



Art © 2024 by Robbi Behr

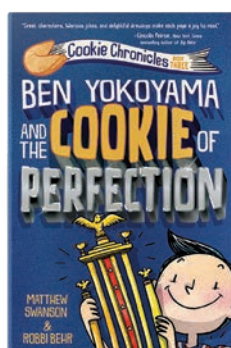
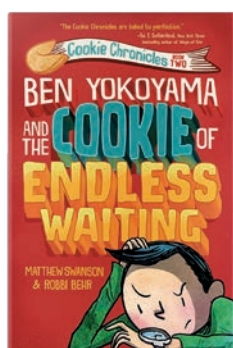
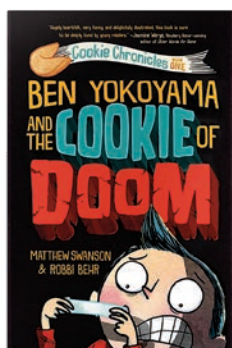
EDUCATORS' GUIDE

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU TAKE YOUR FORTUNE COOKIE TOO SERIOUSLY?

HIJINKS! MISCHIEF! SHENANIGANS!



Meet Ben Yokoyama, a boy whose huge heart and literal mind lead him to hilarious misunderstandings and unexpected adventures. This series can also be used as an educational tool to teach about similes and metaphors while also promoting visual comprehension.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MATTHEW SWANSON and ROBBI BEHR are the husband/wife, author/illustrator creators of The Cookie Chronicles, The Real McCoys, Babies Ruin Everything, Sunrise Summer, and Everywhere, Wonder.

They spend their summers running a commercial salmon fishing operation on the Alaskan tundra and the rest of the year making books and raising four kids in the hayloft of an old barn on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Their national literacy access and awareness initiative Busload of Books provides free author/illustrator visits and books to Title I communities across the country.





HELLO, WONDERFUL TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS!



MATTHEW SWANSON and ROBBI BEHR here, writing to introduce ourselves and our illustrated middle-grade series the Cookie Chronicles.

BRIEFLY: In addition to writing and illustrating books, we are 1) married, 2) parents of four, 3) big fans of pie, 4) literacy advocates, and 5) commercial salmon fishermen (each June and July).

WE (AND OUR KIDS AND TWO DOGS) SPENT THE 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR VISITING TITLE I SCHOOLS IN EVERY STATE ON OUR BUSLOAD OF BOOKS TOUR, hosting assemblies and giving away 25,000 hardcover books in high-need communities. It was an absolute joy.

AS FOR THE COOKIE CHRONICLES: In each book, our hero, Ben Yokoyama, grows profoundly confused by a fortune cookie fortune and gets himself into and out of trouble by working with his best friend, Janet, to figure out the fortune's actual meaning.

Hijinks happen. Sparks fly.

Each of Ben's adventures is loaded with metaphors, similes, and zany illustrations that work together to help readers make the steady march from confusion to understanding.

WE MADE THESE BOOKS BECAUSE 1) Matthew grew up constantly confused, 2) Robbi grew up half Japanese, and 3) we enjoy combining words and illustrations to create stories that delight precocious readers and create an inviting experience for the reluctant ones.

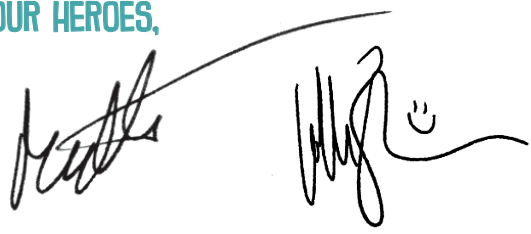
WE HOPE YOU'LL FIND THESE BOOKS FUNNY AND HEARTFELT, EXCITING AND FUN, SWEET AND OCCASIONALLY WISE. We've heard they work well for book battles, classroom read-alongs, and propping up the short leg of extremely wobbly tables.

ALSO CHECK OUT THE AUDIOBOOKS, all of which are narrated by Matthew.

Please follow our adventures (or drop us a line) at [@robbi.and.matthew](#) on Instagram or [robbiandmatthew](#) on Facebook!

Thank you for everything you do each and every day on behalf of your students! The only reason we get to do what WE do is because of all the excellent work YOU do.

YOU ARE OUR HEROES,





Q & A with **MATTHEW SWANSON** and **ROBBI BEHR**, creators of **THE COOKIE CHRONICLES SERIES**



MANY BOOKS ARE CENTERED AROUND FOOD; WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES IT A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION?

M: Food is necessary yet complicated, comforting yet confounding. Food can be fortifying (kale), divisive (beets), and delightful (cookies!) We tend to have many strong feelings and opinions about food.

R: If Matthew had named these books *The Income Tax Chronicles*, no one would read them.

WHAT'S SO ALLURING ABOUT FORTUNE COOKIES THAT MADE YOU THINK THEY'D BE A GOOD BASIS FOR A SERIES?

M: Every fortune cookie holds a secret or surprise, wise words that could literally change your life.

R: But only if you're incredibly gullible or hopelessly confused.

M: Which Ben Yokoyama is! He's literal-minded to a fault.

R: Just like Matthew. It is one of the most frustrating and lovable things about him.

THE COOKIE CHRONICLES BOOKS ARE SUPER ENGAGING WITH ALL THEIR ILLUSTRATIONS AND STRATEGIC TEXT PLACEMENT. HOW DO THE WRITING AND ILLUSTRATION INFORM ONE ANOTHER?

R: Matthew always goes first. Once the text is final, I break it into chunks and try to figure out how I can use my drawings to create a sense of place, illustrate metaphors, or add details that aren't in the story itself. I love Matthew's writing, but he's not much interested in describing things. Which leaves lots of room for me to play.

M: We think of ourselves as co-authors of all our books. I tell the words part of the story and Robbi tells the part that only shows up in the illustrations.

DO THESE STORIES ENCOURAGE TAKING THINGS LITERALLY, OR DO YOU VIEW THEM AS FUN CAUTIONARY TALES? WHY?

M: Definitely cautionary tales! We hope Ben's adventures make kids aware of the fun and perils of metaphorical language—and the wisdom to be found in proverbs. Ben gets himself into trouble so they don't have to.

IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE TWO OF YOU, WHO DO YOU THINK BEN IS MOST LIKE? WHY?

R: Oh gosh. Matthew is absolutely Ben. Earnest, hungry, and frequently confused.

M: And Robbi is just like Ben's best friend Janet. Confident, stubborn, and not at all worried when her hair is a mess.

R: They have opposite mindsets and have to work together to get through the day.

M: Just like Robbi and me.

WHAT LESSONS DO YOU HOPE YOUR READERS TAKE FROM THE SERIES?

M: Let's see. Don't take words at face value. Work with others to solve problems. Anything else?

R: Enjoy childhood. *The Income Tax Chronicles* await!





DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BEN YOKOYAMA AND THE **COOKIE** OF **DOOM**

1. Ben has created a list of things he has always wanted to do. This helps him decide how to live each day as if it was his last. What is the first item on Ben's list? What other things has Ben added to the list and why? What would you put on your list? Write a list of at least five things.
2. Describe how each of the following characters react to hearing about Ben's fortune.
 - Mom
 - Dad
 - Janet
 - Mona
 - Mrs. Ezra
3. Ben decides to live his last day to the fullest by taking some risks and trying out things that seem scary. How does this help him form new friendships and discover fun activities? What is something that scares you but that you would love to try?



BEN YOKOYAMA AND THE **COOKIE** OF **ENDLESS WAITING**

1. What do you think the phrase "good things come to those who wait" means? What do you think this fortune means to Ben?
2. Ben decides to wait to choose a partner for the scavenger hunt, and ends up getting paired with Walter. Although Ben is initially unhappy about this situation, how did being paired with Walter turn out to be a good thing for Ben?
3. Write a limerick about Ben, highlighting his personality, using evidence from the book. Then do the same for Janet and Walter.



BEN YOKOYAMA AND THE **COOKIE** OF **PERFECTION**



1. “Practice makes perfect” is a common saying. When Ben receives this fortune, how does he interpret it? Based on the events in the book, do you agree that practice makes perfect? Explain your answer.
2. Aunt Nora introduces Ben to the Japanese art of kintsugi. What is the lesson that Ben learns from kintsugi about perfection? Can you recall a moment from your own life or an example from the book that demonstrates how messing up can make something better?
3. Mrs. Ezra mentions that “if we go through life without any bruises, we’re living pretty small.” Explain what she means using specific examples from the book to support your answer.
4. What is the meaning of “perfectly imperfect”? As you read, make a list of things that Ben discovers are perfectly imperfect. List some things in your own life that you consider perfectly imperfect.



BEN YOKOYAMA AND THE **COOKIE THIEF**

1. How has Flegg McEggers been bullying the students of Honeycutt Elementary? What did Flegg take from Ben and why is Ben so determined to get it back?
2. Rainey’s mom tells Ben that “people pick on other people for all sorts of reasons. But usually, they’re trying to make themselves feel better.” How does this apply to Flegg?
3. Do you believe that the best things in life are free? What are some of the best things that Ben enjoys that cost nothing? Can you list some of the best things in your life that are free?
4. Explain the meaning of “justice for all,” and describe the judicial system of the United States of America. Do you think that justice was served in the case of Ben Yokoyama vs. Flegg McEggers? If so, why? Why do you think Ben was still unhappy even after Flegg gives him the scooter?



BEN YOKOYAMA AND THE COOKIES OF CHAOS



1. What is Janet's philosophy, and how does it influence her reaction to the wallet Ben found? Do you have a personal philosophy? Which philosophies from the book align with your own and why?
2. Ben and Janet play detective, gathering clues to solve a mystery. How do the library card, the business card, and Alfredo's card lead them to finding the owner of the lost wallet?
3. At the end of the book, Ben realizes that he has changed in an important way. Which characters in the book have also experienced growth or change? Please support your answer with specific examples from the book.



PRAISE FOR THE COOKIE CHRONICLES

"Hilarious and entertaining." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"This is my favorite book of the year. Great characters, hilarious jokes, and delightful drawings make each page a joy to read."

—LINCOLN PEIRCE, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Big Nate*

"A great blend of witty text and dynamic illustrations. My family can't get enough of Ben Yokoyama!"

—MINH LÊ, author of *Drawn Together*





Cookie Chronicles

SERIES QUESTIONS

1. The author Matthew Swanson uses similes and metaphors throughout the series to to put a picture in your head. What is a simile and what is a metaphor? Why might an author choose to use similes or metaphors in their stories? Choose a favorite simile or metaphor from the Cookie Chronicles and explain why you like it.
2. How do the illustrations in the Cookie Chronicles add to the reading experience? Choose a page from the series and explain how the illustrations help tell the story.
3. Who is your favorite character and why? In what ways do the author and illustrator help the characters come to life? Do any of the characters in the Cookie Chronicles remind you of someone in your life? Who and why?
4. Choose one of the books in the series and create a timeline showing how each moment leads to the next.
5. Each book in the Cookie Chronicles begins with a diagram or map. How do these maps help readers better understand the setting?
6. Examine the cover illustrations. Explain the details that Robbi Behr chose to include, using textual evidence as support. Design your own cover, including details that will entice a reader.
7. The Cookie Chronicles series touches upon themes of friendship, family, and school life. Pick any one of these themes and write an essay about what readers can learn or take away from the Cookie Chronicles.
8. Create a book trailer for the Cookie Chronicles series. Carefully choose music, visuals, and words to create a video that will draw readers to the series.
9. Write a script based on your favorite scene(s) in the book. Why did you choose that scene? What changes did you make to the scene and why?
10. How does the book's back matter add to the reading experience? What other information would you add to the back matter?
11. Write an email to the creators at info@robbandmatthew.com and let them know what you liked about their series.

