

A Standards-Aligned Educator Guide for Grades 3 – 7

TAKE BACK THE BLOCK

About the book:

Wes Henderson has the best style in sixth grade. That--and hanging out with his crew (his best friends since little-kid days) and playing video games--is what he wants to be thinking about at the start of the school year, not the protests his parents are always dragging him to.

But when a real estate developer makes an offer to buy Kensington Oaks, the neighborhood Wes has lived his whole life, everything changes. The grownups are supposed to have all the answers, but all they're doing is arguing. Even Wes's best friends are fighting. And some of them may be moving. Wes isn't about to give up the only home he's ever known. Wes has always been good at puzzles, and he knows there has to be a missing piece that will solve this puzzle and save the Oaks. But can he find it . . . before it's too late?

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Publisher: Random House
Books for Young Readers

ISBN-10: 0593175174

ISBN -13: 978-0593175170

About the Author:

Chrystal D. Giles is a children's book author and champion for diversity and representation in children's literature. She is making her middle-grade debut with, *Take Back the Block*, a Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection and Kids' Indie Next Pick. Chrystal was a 2018 We Need Diverse Books mentee, and her poem "Dimples" appears in the poetry anthology *Thanku: Poems of Gratitude* (Millbrook). Chrystal lives outside Charlotte, North Carolina, with her husband and son.



Pre-Reading Discussion:

- Consider the illustration on the cover of the book. List the clues that suggest what his personality might be like.
- Describe the setting. Make an inference regarding how the boy feels about the setting.
- The synopsis suggests that the story is about practice called *gentrification*. Explain all that you know about *gentrification*.
- Another term presented in the synopsis is *justice*. Describe what the word *justice* means to you.
- Predict what the story is going to be about.

Post-Reading Discussion:

The third Saturday I was here instead of playing NBA 2K with Brent and Alyssa ... "Stop tenant replacement!" Which didn't make much sense, because there were no tenants left to replace. I go why we were there, but I was a little tired of fighting battles that didn't have anything to do with me...

- After reading this chapter, describe Wes's personality. Define his values. Describe what he wants. Cite examples from the text.
- Examine reasons why Wes seems to feel agitated while attending the protest. Does he find being with his mother more of a frustration or missing out on spending time with his friends? Explain your answer.
- Consider the phrase "...tired of fighting battles that didn't have anything to do with me". Do agree that he is somehow removed from the issues the displaced tenants were experiencing? How so?
- Define the term *community*. What does word *community* mean to you?

Post-Reading Discussion continued:

Not even an hour into the clothing drive, I spotted Kari walking up to the shelter. Oh no! I had forgotten Mom told him to come. I ran over to stop him from getting in line.

“Sometimes change takes a long time,” Ms. Monica said. “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

I’ve turned into Mom – a much fiercer version. I guess I do have that thing deep inside pushing me to seek out my own way. I’m a leader.

- Identify moments in the text where Wes seems somewhat arrogant and self-absorbed. Consider ways that his focus seemed to shift from being more concerned about the needs of others than his own.
- Analyze Wes’s relationships with Brent, Mya, Alyssa, and Kari. Of the four characters, which one helped Wes develop a sense of compassion? Explain how and why.
- In literature, each secondary character mirror specific traits, or qualities, that are possessed by the main character. Identify the traits demonstrated by Brent, Mya, Alyssa, and Kari that reflect Wes’s true nature. Tell how each secondary character helped Wes to change in the end.
- The word *justice* means fairness, honesty, and equity. Discuss how, throughout the development of the story, Wes is growing to understand the value of establishing *justice* in his community.
- The term *moral universe* can be defined as the pursuit and discovery of what is right and wrong in the universe. Do you agree that the arc of the *moral universe* “bends toward justice”? Explain your answer.
- Wes’s neighborhood is being threatened by a process called *gentrification*, in which part of a city changes from being a poor area to a richer one. Examine how Wes’s growing understanding of this process complicated his relationships, homelife, and community.
- It is said that leadership is a learned process. Does Wes’s journey demonstrate this notion? Explain your answer.
- Some say that engaging in leadership magnifies one’s true character. Describe, how by assuming leadership roles, Wes’s true nature was demonstrated.
- Leaders are known to see opportunities, rather than only focus on obstacles. How about you? Are you ready to step into a leadership role? Are you ready to be a part of the solution, rather than the problem? Go for it!

Make Difference! Make a Plan...

Take Back the Block is the story of a boy’s decision to defend the rights of his community by establishing a well-researched, fact-filled plan of action. How about you? Are there issues that you feel are worthy of defending? If so, use the instructions below and graphic organizer on the next page to develop a persuasive argument, one that will guide your plan to make a difference in your community, too.

Step 1: Social Justice Issue Claim – Identify the issue that you feel most passionate about exploring.

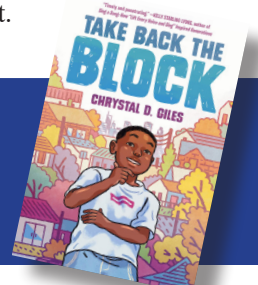
Step 2: Reasons – State three reasons why this issue needs to be addressed.

Step 3: Evidence – Research facts and state proof that this issue needs to be addressed.

Step 4: Explanation – Clearly state your position regarding this issue. Clarify why it needs to be addressed and how you suggest it be done.

Step 5: Counterclaim/Counterargument – State reasons why others might believe that the issue is just.

Step 6: Conclusion – Refute the counterclaims and establish a plan of action.





Social Justice Issue Claim

Reason #1

Reason #2

Reason #3

Evidence #1

Evidence #2

Evidence #3

Explanation

Counterclaim/Counterargument

Conclusion

