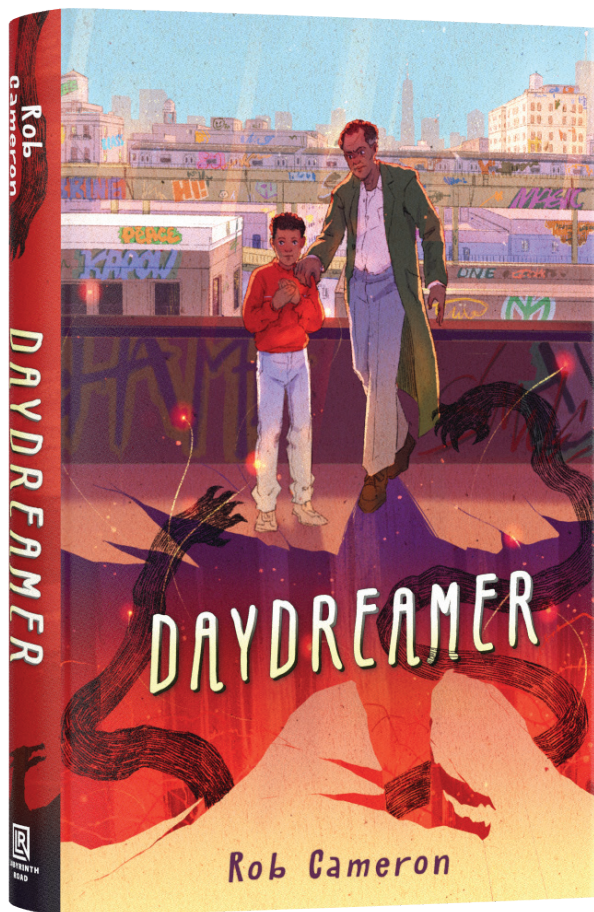


DAYDREAMER

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

RHCBTeachersLibrarians.com





ABOUT THE BOOK

An eleven-year-old boy copes with the challenges of his city life by weaving a magical realm of dragons, foxes, and trolls into his reality—until he must use the power of his creativity to save both of his worlds from destructive forces. This stunning debut is a profound exploration of imagination, community, and how the stories we tell both comfort us and challenge us to grow.

Charles's life is split between two worlds: one real and one fantasy. In the real world, he is a lonely, bullied kid who can't keep up with school when the letters refuse to stay still on the page, and who is constantly in trouble for getting distracted. He lives with his mom in an apartment building, where Glory, the grumpy old superintendent, fills his head with stories about the Dream Folk.

In his fantasy world, the Sanctuary, Charles adventures with fairies and sprites and his two imaginary best friends. There, Charles's bullies become ogres, and Glory opens his arms wide to transform into a dragon. But when trolls move into Charles's apartment building and bring with them a terrible secret, the stories he has been told and the ones he brings to life grow more complicated. To protect everyone he cares about, Charles must harness his imagination in ways he never dreamed in this unique story about the spaces and narratives we create for ourselves and the ways in which fantasy and reality collide and blur.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cameron Roberson, who writes under the pen name Rob Cameron, is a teacher, linguist, and writer. He has published poetry, stories, and essays, in *Star Line*, *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, *Foreign Policy Magazine*, *New Modality*, *Solarpunk Magazine*, *Clockwork Phoenix Five*, and others, as well as on Tor.com.. *Daydreamer* is his debut middle grade novel. Rob is also lead organizer for the Brooklyn Speculative Fiction Writers and executive producer of Kaleidocast.nyc.



Photo Credit: Melissa C. Beckman

PRAISE

“An achingly well written story about the blurry line between reality and magic in childhood—and the heartbreaking ways it can be shattered.”

—SHANNON CHAKRABORTY, *New York Times* bestselling author

“Cameron’s sentences are laden with magic, stuffed to spilling with the stuff of dreams. Through them, he takes us on a journey that’s personal, poignant, phantasmagoric, and profound.”

—CARLOS HERNANDEZ, Pura Belpré Award-winning author of *Sal and Gabi Break the Universe*

“Charming truths melt into harsh lessons about danger, bravery, persistence, and Charles’s growing strength in this fast-paced coming-of-power delight.”

—NISI SHAWL, multiple award-winning author of *Speculation*, *Everfair*, and *Kinning*

“There’s magic on every page of [this] mesmerizing, unpredictable story.... *Daydreamer* is a tale that will capture the imagination of adults and children alike.”

—MILTON J. DAVIS, author of *Amber and the Hidden City*

“A daring, monumentally lyrical achievement, if not an outright fantasy classic.”

—ZIG ZAG CLAYBOURNE, author of *Afro Puffs Are the Antennae of the Universe*

“This creative debut features strong character development in its exploration of the ways Charles copes with multiple challenges that will resonate with many readers. Captivating and cathartic.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Employing compassionate prose, Cameron illustrates the transformative power of storytelling to deliver a kindhearted tale.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

ACCESSIBILITY NOTES

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines support access for all participants by providing options. During activities, consider options for representation by allowing students to read the written text or listen (a partner or adult can read aloud). Some students may have difficulty engaging for extended timeframes. Provide options for engagement by offering short breaks and flexibility to complete tasks in different locations throughout the room. Provide options for action and expression by allowing students to present their responses in oral, written, or artistic forms.

Online Safety Notes: Many activities in the guide encourage participants to engage in internet searches, view videos, and explore online sources. Carefully monitor usage of all web-based resources.

It is helpful to search on a secure school network that filters content.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

BEWARE THE JABBERWOCKY

The poem “Jabberwocky” by Lewis Carroll is mentioned several times in the novel. Read the poem independently, take notes about key events, and then discuss your notes with a partner. Demonstrate active listening by adding at least two things to your notes that were mentioned by your partner. Also, discuss the prompts below:

- Describe the sequence of events in the poem, stanza by stanza.
- What are three characteristics that describe the boy in the poem? Explain your answer.
- Based on the “about the book” description in *Daydreamers*, how might the poem connect to the events or themes in the story? Make a prediction.

FOLKLORE CHARACTER TRACKING

There are many kinds of people and creatures mentioned in folklore across cultures. Often in folklore, there is an important lesson or message for the reader to understand. Keep this in mind as you read the novel.

- Have you read folklore in the past?
- If yes, what happened in the story?
- What was its main lesson?

As you read, use the graphic organizer below to write the names, powers, intentions, and/or interesting facts about folkloric characters referenced in the novel.

FOLKLORE CHARACTER	POWERS, INTENTIONS, OR INTERESTING DETAILS

CREATING DRAGONS

Read this [brief history of Mythical Dragons](#). Then draw an image of a dragon, create a list of the dragon's powers, and include at least three characteristics of the dragon. Your ideas can be based on your imagination, media, or what you have learned from texts in the past.


With a partner:

- Share your dragon image, powers, and characteristics.
- Actively listen to your partner by making eye contact and carefully looking at the image. Then tell your partner two things you really like about their dragon and ask a question you have about the image, powers, or characteristics.
- Swap roles to ensure you both share.
- **Discuss:** What might “to slay a dragon” mean? Is it literal or figurative? Does this apply to anything in your life?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

Consider reading *The People Could Fly* by Virginia Hamilton with the guidance of the attached [lesson plan](#) to support understanding of traditional African American folklore and a story mentioned in the novel.





The word neurodiversity “describes differences in the way people’s brains work. The idea is that there’s no ‘correct’ way for the brain to work.” (Child Mind Institute). It is critical to recognize that we all have unique gifts and talents.

When differences are pronounced and they limit the ability of the individual to adapt to the conventions of society, they might be called disabilities. Disabilities suggest that the differences experienced by the individual impede the person’s ability to function independently according to society’s expectations and rules.

EMBRACING NEURODIVERSITY

JOURNAL PROMPTS

- **Option 1:** Take the multiple intelligences quiz and write about your scores. Which intelligences were the highest? Were the results what you expected?
- **Option 2:** Write a paragraph about why neurodiversity is important. How is your brain unique? What are examples of neurodiversity in our society today?

TEXT DEPENDENT GALLERY WALK

Carefully analyze the novel by reviewing quotes in discussion stations with a small group of peers. All small groups will require a notebook or device to record answers as they review the quotes posted around the room. Discussion station roles include:

1. **Reader:** reads the quotes and questions,
2. **Timekeeper:** ensures that all discussions conclude within ten minutes by providing time reminders,
3. **Notetaker:** records group responses
4. **Questioner:** helps the group come up with one more question related to the quote.

Station One: “Charles (and I) were children in a world before neurodivergence: the realization that no two brains are exactly alike and that people can plug into and experience their worlds in very different ways. That calling somebody, a child, stupid isn’t just mean. It’s dangerous. It’s a lie. Even so, we believe things we hear if they’re repeated over and over.” (Message from the author)

- What types of things are you good at or do you enjoy doing? What does this suggest about your brain?
- Why is it important to remember that all brains are unique?
- How do people treat Charles in the book when he doesn’t do or view things as expected? For example, he says, “Mrs. Hwang—who’ll correct you and call you all types of names if you don’t get the Mrs. right, even if she doesn’t talk about her husband or have any pictures of him—doesn’t try to teach me anything, because she says I’m too stupid to learn.” (p. 20)

Station Two: Charles often mentions his difficulties with reading. He says, “Part of being good is being smart at school, but I can’t read. The words squiggle and twist on the paper and do whatever they want.” (p. 19)

- Do you think that Charles is smart? Why or why not?
- How does Charles view himself as a student? Provide examples.
- What should the teachers and adults in his life do to better support him?

Station Three: Charles often appears inattentive. For example, his mom says, “I told you about fidgeting,” (p.23) and when he attempts to read, he says, “[The words] wanted to move. Pop. VIBRATE like people tell me I do when they catch me imagining too hard.” (p. 3)

- Some students can work on a task and fidget at the same time; have you ever seen that? Are you able to do more than one thing at once? Provide examples.
- Can you think of something that started out difficult but became easier over time?
- Is there a subject in school that you find difficult? What do you do when new information is difficult to understand?
- What is your favorite way to complete a difficult task? Do you like to stand or sit? Do you need the room quiet or do you like to hear music or something else? Do you like to fidget with something? Be specific.

Station Four: Think about chapter 14, when Charles receives the pen. He says, “Inside is a pen with wide silver sides carved with tight, perfectly spaced rings. Inside each ring are complicated markings that could be words. I hear whispering. It’s my own voice ten, a hundred, a thousand times over.” (p. 82–83)

- How does the pen help Charles? What makes the pen powerful?
- How does this tool align with Charles’s natural gifts? Be specific.
- What unique talents does Charles demonstrate throughout the book? How? Who overlooks his gifts? How?

UNDERSTANDING NEURODIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

Select two videos to watch from the [Through a Child’s Eyes](#) resources. You can select videos of kids from different grades talking about different subjects. After watching, discuss the ideas shared in each video using the questions below:

- What is unique about the individual in the video?
- Did they say anything that surprised you?
- What is something new that you learned or hadn’t considered before?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Explore the resources at [Learning for Justice](#) to obtain additional activity ideas related to autism and neurodiversity awareness.

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES: ADDRESSING ABLEISM

ACTIVATING BACKGROUND

Ableism is any action or language that discriminates against individuals with disabilities. If someone is ableist, they view the person with a disability as a problem or someone who needs to be fixed. Watch the video and discuss the following questions:

- Why is ableism problematic?
- What examples of ableism were provided in the video? Can you think of any other examples?
- How does ableism contrast with neurodiversity?

TAKE ACTION

Brainstorm ways you can address ableism in your community using the graphic organizer below. Then write a letter to a community leader who can address the problem you identified. Consider offering community service to support the leader's plan of action.

EXAMPLE OF ABLEISM	WHAT CAN WE DO TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE?
A building that only has stairs for the entry	Ensuring that all buildings also have ramps

BUILD AWARENESS BROCHURE

Read the article "Disability Etiquette," and create a brochure that explains ways to engage with individuals with disabilities respectfully. Your brochure should include the following:

- Heading and titles
- Specific tips in your own words
- Engaging images aligned to your tips
- A paragraph that explains how the actions you listed will counter ableism in our society

EXTENSION DISCUSSION

In our society, examples of ableism often appear in literature and media. Can you think of another text, movie, or media example with ableist actions or language? How did these actions impact others? Be specific.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Use the resources at Learning for Justice to obtain ideas on additional ways to counter and discuss ablesim.

INTERPRETING DREAMS

WORD "DREAM" CLOUD

Literal Dreams: Dreams have many different meanings across cultures. Many people explore and interpret dreams for meaning. Read the article titled ["The Science of Dreams."](#) Next, create a class brainstorm. Place the word dream in the center of your board and add important facts about dreams around the perimeter.

Figurative Dreams: Discuss the difference between having a dream or goal and a sleeping dream. Read the article titled ["5 Qualities Kids Need to Follow Their Dreams."](#) Encourage students to create a brainstorm about one of their dreams, with the dream in the center and ways to accomplish it around the perimeter.

RESEARCH GROUPS

Individually, create a list of your recent dreams (it is okay if you cannot remember). Be sure to note what happened, how you felt, what was most clear, and any parts that seem unclear. After you brainstorm individually, engage in the one of the group research activities below.

- **Group Option 1:** With adult supervision, use online dream dictionaries to search for the meaning of things in one of your dreams. Place your findings on Post-it notes and stick them on a shared poster.
- **Group Option 2:** Interpret one of Charles's daydreams. Which characters are involved? What are their motivations or goals? How do the perspectives or goals differ among the characters? Place your ideas on Post-it notes and stick them on a shared poster.

DREAM INTERPRETATION DICTIONARY

Review the [Kids Britannica Dream resources.](#) What did you learn? Discuss the key definitions and describe the process of dreaming.

With the support of an adult, create a dream dictionary. The dictionary should include five to ten things that people might want interpreted from a dream. Include the following components:

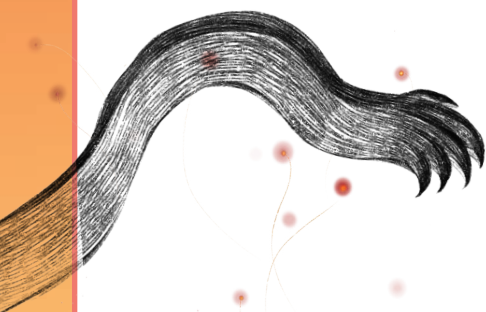
1. Use alphabetical order.
2. Clearly describe the dream location, thing, animal, or action, etc.
3. Support each description with images and interpretations (in your own words).

EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY

Discuss one dream and how it might be interpreted differently across cultures. Be specific about how the different interpretations reflect each unique cultures, history and traditions.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Use the ["Why Do We Dream?"](#) video to expand understanding of dream science.



EXPLORING FOLKLORE: DEEPER DIVE

FOLKLORE HISTORY

The novel references many aspects of African folklore and folklore connected to other countries, like Haiti. It is critical to consider how the stories are passed across generations and geographical locations. Watch the video [“How West African Folklore Came to Ecuador.”](#)

- How is folklore traditionally passed from generation to generation?
- How might folklore move from one country to another?
- Can you think of an example of something (a story, food, object, tradition) that originated in one country and is now part of another?

MAKING CONNECTIONS AND CREATIVE WRITING

Review your “Understanding Folklore” chart from the pre-reading exercise. Compare your notes to the list below—did you identify any of these folklore characters while you read?

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| • Dragon | • Rabbit and Tortoise | • Oisin |
| • Goblins | • Kumiho | • Niamh |
| • Tokoloshe | • Duende | • Fear Dearg |
| • Trolls | | |

Select a folklore character from above, research their characteristics, traditional adventures, culture of origin, and lessons that people learn from the stories. Summarize one of their adventures using an electronic [comic book generator](#), similar tool, or paper sketchbook. Be sure to include a clear sequence of events: a problem, a solution, and a moral of the story.

Optional Collaboration: Team up with an art teacher to explore traditional art connected to African folklore. Discuss the artistic details that emphasize the rich stories and traditions. Allow everyone to share ways they might be able to use the ideas in their individual comic book design.

JABBERWOCKY CONNECTIONS

Although the Jabberwocky is not a traditional folklore character, it is a mystical creature mentioned in the novel. Use [Miro](#) or a similar tool to create digital notes as you discuss the questions below. Be sure to create a different digital Post-it for each question.

- Return to your pre-reading notes about “Jabberwocky.” How did the poem relate to the story? Consider some references that were provided on pages 107, 109, 376, and 339.
- How is Charles like the boy in the poem?
- Which folklore character mentioned in the novel seems most like the Jabberwocky? How? Be specific.

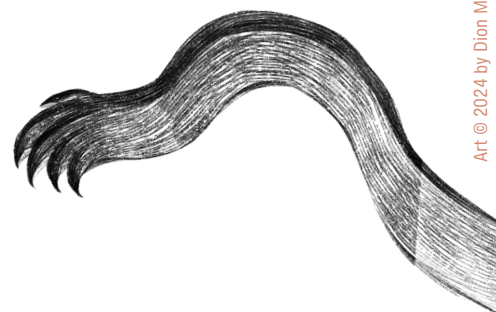
EXTENSION QUESTIONS

- Based upon the events in the story, what are two themes (or intended lessons) of the story? Which events, actions, or quotes support this theme?
- Think about another text with a similar theme. How do the characters, events, and outcomes compare and contrast to this novel?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Consider completing [Activities for African Folklore](#) related to African folklore to learn more about traditional characters and lessons.

Explore traditional [West African Folklore](#) in the Victoria Fall Guide. Discuss familiar and new stories.



CHILD ABUSE AWARENESS

POSTER DESIGN

In the novel, there are some difficult moments when Junior (Will) is the recipient of verbal and physical abuse. With the support of an adult, review the article [“Abuse: What Kids Need to Know.”](#)

- What are some different types of abuse?
- What can you do if you think someone is being abused?

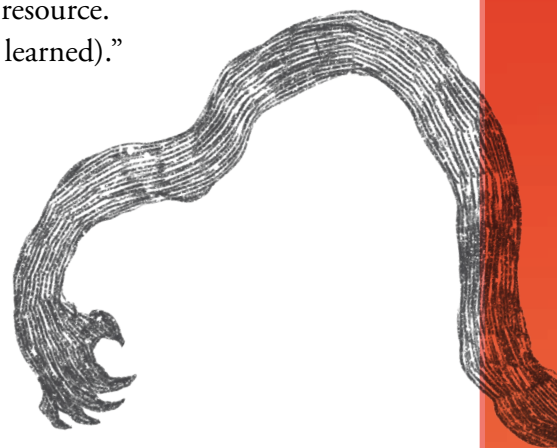
Create a “Stop Child Abuse” advocacy poster using [Canva](#) or a similar online resource. Include the message “You can stop child abuse by (insert something you have learned).” Be sure your sentence provides advice regarding what others can do to help.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Talking to Kids About Child Abuse](#)

[How to Talk to Kids About Abuse](#)

[Fight Child Abuse: 4-6 Videos](#)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE GUIDE

Dawn Jacobs Martin, PhD, has spent her career supporting students with disabilities through various roles as a practitioner, researcher, and special education director, and is currently an [associate clinical professor at University of Maryland, College Park](#). She continues to improve the academic outcomes for students through teacher development and instructional design.



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