

## Dear Educator,

Based on the critically acclaimed best-selling novel by Alice Sebold, **The Lovely Bones** is an emotional and revealing coming-of-age story uniquely told from the perspective of 14-year-old Susie Salmon, who has been murdered and watches over her family—and her killer—from heaven. In December 2009, this riveting story comes to life when Academy Award®-winning director Peter Jackson (*The Lord of the Rings* trilogy) brings **The Lovely Bones** to theaters.

With a rich plotline and captivating characters, **The Lovely Bones** has already found a place in the literature curriculum at many high schools. The debut of the film affords the perfect opportunity to include this contemporary classic in your lesson plans. Students will become absorbed by the powerful acting of Oscar® nominee Mark Wahlberg and Oscar® winners Rachel Weisz and Susan Sarandon, along with Stanley Tucci, Michael Imperioli, and Oscar® nominee Saoirse Ronan. They will become intimately involved in the gripping storyline and Jackson's amazing perspective on "life and everything that came after." Students will connect with Susie's attempts to weigh her desire for vengeance against her desire for her family to heal.

This study guide, brought to you by Young Minds Inspired (YMI), in partnership with DreamWorks Pictures, Film4, and Paramount Pictures, is designed to help your students connect to the film by examining multi-dimensional characters and discussing themes of life and death so richly depicted on the screen. You can use these materials in conjunction with the book or solely to enrich your students' movie-viewing experience.

Please share these materials with other teachers, and return the enclosed reply card. Although the materials are copyrighted, you may make copies for educational purposes. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dominic Kinsley  
Editor in Chief  
Young Minds Inspired



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## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- To explore the universal themes of personal growth, loss, grief, and acceptance portrayed in the new film **The Lovely Bones**.
- To enhance understanding of the many ways people deal with death and the task of moving forward.

## STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

To see how this program aligns with National Standards in English for grades 9-12, go to [www.ymiclassroom.com/pdf/thelovelybonesstandards.pdf](http://www.ymiclassroom.com/pdf/thelovelybonesstandards.pdf)

## HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM

Display the wall poster to introduce the program and generate student interest. Review, photocopy, and distribute a set of the reproducible activity sheets to each student.

## ACTIVITY ONE COMING OF AGE

This activity focuses on the characteristics of a coming-of-age story. Encourage students to research and discuss other protagonists who make this transformation in novels, movies, or other art (for example, Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye* or Gordie Lachance in *Stand by Me*). After they have seen **The Lovely Bones**, ask students to discuss the varying ways Susie, her sister, her brother, and even her parents come of age.

## ACTIVITY TWO A FAMILY IN CRISIS

Begin this activity by leading students in a general discussion about the dynamics of a distressed family. Use the character descriptions to encourage close-reading skills as students deduce which family members exhibit the emotions outlined in the web diagram. After they have seen **The Lovely Bones**, ask students to take on the roles of particular characters to better understand the different emotions each character experiences.

## ACTIVITY THREE LESSONS IN LOSS

**The Lovely Bones** is a revealing portrait of the many ways people cope with grief and loss. In this activity, students will take the role of grief counselor or close family friend and try to console members of the Salmon family. After viewing **The Lovely Bones**, they will use their new perspective to predict how the Salmon family will go forward.

For Group Sales Information please call 1-877-477-7878 or email us at [group\\_sales@paramount.com](mailto:group_sales@paramount.com). Log on to [lovelybones.com/groupsales](http://lovelybones.com/groupsales) for curriculum and talking points to support your field trip.

Encourage your students to participate in **The Lovely Bones** writing contest. Visit [www.lbwritingcontest.com](http://www.lbwritingcontest.com) for details.

THE **LOVELY BONES**

LOVELYBONES.COM

LIMITED - DECEMBER 2009

NATIONWIDE - JANUARY 15, 2010



THE LOVELY BONES has been rated PG13 for mature thematic material involving disturbing violent content and images, and some language.



# ACTIVITY ONE COMING OF AGE

Based on the critically acclaimed best-selling novel by Alice Sebold, and directed by Oscar® winner Peter Jackson (*The Lord of the Rings* trilogy), ***The Lovely Bones*** centers on a young girl, Susie Salmon, who has been murdered and watches over her family—and her killer—from heaven. She must weigh her desire for vengeance against her need for her family to heal.

***The Lovely Bones*** is a coming-of-age story, which means that adolescent characters mature in some way—either by taking responsibility or learning a lesson. In most societies, the teen and early adulthood years are traditionally associated with coming-of-age rituals and lessons. But in ***The Lovely Bones***, even the adults learn that coming of age is a lifelong process as they deal with death, justice, and the differing paths to peace.



**PART A.** Coming-of-age stories have similar characteristics. For example, most protagonists go through a period of physical or emotional separation from family members. Or, they begin to challenge an adult's teaching. Begin this activity by brainstorming a list

of coming-of-age novels and films with which you are familiar. Consider what characteristics the stories have in common. Do the characters have similar experiences and emotions? Are there similarities in what the characters learn on their journey to maturity?

Coming-of-Age Stories	Plot Similarities and Differences	Protagonist Similarities and Differences	What Does the Protagonist Learn?
1.			
2.			
3.			

**PART B.** After viewing ***The Lovely Bones***, consider the following in a class discussion:

- How do Susie's interactions with family members, although mystical, facilitate the coming-of-age theme?
- How are the supporting characters used as agents in Susie's own progress and development? Include in your discussion Susie's mother, who finds many ways to escape her now tragic life; Jack, Susie's guilt-ridden father; Lindsey, Susie's sister, who wants justice yet also wants to go on with her life; and her grandmother who feels compelled to move in with the family and help out.
- Are any of the characters going through transitions like Susie's, and if so, how do Susie's experiences differ from theirs?



## THE LOVELY BONES

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# ACTIVITY TWO A FAMILY IN CRISIS

**The Lovely Bones** is the saga of the Salmon family torn apart by the untimely and tragic death of Susie Salmon. The story traces the lives of each member of the family—including Susie—and shows how each person deals with the repercussions of a devastating loss, both as individuals and as a family.

**PART A.** Get to know the Salmons and their struggle to cope with Susie's death. Read the descriptions of the main characters in **The Lovely Bones** provided below. Then use the terms provided (or your own terms) to create a web diagram showing each family member's emotional connection to the tragedy that has shattered their lives. One spoke of the diagram has been filled in to help you get started.

When **Susie Salmon**, age 14, dies as the result of a crime, she leaves behind a grieving mother, father, and younger sister and brother, whom she watches over from heaven. As she struggles to accept death and leave her lost life behind, she observes the sorrow, anger,

and confusion that consume her family. She desperately wants her family to find peace and go forward with their lives.

Susie's father **Jack** is consumed with guilt over not having been able to protect his daughter. He remains on extended leave from work, increasingly isolating himself at home. He won't give up trying to solve the crime.

Susie's mother **Abigail** cannot deal with both her own grief and the sorrow of her family. She moves to California, leaving her children in the care of her husband and their grandmother.

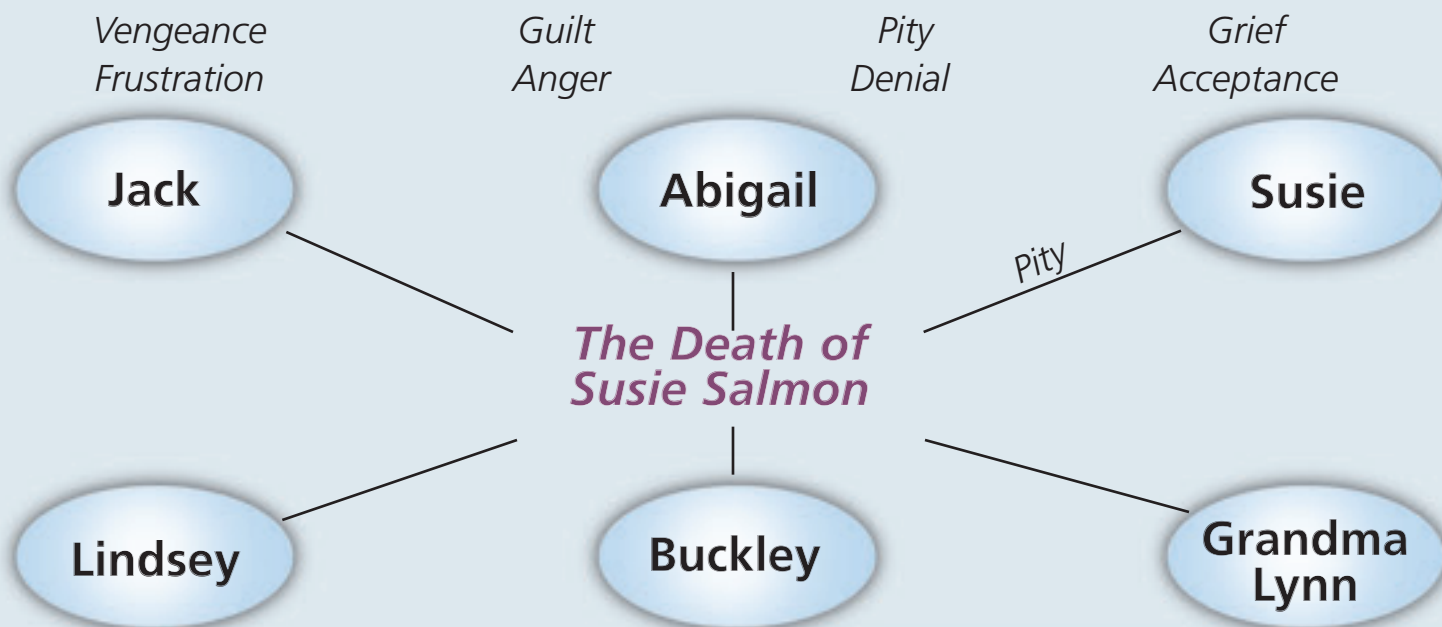
Susie's sister **Lindsey** is a year younger than Susie. She wants justice for Susie but also wants her old life back.

Susie's young brother **Buckley** is 10 years younger than Susie. He takes comfort knowing she is in the "in-between."

Susie's **Grandma Lynn** comes to live with the Salmon family after Abigail leaves. She feels family members need her to keep them moving forward.

After you've completed the web diagram, use the results to examine the forces that hold the family together and pull them apart. Have a class discussion about how the characters and their respective roles in the family dynamic might intensify or calm the family's stress and willingness to move forward.

## EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS



**PART B.** After viewing **The Lovely Bones**, break into small groups and discuss how the film depicted each family member's emotional state. To gain a better understanding of each character's response to Susie's death, your group should select one family member and develop a defense of his or her reaction and eventual resolution.



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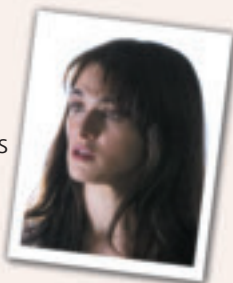


# ACTIVITY THREE LESSONS IN LOSS

Death is a tragedy that affects us all. We must all learn to cope with loss. In *The Lovely Bones*, Susie and her family learn this lesson in different ways. While one person accepts the loss, another is determined to avenge it. While one tries to pretend it never happened, another feels compelled to solve the crime.

**PART A.** Elisabeth Kübler-Ross identified five stages of coping with loss in her famous 1969 book, *On Death and Dying*—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance—providing a basic description of the grieving process that is still in use today. Do some research to learn more about these “stages of grief.” Then read the character descriptions below and decide which stage you think each member of the Salmon family is experiencing. Finally, pretend that you are a psychologist counseling the Salmon family through their loss. What advice would you give each family member?

Susie's mother, **Abigail**, becomes reclusive after Susie dies. She cannot cope with simple daily tasks. Her sadness encompasses her, immobilizes her, and ultimately draws her further away from those who need her most.



Stage of Grief: \_\_\_\_\_

My Advice: \_\_\_\_\_

Susie's sister **Lindsey**, feeding off her father's energy, notices odd reactions from community members and friends. As she begins to intensely study Susie's cold case, she desperately wants to find justice for Susie, and at the same time, wants life to go back to the way it was before the tragedy.



Stage of Grief: \_\_\_\_\_

My Advice: \_\_\_\_\_



Susie's father, **Jack**, seeks justice from the moment he learns of Susie's death. Although the police department buries the case, he will not stop until it is solved.

Stage of Grief: \_\_\_\_\_

My Advice: \_\_\_\_\_



Susie's brother **Buckley**, too young to actively participate in the investigation, feels Susie's presence in “the in-between.” He takes comfort in knowing that Susie is watching out for him and his family.

Stage of Grief: \_\_\_\_\_

My Advice: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART B.** After viewing *The Lovely Bones*, select one of the characters and write, in the space below, what you think life is like for that person 10 years after the film's ending.

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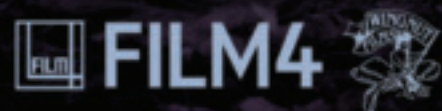
MARK WAHLBERG RACHEL WEISZ SUSAN SARANDON STANLEY TUCCI MICHAEL IMPERIOLI SAOIRSE RONAN

DIRECTED BY  
**PETER JACKSON**

# THE LOVELY BONES

THE STORY OF A LIFE AND EVERYTHING THAT CAME AFTER...

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY **ALICE SEBOLD** SCREENPLAY BY **FRAN WALSH & PHILIPPA BOYENS & PETER JACKSON**



**DECEMBER**  
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