



THE BOOK AND BEYOND:

An educator's guide for exploring children's and YA literature



Title:

Author(s):

Illustrator(s):

The aim of The Book and Beyond is to inspire an interest and passion for books and reading. This section is for your thoughts, questions and notes about different aspects of the book and to consider how you might frame discussion with students.

The book

Physical object

The hardback edition is a standard A5 size and middle weight with standard paper that is soft, vanilla and musty.

Design & cover

The cover has a large area of white blank space with a male basketballer in photo-like silhouette. The title appears in contrast, bright orange on black, vertically down his body. The ball balanced on his finger is made up of text from a poem in the book, which creates the movement and lines of a basketball. The ball (and finger) is repeated, but in close up, on the back cover showing the interplay of words/colour as the ball.

Illustration

Illustrations are used throughout the book as titles of each section. Basic line images of circles, dots and lines show associated basketball movements or game segments that connect to the title/structure eg 'Warm up, First Quarter, ...Overtime'. It is a clever structure that poignantly highlights the significance of 'Overtime' at the end of the book, and how the characters have changed from 'Warm up'.

Characters

Identical 12 year old twins Josh and Jordon (JB) share a passion for basketball and are confident, talented players, but strive to be different from each other. Story told from Josh's point of view—he worries and is determined, focussed on the game, fiery on court and sometimes off it too. We don't learn much about JB's thoughts. Mum is an assistant principal, Dad a former professional basketball player. Loving parents.

Plot

The story develops along with the season/year of basketball/school life. The challenge is for Josh and the team to be the greatest; encouraged and supported by their Dad, and dealing with the legacy of his basketball success. Internally Josh is dealing with strong emotions, relationships, mistakes, expectations—his and others—and the changes and challenges that come with becoming a teen and growing up.

Setting

Set in the present day in a small anonymous un-named town in the US. This helps focus the story on the school, the close knit African-American community and family, and the basketball court action, contributing to a universal feel/appeal for a reader/listener.

Theme & message

The main theme explores family life; brotherhood, love and loyalty, and identity. It also touches gently on messages about:

- success in sport—talent, practice and pressure
- loneliness and loss/grief
- atonement and forgiveness—rupture and repair
- health

Language

Rap poetry techniques—strong rhythm, rhyme, a theme and use of colloquial language and dialect. This combined with wordplay creates appeal and pace, contributes to Josh's identity, the theme and feelings. A range of poetry forms or types help create the rhythm and mood of the book such as rap, list poems, rule poems, free verse, rhyming couplets and conversation poems.

Mood & feeling

The use of rhythm and pace of the poetry contributes greatly to the upbeat, often fast and bouncy feeling and pace, as do Josh and JB's dialogue, and the suspense and speed of the basketball games. The story builds to a tragic climax and bittersweet, sad ending. You feel carried along by the changing mood and pace.

Genre & format

This is a novel in verse (aka verse novel)—every page is a poem or part of a poem. The poems work together to weave the story. It also fits into a description of 'middle grade' fiction. Is it also a sports book? Is that the Crossover too?

The inquiry

Rich question(s)

This section is for creating and exploring questions that might guide an overall inquiry for a particular book. These questions might be inspired by ideas in the book section and/or personal responses and/or the NZ Curriculum and/or available resources.

Why do humans play games? What makes a good or great game?

Crossover is a basketball term and in the book also relates to physical and emotional boundaries. Why do we need boundaries in relationships with family and friends?



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Make connections

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Personal

Explore

What's in a name? Explore the idea of nicknames with students. Do they have a nickname? Would they like a nickname? Are there times when nicknames are great—or not? Collect as a group the positive names.

Create/write/illustrate

This provides a great way to introduce and explore poetry with students. Use the book to find and list interesting, dramatic words and images.

Or, create your own list from a favourite sport or activity then develop this into a ball shape or other shape poem. Use the basketball cover image art as a prompt/frame.

Read more

● Read the next in the series

The next in the series is *Rebound* a prequel to *The Crossover* and features Josh and Jordan's Dad—Chuck as a young basketball star.

● Read another book by the same author

Booked; The Undefeated, illustrated by Kadir Nelson (non-fiction picture book, winner of 2020 Caldecott medal); *How to Read a Book* by Alexander Kwame illustrated by Melissa Sweet (an illustrated poem as a picture book) *The Crossover*, illustrated by Dawud Anyabuike (graphic novel edition)

● Read another book with the same idea/topic/ genre

Check out a non-fiction basketball book or Kwame's *The Playbook: 52 Rules to Aim, Shoot and Score in the Game called Life*. A collection of inspiration from famous figures, their story and images. Or for a similar genre try *Love that dog* by Sharon Creech

● Listen to an audio version of the book

There is an audio version. This is available in the National Library Print Disability Collection, which you may be able to borrow if students can't use our print resources. Visit <https://natlib.govt.nz/collections/a-z/print-disabilities-collection> for information on how to access this collection.

Social (Share your experience)

Read aloud/Perform

This is a book that demands to be read aloud with poems that use rhyme, rhythm and rap with sound effects. Encourage students to find poems, choose their favourites to read aloud and perform in pairs or groups. Give them time and tips for using pause, pace, volume and expression to bring them to life.

Good examples to show first:

- 'Dribbling' (p3)
- 'Filthy McNasty' (p10)
- 'At the End of the Warm ups' (p24)
- 'Ode to my Hair' (p33)

What connections can you make to yourself, other texts, the world?

Text to self

Can be a prompt to think and talk about:

- What are your strengths?
- What activities do you really love?
- Who are important people in your life?

Text to text

Text to world

NZ Curriculum

This section is intended as a prompt for thinking about how the book might relate to the NZ Curriculum. For example, is it a story about cultural diversity? What language, symbols and text tell the story?

Learning areas		Principles		Values		Key Competencies	
● English	○ Maths & Statistics	○ High expectations	○ Future focus	● Excellence	● Community & participation	● Thinking	● Relating to others
● The Arts	○ Science	○ Treaty of Waitangi	● Learning to learn	○ Innovation, inquiry, curiosity	○ Ecological sustainability	● Using language, symbols & text	○ Participating & contributing
● Health & PE	○ Social Sciences	○ Cultural diversity	○ Community engagement	● Diversity	● Integrity	● Managing self	
○ Languages	○ Technology	● Inclusion		● Equity			