

THE BEACON KEEPERS

FIRST LIGHT

EDUCATOR & FACILITATOR GUIDE

Classroom companion guide for grades 4–8

Educational Use Notice

These materials are provided by Lordsburg Press as optional companion resources for *The Beacon Keepers: First Light*. They are designed to support classroom, library, homeschool, family, and small-group conversations around the themes of the book, including trust, teamwork, integrity, student voice, purpose, and responsible leadership.

These resources are not a formal curriculum, clinical program, counseling tool, psychological assessment, or substitute for professional judgment. Educators, librarians, parents, and facilitators should adapt questions and activities based on student age, readiness, classroom culture, district policy, and local requirements.

Some prompts may invite personal reflection. Students should never be required to share private experiences. They may respond from their own experience, from a character's experience, or through a general "someone might" example.

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WELCOME & OVERVIEW

Welcome, and thank you for choosing *The Beacon Keepers: First Light* for your classroom.

This purpose-driven middle-grade novel helps open meaningful conversations about belonging, trust, leadership, teamwork, integrity, and student voice. The principles land the way they land best through characters who face hard choices, fail honestly, rebuild carefully, and show up for one another when it matters.

What this book can do is real, but quiet. It can help make the invisible social dynamics of school more visible. It can help students see that being organized, observant, energetic, anxious, artistic, technical, or quiet can all be forms of contribution. It can give your classroom a shared language for talking about integrity, inclusion, trust, and project work. And it can invite readers to ask questions that lead. Who feels left out around me, and what could I do about it?

This guide is built to support you however you choose to use it, in whole or in part, at your own pace, in your own way. You know your students. This story is here to meet them where they are.

The book does not promise to change kids. It gives them a story strong enough to help them start asking better questions about who they are, how they lead, and for whom they make room. The rest is up to them, and to you.

First Light is Book One in *The Beacon Keepers* series. The story does not end here, and neither do the conversations it hopes to start.

As the series continues, Leo, Jada, Max, and their crew will face new challenges that deepen what began in a basement room through learning to give honest feedback without losing trust, multiplying leadership beyond the original team, confronting what happens when safety fails, leading through change without losing direction, and building something that lasts after the people who started it move on.

Each book adds a new layer of candor, vision, resilience, continuous improvement, safety, stewardship, and the practical thinking that turns good intentions into lasting systems. The principles grow as the characters grow, giving the conversations your classroom starts with *First Light* room to go further with every book that follows.

— Lordsburg Press

About the Book

When a mysterious note sends Leo Morales, Jada Chen, and Max Vega to Ziggy's Skate & Drone, they discover a challenge bigger than any school competition. They take on building a place where everyone belongs, matters, and can shine.

Together, the Beacon Keepers transform an overlooked art room into something real. Part club, part project space, part safe harbor, their community lab discovers how to navigate through observations, data, design, and student voice to help more kids at Saltwind Bay Middle School feel seen.

But as the Spring Club Challenge gets closer, pressure builds. A polished rival team is watching. Trust is tested. And when an integrity crisis threatens what they have built, Leo, Jada, Max, and their crew must decide what matters most.

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AR Points	6.0
Word Count	40,024
Interest Level	MG (Middle Grades, Grades 4–8)
Fiction / Nonfiction	Fiction
Topic / Subject	Leadership, Friendship, Integrity, Belonging, Self-Discovery
Chapters	20
AR Quiz	Sets A & B available for Teacher-Made upload (see AR Quiz Support)

About the Author

G.M. Samuelson spent three decades in operations leadership and safety, and more than a decade coaching youth sports. Across both, he saw a consistent truth that strong teams are built on trust, courage, communication, and people who are willing to show up for one another. He writes middle-grade fiction about friendship, belonging, integrity, and the quiet work of becoming someone others can count on.

Themes

- **Belonging** — Creating room for others instead of waiting to be included
- **Friendship** — Noticing when someone feels invisible and caring enough to respond
- **Teamwork** — Sharing responsibility and using different strengths well
- **Trust** — Built through consistency, honesty, respect, and repair
- **Integrity** — Doing the right thing, even when it costs something
- **Purpose** — Discovered through observation, reflection, and action
- **Student Voice** — Students helping identify needs and design solutions
- **Courage** — Speaking, showing up, and acting even when something feels hard
- **Decision-Making** — Using clear questions to choose wisely under pressure
- **Leadership** — Service over status; helping others move forward
- **Project Management** — Mission statements, pilot testing, correction plans, decision filters, and capacity planning introduced through story
- **Safety** — Psychological safety, process safeguards, and the reminder that speed is not the same as care

How to Use This Guide

This guide is organized around six instructional units, with pacing options, extended discussions, culminating projects, AR quiz support, and appendix resources. Each unit connects to a specific chapter cluster and includes discussion prompts, writing prompts, extension activities, and reflection options tied to that section of the story.

Use the full guide for a comprehensive novel study, or select individual materials based on your classroom goals, schedule, and student readiness. The resources are designed to be flexible, so educators can teach one chapter cluster at a time while keeping the themes, skills, and activities connected. You may also choose the tools that best fit your class from the toolbox within each unit, helping students navigate toward their own North at the pace and depth that works best for them.

- **Welcome & Overview**
- **Section 1: Classroom Pacing Guide** – suggested 3-week, 4-week, and 6-week schedules
- **Section 2: Unit 1-6 Materials** – Comprehension/Analysis/Connection, Values & Leadership discussions, Writing prompts, Extension activities
- **Section 3: Extended Leadership Discussions** – deeper conversations about leadership, teamwork, trust, accountability, and decision-making
- **Section 4: Culminating Projects** – demonstrate comprehension and apply learning
- **Section 5: AR Quiz Support** – Accelerated Reader support information
- **Appendix:** terms glossary, vocabulary quick-reference, CCSS & CASEL reference

Before Reading: Anticipation Guide

Before students open the book, have them respond with Agree, Disagree, or It Depends. Invite students to explain their thinking, then revisit the statements after reading. (see Culminating Project 4.)

- A good leader is someone who wins.
- Trust can begin quickly, but it has to be earned over time.
- If no one complains about a problem, it probably doesn't need to be fixed.
- The best way to help someone is to do things for them.
- The best leader is the loudest voice in the room.
- Being organized can be a form of caring about people.
- People who are quiet usually don't want to be noticed.

Companion Resource: The Beacon Keeper's Logbook

The Beacon Keeper's Logbook is a standalone student journal or personal reflection logbook with six sections that mirror the six units of this guide. It includes reflection prompts, challenges, and personal statements. Logbook section references appear throughout the pacing guide and extension activities. Contact hello@lordsburgpress.com for materials.

CLASSROOM PACING GUIDE

Educator Discretion

The schedules below are suggested options, not mandated plans. Every classroom is different. Use these as starting points and adjust the pace, sequence, and activity selection to fit your students, your schedule, and your instructional goals. The unit structure is consistent across all options, so you can mix and match components freely.

All three schedules use the same six-unit structure. Each unit includes Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection; Values & Leadership Discussion; Writing Prompts; Extension Activities; and optional Logbook connections.

Six-Unit Spine

Unit	Chapters	Theme	PM & Safety Thread	Logbook
1	Ch. 1–4	Purpose & discovery	Safe spaces, psychological safety	Section 1
2	Ch. 5–8	Belonging & values	Mission statement, team formation, observation, early protocols	Section 2
3	Ch. 9–12	Integrity & accountability	Correction plans, scaffolding, process	Section 3
4	Ch. 13–16	Preparation & courage	PROVE. PROTECT. PRACTICE. Pilot tests	Section 4
5	Ch. 17–19	Growth & sustainability	Decision filter, capacity, saying no	Section 5
6	Ch. 20	Reflection & transformation	Measuring impact, staying steady	Section 6

Culminating Project

Each schedule ends with a “Culminating Project.” This refers to one of four post-reading project options listed in Culminating Projects: (1) Build a Beacon — a class proposal to improve a school space, (2) Character Study Essay, (3) Beacon Keeper Showcase, or (4) Revisit the Anticipation Guide. Choose the option that best fits your class and available time.

Option A: 6-Week Deep Dive

Best for: Whole-class novel study with SEL-aligned discussion advisory block, or literature-focused ELA. One unit per week.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Wk. 1	Read Ch. 1–2	Read Ch. 3–4	Unit 1 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection	Unit 1 Values & Leadership Discussion + Writing Prompt	Unit 1 Extension Activity + Logbook Section 1
Wk. 2	Read Ch. 5–6	Read Ch. 7–8	Unit 2 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection	Unit 2 Values & Leadership Discussion + Writing Prompt	Unit 2 Extension Activity + Logbook Section 2
Wk. 3	Read Ch. 9–10	Read Ch. 11–12	Unit 3 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection	Unit 3 Values & Leadership Discussion + Writing Prompt	Unit 3 Extension Activity + Logbook Section 3
Wk. 4	Read Ch. 13–14	Read Ch. 15–16	Unit 4 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection	Unit 4 Values & Leadership Discussion + Writing Prompt	Unit 4 Extension Activity + Logbook Section 4
Wk. 5	Read Ch. 17–18	Read Ch. 19	Unit 5 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection	Unit 5 Values & Leadership Discussion + Writing Prompt	Unit 5 Extension Activity + Logbook Section 5
Wk. 6	Read Ch. 20	Unit 6 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection	Unit 6 Values & Leadership Discussion + Writing Prompt	Unit 6 Extension Activity or Culminating Project Work	Culminating Project Presentations + AR Quiz / Celebration

Option B: 4-Week Standard

Best for: Standard ELA novel study. Reading and core tools are blended across four weeks, with writing prompts and extension activities used selectively or as homework.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Wk. 1	Read Ch. 1–2 + Unit 1 Vocabulary	Read Ch. 3–4 + Unit 1 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection	Unit 1 Values & Leadership Discussion + Writing Prompt	Unit 1 Extension Activity + Read Ch. 5–6	Read Ch. 7–8 + Unit 2 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection
Wk. 2	Unit 2 Values & Leadership Discussion + Writing Prompt	Unit 2 Extension Activity + Read Ch. 9–10	Read Ch. 11–12 + Unit 3 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection	Unit 3 Values & Leadership Discussion + Writing Prompt	Unit 3 Extension Activity + Logbook Section 3
Wk. 3	Read Ch. 13–14 + Unit 4 Vocabulary	Read Ch. 15–16 + Unit 4 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection	Unit 4 Values & Leadership Discussion + Writing Prompt	Unit 4 Extension Activity + Read Ch. 17–18	Read Ch. 19 + Unit 5 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection
Wk. 4	Unit 5 Values & Leadership Discussion + Writing Prompt	Unit 5 Extension Activity + Read Ch. 20	Unit 6 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection + Values & Leadership Discussion	Unit 6 Writing Prompt or Extension Activity + Culminating Project Work	Presentations + Revisit Anticipation Guide + AR Quiz / Celebration

Option C: 3-Week Intensive

Best for: Grades 6–8 or independent reading groups. Students complete most reading outside class; class time focuses on discussion, writing, and applied activities.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Wk. 1	Unit 1 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection + Values Discussion	Unit 1 Writing Prompt or Extension Activity	Unit 2 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection + Values Discussion	Unit 2 Writing Prompt or Extension Activity	Unit 3 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection + Values Discussion
Wk. 2	Unit 3 Writing Prompt or Extension Activity	Unit 4 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection + Values Discussion	Unit 4 Writing Prompt or Extension Activity	Unit 5 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection + Values Discussion	Unit 5 Writing Prompt or Extension Activity
Wk. 3	Unit 6 Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection + Values Discussion	Unit 6 Writing Prompt or Extension Activity	Culminating Project Planning	Culminating Project Work / Presentations	Presentations + Revisit Anticipation Guide + AR Quiz / Celebration

UNIT 1: FIND YOUR BEACON (CHAPTERS 1-4)

Students are introduced to Leo, Jada, Max, Ziggy, and the Beacon, Foundation, and Shoreline model. This unit focuses on purpose, observation, identity, and the idea that leadership often begins by noticing what others miss.

Comprehension, Analysis, and Connection

Scaffolded discussion questions for each unit, plus vocabulary drawn from the text. Questions are marked by level: Comprehension (○) for all readers, Analysis (●) for inference and evidence, Connection (★) for personal reflection and journal writing.

Standards: RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.3, RL.5.6, SL.5.1, W.5.3

SEL: Self-Awareness, Social Awareness

“Don’t have to be perfect to tell the truth. Sometimes the dents are what make people believe you.”

— Ziggy

Comprehension ○

- What three things does Ziggy say he noticed about Leo, Jada, and Max before he invited them? (Ch. 1)
- What are the three parts of Ziggy’s lighthouse? What does each part represent? (Ch. 1)
- How does each character discover their personal beacon? What specific moment helps each one? (Ch. 2–4)

Analysis ●

- Ziggy says, “Leading and looking important are not the same thing.” What does he mean? How does the cracked compass illustrate this idea? (Ch. 1)
- Compare Leo’s conversation with his mother (Ch. 3) to Jada’s conversation with Nai Nai (Ch. 2). How do both adults help without telling the kids what to do?
- Why does the author give each character their own chapter to discover their beacon, rather than having them figure it out together?

Connection ★

- Ziggy tells the kids: “Watch what you do when nobody asks. Watch what people come to you for.” If you did this for one day, what would you notice about yourself?
- Leo’s mother says, “Speed is not the same thing as care.” (Ch. 3) When have you seen this be true in your own life?

Vocabulary

- deliberately (Ch. 1) — done on purpose and with careful thought
- respect (Ch. 4) — treating people, ideas, and responsibilities as if they matter
- integrity (Ch. 4) — doing the right thing, even when it is hard or costs something

Values & Leadership Discussion

Reflection questions for trust, teamwork, integrity, student voice, and purposeful action

These discussion prompts are designed for morning meetings, advisory circles, small-group discussion, or the first five minutes of class. They are reflection-first conversations, not tests, and there is no single right answer.

Because some prompts may touch on personal feelings, students should always have a choice in how they respond. They may answer from their own experience, from a character's experience, or by saying what "someone might" feel in that situation.

The goal is not to make students share more than they are ready to share. The goal is to help them notice, think, listen, and connect the story to real choices people face every day.

1A

Setup: Ziggy tells Leo, Jada, and Max that he noticed specific things about each of them before he ever said a word.

Question: *What do you think someone would notice about you if they spent a week paying attention to how you show up?*

Follow-up: Would that match what you think is most important about yourself?

Listen for: *Students distinguishing between what they do and who they are.*

1B

Setup: Leo's mom, Jada's grandmother, and Max's sister Carmen all help the main characters figure something out — but none of them give answers directly.

Question: *How does someone help you best — by telling you what to do, or by helping you figure it out yourself?*

Follow-up: Can you think of a time someone helped you without giving you the answer?

Listen for: *Students recognizing the difference between directive and supportive help.*

Writing Prompts

Structured writing assignments for text evidence, reflection, narrative writing, and purposeful response. Each unit includes two prompts with a connection, writing task, scaffold, and skills/standards connection.

Use as journal entries, homework, small-group responses, or extended writing assignments. For personal reflection prompts, students may write from their own experience, from a character's experience, or through a realistic "someone might" example.

1A — Beacon Statement

Connection: Leo, Jada, and Max each discover their beacon through personal moments — not through a test or an assignment.

Prompt: *Write your own beacon statement: one sentence that describes what you stand for. Then explain in 3–5 sentences how you discovered it.*

Scaffold: *Start with: "I stand for ____ because ____."*

RL.5.2, W.5.3 | Self-Awareness

1B — Character Comparison

Connection: Each of the three main characters discovers their purpose through a different person.

Prompt: *Compare how Leo, Jada, and Max each discover their beacon. Use at least one specific detail from the text for each character.*

Scaffold: *Start with: "Leo discovers his beacon when _____. Jada discovers hers when _____. Max discovers his when _____."*

RL.5.1, RL.5.3, W.5.1 | Self-Awareness

Extension Activities

Classroom activities for reflection, collaboration, problem-solving, and applied learning

These activities help students connect the story to action through discussion, planning, presenting, creating, and teamwork. Each activity includes a story connection, simple steps, debrief questions, and options for differentiation.

Use them flexibly based on student readiness, classroom needs, and available time. When personal sharing is not appropriate or desired, students may respond through a character, fictional scenario, or general “someone might” example. The goal is thoughtful participation, respectful collaboration, and meaningful connection to the story.

1A. The Beacon Quest | 20 min | Individual → Small Groups

Connection: Mirrors the characters’ discovery process in Chapters 2–4.

Materials: Paper, pencils. Optional: index cards.

Setup: Assign the asking portion ahead of time, or let students complete the activity using a character, fictional student, or trusted classroom example. Tell students: “The Beacon Keepers had to discover their purpose by asking other people what they noticed. You’re going to do the same thing.”

Steps:

1. Students write down 2–3 people they trust.
2. Ask those people: “What do you think I care about most?” Write down the answers.
3. Look for patterns. What shows up more than once?
4. Write a personal beacon statement: one sentence.
5. Share in small groups of 3–4. No critiquing — just listening.

Debrief:

- Was anything surprising about what people said?
- Did the patterns match what you expected?
- How does writing it down feel different from just thinking it?

Scaffolding: *For struggling writers: “I stand for ___ because I always ___.”*

CCSS: W.5.3, SL.5.1 | SEL: Self-Awareness | Logbook: Section 1

1B. Lighthouse Diagram | 30 min | Individual

Connection: The three-part lighthouse is the novel’s central framework.

Materials: Large paper, colored pencils or markers.

Setup: Draw a simple lighthouse on the board. Label: Beacon (top), Foundation (base), Shoreline (visible line where light meets the world).

Steps:

1. Students draw their own lighthouse with personal content: Beacon = what matters, Foundation = values, Shoreline = visible actions.
2. Encourage both drawing and writing.
3. Display on a classroom wall as a gallery.

Debrief:

- Which part was easiest to fill in? Which was hardest?
- How does your shoreline connect to your beacon?

Differentiation: *For advanced students: add a “fog” layer representing fears or doubts.*

CCSS: RL.5.2, W.5.2 | SEL: Self-Awareness | Logbook: Section 1
