

# Smart Cookie Ingredients

An Activity to Explore Self and Community

## ABOUT THE ACTIVITY

In Elly Swartz’s novel **Smart Cookie** (Scholastic, Inc.), Gram calls the idiosyncratic Frankie a “smart cookie.” No one can deny that this sixth-grader is indeed a smart cookie, from rapping Shakespeare to reluctantly ghost-hunting with her best friend to helping her father run the eclectic Greene Family B&B.

But being a smart cookie does not mean Frankie feels complete. Since the death of her mother, she feels like she is missing an important ingredient. However, as the novel unfolds, Frankie discovers that while her mother is gone, she has a community of friends and family that makes up her “herd.”

The truth is, we’re all smart cookies with herds who love and support us. Sometimes, however, that can be hard to see and even harder to feel. This activity allows readers to recognize and embrace their unique traits and community. It celebrates each reader’s uniqueness and gives them a sense of their broad support group.

This activity invites readers to consider their personal idiosyncrasies as the ingredients that make them smart cookies, the very things that make them unique and special. Each reader will be given a clear plastic cup or jar labeled “Smart Cookie.” They’ll write down their own idiosyncrasies or ingredients on pieces of cookie-shaped paper and place them in the jar.

Readers will then brainstorm a list of the people in their life who support them — not just their family, but the whole “herd” of people who sees and honors them and all their idiosyncrasies. Those names will also be written down and dropped into the jar. As the activity wraps up, readers will be able to see a jar that holds what makes them Smart Cookies — their unique traits and their unique herd.

This activity can be adapted for older classrooms by using hashtags, playlists, and/or poetry to have readers express their idiosyncrasies and thoughts on their herd.

## MORE RESOURCES

Look for a full **Smart Cookie** classroom curriculum guide at [EllySwartz.com](http://EllySwartz.com).



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## ABOUT THE BOOK

### Smart Cookie

By Elly Swartz

Published by Scholastic, Inc.

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Age Range: 8 - 12 Years

Sometimes you need to keep a few secrets.

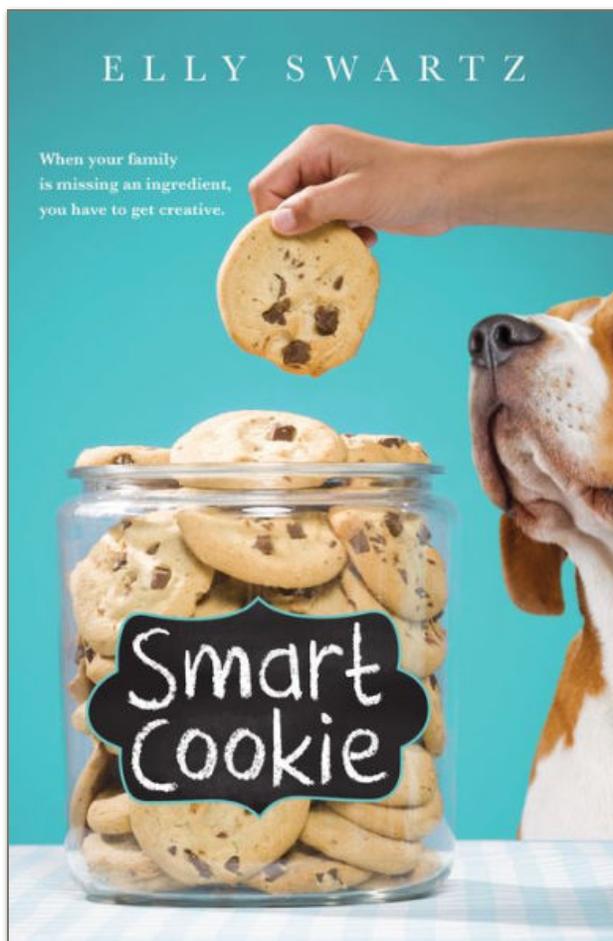
Frankie knows she'll be in big trouble if Dad discovers she secretly posted a dating profile for him online. But she's determined to find him a wife, even if she ends up grounded for life. Frankie wants what she had before Mom died. A family of three. Two is a pair of socks or the wheels on a bicycle or a busy weekend at the B&B where Frankie and Dad live. Three is a family. And Frankie's is missing a piece.

But Operation Mom is harder to pull off than Frankie expects. None of the Possibles are very momish, the B&B's guests keep canceling, Frankie's getting the silent treatment from her once best friend, and there's a maybe-ghost hanging around. Worst of all, Gram and Dad are definitely hiding secrets of their own.

If a smart cookie like Frankie wants to save the B&B and find her missing piece, she's going to have to figure out what secrets are worth keeping and when it's time to let go.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elly Swartz loves family, Twizzlers, and writing for kids. Her debut novel, **Finding Perfect** (FSG, 2016), is about twelve-year-old Molly, friendship, family, OCD, and a slam poetry competition that will determine everything. In her second book, **Smart Cookie** (Scholastic, 2018), you meet the spunky and big-hearted Frankie. Frankie's all about family — with a dash of mischief and mystery! Then, say hello to Maggie in **Give and Take** (FSG, 2019). Elly is a graduate of Boston University and the Georgetown University Law Center. She lives in Massachusetts with her family and a beagle named Lucy.



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## CONNECTING WITH THE AUTHOR

Elly would love to connect with you!

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## PREPARING FOR THE ACTIVITY

This activity provides each reader with a “cookie jar” that will hold the unique ingredients that make them special. Those ingredients, written by them on the backs of paper cookie cut-outs, will fill the jar like the cookies do on the cover of the novel **Smart Cookie**. How might you prepare for this activity?

### Gather Your Materials

1. Locate a copy of the novel **Smart Cookie** by Elly Swartz (Scholastic, Inc.).
2. Obtain “cookie jars” for each reader. The “jars” can be small plastic drinking cups with covers donated by your local coffee shop or jars with screw-on lids that you purchase or locate. Between what your cafeteria manager, science catalog, dollar store, or recycling bin has to offer, we know you will find something perfect. The width of the jar should be between 1.75 and 3.5 inches to hold the 2-inch-wide cookie templates.
3. Label the cups or jars with Smart Cookie labels or prep the labels for readers to apply themselves. You can find Smart Cookie label templates on page 7 of this guide.
4. Cut out a dozen paper cookies or print a single cookie sheet for each reader to cut themselves. The cookie sheet is on page 8 of this guide. The paper cookies are about 2.25 inches wide, so they can be easily cut out with a 2-inch-wide circle hole puncher.



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5. Consider if you want to have a cooking demonstration (a trip to the school kitchen during baking time?) or at least a cookie component to this activity. (We suspect that everyone will be craving cookies while reading this book and doing the activity!)

## DISCOVERING THE INGREDIENTS OF SMART COOKIES

### Explore Idiosyncrasies & Smart Cookies

After reading **Smart Cookie** by Elly Swartz (Scholastic, Inc.) with your readers, consider exploring the word idiosyncrasy and how Elly Swartz's characters have many idiosyncratic traits.

1. Explore the meaning of idiosyncrasy.

Dictionary.com defines the word as “a mode of behavior or way of thought peculiar to an individual.”

2. Explore the unique thoughts and behaviors of the book's main character, Frankie. As time allows, chart the idiosyncrasies of the other main characters.

3. Explore how the collection of a character's idiosyncrasies makes her a memorable character.

4. Consider making an analogy between the author choosing idiosyncrasies when creating each character, and Frankie and Gram choosing ingredients when making the cookies for the B&B guests.

5. Gram calls Frankie a “smart cookie” throughout the story. Discuss how this expression of love is one way that Gram honors all of Frankie's “ingredients” or idiosyncrasies.



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## Make Cookies & Cookie Jars

This part of the activity invites readers to explore their own “ingredients” or idiosyncrasies and to write them on the backs of the cookie templates. Adding the ingredients/cookies to the jar affirms that each reader is also a mix of thoughts and behaviors that makes them “smart cookies.”

1. Consider sharing that you find all of the readers in the room to be “smart cookies” — each with an amazing collection of individual ingredients that mixes to make them special people.
2. Invite your readers to consider six ingredients or idiosyncrasies that make them uniquely themselves. Have them write those six idiosyncrasies on the backs of six paper cookies. If you have not provided them with pre-cut cookies, simply hand out scissors and one cookie sheet each.
3. Invite your readers to drop those cookies into their Smart Cookie jars. If you have not pre-labeled the jars, you can hand out scissors and glue sticks to transform the cups or jars into cookie jars.
4. Reflect how the ingredients in the jar affirm that they are each a mix of thoughts and behaviors that makes them “smart cookies.”

## Explore Who’s in Your Herd

Since the death of her mother, Frankie feels like she is missing an important ingredient. Throughout the book, Frankie tries to find a new wife for her father so that her family has its “pieces back” before the town’s Winter Family Festival Parade.

“I just want to be a family again. Like before. The three of us. Not just Dad and me. Not two. Two is a pair of socks, yin and yang, war and peace. Two is sandwich bread. Our family was never two slices. Our family never fit on a bicycle. I just want what we had. I want our pieces back.” —**Smart Cookie**, Page 189

But as the book progresses, Frankie discovers that there are many people in her life who are just like family.

“You know, we’re a family. Like a herd of elephants, a dazzle of zebras, a bloat of hippos, murder of crows, pod of whales, pack of wolves, or tower of giraffes.”  
—**Smart Cookie**, Page 261

“With a stutter and rumble, our float takes off down the street. I’ve got everyone I love around me. My herd has gathered. My family is here. Some of them are on the float. And some are watching over me.” —**Smart Cookie**, Page 263

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## Explore Who's in Your Herd (cont.)

1. Explore with readers why Frankie feels like she is missing an ingredient in her family.
2. Have readers recall all the things Frankie does to get her family's "pieces back" in time for the Winter Family Festival.
3. Revisit the name of Frankie's float, *Who's in Your Herd?* Why do your readers think she chose that name? Does Frankie embrace a broader definition of family at the end of the book than at the beginning? Why do you think that is?
4. Looking again at the final chapter and the people who are with Frankie on the float, make a list of Frankie's "herd."
5. Invite readers to revisit their idiosyncrasies. Then have them consider who is in their herd and who embraces, respects, or celebrates one or more of these idiosyncrasies. Have them think beyond their family as Frankie finally did.
6. Invite readers to use the remaining paper cookies to write down people who are in their herd.
7. Reassure your readers that they do not need to fill out all of the cookies. New people can join our herd at any time in our lives. Like Frankie in the beginning of the book, some readers may feel, at times, like they are missing ingredients. But those ingredients will come!
8. Explore the question of whether the people in our herds are also ingredients that make us smart cookies.
9. Invite readers to add the cookies naming the people in their herd to their Smart Cookie Jar.
10. Invite readers to reach into their cookie jar as often as they like over the coming year to celebrate what and who make them unique and special. Invite them to continue to add to the cookie jar as they discover more things about themselves and the people in their herd.
11. If you'd like, share images or thoughts with Elly Swartz about this activity under the hashtag **#SmartCookie**.

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## MORE MIDDLE GRADE ENGAGEMENT

For other middle grade based activities for classrooms and libraries including discussion guides, service learning projects, and a spot of fun, visit [CuriousCityDPW.com](http://CuriousCityDPW.com).

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Cookie

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