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## "The Assassin's Guide to Babysitting" Lesson Plan Guide

by Natalie C. Parker

### Unit Overview

**Duration:** 1 week

**Grade Level:** 9–12

**Program:** Florida Teens Read (FTR)

**Subject Integration:** ELA, Social-Emotional Learning, Media Literacy

**Essential Question:** *How does a character's hidden identity shape what they can know, who they can trust, and who they become?*

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### Learning Objectives — Students will be able to:

- Analyze how Parker uses genre conventions (action, thriller, romance) to explore identity and belonging
- Examine how Tru's dual identity structures both plot and character development
- Evaluate the novel's treatment of trust, family legacy, and the relationship between ability and identity
- Engage with the queer representation in the novel as a narrative and thematic element
- Express understanding through close reading, analytical writing, and creative response

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### ONE-WEEK LESSON PLAN

#### Day 1: Meet Tru — Identity, Talent, and the Cost of Hiding

**Objective:** Establish Tru's dual world and what it costs her to maintain both lives

**Materials:** Book, character identity mapping graphic organizer

**Opening (10 min):**

- Quick-write: "Describe a context where you feel you can't fully be yourself. What do you hide—and why?"
- Partner share (voluntary—this is personal territory)

**Main Activity (35 min):**

- Introduce Tru: her Talent, her training, her school life, her adoptive guardian
- Map the two versions of Tru: the high schooler vs. the trained operative—what overlaps? What is completely separate?
- Discuss: What does it cost Tru to maintain this separation constantly? What would happen if it collapsed?
- Introduce the concept of "code-switching" and discuss how it applies to Tru's situation—and to real teen experiences

**Closing (5 min):**

- Exit ticket: "What is Tru most afraid of losing if her real identity is revealed—safety, belonging, or something else?"

**Assessment:** Character comprehension, identity mapping, personal connection to dual-identity theme

#### Day 2: The Babysitting Job Goes Wrong — Action and Consequence

**Objective:** Analyze the inciting incident and what it reveals about Tru's values and judgment

**Materials:** Book, narrative analysis chart

**Opening (10 min):**

- Think-pair-share: "What does Tru do when everything goes wrong? What does that tell us about her?"

**Main Activity (35 min):**

- Track the incident: What happens, in what order, and what decisions does Tru make?
- Analyze: Why does Tru choose to protect the baby rather than cut and run? What does that choice reveal?



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- Introduce the central mystery: Who killed Tru's parents, and how does this incident connect?
- Discuss genre: How does Parker use thriller conventions (pacing, stakes, danger) while also doing emotional character work?

**Closing (5 min):**

- Quick-write: "What question does Tru most need to answer after the babysitting job—and why does it matter so much?"

**Assessment:** Narrative comprehension, character motivation analysis, genre literacy

**Day 3: Trust, Betrayal, and the Enemies-to-Romance Arc**

**Objective:** Examine the novel's treatment of trust and the complex dynamic between Tru and her antagonist

**Materials:** Book, relationship analysis worksheet, discussion norms in place

**Opening (10 min):**

- Discussion: "What does it mean to be attracted to someone who is trying to harm you? Is that a contradiction—or something more complicated?"

**Main Activity (35 min):**

- Map the trust dynamics in the novel: Who does Tru trust, based on what evidence, with what risk?
- Analyze the enemies-to-romance arc with the female antagonist: How does Parker handle this without making Tru seem naive or the danger seem trivial?
- Discuss queer representation: What does it mean for this to be a same-sex romantic complication—how does that change or enrich the dynamic?
- Literary analysis: How does Parker use the antagonist relationship to raise the novel's ethical stakes?

**Closing (5 min):**

- Exit ticket: "What does trust mean in this story—and what does Tru use to decide whether to extend it?"

**Assessment:** Relationship analysis, trust framework, queer representation engagement, literary analysis

**Day 4: Legacy, Choice, and Who Tru Actually Is**

**Objective:** Synthesize the novel's central theme: the relationship between inherited identity and chosen self

**Materials:** Book, theme synthesis chart

**Opening (10 min):**

- Partner discussion: "Tru was born into a world she didn't choose. Does that world define her—or does she get to decide?"

**Main Activity (35 min):**

- Theme synthesis: How does the assassin legacy, the mystery of her parents, and the relationships she builds all contribute to Tru's developing sense of self?
- Discuss: What does it mean to inherit a role (daughter of assassins, wielder of indestructibility) vs. choosing one?
- Connect to real teen experience: What roles do teens inherit from their families—economic, cultural, religious, relational—and how do they navigate those?
- Writing prompt: "What does indestructibility as a Talent suggest about Tru's emotional needs—what is her body protected from that her heart isn't?"

**Closing (5 min):**

- Share one sentence from writing prompt; discuss the metaphor together

**Assessment:** Thematic synthesis, metaphor analysis, personal connection quality

**Day 5: Analytical and Creative Response**

**Objective:** Express understanding through close reading and writing

**Materials:** Writing materials, project choice cards

**Opening (10 min):**

- Preview project options; students select and begin

**Main Activity (35 min):**



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- Option A: Analytical essay — "How does Parker use genre conventions (action-thriller, romance, mystery) to explore questions about identity and belonging?"
- Option B: Write two scenes from the antagonist's perspective—one during a confrontation with Tru, one when Tru is not present. What does she think, feel, plan?
- Option C: Character analysis — "What does indestructibility as a Talent reveal about Tru's psychological needs and vulnerabilities?"
- Share in pairs or small groups

**Closing (5 min):**

- Class closing: "One thing 'The Assassin's Guide to Babysitting' made me think about identity or trust differently is..."

**Assessment:** Analytical writing quality, close reading skill, thematic synthesis

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**Differentiation**

- **Advanced learners:** Comparative analysis: How does Tru's hidden identity compare to protagonists in other YA thriller-fantasy series (Leigh Bardugo, etc.)?
  - **Students needing support:** Character mapping graphic organizer; sentence starters for analytical writing; option to focus on plot comprehension before theme analysis
  - **Discussion norms note:** The queer representation and romance content should be treated with the same seriousness as any other narrative element. Establish norms against dismissiveness or inappropriate commentary before Day 3.
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**Materials List**

- Class set of "The Assassin's Guide to Babysitting"
- Character identity mapping graphic organizer (Day 1)
- Narrative analysis chart (Day 2)
- Relationship analysis worksheet (Day 3)
- Established discussion norms for Day 3 content
- Theme synthesis chart (Day 4)
- Project choice cards and writing materials (Day 5)