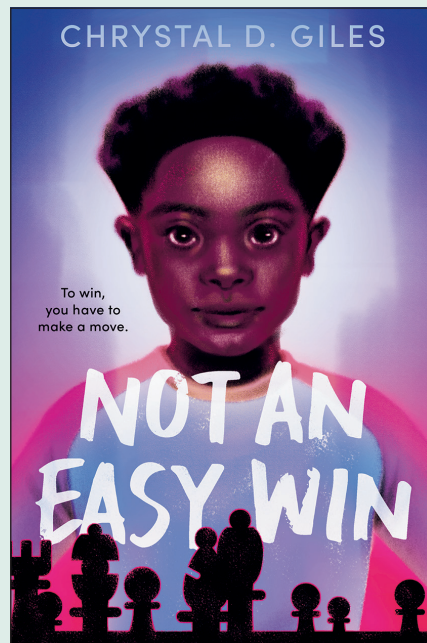
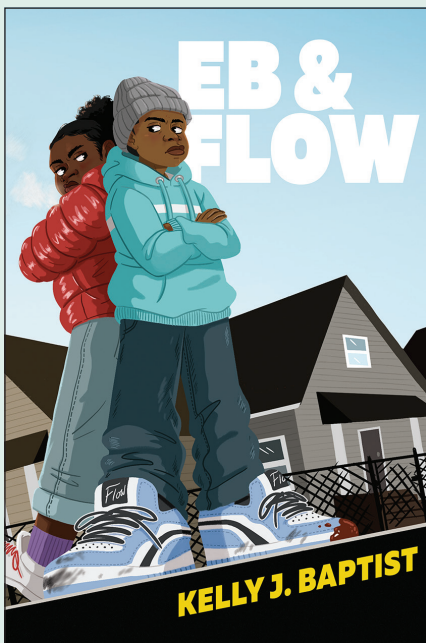
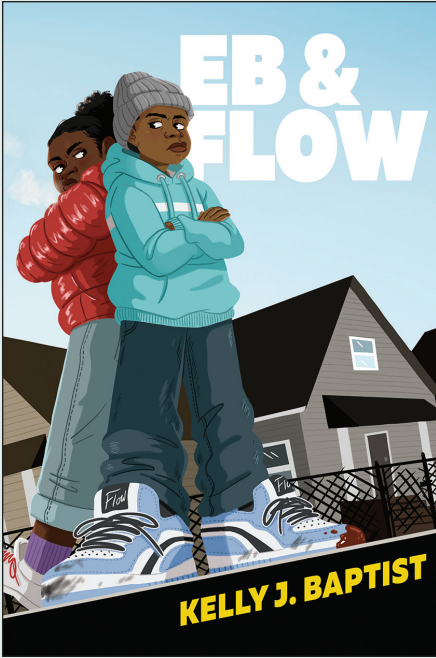




GRIPPING MIDDLE-GRADE

**Books for the middle-grade reader
who wants to see their experiences
reflected in stories**





EB & FLOW

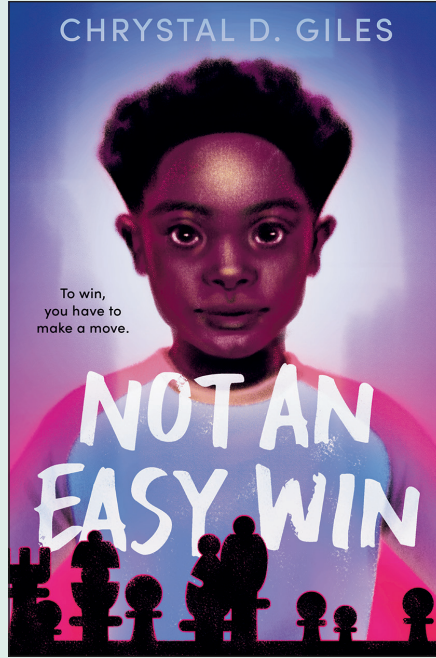
Kelly J. Baptist

HC: 978-0-593-42913-6

GLB: 978-0-593-42914-3

EL: 978-0-593-42915-0

Ages: 8-12



NOT AN EASY WIN

Chrystal D. Giles

HC: 978-0-593-17521-7

GLB: 978-0-593-17522-4

EL: 978-0-593-17523-1

Ages: 8-12



TURTLES OF THE MIDNIGHT MOON

María José Fitzgerald

HC: 978-0-593-48870-6

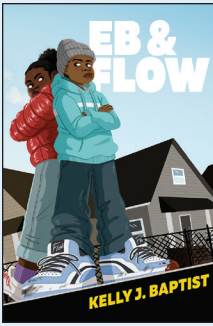
GLB: 978-0-593-48871-3

EL: 978-0-593-48872-0

Ages: 8-12

About this Guide

Middle-grade experiences are universal, which makes these stories wonderful tools to teach social-emotional lessons and provide windows and mirrors to lived experiences both past and present. These coming-of-age tales can help kids navigate unfamiliar and challenging situations by reminding them they are not alone. This guide provides discussion questions, prompts, and activity suggestions to facilitate insightful conversations about these books and their themes of self-discovery.



Eb & Flow

Kelly J. Baptist

Two kids. One fight. No one thinks they're wrong.

Ebony and De'Kari (aka Flow) do **not** get along. How could they when their cafeteria scuffle ended with De'Kari's ruined shoes, Ebony on the ground, and both with ten days of at-home suspension?

Themes: Poetry, Friendship, Growing Up, Forgiveness



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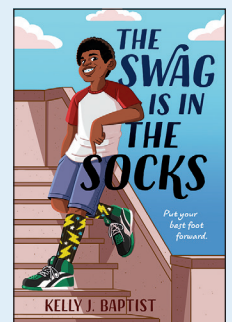
Discussion Questions

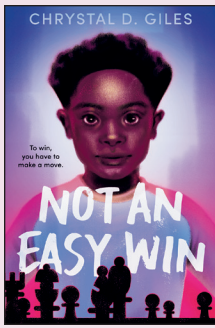
1. Look up the meaning of the phrase “ebb and flow.” What do you think the title of the book refers to besides the main characters’ names? What does the concept have to do with the relationship between the two main characters, Eb and Flow?
 2. Both Eb and Flow struggle to see each other’s perspective, but they actually have a lot in common. Throughout the book, there are moments where Eb and Flow are having a similar experience. What circumstances do they have in common? When do we see their actions or thoughts mirroring each other’s? Make a list of these similarities.
 3. One theme of the book is navigating challenging friendships. Which friendships are hard for Eb? Which friendships are hard for Flow? What role do their friends play in their conflict? Have you ever had a challenging friendship? How did you handle it?
 4. How does the use of social media and texting affect the situation between Eb and Flow?
 5. Grief, or the sorrow we feel when we lose someone or something we love, sometimes shows up as another feeling such as anger. Both Eb and Flow are grieving the absence of special people in their lives. How might this grief contribute to their conflict?
 6. Have you ever felt angry and then realized it was actually a different feeling such as sadness, loneliness, or hurt? How did you deal with that? What strategies worked for you?
 7. Mrs. Rashad asks Eb and Flow to write about kindness and respect. What do those words mean to you?
3. Apologizing can be hard. Write a text exchange between Eb and Flow where they each apologize for their role in the conflict. What might they have said earlier in the book to de-escalate their conflict?
 4. Research the effectiveness of school suspensions. What are the arguments that support suspension, and what are the arguments against it? Where do you see evidence for these arguments in the book? Do you think suspensions are effective? Write a persuasive essay that explains your opinion.
 5. The movement for restorative justice in schools aims to prevent long suspensions like Eb and Flow experienced. Proponents of restorative justice feel there are specific practices that help kids who make mistakes in school repair their relationships more effectively, while staying in school to learn. Research restorative justice. You can [read this article from Encyclopedia Britannica](#) or watch this [video from Chicago Public Schools](#). How might a restorative justice approach have applied to Eb and Flow’s situation? Would it have helped them resolve their conflict differently?

Activities

1. The pool becomes a place where Flow feels safe and happy. Draw a picture of a place where you feel safe and happy.
2. Turn a scene of the book into a play. Write the script. Consider whether you will use a narrator or additional dialogue and props to add detail. Feel free to take the scene further than what we see in the text.

More by Kelly J. Baptist





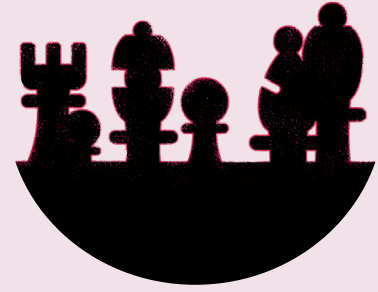
Not an Easy Win

Chrystal D. Giles

To win, you must make a move.

Twelve-year old Lawrence is new to chess. Can he figure out how to get on the board, even though the odds are stacked against him?

Themes: Racism & Prejudice, Perseverance, Contemporary Issues/Social Problems



HC: 978-0-593-17521-7
GLB: 978-0-593-17522-4
EL: 978-0-593-17523-1

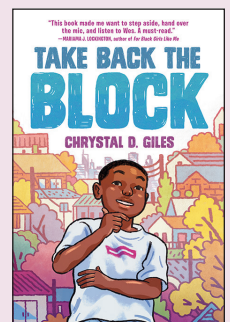
Discussion Questions

1. According to a government report, during the 2020–21 school year, 18.5 million American students, or more than a third, attended school with students of predominantly the same race or ethnicity as themselves. How diverse is your school? What is your experience like?
2. Consider sharing this [PBS Learning Media video](#) about the history of the Confederate flag with your class. Then discuss: How was the flag initially used; what it symbolizes today; and why you think Lawrence's grandmother views it as "pure evil"?
3. Even though Lawrence feels his fight with Deuce isn't his fault, Mr. Dennis and Twyla don't accept his reasoning. Do you agree that Lawrence should hold himself accountable for his actions? Why or why not?
4. Learning the complex rules of chess helps Lawrence see the importance of being strategic in other parts of his life. How does the game teach him to make better choices?
5. It turns out Lawrence and Deuce have a secret in common. What is it? How does it bring them together?
6. Lawrence and Nikko are excited to make a meal for their family and plan on Hamburger Helper because it reminds them of their father. What is a special food or meal that reminds you of someone you care about?
7. Lawrence discovers music helps him concentrate and feel confident during chess matches. What helps you feel focused in stressful situations?
8. Lawrence has a crush on Twyla, and Deuce pressures him to share how he feels. How does Twyla respond when he tells her? What happens next in their friendship? Do you think Lawrence should have said anything?
9. Booker T. Washington was an African American educator and presidential advisor who led the school that would become Tuskegee University, a historically black college in Alabama. At the end of the book, Lawrence plans to attend a charter school named after him with his new friends from the rec center. What do you think Lawrence's experience might be like at his new school?

Activities

1. The history of chess is full of child prodigies, young people who excelled at the game from an early age. Some have achieved the highest title of "grand master" at only twelve years old. Research chess grand masters. Create a poster, podcast, or video about one who inspires you.
2. In the beginning of the book, Lawrence attends Andrew Jackson Middle School. His sister and cousins attend Andrew Jackson Elementary. Andrew Jackson was the seventh president of the United States, and he has a controversial reputation. Research his personal and professional life. What is he remembered for, and how might that relate to events in the book? Write a report about your findings.
3. Lawrence and his family move in with Granny because they get evicted (p.10-11). What is eviction? Why do people get evicted? Check out the work of the [Eviction Lab](#), a team of researchers, students, and website architects who believe that a stable, affordable home is central to human flourishing and economic mobility. How might the eviction crisis be affecting your community? Write a letter to an elected official about this issue.
4. Granny says, "we fought for Black kids to go to school with white kids" (p. 142). Research the history of school segregation in the United States and in your local area. You might look at this timeline from [Teen Vogue](#), this [video from Crash Course](#), or contact your local historical society. What progress has been made? What still needs to happen?
5. Lawrence connects with Deuce through music. They both agree with Lawrence's dad, who said "music is freedom" (p. 185). How does music make you feel? Create a playlist of your favorite songs and share it with someone.

**Also by
Chrystal D. Giles**





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 EL: 978-0-593-48872-0

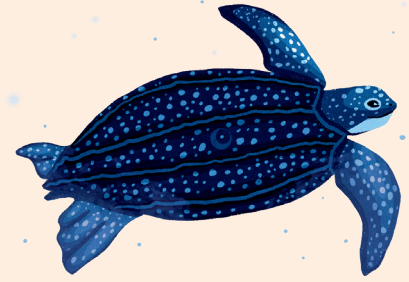
Turtles of the Midnight Moon

María José Fitzgerald

Be the wave of change.

When poachers threaten the island they love, two girls team up to save the turtles—and each other. An eco-mystery with an unforgettable friendship story at its heart from a fresh new voice in middle grade.

Themes: Ecology & Conservation, Animals, Friendship, Mystery & Suspense



Discussion Questions

1. Barana has a special connection to Luna and physically feels her presence through her scar. Abby also forms a connection with the sea turtle and can sense Luna through the small wooden sculpture left under her pillow. They don't always understand the magical relationship they share, but it has an impact on both girls. Have you ever had a special connection with an animal?
2. Abby describes her parents as having different "lenses" based on how much they have traveled (p. 88). Have you ever traveled somewhere outside of your comfort zone? If you have, how did it change your perspective? If you haven't, where might you like to go? How do you think it would change your perspective?
3. Throughout the book, Abby struggles to belong. Why might a trip that takes her far from home help her understand more about who she is and how she fits in?
4. During stressful times, Barana does breathing exercises to calm herself: "inhala, exhala." Have you ever tried breathing exercises, mindfulness, or meditation? What was your experience? If not, investigate each and try at least one.
5. Abby, Barana, and Tulu are all creative young people who express themselves through art. How does their art help them see the people and places around them in new ways? Are you a creative person? How does art help you express yourself? How does it help you see in new ways?
6. Abby forgets to ask before taking Barana's picture, which creates some friction between them. Have you ever been in this situation, either as the photographer or the subject? Why is it important to ask people before taking a photo or video of them?
7. As the mystery of the beach unravels, the villains and heroes are all mixed up together. Do you think it is possible to do a bad thing for a good reason? Under what circumstances?
8. At the end of the book, Abby decides to start letting go of her friendship with Fiana so she can focus on new friends and connections. Have you experienced changes in your friendships before? How did you handle the changes? What advice would you give to someone who is going through friendship changes?

Activities

1. Design a campaign to educate people about sea turtle conservation. Make posters, infographics, memes, or videos that share actions and resources suggested by the author.
2. La Moskitia/La Mosquitia is the coastal forest shared between Nicaragua and Honduras, and the real-life inspiration for the town of Pataya. Research this ecosystem and the efforts being made to protect it. What is the geography like? Who lives there? What wildlife does it support? Why are they important? What is being done to protect this area? Make a travel brochure for people who might want to explore the area while respecting nature and the people who call it home.
3. Abby loves photography and admires the real-life nature photographers [Cristina Mittermeier](#), [Paul Nicklen](#), and [Beverly Joubert](#). Research one of these photographers and their work. How does taking pictures of nature help protect it?
4. Barana often mentions the spooky legends of her culture. Research la Llorona and el Cadejo. What do you imagine they look like? Draw a picture of one of these ghosts.
5. Try a breathing exercise like the one Barana uses or a box breath. (To do a box breath, take a big inhale as you count to four. Now hold it for four seconds. Next, breathe out slowly as you count to four. Finally hold the exhale for four seconds. Repeat three more times for a total of four rounds.) How does it make you feel?
6. Chiqui and Jason are members of an indigenous cultural group known as the Garifuna people who have a very interesting history in Central America. Find out more about the Garifuna and their vibrant musical genre, Punta. Reread pages 120-121 while playing Punta music. How does hearing the music change your experience of reading this passage?
7. Barana crafts a beautiful poem to share with her community that begins with the phrase, "We are from" (p. 296-297). Write a poem about where you are from. Describe what you experience there with your five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and feel. Who lives there with you? What is special about where you live? What is hard? What is beautiful? What are your hopes and dreams for this place?

More Gripping Middle-Grade Books from Random House Children's

LISA YEE, 2022 NEWBERY HONOR-WINNER



HC: 978-1-9848-3025-8
TR: 978-1-9848-3027-2
GLB: 978-1-9848-3026-5
EL: 978-1-9848-3028-9

Maizy Chen's Last Chance

Welcome to the Golden Palace!

Twelve-year-old Maizy discovers her family's Chinese restaurant is full of secrets in this irresistible novel that celebrates food, fortune, and family.

Themes: Immigrant Experience, Family & Relationships, Racism & Prejudice, Friendship

PRAISE for Maizy Chen's Last Chance

★ **"Delightful and enlightening."**

—*Shelf Awareness*, starred review

★ **"Moving."**

—*Booklist*, starred review

★ **"Humorous, heartwarming."**

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ **"Captivating."**

—*The Horn Book*, starred review

ANDREA BEATRIZ ARANGO, 2022 NEWBERY HONOR-WINNER



HC: 978-0-593-56397-7
GLB: 978-0-593-56398-4
EL: 978-0-593-56399-1

Iveliz Explains It All

How do you speak up when it feels like no one is listening?

A preteen girl navigates seventh grade while facing mental health challenges. A hopeful, poetic story about learning to advocate for the help and understanding you deserve.

Themes: Poetry, Emotions & Feelings, Family & Relationships

PRAISE for Iveliz Explains It All

★ **"Superbly woven."**

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

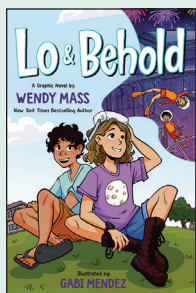
★ **"A compassionate, stirring story."**

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ **"A candid narrative."**

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

WENDY MASS



HC: 978-0-593-17963-5
TR: 978-0-593-17962-8
GLB: 978-0-593-17964-2
EL: 978-0-593-17965-9

Lo & Behold

Could virtual reality flip her world right side up?

An unforgettable graphic novel about connection, friendship, and the wonder all around us from *New York Times* bestselling author Wendy Mass and debut illustrator Gabi Mendez.

Themes: Family & Relationships, Friendship, Contemporary Issues/Social Problems, Forgiveness

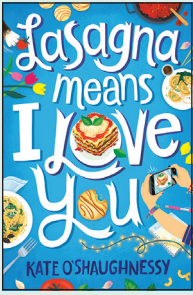
PRAISE for Lo & Behold

"An affecting examination hitting many contemporary notes."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"A solid read that encourages empathy and introspection."

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review



HC: 978-1-9848-9387-1
 GLB: 978-1-9848-9388-8
 EL: 978-1-9848-9389-5

Lasagna Means I Love You
Can Mo discover the perfect recipe for family?

What are the essential ingredients that make a family? Eleven-year-old Mo is making up her own recipe in this unforgettable story that's a little sweet, a little sour, and totally delicious.

Themes: Adopted & Orphaned Children, Death, Dying & Grief, Emotions & Feelings, Family & Relationships, Hope

PRAISE for
Lasagna Means I Love You

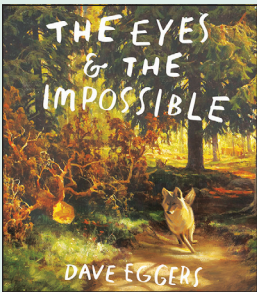
★ **“Deeply moving and tender.”**

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ **“Extremely satisfying.”**

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

DAVE EGGERS



HC: 978-1-5247-6420-3
 GLB: 978-1-5247-6421-0
 EL: 978-1-5247-6422-7

The Eyes and the Impossible

This dog is about to become one park's hero!

From the award-winning author Dave Eggers comes an endearing and beautifully illustrated story of a dog who unwittingly becomes a hero to a park full of animals.

Themes: Animals, Friendship, Adventure, Art, Music & Theater, Courage & Honor

PRAISE for
The Eyes and the Impossible

★ **“Utterly delightful.”**

—*Booklist*, starred review

★ **“Exuberant.”**

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ **“A rousing tale of community.”**

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ **“Essential.”**

—*The Bulletin*, starred review

SHARON G. FLAKE



HC: 978-0-593-48098-4
 GLB: 978-0-593-48099-1
 EL: 978-0-593-48100-4

Once in a Blue Moon
Anything is possible under a blue moon.

Told in verse, this beautiful and uplifting story of family, courage, and redemption follows a young boy's journey from guilt to acceptance.

Themes: Family & Relationships, Forgiveness, Historical Fiction

PRAISE for
Sharon G. Flake

“Shines brightly.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Compelling.”

—*Publishers Weekly*