Simon vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda
Instructional Resource Guide

Suggested Grade Levels: 9-12
Author: Becky Albertalli

User's Guide
Designed for use with high school students, these writing prompts provide opportunities for students to develop a deeper understanding of the following topics/standards:

+ RL.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
+ RL.3 Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters and advance the plot or develop the theme.
+ RL.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.
+ RL.7 Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, evaluating how each version interprets the source text.
+ SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
+ SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
+ W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
+ W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.
+ W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Important Note: Many of the prompts investigate the experiences of marginalized identities; therefore, offering students a choice of prompts allows them to select one that resonates with them the most.

About the Author
Becky Albertalli was born and raised in the Atlanta, Georgia suburbs. She has been writing stories since preschool, generally about her pets. Becky went to college in Connecticut and totally freaked out about all of the snow. She is an extraordinarily picky eater but really loves ice cream and most desserts.

About the Book
Sixteen-year-old and not-so-openly gay Simon prefers to save his drama for the school musical. But when an email falls into the wrong hands, his secret is at risk of being thrust into the spotlight. Now change-averse Simon must find a way to step out of his comfort zone before he’s pushed out—without alienating his friends, compromising himself or fumbling a shot at happiness with the most confusing, adorable guy he’s never met.

Discussion Questions
+ *Simon vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda* features many kinds of relationships: family, friend, romantic, etc. Which characters’ relationship changed the most in the book? What factors changed the relationship? How does the change in this relationship from the book relate to relationships in your life? (Standards RL.3 & SL.1)
“People really are like houses with vast rooms and tiny windows. And maybe it’s a good thing, the way we never stop surprising each other.” (p. 293) What do Bram and Simon mean by this simile in the book? Does this simile apply to the people you know in your life? Why or why not? [Standard RL.4 & SL.1]

After reading the book and viewing the movie, what did the movie best capture from the book? What differences did you notice? How did these differences distract or amplify the book’s characters and themes? [Standard RL.7 & SL.1]

In many ways, Simon vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda is a story about coming out. Simon’s experience is impacted by his identity as a gay, white male. **Explain what “coming out” means.** Explore one of HRC’s Coming Out resources about coming out and living authentically as transgender or nonbinary, as LGBTQ+ Asian and Pacific Islander American, as Black and LGBTQ+, or LGBTQ+ Latinx. How do varying identities impact coming out? [Standard SL.2]

**Writing Prompts**

+ The author uses email entries to move the story forward and develop characters. In one email to Blue, Simon says, “Sometimes it seems everyone knows who I am except me.” (p. 59) Email is usually short but has a straightforward tone. Write three to five email entries that express who you see yourself to be and how you think others see you. Decide to whom you would choose to send the emails and tailor your emails to your audience. [Standard W.2]

+ Take on the perspective of Simon. Write a response to Martin’s email apologizing for the harm he has caused Simon. Use details and events from the story to write his email response, accepting or rejecting Martin’s apology. [Standards RL.1, RL.3 & W.2]

+ Martin feels his family is focused heavily on his older brother’s identity. Using evidence from the book as support, in Martin’s voice, express his feelings to his family in a letter or email message. [Standards RL.1 & W.2]

+ Choose two of the main characters and consider how their friendship changes throughout the book. Write an essay that analyzes the changes within their friendship from the beginning to the ending of the book. [Standards RL.3 & W.2]

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