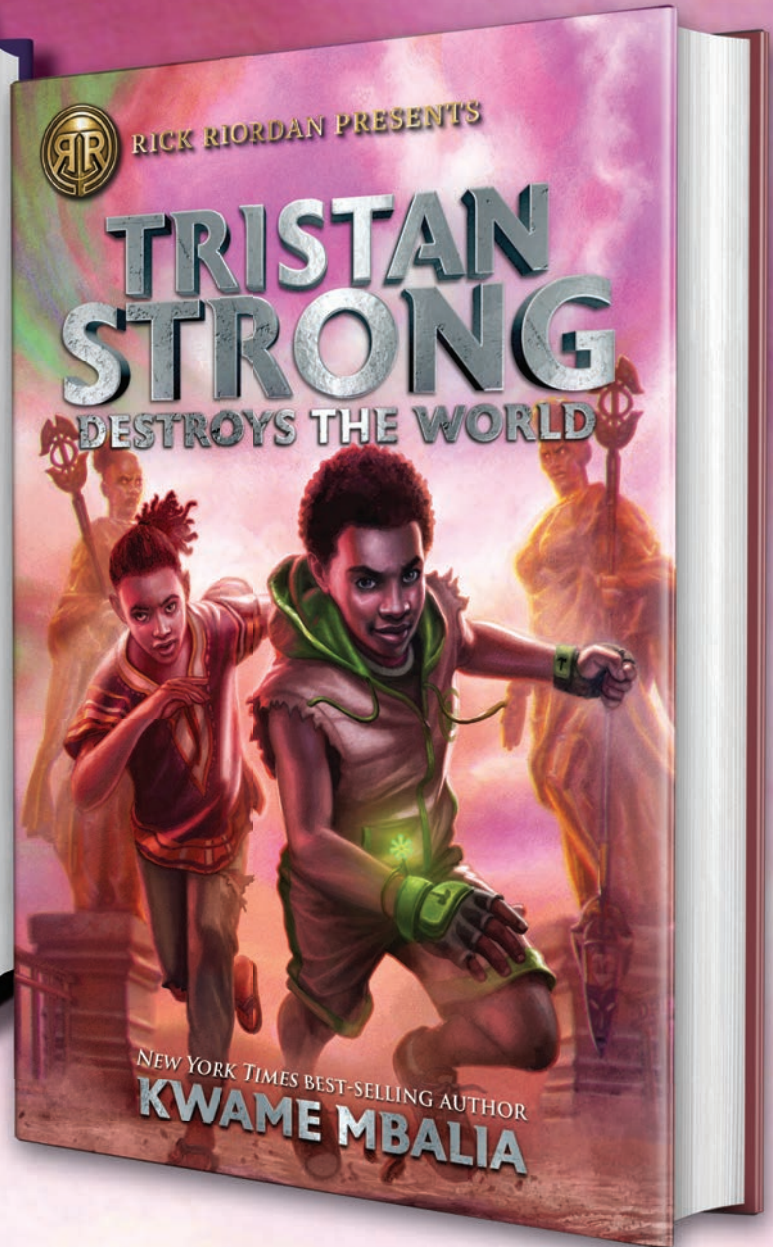
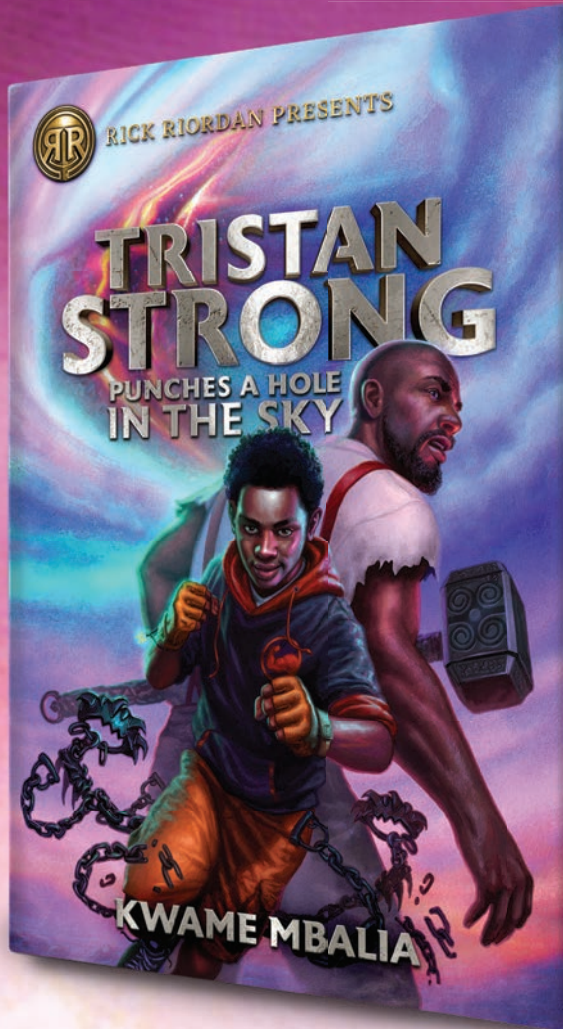




RICK RIORDAN PRESENTS



BY NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

KWAME MBALIA

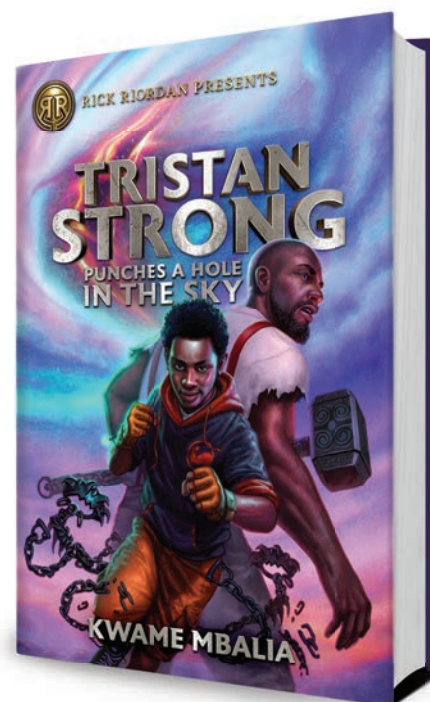
EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Disney • HYPERION

TRISTAN STRONG PUNCHES A HOLE IN THE SKY

ABOUT THE BOOK

Tristan Strong is a seventh grader who is navigating the road to healing following several difficult life events. First, he blames himself for the death of his best friend, Eddie. Then he disappoints his family by losing a highly anticipated boxing match. When it seems like things can't get any worse, he is sent to spend a month at his grandparents' farm in Alabama. During his first night on the farm, a series of strange events occurs. To his surprise, someone tries to steal the only thing he has left of Eddie—a journal. Tristan chases the assailant and ends up in another universe filled with new friends and enemies. Following his arrival, Tristan strategizes a way to win a high-stakes war by enticing the trickster god Anansi. Can Tristan save his new friends and avoid more loss? Readers everywhere will appreciate the connections to familiar African and African American folklore, adventures, and the character development of Tristan throughout the novel.



COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT

The Tristan Strong series provides a great opportunity to apply complex literacy skills such as inferencing, deconstructing vocabulary, identifying author's purpose, answering text-dependent questions, and making textual connections. This discussion guide provides suggestions aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Reading: Literature, Writing, and Speaking and Listening. Each activity in this guide includes a reference for the CCSS strand, domain, and standard that is addressed. To support instruction or obtain additional information visit the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) website www.corestandards.org.

- **Instructional Note:** During each of the activities, please encourage students to support their claims with evidence from the text and illustrations. Providing young learners with the opportunity to answer text-dependent questions is critical to success with Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

ACTIVATING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Explore Important Connections Before Reading

1. Traditional fables typically have the following components, (1) they feature an animal with human characteristics (e.g., the ability to speak); (2) each character usually has one personality trait, such as being clever, that is evident throughout the story; (3) a problem or conflict; (4) a resolution, moral, or lesson that others can learn. Think about familiar fables and consider whether the statements below are true or false.

Statement 1	Statement 2	Statement 3	Statement 4
Fables often reflect the beliefs/values of the individual who is telling the story.	Heroes in fables always make positive decisions.	The animals in fables are usually villains.	Fables are often passed down as spoken stories.
TRUE OR FALSE	TRUE OR FALSE	TRUE OR FALSE	TRUE OR FALSE

A. When you complete the novel, return to these statements and decide whether you still believe they are true or false. Discuss your initial responses and make changes as necessary based upon evidence from the novel. (*Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration, 5.1, 6.1*)



2. Brainstorm the following: What African and African American tales (fables or folktales) have you heard in the past? Describe the stories briefly. Look at the table below. Did you mention any of the included characters during your brainstorm? If yes, note important adventures or character traits of each individual. Next, explain why each individual is significant to African or African American cultural beliefs/values. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.5.1, 6.1*)

Folklore Character	Descriptions	Cultural Significance
Gum-Baby		
Brer Rabbit		
Brer Fox		
Kwaku Anansi		
John Henry		
High John		
Nyame		

A. Select one character from the table above to research using text and online resources. Be sure to explore the characteristics, problem, and resolution/moral throughout multiple stories about the character. Summarize your findings in one page and share with a small group. (*Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge, W.5.7, 6.7*)

3. Read the description of the novel, review chapter titles, and examine the adinkra symbols drawn at the beginning of each chapter. What are important events that you think will take place in this novel? What must you think about as you read a fictional text (e.g., story structure)? How is the strategy different from reading an informational text?

A. Think about an adventure novel that you have read in the past. How does this text seem similar to that text? How does this text seem different? Explain the connection using details from your previous reading. (*Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, RL. 5.9*)

ANNOTATION GUIDE

Monitoring Comprehension While Reading

As you read, use the notations below to monitor your understanding. Share your notations with a peer and/or adult to build discussion and meaningful inquiry questions while reading the novel.

Symbol	Considerations
?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This part is confusing because . . .• What does the statement _____ mean?• I don't understand what sequence of event(s) just happened.• I wonder . . .• What does the character mean when she/he says _____?
*	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is really important to understanding the plot of the story.• This character action helped me learn more about him/her.• This is something important to remember about the character.• This detail is important because . . .• This is a really interesting detail that I would like to discuss.
!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I am surprised by this event.• I was not expecting this character to . . .• I am really surprised by the new information the author shared.
∞	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This information connects to something important in another chapter because . . .• This information connects to my life because . . .• This information connects to another book because . . .• This action connects to something I've seen on television.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

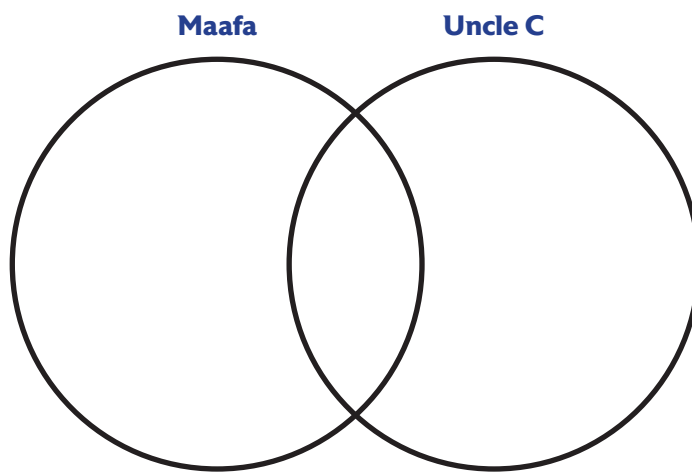
Explore the questions individually and in small groups while reading.

1. When Tristan Strong first talks about his name he states, “I hated that name. It made me appear to be something I’m not. My name should have been Tristan Coward, or Tristan Failure, or Tristan Fake. Maybe Tristan How-Could-You-Lose-Your-First-Boxing Match” (p. 2). Based upon this statement, how does Tristan feel about himself? How does his family view him (i.e., his parents and grandparents)? Support your response with textual evidence. Is there something about yourself that you have disliked in the past? Why?
A. As you read, consider whether you believe this statement is accurate? How does Tristan’s point of view about himself develop and/or change throughout the story? Which events cause the development and/or change? Provide examples.
2. Using details from the story, explain why the journal appears to be special. Which events throughout the car ride and at the farm suggest it is supernatural? What does Tristan’s nana explain about the origins of the symbol on the journal? Why does Tristan seem to avoid the journal? How might the journal be connected to Tristan’s future adventure? Make a prediction using textual support.
3. During several moments in the book, Tristan affirms that he is not “soft.” For example: “A flashlight lay on top of the blankets next to me. Not that I’m scared of the dark, you get me, but in case I had to use the bathroom or get a drink of water” (p. 24). Why do you think the author includes this information? How does it help us understand Tristan? Are there moments you try to show others you are not “soft”? Why? Provide an example.
4. Describe the first interaction between Gum Baby and Tristan. What characteristics are evident about Gum Baby? Do you think Gum Baby is a friend or foe? Why? Use textual evidence in your response.
5. In Chapter 5, should Tristan trust the shadow he meets? Why or why not? How does he feel while interacting with the shadow? What did his nana previously tell him about the Bottle Tree forest? Why is this information important? Support your response with details from the novel.
6. When Tristan first arrives in the new world, he asks a lot of questions, but his inquiries are quickly dismissed. Why isn’t anyone willing to answer his questions? Support with evidence. How does the suspense in the chapter help the author develop the plot?
A. In Chapter 7, what does Tristan learn about the origins of Alke? Why is this important to understand? Provide details in your response.
B. In Chapter 9, what does the author reveal about “folktale characters” in Alke? What is their role and purpose? How does this differ from Tristan’s previous understanding of the characters? Cite evidence.
7. In Chapter 9, Brer Fox warns against speaking about the Maafa to prevent giving it strength (p. 97). Tristan reflects about the following advice from his counselor: “we can’t hide from our fears. We have to be able to talk about them, or else they’ll fester like poison, eating us from the inside.” Who do you think gave the better advice? Why?
A. When the novel is complete, consider whether storytelling was a positive or negative influence throughout the novel. Explain whether the stories are a source of strength or destruction based upon the events.

8. How does Tristan respond when he meets John Henry for the first time in Chapter 11? Why? In the novel, which different versions of John Henry's story are shared? Describe John Henry's character traits based upon his interactions with Tristan.
A. Can you think of other fables or folktales with multiple versions, endings, or events? In your opinion, why might multiple versions of the same fable or folktale exist? Provide an example.
9. As Tristan narrates the novel, he often talks about "grown-ups." Based upon his perspective, how is he treated by adults? How does he view the adults in his life? For example, consider Tristan's reflections in Chapter 12. Can you relate to Tristan's perspective of adults? Why or why not?
10. When explaining the term "Anasesem" John Henry shares, "A storyteller. But more than just words, more than *once upon a time* and *the end*. It's about the entire experience, from the audience to the stage to the spectacle. There's music, too, I reckon" (p. 126). What does this suggest about storytelling in Alke? Why is an Anasesem someone special? In your opinion, what makes a good storytelling experience (e.g., imagine telling someone about a really good movie)?
A. At the end of the novel, return to this question and add details to the characteristics of a good storyteller based upon Tristan's adventure.
11. How does Tristan use boxing throughout the novel? How do John Henry and Tristan connect while talking about boxing? What gift does John Henry give to Tristan? How might the gift help him during his journey? Explain with evidence.
12. In Chapter 20, Tristan admits, "I don't want to go because I'm afraid" (p. 185). How does this acknowledgment differ from his communications in previous chapters? Do you think admitting his fear makes his "soft"? Why or why not?
13. Describe the sequence of events that occurs when Tristan arrives in the Golden Crescent. What problems are they facing in the Golden Crescent? Why is Nyame important to Tristan and his allies? Explain.
14. How does Tristan earn the nickname Bumbletongue at the beginning of the story? Support with textual evidence. As the story progresses, does it seem like a fitting nickname? Why or why not?
15. Nyame shares, "Alke is a land divided" (p. 245). Based upon events in the novel, why is the divide problematic? What are potential resolutions to this divide? Make a prediction. Can you think of ways that we are divided in our society? How does division impact our society? Explain.
A. As you read the novel, consider which moments throughout the story suggest people may be unifying. Be specific by providing examples.
16. What is the definition of an adinkra? How does the author intertwine adinkras throughout the story? Which adinkras does Tristan collect? What is the meaning of each symbol? How does each symbol help Tristan during his journey? Cite details from the novel.
17. In Chapter 28, how does Anansi's lair reflect his character traits? What does the team discover in Anansi's lair? Why is this information important? Do you think Tristan's plan should include Anansi? Why or why not? Support with textual evidence.
18. During several parts of the story, Tristan states, "Strong's keep punching." What does this phrase mean? When does he tend to use these words? How does it help him navigate different situations?
A. Is there something that you say to encourage yourself in challenging situations? If not, what phrase could you adopt? Provide an example.

- 19.** How do the individuals in the Ridge defend themselves? Why are they leery of the visitors seeking their help? Who are the important decision makers in the Ridge? How does Tristan convince the leaders of the Ridge to fight a common enemy?
- A.** Describe Thandiwe, how might she be helpful to the team? How is she similar to both Ayanna and Tristan? Support with evidence from the text.
- 20.** Based upon Tristan’s explanation, why is High John Eddie’s favorite folk hero? How does High John both challenge and help Tristan? How does High John explain the power of the story box?
- A.** When Tristan has to face his enemies, what power does the story box provide? How does Tristan attempt to tap into the strength of the story box? Explain using evidence.
- 21.** Although Eddie is deceased, he is a very important character throughout the story. What key events occur that involve Eddie? For example, Chapter 9: “The Paper Giant.” Why is Eddie an integral character? How does he influence Tristan’s development?
- A.** In the novel, what does it mean when Eddie states, “You’re talking to the wrong one” (p. 140, p. 336, p. 448)? How do each of these exchanges make Tristan feel? Why?
- B.** In Chapter 42, Tristan states, “Well, all memories serve a purpose. . . . What are memories except stories we tell ourselves, right?” (p. 379). Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why? Based upon Tristan’s memory and description of the bus accident, do you think he is to blame for Eddie’s death? Why or why not?
- C.** In Chapter 48, describe the reunion between Tristan and Eddie. What occurs? Why is this moment important? What new details does the reader learn about their friendship? Support with evidence.

- 22.** Reflect upon the events leading up to the conclusion of the story. How does each character transform from the beginning to the end of the story? Did you find the ending of the story surprising? Why or why not? What theme or lesson does the author want the reader to learn from the novel?
- A.** If you could write an alternative ending to the story, what would you make happen? Why?
- 23.** Think about the main antagonists in the story, Uncle C and the Maafa. How does each source cause destruction in Alke? While in their presence, how does each source make individuals feel? What is each antagonist’s goal? How are they similar and different? Compare and contrast using evidence from the story in the Venn diagram below.
(*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.5.3*)



Standards Aligned to Discussion Questions

Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details:
RL.5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3

Reading Literature: Craft and Structure:
RL.5.4, 5.5, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6

Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:
RL.5.9

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

Creative Projects and Writing Extensions

- 1. Small Group Discussion:** Prior to the discussion, prepare notes citing textual evidence and relevant questions to pose to the group using the guiding questions in parts A–E.
(*Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: SL. 5.1, 6.1*)
- A.** How do the characters in the novel compare to their original fable or folktale adventures, actions, character traits, and attributes?
- B.** How did the author make connections to previous tales?
- C.** In the novel, which interactions between characters suggest a previous history within stories? For example, Nyame and High John, Nyame and Anansi, Gum Baby and Mmoatia, etc.
- D.** How did the author change the fable and folktale characters in the novel? How did those adjustments enhance Tristan’s adventure?
- E.** Choose one character to compare and contrast between the original tales and the new depiction in *Tristan Strong* using the graphic organizer below.

Compare and Contrast a Fable or Folktale Character	
Character Traits, Actions, Problems/Solutions	
Original Depiction in Fable or Folktale	Tristan Strong Depiction
Similarities in Both	

- 2. Art Connection:** Readers traveled to many different locations in Alke with Tristan Strong based upon the rich descriptions provided by the author. Create a map of the different places that Tristan visited using detailed images and accurate map lines to show the separation between locations. Present your map to peers and explain the significance of each place in the novel.

(Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: SL. 5.5, 6.5)



- 3. Creative Writing:** As readers learn throughout the novel, fables and folktales are often viewed as an important fabric that ties a culture and community together. Create your own fable using the steps below.

(Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.5.3, 6.3)

A. Brainstorm fable ideas based on familiar tales and events in the novel. Then group similar ideas together and select your favorite idea.

B. List the character traits of the main character in your fable and the events that will make those traits evident.

C. Draft your fable by making clear connections to the setting, character descriptions, problem, and solution with a moral.

D. Allow a peer to read over your fable and make suggestions.

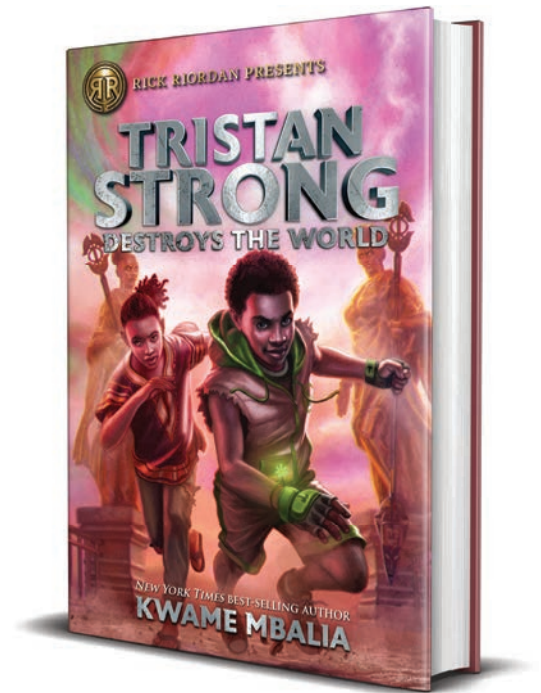
E. Revise the fable based upon suggestions and add meaningful illustrations to the story.

- 4. Current Events:** In the story, we learn that Alke is a divided world, which proves to be problematic throughout Tristan's journey. With a partner, research a current event that shows a division between two communities, countries, cities, etc. If conflict exists, discuss resolutions that might bridge the divides and/or resolve the existing issues. In a written summary, describe the existing division, the impact of the division, aligned solutions, and cite your sources. *(Writing: Research to Build and Present Ideas: W.5.8, 6.8)*

TRISTAN STRONG DESTROYS THE WORLD

ABOUT THE BOOK

Tristan Strong is back on his grandparents' farm following his exciting adventure in Alke—a realm inhabited by West African gods and African American folktale heroes. During his journey, Tristan overcame many obstacles and proved himself to be a hero. Despite his success, he is feeling a great deal of trauma and stress. To make matters worse, Tristan begins hearing voices while he is boxing in his grandparents' barn. When a mysterious evil villain named the Shamble Man kidnaps Tristan's nana, Tristan is forced to spring into action. To save his nana, Tristan must return to Alke and reunite with his old friends and new allies. But how is Tristan supposed to succeed when the only god he can summon to his side is the trickster Anansi, who is imprisoned inside a cell phone? This new adventure is nonstop action, storytelling at its best, and includes heroes that every reader will cheer for.



ACTIVATING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Explore Important Connections Before Reading

1. Retell the main events from the last novel. What was the problem? Solution? Who were the protagonists and antagonists?
 - A. To review, create a character map that shows the connection between individuals in the first novel. Also, note words that highlight Tristan's *perspective* of each character, since the story is told from his point of view. Build several connections until all the important characters are listed. For example:



(Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.6.6)

2. The second novel in the Tristan Strong series continues to highlight West African gods and African American folktale characters. Look at the names of the characters below and note (a) previous adventures of the individuals in traditional folktales, (b) an important moral we learn from the characters, and (c) character traits. Use your background knowledge, multiple books about the character, and/or online tools to engage in research. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.5.1, 6.1; Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge, W.5.7, 6.7*)

Folklore Character	Stories Unique to the Character <i>Events and Moral</i>	Character Traits
Keelboat Annie		
Mami Wata		
A boo hag		
BRER CHARACTERS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brer Fox • Brer Rabbit • Brer Bear 		

3. Based on how the last novel concluded, the synopsis of the second novel, and chapter titles of the second novel, what do you think this story will be about? Who do you think will be the main protagonists and antagonists of the story? Make a prediction. Support your prediction with evidence. (*Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, RL. 5.9*)

VISUALIZING

Monitoring Comprehension While Reading

As you read, it is important to visualize the key events taking place in the novel by creating a movie or detailed images in your mind. When readers visualize a novel, they enhance their understanding of the text. At the end of each chapter, describe what you visualized with a partner orally or through a detailed drawing.

(Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, RL. 5.7, 6.7)

Notation: As you read, underline the key words in the text that help you visualize the events, setting, and/or characters. Remember to look for clues about all five senses to visualize:

- What did you see as you read?
- What did you hear as you read?
- What did you smell as you read?
- What did you feel as you read?
- What did you taste as you read?

Discussion: Verbally describe what you visualized or show your detailed artwork.

Listening Challenge: How do your visualizations change when you hear the story read aloud?

What new or different details do you “see” or “hear”?

Partner Challenge: How was your visualization similar and/or different from someone else’s? Explain.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Explore the questions individually and in small groups while reading.

1. Think about the author's writing style. Why does the author add some of Tristan's thoughts in parentheses? For example, "SBP (Story Box Phone—give me a break, let me be lazy)" (p. 9). How might this text feature engage the reader? Do you like this writing style? Why or why not?
2. When Tristan describes the barn he says, "But the real eye-catcher was a giant mural depicting two men, a weary boxer with one fist up as he curled a bicep, and his cornerman, towel slung over his shoulder, standing behind him with both arms flexed" (p. 4). What is the significance of this art? Why does Granddad hang it up to "commemorate" the event? What lesson can Tristan learn from Granddad's explanation? Use textual evidence to support your response.
3. Describe the fight between Tristan and Reggie. At the end of Chapter 2, why does Tristan say "Fight for something. Fight for something!" (p. 20)? What does this phrase mean to Tristan and his family? How do these phrases impact the tone of the chapter and events? What surprising events occur during the sparring match? Explain.
4. What is the Story Box Phone (SBP) referenced on page 9 of the novel? What events transpired in the first novel before the phone was created? How is Anansi responding to his new setting? Support your response with evidence.
 - A. In Chapter 3, what does Tristan need from Anansi? What deal does Tristan make with Anansi in order to obtain his help? Should Tristan trust Anansi? Why or why not?
 - B. As the story progresses, describe how Anansi and Tristan's relationship develops.
 - C. Record the names of the apps that Anansi creates and how they aid Tristan. What is the name and purpose of each app? Be specific.
5. Anansi explains the meaning of Diaspora as "a group of people who originally came from one spot and then dispersed" (p. 24). In your own words, what is Diaspora? Why is this concept important for an Anansesem? Provide details to support your response.
6. When Tristan talks to Nana about his feelings she says, "Exactly. 'Cause it sounds like you've gone through some trauma. . . . Yes, baby. Trauma. A rough patch in your life. Something that deeply distressed you. Can be physical or emotional, or a combination of the two" (p. 42). What trauma has Tristan experienced in the past? How do Nana and his counselor, Mr. Richardson, suggest he deal with trauma? Explain.
 - A. As you read, note events that distress Tristan and connect to his previous trauma. How does Tristan respond to traumatic reminders?
 - B. How does trauma change characters in the story? How do characters in the story deal with trauma? Based upon the events, what healthy and unhealthy approaches are taken to address trauma? Describe based upon events in the story.



Adinkras and Gifts	Purpose	When It is Used in the Novel <i>Cite Pages</i>
The spider's web		
Akofena (the crossed swords)		
Gye Nyame (the symbol of the sky god)		
The Amagqirha's glimmering bead		
The gloves from John Henry		

7. Several times in the novel Tristan uses the adinkras and gifts from the gods to help him out of tough situations. Explain the purpose of each gift and specific times they aid Tristan in the novel. (*Above*)
8. In Chapter 6, what does Tristan learn about Nana? Describe Nana's "special thread" (p. 52). What is the purpose of the quilt she creates? Support with evidence from the novel.
 - A. In Chapter 7, after looking at the quilt "fragments," Nana says, "Sometimes there ain't no fixing something, baby. If you wanna rebuild, you gotta break it down and start all over. Might seem hard, but it's the only way if you wanna get it right" (p. 64). How might this advice connect to Tristan's upcoming journey?
9. Anansi says, "Ifs are pretty powerful. You can collect them like a lazy man collects excuses. If this, if that. If I can't, if I could. Better watch it, little storyteller, or you'll build yourself a wall of ifs you can't get around" (p. 60). Can you relate? Have you ever doubted or second-guessed yourself? When? Should Tristan listen to Anansi's advice? Why or why not?
10. In Chapter 8, Shamble Man says, "'Come out,' says the little hero. 'Come out!' But does he really want me to, *grum grum*? Little man might not like what he seesss" (p. 74). Describe what the Shamble Man looks like? Why might his appearance be troubling to Tristan? Explain.
 - A. As the conversation progresses, Shamble Man says, "*Tristan Strong punched a hole in the sky / And let the evil in / Cities burned. / Now what did we learn? Don't let him do it again*" (p. 74). What do readers learn about the cause of Shamble Man's anger toward Tristan? Why is this conversation important to the development of the plot? Support your response with textual evidence.

11. After Nana is taken, Tristan struggles to tell stories. He says, “But for some reason, trying to gather up the story felt like collecting water through a vegetable strainer. It was like I couldn’t focus” (p. 87). What solution does Anansi propose? Is it effective? Why or why not?
12. Describe the sequence of events that occur before Tristan meets Keelboat Annie. Who is Keelboat Annie and how does she help the people of MidPass? What is Annie’s view of John Henry and the gods? Why? Do you agree or disagree?
 - A. How are personal stories of families connected to Annie’s travels? Why is collecting stories also an important role of an Anansesem? How does this task connect to the theme or central idea of Diaspora? Provide examples.
13. When Tristan arrives on the coast of the Golden Crescent (Chapter 13), how does he feel? What physical evidence of the previous battle is apparent when he looks around? What still needs to be rebuilt in MidPass? Why do you think the author included this scene in the novel? How does it help us understand Tristan and trauma?
14. Why is Tristan bothered by Junior’s words, “We get it. Everyone knows who you are. The hero. What, did you think there’d be a parade when you arrived?” (p. 127)? What are Junior’s criticisms of Tristan? Are his feelings warranted? Support with evidence.
15. In Chapter 15, what do John Henry and Tristan discuss? What does John Henry mean when he says, “Now’s not the time to be a hero, Tristan. It’s the time to be a leader. Sometimes things ain’t the same” (p. 151)? Why is this advice important? What does Tristan discover about John Henry’s condition? How? Why would the gods keep John Henry’s true condition a secret? Explain using textual details.
16. In Chapter 17, how does Nyanza (the Storm Lands) appear different from the original description? As Tristan’s journey into the land continues, what is odd about the outer and inner section of Nyanza? Describe.
17. Describe the encounter with Kulture Vulture in detail. What are the characteristics of a real vulture? Based upon the text, is the name *Kulture Vulture* fitting given his actions, conversation, and/or intent? Why or why not? What is Kulture Vulture wearing that disturbs Tristan? How does Tristan respond?
18. What events cause the Story Box Phone (SBP) to break? Why is the broken Story Box Phone a huge problem? What solution does Chestnutt propose? Do you think the suggestion will work? Why or why not?
 - A. Later, how does the solution for the Story Box Phone (SBP) relate to the theme or central idea of Diaspora? What is the function of the “Diaspor-app”? Why is the new app important and what important details does it reveal? Support your response with textual evidence.
19. In Chapter 21, what is happening at the juke joint when Tristan arrives? What problems do he and his friends encounter? How does each character respond to the challenges (i.e., Tristan, Ayanna, Gum Baby, Junior, Lady Night)? How do the events at the juke joint help the plot develop? Provide examples.
20. What information does Tristan learn about Junior at the juke joint? How does the suspense about Junior’s identity help the author develop the plot? Support your response with evidence. In Chapter 25, the reader learns Junior’s true identity. Was it surprising? Why or why not? Which clues throughout the novel suggested his origin?

- 21.** In Chapter 22, Tristan recalls what Nana shared about boo hags. Based on her story, what powers do boo hags possess? Should Tristan trust a boo hag? Why or why not? What does Nana's advice mean, "You just gonna have to decide who to believe—the witch, or the one writing the witch's story" (p. 230)? Why is it important to think about who writes the story? How does this advice relate to any story that we read? Support with evidence.
- 22.** As Tristan reflects in Chapter 25, he states, "Yes, I had fixed my mistake (with help from others), but it had cost a lot of people dearly" (p. 268). How does this acknowledgment shift from his perspective in previous chapters? What mistake is he referring to? What is the Shamble Man's true identity? Describe his character traits in traditional folktales. Are his current actions warranted? Cite textual evidence in your answer.
- 23.** In Chapter 28, how does Ayanna describe MidPass before the iron monsters? Tristan relates to her positive memories by acknowledging that he understands "[t]he feeling of good times tucked into nooks and crannies, spilling out of windows and doors" (p. 312). Where is that place for Tristan? Can you relate? What place makes you feel that way? Why?
- 24.** In Chapter 32, what is everyone's role in creating the quilt? How does each character's contribution reflect their skills and talents? Support your claims with evidence. How does the presentation of the quilt to Bear help the plot unfold? What does the quilt reveal to Bear? What is Bear's response to the quilt? Why? Be specific.
- 25.** How does Mami Wata's kidnapping connect to the destruction of Alke? Explain. How does Mami Wata's role also highlight the text theme of Diaspora? Consider the statement "All connected by origin" (p. 324). Why is this idea important? Cite textual details.
- 26.** What is the impact of the storm on Alke? What does Tristan see through Nyame's adinkra during the storm? What other magical tools or adinkras does Tristan use to counter the storm? What is the result? Provide the sequence of events.
- A.** Think about Tristan's observation during the storm, "Everyone clutched at one another, even the gods. There was something terrifying in that, but it was also reassuring. Even the strongest of us needed support, and that was okay" (p. 376). How does this moment relate to one of the themes embedded in the text? Do you agree that everyone "needs support"? Why or why not?
- 27.** What does Tristan mean when he says "Alke is a story" (p. 390)? How does this idea connect to the events that transpire in the final chapter? Did you like the ending of the novel? Why or why not? What do you believe might happen in the next novel?

POST-READING

Comparing Novels

1. How does Tristan's *storytelling* in the first novel differ from the *shared storytelling* and *story collecting* in the second novel? Why are both actions important? What are common and contrasting themes that you noticed in each novel? How does Tristan's *point of view* as a *hero* and *leader* develop and change in both stories? Describe events that support his development.
2. Think about recurring characters and the climate in Alke throughout both novels. How do character perspectives shift between the first and second novel? What new character traits are evident in the second novel? How are the societal challenges in Alke similar and different across novels? Support your response with textual evidence.
3. In your opinion, which novel was the most exciting? Why? Who are your favorite characters? Explain. What are your favorite scenes in each novel? Why? Cite details from the text.

Standards Aligned to Discussion Questions

Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3

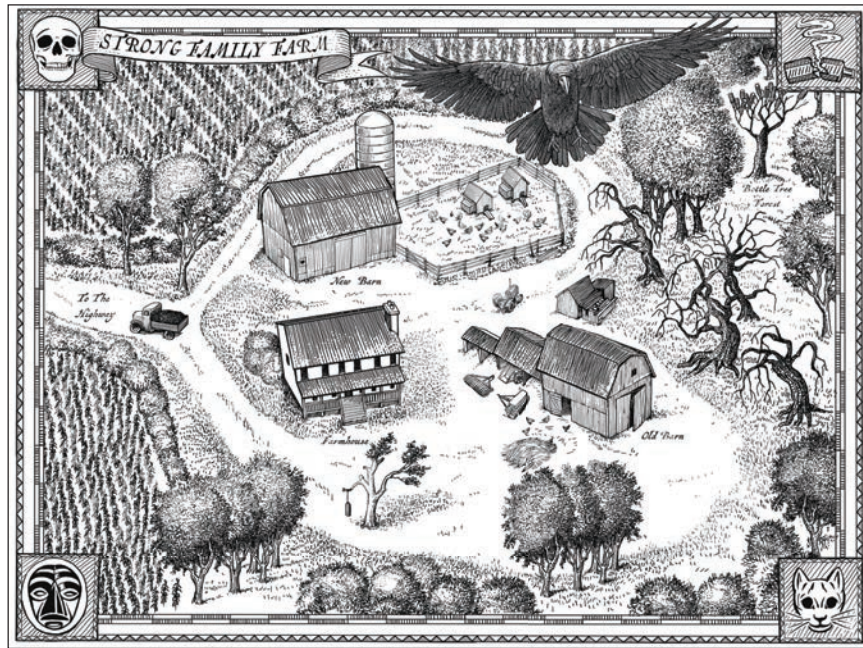
Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.5.4, 5.5, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6

Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RL.5.9

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

Creative Projects and Writing Extensions

1. **Small Group Discussion:** Engage in a discussion about *school curriculum* with a small group to share your perspective and clearly express your ideas. Before the discussion, be sure to form your opinion and collect evidence to support your views. During the discussion, actively listen to your partner's ideas by making eye contact, taking turns, posing questions, and providing comments that build upon ideas. At the end of the conversation, reflect upon the conversation by paraphrasing key ideas shared by each participant.
A. Prompt: There are many cultural stories that go untold in schools. When Nana shares her story about boo hags with Tristan, she says, "Bout time you learned. Shame you don't get this in your school, but that's neither here nor there. I'm called to teach, and you about to learn" (p. 229). Which stories and history are typically taught in schools? Do you think that adjustments should be made to school curriculum? Why or why not? If you could add one new thing to the school curriculum, what would it be? Why? (*Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: SL. 5.1, 6.1*)
2. **Sharing Recipes:** When Lady Night fixes the Story Book Phone (SBP), she says she uses "jollof rice, of course. Jollof fixes everything" (p. 246). What is the origin of jollof rice? Rice is a dish that is made in many different ways across cultures. Research a rice dish unique to a specific country, make the dish, and share with others. Explain the process to make the dish, key ingredients, foods that typically accompany the rice, and at least four to five facts about the country.



- 3. Art Connection:** Tristan thinks about how happy his grandparents' house makes him by stating, "When you think of it, a smile crosses your face and memories appear like hidden treasures suddenly found" (p. 312). Take a look at the art of the farm, pictured above, from the inner cover of the novel. Use the descriptions in the novel to accurately design a specific location on the farm (e.g., interior of barn, bottle tree). Share your art with others and explain where you found details in the text to support your design.

(Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: SL. 5.5, 6.5)

- 4. Research:** Conduct research by exploring several online and/or print resources to answer one of the questions below. Create a report aligned to credible sources that includes the following: (1) introduction, (2) summary of findings, and (3) bibliography. Select the research option below that is of greatest interest:

OPTION 1: At several points in the novel, characters suggest placing the broken Story Book Phone (SBP) in rice. Can you remember which characters make that suggestion? List them. What is Tristan's response to the advice? Research ways to repair a phone. What are ways to fix a water-damaged phone? Is it possible?

OPTION 2: Quilts are a key part of the novel. Can you recall how are quilts used in the novel? Explain. Research the origin of quilting. How do varying patterns and images in quilts convey meaning? How were quilts used in African American communities in the past? Explain.

- 5. Social Studies:** The theme of trauma for both individuals and communities is evident throughout Tristan's journey. When Tristan asks his Nana about whether a community can experience trauma, she responds, "Of course, baby. Sometimes an evil will rock a community, strip their will and feeling right from them, until they're raw and bleeding and hurting, inside and out. Tulsa, Oklahoma. Ferguson, Missouri. Oh yes, baby, a whole city can hurt all at once" (p. 43). What community trauma is Nana referring to in her response? With the help of an adult, select and watch a recent news story that reports on a community experiencing trauma. Engage in a discussion about the traumatic event. Discuss the impact of the trauma, resolutions to help prevent further trauma, and ways we can collectively help those affected.

(Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: SL. 5.2, 6.2)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kwame Mbalia (kwamembalia.com) is the *New York Times* best-selling author of *Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky*, for which he received a Coretta Scott King Author Honor award. The book was also named to best-of-the-year lists compiled by *Publishers Weekly*, the Chicago Public Library, and the *New York Times*. The second book in the trilogy is *Tristan Strong Destroys the World*. Kwame lives with his wife and children in Raleigh, North Carolina, where he is currently working on the third book about Tristan. Follow him on Twitter @KSekouM.



Q&A WITH KWAME MBALIA ABOUT *TRISTAN STRONG PUNCHES A HOLE IN THE SKY*

- Q:** At the beginning of the novel, you write, “For the stories untold and the children who will tell them.” Can you explain why that statement is meaningful to you personally and within the novel?
- A:** This statement refers to the missing stories of the world, the ones forgotten or skipped over or just plain ignored. You’d be surprised how many of those exist in the corners of society. But children will find them no matter how deeply they’re hidden, because children are good at looking for things adults have conveniently forgotten.
- Q:** While you were growing up, who told you fables and folktales? Which story was your favorite? Why?
- A:** We used to get tucked in and our parents would put on a cassette tape of Anansi tales, and the exploits of the trickster would carry us off to sleep. I’ve always been partial to the story of how Anansi won the sky god’s stories, as it is Anansi at his finest.
- Q:** How did you select which fable and folktale characters to tie into your novel? Was it a difficult decision?
- A:** Ha! I tried to stuff them all in there. Have you seen the size of that book? Sweet peaches, that thing is huge.
- Q:** Who was your inspiration for Tristan’s character? How do you see him evolving in future novels?
- A:** Believe it or not, a lot of Tristan’s personality was based on my oldest daughter. She’s entering middle school in the fall, and at the time of me writing the book, she’d lost her grandfather. Coping with loss and grief while undergoing personal change is a monumental task, and I’m proud of both her and Tristan. And in the future, we’ll see how both will handle the roles they’ve taken on at this new stage of life. But if my daughter suddenly acquires a tiny, sticky loudmouth as a companion, I’m calling for help.

Q: Tristan experiences great loss through his best friend, Eddie. Why do you think it is important for readers to explore the theme of loss and healing through Tristan's life events?

A: Because it's a part of life. There are ups and downs, and we have to understand that we can grieve and mourn the loss of someone, while at the same time be happy and thankful for the time we spent with them. This is all a part of being human and it's okay.

Q: What do you want readers to learn as they explore your novel? How can they apply this lesson in their own lives?

A: I want to pass on the stories that were passed to me. I want to develop a new group of Anansesem to carry the stories of the trickster and his friends, of John Henry, of High John the Conqueror, of Brer Rabbit . . . all of them. Create new ones. Share them. Pass on a story to someone and let it come back to you a little different so that we all become richer for it.

Q: What did you enjoy most about writing this novel? Why?

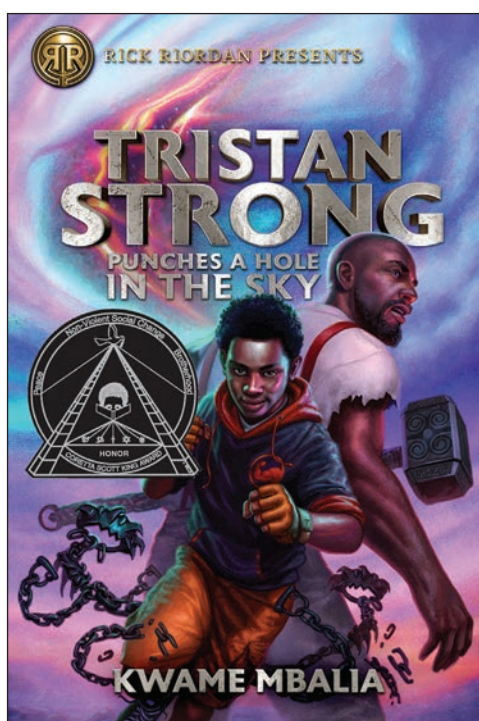
A: I enjoyed the research. I read so many wonderful folktales and fables from around country, and who knows . . . maybe a few new ones will pop up in the sequel. . . .



This guide was written by **Dawn Jacobs Martin, PhD**, an assistant clinical professor at the University of Maryland, College Park. She has spent her career supporting students with disabilities through various roles as a practitioner, researcher, special education director, and teacher educator.

She continues to improve the academic outcomes for students with disabilities through teacher development, instructional design, and research in the areas of literacy intervention, social support, and parent involvement. Feel free to contact her with questions at jacobsdm1@gmail.com.

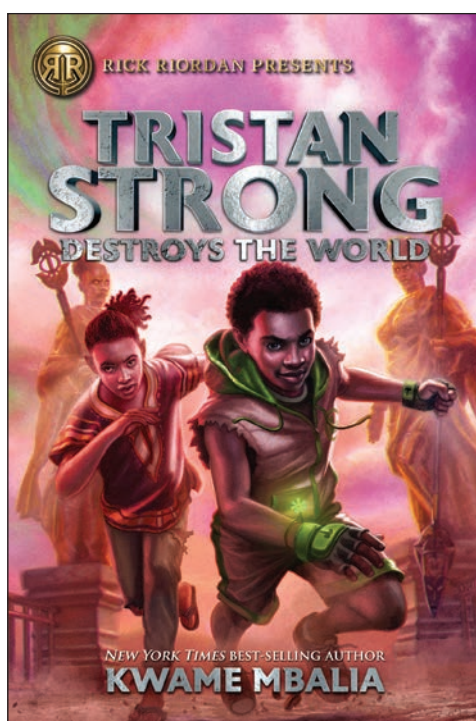
Many more guides can be found on the Disney • Hyperion website at www.DisneyBooks.com.



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