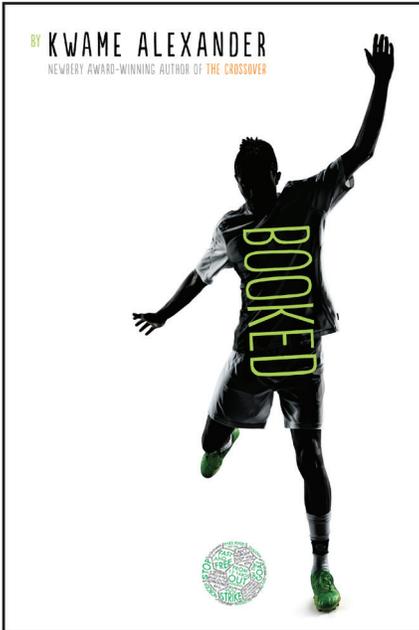


BOOKED

BY KWAME ALEXANDER



978-0-544-57098-6

About the Book

Twelve-year-old Nick is a soccer-loving boy who absolutely hates books. In this follow-up to the Newbery-winning novel *The Crossover*, soccer, family, love, and friendship take center stage as Nick tries to figure out how to navigate his parents' divorce, stand up to a bully, and impress the girl of his dreams. These challenges — which seem even harder than scoring a tie-breaking, game-winning goal — change his life. This energetic novel-in-verse by the poet Kwame Alexander captures all the thrills and setbacks, the action and emotion of a World Cup match!

About the Author

Kwame Alexander is a poet, children's book author, playwright, producer, public speaker, performer, and winner of the 2015 Newbery Medal for his novel-in-verse, *The Crossover*. Alexander believes that poetry can change the world, and he uses it to inspire and empower young people. He lives with his wife and daughter in the Washington, D.C., area. Visit his websites at www.kwamealexander.com and bookinaday.org.

Discussion Questions

As students read or listen to *Booked*, invite them to consider the relationships, conflicts, and surprises in the story. Ask open-ended questions that motivate them to dig deep and challenge them to find poems or passages that support their opinions or analysis. Possible discussion questions include:

- How do Nick and Coby keep their friendship strong while playing on competing soccer teams?
- Why is soccer so important to Nick?
- How does Nick handle the tension between his parents?
- Why do you think dragonflies are mentioned many times throughout the book?
- What is the role of family meetings and therapy (with a doctor) in the story?
- How does Nick's stay in the hospital change things?
- Why doesn't Nick like to read? What changes his mind?
- What can you do when a good friend is making a racist joke? (For example, see p. 191.)
- What is "limerence" and why is it such an important word in this story? (See pp.119–120, 121, 128, 289–290)
- What do you think was in the "Key to Freedom" box that Mr. Mac gave to Nick? Why do you think that?

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1; RL.6.1; RL.6.3; RL.7.1)

Vocabulary

As a linguistics professor, Nick's dad requires Nick to read an adult dictionary from cover to cover to expand his vocabulary, much to Nick's dismay. Talk

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about how Nick's use of "big words" is portrayed in the story and how it becomes important to him. Then highlight the author's use of footnotes to introduce key words. Discuss the role of footnotes in text and the format of these footnotes, i.e., featuring actual definitions followed by Nick's more playful or sarcastic definitions. Which of these words are new to students? Talk about these (and any other new words encountered) and challenge students to use them in the coming days. When they do, invite fellow students to acknowledge the new vocabulary by hollering, "booked!" Vocabulary words showcased in the footnotes include:

- verbomania p. 4
- malapropism p. 18
- pugilism p. 40
- futsal p. 44
- cachinnate p. 54
- mewling p. 70
- ragabash p. 81
- codswallop p. 84
- logorrhea p. 102
- flummoxed p. 119
- onomatophobia p. 121
- farrow p. 134
- sweven p. 144
- nutmeg p. 183
- rapprochement p. 215
- stupefy p. 220
- twain p. 248
- callipygous p. 259
- impossible p. 268
- hellkite p. 272
- gadfly p. 288
- wordbound p. 294
- yobbery p. 296
- zazzy p. 300

This is also a great opportunity to talk about dictionaries (print or online) and what they offer, and provide quick mini-lessons on searching, key words, etymologies, etc. Two helpful online dictionaries include:

www.merriam-webster.com
dictionary.reference.com

Ready-made lesson plans are also available from the National Council of Teachers of English at Read-WriteThink.org.

(CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RL.5.1; RL.5.4; RL.6.1; RL.6.4; RL.7.1; RL.7.4; SL.5.1d; SL.6.1d; L.5.4.C; L.6.4.C; L.7.4.C)

Malapropisms

In addition to introducing new vocabulary and highlighting the dictionary as a resource, the author has fun with words and wordplay, particularly in introducing malapropisms. Talk about what malapropisms are and challenge students to identify examples of them in *Booked*. There are many, beginning with the poem "Busted" (pp. 17–18). Talk about them and how they add humor to the story.

Look to the Grammarly Blog for more examples of common malapropisms heard all the time (www.grammarly.com/blog/2015/8-embarrassing-yet-common-malapropisms/) and invite students to share further examples they read or hear outside of school. Create a collaborative chart with two columns to collect them all—with one column for the misused word or phrase (e.g., could of) and the other column for the correct use (e.g., could have). Keep adding to it all year long!

Forms of Poetry

Since this is a novel in verse, every page of the book is a poem (or part of a poem). Students may be surprised to learn, however, that the poet has used several different forms of poetry throughout the book. See if the students can identify any particular forms of poetry first and then challenge them to find examples of each of these forms in the book. Talk about each poem, how each one is composed and arranged, and why the author might have chosen that particular form for that moment in the story. Some forms include the following:

- acrostic (the first letter of each line of the poem spells a word vertically; e.g., p. 116)
- blackout (all the words and letters of a page are blacked out except those letters that make up the

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- poem; e.g., p. 80)
- free verse (not rhyming, but rhythmic poem; e.g., p. 91)
- blackjack (three-line poems with seven syllables in each line for a total of twenty-one syllables; e.g., p. 72)
- epistolary (poem written in the form of a letter; e.g., p. 32)
- couplet (two rhyming lines with the same meter; e.g., p. 245)
- tercet (any three lines of poetry, as a stanza or poem, rhymed or unrhymed, metered or un-metered; e.g., p. 11)
- quatrain (a stanza or poem in four lines, usually with alternating rhyme; e.g., pp. 86-87)
- spine (poem built from the titles of books as they appear on the books's spines; e.g., p. 244)
- borrowed (poems that allude to previous poems or famous works; e.g., p. 269)
- list (poem made from seemingly unconnected things arranged in list form; e.g., p. 148)

In addition, students may enjoy exploring the poem as a daydream or wish fulfillment in "Stand Up" (pp. 105–106) and "Do-Over" (p. 109). Here the author uses the poem to express what Nick wishes he could say or do, rather than what actually happened. Students may enjoy rewriting a life moment by creating a poem in this way. After you've worked together to explore these different forms and have read and discussed examples from the book, challenge students to choose one of these forms and write their own poems (alone or with a partner).

(CCSS.ELA-Literacy RL.5.1; RL.5.5; RL.6.1; RL.6.5; RL.7.1; RL.7.5; W.5.3; W.6.3; W.7.3)

More about the Poetry

Challenge students to find the title of the book (*Booked*) within the poems in the book (e.g., "Booked" pp. 192–194, "Conversation with Coby" pp. 210–211, "Text to Coby" pp. 257–258). Talk about the title of the book and why the author might have chosen that word for the title. Consider the multiple meanings of

the word (in playing soccer, in being committed, in reading books).

Talk about how the poet uses the titles for each poem. If you read only the titles, what do you surmise about the story (before or after reading the book)? Try it! Read the book aloud as a group with the titles only by passing the book around the class. How do the titles alone set the stage or move the story along? Many of the poems also use graphic elements for a distinctive effect. Work with students to identify the poems that use font size, boldface, or italics in distinctive ways (e.g., pp. 125 and 126–127). Why does the poet do that? What emotion might this convey? How does that make you read the poem differently?

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7)

Another distinctive feature of this book is the use of italics within a poem to indicate that someone is speaking (besides the narrator). This creates dialogue within the poem that can be very effective when read aloud. Try a readers theater performance so that students can get a sense of the characters' voices. Select poems with two parts: plain text and italicized text for two volunteers or two groups to read aloud in turn. Then talk about how that helps us understand the poem and the points of view better.

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6; RL.6.6; RL.6.7; RL.7.6; RL.7.7)

Words of Wisdom

Several characters offer Nick advice along the way. Challenge students to identify a line, phrase, or passage that is pivotal to the story or meaningful to them and talk about why. Possible examples include:

- "The world is an infinite sea of endless possibility." (p. 271)
- "What would you do if you weren't afraid?" (p. 295)

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- “The only fight you really have to win is / the one against the fear.” (p. 296)
- “Nick, the river is always turning and bending. You never / know where it’s going to go and where you’ll wind up. Fol- / low the bend.” (p. 301)
- “Stay on your own path. Don’t let anyone deter you.” (p. 301)
- “It feels good to run toward / something, and not away.” (p. 304)
- “(Fight the fear, Nick.)” / (You got this, Nick.)” (p. 310)

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2; RL.6.2; RL.7.2)

I Have a Dream

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech is mentioned in the story. Talk about why this might have been included in the book. For students who are not familiar with this historic speech, share these resources:

Text available at the National Archives site:
www.archives.gov/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf

Video of Dr. King’s speech available on TeacherTube:
www.teachertube.com/video/i-have-a-dream-speech-20916

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6)

Etiquette

Nick also attends an extracurricular class on social skills with Miss Quattlebaum as the instructor. Here the focus is on learning good manners, proper etiquette, and dance lessons. Invite students who have attended similar classes to share their experiences. What did they learn? How was it helpful? If time allows, role-play social situations and talk about appropriate behaviors (shaking hands, making introductions, etc.). Investigate the availability of similar

classes for students in your own area through local scouting organizations, church groups, or community centers. National organizations with local and regional classes include:

www.nljc.com/junior_cotillion.html
 The National League of Junior Cotillions

www.cotillion.com
 JDW Social Education programs

Cast of Characters

Names, nicknames, and name derivations are an important part of this story. In one instance, for example, Nick cleverly deflects a bully by his taunts regarding the boy’s name. Mr. Mac names his car and even a special dragonfly box. Talk about the names of each of the major characters and speculate about the significance of each.

- Nick (Nicholas, Nicky), the protagonist
- Coby, his best friend
- April, his girl crush
- Mr. MacDonald, (Mr. Mac), school librarian
- Ms. Hardwick, Honors English teacher
- Dean and Don Eggleston, twins and bullies

Challenge students to find out the derivation and story behind their own names or nicknames. Possible sources for examining naming derivations and trends include:

- BabyNames.com
- Parents.com/baby-names
- Babble.com/baby-names

(CCSS.ELA-Literacy RL.5.1; RL.6.1; RL.7.1; SL.5.1d; SL.6.1d)

Sports and Games

Sports are an essential element woven throughout this book with soccer at the heart, but many other sports and games are also referenced. For example, as a competitive soccer player, Nick mentions FIFA, the World Cup, and the Dr Pepper Dallas Cup. Talk about the game of soccer and how the poet describes it in these poems. For students who are less familiar with

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the game, work together to research the governing body for all soccer teams and tournaments, FIFA, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA.com), the World Cup soccer championship games held around the world, and the Dr Pepper Dallas Cup (DallasCup.com), the oldest and most prestigious international youth soccer tournament in the United States held annually in Dallas, Texas. Other sports and games referenced in *Booked* include:

- futsal
- Xbox and video games
- blackjack
- Ping-Pong
- horse racing
- football (and the Super Bowl)
- dancing
- swimming
- bicycling
- boxing
- taekwon do

Survey students about their favorite sports and games and talk about their experiences with these activities. Which have they tried? Which would they like to try? What are the key components of each activity (equipment, practice, competitions, etc.)? Challenge them to select their favorite sport or game for a future poem-writing activity.

Reading, Books, and Book Clubs

Nick gradually comes to read books that he enjoys and participates in the “Nerds & Words Book Club.” Talk about any of the books that his book club (and English class) read and discussed that students might also be familiar with, including:

- *Huckleberry Finn*
- *Tuck Everlasting*
- *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*
- *All the Broken Pieces*
- *Out of the Dust*
- *Locomotion*
- And several woven together in a spine/found poem, “Books You Find on Google” (p. 244)

Create a display for students to recommend their own favorite books and see if there is interest in creating your own book club, if one isn’t already available. If students are interested in reading more novels in verse like *Booked*, direct them to Kwame Alexander’s previous book, *The Crossover*, and challenge them to make some comparisons between the two (e.g., the book covers, the sports featured, the protagonists, the parents, the poem forms, etc.). For even more novels in verse to connect with *Booked*, consider these:

- Adoff, Jaime. 2005. *Jimi & Me*. New York: Hyperion.
- Adoff, Jaime. 2008. *The Death of Jayson Porter*. New York: Jump at the Sun/Hyperion.
- Applegate, Katherine. 2008. *Home of the Brave*. New York: Square Fish.
- Burg, Ann. 2009. *All the Broken Pieces*. New York: Scholastic.
- Creech, Sharon. 2001. *Love That Dog*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Creech, Sharon. 2008. *Hate That Cat*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Crisler, Curtis. 2007. *Tough Boy Sonatas*. Honesdale, Penn: Wordsong/Boyd’s Mills.
- Frost, Helen. 2003. *Keesha’s House*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Frost, Helen. 2011. *Hidden*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Glenn, Mel. 1997. *Jump Ball: A Basketball Season in Poems*. New York: Lodestar Books/Dutton.
- Grimes, Nikki. 2002. *Bronx Masquerade*. New York: Dial.
- Grimes, Nikki. 2011. *Planet Middle School*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Hesse, Karen. 1997. *Out of the Dust*. New York: Scholastic.
- Holt, K. A. 2014. *Rhyme Schemer*. San Francisco: Chronicle.
- Koertge, Ron, 2003. *Shakespeare Bats Cleanup*. Somerville, Mass: Candlewick.
- Koertge, Ron. 2010. *Shakespeare Makes the Playoffs*. Somerville, Mass: Candlewick.
- McCall, Guadalupe Garcia. 2011. *Under the Mesquite*. New York: Lee & Low.

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- Rose, Caroline Starr. 2012. *May B*. New York: Random House.
- Smith, Hope Anita. 2003. *The Way a Door Closes*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Smith, Hope Anita. 2008. *Keeping the Night Watch*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Soto, Gary. 2002. *Fearless Fernie: Hanging Out with Fernie & Me*. New York: Putnam.
- Soto, Gary. 2005. *Worlds Apart: Fernie and Me*. New York: Putnam.
- Woodson, Jacqueline. 2003. *Locomotion*. New York: Putnam.
- Woodson, Jacqueline. 2014. *Brown Girl Dreaming*. New York: Nancy Paulsen Books/Penguin.
- Zimmer, Tracie Vaughn. 2008. *42 Miles*. New York: Clarion.

(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.9; RL.6.9; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1; SL.6.1; SL.7.1)

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