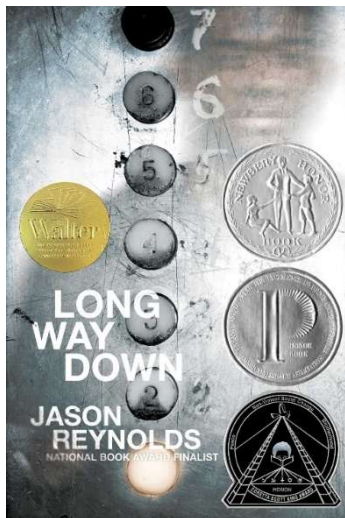


Dear rising Honors sophomore,

Sophomore teachers know two things to be true:

1. Summer reading is a great way to keep your reading and reflective skills sharp.
2. Sophomores *love* crime—Well, learning about it, that is.

To help you prepare this summer to excel in sophomore English, you get to read a recent and relevant, fast-paced **verse novel** starring a teenager from a neighborhood gripped by violence. Your sophomore year especially emphasizes **identity**, **interdependence**, and **life choices**. To launch our class conversations about these themes, we will explore:



Long Way Down by Jason Reynolds

Will's older brother Shawn has been shot. Dead. Will feels a sadness so great he can't explain it. But in his neighborhood, there are The Rules:

No. 1: Crying. Don't. No matter what.

No. 2: Snitching. Don't. No matter what.

No. 3: Revenge. Do. No matter what.

But bullets miss. You can get the wrong guy. And there's always someone else who knows to follow the rules...

Will enters the elevator on the seventh floor, ready. He knows who he's after...or does he? On the sixth floor, Buck, his brother's friend, gets on, which alarms Will. Because just like Shawn, Buck is dead.

What to Expect

- **A novel in verse:** A verse novel tells a story through connected poems or spoken word pieces. It's a form well-known for creative language, including how words arranged on a page can affect your reading! In a different form than prose, verse novels especially emphasize the story's mood, rhythm, and experience. You're exploring another kind of storytelling!
- **African-American Vernacular English (AAVE):** Our language has many faces and voices. The way Will shares his story may look and sound different than those you have encountered in other works; however, it would be incorrect to label AAVE unfairly. Will's background and culture have shaped his voice, just as yours have. Be open to it.
- **Critical Concerns:** Our school connection to the Sisters of Mercy asks you, too, to interact with their Critical Concerns: **the Earth**, **nonviolence**, **women**, **racism**, and **immigration**. This includes literature! *Long Way Down* spotlights **nonviolence**, inviting us to consider and challenge how we respond when faced with difficult choices.

Guiding Questions

- How do you make decisions? Who or what influences you?
- What are the "Rules" that you personally follow or believe?
- How do we fall into patterns or cycles? How can a person break free of them?

Flip to the other side for our reading expectations!

Reading Expectations

To participate in our class activities and discussions about *Long Way Down*, you need to **annotate well** and complete **our reader's response chart**. Both will help you to explore our guiding questions, and both will be checked in our first days back.

- 1. Annotations.** Take active in-text notes about key details and developments, focusing especially on the items in our chart. You should also highlight or underline sentences you find interesting, questionable, or especially moving. Commit to the habit of annotating every text you read for school!
- 2. Reader's response chart.** We're reading not only for a good plot but also for great style. As you read and annotate, keep an eye out for:
 - **Characters:** Will meets several characters on his elevator ride. For each section of the novel, list the name of the character he meets.
 - **Relationship/Interactions:** How does Will know the individual he encounters, and how do they interact? How does this person influence Will's point of view? Explain in detail.
 - **Impact:** How does Will react to the people he encounters? How do they get him to consider and reconsider his situation?

Long Way Down gets us ready to share our own writing voices and rediscover our personal stories through exciting language. We hope you enjoy your summers and look forward to meeting you and speaking about this book in the fall!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Moore

P. S. – Can you read it more than once? Bet.

Name: _____

Floor	Name the person who joins Will on the elevator.	Describe Will's relationship with this individual. (Not just who they are to him, but how well/not well he knows them, and what he thinks about them.)	What is this person's advice to Will and/or stance on his dilemma?	How does this person affect the way Will thinks about his overall situation? What is his reaction to the person? Any lessons learned?
7 (73-106)				
6 (109-146)				
5 (149-192)				

Floor	Name the person who joins Will on the elevator.	Describe Will's relationship with this individual. (Not just who they are to him, but how well/not well he knows them, and what he thinks about them.)	What is this person's advice to Will and/or stance on his dilemma?	How does this person affect the way Will thinks about his overall situation? What is his reaction to the person? Any lessons learned?
4 (195-234)				
3 (237-278)				
2 (281-306)				

Flip back through the book and choose one page that you found especially striking or cool. Write the page number, the first five words of the page, and explain why you chose it.

What do you think happens when Will gets to the first floor? HINT: He does not die.