

# THE **PRINCE** OF **VENICE BEACH**

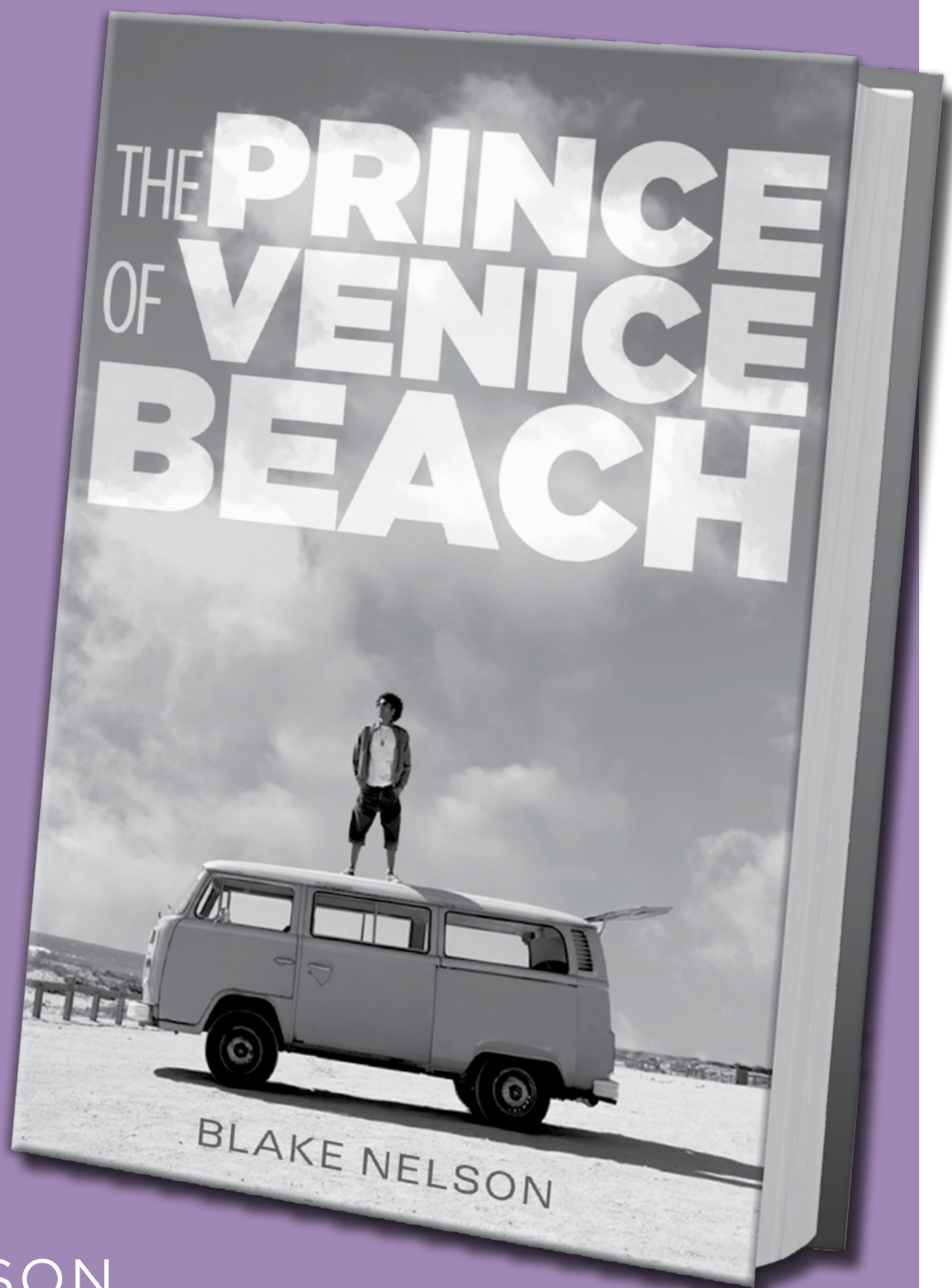
## Curriculum connections

- ❖ Literature
- ❖ Psychology
- ❖ Crime

Ages: 12 & Up

## Thematic connections

- ❖ Mystery and suspense
- ❖ Self and identity
- ❖ Friendship
- ❖ Belief and faith



by  
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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why does Robert “Cali” Callahan come to Venice, California? What does he find there that he didn’t have back home in Omaha, Nebraska?
2. At a pickup basketball game, Cali notices that his out-of-town opponents play an “unselfish, ‘team-first’ approach that probably won them the high school championship” (page 1). Why is that style of play wrong for Venice Beach?
3. Cali lives in a tree house behind Hope Stillwell’s house in Venice. “I’m like their pet,” he says of Hope and her friends. “I’m their good deed” (page 12). Do you agree? Why does Hope help Cali? Would you in her situation?
4. “Off the grid” is how Cali describes his way of life in Venice Beach. What does he mean by that? What are the advantages of living the way he does? What are the disadvantages? Could you live “off the grid”?
5. Cali loves movies about aliens attacking and humans fighting back. Why do you think these movies appeal to him? In what respects does his own life mirror the plot of these films?
6. Self-improvement is often on Cali’s mind. Look again at the lists he makes for himself (pages 29 and 85). What do the items on them say about his ambitions? What would be on your list?
7. Cali hadn’t planned to be an investigator but he soon realizes that he’s very good at it. What special skills does he bring to the work? What does he enjoy about finding people? What does he dislike? What does searching for missing teenagers help Cali about himself?
8. On the basketball court, Jojo has amazing skills, but what is his greater gift? What does he teach Cali about happiness and purpose? What, in turn, does Cali teach or give to Jojo?
9. “Better to let nature take its course,” is advice that Cali often gives himself. When does he ignore that advice? Why?
10. Venice Beach is full of teenage runaways, but Cali goes out of his way to help Strawberry. Why? What sets her apart from the others?
11. Venice Beach attracts all sorts, including criminals. What makes it such an attractive spot for the Evil Twins? Who do they target?
12. How important is money to Cali? When he has it, how does he use it? Compare his spending habits with Reese’s. What does he know about money that she doesn’t?
13. Cali immediately realizes that Reese “was a complicated and formidable person” (Page 116). Why is that such a dangerous combination?

Continued...

14. “When the devil is bored and wants to talk to someone, it’s always a rich person he calls,” Strawberry says to Cali (page 120). “Or someone who wants to be rich.” What does she mean? Do you agree? Why or why not?
15. Lawrence Torres wants Cali to stop searching for his missing son, Mugs. Why? Would you feel the same way? Why or why not?
16. How would you describe Cali’s relationship with Ailis? Why is she encouraging him to get a GED? How successful are they as an investigating team?
17. “How did you know if someone was lying?” Cali asks himself when he meets Reese’s father (page 154). “I didn’t know.” Who you think was more truthful, Reese or her father? Why?
18. Strawberry dubs Cali the Prince of Venice Beach. Why does he deserve that title?

## about the book



**THE PRINCE  
OF VENICE BEACH**  
by Blake Nelson

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Also available as an e-book

A teenage runaway living in Venice Beach, California, Robert “Cali” Callahan has a pretty sweet life: a tree house to sleep in, a gang of surfing bros, a regular basketball game...even a girl who’s maybe-sorta interested in him. What he doesn’t have is a plan. All that changes when a local cop refers Cali to a private investigator who is looking for a missing teenager. After all, it’s common knowledge that Cali knows everyone in Venice Beach. But when he starts searching for the beautiful Reese Abernathy, he discovers that some people will do almost anything not to be found. Written by an acclaimed novelist, this is a striking portrait of an unforgettable character who is trying to navigate life on the street, first love, and some very dangerous threats.

## about the author



Photo © Beth Rosenberg

Blake Nelson is the author of many acclaimed novels, including *Recovery Road*, *Destroy All Cars*, and *Paranoid Park*, which was made into a feature film by Gus Van Sant. His classic 1994 debut novel, *Girl*, was called a “seminal coming-of-age text” by *Vanity Fair*. He lives in Los Angeles, California, and you can visit him on the web at [BlakeNelsonBooks.com](http://BlakeNelsonBooks.com).