

ROADBLOCKS & RELATIONSHIPS

A Comprehensive Teacher's Guide

Using the lessons of a lifetime to help senior high school students think, reflect, make choices and find their own way forward.

FOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS

A free educational resource accompanying Roadblocks & Relationships by James P. Hutton.

Introduction: What This Guide Is Really About

Roadblocks & Relationships began as a book written for a granddaughter. It became something broader: a collection of experiences, setbacks, opportunities, relationships and decisions that shaped one life. For senior high school students, its greatest value is not in learning the details of the author's life. Its value is in using those experiences as a starting point for examining their own.

This guide therefore takes a deliberately different approach. It does not ask students simply to identify what the author learned. It repeatedly asks them to consider what they would have done, what alternatives existed, what they might have learned and how the experience could apply to a situation the author never faced.

The objective is not to teach students how to avoid every roadblock. No one can do that. The objective is to help them become more capable of recognizing a roadblock, thinking clearly about their options, seeking help when appropriate, adapting when necessary and choosing a constructive way forward.

The Central Idea

“When life puts a roadblock in your way, don’t assume the road has ended. Look for another way forward.”

The book also emphasizes that the road is rarely travelled alone. Relationships—with parents, teachers, friends, mentors, employers, colleagues and strangers—can influence the direction of a life. Students should explore both sides: how others affect their journey and how their own actions affect the journeys of others.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is intentionally flexible. It can support a short unit, a semester-long program, independent reading, a guidance activity, a careers course, English/language arts, business education, student success programming or cross-curricular learning.

- Use the entire book and pause at major turning points.
- Assign selected chapters that connect with a current course theme.
- Use the audiobook for whole-class listening or audio-supported reading.
- Have students maintain a personal reflection journal.
- Use small groups to examine different chapters and report their conclusions.
- Choose individual activities without requiring students to complete the entire guide.

The Most Important Teaching Principle

Do not turn the book into a test of whether students agree with the author. Students should be allowed—and encouraged—to disagree respectfully. Ask them to separate three things: what happened, the lesson the author drew from it, and the lesson they themselves draw from it.

That distinction transforms an autobiography into a learning tool.

Learning Outcomes

Students using the book should have opportunities to:

- Identify personal, academic, social and career roadblocks.
- Recognize that a problem can have more than one possible response.
- Distinguish persistence from stubbornly continuing an ineffective approach.
- Recognize strengths and limitations without defining themselves by either.
- Understand the value of mentors, relationships and asking for help.
- See leadership as behaviour and responsibility, not merely position.
- Evaluate risk, consequences and opportunity.
- Adapt plans when circumstances change.
- Reflect on mistakes without allowing them to define their identity.
- Transfer a lesson from the author's experience to a completely different situation in their own lives.
- Develop a personal strategy for responding to future roadblocks.

The Five-Question Roadblock Framework

Use these five questions after virtually any chapter, incident or classroom scenario:

- WHAT HAPPENED? — Describe the situation before judging it.
- WHAT WAS THE ROADBLOCK? — What made the situation difficult?
- WHAT CHOICES EXISTED? — What options were available, including options that were not taken?
- WHAT HAPPENED BECAUSE OF THE RESPONSE? — Consider consequences, both intended and unintended.
- WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME? — What can I apply to my own life, even if my circumstances are completely different?

The fifth question is the key. It moves students from studying someone else's life to thinking about their own.

Major Themes and Teaching Opportunities

Never Accept “Impossible” Too Quickly

- Explore the difference between a genuine limitation and an assumption that has never been tested.
- Ask: Who gets to decide what is possible for you?
- Activity: Students identify one belief they hold about their abilities and examine the evidence supporting it.

Understanding Strengths and Limitations

- Discuss the danger of defining a person by one academic mark, skill or weakness.
- Ask which abilities schools tend to measure well and which are less visible.

- Have students identify three strengths that may not appear on a report card.

Persistence Versus Changing Direction

- Persistence can mean trying again; it can also mean changing the method.
- Ask: When does persistence become stubbornness?
- Have students create two routes to the same goal.

Asking Better Questions

- Move beyond “Why can’t I?” toward “What can I change?”, “Who can help?”, “What have I not considered?” and “What is another route?”
- Challenge students to rewrite an unproductive question into a useful one.

Relationships and Mentors

- Map the people who have influenced students through encouragement, challenge, opportunity or example.
- Ask: Who opened a door for you? How can you become that person for someone else?

Leadership Without a Title

- Explore leadership as responsibility, initiative, service and example.
- Ask students to identify a leadership action they can take without being given authority.

Risk, Opportunity and Initiative

- Examine the difference between reckless risk and calculated risk.
- Ask what information should be gathered before taking a significant risk.
- Discuss the cost of never trying.

Career Choices and Unexpected Turns

- Challenge the idea that a career must be a straight line.
- Have students create a career map showing possible routes, skills, people and experiences rather than one fixed destination.

Resilience

- Define resilience as constructive response—not simply toughness.
- Discuss persistence, adaptation, asking for help and revising a goal.

Responsibility for Your Own Journey

- Emphasize agency without suggesting people are responsible for every hardship they encounter.
- Ask: Within this situation, what choices remain available?

Discussion Questions

Questions About the Author’s Experiences

- What was the most significant roadblock in this part of the book? Why?
- What decision would you have made differently?

- What information did the author have at the time—and what information did he not have?
- What alternatives existed?
- Was the eventual outcome predictable? Why or why not?
- Did the author's response solve the problem, change the problem or change the direction of the journey?
- Do you agree with the lesson the author draws from this experience?

Questions About Students' Own Lives

- What is a roadblock you have faced or might reasonably face?
- How did—or how might—you respond?
- Who could help?
- What assumption might make the roadblock seem larger than it is?
- What part of the situation is within your control?
- What alternative route could exist?
- What would you tell a friend facing the same situation?
- What lesson from the book could apply to a situation the author never experienced?

Classroom Activities

The Roadblock Map

Students draw a road from where they are now toward a future goal. Along the route they place realistic roadblocks and then draw at least two possible detours around each one. Emphasize that changing a route does not necessarily mean abandoning the destination.

Two Roads, One Goal

Give students a scenario such as rejection from a job, failure in a course, loss of an opportunity or discovering that a chosen program is not a good fit. Students create two different strategies that could still move them toward a meaningful goal.

The Advice I Would Give

Students choose one experience from the book and write a short message to the younger version of the author. They explain what they think he should consider and why.

The Advice I Need

Students privately identify a current or anticipated roadblock and list three people, organizations or resources they could approach for help.

Relationship Web

Students create a private map of people who influence their development. They identify where their network is strong and where they might benefit from developing new relationships.

Leadership in One Week

Students choose one small leadership action that requires no formal authority: listening, helping, organizing, accepting responsibility, solving a problem or encouraging someone. They reflect on the result.

Roadblock Case Conference

Groups receive fictional student cases. They identify the roadblock, assumptions, choices, resources, consequences and possible next steps, then defend their recommendation.

My Personal Roadblock Playbook

Students create a one-page guide for their future selves: warning signs that they are stuck, questions to ask, people to contact, strategies to try and signs that it may be time to change direction.

Cross-Curricular Connections

English / Language Arts

- Personal narrative
- Theme and character analysis
- Persuasive writing
- Oral presentation or podcast
- Reflective journal

Career Studies / Guidance

- Career mapping
- Transferable skills
- Mentorship and networking
- Decision-making
- Transition planning

Business / Entrepreneurship

- Initiative
- Opportunity and risk
- Customer interaction
- Learning from failure
- Problem-solving

Social Sciences

- Relationships
- Community influence
- Opportunity and circumstance
- Identity and agency

Physical Education / Athletics

- Discipline
- Performance setbacks
- Team relationships

- Goal setting
- Leadership

A Suggested Six-Week Unit

Assessment: Reward Thinking, Not Agreement

The book is best assessed through reflection and application rather than recall. Students should not receive a lower assessment because they disagree with an author's decision or conclusion.

- Reflection journal: depth of thought, evidence and personal application.
- Roadblock Map: realistic obstacles and multiple strategies.
- Case Conference: reasoning, collaboration and communication.
- Leadership activity: initiative and reflection.
- Career map: thoughtful exploration rather than certainty.
- Roadblock Playbook: practical, specific and personally meaningful.
- Final reflection: ability to transfer a lesson to a new situation.

A Powerful Assessment Question

“What did you learn from this book that you can apply to a situation the author never experienced?”

Supporting Different Learners

The book is available in PDF, EPUB and MP3 formats. Multiple formats allow students to access the same material in different ways.

- Allow audio-supported reading.
- Break reading into manageable sections.
- Use discussion before written work.
- Offer private reflection alternatives when topics become personal.
- Use fictional scenarios when personal disclosure would be inappropriate.
- Allow students to demonstrate learning through writing, speaking, presentation, audio or visual formats when appropriate.

Creating a Safe Classroom Discussion

Some stories may remind students of difficult experiences. The purpose of this resource is educational, not therapeutic.

- Students may pass on a question.
- Never require disclosure of personal trauma or family circumstances.
- Critique ideas and decisions without attacking people.
- Respect different backgrounds, experiences and beliefs.
- Use the school's established procedures when serious safety or wellbeing concerns arise.

Using the Audiobook

- Pause at decision points and ask students what they would do before hearing the outcome.
- Compare student responses with the author's response.
- Ask students what changed when the author changed strategy.
- Use listening journals: one idea, one question and one application after each session.
- Combine listening and reading so students can engage with the story in multiple ways.

Culminating Project: My Road Ahead

Ask students to prepare a written reflection, presentation, video or audio project titled "My Road Ahead." It should address five questions:

- What kind of person do I want to become?
- What strengths will help me?
- What roadblocks might I encounter?
- Who can help me when I get stuck?
- What will I do when my original route no longer works?

The project should not require students to predict their entire future. The objective is to demonstrate a thoughtful approach to an uncertain future.

Questions Teachers Can Use Throughout the Unit

- What assumption are we making?
- What other explanation is possible?
- What choices are available?
- What information are we missing?
- Who could help?
- What is within your control?
- What would happen if you tried another route?
- What can this experience teach you?
- How might another person see this situation?
- What would responsible leadership look like here?
- What would you tell a friend facing the same roadblock?
- What lesson from this story applies beyond the story?

A Note to Educators

The most powerful use of Roadblocks & Relationships may not be the most elaborate lesson plan. A single honest conversation about a setback, career decision, relationship or difficult choice may have more lasting value than a perfectly structured assignment.

The author's life is the raw material. The real educational opportunity begins when students use those experiences to examine their own choices.

Plans change. Opportunities appear unexpectedly. People help us. People disappoint us. We make mistakes. Sometimes we need to persist, and sometimes we need to find another way. Help students understand that changing direction is not automatically failure.

If students finish the book believing they have to avoid every roadblock, the lesson has been missed. If they finish believing that they can face a roadblock, think, ask, adapt and choose a constructive way forward, the book has done its job.

Free Book and Resources

Roadblocks & Relationships is available at no cost to students, educators, families and organizations.

- PDF — classroom and computer use.
- EPUB — e-readers and mobile devices.
- MP3 audiobook — listening and audio-supported learning.
- Teacher's Discussion Guide — discussion, activities and reflection.

Website: www.roadblocksandrelationships.ca

Educators are encouraged to adapt this guide to their students, subject area and available time. It is a starting point rather than a prescribed curriculum.

Closing Reflection for Students

“When I encounter a roadblock, I will remember that...”

Ask students to complete the sentence in their own words. Their answers may be the most meaningful evidence of what they have taken from the book.

Week	Focus	Suggested Work	Student Outcome
1	The Roadblock Mindset	Opening chapters; Five-Question Framework	Students recognize that a roadblock does not automatically end a journey.
2	Knowing Yourself	Strengths/limitations reflection; Relationship Web	Students identify assets, limitations and support.
3	Choices and Detours	Roadblock Map; Two Roads, One Goal	Students generate alternatives rather than seeing one path.
4	Relationships and Leadership	Leadership in One Week; mentor discussion	Students see leadership and relationships as practical skills.
5	Career, Risk and Change	Career map; Roadblock Case Conference	Students practice flexible decision-making.
6	My Road Ahead	Personal Roadblock Playbook; final reflection	Students create a practical strategy for future challenges.