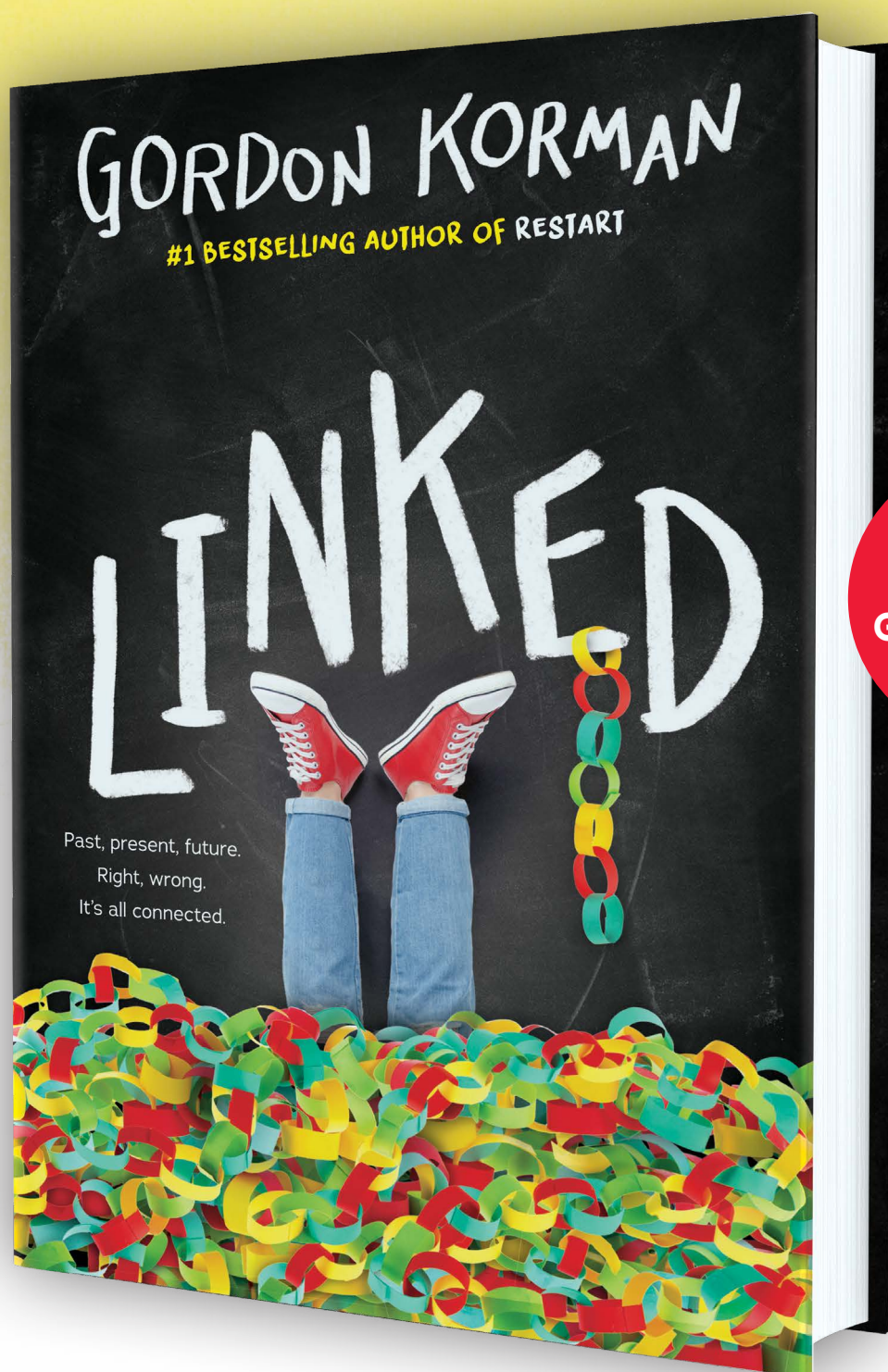
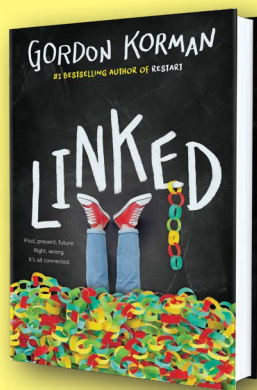


# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## Perception, Courage, and Truth in *LINKED* by Gordon Korman



AGES 8-12  
GRADES 3-7



**ABOUT THE BOOK:** Link, Michael, and Dana's quiet town is woken up very quickly when someone sneaks into the school and vandalizes it with a swastika. Because Michael was the first person to see it, he's the first suspect. Because Link is one of the most popular kids in school, everyone's looking to him to figure it out. And because Dana's the only Jewish girl in the whole town, everyone's treating her more like an outsider than ever. The mystery deepens as more swastikas begin to appear—and the closer Link, Michael, and Dana get to the truth, the more there is to face—not just the crimes of the present, but the crimes of the past.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The author tells this story from six specific perspectives. Why do you think he shows the reader these different points of view? What other character's perspective would you like to read?
2. How do the residents of Chokecherry react to the people from the university moving to town? How do the new arrivals respond to the people of Chokecherry? What do these reactions suggest about different groups of people getting along?
3. After the first swastika is drawn, Chokecherry Middle School begins a "tolerance education unit." What does the word "tolerance" mean? Do you think tolerance is the right goal? What would you call the unit?
4. Michael comes up with the idea for the paper chain, but Link becomes the spokesperson for the project. Why does that happen? How does each boy feel about his role?
5. As the only kid in town who has become a bat mitzvah, Dana helps Link prepare for his bar mitzvah. Why do you think she does that?
6. Chokecherry's history includes the Night of a Thousand Flames, a frightening event carried out by the Klu Klux Klan, a terror organization known for anti-Black and anti-Semitic violence. During the book, many of the town's residents downplay the town's history with the KKK or say the episode never happened. Why might they do that?
7. What happens when Dana and her father discover the physical remains of the Night of a Thousand Flames? What does and does not change afterward?
8. Vlogger ReelTok comes to Chokecherry to research stories about the town. How does his relationship with the town, especially Link and Caroline, change throughout the story? What do the students learn about internet exposure?
9. Why does Link go through with his bar mitzvah at the end? Would you attend, knowing everything that happened? Why or why not?
10. Why do you think Dana organizes the event at the school around Link's bar mitzvah?
11. Principal Brademas tells the students, "I'm sorry that we have to go through this. But I hope we'll be stronger as a community when we come out the other side." (p. 19) Do you think the middle school is stronger at the end? What about the town?
12. Dana says that the Holocaust is "called a crime against humanity because all humans co-own the responsibility never to forget it." (p. 134) What happens when people forget injustices? What are some ways people can ensure that instances of injustice and tragedy are remembered?





# RESEARCH PROMPTS AND ACTIVITIES

1. During the story, Link learns important information about his family and his town. Choose an older relative or community member to interview. Ask them questions about what life was like when they were younger. What similarities do you discover to your own life? Did anything you learned surprise you?
2. Research an injustice that occurred or is occurring in your community (school, neighborhood, city, state). What social, economic, political, or environmental factors might have contributed to or actively encouraged this injustice? How can you educate more people about it? How can you help ensure the injustice is addressed, corrected, and not repeated?
3. Research the Paper Clips Project that inspired the students of Chokecherry. Then write a proposal for a Holocaust memorial or project in your area. How would you want people to engage with your project or memorial? What would you want them to learn or understand? Where might you look for information while planning your proposal? Who in your community could you partner with to make your proposal a reality?
4. At the end of the book, Chokecherry plans to open a museum and tolerance center with several exhibits. Write an introductory message or mission statement for the new center or one of the exhibits.

## FURTHER READING

### Curriculum Resources

“What Is the Holocaust? Interactive Timeline”:  
[yadvashem.org/education/what-is.html](http://yadvashem.org/education/what-is.html)

The Anti-Defamation League: [adl.org](http://adl.org)

The Southern Poverty Law Center: [splcenter.org](http://splcenter.org)

The Museum of Jewish Heritage: [mjhnyc.org](http://mjhnyc.org)

The USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive:  
[sfi.usc.edu/collections/holocaust](http://sfi.usc.edu/collections/holocaust)

“The Holocaust: A Learning Site for Students”: [encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/project/the-holocaust-a-learning-site-for-students](http://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/project/the-holocaust-a-learning-site-for-students)

“Survey of U.S. College Students Shows Holocaust Education is Effective in Building Empathy, Tolerance and Open Mindedness: Survivor Testimony Has Profound Impact on Students”: [adl.org/news/press-releases/survey-of-us-college-students-shows-holocaust-education-is-effective-in](http://adl.org/news/press-releases/survey-of-us-college-students-shows-holocaust-education-is-effective-in)

“A Matter of Life and Death: Two scholars make the case for teaching religious literacy”: [learningforjustice.org/magazine/summer-2017/a-matter-of-life-and-death](http://learningforjustice.org/magazine/summer-2017/a-matter-of-life-and-death)

“Breaking Hate: Supporting Kids to Push Back Against White Nationalism”: [embracerace.org/resources/breaking-hate-supporting-kids-to-push-back-against-white-nationalism](http://embracerace.org/resources/breaking-hate-supporting-kids-to-push-back-against-white-nationalism)

“The Impact of One Survivor’s Story”: [facinghistory.org/our-work/jewish-education-program](http://facinghistory.org/our-work/jewish-education-program)

Paper Clips Project: [oneclipatime.org/paper-clips-project](http://oneclipatime.org/paper-clips-project)

*They Called Themselves the K.K.K.: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

### Books About Becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah

*My Basmati Bat Mitzvah* by Paula J. Freedman

*Becoming Brianna* by Teri Libenson

*All Three Stooges* by Erica S. Perl

*This Is Just a Test* by Wendy Wan-Long Shang and Madelyn Rosenberg

*The Length of a String* by Elissa Brent Weissman

*Turtle Boy* by M. Evan Wolkenstein

### Books About Children and the Holocaust

*Letters From Cuba* by Ruth Behar

*Hidden: A Child’s Story of the Holocaust* by Loïc Dauvillier, illustrated by Marc Lizano, colored by Greg Salsedo

*The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition* by Anne Frank

*Prisoner B-3087* by Alan Gratz

*Out of Hiding: A Holocaust Survivor’s Journey to America* by Ruth Gruener

*We Had to Be Brave: Escaping the Nazis on the Kindertransport* by Deborah Hopkinson

*We Must Not Forget: Holocaust Stories of Survival and Resistance* by Deborah Hopkinson

*The Boy on the Wooden Box* by Leon Leyson with Marilyn J. Haran and Elisabeth B. Leyson

*Chance: Escape from the Holocaust: Memories of a Refugee Childhood* by Uri Shulevitz

*Anne Frank: A Life in Hiding* by Wil Mara

*My Survival: A Girl on Schindler’s List* by Rena FINDER with Joshua M. Greene

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This novel would never have been possible without inspiration from the famous Paper Clips Project, by eighth graders from Whitwell Middle School in Whitwell, Tennessee. In 1998, in response to an after-school unit on the Holocaust, the students got the idea to collect six million paper clips to represent the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. They chose paper clips because the citizens of Norway wore paper clips to protest the Nazi occupation during World War II.

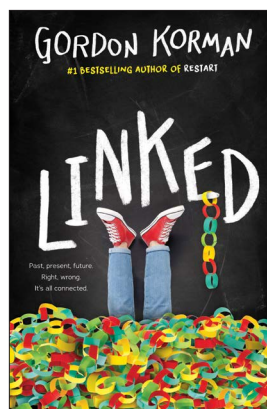
In the end, the students of Whitwell collected more than thirty million paper clips and inspired several books and at least two feature films. In *Linked*, when the students of Chokecherry embark on a tolerance education unit in response to the swastika defacing their atrium, there's no question that the remarkable accomplishments of their fellow middle schoolers in Tennessee would be among the first topics they'd study.

And as the racist vandalism continues, it makes perfect sense that the Chokecherry kids might try to follow in the footsteps of their Whitwell predecessors. Then they can begin to learn what the Paper Clips Project taught us all: that the first step in wrapping your mind around the unimaginably vast tragedy of the Holocaust is to wrap your mind around that unimaginably vast number of six million.

In this book, Michael Amorosa says, "A paper chain can be done when it hits a certain number of links. But tolerance is a project you always have to keep working at."

—Gordon Korman

## PRAISE FOR *LINKED*



HC: 9781338629118 • \$17.99  
Also available in ebook

★ "Bringing the past into the present . . . this wrenching story offers much to ponder and few, if any, easy answers."  
—*Booklist*, starred review

"There's a lot to ponder here about mistakes, intention, the difference between ignorance and hatred, and religious identity. Provocative yet cautious."  
—*Kirkus Reviews*

"In typical Korman style, this novel pulls readers in with its character development and engrossing, heartfelt story line. While the story tackles big issues such as the Holocaust and generational discrimination, the writing style remains upbeat and easy . . . a must-purchase."  
—*School Library Journal*

## ALSO BY GORDON KORMAN



HC: 9781338053777 • \$17.99  
PB: 9781338053807 • \$6.99  
Also available as an ebook

★ "A fresh approach to the familiar topic of bullying, kept credible by believable characters and events, with typical Korman humor and just the right touch of mystery."  
—*School Library Journal*, starred review



HC: 9781338290202 • \$17.99  
PB: 9781338290226 • \$7.99  
Also available as an ebook

★ "This weave of perceptive, well-told tales wears its agenda with unusual grace."  
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gordon Korman is the #1 bestselling author of three books in the 39 Clues series as well as eight books in his Swindle series. His other books include *This Can't Be Happening at Macdonald Hall!* (published when he was fourteen); *Slacker*; *Restart*; *Whatshisface*; *Level 13*; and the trilogies *Island*, *Everest*, *Dive*, *Kidnapped*, and *Titanic*; the series *the Hypnotists* and *On the Run*. Gordon grew up in Thornhill, Ontario, and he lives in New York with his family. Visit him at [gordonkorman.com](http://gordonkorman.com).

## ABOUT THE WRITER OF THIS GUIDE

Robbin Friedman is a children's librarian at the Chappaqua Library. She leads book discussion groups, writes reviews, and has served on the Newbery Committee and the Association of Jewish Libraries' Holiday Highlights Committee.