



# **D.C.F.**

**2013 - 2014**

**BOOK REVIEWS  
&  
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

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## Table of Contents

About This Guide	1
Applegate: <b>The One and Only Ivan</b>	2
Bardugo: <b>Shadow and Bone</b>	4
Bauer: <b>Little Dog, Lost</b>	6
Burg: <b>Laugh with the Moon</b>	8
Curtis: <b>The Mighty Miss Malone</b>	10
Cushman: <b>Will Sparrow's Road</b>	12
Hiaasen: <b>Chomp</b>	14
Hiranandani: <b>The Whole Story of Half a Girl</b>	16
House & Vaswani: <b>Same Sun Here</b>	17
Hunt: <b>One for the Murphys</b>	19
Key: <b>Fourmile</b>	20
Knowles: <b>See You At Harry's</b>	21
Korman: <b>Ungifted</b>	23
Legrand: <b>The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls</b>	24
Montgomery: <b>Temple Grandin: How the Girl Who Loved Cows Embraced Autism and Changed the World</b>	25
Nielsen: <b>The False Prince</b>	27
Palacio: <b>Wonder</b>	29
Patterson & Grabenstein: <b>I Funny</b>	31
Pennypacker: <b>Summer of the Gypsy Moths</b>	33
Preus: <b>Shadow on the Mountain</b>	35
Pyron: <b>Dogs of Winter</b>	37
Rocklin: <b>The Five Lives of Our Cat Zook</b>	38
Rose: <b>May B.</b>	40
Rupp: <b>After Eli</b>	42
Scattergood: <b>Glory Be</b>	43
Sheinkin: <b>Bomb: The Race to Build - and Steal - the World's Most Dangerous Weapon</b>	45
Stead: <b>Liar and Spy</b>	47
Stone: <b>The Boy on Cinnamon Street</b>	48
Taylor: <b>The Expeditioners and the Treasure of Drowned Man's Canyon</b>	50
Turnage: <b>Three Times Lucky</b>	52
Generic Questions	54

# About This Guide

This guide was compiled by members of the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award Committee. Our intent is to provide a booklet that will support the use of the DCF program in schools and libraries.

For the guide to be most effective, we strongly suggest that the librarian or teacher supervising the program read all the books on the 2013-2014 list. Many public libraries will have the new list by the summer, which means you can get a head start before the school year begins. No synopsis can possibly take the place of reading a book; however, we recognize that reading and remembering the details of 30 books can be a challenge. It is hoped that the reviews will jog your memory!

Since many DCF readers choose and read books on their own, the intent of the questions is to promote discussion among readers of DCF books. This dialogue can take place between student/adult, student/student or in small groups of readers. Most, but not all, of the questions were written to promote critical thinking and to seek opinions, not “right” answers. None of the questions was designed for purposes of assessment.

The generic questions at the end of the booklet can be used in discussions in which readers have read different books. They are taken from Susan Zimmerman's book, *7 Keys to Comprehension: How to Help your Kids Read it and Get it!* (Three Rivers Press, 2003. ISBN – 0-7615-1549-6).

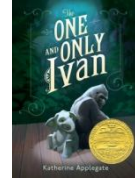
Author websites, if available, are found at the end of the reviews. Some reviews include additional relevant websites. If there is no web address, check the website of the publisher of the book. Their author biographies are usually easy to access and often quite informative.

## Compilers:

- Lauren Chabot
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**Katherine Applegate**  
**THE ONE AND ONLY IVAN**

Harper, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-0619-9225-4. \$16.99. 320 pages.



Ivan is a silverback gorilla living at the Exit 8 Big Top Mall and Video Arcade. After 9,855 days in captivity (27 years), he is used to his small “domain” and the humans who visit him every day. In fact, he barely remembers his former life in the jungles of Africa. Thankfully, he has companions – Stella, a wise old elephant, Bob, a stray dog who sleeps on his belly at night, and Julia, a young girl whose father is the janitor at the mall and who brings him what he loves most – art supplies. When Ruby, a new baby elephant joins their group, Ivan realizes he must do what silverback gorillas do. He must protect his clan. He must do something to save Ruby from a life in captivity and maybe in the process, he will save himself too.

**Curriculum connections:**

Science/Social Studies:

- Ivan is a real gorilla who spent most of his life in a mall in Tacoma, Washington. Research the real Ivan and the Atlanta Zoo where he was relocated.  
[www.zooatlanta.org/Ivan](http://www.zooatlanta.org/Ivan)

Science:

- Gorillas in the wild – [www.gorillas.org](http://www.gorillas.org). Have students research the western lowland gorilla or other primates. Who was Dian Fossey? Have your class Adopt a Gorilla.  
<http://gorillafund.org/take-action/adopt>

Social Studies:

- Have your students research the history of zoos and circuses. [www.zsl.org/education/the-modern-zoo/introducing-the-modern-zoo](http://www.zsl.org/education/the-modern-zoo/introducing-the-modern-zoo) , [www.pbs.org/opb/circus/in-the-ring/history-circus/](http://www.pbs.org/opb/circus/in-the-ring/history-circus/)  
How have zoos and circuses changed over the years? Did reading this book change your attitude about zoos and circuses?

**Discussion questions:**

- This story is told in the first person from Ivan’s point of view. Why do you think the author wrote it this way? Did you find Ivan believable? How would the story be different if it had been told by a different character in the book?
- What do each of Ivan’s friends - Bob, Stella and Julia – give to Ivan? How do they help him? How are they important to Ivan’s survival?
- How does the arrival of Ruby change Ivan? Why does Ivan tell Stella that he will save the baby elephant when he knows he is locked in a cage?
- What do you think of Mack and George? How are they alike? How are they different?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Hatkoff, Juliana, Isabella, & Craig. *Looking for Miza*. Scholastic, 2008.

Kelly, Lynne. *Chained*. FSG, 2012.

Mathews, Tom. *Light Shining Through the Mist: A Photobiography of Dian Fossey*. National Geographic, 1998.

Schrefer, Eliot. *Endangered*. Scholastic Press, 2012. (older readers)

Simon, Seymour. *Gorillas*. HarperCollins, 2000.

Turner, Pamela. *Gorilla Doctors*. Houghton Mifflin, 2005.

Author website: <http://www.theoneandonlyivan.com>

Other important websites: [www.harpercollinschildrens.com/books/One-Only-Ivan](http://www.harpercollinschildrens.com/books/One-Only-Ivan) has a teacher's guide, book trailer and more.

YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) has many videos about the book and the real Ivan, as well as an interview of Katherine Applegate by Global Read Aloud 2012. Type *One and Only Ivan* into the YouTube search box and these videos will come up.

**Leigh Bardugo**  
**SHADOW AND BONE**

Holt, 2012. ISBN 978-0-8050-9459-6. \$17.99. 356 pages.



For hundreds of years the kingdom of Ravka has been at war with its neighbors and divided by The Fold - an almost impassable area of darkness terrorized by bloodthirsty monsters. The kingdom relies on an alliance between the king and the Darkling, the mysterious leader of a magical elite called the Grisha, to protect its boundaries.

Alina and Mal have grown up as orphans of this war, helping each other to survive a childhood of loneliness and deprivation. Mal is a talented tracker whose good looks and charm catch the eye of women of all ranks. Plain and unremarkable Alina is a mapmaker working in the same regiment. When they are sent on a mission across The Fold, their convoy is attacked and Alina's hidden power as a rare Sun Summoner is revealed.

Taken by the Darkling and initiated into the luxurious world of the Grisha, Alina must navigate the swiftly moving currents of political intrigue and brutal ambition as she comes to terms with newly awakened desire. Can Alina find a way to take power over her gift before others harness her as a weapon they can control? Is it necessary to sacrifice Alina's freedom and the self-determination of all of Ravka in the name of security? Alina and Mal must summon all of the strength of their friendship to claim their personal power in a climate of political repression.

**Curriculum connections:**

Language Arts:

- Create an index of the Russian words used in the book. How does Leigh Bardugo change the meaning of these words to fit the world of *Shadow and Bone*?

Social Studies:

- Think of an example from world history of a country that sacrificed individual liberties in the name of winning a war or increased security. Write an essay about how the fictional world of *Shadow and Bone* can inform people's thinking about this real-life tension.

Literature/Art

- Use a search engine to find interesting examples of fan fiction inspired by the world of *Shadow and Bone*. Draw your own image of the characters or a scene from the book, or write a short story from the perspective of one of the minor characters.

Media:

- Look up images and website links on the social networking tool Pinterest that relate to the world of *Shadow and Bone*. Make your own pin board of images that capture the atmosphere of the book.

**Discussion questions:**

- The world of *Shadow and Bone* is inspired by Leigh Bardugo's fascination with the culture of Russia and the former Soviet Union. How does she incorporate elements of Russian culture into the story while creating an original fantasy world?

- There is a constant tension between the Grisha and the King's court. Who wields the power in Ravka? What is the source of the authority held by the King, the Darkling and the Apparatus?
- From the moment that Alina's power is revealed, she is forced to follow the orders of the Darkling and the King. In a sense, her new power takes away her freedom. How does she react to this? What does she need to discover to find her strength and take control of her power?
- Contrast the life of the Grisha and the King's court with that of the peasants of Ravka. What role would you most like to play in this world? Why?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Duane, Diane. *Wizards at War*. Harcourt, 2005.

Mieville, China. *Railsea*. Macmillan, 2012.

Scott, Michael. *The Alchemist*. Delacorte, 2007.

Author website: <http://www.leighbardugo.com>

Leigh Bardugo on Pinterest: <http://pinterest.com/lbardugo>

**Marion Dane Bauer**  
**LITTLE DOG, LOST**

Atheneum, 2012. ISBN 978-1-4424-3423-3. \$15.99. 197 pages.



*Little Dog, Lost* is the story of three very different characters each of whom is missing something in his or her own life. Buddy is a little dog who used to have a home and a boy who loved her, but she ends up alone and wandering the streets of a small town. Mark is a little boy, an only child living with his mom, yearning for a dog. Mr. Larue is an elderly man living alone in a mansion in town. Since Mark doesn't have a dog of his own, he really enjoys spending time with his friends and their dogs. Mark identifies the need for a dog park in their town. With the help of his friends, Mark goes to the town council (his mother is mayor) to propose a dog park. A dramatic thunderstorm and a cat and dog chase bring the council and the "Dog Park Pack" out onto the streets where the three characters meet. Mark not only pleads his case for the dog park but also for a dog of his own. Mr. Larue turns out to be the hero, providing the space for a dog park in his own yard. Told in simple, free verse, *Little Dog, Lost* is a delight to read.

**Curriculum connections:**

Language Arts:

- Experiment with writing a short story in verse. How is it different from writing in prose?
- Read other books written in free verse. Suggestions include *Diamond Willow* by Helen Frost and *Hate that Dog* by Sharon Creech.
- Perform the reader's theater adaptation of the book. How does it compare to the book? What is different when you perform versus read a story?

Social Studies:

- Mark approaches his local government with a problem (the lack of a dog park) and is successful in working with the government and the community to develop a solution. Identify an issue or problem that is meaningful to you. What can you do to help create positive change? How do citizens create change? Possible avenues might be to write a letter to local or national officials, write an editorial for a local newspaper, or educate others in your community about the issue.

Art:

- There are many illustrations throughout the book. Were there any sections that you thought needed or deserved an illustration? Select one of the poems/passages to illustrate. Create your illustration using the same medium used by the illustrator, or choose a different medium to experiment with.

**Discussion questions:**

- How are the main characters (Buddy, Mark and Mr. Larue) similar or different? What is each character seeking?
- The town people make assumptions about Mr. Larue. Why do they treat him this way? Were their assumptions right or wrong? Have you ever made an assumption about someone? Were you right or wrong?
- Why do you think the author chose to write this novel in verse? Does the form work for you as a reader? How does the form affect the story?



**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Creech, Sharon. *Love That Dog*. HarperCollins, 2001.

Frost, Helen. *Diamond Willow*. FSG, 2008.

McKinnon, Hannah Roberts. *Franny Parker*. FSG, 2009.

Perl, Erica. *When Life Gives You O.J.* Knopf, 2011.

Author website: <http://www.mariondanebauer.com/>

Discussion Guide: <http://www.mariondanebauer.com/pdf/LDLdiscussionguide.pdf>

Readers Theater Adaptation: <http://www.mariondanebauer.com/pdf/LDLreaderstheater.pdf>

**Shana Burg**

**LAUGH WITH THE MOON**

**Delacorte, 2012. ISBN 978-0-3857-3471-4. \$16.99. 256 pages.**



Clare's life is falling apart: her mother died, and now her father has uprooted her from friends and normalcy to spend nine weeks in the jungles of Malawi, one of the poorest countries on earth. Not only is she separated from her possessions, but there is no cell service where she is, and she has to go to a native school and learn a whole new language. Then two things help her adjust and put her problems in perspective: she makes friends with a girl named Memory, and she is asked by the principal to teach the youngest class some English.

When Memory, Clare and Memory's little brother,, Innocent (a student of Clare's), go on an outing, a tragedy occurs, and Memory, even in her grief, is able to help Clare move on with hers.

**Curriculum connections:**

Science:

- Study the moon's rotation and how it would be seen differently by you and by a friend in another country

Language Arts:

- Discuss point of view in writing (third person, first person). Talk about how this book would be different if the point of view changed. Take a paragraph from the book and try re-writing it in a different point of view.
- This book is written in the present tense. Do the same as the activity above, but change the tense from present to past. How does this change the feel or tone of the book? Find other books written in the present tense and discuss why the author made that choice.
- Imagine that you are a child from a totally different culture from your own (perhaps a refugee), and that you move to your town. Write fictional diary entries about what you encounter in the school and town that seems weird.

Geography:

- Research the country of Malawi. What would you like to see if you traveled there? What could you learn from children your age in Malawi? <http://www.our-africa.org/malawi>  
Find Malawi on a map and discuss its topography.

Social Studies:

- Write about the differences between your school and the one that Clare attends in Malawi. Can you find any information about education in Malawi?

**Discussion questions:**

- So many of the experiences Clare has in Malawi are new, yet some things are the same. Discuss.
- Memory has experienced so much tragedy in her life, yet remains resilient. How do you think she has been able to deal with these hardships?
- How does Clare's trip to Malawi help her deal with her mother's death?
- Do you think Clare's father was unfair to her? Use evidence from the text to explain why or why not.

- Discuss this quote from p. 218 ... "I used to think that happy people dance and sad people cry. But now I see that people aren't like stitches on a hem. They don't always follow a pattern. They don't always weave in and out, holding the pieces of their lives together in the way you might expect. Sad people can laugh and dance, and that doesn't mean they're suddenly fine. And happy people can cry, and that doesn't mean they're not okay."

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Beake, Lesley. *Song of Be*. Henry Holt, 2003.

Klise, Kate. *Grounded*. Feiwel & Friends, 2010.

Michael, Jan. *City Boy*. Clarion, 2009.

Whelan, Gloria. *Listening for Lions*. HarperCollins, 2005.

Author website: <http://www.shanaburg.com/>

## **Christopher Paul Curtis** **THE MIGHTY MISS MALONE**

Wendy Lamb, 2012. ISBN 978-0-3857-3491-2. \$15.99. 309 pages.



Twelve-year old Deza Malone is a firecracker, with a million dollar vocabulary and an inordinately positive attitude. She is a star at school and an integral part of the close-knit Malone family. The struggles the Malone family face in Indiana and Michigan represent the struggles that so many families faced during the Depression. As setback after setback strikes them, the Malones find a way to make it through, with “Darling Daughter Deza” leading the charge.

Each member of the family does what they believe they need to do in order to keep the family afloat, even if their choices aren’t always properly thought out. Starting with Deza herself, Mr. Curtis has developed a complex and wonderful cast of characters that are sure to have you laughing and screaming in frustration.

As you “journey with the Malone family to a place called Wonderful” your heart will be warmed and you will surely hope that there is a happy ending in sight.

### **Curriculum connections:**

History:

- Research the Great Depression. Were Michigan and Indiana 2 of the hardest hit states? Is the Malone family typical of the working poor at that time? Look at Hoovervilles or shantytowns. What roles did Presidents Hoover and Roosevelt play? What was the New Deal?

Language Arts:

- Vocabulary: Deza loves to use big long words and expressions, many of which have her brand of creative spelling or incorrect usage. Make a list of some of Deza’s “mistakes”. Are there words or expressions that you spell or use incorrectly?
- Describe each member of your family the way Mrs. Needham asks her class to (see pp. 3-12). Be sure to include:
  - Most endearing trait
  - Most annoying trait
  - Pet peeve
  - Dream
- Mrs. Needham introduces the Scottish expression “Gang aft A-Gley” to Deza who then often uses it to describe events in her life. What events in your life are “Gang aft A-Gley”?

### **Discussion questions:**

- Why is Deza called the “Mighty Miss Malone”? What makes her mighty?
- The Malone family has 4 unique and wonderful members. What do you like best and least about each of them?
- Why does Ms. Needham give Deza and A- and threaten her with the possibility of a B? Do you think this is fair?
- Deza and Mrs. Needham have a very special relationship. Have you ever had a teacher like this?

- The Malone family's motto is: "We are on a journey to a place called Wonderful." What would your family motto be?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Giff, Patricia Reilly. *R My Name is Rachel*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2011.

Holm, Jennifer. *Turtle in Paradise*. Random, 2010.

Peck, Richard. *A Long Way from Chicago* (series). Dial, 1998.

Author website: <http://www.nobodybutcurtis.com/biography.html>

Book's website: <http://www.randomhouse.com/book/35775/the-mighty-miss-malone-by-christopher-paul-curtis>

Christopher Paul Curtis video:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGEEJfi0fsI&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGEEJfi0fsI&feature=player_embedded)

PBS: The Great Depression:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/dustbowl-great-depression/>

The History Channel's: The Great Depression: <http://www.history.com/topics/great-depression>

## **Karen Cushman**

### **WILL SPARROW'S ROAD**

Clarion, 2012. ISBN 978-0-547-73962-5. \$16.99. 216 pages.



Will Sparrow has stolen his last meal from the innkeeper to whom his father sold him in return for free ale, and is now on the run. While he is a self-centered liar and thief, Will is also innocent and naïve. As he often states: “I care for none but myself and nothing but my belly.” During his travels, Will encounters truly bizarre and interesting characters, as he searches for food, shelter and a place to fit in, in essence for a family. On his journey through the small towns and countryside of Elizabethan England, he learns about false first impressions and the complexities of character.

#### **Curriculum connections:**

##### Language Arts:

- Each chapter begins with a 2 or 3 line summary of the action to come.
  - Chapter 3 “In which Will earns but is cheated of a supper.”
  - Chapter 7 “Gobsmacked by a pig and a monster.”

Do you like this technique for introducing a chapter or do you prefer just straight numbers? Choose a favorite book and write chapter headings in this style.

- The author uses many words and expressions with which you might not have previously been familiar. Using the following list of words and phrases from the text, and others you choose, discuss their meanings and whether or not you think they are, or should be, still in use today:
  - ratsbane (p.31), varlet (p.31), belike (p.35), poulterers (p.44), sirrah (p.44), “his belly at last full of tart and perry” (p.52), foodmonger (p.56), gobsmacked (p.66), “I am in readiness” (p.103), “lazy cur” (p.150), doublet (p.160), sooth (p.161).
- Samuel Knobby and Alf share a number of (awful!) riddles (pp.90-93). Did you figure out the answers? Did you think they were clever or funny? Write a riddle of this type.

##### History/Social Studies:

- Class project: Plan your own Elizabethan fair. What food would you serve? What would be in your “Oddities and Curiosities” booth? What acts would perform? What services would you offer? Think about costumes, location, and the cost of acts and items.

##### Science:

- Grace Wyse suffers from hypertrichosis. Find out more about this condition. Do people still suffer from it today? What other illnesses and maladies were common at this time?

#### **Discussion questions:**

- Is Will a sympathetic character?
- Talk about the many ways Will changes as the novel progresses.
- How would this book be different if the main character was female? Why do you think the author chose a male protagonist?
- Will finds himself in some awful situations during his adventures. Which one did you find the most frightening? How would you have handled it differently than Will did?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Blackwood, Gary. *The Shakespeare Stealer* (series). Dutton, 1998.

Broach, Elise. *Shakespeare's Secret*. Henry Holt, 2005.

Cushman, Karen. *Alchemy and Meggy Swan*. Clarion, 2010.

Cushman, Karen. *Catherine Called Birdy*. Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

Cushman, Karen. *Matilda Bone*. Clarion, 2000.

Cushman, Karen. *The Midwife's Apprentice*. Clarion, 1995.

Forbes, Esther Hoskins. *Johnny Tremain*. Houghton Mifflin, 1943.

Author website: <http://www.karencushman.com/books/willsparrow.html>

Wiesner-Hanks, Prof. Merry E. *The Marvelous Hairy Girls: The Gonzales Sisters and Their Worlds*. Yale University Press, 2009.

(Cushman's inspiration for the character of Grace Wyse)

## Carl Hiaasen CHOMP

Knopf, 2012. ISBN 978-0-3758-6842-9. \$16.99. 290 pages.



Animal wrangler Mickey Cray recuperates at home in Florida with his wife and teenage son, Wahoo, after being struck in the head by a dead iguana. With finances tight, Mickey's wife gets a temporary job in China, and Mickey must take a job on the hit reality show, *Expedition Survival!*, starring Steve Irwin wannabee, Derek Badger. The show starts out badly when Derek stages a near-disastrous scene with Alice, the Crays' giant gator. It gets worse when Derek, a definite egomaniac, decides to use only wild animals in his stunts. Wahoo has made a new friend while on location in the Everglades for the show, a runaway named Tuna who is hiding out from her abusive father. The two become fast friends and try to help Mickey keep Derek out of trouble. Derek goes missing in a storm after being bitten by a bat and multiple search parties go after him. Then Tuna's father shows up with a gun and all heck breaks loose. Join the wacky crew of *Expedition Survival!* for a romp in the swamp.

### Curriculum connections:

Language Arts:

- Read the first three chapters of Chomp: <http://www.carlhiaasen.com/excerpt-chomp.html> and create character maps for the humans and creatures mentioned. Who are you most like and why?

History:

- Go to the Everglades National Park website: <http://www.nps.gov/ever/historyculture/people.htm> and learn more about the people who have lived and worked in the Everglades.

Science:

- Look at the Vermont Mammals list from the Vermont Natural Heritage Inventory from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department: <http://tinyurl.com/d8uxasm> How many of the mammals have you seen?
- Go to the Animal Rights Foundation of Florida list of Exotic "Pet" incidents: <http://www.animalrightsflorida.org/incidentlist.html> Pick three "pets" and trace their country of origin, diet, and mating habits. Why was this "pet" valuable?

### Discussion questions:

- In this age of reality television, is it possible that a story like this could actually happen?
- How does Derek Badger, a fictitious character compare with the likes of Steve Irwin, Jeff Corwin, and Bear Grylls?
- Why do you think the author wrote this particular book? What is the book's message?

### If you loved this, you'll like:

Applegate, Katherine. *The One and Only Ivan*. Harper, 2012.

Gibbs, Stuart. *Belly Up*. S & S, 2010.

Hiaasen, Carl. *Flush*. Knopf, 2005.

Hiaasen, Carl. *Hoot*. Knopf, 2002.

Hiaasen, Carl. *Scat*. Knopf, 2009.

Phillips, Helen. *Here Where the Sunbeams are Green*. Delacorte, 2012.



Author website: <http://www.carlhaasen.com/index.shtml>

**Veera Hiranandani**  
**THE WHOLE STORY OF HALF A GIRL**

Delacorte, 2012. ISBN 978-0-385-74128-6. \$16.99. 224 pages.



When her father loses his job, Sonia Nadhamuni must leave the private school she loves and enter public school, where she has difficulty fitting in. Half-Indian and half-Jewish, she doesn't always feel as though she belongs. She considers herself "too dark to be white, too light to be black." When she meets Kate, a popular white girl, the two quickly become friends. After some time, however, Sonia begins to question whether or not Kate truly likes her for who she is. In addition to her problems at school, Sonia's family life is also in crisis. Her father is depressed, she doesn't always get along with her mother, and things go really downhill when Sonia's father disappears.

*The Whole Story of Half a Girl* addresses issues that resonate with people, both young and old: self-acceptance, friendship, self-discovery, and problems at home. Many readers will identify with Sonia as she struggles to find her place in the cafeteria and in the world.

**Curriculum connections:**

**Social Studies:**

- Sonia's teacher tells the class that getting to know a country's food is "the best way to really understand a country." As part of a research project, cook an authentic dish from a specific country.
- Interview grandparents or older family members to learn more about your heritage.

**Language Arts:**

- Write about a trip you have taken.

**Discussion questions:**

- Have you ever felt like you did not belong somewhere? Discuss.
- Were you surprised by Kate's reaction to Sonia's dress? Why or why not?
- If you were Sonia, who do you think you would you have sat next to in the cafeteria? Why?
- How do you feel Sonia's public school compares to your school? Do cliques like the ones described in the book exist in your school?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Dionne, Erin. *Notes from an Accidental Band Geek*. Dial, 2011.

Demas, Corinne. *Everything I Was*. Carolrhoda, 2011.

Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *Becoming Naomi León*. Scholastic Press, 2004.

Author website: <http://www.veerahiranandani.com>

## Silas House & Neela Vaswani

### SAME SUN HERE

Candlewick, 2012. ISBN 978-0-7636-5684-3. \$16.99. 288 pages.



River and Meena are matched as pen pals when they both select the snail mail option during a school project. Their lives couldn't be more different. Or could they? Meena has recently moved to the United States from India and lives in New York City with her family in a rent-controlled apartment. River comes from a long line of Kentucky coal miners and lives with his activist grandma and depressed mom in the Appalachian Mountains. As different as their lives are, both River and Meena have special connections with their grandmothers and a keen eye for observing the world around them. Meena's drawings, of New York and the home that she left behind in India, and River's poetic descriptions of the mountains of Kentucky, bridge the cultural gap between these two kindred spirits. When River's community faces the fallout from destructive mountaintop removal mining and Meena suffers the loss of her grandmother and her home, their letters become a source of strength and optimism. Written by two authors, this novel presents two compelling voices that insist that our similarities are greater than any differences and that even the smallest actions can have an impact.

#### Curriculum connections:

##### Social Studies:

- Research the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand and Meena's hometown of Mussoorie. Compare and contrast the geography and climate to the Appalachian mountain region of eastern Kentucky.
- In one of her letters to River, Meena records 46 of the questions from the US citizenship exam that her parents must take to become American citizens. Head to [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) to learn about the process that immigrants must navigate to become US citizens. Take a practice citizenship exam and see how many answers you get right.
- Meena tells River about the Chipko environmental movement in India that occurred during the 1970's. She also describes the nonviolent philosophy and civil disobedience used by Mahatma Gandhi to resist British rule. Research social activism movements in India and the United States. What are some of the characteristics of successful grassroots movements?

##### Science/Environment

- Research the process of mountaintop removal mining. What are the environmental impacts of this type of mining? Why do coal companies use this process? Why do some of River's neighbors support it? Why do River and his family oppose it?

##### Language Arts:

- Use the online resource ePals to connect with other classrooms around the world and start a cross-cultural pen pal learning project in your school.

#### Discussion questions:

- *Same Sun Here* is an epistolary novel. Can you think of other books that use this format? Why did the authors choose to tell their stories in letters?

- Both River and Meena have experienced family hardships that have left them feeling distant from their parents. Describe how each of these experiences has impacted Meena and River and the way that they come to terms with their feelings.
- Meena and River write things in their letters that they might not feel comfortable sharing aloud. How might their relationship be different if they had met in real life and not through letters? How might it have been different if they got to know each other over email?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Klise, Kate M. and Sarah Klise. *Regarding the Fountain: a Tale in Letters, of Liars and Leaks*, HarperCollins, 1998.

Sullivan, Mary. *Dear Blue Sky*. Nancy Paulsen, 2012.

Author websites:

Silas House - <http://silashouse.weebly.com>

Neela Vaswani - <http://www.neelavaswani.com>

Candlewick Press Discussion Guide:

[http://www.candlewick.com/book\\_files/0763656844.bdg.1.pdf](http://www.candlewick.com/book_files/0763656844.bdg.1.pdf)

## Lynda Mullaly Hunt

### ONE FOR THE MURPHYS

Nancy Paulsen, 2012. ISBN 978-0-3992-5615-8. \$16.99. 224 pages.



When Carley enters foster care after a horrible domestic incident involving her mother and her mother's boyfriend, she moves in with the Murphy family. At first she is reluctant to get emotionally attached, but she eventually grows to love them as they accept her into their home. The Murphys show her what it's like to belong somewhere.

In the end, despite her love for the Murphys, Carley must return to live with her mother. Because of the Murphys, however, her life has been changed forever. She realizes that she is worthy of love and that she is capable of having a wonderful and successful life. Heart-wrenching but also full of humor, *One for the Murphys* is full of complex characters and real-life issues. Readers who have had struggles in their home lives may feel especially connected to Carley. A genuine and relatable read, *One for the Murphys* is a story of hope.

#### Curriculum connections:

Language Arts/Writing:

- Imagine Carley as an adult and write a letter from Carley to the Murphy Family. What would Carley say? What is her life like today?
- Read Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree* and explain how it relates to *One for the Murphys*.

History/Language Arts:

- Follow Mr. Ruben's assignment: Split into partners and research a person who has changed the world for the better.

#### Discussion questions:

- Why was Carley so reluctant to become friendly with the Murphys?
- Did you like Carley? Why or why not?
- What does the title *One for the Murphys* mean?
- How does Carley change throughout the book?
- Did you like the ending? Was it realistic? Do you wish it ended in a different way?

#### If you loved this, you'll like:

Bauer, Joan. *Almost Home*. Viking, 2012.

Horvath, Polly. *One Year in Coal Harbor*. Schwartz & Wade, 2012.

Snyder, Laurel. *Bigger than a Bread Box*. Random, 2011.

Author website: <http://www.lyndamullalyhunt.com>

Teacher's Guide: [http://www.lyndamullalyhunt.com/cmsfiles/Murphys\\_Teachers\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.lyndamullalyhunt.com/cmsfiles/Murphys_Teachers_Guide.pdf)

## Watt Key FOURMILE

FSG, 2012. ISBN 978-0-3743-5095-6. \$16.99. 228 pages.



Twelve-year old Foster knows Dax, his mother's boyfriend, is dangerous. Foster lives with his mom on their farm in Alabama. Since Foster's father died, the farm has fallen to disrepair. One afternoon a stranger walks down their road and their life changes forever. Gary is walking to Texas and stops for some water from their hose. He ends up sleeping in the barn and offering to do some small repairs around the farm. Soon, Gary and Foster are working side-by-side completing projects. Foster grows close to Gary as their relationship deepens. Dax however does not take well to Gary's presence. After a few standoffs between the men, a brutal fight ensues. Gary frees Foster and his mom from the clutches of Dax but at the price of his own freedom. When the police get involved, we learn that Gary is not simply a wanderer, but has gone AWOL from the army. The novel's conclusion reveals that Gary went to prison and Foster and his mom settled into a new life in Mobile. At times violent, often gritty and always honest, *Fourmile* is a compelling story of loss, grief and connection. *Fourmile* will appeal to older readers who don't mind a dark tale.

### Curriculum connections:

Language Arts:

- Select one character to analyze. How is their character developed throughout the story? Do they change? Find evidence from the text to support your statements.
- What if this story ended in a differently? What if the fight between Dax and Gary had a different outcome? What if Gary didn't get arrested? Write an alternative ending to the novel.

### Discussion questions:

- *Fourmile* has the distinct feeling of a western, but surprisingly takes place in Alabama. How does the author create the atmosphere of the "wild-west" in modern times in the south? Use examples from the text.
- What are Foster's struggles in this novel? How does he change and/or overcome his struggles throughout the novel?
- Is Gary a trustworthy character? Why or why not?
- How did you feel about the ending? Were you satisfied?

### If you loved this, you'll like:

Key, Watt. *Alabama Moon*. FSG, 2006.

Klass, David. *You Don't Know Me*. Square Fish, 2010.

Knowles, John. *A Separate Peace*. Scribner, 1996.

Author website: <http://www.wattkey.com>

**Jo Knowles**

**SEE YOU AT HARRY'S**

**Candlewick, 2012. ISBN 978-0-7636-5407-8. \$16.99. 310 pages.**



Fern's parents are so busy with the family business, they have little time for her. Her father, always trying to promote their restaurant, is involved with thinking up PR that usually embarrasses the whole family, and her mother copes by going off to meditate. Her older sister is doing a gap year while all of her friends have gone away to college, so she is pretty miserable, and Fern's brother is struggling with coming out. Then there is the surprise baby, Charlie, who at three is the center of everything. Where does Fern fit in? Does anyone even care? Fortunately, she has a calm best friend, Ran, who assures her constantly that "All will be well." But then a terrible tragedy strikes the whole family and things go from bad to horrible. Plus, Fern is sure she is responsible for what happened. Things will never be the same, but can they at least get better?

**Curriculum connections:**

Psychology:

- Everyone deals with death differently, but there are some standard phases of grief that most people pass through. Research those stages and see if they apply to the family in this book.

Language Arts:

- Discuss point of view in writing (third person, first person). Talk about how this book would be different if the point of view changed. Take a paragraph from the book and try re-writing it in a different point of view. Have the students write a paragraph about themselves first in first person, and then third.
- Try writing ads for a business. What works and what does not?

Mixed Media:

- Fern's dad embarrassed his family terribly by forcing them to appear in a commercial for their restaurant. Plan out a better, non embarrassing commercial and film it.

**Discussion Questions:**

- Would you call this family dysfunctional at the beginning of the book? What are the problems that each one is struggling with?
- Each of the children is named after a children's book character. How are they like and unlike their namesakes?
- Bullying is an issue in this book. Is bullying a problem at your school? How is it handled? Do gay and lesbian students feel safe and supported at your school?
- Do you think Fern was too young to be left to watch her little brother? Use evidence from the text to explain why or why not.
- How did Fern's relationships with her family and friends change throughout the book?
- What other books have you read in which a character dies? How is this book similar to or different from those books?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Coulumbis, Audrey. *Getting Near to Baby*. Scholastic, 1999.  
Knowles, Jo. *Pearl*. Henry Holt, 2011.

Martin, Ann. *A Corner of the Universe*. Scholastic, 1999.  
McKay, Hilary. *Caddy's World*. McElderry, 2012. (and others in the Casson family series)  
Paterson, Katherine. *Bridge to Terabithia*. HarperCollins, 1977.

Author website: <http://www.joknowles.com/Home.html>

Book trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDPzH-9Be3g>

Twitter: @JoKnowles

Teacher guide from Walker Books, Australia:

<http://www.walkerbooks.com.au/statics/dyn/1351564059535/See-You-at-Harrys.pdf>

Pinterest board : <http://pinterest.com/joknowles/see-you-at-harry-s/>



## **Gordon Korman** **UNGIFTED**

**Balzer & Bray, 2012. ISBN 978-0-06-174266-8. \$16.99. 288 pages.**



Donovan Curtis is the ultimate troublemaker. When one of his pranks goes too far and leads to the destruction of the middle school gymnasium, Donovan faces possible expulsion and must meet with the superintendent. Through a series of mix-ups, Donovan's name ends up on a list of gifted students who will be attending the Academy of Scholastic Distinction (ASD), a special school for the gifted and talented. In order to escape punishment, Donovan decides to go to ASD and hide out from the superintendent, who can't remember his name.

It doesn't take a genius to see that Donovan isn't talented or gifted, and soon the teachers and students begin to question whether or not Donovan belongs at ASD. As time goes on, however, he bonds with his fellow students, bringing excitement and "normalcy" into their lives. Laugh-out-loud hilarious, *Ungifted* is full of entertaining scenes that are perfectly balanced with strong messages of tolerance and acceptance of others. An enjoyable read for both reluctant readers and avid readers alike.

### **Curriculum connections:**

History/Genealogy:

- Donovan is interested in genealogy and has an ancestry.com site. Research your own family history.

Science/Technology:

- Study important advancements in robotics and technology.
- Learn about robotics and attempt to build a robot or other technological tool.

### **Discussion Questions**

- When Korman first introduces his characters, they seem to be stereotypes, but by the end of the book they are much more fully rounded. How does he develop the characters?
- What does being "gifted" mean to you?
- Did you like Donovan? Why or why not?
- In what way is Donovan "gifted?"
- While Donovan is very different from the other students at ASD, he is able to connect with each of them. Why do you think this is?

### **If you loved this, you'll like:**

Gantos, Jack. *Dead End in Norvelt*. FSG, 2011.

Sachar, Louis. *Holes*. Scholastic, 1999.

Schmidt, Gary D. *The Wednesday Wars*. Clarion, 2007.

Author website: <http://www.gordonkorman.com/>

**Claire Legrand**

**THE CAVENDISH HOME FOR BOYS AND GIRLS**

S & S, 2012. ISBN 978-1-4424-4291-7. \$16.99. 344 pages.



12 year-old Victoria is a no-nonsense prissy girl who sets ridiculously high standards for herself and for everyone around her. Lawrence is her one friend, yet she treats him very poorly, always criticizing him and telling him how he should eat, dress and behave. When Lawrence goes missing, Victoria is the only one who seems to care; in fact she is the only one who seems to notice. Clues soon point Victoria towards The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls and this determined 12 year-old girl shows her bravery and sense of friendship in her relentless quest to figure out the truth behind her friend's disappearance.

**Curriculum connections:**

Social Studies:

- Study orphanages throughout history. How have they changed? Do you think Mrs. Cavendish's orphanage is like any orphanages you learned about?

Language Arts

- There are beetles/cockroaches everywhere in this book, both in the text and as art on the pages. What about these insects do you think made the author scatter them throughout the pages? What is their symbolism?

Theatre:

- Make your own marionettes and act out your favorite scenes from *The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls*.
  - How to make simple marionettes:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLa2-zOr-Fg>  
<http://spoonful.com/crafts/how-make-marionette>

**Discussion questions:**

- Did you like Victoria? Why or why not?
- Why is Lawrence friends with Victoria?
- Did you find *The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls* scary? What makes a book too scary for you? To what age and type of reader would you recommend this book?
- This book has been called both charming and creepy. How would you describe it? How is it charming?
- What do you think happened to the adults in the book? Why were they so dazed and forgetful?
- How are Mrs. Cavendish and Mr. Alice still alive after 150 years?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1837.

Gaiman, Neil. *Coraline*. HarperCollins, 2002.

Rich, Susan, editor. *Half-Minute Horrors*. HarperCollins, 2009.

Stewart, Trenton Lee. *The Mysterious Benedict Society* (series). Little, Brown, 2007.

Author website: <http://claire-legrand.com/the-books-2/the-books/>

**Sy Montgomery**

**TEMPLE GRANDIN: HOW THE GIRL WHO LOVED COWS  
EMBRACED AUTISM AND CHANGED THE WORLD**

**Putnam, 2011. ISBN 978-0-3992-5627-1. \$16.99. 368 pages.**



In this engaging and informative biography, we learn about Dr. Temple Grandin, a scientist who has worked for years in the livestock industry developing cruelty-free methods for handling animals. When Grandin was young her parents felt that something wasn't quite "right" with their child; she didn't laugh, she didn't hug her parents and she didn't speak. In 1950, when Temple was three she was diagnosed with autism. Grandin's mother refused to send Temple to an institution, which was common at the time. Grandin went on to attend school and eventually earn a doctorate degree. Due to her autism, loud noises were extremely uncomfortable and words were often unclear. While Temple had some significant struggles as a child, she also had many gifts. Grandin uses her gifts to improve the treatment and experiences of livestock. Montgomery writes about both Grandin's life and achievements and autism with clarity, sensitivity and respect.

**Curriculum connections:**

Language Arts:

- Watch Grandin's TED talk. Compare what you learn and infer about Grandin from the TED talk with what you learn and infer about Grandin from the book.

Social Studies:

- Conduct debates about animal rights. Consider the following questions. Should animals be treated morally? Do animals destined for slaughter need humane treatment?
- In the 1950's when Grandin was a child it was typical for children with her diagnosis to be institutionalized. Investigate how the treatment of individuals with autism (and other disorders or difference) has changed over the past 60 years.

**Discussion questions:**

- Describe some of the challenges Grandin faced as a child and young adult and how she overcame them.
- How did Temple Grandin use her autism as a strength?
- Why do you think Temple Grandin was drawn towards working with animals?
- What do you think Temple Grandin's greatest achievement thus far is? Explain why.

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Baskin, Nora Raleigh. *Anything But Typical*. S & S, 2009.

Fleming, Candice. *Amelia Lost: The Life and Disappearance of Amelia Earhart*. Schwartz & Wade, 2011.

Haddon, Mark. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Doubleday, 2003.

Keller, Helen. *The Story of My Life*. Doubleday, 1954.

Lord, Cynthia. *Rules*. Scholastic Press, 2006.

Stork, Francisco X. *Marcelo in the Real World*. Arthur A. Levine, 2009.

Author website: <http://www.symontgomery.com>

Discussion Guide from the Publisher and Common Core Guide:

<http://symontgomery.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/TempleGrandin-Guide.pdf>

<http://symontgomery.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/How-To-Use-With-Common-Core.pdf>

Temple Grandin's Autism website: <http://www.templegrandin.com/>

TED profile and talk by Temple Grandin: [http://www.ted.com/speakers/temple\\_grandin.html](http://www.ted.com/speakers/temple_grandin.html)

Interview with Temple Grandin: <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/35150832/#.UWHI-IXjfcc>

**Jennifer Nielsen**

**THE FALSE PRINCE**

Scholastic Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0-545-28413-4. \$17.99. 352 pages.



To unify the divided people in the kingdom of Carthya, Conner, a nobleman of the court, devises a plan to create an impersonator of the king's long-lost son and install him as a puppet prince. Four boys are taken from orphanages to compete for the role, including a feisty, defiant boy named Sage. Taken to Conner's sumptuous palace, they are trained to fight, to ride, to behave like a prince. Each of the boys realizes that the penalty for losing the contest will be death, so no one can be trusted. Layer upon layer of treachery and deceit unfold, until finally, a truth is revealed that is both shocking and dangerous.

The second book in the trilogy, *The Runaway King*, is already out.

**Curriculum connections:**

Language Arts:

- Point of View: When we learn that Sage is in fact the real Prince Jaron (Chapter 42, page 258) the point of view shifts. Before then, Sage narrates the story in the first person; in Chapters 42 and 43 the author writes the story in the third person and after that, Prince Jaron tells the story in the first person. Challenge students to choose a chapter in the novel to write from a different character's point of view.

Music:

- A major influence for *The False Prince*, came from the music of Eddie Vedder, the lead singer of the seminal grunge band Pearl Jam. From Vedder's lyrics "I knew all the rules, but the rules did not know me," Sage, Nielsen's protagonist, was born. The lyrics come from the song, "Guaranteed," written for the soundtrack of the movie "Into the Wild." Listen to it on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mA-Xn2Dx-s> and discuss what the song is about, and whether you see connections between it and *The False Prince*. Then pick some popular songs that the students may know and have them talk about how a line from a song could be the basis for a whole book.

Mixed Media:

- *The False Prince* is going to be made into a movie. Have the students choose a scene and make it into a screenplay or animated film.

**Discussion questions:**

- During the lessons and competitions with Tobias and Roden, Sage frequently acts as if he does not want to be prince. Why does he behave this way?
- The character of Conner is complex. How does Conner's character appear to you? As a hero? An antihero? A villain? Or something else? Provide evidence to support your claim.
- Discuss the theme of loyalty in the novel. What is loyalty? What kinds of loyalty are there?
- There are a lot of lies and misrepresentations in this book. Using examples from the text, discuss ones you think are justified, and ones that are not.

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Moran, Katy. *Bloodline*. Candlewick, 2009.

Morris, Gerald. *The Squire's Tale*. Houghton Mifflin, 1998. (The Squire's Tales series) and other Arthurian books

Pierce, Tamora. *Terrier*. Random, 2006. (Beka Cooper series)

Spradlin, Michael. *Keeper of the Grail*. Putnam, 2008. (Youngest Templar series)

Author website: <http://www.jennielsen.com/>

More discussion questions from Scholastic:

[http://www.scholastic.com/motherdaughterbookclub/pdf/Scholastic MDBC FalsePrinceQA.pdf](http://www.scholastic.com/motherdaughterbookclub/pdf/Scholastic_MDBC_FalsePrinceQA.pdf)

Questionnaire to see if you would make a good False Prince:

<http://www.scholastic.com/FalsePrince/game/>

**R.J. Palacio**  
**WONDER**

**Knopf, 2012. ISBN 978-0-3758-6902-0. \$15.99. 315 pages.**



Ten year-old August Pullman is attending school for the very first time. For most children, this would be a slightly scary thing, but Auggie’s fears about school are compounded by the fact that he suffers from severe facial deformities that horrify most people. His mother has homeschooled him but both of his parents feel that it would be better for Auggie to face the real world which includes school. As Auggie begins fifth grade at Beecher Prep in NYC, his sister Via (Olivia) is starting high school. Told in eight parts by Auggie and five other characters, *Wonder* is a meditation on how we should treat other people regardless of their appearance. While the reader cannot help being sympathetic towards Auggie and his plight, we also share the difficulties in navigating the social hierarchies of both middle school and high school, the pain of losing your best friend to popularity, the joy of first love, and the loss of a beloved family member or pet. Follow Auggie as he tries like any ordinary kid to just get through fifth grade in one piece and maybe carry up a few hearts along the way.

**Curriculum connections:**

Health/Life Skills/Classroom/Advisory:

- Use the book with an entire class or group to examine bullying in all of its forms. The behaviors exhibited in the book by Auggie’s classmates are typical of the age group but cannot be tolerated. Brainstorm ways that characters in the story should have behaved and what held them back. Promote the **Choose Kind** campaign in your school.

Language Arts/English:

- Look at Mr. Browne’s Precepts on pages 311 and 312. Pick your favorite and discuss why you like it. Write your own precept and share with your classmates.

Music:

- The author used a song to help her write this book. Pick a song with lyrics that inspire you and create a story around it. Compare how this song inspired this book with how “Guaranteed” inspired *The False Prince*.

History:

- One of Mr. Browne’s precepts, “Your deeds are your monuments,” is inscribed on an Egyptian tomb. Pick an historical figure who has accomplished something great and compare them with someone who has a monument created in their honor. Who is judged greater? Which is better, the deed or the monument? Does everyone deserve a monument in their honor?

**Discussion Questions**

- On the first page of this book, Auggie says, “I won’t describe what I look like. Whatever you’re thinking, it’s probably worse.” Why do you think the author chooses to have Via describe her brother rather than Auggie himself?
- How realistic are the adults portrayed in the story?
- The author chooses to have children narrate the story; would the story work with the addition of an adult perspective?

- Why does Miranda stay in touch with Auggie even after her friendship with Via is severed?
- Is Julian Albans a product of his environment?
- The author includes references to *The Hobbit*, *Star Wars*, *The Little Prince*, and *The Elephant Man*. How do any of these books and movies connect to the story?
- Look at Mr. Browne's Precepts on pages 311 and 312. Pick your favorite and discuss why you like it. Write your own precept and share with your classmates.

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Abbott, Tony. *Firegirl*. Little, Brown, 2006.

Baskin, Nora Raleigh. *Anything but Typical*. S & S, 2009.

Draper, Sharon M. *Out of My Mind*. Atheneum, 2010.

Erskine, Kathryn. *Mockingbird*. Philomel, 2010.

Hunt, Lynda Mullaly. *One for the Murphys*. Nancy Paulsen, 2012.

Telgemeier, Raina. *Smile*. Graphix, 2010.

Author website: <http://rjpalacio.com/index.html>

Help Readers Love Reading: Brian Wilhorn's Blogger site with excellent lesson plans and multimedia links: <http://www.helpreaderslovereading.com/2012/03/wonder-by-r-j-palacio.html>

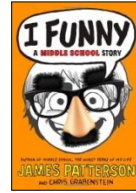
Choose Kind: The anti-bullying campaign inspired by Wonder: <http://choosekind.tumblr.com/>



## James Patterson & Chris Grabenstein

### I FUNNY

Little, Brown, 2012. ISBN 978-0-316-20693-8. \$15.99. 302 pages.



Middle-schooler Jamie Grimm has two great loves: stand-up comedy and his Uncle Frankie. Jamie takes his humor very seriously, studies the legends of comedy religiously and tries out his routines on the customers at his Uncle's diner. Jamie would try them out at home, but he's recently moved in with his humor-challenged relatives and his older cousin Stevie, who happens to be the school bully. Despite being in a wheelchair, Jamie has friends who care for him, an uncle who looks out for him and he has recently caught the eye of the Cool Girl in school. So why throw all that away on some silly comedy contest to crown *The Planet's Funniest Kid Comic*? What if he freezes during a routine? What if no one laughs? What if the judges go easy on him? Will Jamie ever share the secret of his troubled past instead of hiding behind his comedy act? Find out what happens to our optimistic hero in this heartfelt story.

#### Curriculum connections:

##### History:

- Trace the history of comedy in America through the website **Make 'em laugh: The Funny Business of America**: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/makeemlaugh/> Look at the comedy's evolution tab to see how comedy has changed over time. Create a timeline using **timetoast.com** to show the highlights.
- Comedian Billy Crystal appears to Jamie in his dreams. Read the article about Mr. Crystal: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy\\_Crystal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Crystal) and discuss why Jamie would look up to him specifically as a comedian.

##### Language Arts:

- Create a three minute comedy routine based on the comics mentioned in the novel. With your parent's help, see if you can find their acts on YouTube.
- Cool girl tells Jamie, "You use jokes to hide your true feelings." Find quotes in the story that support this statement and show how very different the book would have been if Jamie had actually blurted out the truth.

##### Health:

- Is laughter really good for you? Read this article and find out how this simple act can change the way you feel: <http://www.webmd.com/balance/features/give-your-body-boost-with-laughter>

#### Discussion questions:

- Why do you think Jamie uses his friends, family, and his enemies in his stand-up routine? How do they react?
- Were you surprised by the secrets that Jamie reveals towards the end of the story?
- Which of the three P's is more important to you: Practice, prepare or perform? Why?

#### If you loved this, you'll like:

The rest of the Middle School series by James Patterson and friends.

Cotler, Steve. *Cheesie Mack Is Not a Genius or Anything*. Random, 2011. (series)

Gutman, Dan. *The Genius Files: Mission Unstoppable*. HarperCollins, 2011. (series)

Korman, Gordon. *Schooled*. Hyperion, 2007.  
Rylander, Chris. *The Fourth Stall*. Walden Pond Press, 2011. (series)  
Yee, Lisa. *Warp Speed*. Arthur A. Levine, 2011.

Author websites:

James Patterson - <http://www.readkiddoread.com/>

Chris Grabenstein - <http://www.chrisgrabenstein.com/>

James Patterson's I Funny You Funny Kids Contest on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1181OLYztGM&list=SPa0yXibgg6MIupSF0JXIblg0IXQz1oiF&index=5>

Joke websites:

<http://kids.yahoo.com/jokes>

<http://jokesbykids.com>

[http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/jokes/jokes\\_galore.htm](http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/jokes/jokes_galore.htm)

<http://bconnex.net/~kidworld/weekjoke.com>

**Sara Pennypacker**  
**SUMMER OF THE GYPSY MOTHS**

Balzer & Bray, 2012. ISBN 978-0-0619-6420-6. \$15.99. 275 pages.



Stella is a girl who likes things done in an orderly manner and who always looks for the best in people. Life has dealt her a pretty bad hand, yet she still manages to approach everything from a positive perspective. Hoping to spend a lovely summer at her Great aunt Louise's beach house on Cape Cod while her mother sorts herself out, Stella has no idea just how different her summer will end up being. Enter Louise's new foster child, Angel, a troubled young girl who could not be more opposite to Stella. Almost immediately after being thrust together, these young girls must unite to cope with an unexpected tragedy. The skies over the Cape turn suddenly gray.

**Curriculum connections:**

Art/Language Arts

- *Summer of the Gypsy Moths* has one of those covers that might have you assuming that the story is very different than the picture implies. Forgetting that you have read the book, and looking only at the cover, write or tell what you think this book might be about.
  - Show students the covers of other books (with titles covered up) and have them guess first the title and then what the story is about.
  - Read them the real summaries of these books after they have guessed.

Language Arts

- Stella is obsessed with keeping her house in order using "Hints from Heloise." Write up your own favorite Heloise-type hints on cards. Ask friends and family what tips they recommend.

Science/Language Arts

- Study gypsy moths in depth. Explain, from a scientific perspective, why you think the author used gypsy moths in her story. Explain, from a literary perspective, the symbolism of the gypsy moths.

**Discussion questions**

- Is *Summer of the Gypsy Moths* realistic?
- Are you more like Stella or Angel? Name their good and bad traits.
- Have you ever had to keep a big secret? Did you eventually tell someone? How did keeping the secret make you feel? Do you think you could have kept the girls' secret?
- What did you think would happen at the end of the novel? Did it turn out as you had expected? Did you like the ending?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Gennari, Jennifer. *My Mixed-Up Berry Blue Summer*. Houghton Mifflin, 2012.

Horvath, Polly. *One Year in Cold Harbor*. Schwartz & Wade, 2012.

Lord, Cynthia. *Touch Blue*. Scholastic Press, 2010.

O'Connor, Sheila. *Keeping Safe the Stars*, Putnam, 2012.

Author website: <http://www.sarapennypacker.com/>

Book's website: <http://www.harpercollinschildrens.com/books/Summer-Gypsy-Moths-Sara>

## Margi Preus

### SHADOW ON THE MOUNTAIN

Amulet, 2012. ISBN 978-1-4197-0424-6. \$16.95. 290 pages.



The Nazis have invaded Norway and people are forced to take sides; you are either for the Resistance or for the Norwegian Nazi party. Fourteen-year-old Espen soon makes his allegiance to the Resistance and his help is needed immediately and often. His responsibilities are quickly increased and so is the danger. Not all of Espen's friends make the same choice and loyalties are severely tested. Under these circumstances, a boy soon becomes a man and as Espen grows into his new role, he is forced to make adult decisions that will change his life forever.

#### Curriculum connections:

##### History:

- *Shadow on the Mountain* is based on the real-life experiences of Norwegian Erling Storrusten during World War II. While there is some information at the end of the novel, do further research into his life.
- Research the Nazi invasion. What other countries faced invasions similar to Norway's?
- The Resistance was strong in many countries during the Second World War. Discuss the Resistance movement in these countries.

##### Language Arts:

- Folklore/Norse Mythology: What is the story of Odin, the Norse God? Look further into this legend and explain how he fits into *Shadow on the Mountain*.

#### Discussion questions:

- Do you think Espen made the right choice by joining the Resistance?
- There are many complicated relationships in *Shadow on the Mountain*.

Discuss the relationship between these characters:

- Espen and Ingrid
- Espen and Kjell
- Espen and Solveig
- Aksell and the members of the soccer team

What other relationships do you think are important?

- Were you worried about Ingrid and her diary? What do you think about the way she deceived the officers?
- Why did Espen have to give up his scouting uniform? Why do you think the Nazis prohibited scouting activities?

#### If you loved this, you'll like:

Hartnett, Sonya. *The Midnight Zoo*. Candlewick, 2011.

Lowry, Lois. *Number the Stars*. Houghton Mifflin, 1989.

Morpurgo, Michael. *An Elephant in the Garden*. Feiwel & Friends, 2011.

Van Steenwyk, Elizabeth. *A Traitor Among Us*. Eerdmans, 1998.

Author website: [http://www.margipreus.com/margipreus.com/Margi\\_Preus\\_-\\_Books.html](http://www.margipreus.com/margipreus.com/Margi_Preus_-_Books.html)

*Shadow on the Mountain* Reader's Guide:

[http://www.abramsbooks.com/shadowonthemountain/ShadowOnTheMountain\\_ReadersGuide.pdf](http://www.abramsbooks.com/shadowonthemountain/ShadowOnTheMountain_ReadersGuide.pdf)

“Norway: War / Resistance /Peace”. Stories about other young Norwegians during WWII.

[www.wiinorge.com](http://www.wiinorge.com)

**Bobbie Pyron**  
**DOGS OF WINTER**

Arthur A Levine, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-545-39930-2. \$16.99. 320 pages.



In 1990s Russia when Ivan's mother disappears, her abusive boyfriend tries to take the five-year-old to an orphanage in Moscow, but Ivan escapes to the streets. There he first joins up with a group of homeless children, but then chooses to live with a pack of dogs who treat him better. The dogs become Ivan's family, and together they survive in the forest in the summer and on the subway in the winter.

**Curriculum connections:**

At the back of the book, Pyron lists many resources on feral children, on Ivan Mishukov on whom this book is based and on homelessness in Russia. Students can use these as a starting point for research on many related subjects.

**History/ Social Studies:**

- Research the breakup of the Soviet Union and the causes of the great number of homeless children in the 1990s. What is the current status of homeless children in Russia now? Research other aspects of Moscow-how does it resemble a big city in the US? How does it differ?

**Social Studies:**

- Research homelessness in the US and in Vermont. What are people doing to help the homeless? What else could be done?
- There are many other tales of feral children (children raised by animals or away from human contact). Some of the tales are hoaxes. What ones do you think are real? Why?

**Discussion questions:**

- Ivan holds onto certain things: his mother's button, his fairytales and his tooth. What do they mean to him?
- Do you think you could have survived if you were in Ivan's situation? What would you have done?
- Why do so few people come to the aid of these children?
- Was Ivan better off with the dogs or with the other kids living on the streets?
- Did this story change the way you feel about homeless people?
- What do you think will happen to Ivan?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Eckert, Allan W. *Incident at Hawk's Hill*. Little, Brown 1998.

Kadohata, Cynthia. *A Million Shades of Gray*. Atheneum, 2010.

Losure, Mary. *Wild Boy: The Real Life of the Savage of Aveyron*. Candlewick, 2013.

Morgan, Clay. *The Boy Who Spoke Dog*. Dutton, 2003.

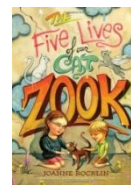
Pyron, Bobbie. *A Dog's Way Home*. Katherine Tegen, 2011.

Author website: <http://www.bobbiepyron.com/>

**Joanne Rocklin**

**THE FIVE LIVES OF OUR CAT ZOOK**

Amulet, 2011. ISBN 978-1-4197-0192-4. \$16.95. 240 pages.



Ten-year-old Oona and her younger brother Fred are still healing from the death of their father two years earlier. Now their beloved cat Zook is sick, the cat that Oona found in their backyard alley one day asleep among the geraniums. What Oona never told anyone is that Zook really wasn't a stray – he had a tag on his collar that she removed so no one would know where he came from. Oona is a storyteller, a “noticer,” and the self-assigned caretaker of her little brother's emotional health. She tells Fred not to worry about Zook – all cats have nine lives and Zook is only on life number five. She tells him wonderfully imaginative stories about Zook's other past lives. But what will she tell him if Zook doesn't get better? What whopper will she tell herself?

**Curriculum connections:**

Language Arts/History:

- Oona uses rebuses to help teach Fred to read. What is a rebus and when were they first used? Research the history of rebuses and then make your own.

Websites:

<http://grammar.yourdictionary.com/games-puzzles-and-worksheets/kids-rebuspuzzle.html>

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/493346/rebus>

Multicultural Studies:

- Oona attends a celebration for her friend Riya's baby brother called an *annaprasan* (pg 51-52). Learn more about this celebration or choose a different country and research a celebration or holiday and the foods that are prepared during it.

Websites:

<http://www.foodbycountry.com/>

<http://www.iloveindia.com/indian-traditions/annaprashan.html>

**Discussion questions:**

- This book deals with themes of loss and change. What does Zook symbolize for Oona and her family? What connection does Zook have with Oona's father and his death?
- Think about the most recent whopper you told. Was it blue, red, black, or yellow? (refer to pages 20-21)
- Oona has many theories about life, like her Wishing Theory (p.58), her Hope-of-the-World Theory (p.61), and her Common-Letter-of-the-Alphabet Theory (p. 155). What is a theory? Do you have any theories about life?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Creech, Sharon. *Hate That Cat*. HarperCollins, 2008.

Creech, Sharon. *Love That Dog*. HarperCollins, 2001.

Deedy, Carmen Agra. *The Cheshire Cheese Cat*. Peachtree, 2011.

Morpurgo, Michael. *Kaspar the Titanic Cat*. HarperCollins, 2012.

Rocklin, Joanne. *One Day and One Amazing Morning on Orange Street*. Amulet, 2011.

Books by Polly Horvath and Susan Patron (quirky characters).



Author website: [www.joannerocklin.com](http://www.joannerocklin.com)/ Includes a teaching guide, book trailer, author interview and more.

## Caroline Starr Rose

### MAY B.

Schwartz & Wade, 2012. ISBN 978-1-5824-6393-3. \$15.99. 240 pages.



When the wheat crop fails, May B. is pulled from school and sent to work on a neighbor's homestead. It is only for a few months and her family needs the extra money her work will provide. Life on the Kansas prairie in the 1800's is hard. People live in sodhouses, burn buffalo "chips" for fuel, have no running water or electricity, and travel by horse and wagon.

It takes hours to get to the Oplingers'. When May arrives, she quickly learns that the farmer's new wife is miserable. May does chores and tries to cheer her up but nothing works. One afternoon, Mrs. Oplinger saddles up the horse and leaves. Soon her husband goes after her. As days go by, May realizes they are not coming back. Winter is coming, food is scarce, and her family is miles away.

Can a twelve-year-old girl figure out a way to survive alone on the prairie? Will she find the courage not to give up? And will she figure out a way to decipher the words in the one book she brought with her? If she ever wants a better life for herself, she knows that she must teach herself to read.

#### Curriculum connections:

##### Language Arts:

- This book is written in free verse. Using the list of items in your brainstorming session (above), have your students pick an item and write a free verse poem or short story about that item.

##### History:

- Sodhouses: Measure off a 16' x 20' rectangle in your classroom. Have your students sit inside it. Imagine a family of four living in this space. See author's guide (below) for more details. Or go to this website to learn more about life on the prairie: [www.frontiertravel.com/kansas/the-kansas-soddy/](http://www.frontiertravel.com/kansas/the-kansas-soddy/).

#### Discussion questions:

- May is angry that she is sent away from home to work while her brother is not. How were girls treated differently from boys in the 1800s? Have times changed?
- When did you realize that May could not read? How did the author let the reader know of May's struggles?
- With all of our modern-day conveniences, it is hard to imagine what life was like for May. Brainstorm all of the conveniences we have today that May did not have. If you had to give up one, what would it be? What could you absolutely not live without?

#### If you loved this, you'll like:

Figley, Marty Rhodes. *The Schoolchildren's Blizzard*. Carolrhoda, 2004.

Greenwood, Barbara. *A Pioneer Sampler: The Daily Life of a Pioneer Family*.

Hesse, Karen. *Out of the Dust*. Scholastic Press, 1997.

Warren, Andrea. *Pioneer Girl: A True Story of Growing up on the Prairie*. Bison Books, 2009.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls. *Little House on the Prairie*. HarperCollins, 1953.

Author website: [www.carolinestarrrose.com](http://www.carolinestarrrose.com) has an extensive teacher's guide with many curriculum ideas, including studying flora and fauna of the prairie, history of pioneering, and more.

## Rebecca Rupp

### AFTER ELI

Candlewick, 2012. ISBN 978-0-7636-5810-6. \$15.99. 256 pages.



After his brother Eli is killed during the war, Daniel struggles to accept his death. Everyone keeps calling Eli a hero, but Danny is angry. He can't stop thinking it's Eli's own fault for joining the military and going to war. As a way of dealing with his pain and grief, Danny starts a Book of the Dead, where he records notable people and the ways in which they died.

Life becomes a little brighter when Danny meets the beautiful Isabelle and befriends the nerdy yet loyal Walter. His friends help in his coping process and as Danny becomes more in touch with his emotions, he and his family can start to look forward.

#### Curriculum connections:

##### Social Studies:

- Research a person from Danny's Book of the Dead.

##### Language Arts:

- Danny asks his friends to remember the best days of their lives. Write about a day you would relive if you could.
- Isabelle asks, “Which do you think you'd be, if you were an element? Water, fire, earth, or air (p. 173)?” Write about which element you would be.

#### Discussion questions:

- Why do you think Danny's father continually compares Danny to Eli? What effect does this have on Danny?
- Why does Peter bully Walter? Why do you think he treats others so poorly?
- Danny's dad doesn't think it's healthy for Danny to keep a Book of the Dead. What do you think?
- Emma's “special book” (a book that has had an impact on her life) is *The Secret Garden*. Do you have a special book? If so, what is it?
- If you were Danny, would you be angry at your brother for going to war?
- Was Eli's death heroic or accidental?

#### If you loved this, you'll like:

Collier, James Lincoln. *My Brother Sam Is Dead*. S & S, 1984.

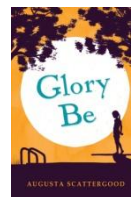
Schmidt, Gary D. *Okay for Now*. Clarion, 2011.

Sonnenblick, Jordan. *Drums, Girls, and Dangerous Pie*. Scholastic Press, 2005.

Author website is Coming Soon! <http://www.rebeccarupp.com/>

## Augusta Scattergood GLORY BE

Scholastic Press, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-545-33180-7. \$16.99. 208 pages.



Gloriana Hemphill, age eleven, has enjoyed spending her Fourth of July birthday at the community pool in her small town of Hanging Moss, Mississippi for as long as she can remember. In the summer of 1964, Glory's world changes in many ways: there are rumors of the pool closing, "freedom people" from the North have come bringing unwanted consequences, and her relationships with her older sister Jessalyn and best friend Frankie change for the worse. Glory is blessed with a patient widowed father, a wise African-American housekeeper, and an open-minded librarian; all three help to guide her through this tumultuous summer of change. Filled with nostalgic cultural references, *Glory Be* provides an intimate look at America's struggle for civil rights as seen through the eyes of one spunky girl.

### Curriculum connections:

#### Social Studies:

- A complete unit of lessons on the Civil Rights Movement designed for grades 3-5 from PBS Teachers can be found here:  
<http://www.pbs.org/teachers/connect/resources/1017/preview/>
- Discuss what segregation looked like in parts of the south. Discuss "Separate but Equal" laws based upon Plessy v. Ferguson. Use primary sources from the Library of Congress's American Memories collection to show photographs of the time period  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/may18.html>

#### Music:

- Listen to Elvis's songs while looking at what his home in Tupelo, MS, looks like today with a virtual tour:  
<http://www.quantumtour.com/entity/elvis/tour/tupeloelvis/scene/home/#viewer>

#### Physical Education:

- Play kick the can like Glory and her friends. Learn how at:  
<http://familyfun.go.com/playtime/kick-the-can-708085/>

### Discussion questions:

- Glory and her older sister were friends, but find themselves drifting apart. Why do you think this is happening?
- Why do you think Glory ignores Emma's advice to try not to worry about things she cannot fix?
- Glory's choice to befriend Laura is not popular with other kids in town. Have you ever made an unpopular choice because you knew it was right? How did it feel?
- Emma also tells Glory that if she keeps her mouth closed, she cannot cause trouble. Is this a good motto to live by? Why or why not?
- Glory's father says that she is as opinionated as her mother. In what ways are you like your family members?

### If you loved this, you'll like:

Curtis, Christopher Paul. *The Watsons go to Birmingham--1963*. Delacorte, 1995.

Levine, Kristin. *The Lions of Little Rock*. Putnam, 2012.  
Lynch, Chris. *Gold Dust*. HarperCollins, 2000.  
Martin, Ann M. *Belle Teal*. Scholastic Press, 2001.  
McMullen, Margaret. *Sources of Light*. Houghton Mifflin, 2010.  
Taylor, Mildred D. *The Friendship*. Dial, 1987.  
Williams-Garcia, Rita. *One Crazy Summer*. Amistad, 2010.  
Woodson, Jacqueline. *Feathers*. Putnam, 2007.  
Wright, Barbara. *Crow*. Random, 2012.

Author website: <http://www.ascattergood.com/index.html>

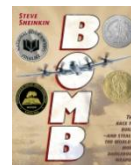
Scott Simon interview with author on NPR: <http://www.npr.org/2012/01/07/144829261/glory-be-a-tale-of-the-south-for-young-adults>

Scattergood's blog: <http://www.ascattergood.blogspot.com/>

**Steve Sheinkin**

**BOMB: THE RACE TO BUILD - AND STEAL - THE  
WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS WEAPON**

Neal Porter, 2012. ISBN 978-1-59643-487-5. \$19.99. 272 pages.



During World War II there was a quiet race happening across the world. Scientists in several countries were all working towards developing the world's most dangerous weapon, the atomic bomb, using new discoveries in the field of physics. No one wanted to lose this race. The United States government employed all the best scientists and engineers and sequestered them in Los Alamos, New Mexico. Across the Atlantic, Russia was also working tirelessly on the bomb. However, Russia also had a spy network embedded in the United States including Los Alamos; top-secret meetings were held and classified information was shared. Ultimately, the United States won the race and dropped the bomb, but it was a close race with many factors working against them.

Sheinkin expertly tells the fascinating creation story of the atomic bomb. He makes the science of fission and fusion not only understandable but also interesting. Sheinkin also skillfully details the actions of various citizens working for the KGB without any bias. Readers will finish this book with an understanding of the complex circumstances that surrounded the development of the atomic bomb. *Bomb* is a riveting read from beginning to end.

**Curriculum connections:**

Language Arts:

- Read *Shadow on the Mountain* by Margi Preus and compare the two pieces, both of which address World War II.

Science:

- Select a science topic from the book to investigate (the basics of fission and fusion, effects of exposure to radiation, etc). Compare your findings with the information provided in the text and present what you learned.

Social Studies:

- Select one of the historical figures mentioned in the book. Conduct further research about that person's role in World War II.
- Investigate the effects of the use of the atomic bomb in World War II. How did it impact the outcome of the war? How did it impact Japan and its citizens? Are there impacts still felt today?
- Conduct background research on which countries have access to nuclear weapons today. Debate whether any country should have access to this type of weapon.

**Discussion questions:**

- There are many interesting characters in this story. Were you drawn to anyone in particular? What made you interested in them and their part in the story? How does the author incorporate so many threads into this book?
- Discuss the relationship between the United States and Russia during World War II. We were allies but at the same time competing with each other in the race to build the bomb.

- Do you think the scientists should have created the bomb? Why did they? How were different people motivated?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Davies, Jacqueline. *Where the Ground Meets the Sky*. Marshall Cavendish, 2002.

Klages, Ellen. *The Green Glass Sea*. Viking, 2006.

Nelson, Peter. *Left for Dead : A Young Man's Search for Justice for the USS Indianapolis*. Delacorte, 2002.

Zindel, Paul. *The Gadget*. HarperCollins, 2001.

Author website: <http://www.stevesheinkin.com/index.html>

Teacher's Guide from Publisher:

<http://media.us.macmillan.com/teachersguides/9781596434875TG.pdf>



## Rebecca Stead **LIAR AND SPY**

Wendy Lamb, 2012. ISBN 978-0-3857-3743-2. \$15.99. 192 pages.



When his father loses his job, Georges and his family move out of their house and into a small apartment in Brooklyn. Georges has always struggled to find friends and is often bullied at school, but he makes a quick friend in his new neighbor Safer, a home schooled boy about his age. Safer welcomes Georges into his spy club and teaches him how to spy on their mysterious neighbor, Mr. X, who Safer insists is hiding a dangerous secret. After some stressful spy work, Georges learns that Safer has invented Mr. X and he grows very angry at his friend. In the midst all his friendship drama, we learn that Georges's mother is sick and is being treated at the hospital. *Liar and Spy* is an engaging, surprising, and touching book about family and friendship. Beautifully written, it addresses issues that resonate with people, both young and old: bullying, self-acceptance, friendship difficulties, and problems at home.

### **Curriculum connections:**

Art/Art History:

- Georges is named after the artist Georges Seurat who used pointillism to create his art. Paint a picture using pointillism.
- Research Georges Seurat.

Science:

- Explore the science of tasting. (Experiments may include actual taste testing!)

Creative Writing:

- Imagine what happens after the end of the book and write a new chapter.

### **Discussion questions:**

- Were you surprised by the twist?
- Should kids who are bullied tell their parents?
- Why did Georges put off visiting his mother in the hospital?
- What are the benefits and disadvantages of homeschooling?
- How does Georges change throughout the book?

### **If you loved this, you'll like:**

Potter, Ellen. *The Humming Room*. Feiwel & Friends, 2012.

Raskin, Ellen. *The Westing Game*. Dutton, 2003.

Standiford, Natalie. *The Secret Tree*. Scholastic Press, 2012.

Stead, Rebecca. *When You Reach Me*. Wendy Lamb, 2009.

Author website: <http://www.rebeccasteadbooks.com/>

Teachers' Resource Kit:

[http://textpublishing.com.au/static/files/assets/71c21334/LiarandSpy\\_TeachersResource.pdf](http://textpublishing.com.au/static/files/assets/71c21334/LiarandSpy_TeachersResource.pdf)

**Phoebe Stone**  
**THE BOY ON CINNAMON STREET**

Arthur A. Levine, 2012. ISBN 978-0-5452-1512-1. \$16.99. 240 pages.



Seventh grader Louise Terrace used to be a star gymnast. She used to have lots of friends and a mom and dad. She used to be a Cinnamon Street girl. Now, Louise lives on the other side of town with her grandparents, a quirky pair who love the Beatles and are always acting like ridiculous lovebirds. She sells her balance beam, quits the gymnastics team and changes her name to Thumbelina.

When Louise finds a love letter after ordering a pizza during a snowstorm, she enlists the help of a couple of new friends, Reni and her brother Henderson, to help to uncover the identity of her secret admirer. Is it Benny McCartney, the cute pizza delivery boy who sends Louise's stomach into flips? Or could those butterflies be a sign of a different connection, tied to the family tragedy that Louise won't let herself remember? As Louise's secret admirer slowly helps her frozen heart to melt, Louise has to face the pain that she has kept hidden for so long.

**Curriculum connections:**

Language Arts/Creative Arts:

- Louise is quite concerned by the slow pace of her physical growth. Make a character growth chart to show how Louise's character changes over the course of the story. Describe her perspective and feelings at key points in the story. How would you describe her transformation? How does her inner growth compare with her physical growth?
- Write about a time when it was difficult to express your feelings. First, write in the present tense and in the first person. Then, write about the same event using a different tense and perspective. How do the stories compare and contrast?
- At the end of the story, Louise finds a digital camera that shows a series of picture clues that bring her to her secret admirer. Create a treasure map or scavenger hunt using digital photographs.

Social Studies:

- It is not uncommon for people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to experience memory loss, avoid places and people who remind them of the trauma, and deaden their emotions to protect themselves from emotional pain. Research this disorder and the types of treatment available to kids who have suffered traumatic experiences.
- Draw a map of the fictional towns of North and South Pottsboro, Massachusetts. Include the two middle schools, 14 Cinnamon Street, Benny's house, the Elliots', Louise's grandparents' condo, Pottsboro Pumpkin Mall, the Pottsboro Public Library, and other landmarks from the book. Draw the route of the Tourist Trolley and Henderson's bike route between the schools. Compare your map with the maps that other kids have drawn.
- Louise's grandparents are big fans of the Beatles. Research the band and the cultural phenomenon of the British musical invasion of the 1960's. Create a playlist of some of Louise's grandparents favorite songs using [www.playlist.com](http://www.playlist.com).

**Discussion questions:**

- Louise has decided to change her name to Thumbelina. Henderson says: "Everybody has a story, a fairytale in their heart that they adhere to." What is Henderson's story? Reni's? What about Louise's grandparents? Can you think of a fairy tale that connects to your life?
- It takes a long time for Louise's suppressed memories to resurface. How does Phoebe Stone show the reader that Louise is leaving out an important event in her life? What clues does she give about what has happened?
- *The Boy on Cinnamon Street* is written in the first person and in the present tense. Can you think of other books written in this style? Why do you think Phoebe Stone chose to write this story in that way?
- Louise sees Mrs. Elliot as a perfect mother. What qualities does she appreciate in her? Are there issues in the Elliot family that Louise does not recognize?
- The book does not provide a tidy resolution to the conflict between Louise and her dad. Are there other questions left unanswered at the end of the book? Why do you think Phoebe Stone does not tie up these loose ends?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Balliett, Blue. *Hold Fast*. Scholastic Press, 2013  
Lafleur, Suzanne M. *Love, Aubrey*. Wendy Lamb, 2009.  
Paratore, Coleen Murtagh. *Dreamsleeves*. Scholastic Press, 2012.  
Park, Barbara. *Mick Harte Was Here*. Knopf, 1995.

Author website: [www.phoebestone.com](http://www.phoebestone.com)

**S.S. Taylor**

**THE EXPEDITIONERS AND THE TREASURE OF DROWNED MAN'S CANYON**

McSweeney's McMullens, 2012. ISBN 978-1-9380-7306-9. \$22.00. 375 pages.



When intrepid Explorer Alexander West dies under mysterious circumstances, he leaves behind his three children: brainy Kit, brave Zander, and the mechanically-minded M.K. Still grieving over their father's death, the three are surprised when a stranger with a clockwork hand gives Kit a book; this encounter prompts a sinister visit by agents from the Bureau of Newly Discovered Lands, the government in power. The children discover a code in the book that leads them to half of one of their father's maps and the three decide to follow the map to Azure Canyon in Arizona. They first go to NYC to see Mountmorris, the author of the book, and are surprised to learn of the lost treasure of gold in the canyon. Seeking answers to their questions, the three head to the Expedition Society, the home base for Explorers like their father. Snooping around the building, the three are helped by Sukey Neville who guides them to the Map Room where they find the second half of the map. Needing guidance, the three siblings head to Philadelphia to see Raleigh McAdam, their father's best friend from school. Raleigh outfits them with vests and leggings kitted out with cool gadgets and the three, again helped by the adventurous Sukey, are off to solve the mystery of Drowned Man's Canyon with agents in hot pursuit. This steampunk, dystopic adventure has it all: codes, gadgets, and a new way of looking at the world that will keep you guessing. Great fun!!

**Curriculum connections:**

History:

- Read the prologue and Chapter One of the Expeditioners at: <http://sstaylorbooks.com/ChapterOne> How is this America different from the one we live in?
- Read or listen to the series Engines of our Ingenuity Episode 889: The First Atlas about Ortelius and Mercator: <http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi889.htm>
- Look at the Cliff-Dwellers of Pueblo Colorado to compare how they lived with how Halla and her people lived in the fictitious canyons of Arizona: [http://www.nps.gov/meve/historyculture/cliff\\_dwelling\\_home.htm](http://www.nps.gov/meve/historyculture/cliff_dwelling_home.htm)

**Discussion questions:**

- What gear would you store in your Explorer's vest? Which vest gadget did you like the best and why?
- If you could trade places and be Kit, Zander, or M.K., who would you rather be?
- How will the West children do at the Academy of Exploratory Sciences?
- Sukey and Halla are both strong female characters. Compare and contrast the two of them.
- Why has the steampunk genre become so successful?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Bachmann, Stefan. *The Peculiar*. Greenwillow, 2012.

Hughes, Mark Peter. *A Crack in the Sky*. Delacorte, 2010.

Oppel, Kenneth. *Airborn*. HarperCollins, 2004. (trilogy)

Reeve, Philip. *Mortal Engines*. Scholastic Press, 2001. (The Hungry City Chronicles)

Slade, Arthur. *The Hunchback Assignments*. Wendy Lamb, 2009. (quartet)  
Stephens, John. *The Emerald Atlas*. Knopf, 2011.  
Westerfeld, Scott. *Leviathan*. SimonPulse, 2009. (series)

Author website: <http://sstaylorbooks.com/>

Web resources related to early maps: <http://www.maphistory.info/teachers.html>

## Sheila Turnage **THREE TIMES LUCKY**

Dial, 2012. ISBN 978-0-8037-3670-2. \$16.99. 256 pages.



Mo Lebeau was swept into the town of Tupelo Landing, North Carolina eleven years ago by the winds of a hurricane. The very same night marked the arrival of the Colonel, a mysterious stranger unable to remember his past, so it makes sense that the two stick together. Mo and the Colonel settle into life in quirky Tupelo Landing with the one-of-a-kind Miss Lana, but Mo never stops wondering about her origins and the "upstream mother" who lost her so many years before.

Now trouble is brewing in the shape of a corpse and a nosy detective from Winston Salem. When a local curmudgeon is found dead, Mo and her best friend Dale Earnhardt Johnson III decide to go into business as detectives, both to find the killer and to clear the names of Detective Joe Starr's top suspects - Dale and the Colonel. Meanwhile, Dale's father's drinking has taken a turn for the worse and another hurricane is bearing down on Tupelo Landing. Mo learns that sometimes it's not until the life you have is threatened that you truly appreciate how lucky you are.

### **Curriculum connections:**

#### Language Arts:

- Sheila Turnage gives her characters unique voices. Make a list of your favorite expressions or quotes from the book. Challenge your friends to match the turns of phrase to characters in the book.

#### Language Arts/Social Studies:

- Plan and host a live action murder mystery game. Create a list of characters from the book and decorate your library or classroom as the Tupelo Landing Cafe. Start off the event with a short skit and challenge participants to solve a mystery inspired by the book.

#### Language Arts/Art:

- Make your own message in a bottle. Give it to a friend or leave it for someone to find (don't include any personal information).

### **Discussion questions:**

- What is meant by the title? How has Mo been three times lucky?
- What advantages do Mo and Dale have over Detective Joe Starr in their murder investigation?
- Unlike Dale's family, Mo, the Colonel and Miss Lana are not related by blood. What makes them a family?
- How does Mo come to understand more about Dale's home situation? What does she do with this information? How does her reaction affect Dale? What would you do if you knew that a friend's parent was abusive?
- The characters in *Three Times Lucky* are not as racially diverse as the population of real-life eastern North Carolina. Do you think that this takes away from the realism of the book? Do authors have a responsibility to represent diverse characters in their books?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Bauer, Joan, *Hope Was Here*. Putnam, 2000.

Carmichael, Clay. *Wild Things*. Front Street, 2009.

Kelly, Jacqueline. *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*. Holt, 2009.

Law, Ingrid. *Savvy*. Dial, 2008.

O'Connor, Barbara. *Fame and Glory in Freedom, Georgia*. Frances Foster, 2003

Sachar, Louis. *Holes*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1998.

Author website: <http://www.sheilaturnage.com>

Teaching Books Meet-the-Author :

[http://www.teachingbooks.net/book\\_reading.cgi?id=8431&a=1](http://www.teachingbooks.net/book_reading.cgi?id=8431&a=1)

## Generic Questions that can be used for any book:

- Can you make any connections between this book and events in your own life? (text to self) What about connections between this book and other books you've read? (text to text) Can you make any connections between this book and experiences that people you know, or know about, have had? (text to world)
- What research do you think the author of this book had to do in order to write this story? (inferring)
- If this book were turned into a play and you could play any character in the story (without regard to gender) which character would you pick and why?
- Illustrate a scene from this book. (visualization)
- Having read the book, what connections can you make between the book jacket, the title and the story itself. (inferring)
- Design a new book jacket.
- While reading this book, did you make any predictions? What were they? Were they accurate? (inferring)
- **For non-fiction:** See your teacher/librarian, take a brief look at this book together and talk about how it is organized. (determining importance)
- What did you wonder about as you read this book? (questioning)