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Minecraft: The Crash

An Official Minecraft Novel

by Tracey Baptiste

Del Rey | HC | 978-0-399-18066-8 | 288 pages | \$17.99/\$23.99 Can.

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Reading Level: 5



about the book

The brand-new official *Minecraft* novel is an action-packed thriller! When a new virtual-reality version of the game brings her dreams—and doubts—to life, one player must face her fears

Bianca has never been good at following the plan. She's more of an act-now, deal-with-the-consequences-later kind of person. But consequences can't be put off forever, as Bianca learns when she and her best friend, Lonnie, are in a terrible car crash.

Waking up in the hospital, almost paralyzed by her injuries, Bianca is faced with questions she's not equipped to answer. She chooses instead to try a new virtual-reality version of *Minecraft* that responds to her every wish, giving her control over a world at the very moment she thought she'd lost it. As she explores this new realm, she encounters a mute, glitching avatar she believes to be Lonnie. Bianca teams up with Esme and Anton, two kids who are also playing on the hospital server, to save her friend.

But the road to recovery isn't without its own dangers. The kids are swarmed by mobs seemingly generated by their fears and insecurities, and now Bianca must deal with the uncertainties that have been plaguing her: Is Lonnie really in the game? And can Bianca help him return to reality?

about the author

Tracey Baptiste is the author of several works of fiction and nonfiction for children, including the Jumbies series and *The Totally Gross History of Ancient Egypt*. Ms. Baptiste volunteers with We Need Diverse Books, The Brown Bookshelf, and I Too Arts Collective. She teaches in Lesley University's creative writing MFA program and runs the editorial company Fairy Godfather.

note to the teacher

Minecraft: The Crash, is a novel with highly engaging content for upper elementary and middle school students (Grades 5–8). The artful design of the storyline incorporates science phenomenon within a fictional setting and teaches numerous

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life lessons. *Minecraft: The Crash* is appropriate for interdisciplinary instruction among language arts, science, and technology classrooms or for character-building instruction in a middle school advisory setting. It can easily serve as a vehicle for STEM instruction within a middle school science classroom while affording science teachers an opportunity to promote reading outside of the traditional textbook.

Before Reading: The novel involves a serious car accident whereby a young driver perishes in the crash, and the main character is left to deal with both her lengthy recovery from injuries sustained in the accident and her guilt for distracting her friend, the driver, and contributing to the crash. Unfortunately, many of our students have experiences with family and friends involved in serious car accidents. Before introducing the novel, you will want to warn students of the content and allow them to make arrangements for alternative readings or assignments should the topic be upsetting to them.

→ vocabulary acquisition and use

This guide provides ideas for the development of vocabulary, questions to use in class discussion, writing prompts, strategies to strengthen reading comprehension, and the application of key science concepts. Questions and activities are aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for language arts and where the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) also apply, the science standard is noted.

Encourage students as they are reading to ask themselves if they know what a word means and to employ strategies to figure it out if they don't know (e.g. context clues, illustrations, relationship among words in the phrase, cognates, using similar words in the sentence, etc.)

Use Marzano's research-based "6 Steps for Teaching Vocabulary" as students navigate their way through the novel. The strategy is appropriate for all grade levels and content areas. Employing deliberate instruction to develop students' vocabulary will accelerate learning for all students including English learners and reluctant readers. Implement these steps throughout the unit of study on *Minecraft: The Crash*. Consider clumping vocabulary words when chapters have fewer unfamiliar words for students (e.g. Chapters 8–11). For a detailed description and implementation hints for each of the six steps to support vocabulary development—description, restatement, non-linguistic representations, activities, student discussion, and games—visit: www.commlearnonline.com/files/Classroom-Tip-4-Marzano-Vocabulary-Game.pdf.

Encourage students to create their personalized word bank. Provide each student with a stack of paint chip cards from the hardware store and a simple key ring. Each new vocabulary word can be printed at the top of individual paint chip cards and the student can find synonyms, illustrations, and examples of the term and place one on each paint chip block below the new vocabulary word. Students can customize the key ring of vocabulary words to meet their individual needs and use the resource throughout reading, writing, and presenting ideas about the text. (Adapted from J. Serrvahalho, *Reading Strategies Book, Your Everything Guide to Developing Skilled Readers*, Heinemann Press, Portsmouth, NH, 2015)

CCSS-Literacy.L.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown or multiple-meaning words and phrased based upon grade level reading and content, choosing flexibility from a range of strategies.

CCSS-Literacy.L.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meaning.

CCSS-Literacy.L.6 Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when consider a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

→ key vocabulary words by chapter

CHAPTER 1: hindsight, hallmark, parameters, scrunched, defensive, bonder, chauffeur, smugly, revved, cornrows, lurched, A-frame, mottled, wobbled, renovation, condemned, swashbuckling, trapeze, stoke, nostalgia, chasm, proximity, evasive, fracture, splinter, fractals

CHAPTER 2: paralyzed, anesthesia, dissipated, extensive, vocalize, dribble, stabilized, hologram, blueprint, version, abysmal, concussion, hideous, IV, descended, , upstream, propped, *déjà vu*, flinched, blanched, stethoscope, sensation, molten, seared, consuming, torture, shard, smolder, tangled, communing, VR, configurations, mode, mods, goggles, wince, queued, disorienting, biome, spewed, noobs

CHAPTER 3: blocky, traumatized, overenthusiastic, uniformed, stiffened, adrenaline, bustling, plunger, dangled, vertigo, jumbotron, interface, avatar, syncs, realm, concede, portal, visualization, cringed, realm, spawned, pixelated, hesitant, disembodied, dwell, programmed, munching, scroll, nestled

CHAPTER 4: exhilaration, intoxicating, Technicolor, projections, optical illusion, dimensions, indicated, enticing, lumbered, muttering, throng, impressive, engage, obsidian, schematics, crisscrossing, pores, constrict, gall, mute, unsettling, diverting

CHAPTER 5: imminent, lag, gulf, peering, schematics, efficient, ambitions, dismissively, distracted, mannequin, homiest, stock-still, sarcastically, pixelated, dispatched, diagonal, torso, rotary, horde, animation, throng, intercepted, foes, gestured, recruiter, chemo, synapse

CHAPTER 6: lair, manipulated, nausea, gnarly, recited, cacti, TNT, mimicking, dud, treacherous, gauntlet, cascade, erupted, receded, zilch, uncluttered, remnants, permanent, suspiciously, biome, NPC, crucifix, interjected, conclusion, detonated, noncombative, surging, server, interjected, glitched, spawned

CHAPTER 7: whining, nuzzled, lean-to, skittered, hacked, dispatched, flanked, befriending, legendary, resilient, orbs, drily, nonissue, yacht, shiver, lurched, chasm, nanosecond, halt, mimicking, dramatically, hostile, circumvent

CHAPTER 8: cavernous, bounded, ledge, tactic, audible, illusion

CHAPTER 9: obliged, grudgingly, wield, volley, mutton, maim

CHAPTER 10: stronghold, nonchalant, paranoid, guffawed

CHAPTER 11: ominously, victorious, dissipated, pivoted

CHAPTER 12: mercenaries, elite, clambered, embankment, bluffed, lassoed, reminiscent, feverishly, miraculously, trudged, meticulously

CHAPTER 13: niggled, vortex, afro, contraption, golems, arsenal, trekked, vanquish, horde, corral, taiga, scrounge, copse, thicket, remotely, hunkered, smithereens, surged, anvil, scrapper, consistently, tangle, scoffed

CHAPTER 14: gauntlet, array, corralled, fortress, enthralled, digital, tundra, recon, foliage, paltry, demolition, shard, assemblage, mayhem

CHAPTER 15: crevice, ghouls, leaden, pneumatic

CHAPTER 16: Jumanji, melee, telepathy, suction, torso, shulker, undulating, vantage, teleport

CHAPTER 17: methodically, terrain, peninsula, potion, vials, bait, landscape, fire-retardant, decoy, pelted, flinched, scuffle

CHAPTER 18: momentum, warily, barrettes, distracting, physics, epic, collided, definitive, gaze, existence, tinkly, vibrant, satellite, flint, methodical, ignited

CHAPTER 19: ghastr, tentacles, singe, rivulet, microsecond, motes, periphery, conferring, barreled, flyby, strafing, protrusions, intertwined, enchanter, projectile, nonverbal, enchantment, comatose, distraction, maze, trampled, zigzag, craning, gesturing, milling, crouching, horde, grimaced, fray, dispatched, prey, huff, snarkily, deflected, resemblance

CHAPTER 20: vulnerable, literal, simultaneous, vented, seething, disdain, gravelly, silhouetted, grimace, retaliate, reciprocate, fortress, rivulet, execute, equivalent, snide, muck, winced, gaping, trugged, intimidating, logistical, protested, conserve, diva, immersive

CHAPTER 21: culinary, sustenance, flailing, intervene, unison, careening, stead, gibes, turrets, cavernous, elaborate, buttresses, crouching, colossal, dissuade, tapestries, immense, candelabra, successive, abrasive, stark, Gothic, misleading, deflating, variables, despondent, radiating, singe, trajectory, perspective, contorted, obliterated, mimicking, jinx, body-checked

CHAPTER 22: executing, coralling, evading, meticulous, incinerate, imminent, deflection, steely, momentarily, deflecting

CHAPTER 23: jostling, exasperated, curtly, ammunition, distract, lure, sliver, prow, furtive, clambered, stern, pulverized, scourge, pummeled, eradicate, perch, flailed, detonate, cascade

CHAPTER 24: char, despair, hurtled, hovered, annihilated, pleaded, welling, sniffled

CHAPTER 25: crawlspace, clambered, eerily, suffocating, klutzes, perimeter, latticework, audible, haphazard, stronghold, vicious, unrelenting, hideous, shish kebab, corralled, mesmerizing, synchronizing, reluctantly, curdle, vortex, stall

CHAPTER 26: propel, flailed, dislodge, tactics, oblivion, rendered, lunged, hollow, berth, surged, thwack, projectile, desperately, careened, distraction, shards, taunted, luring, sauntered, blot, salvation, maneuver, strafed

CHAPTER 27: cacophony, alter, corkscrew, preening, tsunami, heave, piteous, gesticulating, hubris, garish, simultaneously, insubstantial, stifled, retracted, exceptionally, distinguishable, antiseptics, squinted, unison, sheepishly, cascaded, tacking

→ reading strategies to introduce the novel and support readers

→ key ideas & details

CCSS-Literacy.RL.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Lonnie and Bianca endorse a strategy to level up in *Minecraft*, entitled “Prepare, Plan and Power Through.” How does their problem-solving compare with the scientific method and the engineering design processes? What do all three have in common and what are distinctive features of each? For examples of engineering design models visit pbskids.org/designsquad/pdf/parentseducators/DS_TG_DesignProcess.pdf for information on the Design Process. or view the video clip at www.teachengineering.org/k12engineering/designprocess.

NGSS Science and Engineering Practices: Constructing Explanations and Designing Solutions and ETS-1-4: Develop a model to generate data for iterative testing and modification of a proposed object, tool, or process such that an optimal design can be achieved.

Early in the novel (Chapters 2 and 3) there are indications Lonnie did not survive the crash. Find at least four examples from the text to support this idea. What evidence can you find later in the story as Bianca enters the virtual world of *Minecraft* to support the same idea? What is your claim, evidence, and reasoning to explain why Bianca refuses to accept these signs of Lonnie’s death?

A.J. appears in the novel on page 21 in pajamas that say “GAMER 4 LIFE” and a robe with glow-in-the-dark planets all over it. What is the significance of these details to the plot? Support your ideas with examples from several chapters of the novel and how these details provide evidence about A.J.’s connection to the other characters.

Several traps are designed and set within the game. What is the purpose of the traps? Do the characters in the novel benefit or not benefit from the presence of traps in the game? What is your

evidence? Try making your own trap door, activated by a pressure plate, at *Minecraft Education Edition* at education.minecraft.net/lessons/sensors.

NGSS PS2A: Forces and Motion: The motion of an object is determined by the sum of the forces acting on it. If the total force on the object is not zero, its motion will change. The greater the mass of the object, the greater the force needed to achieve the same change in motion.

→ integration of knowledge and ideas

CCSS-Literacy.RL.3 Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

As you read the novel, use a three-column organizer with the headers—facts, questions, and responses—to keep track of any uncertainties you have about the plot or characters. As you continue re-read a section or continue reading, make note of any additional information that answers your questions.

Choose one of the main characters—Bianca, Esme, Elon, or Anton—and create a character trait web. Under each character trait give an example from the text to demonstrate how the quality is described or demonstrated within the novel.

Bianca’s friendships with Anton and Esme develop over the course of the novel. How do Bianca’s feelings about each of the characters change as the game progresses? Find specific examples in the book to illustrate her range of emotions and behaviors as the friendships evolve.

CCSS-Literacy.RL.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meaning; analyze the effect of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

Research the meaning of the characters’ names: Elon, Bianca, Esme, and Anton. What do you think the author’s purpose is in selecting these names for the main characters? Do you think the author is sending any additional message about the group of friends based upon their names and other attributes? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

The author uses flashbacks several times throughout the story. Find two examples and cite evidence from the text indicating that the scene is describing events in the past. Why is the author using this technique? What clues did you use to determine it is a flashback?

CCSS-Literacy.RL.6 Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in the text.

Throughout the story Bianca faces challenges and reacts to each conflict differently. Find two specific instances of conflicts she faces and how differently she handles the conflict in each situation. Support your reasoning with evidence from the text.

Bianca makes many mistakes throughout the novel, some in the *Minecraft* world and others in real life. Describe three mistakes she makes and explain the life lessons she learns from each. Use supporting evidence from the text to defend your rationale. Provide a short title, similar to a “headline” or “bumper sticker,” that captures the essence of each lesson.

CCSS-Literacy.RI.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g. visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

The characters travel in and out of the *Minecraft* world and within several biomes within the *Minecraft* world. Create a timeline to document Bianca’s travel in and out of the game as well as between biomes and finally to the end of the game. Cite specific pages from the novel to support accuracy of the timeline.

text types and purposes

CCSS-Literacy.CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or text using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

The characters' emotions as they relate to their healthcare challenges and life circumstances seem to influence the challenges and monsters they meet *Minecraft*. What is the author telling us about defining our own fate? State your claim, evidence, and reasoning. Include specific examples from the text in your written response.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

Several biomes are mentioned throughout the novel including forest, tundra, desert, and taiga. Select one of the biomes that interests you to research. Does the novel accurately depict its features, biotic and abiotic? Is there a relationship between the hardship a biome imposes on the characters and how close that biome is to "the End" of the game? What is your claim, evidence, and reasoning? National Geographic YouTube Videos may help you begin your research.

NGSS-LS 2A: Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems: Predatory interactions may reduce the number of organisms or eliminate whole populations of organisms. Mutually beneficial interactions, in contrast, may become so interdependent that each organism requires the other for survival. Although the species involved in these competitive, predatory and mutually beneficial interactions vary across ecosystems, the patterns of interactions of organisms in their environments, both living, and nonliving are shared.

craft and structure

CCSS-Literacy.RL.5 Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

The mood of the novel is strikingly set in the first paragraph of Chapter 1. Identify the words or phrases responsible for communicating the mood. Suggest alternative vocabulary to preserve the mood set in the paragraph. Find two other paragraphs in the novel that demonstrate a dramatic shift in mood and provide evidence from the text to support your stance. How does the mood help you comprehend the story line and empathize with the character(s)?

A.J. has very few direct interactions with Bianca, but their relationship is important to the storyline. How does A.J. make Bianca feel and how would you describe their relationship? Use specific examples and evidence from the text to defend your answer.

On page 30, Bianca states, "It was like the goggles could almost read my mind," and Esme comments, "It syncs with your brainwaves or something, and reacts to your thinking." Each character is aware of this unique feature of the game. How does it manifest itself throughout the novel? Find examples from the text of the impact of the mind-body-game connection on each character. How does the game provide therapeutic benefits to the main characters? What is your evidence?

Bianca faces several conflicts with Lonnie, Anton, Esme, and even her own self throughout the novel. Find a place in the novel and identify a specific conflict you feel is significant to the plot and describe Bianca's actions before and after the conflict. Does her behavior reveal some complexity about her character? What is your evidence?

production and distribution of writing

CCSS-Literacy.W.6 Use technology including the Internet to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

Dr. Nay uses a hologram to show Bianca her injuries and her progress towards healing. Visit these websites and others to discover how 3D images and holograms are used in the field of medicine: www.nydailynews.com/newswires/entertainment/better-holograms-new-3-d-projection-thin-air-article-1.3776479 and education.minecraft.net/lessons/sensors. Write a summary to compare and contrast the current uses of virtual imaging with its medical application in the novel. Share your findings with your classmates.

The 3D goggles in the novel are described as being able to track the characters' thoughts and feelings. View a clip about similar technology under development at Massachusetts Institute of Technology: www.zdnet.com/article/mits-alterego-headset-reads-your-face-to-see-words-youre-only-saying-in-your-mind. With a team, write a commercial for marketing the product and capture your advertisement on video. Think creatively about ways this product may enhance a person's quality of life. How close is this technology to the goggles used by the characters in the novel? Could it be used in a similar fashion? What is your evidence?

related activities

NGSS-MSETS1-1: Define criteria and constraints of a design problem with sufficient precision to ensure a successful solution, taking into account relevant scientific principals and potential impacts on people and the natural environment that may limit possible solutions.

Learning the “Game” of Science: The players in the novel figured out the rules of the game by playing the game and using various problem-solving techniques. Select one of the game versions (Beta, Gamma, Delta, Psi, or Theta) from the “Game of Science” website (users.ipfw.edu/maloney/game_of_science.htm). You and your team will find a gameboard, playing pieces, and a brief history of the game as played by two players. Your job, like that of the players in the novel, is to figure out the rules and goal of the game.

resources

The Multiplayer Classroom: Designing Coursework as a Game by Lee Sheldon.

Gamify Your Classroom: A Field Guide to Game-Based Learning by Matthew Farber.

“Ideas for Using Minecraft in the Classroom”

www.edutopia.org/blog/minecraft-in-classroom-andrew-miller

“Classroom Management Tips for Teaching with Minecraft Edu”

education.minecraft.net/blog/classroom-management-tips-from-minecraft-mentors

Minecraft: Education Edition

Discover a platform specifically designed for educators and students to develop problem-solving and creativity in the classroom using *Minecraft*. education.minecraft.net

other works of interest

El Deafo by Cece Bell

Minecraft: The Island by Max Brooks

Nation by Terry Pratchett

A Long Walk to Water: Based on a True Story by Lindo Sue Park

— about this guide's writer

MARY ANNE BUTLER is currently the Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Stonington Public Schools in Stonington, Connecticut. She is a national presenter on science educators for the Bureau of Education and Research, Bellevue, Washington, and serves on the NCAA High School Review Committee. She holds a B.S. in Biology from Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, a J.D. from Western New England University School of Law, and a 6th Year Degree in Educational Leadership from Central Connecticut State University.



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