

# TOURNAMENT TROUBLE: CROSS UPS 1

by Sylv Chiang • illustrated by Connie Choi

**Genre:** Contemporary Fiction

**Themes:** family relationships; video games; bullying; conflict resolution; friends; growing up; school; humour; secrets; problem-solving

**Suitable for:** Grades 5+

**Guided Reading Level:** U

**Lexile Measure:** 590L

**Common Core standards:** RF.5.3,3a,4,4a,4c  
SL.5.1,1c,1d,2,3,4,5,6  
W.5.3,4,8,9,9a,10  
RL.5.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9,10  
L.5.3,4,4a,5,5a,5c,6

## Summary

All twelve-year-old Jaden wants to do is be the best at *Cross Ups*, the video game he and his friends can't stop playing. He knows he could be—if only he didn't have to hide his gaming from his mom, who's convinced it will make him violent. After an epic match leads to an invitation to play in a top tournament, Jaden and his friends Devesh and Hugh hatch a plan to get him there. But Jaden's strict parents and annoying siblings, not to mention a couple of bullies and his confusing feelings for his next-door neighbor Cali, keep getting in the way!

*Tournament Trouble* marks the first book in a planned series by Sylv Chiang, a captivating new voice in middle reader fiction. With sharp dialogue and relatable characters, it chronicles the ups and downs of middle school with a relevant, contemporary twist. Accompanied by Connie Choi's lively illustrations, *Tournament Trouble* invites readers into Jaden's world, and will leave them eagerly awaiting his next adventure.

# GENERAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE CROSS UPS SERIES

## 1. VIDEO GAME RATINGS (BLM1)

The Entertainment Software Ratings Board assigns rating categories to games to suggest age-appropriateness. Discuss the ratings system. Are the games you play rated appropriately for your age group? Do you think there should be restrictions placed on who can play certain games? Why or why not?

## 2. CREATE A VIDEO GAME CHARACTER (BLM2)

The video game *Cross Ups* has characters that transform into mythical creatures. Invent your own *Cross Ups* character to add to the game. Draw a picture of the character before and after it transforms and describe its Super moves.

## 3. MS RESEARCH

Cali's mom has Multiple Sclerosis (MS). Research MS symptoms. Discuss how these symptoms might affect her day to day life. Create an awareness poster to tell people about MS.

## 4. PRESS CONFERENCE

What would you like to ask a character? How do you imagine s/he would respond? Conduct a press conference, where one student takes on the role of a character from the story, while the rest of the class acts as reporters. Then write a newspaper article based on the press conference.

## 5. CHARACTER CHAT

Imagine you got to play *Cross Ups* against your favorite character online. Write an imagined conversation, either as a series of in-game messages or as a conversation over microphone and headset.

## 6. DESCRIPTIVE ADJECTIVES (BLM3 and BLM4)

List three adjectives to describe each character. Who are you most like? What qualities do you share? Who are you least like? Who do you wish you were like?

## 7. BEST FRIEND

What qualities make a good friend? Who do you think is the best friend to Jaden? Support your answer with examples. Do you think Jaden would agree? Is Jaden a good friend?

## BEFORE READING CROSS UPS BOOK 1: TOURNAMENT TROUBLE

These activities build the context and introduce the topic of the book, and establish prior knowledge and interest.

### 1. OFF LIMITS

Think of something you love doing and are really good at. Now, imagine you aren't allowed to do it anymore. How would you feel?

### 2. PROS AND CONS OF GAMING (BLM5)

Jaden's mother thinks that playing violent games will cause him to become violent. Do you agree or disagree with her thinking? Make a list of the pros and cons of playing video games. Have a class debate on the subject.

### 3. SECRET REASONS (BLM6)

In the story, many characters keep secrets from each other. Why do you think people keep secrets? Create a T-chart listing GOOD REASONS and BAD REASONS someone might keep a secret.

## WHILE READING CROSS UPS BOOK 1: TOURNAMENT TROUBLE

These activities check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.

### 1. SECRETS CONTINUED (throughout the novel) (BLM6)

As you read the novel, take note of the various secrets that characters keep from each other. Place each secret on the T-chart of GOOD REASONS and BAD REASONS to keep a secret.

### 2. A MESSAGE FOR SOMEONE YOU MISS (after Chapter 2)

Jaden and Cali have been friends since they were little, but now that they go to different schools they have drifted apart. Think of someone you used to spend a lot of time with who you haven't seen in a while. Write them a letter telling them the things you miss doing together.

When Jaden and his friends send messages over their gaming systems, they keep it short and simple. Rewrite the message above in as few words as possible.

3. **MAKING CONNECTIONS** (after Chapter 3)

Jaden hides his gaming from his mom. Think about a time when you kept a secret from someone because you didn't want to get in trouble. What happened?

4. **PLANNING WHAT TO SAY**

Jaden has trouble finding the words. Help him say the right thing in each situation:

- Tell the Trekkie he wants to sign up for the T3 tournament (after Chapter 6)
- Ask Cali about her mom (after Chapter 8)
- Ask his mom about her brother (after Chapter 11)

5. **INTERNET SAFETY** (after Chapter 7)

Jaden interacts with other gamers online, including Kn1ght\_Rage who he does not know. Discuss ways to be safe when communicating online.

6. **OPINION** (after Chapter 10)

Mr. Efram decides that Jaden, Devesh, and Hugh must tutor Ty and Flash after school. Do you think this is a good idea? Is it fair? Explain your thinking.

7. **CALMING DOWN** (BLM) (after Chapter 11)

Cali's mom taught her to use the alphabet game to calm her thoughts. Play the alphabet game. This can be done alone or with a partner, orally or written.

What strategies do you use to calm down when you are anxious or stressed?

8. **GROUP WORK** (after Chapter 12)

Mr. Efram makes Jaden and his friends tutor Ty and Flash even though they do not get along. Make a list of group work strategies you use in class that could help them be successful.

9. **IF I HAD \$2,000** (after Chapter 15)

What do you think Jaden plans to do with the money if he wins the tournament? What would you do if you won \$2,000?

10. **LANGUAGE BARRIER** (after Chapter 18)

Jaden's mom speaks to him in Mandarin, but he answers in English for most of the novel. Why do you think that is? What does Jaden's language choice say about his feelings toward his mother?

11. **THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE** (after Chapter 19)

Jaden finds his sister annoying and his parents embarrassing, but Cali envies his family life. What are some things that she appreciates about his family that Jaden does not?

12. **CHANGING IMPRESSIONS** (after Chapter 24)

Jaden’s mom says, “Your actions show what kind of person you really are” (p. 163). List some examples of characters acting in ways that reveal their true character. Have any characters surprised you with their actions? How have your impressions of characters changed throughout the novel?

13. **PROBLEM-SOLVING STEPS** (after Chapter 26)

Jaden uses the math problem-solving steps to help him at the tournament. Brainstorm other life situations where these problem-solving steps could come in handy.

14. **PERSUASIVE WRITING** (after Chapter 27)

Jaden wants to convince his parents to let him be part of the ArcadeStix team. Write a letter from Jaden to his parents, detailing all the reasons he should be allowed to be on the team.

15. **FINAL GIFT** (after Chapter 28)

What is the significance of the gift Jaden gives Cali at the end of the novel?

## **AFTER READING CROSS UPS BOOK 1: TOURNAMENT TROUBLE**

These activities inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further extensions.

1. **WEATHER AND MOOD**

How does the author use the weather to reinforce the mood of the story?

2. **ILLUSTRATIONS**

Select an image from the novel and explain how that picture helped you to better understand the text.

3. **POINT OF VIEW**

The story is told from Jaden’s point of view. Think about how the story might be different if it was told from a different character’s point of view. Pick a scene and write it from another character’s point of view. Examples:

- Write the first scene of Chapter 11 (p. 64-67) from Jaden’s mother’s POV.
- Write the first scene of Chapter 14 (p. 86-91) from Ty or Flash’s POV.
- Write Chapter 20 (p. 131-136) from Cali’s POV.

4. **EVALUATION**

Jaden lies, steals, and cheats to get to the tournament. Do you think he’s a good person? Why or why not?

## RATING CATEGORIES



### EARLY CHILDHOOD

Content is intended for young children.



### EVERYONE

Content is generally suitable for all ages. May contain minimal cartoon, fantasy or mild violence and/or infrequent use of mild language.



### EVERYONE 10+

Content is generally suitable for ages 10 and up. May contain more cartoon, fantasy or mild violence, mild language and/or minimal suggestive themes.



### TEEN

Content is generally suitable for ages 13 and up. May contain violence, suggestive themes, crude humor, minimal blood, simulated gambling and/or infrequent use of strong language.



### MATURE

Content is generally suitable for ages 17 and up. May contain intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content and/or strong language.



### ADULTS ONLY

Content suitable only for adults ages 18 and up. May include prolonged scenes of intense violence, graphic sexual content and/or gambling with real currency.

**NOTE:** Rating Category assignments can also be based upon a game or app's minimum age requirement.

\*adapted from [http://www.esrb.org/ratings/ratings\\_guide.aspx](http://www.esrb.org/ratings/ratings_guide.aspx)

## A NEW CROSS UPS CHARACTER

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SUPER POWERS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### DRAW YOUR CHARACTER:

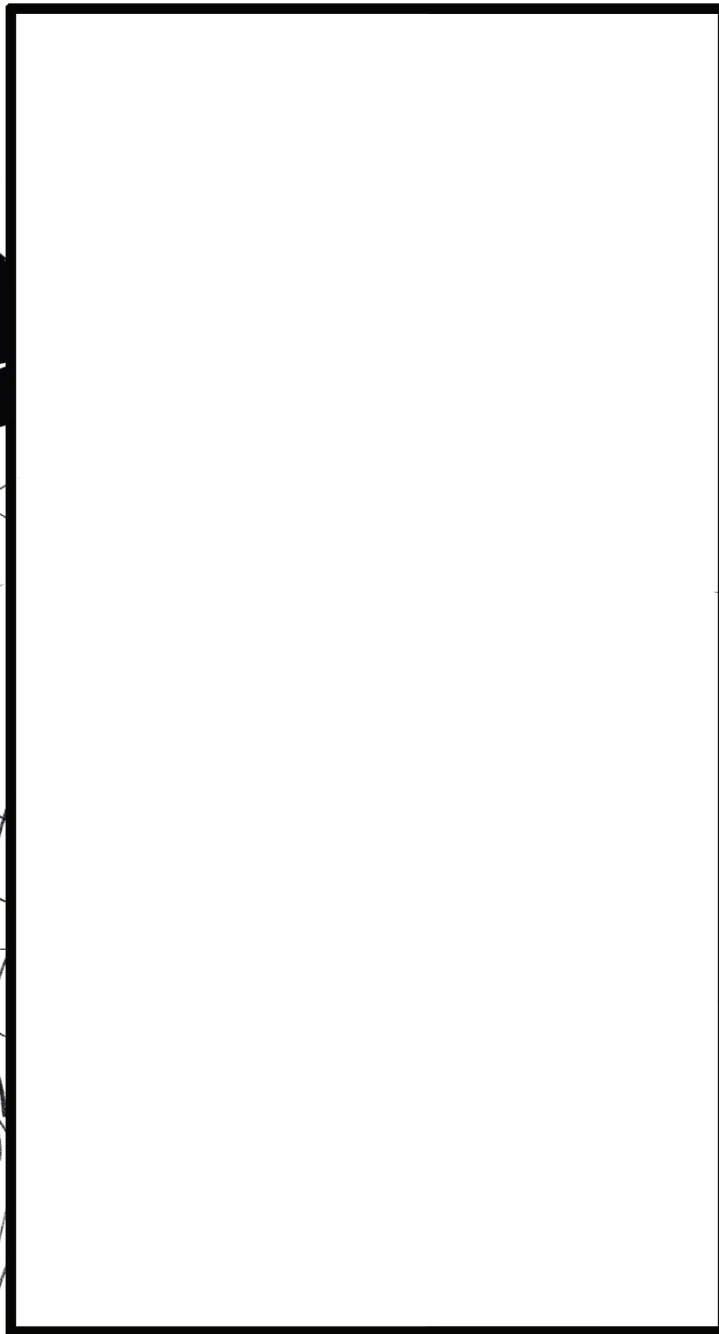
REGULAR MODE

SUPER MODE

|  |  |
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|--|--|

# CROSS UPS

**Design your own avatar!**



An avatar is your fighter of choice in the battle game *Cross Ups*! Every avatar is able to transform from a person in karate gear to a wild creature! Examples include a dragon, a griffon, a scorpion, a spider, a basilisk, and a monkey.



## Describing People

**List three adjectives to describe each character's personality.**

| <b>Character</b> | <b>Adjectives</b> |  |  |
|------------------|-------------------|--|--|
| Jaden            |                   |  |  |
| Cali             |                   |  |  |
| Devesh           |                   |  |  |
| Hugh             |                   |  |  |
| Jaden's mom      |                   |  |  |
| Mr. Efram        |                   |  |  |
| Ty               |                   |  |  |
| Flash            |                   |  |  |
| Melanie          |                   |  |  |
| Josh             |                   |  |  |
| Jaden's dad      |                   |  |  |
| Roy              |                   |  |  |
| Kaigo            |                   |  |  |

I am most like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I am least like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I would like to be more like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Adjectives Describing People and Personal Qualities

|  |  |   |   |  |  |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|
| <p><b>A</b></p> <p>able<br/>abnormal<br/>absent-minded<br/>above average<br/>adventurous<br/>affectionate<br/>agreeable<br/>ambitious<br/>amiable<br/>amusing<br/>apprehensive<br/>artistic<br/>assertive<br/>attentive<br/>average</p> <p><b>B</b></p> <p>balanced<br/>below average<br/>blunt<br/>brave<br/>bright<br/>brilliant</p> <p><b>C</b></p> <p>capable<br/>careful<br/>careless<br/>cautious<br/>charming<br/>childish<br/>childlike<br/>cheerful<br/>chic<br/>clever<br/>clumsy<br/>cold<br/>competent<br/>composed<br/>conceited<br/>confident<br/>confused<br/>conscientious<br/>considerate<br/>content<br/>cool<br/>cool-headed<br/>cooperative<br/>courageous<br/>cowardly<br/>critical<br/>cruel<br/>curious</p> | <p><b>D</b></p> <p>decisive<br/>deep<br/>dependent<br/>delightful<br/>depressed<br/>devoted<br/>dextrous<br/>diligent<br/>direct<br/>disagreeable<br/>discreet<br/>disruptive<br/>distant<br/>distraught<br/>distrustful<br/>dramatic<br/>dull<br/>dutiful</p> <p><b>E</b></p> <p>eager<br/>earnest<br/>easy-going<br/>efficient<br/>egotistical<br/>emotional<br/>energetic<br/>enthusiastic<br/>evasive<br/>even-tempered<br/>exacting<br/>excitable<br/>experienced</p> <p><b>F</b></p> <p>ferocious<br/>fiery<br/>flashy<br/>friendly<br/>funny</p> <p><b>G</b></p> <p>generous<br/>gentle<br/>gloomy<br/>gluttonous<br/>grouchy</p> <p><b>H</b></p> <p>hateful<br/>hearty<br/>helpful<br/>hesitant<br/>hot-headed<br/>hypercritical</p> | <p><b>I</b></p> <p>idle<br/>illogical<br/>imaginative<br/>immature<br/>impatient<br/>impractical<br/>impressionable<br/>impressive<br/>impulsive<br/>inactive<br/>incompetent<br/>inconsiderate<br/>inconsistent<br/>independent<br/>industrious<br/>inexperienced<br/>insensitive<br/>inspiring<br/>intelligent<br/>interesting<br/>intolerant<br/>inventive<br/>irritable<br/>irritating</p> <p><b>J</b></p> <p>joyful<br/>joyous<br/>judgmental</p> <p><b>K</b></p> <p>keen<br/>kind</p> <p><b>L</b></p> <p>lazy<br/>lethargic<br/>level-headed<br/>lithe<br/>lively<br/>logical<br/>long-winded<br/>lovable</p> <p><b>M</b></p> <p>maternal<br/>mature<br/>mean<br/>methodical<br/>meticulous<br/>mild<br/>miserable<br/>modest<br/>motivated<br/>musical</p> | <p><b>N</b></p> <p>naive<br/>nasty<br/>naughty<br/>negative<br/>nervous<br/>noisy<br/>normal<br/>nosy</p> <p><b>O</b></p> <p>obliging<br/>obnoxious<br/>old-fashioned<br/>orderly<br/>outgoing<br/>outspoken</p> <p><b>P</b></p> <p>passionate<br/>passive<br/>paternal<br/>patient<br/>peaceful<br/>peevish<br/>pensive<br/>persevering<br/>picky<br/>plain-speaking<br/>playful<br/>pleasant<br/>polite<br/>popular<br/>positive<br/>powerful<br/>practical<br/>prejudiced<br/>pretty<br/>proficient<br/>proud<br/>provocative<br/>punctual</p> <p><b>Q</b></p> <p>quarrelsome<br/>quick<br/>quick-tempered<br/>quiet</p> | <p><b>R</b></p> <p>realistic<br/>reassuring<br/>reclusive<br/>reliable<br/>reluctant<br/>resentful<br/>reserved<br/>resigned<br/>resourceful<br/>respected<br/>respectful<br/>responsible<br/>restless<br/>revered<br/>ridiculous</p> <p><b>S</b></p> <p>sad<br/>sassy<br/>self-assured<br/>selfish<br/>sensible<br/>sensitive<br/>sentimental<br/>serious<br/>short-tempered<br/>shrewd<br/>shy<br/>silly<br/>sincere<br/>sleepy<br/>sloppy<br/>slow<br/>smart<br/>snazzy<br/>sneering<br/>snobby<br/>somber<br/>sophisticated<br/>soulful<br/>soulless<br/>spirited<br/>spiteful<br/>stable<br/>steady<br/>strict<br/>strong<br/>subtle<br/>sulky<br/>superficial<br/>suspicious<br/>sweet</p> | <p><b>T</b></p> <p>tactful<br/>tactless<br/>talented<br/>testy<br/>thinking<br/>thoughtful<br/>thoughtless<br/>timid<br/>tired<br/>tolerant<br/>touchy<br/>tranquil</p> <p><b>U</b></p> <p>ugly<br/>unaffected<br/>unbalanced<br/>uncertain<br/>uncooperative<br/>undependable<br/>unemotional<br/>unfriendly<br/>unguarded<br/>unhelpful<br/>unimaginative<br/>unmotivated<br/>unpleasant<br/>unpopular<br/>unreliable<br/>unsophisticated<br/>unstable<br/>unsure<br/>unthinking<br/>unwilling</p> <p><b>V</b></p> <p>versatile<br/>vigilant<br/>vulnerable</p> <p><b>W</b></p> <p>warm-hearted<br/>wary<br/>watchful<br/>weak<br/>well-behaved<br/>well-developed<br/>well-intentioned<br/>well-respected<br/>well-rounded<br/>willing<br/>wonderful</p> <p><b>Z</b></p> <p>zealous</p> |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|

\*Adapted from <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/wordlist/adjectivesforpeople.shtml>

## ARE VIDEO GAMES GOOD OR BAD?

Make a list of all the things that are good about playing video games (PROS) and all the things that are bad about playing video games (CONS) .

| PROS | CONS |
|------|------|
|      |      |
|      |      |
|      |      |
|      |      |
|      |      |
|      |      |
|      |      |
|      |      |
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|      |      |
|      |      |
|      |      |

Which list of reasons is more convincing?

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Keeping Secrets

| Good Reasons | Bad Reasons |
|--------------|-------------|
|              |             |

# Alphabet Game

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

|   |   |
|---|---|
| A | N |
| B | O |
| C | P |
| D | Q |
| E | R |
| F | S |
| G | T |
| H | U |
| I | V |
| J | W |
| K | X |
| L | Y |
| M | Z |

What are some other strategies you can use to calm down when you are feeling anxious or stressed?

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