



**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 9-12**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Ugghies

Scott Westerfeld

**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# Uglies

Scott Westerfeld

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Table of Contents

Summary.....	3
About the Author.....	3
Characters.....	4
Background Information.....	4
Initiating Activities.....	5
Vocabulary Activities.....	6
Nine Sections.....	7
Each section contains: Summary, Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, and Supplementary Activities	
Post-reading Discussion Questions.....	25
Post-reading Extension Activities.....	27
Assessment.....	28
Scoring Rubric.....	40

## Skills and Strategies

### Comprehension

Creative thinking, identifying attributes, inferring, predicting, supporting judgments

### Literary Elements

Character analysis, story mapping, setting, conflict, theme, point of view, author's purpose, figurative language, genre

### Vocabulary

Word maps, context clues, definitions, root words, parts of speech, word sort

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, oral presentation, dramatization, interview

### Writing

Creative writing, personal narrative, poetry, journalism, report, essay

### Critical Thinking

Brainstorming, research, compare/contrast, cause/effect, analysis, evaluation

### Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—history, culture, time line, oil dependency, facial symmetry, Hippocratic Oath; Science—magnetic levitation, alternative energy sources, orchids, insomnia, Mojave Desert animals, environment; Health—diet, guilt; Math—graphs, Phi Ratio; Art—illustration, design, diorama; Music—soundtrack

**Genre:** science fiction, dystopian fiction

**Setting:** futuristic United States

**Point of View:** third-person limited

**Themes:** narcissism, self-worth, conformity, betrayal, friendship, rebellion, coming-of-age, society, environmental issues

**Conflict:** person vs. society, person vs. self, person vs. person, person vs. nature

**Style:** narrative

**Tone:** conversational, thought-provoking, ominous

**Date of First Publication:** 2005

## Summary

Tally Youngblood is a teenager growing up in a society centered around attractiveness. Tally impatiently awaits the mandatory operation that will transform her from an “ugly” to a “pretty”—an operation designed to make everyone equal. However, Tally’s friend Shay does not want to be a pretty. When Shay runs away to join a rebel society, Tally is given an ultimatum—help the authorities apprehend her friend or remain an ugly forever. Tally travels to the Smoke, where she discovers a new way of life. In the Smoke, Tally meets David, an ugly who was born in the wilderness. David’s parents, who are former surgeons, inform Tally that the transformative operation not only changes a person’s appearance, but also creates brain lesions that change the patient’s personality. Just as Tally decides she belongs in the Smoke, she accidentally reveals its whereabouts to the authorities. To compensate for her betrayal, Tally decides to have the pretty operation to become a test subject for David’s mother’s experimental cure.

## About the Author

**Personal:** Scott Westerfeld was born in Dallas, Texas on May 5, 1963, to Pamela and Lloyd Westerfeld. As a result of his father’s computer-programming job, Westerfeld’s family moved frequently. Westerfeld received his B.A. in philosophy from Vassar College in 1985. From 1987 to 1988, he did graduate work in Performance Studies at New York University. Following college, Westerfeld held a variety of jobs including factory worker, substitute teacher, textbook editor, and software designer. Westerfeld married the Hugo-nominated Australian author Justine Larbalestier in 2001. To avoid winter, the couple alternates living in New York City and Sydney, Australia.

**Career:** Westerfeld has composed music for dance productions, ghost-written for series such as *Goosebumps*, and written 18 novels—five for adults and 13 for young adults. His award-winning novels for young adults include *So Yesterday*, the *Midnighters* fantasy series, the *Uglies* science-fiction series, the *Peeps* vampire series, and the *Leviathan* alternate-history series. *Uglies*, a *New York Times* Best Seller and an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, is the first book in the *Uglies* series and is being made into a film. The other books in the *Uglies* series—*Pretties* (2005), *Specials* (2006), and *Extras* (2007), are also *New York Times* Best Sellers.

## Characters

**Tally Youngblood:** 15-year-old girl; desperately wants to become a pretty; eventually discovers a new way of life; becomes romantically involved with David

**Peris:** Tally's best friend since childhood; recently became a pretty; promises Tally that they will remain friends

**Shay:** Tally's new friend; teaches Tally about another way of life; forced to become a pretty

**Ellie and Sol:** Tally's parents; middle pretties

**David:** born in the Smoke; strives to create harmony between humans and nature; becomes romantically involved with Tally

**Maddy and Az:** David's parents; former surgeons; founded the Smoke after learning that the pretty operation involved a form of brainwashing

**Croy:** lives in the Smoke; initially suspicious of Tally but soon comes to trust her

**Dr. Cable:** head of Special Circumstances; blackmails Tally into betraying the rebels in the Smoke

**Special Circumstances:** secret police force made up of cruel pretties with superhuman capabilities

**Smokies:** rebels living in the Smoke

**the Boss:** middle-aged ugly living in the Smoke; concerned mainly with preserving Rusty relics

**Sussy, An, and Dex:** three uglies who help Tally and David infiltrate Special Circumstances

**the rangers:** pretties who work to control the wild orchid population; help Tally find the Smoke

## Background Information

The following information will enhance students' understanding of the novel.

1. **Inspiration for the Novel:** The idea for *Uglies* began with a humorous e-mail from one of Westerfeld's friends. The friend had moved from New York to Los Angeles and had visited an L.A. dentist for the first time. The dentist recommended a five-year-plan of cosmetic surgery designed to turn normal teeth into a smile rivaling a movie star's. Westerfeld brainstormed: "What if going to the doctor wasn't about your health at all, but how you wanted to look? What if cosmetic surgery was so common that you *had* to get it, or you'd be an outcast?" After researching plastic surgery and the science of beauty, Westerfeld created for his novel a future government which forces citizens to be physically attractive. However, he says *Uglies* is not necessarily a cautionary tale, but rather about "thinking things through" in order to make better choices.
2. **Dystopian Fiction:** Dystopian fiction is a genre that involves an imagined society living in almost total oppression. Since the events usually take place in the future, dystopian fiction is often classified as a sub-genre of science fiction. The dystopian society often develops after a natural or man-made catastrophe or by the gradual erosion of personal freedoms. Characteristics of dystopian fiction include a backstory that explains the societal conditions, conformity to uniform standards, an unfair caste system, advanced technology, and themes of oppression, rebellion, and identity (or lack thereof). The dystopian protagonist questions existing societal conditions and encourages readers to do the same. Dystopian fiction is intended to explore contemporary societal conditions or current fears and imply what could happen if modern society does not reform.

## Suspicion–Burning Bridges

Tally settles into a routine and wonders if she is meant to live in the Smoke. Croy questions Tally’s story about traveling alone, though David calls her brave. Tally comes between David and Shay and, for the first time since arriving in the Smoke, Tally feels ugly. She meets David’s parents and learns that the pretty operation causes brain lesions, thereby making pretties easier to control. After David and Tally express their feelings for each other, Tally destroys the tracking pendant. The next morning, Special Circumstances invades the Smoke.

Vocabulary
pliant
treachery
deliberately
infirm
bask
uncanny
sealant
genetics
abstract
coddled
lesions
immune
gender
controversies
exquisite
chaos

### Discussion Questions

1. Explain how “clear-cutting” can result in “a vast web of life traded for cheap hamburgers” (p. 222). Is David asking the Smokies to clear-cut? (*Clearing an area of all trees to create grazing land destroys the balance of life in the area, prohibiting the number of species that can exist there. David does not want to clear-cut. He intends to remove the railroad track, or “garbage,” the Rusties left behind. The removed scrub trees won’t be wasted and will be replaced with new trees.*)
2. How does Tally fend off Croy’s suspicions? Do you think Croy believes her? (*Tally admits to exaggerating her story, especially about the amount of food she carried, to make the journey sound more interesting. Answers will vary, but Croy does not seem convinced. He still questions Tally’s credibility and perhaps even her intentions.*)
3. Why hasn’t Tally felt ugly since she arrived in the Smoke? What causes her to suddenly feel ugly? Do you think she lost her chance of belonging in the Smoke? (*No one in the Smoke has had the operation, and everyone is accepted as they are. Tally feels ugly because, as a spy, she deserves Croy’s hostility. She also feels guilty*

*for coming between David and Shay. She feels ugly for her actions, not her appearance. Answers will vary. Some students may agree with Tally that she has ruined her chances of ever belonging in the Smoke, since inevitably the Smokies will learn she is a spy. Others may feel Tally should tell the truth and ask for the Smokies’ help in getting rid of the pendant.*)

4. David tells Tally, “You get what we’re doing here in a way that most runaways don’t” (p. 239). What is David’s goal for the Smoke? Why does Tally understand this? (*Answers will vary. David wants the Smoke to be a self-sufficient community that works in harmony with nature. He wants to live off the land without harming the environment. Tally is more serious than other runaways, who consider coming to the Smoke a trick. Tally’s mission allows her to see David’s dreams that her betrayal will destroy.*)
5. Why is Tally surprised that David looks like his father? In your family, are there any distinguishing characteristics passed from one generation to the next? (*Tally has never seen a child next to parents who are not pretties. She did not realize that the operation removes all inherited characteristics. Answers will vary.*)
6. How do the brain lesions affect pretties? Why are the lesions part of the operation? If uglies knew the truth about the operation, do you think they would still choose to turn pretty? (*The brain lesions change the way people think. They force people to think alike and to be content with their controlled lifestyles. The lesions prevent conflicting opinions that can lead to demands for changes or war. The lesions allow people with certain occupations, such as Special Circumstances, to control the entire population. Answers will vary.*)

7. Why did Az and Maddy found the Smoke? Why do they think there is a simple cure for the brain lesions? *(The only way to determine how the brain lesions affect people is to compare groups of uglies without the lesions to groups of pretties with the lesions. Az and Maddy were familiar with pretties from their time in the city. Founding the Smoke allowed Az and Maddy to study uglies in daily life. They observed that without lesions people are confident, capable, and free of “pretty thinking.” Maddy and Az discovered that everyone had the lesions after the first operation, yet the lesions were removed from pretties who later took on challenging jobs. Az and Maddy therefore deduced that there must be a simple method of removing the lesions.)*
8. How difficult do you think it was for Tally to decide to stay in the Smoke permanently? *(Answers will vary. Initially, it is difficult for Tally to leave behind the comforts of home—with food, medication, rest, and entertainment readily available. However, Tally soon finds that the Smokies’ lifestyle is extremely natural and satisfying. Other factors that may have made Tally’s decision easier include David’s affection, Shay’s friendship, the Smoke’s sense of community, and knowing the truth about the pretty operation.)*
9. “There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion” (p. 133). How does this quote apply to Part II of the novel? *(Answers will vary. Beauty is not perfect in that even the most beautiful person or object has individual characteristics or irregularities. Tally thinks David is beautiful despite his big nose and lopsided smile. David finds Tally beautiful because of who she is—she sees the world clearly and the scratches marring her face indicate she takes risks. The quote could also apply to the beauty of the orchids that became destructive and to the pretties, who are tragically unaware their brains have been altered.)*
10. **Prediction:** What will Special Circumstances do to the Smokies?

### Supplementary Activities

1. Health/Interviewing: Interview a doctor, nurse, or other medical professional about teenage insomnia. Write an article based on information gathered during your interview. Include quotes from your interview in your article.
2. Comprehension: Write a journal entry from Croy’s point of view that evaluates Tally’s trustworthiness. Use information from the novel to support your evaluation.
3. Critical Thinking: Imagine that you are a member of the Committee for Morphological Standards, or the “Pretty Committee.” Prepare a presentation about what the next generation of pretties will look like. Include illustrations, charts, and graphs in your presentation, and explain your choices.
4. Creative Writing: Write a humorous story that explains how David got the scar on his eyebrow.