

November Blues

Study Guide

The following questions could be used for small group discussions, whole class discussions, or short answer written questions.	Common Core Standard(s)
1. November Blues begins with a rather graphic description of the early discomforts of pregnancy. How does this textual choice help capture the reader's attention? What predictions can the reader make about November and the situation she seems to have gotten herself into based on the text? Compare those predictions to what really happens at the end of the novel using textual evidence to support your answer.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.5 RL.6-12.6
2. As you first meet November, how is she like many young people today? How is she different? What seem to be her biggest insecurities? Her greatest strengths? What character traits does she have that will help her through the difficulties to come? Support your answer with specific details from the text.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3
3. Describe the relationship between November and her mother using evidence from the novel. What family situations from the past still affect both of them? What tensions exist between November and her mother and why? How is their relationship affected by November's pregnancy?	RL.6-12.3
4. Use explicit and implicit clues to determine why Jericho has given up the trumpet. Why does music cause him pain instead of give him pleasure? Why does he choose football over music? What is ironic about the practice times, as well as performance times, for the football team and the high school band?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3
5. Discuss the character of Arielle and her complicated relationship with Jericho, as well as her treatment of Olivia using specific details from the book. Does she have any redeeming qualities, or is she purely a negative character? What might have made Arielle the person she is? What alternate endings might you create for Arielle at the end of the book?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.1
6. Describe Olivia--physically, emotionally, and socially using details from the text. Why is a girl like Olivia mistreated and sometimes unhappy in school situations? What makes Olivia a strong character? Compare Olivia's social difficulties with November's social problems. How are they alike? How are they different? How does each girl handle the problems she confronts?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 RL.6-12.4 W.6-12.2
7. How does Jericho react to November's pregnancy and why does he have mixed emotions? How does he prove to be a supportive friend? How do the other students in the school react? Give specific examples.	RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.1
8. Describe November's increasing physical and social difficulties as her pregnancy progresses. How do her friends and teachers treat her? How does she feel about herself? What does she learn during her shopping trip for baby items? What happens during her trip to the mall? Support your answer with specific details from the text.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.1
9. Describe Josh's parents after their son's death. Why do you think Josh's parents wanted to adopt the baby? What would you have done if you had to make November's choice? Use evidence from the novel to back up your answer.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.1

10. Use textual evidence to determine what Douglass High School is like. Look for explicit and implicit details that describe the building, the teachers, the students, the administration, and the feel of the school. What specific language does Draper use to convey the feel of the school? How does it compare to your school and/or other schools in your community?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.2 RL.6-12.3
11. Why would a school football team like Douglass agree to play a team like Excelsior? Realistically, what are the Douglass team's chances of winning? Coach Barnes is a great example of the power of encouragement and belief in the impossible. As they attempt to win, how does he help the boys on the team, both emotionally and socially? Support your answer with specific details from the text.	RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.1
12. Describe the game with Excelsior. Do you think they could have won the game if it had not rained? Explain your answer. In the long run, which do you think was better for the plot, a win in spite of great odds, or a loss with dignity?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.5
13. Describe the scene when November goes into labor on the side of the highway using details from the text. How do you think she felt? How do you think the other students reacted to the whole scene? What would you have done if confronted with that situation?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.1
14. What were your predictions about November and the birth of her baby? What did you base those predictions on? How did those predictions differ from what really happened? How realistic were the events in the story, and how often do you think difficulties occur in teen births and deliveries?	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 RL.6-12.4
15. Why do Josh's parents decide they no longer want to adopt the baby? What does that tell you about them and their motives? How does November react and why? Why does Josh's mother cry as they leave? Support your answer with details from the text.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3
16. Why do you think Jericho decides to return to his music? Why does he stay with the football team as well? Describe the very last scene and why is it significant.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3
17. Explain the title of the novel. Why does the title have more than one possible interpretation? Discuss the various "blues" within the story.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.4
18. What would have been the effect on the novel if the baby had been perfect? Why is tragedy more memorable and more powerful than happiness in a novel?	RL.6-12.3 RL.6-12.5 W.6-12.1
19. What does November learn about herself, her past and her future through the birth of her baby? How has she changed? What has she lost? What has she gained? Support your answer with details from the text.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.1
20. Many young people live with unbelievable amounts of pressure from their peers—who they date, what they do on those dates, the way they dress, act, talk, and respond to the world around them is often controlled by the larger group. Use evidence from the text to discuss how realistic the lives of November and the others are portrayed, and how they can become a voice for young readers.	RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.1
The following questions are designed to be individual writing projects or small group writing projects depending upon the needs of your classroom.	Common Core Standard(s)

<p>Narrative</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Visualize the next ten years for November and Sunshine, Jericho and Olivia, Dana and Kofi, and Arielle. Tell how their lives will have changed and how they were affected by the events of that year in high school. Create a scene in which they meet at a ten-year reunion. Write it in a style that mimics Draper's tone and text structure in the novel. What will have happened to them and why? 2. "That night, November shivered as she curled up in her bed with her Big Bird stuffed toy that she'd gotten when she was five. She would never let her friends know she still slept with a stuffed animal, but Josh had known. He'd even bought her a little green Kermit the Frog for her birthday last year. When she'd asked him why Kermit, Josh had said, "The frog can keep the bird company while you're gone to school, and besides, it will drive Miss Piggy crazy with jealousy!" <p>They'd giggled and pretended and figured they'd have forever to laugh together. But they didn't. Kermit was still around to keep Big Bird company, but November knew she was now on her own. She cuddled the well-worn toy and cried herself to sleep."</p> <p>Write a personal essay that describes a special memory or object in your life. Explain why it is meaningful to you. Be sure to include sensory imagery-- sights, smells, touches, tastes, and sounds.</p>	<p>RL.6-12.5 W.6-12.3 W.6-12.4</p>
<p>Newspaper Article</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trace the story of one of the following characters: Arielle, Olivia, Coach Barnes, Dana, or Roscoe. Imagine you are a reporter doing a story on one of their lives. Write everything you know, as well as whatever you can infer about the character in order to write your article. 2. You are a reporter at one of the following scenes. Write the story for your newspaper. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The game with Excelsior o The ride home from the game on the school bus o The helicopter landing on the highway o The gathering of people in the hospital waiting room 	<p>RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.2 W.6-12.3 W.6-12.4</p>
<p>Letters</p> <p>Write a letter to one of the characters in the book explaining your feelings about the events in the story. What advice would you give November, or Olivia, or Josh's parents, or Jericho?</p>	<p>RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.3 W.6-12.4</p>
<p>Point of View Paper</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write a narrative paper from the point of view of November. Tell what kind of day or week or month she might have as a pregnant teen. Take any aspect of her pregnancy and develop it. Use examples from the book to support your statements. 2. In diary form, write the life of November and Sunshine for several months. Include details about how she manages to cope as a teen mother with a 	<p>RL.6-12.6 W.6-12.1 W.6-12.4 W.6-12.9</p>

<p>possibly disabled baby.</p> <p>3. Reread the scene with November, the Prescotts and their lawyer where they discuss adopting November's baby. Notice how it discusses November's conflicting feelings about the suggestion. The point of view of the character that makes the observation influences the description. How would Josh's mother have written this passage? How would the lawyer have written this passage?</p>	
<p>Descriptive Paper</p> <p>Draper uses very vivid descriptions throughout the novel. For example, " Cell phones came out like buzzards after a kill as kids sent calls and text messages to each other, passing along the news and trying to get more details. That's all anyone talked about for days afterward--the fact that November was pregnant with her dead boyfriend's baby--it was better than reality television." Use Draper's style as a model to write a descriptive paper that uses sensory imagery. Use vivid verbs and powerful adjectives and adverbs as you write. Use as many of the senses as you can (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste).</p>	<p>RL.6-12.5 W.6-12.3 W.6-12.4</p>
<p>Research Topics</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigate the problems of high school pregnancy. Find out statistics as well as problems that occur. Find at least 3-4 current, relevant, authoritative, accurate, and credible sources that talk about the issue. Be sure to cite your sources used. 2. Research current laws concerning adoption. Investigate the options as well as rights of a teen mother and her baby. Find at least 3-4 current, relevant, authoritative, accurate, and credible sources that talk about the issue. Be sure to cite your sources used. 3. Research the costs of running a high school football team for a year. Include uniforms and equipment, coaches, busses, and all other costs. Find at least 3-4 current, relevant, authoritative, accurate, and credible sources that talk about the issue. Be sure to cite your sources used. 4. Research the rules governing high school football in your state. Include times and dates of practices, games, physical requirements, and all other state and local rules. Find at least 3-4 current, relevant, authoritative, accurate, and credible sources that talk about the issue. Be sure to cite your sources used. 5. Write a paper that investigates the effects of pregnancy on young women. You might discuss options, adjustment, or financial situations. Show the results of the effects of pregnancy on school, personal, and social situations. You may choose to show both positive and negative results. Find at least 3-4 current, relevant, authoritative, accurate, and credible sources that talk about the issue. Be sure to cite your sources used. 6. Write a paper that investigates the effects of teen births on young men. Discuss social, emotional, and financial responsibility, both short-term and long range. Give specific examples. Find at least 3-4 current, relevant, authoritative, accurate, and credible sources that talk about the issue. Be sure to cite your sources used. 	<p>W.6-12.1 W.6-12.2 W.6-12.4 W.6-12.7 W.6-12.8 W.6-12.9 RI.6-12.1 RI.6-12.2 RI.6-12.4 RI.6-12.8</p>
<p>Persuasive Paper</p> <p>Reread the scene where Coach Barnes tries to convince the team that they can beat</p>	<p>W.6-12.1 W.6-12.4</p>

<p>the Wildcats. Write a persuasive paper that argues the following point: "The impossible can be accomplished with hard work and high expectations." Whether you agree or disagree, your paper should address only one side of the issue.</p>	
<p>Comparison</p> <p>"I don't have one single thing to remember about my mother," Olivia said, her eyes filling with tears. "It's like a clean notebook--full of pages with nothing written on them."</p> <p>"My mother makes me itch," Dana told them, "but I wouldn't know how to breathe without her. It must be really hard." "You know what it's like not having a mother?" Olivia asked.</p> <p>"I can guess, but not really," November replied.</p> <p>"Imagine being born without your right hand. You learn to do stuff without it. You eat with your left hand and figure out how to tie your shoes. You only need one glove in the winter. You can't clap."</p> <p>Write a paper about a friend or family member that uses strong, unusual comparisons to make your point. Make sure you use specific details to make your paper effective.</p>	<p>RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.1 W.6-12.4</p>
<p>Expository Essay</p> <p>"The coach and the team climbed back on the bus and Mr. Rubicon directed the driver up a long drive flanked by weeping willows.</p> <p>"In front of us you'll see the main campus of our academy," Mr. Rubicon said. "That's our Arts building to the right and the Science building on the left. As we pull around to the back here, you can see our athletic complex--tennis courts, the polo fields, and our outside swimming pool. Our indoor swimming facility is Olympic-sized. We've had several athletes win gold in the high school championships," he said proudly.</p> <p>"What do you need a barn for?" Roscoe asked as he pointed to the wooden structure they drove by next.</p> <p>"Oh, those are our stables. That's where we keep the polo ponies, as well as the horses we use for students involved in various equestrian competitions."</p> <p>"Man!" Roscoe muttered."</p> <p>Write an expository (explanatory) paper that describes your school or an area in your neighborhood. Use as many specifics as possible.</p>	<p>RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.1 W.6-12.4</p>
<p>Character Sketch</p> <p>"November was quiet for a moment, then moved aside two empty boxes of frosted flakes, revealing a framed photo of Josh that was sitting on Jericho's desk. It had been taken at last year's school picnic at the end the junior-senior foot race. Josh's face glowed with sweat, and his feet barely touched the ground as he lunged for the</p>	<p>RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.3 W.6-12.4</p>

<p>finish line. Arms upraised and waving, wide grin signaling victory, the photo captured him so completely that it seemed he might burst out of the frame. She picked it up, almost expecting it to feel warm. "He looks so. . . alive in this picture," she said softly." Write a character sketch of a strong powerful person--a friend, a relative, a family member. Use strong verbs and adjectives, as well as sensory imagery. Use Draper's character sketch as a model.</p>	
<p>Conversation/Dialogue Imagine it is three weeks after the end of the novel. Create a conversation between the following characters mimicking Draper's style:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jericho to Olivia ○ Arielle to Jericho ○ November to Mrs. Prescott ○ Mr. Tambori to Jericho ○ Mr. Grant (the lawyer) to Josh's parents ○ Josh's parents to Mr. Grant 	<p>RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.3 W.6-12.3 W.6-12.4</p>
<p>Poetry Write a poem about one of the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secret ○ Broken Heart ○ Forever Friends ○ The Joy of Music ○ The Power of Sports ○ Betrayal by a Friend ○ Babies 	<p>RL.6-12.4 W.6-12.3</p>
<p>Literary Analysis Read the poem "Metaphores" by Sylvia Plath or another similar work in which the poet describes pregnancy that your teacher provides. Use what you have learned from reading <i>November Blues</i> by Sharon Draper and the poem to write an essay that provides an analysis of how different characters or narrators discuss their experience with pregnancy. Think about what is emphasized in each text. Think about what is different about each text. What implicit message is each author trying to send to the reader? Be sure to provide evidence to support your argument from both texts.</p>	<p>RL.6-12.1 RL.6-12.2 RL.6-12.4 RL.6-12.5 RL.6-12.7 W.6-12.1 W.6-12.4 W.6-12.9</p>