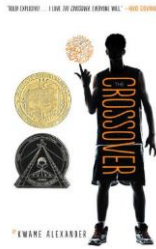


## Must Read Books for Middle School Students by Dr. Carmen Gordillo

Teachers often ask me how can they encourage students to read more independently. By reading research, being active on social media, and attending literacy conferences I have learned the importance of “teachers as readers.” It is crucial for teachers to read and keep abreast of current books in order to recommend them to students (and other educators too). Penny Kittle @pennykittle, Donalyn Miller @donalynbooks, Teri Lesesne @ProfessorNana, and other educators emphasize the importance of teachers reading alongside their students. Teachers need to recommend books to students every day. It is suggested that teachers conduct at least one “booktalk” per day. Therefore, one of my professional goals is to read more, especially children’s and YA books so I can increase my knowledge of books and help other educators add good books to their classroom libraries.

One “Must Read” book for the middle school classroom is *The Crossover* by Kwame Alexander. I utilized this book as a read aloud this year. Many students begged (yes, begged) me to continue reading it. In fact, one class this school year kept cheering with enthusiasm after each verse. *The Crossover* flew off the shelves in my eighth grade classroom. The book is about twin brothers, Josh and Jordan Bell, who are basketball stars and inseparable until one of them meets someone special. Dr. Bell, the boys’ mother, is the assistant principal of the middle school they attend. Their father, Mr. Bell, is a retired professional basketball player who coaches them in basketball and life. This book is about the special bond between the brothers and their family. It explores themes of love, friendship, familial love, and loss. Kwame Alexander writes this book in verse and includes pop culture references. In addition, he intertwines lessons about life through

the lens of basketball. This book was the 2015 Newbery Award winner and Coretta Scott King Honor award winner.



Another “Must Read” for middle school classroom is the informational text *The 2016 Book of World Records* by Jennifer Corr Morse. Each year Scholastic publishes a book for kids about world records on various categories, i.e., entertainment, sports, the Internet, technology, animals, nature, and more! The book includes glossy pictures in color, charts with statistics, and interesting vocabulary. This year I used it as a mentor text when I taught the Notice and Note Nonfiction Signposts based on Kylee Beers and Robert Probst’s work. This was a great resource when we explored, “Numbers and Stats” “Word Gaps” and “Quoted Words” – some of the features commonly found in nonfiction. My students often ask me, “Are we are going to read that book today?” This book brought in new life in to the classroom and even the most reticent students participated in lessons when we used this book. I am looking forward to reading the 2017 edition, which is out right now!

