

The Electric Slide and Kai

written by Kelly J. Baptist

illustrated by Darnell Johnson

About the Book

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Format: Hardcover, \$19.95
40 pages, 10-1/2" x 8-1/4"

ISBN: 9781885008978

Reading Level: Grade 3

Interest Level: Grades PreK-5

Guided Reading Level: O

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
NP

Lexile™ Measure: NP

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: African/African American Interest, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Dance, Diversity, Families, Grandparents, Identity/Self Esteem/Confidence, Mentors, Overcoming Obstacles, People In Motion, Persistence/Grit

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/the-electric-slide-and-kai

SYNOPSIS

Kai's aunt is getting married, and everyone in the Donovan family is excited about the wedding ... except Kai. The highlight of every Donovan occasion is dancing the electric slide--a groovy line dance with footwork that Kai can't quite figure out. More than anything, he wants to prove that he can boogie with the rest of his family and earn a cool nickname from his granddad. Can Kai break through his nerves and break it down on the dance floor?

Told with humor and heart by author Kelly J. Baptist and lively illustrations from debut picture book artist Darnell Johnson, *The Electric Slide and Kai* is a funky celebration with all the right moves!

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

The History Behind the Electric Slide

The Electric Slide is a fun and entertaining dance to the song called "Electric Boogie." In 1976, Richard Silver created the moves for the dance and Neville "Bunny Wailer" Livingston wrote the catchy song. The song was first popular in Jamaica and then made its way to the radio waves in the United States. The Electric Slide incorporates grapevines, side steps and a series of forward and backward steps (<https://people.howstuffworks.com/stories-behind-electric-slide-moonwalk-and-other-epic-dance-moves.htm#:~:text=Back%20in%201976%2C%20Neville%20%22Bunny,of%20forward%20and%20backward%20steps.>)

In the 1990s, the Electric Slide became popular and styled for American line dancing. It also was featured in the 1999 romantic comedy film, "The Best Man," and has been a hit at parties and weddings ever since (<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/jun/11/how-the-electric-slide-became-the-black-lives-matter-protest-dance>).

Teaching Marriage to Students

Consult Sesame Street's "Grover discusses 'What is marriage?'" for showing students a child-friendly way to explain what marriage is about and why people get married. Additionally, Reading Rockets (<https://www.readingrockets.org/booklists/somebodys-getting-married>) and Beyond the Bookends (<https://www.beyondthebookends.com/11-kids-books-about-weddings/>) both have lists of books about weddings, marriage, and how marriages and weddings signify the start of something new as well as family change. *The Ring Bearer* by Floyd Cooper (Penguin Random House) is another book that helps children think about what weddings represent and how they're meaningful to families.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- Do you like to dance? Why or why not? Do you know any specific dances? What are they?
- Have you ever been to a wedding? What happens at a wedding? What are some specific traditions or things that people do at weddings?
- Why is it important to practice something? If you play a particular sport or have a hobby, how does practice help you get better? How do you feel about practicing something?
- Is there a family member or friend that helped you when you struggled with something? What did they do to support you? Why were they helpful?

- What does it mean to be persistent? How do you demonstrate persistence even though something may be challenging? Why is it important to be persistent? Do you think persistence can be learned? How so?
- Was there ever a time where you solved a problem creatively? What did you do? Why did you have to solve that problem? How did you think quickly?
- Was there a time when you took a chance on something? What did you do? What was the end result? Was it worth taking the chance? How are taking chances important in your life?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book *The Electric Slide and Kai*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- **Read Kelly J. Baptist's Biography:** Read about Kelly J. Baptist on the jacket back flap as well as on her website <http://kellyiswrite.com/>. Encourage students to think about what it was like to write a children's book, and what might have been her inspiration for writing *The Electric Slide and Kai*. Students can also think about what Kelly J. Baptist wrote in her dedication.
- **Read Darnell Johnson's Biography:** Read about Darnell Johnson on the jacket back flap as well as on his website <http://artofdarnelljohnson.com/>. Darnell discovered his passion for art by catching cartoons when he was a kid. How do you think the illustrations in *The Electric Slide and Kai* reflect Darnell's inspiration?
- Encourage students to stop and jot down in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear a new word.
- Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote down that feeling and have them write a journal entry about it.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- what event Kai and his family go to
- what the electric slide is and the different moves involved
- how Kai feels about dancing
- why Kai decides to practice dancing
- what happens when Kai shows off his dance moves

- how family is important
- why persistence helps you get better at something

Encourage students to consider why the author, Kelly J. Baptist, would want to share with young people this story about Kai and dancing to the electric slide.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

wedding, flower girl, junior bridesmaid, dip, electric slide, suit, bow ties, ceremony, reception hall, deejay, mic

Academic

shrug, rhythm, grinning

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does Mama get in the mail?
2. Who is getting married?
3. How is each family member involved in the wedding?
4. What happened to Kai at the family reunion?
5. Who turns on the music after dinner? What does Kai do?
6. Who teaches Kai to dance first? How does she teach him? What happens?
7. Which family member tries to teach Kai next? How does he teach him? What happens?
8. What does Kai do in the car on the way to the wedding?
9. What do Kai and his family members have to do during and right after the wedding?
10. What happens on the dance floor? When the electric slide comes on, what does Kai think he's first going to do?
11. Who stops Kai from leaving before the dance? What does he say to Kai?
12. What does Granddad do right before Kai and his family have to leave? What nickname does he give Kai?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What is one big thought you have after reading this book? Think about Kai's dedication to practicing his dance moves and his love for his family. What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. What do you think is Kelly J. Baptist's message to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind Kelly J. Baptist's intentions for writing the book. What do you think she wanted to tell her readers?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kinds of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Kai's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you?

4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *The Electric Slide and Kai*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make between this book and what you have seen in the world, such as online, on television, or in a newspaper? Why did this book make you think of that?
6. What does persistence mean to you after reading? After reading *The Electric Slide and Kai*, what does practice and hard work mean to you? Why?
7. How has a family member or other close person impacted your life? Kai's family all supported him in improving his dance, and Kai was determined to get a nickname from his beloved granddad. Have you had a family member or other person who really changed your life? What were some things that family member or person did that were significant to you?

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to tell what they learned about one of the poems. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about something that they had to get better at and what they did to improve and practice.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students, and several words are printed in bold. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Dancing and moving can help kids feel good and be beneficial for their health (<https://bit.ly/3tJPjTZ>). Have students think about why dancing can relieve stress or anxiety. How does dancing make them feel? Do they like to dance? Why or why not? If they like to dance, how does it help them feel better if they're feeling anxious, nervous or sad? Have students write a piece about how dancing, or any kind of movement, makes them feel and why.
2. How do Kai's feelings change about dance throughout the story? Students can create a graphic organizer with three columns, "Beginning," "Middle," and "End." Write down what Kai was like in the beginning of the story, what kinds of changes he experienced in the middle, and how his character was different in the end.
3. Connect Kai's experiences with dancing to students' own apprehension about something that they've had in their life. Were students ever nervous about something, or felt like they weren't good enough at a particular activity? How did it make them feel? Did they want to keep trying? How did they practice that particular activity? Students can share their findings in an essay.
4. Kai realizes in the end that mistakes are okay, and that no one is going to notice if he messes up. How does this demonstrate how his character changed over the course of the story? Have you ever related to Kai in this type of situation before? What was it like? What does it feel like to make a mistake? How did you overcome your fear of making mistakes?
5. Which illustration in *The Electric Slide and Kai* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it shows. How does the image portray that emotion?
6. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *The Electric Slide and Kai*.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Complete a literary unit on dance and different types of dances.** Lee & Low titles include *Capoeira* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/capoeira>), *¡Olé, Flamenco!* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ole-flamenco>) and *Drumbeat in Our Feet* ([leeandlow.com/books/drumbeat-in-our-feet](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/drumbeat-in-our-feet)). Use a graphic organizer to compare and contrast the electric slide to the different dances in the books. What are the different dances called? Where did they originate? What are the moves involved? Students can discuss their findings and then write an essay about what they learned from conducting this study.
- **Conduct a “how-to” unit featuring something that students like to do.** Kai had to look up videos on how to dance. Have students write about their favorite hobby, such as a sport or anything else like that to do, and instructions on how to do it. Students can think about the following: what are the most critical instructions? How do I write the directions so people will know exactly how to do my hobby? What makes an effective how-to writing piece? ReadWriteThink has a lesson plan for more information about how-to writing (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/writing-motivating-students-write-871.html>). After students write their piece, if possible they can also record a video on how to do their particular hobby. Students can also accompany their pieces with illustrations or pieces of artwork.
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author Kelly J. Baptist.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children’s book? How did the author come up with the idea to write *The Electric Slide and Kai*? What research did she do? Was she inspired by events from her own life? Consider contacting Kelly J. Baptist and inviting her to your school, library, or other relevant setting for an in-person or a virtual author visit (<https://www.kellyiswrite.com/about>).
- **Encourage students to watch the book trailer** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-electric-slide-and-kai>) **for *The Electric Slide and Kai*.** If the necessary equipment is available at school or in students’ homes, encourage students to record and edit their own book trailers for *The Electric Slide and Kai*. For ideas, check out this Creating Reading Excitement with Book Trailers lesson plan (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroomresources/lesson-plans/book-report-alternativecreating-c-30914.html>) by ReadWriteThink.org.

- **Have students read Kelly J. Baptist and Darnell Johnson's interview, "The importance of Black Joy in Children's Books: A Conversation with Kelly J. Baptist and Darnell Johnson"** (<https://blog.leeandlow.com/2021/03/30/the-importance-of-black-joy-in-childrens-books-a-conversation-with-kelly-j-baptist-and-darnell-johnson/>). What did students learn from the author and illustrator's interview? How is *The Electric Slide and Kai* meaningful to their lives? Why is this book important? Encourage teachers and students to highlight and read books all year long featuring Black joy and love.
- **Students can write a piece about a hobby, such as a dance or a sport, that's meaningful to them.** When Kai was practicing his dance moves, he was thinking of his family and how they were inspirational to him. Do students have a hobby, such as a sport or another activity, that their family members or friends do that is also important to them? Did they ever struggle with it in the beginning, or feel embarrassed about it? Students can write a small moment piece or another reflection on their hobby, how it makes them feel, how they practice, and why it's meaningful to them. If possible, students can show off the hobby to the class or bring in an artifact that demonstrates their hobby to the class.
- **Read other books about weddings featured in book lists in the Background Section of this guide.** Students can share what they learned about weddings from reading the different titles, including *The Electric Slide and Kai*. What do you typically see at weddings? How can weddings all be different? Why are weddings important? If students have ever been to a wedding, what was it like? Students can share their findings with a partner, small group or whole class.

Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Conduct a research study on other types of dance across the world.** PBS LearningMedia has a digital library that encourages the exploration, analysis and appreciation of dance (<https://blog.leeandlow.com/2021/03/30/the-importance-of-black-joy-in-childrens-books-a-conversation-with-kelly-j-baptist-and-darnell-johnson/>). *The New York Times* also has an article, "Travel the World Through These Dance Tutorials" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/25/travel/cultural-dances-tutorials.html>). Students can work independently, with a partner or in small groups and select a dance of their choice. Students can think about the following guiding questions: Where did this dance originate? What are the steps and movements involved in this dance? When was this dance created? What kind of music is typically involved with this dance? Students can share their findings in a visual presentation format of their choosing with photographs and other digital or print resources.
- **Have students explore the importance of dance in African American culture** (<https://www.edc.org/blog/importance-dance-african-american-culture>). Students can investigate other resources online, including Google Arts and Culture "The Story of Black History and Culture Through Dance" (https://artsandculture.google.com/story/the-story-of-black-history-and-culture-through-dance/YwVx_bMIOiR2eQ?hl=en) and the African American

Registry's "Black Dance in America, a Brief History" (<https://aaregistry.org/story/african-american-dance-a-brief-history/>). Afterwards, have students reflect on what they learned. How is dance important in Black history? Why is this important history to learn about? What did they learn during the research process?

Arts, Media & Music

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4-6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7-9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Teach students the electric slide dance** (<https://www.passion4dancing.com/electric-slide-dance/>). Have students learn in small groups and then get together as a whole class to do the electric slide. Consider adding a movement break throughout the school day and continue to practice the dance. Students can reflect on what the experience of learning a dance was like, and compare it to Kai's experience. For students who already know the dance, do they like performing the electric slide? Why or why not?
- **Consider having students come up with questions to interview the illustrator Darnell Johnson.** What is his process behind creating the illustrations for a children's book? What medium did he use to create the illustrations? Why? What was it like to work on *The Electric Slide and Kai*? Consider contacting Darnell Johnson for an illustrator visit <https://artofdarnelljohnson.com/>.
- **Encourage students to select the illustration from *The Electric Slide and Kai* that resonated with them the most.** Have students write a reflection about the illustrations chosen. What stood out to them? How did their illustrations make them feel? What did the illustrations make them think about?

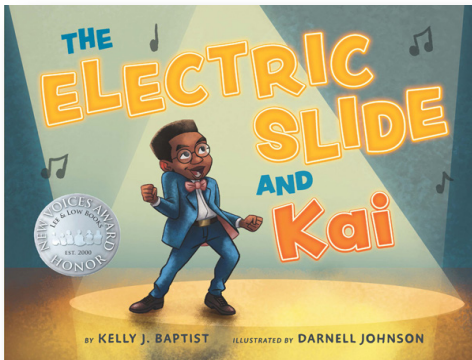
School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Ask students to interview family members about dancing.** Do they like to dance? Why or why not? How does dancing make them feel? What kinds of dances do they know? Where do they typically dance? Have they ever danced at weddings? Students can share their findings with the class. Encourage students and families to dance at home!
- **Learn the electric slide dance as a family while referring to the steps from the Art/Media section of this guide** (<https://www.passion4dancing.com/electric-slide-dance/>). Students and families can work together to learn the steps of the dance, or dance together as a family if they're already familiar with the electric slide. Students can take the lead in teaching their families the dance moves, and for students already familiar, they can take this opportunity as a fun way to move with their families. Students can share their experiences with the class. Did students have to teach their family members? What was that like? Students can connect their dance experiences to Kai's.



Ordering Information

General Order Information:

leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

Secure Online Ordering:

leeandlow.com/books/the-electric-slide-and-kai

By Phone: 212-779-4400 ext. 25

By Fax: 212-683-1894

By Mail:

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,
New York, NY 10016

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelly J. Baptist grew up in southwest Michigan, and after living in Alabama, Florida, and Minnesota, she is happy to be right back home in Berrien Springs! She works as a social emotional learning interventionist and is the author of the middle grade novel *Isaiah Dunn Is My Hero*. Kelly keeps busy with her five amazing children, who often play loud music that leads to epic family dance parties. You can visit her on Twitter @kellyiswrite and online at kellyiswrite.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Darnell Johnson is a Miami native who discovered his passion for art while watching Saturday morning cartoons as a kid. Currently he resides in Alpharetta, Georgia, with his beautiful wife and newborn son. Darnell pulled inspiration from his childhood, family, and friends to draw life into the characters for *The Electric Slide and Kai*. He hopes the lines, colors, and shapes he makes sparks the imagination of young readers. You can visit him online at artofdarnelljohnson.com.

REVIEWS

"An all-around wonderful book that will inspire laughter and perhaps even a little dancing." *–Kirkus, starred review*

"An uplifting story with just the right mix of humor, family love, and an unobtrusive lesson in persistence, plus a glowing look at the hubbub around a wedding, this is a recommended purchase." *–School Library Journal*

"This uplifting story of one kid's struggle to fit in with his own family will resonate with readers who have similar insecurities. And the centrality of the *Electric Slide* might prompt readers to turn on the tunes and get their own groove on." *–The Horn Book*

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