



## Writing Activity 2: Examining Motives



**“Look at those, Isabel. Those are you. Those are who you really are. That’s what I hope you’ll be thinking about, not silly gossip by unkind children who always have to make themselves feel better by saying mean things about other people.”**

**-*Just Kidding* p. 176**

Think about the characters in *Just Kidding* who gossip, specifically Anna and Joline.

Tell, in writing, why you think they do that. Do you think that Mrs. Martinez is correct when she says they are trying to make themselves feel better by saying mean things about other people?

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Do you think that, in time, Anna and Joline will really feel better about themselves if they continue to say and do mean things?

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Could Anna and Joline be considered victims also?

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## Art Activity 1: **The True You**



**“They have nothing to do with the real you, Isabel. Your artwork, and your friends, and your schoolwork, and your family – those are the things that really define you. Do you see that?”**

**-Just Kidding p. 176**

### **Supplies:**

- Old magazines and/or newspapers
- Scissors, glue, markers
- Construction paper

**Define yourself. Make a collage using pictures and/or words cut from old newspapers or magazines glued onto a large piece of construction paper. Ask your friends if they think you have defined the “real” you.**

## Art Activity 2: Telephone Game



“I know that now,” Kevin told her. “It’s weird how fast someone can start a rumor and it can just grow...” he shook his head from side to side, his brown hair falling onto his forehead. “This gossip thing is really sick. People get a hold of something, then a few people repeat it, and it doesn’t even sound the same as it was the first time. It’s even worse on the Internet because you don’t see people face-to-face. It’s like that old game ‘Telephone.’ You say to someone, ‘I like red cherries’ and at the other end it comes out, ‘I saw Kevin with a girl named Sherry.’”

-*Just Kidding* p. 244

Have several random sentences written on paper before you begin the game. (You can take them from a book, magazine or newspaper if you like.)

Line up at least 5 people. The first person takes a slip of paper from the pile of sentences and reads the paper’s sentence to herself and then whispers it, only once, into the ear of the next person in line. That person passes on what she heard by whispering it, again only once, into the ear of the next person in the line and so on until the end of the line. The last person in line says aloud what she heard. After hearing what the last person heard, the first person in the line rereads what she originally said to the first person. Most often, what the last person heard bears no resemblance to what the first person read! What does this tell you about passing on information you hear from someone else?

## Discussion Activity 1: **Confrontations**



*To speak up, or not to speak up...*

**“Isabel just had to ask her, “Maeve, how can you let their comments just slid off your back like that? They make me so mad.”**

**Maeve shrugged. “You know, I think a few months ago I’d have cared a lot. But now it just seems like a waste of time. Anna and Joline aren’t getting any nicer, so it’s better to just say out of their way when they get nasty.”**

**-Just Kidding p. 56**

Discuss this idea in groups of three or more. What do you think of Maeve’s idea of just keeping out of the way of Anna and Joline?

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Is it better to confront people who are annoying or hurting you, or to stay away from them?

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Do you think that Anna and Joline are getting the message when people avoid them?

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## Discussion Activity 2: **Gossip Alert**



**“I mean, the whole school is talking about it, like you are his new crush or something” Maeve gestured dramatically around the room. Isabel, looking around, realized with a sinking heart that Maeve was right.”**  
*-Just Kidding p. 60*

In a group discuss these ideas. Do you think it is kinder to make a friend aware of gossip about her or to keep any gossip you hear about a friend to yourself?

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Would you want to hear from a friend if someone was spreading gossip about you?

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## Research Activity 1: **Jazz Swing**



**“That’s right. And it was just about that time (the end of WWII, 1945) that Birdland music began to influence America. We’re talking about great players here – Charlie ‘Bird’ Parker, for whom Birdland was named; Count Basie, who had a great swing orchestra; and Thelonious Monk. These were great musicians who all had their own style, and each of them influenced Birdland in their own way.”**  
*-Just Kidding p. 45*

### **Supplies:**

- Internet access
- Encyclopedias
- Access to: music store, library records, music players, CDS

Here’s your chance to swing! First, look online, in your local music store or library music section to see if you can listen to a recording of “Lullaby of Birdland.” That will certainly put you in the mood to research the big names in Birdland music – Charlie Parker, Count Basie, and Thelonious Monk. Choose one or all three and listen to the music they played. Try dancing swing dance if you know how or can find someone who does.

Can you find any old newspaper photos in your library’s picture files or online of the original Birdland Dance Club in New York City?

## Research Activity 2: Papier-mâché



*A little paper, a lot of glue....*

**“Isabel remembered her art teacher, Mrs. Benigni’s, enthusiasm for the larger-than-life papier-mâché bird.”**

*-Just Kidding p. 20*

### Supplies:

- Internet access, art books, library
- Strips of newspaper, paste, water & containers
- Balloons

(note: as methods differ, so might the materials)

1. **Research by finding art books in your library, asking your art teacher or other resource person, or by conducting an Internet search on how to make a papier-mâché artwork. There are several different techniques and “recipes” for making papier-mâché.**
2. **Once you know how to do it, what’s stopping you from giving it a go? Try making your own papier-mâché bird. After it dries, paint it and add real wings and tail feathers. Add a beak and wire legs. Finish your creation by coating it with a protective layer of “Gesso” or “Mod Podge.” Voila! You have a cool decoration for your room or a great gift!**