

## EDUCATOR GUIDE FOR

# THE COIN SLOT CHRONICLES: ARCADE AND THE TRIPLE T TOKEN

By Rashad Jennings

GRADES  
3-5



### BOOK SUMMARY

The Coin Slot Chronicles series, by former NFL running back and *Dancing with the Stars* champion Rashad Jennings, is a humorous and imaginative series that explores the power of friendship and imagination, the challenges in finding your place, and the reality of missing home.

Eleven-year-old Arcade Livingston has a problem. Several, actually. The Tolley twins, a.k.a. neighborhood bullies, are making Arcade's move to a new city even harder than it needs to be. They expect *him* to do *their* research papers and interactive displays for the sixth-grade career expo's theme: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Besides doing their work, Arcade doesn't even know his own answer to that question.

Then at the library—Arcade's favorite place to chill—a mysterious old woman gives him a golden arcade token that grants him a unique gift. A gift that allows him to time travel between different places including his own future. From sitting in the dugout with Babe Ruth, to hanging on to the back of a bucking bull, to performing life-saving surgery on a dog, Arcade has no shortage of adventure! Together with his older sister, Zoe, Arcade explores life's biggest thrills and challenges, and the two also have a big mystery to solve. Who is the rightful owner of the incredible Triple T Token that leads to such astounding adventures?

Arcade's circle of friends begins to widen as the Triple T Token hangs from his neck. Pulsing. Beckoning another adventure. The question for Arcade, Zoe, and their new friends is no longer, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" It's, "Where will we go next?"

### PRE-READING: SETTING THE STAGE

Before sharing this book, talk about what it might be like to discover a magic doorway to another time or place—even for just a few minutes. Invite students to share any books, movies, or television programs that present an opportunity like this (such as *A Wrinkle in Time*; *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*; *Harry Potter*, etc.). Challenge students to think about whether they might want to take advantage of that opportunity or not and what the consequences might be. This first book in "The Coin Slot Chronicles" offers Arcade and his sister, Zoe (and some of their friends) an opportunity to make a magical journey. Let's see whether they do or not—and what might happen if they do.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL. 3.9, 4.9, 5.9

This novel incorporates illustrations within the narrative to highlight key elements of the story. Show some of these illustrations prior to reading the novel to provide clues to what might happen in the story: stack of books (p. 9),

backpack (p. 15), bowl of names (p. 25), cowboy hat (p. 36), daisy-covered suitcase (p. 54), book about New York (p. 60), cooking bowl and wisk (p. 73), framed diploma (p. 94), stop sign (p. 125), deck of playing cards (p. 132), baseball, bat, and glove (p. 135), homemade barbells (p. 144), fire extinguisher (p. 157), motorized scooter (p. 164), aquarium (p. 169), cockatoo (p. 185), police dog with therapeutic cone (p. 188), food truck (p. 204), impact wrench and tire (p. 209), and crazy socks (p. 228). Encourage students to make predictions or guesses about what might happen in the story based on these images to increase motivation and engagement. (No need to check answers, all will be revealed in the reading!)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL. 3.7, 4.7, 5.7

### UNDERSTANDING CHARACTERS

As students read or listen to this novel, encourage them to visualize each of the main characters and talk about what they might look like and how they might talk and act. Work together to draw character sketches or find magazine or web-based images that look like how they envision each of these characters. As you

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move along in the reading, talk about how the characters' actions influence what happens in the story, particularly for Arcade and Zoe.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.6, 4.6, 5.6

- Arcade Livingston
- Zoe Livingston, Arcade's sister
- Loopy, the pet dog
- Milo, a pet cockatoo
- Derek, a cousin from Virginia
- Mom, an adjunct professor
- Dad, a Broadway set designer and stage manager
- Doug Baker, neighbor, friend, and teammate
- Amber Lin, classmate, friend, and teammate
- Bailey Martin, classmate and teammate
- Michael Scranton ("Scratch"), friend and classmate
- Ivan, friend, classmate, and foreign exchange student
- Casey and Kevin Tolley, neighbor kids, bullies, classmates
- Mr. Dooley, their 6th grade teacher
- Ms. Weckles, school and public librarian
- Frank Langdon, local police officer
- Samson, K-9 police officer
- Mysterious lady at the library

Just for fun, challenge students to find out the derivation and story behind their own names or nicknames. They can ask their parents or family members (as Arcade does) or use these online sources for examining naming derivations and trends:

- [BabyNames.com](http://BabyNames.com)
- [Parents.com/baby-names/](http://Parents.com/baby-names/)
- [Babble.com/baby-names/](http://Babble.com/baby-names/)

## FOR DISCUSSION

As students read or listen to this novel, invite them to consider the characters, relationships, conflicts, and surprises in the story. Ask open-ended questions that motivate them to dig deep and challenge them to find lines or passages that support their opinions. Possible discussion questions include:

1. What is it like to be new to a city, school, classroom or other setting?
2. What helps Arcade adjust to his new life in New York and at P.S. 23?
3. How do you know that Zoe cares about her younger brother, Arcade?
4. Arcade constantly wants to ask how many sides a stop sign has. What do you think is the best answer?

5. What are the signs that something magical is happening after Arcade gets the new Triple T token?
6. How do "friends help friends become better people"?
7. What do you think Triple T might stand for?
8. When might it be OK to keep a secret? When is it not OK?
9. How does Arcade deal with the bullies, Kevin and Casey Tolley?
10. As the story ends, Arcade has received urgent messages from his cousin Derek in Virginia and the magical token has started smoking. What do you think might happen next?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL. 3.1; 4.1; 5.1

How does each "Triple T Token" adventure fit with what is happening in the story? Which characters are involved and how does each adventure affect them?

1. Riding a rodeo bull and being a rodeo clown
2. Appearing on a television cooking show, *The Munch*
3. Operating on a police dog at the Pawsitive Pet Care Center
4. Appearing at a baseball game and seeing a card trick with Babe Ruth (in black and white)
5. Working in a NASCAR pit crew
6. Riding in an airplane over New York City

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL. 3.5; 4.5; 5.5

Arcade's teacher, Mr. Dooley, asks the students to think about what they want to be when they grow up based on their talents and interests now. Invite students to share some of the interests and hobbies they have now and then brainstorm together possible future careers related to those interests and hobbies. Here are some of the career possibilities presented in the novel:

- Gym owner
- Personal trainer
- Pastry chef
- Guidance counselor
- Food truck entrepreneur
- Alps mountain climbing guide
- Event planner
- K-9 officer trainer
- Professional baseball player
- Public librarian
- Middle school teacher
- Veterinarian

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1.B; 4.1.B; 5.1.B

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## LANGUAGE: VOCABULARY

In any work of literature, we can encounter new vocabulary or familiar words used in new ways. Students can log their own individual lists of new words, use context to guess at meaning, and/or consider those on the list below. Which of these words (or phrases) are new to students? Talk about these words (and any other new words encountered) and their use in context, possible multiple meanings, and how these word choices impact the tone of the book. Challenge students to use them in the coming days. Possible vocabulary words showcased throughout the book include:

- robotics p. 19
- lacquer p. 22
- radical p. 24
- shuddered p. 25
- orthodontist p. 31
- medallion p. 32
- pulsing p. 40
- veterinarian p. 53
- scones p. 55
- gesture p. 58
- bookworm p. 63
- adversity p. 67
- fondant p. 71
- professional p. 80
- eczema p. 83
- foreign exchange student p. 84
- scowling p. 85
- mesmerized p. 90
- intestinal blockage p. 92
- tumor p. 96
- zipline p. 113
- overcast p. 130
- illusions p. 132
- foreign correspondent p. 139
- circuit training p. 141
- skunked p. 142
- mirroring p. 143
- burpees p. 144
- hydrated p. 148
- entrepreneur p. 153
- stuck up p. 157
- mishap p. 176
- appendectomy p. 185
- pit crew p. 208
- impact wrench p. 209
- lug nuts p. 209

- hyperventilating p. 209
- stockcar p. 210
- glistening p. 212
- amateur p. 219
- magnification p. 221
- descending p. 222
- counselor p. 228
- bite suit p. 231

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.3.4.A; 4.4.A; 5.4.A

Some students may enjoy illustrating some of their vocabulary words much like the pop-up drawings that appear throughout the novel. They can create a small sketch to visualize a new vocabulary word (like “medallion” or “mishap”) using simple stick figures or quick cartoons to help them understand and remember unfamiliar words encountered while reading.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL. 3.7, 4.7; 5.7

This is also a great opportunity to talk about (print or online) dictionaries and what they offer, providing quick mini-lessons on searching, key words, etymologies, etc. Two helpful online dictionaries include:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com>

<http://dictionary.reference.com>

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.3.2.G; 4.4.C; 5.4.C

## WORDS OF WISDOM

Several characters offer Arcade advice along the way, in notes from his dad or mom, conversations with his sister or friends, input from sympathetic adults, or in books he is reading. Challenge students to identify a key line, phrase, or passage that is pivotal to the story or meaningful to them and talk about why. Possible examples include:

- Happy travels
- You’ve got this.
- Just hang on and enjoy the ride.
- We’re in this together.
- I’ve got your back.
- Take a breath.
- “As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.”
- Friends help friends become better people.
- Trust.
- Don’t let doubts steal your identity.
- Enemies only have the power over us if we give it to them.

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- God gives talents to everyone.
- It's always good to learn another language.
- You can't be so scared of striking out that you don't swing.
- No pain, no gain.
- The choices you're making today are shaping who you'll be in the future.
- You were made on purpose for a purpose.
- Your unique gifts are valuable to this world.
- Teamwork is important.
- Dessert first!
- Take a look around. Get a new perspective.
- Calm down.
- Keep shining your light in the right direction, and others will follow.
- You're never stronger than when you are helping someone in need.
- Sometimes we're forced to walk through doors of opportunity for our good and the good of others.

Encourage students to choose their favorite phrase or line as a personal motto and then create simple mini-posters (using Canva or other digital tools) to display. Some of these "words of wisdom" even offer possible themes of the novel. After students have spent some time thinking about these sayings, choosing a favorite and interpreting it visually, talk with them about which three of four sayings seem to represent the "big picture" or themes for the book as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL. 3.2, 4.2; 5.2

For more information about the author and his work:



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*This guide is created by Sylvia Vardell, Professor in the School of Library and Information Studies at Texas Woman's University and a recipient of the ALA Scholastic Library Publishing Award. She maintains the PoetryforChildren blog and co-edits the POETRY FRIDAY ANTHOLOGY series with author Janet Wong.*