



D.C.F.

2014 - 2015

**BOOK REVIEWS
&
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

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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 2014-2015 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:

- Meg Allison
- Lauren Chabot
- Caitlin Corless
- Suzanne Loring
- Hannah Peacock
- Julie Pickett
- Mary Linney, Committee Chair
- Grace Greene, VTLIB liaison to DCF Committee

Holly Black DOLL BONES

Margaret K. McElderry, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-4169-6398-1. \$16.99. 256 pages.



Zach, Poppy and Alice have been friends forever. They love playing with their action figures and dolls, creating a magical world of adventure and heroism. Until, without warning, Zach's father throws out all his toys, declaring that he's too old for them. Zach is furious and upset and embarrassed. His only way of coping is to stop playing with Poppy and Alice altogether. He's too upset to tell them why. Poppy and Alice need to get him back, so one night they pay Zach a visit, and tell him about a series of mysterious occurrences. Poppy swears she is being haunted by a china doll, The Queen, who rules over their imaginary land. The doll has told Poppy that she is made from the ground-up bones of a murdered girl. They must return the doll to where the girl lived, and bury it. Otherwise the three children will be cursed for eternity....

Curriculum connections:

Language Arts:

- Have your students write a scary story. Or sit in a circle, start a story and have each person add on to it around the circle, making it scarier and scarier.
- Create fan fiction. Write your own different ending to the story.

Art/Dramatic Art:

- This book would make a great dramatic read-aloud and/or Reader's Theatre.
- Write your own script based on the character's imaginary play or make up your own imaginary world. Create a puppet show and act it out.

Discussion questions:

- Do you think Zach's father was wrong to throw out his toys? How did Zach's father change in the book? Did you feel differently about him in the end?
- Do you think Poppy was telling the truth the whole time? Do you believe her story about the doll? What do you think happened to the Queen?
- What do you think was the scariest part of the story? Would you have liked a different ending? How might the author have ended it differently?
- Who is your favorite character and why?

If you loved this, you may like:

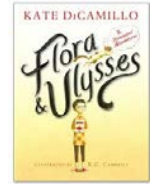
Gaiman, Neil. *Coraline*. Bloomsbury, 2002.

Gaiman, Neil. *The Graveyard Book*. HarperCollins, 2008.

Hahn, Mary Downing. *Wait Till Helen Comes*. Clarion, 1986.

Legrand, Claire. *The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls*. Simon & Schuster, 2012.

Author website: www.blackholly.com



Kate DiCamillo

FLORA AND ULYSSES: THE ILLUMINATED ADVENTURES

Candlewick, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-76366-040-6. \$17.99. 240 pages.

As Flora Belle Buckman sits in her room reading a comic book, disobeying the contract* she signed with her mother, she hears what sounds like a jet engine in her neighbor's yard. She looks out the window to see Mrs. Tickham's runaway vacuum sucking up a poor squirrel and rushes out to save the day. After giving mouth-to-mouth on lips that taste fuzzy, damp and slightly nutty, Flora manages to bring the little creature back to life. The encounter with the vacuum and his new human friend has left the squirrel feeling very grateful, happy and in possession of some new powers, including super-squirrel strength. Thus begins the friendship and adventures of Flora and Ulysses.

As the narration alternates between girl and squirrel, the two new friends, along with Tootie Tickham's blind nephew William Spiver, set out to deal with the crazy cast of adults who disrupt and enrich their lives. "Holy bagumba!"

*In this contract, Flora agrees "to turn her face away from the idiotic high jinks of comics and toward the bright light of true literature." Her mother wrote the contract. Her mother writes romance novels for a living.

Curriculum connections:

Language Arts – Poetry:

- Read the novel's "Squirrel Poetry"- "What It Said" (p.65) and from the epilogue, "Words for Flora" (p.233).
- Write your own squirrel poem from Ulysses to Flora.
- Write a poem in response, from Flora to Ulysses.

Art:

- Every time Ulysses does anything heroic, there is a comic strip of the action. Choose your favorite scenes from the book and draw your own comic strip version of them.

Creative writing:

- Peter Parker was turned into Spiderman from a radioactive spider bite, Bruce Banner became The Incredible Hulk after a gamma radiation explosion and now Ulysses has been turned into a superhero squirrel after being vacuumed up by the Ulysses 2000X. Write your own transformation to superhero story – what happens to your regular human or animal character to give them their superpowers?

Discussion questions:

- Why do you think Flora's mother makes her sign "the contract"?
- Do you think that a vacuum cleaner is a good present for a husband to give a wife for her birthday? Do you think Mrs. Tickham has every right to be unimpressed at this gift?
- Why does Flora feel as if her mother loves Mary Ann the lamp more than she loves her?
- Why did Flora's parents break up? Why do they get back together?
- *Flora and Ulysses* has many quirky characters. Who are your favorites? Least favorite?
- Are Flora and William Spiver good friends to one another? Why or why not? What makes a good friend?

If you loved this, you may like:

DiCamillo, Kate. *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*. Candlewick, 2006.

DiCamillo, Kate. *The Tale of Despereaux: Being the Story of a Mouse, a Princess, Some Soup, and a Spool of Thread*. Candlewick, 2003.

Fitzhugh, Louise. *Harriet the Spy*. Harper & Row, 1964.

Horvath, Polly. *Mr. and Mrs. Bunny—Detectives Extraordinaire!* (series). Schwartz & Wade, 2012.

Rocklin, Joanne. *The Five Lives of Our Cat Zook*. Harry N. Abrams, 2012.

White, E.B. *Charlotte's Web*. Harper & Brothers, 1952.

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

Interview with the author: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQymCUPGI0Q>

Flora & Ulysses Resources: <http://www.floraandulysses.com>

Official Book Trailer from Candlewick: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6cdkkJvgaA>

Ms. DiCamillo's inspiration for the opening scene of the book:

White, E.B. "Death of a Pig". *The Atlantic*: January 1948. Vol. 181, No. 1, pp. 28–33.

Available online at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/ideastour/animals/white-full.html>

Tim Federle
BETTER NATE THAN EVER

Simon & Schuster, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-4424-4689-2. \$16.99. 275 pages.



Nate, an eighth grader, has spent his whole life in small town Pennsylvania dreaming about being on Broadway. He and his best friend Libby know all of the songs to all of the musicals ever written, and even talk in a sort of musical show shorthand. When they find out that there are going to be auditions for the musical version of E. T., they concoct a secret plan for Nate to go to NYC by himself to try out for the part of Elliott.

Curriculum connections:

Geography:

- Nate has a very quick introduction to New York City in his brief visit to the big city. Find references to actual places and make a map of Nate's journey using Google earth.

History:

- Research the history of Broadway. How did it become THE theater district in the USA?

Music/Theater:

- Collaborate with the school's drama and music teachers, and have the class put on a scene from one of the shows mentioned in the book. Even better, have the whole school put on an entire musical.
- Listen to show tunes from some of the shows mentioned and discuss why you do or do not like them.

Discussion questions:

- Nate and Libby have their own way of communicating by referring to Broadway shows and song lyrics. Do you have a secret or shared language that you and your friends or family use to communicate? Explain your answer.
- At home Nate is taunted and assumed to be gay. How does he handle the situation? Do you think he handles it well? Why or why not?
- How does Aunt Heidi fit into this story and into Nate's life?
- Was Nate's decision to go to New York by himself a good one? Why do you think that?
- The ending of the book is a bit ambiguous. What do you think is going to happen? If the students have read the sequel, *Five, Six, Seven, Nate!* then they know what the answer is, so have them compare what they expected to happen with what really did happen.
- This book is told in the present tense. What does that do for the story? Why do you think Federle chose to write it that way?

If you loved this, you may like:

Patterson, James. *I Funny*. Little, Brown, 2012.

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

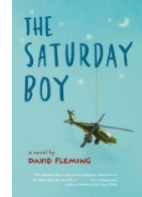
Telgemeier, Raina. *Drama*. Graphix, 2012.

Stephanie Tolan, Stephanie. *Surviving the Applewhites*. HarperCollins, 2002.

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

David Fleming **THE SATURDAY BOY**

Viking Juvenile, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-6707-8551-3. \$16.99. 240 pages.



Eleven-year-old Derek lives with his mother while his father is in Afghanistan, where he has been off and on for most of Derek's life. Derek misses his father and they write back and forth - 91 letters are exchanged. Derek struggles at school with his peers and often gets into trouble as a result of his inability to deal with his emotions and frequent taunts from his peers. He also struggles with the fact that one close friend is cruel to him at school but nice to him in private when no one else is looking. He is told to be the "bigger person" as his mother is somewhat blind to the bullying her son receives at school. Derek muddles through and learns that sometimes life is hard and you just have to do your best to navigate through it.

Curriculum connections:

Language Arts:

- Derek loved comic books and drawing. Write a story in graphic novel form using pictures instead of words to get your point across. Check out the Center for Cartoon Studies, www.cartoonstudies.org, for different workshops and ideas that you can use in your classroom. New Hampshire comic Marek Bennett is also available for classroom visits: www.marekbennett.com.
- Derek's father was in the military. Start a penpal campaign between soldiers and your students. Or, using Epals, www.epals.com, Email Exchange program set up an email penpal program between your students and another classroom from anywhere in the world.
- Have your students write letters. Pretend that a family member or friend has been gone for a long time or has moved away. Have them write a letter telling them what is going on in their lives.

Social Studies:

- Study the war in Afghanistan. Why did it start? What has changed in the country since the war started?

Genealogy:

- Do/did any of your students have members of the military in their families? Have them research their family histories.

Geography:

- Locate Afghanistan on a map. Talk about the differences in the landscape between it and Vermont. What are the differences between children your age here and there?

Discussion questions:

- Do you like Derek? Why or why not?
- Budgie and Derek used to be friends, but now they fight unless they are hanging out alone together. What do you think happened to this friendship?
- Do you know anyone with a parent away from home in the Army, Navy, or Marines? Does *The Saturday Boy* help you understand how that might feel?
- Do you think that Derek and his mother had a good relationship? Why or why not?

If you loved this, you may like:

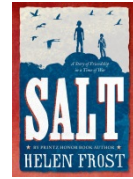
- Goldblatt, Mark. *Twerp*. Random House, 2013. (on this year's DCF list)
- Kinney, Jeff. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid Series*. Harry N. Abrams.
- Schmidt, Gary. *Wednesday Wars*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009.

Author website: www.davidflemingink.com

Helen Frost

SALT: A STORY OF FRIENDSHIP IN A TIME OF WAR

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-3743-6387-1. \$17.99. 160 pages.



It is 1812, and James and Anikwa are two good friends who share much in common: They are both twelve, they enjoy nature, and they live near one another in the Indiana Territory. They are an unlikely duo, however, in that they come from two very different cultures and speak different languages. Anikwa and his family are part of the Native American Miami tribe and have lived on the land for generations in the village of Kekionga. James and his family are recent settlers who run a trading post right outside of Fort Wayne. Despite tensions between their communities, the boys happily spend their days together playing outdoors and exploring.

As the British army and the American army approach the Fort to fight in the War of 1812, tensions between the Miami tribe and the settlers escalate. American soldiers tell James's father to stop selling provisions to the Native Americans, and he refuses to sell salt to Anikwa's family. Due to this tension and some unfortunate miscommunication, Anikwa and James begin to question their friendship. Eventually, the boys recover their friendship and the families come together again, but the story ends with the sad reality that their cultures will never peacefully coexist, that changes are happening, and that American settlers will take over the Natives' land. Told in alternating chapters from the perspectives of Anikwa and James, *Salt* is a powerful story told in free verse.

Curriculum connections:

Language Arts:

- Have students keep a journal in which they step into the shoes of a Miami boy or girl. Have them describe their daily life.
- Fast-forward ten years and have students imagine what James and Anikwa's lives look like.
- Encourage students to try writing a short story in verse. How is writing in verse different from writing in prose?

Social Studies:

- Separate students into groups and assign each group one of the following topics to research about the Miami tribe: shelter, dress and attire, food, men's roles in the tribe, and women's roles in the tribe.
- Every argument has two sides. Have students research why American settlers felt entitled to the land and discuss as a class.

Discussion questions:

- Why does salt play such an important role in *Salt*? What is the significance?
- Do you think James's father had the right to deny Old Raccoon salt? Why or why not?
- In what ways are James and Anikwa similar? How are they different?
- Do you think that James and Anikwa can continue to be friends? Why or why not?
- At the end of the book, James whispers to his mother, "They hardly have any food. Why are they feeding us?" She answers, "You should know by now. This is who they are." What does she mean by this?
- Why do you think Helen Frost told the story from two perspectives?

If you loved this, you may like:

Burg, Ann E. *Serafina's Promise*. Scholastic Press, 2013.

Hesse, Karen. *Witness*. Scholastic, 2003.

Park, Linda Sue. *A Long Walk to Water*. HMH Books, 2011.

Author website: <http://helenfrost.net/>

Myaami Language Dictionary: <http://myaamiadictionary.org>

Aacimotaatiiyankwi: A Miami Community History and Ecology Blog:
<http://myaamiahistory.wordpress.com>

War of 1812 Lesson Plans: <http://www.pbs.org/wned/war-of-1812/classroom/>

Adina Rische Gewirtz
ZEBRA FOREST

Candlewick, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-7636-6041-3. \$15.99. 200 pages.



From a reviewer on Goodreads: “This is a terrific book to read if you enjoy mysteries, escaped convicts, and insane grandmothers.”

Ever since she was small, Annie's had three wishes:

1. Get tall
2. Have an adventure
3. Meet her father.

She knows none of them will come true. Especially not the last. After all, her father's dead – killed by an angry man, a fact that Gran has told her and her brother Rew for as long as she could remember. But then there is a breakout at the prison behind their house and an escaped convict not only keeps them hostage in their own home, but reveals family secrets that change everything Annie and Rew thought they knew.

Curriculum connections:

Language Arts:

- Read *Treasure Island* as a classroom book, or read part of it aloud. What is so compelling about this story that both of the children return to it again and again?
- Part of the way the two siblings relate to one another is by making up stories about their father as some swashbuckling hero. This has similarities to the stories that the three children tell in Holly Black's *Doll Bones* (also on this list). Have the students write up or create orally a fantastic story about a pirate or some other adventurer.

Civics/Morality:

- What are the penalties for killing a person in your state? Do you think they are fair? Is there ever a justifiable reason to kill a person? Was this one?

Science:

- Gran is obviously suffering from some form of dementia, maybe Alzheimer's. Research Alzheimer's to understand how it affects the brain and a person's behavior. What can you do to help someone with Alzheimer's?

History:

- The Iran Hostage crisis is occurring at the same time as this private hostage crisis. Research the details of the real one to learn why it happened and how it was resolved.

Discussion questions:

- Talk about the zebra forest itself. What is its significance?
- What did you think about the father? What kind of a person was he? Could you accept him if he were your own father?
- Compare and contrast the reaction of the two children to Andrew Snow. Why do the reactions differ so much?

- What do you think about the lies that Gran told the kids? Why do you think she did it? Was it a good idea or not?
- What should the children do about their Gran's failing health?

If you loved this, you may like:

Hill, Kirkpatrick. *Do Not Pass Go*. McElderry, 2007.

Salisbury, Graham. *Lord of the Deep*. Delacorte, 2001.

Voigt, Cynthia. *Homecoming*. Ballantine, 1981.

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

Mark Goldblatt TWERP

Random House, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-37597-142-6. \$16.99. 288 pages.



Julian “Twerp” Twerski can get out of writing his regular assignments for sixth grade English class, including the assignment on Julius Caesar he is dreading most of all, if he continues with his journal writing. After the incident over December break, Mr. Selkirk made him write about what happened. So Julian writes and writes and writes and Mr. Selkirk encourages him to keep going. He takes his time and writes about his friends, his first date, hanging out at Ponzini, his running – everything *but* the incident. He even reads all the assigned texts and actually likes Julius Caesar. After filling nine composition books, Julian finally gets to the business at hand – he confesses to his part in the incident, the incident that led to him and his friends being suspended for a week. With the task completed as assigned, Julian continues to write....

Curriculum connections:

Language Arts/Creative Writing:

- Put yourself in Julian’s shoes. After he wrote about everything going on in his life for Mr. Selkirk, explain how you think he might have felt after writing about the incident. Was writing it all down transformative for Julian? Consider the importance of the final chapter “Dragging the Couch.” Consider these quotes while completing the assignment: “... if I don’t understand what happened, how can I write about it?” (p.2) “What’s wrong with me? God help me, what did I do?” (p.268)

Geography/Art:

- The neighborhood setting or geography is very important in *Twerp* – where they hang out, the proximity of all the friends’ houses, the multi-ethnicity of Queens, etc. Is neighborhood important in your story? Draw a map of your neighborhood, including places that are significant for you – where *you* hang out, where your friends/family live, proximity of neighbors, school, shops, parks, etc. Talk about your map and how it affects what you get to do after school, on weekends and during school breaks.

History:

- *Twerp* is set in 1969. What clues from the text alert the reader to the time period?
- If you were trying to set the time more deliberately, what would you do? What music would the characters be listening to? What current events would they be talking about? Also consider clothing, cars, books and anything else that would make it clear that it is set in the late 60s.

Discussion questions:

- Why does Mr. Selkirk make Julian write the journal? Do you think his plan worked?
- Describe Lonnie and Julian’s friendship. Is Lonnie a good friend? What makes Lonnie change his mind about apologizing? Does that change how you feel about their friendship? Discuss the importance of “dragging the couch” (p.269). Why is this “the couch that matters” (p.273)?
- Why does Julian write the love letter for Lonnie?
- Why is it so important to Julian that he is the fastest kid in school?

- How do you feel about the “the incident”? Are Julian and his friends all equally guilty? Do you think the punishment was appropriate for the crime? If not, how do you think they should have been punished?

If you loved this, you may like:

Gale, Eric Kahn. *The Bully Book*. Harper, 2013.

Hasak-Lowy, Todd. *33 Minutes... Until Morgan Sturtz Kicks My Butt*. Aladdin, 2013. (on this year's DCF list)

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

Yee, Lisa. *Warp Speed*. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2011.

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

11 Questions with Author Mark Goldblatt:

<http://randomactsofreading.wordpress.com/2013/05/24/11-questions-with-author-mark-goldblatt/>

Bullying Book Discussion Guide from Random House:

<http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/resource/bullying-book-discussion-guide/>

Chris Grabenstein
ESCAPE FROM MR. LEMONCELLO'S LIBRARY
Random House, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-375-87089-7. \$16.99. 291 pages.



Twelve year-old Kyle Keeley suffers from having two overachieving, yet loving older brothers. Kyle loves games, not sports or school. When the world's most famous game maker decides to give back to his and Kyle's home town, he designs and builds an incredible public library for the citizens of Alexandriaville, Ohio. Kyle and his classmates are encouraged to enter an essay contest to win the chance to see the library before its official opening; the twelve winners get to go to a library lock-in. Kyle is lucky enough to be one of the winners and he and they are awestruck when they actually enter the amazing space. Mr. Lemoncello has ensured that a night in the library will be rewarding in many ways: great food, wacky games, and a tour of the library. The next day, the contestants are surprised to find themselves facing the ultimate challenge: how to get out of the library! Who will work together and who will go it alone: bookwork Sierra, brainiac Miguel, teen beauty Haley, or the insufferable Charles Chillington? Roll the dice and try your hand at this adventure that pays homage to Roald Dahl and E.L. Konigsburg.

Curriculum connections:

Library:

- Have a lock-in in your library and create a Dewey Decimal scavenger hunt.
- Ask for content subject trivia and recreate the Hurry to the Top of the Heap game.

Language Arts:

- Use the children's book titles mentioned in the story to create book groups for your class.
- Make alphabet cookies that you turn into words; have students create anagrams from their words. The winner eats their prize!

Social Studies:

- Research the history of and impact of different games through the Museum of Play:
<http://www.museumofplay.org/collections/game>

Design and Technology:

- Look at this Austin, TX library of the future:
<http://www.asce.org/cemagazine/Article.aspx?id=23622330282#.U0R1KhdUuf> Is Mr. Lemoncello's design feasible?

Discussion questions:

- Kyle and his classmates decide to pool their individual talents to win the contest. What special skills do Akimi, Haley, Kyle, Miguel, and Sierra possess that give them the potential to win?
- How does Kyle change over the course of the novel?
- What is the best part of the new Alexandriaville Public library?

If you loved this, you may like:

Berlin, Eric. *The Puzzling World of Winston Breen*. Putnam, 2007.

Bosch, Pseudonymous. *The Name of This Book Is Secret*. Little, Brown, 2007.

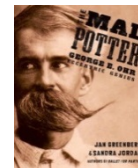
Dahl, Roald. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Knopf, 1964.
Feldman, Jody. *The Gollywhopper Games*. Greenwillow, 2008.
Konigsburg, E.L. *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. Atheneum, 1967.

Author website: <http://www.chrisgrabenstein.com/kids/>

Author on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/chris.grabenstein>

Interview in Jack and Jill Magazine: <http://www.uskidsmags.com/blog/2013/07/13/jack-and-jill-interviews-author-chris-grabenstein/>

Jan Greenberg & Sandra Jordan
THE MAD POTTER: GEORGE E. OHR, ECCENTRIC GENIUS
Roaring Brook Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-59643-810-1. \$19.99. 53 pages.



The Mad Potter is a biography that leaves you wishing you could meet the subject. George Ohr was an artist with a grand vision, a larger than life personality, and an unwavering dedication to his work. Ohr was a potter living in Biloxi, Mississippi in the 19th century, but his artistic vision was far ahead of his time. He began his career creating traditional pottery like teapots and vases, but after working with a group of artists, he was inspired to create original art with his pottery and create “no two alike.” Ohr was an eccentric who was as much a showman as a potter. He stayed true to his artistic vision despite not receiving the acclaim he wanted. Greenberg and Jordan bring Ohr back to life in *The Mad Potter*. The pages are filled with striking images of Ohr and his pottery and the reader is left with a true sense of George Ohr.

Curriculum connections:

Art:

- Study the work of George Ohr, learn about the process of shaping ceramics and make something in the style of Ohr. All of his pieces were unique, so yours should be too.

Social Studies/Language Arts/Art:

- Select another artist biography to read. Compare and contrast the life and work of the two artists. Provide students with options for sharing their findings: presentation, comic strip, graphic organizer, etc.

Discussion questions:

- The subtitle of the book is “George E. Ohr, Eccentric Genius.” Describe George. What are some of his personality characteristics that really stand out to you? Give some examples.
- Why do you think George Ohr did not receive the fame that he wanted during his lifetime? Do you think that is fair or not?
- What do you think of his pottery? Do you like it? Why or why not? If not, can you appreciate it? Why or why not?
- What would you describe as George’s greatest challenge during his life? What would you describe as his greatest success? Explain your answers.
- Would you have enjoyed having George Ohr as a father? Why or why not?

If you loved this, you may like:

Fleming, Candice. *The Great and Only Barnum: The Tremendous, Stupendous Life of Showman P.T. Barnum*. Schwartz & Wade, 2009.

Greenberg, Jan and Sandra Jordan. *Christo and Jeanne-Claude: Through the Gates and Beyond*. Roaring Brook, 2008.

Greenberg, Jan and Sandra Jordan. *Frank O. Gehry: Outside In*. DK Children, 2000.

Lange, Karen. *Nevermore: A Photobiography of Edgar Allan Poe*. National Geographic, 2009.

Wenzel, Angela. *13 Artists Children Should Know*. Prestel, 2009.

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

Karen Harrington
SURE SIGNS OF CRAZY

Little, Brown and Co., 2013. ISBN: 978-0-316-21058-4. \$17.00. 280 pages.



Twelve-year-old Sarah Nelson has just finished sixth grade and is looking forward to her summer vacation. For the first time ever, her father is letting her stay home in Garland instead of going to Houston to be with her grandparents. Sarah is a survivor. When she was two, her mentally ill mother tried to drown her and her twin brother. Tragically, Simon died but Sarah survived. Her mother has lived in a mental institution ever since and, except for twice-a-year letters from her, Sarah doesn't know her mother at all. Her father has a drinking problem and cannot cope with the notoriety that follows them everywhere.

Sarah copes with her situation by writing. She loves words and writes them down in her diary. Some are “trouble” words like “crazy” and some are new favorites like “pizzazz.” She writes letters to the fictional Atticus Finch from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a man she wishes her father could be. And she makes lists of everything, including a list of signs that she might be going crazy too. For now, all she really wants is a normal, fun summer. Does she get it?

Curriculum connections:

Language arts:

- Choose a person either fictional or real and write letters to them, like Sarah did over the summer.
- Vocabulary – do you have a favorite word or a trouble word? Make a list of your favorite and least favorite words and write down why.

Social studies:

- What is mental illness? Have your students research different mental diseases. Talk about the way society deals with mental illness vs. physical illness.

Science:

- Sarah's best friend is a plant. Have your kids grow and take care of a plant.

Discussion questions:

- Why does Sarah think “love” is a trouble word?
- This book is about secrets. How does Sarah feel when Finn reveals his secret (p. 190)? What secrets does Sarah keep from her father? When is it all right to tell your secret?
- There are issues of privacy in this story. Talk about the role of a reporter vs a person's right to privacy. How can you protect your privacy? (p. 236)
- Sarah makes a new friend in Mrs. Dupree. How does this friendship help Sarah?
- What did Sarah learn from her relationship with Finn?

If you loved this, you may like:

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

Sloan, Holly Goldberg. *I'll Be There*. Little, Brown, 2011.

Weeks, Sarah. *So B. It*. HarperCollins, 2004.

Author website: www.karenharringtonbooks.com

Todd Hasak-Lowy

33 MINUTES...UNTIL MORGAN STURTZ KICKS MY BUTT

Aladdin, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-4424-4500-0. \$16.99. 224 pages.



When Morgan Sturtz tells Sam Lewis that he's going to kick his butt at recess, Sam is terrified. Morgan is ten inches taller than him and forty pounds heavier, and unathletic Sam is sure he's going to be badly hurt. Last year, Sam and Morgan were the best of friends, playing video games together all day long and having TAMADE (The Absolutely Most Amazing Day Ever). Now Morgan can't stand Sam, and Sam is devastated. At first, Morgan seems like your typical bully: big, mean, and tough, but as Sam tells his story, he slowly reveals that Morgan is not entirely to blame for the unraveling of their friendship and that Morgan's threat was provoked. In an action-packed day that includes an epic food fight, a salad bowl head injury, and a visit to the principal's office, Sam realizes and learns to accept that he and Morgan have simply grown apart and have developed different interests and new friendships. *33 Minutes* is a touching and laugh-out-loud story that deals with the difficulties of growing up and growing apart, and the importance of moving on.

Curriculum connections:

Language Arts:

- At the end of the book, Sam imagines future scenarios of his relationship with Morgan. Have students write another future scenario from Sam's point of view.
- Have students step into Morgan's shoes and tell his side of the story.
- Have students write about a time they faced conflict. How did they resolve it? Would they have done anything differently today?

Art/Mixed Media:

- Sam writes lists and draws diagrams and illustrations throughout the book. Have students choose a scene and create their own illustrations or diagrams.
- Imagine that *33 Minutes* is going to be made into a movie. Have students act out a scene in the book and film it.

Discussion questions:

- Did you find Sam to be a sympathetic character? Why or why not?
- Do you think there is anything either Sam or Morgan could have done to save their friendship? If so, what?
- Why does it take Sam so long to admit what he did to Morgan? Why doesn't he mention the note until late in the story?
- Were you surprised or disappointed by the ending? Did you think they would become best friends again? Why or why not?
- Is this a story about bullying? If so, which character is the bully?

If you loved this, you may like:

Beatty, Andrew. *Dorko the Magnificent*. Harry N. Abrams, 2013.

Kowitt, H.N. *The Loser List*. Scholastic, 2011.

Schmidt, Gary D. *The Wednesday Wars*. HMH Books for Young Readers, 2009.

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

Deborah Hopkinson

THE GREAT TROUBLE: A MYSTERY OF LONDON, THE BLUE DEATH, AND A BOY CALLED EEL

Knopf. 2013. ISBN: 978-0-375-84818-6. \$16.99. 249 pages.



Eel, a thirteen year-old orphan, works as a “mudlark,” scavenging the Thames River in London for coins, coal, or anything he can sell. Things are rough in 1854 and Eel has secrets to hide. Fisheye Bill Tyler has come after him and Eel will do anything to evade him. Wrongly suspected of theft, Eel takes to the streets and must rely on the kindness of Dr. Snow who has hired him to take care of his animals. When Eel’s friends start getting sick, he is forced to ask his employer to help him and is surprised when he and his best friend, Florrie, are needed to solve the mystery of the Blue Death. Eel must use his wits if he wants to save the rest of his neighborhood while staying out of the evil clutches of his worst enemy. Part medical mystery, part survival adventure, and part homage to Charles Dickens, *The Great Trouble* looks at how an early public health crisis changed history.

Curriculum connections:

Science:

- Investigate epidemics on the CDC website www.dcd.gov
- Research the life of Dr. John Snow www.ph.ucla.edu/epi/snow.html

English/Language Arts:

- Using the five sections of the book, have students create scripts and act out each section as reader’s theater.

Geography:

- Using the timeline beginning on page 241 and Google Maps, create a visual representation of London with plot points.

Social Studies:

- Trace the history of the “ragged school” at:
<http://www.maybole.org/history/articles/historyofraggedschools.htm>

Career Guidance:

- Find out about epidemiology as a career by going to the US Dept of Labor’s occupational Outlook Handbook: www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/epidemiologists.htm

Discussion questions:

- Eel is both loyal and responsible. What is the difference between the two traits? How does Eel show his loyalty and responsibility?
- Why do Eel’s neighbors initially put their faith in Reverend Whitehead instead of Dr. Snow?
- Who is your favorite villain in this story? What motivates each of them to treat Eel badly?
- What does Eel reveal when he is hired to help Charlie the coffin man in Chapter 11?
- Why is Eel attracted to Florrie as a person? What qualities do you admire in your friends?

If you loved this, you may like:

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Fever, 1793*. New York, 2000.

Burgess, Melvin. *Copper Treasure*. HarperCollins, 2002.

Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. Richard Bentley, 1838.

Prachett, Terry. *Dodger*. Harper Collins, 2012.

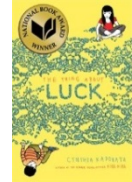
Author website: <http://www.deborahhopkinson.com/>

Random House educator guide: https://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/GreatTrouble_EG_WEB.pdf

Link to SLJ article: <http://www.slj.com/2014/04/standards/curriculum-connections/beyond-the-computer-a-writer-reflects-on-information-literacy/#>

Cynthia Kadohata
THE THING ABOUT LUCK

Atheneum, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-4169-1882-0. \$16.99. 270 pages.



Twelve-year-old Summer is having a year of terrible luck. She gets malaria, her quirky brother Jaz, “cursed with invisibility,” cannot make any friends, and her parents are called to Japan to care for elderly relatives. The wheat harvesting season is about to begin and her parents are combine drivers. It is now up to Summer’s grandparents to take over their job, traveling from farm to farm across the Midwest operating the combines. Summer will have to help out too. She is worried. Her cantankerous grandmother has a bad back and her grandfather is showing signs of exhaustion. How much responsibility will Summer have to take on?

Curriculum connections:

Social studies:

- Research crops of the Midwest, harvesting procedures, etc. Compare farming practices in Vermont. Visit a Vermont farm.
- What is a migrant worker? Do Vermont farms employ people from other countries?

Science:

- What is malaria? In which countries is this disease still prevalent?

Language arts:

- Choose any scene and rewrite it from the point of view of another character. For example, when Summer’s dog kills the chickens, tell the story from the point of view of the boss’ wife, Mrs. Parker.

Discussion questions:

- Summer feels a tremendous amount of responsibility. In what ways does she feel responsible and why?
- What events illustrate Summer’s strength of character?
- Thunder, the family dog, goes along on the harvest. What pivotal role does he play? What conflict would be absent if he were not in the story?
- How does Summer’s opinion of Robbie change by the end of the story?
- Are Summer and her family treated differently because they are Asian-American? Talk about discrimination.
- How has Summer grown by the end of the story? How has her relationship with her grandparents changed? What about their understanding of her?

If you loved this, you may like:

Kadohata, Cynthia. *Kira-Kira*. Atheneum, 2004.

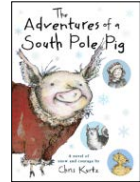
Kinsey-Warnock, Natalie. *As Long as There Are Mountains*. Dutton, 1997.

Author website: <http://authors.simonandschuster.com/cynthia-kadohata/19010675>

Chris Kurtz

ADVENTURES OF A SOUTH POLE PIG

Harcourt, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-5476-3455-5. \$16.99. 278 pages.



Flora the pig is bored living in a pig pen with her mother and brothers and wants to see and do and adventure. When she sees the farmer training his dogs to be sled dogs she decides that is the life for her and she begins to train every day. Soon, she is delighted to learn that she is going to accompany the men and the dogs on an adventure to the South Pole. But Flora's understanding of the reason she has been selected is quite different from the reality. What will the fate of this eager pig be?

Curriculum connections:

Language Arts:

- Flora is eager for anything new. What else might she do? Write a new adventure for Flora.

Social Studies:

- Do research on the climate and topography of the Antarctic.
- Study one (or more) of the expeditions to the Antarctic. Ernest Shackleton's journey was probably the most amazing, while the race between Scott and Amundsen to be first to reach the pole was the most dramatic.
- Plan a pretend trip to the Antarctic. What supplies would you pack?

Discussion questions:

- Do you consider yourself to be an adventurer like Flora or someone content with the status quo like her brothers? Explain.
- Flora has big dreams to be an explorer and adventurer. What are your dreams?
- When Flora is taken along for the Antarctic adventure, she is sure she is going to be used as a sled pig. Did you think so, too, or did you know why she really was going? Explain your answer.
- Although Flora is very independent, she learns that sometimes team work is the best way to go. What are some of the example of ways she teams up with her friends?

If you loved this, you may like:

Avi. *Poppy*. Orchard Books, 1995.

Deedy, Carmen Agra. *Cheshire Cheese Cat: A Dickens of a Tale*. Peachtree, 2011.

DiCamillo, Kate. *The Tale of Despereaux*. Candlewick, 2003.

King-Smith, Dick. *Babe, the Gallant Pig*. Crown, 1983.

O'Brien, Robert. *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*. Atheneum, 1971.

Seidler, Tor. *A Rat's Tale*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 1986.

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

Josanne La Valley
THE VINE BASKET

Clarion, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-5478-4801-3. \$16.99. 256 pages.



Fourteen-year-old Mehrigul, a Uyghur girl growing up in western China, has dreams of going to school but is forced to stay home and help out on her family farm. She struggles to stay hopeful in an ever-challenging environment faced with an angry father, a withdrawn mother, a society that looks down on women and a government that would like nothing better than to send her away to work in a factory in southern China.

It is not until an American woman happens upon Mehrigul's family's cart at the market and sees a basket woven by Mehrigul and offers her a goodly sum of money for it and asks for more, that things start to change for Mehrigul. If she can make more baskets and sell them to the American perhaps she can help her family's farm and realize her own dreams at the same time. While her task at hand may be her greatest challenge yet, Mehrigul proves that hope and determination go a long way in helping to realize her dreams.

An excellent choice for expanding global understanding.

Curriculum connections:

Language Arts:

- What if this story ended differently? What if Mehrigul's father refused to let her make baskets? Write an alternative ending to the novel.
- Throughout *The Vine Basket*, Mehrigul held on to the dream of going to school. Write an essay or poem about your dreams.

Social Studies:

- Most likely a first introduction to the Uyghur people for the students, *The Vine Basket* evokes the culture and struggles of an ethnic group whose future is less than certain. Talk to your students about the importance of keeping culture alive. Is it important? What are the repercussions of the Chinese government's oppressive cultural and ethnic policies? Talk about other countries and cultures facing similar challenges.
- Talk with your students about family and what it means to them. Discuss the differences between their family dynamics and Mehrigul's. Have students research the role children play in families in the Uyghur community.

Geography:

- Research the country of East Turkestan. What makes this country unique? Find East Turkestan on a map and discuss its topography.

Art:

- Have students weave their own baskets. While grapevine baskets may be asking a bit much, try something simpler like weaving with newspapers:
<http://spoonful.com/crafts/easy-weave-newsprint-basket>

Discussion questions:

- Mehrigul is an extremely strong character. What was your favorite thing about her?
- Talk about the hardships that Mehrigul must overcome. How do you think she found the strength to keep going?
- The Uyghur culture is very different from America. What are some of the differences you noticed? How do you feel about these differences?
- Besides Mehrigul, who was your favorite character in the book and why?
- How did Mehrigul's relationship with her family and friends change throughout the book?

If you loved this, you may like:

Kadohata, Cynthia. *Kira-Kira*. Atheneum, 2006.

Lekuton, Joseph Lemasolai. *Facing the Lion: Growing Up Maasai on the African Savanna*. National Geographic, 2005.

Park, Linda Sue. *A Single Shard*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011.

Quirk, Katie. *A Girl Called Problem*. Eerdmans, 2013.

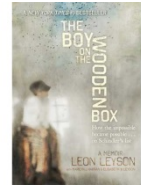
Whelan, Gloria. *Listening for Lions*. HarperCollins, 2006.

Author website: www.josannelavalley.com

Leyson, Leon

THE BOY ON THE WOODEN BOX

Atheneum, 2013. ISBN: 978-1442-4978-18. \$17.99. 240 pages.



Leon Leyson (born Leib Lezjon) was only ten years old when the Nazis invaded Poland and his family was forced to relocate to the Krakow ghetto. With incredible luck, perseverance, and grit, Leyson was able to survive the sadism of the Nazis, including that of the demonic Amon Goeth, commandant of Plaszow, the concentration camp outside Krakow. Ultimately, it was the generosity and cunning of one man, a man named Oskar Schindler, who saved Leon Leyson's life, and the lives of his mother, his father, and two of his four siblings, by adding their names to his list of workers in his factory – a list that became world renowned: Schindler's List.

This, the only memoir published by a former Schindler's List child, perfectly captures the innocence of a small boy who goes through the unthinkable. Most notable is the lack of rancor, the lack of venom, and the abundance of dignity in Mr. Leyson's telling. *The Boy on the Wooden Box* is a legacy of hope, a memoir unlike anything you've ever read.

Curriculum connections:

Language Arts:

- How is a memoir different from a novel? How is it similar? What other memoirs have you read?
- Every year the Rodgers Center for Holocaust Education at Chapman University holds the Holocaust Art and Writing Contest, which is open to 7th through 12th graders. Students listen to and view oral testimonies from the survivors and then create responses with art, poetry or prose. One of the highlights of the contest is that students chosen by their teachers to participate in the contest have a chance to meet the survivors. *The Boy on the Wooden Box* contributor, Marilyn Harran, is the director of the center and teaches at Chapman University. Have your students create entries. The winner is able to meet and speak to Holocaust survivors at the awards ceremony. <http://chapman.edu/research-and-institutions/holocaust-education/rodgers-center/holocaust-art-and-writing-contest/index.aspx>.

Social Studies:

- Discuss the Holocaust. Who was Hitler? Who were the Nazis? Who was Oskar Schindler? What was a concentration camp?
- Research one of the better-known figures that played a role in the Holocaust.
- Talk about discrimination. Using *The Boy on the Wooden Box* as an example, ask students to analyze how the Jews were discriminated against in World War II. What are some other situations throughout history and in current times where discrimination exists?

Geography:

- Map survivor stories. Trace a survivor's story using a timeline, map skills, photography, poetry, and/or prose.

Current Events:

- Have students track prejudice and human rights issues in current newspapers or on the Web.

Discussion questions:

- Leyson reveals many emotions - fear, anger, confusion, but there is no sense of self-pity even as he describes unspeakable events. How did you feel while you were reading this book? How do you feel now that you are finished?
- Oskar Schindler was considered a hero. What is a hero? Can someone who was a Nazi also be considered a hero?
- What stood out to you the most about Leon Leyson's story?
- Do you think that one person can truly make a difference?

If you loved this, you may like:

Frank, Anne. *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. Bantam, 1993.

Gratz, Alan. *Prisoner B-3087*. Scholastic, 2013.

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

Rappaport, Doreen. *Beyond Courage*. Candlewick, 2014.

You Tube Video of interview with Leon Leyson:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tPCs7wIFhQ>

Leon Leyson's Obituary: <http://blogs.chapman.edu/happenings/2013/01/15/leon-leyson-one-of-the-youngest-schindlers-list-survivors-honorary-doctorate-dies-at-83/>

Resources and Information from the United States Holocaust Museum: <http://www.ushmm.org/>

Nan Marino

HIDING OUT AT THE PANCAKE PALACE

Henry Holt & Co., 2013. ISBN: 978-1-59643-753-1. \$16.99. 256 pages.



Elvis Ruby is a superstar with phenomenal talent. At eleven years old, he can play just about any instrument and he sings like an angel. He is a shoo-in to win the TweenStar talent competition (think American Idol for tweens). Unfortunately, during a live performance on stage, Elvis freezes. He can't remember the words of the song. Now the paparazzi are camped outside his hotel and Elvis is in a panic. He needs a break from all this fame. Luckily his father's old friend, known as Aunt Emily, lives way out in the Pinelands of New Jersey. Elvis can hide out there. He cuts his hair, changes his name, and tries to blend in at Emily's restaurant, Piney Pete's Pancake Palace. All goes well until the snoopy girl from next door, Cecilia, figures out who he really is. Not known for keeping secrets, Cecilia promises to keep his if he will do a favor for her. She has been searching for the mysterious "music of the pines," which not everyone can hear, but, supposedly, her parents heard on the night she was born. Maybe if Elvis helps her, he will find his way back to his own music, too.

Curriculum connections:

Dramatic Arts:

- Hold a talent show. Make a YouTube video of the show.
- Have a "Disguise Day." Come to school looking completely different.

Social Studies:

- Where are the Pinelands of New Jersey? Make a map of the area.
- What is the legend of the Jersey Devil? Does Vermont have a mythical creature? (Champ)

Culinary Arts:

- Make pancakes!

Discussion questions:

- What is the price of fame? Is Elvis really happy being a star?
- This book is about secrets. What happens when you can't keep a secret? Are the consequences always bad? How hard was it for Elvis to pretend to be someone else?
- Why does Cecilia have a hard time making friends? Would you be her friend?

If you loved this, you may like:

Bauer, Joan. *Close to Famous*. Viking, 2011.

Federle, Tim. *Better Nate Than Ever*. Simon & Schuster, 2013. (on this year's DCF list)

O'Connor, Barbara. *Beethoven in Paradise*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2011.

Author website: www.nanmarino.com

Tom McNeal FAR FAR AWAY

Knopf, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-37584-972-5. \$16.99. 384 pages.



Jeremy Johnson Johnson lives a solitary life in Never Better, USA. His mother vanished when he was in first grade but has left with him a precious gift – a love for fairy tales. His father is still mourning his wife’s departure and has become a television-watching recluse. Jeremy is seen as an outcast by the rest of the townspeople, partly because he once admitted to being able to hear voices. The voice Jeremy hears is none other than Jacob Grimm, a ghost caught between mortal life and the hereafter, who is there to protect Jeremy from his “Finder of Occasions.” Jeremy’s quiet life takes a sharp turn when the outgoing and bold Ginger Boultinghouse invites him to join her for *Prinsessstårta* at Sten Blix’s Swedish bakery. Ginger’s friendship changes the course of Jeremy’s life; he begins to take risks that he would never have even dreamed of taking before, much to the disapproval of Jacob Grimm. Jacob would prefer that Jeremy stay at home and study, study, study. As it turns out, he should probably have listened to Jacob, as innocent mischief leads the friends to an unexpected and dangerous place.

Curriculum connections:

Language Arts:

- Read a selection of Grimms’ Fairy Tales. Choose one and rewrite it as a fractured fairy tale. Read it aloud to the class and have them guess which one you have reworked.
- As a class, recreate your own version of *Uncommon Knowledge*. Students should be divided into the following groups:
 - Experts/contestants- these students will choose their individual areas of expertise.
 - Question writers- research & write an equal number of questions in each contestant’s area of expertise.
 - Quiz master (Milo Castle)- will read questions to contestants.
 - Judges/Panel of experts- will determine if questions are answered correctly. Their decision is final.
 - Scorekeeper- keeps track of score and determines winner.

Social Studies/World Cultures:

- Read a fairy or folk tale from a country/culture with which you are not familiar. What does this tale tell you about this culture? Is the tale you chose a retelling of a tale you already knew? If so, can you find other versions of it?

Discussion questions:

- If you owned the “Two-Book Bookstore,” what 2 books would you sell?
- Why do you think the author had the *Uncommon Knowledge* taping end the way it did? Why was the Disney question the final question?
- Did you find *Far Far Away* creepy? What makes a book too creepy for you?
- 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?
- Why are fairy tales important?
- Why does Jacob decide that it is finally time for him to leave Jeremy? How does Jeremy already know it is time before Jacob tells him?
- How do you think the events in the novel affect Ginger and Jeremy’s friendship? What do you think will happen between them after the novel’s end?

If you loved this, you may like:

Black, Holly. *Doll Bones*. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2013. (on this year's DCF list)

Gaiman, Neil. *The Graveyard Book*. HarperCollins, 2008.

Ruiz Zafon, Carlos. *The Prince of Mist*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2010.

Zusak, Markus. *The Book Thief*. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2006.

Author website: <http://mcnealbooks.com/home.aspx>

Tom McNeal introduces and shares some of the backstory for creating *Far Far Away*:

http://www.teachingbooks.net/book_reading.cgi?id=8961&a=1

Official *Far Far Away* book trailer:

<http://www.randomhouse.com/book/112461/far-far-away-by-tom-mcneal>

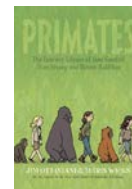
Reading Guide from *Room 228. An Educational Consulting Company*:

<http://www.rm228.com/current-projects>

Jim Ottaviani

**PRIMATES: THE FEARLESS SCIENCE OF JANE GOODALL,
DIAN FOSSEY, AND BIRUTE GALDIKAS**

First Second, 2013. ISBN: 9781596438651. \$19.99. 133 pages.



Presented in graphic novel format, *Primates* introduces the reader to three extraordinary female scientists: Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey and Birute Galdikas. We learn how each woman got her start in the field, some of the trials they experienced while conducting their field research, and some of the contributions they made to science. *Primates* does an amazing job of seamlessly weaving these three stories together. Although the volume is slim, the reader is left with a solid understanding of how each woman pursued her dream and the impact each had on her field. The graphic format makes this topic interesting and accessible for all readers and many will be left wanting to learn even more about these extraordinary women.

Curriculum connections:

Science/Language Arts/Art:

- Create your own graphic biography. Research other famous scientists (male or female), identify the defining moments of their career and create a short graphic biography.

Social Studies:

- Take a virtual field trip and explore the countries and regions that these scientists lived and studied in. Find them on Google Earth, visit websites of the preserves, etc. Compare them to where you live.

Discussion questions:

- Why do you think the author chose to feature these three scientists together in one volume? Why not let each have her own biography?
- Do you think the graphic novel format “works” for biographies? Why or why not?
- Did you enjoy reading about one person more than another? Who was it and why?
- What characteristics of one or more of these women resonated with you?

If you loved this, you may like:

Goodall, Jane. *My Life with the Chimpanzees*. Revised edition. Aladdin, 1996.

Lambert, Joseph. *Annie Sullivan and the Trials of Helen Keller*. Disney-Hyperion, 2012.

Lutes, Jason and Nick Bertozzi. *Houdini: The Handcuff King*. Hyperion, 2007.

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

Siegel, Siena Cherson. *To Dance: A Ballerina’s Graphic Novel*. Atheneum, 2006.

Author website: <http://www.gt-labs.com/>

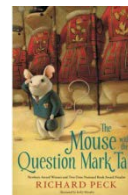
Teacher’s Guide: <http://media.us.macmillan.com/teachersguides/9781596438651TG.pdf>

Discussion Guide: <http://media.us.macmillan.com/discussionguides/9781596438651DG.pdf>

Richard Peck

THE MOUSE WITH THE QUESTION MARK TAIL

Dial/Penguin, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-8037-3838-6. \$16.99. 223 pages.



An undersized young mouse with a distinctly shaped tail lives in the Royal Mews next to Buckingham Palace in London. He has no name, but lives with his Aunty Marigold who dresses him and sends him off to school. When bullied by the other school mice, he runs away seeking adventure and his identity. His journey of self-discovery occurs shortly before the celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, with all of the pomp and majesty befitting her sixty years on the British throne. Helped along the way by other animals and some very memorable older mice, our hero is able to solve the mystery of who he really is. In this companion novel to *Secrets at Sea*, Richard Peck provides another charming look at the tiny world of mice, *who are only a whisker away and everywhere you fail to look.*

Curriculum connections:

Social Studies:

- Learn more about Queen Victoria through the BBC:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/famouspeople/victoria/>

Etiquette:

- Host a celebration in honor of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Make scones, tea, and paper hats. Look at these Pinterest sites for ideas: www.pinterest.com/chez65/english-tea-party-in-the-garden/ and www.pinterest.com/imaginative1/hatters-fascinators/

Art:

- Look at the illustrations to see how Kelly Murphy used household items to recreate the mouse world at Buckingham Palace/Mews. Shift to the mouse perspective using a room in your house and draw in the style of the illustrator.

Discussion questions:

- How does each of the older, wiser mice guide our hero on his journey?
- Mouse Minor is helped on his journey of self-discovery by three different creatures. Describe them and decide which has the most impact on him.
- What do you think that the Yeomice motto: *SEE, DON'T SAY* really means?
- Which illustration best captures the overall feeling of the story?
- How does Mouse Minor's journey mirror your own?

If you loved this, you may like:

Deedy, Carmen Agra. *The Cheshire Cheese Cat: a Dickens of a Tale*. Peachtree, 2011.

DiCamillo, Kate. *The Tale of Despereaux*. Candlewick, 2003.

Lowry, Lois. *Bless this Mouse*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011.

Norton, Mary. *The Borrowers*. J. M. Dent, 1952.

Peck, Richard. *Secrets at Sea*. Penguin, 2011.

Author on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/richardpeckauthor>

Illustrator website: <http://www.kelmurphy.com/>

Peck at the 2013 National Book Festival: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Do3j-qnSqB8>

Leah Pileggi
PRISONER 88

Charlesbridge, 2013. ISBN: 9781580895606. \$16.95. 142 pages.



In 1887, Jake Oliver Evans is 10 years old and the youngest prisoner at the Idaho Territorial Penitentiary; he was sentenced to five years for manslaughter. Jake settles into prison life quickly. Some aspects of prison life are an improvement, like the fact that he gets two meals a day. However, Jake initially dislikes other aspects of prison life including his mandatory reading lessons. Everyone at the prison works, and Jake begins work with a local pig farmer, Mr. Criswell, and develops a strong connection with the family. Jake also develops close connections with several inmates and guards. He finds more of a family within the prison than he ever had outside. After almost a full year in the prison, Jake is pardoned and sent to live with a foster family. *Prisoner 88* was inspired by the author’s visit to the Idaho Territorial Penitentiary where she learned that their youngest prisoner was a ten year old boy: Jake Evans. The inspiration for the story is sure to attract readers, but the vivid setting, gripping plot and concern and hope for Jake will keep readers turning the pages.

Curriculum connections:

Social Studies/Music:

- After Mr. Nance is attacked, Jake, Mr. Shin and Mr. Wu sing together. They sing “Camptown Races,” “Oh, Susanna” and “Yankee Doodle Dandy” (p. 64). Find recordings of these songs and listen to them. Research their history: when were they written and by whom, what is the meaning behind these songs, etc. What other songs were popular at this time?

Language Arts:

- In the Author’s Note we learn a little bit about what happened to Jake after he was released. Based on what you know of the other characters in the book, write an epilogue that details what happened to others after Jake’s release.

Discussion questions:

- Describe Jake’s character. How does he change over the course of the novel?
- Why do you think Jake always fights so hard to go to work at the Criswells’ farm?
- Jake makes many strong friendships while in prison. Describe one and explain how it develops and changes and the impact it has on Jake.
- How do you think Jake felt about being pardoned and leaving the prison?
- Do you believe Jake’s sentence was just? Why or why not?

If you loved this, you may like:

Conly, Jane Leslie. *Murder Afloat*. Disney-Hyperion, 2010.

Cushman, Karen. *Will Sparrow’s Road*. Clarion, 2012.

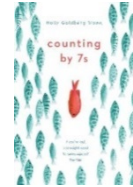
Lisle, Janet Taylor. *Black Duck*. Puffin, 2007.

Philbrick, Nathaniel. *The Young Man and the Sea*. Scholastic, 2004.

Author website: <http://leahpileggi.com/home>

Holly Goldberg Sloan COUNTING BY 7S

Dial, 2013. ISBN 978-0-8037-3855-3. \$16.99. 380 pages.



Willow Chance has lost her parents – twice. Adopted as a baby, she has no memory of her birth parents, and nothing but memories of her adoptive parents. After the tragic death of her adoptive parents, the newly-orphaned girl has a temporary family that consists of a cab driver, a counselor with his own personal issues, and a take-charge nail salon owner. For the 12-year-old genius, fitting in with the rest of the world is just about to get more complicated. (School Library Journal)

Curriculum connections:

Literacy:

- Reader's Theater. Script written by Holly Goldberg Sloan:
<http://texasbluebonnetaward2015.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/rtcountingby7s-2.pdf>

Service-Learning; Science:

- Create and/or design a wildlife friendly garden with native plants. On page 15 Willow says, "To know me is to know my garden. It is my sanctuary." What is your sanctuary? What should people know in order to know you?
- Gardening with Kids: <http://www.gardeningwithkids.org/>
- Kids Gardening: <http://www.kidsgardening.org/>

Art:

- When Quang-ha sees the broken glass on the roof he fits the pieces together and makes a mosaic on the skylight. Try creating your own mosaic using tiles or cut up pieces of construction paper.

Inquiry/Information Literacy:

- Willow's school mascot is the Sequoia Giant. If your school mascot was a plant which plant would you choose and why? What characteristics of your plant would make it an awesome mascot?

Discussion questions:

- How does Willow cope with her tragic situation?
- The quote on the cover says, "If you're lost, you might need to swim against the tide." What do you think that means, within the context of the story?
- Willow's counselor, Dell Duke, puts his students (and people in general) into categories. Do you think this is realistic? What labels would you assign to kids and adults in your school? Is that a fair characterization of them? Why or why not?
- Do you believe that people are capable of change?
- Without her parents, Willow questions what binds her to this world. What do you think binds you to the world?
- What are the 7 most important things in your life?

If you loved this, you may like:

Draper, Sharon. *Out of My Mind*. Scholastic, 2012.

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

Palacio, R.J. *Wonder*. Knopf, 2012.

Spinelli, Jerry. *Loser*. Scholastic, 2003.

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

Author on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/HGoldbergSloan>

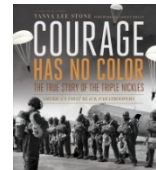
The Texas Bluebonnet Award has created a wonderful, comprehensive teaching guide with more classroom activities, discussion questions, and extensions:

<http://texasbluebonnetaward2015.wordpress.com/counting-by-7s/>

Tanya Lee Stone

**COURAGE HAS NO COLOR:
THE TRUE STORY OF THE TRIPLE NICKLES
AMERICA'S FIRST BLACK PARATROOPERS**

Candlewick Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-7636-5117-6 \$24.99. 147 pages.



Courage Has No Color tells the story of the Triple Nickles, an all-black paratrooper unit developed by First Sergeant Walter Morris during World War II. The first members of the Triple Nickles were soldiers stationed as guards at the Fort Benning Parachute School. Morris noticed a lack of pride and engagement in his soldiers, so he decided to start running them through the same training as the white paratroopers. Soon after, Morris was given commands to officially create the first all-black unit of paratroopers. While this seemed like a great success, racial prejudice and segregation were still deeply ingrained in the culture of the army. We learn about the unrelenting devotion of the members of the Triple Nickles to serve their country, despite them not being given the opportunity to go to battle, and we also learn about the larger story of discrimination in the United States during World War II.

Curriculum connections:

Social Studies:

- Research other minority groups that served in World War II (women, Native Americans, etc). What roles did they serve? How were they treated? How was their service recognized?
- Research what was happening with the civil rights movement in the United States during WWII. Create a timeline of the civil rights movement from WWII through the present.
- Many historical figures are mentioned in this book (Eleanor Roosevelt, General George S. Patton, General Dwight D. Eisenhower). Find out more about them and their roles in American History.

Discussion questions:

- Historian Stephen Ambrose is quoted in this book: “Soldiers were fighting the world’s worst racist, Adolph Hitler, in the world’s most segregated army.” Explain this quote and give some examples of the racism experienced by minorities in the army.
- What was your reaction to some of these examples of racism and segregation?
- Why do you think the Triple Nickles wanted to serve their country when they were treated so unfairly by their country?
- Who were some of the people who impacted (for better or worse) the Triple Nickles? What was their role and do you think it was positive or negative?

If you loved this, you may like:

Hoose, Phillip. *Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice*. FSG, 2009.

Nelson, Pete. *Left for Dead: A Young Man's Search for Justice for the USS Indianapolis*. Scholastic, 2003.

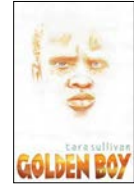
Sheinkin, Steve. *Bomb: The Race to Build and Steal the World's Most Dangerous Weapon*. Flash Point, 2012.

Stone, Tanya Lee. *Almost Astronauts*. Candlewick, 2009.

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

Tara Sullivan
GOLDEN BOY

Putnam Juvenile, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-39916-112-4. \$16.99. 368 pages.



Habo is a 13-year-old Tanzanian boy with albinism. His father has left home because of him and his mother and brothers want little to do with him. Habo’s sister is the only person who shows him any love or affection.

In Tanzania, it is believed that albinos or *zeruzerus* have special healing powers. They are therefore hunted so that medicine can be made out of their body parts. One such hunter crosses their path and wants Habo for that very reason; the reward for capturing an albino is high. Habo’s condition has put him and his family in constant danger. Not wanting to be such a burden, he decides to escape and make the forty-hour train ride to Dar Es Salaam, as he has heard that they do not hunt albinos in the big city.

His journey changes Habo from scared child to brave young boy who realizes he has worth. As Habo finds a way to fend for himself and struggles through suspenseful and frightening situations in Dar Es Salaam, he learns about friendship, trust, kindness and the true meaning of love.

Curriculum connections:

Health:

- Research albinism
 - What exactly is it?
 - How do you get it?
 - Is it easy to live with it?
 - How would your life change if you had it?
 - Is it curable?
 - Are there albinos in the United States?

Art:

- Kweli is a talented wood sculptor who is able to create beautiful pieces without the benefit of sight. Wearing a blindfold, shape a figure out of clay.
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of not being able to see while practicing this art form.

Social Studies:

- Is the danger Habo faces in the book real? Do people really hunt albinos for their “lucky” body parts today?
- Research this topic in Tanzania and elsewhere in the world.

Language Arts:

- It is always difficult to be the new student in a class. What are some ways to make a new student feel welcome, especially someone who suffers from a condition such as albinism? Is it best to treat him/her like everyone else or go out of your way to be welcoming? How do you think you have responded to new students in the past? Do you behave differently if they have special needs and/or obvious physical differences?

Discussion questions:

- How do you feel about the way Habo’s brother and mother treat him?
- What could his mother have done differently?
- Why did Habo’s father leave?
- There are many complicated relationships in the story. Which one(s) affected you the most? Why?
- Faced with the same situations Habo faced, what would you have done? Would you have fled to Dar Es Salaam? What other options did he have?
- Why does the book end with Habo’s phone call to Kito?

If you loved this, you may like:

Burg, Shana. *Laugh with the Moon*. Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2012.

Lawrence, Iain. *Ghost Boy*. Delacorte Press, 2000.

Okorafor, Nnedi. *Akata Witch*. Viking Juvenile, 2011.

Vawter, Vince. *Paperboy*. Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2013. (on this year’s DCF list)

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

NPR Story on Albinism:

Burnett, John. (2012, November 30). “Tanzania's Albinos Face Constant Threat Of Attack.” *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio.

<http://www.npr.org/2012/11/30/165643518/tanzanias-albinos-face-constant-threat-of-attack>

“As Tanzania's Albino Killings Continue, Unanswered Questions Raise Fears.”

National Geographic Daily News:

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/10/131011-albino-killings-witch-doctors-tanzania-superstition/>

Threats to African Elephants. World Wildlife Fund:

http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/endangered_species/elephants/african_elephants/afelephants_threats/

James L. Swanson
“THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN SHOT!”:
THE ASSASSINATION OF JOHN F. KENNEDY
Scholastic, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-5454-9007-8. \$18.99. 336 pages.



The President Has Been Shot goes back in time to November 22, 1963, the day America mourned the death of its young and charismatic leader, President John F. Kennedy. Through engaging text, diagrams, maps, photographs, and illustrations, this historical account describes the assassination of the president who was riding in a motorcade in downtown Dallas, Texas, when he was shot by Lee Harvey Oswald.

The President Has Been Shot provides an inside look at the heartbreaking loss of a nation's hero. It touches upon Kennedy's home life, his presidency, and the political issues of the 1960s. It also provides an inside look into the life and death of Lee Harvey Oswald. This attractive and riveting title brings history to life and gives its readers a firsthand look at the shocking events that unfolded on that tragic day in 1963.

Curriculum connections:

Social Studies:

- Have students interview an adult who lived during the time of Kennedy's assassination. Have them ask the adult where he or she was when the news broke of President Kennedy's death. What was his or her reaction?
- There are many conspiracy theories related to President Kennedy's assassination. Have students research the controversy behind his assassination. Has there been any proof of a conspiracy? Explain.
- Besides the assassination, this book also makes reference to other events that took place during Kennedy's presidency such as the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the space race, and *Brown v. Board of Education*. Assign students a topic to research.

Art and/or Social Studies:

- Photography and other historical documents have played a huge role in holding on to our nation's history. Have students document their own history by creating scrapbooks, filling them with photographs, illustrations, news clippings, and other personal artifacts.

Discussion questions:

- How would today's technology have changed the way Americans learned of the assassination? What role would smartphones, cameras, and social media have played?
- Before reading this book, what, if anything, did you know about President Kennedy?
- Why was the American public so fascinated by the Kennedy family?
- The Presidential debate between Vice President Richard Nixon and Senator John F. Kennedy was the first debate to be televised. What effect did this have on the election?

If you loved this, you may like:

Bascomb, Neal. *The Nazi Hunters: How a Team of Spies and Survivors Captured the World's Most Notorious Nazi*. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2013. (older readers)

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

Fleming, Candace. *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*. Schwartz & Wade, 2008.

Floca, Brian. *Moonshot: The Flight of Apollo 11*. Atheneum/Richard Jackson Books, 2009.

Scholastic Author Page: <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/contributor/james-l-swanson>

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum Website: <http://www.jfklibrary.org/>

Amy Timberlake
ONE CAME HOME

Knopf, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-3758-6925-9. \$16.99. 272 pages.



It is 1871, and Georgie's older sister Agatha has disappeared. When the town sheriff brings home an unidentifiable body clothed in Agatha's blue-green gown, everyone but Georgie accepts that Agatha is dead. With the help of Agatha's former suitor, Billy McCabe, Georgie sets off on a dangerous journey to track down her sister and to bring her back home to Placid, Wisconsin.

Georgie, the best shot in Placid, demonstrates bravery throughout her exciting journey. She chases away a terrifying cougar, confronts counterfeiters, and even saves Billy's life. Unfortunately, her quest to discover the truth about her sister only leads to more questions when she learns that another young woman, who strongly resembles her sister, has also disappeared. When Billy is badly injured, their adventure must come to an abrupt end, and Georgie disappointingly heads home. The mystery is solved when Georgie receives a letter from Agatha, who explains that she ran away to attend college. While Georgie fails to bring her sister back home, her journey is by no means a failure. It leads her to discover many truths about the world and about herself.

Curriculum connections:

Social Studies and Science:

- By 1914, the passenger pigeon was extinct. Research the bird and why it no longer exists. Discuss steps we can take to prevent the extinction of other animals.

Media Studies:

- If this story were to take place today, how would it be different? (Take into account forensics, media, and other technology.)

Language Arts:

- From Georgie's viewpoint, write a response letter to Agatha.

Discussion questions:

- Passenger pigeons are referred to many times in the book. Why are they important to the story? Is there a special significance?
- What did you think of Agatha's decision to run away? Was it necessary? Selfish? Explain.
- If you were Georgie and saw Agatha and Billy kissing, would you tell Mr. Olmstead? Why or why not?
- How are Georgie and Agatha similar? How are they different?
- How did Georgie know that Agatha was alive?
- Is Billy a likeable character? Why or why not?

If you loved this, you may like:

Blakemore, Megan Frazer. *The Water Castle*. Walker, 2013.

Larson, Kirby. *Hattie Big Sky*. Yearling, 2008.

Stead, Rebecca. *When You Reach Me*. Yearling, 2010.

Vanderpool, Clare. *Navigating Early*. Delacorte, 2013.

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

Activity Kit/Discussion Guide:

<http://static.squarespace.com/static/503d3bee84aef2a18d298301/t/50dc95c6e4b0c2f49761da1b/1356633542483/OneCameHomeDiscussion%20guide-Timberlake.pdf>

Linda Urban
THE CENTER OF EVERYTHING

HMH Books for Young Readers, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-5477-6348-4. \$15.99. 197 pages.



For Ruby Pepperdine, the “center of everything” is on the rooftop of Pepperdine Motors in her donut-obsessed town of Bunning, New Hampshire, stargazing from the circle of her grandmother Gigi’s hug. That’s how everything is supposed to be – until Ruby messes up and things spin out of control. But she has one last hope. It all depends on what happens on Bunning Day, when the entire town will hear Ruby read her winning essay. And it depends on her twelfth birthday wish – unless she messes that up too. Can Ruby’s wish set everything straight in her topsy-turvy world?

Curriculum connections:

Literacy:

- After sharing some of the parade perspectives aloud, students could write their own short descriptions of an event that’s experienced by many people (a parade, a football game, a wedding) in that omniscient point of view, providing numerous views of the events from all different angles.
- Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.
- Describe how a narrator’s or speaker’s point of view influences how events are described.

Science:

- Star Gazing: Ruby Pepperdine and her grandmother Gigi used to climb the staircase to the flat roof of Pepperdine Motors in the town of Bunning, NH, to look at the stars. Investigate the stars and constellations above. Explore the [SkyView app](#) or [SkyWalk app](#) (for iPad,iPods,iPhones).

Social Studies:

- The Story of the Doughnut. Research the history of the doughnut. Where did it originate? Why is it so popular in the United States? Why is there a hole in the middle?
- Celebrate National Doughnut Day on June 7. Make it a party!

Culinary Arts:

- Doughnuts play a very big part in this novel. They are explored, celebrated, philosophized, and eaten. Try your hand at making homemade doughnuts with one of these 15 homemade recipes: <http://www.saveur.com/gallery/Donut-Recipes>.

Discussion questions:

- Ruby’s friend Lucy is very self-centered, but Ruby never says anything to her about it. Do you think that forgiveness is important?
- Ruby is very sad about losing her grandmother, but she finds ways to help herself, such as forming a friendship with Nero. How does her friendship with Nero help her heal and deal with her grief?
- What purpose does the legend of Captain Cornelius Bunning and his doughnuts have for Ruby’s community?

- Compare and contrast your community with Ruby's. What is similar? What is different? Could a community such as Bunning, New Hampshire really exist?
- Wishes play an important part in the book. What is the purpose of a wish? Why is Ruby so fixated on fulfilling her wishes?

If you loved this, you may like:

Books mentioned in *The Center of Everything*:

Birney, Betty. *Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs*. Atheneum, 2005.

L'Engle, Madeleine. *A Wrinkle in Time*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 1962.

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

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

Books about doughnuts:

Keller, Laurie. *Arnie the Doughnut*. Holt, 2003.

Linda Urban Books website: <http://lindaurbanbooks.com/>

Linda Urban on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/lindaurbanbooks>

Vivian Vande Velde

FROGGED

Harcourt, 2013. ISBN 978-0-5479-4215-5. \$16.99. 198 pages.



Princess Imogene, about to turn 13, is supposed to be studying the book her mother has thrust upon her: *The Art of Being A Princess*. But being neither good nor beautiful, she leaves her studies and wanders down by the pond where she finds a talking frog who claims to be a bewitched prince. Of course she helps him out by kissing him, but then SHE turns into a frog. Now what to do? Get rid of the curse by turning someone else into a frog? First she must get back to the castle to talk to her parents. But, horrors, she is kidnapped by a traveling troupe of actors who decide that she is worth more performing in their shows than she is for ransom.

Curriculum connections:

Creative Dramatics:

- Try to recreate the play that the troupe did on the road.

Language Arts:

- Do a study of retellings of “The Frog Prince.”
- Read other fractured fairy tales and discuss what works and what does not. What makes a take off funny?
- Write your own list of rules for being a princess.
- If you could turn yourself into any animal you wanted, what would you choose? Write a story about yourself as that animal.

Discussion questions:

- Is there any other way that Princess Imogene could get back to being a human being without making someone else a frog?
- If you were to write a fractured fairy tale, which fairy tale would you start with? Why?
- If you were to find yourself under a similar curse, would you ever kiss someone knowing they would become a frog?

If you loved this, you may like:

Ferris, Jean. *Once Upon a Marigold*. Harcourt, 2002.

George, Jessica Day. *Tuesdays at the Castle*. Bloomsbury, 2011.

George, Jessica Day. *Wednesdays in the Tower*. Bloomsbury, 2013.

Levine, Gail Carson. *Ella Enchanted*. HarperCollins, 1997.

Murdock, Catherine Gilbert. *Princess Ben*. Houghton, 2008.

Shurtliff, Liesl. *Rump*. Knopf, 2013.

Vande Velde, Vivian. *Curses, Inc. and Other Stories*. Harcourt, 2007.

Author website: www.vivianvandelde.com

Vince Vawter **PAPERBOY**

Random House, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-3857-4244-3. \$16.99. 224 pages.



An 11-year-old boy living in Memphis in 1959 throws the meanest fastball in town, but talking is a whole different ball game. He can barely say a word without stuttering, not even his own name. So when he takes over his best friend's paper route for the month of July, he worries about being forced to communicate with the different customers, including a housewife who drinks too much and a retired merchant marine who seems to know just about everything.

The paper route poses challenges, but it's a run-in with the neighborhood junkman, a bully and thief, that stirs up real trouble – and puts the boy's life, as well as that of his family's devoted housekeeper, in danger.

Curriculum connections:

Science:

- Interview a Speech and Language Pathologist. Prepare a list of questions that will help you understand the causes of stuttering. Can it be cured? What are some strategies that can help someone cope with stuttering? Do some of the things that the paperboy tries (breathing, avoiding tricky sounds) help, or have there been improvements in the treatment of stuttering since the 1950s?

History:

- Research racial segregation and civil rights in Memphis, Tennessee in the 1950s. What were some of the major events and turning points?

Geography:

- In the story, the boy takes over his best friend Rat's newspaper route for the summer. Imagine that you have a paper route for the summer, too. Using GoogleEarth, create a map of your route. How long is it? What are some interesting places along the way? How long would it take you to walk it? Bike it?

Culinary Arts:

- The cuisine of the South is so distinctive and special. Research foods that the paperboy and his family would have enjoyed in Memphis, Tennessee. Prepare a pecan pie (one of Vince Vawter's favorites) and a pitcher of sweet tea. What are some foods that your family enjoys? What are some foods that are popular in our region?

Discussion questions:

- A relevant subplot in the book is the confusion brought on by the harshly segregated Memphis of the 1950s. The boy cannot understand why his black housekeeper, a woman he loves and respects, is treated so badly by people of both races. What is his relationship with his housekeeper?
- There's a passage in the book where the young paperboy talks about his "stuttering scars." He tries to convince himself that if he has enough of them, the stuttering doesn't hurt as much. What does he mean by this?

- The paperboy struggles with his stuttering and the effect it has on communicating with others. How does he manage to discover his voice, in spite of his difficulty in speaking?
- In life, everyone has some kind of struggle. Internal struggles are private issues, which others only know about if the individual chooses to share them. External struggles are there for all the world to see, whether that person likes it or not. What are some of your struggles? How do you cope with them?

If you loved this, you may like:

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

Gantos, Jack. *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 1998.

Spinelli, Jerry. *Loser*. Scholastic, 2003.

Ursu, Anne. *The Real Boy*. Walden Pond Press, 2013.

Wyss, Johann David. *The Swiss Family Robinson*. (Vince Vawter's favorite book as a child)

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

Author on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/VVAWTER>

Stuttering Foundation: <http://www.stutteringhelp.org/>

FRIENDS: The National Organization for Young People Who Stutter:

<http://www.friendswhostutter.org/>

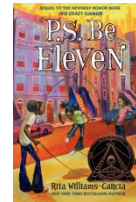
Paperboy book trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=K9mudUccJKk

Rita Williams-Garcia

P.S. BE ELEVEN

Amistad/HarperCollins. ISBN 978-0-0619-3862-7. \$16.99. 274 pages.



Eleven-year-old Delphine and her sisters from the Newbery Honor book *One Crazy Summer* are back in Brooklyn, which feels different after a summer at Black Panther camp in Oakland, CA. Delphine now finds her grandmother's old-fashioned views on race oppressive. She's shocked to learn her father is in love, and bewildered when her uncle returns from Vietnam so changed. Even the sisters she's always looked after are getting more independent. With her first dance and a Jackson Five concert on the horizon, Delphine is on her way to growing up, ready or not, in this vivid novel steeped in the music and politics of the late 1960s.

Curriculum connections:

Literacy:

- Dear Big Ma. Write three letters to Big Ma, one from each sister's point of view at the close of the book. For inspiration, see Vonetta and Fern's letters to Cecile on pages 54–55 and Delphine's letters throughout the book. Use formal letter format with a date, salutation, and closing.
- The Great Debate. Delphine and her classmates have a debate in which the two sides take turns of two minutes per speaker. Each speaker has notes and uses the two minutes to make their strongest points. Have students come up with two-sided topics related to their lives. Have them prepare notes and then hold short debates.

Social Studies/Current Events:

- Women in Power. In 1968, women held few political offices. Have students research how things stand now. Assign states to students to find out if the state has or has had a female governor. Have some students find out how many women are in the U.S. House of Representatives and in the Senate. Have students discuss why women don't hold more offices and what steps could be taken to improve the numbers.

Music/Inquiry:

- In Rita's own words: For homework, google the Jackson Five on Hollywood Palace. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07Kzo6rjzkU>
- Watch the Jackson Five, singing Who's Lovin' You: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2xc8xZ0tV0>
- And also, Sugar, Sugar by The Archies: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9nE2spOw_o#aid=P-tOzL44tL8

Discussion questions:

- Delphine's mother Celine always signs her letters "P.S. Be Eleven." Why did Celine need to remind Delphine to enjoy being 11 years old? Do you ever feel pressure to behave older than you are? Can you point to shows, books, video games where kids dress and act older than their age?
- Talk about the difference between our era and the 1960s. While the times and issues are different, how does this book mirror what is happening in the world today?
- Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern must save half of \$24.00 for Jackson Five concert tickets,

public transportation, and refreshments. What do the prices say about the times the characters live in? Calculate how much money is needed for concert tickets, transportation, and refreshments to see your favorite group perform.

- Do you or anyone you know have to split your time between two parents' homes? What kinds of challenges does this situation present? What challenges cause Delphine to struggle?
- Discuss the girls' father's ultimate decision about the concert tickets. It's a hard choice and one with which a parent is constantly faced. Should parents smooth over the bumps of life for their kids or should they start helping them cope with the inevitable disappointments and heartbreaks of life?

If you loved this, you may like:

Curtis, Christopher Paul. *The Mighty Miss Malone*. Wendy Lamb, 2012.

Hamilton, Virginia. *Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush*. Philomel, 1982.

Kadohata, Cynthia. *Kira-Kira*. Atheneum, 2006.

Voigt, Cynthia. *Homecoming*. Ballantine, 1981.

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

Author interview with her publisher about her inspiration:

http://files.harpercollins.com/HCChildrens/OMM/Media/PSBeEleven_AuthorQA.pdf

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)



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