



## **Crossover**

Jeff Rud

Reading level: 4.0

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AR Quiz # 122443

### **Book Summary**

Kyle Evans believes he's got his high school life all figured out. He's a star basketball player and he hangs out almost exclusively with the popular athletes at Sainsbury High School.

But Kyle's outlook begins to change when he runs into Lukas Connor, a former friend from elementary school, who encourages him to try out for the school theater production of *Oliver!* Kyle doesn't take the suggestion seriously—and even resents Luke for making it—until he discovers his girlfriend Jenna is also in the production and wants him to try out too.

What begins as a lark turns into something Kyle discovers that he enjoys—maybe even as much as basketball. His attitude toward non-jock kids at the school also changes as, despite their differences, Kyle quickly makes some good friends within the theater crowd.

But trouble is looming. Kyle's coach is not at all understanding about his role in *Oliver!* and his teammates—particularly the bully Ben Stillman—think acting is just plain weird. When Stillman and a couple of other teammates vandalize the *Oliver!* sets with homophobic slurs aimed at Lukas Connor, Kyle has to take a stand even if it means the basketball team will suffer.

**Prereading Ideas**

- Have students identify stereotypes in their own school. Are there identifiable groups like “jocks,” “band geeks,” “theater nerds,” etc.? What are the dangers of labels such as these? Are they really accurate? What can be done to break down such stereotypes?
- Explore a social justice theme with regard to homophobia. What are the causes of homophobia? What are the dangers? Who are the victims? What is being done to end homophobia in your school?

**Connecting to the Text*****Title***

- A good title should draw readers to the book and give them a hint of what the book is about. Is *Crossover* a good title? What does it convey about the book?
- Have students brainstorm alternative titles and vote on which title works best.
- If the photo on the cover didn't feature a boy and a basketball, would the title *Crossover* still work?

***Plot and Theme***

- Most novels have a main plot and a few subplots. Get students to write a list of *Crossover*'s plots and subplots.
- Repeat the process, this time concentrating on themes. Discuss whether there is any crossover between plot and theme.
- Have students compare their lists of themes and decide which theme is the most important. For instance, is the theme of tolerance more important than the theme of teamwork? Or is justice more important than doing the right thing?
- On graph paper, have students chart the action of the novel. Where is the height of conflict? Where is the resolution?

***Point of View***

*Crossover* is written from Kyle's point of view. Ask student's to pick a scene and rewrite it from Luke's or Jenna's point of view.

## Connecting to the Curriculum

### *Math*

What are the dimensions of a regulation NBA basketball court? If a player stands under the backboard and a foot away from the rim (ch.7) and moves back 18" (45 cm) every time he sinks a shot, how many steps will it take him to reach the free throw line? How many steps to reach the center-court inner circle?

### *Literature*

- The musical *Oliver!* is taken from the novel *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens. Have students research Dickens' life. Which character in *Oliver* is semi-autobiographical?
- Many other Dickens' novels have been adapted for movies and television. Get students to answer the following questions:
  1. Who directed the latest movie version of *Oliver Twist* (2005)?
  2. Who starred as the young David Copperfield in the 1999 television series of the same name?
  3. Who played Estella in the 1998 movie adaptation of *Great Expectations*?

## Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Kyle is lectured about commitment by both his coach and the drama teacher. He worries that he will be unable to fulfill their expectations. Discuss whether it's possible to commit 100% to two different things.
2. Teamwork isn't something that exists just on sports teams. Discuss other activities where teamwork is valuable. What kinds of things don't benefit from a team approach?
3. Kyle's principal tells the assembly that there is zero tolerance at the school for hatred and vandalism, yet Kyle's teammates use words like *fag*, *homo* and *queer*. What does zero tolerance really mean? Is it enforced at your school? Does it work?
4. Lukas has a very unselfish response to the way he is treated by Stillman and his buddies, but he recognizes that other people might not respond as well. What would you do if someone treated you that way? What would you do if it was happening to a close friend?

**Author's Note**

Stereotypes in school—and in society in general—keep a lot of people from getting to know each other. All of us are guilty of making snap decisions about people based on their appearance or their interests. I wrote about this subject because I believe everybody should be encouraged to look beyond stereotypes.

**Resources*****Charles Dickens***

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_Dickens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Dickens)

[www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/473285](http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/473285)

***Homophobia***

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homophobia>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zero\\_tolerance\\_%28schools%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zero_tolerance_%28schools%29)

***Basketball courts***

[www.betterbasketball.com/basketball-court](http://www.betterbasketball.com/basketball-court)

**Author Biography**

**Jeff Rud** is the author of ten sports-related books, including five books for Orca Book Publishers. *Crossover* was his first book in the popular Orca Sports series.

Jeff was a journalist in Western Canada for nearly thirty years, working for a variety of newspapers. For the first twenty-three years, he was a sports writer, covering a wide range of sports, including the NHL, CFL and NBA. Aside from his fiction, he has written two biographies of Canadian basketball star Steve Nash, and a history of the Vancouver Canucks.

For the final six years of his newspaper career, Jeff was a political journalist, covering politics in the British Columbia Legislature. He now works in communications for the BC government.

He is married to Lana, a middle school teacher. The couple lives in Victoria with their two children, Maggie and Matthew, and their two black Lab-crosses, Otis and Joker. Jeff coaches youth basketball and baseball and is the manager of his son's hockey team.