

The Hive – Teaching Guide

About the Book

A Winner of *People Magazine's* Best Books for Fall 2019.

New York Times bestselling authors Barry Lyga and Morgan Baden have teamed up for the first time to create a novel that's gripping, terrifying and more relevant every day.

Cassie McKinney has always believed in the Hive.

Social media used to be out of control, after all. People were torn apart by trolls and doxxers. Even hackers — like Cassie's dad — were powerless against it.

But then the Hive came. A better way to sanction people for what they do online. Cause trouble, get too many "condemns," and a crowd can come after you, teach you a lesson in real life. It's safer, fairer and perfectly legal.

Entering her senior year of high school, filled with grief over an unexpected loss, Cassie is primed to lash out. Egged on by new friends, she makes an edgy joke online. Cassie doubts anyone will notice.

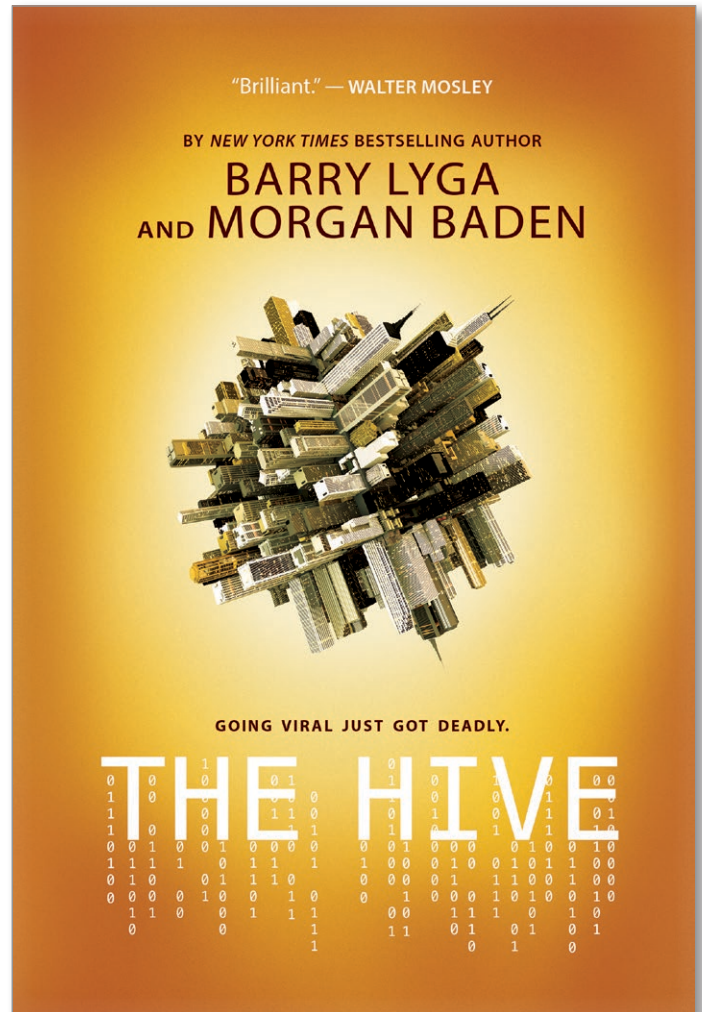
But the Hive notices everything. And as her viral comment whips an entire country into a frenzy, the Hive demands retribution.

One moment Cassie is anonymous; the next, she's infamous. And running for her life.

With nowhere to turn, she must learn to rely on herself — and a group of Hive outcasts who may not be reliable — as she slowly uncovers the truth about the machine behind the Hive.

About the Authors

BARRY LYGA is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the *I Hunt Killers* trilogy as well as such critically acclaimed novels as *Boy Toy* and *Bang*. He's also a comic book nerd who geeks out by writing superhero novels, including the *Flash* series and *Thanos: Titan Consumed*. He lives outside New York City, in a house bursting with books.



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From the Authors

We were attracted to the concept of the Hive because of its sense of immediacy ... and, in some ways, its inevitability. While we love a good dystopian tale set a hundred years in the future, or a dark fantasy set in another universe, we wanted *The Hive* to feel more present; like the events within it are already happening in certain ways. *The Hive* is us.

To make the events in *The Hive* feel plausible, all we had to do was amp up what's already happening in our current social media landscape. *The Hive* is — if not now — very, very nearby. It's a cautionary tale, a shout of "Look out!" right before an air conditioner drops out of the sky and into your path.

Each of us has a voice — not just about what we want from our technologies, but about how we'll navigate those technologies to craft the kind of world we want. And each of us must understand that our choices do, in fact, directly impact the world we're creating. We wrote this book to hypothesize about how certain choices could jeopardize what we hold dear; and to serve as a warning of what could very well be.

Social media can connect, but it can also divide. We read the following real-life stories carefully as we wrote *The Hive*:

[Opinion | You Care More About Your Privacy Than You Think](#)

[Three Facebook moderators break their NDAs to expose a company in crisis](#)

[Man Who Built The Retweet: "We Handed A Loaded Weapon To 4-Year-Olds"](#)

[People are using Snapchat to sell smuggled guns](#)

Introducing the Novel

1. Introduce the concepts of utopia and dystopia. Have students work in small groups to brainstorm what they think are the issues or problems with current society. Then have them describe what an "ideal" society would look like to address these issues. Use the term "utopia" to describe this ideal world.
2. After students have shared their ideas, ask them to consider what the consequences might be of creating their "utopian" society (e.g., would everyone have to conform to the same vision of society? Would there be one way of thinking, one religion? What happens to dissidents?). Discuss what might have to be sacrificed to create this utopian society.
3. Introduce the term dystopia (an imagined world or society in which people lead wretched, dehumanized, fearful lives; formed from the Ancient Greek words $\delta\upsilon\sigma$, "bad," and $\tau\acute{o}\pi\omicron\varsigma$, "place"). Explain that dystopias often begin with an attempt to create a utopian society that goes very wrong. Dystopia describes an imagined society that maintains the illusion of utopia through control by an individual or a government.
4. Ask students to share examples of dystopian societies from books and films. Have them explain why they are examples of dystopia.
5. Using students' knowledge of films and books, construct a list of the characteristics of dystopian literature. You may wish to add to the list throughout the novel study or as you study other dystopian novels and film. (See BLM 1: *The Hive* as Dystopia.)

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6. Before beginning to read the novel, present the following statement to students:
The internet is more good than evil. Have students use a Likert scale to respond to the statement.

The internet is more good than evil	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Have students share their rationale for their rankings. You may wish to aggregate the scores on the Likert scale to show the class pattern.

Questions and Prompts

The following questions or prompts can be used for class or group discussion:

1. What is the backstory that explains why the Hive was developed as a system of justice?
2. What is BLINQ? How does it work? What is the role of the Hive?
3. How does the authors' description of the various groups in Cassie's high school compare to the groups in today's high schools? Why do you think groups such as the artists and the athletes have become less popular over time in Cassie's world?
4. How does Rowan's view of the internet and being "BLINQ ready" compare with that of Cassie's? How does it compare with your view of the internet?
5. Cassie tells herself that she made the joke about the president's daughter's baby because she was goaded into it. Later she tells herself that she did it to fit in. What role do you think peer pressure plays in shaping our actions?
6. Why was the symbol Ω chosen to represent the Organized Human Mutiny?
7. How is the Organized Human Mutiny able to remain hidden from the government? Do you think it would be possible for a group to do this today?
8. What strategy does Rachel use to help Cassie? How effective do you think her strategy is?
9. How is the president able to use the Hive for his own purposes?
10. How are bots used to manipulate BLINQ? How are bots used to manipulate people's thinking and actions in our society?
11. What role does Alexandra Pastor play in the manipulation of the Hive? Do you think her strategy to stay undercover was the right thing to do?
12. How does Cassie, with Carson's help, reverse the Level 6 alert? How do the president and Alexandra explain the reversal?
13. Do you think that Harlan is still alive, or is it a bot communicating with Cassie?
14. The authors do not reveal what Cassie decides to do with the information she discovers about the Hive. What do you think she will do? What would you do?
15. What is the same about the society in *The Hive* and our society? Think about topics such as technology, attitudes to conformity, government, justice, etc.

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Writer's Craft

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- i. Describe Cassie's attitude toward Hive Justice at the beginning of the novel. Describe how her attitude and beliefs change throughout the novel.
- ii. The novel identifies quotes and advice from Cassie's father, Harlan. How do these quotes from her father affect her decision-making throughout the novel? Which of the quotes from her father had the most impact on your own thinking?
- iii. How does Cassie's relationship with her mother, Rachel, change throughout the book?
- iv. Why do you think the authors presented Carson as a somewhat "flat" character in the beginning of the novel and then a more dynamic character at the end of the novel?

THEME

- i. Think about *The Hive* and other dystopian books that you have read or films that you have watched. What themes do they have in common? What would you consider the overarching theme of *The Hive*? Have students use think-pair-share strategy to compare their response with those of their peers.

FORM AND STYLE

- i. Why do you think the authors include text messages throughout the novel? What other elements of technology are used in the novel?
- ii. The story is told from alternating third-person narratives. The reader hears both Cassie's and her mother's points of view in the story. Do you think this is more or less effective than if the novel were told through first-person narrative? Why do you think the authors chose this narrative style?
- iii. Are there elements of the authors' style that did not appeal to you? Why didn't they appeal to you? Are there elements that did appeal to you? Why?

CRITICAL LITERACY

- i. Harlan tells Cassie to "punch up, not down." How did Cassie interpret and use this advice? How might this message have applicability to the citizens of today?
- ii. What message do you think the authors wanted to give to the reader? What evidence from the novel supports your idea?
- iii. Do you think the government ever has the right to restrict the freedom of the citizens in a society? Under what circumstances?
- iv. Do you think individuals can change society? Give examples to support your thinking.

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Self-Reflection

1. Have students reexamine the statement, *The internet is more good than evil*. Have them review both their own responses on the Likert scale and the aggregated class response. Provide students with an opportunity to rescore themselves on the Likert scale. Discuss why they might have changed their responses or kept them the same. Aggregate the class data and examine it for change. Ask students if they think other groups such as their parents or their grandparents would respond in the same way as they did.

Responding to the Text

1. Write an epilogue for each of the following characters: Cassie, Rachel, Carson, Bryce, Sarah, Rowan, the president and Alexandra. Briefly describe what happens to each of the characters immediately after the conclusion of *The Hive*.
2. Imagine that *The Hive* is about to be released as a movie. Create a movie trailer. Movie trailers include elements such as the following:
 - Music or sound that attracts the audience's attention
 - Introduction of the main character(s)
 - Quick pace to make the action seem exciting
 - Voice-over to tell what the movie is about without giving too much away
 - Might include words and graphics or motion graphics
3. Select a scene from *The Hive* that you think best represents the theme of the book. Work with some of your classmates to prepare and present the scene through readers' theater. Remember that an effective reader must
 - Know their part and practice it.
 - Put themselves in the character's place. Think about how the character sounds and how they are feeling. React to what the other characters are saying.
 - Read with voice projection, fluency and expression.
 - Use props if appropriate.
 - Look at the audience from time to time. Don't just look down at the script.

Other Dystopian Novels for Comparison Studies

Internment by Samira Ahmed

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

The Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler

The Belles by Dhonielle Clayton

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

The Marrow Thieves by Cherie Dimaline

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

The Giver by Lois Lowry

Legend by Marie Lu

Shatter Me by Tahereh Mafi

Cinder by Marissa Meyer

Animal Farm by George Orwell

Nineteen Eighty-Four by George Orwell

Life as We Knew It by Susan Beth Pfeffer

Want by Cindy Pon

Divergent by Veronica Roth

The Uglies by Scott Westerfeld

BLM 1: *The Hive* as Dystopia

Name: _____ Date: _____

Would you say that *The Hive* is a dystopian novel? Use this list of characteristics of dystopian literature to defend your response.

1. The story takes place in the future.

2. The narrative includes a backstory that explains how events of the past lead to the current changes to society.

3. The protagonist recognizes the problems within the society and attempts to resolve them.

4. The story connects to today's society through an issue, problem or trend.

5. There is a group that is not under the control of the society.

6. Society is controlled through a government, group or individual.

7. Technology is more advanced than in current society and is controlled by those in power.

8. There is the possibility that citizens can escape.

9. An event triggers the protagonist into action.

10. Propaganda is used to control the people.

11. Information, independent thought and freedom are restricted.

12. Citizens conform to a set of expectations or rules. Individuality and deviation are considered bad and punishable.

13. The society is an illusion of utopia.

14. Citizens are under constant surveillance.

15. The end of the story does not always bring a resolution.

The Hive Chapter Questions

Chapter 1

Begin to make a character development map for Cassie. What do you learn about her in this chapter? Add to your map as more of Cassie's character is revealed throughout the novel. Note how her feelings and attitudes toward people such as her mother and friends, technology and Hive Justice change. You can use visual representations, symbols, words and phrases to develop your character map.

1. What is Hive Justice? Why do you think Cassie ran away from the Hive Mob?

Chapter 2

1. Why does Cassie feel that there is nothing left to be taken away from her?
2. Cassie recalls that her father used to say, **“People get mean when you give them permission to”** (page 26). How does this quote fit with the development of the social media platform BLINQ?
3. Compare how Cassie and her mom view Hive Justice. How do you view Hive Justice?

Chapter 3

1. Cassie describes high school as a battleground. What evidence does she provide to support her belief? How well does her description of high school fit with your view of high school?
2. What are some key characteristics that we learn about Rowan and her group, the Homework Coven? Consider their views on social media, personal appearance and solidarity. Why do you think Cassie accepts the invitation to join their group? What advice would you give to her about joining this group?

Chapter 4

1. When teaching her history course, Rachel compares her society to that of the ancient Romans. She asks her class this question: **“Are they the barbarians or are we, who kill each other daily in the media and online, with no lesson taken away for all that violence?”** (page 63). How would you respond to her question?
2. Why do you think the author placed Bryce in a position to overhear the conversation between Rachel and Agent Hernandez?

Chapter 5

1. How are Harlon and Cassie able to communicate? Why do you think Cassie continues to text her dad, even though she knows it's a bot?
2. In her discussion with the Homework Coven about the president, Cassie says, **“My dad said the president thinks he's a king”** (page 82). How do you think this might be foreshadowing?

Chapter 6

1. When Cassie first meets Carson, he is wearing a shirt that says CODE IS POETRY. At the second meeting, he is wearing a shirt that says LIFE IS A HACK. What do these shirts reveal about Carson's character? What do Cassie's interactions with him reveal about his character?
2. How do Rowan and Sarah react when Cassie's joke reaches LEVEL 1 and then 2? Do you think Cassie deserved the reply she received from them? Defend your response.

Chapter 7

1. What does this chapter reveal about the relationship between Cassie and her mother, Rachel?

Chapter 8

1. **“It was illegal to dump your phone while you were being hunted but not illegal to run” (page 117).** What is the paradox that Cassie sees in this Hive rule?
2. The authors state that, **“contrary to popular belief, there was knowledge in the world that could not be found in the endless tracts of Google or Wikipedia” (page 124).** What do you think the authors meant by this? What role do you think print books play in our society?

Chapter 9

1. Bryce says, **“Hard thing to do. We’ve all become so accustomed to them — it’s like having a second brain. Hard to ditch your phone, even if you know it’s for the best” (page 142).** How does this statement apply to Cassie’s situation? Many people today say that if they gave up their phones they would disappear. How would you respond to both statements?
2. What is the symbol used by the Organized Human Mutiny? What meaning does the symbol have in the Greek alphabet? What meaning does the symbol have for OHM?
3. A political pundit is someone who offers their opinion on a political topic on which they are knowledgeable to mass media. Imagine you are a political pundit. Write a brief report for the media, analyzing and offering your opinion about each of the speeches by the president and Alexandra Pastor.

Chapters 10 and 11

1. Why do you think Harlon was known as Black Moses? What started his notoriety as a hacker?
2. **“The world had become accustomed to immediate gratification. Instant delivery. Instant response. Now, instant justice” (page 187).** Why do you think the authors used short two-word sentences for this part of the text? How effective is this technique? How could you use this technique in your own writing?
3. What effect do you think Rachel’s second message to the president had on OHM, on Hive Justice and on the president?

Chapter 12

1. Cassie quotes Archimedes: **“Give me a firm place to stand and with a lever I will move the whole world” (page 204).** How does this principle apply to what Cassie did to both try to reverse the Level 6 rating and to impress OHM?
2. Cassie often uses the adage **“punch up, not down.”** What does it mean? Where else in the novel does Cassie use that saying? How does she think this adage applies to the actions the president will have to take in order to respond to her hack?

Chapter 13

1. Rachel and Special Agent Kharouk have the following conversation about Cassie running away.
Agent Kharouk: “... **this isn’t just about her. It’s about the integrity of the entire Hive system [...] There’s a bigger picture here. The social good. The stability of law and order.**”
Rachel: “**The death of a child**” (pages 208–209).
Discuss whether there are any circumstances when the life of a child is worth the stability of the “system.”
2. Why do you think deleting pictures was an effective strategy to force Rachel to tell where Cassie is? Why are photographs so important to us?
3. Rachel posts on #UniversityMoms. What argument does she use to try to elicit help from other moms? How might this be an effective strategy? How does this connect to an example from social media today?

Chapter 14

1. Why does OHM think that the “system” has been manipulated to bring Cassie to Level 6?
2. TonyStark tells Cassie that “**everything is about money**” (page 229). Do you agree or disagree with his statement? What arguments would support your opinion?

Chapter 15

1. Imagery means using figurative language to represent objects, actions and ideas in such a way that it appeals to our physical senses. Use a chart like the one below to show examples of how the authors use imagery to help the reader visualize the scene after the breach.

Sound	Sight	Tactile	Taste	Feelings/Emotions	Actions
- Street noise of tires on pavement - People barking orders into their earbuds					

Chapter 16

1. Cassie realizes that “**They — the scary they of conspiracy movies, now suddenly real — knew everything she was doing and saying**” (page 255). What do you think Cassie believed about surveillance prior to her Level 6 ranking and the breach? How close do you think our society is to having everything we say and do monitored and scrutinized?
2. What does Rachel mean when she says, “**Online action needs to turn to real-life action**” (page 257)?

Chapter 17

1. What purpose does the death of TonyStark play in the novel?

Chapter 18

1. What comparison does Rachel make between the actions of the Roman elite and Hive Justice?
2. Why do you think the authors chose to make Rachel a professor of ancient history? Use examples from the novel to support your answer.

Chapter 19

1. Why does Cassie think that Bryce tipped off the Hive mob about the location of OHM? What do you think of her accusation?

Chapter 20

1. How did Bryce react to finding out the identity of @Shameless? How did Cassie react?
2. What new information is revealed about the origins of Level 6?
3. How does the incident at Venecia confirm or disprove your opinion from chapter 19 about Bryce as the betrayer?

Chapter 21

1. Compare and contrast the messages that were posted after the appearance of Cassie at Venecia. What do the messages tell you about the people who posted them?

Chapter 22

1. Who do you think Cassie contacts for help at the end of the chapter? What made you select this person?

Chapter 23

1. Rachel reveals that **“the #MomArmy was on the move ... virtually. Someone was organizing a boycott of Facebook, on the theory that if they could disrupt one of the social network’s algorithms, others might follow” (page 314)**. Discuss whether or not you think a boycott is an effective way to shut down or bring about change to a social media giant or any large corporation. Provide an example of a boycott from our society. How successful was it?

Chapter 24

1. How did the government get the most powerful companies in the world to cooperate in the creation of BLINQ? How realistic do you think this scenario is in today’s context?
2. How was the government using misdirection to test Level 6?
3. What did you learn about bots from Cassie’s and Carson’s discussion? What role do bots play in our lives? Consider both positive and negatives roles.
4. How does Carson’s understanding of patterns help to uncover how the government “gamed” the system?
5. Review how Cassie treated Sarah in the early part of the story. Does Cassie deserve the response she gets from Sarah? Defend your opinion.

Chapter 25

1. Should Cassie trust the message from Bryce? Why or why not?

Chapter 26

1. Why does Alexandra think that Cassie will not be successful even if she tells the public what she knows about how the Hive has been manipulated?

Chapters 27 and 28

1. Do you think the relationship between Rachel and her daughter is typical of that of a mother and teenage daughter. Explain your thinking. How do you think Harlon affected the relationship between Rachel and Cassie?
2. Predict why Cassie posted latitude and longitude coordinates.

Chapter 29

1. **“Sometimes when you have to put a hole in a wall, you need a sledgehammer and sometimes you just need a drill. Know the difference” (page 379)** is another piece of advice from Harlon. What did Harlon mean by this? Why do you think the authors include this saying in more than one chapter? (See chapter 26, page 365.)

Chapter 30

1. Review the texts that were posted after Cassie’s apology. What would you have posted?
2. How do you think Alexandra proved she was working “from the inside” through her explanation of the Hive Justice reversal?
3. Discuss whether or not you think artificial intelligence can ever have its own morality.

Chapters 31 and 32

1. Describe Cassie’s relationship with her mom at the beginning of the story. How does her attitude toward her mother change throughout the story? How does Rachel’s attitude toward Cassie change? What do you think their relationship will be like in the future?

Chapter 33

1. If Cassie releases the data, what do you think will be the consequences for the OHM members, the President, Alexandra Pastor, BLINQ and Cassie? What do you think Cassie will do? What would you do?

Chapter 34

1. Why do you think the authors used the sledgehammer and the drill analogy again at the end of the novel?
2. The novel ends: **“And then she sat back. And waited” (page 413)**. Why do you think the authors ended it this way? Do you consider this a satisfactory ending? How would you have ended it?