



Swing

Kwame Alexander , Mary Rand Hess

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Things usually do not go as planned for seventeen-year-old Noah. He and his best friend Walt (aka Swing) have been cut from the high school baseball team for the third year in a row, and it looks like Noah's love interest since third grade, Sam, will never take it past the "best friend" zone. Noah would love to retire his bat and accept the status quo, but Walt has big plans for them both, which include making the best baseball comeback ever, getting the girl, and finally finding cool.

To go from lovelorn to ladies' men, Walt introduces Noah to a relationship guru—his Dairy Queen-employed cousin, Floyd—and the always informative Woohoo Woman Podcast. Noah is reluctant, but decides fate may be intervening when he discovers more than just his mom's birthday gift at the thrift shop. Inside the vintage Keepall is a gold mine of love letters from the 1960s. Walt is sure these letters and the podcasts are just what Noah needs to communicate his true feelings to Sam. To Noah, the letters are more: an initiation to the curious rhythms of love and jazz, as well as a way for him and Walt to embrace their own kind of cool. While Walt is hitting balls out of the park and catching the eye of the baseball coach, Noah composes anonymous love letters to Sam in an attempt to write his way into her heart. But as things are looking up for Noah and Walt, a chain of events alters everything Noah knows to be true about love, friendship, sacrifice, and fate.

In *Swing*, bestselling authors Kwame Alexander and Mary Rand Hess (*Solo*) present a free-verse poetic story that will speak to anyone who's struggled to find their voice and take a swing at life.

Swing Details

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From Reader Review Swing for online ebook

Theresa says

I read an ARC via NetGalley. Kwame Alexander is a fabulous writer whose prose are intelligent and engaging. Walt (AKA Swing) and Noah are lovelorn high school boys who are passionate about many things, including baseball, jazz, art, and ladies. While neither boy is great at baseball, they strive to be their best selves. I liked that they didn't feel an obligation to fit in to stereotypical high school roles.

The story follows their ups and downs with relationships and how they each find outlets for their exuberant passion. My hang-up was that I wanted more depth in the social justice storyline and with Walt's brother who returned from war with PTSD. Instead there was a ton of focus on Noah's unrequited love, which made the ending feel abrupt. Overall, this is quintessential Kwame writing, I just feel like his middle grade books have more focus than his YA titles co-written with Hess.

Keri says

I had the opportunity to read Swing via NetGalley. I am a huge fan of Kwame Alexander and Mary Rand Hess. I love what they offer the world through literature. I have read everything by Kwame and have loved it all. I am constantly amazed how beautifully he can express feelings and ideas through poetry.

For that reason, I expected great things from Swing. It did not disappoint! The friendships, hopes, goals, feelings, and disappointments fit right in to what we can all remember from our teenage years. I had been warned that the ending would come as a surprise, and I am not sure it really did.

Honestly, I partially expected it. But even with that, I still have found myself struggling with how I feel about the ending. Was it too abrupt? Were all the characters developed enough to feel like it was ok and not a rushed ending? Does it send a positive message in the end? I have been grappling a bit with these questions, and ultimately this is what I have come up with.

Sometimes in life things happen more abruptly than you would expect. Often you don't get to really know and understand someone well enough to appreciate their situation. Life can leave us feeling very uncomfortable. Ultimately, we all take different messages from situations we are exposed to, even when exposed to the very same situation. Our personal background, understanding, and experiences will help each of us shape what we take from events.

Swing might just be a bit like that, which is a beautiful accomplishment. Let it make you think. Let the ending frustrate you, or break your heart. Let it encourage you to start positive conversations with those around you. Let Swing be one of those stories that will stick with you for a while.

PinkAmy loves 💕 books📖 , cats😻 and naps🛏 says

Kwame Alexander is a gift to YA literature. He brings readers like me, a middle aged white adult, to a world I know only from the media, making me feel like I was part of Noah's community. For teenage YA readers,

his books have wider appeal, including for reluctant readers who have yet to find stories and writing styles to engage them. SWING tackles issues of friendship, family, mental illness, dreams, sports, music and the scary realities of a rush to judgment.

I recommend anything he writes.

Laurie says

Have you ever been best friends with someone but you really want to move past the friend zone into something more? Noah, Walt, and Sam have been best friends for as long as they can remember. Noah has feelings for Sam that go way past the best friend zone, but Sam only has eyes for the star baseball player (even though he treats her bad). To help move Noah and Sam's relationship on, Walt takes Noah to see the guru of love, his cousin Floyd who works at the Dairy Queen. Floyd helps produce a podcast called "WhooHoo Woman", a podcast in which two women give advice on how to treat a lady. What really turns all of their lives around is when Noah and Walt go to the local thrift store to buy a present for his mom's birthday. The girl behind the counter, Divya, helps Noah pick out a vintage purse and Walt falls instantly in love with her. What comes as a total surprise is when Noah finds a bunch of love letters from a man named Corinthian to the love of his life, Annemarie written back in the 1960s. While Noah is pouring over these letters, Walt is trying to get back on the baseball team in which he has given himself the nickname, Swing. These letters give Noah the courage to come out in the open to Sam about his feelings. Everything comes to a head one night at a party at Noah's house. Will Sam be able to cross that friend zone into something more with Noah? Will Noah's confession of love ruin a lifelong friendship? Will Walt ever make it back onto the baseball team before he graduates? This is a must read book of love, loss, friendship, and music. Do not miss this one!!

Kwame and Mary are an incredible writing duo. Kwame's books are written in verse form and the rhythm just flows throughout the whole book. This book will have you laughing and crying and cheering on each character as they go through different situations in their life. I was only a few pages into this book and I wanted to be friends with these characters so bad. You are just drawn into their world and when the story is over these characters still have your heart. Do not miss one of Kwame's best books yet (I have to say "one of" because all of his books are the bomb!!).

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Karen Reed says

I don't know how Kwame / Mary do this? Pack so much into a book with few words. Nothing is lacking, not character development, not storyline, and definitely not emotion. This story schools us all in jazz, art, and life. We all need reminders to "Hug Life" and keep striving and working towards our dreams, but possibly teens need to be reminded of this lesson the most. They need to be reminded not to just be okay maintaining the status quo but to strive for more, both personally and globally. Kwame is such a motivating person for teens and his character Walt lends his voice to this message. I have pre-ordered the copy , even though myself and two teen boys (7th/9th) have already read the ARC (from netgalley in exchange for honest review). I look forward to seeing the final art pieces. I will also be ordering the audio for my library because I think Kwame's voice will make this powerful read even more influential.

Daisey says

The poetic rhythm and the figurative language in this story are amazing. It was so enjoyable to read all of the fun facts and allusions that are included. The combination of jazz, baseball, and poetry made for a fascinating mix in this story of friendship and love. However, the overall story is one that is tough for me to review because I just don't feel I'm the right audience. There was too much love story, or more accurately the story of a lovesick teenage boy, for me to completely enjoy the center section of this book, but the end came through in an unexpectedly powerful way.

* I received an electronic copy of this book through NetGalley for an honest review.

Jana says

unfortunately couldn't really get into this one

Pernille Ripp says

3.5 stars for this one, much to love but also much that could have been left out for the story to come alive more. The ending while heart wrenching came out of nowhere and seemed like it didn't fit. It will be interesting to see how my students react to this one.

Becky R. says

Swing is one of those novels that you won't soon forget. While I really enjoy novels told in verse form, I can't say that I've gotten lost in the story quite as much as I did here. The development of the story is slow but thoughtful, helping you to fully connect to all the characters involved. The most important characters are Noah and Swing. Told from Noah's point of view, we come to see how his friendship with his best friend, Swing, works. I love their friendship, their connection to baseball, and their appreciate for Jazz music.

Generally a progressive story about Noah's crush on his female best friend, includes very realistic looks at things like race, social class, education, war veterans, and even the Black Lives Matter movement. Nothing is shoved in your face, but takes place after well-developed narration that keeps you interested and flipping pages.

To say that I loved this book is putting it mildly. It has been a long time since I wanted to cry over a book, and this one put me there. I see this as required reading for any teen today, and a good book to look at and consider for adults.

Kristen says

Netgalley provided me a DRC of this book in exchange for an honest review.

I can't even tell you guys how excited I was to get an ARC of this one. I ADORE Kwame Alexander's work, and I wasn't disappointed.

Swing is one part romance, one part coming-of-age, one part social commentary. (Although it's a little heavy on the romance and light on the commentary.) Our narrator, Noah, is in love with his best friend--but she has a boyfriend. He loves art and baseball and his kooky friend Walt (aka Swing), who always seems to get them into crazy situations. I loved watching Noah's story progress, and Alexander's poetry is--as always--a fantastic mix that sometimes hits you hard like rap and sometimes eases into your blood like Jazz.

My only complaint is the abruptness of the ending. Most of the book is about Noah and Sam's non-relationship and Swing's crazy plan to find "cool". Then all of a sudden there seems to be a new focus and we (as readers) are not afforded much time to make the switch or deal with the emotional repercussions. If it was intentional and we were meant to feel uncomfortable, okay--but this felt more like an entire story was told only to have another one crammed in at the end. And while I LIKED both stories, I felt like the second one didn't get near the attention it should have.

Clare Lund says

I just finished listening to the audiobook, and if you have the chance to do the same, I highly recommend it! Author Kwame Alexander reads it himself and brings the story to life, and I loved the jazz music played in between chapters. I am still in a state of shock from the heartbreak ending, so I'll have to come back and write more later. Ages 12 and up.

Maureen says

Kwame Alexander and Mary Rand Hess have another hit on their hands. Noah and Walt are high school juniors who want to fit in. Walt has decided he is going to make the varsity baseball team their senior year and works hard to make it happen. Noah is carrying a torch for his long-time best friend Samantha, who happens to date baseball star Cruz. Over a four-week period in their lives, we learn so much about Noah, Walt, Sam, and Cruz. This novel in verse is perfect in every way. I am so thankful that the authors chose me to be part of their street team. I can't wait to buy published copies for my students.

Tara says

Music, art, poetry, baseball, love, and war make this YA novel in verse unique. Noah has been in love with one of his best friends for a while, and he is inspired to start creating found art love poems for her after finding some love letters from the 60s. His other best friend Walt, aka Swing, is obsessed with getting back on their school baseball team, and he teaches Noah to appreciate jazz and to be more bold.

**Read via NetGalley

**Publication date: October 2, 2018

**Member of Swing Launch Team

Meg says

Newbery Award winner, Kwame Alexander, along with Mary Rand Hess has written and illustrated an awesome realistic fiction novel about the intersections of baseball, jazz, life and love. Noah and Walt have been friends since grade school. Walt (Swing) is crazy about baseball and jazz; Noah is crazy about their friend Sam (Samantha). In this teenage love story, the characters go through their days trying to find out about life in poetic fashion. As a talented artist, Noah finally has the courage to draw his love a picture with an embedded love poem. When Walt secretly delivers the poem to Sam, sparks start to fly! Will Sam find out who her secret admirer is? Will Walt (Swing) make the baseball team after three unsuccessful tries? The plot draws the reader into their high school world and rushes toward an ending which is totally unexpected. With a message about the happenings in today's world of bias, this novel is a necessary read for young adult students!

Amanda says

They do it again!!

I'm always amazed that Kwame & Mary evoke such depth of emotion from so few words. This book is full of memorable characters and will leave you changed.

At one point in the story I did think there were too many plot points happening that diluted the story slightly but they tie them up, if not happily, then succinctly.

This is a story that will stick with me and is easy to champion for, much like this team's book Solo and Kwame's books overall. An accessible and essential voice in the book world.
