

The BOY PROJECT

(Notes and Observations of Kara McAllister)

Scholastic 2012

by Kami Kinard

Curriculum Guide

by Marcie Colleen

Kami Kinard, Author

Kami Kinard's latest novel, *The Boy Problem: Notes and Predictions of Tabitha Reddy*, was published by Scholastic in April 2014. Her first novel, *The Boy Project: Notes and Observations of Kara McAllister*, published by Scholastic in January 2012, was chosen for the 2013 Children's Choices Reading List. Kinard's poetry, fiction, and nonfiction pieces have appeared in many children's magazines, including *Ladybug*, *Babybug*, *Highlights*, and *Jack And Jill*.



A co-founder of Kidlit Summer School, an online program that focuses on the craft of writing for children, Kinard is also a teaching artist on the South Carolina Arts Commission's Roster of Approved Artists. She lives with her family in Beaufort, South Carolina.

You can find out more about her by visiting her website www.kamikinard.com.

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How to Use This Guide

This classroom guide for *The Boy Project* is designed for students in third through seventh grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

This guide offers discussion points, activities, and writing prompts to help educators use *The Boy Project* as a classroom read-aloud or as a selection for independent reading.

All activities were created in conjunction with relevant content standards in ELA, math, science, social studies, art, and drama, including the Common Core State Standards.

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Before You Read

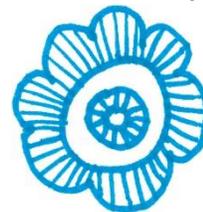
1. Take a close look at the front cover of *The Boy Project*. Can you predict what this book is about? What about when and where it takes place? What from the title and illustrations supports your prediction?
2. Read the text on the back cover. What do you learn about the book from this blurb?
3. List at least five questions that you have about this novel after looking at the front and back covers.
4. Look closely at the design of the book: the colors, text, any illustrations, word choice. How would you describe the design of the book?
5. Who do you think is the intended audience of this book? If you saw this book on a shelf, would you want to read it? Why or why not?
6. Visit www.kamikinard.com. Click on the cover image for *The Boy Project* to go to the page for the book. The book trailer is located on this page. Play the book trailer *without* sound. Jot down any images you see or words that come to mind. Share your list with the rest of the class. Are there similarities on the class lists? Is there anything on someone's list that you didn't have?
7. Now *listen* to the book trailer for *The Boy Project*, but do not watch it. Focus on the sounds. Describe Kara McAllister's voice in five words. What are some key words you can pick out that might help you better understand what the story might be about? What mood does the music set?
8. How do the music, visuals, and words combine to give you an overall feel for the book?
9. Write one paragraph describing your thoughts about the book, and include one question you have that you hope to learn the answer to when you read. Share your paragraph with the class.



Discussion Questions

Section 1 (pages 1 – 64)

1. Divide a piece of paper into six sections. Label the sections: looks, personality, home life, school life, interests, and friends. In each appropriate box, jot down information about Kara McAllister as you read. Share with the class.
2. What was Kara's New Year's resolution? What is Kara's secret resolution? How does she combine the two? Do you think these are realistic resolutions? Why or why not?
3. Kara and Chip both get detention and Mrs. Hill's punishment is "talk and discover something to like about each other." Why do you think Mrs. Hill chose this form of punishment? How did it go?
4. Bebe Truelove's first tip is to "be yourself." What do you think this means? Do you think this advice is silly? Why or why not? Is Kara being true to herself?
5. How does Kara overcoming her fear of talking to her crush ultimately cause a problem between her and Tabbi? How does Kara handle the problem? Do you agree or disagree with her reactions?



Section 2 (pages 64 – 130)

1. While Tabbi is trying to comfort Kara, she actually ends up embarrassing her. What happened? Have you ever been embarrassed? How did you get over your embarrassment?
2. Mr. DeLacey does not return Kara's surveys to her. Why? Do you agree with his reasoning? What would you do if you were Kara in this situation? What does Kara do to eventually get them back?
3. What scheme does Kara think up to get to the mall? How does this scheme impact Kara's daily life? How about her relationship with Julie?
4. What does Kara say to upset Maybelline? How does Maybelline get revenge? Do you think it is Kara's fault? Why or why not?



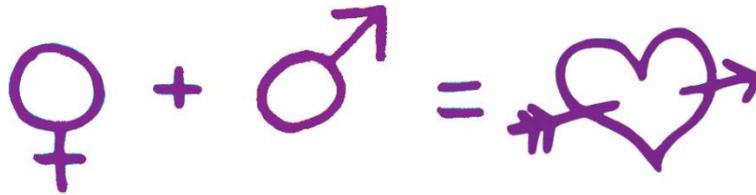
Section 3 (pages 130 – 194)

1. Summarize some of Kara's discoveries from her time in the boys' bathroom. How does this affect Kara's project? How do others react to knowing she was in the boys' bathroom?
2. How does Evan redeem himself a little in Kara's eyes? Why do you think Evan does this? Have you ever stood up for a friend?

3. Describe Kara's science project. What grade does she get? How does Ms. Sabatino give Kara an opportunity to improve her grade?
4. Kara feels torn between Tabbi and Evan. How so? What conclusion does she come to? Have you ever had to choose between friends? How did it make you feel?

Section 4 (pages 194 – 250)

1. Kara adds "compassion" to the list of what she needs in a soul mate. What is compassion? Who shows compassion to Kara? When was a time someone showed you compassion? When have you shown it to someone else?
2. How does Kara show everyone "I am not ashamed"? How do others react to her statement?
3. Do you think Kara's project was a success? Did the scientific method help her find a boyfriend? Use specific examples from the text to defend your answer.
4. **What do you think is Kara's biggest lesson in *The Boy Project*? Brainstorm some possible themes for this novel and justify them with textual examples.**



Vocab Detectives

The Boy Project has some new and challenging vocabulary words, some of which Kara McAllister says are new words for her, too.

filibuster (pg 22)

overcompensating (pg 25)

rendered (pg 93)

malevolent (pg 93)

rhetorical (pg 97)

vapid (pg 101)

acutely (pg 164)

pondered (pg 196)

As you read *The Boy Project*, look carefully for words you do not know.

- As soon as you come across a new vocabulary word, write it down.
- Repeat the sentence that includes the unknown word. What might it mean, based on context? Can you replace the unknown word with another word that might make sense?
- Look up the word in the dictionary. Read the definition.
- Create a way to remember what the word means.
 - Using Total Physical Response, create an action that symbolizes the word and helps you remember it.
 - Illustrate it! Draw a picture that will help you remember what the word means visually.
 - Challenge yourself to use the new word correctly in a sentence three times during the day.
- Keep a list of your vocabulary words and hang it on the classroom wall. Revisit it again and again.



The Structure & Craft of *The Boy Project*

The Structure

Many novels are broken up into sections called *chapters*. But *The Boy Project* is broken up through dated journal entries from Kara McAllister.

- Why do you think Kinard chose to use dated journal entries instead of numbered chapters?
- How does this structure help move the story along? How does this structure add to the story? How does it affect the mood? The theme?

No matter how a novel is structured, each section needs to be a mini story with its own mini plot arc and needs to include:

- A beginning
 - A middle
 - An end
 - A conflict
 - A reason to keep reading
- 
- Look closely at the following dated sections of *The Boy Project* and summarize their beginnings, middles, ends, conflicts, and how Kinard keeps readers wanting to know more.
 - Monday, January 1 (long section)
 - Saturday, February 3 (short section—but elements are still there!)
 - Kara McAllister had a very busy and eventful two-and-a-half months! Make a timeline (or calendar) of *The Boy Project*. On each date, summarize in one sentence what happened on that date.

The Point of View

The Boy Project is written in the voice of Kara McAllister in first person point of view, meaning Kara is telling the readers her own story.

"Life is really not fair. I mean it finally looks like karma has caught up with Maybelline for being such a rotten person, and then I have to go and wave a big red cape in its direction. I may as well have yelled, 'Hey, Karma! Lower your head and charge this way!'"

page 107

- Rewrite this passage from a third person point of view, meaning Kara isn't telling the story but a narrator is.

- How does the change in point of view change the story? Why do you think Kinard chose to tell the story from Kara's point of view?
- Now look at the following passage:

"The two things happened at the exact wrong time. Justin walked in from the back of the store (he looked even better than before, if that's possible), and my mom showed up at the front. I ran out, pulling her toward the food court. But I heard the clerk say, 'Do you know that girl? She was looking for you.'

'Who, her?' he asked. He used a tone that means 'NO!' in about eighty-two different languages.'"

Page 94

- Rewrite this passage from the point of view of Justin, the other clerk, or Kara's mom.

- How does switching the point of view to that of another character change the story?

Unobtrusive Observations

Unobtrusive Observation: A research method in which an experimenter simply watches and takes notes on the behavior of the subject in either a natural or laboratory setting WITHOUT any kind of interaction between the experimenter and subject.

- How is this kind of research helpful?
- What kind of behavior can be observed?
- What is lacking in this kind of research?
- What does Kara McAllister unobtrusively observe for her research?
- What other kinds of behavior would you record from observations if you were Kara?

The Science of Observing: How Scientists Observe Animals

The study of animal behavior is called *ethology*.

When scientists observe animal behavior, they rely on specific procedures in order to collect data that is as accurate as possible.

Kara McAllister uses index card, but in many cases, scientists use *ethograms* during observations to record data, such as:

Grooming: The animal is tending to its own hygiene.

Feeding: The animal is foraging or eating food items.

Manipulating object: The animal is moving any object.

Vocalizing: The animal is making sound.

Locomotion: The animal is walking, flying, pacing, hopping, running, jumping, etc.

Resting: The animal is inactive, possibly lying down or sitting still. No other behavior is occurring. Eyes may be open or shut.

Not visible: Scientist cannot see the animal.

Other: Scientist sees a behavior not described above.

Observations: Using an Ethogram

Using an ethogram like the one below:

1. Find a study area (a park, school yard, or zoo) and identify an animal to observe. More than one participant can observe the same animal.
2. Before using the ethogram, take time to simply observe the animal and write down some notes or questions.
3. Then focus on collecting data. In each box, write notes based on your observation during each time interval. Use a stopwatch to keep time. The teacher may announce each interval.
4. Remain quiet throughout the entire length of the observation, as loud noises may affect animal behavior.
5. Share your observations.

TIME (in minutes)	Grooming	Feeding	Manip. Object	Vocalizing	Locomotion	Resting	Not Visible	Other
1:00								
2:00								
3:00								
4:00								
5:00								

The Scientific Method

Kara McAllister uses the scientific method to research and answer the question: *How can I find a boyfriend?*

Throughout *The Boy Project*, Kara engages in the following steps:

Step 1: Ask a Question

Step 2: Do Background Research

Step 3: Form a Hypothesis

Step 4: Test Your Hypothesis

Step 5: Interpret Your Data

Step 6: Draw a Conclusion

Step 7: Publish Results

Step 8: Retest

- Write a brief summary of how Kara completed each step. Be as specific as possible and use visuals where needed.
- Then, as a class, brainstorm a possible question to test through the scientific method. Examples can include:
 - If given the choice, would students prefer white milk or chocolate milk with lunch?
 - What is the average length of time it takes a student to use a bathroom pass?
 - How can you tell if an egg is raw or hard-boiled without cracking it?
 - What makes someone a good thumb wrestler?
- Using the following worksheet, test your question and record your data.





The Scientific Method worksheet

Question: _____

Background Research: (use additional space if necessary and provide visual aids) _____

Hypothesis:

If _____
then _____

Testing Procedures: Be sure to use a variety of tests, such as interviews, surveys, observation, etc. Document all of the testing through visuals (photos, graphs, etc.) and narrative. Summarize your procedure here.

Interpret Data: (what does it all mean?)

Conclusion:

Publish Results: Using Kara's displays on pages 140 and 237 as inspiration, creatively and visually publish your results. Remember Kara's mom's philosophy: *a little fringe can dress up anything!*

Retest: What did you learn that you would do differently next time? How could you better your chances of accurate results?

Gathering and Recording Data

Topic to research: The daily life of an American teenager.

Gathering Data

When gathering data for research, be sure to include a variety of types of sources.

Primary Sources—original materials that have not been filtered through a third party’s interpretation. Examples include diaries, interviews, letters, photographs, surveys, transcripts.

- Create a quiz or flowchart.
- Conduct an interview.
- Develop a survey to ask twenty-five people.

Kara used a variety of primary sources for her own research. Check out some examples in the book.

Quiz pg 160

Flowchart pg 50

Survey pg 49

Interview transcript pg 223

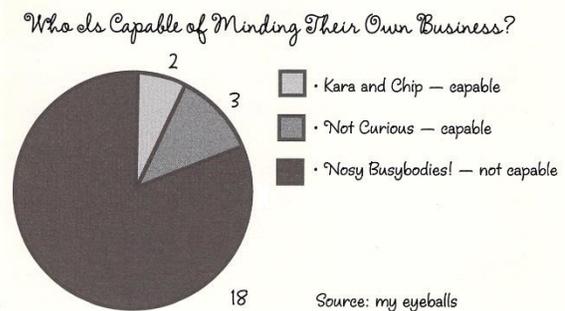
Secondary Sources—interpretations and evaluations of primary sources. Secondary sources are not evidence, but rather commentary on and discussion of evidence. Examples include biographies, encyclopedias, dictionaries, textbooks, Internet articles, etc.

- Go to the library to find books or other materials that might provide insight on the topic. Ask a librarian if you need help.
- Use the Internet to locate information written about the topic.

Recording Data

Kara McAllister uses a variety of methods to record her data.

- Pie charts
- Bar graphs (pg 209)
- Picture charts (pg 152)
- Narratives
- Transcripts (pg 35)
- Line graph (pg 24)

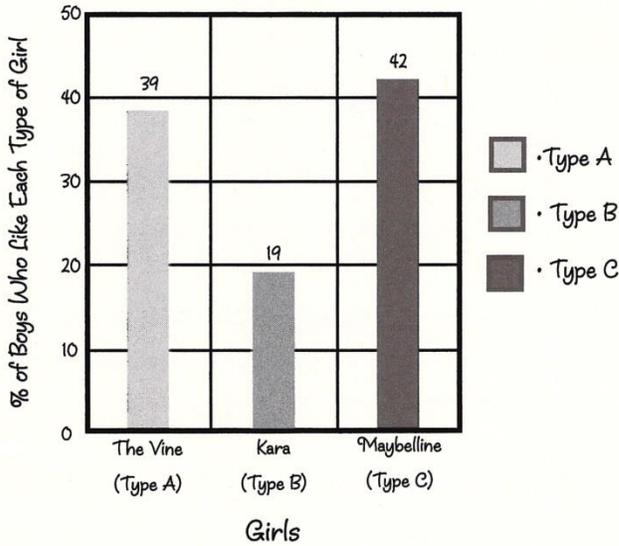


- Divide into groups of three to four students. The teacher will assign a type of data recorder to your group. As a group, create the assigned recorder.

- What was easy about recording data this way? What was difficult?

No! No! No! A Googol Times No:
 The Results of My Stinking Survey
 by Kara McAtllister

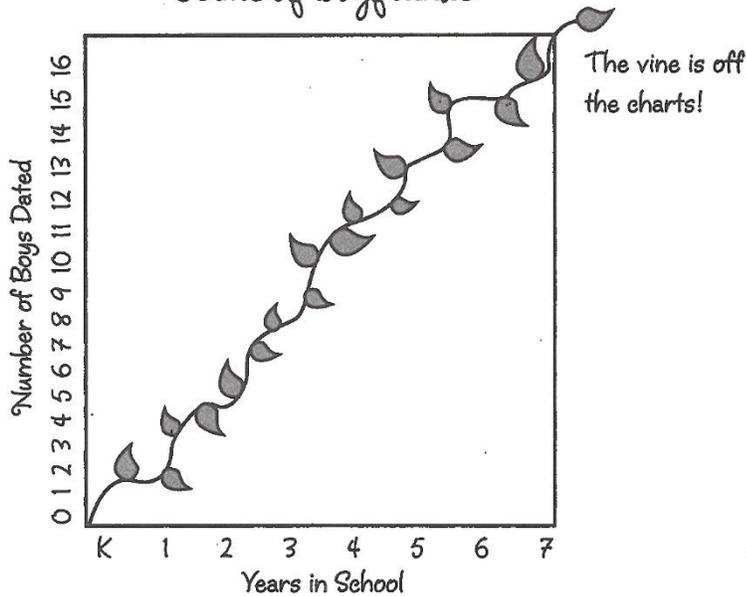
Which Type Do Guys Like?



Bar Graph, *The Boy Project*, page 89

Source: my stupid surveys

The Vine's Growth Chart in
 Terms of Boyfriends



Line graph, *The Boy Project*, page 24

Design Your Dream Bedroom

Bedrooms can be an outward expression of who we are and what we like to do.

Kara McAllister's parents allowed her to "celebrate her creativity" and design her own bedroom (within reason). They wouldn't go for painting the ceiling black.

Kara's design included:

- A thick, shaggy cream rug
- Roll-down shades made out of denim jeans (with secret pockets)
- Christmas lights
- Indigo walls, which replaced the pink walls



- What does the design of Kara's bedroom say about her character?

Celebrate your own creativity by designing your dream bedroom. Any idea is within reason!

Share your drawing with the rest of the class.

- What does your design say about your character?
- Does your design have any similarities with your classmates' designs?

MATH BONUS: Create a budget for your room redecoration. Price out the cost of each item (i.e, paint, curtains, rugs, etc.) And then, once you have a total, calculate a way to earn the money to redecorate.



- Does cost affect your design? How so?
- If cost is prohibitive, can you figure out a more cost-effective way of re-decorating while keeping the same look and feel?

Where Children Sleep

The book *Where Children Sleep* by photographer James Mollison is a book of large-format photographs of children's bedrooms around the world—from the USA, Mexico, Brazil, England, Italy, Israel and the West Bank, Kenya, Senegal, Lesotho, Nepal, China and India—alongside portraits of the children themselves. Each pair of photographs is accompanied by an extended caption that tells the story of each child.

A slideshow of some of the bedrooms can be found online at:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/16/where-children-sleep-james-mollison-photography_n_1664731.html

Take a look at a few of these photographs.

- Describe where the child sleeps.
- Are there any similarities to your own bedroom? Any differences?
- What predictions might you make about the person who lives here?
- Where in the world could this be?
- How does this bedroom make you feel?

Then read the accompanying child's biography.

- Were any of your predictions about the child correct?
- Where in the world is this bedroom? Find it on the map/globe.
- What new information do you have about this child now?
- How does this bedroom make you feel?



Transforming Everyday Objects

The popular saying is “when life gives you lemons, you make lemonade.” So when Kara McAllister is given a Depend Undergarment as a mean joke, she turns that trash into treasure!

Up-cycled or recycled art is a wonderful way of transforming everyday objects into works of art.

Bring in items from home that you find interesting and unique and do not want anymore. Look in the garage, attic, or drawers. The recycling bin is also a great place to look!

Working in groups, repurpose the objects into a useful art project of your own. Can you make one piece of art out of each group member’s item? How about combining all of the objects into one piece of art?

Feel free to use glue, cardboard, paint, string, and other art supplies as needed.

Present your art project to the class and display it in the school library along with information about recycling.

- Check out www.recyclart.org for ideas and inspiration.
- Also, check out <http://www.101ducttapecrafts.com/> for countless creative ways to make things out of duct tape! Perhaps try one yourself.
- And while you are at it, check out these duct tape prom dresses. <https://www.duckbrand.com/promotions/stuck-at-prom/year-book-gallery/2014>. Seems there are a lot of creative teens like Kara McAllister out there. What you see will blow your mind!



Are You Self-Confident?

Kara McAllister learns that self-confidence is the best asset someone can have. She learns to celebrate her strengths and not focus on her weaknesses. And yes, she finds a boyfriend, too! Self-confidence is attractive.

How self-confident are you? Take the True-False quiz below to find out.

1. I am lucky to be me.

True False

2. I like myself and am happy.

True False

3. I enjoy hanging out with my friends.

True False

4. I deserve love and respect.

True False

5. I feel valued and needed.

True False

6. I don't need others to tell me I have done a good job.

True False

7. It is important to be yourself.

True False

8. It is easy for me to make friends.

True False

9. When people criticize me, I feel put down.

True False

10. I can admit to others when I have made a mistake.

True False

11. I express openly how I am feeling.

True False

12. I feel good about speaking up for myself.

True False

13. I am a happy person.

True False

14. I don't care what others think.

True False

To score your quiz, add up one point for every TRUE answer.

12 – 14 Points—Go you! You have high self-confidence!

9 – 11 Points—Not bad. But let's work to celebrate YOU a little more.

6 – 8 Points—Your low self-confidence might be holding you back.

Below 6 Points—Your self-confidence is super low! We need to change that.

How can you improve your self-confidence? Brainstorm some ideas with your class.

Write a three hundred word essay on the effectiveness of either or both of these activities:

1. Did you know that when you're helping others, you end up helping yourself as well? Feeling like you're making a difference and that your help is valued can do wonders to improve self-esteem. So get out there and volunteer your time. Try tutoring, helping an elderly neighbor, doing walk-a-thons, helping a classmate with a project, or cleaning out a local park! You'll feel proud of yourself!

2. What makes you special? What do you do really well? What do your friends and family love about you? Write a letter to yourself about all of the things that make you special.

Famous People Who Didn't "Fit In"

One of the reasons that Kara doesn't have confidence is that she doesn't feel like she "fits in" with the other kids at her school. In fact, Maybelline and The Sponge tease her because she is not like them. This hurts Kara and makes her ashamed of who she is. It is not until Kara learns to celebrate what makes her unique that she finds her confidence.

Unfortunately, many people are bullied every day because they are "not like everyone else." If you are being bullied, you are not alone.

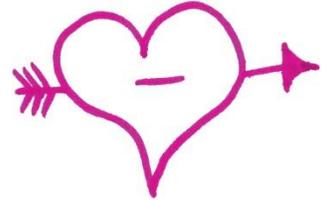
Research famous and notable people who were bullied for being different.

Research a particular celebrity who was bullied and share their story with your class.

- Talk to older family members who have been bullied and share their story with the class.
- Rewrite history—discuss how you would help someone who is being bullied.



What Matters Most



Friendship

Through her quest to find a boyfriend, Kara McAllister learns that friendship is what matters most.

According to “The Tabbi Chart” on page 177, what are some of the things that make friendship important to Kara?

What makes your friendships special? Choose five things that you love most about your friends and make a “Measuring What Matters Most” chart.

Commonalities/Uniqueness

Kara and Chip have common interests. They both love practical jokes and Kara’s duct tape creations.

Finding things you have in common with other people is the beginning of starting a meaningful relationship.

Here is a way to find out just what you have in common with others in your class, while also celebrating what makes everyone unique.

Materials: A pen and two pieces of paper.

- Divide into groups of five to eight students.
- On one of the sheets of paper, you will have twenty minutes to come up with a list of things that everyone in the group has in common. In order to make the list, it has to be something that applies to *everyone*. Completely obvious answers such as “we all have hair” or “we are all in _____ class” are not allowed!
- After twenty minutes, switch to the other paper. You now have twenty minutes to come up with a list of things that are unique to only one person in the group.
- Share both lists with the class when finished.

This is an excellent activity because it promotes unity and gets people to realize that they might have more in common than they first thought. It also empowers individual uniqueness.

- Pretend you are a talk show host introducing the day’s exciting new guest and introduce a member of your group to the rest of the class.
- Take a look at the “About the Author” blurb in the back of *The Boy Project*. In the same style, write a paragraph about a member of your group.

- Design a mural, using bulletin board paper, as a tribute to your group's commonalities and uniqueness to display in the school hallways.

