



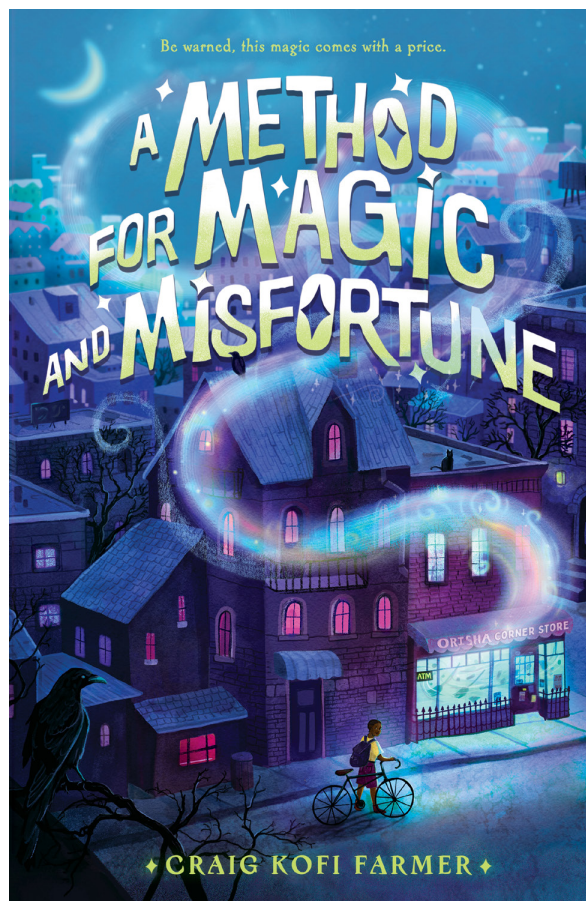
# A teachers guide for **A METHOD FOR MAGIC AND MISFORTUNE**

## ABOUT THE BOOK

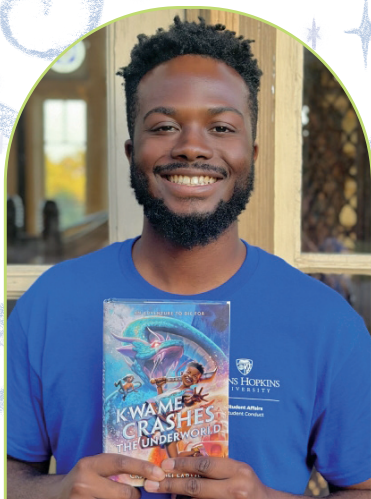
Twelve-year-old Marcus Pennrider feels far from magical. He's trying his best to balance school, a part-time job, and looking after his little sister. On top of that, his aunt has moved in with them to be their new caretaker.

But one day, Marcus discovers a secret magic that flows through the streets of Grand Park—magic that can make money out of thin air or control the weather—and everything seems to start changing for the better. Marcus even catches the attention of Mr. O, owner of the local corner store and a beloved leader in the community, who takes Marcus under his wing and teaches him how to use magic.

As Marcus delves into the strange world of divination, he becomes entrenched in a rigorous magical training program . . . and discovers that Mr. O may not be who he seems. It'll be up to Marcus to decide who his true family is, and if perhaps the real magic of Grand Park lies much closer to home.



Ages 8–12 • 9781250900289 • e-Book 9781250900272



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**CRAIG KOFI FARMER** is the winner of the Coretta Scott King–John Steptoe New Talent Award and the author of the middle-grade novels *Kwame Crashes the Underworld* and *A Method for Magic and Misfortune*. Farmer grew up in Prince Georges County, went to Towson University for his bachelor of science degree, and earned a master of education degree from the University of Maryland, College Park. He currently works in student affairs, helping college students achieve work-life balance and self-actualization. When he's not writing or working, he's exploring Baltimore, analyzing superhero movies, watching psychological thrillers, and deciding exactly what he's going to eat that day.



# ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## PRE-READING

1. **Celebrating Yourself:** Write a letter to yourself talking about all the things you have accomplished recently.
  - Why did you select the accomplishments you did in the letter? What about those accomplishments makes you proud?
2. **Acknowledging Others:** Pretend you won an award. Write an acceptance speech where you acknowledge people in your life who have had a positive impact.
  - Why did you select the people you selected in the speech?
3. **Role Models:** Create a short research project about someone you consider a role model or whom you look up to.
  - Why did you select them?
  - What do you know about their past/present/future?
  - How do you personally connect to them?
4. **Understanding Bullying:** Do you believe bullying is an issue in your school/community?
  - How does your school/community address bullying?
  - How do you think your school/community should address bullying?
5. **Community Exploration:** Research the history of your community.
  - What are the biggest strengths of your community?
  - What are the biggest challenges in your community?
  - How has your community changed over the years?
  - How is your community trying to improve?

## DURING READING

### Chapter One

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** What makes a strong community?
- **Video Exploration:** Community Song with Mickey Guyton: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvrNCEcqhAM>
- **Ending Discussion Question:** How does Marcus view Mr. O at the start of the book?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** How do you think Mr. O will be important to Marcus's development during the course of the book?

### Chapter Two

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** What makes a strong mentor?
- **Video Exploration:** Mentorship Moves the Needle: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUvY7sOvYUA>
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Mr. O and Brian are both mentors to Marcus. How are they similar and how are they different at the beginning of the book? Who would you rather have as a mentor?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** Who do you think is going to be a better mentor to Marcus, Mr. O or Brian?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** What do you think happened when Marcus drew the infinity symbol?

### Chapter Three

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** What is a special gift you have?
- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** When was a time you surprised yourself?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Mr. O showed his magical powers to Marcus. Why do you think he decided to showcase the duplication of money? What might this tell you about Mr. O?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Were you surprised by how Mr. O reacted when he found out Marcus has magical powers?





- **Prediction Discussion Question:** Now that Marcus has been introduced to divination, what challenges do you think he might face going forward?

#### Chapter Four

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** Empathy is the ability to understand where another person is coming from. Do you consider yourself an empathetic person? Why or why not?
- **Video Exploration:** What is empathy? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icIIUdTEQnU>
- **Video Exploration:** Sesame Street: Empathy [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9\\_IRtIR4xbM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_IRtIR4xbM)
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Marcus decides to save Jade during the duel. Why do you think he decided to save her? Were you surprised that he decided to save her? What would you have done if you were in Marcus's situation?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Marcus has experienced his first divination lesson. How do you think he is feeling after the lesson?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** How do you think Marcus will do in his first duel against Jade?

#### Chapter Five

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** When was a time you learned to do something new that was challenging?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Mr. O claims to be the reason that Grand Park improved. Do you believe he actually is the reason? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Mr. O says that "Great pain yields great potential for evolution. For invention. For magic." Do you agree with how Mr. O views pain? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you think Marcus was right in how he tried to stand up against Aunt Donna? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Was Aunt Donna right in grounding Marcus? Why or why not?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** Do you think Marcus is still going to find a way to take lessons with Mr. O?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** How do you think Marcus's relationship with Aunt Donna will change? How do you think his relationship with Mr. O will change?

#### Chapter Six

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** Was there a time you went against something an adult told you to do? Why did you go against them?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** How is Marcus treating Ariana and Aunt Donna in this chapter? Do you think it is fair for him to treat them like this?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you think Marcus should go against Aunt Donna and still do divination?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you support Mr. O or Aunt Donna more? Do you agree with Marcus going against Aunt Donna and going with Mr. O? Do you agree with Mr. O helping Marcus go against Aunt Donna?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** Do you think Aunt Donna will find out what Marcus is doing with Mr. O? How do you think she would react if she found out?

#### Chapter Seven

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** What is one thing in your community you would want to improve?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** How is Marcus's relationship with Jade evolving and changing in this chapter?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Mr. O shares with Marcus the history of divination and what makes someone a divinator. What part of this information stood out to you? What impact do you think learning about the history of divination will have on Marcus?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Mr. O suggests that everyone should act like Marcus. Do you think the world would be better if everyone acted like Marcus? Would you want everyone in the world to act like you?



- **Ending Discussion Question:** What do you think a divinator should be focused on? If you were a divinator, what would you do? What would be your goal?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you agree with Marcus turning away from his aunt? Do you really think that's what's best?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** What do you think will happen to the relationship between Marcus and his aunt?

## Chapter Eight

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** When was a time you disappointed someone? What did you do to disappoint them? How did you feel?
- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** When was a time you lied about something? Why did you decide to lie? Did you ever tell the truth about it?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you think Mr. O is lying about what Aunt Donna said to him about Marcus? Why or why not? If he is lying, why do you think he might be lying?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Marcus decides he wants to drop out of school. Do you agree with his choice? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Jade lives at the corner store with Mr. O. How did you react when you found this out? What does this tell you about Jade? What does it tell you about Mr. O?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** What do you think will happen to Marcus now that he has made his decision to focus on divination full time?

## Chapter Nine

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** What do you think is the biggest threat to a peaceful community?
- **Video Exploration:** What Is Trauma and How to Cope with It: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TX6W5OfN7iY>
- **Video Exploration:** Coping with Scary and Distressing Memories: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5CrmanerlY>
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Mr. O talks a lot about chaos and chaos creators. Do you agree that chaos creators should be gotten rid of as soon as possible? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Marcus and Jade have to stop a battle. If you were a divinator, how would you have tried to stop the battle?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Mr. O makes Jade and Marcus call him "sir." Do you agree with why Mr. O says it's important to call him sir? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you think Marcus should push through and keep learning how to be a divinator or should he stop and go back home? Why?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Mr. O confiscates Jade's and Marcus's phones. Do you agree with him confiscating their phones? Why or why not?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** Do you think Marcus will keep going as a divinator or stop?

## Chapter Ten

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** Do you think people in the world are generally more individualistic (focused on themselves) or collective (focused on everyone)?
- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** Is it easy or hard for you to trust people? Why?
- **Video Exploration:** Cultural Dimension: me or we: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CW7aWKXB5J4>
- **Video Exploration:** What is individualism?: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZVR10D2DPU>
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Mr. O seems very focused on violence. Why do you think he is so focused on violence and having a "killer instinct"?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you think this new lifestyle is actually making Marcus stronger? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** We learn a bit about Jade's history. What from her history stands out to you? How does Jade view Mr. O? Does she view Mr. O in a similar or different way from how Marcus views him?





- **Ending Discussion Question:** Jade says, “He’s tough on me, but I deserve it. I deserve much worse than this.” Do you agree with Jade? Do you think she deserves it?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** How does Aunt Donna actually seem to feel about Marcus being gone? How might this impact Marcus and his decision?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Why do you think Jade tells Marcus to leave? Do you think she is trying to help him or trick him?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** Do you think Marcus is going to stay or leave after this experience?

## Chapter Eleven

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** When was a time you pushed through a difficult situation? How did it feel to push through?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** What does Mr. O tell Marcus when he tries to go to his aunt? Why do you think he tells him this?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Why doesn’t Marcus leave when he has the chance? What would you do?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Jade suffers the consequences of sneaking the phones back. Do you think Mr. O’s punishment for Jade was fair? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Why do you think Mr. O decides to take Jade and Marcus to the annual Conclave of Divinators?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** What do you think will happen at the annual Conclave of Divinators?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** How do you think Marcus and Jade’s relationship will change going forward?

## Chapter Twelve

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** If you didn’t have to go to school, would you still go? Why or why not? Do you think school is a good use of your time?
- **Video Exploration:** History of Tulum Ruins: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIJzyBOOPpM>
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Why do you think Ms. Volumina tries to warn Marcus and Jade about Mr. O? Do you think it was right for her to try and warn them? Should Marcus and Jade listen to Ms. Volumina? Why or why not?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** Why do you think Brian is at the conclave?

## Chapter Thirteen

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** Describe a time you went against a friend. Why did you go against them? How did it feel?
- **Video Exploration:** Morgane Le Fay: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUUC0c3ISZQ>
- **Video Exploration:** Merlin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vwN4RuquIU>
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Why do you think Brian tells Marcus that he can’t trust Mr. O? How would you respond if you were in Marcus’s situation?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Why does Marcus keep defending Mr. O to Brian? What does this tell us about Marcus?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Why do you think Jade and Marcus don’t want Brian’s help?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Why do you think Marcus chose Mr. O over Brian? Do you think this was the right decision?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Why do you think people are shocked by Marcus’s duel strategy? What does this tell us about how Marcus and Mr. O have been training?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** How does Marcus respond when he starts to lose a duel? Do you think he made a good choice or a bad choice by responding this way?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Mr. O and Morgane Le Fay disagree over how to train apprentices to duel. Who do you agree with? Why?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** We learn that Mr. O has gotten in trouble with the conclave before. What do you think he did to get his first “charge”?



## Chapter Fourteen

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** When was a time you doubted or disagreed with something you were doing? Why did you doubt or disagree with it?
- **Video Exploration:** 8 Signs of an Abusive Parent: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pn2a7tHsfa0>
- **Video Exploration:** Childhood Trauma and the Brain: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYBUYIkZpf8>
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Why does Marcus start to doubt Mr. O and his training after the conclave? Do you think Marcus is right in doubting his training? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Were you surprised that so many people seem to be showing up to help find Marcus? How do you think this might impact Marcus and his decisions and mindset?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** We learn that Mr. O lied about Jade going to private school and adopting her. Were you surprised to learn this? Why or why not? What does this tell us about Mr. O?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Why does Marcus decide to openly question Mr. O? How does Mr. O respond to being questioned? Were you surprised by how Mr. O responded?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Marcus suggests there are different ways to be a divinator. Do you think he is correct? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Marcus questions what his father deserves. What do you think Marcus's father deserves? Why?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** How will Marcus's relationships change after the incident with Mr. O? What would you do if you were in his situation?

## Chapter Fifteen

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** What is a dream you have had recently?
- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** Do you think it is better to rule with fear or rule with love? Why?
- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** Do you believe people are naturally selfish?
- **Video Reflection:** Standing Up to a Bully: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YN2IXz9vI7Y>
- **Video Reflection:** Protect Yourself Rules—Bullying: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mrE5zgEvt4>
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Marcus debates the importance of being a kid. Do you think it is better to stay a kid as long as you can or to grow up and mature quickly? Why? Which message have you heard more?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Marcus decides he needs to get away from Mr. O. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you think Marcus made the right choice by leaving Mr. O? Why do you think Jade decided she had to stay?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** Jade stays with Mr. O. What do you think will happen to her now? Do you think Marcus will try to go back and get her?

## Chapter Sixteen

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** What is one way you give back to your community?
- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** Do you think it is important to always tell the truth? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Marcus wonders if every adult is like Mr. O and his father. Do you think all adults are like Mr. O and Marcus's father? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you think Marcus should tell Aunt Donna everything that happened to him? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** What is Brian's touchstone? What does this tell us about Brian?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you agree with how Brian chooses to support the community? Why or why not?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** Do you think Aunt Donna is actually going to find out the truth?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** How do you think Marcus's relationship with Brian is going to change now that he is back?





## Chapter Seventeen

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** A breaking point is a moment when you don't feel like you can handle something or someone any longer. When was a time that you reached a breaking point?
- **Video Exploration:** Why It Can Be Hard to Leave an Abusive Relationship: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgN-VLKAgjYs>
- **Video Exploration:** How to Safely Leave an Abusive Relationship: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvWw9OZMgZ0n>
- **Ending Discussion Question:** We learn about the history between Brian and Mr. O. Were you surprised by what we learned? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Why does Brian say Jade is staying with Mr. O? Do you agree that they should let Jade reach her breaking point with Mr. O?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** What was Brian's breaking point with Mr. O? What does this tell us about Brian?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** Do you think Jade will ever leave Mr. O? What do you think her breaking point might be?

## Chapter Eighteen

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** If you could create your own "touchstone," what would you want it to be able to do?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** What is Marcus's touchstone? Were you surprised this was his touchstone?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Marcus decides to tell Mr. O what's happening. Why do you think he decided to tell him? Do you think this was a good choice or a bad choice?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Why do you think Mr. O is so excited about Marcus's touchstone? What does this tell us about Mr. O? Do you support how Mr. O wants to use the touchstone? Why or why not?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** What do you think will happen to Ariana?

## Chapter Nineteen

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
- **Video Exploration:** The Cycle of Abuse: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRICIFcINb4>
- **Video Exploration:** The Choice Is Yours (A Lesson on Free Will for Kids): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJQ4U-vAEeyA>
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Marcus says he still looks up to Mr. O. Are you surprised that he still feels this way about Mr. O? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you think mind control could ever be justified? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** We learn a bit about how Marcus's father treated him. What does this tell us about Marcus? What does this tell us about his father? Based on this information, what do you think Marcus's father deserves to have happen as a consequence of his actions?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you think Marcus should stand up against Mr. O or try and run away? Why?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** What do you think will happen to Marcus, Mr. O, and Jade?

## Chapter Twenty

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** When is a time you should've stood up for someone but didn't? Why did you decide not to stand up for them?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** How does Jade act during the battle between Marcus and Mr. O? Does this surprise you? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Brian and Marcus debate trying to kill Mr. O. Do you think they should kill Mr. O? Why or why not?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** Do you think Brian and Marcus are going to kill Mr. O?

## Chapter Twenty-One

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** If you could go back in time and change one moment in your life, what would you change? Why would you change it?



- **Video Reflection:** Confronting Domestic Violence Abusers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IL-8CI2lsu0>
- **Ending Discussion Question:** When we meet Mr. O as a kid, what do we learn about his experience growing up? Does this change your perception of him? Why or why not?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Why do you think Mr. O treated Jade, Marcus, and Brian the way he treated them, knowing what he went through as a child?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you think Marcus, Jade, and Brian should accept Mr. O's apology? Why or why not? What would you do if you were in their situation?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you agree with how Marcus reacts to Mr. O? Why or why not?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** Do you think Mr. O has actually changed?

## Chapter Twenty-Two

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** When was a time you overcame a fear? What did you overcome? How did you overcome it?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Jade feels scared to be out in the real world. What advice would you give her if you were her friend?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Do you think Marcus should stay in Grand Park or go with Jade? Why? What would you do if you were in his situation?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** What do you think is going to happen to Jade now that she has decided to leave Grand Park?

## Epilogue

- **Brainstorming Discussion Question:** What do you like to do over the summer for fun?
- **Video Exploration:** Meet the Man Who Invented the Super Soaker: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-IzAOIWkG58> OR <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYq6aKLuSk0>
- **Ending Discussion Question:** What is Jade's touchstone? What does this touchstone tell us about Jade? Would you use her touchstone if you were able to?
- **Ending Discussion Question:** Jade and Marcus decide to keep his touchstone a secret. Do you agree that they should keep it a secret? Why or why not?
- **Prediction Discussion Question:** Do you think Marcus is going to be able to keep his touchstone a secret?

# POST READING

## I. Essential Question Exploration

- **Visual Representation:** Create a drawing or series of drawings that focus on Marcus's challenges and ability to overcome them.
- **Presentation:** Create a slide deck that looks at ten to fifteen key moments in the text and Marcus's challenges and ability to overcome them.
- **Poem, Rap, or Song:** Create a short poem, rap, or song that highlights Marcus's challenges and ability to overcome them.
- **Musical Playlist:** Create a musical playlist of ten to fifteen songs that explore Marcus's challenges and ability to overcome them.
- **Textual Evidence Analysis:** Identify ten to fifteen key lines in the text that showcase Marcus's challenges and ability to overcome them.
- **Analytical Essay:** Write a three to five paragraph essay responding to the essential question around Marcus's challenges.
- **Narrative Writing Task #1:** Create an alternative ending to the text.
- **Narrative Writing Task #2:** Choose a specific moment in the text and write it from another character's perspective.

## 2. Discussion Questions

- If you had the chance to be a divinator, would you take that opportunity? Why or why not?
  - ◊ If you could develop your own touchstone, what would you want the ability to do?

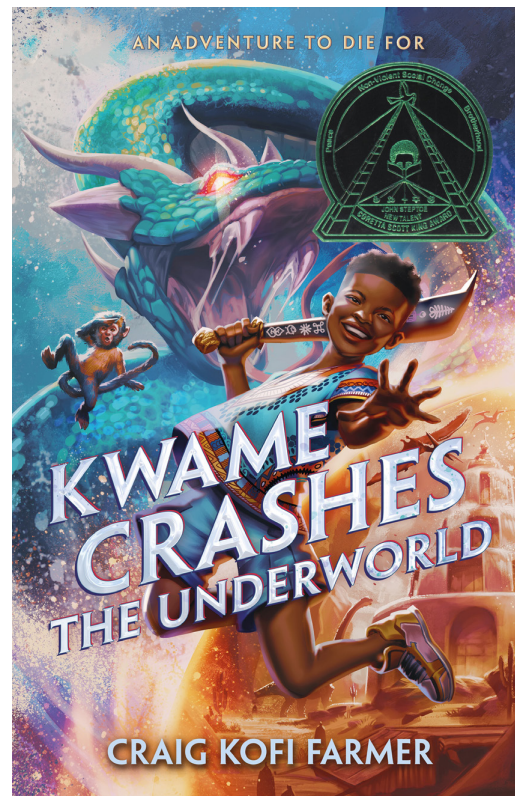




- Marcus has different role models and mentors throughout the book (Aunt Donna, Brian, Jade, and Mr. O). Who do you think had the biggest impact on him and his development?
  - ◊ What do you think are important qualities a mentor should have?
  - ◊ Do you think in the end Mr. O was a good or a bad mentor for Marcus to have? Why?
- How does Marcus's understanding about "family" change over the course of the book? How is your understanding of family similar to or different from Marcus's understanding?
- All of the characters change throughout the course of the book. Who do you think changes the most (Marcus, Mr. O, Jade, Brian, etc.)?
- Many of the characters in the book found themselves in abusive relationships. Why was it so challenging for them to get out of the abusive relationships? What advice would you have given them if they were your friends or family?
- Do you think there was a villain in this book? Why or why not?
- If you had a mentor like Mr. O, how would you react?
- Marcus has different examples of what it means to be a parent or guardian. What qualities make someone a good parent or guardian?
- Create an action plan: If you were in a challenging situation or an abusive relationship, how would you get out of it? Whose help might you need to get out of it?
  - ◊ Safety Plan: <https://www.thewishcentre.org/resources/resources-children-young-people/>
  - ◊ How can you support someone who has been in a difficult or bad situation?



## ALSO BY CRAIG KOFI FARMER



9781250394736 • Ages 8-12

Guide prepared by Wyatt Oroke (Mr.O), a nationally recognized middle school English teacher in Baltimore City. Mr. O was named Baltimore City Teacher of the Year in 2020, Maryland State Teacher of the Year in 2021, and was a two time featured guest on the Ellen DeGeneres Show



An imprint of Macmillan Children's Publishing Group | MacKidsSchoolandLibrary.com