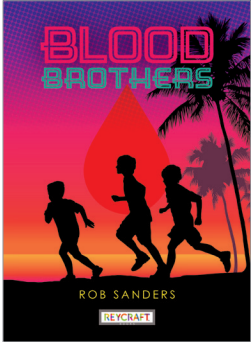


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*Blood Brothers*  
by Rob Sanders

### SUMMARY

Calvin Johnston's secret is out. He and his brothers are tainted. Untouchable. And the bad blood flowing through their veins is threatening to kill them. So are some of their neighbors in Ashland, the "Friendliest Little Town" in Florida. The Johnston brothers are kicked out of everything—school, baseball, scouts, even church. Ashland's anger has erupted into a fireball of hate. The only silver lining is that Calvin's best friend Izzy lives 65 miles away at the beach and has no idea about his secret. But news has a way of spreading. Calvin and his brothers are in the fight of their lives. As a matter of fact, they're fighting for life itself.

### SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

- Relationship Skills: When Calvin and his brothers begin to experience prejudice, they understand what other targeted groups in their community face. Calvin learns why it's important to stand up for the rights of others.
- For more about relationship skills and other social-emotional competencies, visit: <https://casel.org/>.

For read-aloud videos of the Reycraft books, visit [reycraftbooks.com/videos.html](http://reycraftbooks.com/videos.html).

# Teacher's Guide

BY JESSICA WALSH

## Book Talk Blurb

Have you ever read a book that you know you'll never forget? Where the characters feel like real people? *Blood Brothers* is one of those stories. Even though it is inspired by real people, this is the fictional story of three brothers—Charlie, Curtis, and Calvin—who have to show their town what it means to stand up for what's right when their world gets turned upside down.

## Set Purpose: Invitation to Readers

*Blood Brothers* is a novel in verse. Let's take a look inside. What do you notice? (It looks like poetry.) How do you think reading a novel in verse is different from reading a prose novel? (there's more blank space, fewer words, poetic devices) As you read, think about how the author uses poetic devices like figurative language, metaphor, and allusions (references to other texts and poems) to layer on meaning while still developing characters and plot. You can use your notebook to show what you are noticing as you read!

## During Reading

### Conferring Conversation Starters


- The three brothers are important characters in this story. There are several minor characters too. What is your plan for keeping track of characters in your notebook? Have you seen a classmate's character tracking system that you like? Let's brainstorm.
- *Blood Brothers* is a historical fiction novel. Have you read historical fiction before? Talk to me about the similarities and differences you are noticing between other historical fiction stories and *Blood Brothers*.
- Rob Sanders uses a lot of figurative language to layer on meaning in fewer words. Keeping track of figurative language can help us see patterns and start thinking about main ideas and big themes in the story. Can you show me how you've been keeping track of your notes? What main ideas or big themes are emerging for you?
- Each brother faces different conflicts throughout the story, both internal and external. What are you noticing about how those conflicts impact the plot? Are there ways you can use visuals in your notebook to help you see the connections and draw conclusions about bigger ideas and themes?

## Respond, Reflect, React, or Research

- **Respond—Read Like a Writer (Figurative Language):** Poetry uses figurative language to pack a lot of meaning in fewer words. Novels in verse do the same thing. What are some of the most memorable uses of figurative language in *Blood Brothers*? What makes it memorable? What can students learn from Rob Sanders that they can use in their writing?
- **Respond—Langston Hughes Mentor Text Poem:** In *Blood Brothers*, a poem by Langston Hughes inspires Calvin to write his own poem. Calvin learns a technique called “borrowing a line.” When writers borrow a line, they use words or phrases from a mentor text (original text) and then finish with their own words and ideas. [In your journal, borrow a line from Langston Hughes’ poem to write your own inspired poem.](#)
- **Reflect on SEL Competency—Relationship Skills:** When Calvin and his brothers start to experience prejudice from members of their community, they begin to understand how other targeted groups have been feeling. This is called empathy—when someone understands what someone else is going through because they’ve also gone through it. [How can empathy help us be better classmates? Jot your thoughts down in your journal.](#)
- **Research—Historical Songs:** *Blood Brothers* includes many songs from the time period the story is set in. [You might be interested in looking up the lyrics of these songs to understand the time period even better. Find the list of song titles in the back of the book and see where your research takes you!](#)

### Real World Action

Music has strong ties to memory. Ask students to create a “Memory Mixtape” of a list of songs that are connected to their memories. Encourage students to try thinking of a theme for their playlists, such as “School Memories” or “Summer Memories.”

 **If your students liked this book . . .**

***Carlos Gomez Freestyles... Heavy on the Style***

by Chuck Gonzales

New York: Reycraft Books, 2021

Loosely based on the artist’s childhood in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, this graphic novel centers on Carlos Gomez and his family—the only Mexican family in their Midwestern town. When invited to participate in a talent competition at an upcoming RV show, Carlos decides to join the BMX stunt team and show his special flair. What could possibly go wrong?

***Red, White, and Whole***

by Rajani LaRocca

New York: Quill Tree Books, 2021

A novel in verse about an Indian American girl whose life is turned upside down when her mother is diagnosed with leukemia.

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