ABOUT THE BOOK
Timothy is on probation. It’s a strange word—something that happens to other kids, to delinquents, not to kids like him. And yet, a judge has officially rendered him an ‘adjudicated delinquent.’ He is under house arrest for the next year. He must check in weekly with a probation officer, a therapist, and keep a journal, but mostly, he has to stay out of trouble. But staying out of trouble proves more difficult than Timothy ever thought it would be when he must take drastic measures to help his struggling family.

*House Arrest* is a touching yet humorous middle grade novel in verse about one boy’s path to redemption as he navigates a sick brother, a grieving mother, and one tough probation officer.

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE
This teacher guide contains discussion questions and activities aligned with the Common Core State Standards. See inside for reference to the Reading and Writing strands and grade-specific standards.
PRE-READING ACTIVITY

THE MORAL DILEMMA

Present Lawrence Kohlberg’s classic moral dilemma to students:

*Heinz’s wife was dying from a particular type of cancer. Doctors said a new drug might save her. The drug had been discovered by a local pharmacist and Heinz tried desperately to buy some, but the pharmacist was charging ten times the money it cost to make the drug.*

*Heinz could only raise half the money, even after help from family and friends. He explained to the pharmacist that his wife was dying and asked if he could have the drug at a lower price or pay the rest of the money later. The pharmacist refused, saying that he had discovered the drug and was going to make money from it. The husband was desperate to save his wife, so later that night he broke into the pharmacy and stole the drug.*

ASK STUDENTS:

1. Should Heinz have stolen the drug? Why or why not?

2. What if the person dying was a stranger? Should Heinz steal the drug to aid a stranger? Why or why not?

3. Does Heinz have a duty or an obligation to steal the drug? Why or why not?

4. It is against the law for Heinz to steal. Does that make it morally wrong?

5. In general, should people do everything they can to obey the law? Why or why not?

6. What do you think is the most responsible thing for Heinz to do?

(Modified from http://www.haverford.edu/psych/ddavis/p109g/kohlberg.dilemmas.html)

Follow up with a discussion about Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development. Emphasize that while this is a controversial theory, it is one way of thinking about how people develop their system of ethics. Ask students to keep this theory in mind as they learn about Timothy in *House Arrest.*

Correlates with CCSS SL. 6-9.1, 6-9.3, 6-9.4.

WHILE READING: TEXT-BASED QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Based on the section “Week 1,” what can you conclude about the protagonist Timothy so far? Support your response with textual evidence.

- Create an imitation poem of Timothy’s “confession” on page 7, beginning with “I will never know what I was thinking when . . . ” and ending with “It would have.” First, count the number of lines in the section. Then, count the number of syllables in each line. Aim to replicate the length of this poem exactly. Afterward, reflect on what you learned about the poetry in the book based on this exercise.

- After reading “Week 4,” review Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development. Then, write a journal entry about what you would have done if you were in Timothy’s situation.

- “Mrs. Bainbridge called that last part of the journal/a breakthrough. . . . I don’t feel like I’ve broken through anything, though./Really./Maybe some things have broken through me?” (page 25) What do you think Mrs. Bainbridge meant when she said Timothy had a breakthrough? Did something “break through” Timothy? If so, what?
• After reading “Week 7,” create a character portrait about one of the following secondary characters: Mrs. Bainbridge, James, Timothy’s mom. The character portrait should be in the form of a found poem. Find a minimum of 10 lines or phrases from the text to create this found poem portrait.

• Create an autobiographical poem using a Q&A format, beginning with “You look cold. . . . Duh, Mrs. B. Are you listening to you?” (pages 33–34) Note that Mrs. Bainbridge’s questions are actual dialogue, while Timothy’s responses are interior monologue. Use a similar imagined conversation that you’ve had with someone as inspiration for this poem.

• Discuss the author’s usage of figurative language on page 47. What is the effect of comparing the mysterious gift to fireworks and a slant of sunshine? How are these metaphors effective in conveying Timothy’s feelings here?

• Timothy says about José, “He just doesn’t even know” (page 60). This is a refrain throughout the book. Discuss who else Timothy accuses of “not knowing.” What does he think each of these characters misunderstands about his life? Based on textual evidence, do you think this is a fair assessment?

• Compare José’s family and house to Timothy’s. What do you think Timothy feels about José’s family? How does he feel when he’s at José’s house? What role does José and his family play in Timothy’s life?

• “Translate” one section of the book into prose. Read the original text aloud, and then your translation. What difference, or impact, does the verse structure have on the reading experience?

• Given the incidents at the end of the book, do you think Timothy changed, or developed, through the course of the book? Use textual evidence to support your answer.

• Using pages 271–272 as a starting point, write Timothy’s speech at the Carnival of Giving. Share it with a classmate.

• Brainstorm a list of the many acts of generosity throughout this novel. Which would you say was the most generous gift of all?


WRITING AND RESEARCH CONNECTIONS:
FINAL PROJECTS TO CONSIDER FOR YOUR STUDENTS

FOUND POEM CHALLENGE
Ask your students: What was the greatest thing that Timothy overcame? They must submit their response in the form of a found poem, using a minimum of fifteen lines from the book as evidence. They must also structure their poem to clearly answer this question. Ask them to share and discuss with a group of classmates.

Correlates with CCSS W. 6-9.3.

RESEARCH ACTIVITY
Have students use appropriate research methods to learn more about Levi’s medical condition: history, causes, symptoms, and available treatments. Ask them to create a brief presentation or report on their findings.

Correlates with CSS W. 6-9.7, 6-9.8, SL. 6-9.5
K.A. Holt is the author of *Rhyme Schemer* (Chronicle, 2014) as well as *Mike Stellar: Nerves of Steel* (Random House BFYR, 2009), which was an RH Fresh Fiction from New Voices choice as well as a Scholastic.com Great Summer Read for Tweens; and *Brains for Lunch: A Zombie Novel In Haiku?!* (Neal Porter Books, 2010), which received a starred review in Publishers Weekly and was on the 2011 Lone Star Reading List. She lives with her family in Austin, TX, and is active and very well-connected in the vibrant Texas writing community.