Kwame Alexander's

# THE CROSSOVER LITERACY

## A Supplemental Literacy Resource for Grades 3–5

Dive into The Crossover Literacy, where fast-break stories build serious reading swagger.



SAMPLER



Kwame Alexander's
THE CROSSOVER LITERACY

# The Books They Love with the Literacy Skills They Need

*Kwame Alexander's The Crossover Literacy* is a supplementary literacy resource for grades 3–5 that combines **explicit**, **systematic instruction** with **high-interest**, **relevant**, and **relatable** transitional chapter books.

Anchored in the voice, characters, and narrative world of Kwame Alexander's Newbery Award-winning novel, *The Crossover*, the heart of this series is three grade-level collections of **12 trade-style chapter books** each. With plots that twist and turn and complex characters, these stories keep readers fully engaged, all while they're developing their identities as readers.

But *The Crossover Literacy* is **more than a lineup of incredibly engaging books**: each grade-level collection is accompanied by a Teacher's Guide with lessons designed to meet the needs of small groups or whole class supplemental instruction. Aligned to a research-based scope and sequence, the **lessons support grade-appropriate phonics**, **fluency**, **vocabulary** and **word analysis**, and **comprehension**, with scaffolds to address your students' needs.

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Grade 3 Sample Book Thread: *The Unwelcome Guest* *(Note: see page 2 for more information on Book Threads.)*



# Explicit, Systematic Instruction

The instructional design is explicit and systematic, with scaffolds to support students' needs and allow for responsive small-group and whole-class instruction.

**Aligned to a research-based scope and sequence, lessons provide:**

- Support for grade-appropriate literacy skill development
- Scaffolds to address students' needs.
- Application and reinforcement of previously taught skills
- Opportunities to build background knowledge through paired nonfiction articles

Explicit instruction follows the **Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework.**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Teach and Model (I DO)** | Teacher explicitly teaches new skill or concept and demonstrates 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. |

## What is a Book  ?



The components of *The 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 **book thread**.

This sampler includes one complete **Book Thread for Collection 1, Grade 3: *The Unwelcome Guest***, as well as additional sample chapter books.

Within each thread of 10 lessons are:

- 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

## Lesson Framework

The order and arrangement of lessons follows a consistent pattern aligned to *The Crossover Literacy*'s scope and sequence to ensure 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

1 lesson per each of the strands of instruction highlighted in the scope and sequence

**Nonfiction Article (Student Journal)**

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

2 lessons per thread devoted to the paired nonfiction article

**Writing Activity (Student Journal)**

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

The thread culminates with 2 lessons devoted to a writing activity

# Scope and Sequence

The scope and sequence supports grade-level:

- Phonics
- Vocabulary and Word Analysis
- Fluency
- Comprehension

It was developed by *The Crossover Literacy* Academic Advisors, including Pam Allyn and JT Torres, who consulted all pedagogical matters. See below for a sample of the Scope and Sequence for 3 of the 36 Book Threads (12 in each grade).

| Title | Phonics | Fluency | Vocabulary and Word Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|
| **GRADE 3 Sample Book** | | | |
| ***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.<br>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 Book** | | | |
| ***Celebration*** | Read and spell multisyllabic words with vowel team syllables (*a/e*). | Read multisyllabic words with vowel team syllables with automaticity.<br>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 Book** | | | |
| ***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.<br>Read text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody. | Identify and use common derivational suffixes (*-ful, -less, -ment, -ness, -able/ -ible*). |

Contact your Heinemann Rep for access to the full Scope and Sequence.
**hein.pub/ContactYourRep**

| Title | Comprehension Strategy | Literary Skill | Nonfiction Skill |
|---|---|---|---|
| **GRADE 3 Sample Book** | | | |
| ***The Unwelcome Guest*** | 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. |
| **GRADE 4 Sample Book** | | | |
| ***Celebration*** | 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. |
| **GRADE 5 Sample Book** | | | |
| ***The Missing Journal*** | Make Connections | Identify point of view in a text. | Explain how text structure helps the reader understand information. |

# Student Materials

## Transitional Chapter Books

Divided across three grade-level collections (3–5), these authentic chapter books invite students to connect with engaging characters and their stories while providing opportunities to build literacy skills and reading stamina.

The student books are relevant and relatable, with realistic, multidimensional characters, high-interest topics like basketball, family, and friendship, anchored by complex storylines to help students develop reading stamina while building literacy skills.







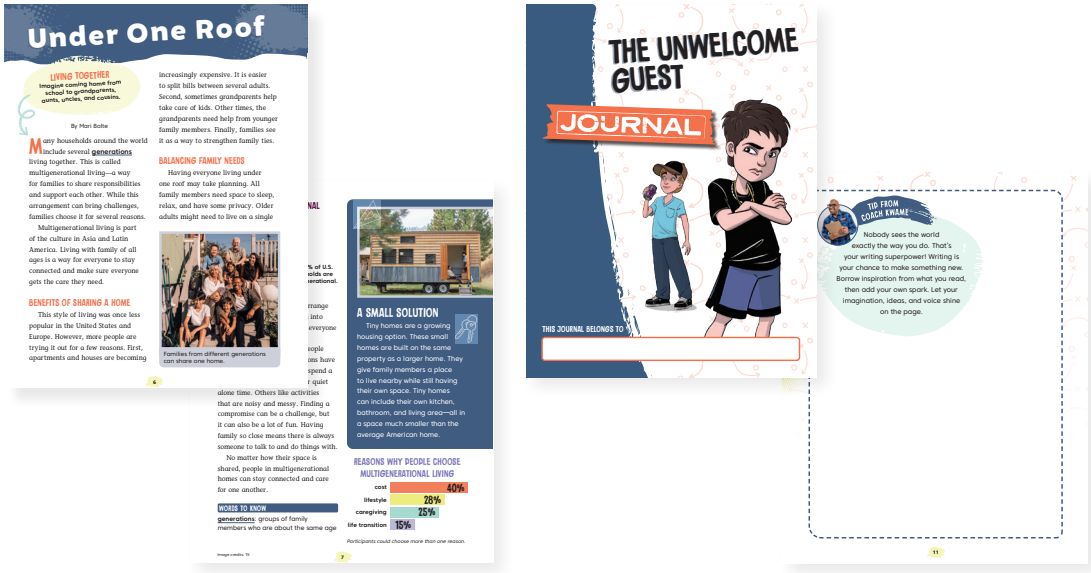



The chapter length and highly engaging stories help build confidence and joy through the experience of reading authentic chapter books.

Each grade-level collection of 12 books includes 2 books from the point of view of each main character.

## Student Journals and Paired Nonfiction Articles

Book Threads (10 lessons that accompany each chapter book) connect each chapter book to the corresponding **Student Journal** and paired **Nonfiction Article** with exclusive **Tips from Coach Kwame,** giving students opportunities to reflect, write, discuss, and build knowledge.




## Digital Resources to Extend Learning

From "Warm Up with Coach Kwame" videos and Fandom Short videos to audio-supported eBooks, digital resources give students more ways to stay connected to the stories beyond the page.

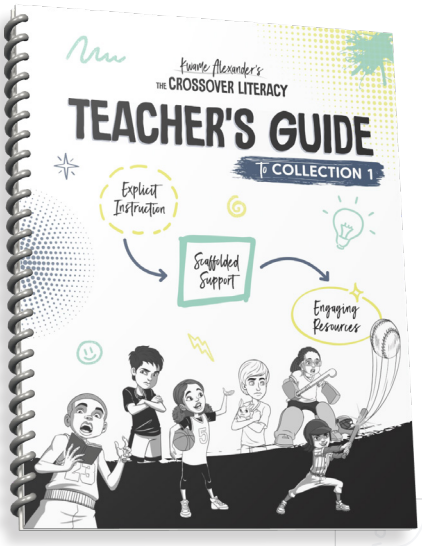



Students can read along to each chapter book with audio-supported eBooks.

Fandom Shorts extend the universe and provide another layer for students wanting more.

Warm-Up with Coach Kwame videos serve as book intros to generate hype for students.

# Teacher Materials




## Teacher's Guide

Each grade's **Teacher's Guide** provides implementation support, lessons, and assessment aligned to a research-based scope and sequence focused on grade-level literacy skills—all grounded in meaningful instruction and application from the text.

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

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

**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.

**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.

**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."

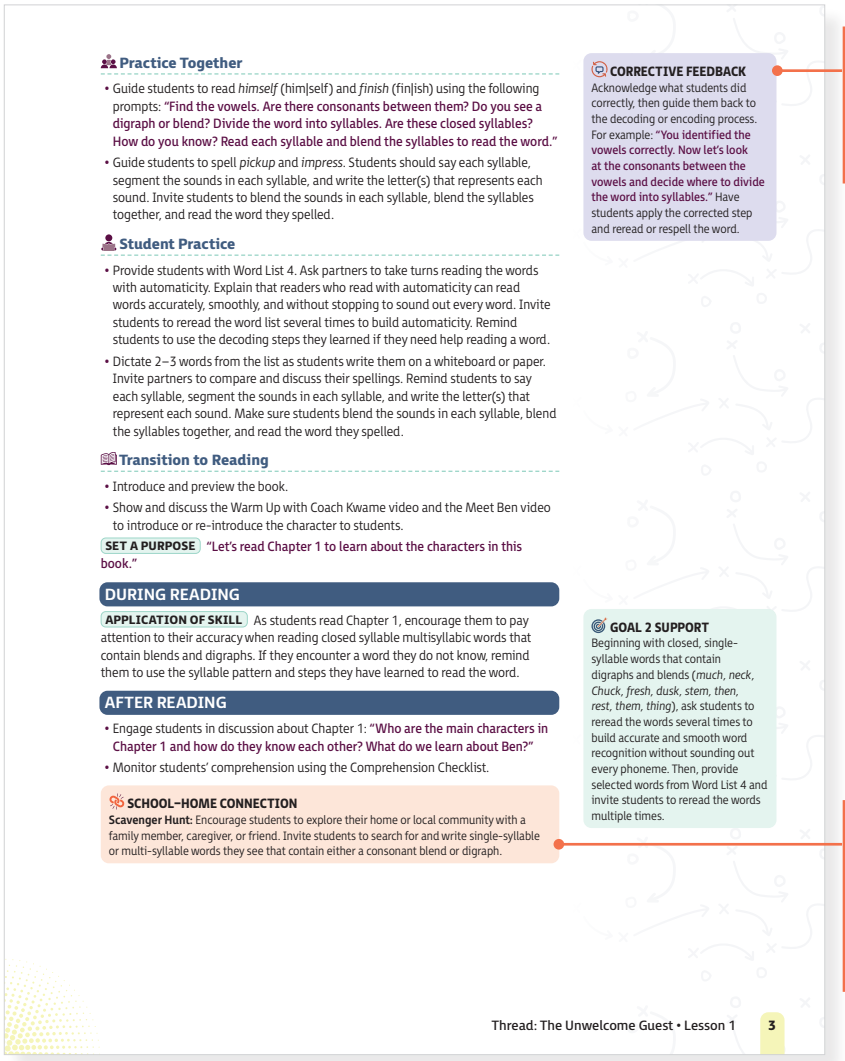
- Display these words: *pickup, impress*.
- Model reading the word *pickup*.

"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 */i/*. Now I can read the syllable: */p/ /i/ /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/, /ü/ /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*.



### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

**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.

**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.

Thread: The Unwelcome Guest • Lesson 1 3

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

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

# Access to Digital Resources

Teachers are granted access to all the student resources, including Warm-Up with Coach Kwame videos, audio-supported eBooks, and engaging Fandom Shorts that extend learning. In addition, digital and printable resources to support implementation and assessment are available online.



# Grade 3 Sample Chapter Book:

## *The Unwelcome Guest*

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# THE UNWELCOME GUEST

by Mari Bolte
Illustrated by Daniel Barrón

## NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

The enemy of my enemy is my friend. But the friend of my enemy could turn out to be totally cool too.

—Mari Bolte

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1

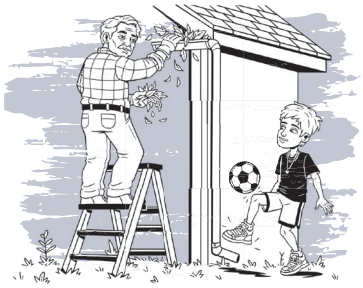
# BETRAYAL AFTER BREAKFAST

It's a sunny Saturday morning. I'm kicking a soccer ball around the backyard. I'm really out there to keep an eye on my grandpa Biggie, though.

He's high up on a ladder on the side of the house. I think he's working on the gutters.

He throws bunches of something gross out onto the lawn. The whole yard stinks like mold and old leaves.





I get a little too close to the ladder. Something slimy falls. It hits my neck. I yelp and wipe it off as fast as I can.

Biggie calls, "Sorry about that, Ben."

I wish I was inside. The air smells nice there. But I said I would keep an eye on Biggie. He does too much.



I know his back has been bothering him. He probably shouldn't be up that ladder at all.

What would I even do if he got stuck? How would I get him down? It's not like I could climb up the ladder behind him. I'd have to fireman's carry him.

I'm strong, but I'm not *that* strong. Not yet. Maybe in two years, when I'm twelve. Definitely not now, though.

Maybe I could call in a helicopter? They could throw down some ropes. Maybe a harness or something.

Biggie calls down to me, "You know you don't have to hang around."

I jump. He knows I'm watching him.

He continues, "I don't need a babysitter.

Your grandma worries for no reason. I'm fine."

I bite my lip and lie, "I'm not babysitting anyone. Honestly, Biggie, I'm just practicing my footwork." I juggle the ball off my feet a few times to prove it.

"Uh-huh," he says. He shakes his head and goes back to work.

I can hear him muttering good-naturedly to himself. Something about my grandma Meems needing to mind her business.

I snort. Good luck with that. Meems has been watching out for Biggie since they were teenagers. And she asked me to watch him today.

I set the ball down and start raking the



stinky leaves into a pile. Biggie and I will scoop them into trash bags later.

Meems put me in charge because every Saturday she heads out to meet her friends. They go to the Over Easy Diner. They call their group the Fresh and Fly ChitChat Club.

These ladies know everything about everybody. I'd never say it to her face, but Meems is a grade-A gossip.

Some people might think it's weird that I spend so much time with my grandparents. How could I not? I live with them.

My parents died in a car accident when I was little. Ever since, I've been a mess. I try not to talk about what happened.

I don't even like to think about it.



There's really only one thing that's gone right in my life, and that's Meems and Biggie.

I hear a car door slam. Meems must be back. I check to make sure Biggie's doing OK, then I trot to the front yard.

Meems said she would bring me a cinnamon roll. I think of toasty cinnamon and sweet frosting—a much better smell than rotten leaves.

I grin. If she's finally home, maybe I can sneak off to the gym. Soccer's okay, but basketball's my real sport. Number 30, *whoop whoop*!

I rush to the driver's side. Where's that cinnamon roll at? But before I can get my hands on that sticky goodness, a door



opens on the other side. Maybe one of the ChitChatters is coming over to visit. If it's Mrs. Chin, I'll get to hear about the diner chat.

I hate to say it, but I love gossip too. (Who doesn't?) Who was at the movies together? Who was in the back of Officer Skinny's patrol car last Saturday? And did you *hear* about what happened at the mall? Mrs. Chin's stories are better than a TV show.

I hope it's not Miss Peck. She's real nosy. She is always telling me to cut my hair. "Dress nice! Stand up straight!" Biggie usually hides when Miss Peck is over.

But it's not Mrs. Chin or Miss Peck. Instead, a kid my age gets out of the car.

I see who it is, and my heart drops.

At least it isn't Josh or Jordan Bell. Those two are my sworn enemies. Can you have more than one sworn enemy? Josh and Jordan are twins, so that's kind of like having one.

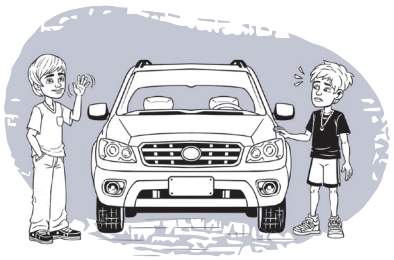
But Meems's passenger isn't one of the Bell boys. It's the next-worst thing: It's their shared best friend, Vondie.

"Hey," Vondie says as he gives a little wave.

"Hey," I say as I narrow my eyes. I shoot a look at Meems. She just smiles back.

I wanted the ChitChat to come to me. I didn't want to be part of it myself.







2

# THE LOST DOG

I pull Meems over. Vondie bends down to tie his shoe.

I'm sure he's listening, though. Spying.

He'll run right to the Bell twins after this and tell them everything he sees.

I make a note to keep him away from my room.

I hiss, "Meems, what's *he* doing here?"

Meems calls over to Vondie, "Stay here, dear. I'll be right back."

She pulls me around to the side of the house. "We have a guest! Why are you being so rude?" she asks.

I argue back, "It's not a guest. It's Vondie!"

Meems frowns.

"Look, Ben. I got to the diner and Vondie was hanging out front by himself. He was still there when I went to pay and I couldn't just leave him there."

I mumble, "Yes, you could."

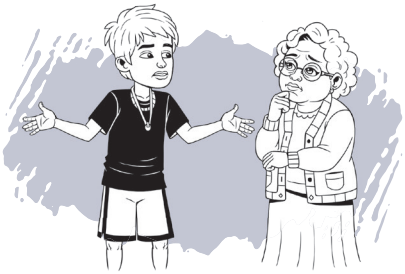
Meems says, "I called his dad, but he didn't answer." Meems makes a *tut-tut* noise.

Vondie's parents are divorced. This isn't the first time I've heard that his dad's not a great guy.

But I can't help but think, at least he has a dad.

Meems keeps going. "So I left a message for his mom. She's on a work trip. I'm sure it's busy at NASA® these days. I always said she had her head in the clouds. Now she gets paid to do it. Good for her, but that means Vondie's at his dad's until she comes home."

I shrug. "So?"



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Meems ignores me. "Then I called his grandma. She's on some sort of cruise for 'people of a certain age.' No wonder I haven't seen her around. She used to be at bingo every Thursday night. Anyway, she was worried too and said it was fine if he came with me. And here we are."

She sees the look on my face.

The look says, *Get real.*

It says, *Are you kidding?*

It says, *I really can't believe you're doing this to me.*

She stares back. Hers says, *You'd better wipe that look off your face.*

I grumble, and my stomach does too. I realize I still don't have that roll. I wonder if Vondie ate it.

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I huff. "He's not a lost dog. It's not your job to take care of him."

Meems answers back, "No. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't. Come on, he'll think we've left him."

I whisper, "A boy can wish."

Vondie's not by the car.

For a hopeful moment, I think he's gone on his own. But then, I hear laughing.

We follow the sound. Vondie's helping Biggie. They're cleaning up the stuff from the gutter.

That's my job.

Did I want to put slimy leaves into a trash bag?

No.

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But did I want Vondie to do it instead of me?

Also, no.

Biggie claps Vondie on the back. He says, "Thanks for your help."

Vondie's face and the tips of his ears turn red at the small praise. It makes my lip curl.

Meems interrupts. "Come on, boys," she says, "into the kitchen with you. I have fresh beans from the garden that need snapping. There's corn that needs shucking. Then I can get started on supper."

"You just got back from brunch," I say.

Meems ignores me.

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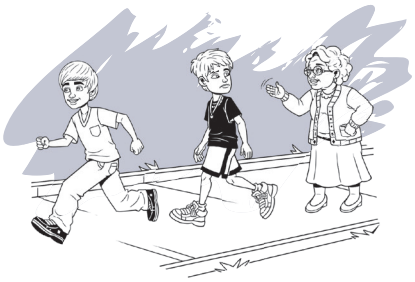


She shoos us into the house.

She sits Vondie and me at the kitchen table. There's a pile of corn in front of Vondie and a bag of green beans in front of me. Both of us have small bowls for the cleaned veggies and big bowls for the food waste.

I don't want to look at Vondie. I start snapping beans instead. I like the *pop* they



make. I toss the stem and tip into the trash bowl. The good part of the bean goes into the small one. I grab another bean.

There's a loud *rip* sound. Vondie's shucking the corn like a dog burying a bone. The fine silks fly through the air. He makes a huge mess.

I scowl and get back to my beans, but I can't focus. The sound of the corn is just so loud.

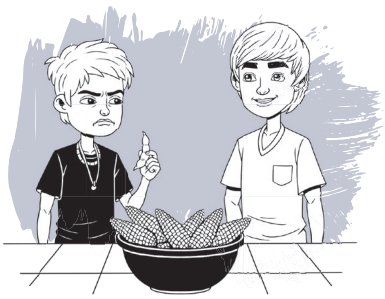
Vondie doesn't stop between ears either.

It's just *rip, rip, rip.*

"Done!" he exclaims like he's made a slam dunk at the NBA Finals®.

Meems comes over to check his work. "Excellent, Vondie," she says. She gives him a huge smile.





All the ears are piled neatly in the smaller bowl. The big bowl is overflowing.

Cornhusks and silks are all over. Meems gently sweeps the silks from the counter. She grabs them in her hand and then puts them in the trash bowl.

To my annoyance, Vondie copies her.

Meems looks over at my bowls. "You've



got some work to do, Ben," she says.

I stare her straight in the eye. I snap a bean in half as loud as I can.

Meems ignores me. "Have you ever seen a compost pile, Vondie?" she asks. "We can add your cornhusks to it before supper."

3

# VONDIE'S SILENCE

Supper is weird. At least, it is weird for me. Meems, Biggie, and Vondie have a great time. Vondie has seconds of Meems's baked chicken. He even saves room for a slice of pecan pie.

Baked chicken and pecan pie are my favorites, but I say no thanks to dessert. I just want the whole thing to be over.

Vondie helps with the dishes by putting them away. It's dusk when he goes home. Meems lets him walk on his own since he only lives two streets over.



But the next day after lunch, Vondie shows up again!

No joke. This time, he gets out of Biggie's pickup.

Biggie picked him up on the way to the recycling center. Vondie helped him. They sorted cans. They cut up cardboard boxes.

And, again, Vondie stays for dinner. He finishes off my slice of pecan pie from the night before.

I spend dinner glaring at him.

Why do I hate Vondie? Let me count the ways.

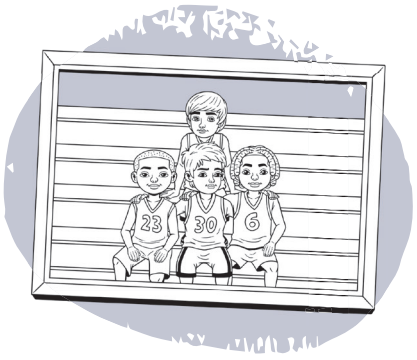
One, he's the best friend of my sworn enemies.

Two, he was there when they changed from *my* friends to my sworn enemies.



Three, he didn't say anything when they stole my court time.

Two years ago, me and the Bell brothers were tight. We spent weekends playing video games. We snacked on doughnuts by the dozen. We played hours of H-O-R-S-E.






I liked the twins. When they said we should all join the after-school b-ball league at the gym, I was all in.

It was meant to be fun and chill. But Chuck Bell—Josh and Jordan's dad—was our coach. Kids from all over came to shoot hoops with "Da Man." We'd all seen the clip of him on ESPN®. We wanted to impress the former pro.

Soon, Josh and Jordan started getting more play time. It seemed pretty clear why.

At first, it was just here and there. But before long, they were playing full games. The rest of us had to switch in and out. It was a lot of kids for not that many spots.

After one game, I said, "I played for two minutes today! You guys were in the whole time!"

Josh shook his head. He said, "Not true. We were both out for part of the third period. Jordan sat out, like, the whole time."

I pointed at Josh. "Because *you* had to take a water break." I pointed at Jordan. "And *you* went to the bathroom. I saw you talking to a girl on the way back."

Jordan leaned over to Josh and said, "Told you he'd say that. You owe me a dollar."

Josh said, "Ben's just mad we're the best. We're the real deal, and he's the rest." They fist-bumped.

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I rolled my eyes. "Your *dad* may be the best. You're just his shadow. Two shadows. So like half his talent each."

Yeah, their dad's a cool guy. Must be nice to have a semi-famous dad—*or a dad at all.*

Suddenly, the whole thing seemed even more unfair. I felt my hands form into fists.

Josh laughed when he saw my fists. "Ouch," he said. My blood boiled.

Jordan agreed. "Double ouch." Then, he tilted his head and grinned. "Or is that half-ouch?"

I looked over to Vondie. He had been silent so far. I said, "Back me up, here, Vondie. You sat out too."

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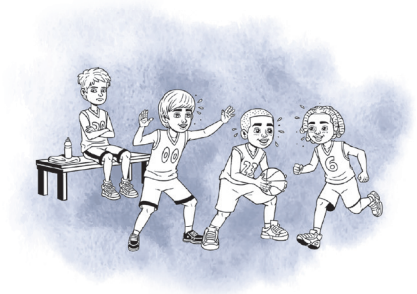
But Vondie just looked down at his feet and said, "Oh, it's fine. I don't mind."

I knew he did. He had to. What a chicken.

Josh spoke up again. "See?" He swung an arm over Vondie's shoulders.



30

Next game, Vondie got to play almost as much as the Bells. That meant even *less* play time for all the rest of us.

I quit. I walked off the court and didn't talk to Josh or Jordan or Vondie again.

Friendship = over.

I begged my grandparents to allow me to switch schools. They asked why. Why would I want to go to another school that was farther away?

I never said. They let me change, though.

The switch was good. I made new friends and joined a new basketball team. And, for once in my life, I was the star player.

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I didn't see any of them again until last summer. We were all in the under-12 summer league. When I heard their names, all those old feelings came back.

The Bells were no longer my friends. They were now my sworn enemies.

And now their best friend is sitting in my house. He is eating my food. He is taking up my space. And he *will not leave*.






# BEN VERSUS THE WORLD

The next day is Monday. I get home from school. Vondie is there.

Again!

What is wrong with his house?

Isn't he friends with the Bells anymore? Why is he here and not over there?

I really want to know, but it's not like I can ask Vondie. It's been three days now and we still aren't talking. Maybe there's someone else who knows.

Meems asks Vondie to help in her garden. Good. This is my chance.



I ask Biggie, "Do you remember the Bell brothers? Josh and Jordan?"

Biggie says, "Not really." He doesn't even look up from his newspaper.

Well, that wasn't helpful.

But then Biggie adds, "Maybe Vondie does. You should ask."

I stick my tongue out at him. He can't see me.

But he still says, "I saw that."

So he *does* know something. But he won't tell me. I'll ask him again later.

I won't ask Meems. She'd know what I was up to right away. Plus, it might make her feel even worse for Vondie.

Next thing you know, he'll be moving in. What if they made us share a bedroom?



No, thank you.

I look out the window. Vondie's standing next to Meems. He has a basket full of veggies.

Meems says something to him. Then she laughs and hands him an onion. There's a big, silly smile on Vondie's face.

I look back at Biggie. There's a bottle of pills next to his coffee mug. I know that his back has been bugging him.

I'm glad to see he doesn't have to lift heavy baskets, but I could have helped. Meems never even asked me.

It's like they don't need me anymore.

Something catches in my throat. My eyes start to prickle, the room blurs, and I get the distinct feeling that I am going to lose it.

I jump to my feet before Biggie sees. I just can't take another day with Vondie here. I have to go somewhere else.

"Later, Biggie," I say. I head out the front door. He grunts and just flips to the next page of the paper.

I rush to the gym and it's quiet when I get there. I wave to Mr. Jones. He's one of the janitors and old friends with Biggie. He doesn't mind if I hang around the gym alone as long as he knows I'm there.

Some of the lights are off. I like it that way. It makes the space feel like it's a spot just for me.

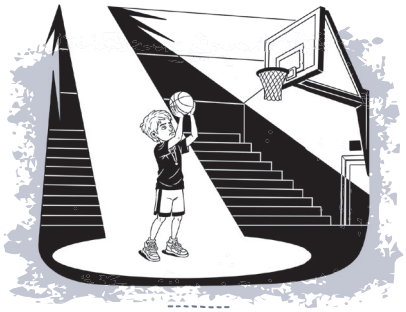
I grab a basketball. Shooting hoops always calms me down.

I love the sound of the ball hitting the



court. I love the squeak of my shoes. I love the way the old bumpy basketball feels on my fingers. I even love the smell of the floor wax.

They all help my mood. I don't feel at home at my own home anymore, but at least I can feel at home here.





After an hour, I'm sweaty and tired. It's a good tired and I feel loose.

I fill my water bottle. I grab the ball and find a spot under the bleachers to sit and rest. I feel like I'm in a fort. No one else is allowed in.

I mumble, "Inner peace. Inner peace. No Vondie. Just basketball. Inner peace."

My eyes close for a second.

Suddenly, someone flips a switch. The lights make a *thunk, thunk, thunk* noise as they power up. Then, they start to hum. The white glow overhead is blinding.

My body jolts awake as my heart races.

My inner peace is gone. All I feel now is annoyed.

And then I hear them. I would know the



voices of Josh and Jordan anywhere. I peek out to see their dad waving to them as he heads out a side door.

"What's up, what's up, what's up, rec center?! Wake up! Lights on! Vondie and the Bell boys are here to *ball out*!"

I groan.

Josh Bell keeps talking in an announcer voice. "He heads toward the middle of the court. It's number 23"—Josh stretches out the *e*—"Jordan Bell. All air, no hair. And he's got a crossover with flair!"

There are claps and cheers.

Josh goes on, "Next up, number 00. He's not little on the court or in our hearts … it's Vondie Little! That's his name, not his size, everyone!"

I roll my eyes as Vondie's call is followed by hollers.

Josh still doesn't stop, of course.

"And last, but not least, he's number 6 on the court but number 1 in our hearts. Josh Bell, at your service!"

What else can I do but scoff?

It sounds like a hundred basketballs





bouncing on the court. A few hit the bleachers above my head. They make a hollow *thunk* that hurts my ears.

I hear the *swooshes* and *tings* of balls. They drop through and bounce off the hoops. The yells and cheers go on. Each one is louder than the last.

For just three boys, they sure can make a lot of noise.

I run into the Bells at the gym sometimes. Usually, I just ignore them.

Not today, though. They still haven't seen me, and they're not going to. I'm out of here.

I still have a ball on my lap. I stand up and let it go. It rolls out from under the bleachers and heads toward the court.



As I reach down to grab my water bottle, I see a shadow block the sliver of light in front of me. The shadow reaches down. It picks up the ball. Someone peeks under the bleachers.

We lock eyes.

Of course, it's Vondie.






I give him a cross look. Without a word, I turn and leave the gym.

It's just the world working against me yet again.

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# NOBODY STANDS ALONE

The next day, I can't believe my eyes. Vondie is back.

Four days in a row.

Get a clue, dude.

Pound sand. Touch grass. Kick rocks. You're not wanted here.

But that's not true. Meems has him weeding her garden and he stays for supper. After, he says, "Thanks for the meal, Meems and Biggie."

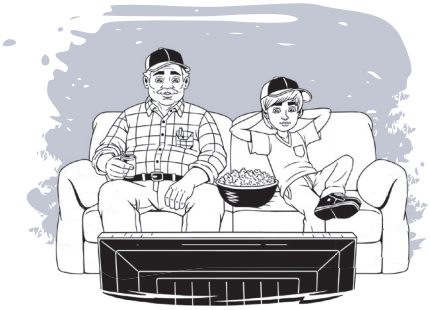
My jaw drops when I hear him use their special names like they're his



grandparents too.

What is happening?

And now he and Biggie are sitting on the couch together. The baseball game is on. Vondie's got popcorn. He's cracked a soda. Meems only lets me have those on special days.





The worst thing, though? He's sitting in my spot.

I've had enough.

I stomp forward. I grab the bowl and popcorn spills everywhere. I'm going to have to pick up the mess later.

That just makes me madder.

I growl, "Get out."

Confused, Biggie says, "Ben, what? Vondie, stay put."

Vondie was about to get up. He freezes.

Meems walks in and asks, "Why are we yelling?"

I point my finger at Vondie and say, "I'm sick of him being here! He's over all day, every day. He's in my space. He's in my face. This is my house. He should not





be here and I want him out!"

I'm about to storm out when I see Vondie's face. His eyes are wide and I can see the hurt in them. His lip twitches.

Meems puts her arm around him. She says, "Ben, we will talk about this later."

Vondie quietly says, "It's okay. I'll go." He gives Meems a tiny smile and squeezes her hand.

"Thank you, Mrs. and Mr. Santos, for everything."

He leaves, head down. He wipes his eyes and then exits out the front door.

I should feel like I won. Vondie left. That's what I wanted, but I just feel small.

I don't think I've ever seen Biggie and Meems this mad before.

We are all silent. It lasts a hundred years. I feel smaller every second. Soon, I'll be tiny enough for Meems to smush with a fly swatter.

Meems finally asks me why I did what I did. I can see the sadness in her eyes.



I say, "He was here all the time! You know I hate him, and you let him stay anyway! Why do his feelings matter more than mine? Don't you care about me anymore?" I sniff.

Meems says, "I didn't know you hated Vondie. What did that poor boy ever do to you?"

I say, "He's best friends with the Bells. That's enough."

Shaking, I tell them about what went on in basketball. How the Bells took over. How Vondie didn't back me up. How he got rewarded for it. Why the whole thing was the reason I switched schools.

Then I say, "And now you've brought him here!" My hands shake.



Meems says, "You used to be so close to Josh and Jordan. I wondered why they stopped coming around."

Biggie speaks up and says, "It sounds like Vondie didn't have much say in what happened."

I frown. He's not wrong. "But he didn't *do* anything about it," I say. "He could have spoken up. He's guilty just for that."

Biggie says, "It all seemed to work out for the best. You love your school, and you love your team."

I cross my arms and say, "I guess. It was still really unfair, though."

Meems says gently, "Ben, some things are bigger than basketball."

"I know," I grumble.



Meems goes on. "Sometimes, bad things happen to us. It might feel like those things are the worst things that have ever happened."

Her eyes get sad again. I know she's thinking about what happened to my parents.



Biggie adds, "But other people are going through things too. It doesn't mean our problems are less or more. Everyone hurts. We all need to be seen and heard."

"What things does Vondie have?" I ask. I lift an eyebrow.

Usually Meems is all about the gossip. But in this moment, she tells me it isn't her place to talk about it.

That means it must be something serious, that it's personal.

She pats my hand and says, "Talk to Vondie and tell him you're sorry. Maybe you'll find out that you two have more in common than you thought."

I doubt it, but I'll do anything for Meems. I have to at least try.



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# HOOPS AND HONESTY

It takes me two days to get the guts to talk to Vondie. I finally head to his house and wait on his front step.

The step's made of old, cracking concrete. My butt's asleep. Is he ever going to show up?

Then I hear a voice ask, "Ben?"

I jump. He's here.

Vondie asks, "What are you doing on my step?"

I hear a lot in his words. He's nervous and maybe a little scared.





But then, he smiles, and it's a real smile.

"Thanks for coming over." Vondie says it like he asked me here.

Without meaning to, I smile back.

He looks pretty sweaty and there's a basketball tucked under his arm. I wonder if he was at the gym.

Vondie holds the ball out.



He asks, "Wanna shoot some hoops?"

He passes me the ball. I dribble it a few times.

His driveway looks like his front step, with big cracks running across the whole thing. Grass and weeds grow out of the cracks. His hoop looks older than Biggie.

I send the ball through. Vondie catches it. He steps back and takes his own shot. We take turns for a while. It feels normal.

A voice from inside the house yells, "Vondie! Stop making a racket, or I'll give you something to make a racket about!"

"Sorry," Vondie calls back. He sticks the ball under his arm.

"Sorry," he says to me too. He shrugs.

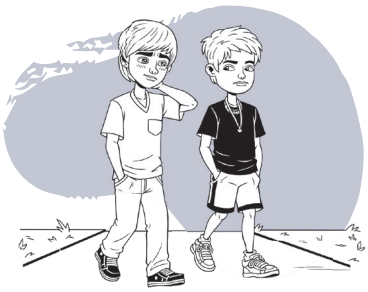
Game's over.

I ask if he wants to take a walk. Vondie puts the ball down and nods. We start a loop around the block.

"So, uh, was that your dad? Is he … like that all the time?" I ask.

"When he's around," Vondie says.

Yikes.



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Vondie adds, "He's worse this week. He's got some kind of health thing going on. I don't know what it is. He doesn't say and gets mad when I ask."

"Ah," I reply.

I don't know what else to say. Sometimes Biggie's back is so bad he can't get out of his chair.

He'd never speak to me like that, though. Mainly because Meems would kill him.

Vondie continues, "Usually, I'm at my mom's house. She's been out of town for work, though, so I had to stay here. My dad hates it. I just try to stay out of his way."

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I can't help myself as I ask, "What about your *best friends*?" I try to keep the sneer out of my voice. I know I don't hide it well, though.

Vondie admits, "I kind of hate bothering them. They don't have problems like these. And their parents seem so happy, it gets hard to see. I mean, I know a happy family is good, but still … "

He stops. "I tried to tell Meems—I mean, your grandma—that I was okay. She wouldn't take no for an answer."

I laugh a little. "I get it. She gets her mind made up and nobody can change it."

Vondie rubs his neck. He laughs too. "She pretty much just pushed me into the car," he says. "She and my grandma were,

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like, best friends in grade school. Did you know that?"

It's so weird to think of Meems being a kid. I wonder if she had a sworn enemy.

Vondie adds, "Anyway, I'm sorry for being in your space so much. I could tell you didn't want me to be there. I just didn't have anywhere else to go."

His words hit me like a ton of bricks.

I'm suddenly jolted back to when my parents died.

I was at the hospital. They'd just told me the news. A nurse was there. I heard him on the phone with a social worker. They were trying to decide where I should go.

I was scared. I was alone. I didn't know where I would end up.

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And then, Meems and Biggie swooped in. They saved me.

Meems was right. Maybe I do have more in common with Vondie than I thought.

Vondie interrupts my thoughts. He says, "And I'm sorry about what happened, you know. Back then I didn't know I was going to get to play so much, honest. I knew it wasn't fair."

"Not your fault," I hear myself say, but it's true. I know it's not. Vondie never asked for more play time.

"Friends?" he asks and he holds up a fist.

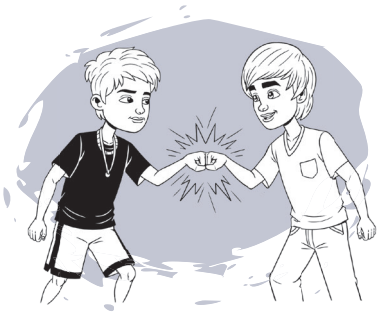
I stare at it for a second. Can I really be friends with the best friend of my sworn enemies?



The answer, of course, is yes. Vondie isn't Josh or Jordan. He's not my enemy.

He's just a kid like me who wants to fit in.

I bump his fist with my own. "I don't know about friends, but you can come to dinner tonight. We're having roasted chicken."





## KEEP EXPLORING THE COLLECTION

Discover different characters' stories in the books listed below.




*All-Stars*

*H-O-R-S-E*




*The Bet Master*

*The Duo*




*Mia on the Run*

*Queen of the Court*




✓ *The Unwelcome Guest*

*Just Jokes*




*Bunny and the Beast*

*Clean Steal*



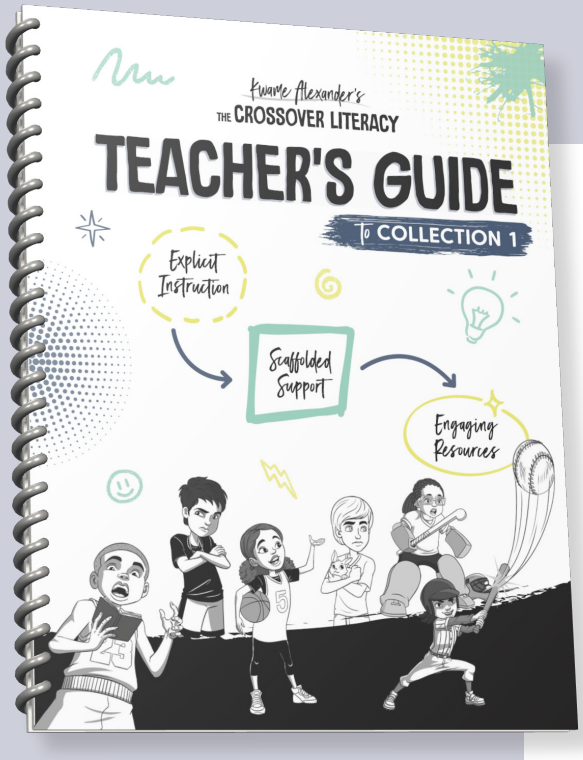

*A Girl's Got Goals*

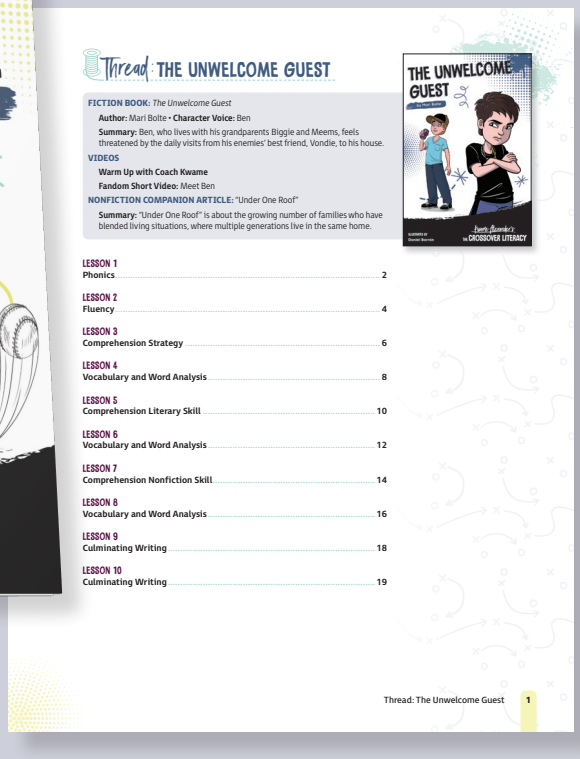
*Foodie Fight*



# Grade 3 Sample Lessons for:

## *The Unwelcome Guest*



Thread: THE UNWELCOME GUEST

**FICTION BOOK:** *The Unwelcome Guest*
**Author:** Mari Bolte • **Character Voice:** Ben
**Summary:** Ben, who lives with his grandparents Biggie and Meems, feels threatened by the daily visits from his enemies' best friend, Vondie, to his house.

**VIDEOS**
**Warm Up with Coach Kwame**
**Fandom Short Video:** Meet Ben

**NONFICTION COMPANION ARTICLE:** "Under One Roof"
**Summary:** "Under One Roof" is about the growing number of families who have blended living situations, where multiple generations live in the same home.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## 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.

**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.

### 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*.

### 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.

### 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.

## 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.

**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.

**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.

## LESSON 2 • Fluency *15–30 minutes*

**GOALS**

- Read a fiction text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.
- Read multisyllabic words with closed syllables and consonant blends and digraphs with automaticity.

In this lesson, students will read Chapter 2.

**GOAL 1 SUPPORT**

Select dialogue from Chapter 2 and guide students through a fluency think-aloud. Ask: **"Who is speaking? How is the character feeling? What punctuation do you notice?"** Discuss how the character's feelings and the punctuation can help readers know when to pause, change their voice, or add expression. Model fluent reading of the sentence, then invite students to echo read and reread the sentence using appropriate expression and phrasing.

**MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS**

Select dialogue from Chapter 2 and discuss the meaning of feeling words such as *excited*, *frustrated*, *caring*, or *encouraging*. Display pictures or emotion cards that represent each feeling and invite students to match the feeling words to the visuals. Provide sentence frames such as *"The character feels ___."* and *"The character says ___, so I think he/she feels ___."* Then model how to adjust voice, expression, and phrasing to match the character's feelings.

### BEFORE READING

#### Teach and Model

**"Today we will learn to read with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody so that we can focus on understanding and enjoying what we read."**

- Display an excerpt from Chapter 2: *Meems answers back, "No. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't. Come on, he'll think we've left him." I whisper, "A boy can wish."*
- Read the passage word-by-word in a flat voice. Intentionally misread several words.

**"Did that sound like strong reading? Would that kind of reading help me understand this part? Why or why not?"**

**"Strong readers read with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody. To read with accuracy means to read the words correctly, as they are written. If I come to a word I don't know, I can use my decoding skills to read it correctly. Strong readers also read with an appropriate rate. This means they do not read too fast or too slow, but rather, at a smooth, steady pace."**

**"Finally, strong readers read with prosody. Prosody means reading in a way that shows the meaning of the text. Readers read with prosody by reading words together in phrases that make sense, paying close attention to punctuation, and using their voice to match what is happening in the text."**

- Demonstrate reading with prosody, emphasizing natural phrases, pauses caused by punctuation, and the expression of the excerpt. After reading, debrief how you knew to read each part.

**"As I read, I worked to read in meaningful phrases, grouping words like 'Meems answers back' or, 'Come on,' based on the words in the text and the punctuation I saw. I also worked to read with expression, thinking about how the characters would feel and talk if this were happening in real life. For example, Meems sounds caring, so I used a calm, gentle voice when she was talking, and later, when the text said that 'Ben whispered,' I lowered my voice."**

#### Practice Together

- Guide students to chorally read the excerpt with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody. Remind students to read the words correctly, use a smooth rate, and match their voices to the characters' feelings. Invite students to chorally reread the excerpt two or three times, focusing on making their reading sound smooth, natural, and expressive. **"Our reading should sound like how people talk in real life."**

#### Student Practice

- Ask partners to take turns reading the excerpt aloud, making their reading sound smooth and natural, like how people talk in real life. Remind students to read the words accurately, use an appropriate rate, and read with prosody by paying attention to punctuation and the characters' feelings.

- Provide students with Word List 4. Remind students that reading words automatically helps them read with accuracy, appropriate rate and focus on the meaning of the text. Have partners reread the words several times to build automaticity and support fluent reading.

### Transition to Reading

**THINK BACK** **"Let's think back to what happened in Chapter 1. Who did Meems bring home with her, and how did Ben feel about seeing him?"**

**SET A PURPOSE** **"Let's read Chapter 2 to find out why Meems decides to help Vondie."**

## DURING READING

**APPLICATION OF SKILL** As students read Chapter 2, encourage them to pay attention to how the characters are feeling and how punctuation helps convey those feelings. Encourage students to use prosody by matching their voices to the meaning of the text.

**MONITOR FLUENCY** As students read Chapter 2, circulate to monitor fluency, using the Fluency Checklist. Ask students to read aloud quietly as you listen for accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.

## AFTER READING

- Engage students in discussion about Chapter 2: **"Why does Meems decide to help Vondie? How do Ben and Meems feel differently about helping Vondie?"**
- Monitor students' comprehension using the Comprehension Checklist.

**SCHOOL–HOME CONNECTION**
Encourage students to give a "fluency performance" at home by reading a familiar chapter aloud to a family member, caregiver, friend, pet, or stuffed animal. Invite students to read accurately, use a smooth rate, and bring the characters to life with expression.

**CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK**
Acknowledge what students did correctly, then guide them back to the character feelings or punctuation that support fluent reading. For example: **"You identified how Vondie is feeling. Now reread his words and let your voice match that feeling."** Have students apply the corrected strategy and reread the passage.

**GOAL 2 SUPPORT**
Begin with selected words from Word List 4. Model reading each word accurately and smoothly. Invite students to repeat the word after you, matching your rate and accuracy. Then guide students to reread the words in groups of three or four, focusing on reading the words smoothly and automatically without stopping to sound out individual phonemes.

## LESSON 3 • Comprehension Strategy *15–30 minutes*

**GOALS**

- Visualize and make inferences in a fiction text.
- Read a fiction text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.

In this lesson, students will read Chapter 3.

**GOAL 1 SUPPORT**

If students struggle to make an inference, prompt them to first describe or quickly sketch what they are visualizing. **"What do you picture happening? What details helped you create that picture?"** Then guide students to think about what those details might reveal about a character's feelings, thoughts, or motivations.

**MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS**

Have students use the following sentence starters to help them visualize and make an inference. *"As I read, I picture _____. In the text, it says _____. I know _____. I can infer that _____."*

### BEFORE READING

#### Teach and Model

**"Today we will learn to visualize details in a text and make inferences so that we can build a deeper understanding of a story. When readers visualize, they create a picture or movie in their minds using the details they read. They can then use those mental images, along with what they already know, to make inferences, or figure out information an author does not directly state."**

- Display the section of Chapter 2 (pp. 18–19) beginning with *"Vondie's not by the car."* and ending with *"It makes my lip curl."*
- Read the excerpt aloud.
- Think aloud (visualize): **"As I read this part, I create a movie in my mind. I can see Biggie and Vondie cleaning leaves from the gutter, and I hear Biggie thanking Vondie for helping. I picture Vondie's face and ears turning red when Biggie praises him."**
- Think aloud (think about what a detail means): **"As I picture this scene, I notice that the author tells me Vondie's face and ears turn red but doesn't explain why. I need to think about what that detail means."**
- Think aloud (connect to background knowledge): **"I know that people sometimes blush when they feel embarrassed or shy. Earlier in the chapter, Vondie was happy to help Biggie clean up the leaves. Now Biggie is thanking him. Thinking about what I know and what has happened in the story helps me understand why Vondie's face and ears might have turned red."**
- Think aloud (infer): **"I can picture Vondie getting attention from Biggie and his face turning red. Using what I visualized and what I know about people, I can infer that Vondie feels embarrassed or shy when Biggie thanks him."**

**"First, I created a movie in my mind. Then, I thought about a detail the author did not fully explain. Next, I connected that detail to what I already know. Finally, I made an inference about how Vondie was feeling."**

#### Practice Together

- Display the same excerpt as above.

**"Let's practice visualizing and inferring together. As I reread this part, create a movie in your mind, and think about what the details help you understand about Ben."**

- Read the excerpt aloud.

**"What do you visualize? Which details helped you create that movie?"** (Biggie and Vondie are cleaning up the leaves together. Biggie thanks Vondie for helping. Ben is watching them. Vondie's face and ears turn red. Ben's lip curls when he sees what is happening.)

- Guide students to think about a detail that the author does not fully explain. **"As you picture the scene, which detail helps you think about Ben's feelings?"** (Ben watches Biggie thank Vondie. Ben's lip curls. Ben sees Vondie helping Biggie

instead of him helping.)

- Guide students to connect the scene to their background knowledge. **"What do you know from your own experiences or earlier in the story that helps you understand that detail?"** (People sometimes curl their lips when they are annoyed or upset. Earlier, Ben didn't want Vondie to come to his house and seemed frustrated when Meems brought Vondie home.)
- Guide students to make an inference. **"Using what you visualized and what you know, what can you infer about how Ben is feeling?"** (Ben feels annoyed. Ben feels angry or resentful because Vondie is receiving praise from Biggie.)

**"We used what we visualized and what we already knew to infer how Ben was feeling."**

### Student Practice

- Display the section of Chapter 2 (pp. *18–19*) beginning with *"We follow the sound."* and ending with *"It makes my lip curl."*
- Read the excerpt aloud or have students read it with a partner.

**"Now you will visualize the scene and make an inference about how Biggie is feeling. Create a picture or movie in your mind, paying close attention to Biggie's words and actions. Then, use what you visualized and what you know from your own life or earlier in the story to infer his feelings."**

- Invite partners to explain their thinking and support their answers with evidence from the text.

### Transition to Reading

**THINK BACK** **"Let's think back to what happened in Chapter 2. At the end of Chapter 2, Vondie was helping, but Ben was still upset. What details help you infer why Ben feels that way?"**

**SET A PURPOSE** **"Let's read Chapter 3 to visualize the events and make inferences about the characters' feelings."**

## DURING READING

**APPLICATION OF SKILL** **"As you read Chapter 3, visualize the details. Notice the details the author does not fully explain. Use what you visualize, along with what you know from your own life and earlier parts of the story, to make inferences."**

**MONITOR FLUENCY** As students read Chapter 3, circulate to monitor fluency, using the Fluency Checklist. Ask students to read aloud quietly as you listen for accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.

## AFTER READING

- Engage students in discussion about Chapter 3: **"What can you infer about Vondie's feelings toward Biggie and Meems? As you picture Ben's memories of the basketball team and his conversation with Vondie, what can you infer about why Ben is still upset with Vondie?"**
- Monitor students' comprehension using the Comprehension Checklist.

**SCHOOL–HOME CONNECTION**
**Mystery Scene** Invite students to describe a scene for a family member, caregiver, or friend. Challenge the listener to visualize the scene and use the details to make an inference. (For example, "Ella grabbed her umbrella and boots as she walked out the door. What can you infer?")

**CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK**
Acknowledge what students did correctly, then guide them to revisit the text and describe what they are visualizing. Ask: **"What details from the text helped you create that mental picture?"** and **"How does that mental picture support your inference?"** Have students apply the corrected strategy and revise or confirm their inference using details from the text and their visualization.

**GOAL 2 SUPPORT**
If students struggle to read with appropriate rate and prosody, model reading a short passage aloud. Then have students echo read the same passage, paying attention to phrasing, expression, and punctuation.

## LESSON 4 • Vocabulary and Word Analysis *15–30 minutes*

**GOALS**

- Identify and use base words with the inflectional ending *-ing* with and without spelling changes in multisyllabic words.
- Read a fiction text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.

In this lesson, students will read Chapter 4.

**GOAL 1 SUPPORT**
Provide students with word cards containing words with inflectional endings with and without spelling changes. Ask students to sort the words by spelling pattern and then use each word in a sentence.

**MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS**
Display words from the lesson and color-code the base word and inflectional ending. Guide students to identify each part and explain how the ending changes the word. Provide sentence frames such as: *The base word is ___.* and *The ending changes the word to ___.*

### BEFORE READING

**NOTE:** Use this same routine to teach and reinforce other inflectional endings, such as *-s*, *-es*, and *-ed*.

#### Teach and Model

"Today, we will learn to identify and use base words and the inflectional ending *-ing* in multisyllabic words so that we can read and understand more words. Longer words can be broken into smaller parts to help us read them. Today, we will learn that many multisyllabic words are made up of a base word and an ending. These endings can change a word's meaning and sometimes require spelling changes. Today, we will learn how the inflectional ending *-ing* changes words."

- Display these words: *talk, talking*. "*Talk* is a base word. When we add *-ing*, the word becomes *talking*. The ending *-ing* tells me that an action is happening now or is continuing. To determine the meaning of a word with an inflectional ending, I identify the base word and its meaning, think about the meaning of the ending, and combine those meanings. The base word *talk* means 'to speak.' The ending *-ing* means the action is happening now. *Talking* means 'speaking now,' as in the sentence, 'I am talking on the phone.'"
- Display these words: *hide, hiding*. "Sometimes a spelling change is needed before adding *-ing*. The word *hide* ends with a silent *e*. When adding *-ing*, we drop the silent *e* before adding the ending: *hide* → *hiding*. The base word *hide* means 'to put out of sight.' The ending *-ing* means the action is happening now. *Hiding* means 'to put something out of sight now,' as in the sentence, 'The squirrel is hiding nuts in the garden.'"
- Display these words: *hit, hitting*. "Sometimes we double the final consonant before adding *-ing*. The base word *hit* has a short vowel sound followed by one consonant. When adding *-ing*, we double the final consonant: *hit* → *hitting*. The base word *hit* means 'to strike something.' The ending *-ing* means the action is happening now. *Hitting* means 'striking something now,' as in the sentence, 'He practiced hitting the baseball with his bat.'"

"To identify and use words with *-ing*, first find the base word and think about its meaning. Then identify the ending *-ing* and determine that it means the action is happening now or is continuing. Check whether a spelling change was applied before the ending was added. To determine the word's meaning, combine the meaning of the base word and the ending."

#### Practice Together

- Display these words: *standing, bouncing, bugging*.
- Guide students through *standing*: "What is the base word? What ending was added? Was a spelling change needed before adding the ending? What does the base word *stand* mean? What does the ending *-ing* mean? Combine those meanings. What does *standing* mean? Use *standing* in a sentence."

- Guide students through *bouncing* (drop silent *e*) and *bugging* (double final consonant). Invite students to use each word in a sentence.

### Student Practice

- Display these words: *working, having, running*.
- Ask students to: identify the base word and its meaning; identify the inflectional ending *-ing* and its meaning; determine whether a spelling change was applied before adding the ending; determine the meaning of the new word by combining the meaning of the base word and the ending; and use each word in a sentence.
- Review responses as a class.

### Transition to Reading

**THINK BACK** "Let's think back to what happened in Chapter 3. Why does Ben consider Vondie one of his sworn enemies?"

**SET A PURPOSE** "Let's read Chapter 4 to find out how Ben's feelings about Vondie affect his actions."

## DURING READING

**APPLICATION OF SKILL** As students read Chapter 4, encourage them to pay attention to their accuracy when reading multisyllabic words with the ending *-ing*.

**MONITOR FLUENCY** As students read Chapter 4, circulate to monitor fluency, using the Fluency Checklist. Ask students to read aloud quietly as you listen for accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.

## AFTER READING

- Students write about their reading. Prompts are provided in the Journal.
- Monitor students' comprehension using the Comprehension Checklist.

**SCHOOL–HOME CONNECTION**
Invite students to become "Word Detectives" at home. Ask them to find three words with the ending *-ing* in books, magazines, or signs. Encourage students to teach a family member one spelling rule they learned in class.

**CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK**
Acknowledge students' correct identification of the base word, ending, meaning, or spelling rule. Then guide them to identify the missing part of their thinking. Ask: **"What is the base word? What does the ending mean? Does a spelling rule apply?"** Support students in using the base word and ending to determine the word's meaning.

**GOAL 2 SUPPORT**
Model reading a sentence from Chapter 4 word by word and then model pausing between phrases rather than after every word. Invite students to reread the sentence, reading with appropriate phrasing.

## LESSON 5 • Comprehension Literary Skill *15–30 minutes*

**GOALS**

- Identify and explain the problem and solution in a story using accurate details from the text.
- Read a fiction text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.

In this lesson, students will read Chapter 5.

**GOAL 1 SUPPORT**

Provide students with a Problem and Solution graphic organizer with sections for the problem and the solution. Pause at key points during reading and ask guiding questions such as: **"What problem is Ben facing?" "What is happening that is helping Ben move toward a solution?"** and **"What solution does Ben decide to try?"** Invite students to record their thinking using sentence frames such as: *"Ben's problem is ___." "Events that lead to the solution are ___."* and *"The solution Ben decides to try is ___."*

**MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS**

Display illustrations from Chapter 5 and guide students to describe what they notice about the characters' actions and feelings. Ask students to make connections by discussing a time they experienced a problem with a friend or family member and how they worked toward a solution. Provide a word bank with terms such as *problem, solution, challenge, apologize, hurt, frustrated,* and *understand* to support oral discussion. Invite students to use words from the word bank when explaining Ben's problem and the solution he decides to try.

### BEFORE READING

#### Teach and Model

**"Today, we will learn to identify and explain the problem and solution in a fiction text so that we can better understand the challenges characters face and how they are resolved. Let's think about what we already know. As we read, we often use details from the text to visualize what is happening and make inferences about characters and events. Today, we will use those same details to identify a character's problem and explain how it is solved."**

- Display the section of Chapter 2 (pp. 15–17) beginning with *"Meems says, 'I called his dad, but he didn't answer.'"* and ending with *"And here we are."*
- Read the excerpt aloud.

**"When we identify a problem and solution, we ask ourselves, "What challenge does a character face?" and "What happens to help solve it?" The problem is the challenge. The solution is what helps address the challenge."**

- Think aloud (problem): **"As I read this section, I notice that Vondie does not have an adult available to stay with him. His dad is not answering the phone, his mom is away, and his grandmother cannot help. That is the problem because Vondie needs a safe place to stay."**
- Think aloud (solution): **"Now I look for what happens to help solve the problem. Meems contacts Vondie's grandmother, and his grandmother says that Vondie can stay with Meems. In this section, that is the solution because it helps make sure Vondie has a safe place to stay."**
- Think aloud (supporting details): **"The details about Vondie's dad not answering the phone, his mom being away, and his grandmother not being available help me understand the problem. The detail that Meems offers to care for Vondie helps me understand the solution."**

**"When I identify a problem and solution, I look for the challenge a character faces and the events that help address it. I use important details from the text to explain both the problem and the solution."**

#### Practice Together

- Display the section of Chapter 4 (pp. 35–36) beginning with *"I look out the window."* and ending with *" ... it's quiet when I get there."*
- Read the excerpt aloud.

**"Let's identify the problem and solution of this section by asking: 'What challenge does the character face?' and 'What happens to help solve it?'"**

- Guide students to identify the problem. **"What challenge does Ben face in this section?"** (Ben feels left out and upset because Vondie is spending time with Meems and Biggie. He thinks they do not need him anymore.) **"What details help you understand the problem?"** (Ben notices Meems laughing with Vondie and giving him work to do in the garden. He also thinks, *"It's like they don't need me anymore."* These details help explain why Ben feels hurt and left out.)

- Guide students to identify the solution. **"What does Ben decide to do after he becomes upset?" "How does this help solve his problem?"** (He leaves the house and goes to the gym. It gives him a place to calm down and spend time doing something he enjoys.)

**"Which details help explain the solution?"** (Ben decides he cannot take another day with Vondie there, and goes to the gym to shoot baskets.)

### Student Practice

- Display the section of Chapter 3 (pp. 29–31) beginning with *"Suddenly, the whole thing seemed even more unfair."* and ending with *"And, for once in my life, I was the star player."*
- Read the excerpt aloud or invite students to read it with a partner.

**"Now you will identify and explain the problem and solution in this section. Remember to ask yourself: 'What challenge does the character face?' and 'What events help address the challenge?'"**

- Ask students to identify Ben's problem and the details that help explain it. Encourage students to identify the events that lead to the solution and explain how they help address Ben's problem.
- Invite partners to discuss their thinking. Guide students to support their answers with evidence from the text.

### Transition to Reading

**THINK BACK** **"Let's think back to what happened in Chapter 4. Ben was upset that Vondie kept coming to his house. He felt like Vondie was taking his place and that Meems and Biggie did not need him anymore. What details from the chapter help us understand why Ben felt that way?"**

**SET A PURPOSE** **"Let's read Chapter 5 to find out what problem Ben faces because of these feelings and how he tries to work toward a solution."**

## DURING READING

**APPLICATION OF SKILL** **"As you read, pay attention to Ben's problem, the details that help explain it, and the solution he decides to try. "**

**MONITOR FLUENCY** As students read Chapter 5, circulate to monitor fluency, using the Fluency Checklist. Ask students to read aloud quietly as you listen for accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.

## AFTER READING

- Engage students in discussion about Chapter 5: **"What problem does Ben face in this chapter? What solution does Ben decide to try by the end of the chapter, and how might this help him solve his problem?"**
- Monitor students' comprehension using the Comprehension Checklist.

**SCHOOL–HOME CONNECTION**
Invite students to play a "Problem and Solution Detective" game with a family member. Ask each person to describe a real-life problem they experienced and the steps they took to solve it. Encourage students to identify the problem, the events that led to the solution, and the solution itself.

**CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK**
Acknowledge what students did correctly, then guide them back to identifying the character's challenge and the event that helps address it. For example: **"You found a detail from the story. Let's think about how it fits with the problem and solution. Does this event help us understand Ben's challenge, or does it help us understand what Ben does to address that challenge?"** Have students explain how the detail supports the problem or the solution using evidence from the text.

**GOAL 2 SUPPORT**
Model fluent reading with dialogue from Chapter 5. Have students identify who is speaking and explain how the character is feeling. **"How do the punctuation marks help you know how to read the dialogue?"** Then invite students to reread the dialogue using accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody. Encourage students to use punctuation and character emotions to guide their expression and intonation.

## LESSON 6 • Vocabulary and Word Analysis *15–30 minutes*

**GOALS**

- Identify and use base words with the inflectional ending *-ed* with and without spelling changes in multisyllabic words.
- Read a fiction text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.

In this lesson, students will read Chapter 6.

**GOAL 1 SUPPORT**

Provide students with a partially completed Word Chart that includes the target word, base word and its meaning, and inflectional ending and its meaning. Guide students to determine the meaning of the word by thinking about the meaning of the base word and the ending. Then invite students to use each word in a sentence before completing the remaining sections of the chart.

**MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS**

Provide a word bank with the base words and meanings for selected words from Chapter 6. As students encounter words with the inflectional ending *-ed*, encourage them to identify the base word and use the word bank to recall its meaning. Then guide students to use the meaning of *-ed* to determine the meaning of the new word. Encourage partners to discuss how the ending changes the meaning of the base word.

### BEFORE READING

**NOTE:** Use this same routine to teach and reinforce other inflectional endings, such as *-s*, *-es*, and *-ing*.

#### Teach and Model

"Today, we will learn to identify and use base words and the inflectional ending *-ed* in multisyllabic words so that we can read and understand more words. Let's think about what we already know. We have learned that many multisyllabic words are made up of a base word and an ending. We also learned that inflectional endings can change a word's meaning and sometimes require spelling changes. Today, we will use that same thinking to learn how the inflectional ending *-ed* changes words."

- Display these words: *embarrass, embarrassed*. "*Embarrass* is the base word. When we add *-ed*, the word becomes *embarrassed*. The ending *-ed* tells me that an action happened in the past. To determine the meaning of a word with an inflectional ending, I identify the base word and its meaning, think about the meaning of the ending, and combine those meanings. The base word *embarrass* means 'to make someone feel uncomfortable or self-conscious.' The ending *-ed* means the action happened in the past. *Embarrassed* means someone was made to feel uncomfortable or self-conscious in the past, as in the sentence, 'I felt embarrassed when I tripped in front of my class.'"
- Display these words: *divorce, divorced*. "Sometimes a spelling change is needed before adding *-ed*. The word *divorce* ends with a silent *e*. When adding *-ed*, we drop the silent *e* before adding *-ed*: *divorce* → *divorced*. The base word *divorce* means 'to legally end a marriage.' The ending *-ed* means the action happened in the past. *Divorced* means a marriage ended in the past,' as in the sentence, 'My mom and dad divorced a few years ago.'"
- Display these words: *worry, worried*. "Sometimes a base word ends with a consonant followed by *y*. When adding *-ed*, we change the *y* to *i* before adding the ending: *worry* → *worried*. The base word *worry* means "to feel concerned." The ending *-ed* means the action happened in the past. *Worried* means someone felt concerned in the past, as in the sentence, 'I was worried about the storm last night.'"

"To identify and use words with *-ed*, first find the base word and think about its meaning. Then identify the ending *-ed* and determine that it means the action happened in the past. Check whether a spelling change was applied before the ending was added. To determine the word's meaning, combine the meaning of the base word and the ending."

#### Practice Together

- Display these words: *rewarded, included, carried*.
- Guide students through *rewarded*: "What is the base word? What ending was added? Was a spelling change needed before adding the ending? What does the base word *reward* mean? What does the ending *–ed* mean? Combine those

meanings. What does *rewarded* mean? Use *rewarded* in a sentence."

- Guide students through *included* (drop silent *e*) and *carried* (changing the *y* to *i* before adding *-ed*). Invite students to use each word in a sentence.

### Student Practice

- Display these words: *wanted*, *invited*, *hurried*.
- Ask students to: identify the base word and its meaning; identify the inflectional ending *-ed* and its meaning; determine whether a spelling change was applied before adding the ending; determine the meaning of the new word by combining the meaning of the base word and the ending; and use each word in a sentence.
- Review responses as a class.

### Transition to Reading

**THINK BACK** "Let's think back to what happened in Chapter 5. Why did Ben tell Vondie to leave, and what did Meems encourage Ben to do?"

**SET A PURPOSE** "Let's read Chapter 6 to find out how the story ends and if Ben's problem is solved."

## DURING READING

**APPLICATION OF SKILL** As students read Chapter 6, encourage them to pay attention to words with inflectional endings. Invite them to identify the base word and the ending and then use what they know about both parts to determine the meaning of the new word.

**MONITOR FLUENCY** As students read Chapter 6, circulate to monitor fluency, using the Fluency Checklist. Ask students to read aloud quietly as you listen for accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.

## AFTER READING

- Students write about their reading. Prompts are provided in the Journal.
- Monitor students' comprehension using the Comprehension Checklist.

**SCHOOL–HOME CONNECTION**
Invite students to play Past-Tense Challenge with a family member. Have one person say a base word, such as *finish*, *decide*, or *study*. The other person changes the word by adding the inflectional ending *-ed* and explains how the ending changes the word's meaning. Encourage students to discuss any spelling changes that occur, such as dropping a silent *e* or changing *y* to *i* before adding *-ed*. Continue taking turns creating and explaining new words.

**CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK**
Acknowledge what students did correctly, then guide them to use the meaning of the base word and the ending to determine the meaning of the new word. For example: **"You identified the meaning of the base word and the ending. Now let's put those meanings together. How do those meanings help you determine the meaning of the new word?"**

**GOAL 2 SUPPORT**
Display several sentences with dialogue from Chapter 6. Model reading each sentence first in a flat, word-by-word voice and then with appropriate expression. Discuss which reading sounded more like natural speech and why. Then invite students to read the sentences with a partner two or three times, focusing on pausing at punctuation, adjusting their voice to match the dialogue, and reading smoothly with expression.

## LESSON 7 • Comprehension Nonfiction Skill *15–30 minutes*

**GOALS**

- Identify the main idea and supporting details in a section of nonfiction text.
- Read a nonfiction text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.

In this lesson, students will read "Under One Roof."

**GOAL 1 SUPPORT**
Provide students with a partially completed Main Idea and Supporting Details Chart. Ask students to identify one or two additional supporting details and use all the details in the chart to determine the main idea.

**MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS**
Provide students with three supporting details and three possible main ideas. Think aloud about what the details have in common. Ask students to select the main idea that matches all the supporting details and explain their thinking. Provide language frames as needed: *I learned ____. These details are mostly about ____. The main idea is ____.*

### BEFORE READING

**PREVIEW THE ARTICLE** Read aloud the title and discuss the photos, captions, and other text features. Explain that multigenerational living means several different generations of a family are living in the same home. Have students tell what they already know about multigenerational living.

#### Teach and Model

"Today we will learn to identify the main idea and supporting details in a section of nonfiction text so that we can better understand what the author wants us to learn. Nonfiction texts teach readers about real people, places, events, or ideas. Authors include facts, examples, and details to share information with readers. As we read nonfiction, we can identify important details and think about what they teach us. This helps us determine the main idea of a section."

"During our preview, we looked at the title, photos, captions, and other text features. Those features helped us identify the topic of this article as multigenerational living. The topic tells us what the article is about. Now we will identify the main idea of each section by thinking about what the author wants readers to learn about multigenerational living."

"When we identify the main idea and supporting details in a section of text, we first look for the important details. Then we think about what those details teach us. The main idea is the most important point about a topic the author wants readers to understand. Supporting details are important facts and information that help explain the main idea."

- Display and read aloud the second paragraph of the article.
- Think aloud (supporting details): "As I read this section, I look for important details. I learn that multigenerational living is common in Asia and Latin America and helps family members stay connected and get the care they need."
- Draw this Main Idea and Supporting Details Chart on whiteboard or paper and record the supporting details:

| Main Idea: |
| --- |
| Supporting Details:<br>•<br>• |

- Think aloud (main idea): "Now, to identify the main idea of this section, I look at the supporting details and think about what they have in common. The details all explain how living with family members helps families stay connected and get the care they need. From these details, I can determine that the main idea the author wants me to know about in this section is that multigenerational living helps family members stay connected and care for one another."
- Record the main idea: Multigenerational living helps family members stay connected and care for one another.

"When I identify the main idea and supporting details, I ask myself: 'What important details do I learn?' 'What do those details have in common?' 'What is the main idea the author is trying to teach me in this section?'"

### Practice Together

- Draw a new Main Idea and Supporting Details chart.
- Display and read aloud the third paragraph of the article.
- Guide students to identify the main idea of the section using the following prompts. Record their responses on the chart.

"What important details did you learn?" (Share housing costs; grandparents help care for children; younger family members help grandparents; living together strengthens family ties.)

"What do these details have in common? What is the main idea the author is trying to teach me in this section?" (Multigenerational living offers many benefits for families.)

"How does the heading help us identify the main idea?" (It tells what the section is mostly about and gives a clue to the main idea.)

### Student Practice

- Draw a new Main Idea and Supporting Details chart.
- Ask students to read the fifth paragraph of the article with a partner and identify the supporting details and main idea.
- Invite students to share the supporting details and main idea they identified and add students' responses to the chart.

### Transition to Reading

**SET A PURPOSE** "Let's read the article to learn about multigenerational living."

## DURING READING

**APPLICATION OF SKILL** As students read the article, encourage them to identify the supporting details in each section and think about what those details have in common. Encourage students to use the supporting details to determine the main idea of each section.

**MONITOR FLUENCY** As students read the article, circulate to monitor fluency, using the Fluency Checklist. Ask students to read aloud quietly as you listen for accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.

## AFTER READING

- Engage students in discussion about the article: "What did you learn to help explain why some families choose multigenerational living? What details helped explain the benefits and challenges of multigenerational living?"
- Monitor students' comprehension using the Comprehension Checklist.

**SCHOOL–HOME CONNECTION**
Invite students to play a "Guess the Main Idea" game with a family member or caregiver. One person shares three details, and the other person guesses the main idea. Then switch roles.

**CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK**
Acknowledge what students did correctly, then guide them to think about how the detail connects to the main idea of the section. For example: "You found an important detail from the section. Let's think about what that detail teaches us. What other important details support the same idea? What main idea do those details help you identify?" Have students apply the corrected strategy and explain how the supporting details help them determine the main idea.

**GOAL 2 SUPPORT**
Model fluent reading with a paragraph from the article. Read the paragraph once with appropriate phrasing and once with choppy phrasing. Ask students which reading made it easier to understand the author's ideas and why. Then invite students to reread the paragraph with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody, paying attention to how fluent reading helps them understand the main idea and supporting details.

## LESSON 8 • Vocabulary and Word Analysis *15–30 minutes*

**GOALS**

- Identify and use base words with the inflectional endings *–s* and *-es* with and without spelling changes in multisyllabic words.
- Reread a nonfiction text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.

In this lesson, students will reread "Under One Roof."

**GOAL 1 SUPPORT**

Color-code the base word and ending in each word (for example, *parent* + *s*, *bunch* + *es*). Tell students that *-s* and *-es* can mean "more than one." Then ask students to determine the meaning of the whole word using the color-coded parts.

**MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS**

Provide a word bank with the meanings of selected base words from the article. As students encounter words with inflectional endings, encourage them to identify the base word, use the word bank to recall its meaning, and then determine how the ending changes the word's meaning. Provide sentence frames such as: *The base word means ____. The ending means ____. The word ____ means ____.*

### BEFORE READING

**NOTE:** Use this same routine to teach and reinforce other inflectional endings, such as *-ed*, *-ing*. For additional instruction with words that require spelling changes before adding an inflectional ending (e.g., *family* → *families*), use the routines from Lessons 4 and 6.

#### Teach and Model

"Today, we will learn to identify and use base words and the inflectional endings *-s* and *-es* in multisyllabic words so that we can read and understand more words. Let's think about what we already know. We have learned that many multisyllabic words are made up of a base word and an ending. We also learned that inflectional endings can change a word's meaning. Today, we will use that same thinking to learn how the inflectional endings *-s* and *-es* change words."

- Display these words: *problem*, *problems*. "The word *problem* is the base word. When we add *-s*, the word becomes *problems*. When added to nouns, the ending *-s* can show more than one person, place, thing, or idea. To determine the meaning of a word with an inflectional ending, I identify the base word and its meaning, think about the meaning of the ending, and combine those meanings. The base word *problem* means 'something that needs to be solved.' The ending *-s* means 'more than one.' *Problems* means 'more than one thing that needs to be solved,' as in the sentence, 'I had to solve many math problems in class today.'"
- Display these words: *swoosh*, *swooshes*. "Sometimes we add *-es* instead of *-s*. We often add *-es* when a base word ends in *s*, *ss*, *sh*, *ch*, *x*, or *z*. The word *swoosh* ends with *sh*, so we add *-es*: *swoosh* → *swooshes*. The base word *swoosh* means 'a rushing or swishing sound.' The ending *-es* means 'more than one.' *Swooshes* means 'more than one rushing or swishing sound,' as in the sentence, 'We heard several swooshes as the cars raced by.'"

"The endings *-s* and *-es* can have more than one meaning. Today, we are adding them to nouns to show 'more than one' person, place, thing, or idea. When added to an action verb, *-s* or *-es* can show that the action is happening now. For example, in the sentence, 'The dog rushes to the door,' the base word is *rush*, and the ending *-es*, shows that the action is happening now."

"To identify and use words with *-s* and *-es*, first find the base word and think about its meaning. Then identify the ending *-s* or *-es*, and determine that it means 'more than one' or 'happening now.' Explain why *-s* or *-es* was added. Remember that we often add *-es* when a base word ends with *s*, *ss*, *sh*, *ch*, *x*, or *z*. To determine the word's meaning, combine the meaning of the base word and the ending."

### Practice Together

- Display these words: *parents*, *bunches*.
- Guide students through *parents*: **"What is the base word? What ending was added? What does the base word *parent* mean? What does the ending *-s* mean? Combine those meanings. What does *parents* mean? Use *parents* in a sentence."**
- Guide students through *bunches*. **"Why was *–es* added instead of *–s*?"** (ch). Invite students to use *bunches* in a sentence.

### Student Practice

- Display these words: *members*, *classes*.
- Ask students to: identify the base word and its meaning; identify the inflectional ending and its meaning; determine whether *-s* or *-es* was added to the base word; explain whether the base word ends with *s*, *ss*, *sh*, *ch*, *x*, or *z*; determine the meaning of the new word; and use each word in a sentence.
- Review responses as a class.

### Transition to Reading

**THINK BACK** Briefly review the article with students. Ask them to share one thing they learned about multigenerational living. Then invite them to recall a section of the article, identify its main idea, and share one or two supporting details that helped them determine it.

**SET A PURPOSE** **"Let's reread the article to look for important details we may have missed the first time we read."**

## DURING READING

**APPLICATION OF SKILL** As students reread the article, encourage them to pay attention to words with inflectional endings. Invite them to identify the base word and the ending and then use what they know about both parts to determine the meaning of the new word.

**MONITOR FLUENCY** As students reread the article, circulate to monitor fluency, using the Fluency Checklist. Ask students to read aloud quietly as you listen for accuracy, appropriate rate, and prosody.

## AFTER READING

- Students write about their reading. Prompts are provided in the Journal.
- Monitor students' comprehension using the Comprehension Checklist.

**SCHOOL–HOME CONNECTION**
Invite students to play a "Word Builder" game with a family member or caregiver. One person says a base word, such as *bedroom* or *brush*. The other person adds an inflectional ending, explains what the new word means, and uses it in a sentence. Then switch roles.

**CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK**
Acknowledge students' correct identification of the base word, ending, or meaning. Then guide them to identify the missing part of their thinking. Ask: **"What is the base word? What does the base word mean? What does the ending mean? Why was *-s* or *-es* added?"** Support students in combining the meanings of the base word and the ending to determine the meaning of the new word.

**GOAL 2 SUPPORT**
Model fluent reading with a paragraph from the article. First, read the paragraph word by word and without grouping words into meaningful phrases. Then, reread the paragraph, grouping words that belong together and pausing at punctuation. Ask students which reading sounded more fluent and how the phrasing helped them understand the meaning of the text. Then invite them to repeatedly read the same paragraph, paying attention to punctuation and grouping words into meaningful phrases.

## LESSON 9 • Culminating Writing *15–30 minutes*

**GOALS**

- Demonstrate engagement and excitement for writing.
- Generate ideas, plan, and begin drafting a writing piece.

**WRITING SUPPORT 1**

Use a Quick-Fire Warm-Up to spark ideas and build excitement before writing. Present 3–4 "What If?" questions connected to the prompts and invite students to turn and talk with a partner: **"What if Ben and Vondie could hear each others' thoughts? What if you could talk to Ben? What advice would you give him? What if you could spend one day with a character from the book? What if one event in the story happened differently?"**

**WRITING SUPPORT 2**

Use open-ended questions to encourage students to revisit key ideas from their reading and generate ideas for writing. **"What part of the story has stayed with you the most? Which character would you most like to talk to? Why? What is one important idea from the book or article that stands out to you? What connection can you make between the book and the article? What is something you're still wondering about?"**

**MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS**

Use the blank planning pages in the Journal to co-create graphic organizers that work best for the question students choose. This might be a two-column t-chart, a timeline, a main idea box with room for supporting details, a cause and effect flow chart, or a story map with space for characters, setting, and events.

### BEFORE WRITING

**"As readers, we've explored ideas through the book and the article. Today, we'll use those ideas as inspiration for our own writing, and at the end of this writing experience, we'll hold a Mic Drop! Celebration where you will get to share your writing with others."**

**"No one else in this room thinks exactly like you. No one else has your experiences, your imagination, or your perspective, and that's what makes *your* writing special. So today, we will read a few questions that will spark an idea, and then it will be up to you to make it your own!"**

**"Let's take a look at the questions and start thinking like authors."**

- Read the three Mic Drop! questions from the Journal aloud.
  - **Question 1:** The story isn't over yet! What happens next? Imagine the next conversation, the next challenge, the next surprise, or the next chapter in Ben and Vondie's story.
  - **Question 2:** Be inspired by the text. In the story, Biggie says, *"Everyone hurts. We all need to be seen and heard."* What does this mean to you?
  - **Question 3:** Imagine you suddenly landed inside the story. Would you help a character? Start a new adventure? Cause a little trouble? Change the ending? What happens?
- Encourage students to share their reactions with a partner and select a question to write about. Then, give partners time to discuss their ideas.

### DURING WRITING

**"*You* are authors. Authors imagine new possibilities, take risks with ideas, and bring their thoughts to life with words. We can't wait to hear what only *you* can write at our Mic Drop! Celebration. You might make your audience laugh, surprise them, help them think in a new way, or tell a story they'll remember!"**

- Invite students to read the first **Tip from Coach Kwame** in their Journal for inspiration and writing advice. Explain that there is an optional blank page to help collect and organize their thoughts, sketches, questions, interesting words, possible scenes, or ideas they want to explore.

### AFTER WRITING

- Ask students to find a stopping place in their writing. Remind them that they will have time to complete their writing another day.

**SCHOOL–HOME CONNECTION**

Invite students to discuss the question they chose with a family member. They might share the ideas they've developed so far and tell what they are excited about in their writing.

## LESSON 10 • Culminating Writing *15–30 minutes*

**GOALS**

- Demonstrate engagement and excitement for writing.
- Revise and share their writing piece.

### BEFORE WRITING

"Yesterday you started as authors. Today you get to keep building your piece. It is important for writers to return to their work with fresh eyes to make it even stronger. Have you ever started telling a story and remembered more as you talked? Writers do that, too. While great writing begins with a great idea, it grows through revision! Today, as you finish and revise your piece, look for places where you can add more heart, more imagination, more detail, or more of your unique voice. This is your chance to make your writing unforgettable."

### DURING WRITING

- Invite students to read the second **Tip from Coach Kwame** for inspiration and writing advice.
- Encourage students to think about one way they can revise to make their piece even stronger. "Authors know that a favorite line is hiding right there on the page. Find a sentence, scene, or idea you really like and think about how you can make it shine even brighter. You might add details, include descriptive or precise language, or craft a powerful ending that leaves your reader thinking. This is your final stretch before the Mic Drop! Celebration."
- Ask students to complete their writing in their Journals.

### AFTER WRITING: MIC DROP! CELEBRATION

- Invite students to participate in a Mic Drop! Celebration. Students may share all or part of their completed piece with a partner, small group, or the class.
- Encourage listeners to respond as both readers and writers. As readers, they can share a favorite part, a detail that stood out, or a question they have. As writers, they can point out effective techniques the author used, such as strong word choice, vivid details, dialogue, or a memorable beginning or ending.
- As time allows, invite students to briefly reflect on their experience as writers. For example, you might invite students to think about a part of their writing they are most proud of, reflect on how their ideas grew as they wrote, or name something they learned about themselves as a writer.

"Coach Kwame believes every writer has a story, idea, or voice worth sharing. Today you brought your ideas to life. You imagined, created, revised, and shared your work with others. That's what authors do. So, let's celebrate ourselves as writers! Give yourself a round of applause for taking risks, sharing your voice, and creating something only *you* could create. Mic drop!"

**SCHOOL–HOME CONNECTION**

Encourage students to share their writing with a family member. Invite them to read their writing and tell about the part or parts of the piece they are most proud of.

**WRITING SUPPORT 1**

Invite students to find a part of their writing that they are particularly proud of. Challenge them to name the writing technique they used to make that part strong. Ask questions such as: "What did you do as a writer to clearly show your ideas? What makes this part so unique? Why does this part stand out to you?"

**WRITING SUPPORT 2**

Encourage students to revise their piece with the intention of using stronger, more precise language. For example, you might have students underline all the verbs they used in a particular part of their piece. Then, invite them to think: how can I revise these words to help my reader visualize the action of my piece even more? Instead of *say*, or *said*, they might use words like *whisper, bellow, declare, confess.* Instead of *run,* they might use *sprint, bolt, scurry* or *flee.*

**MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS**

Support students in revising their writing to include precise action words. Choose a short section of text and help students identify the verbs. Create a simple chart with a common verb and several stronger alternatives (e.g., *say* → *whisper, shout, reply; run* → *sprint, dash, race*). Invite students to discuss the meaning of each word and how it changes the image readers create in their minds. Encourage partners to orally rehearse revised sentences before making changes to their writing, using frames such as *"I changed ___ to ___ because it helps the reader picture ___."* or *"___ is a stronger verb because ___."*



# Grade 3 Sample Student Journal and Nonfiction Article:

## *The Unwelcome Guest*


THE UNWELCOME GUEST
JOURNAL
THIS JOURNAL BELONGS TO
MESSAGE FROM COACH KWAME
This journal belongs to YOU. It's a place to think, wonder, explore new ideas, and create. As you read and write, take your time, be curious, and see where your thinking leads you. Every piece of writing is a chance to grow as a reader, thinker, and writer.

**Strengthen Writing Support**
Student Journals include 3 opportunities to write about reading and 1 culminating writing activity.

# MIC DROP!

Let your reading inspire your writing. Choose the format that best fits your ideas, such as a story, letter, poem, journal entry, article, speech, or another piece of writing. Use your imagination, share your unique voice, and write something only YOU can create!

- ☐ The story isn't over yet! What happens next? Imagine the next conversation, the next challenge, the next surprise, or the next chapter in Ben and Vondie's story.

- ☐ Be inspired by the text. In the story, Biggie says, *"Everyone hurts. We all need to be seen and heard."* What does this mean to you?

- ☐ Imagine you suddenly landed inside the story. Would you help a character? Start a new adventure? Cause a little trouble? Change the ending? What happens?

**Tips from Coach Kwame**
Special writing tips give students opportunities to reflect, write, discuss, and build knowledge.



TIP FROM COACH KWAME

Nobody sees the world exactly the way you do. That's your writing superpower! Writing is your chance to make something new. Borrow inspiration from what you read, then add your own spark. Let your imagination, ideas, and voice shine on the page.

## Sample Nonfiction Article (*appears within the Student Journal*)

**Support Background Knowledge**
Paired Nonfiction Articles strengthen students' knowledge-building skills by providing engaging nonfiction tied to the fiction story.

# Under One Roof

### LIVING TOGETHER

**Imagine coming home from school to grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.**

By Mari Bolte

Many households around the world include several **generations** living together. This is called multigenerational living—a way for families to share responsibilities and support each other. While this arrangement can bring challenges, families choose it for several reasons.

Multigenerational living is part of the culture in Asia and Latin America. Living with family of all ages is a way for everyone to stay connected and make sure everyone gets the care they need.

### BENEFITS OF SHARING A HOME

This style of living was once less popular in the United States and Europe. However, more people are trying it out for a few reasons. First, apartments and houses are becoming increasingly expensive. It is easier to split bills between several adults. Second, sometimes grandparents help take care of kids. Other times, the grandparents need help from younger family members. Finally, families see it as a way to strengthen family ties.

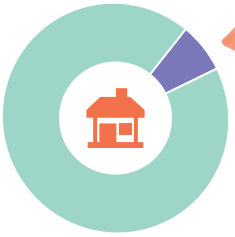
### BALANCING FAMILY NEEDS

Having everyone living under one roof may take planning. All family members need space to sleep, relax, and have some privacy. Older adults might need to live on a single



Families from different generations can share one home.

## U.S. MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSEHOLDS



Over 7% of U.S. households are multigenerational.

level. Sometimes families rearrange bedrooms or divide one room into two. These changes can help everyone get along.

But what happens when people from three different generations have different ideas about how to spend a Saturday? Some people prefer quiet alone time. Others like activities that are noisy and messy. Finding a compromise can be a challenge, but it can also be a lot of fun. Having family so close means there is always someone to talk to and do things with.

No matter how their space is shared, people in multigenerational homes can stay connected and care for one another.

### WORDS TO KNOW

**generations**: groups of family members who are about the same age

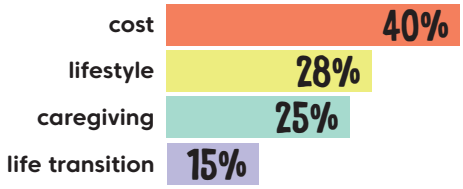


## A SMALL SOLUTION



Tiny homes are a growing housing option. These small homes are built on the same property as a larger home. They give family members a place to live nearby while still having their own space. Tiny homes can include their own kitchen, bathroom, and living area—all in a space much smaller than the average American home.

## REASONS WHY PEOPLE CHOOSE MULTIGENERATIONAL LIVING




*Participants could choose more than one reason.*

Image credits: TK



**Build Informational Text Skills**
The Nonfiction Articles provide students with opportunities to build familiarity with informational text features such as charts, graphs, and infographics.



# Grade 3 Sample Digital Resources for:

## *The Unwelcome Guest*

## Warm Up with Coach Kwame Sample Video




## Additional "Warm Up with Coach Kwame" Sample Videos








# Grade 4 Sample Chapter Book:

*Celebration*




Kwame Alexander's
THE CROSSOVER LITERACY

# CELEBRATION

by Charles R. Smith Jr.
Illustrated by Daniel Barrón

## NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

My dad has twelve brothers and sisters so whenever there was a cookout there was lots of laughs and lots of love. My dad and any of his brothers played the role of grill master over the years and now I enjoy the title today at family gatherings. This story comes from those great memories.

—Charles R. Smith Jr.

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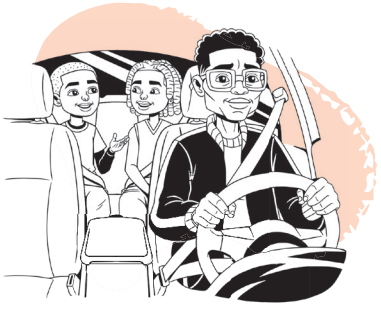
1

# THE GRILL MASTER

5

**"Let's go, Josh!"**

my twin
brother,
Jordan,
calls out
Fourth of July morning
as Dad

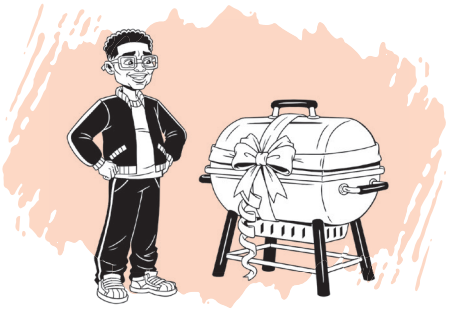


6

starts up the
car,
so we can go
to the market
and then to Dad's
new favorite
place,
the House
of Grills.

7

Big grills,
little grills,
gas grills,
electric grills,
and tools—
lots of tools—
and gadgets
for his new grill.



8

**On Father's Day**,

just two weeks
ago,
we got Dad
a new grill,
a gas
smoker grill,
and Dad
has been waiting,
waiting,
for today,
the Fourth of July cookout.
Grill Master again for the day.

9

**At the market**,

we get
burgers,
hot dogs,
a brisket,
and wings,
but Dad
also predicts
what guests
might bring
and prepares
for anything.

10

**At the House of Grills**,

we get
spatulas,
skewers,
baskets,
and tongs,
to cover everything
so
nothing
goes wrong.

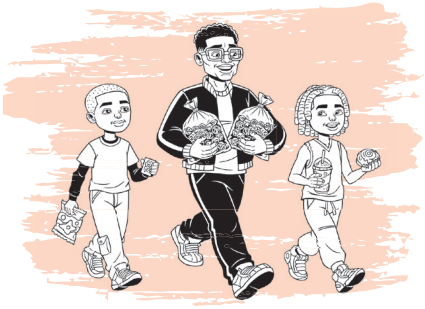
11

**Back in the car,**

Dad says,
"I almost forgot,
your mother said
we need ice.
Big bags of ice.
We'll stop at
the gas station.
You can
get something too.
Here's 10 bucks
to split
between the two
of you."



We inspect
the aisles.
A peanut butter cookie
for me,
bacon jerky for Jordan, and
a honey bun
and peppermint gum
for Mom.





**Dad says,**

"Okay, boys,
who's ready,
ready for a cookout?
Who's ready
for some
food,
ready for some
fun?
Who's ready
for some hoops
under the sun?"



2

# BACKYARD SET-UP

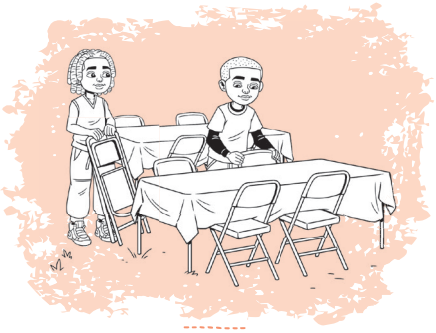
**Back at home,**

Mom thanks us
for the
honey bun
and
peppermint gum,
then tells us,
"Report to your father
to set up the backyard.
He'll give you
instructions
on what to do."



**Dad says,**

"Set up the tables,
set up the chairs,
one by one,
then set up
the tent,
and you're all done."





**Jordan bets me**

that
I can't
construct
the tent
by myself
in five minutes
or less.
But
I know
he's just
trying
to get me
to do
all the work.



**What Jordan doesn't know**

is
I already read
the easy instructions.
I tell him
I'll take that bet.
"If I win," I say,
"you deconstruct it tonight
*aaannnd* put it away
by yourself."
"That thing is huge,"
he says, then:
"Bet.
Ready?
Set.
*Go!*"

This pole
through here,
that pole
through there,
this pole
to that pole.
Lock it.
All done.



20

**What Was the Time?**

That was fast;
that felt fast.
I know it was fast,
because Jordan
tosses
the watch
to me
and leaves.
Three minutes
and 13
seconds,
it reads.

21

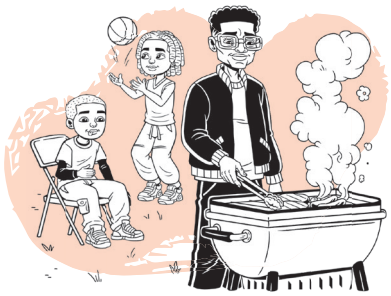
**The backyard**

looks good.
Mom and Dad
agree
everything
looks good.
Dad inspects
the tent
and gives it
a thumbs-up.
Then he says,
"Boys,
you did great.
It's time
to fire the grill up!"

22

**Jordan says,**

"The smoke
from Dad's grill
is making me
hungry.
It smells so
good."



23

**"I'm ready for**

Dad's
smoked chicken wings,
Mom's
mac and cheese,
and all the
good food
Mia's family
brings.
Hopefully,
everyone
will get here
soon."



3

# THE COOKOUT IS ON



**People arrive**

that we know
and don't know.
Mom's friends,
Dad's friends,
and our friend
Mia.





**Mia says,**

"Hey,
you guys ready
to play?
I been practicing,
and practicing,
and practicing,
to beat
both of you."

**If you're ready,**

we're ready,
ready to play
one-on-one
and twenty-one.
Let's do this.
Let's hoop.
Let's have
some fun.

28

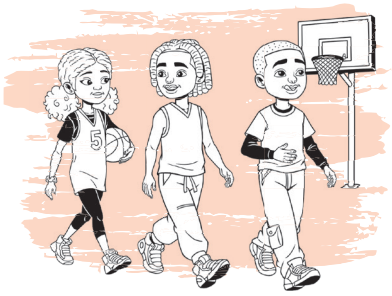
**Jordan interrupts:**

"Wait, wait, wait.
Before we play,
did I smell
your dad's famous
tamales,
and was your mom
holding
a sweet potato pie?"

29

**Mia says yes,**

and Jordan walks away.
"I can't focus.
I'm hungry,"
Jordan says.
"Let's eat first,
then play."



30

**The backyard**

is busy.
The grill
is sizzling,
and Mom
is smiling
and talking to
everyone,
while Dad's friend
Skinny
is telling loud
stories
to anyone
who will listen.

31

**Mia sits down**

with a full plate
and says,
"Your dad
may be
on the grill
now,
but I'm
cooking you
later
on the court.
We'll see
who got game
today."



**Back on the court,**

I tell Mia,
"I'm gonna cook you
so much,
you'll call me
the Grill Master."
Then Dad
pops out to say,
"Did I hear somebody say
*grill master*?
Why, thank you.
It does smell good."



**Mia laughs and says,**

"No, Mr. Bell,
that's what we
call it when
you're hot
on the court.
You're cooking."

Dad says to me,
"Well, me and Mia here
will show you
and your brother
who are the real
Grill Masters.
You win the game,
you earn the name."



4

# TWENTY-ONE

**While waiting for Dad,**

Jordan, Mia, and me
play twenty-one.
Every man—
sorry—
every player
for themselves.





You make it,
that's two points,
plus
you get to shoot
a free throw.
But
you can't
make more
than three
free throws
in a row.



**Jordan bets me**

every time
I'm at the
free-throw
line.
"Bet you can't make
three in a row."

I keep quiet.



**Mia**

has it worse,
because
every time
she
touches
the ball,
Jordan bets
her
that she can't
make a
shot.

But every time,
she just
laughs,
before
another
aim and
swish.
Then she says,
"Keep talking,
Jordan.
I told you
I don't miss.
I told you
I'm cooking you.
Sizzle-sizzle-sssssssss!"



**The score**

is Mia, 18,
Jordan, 17,
and me
with 17 too.
Mia makes
her free throws
three at a time.
We make some
and we miss some
at the free-throw line.



**Mia has 20**

and needs
one free throw
to win,
but
if she misses,
she drops
down
to 11
again.

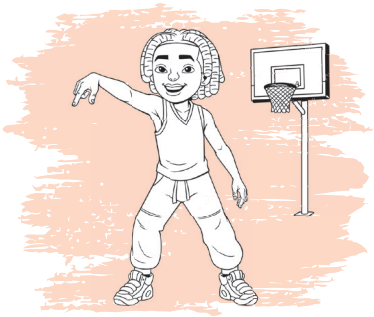


**Jordan says,**

"I bet you
you miss."
Mia laughs.
Mia dribbles.
*Clang.*
No swish.



No swish?
A miss?
Back down
to 11.
With a jump shot
and two
free throws,
I win.





5

# TWENTY-ONE TO ONE-ON-ONE



**Run It Back**

Mia says,
"Twenty-one
again.
Nice game, Josh,
but this time,
I'm gonna win."






**Jordan says**

he's gonna
win.
Then he
and Mia
disrupt
my game,
defending me
close
at the same time.
I still score,
but miss
my free throws
at the line.

**Spectators stand**

nearby.
Then Dad's friend Skinny
comes out to say,
"Well, lookie lookie
who's out here today:
the Bell twins
and Mia,
the queen,
doing your thing."



"I got a message
for the three of you:
the original
Grill Master
will be out here soon,
for some
two-on-two,
so
you better be ready
to show what
you can do!"



**Mia wins,**

then says,
"Let's switch
to one-on-one.
Me versus you, Josh,
then the winner versus Jordan."





**The whole game,**

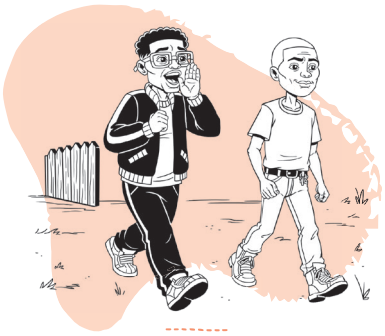
Jordan
keeps making bets.
Betting Mia
won't get
a rebound
after a miss,
betting me
I can't make it
from far,
far away.
I take the bait
and miss
shot
after shot,
and Mia wins.

**Jordan Versus Mia**

Now it's my turn
to disrupt,
just like
Jordan did to me,
so I show support
for Mia,
and cheer
each time
she scores,
but Jordan
stays focused
and scores
more
and more



until the winning
shot.
And it's Jordan
versus me.
Then Dad comes out
with his friend
Skinny.





**Dad says,**

"Don't worry, Mia,
I'm here.
I got you.
The Grill Master
is here to cook
in some two-on-two."



6

# COOKING ON THE COURT

**Me and Jordan**

versus
Dad and Mia.
I say,
"Let's do this, Jordan.
Let's get this win."

Dad says,
"You ready, Mia,
to show
these boys
how to cook?"



**Dad says,**

"You make it,
you take it.
Game to 11,
win by two.
Every shot
is worth one
point,
no matter
how far.
Since I'm the master,
I'll let you
have the ball first."



**Then Skinny starts:**

"I hope you boys are ready,
because Mia
looks unafraid.
I know Chuck is ready,
because he was
born ready!"





**We'll Show You What We Can Do**

I pass to Jordan;
he passes back.
He dribble-dribbles,
then takes the shot,
but the ball
bounces
off the rim.
Dad grabs it,
then passes to Mia
behind the free-throw line.
She shoots it
and says,
"Sizzle-sizzle-ssss.
1–0 us."

**Dad and Mia**

keep making it,
so they keep taking it,
but I grab Dad's miss
and pass to Jordan,
who doesn't miss.
"It's about time,"
Dad says.
"Now show me
some more."
We score
four more
and finally
catch up.



**Skinny says,**

"The twins are on a mission
to win this game,
but the king and queen
are doing their thing,
dribbling
and talking
and swishing
and dishing
and cooking,
just cooking,
taking the lead.
It's 10 to 8.
Game point."



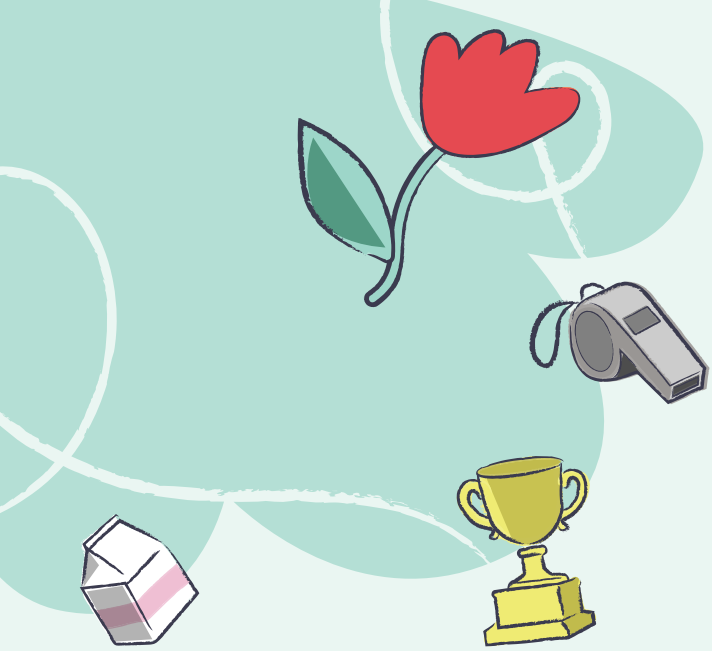
**They need one**

to win,
but we're still
in it.
We just need
the ball
to get two more.
But Dad
has the ball
and he's looking to score.
He dribbles
backward,
backward,
until he's far,
far away.



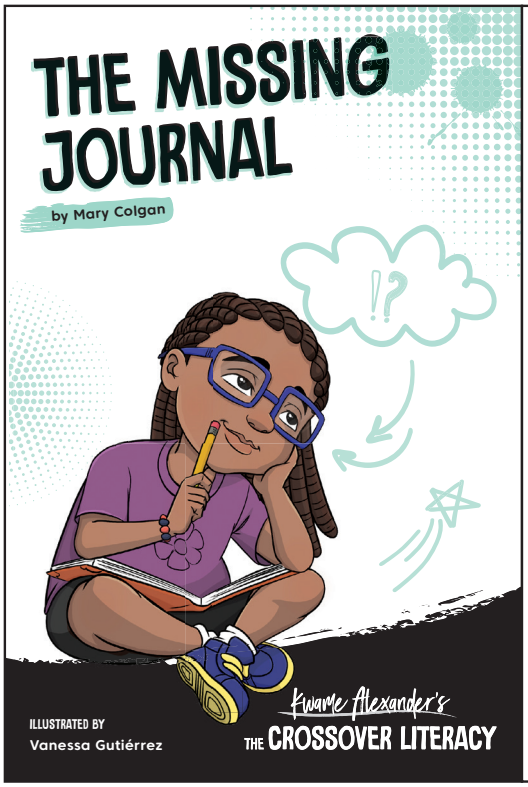
He shoots, then says,
"What you say, Mia?
Sizzle-sizzle-sssswish!
The verdict and the shot are in:
we cooked you.
Respect the game
and the name,
Grill Masters!"





# Grade 5 Sample Chapter Book:

## *The Missing Journal*




Kwame Alexander's
THE CROSSOVER LITERACY

# THE MISSING JOURNAL

by Mary Colgan

Illustrated by Vanessa Gutiérrez

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1

# SUMMER

The sun is sizzling my scalp, but I honestly don't care. It feels like summer itself—bright, insistent, impossible to ignore. Most people would whine about the discomfort and the relentless sweat, but I intend to squeeze every conceivable golden drop out of this fleeting season.

My guitar is searing the skin of my bare arm. Carefully encircling my fingers around the neck the way Mrs. Temple demonstrated, I wince at the sting of each



strum. How long is this going to hurt? I struggle sometimes to remember that forming calluses means progress; real musicians earn all their calluses.

Mrs. Temple has taught me a few simple tunes, a helpful educational tool, I suppose, but I really want to compose something original. My journal, perched on the porch





ledge, weighed down by speckled pebbles to keep the wind from ruffling its pages, is beckoning, so I pick it up, squinting at words that have been scrawled and erased countless times to the point that they're now basically illegible.

Another forcible strum produces not only more discomfort but a sour note, at the precise moment Dad appears on the porch, gripping a steaming mug of coffee and observing, through a massive yawn, "Hey, you're improving!"

I grimace. "I guess. But I still don't sound like Mrs. Temple."

Dad taps my head gently. "Say that again?"

I mumble, "All right. I don't sound like

Mrs. Temple … *yet.*"

"That's my girl," he says.

He dawdles, obviously waiting for me to play again, but I hesitate, as the song I've been writing feels too private to share. It's about friendship, or the kind of friendship I aspire to have. I have plenty of friends, but no *real* friends—the kind I can trust with everything. The concept of genuine, meaningful friendship feels eternally just out of reach, something I can glimpse but not quite grasp.

I successfully wait Dad out until he retreats back inside for more caffeine. As I sing the words softly, they weigh on my heart. A big gust of hot wind ripples my journal pages, revealing my loopy





scribbles scratched in pencil, or in green, magenta, indigo—an ink for every mood. I smooth a wrinkle with my thumb. Every crossed-out lyric remains exactly where I left it. In my journal, I record whatever is on my mind—joyful thoughts, somber feelings, and everything in between; no censorship or rewriting history allowed. Sometimes it's painful to be so honest, but



mostly it makes me feel free.

A voice startles me: "Since when do you play guitar?"

It's Mia, holding her skateboard, her onyx helmet dangling from her wrist.

I feel a flood of embarrassment. How much of my song did she hear?

Gesturing toward the neighboring house, I say, "Mrs. Temple's been teaching me."

Mia nods and bundles her hair up into a ponytail. "What song were you singing just now?" she asks. "I don't think I've heard it before."

My heart flutters. "I wrote it," I respond, my voice small, brittle, and squeaky.

Her eyebrows lift. "Really? What's it about?"



"Nothing, really." I shrug.

Mia keeps scrutinizing me and it's impossible to tell if she's swallowing my implausible lie. Who writes a song about nothing?

"OK," she says, though her eyebrows stay arched for a while.

I pluck absentmindedly at the strings while Mia examines a knot in her shoelace; the silence stretches between us.

"Where are you going?" I ask finally.

"To the park," she responds. "Everyone's there skateboarding."

"Oh," I say, settling in for what will likely be an interminable and possibly fruitless wait for an invitation. Mia and I hang out mostly only when other people

are around, and we don't run to each other to confess secrets; sometimes, it feels like we're getting close—but not quite.

But then she asks, "Do you want to come?"

"Sure," I say, careful to conceal my enthusiasm.

In the house, I prop my guitar at a stable angle against the wall, grab my skateboard, helmet, and kneepads, and bellow to Dad—so he might conceivably hear me over the music he's blaring in the kitchen—"I'm going to the park with Mia!"

"OK!" he calls back, the unmistakable scent of sizzling garlic suddenly filling the air. "Be back in time for lunch. And don't go anywhere except the park without



telling me."

Being allowed to leave the house alone is something I've been desperately begging for for months, so when a smart response inevitably rises in my throat, I throttle it back down and instead call out, "I won't!" Giving Dad attitude won't give me the freedom I crave—and maybe more time out with my friends is just what's necessary to find what I'm looking for.

* * *

I'm nearly back home in the searing noontime heat when suddenly, Diego and Victor come barreling down the sidewalk, cackling so hard at something that they don't see where they're going.

"Hey!" I shout. "Watch it!"





Diego's elbow clips my arm as he swerves, his bike wobbling treacherously before he steadies it; at the same time, I launch off my skateboard and take a graceless tumble to avoid the speeding bikes.

"Sorry, April!" Diego yells over his shoulder, while Victor's guffaw swells with



no discernible note of remorse.

I brush off dirt as I watch them disappear, contemplating how *Watch it* and *Sorry* are the sole words Diego and I have exchanged in months.

All day after that, I can't stop thinking about Diego and about how, when we were younger, we were inseparable; if I ever *have* had a real friend, it's him.

That night, I can't sleep. I reach toward the end table for my journal, but my palm brushes bare wood.

Panic propels me out of bed. I tear through my room, yanking open drawers and crawling into corners. Grasping around behind my nightstand yields only a handful of dust. My journal is nowhere.

Finally, I close my eyes, replaying the day from beginning to end—the guitar, Dad, Mia, the park. No. Before the park. The porch! I must have left my journal on the porch when I was practicing guitar.

I leap down the stairs and explode through the front door out into the





humid darkness—but the ledge is empty, the pebbles that held my journal open scattered on the floor.



2

# DETECTIVES

After a restless night, I charge over to Mia's house, and her mom motions me toward Mia's slightly ajar bedroom door.

"Hey," I say, still a little breathless.

"Hi." Mia studies me quizzically.

Instantly, I know why, and a tremble starts in my stomach and spreads like a rash. I've never stepped inside Mia's house before; until this awkward moment, we've always remained on opposite sides of each other's front doors. I start fidgeting.



Mia scrutinizes me, narrowing her eyes. "What's the matter with you?"

I inhale slowly. "Did you take my journal yesterday?"

The scrunched expression on her face says it all. "Huh?" she says.

I suddenly feel so incredibly guilty and horrible that I want to flee right back home, but instead I babble, "I had it on the porch when you asked me to go to the park, remember? Now it's gone. So I thought that maybe—"

Her eyes get steely. "I wouldn't take your journal, April."

"I know. I'm sorry I even asked," I continue. "It's just …"

It all tumbles out: how I inscribe

everything in my journal. Every single inspiration, every dread, every yearning I can't bring myself to express aloud …

"OK!" Mia barks. Then she adds, more kindly, "Okay, I get it."

She sits cross-legged on the bed. "Are you sure your dad doesn't have it?"

"I asked him and I searched the house and yard. It was useless." I shrug hopelessly. "It's a mystery—an unbelievable mystery."

Mia's eyes shine. "It *is* a mystery! So, let's solve it! I mean, *someone* has your journal, right? Let's be detectives and figure it out."

I ask, "Really? You'll help me?"

"Why not?" she says.



I ask anxiously, "Do you really think we can find it?" I'm fretting about this unknowable "someone" who has my journal and wondering how many other "someone"s they'll show it to before Mia and I are successful—*if* we're successful.

Mia crosses her arms. "April Farrow, since when do you not believe you can do something?"

My stomach unclenches a smidge and I grin despite myself. "OK. We should write out a plan."

Mia rummages around for a pen and notebook and I flip to a blank page and title it *Clues*. The next page gets marked *Suspects*.

"Nice," Mia says. "So how many clues do



you have?"

"None," I respond, bumping my shoulder against hers with a smile. "*Yet*."

* * *

On the walk back to my house, we deliberate on strategy.

"Motive," Mia says. "That's the other





thing we need to think about, right?"

"Why would someone want to take my journal …" I murmur, considering.

"Revenge?" Mia suggests.

I halt in my tracks. "Revenge! What did I do to anyone?"

Mia snickers. "I don't know. Don't you have any enemies?"

"No!" I shout emphatically.

She crooks her head. "Really?" She is trying to camouflage her skeptical smile, but her dimple gives her away.

"Really," I insist. I may struggle with maintaining authentic friendships, but unquestionably I do not have enemies.

We start walking again, but now my mind is in turmoil. *Do* I have any enemies?

Did someone pinch my journal to retaliate for something awful that I've done?

At my house, we plop down in the shade and flip open the notebook to a third blank page, which I label *Motives.*

"Revenge," I grumble, resentfully scrawling the word while Mia giggles under her breath.

Doodling helps me think, so I sketch some swirls and stars in the margins. "Curiosity?" I suggest. "Maybe they just wanted to know what it said."

Mia nods, so I begin writing C-U-R-I, then pause. "How do you spell *curiosity*?" I ask her.

Mia snickers as she grabs the pen and spells N-O-S-Y. "Same thing," she says.



I resume doodling while Mia keeps musing.

"Maybe they're jealous?" she says.

Of all the possibilities Mia has conjured up, this one stumps me the most. I ask, "Who would be jealous of me?"

She shrugs. "Lots of people! You get straight-As, you're good at sports, and almost everyone likes you."

I narrow my eyes. "What do you mean *almost*?"

Mia's playful grin confirms that she's having way too much fun with this. My ringtone drowns out our conversation and I know whose name I'll read on the screen before I even look.

"Hi, Dad," I say, heaving a sigh.





"Hi, honey," he says. "Are you still at Mia's?"

"No."

"What do you mean *no*? You know you need to inform me before—"

"Dad, look outside," I say.

The living-room curtain is swept aside and Dad's face materializes, his phone glued to his ear. "Very funny. Hi, Mia."



"Hi, Mr. Farrow."

Dad points at me through the window. "You tell me before you go anywhere." Finally, thankfully, the curtain falls back into place, leaving us in peace.

Mia snatches the pen and jots down *jealous* with a flourish. As senseless as it seems, I decide to humor her.



"Now what?" Mia inquires.

"Now we inspect the scene of the crime." I say it like a joke, but as my gaze turns again to the bare ledge, my stomach roils. Playing detective is fun—but this is my journal we're talking about: a priceless object that's like an extension of myself, or an organ I need to survive.

We get up to examine the spot. "My journal was right here," I say, scooping up scattered pebbles. "These were on top of it."

Mia's scrutinizing a section of the lawn nearby, where a muddy shoe tread is embedded in the grass. I mentally revisit the day before, retrieving an image of Diego's mud-splattered shoes as he biked



away—also, the smear of dirt across the tires and whatever inscrutable joke he and Victor were sniggering about. Was *I* the laughingstock? Had they already snatched the journal and were wondering when I'd notice?

I inform Mia that we've got the first name for our *Suspects* list.

Then I add, sighing, "And I think one of your motives might be right."



3

# REVENGE

"Diego's harmless," Mia replies after I relay yesterday's events. "If he found your journal, he'd give it back."

I disclose, "I wrote a poem about him in there."

Mia's eyebrows shoot up. "A love poem?"

"No! Just a poem." I anxiously chew on my lower lip. "I have to talk to him."

The "revenge" motive points to only one person. Diego has every reason to resent me, and it's entirely my fault our



friendship failed; I did something shameful and I've never had the nerve to fess up and apologize.

Mia offers to come, but I feel like I have to do this alone. When I call, Diego's mom tells me he's at the rec center playing basketball. Dad gives me a quizzical look when I tell him I'm going to see Diego; I never told him why we drifted apart. I couldn't bear to see the disappointment that would settle across my dad's face if he knew the truth.

As I drag myself over to the rec center, rehearsing apologies and imagining the countless terrible possibilities of how Diego might react, I suddenly have a horrific thought: *What if Diego brought*

*my journal to the rec center? What if he's reading it aloud right now?* I envision a circle of kids clustered around him, eagerly gobbling up every word, every private thought I've ever had, every secret, every fear, spilled out into the open for them to ridicule.

By the time I reach the rec center, my stomach is in knots. Diego is on the outdoor court, playing four-on-four. He's completely absorbed in the game while I hover just outside the fence.

"Hey, April!" Ben calls, grinning. "You wanna play?" He's well aware of the fact that I don't play basketball.

Diego glances over, missing a pass. Ben snatches the ball from the air and



sinks a shot.

"That's 11!" he crows. "We win!"

Seconds later, they're already regrouping for another game. If I don't act now, I'll miss my chance, so I wave Diego over.

"Hey," he says when he reaches me.

I search his expression, noting that, like Mia, he looks mystified, not guilt-ridden; he just looks like my old friend Diego. My heart rattles in my chest, and my gaze drops to the dandelion-speckled field.

Brushing my toe over the sea of yellow, I say, "These always remind me of you."

I anticipate fury, but instead Diego smiles. "Me too. That last chain we made was epic. It had, like, a hundred flowers."



The yellow blooms blur and suddenly I'm seven again. When we were little, Diego and I loved inventing imaginary worlds. I vividly remember Diego with loops of dandelions encircling his neck, a crown of leaves propped on his curly hair. By fourth grade, we had outgrown those little-kid games—except for one





day, when we were lolling around in his backyard, unbelievably bored, until, almost automatically, I started knotting together a flower chain; Diego followed suit, and we slipped into our old routine, playing make-believe all afternoon.

We both pledged to never tell anyone, but the next day at recess, I got scared. I didn't trust him. When I saw Diego gesturing to me as he joked with a group of boys, I was certain his betrayal was inevitable.

I grew hot with embarrassment, dropped my jump rope, and dashed across the schoolyard, my heart bursting with the shame of having played make-believe like a baby, motivated by the blistering

thought that if Diego was about to ruin my reputation forever, I'd get ahead of him and destroy his.

"Diego takes dance classes!" I loudly announced to the group of boys.

All the laughter left Diego's face and instantly my heart sank. I'd promised not to tell that secret, and it was impossible not to perceive now, from the way no one was mocking me, that he hadn't divulged mine. A few of the boys started ribbing him about dancing, and Diego ducked his head and slinked off the playground. After that, I couldn't even look at him.

"I'm really sorry," I grovel to him now, almost choking on the words.

He asks, "For what?"



I blink at him. Is he serious? "For telling everyone you took dance."

"Oh, that?" He shrugs. "No one cares anymore. Honestly, I don't either."

"You're not mad?" I ask, dumbfounded.

"Nah," he says, waving me off.

"Then why aren't we friends anymore?" I demand.

It's his turn to look blank. "I thought you didn't want to be. You stopped talking to me."

"Diego, come on!" Ben bellows from the court.

Diego glances over his shoulder. "I gotta go," he tells me.

"I do want to be friends. I wrote a poem about it," I mutter.



Diego grins, then stoops down and plucks three flowers, pierces each stem with his thumbnail, threads the flowers together, and holds out the tiny chain.

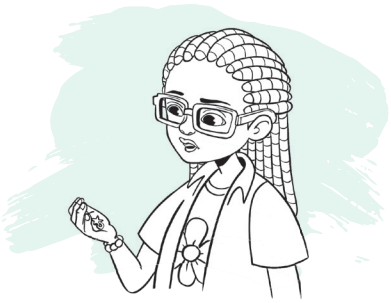
"Deal," he says before jogging back onto the court.

I loop the velvety petals over my ear and display them proudly on my walk home, pondering my discovery that while some friendships unravel without warning, some can also be woven back together.

Back on my front lawn, I catch a glimpse of something white fluttering from a low branch of the dogwood tree; when I grab it, I immediately recognize the torn-off corner of a page from my journal.

For a breathless moment, I wonder if I'll





find the whole journal nearby. I stalk a circle around the tree. Nothing.

Then I spot something glinting in the sun. Nestled in a clump of grass near the dogwood is a glittering silver star, a charm from a necklace—and I know whose necklace it's from.

4

# SURPRISED

By the time I leave my house again, every apprehension that's been jangling around in my brain has solidified into pure, seething anger. My feet strike the sidewalk hard. Diego would have had a reason—but if Sophia filched my journal, what could be her motive except for cruelty?

Perfect Sophia. We're not friends and never have been; I only recognize the charm from her necklace because she's



been showing it off relentlessly at school. Her friends orbit around her and half the school acts as though she can do no wrong.

I'm half a block from where she lives when I see she is outside, predictably surrounded by her usual multitude of worshipful girls, proffering their undivided attention as Sophia babbles away about who-knows-what.

Sophia spots me, and at last, I get the reaction I've been waiting for: her jovial smile collapses, her words trail off, and a rosy bloom of panic passes over her face. My last sliver of doubt dissolves. I know—I *know*—that she's the one who robbed me. But that's not the only question. Has she shown my journal to anyone else?



My answer arrives when the members of Sophia's clique peel their eyes off her and plant them on me. Three sets of eyes widen in shame; but the fourth girl, Alexis, smiles, revealing two deep dimples in her cheeks.

The strength I derived from my rush of righteous indignation wobbles a bit. I was prepared to confront Sophia, but I didn't expect to be outnumbered five to one. Plus, Alexis's simpering sneer is going nowhere fast.

I skirt around them, struggling to keep my chin up as I march forward, but it trembles when Alexis whispers something as I pass by: a line from the song I was playing yesterday. My skin gets clammy.





"Stop it," Sophia admonishes her in a hushed voice.

When Sophia's mom answers the door, she smiles, and her niceness makes me feel miserable about feeding her the lie that Sophia borrowed a book from me and that, when I spoke to her just now, she told me to go up into her room to get it. Sophia's mom buys it and sends me up.

A tangle of wrath and self-reproach washes over me as I push open Sophia's bedroom door. I've never seen such a flawless room. I'd hoped my journal would be left out somewhere, but the room is spotless, Sophia's desk so immaculate and polished, it shines. My hand hesitates over the drawer handle. I take a breath and pull.

No journal, only an organized stack of paper—with delicate pencil lines on the top page. Wispy curves, some impossibly subtle, others more defined. I pull out the pages and flick through them.

They're drawings. *Impressive* drawings. Each sketch looks unfinished until I notice the minute details—the shading beneath a fox's tail, the meticulous texture in a tree





trunk, the faint eraser marks where Sophia clearly started over.

"What are you doing?"

I whip around to see Sophia in the doorway.

I square my shoulders. "Looking for my journal," I say. "I know you took it."



Her face flushes again, but she's shaking her head as she reaches into her back pocket and reveals a folded piece of paper: a page from my journal!

She holds it out. "I think this is yours?"

I snatch it from her. "Where's the rest?"

"I just have this, I swear. It was caught in a tree branch. I didn't know whose it was."

"It was in front of *my* house!" I yell.

"I didn't know it was your house," she protests.

I realize I've crushed the page into a ball; my eyes are burning, but instead of letting myself cry, I grit my teeth.

"Then how do you know it's mine?" I demand. "How did Alexis know?"



"She knows your handwriting. You did a history project together, right?"

"Fine." I shove the wadded-up page into my pocket.

"Wait," Sophia says.

"What?" My voice sounds frosty and bitter, but my grip on the crumpled page eases; it strikes me as strange, the way a single piece of paper can make me feel as if I've been turned inside-out.

"How'd you learn to write like that?" she asks. "I didn't show my friends to make fun of you. I thought they'd like it. Your poem is so beautiful."

My anger is fading, and I hear myself say, "I don't know. Once I start, it's like it flows out of me. I'm starting to write songs

too, but that's harder. How'd you learn to draw like that?" I gesture to the stack of papers.

Fondly, she touches the top page, and I regret rifling through them; it probably makes her feel the same way I felt when I saw my journal page in her hand.

She picks up the drawing and studies it





as she answers, "I've always liked to draw, and now I take classes at the rec center. My friends don't know."

"Why not?" I ask.

"It feels personal, I guess?" Her nervousness is, frankly, astonishing; I never imagined that she'd be insecure about anything. "They don't do anything creative. They would *never* take a class in the summer."

I divulge another secret: "I'm taking guitar lessons."

A smile illuminates her face. "Can I hear you play sometime?"

"I'm not very good. Yet," I answer.

"I could teach you to draw and you could show me what you're learning on the



guitar," Sophia offers, and it feels like an olive branch.

I'm surprised when I hear myself agree.



5

# THE STRANGER

Mia and I are so busy comparing theories that I barely notice Elijah hollering from his driveway.

"Hey, Earth to April! Who's that girl who keeps hanging around?"

Mia nudges me and I look up, finally acknowledging Elijah from next door; he's practicing moves on his skateboard, attempting an ollie that does not go spectacularly well.

"Who is she?" he repeats from flat on



the ground.

Then he tries again. *Smack.* He topples onto the pavement once again.

"Who are you talking about?" I ask.

He enlightens us: "This girl keeps watching your house."

Mia and I exchange a look, then hasten over to Elijah's driveway, where Mia whips



out our detective notebook and commands, "Spill it."

She scribbles down everything he says: (1) the girl Elijah saw stalking around my house was about our age, tall and skinny; (2) he saw her yesterday while I was at the park and again today while I was occupied with interrogating Sophia; (3) she wears a black T-shirt and baggy white shorts.

Mia flips to our page of suspects, crosses off *Diego* and *Sophia,* pauses over the next line, and then writes *Mysteriosa.* "What do we do now?" she wonders.

"Let's ask my other neighbors. Maybe someone else has seen her," I suggest.

The first three houses feel like official detective work, but at the fourth, we



dissolve into giggles for no discernible reason, barely managing to settle down before knocking on the fifth door.

"That sounds like my daughter," the woman says after we describe *Mysteriosa.* "Hold on a moment."

Mia and I exchange a look of surprise.

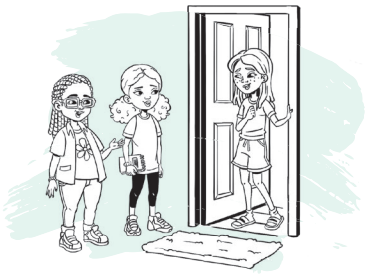
"These people are kind of new to the neighborhood, but I didn't think they had any kids." I speculate to Mia, "She must be lonely."

"Don't go soft on me now, Farrow," Mia scolds. "We've almost cracked the case!"

"I won't," I promise.

But even Mia melts when a girl sidles hesitantly up to the door, looking more like a bashful kitten than a thief, her wide





brown eyes skittering between Mia and me.

"Hi. I think my neighbor saw you at my house," I say warmly, smiling as I point across the street. "Did you need something?"

"My mom told me there was a girl my age there." Her voice is so muted that it's barely audible. "I thought if we met,

maybe we could hang out."

"Sure!" I say. I remember her parents moving in a month ago, and try to think of a delicate way to inquire why she's spent an entire month in seclusion.

Mia is more blunt: "There are lots of kids around here. Why didn't you just come to the park or something?"

The girl drops her gaze. "No, it's OK," I say hastily, elbowing Mia. "Moving somewhere new is scary. What made you come over today?"

"I'm just so bored!" Her words tumble out so fast that we all start laughing, and then we introduce ourselves; the new girl's name is Harper. Now it feels weird to tell her why we're there, but Mia starts



elbowing *me*, so finally I relent and spring back into detective mode.

I ask her, "You didn't take anything from my porch, did you?"

Her forehead furrows. "No. Like what?"

"Never mind."

I shoot Mia a look that says, *Happy now?* She nods and suggests we all go swimming tomorrow. Seeing Harper's grin, I start to contemplate how many mysteries arise simply out of loneliness.



6

# TRENCH COATS

The next morning, Mia's mom informs me, with considerable skepticism, that Mia is tidying up her room. Upstairs, I find Mia picking up clothes.

"Welp," I say. "Three clues, three suspects, three motives—and we're zero for three. I think it's time to hang up our trench coats."

Mia chucks a sock into her laundry hamper. "Our what?"

"Trench coats. Like what detectives in



old movies wear," I say.

She freezes with a shirt in her hands. "You're giving up?"

I toss a pillow in the air and catch it. For some reason, I feel freer than I have since my journal first went missing. If it turns up, it turns up; if it doesn't, it doesn't. I do miss the precious thoughts I've lost, but I'll just have to start a new



one and be less careless with it this time.

I say, "Not every mystery can be solved. This one is hopeless. Maybe it's like that saying … what is it? If you love something, it'll come back to you?"

"How?" Mia inquires with a smirk. "Is your journal going to sprout wings?"

I'm about to snap back, but I just chuckle. I've been so fixated on lamenting about not having any real friends that I didn't realize *Mia* has been a real friend: helpful without requesting anything in return. I hug her, grateful when she doesn't resist.

"Thank you," I say.

She smiles. "It's been fun. You're … cooler than I thought you were."



Should I be offended or flattered? I settle for a *humph*, which makes her laugh.

"Well, you are too." To be truthful, I always thought she was cool, but I'm not telling *her* that.

* * *

Back at home, I pause on the path to our porch, listening to Dad's music blasting inside.

"April!" Mrs. Temple pokes her head out the window. "Hold on a minute."

A moment later, she steps outside, a book in her hand. "I forgot I had this."

It's. My. Journal. Relief weakens my body until my knees almost buckle.

She says, "It must have blown into my yard. I found it while I was gardening.



I knocked on the door, but Skinny must not have heard me. No surprise with that racket!"

The muddy footprint—Mrs. Temple's garden—the page caught in the tree—the gusty wind. As the pieces finally settle into place, I comprehend how hastily I let fear and suspicion convince me that someone wanted to hurt me; the simple answer had been there all along.

When I've got my journal again, I clutch it tightly to my chest. Mrs. Temple says, "Oh, my goodness. You were worried! I'm so sorry."

But my journal doesn't feel as crucial as it did yesterday. Two days ago, I thought I had no genuine friends. Somewhere





between chasing clues and accusing the wrong people, I made four. Are they *real* friends? Mia is. Diego could be again. Sophia is different than I thought. And Harper? I don't know yet, but possibly someday.

"It's OK, Mrs. Temple," I say. "Looking for it helped me find something even better."

Kwame Alexander's

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