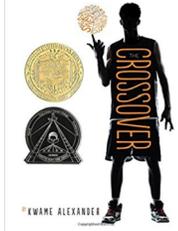


Books by the Stack

The Crossover by Kwame Alexander



"With a bolt of lightning on my kicks . . . The court is SIZZLING. My sweat is DRIZZLING. Stop all that quivering. Cuz tonight I'm delivering," announces dread-locked, 12-year old Josh Bell. He and his twin brother Jordan are awesome on the court. But Josh has more than basketball in his blood, he's got mad beats, too. Josh and Jordan must come to grips with growing up on and off the court to realize breaking the rules comes at a terrible price, as their story's heart-stopping climax proves a game-changer for the entire family.

Why you'll like it: Family, basketball, hip-hop

About the Author: Kwame Alexander is a poet, children's book author, playwright, producer, speaker, and performer. His books include *And Then You Know: New and Selected Poems*, *Crush: Love Poems*, *Family Pictures: Poems and Photographs Celebrating Our Loved Ones*, and *Acoustic Rooster and His Barnyard Band*. He won the 2015 John Newbery Medal for his bestselling novel *The Crossover*. Since 2006, his Book-in-a-Day writing and publishing program has created more than 2500 student authors in 50 schools across the U.S., and in Canada and the Caribbean.

Questions for Discussion

1. Josh has many identities in this book – son, brother, basketball players, poet, and friend. At times he likes his nickname “Filthy McNasty,” but at other times he wants to be called “Josh.” How is Josh different from “Filthy McNasty”? Is either personality dominant?
2. Mr. Bell’s advice to his sons comes through in several places, but particularly in all of the Basketball Rules. How do the rules connect to the characters in the book? How do they connect to your family?
3. Teens are often accused of caring only for themselves. How does Josh both fit and go against that stereotype? In what ways are teenagers and their worlds more complex than adults give them credit for?
4. How does each parent shape Josh’s values, concerns, interests, etc? How does his brother?
5. In thinking of siblings or even good friends, how do brothers and sisters (or friends) both challenge us to be more than we are and also keep us in our place?
6. How does Mr. Bell’s health struggle affect the family in both direct and subtle ways?
7. How do extracurricular/outside of school activities create possibilities for growth as well as challenges we must learn to overcome? How do these areas of growth and challenge affect the characters in the book?
8. Josh encounters many types of loss throughout the book, and in the final section, “Overtime,” Josh struggles with his most painful loss. How does he process the conflicting emotions that come with each loss?
9. Kwame Alexander said the following in an interview with ESPN's TrueHoop TV: “The idea is that you want to win but you want to do it in such a beautiful way. You don’t just want to win. You want to win with

wit, with cleverness, with magic...That energy is such an important part of basketball, that SWISH, that DRIZZLE, that CROSSOVER.” Some people might initially label this as a sports book, but the book goes beyond the label. How is this book about much more than basketball? How does the book also connect to the beauty, wit, swish, and drizzle of life?

10. Kwame Alexander writes the novel in verse. How does using poetry – many different kinds of poetry – affect the story and its readers?

11. Vocabulary poems appear throughout the book. How do these reinforce significant moments in the book? How do the rules apply to life?

12. The book includes many references to jazz and hip hop. How does bringing in the different types of music add to the story and the characters?

13. The book presents an opportunity to consider forgiveness and the righting of wrongs with siblings, parents, friends, and perhaps more difficult, ourselves. What are the challenges and benefits in doing so?

14. What can a variety of audiences gain from reading books written for children and young adults?



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