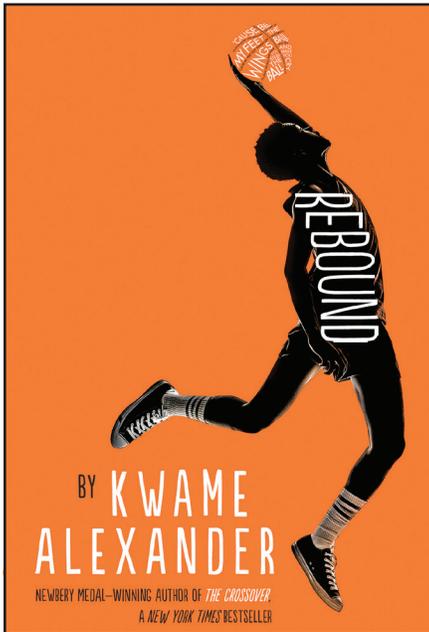


Rebound by KWAME ALEXANDER



9780544868137 • HC

About the Book

Before Josh and Jordan Bell were streaking up and down the court, their father was learning his own moves. In this prequel to Newbery Medal winner *The Crossover*, Chuck Bell takes center stage, as readers get a glimpse of his childhood and how he became the jazz music-worshipping star his sons look up to.

A novel in verse with all the impact and rhythm readers have come to expect from Kwame Alexander, *Rebound* goes back in time to visit the childhood of Chuck “Da Man” Bell during one pivotal summer when he is sent to stay with his grandparents, where he discovers basketball and learns more about his family’s past.

About the Author

Kwame Alexander is a poet, educator, and the New York Times bestselling author of 24 books, including *The Crossover*, which received the Newbery Medal, the Coretta Scott King Author Award Honor, the NCTE Charlotte Huck Honor, the Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award, and the Paterson Poetry Prize. Kwame writes for children of all ages. Some of his other works include *The Playbook*, the picture books *Out of Wonder* and *Surf’s Up*; and novels *Booked* and *Solo*.

Pre-Reading Activity

Discuss with students what a prequel is.

Cast of Characters

It can be helpful to consider the main characters of the story and learn their names and nicknames, an important part of this story. Talk about the names of each of the major characters and speculate about the significance of each, particularly as the story moves along and you learn more about each one.

- Charlie (Chuck) Bell
- Skinny (a boy), one of Charlie’s best friends
- CJ (a girl), one of Charlie’s best friends
- Charlie’s mom
- Ivan, Skinny’s older cousin
- Mrs. Wilson (and her dog, Woodrow, AKA Harriet Tubman)
- Percy and Alice Bell, Charlie’s grandparents
- Roxie Bell, Charlie’s cousin
- Wink, a friend of Roxie’s
- Mr. Smith (Smitty), Grandpa’s friend and neighbor
- Uncle LeRoy

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy RL.5.1; RL.6.1; RL.7.1; SL.5.1d; SL.6.1d]

Discussion Questions

As students read or listen to you read aloud *Rebound*, 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

1. You know that Charlie is dealing with something really terrible early in the story. What clues does the author give?
2. What activities give Charlie comfort as he deals with his father’s death?
3. Why are comic books so important to Charlie?

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4. How is Charlie's friendship with Skinny different from his friendship with CJ?
5. Why does Charlie's mother send him to spend the summer with his grandparents?
6. What does Charlie like best about being with his grandparents? What is most challenging for him?
7. How can you tell that things are changing for Charlie over the summer?
8. How does Charlie's relationship with his cousin Roxie affect him? How does his relationship with his friend Skinny affect him?
9. What helps Charlie and his mom heal their relationship? Why do you think he decides to go by the nickname "Chuck" instead of "Charlie"?
10. How might our parents' or grandparents' stories affect our own lives?
11. If you have read *The Crossover*, what surprised you most about the story of Chuck's life at age twelve in 1988? Did you notice use of the word "crossover" in *Rebound*? Why might the author have done that? How does he use the word "rebound" in the poems in this story too?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1; RL.6.1; RL.6.3; RL.7.1]

Studying and Writing Poetry

Every page of the book is a poem (or part of a poem) and they all work together to tell a story. Students who look closely will notice that the author uses several different kinds of poems to move the story along, including these below. Challenge students to identify examples of each of these and to try their hands at writing one in their favorite form.

- "Ten Reasons Why" poem
- "I wish . . ." poem
- Illustrated poem/comics
- "Conversation" poem
- List poem
- "Things I Think About . . ." poem
- Question poem
- Prose poem (e.g., "Answers"; "Mom calls")
- Haiku
- Nonet poem
- Rhyming couplet
- Tercet

In addition, there are some poems for which the title is a continuous part of the whole poem. Students can identify examples (e.g., "But, before I can say"; "When I get home") and experiment with writing these also.

Sports and Poetry. Many poems in *Rebound* also serve to capture various moments in playing or practicing basketball. Talk with students about how the structure and line breaks of poetry really capture the suspense and excitement of the game with examples such as "The Last Shot."

Epilogue Poetry. The last eight poems function as a kind of epilogue and "fast forward" the story thirty years to 2018. Talk about those poems as a group and what they reveal about the story characters (and the characters in *The Crossover*, if students have read it).

Similes and Metaphors. Finally, Kwame Alexander frequently uses similes and metaphors in his poetry (e.g., "Amen") to great effect. After repeated reading, challenge students to see how many they can find and discuss what they add to the meaning or tone of the poems.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1; RL.4.5; RL.5.1; RL.5.5; RL.6.1; RL.6.5]

More Writing

Journaling and Letter Writing. Besides poetry writing, two other forms of writing are important in this story: journal and letter writing. Look for examples of both of these in *Rebound* and challenge students to choose one to try themselves.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1; RL.4.5; RL.5.1; RL.5.5; RL.6.1; RL.6.5]

Words of Wisdom. Granddaddy, Roxie, and CJ often offer Charlie advice along the way, particularly in "corny" rhymes and pithy proverbs and sayings. Challenge students to identify a line, phrase, or passage that is pivotal to the story or especially meaningful to them and talk about why. Possible examples include

- "Hustle and grind, peace of mind."

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- “A new day, a new dollar. / Makes me wanna holler!”
- “Champions train, chumps complain.”
- “Own the sadness, / don’t let it own you.”

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2; RL.6.2; RL.7.2]

Readers’ Theater. One distinctive feature of this book is the use of italics within a poem to indicate that someone is speaking (besides the narrator or protagonist). This creates dialogue within the poem that can be very effective when read aloud. Try 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. The poems entitled “Conversation” work particularly well with this approach. Then talk about how hearing the words read aloud 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; SL.4.1b; SL.5.1b; SL.6.1b]

Other Elements

Sports and Games. Once again, sports are an essential element woven throughout this book by Alexander, particularly basketball. This time our protagonist, Charlie, is not a gifted athlete at the beginning, but through frequent practice (guided by his cousin, Roxie), he gets better and better. This will be particularly interesting to readers of *The Crossover* since Charlie becomes Chuck, the professional basketball player and father of twins JB and Josh. Work with students to read up on the the heroes of baskeball that are mentioned and consider their influence on basketball today.

- Michael Jordan
- Kareem Abdul-Jabbar
- Dr. J
- Washington Bullets
- Harlem Globetrotters
- Los Angeles Lakers

You may even want to connect with a gym or physical education teacher or coach to stage a

reenactment of some of the basketball scenes depicted in selected poems. In addition, invite students who play basketball to describe the games H.O.R.S.E. (C.U.R.L.Y.), and Around the World for the class—both mentioned in *Rebound*. Other games and activities are also part of this story including roller skating, bike riding, playing video games (such as Pac-Man), and walking dogs. Survey students on which of these activities they have tried and enjoyed or may want to try.

Superheroes. Another interesting thread woven through this novel in verse is Charlie’s fascination with superhero characters and comic books. Many are referenced throughout the story including

- The Fantastic Four—Johnny Storm, Ben Grimm, Sue Storm, Reed Richards
- Thor
- The Incredible Hulk
- Ant-Man
- The Impossible Man
- Black Panther
- Iron Man
- Superman

Discuss with students why the author might have included this as an important element in the story. What does it tell us about Charlie? How does it help connect him with his dad?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1.D; SL.6.1.D; SL.7.1.D]

Graphic Novel/Comic Panel Poems. In addition, there are several illustrated poems presented graphically throughout *Rebound*. These are poems in graphic novel-style or comic panels drawn with characters, action, and speech balloons and boxes. Invite students to read them aloud, acting as narrators and characters, as appropriate. Invite them to consider how the art helps them visualize the story behind the poem and how it might help them pause for emphasis too while reading aloud. They also provide a picture of how several of the characters look physically. Is that how they picture the characters? What do all these pictures and graphic

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poems add to their understanding of the story? Challenge them to work in pairs to choose a non-illustrated poem in the book and represent it visually in their own comic/graphic panels. Put them all together and see how the story unfolds through these alone.

Family Trees and Photos. In *Rebound* we are introduced to the father figure from *The Crossover* as a boy. It might be helpful and interesting for students who are familiar with both books to sketch out a quick family tree showing the names and relationships of the major characters in both books. For example, Granddaddy Percy's brother's name was Jordan Bell. Charlie's dad's name was Joshua Bell and the main characters of *The Crossover* are Jordan (JB) Bell and Josh Bell. In addition, Grandma shows Charlie a scrapbook of photos of his Granddaddy as a young man. Exploring family stories and photos can be meaningful for students who have access to them. Or creating a make-believe photo album for these story characters can be a fun way to visualize them. Work with students to find a magazine or photo or drawing that looks like how you imagine each character and make a collage of *Rebound* characters to display as you read the book together.

Further Reading

For even more poetry books to connect with *Rebound*, look for these.

- Alexander, Kwame. 2014. *The Crossover*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Alexander, Kwame. 2016. *Booked*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Alexander, Kwame. 2017. *The Playbook: 52 Rules to Aim, Shoot, and Score in This Game Called Life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Burg, Ann E. 2009. *All the Broken Pieces*. New York: Scholastic Press.
- Carroll, Lewis, and Christopher Myers (ill.). 2007. *Jabberwocky*. New York: Jump at the Sun. (Originally published in 1871).
- Hesse, Karen. 1997. *Out of the Dust*. New York: Scholastic Press.

- Holt, K. A. 2014. *Rhyme Schemer*. San Francisco: Chronicle.
- Myers, Christopher. 2012. *H.O.R.S.E.: A Game of Basketball and Imagination*. Egmont.
- Smith, Charles R., Jr. 1999. *Rimshots; Basketball Pix, Rolls, and Rhythms*. New York: Dutton.
- Smith, Charles R., Jr. 2001. *Short Takes: Fast-Break Basketball Poetry*. New York: Dutton.
- Smith, Charles R., Jr. 2003. *Hoop Queens*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick.
- Smith, Charles R., Jr. 2003. *I Am America*. New York: Scholastic.
- Smith, Charles R., Jr. 2004. *Hoop Kings*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick.
- 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.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.9; RL.6.9; SL.5.1; SL.6.1; SL.7.1]

For more about author and poet Kwame Alexander and his work, visit kwamealexander.com.

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