racism, mentioning that he’s “trying to remember the last day I haven’t been reminded of the inconceivable violence black people have endured in this country” (16). What does this reveal about the nature of racism and the way it infiltrates Black people’s delight?
- Explain why Ross includes the context and setting in which he receives the news about his friend Walt’s cancer diagnosis. What does it reveal about tragedy and normalcy?
- Analyze Ross’s interaction with the praying mantis at a restaurant. How is his interaction different from when people typically see insects in manmade spaces? What can we learn from this interaction, from allowing nature to coexist in the same spaces as us?

DELIGHTS #11 – 20

11. Transplanting
12. Nicknames
13. But, Maybe...
14. “Joy Is Such a Human Madness”
15. House Party
16. Hummingbird
17. Just a Dream
18. “That’s Some Bambi Shit”...
19. The Irrepressible: The Gratitudes
20. Tap Tap

- Explain the quote: “Innocence is an impossible state for black people in America” (25). What evidence does Ross provide to support this claim?
- How is negreeting—the nod, calling other Black people “brother” or “sis”—a way of witnessing each other’s innocence?
- Why does Ross delight in “unequivocally pleasant public physical interactions with strangers” (28)? What do these interactions communicate to those involved?
- According to Ross, what important experience does writing by hand provide that typing does not?
- In “Transplanting,” how does the act of transplanting figs help Ross process Rachel’s death? How can the natural world help us find delight even in grief or mourning?
- What is ironic about Boogie’s nickname? What can a nickname represent about a relationship?
- In “But Maybe...,” explain what Ross thinks is dangerous and limiting about absolutes. What does the removal of absolutes make space and possibility for?
- What is the difference between pleasure and delight (meaning joy)? In what ways is joy a more complex emotion or experience than pleasure?
- Explain what Ross means when he says: “What if we joined our sorrows...what if that is joy” (50)? Consider how knowing that we will one day die often impacts our point of view on life.
- Why is it particularly delightful to share art with people who are from your same culture, background, or experience? Support your response with details from Ross’s interaction with the student who compliments his work by referencing the movie *House Party*.
- What could hummingbirds represent to Ross? Consider the types of moments they appear to him.
- How do the flower and the bumblebee demonstrate an impossibility? What else in our world is improbable or “impossible” and yet exists?
- What does a “tap tap” symbolize? How does this essayette connect to “Negreeting” and/or “The High-Five From Strangers, Etc.?”

HIGHLIGHTED MEANS THE DELIGHT MAY NOT BE SCHOOL APPROPRIATE

DELIGHTS #21 – 30

- 21. Coffee without the Saucer
- 22. Lily on the Pants
- 23. Sharing a Bag
- 24. Umbrella in the Café
- 25. Beast Mode
- 26.. Airplane Rituals
- 27. Weirdly Untitled
- 28. Pecans
- 29. The Do-Over
- 30. Infinity

- Analyze the imagery in “Lily on the Pants.” What spiritual connections exist between people and the natural world?
- What does Ross enjoy about seeing people carrying a bag together? More specifically, what is it about “the lack of necessity” (73) in this task that delights him?
- Why is food so delightful? Consider how it connected to culture, to identity, to relaxation, and to nourishment.
- What lesson can be learned from the man who chooses to smile at his mistake of opening his umbrella inside the cafe?
- Examine Ross’s use of the word filth in “Weirdly Untitled.” What does he mean when he says, “I enjoyed the filthing” (83)? How does this word connect to the irony of his brother purchasing a house in Lemoyne, Pennsylvania? How does it connect to his parents experience as an interracial couple in America?
- According to Ross, what warrants a “do-over?” When is a do-over appropriate and when is it misused? Why are do-overs more “fantasy than possibility” for adults—but why might adults still enjoy them?
- Explain how Ross’s idea of masculinity was shaped by his experiences growing up. Reference examples from “Infinity” about his childhood. What do his experiences reveal about the way society genders color and clothing?
- What would the lavender infinity scarf have represented to Ross during his youth? What does it represent to him now?

DELIGHTS #31 – 40

- 31. Ghost
- 32. Nota Bene
- 33. “Love Me in a Special Way”
- 34. “Stay,” by Lisa Loeb
- 35. Stacking Delights
- 36. Donny Hathaway on Pandora

- Why does Ross delight in his father crying at the movie *Ghost*? How does his father’s response to this movie challenge the idea of traditional masculinity?
- Why is it important not to stack delights but to practice “witnessing one’s delight...daily” (108)? What type of faith does this practice require?
- Explain what Ross means by “your voice is the song of your disappearing, which is our most common song” (111-112). Why can understanding this be the beginning of “a radical love?”

- 37. “To Spread the Sweetness of Love”
- 38. Baby, Baby, Baby
- 39. “REPENT OR BURN”
- 40. Giving My Body to the Cause

DELIGHTS #41 – 50

- 41. Among the Rewards of My Sloth...
- 42. Not Grumpy Cat
- 43. Some Stupid Shit
- 44. Not Only...
- 45. Micro-gentrification: WE BUY GOLD
- 46. Reading Palms
- 47. The Sanctity of Trains
- 48. Bird Feeding
- 49. Kombucha in a Mid-century Glass
- 50. Hickories

- Why is Ross anxious in the Santa Fe airport, and what interaction does he notice between two women that soothes his anxiety? Why would this type of interaction be the “antidote to [his] anxiety” (114)? Consider the emotions Trump’s inauguration incited in various communities.
- Explain why a man skating in pink and purple roller skates represents a challenge or resistance to the message “REPENT OR BURN.”
- Explain how Ross and other protesters help the lost boy find his mother. Why do you think Ross chose this moment from the protest to write about as his delight? What does it reveal about the power of collective action? What connection does this moment with the lost boy have to social justice overall?
- Define the word sloth. How did Ross’s delay or “sloth” in disposing of the tree he cut down provide a reward for the birds? What larger lesson does it reveal about the potential outcomes of “sloth?”
- Why is Thomas Jefferson saying “The sun has not caught me in bed in fifty years” both ironic and “some stupid shit” (126-127)? Be sure to reference his history as a slave owner in your response.
- Ross asserts that sharing what we love and find beautiful is “an ethics.” What does he mean by this? And based on what you’ve read so far, what other ethics does he live by?
- Why does Ross believe that “caretaking is our default mode”(135)? Explain using the example of unattended bags on the train. What other examples of caretaking do we engage in regularly in our social lives?
- What connections do you notice between “Bird Feeding” and “Praying Mantis” and “That’s Some Bambi Shit?” What argument is Ross making about human life and wildlife through these examples?
- According to Ross, why is questioning his love of 1950s-style aesthetics a centering of whiteness? What does this realization reveal about the erasure that often happens when we reflect on this and other time periods?
- Why do you think Ross includes “Hickories” in this book? What might he find delightful about the fact that hickories won’t start making fruit until 200–250 years from now?

DELIGHTS #51 — 60

51. Annoyed No More

52. Toto

53. Church Poets

54. Public Lying Down

55. Babies. Seriously.

56. “My Life, My Life,
My Life, My Life in
the Sunshine”

57. Incorporation

58. Botan Rice Candy

59. Understory

60. “Joy Is Such A Human
Madness”: The Duff
Between Us

- Ross considers that annoyance might originate from an “unacknowledged lack-of-control feeling” (143). Do you think there is a connection between annoyance and lack of control? How can acknowledging that one lacks control impact the annoyance?
- When is lying down in public considered acceptable? When is it considered unacceptable? What does this reveal about who is able to feel safe in public?
- Why are babies so universally delightful to adults?
- At the end of “Incorporation,” Ross claims that “how so often, and mostly unbeknownst, our bodies are the bodies of others” (156). Explain what he means by this and reflect on your own gestures, mannerisms, and behaviors. In what ways is your body the body of others?
- Of what childhood experience does Botan Rice Candy remind Ross? What can this candy, and other candies of our childhood, represent?
- What does Ross mean when he says, “Joy is the underground union between us” (163)? Support your explanation using the example of how stronger tree roots and mycelium support ill, weak or stressed trees. (Put in conversation with “Undrowned” and “Emergent Strategy”)

DELIGHTS #61 — 70

61. “It’s Just the Day
I’m Having”...

62. The Purple Cornets
of Spring

63. The Volunteer

64. Fishing an Eyelash:
Two or Three Cents on
the Virtues of the
Poetry Reading

65. Found Things

66. Found Things (2)

- Ross compares the volunteer to a boatwoman taking people across the River Styx. Look up the River Styx. What does this volunteer symbolize to him, and what about her demeanor informs this symbolism?
- According to Ross, what is the major difference between reading poems in a book and a live poetry reading? More specifically, what important experience can a live poetry reading create that a book simply cannot?
- Ross theorizes that “our delight grows as we share it” (173). What example does he use to support this idea and what examples from your own life support this idea?
- In “Bobblehead,” what lessons does Ross’s grandmother teach him? Support your response with an explanation of how she teaches him.

67. Cuplicking

68. Bobblehead

69. The Jenky

70. The Crow’s Ablutions

- Analyze the word jenky. What does it mean and what connotation does it usually have? What new definition and connotation does Ross give it?
- How do jenky innovations interrupt the logic of capitalism, and how can this be beneficial to the environment? Consider what capitalism encourages one to do when something is old or broken.

DELIGHTS #71 — 80

71. Flowers in the Hands
of Statues

72. An Abundance of
Public Toilets

73. The Wave
of Unfamiliar

74. Not for Nothing

75. Bindweed...Delight?

76. Dickhead

77. Ambiguous
Signage Sometimes

78. Heart to Heart

79. Caution: Bees
on Bridge

80. Tomato on Board

- Ross notes that it is common in the United States to see public statues “of men adorned with guns” (187). What do these statues communicate about the men they represent and, by extension, the country they represent?
- What is Ross’s prediction about why people leave gifts such as flowers, fruit, and coins at statues?
- Refer back to “The High-Five from Strangers, Etc.” and Ross’s delight for all new statues to have “flowers or shovels or babies or seedlings...but never again guns” (27) in their hands. What new message would statues like this convey?
- In “Not for Nothing,” Ross comments on regional slang. What is so special about the experience of hearing slang that you recognize? Conversely, what is so special about the experience of learning new slang from a region different from your own?
- What is dangerous and irritating about having bindweed in one’s garden? What is delightful to Ross about removing this plant? What does its existence encourage him to do? What is the larger message about how delight can result from something dangerous or irritating?
- Why does Ross’s father value “proper” English, etiquette, and tastes? Explain what Ross means when he says his father was “trying to make our blackness, or the idea of our blackness, invisible” (204).
- Ross notes that his father was “trying to keep us alive physically and psychically” (204). How is his father’s insistence on “properness” a direct result of racism and a kind of protective parenting that is a burden specifically to Black people?
- How do people treat Ross when he’s flying with a tomato plant? How is this treatment different from how humans often treat plants—both on a personal level and at a macro, industrial level? What can we learn from this interaction?

DELIGHTS #81 – 90

81. Purple-Handed

82. Name: Kayte Young;
Phone Number:
555-867-5309

83. Still Processing

84. Fireflies

85. My Scythe Jack

86. Pawpaw Grove

87. Loitering

88. Touched

89. Scat

90. Get Thee to the
Nutrient Cycle!

- Why is Ross delighted by the fact that Kayte, an adult, put her name and phone number on the tag inside her backpack?
- Ross notes that one of the objectives of popular culture and media is to “make blackness appear to be inextricable from suffering” (220). What examples from pop culture and media (movies, tv shows, music, fame and celebrity, etc.) can you identify that confirm this idea?
- According to Ross, why is it clever of culture and media to try to falsely link Blackness and suffering? What goal does it accomplish?
- What connections do you see between “Fireflies” and “Botan Rice Candy” and “Ghost?” How would you characterize Ross’s father in these memories? How does this characterization resist or challenge traditional masculinity?
- Ross notes that loitering “implies being unproductive...and that is a crime in America” (230). In what ways does America demand productivity and punish a lack of productivity? Consider industries like education, business, etc.
- According to Ross, what is the connection between loitering and laughing?
- Ross notes that a synonym for loitering is “taking one’s time.” What is so powerful about taking ownership of your own time? In your life now, what people and industries try to claim ownership of your time? What are some ways that you take ownership of your time?
- Analyze the word *touched*. What does it mean and what connotation does it usually have? What alternate definition and connotation does Ross identify for it?

DELIGHTS #91 – 102

91. Pulling Carrots

92. Filling the Frame

93. Reckless Air Quotes

94. Judith Irene Gay, Aged
Seventy-six Today!

95. Rothko Backboard

96. The Marfa Lights

97. The Carport

98. My Garden (Book):

99. Black Bumblebees!

100. Grown

101. Coco-baby

102. My Birthday

- Define the word *kin* and identify the multiple definitions for the word *kind*. What connection does Ross note between these words?
- Why does Ross believe that carrots and similar vegetables likely had to be discovered? How does this discovery connect to the fact that today we have many different kinds of carrots, and how is having different kinds related to kindness and kin?
- Why is the imagery of Black kids playing so delightful to witness, especially for Black adults? In your answer, consider how Black children are treated in America and the violences they regularly endure.
- Explain how Ross’s friend breaks linguistic rules with his reckless use of air quotes. What unique qualities and characteristics do you notice in your friends and family where they are breaking a social rule? Why do we often appreciate the ways humans choose to “break the rules?”
- Ross notes that his mother “is among the most self-berating people I know” (249). What quality is she developing as she gets older, as evidenced by the story she tells about herself on her birthday?
- Ross notes while putting lotion on himself, that “when you watch yourself in the mirror...wrapping your arms around yourself...it is easier to see yourself as a child...or at least I thought so today, looking at myself, whom I am so often not nice to” (268). Why is it important to remember the child in you? Why are we often kinder to children than we are to adults? What grace and understanding do we often grant children, and why is it important that we also grant them to ourselves, at any age?
- What is the tone and emotion of the final essayette of this book, “My Birthday?” How does Ross use imagery and sensory detail to create this tone? What details does he include that inform the reader about how his birthday was?

ESSAYETTE(S)	POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES TO DIG DEEPER WHILE OR AFTER READING		
My Birthday (p.269)	<p>Use this essayette for a creative writing lesson for Show Don't Tell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show Don't Tell (video) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4RthqSOcR0 Show Don't Tell (informational blog post) https://blog.reedsy.com/show-dont-tell 	<p>Loitering (p.229)</p> <p>Inefficiency (p.4)</p>	<p>Use these essayettes to create an activity where students examine the ways different industries try to lay claim to our time (specifically education and business)</p> <p>Articles like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work Isn't Fulfilling Because Capitalism Is A Slow March To Death https://truthout.org/audio/work-isnt-fulfilling-because-capitalism-is-a-death-march/ The 40 Hour Work Week https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KtJNYzSjU <p>Then have students reflect on ways they can reclaim their time</p>
<p>Filling the Frame (p.246)</p> <p>Negreeting (p.23)</p>	<p>Use these essayettes to do a larger research activity or project where students explore nonfiction resources that help explain <i>why</i> it is so powerful to see Black children at play and the ways in which Black people are never seen as innocent (resources that examine how Black children are treated in America)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School to Prison Pipeline (video) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoKkasEyDOI Penalizing Black hair in the name of academic success https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2021/02/23/penalizing-black-hair-in-the-name-of-academic-success-is-undeniably-racist-unfounded-and-against-the-law/ Black girls feel the sting of adultification https://www.law.georgetown.edu/news/research-confirms-that-black-girls-feel-the-sting-of-adultification-bias-identified-in-earlier-georgetown-law-study/ Why Won't Society Let Black Girls Be Children? https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/17/parenting/adultification-black-girls.html Teachers Implicit Bias Against Black Children Starts in Preschool https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/04/black-students-teachers-implicit-racial-bias-preschool-study Black Students Face Racial Bias in School Discipline https://www.forbes.com/sites/nickmorrison/2019/04/05/black-students-face-racial-bias-in-school-discipline/?sh=3d571f1536d5 	<p>High-Fives (p.27)</p> <p>Flowers in the Hands of Statues (p.187)</p>	<p>Have students design and create their own statues and reflect on what message they want their statue to convey</p> <p>Then do a gallery walk and have students reflect on what they think their classmates' statues represent</p>
		<p>Fishing an Eyelash: Two or Three Cents on the Virtues of the Poetry Reading (p.169)</p>	<p>Use this essayette to open a poetry unit where you have students read and then also watch the performance of specific poems and describe the benefits of both. Optional: have students then write and perform their own poems.</p> <p>Example Poems: <i>These are poems where the experience of reading and witnessing the performance evoke different emotions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Miss America" by Ramya Ramana https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPwhfzZsIHM "A Queer Girl's Ode To The Piraguero" by Denice Frohman https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMLvLfV5_7k&feature=youtu.be "How To Properly Cook Rice" by Pages Matam https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t87T8R4L_po&list=PLepzmkEb1RXoX5vQCJz3ALTu7TEMRO0A3&index=8 "How To Translate A Joke" by Emi Mahmoud https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tq-W_GLxsUs

<p>Infinity (p.91)</p> <p>“REPENT OR BURN” (p.118)</p>	<p>Use these essayettes with other resources to have a discussion about how color and clothing are gendered and how gender expression is so often violently policed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross Dressing Laws in the United States (video) https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nHnY_wowwyKe9q0NY3-mbYTZcQqDgrrQ/view • From Manly to Sexy: The History of the High Heel https://www.huffpost.com/entry/high-heel-history_b_2613029 • When Did Girls Start Wearing Pink? https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/when-did-girls-start-wearing-pink-1370097/?page=1 • The Casualties of Women’s War on Body Hair https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/02/the-casualties-of-womens-war-on-body-hair/514983/ 	<p>Tomato on Board (p.212)</p> <p>Pulling Carrots (p.244)</p> <p>My Garden (Book): (p.258)</p> <p>Black Bumblebees (p.262)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds</i> by adrienne maree brown (teacher will need to pull excerpts) https://www.amazon.com/Emergent-Strategy-Shaping-Change-Changing/dp/1849352607/ref=sr_1_1?crd=1BGB01OKM8X07&dchil=1&keywords=emergent+strategy&qid=1620059770&sr=8-1 • 10 Inventions That Will Help The Planet https://www.buzzworthy.com/10-inventions-to-save-the-earth/ • 5 Cool Inventions That Could Save The Planet https://www.cnn.com/2017/05/11/tech/ecosolutions-5-ways-tech • 15 Mind-Blowing Inventions That Could Save The Planet https://www.theoxygenproject.com/post/top-15-inventions-that-could-save-the-planet-today/ • Proposal Writing Resource https://classroom.synonym.com/teach-kids-write-proposal-7735080.html • Environmental Volunteer Opportunities in Maryland https://mde.state.md.us/programs/Marylander/Pages/volunteer_opps.aspx
<p>Flower in the Curb (p.8)</p> <p>Praying Mantis (p.20)</p> <p>Transplanting (p.34)</p> <p>Among the Rewards of My Sloth... (p.122)</p> <p>Bird Feeding (p.136)</p> <p>Hickories (p.141)</p> <p>Understory (p.160)</p> <p>“Joy Is Such A Human Madness”: The Duff Between Us (162)</p> <p>The Purple Cornets of Spring (p.165)</p> <p>Bindweed...Delight? (p.197)</p> <p>Caution: Bees on Bridge (p.209)</p>	<p>Delights in Nature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many of Ross’s essayettes focus on humans coexisting with nature and learning from nature. Have students discuss the ways they connect with nature, and engage in close reading of specific essayettes, discussing the way they connect with nature and what nature can teach us. Have students research innovative ways that humans have found to benefit from nature that <i>does not</i> harm nature in the process, but benefits the natural world as well. Then have students brainstorm and draft proposals for either (1) an invention to help the environment in their community that will also benefit the people in their community or (2) a policy change they want to see that’s based on a lesson they’ve learned from the natural world. <p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals</i> by Alexis Pauline Gumbs (teacher will need to pull excerpts) https://www.amazon.com/Undrowned-Feminist-Lessons-Emergent-Strategy/dp/1849353972/ref=sr_1_1?dchil=1&keywords=undrowned&qid=1620059722&sr=8-1 		

AFTER READING - ESSAY OR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

ESSAYETTES TO PULL EVIDENCE FROM	ESSAY QUESTIONS
<p>Botan Rice Candy (p.157)</p> <p>Fireflies (p.221)</p> <p>Judith Irene Gay, Aged Seventy-six Today! (p.249)</p> <p>Ambiguous Signage Sometimes (p.202)</p> <p>The Jenky (p.181)</p> <p>Ghosts (p.94)</p> <p>Weirdly Untitled (p.82)</p> <p>Blowing It Off (p.10)</p>	<p>Many of Ross’s essayettes focus on interactions with his mother and father. Write an essay where you examine Ross’s relationship with his parents. Characterize his mother and/or father through the interactions and memories Ross shares of them and analyze what lessons Ross learns from them—about family, about masculinity, about acceptance, about care, about survival.</p>
<p>Infinity (p.91)</p> <p>“REPENT OR BURN” (p.118)</p> <p>Kombucha in a Mid-century Glass (p.138)</p> <p>Touched (p.233)</p> <p>Umbrella in The Cafe (p.74)</p> <p>Flowers in The Hands of Statutes (p.187)</p> <p>Tomato on Board (p.212)</p> <p>“Joy Is Such A Human Madness”: The Duff Between Us (p.162)</p> <p>Tap Tap (p.66)</p> <p>Baby, Baby, Baby (p.116)</p> <p>Botan Rice Candy (p.157)</p> <p>Fireflies (p.221)</p>	<p>In many of the essayettes, Ross explores masculinity. Write an essay in which you define traditional masculinity and then examine the ways many of Ross’s delights challenge it. Be sure to analyze how and why they challenge it—what freedoms, what relationships, what emotional expressions can be gained from resisting and/or unlearning this type of masculinity?</p>
	<p>Flower in the Curb (p.8)</p> <p>Praying Mantis (p.20)</p> <p>Transplanting (p.34)</p> <p>Among the Rewards of My Sloth... (p.122)</p> <p>Bird Feeding (p.136)</p> <p>Hickories (p.141)</p> <p>Understory (p.160)</p> <p>“Joy Is Such A Human Madness”: The Duff Between Us (p.162)</p> <p>The Purple Cornets of Spring (p.165)</p> <p>Bindweed...Delight? (p.197)</p> <p>Caution: Bees on Bridge (p.209)</p> <p>Tomato on Board (p.212)</p> <p>Pulling Carrots (p.244)</p> <p><i>My Garden (Book):</i> (p.258)</p> <p>Black Bumblebees! (p.262)</p> <p>Additional sources to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Undrowned</i> by Alexis Pauline Gumbs • <i>Emergent Strategy</i> by adrienne maree brown
	<p>Many of Ross’s essayettes focus on human relationships with nature. Write an essay exploring what lessons we can learn from the natural world.</p>

<p>The Sanctity of Trains (p.134)</p> <p>Name: Kayte Young; Phone Number: 555-867-5309 (p.216)</p> <p>The Wave of Unfamiliar (p.193)</p> <p>“It’s Just the Day I’m Having”... (p.164)</p> <p>Babies. Seriously. (p.152)</p> <p>Tap, Tap (p.66)</p> <p>The Negreeting (p.23)</p> <p>The High-Five from Strangers, Etc (p.27)</p> <p>“To Spread the Sweetness of Love” (p.113)</p> <p>Baby, Baby, Baby (p.116)</p> <p>Giving My Body to the Cause (p.120)</p>	<p>Many of Ross’s essayettes focus on “common flourish[es] of love.” Write an essay analyzing the significance of casual everyday intimacies and what we can learn from these types of connections with other people.</p>
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CREATIVE WRITING: STUDENT BOOKS OF DELIGHT

- Have students select their favorite delights from Ross’s collection and examine the structure of his writing. Discuss stream of consciousness, theme, imagery, and other figurative language devices that they may find useful. Have students spend a week (or longer!) brainstorming and then free writing about their delights. Create a class blog with all the entries and have students read each other’s, writing responses and reflections. NOTE: Beginning in Summer 2021, you can visit onemarylandonebook.org for information about submitting “delights” to Maryland Humanities to be featured on their website and social media channels.
- Scaffold: Help students focus their delights with specific topics such as childhood; food/drink; favorite place; etc.



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