

Speculative

HORROR

THRILLER



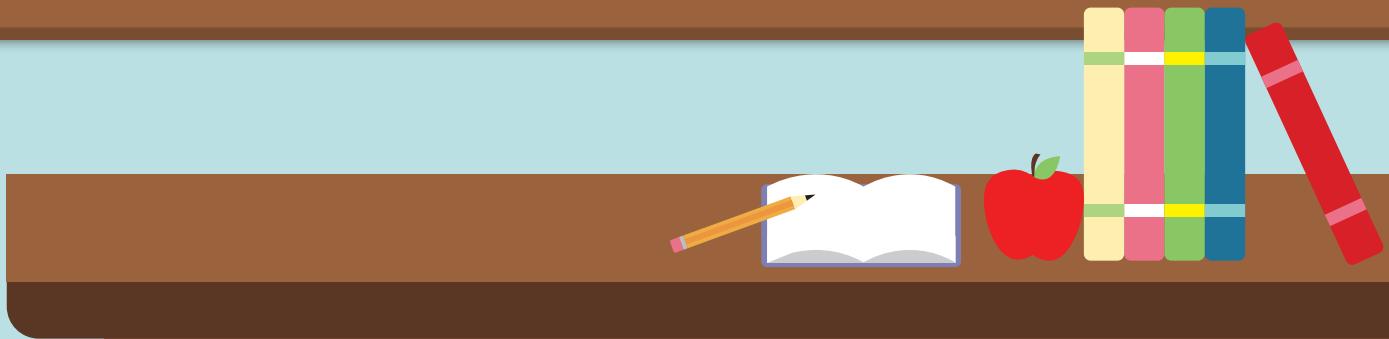
Fantasy

—TEACHING—

SCI-FI

# Social Justice

## THROUGH GENRE



# DEAR EDUCATORS,

Whether it's movies like *Black Panther* or *Get Out* or TV shows like *Watchmen*, science fiction, horror, fantasy, and other genres have been a hit with audiences to introduce social justice concepts and history. Film, TV, and books have the power to do that, packaging entertaining worlds, characters, and stories to discuss broader and specific topics of importance to our society. That is why we're so excited to be partnering with S.R. Toliver on this educator resource to help bring social justice units to life in your classroom around genre fiction. These novels vary from horror to thriller to sci-fi and fantasy, and all introduce themes and concepts of social justice from race, racism, the criminal justice system, poverty, LGBTQIA+ rights, and more! We hope this introduces new ideas on how to not only bring these books into your classroom, but to also think on how to bring genre more into your classroom as well. The table of contents are below. Click each item to jump to that section or scroll down to read through the guide as needed.

## SPECULATIVE FICTION & SOCIAL JUSTICE

Intro from S.R. Toliver on Speculative Fiction and Social Justice in the Classroom



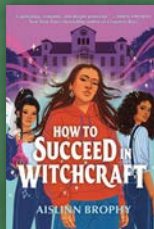
*Another Dimension of Us*



*Beasts of Prey*



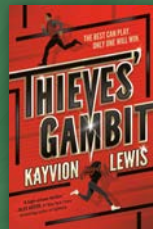
*Forgive Me Not*



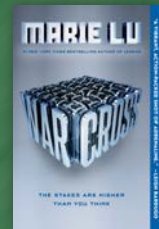
*How to Succeed in Witchcraft*



*The Taking of Jake Livingston*



*Thieves' Gambit*



*Warcross*

Thank you for all you do and for sharing these books with your readers.

SINCERELY,  
PENGUIN YOUNG READERS SCHOOL & LIBRARY MARKETING TEAM

**S. R. TOLIVER** is an assistant professor of curriculum and instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign whose scholarship centers the freedom dreams of Black youth and honors the historical legacy that Black imaginations have had and will have on activism and social change. She is the author of *Recovering Black Storytelling in Qualitative Research: Endarkened Storywork*, and her academic work has been published in several journals, including the *Journal of Literacy Research* and *Equity & Excellence in Education*.

# WHAT IS SPECULATIVE FICTION?

Speculative fiction is an umbrella category that houses all nonmimetic literary genres, those that, in one form or another, depart from mimicking everyday realities (Oziewicz, 2017). The focus on mimetic or nonmimetic traits is essential to understanding the speculative genre. Mimesis attempts to reproduce an external reality through art and literature, while nonmimetic narratives deliberately and methodically add characters, settings, and/or plots that move away from accurate depictions of realistic experience. In other

words, although both use reality as their foundation, mimetic narratives attempt to include details that would mimic our everyday consensus of reality, while nonmimetic stories endeavor to change the realistic landscape, adding monsters, magic, and future or faraway lands to create new narrative worlds. Of course, some people debate over how nonmimetic a narrative must be to be categorized as speculative. For instance, some will ask questions like: How accurate must something be to depict a realistic experience? How many nonmimetic elements must be included to be nonrealistic? Who gets to decide what an everyday consensus of reality really is? These are valid questions, and several readers and authors will provide different answers, but there are several subgenres that are often included under the speculative fiction umbrella. These subcategories include, but are not limited to, the following: fantasy, science fiction, and horror, as well as their offshoots and hybrids, including cyberpunk, space opera, zombie stories, alternate history, paranormal romance, sci-fi/thriller, apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic, magical realism, gothic fiction, and superhero tales.

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## SPECULATIVE FICTION, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND THE CLASSROOM

Several authors have discussed the deep connections between speculative fiction and social justice. As examples, L.A. Young (2021) stated that “speculative fiction is a genre which allows authors to present and to transform the horrors of hatred, prejudice, and bigotry into fantastical elements either to reveal and educate or to explore the truth with the depth of metaphor” (para. 2). Samuel Delaney famously argued that “Science fiction isn’t just thinking about the world out there. It’s also thinking about how that world might be—a particularly important exercise for those who are oppressed, because if they’re going to change the world we live in, they—and all of us—have to be able to think about a world that works differently” (Ghansah 2011, para. 7). Similarly, Walidah Imarisha noted that social activists are constantly engaging in speculative fiction. Whenever people envision worlds without violence, without inequality, or without oppression, they are departing from reality to imagine freer worlds and more liberated futures (brown and Imarisha 2015). Collectively, these authors highlight that the future or other worlds in speculative fiction are often metaphors for the present moment. They emphasize that even if the story is set in a nonmimetic world, many speculative narratives use realistic oppressions as a foundation to metaphorically explore *what if*: What if we lived in a world that refused to address oppression? What if we lived in a world that attempted to eradicate injustice? What kind of world would/could we create if we had the resources to make the world a better place?

# SPECULATIVE FICTION, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND THE CLASSROOM (CONTINUED)

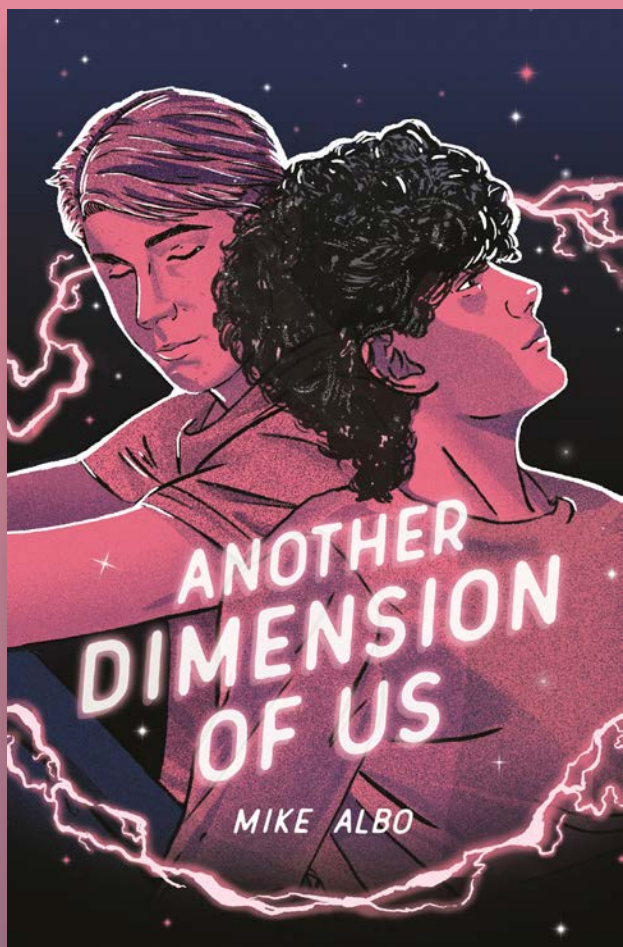
Because speculative fiction often employs metaphor, allegory, and symbolism to discuss social justice issues, using speculative narratives in secondary classrooms can help educators more easily discuss justice-related topics. Specifically, speculative fiction novels often include plot, characters, and conflicts that connect to historical and contemporary issues like climate justice, race and racism, gender and sexual identity, social class, disability justice, language rights, gentrification, etc. By metaphorically (or, sometimes, overtly) including these topics in nonmimetic settings, speculative fiction offers a means to critique these injustices in a way that does not cause immediate defensiveness, as the movement away from mimesis ensures a kind of distance. In this way, the novels offer space for young people to examine themselves and their world with fresh perspectives, rather than letting contemporary society dictate or excessively influence their beliefs and reactions (McKitterick, 2018). Ultimately, speculative fiction is essential to the classroom, as it allows students the time and space to examine the pitfalls, promises, and possibilities of our collective futures. It allows them to consider reality in an alternative space, thus permitting them to dream and imagine otherwise in hopes that they, too, might imagine and create anti-oppressionist futures in which all people can thrive.

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- McKitterick, C. (2018). "Literal Metaphors, Science Fiction, and How to Save the Human Species." *The Astounding Analog Companion*.
- Oziewicz, Mark. 2017. "Speculative Fiction." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*.
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## FURTHER RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS:

- Bach, Jacqueline, Emily Peters, and Joshua Bourgeois. 2019. "Teaching Students the 'What-ifs': Conversations on YA Speculative Fiction." *The English Journal* 109, no. 2 (2019): 39-46.
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## ANOTHER DIMENSION OF US BY MIKE ALBO

In 1986, Tommy Gaye has a crush on his best friend, Renaldo Calabasas, but his ever-growing social anxiety and the larger social context of the AIDS epidemic makes Tommy feel like he must keep his feelings to himself. The friends do everything together, but when Renaldo becomes obsessed with a book on astral projection, everything changes. Renaldo becomes more eccentric and erratic: He is repetitively absent from school, and he begins to tell Tommy that he is hearing voices and is afraid that something sinister is following him. Then, one night, Renaldo is struck by lightning, and when he wakes up, Renaldo isn't the same boy Tommy has come to love. Renaldo's body has been taken over by a hedonistic demon who travels across time and steals the bodies of talented young people. To save the boy he loves, Tommy must ally with Pris, an unexpected helper from the year 2044, to figure

out astral projection, engage in trans-dimensional travel, and locate Renaldo's soul before his best friend's body is destroyed.

- ◆ **SOCIAL JUSTICE TOPICS ADDRESSED:** communal and individual implications of LGBTQ+ violence, stereotypes based on social identities, gender expression or refusal as an aspect of freedom and justice
- ◆ **SOCIAL IDENTITY REPRESENTATION INCLUDED:**
  - Tommy is white and gay.
  - Renaldo is Argentinian-American and gay.
  - Pris is Black and lesbian. She was adopted by her uncle and has a form of vitiligo which makes her skin striped.
  - Jade (secondary character) is Latine and nonbinary, using they/them pronouns.
  - Dara (secondary character) is Filipino, queer, and goth.



◆ **POTENTIAL ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

- In what ways can identity labels define and/or confine people?
- How are people transformed through their relationships with others?
- In a culture where we are bombarded with other people's definitions of who we are, how do we make decisions to define ourselves?
- Even if society shifts overtime, how are systemic oppressions and activist movements connected across time?

◆ **POTENTIAL LESSON:** Building Connections Across People and Time

- **Use During:** Whole Text
- **Great For Units On:** Comparing social justice movements
- **Description:** A major factor in social justice movements is that various oppressions are connected across marginalized groups and across time. *Another Dimension of Us* is a great text to practice making those connections due to its multiple points of view and multiple time periods. For this activity, have students create a visual that connects social justice issues across the many characters in the text. As an example, Tommy, Renaldo, and Dara are living during the time of the AIDS crisis, while Pris and Jade are living in a time post-COVID. Ask students to consider how governmental and social response to those viruses are similar and how they are different. As another example, many of the characters in the text are queer, but their racial, gender, and economic differences as well as the time periods in which they live result in similarities and differences in their struggle for equality. As students read, ask them to visually map these connections between the characters.
- **Lesson Resources:**
  - » ["Different fight, 'same goal': How the Black freedom movement inspired early gay activists"](#)
  - » ["Misinformation is a common thread between the COVID-19 and HIV/AIDS pandemics—with deadly consequences"](#)
  - » [Social and personal identity wheels \(can be used for characters or for students\)](#)
  - » [Spectrum Activity](#)



# BEASTS of PREY

BY AYANA GRAY

Koffi is an indentured servant forced to raise and train dangerous animals at the Night Zoo to pay off her father's debts. Strong-willed and often impulsive, she dreams of freedom and longs for the day she and her mother will be released from servitude, but a tragic event pushes her liberation far into the future. To ensure that she and her loved ones are emancipated, Koffi strikes a deal to erase her family's debts. For freedom, she must capture the fierce Shetani, a monster of lore that lies deep within an enchanted jungle.

Ekon Okojo is the son of one of the most powerful families in Lkossa, and he is on his way to becoming a Son of the Six, a group of fierce warriors charged with protecting the city and enforcing its rules. Though he struggles with

anxiety, Ekon dreams of gaining the respect of his country, but when his aspirations are stripped away, he knows he must do something amazing to regain his position: Kill the Shetani. An eventful night brings Koffi and Ekon together, dashing their hopes and changing their destinies. As the difference between their social, political, and economic status brings mistrust, they form a fragile partnership to help each other catch the Shetani. Traveling into the Greater Jungle to catch the predator, however, leads to new discoveries, new friendships, and new problems.

◆ **SOCIAL JUSTICE TOPICS ADDRESSED:** differences in religious beliefs and practices; impact of socioeconomic status on life outcomes; humans' interactions with nature; mental health and its effects on daily life

◆ **SOCIAL IDENTITY REPRESENTATION INCLUDED:**

- Koffi is a Black girl who experiences poverty.
- Ekon is a Black boy who deals with anxiety and possible obsessive-compulsive disorder (not confirmed).

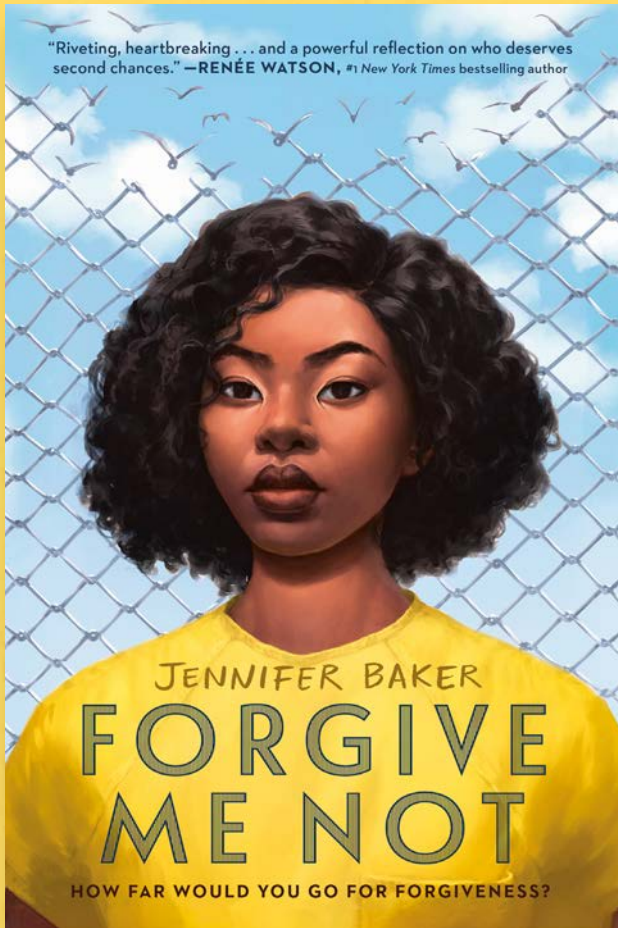
### ◆ POTENTIAL ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How can history be skewed by those in power?
- In what ways might poverty be a monster “always lurking and waiting to consume”?
- Why is it easier for people with different social identities to work against each other rather than work together?
- How can people with different social identities (e.g., race, gender, religious belief, socioeconomic status) learn to work together?
- What are the benefits of humans concerning ourselves with nature’s balance? What are the consequences of being unconcerned with a balance in nature?

### ◆ POTENTIAL LESSON: Social Justice and History

- **Use During:** Whole Text
- **Great for Units On:** How stories are used to empower or oppress
- **Description:** There are several famous sayings about how history is decided by those in power. As examples, Hermann Göring is attributed with saying, “The victor will always be the judge, and the vanquished the accused.” Although there is no clear source, Winston Churchill is credited with acknowledging that “history is written by the victors.” An African proverb argues the following: “Until the lion tells the story, the hunter will always be the hero.” In each of these quotes, the authors argue that history is often one-sided, with the words of those most marginalized often being stricken from the historical record. Considering the importance of this topic, this lesson has three parts. Before reading, share the quotes above with students, asking them questions like the following: What do each of these statements have in common? What do they say about who gets to decide how history is told and remembered? How might these quotes relate to the history we know? Use these (and other) questions to ground student discussions of history as they read the novel, especially related to magic, the Greater Jungle, and the history of the Shetani. Help students figure out who might be the hunter/victor/judge and who might be the lion/vanquished/accused. After reading, ask students how each of the quotes apply to the novel and how these quotes might apply to their own communities/histories. As a real-life extension, ask students to research local hidden histories to share with classmates. To do so, students might conduct oral or social histories in their communities or they might research local histories that are often removed from or overlooked in their traditional history classes.
- **Lesson Resources**
  - » [“Hidden Histories: Mexican Repatriation During the 1930s”](#)
  - » [Hidden Figures \(Film\) Curriculum Guide](#)
  - » [“Lesson Plan: The Debate Over the Teaching of US History”](#)
  - » [“Lesson Plan: Oral History and Social History”](#)
  - » [“Because My History Matters: A Guide to Integrating Local History into the Classroom, Grades 6–12”](#)





# FORGIVE ME NOT

BY JENNIFER BAKER

What if, instead of decisions made by a judge and/or jury, punishment was decided by the victims?

After a drunk driving incident results in the death of her younger sister, Violetta Chen-Samuels is incarcerated for involuntary manslaughter. Because she is a minor, her case is not handled through the court system. Instead, the victim's loved ones (Violetta's parents) are responsible for deciding her punishment: forgiveness, the trials, or juvenile detention. If she is forgiven, she can go home immediately with an expunged record. If her parents choose the trials, Violetta will be given a set of tasks to prove that she has learned from her mistakes and is ready for re-entry. Upon satisfactory completion of her tests,

she can return home with no criminal record. However, if juvenile detention is selected, Violetta will be detained for an indeterminate length of time. When she is denied forgiveness and given the trials, she is hopeful that she can one day regain her freedom, but the trials are not easy, and many are traumatizing. Violetta decides that she will do whatever it takes to gain her family's forgiveness, but she also must decide how and if she can ever forgive herself.

◆ **SOCIAL JUSTICE TOPICS ADDRESSED:** incarceration and antiblackness; criminal justice system; drug use/abuse/recovery; sexual assault and self-defense; differences between punishment and rehabilitation

◆ **SOCIAL IDENTITY REPRESENTATION INCLUDED:**

- Violetta is biracial (Black and Asian): her mom is Chinese and her dad is Black.
- Vincent (Violetta's brother) is biracial and gay.
- Jorge (Vincent's friend) uses they/them pronouns.
- Levi (Vincent's ex) is queer.
- Byron (Vincent's teammate) is white and queer.

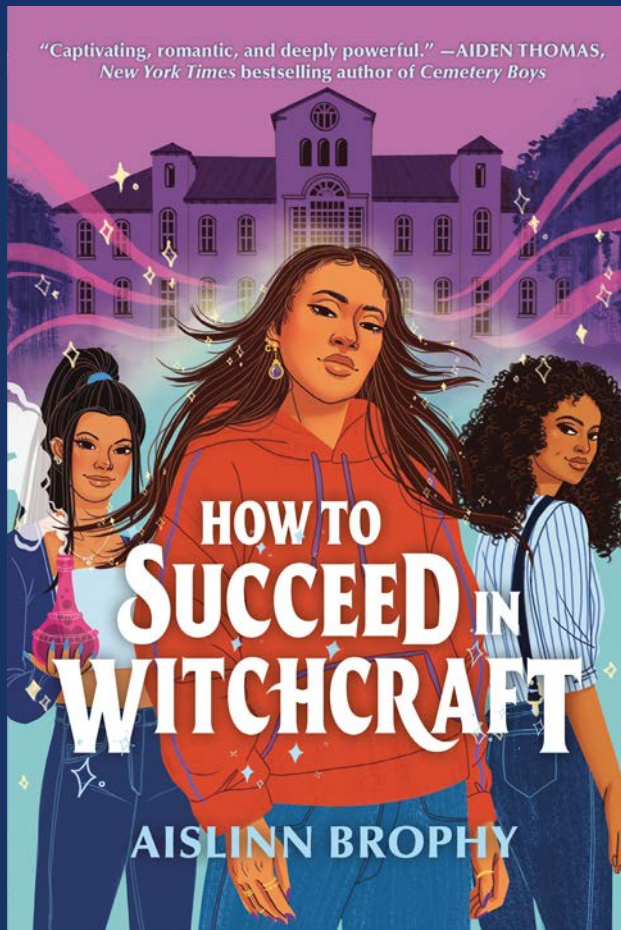
## ◆ POTENTIAL ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- Is cruel and unusual punishment ever justified?
- What does forgiveness look like?
- Would it be ethical for victims of a crime to decide the fate of an offender?
- What could abolition—the action or act of formally putting an end to a system, practice, or institution like the criminal justice system—look like in the United States?
- How might understanding the stories of people experiencing incarceration help us create a more just world?

## ◆ POTENTIAL LESSON: Social Justice and Abolition

- **Use During:** Whole Text
- **Great for Units On:** Abolition and the criminal justice system
- **Description:** There are many issues housed under the larger umbrella of social justice, and many of these issues demand attention. One such issue that must be considered is the idea of abolition. Abolition can refer to the elimination of any institution, but many activists use the term abolition to refer to the abolishment of the prison-industrial complex (see resource below). In this sense, abolition means eliminating “the use of surveillance, policing, sentencing, imprisonment, and execution and to build healthy, stable, self-determined societies that do not rely on coercion and vengeance to address harm” (Herzing, 2023). This is the system under scrutiny in this novel. Before reading the text, have students complete a KWLH (what they know, what they want to know, how they will learn new information, and what they learned) chart detailing information about incarceration in the United States. Considering student knowledge, add to their understanding by discussing positive and negative arguments about the justice system and outline arguments for and against abolition. During reading, have students revisit their charts and list new wonderings connected to the text and to society at-large. After reading, revisit the charts again so they can update their understandings. Considering their charts, class conversations, and the texts, engage students in a discussion on what abolition and ethical criminal justice reform would look like. Have them compare their ideas of justice reform to the one presented in the book.
- **Lesson Resources**
  - » [“Teaching about Mass Incarceration: From Conversation to Civic Action”](#)
  - » [“Criminal Justice Reform: Lesson Plan”](#)
  - » [“Lesson Plan: Imagine a World Without Prisons”](#)
  - » [“Lesson Plan: Time Served—Now What?”](#)
  - » [“What Do Abolitionists Really Want?”](#)
  - » [“Prison Abolition: A Curated Collection of Links”](#)





# HOW TO SUCCEED IN WITCHCRAFT

BY AISLINN BROPHY

Shay Johnson has always had a plan: attend T.K. Anderson Magical Magnet School, become the top student in her class and get the full-ride Brockton scholarship, and attend an elite college and make enough money to ensure that neither she nor her family will ever have to struggle again. But executing her plan is difficult. First, she is constantly engaged in battle with her academic nemesis, Ana Álvarez, who is also vying for the prestigious scholarship. Next, everyone knows that getting the scholarship requires students to impress Mr. B, the school drama teacher and head of the scholarship committee, but Shay is a terrible actor. To make matters worse, Mr. B asks Shay to star in the school's aggressively inclusive musical alongside Ana, forcing her

to be castmates with her archenemy and compelling her to figure out acting by opening night. Eventually, Shay learns that everything is not as it seems. Ana is not the evil girl she imagined her to be, and Mr. B, although popular amongst the high school students, seems to give female scholarship hopefuls a lot of unwanted attention. When Mr. B turns his attentions to Shay, she must decide how much she is willing to ignore to attain the future she deserves.

- ◆ **SOCIAL JUSTICE TOPICS ADDRESSED:** racism, power/privilege and manipulation, grooming, homophobia, linguistic injustice, educational attainment and access to resources
- ◆ **SOCIAL IDENTITY REPRESENTATION INCLUDED:**
  - Shay is biracial and identifies as Black. She is lesbian and from a working-class family.
  - Ana is Cuban, Spanish-speaking, and bisexual. She is from a working-class family.
  - Lex (Shay's best friend) is Filipino and was adopted by a wealthy white family.



◆ **POTENTIAL ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

- When should someone take a stand against injustice?
- How does socio-economic status affect a person's access to education?
- How might age and social status create an imbalance of power?
- To what extent does power or lack of power influence people's ability to make choices about their lives?

◆ **POTENTIAL LESSON:** Understanding Power, Privilege, and Social Injustice

- **Use During:** Whole Text
- **Great For Units On:** Power and privilege in the U.S.
- **Description:** Social injustice is often a result of one group having more power or privileges over another group. These power differentials are quite prominent in *How to Succeed in Witchcraft*. For this activity, have students create a chart that includes the following headings: Target, Perpetrator, Bystander, Ally/Accomplice. A target is a person who is singled out because of the identities they hold. A perpetrator is someone who engages in harm against the target. This person often holds quite a bit of power. A bystander is someone who witnesses the harm but does not take part in correcting it. An accomplice is someone who sees the injustice and supports or advocates on behalf of the targeted person. Students can use the chart to pinpoint how power is wielded against marginalized people. For instance, Shay would be considered a target (as a student, as a lesbian, and as a Black girl), while Mr. B would be the perpetrator (as a teacher, as heterosexual, and as a white man). Former students could be bystanders, and Ana and Lex could be allies/accomplices. Students' answers will vary, but completing the chart and discussing their responses will enable conversations about how power enables some people/groups to oppress targeted groups.
- **Lesson Resources:**
  - » ["Examining Privilege and Oppression"](#)
  - » ["Social Justice: Examining Privilege with a Recycling Bin"](#)
  - » ["Perseverance, Power, and Privilege"](#)
  - » ["Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege"](#)





## THE TAKING OF JAKE LIVINGSTON

BY RYAN DOUGLASS

Sixteen-year-old Jake Livingston is the only Black kid in his grade and has to deal with the racism and microaggressions of teachers and classmates on a regular basis. He is also gay and has the unfortunate advantage of having a popular older brother. But identity and school social status are the least of his worries. He is also a medium who can see ghosts reliving their deaths on a loop and astral projects to the ghostly dimension at night. Most of the ghosts he sees are harmless, but then Jake meets Sawyer Doon, a queer white boy who murdered six kids at his high school before taking his own life. Rather than existing on a loop, Sawyer wants to inhabit Jake's body and finish what he started years ago. With the help of newfound friends Fiona Chan and Allister Burroughs, Jake challenges Sawyer and fights to protect his friends

and family. But, is Jake strong enough to fight such a great force of evil, especially with everything else going on in his life?

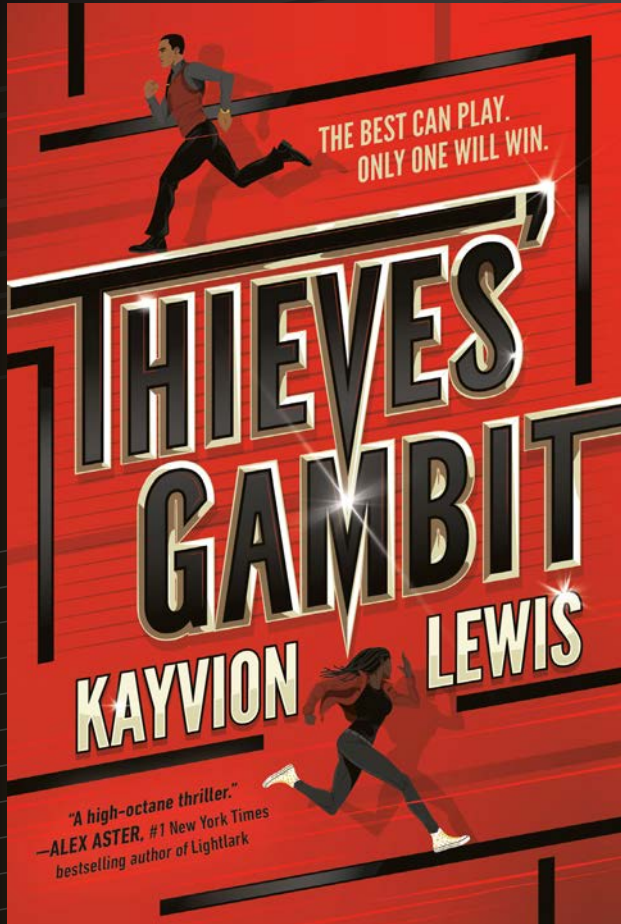
- ◆ **SOCIAL JUSTICE TOPICS ADDRESSED:** racism and microaggressions; increased need for mental health support; intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality; religion and oppression; homophobia
- ◆ **IDENTITY REPRESENTATION INCLUDED:**
  - Jake is Black and gay. He hides his queerness from most of the other characters.
  - Sawyer is white and queer, and he is from a family who experiences poverty.
  - Allister is Black and queer.
  - Fiona is Asian.

◆ **POTENTIAL ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

- How might various combinations of identity (e.g., race, class, gender, and sexuality) effect people's experiences in the world?
- How do our social identities afford us privilege and/or position us as members of minoritized groups?
- How is mental health support a social justice issue?
- What is community and what are the individual's responsibilities to the community? What is the community's responsibility to the individual?

◆ **POTENTIAL LESSON:** Understanding Structural Inequality

- **Use During:** Before Reading/During Reading
- **Great For Units On:** Intersectionality
- **Description:** In 1989, Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term *intersectionality*, which is a term created to help people discuss how systems of oppression overlap and create distinct experiences for people with multiple identity categories. Throughout *The Taking of Jake Livingston*, Jake often talks about the fact that he is Black and gay and how that creates a different life experience for him. To better understand how Jake feels throughout the text, have students learn about intersectionality before they read the book. As they learn about this term, ask them to consider their own identities and how they overlap to create certain privileged or marginalized experiences in the world. Then, during reading, have conversations with students about how Jake's identity categories have resulted in social injustice. They can also discuss the intersections of Sawyer's identity to show the differences in the characters' lives. Of course, it is important not to lose sight that this term was coined by a Black women scholar to discuss the issues that Black women face, and it is also important to discuss how everyone has multiple identity categories and that those categories interact with a larger system of oppression.
- **Lesson Resources:**
  - » ["Toolkit for 'Teaching at the Intersections'"](#)
  - » ["What's Intersectionality? Let These Scholars Explain the Theory and Its History"](#)
  - » [TED Talk: "The urgency of intersectionality"](#)
  - » ["Black Queer History Is American History"](#)



# THIEVES' GAMBIT

BY KAYVION LEWIS

What if, every year, several young members of international thieving families were granted the opportunity to participate in a competition that could change their lives forever?

Part of a legendary family of thieves, seventeen-year-old Rosalyn 'Ross' Quest was destined to become a master thief. But even though it is her family's legacy, Ross wants the chance to live a normal life: camp, school, friends. Her ambitions completely change, however, when her mother is kidnapped, and a billion-dollar ransom is placed on her head. To get the money to free her mother, Ross is forced to participate in the Thieves' Gambit, a dangerous international heist competition where the winner is granted one wish. To save her mother, she can't just compete in the games: She must win. To win, she must make allies and trust strangers. But how can she trust

anyone when the only motto she's ever known is: "A Quest can't trust anyone in this world—except for a Quest"?

- ◆ **Social Justice Topics Addressed:** colonialism and ownership; racism and privilege; moral and ethical dilemmas
- ◆ **Identity Representation Included:**
  - Ross Quest is a Black girl from the Bahamas.
  - Devroe Kenzi is a Black boy from England.
  - Kyung-Soon Shin is a girl from South Korea.
  - Taiyō Itō is from Japan.
  - Adra Laghari is a girl from India.



### ◆ Potential Essential Questions:

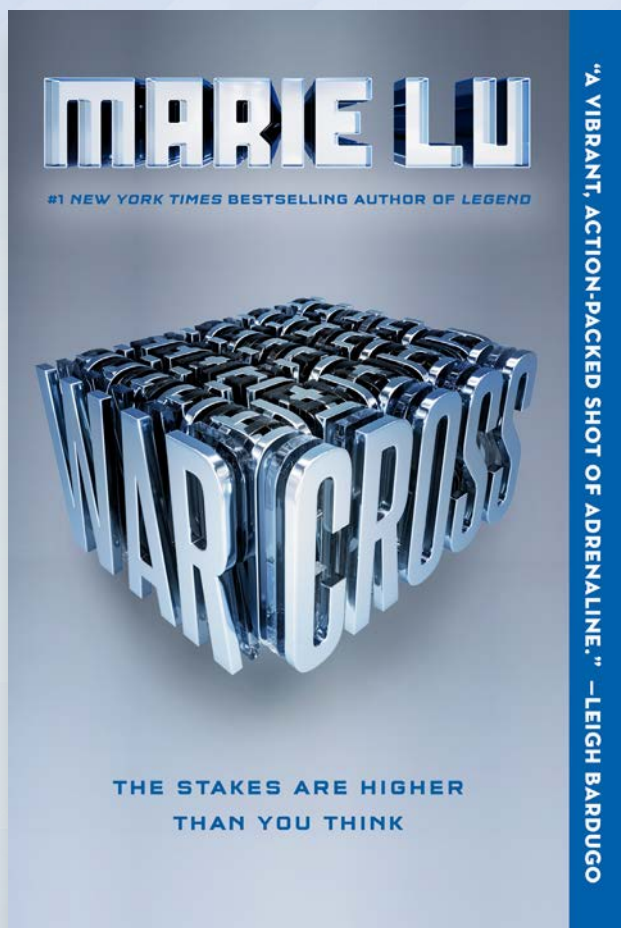
- How can people's decisions and actions change their lives?
- How do people develop values and beliefs? How do our beliefs and values shape or influence our behavior?
- How do our personal experiences shape our views of others?
- If any, what are the moral and ethical boundaries between love and sacrifice?
- Who owns the past?

### ◆ Potential Lesson: Social Injustice and Ownership

- **Use During:** Whole Text
- **Great For Units On:** Social justice movements and current impacts of colonialism
- **Description:** The focus of the novel is Ross's goal to save her mother by participating in a thieving competition, but another thread that is consistently mentioned throughout the story is the ethics of stealing. For this lesson, students will consider the ethics of acquisition from museum curation to colonialist land occupation. Before reading, show students [a clip of Killmonger's heist in \*Black Panther\*](#). Ask students about the ethics of Killmonger stealing artifacts from the museum. Then, ask students if it's ethical for him to steal the artifacts after the artifacts were stolen by the museum. Use this discussion to talk about the ethics of acquisition and whether it is morally or ethically wrong for people to steal those artifacts back (or to steal them for others). During the text, use these previous discussions to assist students in thinking through the ethics of Ross's actions (stealing from looters on the boat; stealing artifacts from a museum; stealing secrets from shady officials). In addition, lead students through a discussion about the ethics of the looters, museums, and officials who obtained those artifacts in the first place. Toward the end of the text, have students work in groups to discuss the ethics of the Egyptian auction heist. Have them consider the position of the protestors, the thieves, the organization, the auctioneers, and the museum. After reading the text, engage students in a Socratic seminar around the essential question: If anyone, who owns the past?
- **Lesson Resources:**
  - » [Video: "Land Back: The Indigenous Fight to Reclaim Lands"](#)
  - » ["Lesson of the Day: 'He Sold Away His People's Heritage. He's in the Jungle to Get It Back.'"](#)
  - » ["Art Mystery Lesson Plan: Bow Gallery at Krannert Art Museum"](#)
  - » ["Who Owns the Past?"](#)
  - » [Video: "The British Museum is full of stolen artifacts"](#)







## WARCROSS BY MARIE LU

Eighteen-year-old Emika Chen has been struggling to make ends meet after the death of her father. To pay her bills, she works as a part-time bounty hunter who is responsible for catching people suspected of engaging in illegal activity on Warcross, the biggest virtual reality game in the world. However, bounty hunting doesn't pay well, so, when she needs some quick cash, she decides to hack into the Warcross world tournament and steal a rare item that could help her pay off her debts. During the hack, however, she accidentally glitches, revealing her identity to millions of onlookers. Convinced she will be arrested for her crime, Emika is surprised when she receives an irresistible job offer from none other than the Warcross creator himself, Hideo Tanaka. He wants her to be a spy in the virtual tournament to uncover a security problem. But, through her investigation, Emika soon discovers a sinister plot that has major consequences for all Warcross users.

- ◆ **SOCIAL JUSTICE TOPICS ADDRESSED:** poverty and lack of resources vs. wealth and access to various resources; ethics of the distribution and use of virtual reality and technology
- ◆ **IDENTITY REPRESENTATION INCLUDED:**
  - Emika is Asian American and initially experiences poverty.
  - Asher is a secondary character who is paralyzed from the waist down.
  - Roshan is a Brown secondary character who is British and queer.
  - Multiple mentions of language (technological translators provide subtitles that translate) and social class (various connections to poverty and wealth)

◆ **POTENTIAL ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

- How does algorithmic bias affect different groups of people?
- What is the relationship between privacy, surveillance, freedom, and security?
- How might new technologies, like virtual/augmented reality, lead to broader social change? How might they lead to more injustice?
- How might technological advancements affect people from different socioeconomic groups?

◆ **POTENTIAL LESSON:** Social Injustice and Technology

- **Use During:** Before Reading/After Reading
- **Great For Units On:** Technology, algorithms, and the digital age
- **Description:** Often, when people talk about social justice, they are referring to interactions between people or groups, but as we move into a more digital age, it is important to consider how technology factors into social injustice both positively and negatively. Before reading, work with students to create a positive/negative chart depicting the benefits (potential responses might include social media and activist movements; virality and activism via hashtags; forming of activist communities) and drawbacks (potential responses might include algorithmic bias; antiblackness coded into technology; virtual reality used to combat unconscious bias) of technology (virtual reality, social media, algorithms, etc.). Answers will vary, but benefits could include social media and activist movements; virality and activism via hashtags; forming of activist communities; and using virtual reality to combat unconscious bias, while drawbacks might include algorithmic bias; antiblackness coded into technology; needing virtual reality to cultivate empathy. After reading, revisit the chart, noting how the book showcases the positives and negatives of using/creating technological advancements and how these advances might facilitate or hinder social justice efforts.
- **Lesson Resources:**
  - » [“Lesson: Social Media for Social Action”](#)
  - » [“Lesson: Digital Activism Remixed: Hashtags for Voice, Visibility, and Visions of Social Justice”](#)
  - » [“Lesson Plan: What Is Algorithmic Bias?”](#)
  - » [TED Talk Playlist: “The inherent bias in our technology”](#)