

## **Newbery Medal-winning Author Kwame Alexander Joins National Geographic and First Book to Support Kids in Need**



# AnimalArk

Celebrating our  
**WILD WORLD**  
in **poetry**  
and **pictures**



Photographs by **JOEL SARTORE**, Photo Ark Creator

Words by **KWAME ALEXANDER**, Winner of the Newbery Medal

Tomorrow night, Newbery Medal-winning author Kwame Alexander will address hundreds of educators and professionals supporting children in need about the empowering and inspiring role of poetry in young people's education. The event will culminate with a gift of a signed copy for each educator of Alexander's National Geographic Kids book, *Animal Ark: Celebrating Our Wild World in Poetry and Pictures*, in addition to other resources. The event is a partnership with First Book, a nonprofit social enterprise that has distributed more than 160 million books to kids in need, and National Geographic. National Geographic will host the event at its Washington, D.C., headquarters. Video of the event will be made available to educators nationwide. In a 2015 survey of First Book members, all of whom exclusively serve children in need, 93 percent of respondents cited sparking a love of reading as the primary motivation for accessing books for their classrooms and programs. The educators ranked developing this affinity for reading even above the development of the skills to read at grade level, which was cited as a goal by 79 percent of respondents. In the same survey, 87 percent of educators and program leaders saw an increased interest in reading among the kids they

serve after distributing books from First Book. “Kwame’s commitment not only to literacy, but to sparking the love of reading in young people, is critical to building a generation of empathetic, informed adults,” said Kyle Zimmer, president and CEO of First Book. “We are very grateful to him, and to National Geographic, for partnering with us to create this opportunity to connect with the educators who work with kids in need every day, and to provide them with a resource that will assist them in the classroom.” *Animal Ark: Celebrating Our Wild World in Poetry and Pictures*, is a picture book that pairs the stunning photography of National Geographic Fellow and photographer Joel Sartore with Alexander’s mix of poetry and prose, and it celebrates the beauty, diversity and fragility of the animal world. The book was coauthored by Mary Rand Hess and Deanna Nikaido. KPMG has provided generous support for the event and distribution of books to educators in the DC Metro Area in celebration of its partnership with both First Book and National Geographic. Its efforts are a part of KPMG’s Family for Literacy Program, which combats illiteracy by providing new books to children in need. “We are thrilled to host Kwame at our headquarters and partner with First Book in sharing this powerful message of conservation,” said Jennifer Emmett, vice president of content for National Geographic Kids. “The combination of Joel’s beautiful images of animals from around the world and Kwame’s unique, lyrical text have created something truly special. We are excited to share *Animal Ark* with First Book’s network of educators supporting children in need.” The event is part of First Book’s Authors & Illustrators in Action program. In addition to their creative contributions, prominent children’s book creators have supported the organization in raising awareness and funds to promote literacy and education in their local communities and across the country, in classrooms, online and at other events. Since its founding, the organization has built a network of more than 300,000

educators—a number that represents 23 percent, or nearly one in four—of the estimated 1.3 million formal and informal educators working in the lives of children in need in the U.S. **ABOUT FIRST BOOK** First Book is a nonprofit social enterprise founded in 1992 that has distributed more than 160 million books and educational resources to programs and schools serving children from low-income families throughout the United States and Canada, which, with more than 300,000 members, is the largest and fastest growing network of educators exclusively serving kids in need. By making new, high-quality books and educational resources available on an ongoing basis, First Book is transforming the lives of children in need and elevating the quality of education. Eligible educators, librarians, program leaders and others serving children in need can sign up at [firstbook.org/register](https://firstbook.org/register). For more information, please visit [firstbook.org](https://firstbook.org) or follow the latest news on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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**Caitlin Holbrook** National Geographic [caitlin.holbrook@natgeo.com](mailto:caitlin.holbrook@natgeo.com) (202) 912-6714