

A Curriculum Guide to

The Kicks Series

by Olympic Gold Medalist Alex Morgan

The discussion questions and activities in this guide align with the following Common Core State Standards: (SL.5.1a, 1c) (RL.5.1, 2, 3, 4, 6) (W.5.3)

Discussion Questions for Book 1: *Saving the Team*

1. What are the five most important things to know about Devin Burke?
2. Describe what Devin's first day at Kentville Middle School is like. How do tryouts go after school is over?
3. Who are Jessi and Mirabelle? Summarize what happened between them. Choose one word to describe each of them and then defend your answer with a quote from the book.
4. Do you think there are any differences playing soccer in California than in Connecticut? What do you think would be the most difficult to get used to?
5. Who does Devin become friends with at her new school? How do you make new friends? What's the hardest part? What's the easiest?
6. Why is Devin forced to work with Mirabelle? How does Mirabelle try to manipulate Coach Flores into making changes on the team? What is most important to this coach? Do you agree with her philosophy or not? Why?
7. List the important events from the game with Pinewood. What does it reveal about the team and the way they're working? What does Devin want to do about it?
8. Mirabelle is an example of someone who is not a leader but a bully. What qualities make a good leader? Does Devin have those skills? Can anyone develop them? How does Devin get Coach Flores to see her team in a new way?
9. What happened in the Ranchos Verde game? What strategy finally worked to make Emma a better player?
10. Explain why Jessi had to stop playing for the team for a while. Do you agree with her parents' plan or not? How does Devin try to help?
11. Compare and contrast how the boys' soccer team is treated compared to the girls'. How do they finally try to make amends?

12. How does Devin try to keep her friendship with her best friend in Connecticut still important in her daily life? How do you stay close to someone so far away?

Activities

1. Character: Fill out the following chart below as you read the novel.

Character name:	A short description:	A key quote or selection that best shows these characteristics:
Devin		
Kara		
Emma		
Jessi		
Zoe		
Frida		
Mirabelle		

2. Compare and contrast Devin’s life in Connecticut to her new one in California.

	Connecticut	California
Soccer		
Friends		
School Life (clothes, etc.)		

Point of View: The view in a story

3. Discuss how the story would be different if told through the eyes of each of the characters in the chart below with a reading partner.

Mirabelle	Coach Flores	Frida	Maisie (little sister)

Discuss: How does point of view impact what a reader thinks or knows about events and other characters in the story?

Discussion Questions for Book 2: *Sabotage Season*

1. Explain why Devin is running the Kicks' practice. What did she plan? Why? Did anything strange happen at this practice?
2. Summarize the main action in the game between the Kicks and the Eagles.
3. Since Zoe was injured, what does Devin worry about on the team? How did she come up with ideas to compensate for Zoe's inability to play? Does it work?
4. Describe the girls' day at the mall. What do you think is the most important part of this episode? What does it show us about Jessi? Where do you and your friends like to go together?
5. Is Devin becoming obsessed with soccer? What's the difference between being driven at something and losing perspective because of it? List evidence from the story to support your answer.
6. List the key moments in the story leading up to the match between the Kicks and the Roses, and the game itself. What is the result?
7. What happens during the boys' game that follows? What theory about the odd events does Jessi reveal to Devin and Steven and Cody? How do they react? How would you?
8. What does Devin discover in the storage shed? What evidence do they have against Mirabelle and the Pinewood Panthers? To whom do they take this evidence? How does she respond?
9. What plan does Jessi reveal to enact revenge on the Panthers? What could the consequences be—both intended and unintended?
10. How does Jessi end up as an alibi for Mirabelle when Devin's jersey turns up ruined? How should the team respond to this type of attempt at sabotage? How would you?
11. Why does Devin say no to Steven about attending the festival together? Why does Kara ask if it is just an excuse?
12. Summarize the attempt to get even with the Panthers. How does Mirabelle call them out on their choices? What do they learn from her?
13. Explain how Frida's amazing acting talent is able to get the Kicks the evidence they need. Find a key quote that reveals the plan by the Rams.
14. How do the girls' catch the culprits? What do they decide to do with the information? How do they end up getting the best revenge in the end?

15. Devin’s friendship with her long-time best friend in Connecticut gets strained in this story. Why? How hard is it to keep a long-distance friendship? How important is it? Do you think it is easier to do now than it was twenty years ago? Why?

Activities— Common Core Connections

1. Theme Detective: Theme is the statement about life or human nature that an author reveals through a story, most often unstated directly.

What a theme is:	What a theme is not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —A statement that seems true after reading a story —It’s what a reader often remembers years after forgetting the details of a story —Can be positive or negative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —Not a single word (like <i>friendship</i>, <i>hope</i>, or <i>courage</i>) —A topic or moral —A cliché or worn-out set of words

How to come up with a thematic statement:

a. Brainstorm a list of the important ideas in the story:

For example: In *Sabotage Season* include the important topics: friendship, sportsmanship, revenge, balance, and leadership.

b. Look at the two examples below and then in small groups or reading pairs brainstorm a thematic statement based on the other important topics.

Important topics:	Thematic Statements:
Balance	Leading a balanced life of school, athletics, and friendships is more important than always winning.
Sportsmanship	Actions that can be seen both on and off the field reveal a person’s true character.
Friendship	
Leadership	
Revenge	

c. Thematic statements are well written and often poetic. You may need to revise your statements several times to get them to say exactly what you want in an interesting way.

Share and compare your thematic statements with another pair or group.

2. Vocabulary: Use the following words from Chapter One of *Sabotage Season* in the sentences where they make sense in context:

circumference defensive intercepted guaranteed klutz
 offensive limbo furious scrimmage sergeant

a. I’ve got some _____ drills for us that may make it harder for the other team to score on Saturday!

- b. When Jessi saw the ruined jersey she was _____ about it.
- c. The Panthers are nearly _____ a spot in this year's play-offs with their 8 – 1 season so far.
- d. Don't be such a drill _____! You never know how to have fun anymore!
- e. We should play a _____ before we face our first real game next week.
- f. Devin dribbled around the _____ of the field.
- g. The main objective to an _____ position is to score.
- h. Although she was tall and athletic, Emma could be a bit of a _____ on the field unless she was playing goalie.
- i. The e-mail from Coach was stuck in _____, not sent or received.
- j. Zoe swiped in from the left and _____ a pass between two players on the Eagles.

3. Mystery: As you read the novel, keep track of the events that make Devin and Jessi come to the conclusion that someone is trying to sabotage their season. Find key quotes that reveal the evidence and then list the inferences that are made. Check off the ones that turn out to be true.

Events:	Evidence (use key quotes):	Inferences made:	True?
EX: Players late for practice	“Coach Flores e-mailed that practice starting late today.” (p.7)	E-mail stuck in limbo	

Discussion Questions for Book 3: *Win or Lose*

1. How was Devin misquoted in the news article? Why was it an important mistake? How did she try to fix it?
2. What important event is Zoe preparing for? How could soccer conflict?
3. Describe how Zoe helped her teammates prepare for her party. What did it reveal about her as a person and about how well she knew her friends?
4. Why was the end of the play-off game against the Tigers both exciting and disappointing?
5. Why was the boys' play-off game disappointing in two ways? How do you handle disappointment?
6. Compare and contrast Coach Valentine to Coach Flores. Who do you think has the best coaching style? Why? Defend your choice with evidence from the text.
7. Why does Devin believe the team needs a building exercise? What does she plan? Summarize what happened.
8. List the most important events in the championship game. Find three key quotes that best represent the game.
9. Why is Devin nervous about hanging out with Jessi, Steven, and Cody? How does it turn out?
10. Explain why Devin writes a letter to the newspaper instead of agreeing to another interview. Summarize the important points of her letter. How does the team react? What does Grace reveal to Devin?
11. How did the pep assembly prove that the rift between the seventh and eighth graders was finally over? How do you handle something embarrassing? How did Devin?
12. In the end, what happened during the game with the Bolts? Why was Coach Flores proud? What did Kara remind Devin about the game?
13. Describe Zoe's Bat Mitzvah. What celebrations are important in your family?
14. How has Devin changed in this story? What lessons did she learn in this book?
15. How has Devin grown up since moving to California? Do you think she would still want to move back to Connecticut if she could? Why or why not?

Activities

1. Writing: Inspired by Alex Morgan’s writing, write your own narrative about an important game, performance, or key event from your life. Reread one of the chapters that describes a game as a mentor text. Then take notes about the following elements and brainstorm for your own story:

Narrative moves:	Example from mentor text:	Brainstorm ideas for my own story:
Skipping time (leaving out the boring parts)	“That’s how it went for most of the first half.” (Chapter 17)	Jump to the interesting parts . . . leave out getting places, etc.
Dialogue		
Description		
Action sequences		

Write a draft and then revise it. Have a peer edit your paper between drafts looking for places you could add more detail with description. Then, revise to final copy.

2. Summarize: Good readers know how to summarize text, or tell only the most important events in a story. Write a one-sentence summary for each chapter of the novel to practice this important skill.

Ch.	One sentence summary:
1.	Devin is misquoted in the <i>Kentville Chronicle</i> in a way that upsets many of her teammates as the Kicks prepare for play-offs.
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3. Vocabulary: It’s important to learn new words. A great place to do this is in your independent reading. Choose ten words that are new to you and fill out the chart below as you read the book.

New word:	How it’s used in the book:	What I think it means:	What the dictionary says:
Sarcasm	“Her voice dripped with sarcasm.” (Ch.1)	A mean way of talking	Language intended to convey scorn or insult

Guide written in 2013 by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, author and English teacher.

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