

Blook Series Commentary

The Block Book Series (dubbed 'Blook') consists of five volumes. A series cannot exist until at least two have been published. Since Volume II of the series is released as of February 28th 2022 it is time to launch a commentary document that describes the relationship of specific volumes of the growing series. From this volume on the author will continue to add notes, comments, etc. with the objective of knitting the entire series into a whole.

Fundamental unifying agents exist for the series:

INDUSTRY CODES:

The BISAC (Book Industry Standard) applicable codes are:

- YAF011000 YOUNG ADULT FICTION / Coming of Age
- YAF058280 YOUNG ADULT FICTION / Social Themes / Activism & Social Justice
- YAF055000 YOUNG ADULT FICTION / Technology
- Note that there are several sub codes in 'Social Themes' category that apply as well

BLOCK MODELS:

The series arbitrarily select an ancient physical (three dimensional) model that includes ancient attributes of each entity in order to provide a firm substrate for the exposition. Here we list the formal names and attributes for the entire series:

- Octahedron (wind element)
- Icosahedron (water element)
- Tetrahedron (fire element)
- Cube (earth element)
- DuoDecahedron (stars element)

Marketing opportunities exist for the series:

- Collectors. Even if a single volume edges higher on a rating list there is an inclination to acquire all volumes.
- Approved (after market) physical models (i.e. the above listed blocks). Many varieties and opportunities exist. Wood, ceramic, molded, metal, etc. Engravings etched onto the 'faces' (i.e. the sides of the models - a cube has six). Volume I even has a page inside to be viewed that encourages fabricating a model from paper.
- Volume I is expected to be the lowest opportunity for sales for several reasons. (1) It has been purposely written for a vastly reduced YA audience. (2) it pretty much requires using a separate Instructors' Guide. That suggests group teaching of the narrow YA group. The author suggests, if considering to expand the market for this volume, that the guide needs to be included and/or a special edition that includes it has to be fabricated. Ironically the topic covered in Volume I is essential and therefore is referenced in subsequent volumes.
- 'Drag' market opportunities include (1) the above guide (if sold separately), (2) Once done the collection of commentaries (such as this starter one), (3) Biographies. The characters depicted in the various volumes are either well-known or actual unknowns. In both cases the series author believes that their story can and should be heard.
- Media variations. Starting with Volume II it seems likely that a spoken version would be welcomed in that unique marketplace. Plans exist for how to manage the images.
- Free versions. The author hopes, for example, a spoken edition is created in other languages such as Bantu, Luganda (the book cites Kampala in the text).

Volume I Commentary

The above mentioned guide represents the commentary for this volume. However, since it is so essential to understand the remaining volumes, the remaining commentaries will amplify the guide where appropriate.

This volume is the only one that appears to be written by 'monkeys'. As stated early on the author-monkeys are disturbed (to say the least) that humans have devolved.

Indeed the initial pages seem to be geared for not YA but second or third graders. Proceeding along the text quickly becomes a challenge using structures such as coding examples to drive home points.

The monkey-authors do not shy away from borderline 'political' discussions. That sets the tone for the rest of the series. Too bad if certain educational institutions discourage and even forbid the content. Too bad for them.

This volume has purposely left many holes in the exposition. That includes the expected such as character portraits. Do we need to describe a monkey as beautiful? The reason for the holes is the expected readership and the need for them to 'fill in the blanks' via a book club like environment (with a leader armed with the guide).

There may be opportunity to push the YA for this volume but the actual vision (see dedication) is as follows:

- Hard core drop outs. Perhaps gang members, kids from dysfunctional families, bullies, kids who have been bullied, addicts, and kids with a record.
- No amount of coaxing will save them from the dedicated person (in book) claims are suffering from PTS. (Note not PTSD - it is not a disorder, it is a result perhaps of disorder).
- Convinced that they are not savable the plan is enticement. One example: Kid I give you a free tablet. (Kid thinks: *fine I can play games*). Kid all you need to do is participate in a book club (NOT return to a school). Some leader will discuss this nice easy book that looks like you can read anyways. All results are verbal analysis towards the end. Mentors, Big Brothers, Sisters are involved. Some manageable program is established for the lost soul. If so they get to keep the tablet.
- Venturing into non-hard core is risky but feasible. Real time tests will tell.

Volume II Commentary

Educators dealing with the YA readers need to be prepared ahead of time. Expect the readers to ask about sex, politics, etc. The plan is to (1) divert (too controversial and sorry - not at this school) or (2) confront head on. A compromise is to be proactive and bring out at least part of the topic. The commentary presents examples in the proactive arena.

Discuss bicycles. Pretend 'training wheels' don't exist (a likely case worldwide). How would a YA learn to ride one? Discuss: peddling, balance, braking, steering. Where to start?

Volume I details the plan: Quintillus precluded no risk of falling or even obscuring focus. He jogs next to Alexa pushing the bike. He wants her to learn one (and only one) skill. Stop. Once mastered, he reduces his pushing role since he has introduced peddling by then.

A takeaway for YA: the bike is a metaphor for life. One's first early on lesson is to learn how and when to STOP.

This volume amplifies that lesson as Alexa relates the “y’all” mechanics mansplaining and is alerted when he says something about cars’ ‘brakes’. Devolved humans generally don’t understand the salient feature that’s part of any car - *the brakes*. The dumb mechanic knows better as explained by their redundancy. If the brakes fail, basically, you’re dead.

Bicycles - - discuss mechanics and hazards. Of interest might be when a rider has two caliper brakes (handlebar attached), hitting just the front wheel one during a turn is really DUMB (you human). Flipping gears introduces physics. Don’t be shy.

The car mechanic. Watch out for this topic. Could get any teacher fired. His claim is that the fuel pump is a single point of failure, “like your heart ladies”. Interesting observation. Some student might observe this VERY CONTROVERSIAL item. “Teacher. Is the human heart what makes us a full being? When a mother-to-be hears an ultrasound heartbeat is she a complete mother, the baby done?”

Alexa, the rational scientist, reasons that yes, the heart is a sentimental ‘part’ of any human’s body. Yes it seems a single point of failure. But how far can we go? Discuss Henry Ford. He had a very regimented ‘assembly line’. “Folks - any color you want just so long as it’s black”. Would Mr. Ford say: “OK the fuel pump is assembled into the car, so go ahead and drive it off the line.” We’re not certain what he would say. Scientists need to consider concepts such as ‘viability’ to make sound judgments about a fetus. Each person in the class is expected to do the same. Best practice is to encourage them to think for themselves or seek the answer elsewhere.

Regarding the above cited category “Coming of Age” there exists ample opportunities to address the topic. There are so many that the commentary will condense them in list form.

- No shame attached to childhood hold-ons: (Tashi’a dress, Alexa’s Knitty).
- The blown away interview steps: wow apron hand sewn, surprised meal. A Plan!
- Adjust to unexpected: uh-oh she may have to deliver a babe? Get ready. Learn.
- The combined football and pothole metaphors. Life’s unpredictable bounces (like a pigskin). Life’s experiences wearing away the sharp edges or baggage one might possess.
- Selfish? Teaching in French at a local school after hours to boost her fluency. Leaving her older sister Jane (her surrogate mother too) for her own pursuit. How could she?
- The ‘incident’ and the sordid after effects. Challenge to be a survivor.
- The undersized punk, Jusuf, dealing with typical poor family issues. Mentoring by Mr. B. Learning to survive a hazing episode; carry his own big stick.
- The Aretha Franklin love story begins with RESPECT. Jusuf is non intrusive but also intrigued by Alexa. A start. The weird initial exchange (thanks to Koko). Alexa’s profound personage (seems to only know how to love; no room for hate).

- Young love grows, a hand's grasp, a tentative kiss, a plan to handle horrible childhood memories.
- The disappointing relationship seemingly put on hold forever. Jusuf disappears. Alexa moves on to where this volume starts: Canada.
- Alexa's depression. A saving quote has words that helped her: Willpower/ Locomotion.
- Stress. Anxiety about what's next. All friends off in different directions. Alexa hitches onto Joe's idea seemingly because he can hoard her belongings and she lacked alternatives.
- The sudden connection. The almost desperate plan to reunite. Courtship issues ranging all the way from no more waiting for love that goes way beyond hand-holding. Safe sex. Practical issues about boundaries, space, money. 'Charting' a future on a boat. Switching command/crew roles to boot.
- The desire to even allow a veto. To be presentable ('well appointed'). Practical (rent bikes).
- The confident real adult choices for the two lovers. But not without drama, or at least a *Restless* episode.

Regarding the above cited category "Activism & Social Justice" there exists ample opportunities to address the topic. Again a list.

- Does anyone care about use or misuse of the word 'Indian'? The indignities of First Nations peoples? Alexa addresses societal issues.
- She points out (perhaps from the village raid) a game (i.e. football) which might play a role in letting off steam. We all knew that though.
- Having a choice she would put what Yusuf is doing before any contributions she may offer. Nonetheless the meeting with her Cachuchas devises a long term plan in addition to the short term plan that was actually handled toward the end of Volume I. The feeling is that, if ever implemented, the freeter concept could redirect misplaced youth energy. The same youth that could address BIG issues such as climate change, violence, systemic issues surrounding not just racism but even infrastructure plans.
- Is the placing of the USA flag on top of an iceberg doomed to melt away yet another metaphor? How much time do the two lovers have to help their world (let alone USA)?
- Alexa's 'memo' has hints about the next volume's topic. Take a guess. Note the memo's tone is conciliatory. Alexa's attitude displays hope over hate.
- As a gesture to shy away from offending people, for example, those who are 'identifying', Alexa avoids the casual 'you guys' and, if *can't* works for *cannot*, then *y'all* will do.
- Any budding scientist can 'try a bet' (make an hypothesis). Alexa N. Trybet accepts being wrong. The bet that the ancient one knew not zero was evidently moot. She is humbled by not connecting the metaphor of the quilt to her community bonding effort (also described in Volume I in more detail).
- Every Volume, including this one, tries to energize youth to actually *do something*. In this case she had explained it may take years to create some suggested freeter apps.
- Many 'Technology' words are threaded thought the entire series.