TRACK MONSTERS

Monster Hunter Educator Guide

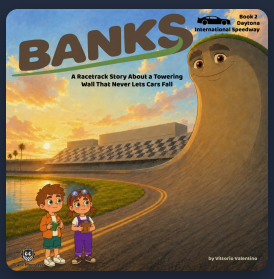
Discussion questions, real track facts, and hands-on activities for the Track Monsters picture book series. For ages 3–8 (PreK–Grade 3).



BOOK 1

Twist

Laguna Seca
California, USA



BOOK 2

Banks

Daytona International Speedway
Florida, USA



BOOK 3

Rusty

Indianapolis Motor Speedway
Indiana, USA



BOOK 4

Dash

Circuit de Monaco
Monaco

Talk about it
Before, during, and after reading questions

Real facts
The true track details behind each monster

Try it
Science, math, and kindness activities

Print it
Story map and create-a-monster worksheets

By Vittorio Valentino
Free to print and copy for classroom use.

trackmonstersbooks.com

WELCOME, MONSTER HUNTERS

How to use this guide

Every Track Monsters book takes one real, famous racetrack and turns its most famous feature into a monster. Each monster looks scary at first, and each story is about looking again until you understand it. Under the fiction, every detail is true: the real drop, the real angle, the real bricks, the real streets.

Two ways to read every book

The story: why the legend exists, and how curiosity turns fear into friendship.

The mechanism: the real science and engineering behind each track. Every book ends with a Track Facts page for grown-ups and kids to read together.

What's inside for each book

- A short summary and the big idea
- Real track facts from the book, in kid-friendly words
- One racing word to teach
- Questions for before, during, and after reading
- A hands-on activity, a Look Closer kindness prompt, and a math challenge for older readers

Meet the Monster Hunters

The same family discovers every monster. Children quickly learn their roles and start predicting what each one will do.

SEES THE STORY

Enzo

Carries a sketchbook, loves race day, and dreams of racing someday. He is usually the one brave enough to look closely.

CHECKS THE MATH

Leni

Enzo's sister. She writes down every number on her clipboard and won't stop until the numbers make sense.

HAS BEEN THERE BEFORE

Grandpa Vito

A retired weekend racer who has driven each track a thousand times, but never once stopped to truly see it.

Every story follows the same path

Point out this pattern after the first book. By the second, children will predict what comes next, which makes it a natural fit for story mapping (see the worksheet on page 13).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A legend People tell a scary story about the track.	**A puzzle** Leni notices numbers that don't add up.	**Together** All three go to look, side by side.	**Look closer** Someone stops and really looks.	**The reveal** The monster wakes and is kind.	**"I never saw you"** Grandpa Vito finally sees it.	**Stickers** "A whole world to go."

Reading tip: Ask children to listen for Grandpa Vito's line near the end of each book, "I never once truly saw you." Then ask: what is something *you* see every day but have never really looked at?

THE SERIES AT A GLANCE

Four tracks, four monsters

Each monster's scary reputation turns out to be a true detail about the real track, seen from a kinder angle. Use this chart to compare books, or as an answer key for the story map worksheet.

BOOK	THE TRACK	THE LEGEND	THE TRUTH	LOOK CLOSER
 **Twist** Book 1	Laguna Seca, Monterey, California Racing word: off-camber	Something up on the hill swallows cars whole.	The track drops so fast that cars vanish for a moment. Twist catches every one at the bottom.	*"Do you know someone quiet who keeps to themselves? Look closer. Then say hello."*
 **Banks** Book 2	Daytona International Speedway, Florida Racing word: tri-oval	A wall so steep and tall it looks like it could swallow the cars whole.	The banked curve holds every car safely on the track, using the car's own speed.	*"Who holds you up, every single day? Look closer today, then give them a hug."*
 **Rusty** Book 3	Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Indiana Racing phrase: three-wide start	Three million bricks have disappeared. And why do winners kiss the ground?	The bricks never left. Rusty has been under the whole track, carrying every race, for over 100 years.	*"Who in your life is like that? Look deeper. Then thank them."*
 **Dash** Book 4	Circuit de Monaco, a race through town streets Racing phrase: street circuit	Something in the old stone walls never forgives a single mistake.	Dash keeps things safe and holds his neighbors close. He even catches a runaway ball.	*"What do you walk past every day? Look closer. What do you see?"*

Big ideas across the series

- **Curiosity over fear.** Things often look scary only because nobody has taken the time to understand them.
- **Look closer.** Really seeing something (or someone) is different from looking past it.
- **Do it together.** The family always goes to look side by side.
- **Questions have answers.** Leni's numbers always lead to the real reason.

Coming next in the series

The Monster Hunter list at the back of each book already names the next monsters. Children love guessing what they will be like.

- **Gale**, Talladega Superspeedway, Alabama, USA
- **Groll**, Nürburgring, Germany

Invite children to draw what they think Gale and Groll look like, using only the track's name and location as clues.

BOOK ONE · LAGUNA SECA

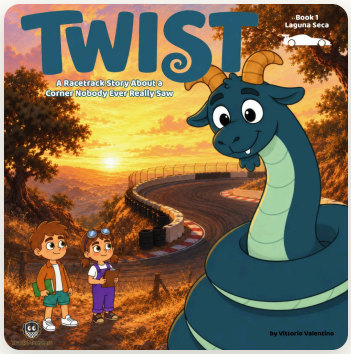
Twist

A Racetrack Story About a Corner Nobody Ever Really Saw

BOOK 1

TRACK	WHERE	MONSTER	ISBN
Laguna Seca Raceway	Monterey, California, USA	Twist, at the Corkscrew	979-8-9973861-1-5

The story in brief



Up on the hill at Laguna Seca, the race cars drive in behind the trees and vanish. People who race there tell a story about something called The Twist that swallows cars whole. When the track closes for the night, Enzo, Leni, and Grandpa Vito walk up to the famous Corkscrew to look. Enzo's sketchbook tumbles over the edge, the kids start sliding, and something long and coiled catches them. Twist isn't swallowing cars at all. He's shy, a little clumsy, and he catches whatever falls.

> **Big idea:** Someone who seems scary may just be shy. Twist hides because he's afraid of being seen tripping over his own tail.

Real track facts

- The Corkscrew at Laguna Seca Raceway is one of the most famous corners in all of racing.
- The track drops **59 feet in only 450 feet** of track. That's about the height of a 5½-story building, in roughly two seconds at racing speed.
- The steepest point is an **18% grade**, like the biggest, fastest slide at the playground.
- For about two and a half seconds, drivers **can't see the track at all**, only treetops and sky.
- So drivers pick one tree ahead of time and aim straight for it, trusting the track will be there when they land.
- One driver said the track is going to "catch you at the bottom," just like Twist does.

RACING WORD TO KNOW

Off-camber

Most turns lean in, like the inside of a bowl, which helps cars stick to the track. The steepest part of the Corkscrew leans the other way, like a plate tipping away from you. That makes it extra slippery.

Words to know

corkscrew · steep · grade · coiled · legend · vanish · clumsy · shy

Find it on a map

Find California on a U.S. map. Monterey is on the Pacific coast. Then find where you live. Is it closer or farther than you thought?

Talk about it

Before reading

1. Look at the cover. Does Twist look scary, friendly, or both? What makes you think so?
2. Have you ever been at the top of a hill so steep you couldn't see the bottom? How did it feel?

While reading

3. Why do the cars seem to disappear behind the trees?
4. Grandpa Vito drove through the Corkscrew a thousand times but never saw Twist. How could that be?
5. Leni says, "Cars can't just disappear. There has to be a reason!" What do you think the reason is?

After reading

6. Twist says, "I just catch things when they fall." How did your idea of Twist change from the beginning to the end?
7. Why does Twist curl up tight and hide? Have you ever wanted to hide?
8. Enzo says, "You're not hiding. You're catching." What does he mean?
9. Why do you think Grandpa Vito never saw Twist before?

Try it: The Disappearing Car

Science · Ages 3–8

You need: a board or stiff cardboard, a stack of books, a toy car, and a piece of tape.

1. Make a gentle ramp with one book. Crouch down at the top and roll the car. Can you see it the whole way down?
2. Add books to make the ramp steeper, with a sharp edge at the top. Now crouch at the top and look. Where does the car "disappear"?
3. Talk about it: the car didn't vanish. The track just dropped away faster than your eyes could follow, just like at the Corkscrew.

Extend it: put a tape mark at the bottom of the ramp. Like the drivers who aim at a tree, can children predict where the car will land before they let go?

Look Closer

"Twist curled up tight so nobody would see him. Do you know someone quiet who keeps to themselves? Look closer. Then say hello."

Invite each child to draw someone they could say hello to this week, and one kind thing they could say.

Math challenge · Grades 2–3

The Corkscrew drops 59 feet. Use a tape measure to mark 59 feet down a hallway or across the playground. How many of your steps is it? How many children lying head to toe would it take?

Save your answer for **Dash (Book 4)**, where the hill in Monaco drops even farther.

BOOK TWO · DAYTONA

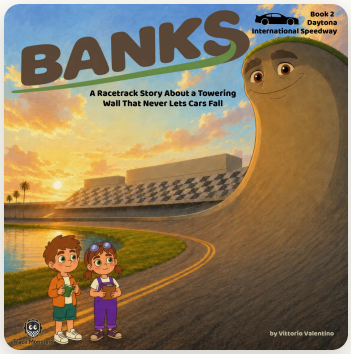
Banks

A Racetrack Story About a Towering Wall That Never Lets Cars Fall

BOOK 2

TRACK	WHERE	MONSTER	ISBN
Daytona International Speedway	Daytona Beach, Florida, USA	Banks, the high banked wall	979-8-9973861-2-2

The story in brief



At Daytona, the stock cars race high up a giant curved wall without ever sliding down. Leni can't make the numbers add up: the wall is as steep as their stairs at home, the cars stick like glue, and there's a whole lake in the middle of the racetrack. When the track goes quiet for the night, Enzo tries to climb the wall and slips. The wall itself rises up to catch him and Leni. It's Banks, a colossal, gentle creature who has been holding every car safely on the track since the very first lap.

> **Big idea:** The scariest ones can turn out to be the kindest. Some of the things that hold us up are so big we forget to notice them.

Real track facts

- The turns are banked at **31 degrees**, about as steep as the staircase in your house, but smooth with nothing to hold on to.
- The banking climbs about **20 feet**, as tall as a two-story house. Each step toward the top rises about six inches.
- On a flat turn, a car going nearly 200 miles an hour would slide right off. The banking lets the car's **own speed press it against the track**. The faster it goes, the harder the banking holds it.
- The cars only turn left, racing counterclockwise.
- **Lake Lloyd** (about 29 acres) sits in the middle. Builders dug the dirt out of the infield to raise the banks, and the hole filled with water. The founder stocked it with 65,000 fish.
- Daytona opened in 1959. The first race finished so close it took 61 hours to decide the winner.

RACING WORD TO KNOW

Tri-oval

Most oval tracks look like a stretched-out circle. At Daytona, one side bends gently outward, like the round back of a letter D, so people in the stands can watch the cars all the way around.

Words to know

banked · **steep** · **degree** · **counterclockwise** · **infield** · **colossal** · **gentle** · **protractor**

Find it on a map

Find Florida on a U.S. map. Daytona Beach is on the Atlantic coast. Is it north, south, east, or west of where you live?

Talk about it

Before reading

1. Have you ever climbed something so steep that you wanted to use your hands?
2. Look at the cover. What do you notice about the wall? What could be hiding there?

While reading

3. Leni writes, "That shouldn't work." What is she puzzled about?
4. Leni lists three clues: steep as stairs, cars that stick like glue, and a lake in the middle. What do you think connects them?
5. What do you think will happen when Enzo starts to climb?

After reading

6. How does Banks help the cars stay on the track?
7. Where did the lake come from, in the story and in real life?
8. Banks says hardly anyone has stopped to learn his name. Why do you think that is?
9. Leni writes, "The scariest ones keep turning out to be the kindest." Do you agree? Why?

Try it: Bowl Racers

Science · Ages 3–8

You need: a flat paper plate, a large mixing or salad bowl, and a ping-pong ball. (Use a ping-pong ball rather than marbles with young children.)

1. Roll the ball around the edge of the flat plate. What happens? It rolls right off the side.
2. Now swirl the ball around the inside of the bowl, fast. The sloped side keeps it going around, just like Daytona's banked turns.
3. Swirl it slowly. What happens? It slides down to the bottom, just like Grandpa Vito's car did when he went too slow.

Talk about it: the faster the ball goes, the higher it rides and the better the bowl holds it, exactly like Banks.

Look Closer

"Banks looked scary until we looked closer. Who holds you up, every single day? Look closer today, then give them a hug."

Make a "Who Holds Me Up" drawing: draw yourself in the middle and the people who help you all around you.

Math challenge · Grades 2–3

Daytona's banking climbs about 20 feet. Each step up rises about 6 inches. How many steps would it take to reach the top?

Hint: there are 12 inches in a foot. (Answer: 20 feet = 240 inches, and 240 ÷ 6 = 40 steps.)

BOOK THREE · INDIANAPOLIS

Rusty

A Racetrack Story About Three Million Bricks That Never Left

BOOK 3

TRACK	WHERE	MONSTER	ISBN
Indianapolis Motor Speedway	Indianapolis, Indiana, USA	Rusty, under the whole track	979-8-9973861-3-9

The story in brief



After the big race at Indianapolis, the winner does two puzzling things: he drinks a bottle of milk, and he kisses the bricks. Grandpa Vito says the whole track used to be made of three million bricks, and Leni can't stop wondering where they all went. Enzo has a different question: what is under the track? When he gets all the way down on the bricks, the way the winner did, he hears a low hum. It's Rusty, stretched under the whole track. The bricks never went anywhere.

> **Big idea:** Some of the most important things have been there all along, quietly carrying us. Saying thank you is how we show we've noticed.

Real track facts

- The Speedway opened in **1909**. That autumn, the whole two-and-a-half-mile oval was paved with **3.2 million bricks**, laid by hand. People started calling it the Brickyard.
- Each brick weighs about ten pounds.
- Starting in the 1930s, the track was covered with asphalt. By 1961, only one strip of bricks was left showing, at the start and finish line: **a yard wide, 50 feet long, and 576 bricks** you can count yourself.
- Nearly all the other bricks are **still down there**, under the track. In 2025, workers fixing a bump uncovered some for the first time since 1937.
- Winners have celebrated with milk since 1936, when Louis Meyer asked for buttermilk. Kissing the bricks started in 1996.

RACING PHRASE TO KNOW

Three-wide start

Most races start with cars two by two. At Indianapolis, 33 cars line up three across in eleven rows, side by side by side. It's the widest start in racing.

Words to know

tradition · brick · asphalt · oval · seam · century · grateful

Find it on a map

Find Indiana on a U.S. map. Indianapolis is right in the middle of the state. Which of the first three tracks is closest to you?

Talk about it

Before reading

1. What traditions does your family have on special days?
2. The title says three million bricks "never left." Where do you think they could be?

While reading

3. Grandpa Vito says the winners kiss the bricks because of "tradition." Why doesn't Enzo think that's the whole answer?
4. Leni writes down her guesses: trucks, sold, buried. What would you guess?
5. Why do you think Enzo gets all the way down on the bricks?

After reading

6. Rusty says, "Most people don't look deep enough." What does he mean?
7. Why do you think the winners kiss the bricks? What did Enzo decide?
8. Rusty says carrying the cars felt "Heavy. Good heavy." What is something that feels like hard work but good?
9. Leni writes, "Present and accounted for." What does that mean?

Try it: The Three-Wide Start

Math · Ages 3–8

You need: 33 toy cars, blocks, or paper cars (or the class itself!) and masking tape.

1. Make a "Yard of Bricks" finish line with masking tape on the floor.
2. Line the cars up three across, side by side by side. Count the rows as you go. How many rows does it take to fit all 33? (Answer: 11 rows.)
3. Younger children: count the cars by ones, then count each row of three. Older children: skip-count by threes.

Extend it: try lining up the same cars two by two. How many rows now? Which start is wider? Which is longer?

Look Closer

"Rusty stayed through a hundred years of racing, quietly carrying every race on his back. Who in your life is like that? Look deeper. Then thank them."

Build a class Thank-You Wall: each child writes or draws a thank-you on a paper brick for someone who quietly helps them.

Math challenge · Grades 2–3

The real Yard of Bricks has 576 bricks. How many hundreds, tens, and ones is that?

The yard is 3 feet wide and 50 feet long. Mark it out with chalk on the playground. How many children can stand on it?

BOOK FOUR · MONACO

Dash

A Story About a Town So Small It Turns Into a Racetrack

BOOK 4

TRACK	WHERE	MONSTER	ISBN
Circuit de Monaco	Monaco, on the Mediterranean	Dash, in the old stone walls	979-8-9973861-5-3

The story in brief



Monaco's secret is that there isn't a racetrack there at all, just a town. Enzo and Leni visit their cousin Alex, who lives right on the street where the race cars zoom past. People say something lives in the old stone walls that never forgives a single mistake. When the race barriers come down, the four of them walk the course looking for Dash. Alex's ball bounces away down the steep hill toward the harbor, and a wall leans over and catches it. Dash isn't unforgiving. He keeps things safe and holds everyone close.

> **Big idea:** Notice what has been right beside you all along, including the neighbors and places you pass every day.

Real track facts

- Monaco is a tiny **city-state** on the Mediterranean Sea: a city that is also its own country, with its own flag and a prince. It's the second-smallest country in the world.
- Building the track takes about **six weeks**, and taking it down takes about **three more**. That's nine weeks of work for one weekend of racing.
- At its tightest spots, the track is only about **25 feet wide**. A race car is about six and a half feet across, so there's barely room for three side by side.
- The hill drops about **138 feet** from the casino to the harbor, more than twice Twist's drop in Book 1, but a little at a time.
- Cars race through a tunnel under a hotel, and around the slowest corner in top-level racing.
- In 1955, a driver crashed into the harbor and swam out.

RACING PHRASE TO KNOW

Street circuit

Most racetracks are built just for racing. A street circuit is made of ordinary streets that people drive, walk their dogs on, and live beside. For one weekend, barriers turn the town into a racetrack.

Words to know

street circuit · barrier · harbor · hairpin · tunnel · shutters · neighbor · tidy

Find it on a map

Find France on a world map, then look for tiny Monaco on its southern coast, near Italy. How far is it from the other three tracks?

BOOK FOUR · DASH

Talk about it

Before reading

1. What would it be like if race cars zoomed down your street?
2. The book says Monaco's secret is that there isn't a racetrack there at all. How can that be?

While reading

3. Leni measures the street with her thumb. How many cars do you think can fit side by side?
4. Leni notices that every shutter is perfectly straight. Why might that be a clue?
5. What do you think will happen to Alex's ball?

After reading

6. People said Dash never forgives a single mistake. What did the children find out?
7. Dash says most racers go too quickly to really see him. What do you rush past without noticing?
8. Alex walks past Dash every day but never says good morning. Why do you think that changed?
9. Leni writes, "Not unforgiving. Just holding close." What does she mean?

Try it: How Many Cars Fit?

Math · Ages 4–8

You need: masking tape, a tape measure, and large paper or cardboard "cars" cut about 6½ feet long (or children lying down).

1. Mark two tape lines 25 feet apart. That's Monaco's street at its narrowest.
2. Lay the cars between the lines, side by side, like Leni's thumb test. How many fit?
3. Three cars fit (19½ feet). A fourth would need 26 feet, so it won't fit! Just as Leni said, "Four would be a squeeze!"

Younger children can do this with toy cars and a short strip of paper "street": how many fit across?

Look Closer

"Alex walked past Dash every day and never gave him a second look. What do you walk past every day? Look closer. What do you see?"

Take a Noticing Walk around your school. Each child finds one thing they've never noticed before and draws it.

Math challenge · Grades 2–3

Twist's Corkscrew drops 59 feet. Monaco's hill drops 138 feet. How much farther does Monaco drop? (Answer: 79 feet.)

Draw two bars to compare them. Which drop happens all at once, and which happens a little at a time?

ACTIVITIES FOR THE WHOLE SERIES

Become a Monster Hunter

Use these after reading two or more books, or as a celebration at the end of a Track Monsters unit.

Monster Hunter World Map

Geography

Pin each track on a classroom world map as you read. Add a sticker or drawing of its monster.

- Twist: Monterey, California
- Banks: Daytona Beach, Florida
- Rusty: Indianapolis, Indiana
- Dash: Monaco
- Coming soon: Gale (Talladega, Alabama) and Groll (Nürburgring, Germany)

Ask: which track is closest to us? Which is farthest? Which one would you visit first?

Create Your Own Track Monster

Writing · Art

Every monster starts with a real place and a true detail. Children pick a place they know, like the big slide, a steep hill, or the school hallway, and invent its monster.

1. What do people say about this place? (the legend)
2. What's the real reason? (the mechanism)
3. What is the monster really doing to help?
4. Give it a name, and draw it!

Use the worksheet on page 14.

Monster Hunter Badges

Art · SEL

At the back of every book, Enzo draws his own badge. Children design a badge of their own with a shape, a color, and a shine, then write their Monster Hunter name to make it official.

Award a badge each time the class "finds" a new monster by reading another book.

Leni's Number Detective

Math

Leni always solves the mystery with numbers. Give children a number from each book and ask what it measures:

- **59** (feet the Corkscrew drops)
- **31** (degrees of Daytona's banking)
- **576** (bricks in the Yard of Bricks)
- **25** (feet across Monaco's narrowest street)

A sample one-week unit

DAY	READ	TRY IT
Day 1	Twist (Book 1)	The Disappearing Car ramp, then start the Monster Hunter World Map
Day 2	Banks (Book 2)	Bowl Racers and the "Who Holds Me Up" drawing
Day 3	Rusty (Book 3)	The Three-Wide Start and the class Thank-You Wall
Day 4	Dash (Book 4)	How Many Cars Fit? and a Noticing Walk
Day 5	Reread a class favorite	Create Your Own Track Monster, then award Monster Hunter badges

Free stickers for your Monster Hunters

Every book has a Monster Hunter page where children place a sticker for each monster they've met. Get a free printable sticker sheet at **trackmonstersbooks.com/monster-hunters-club**.

PRINTABLE WORKSHEET

My Monster Story Map

Name

Book

Works with any Track Monsters book. Younger children can draw their answers; older children can write them.

The track 1
Where does the story happen?

The legend 2
What scary story do people tell?

Leni's puzzle 3
What numbers or clues didn't add up?

Looking closer 4
How did they find the monster?

The truth 5
What was the monster really doing?

Grandpa Vito 6
What did he finally see?

Draw the monster

PRINTABLE WORKSHEET

Create Your Own Track Monster

Name _____

Every Track Monster comes from a real place with a true detail. Pick a place you know: a big slide, a steep hill, a busy hallway, a bumpy road.

My place
Where does my monster live?

The legend
What do people say is scary about it?

The real reason
What is actually true about this place?

How my monster helps
What is it really doing?

My monster's name

Draw your monster

Draw your Monster Hunter badge here

My Monster Hunter Name

Give your badge a shape, a color, and a shine. Then write your name to make it official.

FOR EDUCATORS

Curriculum connections

These are suggested connections for the activities in this guide. Check them against your own state or local standards.

SUBJECT	WHERE IT SHOWS UP	COMMON CORE / NGSS
Reading	Story map, before/during/after questions, comparing characters across books	RL.K.3, RL.1.3, RL.2.3 (characters, settings, major events)
Science	The Disappearing Car ramp (Twist), Bowl Racers (Banks), the bouncing ball (Dash)	K-PS2-1 (pushes and pulls on the motion of an object)
Math: measuring	Marking 59 feet (Twist), How Many Cars Fit? (Dash), comparing drops	K.MD.A.2 (compare objects), 2.MD.A.1 (measure length)
Math: number	576 bricks in hundreds, tens, and ones; 33 cars in rows of three (Rusty)	2.NBT.A.1 (place value), 3.OA.A.1 (equal groups)
Social studies	Monster Hunter World Map; Monaco as a city-state	Map skills and geography
Social-emotional	Look Closer prompts: saying hello, gratitude, noticing others	Empathy, relationship skills

About the series

Track Monsters is a picture book series for ages 3–8 where real, famous racetracks turn out to be friendly monsters. Every story is built on real facts, real numbers, and real racing.

Author **Vittorio Valentino** comes from a motorsport family, from a great-uncle who founded a performance-piston company to a father and brother who were gifted mechanics. He created these stories to pass that passion on to a new generation.

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