

WRINGER

Student Mission & Response Journal

CENTRAL IDEA

When belonging demands harm, what makes moral courage possible?

Resource Information

Novel: *Wringer* by Jerry Spinelli

Setting: the fictional town of Waymer

Designed for: Advanced readers in grades 4–7, with adaptable supports

TEXT USE

Use a teacher-approved copy of the complete 40-chapter novel. This resource supplies original prompts and no reproduced passages.

Your Mission

Investigate how belonging, tradition, fear, care, and courage interact in Waymer. Track Palmer LaRue's changing choices without reducing the novel to a single lesson.

Driving question

When a community calls a harmful act normal, what helps a person recognize responsibility and act?

Reading Care

The novel includes bullying, coercion, threats, secrecy, and the shooting and killing of pigeons. Discuss these events analytically without reenacting, simulating, or graphically illustrating harm. Ask for a preview, pause, or alternate response mode when needed.

Use of the Novel

- Use a teacher-approved edition containing all 40 chapters.
- Cite chapters; add page numbers only when everyone uses the same edition.
- Do not copy long passages. Record brief location notes and paraphrase evidence.
- The culminating mission requires the complete novel.

Conceptual Questions

Belonging

- What makes membership meaningful?
- When does a group turn belonging into control?

Tradition

- Who benefits, who pays, and who gets to question a custom?
- Can a tradition be changed without erasing community?

Moral Courage

- Is courage a feeling, decision, action, pattern, or public risk?
- What forms of help make refusal possible?

Care & Responsibility

- What responsibilities arise when a person cares for another living being?
- When is secrecy protective?

Power & Bystanders

- How do humor, silence, status, and threat distribute power?
- What can a bystander do safely?

Narrative Craft

- How does the countdown create tension?
- How does limited perspective shape judgment?

Reading Route

Mission	Reading	Inquiry Focus	Transfer Question
1	Chapters 1–6	Countdown, Custom & Fear	How can a community expectation shape a child before he chooses?
2	Chapters 7–12	Belonging & Performance	What does Palmer trade for membership in the group?
3	Chapters 13–18	Nipper, Care & Secrecy	When can secrecy protect—and when can it increase danger?
4	Chapters 19–24	The Double Life	How do care, fear, and loyalty pull Palmer in different directions?
5	Chapters 25–32	Pressure & Refusal	What changes private discomfort into a moral decision?
6	Chapters 33–40	Protection & Public Courage	What can one public act change—and what can it not change?

Range alignment

The same six ranges are used in the journal and facilitator guide. Mission 6 ends with Chapter 40.

Edition Record

Publisher / year: _____ Format: _____

Forty chapters confirmed: ☐ Yes ☐ No Page-number citations required: ☐ Yes ☐ No

People, Groups & Pressures

Person / Group	Role to Track	Question
Palmer LaRue	Child approaching the expected wringer age	Where do fear, desire for status, and conscience collide?
Nipper	Pigeon Palmer secretly cares for	How does relationship alter moral attention?
Dorothy Gruzik	Neighbor and friend whom Palmer pushes away and later trusts	How does she see beyond the group's performance?
Beans	Dominant peer in Palmer's group	How does he convert cruelty into status and entertainment?
Mutto	Peer who helps enforce the group's behavior	When does participation become responsibility?
Henry	Peer whose hesitation complicates the group	What possibilities exist between leader and resister?
Farquar	Older boy associated with birthday "Treatment"	How does ritual disguise coercion?
Palmer's parents	Adults whose knowledge and responses matter	What support is visible, delayed, or misunderstood?
Waymer community	The system surrounding Family Fest and Pigeon Day	How are money, celebration, adulthood, and harm linked?

Discussion Toolkit

Move	Ask Yourself
Claim	What pattern or meaning do I infer?
Evidence	Which action, contrast, repetition, consequence, or craft choice supports it?
Reasoning	How does the evidence produce the meaning?
Counterview	What might another careful reader argue?
Revision	What later evidence changes my claim?

- Separate explanation from excuse.
- Analyze competing values without treating suffering as merely a matter of taste.
- Name the difference between private belief and public action.
- Critique behavior and systems, not classmates or communities represented in discussion.

Mission 1: Countdown, Custom & Fear

CHAPTERS 1–6

Essential question

How can a community expectation shape a child before he chooses?

Pressure Point

Identify one moment when an expectation narrows a character's choices.

Evidence Across the Range

Record two chapter references and paraphrase the relevant actions or craft choices.

Cost Ledger

Who gains belonging, safety, status, money, or pleasure? Who carries fear, exclusion, or harm?

Current Claim

Write a defensible answer to the essential question.

Complication

What evidence resists or limits your claim?

Mission 2: Belonging & Performance

CHAPTERS 7–12

Essential question

What does Palmer trade for membership in the group?

Pressure Point

Identify one moment when an expectation narrows a character's choices.

Evidence Across the Range

Record two chapter references and paraphrase the relevant actions or craft choices.

Cost Ledger

Who gains belonging, safety, status, money, or pleasure? Who carries fear, exclusion, or harm?

Current Claim

Write a defensible answer to the essential question.

Complication

What evidence resists or limits your claim?

Mission 3: Nipper, Care & Secrecy

CHAPTERS 13–18

Essential question

When can secrecy protect—and when can it increase danger?

Pressure Point

Identify one moment when an expectation narrows a character's choices.

Evidence Across the Range

Record two chapter references and paraphrase the relevant actions or craft choices.

Cost Ledger

Who gains belonging, safety, status, money, or pleasure? Who carries fear, exclusion, or harm?

Current Claim

Write a defensible answer to the essential question.

Complication

What evidence resists or limits your claim?

Mission 4: The Double Life

CHAPTERS 19–24

Essential question

How do care, fear, and loyalty pull Palmer in different directions?

Pressure Point

Identify one moment when an expectation narrows a character's choices.

Evidence Across the Range

Record two chapter references and paraphrase the relevant actions or craft choices.

Cost Ledger

Who gains belonging, safety, status, money, or pleasure? Who carries fear, exclusion, or harm?

Current Claim

Write a defensible answer to the essential question.

Complication

What evidence resists or limits your claim?

Mission 5: Pressure & Refusal

CHAPTERS 25–32

Essential question

What changes private discomfort into a moral decision?

Pressure Point

Identify one moment when an expectation narrows a character's choices.

Evidence Across the Range

Record two chapter references and paraphrase the relevant actions or craft choices.

Cost Ledger

Who gains belonging, safety, status, money, or pleasure? Who carries fear, exclusion, or harm?

Current Claim

Write a defensible answer to the essential question.

Complication

What evidence resists or limits your claim?

Mission 6: Protection & Public Courage

CHAPTERS 33–40

Essential question

What can one public act change—and what can it not change?

Pressure Point

Identify one moment when an expectation narrows a character's choices.

Evidence Across the Range

Record two chapter references and paraphrase the relevant actions or craft choices.

Cost Ledger

Who gains belonging, safety, status, money, or pleasure? Who carries fear, exclusion, or harm?

Current Claim

Write a defensible answer to the essential question.

Complication

What evidence resists or limits your claim?

Belonging–Cost Ledger

Choice or Ritual	Belonging / Status Gained	Cost to Self	Cost to Others

Pattern / Revised Judgment

Choice–Pressure–Consequence Map

Choice	Pressure / Constraint	Immediate Result	Longer Consequence

Pattern / Revised Judgment

Tradition Systems Map

Actor / Institution	Value or Benefit	Power / Resource	Cost or Blind Spot

Pattern / Revised Judgment

Secrecy & Protection Audit

Secret	Whom It Protects	Risk It Creates	Better Support?

Pattern / Revised Judgment

Courage Continuum

Moment	Private Belief	Interpersonal Action	Public Risk

Pattern / Revised Judgment

Narrative Tension Tracker

Chapter	What Palmer Knows	What Reader Anticipates	Craft Effect

Pattern / Revised Judgment

Historical & Ethical Inquiry

Use the companion context packet. Select one question that helps interpret—not replace—the novel.

- How do domestic or rock pigeons differ from the extinct passenger pigeon?
- What is known, uncertain, or still studied about pigeon homing?
- How have communities defended or challenged animal-use traditions?
- How can fundraising, identity, and spectacle make a custom resistant to change?
- What distinguishes bystander, reinforcer, target, and upstander roles?

Research Plan

Culminating Mission: Waymer Civic Review

Complete-novel requirement

Read Chapters 1–40 before completing this mission.

Prepare a recommendation for a fictional Waymer community review board. Decide whether and how Family Fest should change while addressing tradition, fundraising, community identity, youth participation, public safety, and animal welfare.

Required Evidence

- Novel evidence from Chapters 1–12, 13–24, 25–32, and 33–40.
- At least two credible context sources; distinguish fact, inference, and ethical judgment.
- A systems explanation showing how the tradition persists.
- A fair counterproposal or counterargument.
- A concrete transition plan: stakeholders, resources, likely resistance, and success measures.
- A reflection on what Palmer's story can and cannot prove about real communities.

Product Options

☐ Policy brief ☐ Public-hearing testimony ☐ Exhibit ☐ Podcast ☐ Illustrated essay ☐ Approved design

Culminating Planner

Recommendation

Whole-novel evidence plan

Historical / scientific source plan

Ethical framework

Counterargument

Transition plan

Audience and format

Student Rubric

Criterion	4 — Advanced	3 — Secure	2 — Developing	1 — Beginning
Interpretation	Nuanced, significant, revisable	Clear and defensible	Broad or uneven	Summary / opinion
Novel Evidence	Precise across all four bands	Relevant across all bands	Uneven or incomplete	Little / inaccurate
Context Evidence	Credible sources deepen interpretation	Accurate and connected	Mostly background	Unverified / absent
Reasoning	Explains systems, causes, limits	Explains evidence links	Some explanation	Lists evidence
Ethical Complexity	Weighs duties, care, effects, power	Addresses competing values	Mentions another view	False balance or dismissal
Communication	Audience-shaped and compelling	Clear and appropriate	Sometimes unclear	Incomplete
Reflection	Specific revision and next question	Explains growth	General process	Completion only

Reflection & Access

How did your understanding of courage change?

Which evidence most disrupted your first idea?

What remains unresolved?

What support preserved challenge for you?

Useful supports: ☐ preview questions ☐ audio + text ☐ writing before speaking ☐ speech-to-text ☐ visual organizer ☐ compacted practice ☐ independent extension