Kwame Alexander's

THE CROSSOVER LITERACY

A Supplemental Literacy Resource for Grades 3–5

Stories with pull. Instruction with purpose.





The Books They Love with the Literacy Skills They Need

New York Times bestselling author Kwame Alexander brings his award-winning storytelling into the classroom with a supplemental literacy resource for grades 3–5. Combining explicit instruction with fast-break stories that will engage and delight, these 36 chapter books and their corresponding lessons allow students to explore the events that precede *The Crossover*.

Kwame Alexander's The Crossover Literacy offers realistic, multidimensional storytelling, providing essential exposure to grade-level whole books alongside lessons aligned to a research-based scope and sequence in phonics, fluency, vocabulary and word analysis, and comprehension.

Explore this Overview Brochure to discover:

- The need that inspired this supplemental literacy resource
- How *The Crossover Literacy* supports a student's literacy journey during a pivotal time
- The impact of a beloved author and relevant, relatable books
- The power of high engagement paired with explicit instruction
- The essential components
- The research-based scope and sequence and the academic team behind the instructional design

The Need for *The Crossover Literacy*

The intermediate grades present a pivotal opportunity

Grades 3–5 signal a significant shift for students as they prepare for middle school. Students begin to put the foundational skills they've learned to work in longer, more complex texts. They're asked to follow ideas and synthesize information across pages, to stay with characters across chapters, all while growing vocabulary, deepening comprehension skills, and developing stamina.

To keep progressing, students need BOTH:

- The literacy skills to take on increasingly complex literacy tasks
- The desire to keep turning the page

Few know the pull of a great story like Kwame Alexander.

The power of a great story with explicit instruction

When teachers bring irresistible stories and relatable, complex characters to the table alongside explicit instruction, students have the potential to unlock literacy skills and grow their reading identities in ways that will shape them far beyond academics.



Award-winning.
Best selling.
A writer whose words have invited young people to laugh, to wonder, to feel—and—**to turn the page**.

An Award-Winning Author

With a voice that leaps off the page

For decades, Kwame Alexander has been doing something remarkable: writing books young people want to read.

His stories have rhythm. Humor. Heart. Characters who feel like people you know. Experiences that are relevant and relatable. And a voice that knows when to make you laugh, when to make you think, and when to leave you wondering what comes next.

A groundbreaking partnership

The Crossover Literacy presents a fresh way of looking at the partnership between classroom teachers and children's book authors, harnessing the power of both to offer students deeply engaging texts alongside explicit instruction they need to advance as readers.

Engagement matters deeply in *The Crossover Literacy*. Because Kwame's storytelling isn't simply wrapped around the instruction. Students enter through story, connect with characters and ideas, and stay to see where the story takes them.

> The story becomes more than the hook—it becomes the place where literacy skills get put to work.



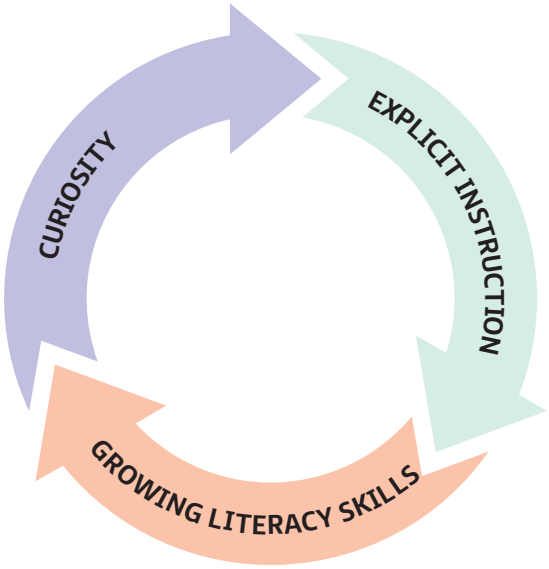
The Crossover Literacy *taps into Kwame's high-energy, incredibly creative voice, both on and off the page.*

Through "Warm Up with Coach Kwame" videos, he introduces students to each book's themes, characters, and gets them excited about what's ahead—without giving away where the story will take them.

Watch a Sample "Warm Up with Coach Kwame" Video!

From Curiosity to Growing Literacy Skills

The story pulls them in. Explicit instruction builds the skills to take them further.



CURIOSITY

First, there's **curiosity**. A character catches a student's attention. A question needs an answer. A world feels close enough to step inside but big enough to discover something new.

EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION

When students can read the words on the page and care what happens next in a story, the text on the page is no longer intimidating. One chapter leads to another and students **grow new literacy skills** across authentic whole-book experiences, without even realizing it. Bolstered by these skills, students are able to access text deeper than before, forming connections, following characters, relationships, and ideas as they develop across chapters.

GROWING LITERACY SKILLS

The **explicit instruction** at the heart of *The Crossover Literacy* supports students every step of the way, through lessons grounded in the research-based Scope and Sequence with instructional scaffolds teachers can use to meet the needs of each student. In addition, paired nonfiction articles and student writing journals accompany every chapter book, providing opportunities to reinforce and grow grade-appropriate literacy skills.

Series Components

36 Trade-Style Chapter Books (12 per grade-level collection)

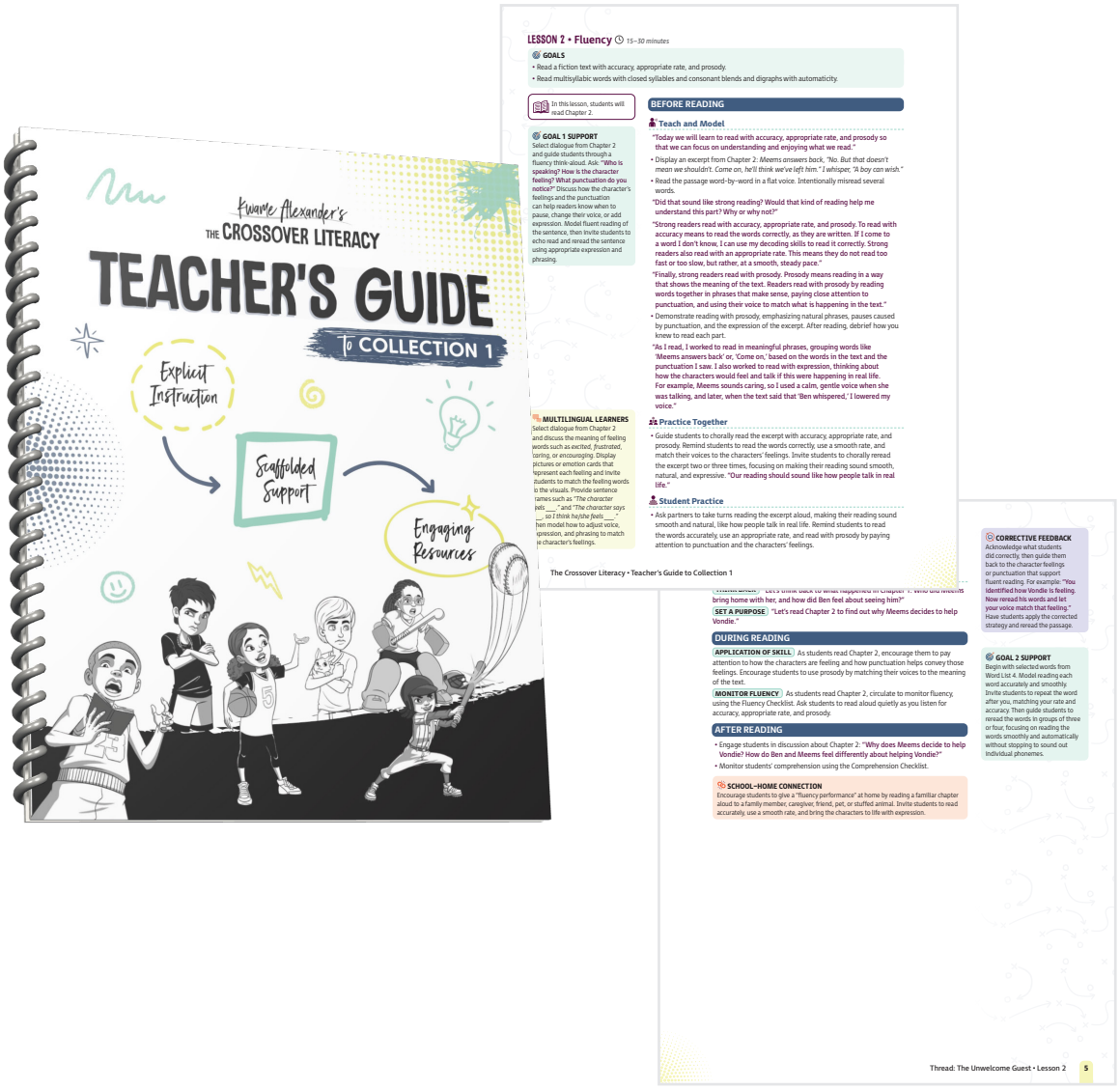
- The chapter books are written at grade level, with opportunities to scaffold instruction throughout every lesson, aligned to grade-level Lexile, ATOS, and Flesch-Kincaid readability measures.
- 6 Main Characters: Students meet six recurring characters through relevant and relatable stories centered around friendship, family, sports, school—and everything that happens in between.





Teacher's Guide

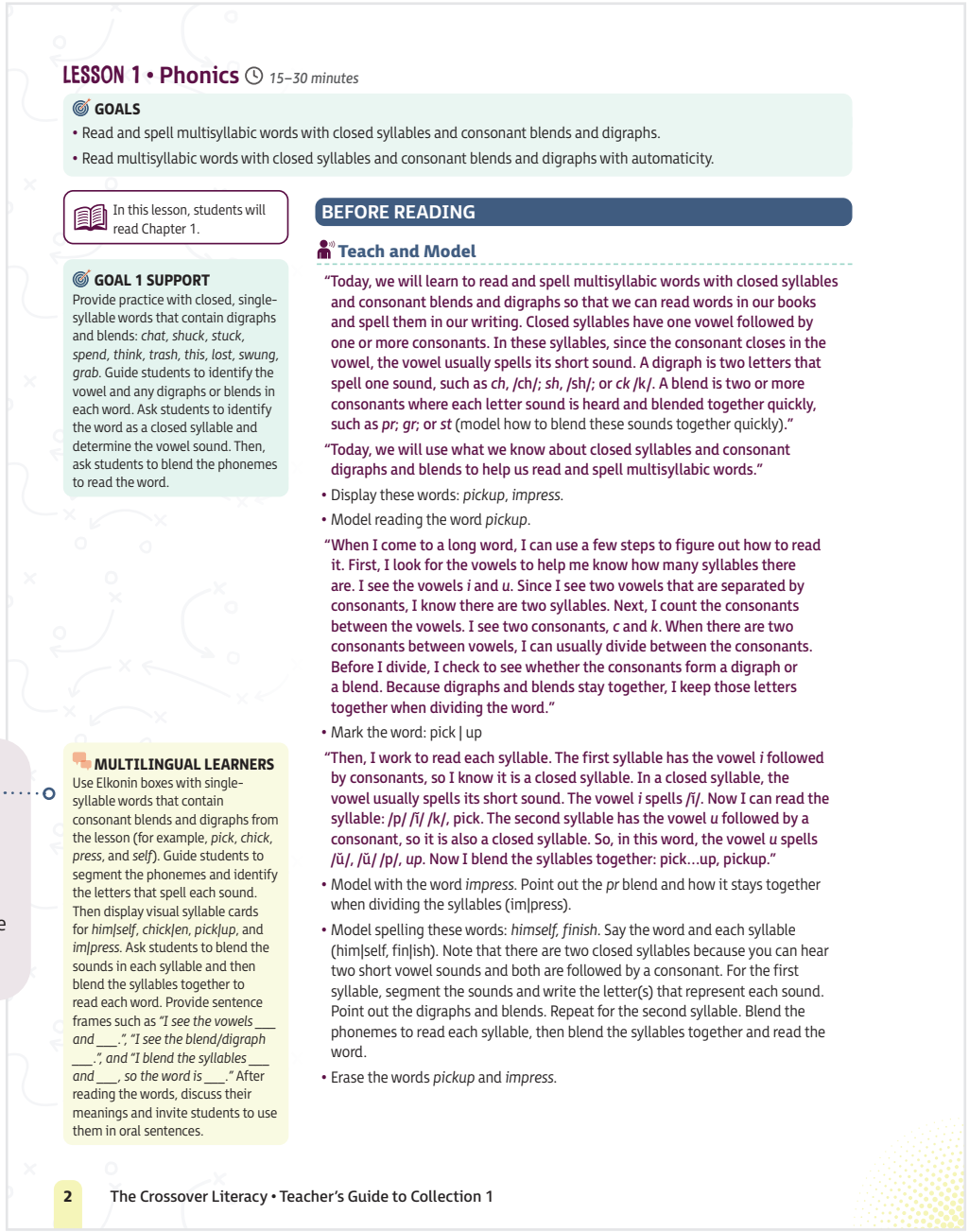
- Lessons aligned to a research-based scope and sequence focused on grade-level Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary and Word Analysis, and Comprehension
- Implementation guidance and pacing to support flexible use across whole class or small group instruction
- Formative and summative assessment and support with progress monitoring



A Closer Look at the Teacher's Guide

Instructional Scaffolds to Support Each Student

Each lesson is thoughtfully designed to provide explicit instruction through the gradual release of responsibility model. Lessons combine direct teaching with authentic opportunities for students to practice and apply new skills in connected and purposeful ways.



LESSON 1 • Phonics *15–30 minutes*

GOALS

- Read and spell multisyllabic words with closed syllables and consonant blends and digraphs.
- Read multisyllabic words with closed syllables and consonant blends and digraphs with automaticity.

In this lesson, students will read Chapter 1.

GOAL 1 SUPPORT

Provide practice with closed, single-syllable words that contain digraphs and blends: *chat, shuck, stuck, spend, think, trash, this, lost, swung, grab*. Guide students to identify the vowel and any digraphs or blends in each word. Ask students to identify the word as a closed syllable and determine the vowel sound. Then, ask students to blend the phonemes to read the word.

BEFORE READING

Teach and Model

"Today, we will learn to read and spell multisyllabic words with closed syllables and consonant blends and digraphs so that we can read words in our books and spell them in our writing. Closed syllables have one vowel followed by one or more consonants. In these syllables, since the consonant closes in the vowel, the vowel usually spells its short sound. A digraph is two letters that spell one sound, such as *ch*, /ch/; *sh*, /sh/; or *ck* /k/. A blend is two or more consonants where each letter sound is heard and blended together quickly, such as *pr*; *gr*; or *st* (model how to blend these sounds together quickly)."

"Today, we will use what we know about closed syllables and consonant digraphs and blends to help us read and spell multisyllabic words."

- Display these words: *pickup*, *impress*.
- Model reading the word *pickup*.

"When I come to a long word, I can use a few steps to figure out how to read it. First, I look for the vowels to help me know how many syllables there are. I see the vowels *i* and *u*. Since I see two vowels that are separated by consonants, I know there are two syllables. Next, I count the consonants between the vowels. I see two consonants, *c* and *k*. When there are two consonants between vowels, I can usually divide between the consonants. Before I divide, I check to see whether the consonants form a digraph or a blend. Because digraphs and blends stay together, I keep those letters together when dividing the word."

- Mark the word: pick | up

"Then, I work to read each syllable. The first syllable has the vowel *i* followed by consonants, so I know it is a closed syllable. In a closed syllable, the vowel usually spells its short sound. The vowel *i* spells /ĭ/. Now I can read the syllable: /p/ /ĭ/ /k/, pick. The second syllable has the vowel *u* followed by a consonant, so it is also a closed syllable. So, in this word, the vowel *u* spells /ŭ/, /ŭ/ /p/, *up*. Now I blend the syllables together: pick…up, pickup."

- Model with the word *impress*. Point out the *pr* blend and how it stays together when dividing the syllables (im|press).
- Model spelling these words: *himself, finish*. Say the word and each syllable (him|self, fin|ish). Note that there are two closed syllables because you can hear two short vowel sounds and both are followed by a consonant. For the first syllable, segment the sounds and write the letter(s) that represent each sound. Point out the digraphs and blends. Repeat for the second syllable. Blend the phonemes to read each syllable, then blend the syllables together and read the word.
- Erase the words *pickup* and *impress*.

MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

Use Elkonin boxes with single-syllable words that contain consonant blends and digraphs from the lesson (for example, *pick, chick, press*, and *self*). Guide students to segment the phonemes and identify the letters that spell each sound. Then display visual syllable cards for *him|self, chick|en, pick|up*, and *im|press*. Ask students to blend the sounds in each syllable and then blend the syllables together to read each word. Provide sentence frames such as *"I see the vowels ___ and ___."*, *"I see the blend/digraph ___."*, and *"I blend the syllables ___ and ___, so the word is ___."* After reading the words, discuss their meanings and invite students to use them in oral sentences.

2 The Crossover Literacy • Teacher's Guide to Collection 1

Support for Multilingual Learners include suggested prompts and resources to help MLLs reach the lesson goals.

The **Corrective Feedback** boxes provide language teachers can use to guide students.

Practice Together

- Guide students to read *himself* (him|self) and *finish* (fin|ish) using the following prompts: **"Find the vowels. Are there consonants between them? Do you see a digraph or blend? Divide the word into syllables. Are these closed syllables? How do you know? Read each syllable and blend the syllables to read the word."**
- Guide students to spell *pickup* and *impress*. Students should say each syllable, segment the sounds in each syllable, and write the letter(s) that represents each sound. Invite students to blend the sounds in each syllable, blend the syllables together, and read the word they spelled.

CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK
Acknowledge what students did correctly, then guide them back to the decoding or encoding process. For example: **"You identified the vowels correctly. Now let's look at the consonants between the vowels and decide where to divide the word into syllables."** Have students apply the corrected step and reread or respell the word.

Student Practice

- Provide students with Word List 4. Ask partners to take turns reading the words with automaticity. Explain that readers who read with automaticity can read words accurately, smoothly, and without stopping to sound out every word. Invite students to reread the word list several times to build automaticity. Remind students to use the decoding steps they learned if they need help reading a word.
- Dictate 2–3 words from the list as students write them on a whiteboard or paper. Invite partners to compare and discuss their spellings. Remind students to say each syllable, segment the sounds in each syllable, and write the letter(s) that represent each sound. Make sure students blend the sounds in each syllable, blend the syllables together, and read the word they spelled.

Transition to Reading

- Introduce and preview the book.
- Show and discuss the Warm Up with Coach Kwame video and the Meet Ben video to introduce or re-introduce the character to students.

SET A PURPOSE **"Let's read Chapter 1 to learn about the characters in this book."**

DURING READING

APPLICATION OF SKILL As students read Chapter 1, encourage them to pay attention to their accuracy when reading closed syllable multisyllabic words that contain blends and digraphs. If they encounter a word they do not know, remind them to use the syllable pattern and steps they have learned to read the word.

GOAL 2 SUPPORT
Beginning with closed, single-syllable words that contain digraphs and blends (*much, neck, Chuck, fresh, dusk, stem, then, rest, them, thing*), ask students to reread the words several times to build accurate and smooth word recognition without sounding out every phoneme. Then, provide selected words from Word List 4 and invite students to reread the words multiple times.

Goal Support for students needing more practice with the lesson's instructional strand (i.e., phonics, fluency, comprehension, etc.) is included for each lesson.

AFTER READING

- Engage students in discussion about Chapter 1: **"Who are the main characters in Chapter 1 and how do they know each other? What do we learn about Ben?"**
- Monitor students' comprehension using the Comprehension Checklist.

SCHOOL–HOME CONNECTION
Scavenger Hunt: Encourage students to explore their home or local community with a family member, caregiver, or friend. Invite students to search for and write single-syllable or multi-syllable words they see that contain either a consonant blend or digraph.

Every lesson contains a **School–Home Connection** activity for students to do with caregiver or family member.

Components

Additional Student Resources

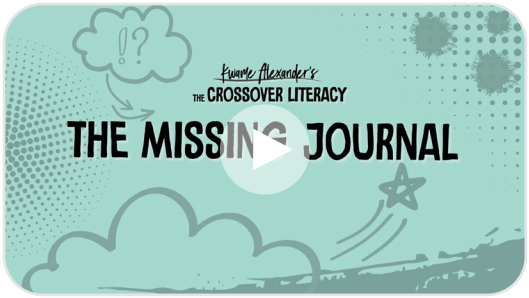


Student Journals and Nonfiction Articles

- Student Journal pages with prompts and space for students to write in response to what they're reading
- Authentic opportunities for students to put pencil to paper and become a writer or poet themselves with a culminating writing experience per book
- Paired nonfiction articles (1 per book) correspond to the chapter book, providing students the opportunity to learn about nonfiction text features, apply reading skills to nonfiction texts, and build their knowledge

Digital Resources

- Both teachers and students gain access to a wealth of connected digital resources that extend learning, including:
- eBooks with audio for each of the 36 trade books, with at least 1 voiced by Kwame per grade
- "Warm- Up with Coach Kwame" videos (1 per book) that introduce students to the world of each story and build student excitement
- Fandom Short Videos that extend the world of the story for students through character studies, connections beyond the page, and more





Thread

What is a Book Thread?

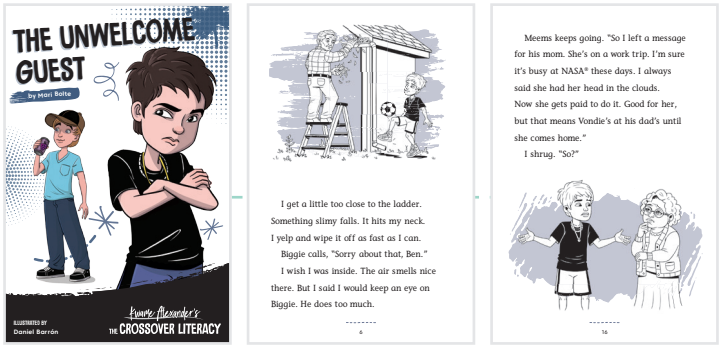
The components of T*he Crossover Literacy*—from the lessons to the fiction chapter books to the nonfiction articles and journals—seamlessly weave together to form a cohesive instructional arc of 10 lessons. Each group of 10 lessons and their accompanying resources is called a thread.

Each thread of 10 lessons contains:

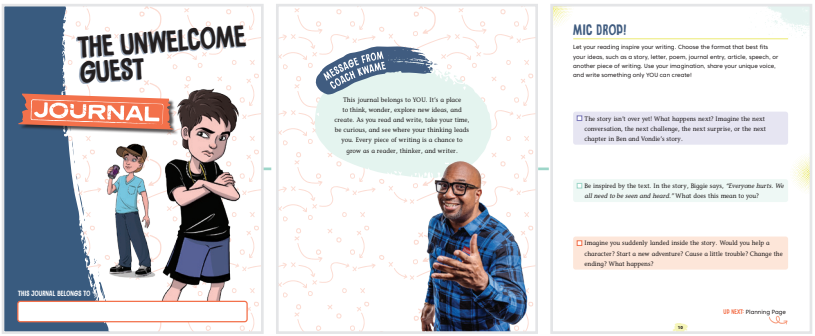
- 6 lessons to accompany the fiction book (1 lesson per chapter)
- 2 lessons to accompany the nonfiction article
- 2 lessons for a culminating writing activity



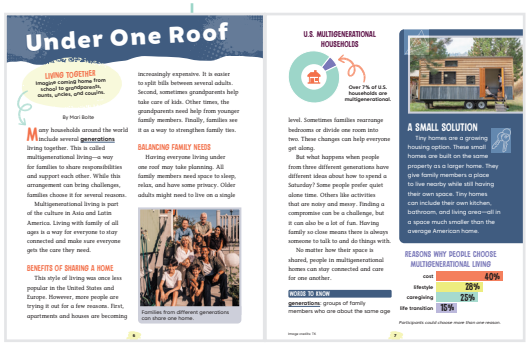
A Sample Book Thread: *The Unwelcome Guest*



Chapter Book



Student Journal



Nonfiction Article



Teacher's Guide with Lessons



Explicit, Systematic Instruction

Stories open doors to what's possible. Great instruction helps students walk through them.

Explicit Instruction follows the Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework.

Teach and Model (I DO)	Explicitly teach new skill or concept and demonstrate how to apply it.
Practice Together (WE DO)	Teacher and students practice the same skill or concept together.
Student Practice (YOU DO)	Students independently apply the same skill or concept that was taught and practiced.

10 Lessons accompany each chapter book and nonfiction article thread in the Teacher's Guides, providing explicit skills instruction with opportunities for application and review.

Scope and Sequence

The research-based Scope and Sequence gives teachers a clear view of grade-appropriate skill development across comprehension, phonics, vocabulary and word analysis, and fluency. The below provides a small sample of the complete scope and sequence by showing how each literacy skill is developed across just 3 of the 36 books in the series.

Scope and Sequence Sample

Title	Phonics	Fluency	Vocabulary and Word Analysis	
GRADE 3 Sample Text				
The Unwelcome Guest	Read and spell multisyllabic words with closed syllables with consonant blends and digraphs.	Read multisyllabic closed-syllable words with consonant blends and digraphs with automaticity. Read text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.	Identify and use base words & inflectional endings (-s, -es, -ed, -ing) with and without spelling changes.	
GRADE 4 Sample Text				
Celebration	Read and spell multisyllabic words with vowel team syllables (a/e).	Read multisyllabic words with vowel team syllables with automaticity. Read text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.	Use common Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to meaning (struct, port, dict, rupt, spect).	
GRADE 5 Sample Text				
The Missing Journal	Read and spell multisyllabic words with final stable syllables (-tle, -dle, -ble, -ple, -gle).	Read multisyllabic words with final stable syllables with automaticity. Read text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.	Identify and use common derivational suffixes (-ful, -less, -ment, -ness, -able/-ible).	

	Comprehension Strategy	Literary Skill	Nonfiction Skill
	Infer and Visualize	Explain the problem and solution in a story with accurate details.	Identify the main idea and supporting details in a section of text.
	Ask and Answer Questions	Determine the meaning of unknown words using context clues.	Determine the meaning of domain-specific vocabulary using context and text features.
	Ask and Answer Questions	Determine the meaning of unknown words using context clues.	Determine the meaning of domain-specific vocabulary using context and text features.

Lesson Framework

The order and arrangement of lessons follows a consistent pattern aligned to *The Crossover Literacy*'s Scope and Sequence to ensure well-rounded instruction across each pillar of literacy.

Fiction Book Lessons

- Lesson 1: Phonics
- Lesson 2: Fluency
- Lesson 3: Comprehension Strategy
- Lesson 4: Vocabulary and Word Analysis
- Lesson 5: Comprehension Literary Skill
- Lesson 6: Vocabulary and Word Analysis

6 lessons per thread relate to the fiction text with goals identified from the scope and sequence

Nonfiction Article (Student Journal)

- Lesson 7: Comprehension Nonfiction Skill
- Lesson 8: Vocabulary and Word Analysis

2 lessons per thread relate to the paired nonfiction article

Culminating Writing (Student Journal)

- Lesson 9: Culminating Writing
- Lesson 10: Culminating Writing

The thread culminates with 2 lessons devoted to a writing activity

Built with Literacy Expertise

The Scope and Sequence and Research Base supporting the series were developed with guidance from *The Crossover Literacy* Academic Advisors, including Pam Allyn and JT Torres.

Pam Allyn



Pam Allyn is the founder and Executive Director of LitWorld, a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening children, families, and their communities through literacy and the power of stories. Pam is a renowned literacy educator and the author of many acclaimed books for both educators and parents, as well as the creator of the internationally recognized and celebrated World Read Aloud Day and many other successful academic programs. Pam has received many honors for her work, including the James Patterson Page Turner Award, The Children's Village Legacy of Service Award, Scholastic's Reading Champion Award and the Kent Willamson NCTE Award, among many others.

JT Torres



Dr. JT Torres directs the Houston H. Harte Center for Teaching and Learning at Washington & Lee University. He supports teachers and students in all contexts, both in and out of the classroom. His approach to educational development focuses on meaningful relationships with students, teachers, and content. He helps educators cultivate critical connections with students, building on shared interest to achieve important outcomes. He is the co-author of How to Use Writing for Teaching and Learning and has published numerous studies based on his research exploring students' writing identity, equity and justice in teaching and oral literacy practices. Torres believes that literacy is an inherently inclusive process.

Extend the Impact of Your Literacy Instruction

A Supplement that Complements your core ELA program

The Crossover Literacy works alongside the literacy instruction already happening in your school, providing:

- Engaging whole books with opportunities to practice and apply skills from core instruction in longer, continuous texts
- Explicit, systematic instruction in phonics, vocabulary and word analysis, fluency, and comprehension
- Support for building students' confidence, engagement, and stamina in a critical year of their reading journey
- Guided opportunities for students to write about what they are reading and creative writing prompts

Built for Schools

Made for the people in them

Every school has its own priorities. Every classroom has its own students. *The Crossover Literacy* brings together the structure schools need and the flexibility teachers value.

One Resource. Different Possibilities.

- **Whole Class or Small Group:** Use lessons in the setting that makes sense for your students
- **Focused and Flexible:** Use the lesson framework to connect specific literacy needs with explicit, purposeful instruction and corresponding books and nonfiction articles.
- **Complements Your Core:** Bring engaging whole books and explicit literacy instruction into your existing literacy approach.

See where The Crossover Literacy can take students

Learn More at **CrossoverLiteracy.com**





Discover Kwame Alexander's The Crossover Literacy for Grades 3–5

Request a Sample

The books they love.
The literacy skills they need.

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