

# **Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award**



**2019 - 2020**

## **BOOK REVIEWS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Vermont Department of Libraries  
Barre, VT

<https://bit.ly/2m5EyfP>

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# About This Guide

This guide was compiled by members of the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award Reading Committee. Our intent is to provide a booklet that will support the use of the Dorothy's List 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 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 Dorothy's List readers choose and read books on their own, the intent of the questions is to promote discussion among readers of Dorothy's List 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 the author does not have a website, check the website of the publisher of the book. Their author biographies are usually easy to access and often quite informative.

## Compilers:

- Annie Brabazon, *Grand Isle School*
- Melissa Curtis, *Pawlet, Vermont*
- Charles H. Farrell IV, *Grand Isle School*
- Sacha Krawczyk, *Fletcher Memorial Library (Ludlow)*
- Carole Oglesby, *Malletts Bay School (Colchester)*
- Rebecca Rupp- Committee Chair, *Swanton, Vermont*
- Nicole Westbom, *Kellogg-Hubbard Library (Montpelier)*
- Laurie Williams, *Newbury Elementary School*

**Katherine Arden**  
**SMALL SPACES**  
**Putnam, 2018.**  
**ISBN: 978-0525515029.**  
**\$16.99, 224 pages.**

Eleven-year old Ollie was biking home when she encounters a distraught woman near a river. The woman threatens to throw an old book into the river waters. On an impulse Ollie snatches the book and escapes the woman.

Later when she reads the book, Ollie is entranced by a strange tale of love, death, and a deal made with a mysterious “smiling man”.

On the very next day, Ollie and her classmates go to a local farm for an autumn field trip. Things begin to get really strange after Ollie discovers a small graveyard that contains gravestones etched with the names of the people described in the old book.

Ollie and her friends can only hope to survive the field trip if they keep to the small spaces and heed the advice from a “broken” digital wristwatch.

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***Art:***

- In *Small Spaces*, Ollie, Brian and Coco notice that the scarecrows resemble their classmates and chaperones. Create a scarecrow that represents you. The scarecrow can either be drawn or if you are ambitious you can create an actual scarecrow. The scarecrow could wear one of your favorite outfits. Your classroom or library can be decorated with your creations.

#### ***Language Arts:***

- Explore a book’s setting using *Small Spaces*. Katherine Arden uses many details to create the book’s setting. Ask your students to list all the iconic Vermont details that are mentioned in the story. Have them be specific.

#### ***Discussion Questions:***

- Why was the woman throwing her book into the river?
- What was the significance of Ollie’s watch? What messages was it sending? Where were the messages coming from?
- Who were the scarecrows?
- How did Coco surprise Ollie? How did Coco prove her worth to the trio?
- Who was the “smiling man? What did he want?

#### **Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:  
<https://www.katherinearden.com>

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

- Auxier, Jonathan. *The Night Gardener*. Amulet Books, 2014.
- Black, Holly. *Doll Bones*. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2013.
- Gaiman, Neil. *The Graveyard Book*. Harper Collins, 2008.
- Hahn, Mary Downing. *The Old Willis Place*. Clarion, 2004.
- White, J.A.. *Nightbooks*. Katherine Tegen Books, 2018.

**Jonathan Auxier**

**SWEEP: THE STORY OF A GIRL AND HER MONSTER**

**Abrams, 2018.**

**ISBN: 978-1419731402.**

**\$18.99, 368 pages.**

Nan, a young chimney climber in Victorian London, has to carry on without her protector the “Sweep” when he disappears, leaving behind only his hat and a small piece of coal. The coal comes to life in the form of a golem named Charlie who saves Nan from a chimney fire and continues to use his strength to protect and help others suffering from the harsh and grim realities of nineteenth century London.

When Nan learns of the death of a special young chimney climber, she involves Charlie and her friend Toby, a Jewish refugee, and Miss Bloom, a teacher, to orchestrate a protest to challenge the unjust exploitation of child workers. Charlie’s unending desire to help others takes its toll. Nan realizes she must protect Charlie too and learns to save herself by saving others. Combining fantasy, history and Jewish folklore, this is a heartwarming, funny and adventurous tale of love, friendship and loyalty.

**Curriculum Connections:**

***Social Studies:***

- Child Labor
  - Research child labor and child labor laws in Victorian England and compare them to child labor issues and laws protecting children today.
  - Topics include: International Workers Day; the Chimney Sweepers Act of 1865; Lewis Hines photographs; Iqbal Masih; the declaration of the rights of the child; child labor in agriculture.

The Library of Congress has lesson plans focused on child labor using primary sources.

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/child-labor/>

***Language Arts:***

- Folklore
  - Research and explore Jewish folklore surrounding the Golem and its presence today in fantasy literature.
- Story Soup
  - In the author notes at the end of *Sweep*, Jonathan Auxier talks about the ingredients that came together for him to write Nan and Charlie’s story: a golem figurine, a swaddling cloth, a library card and a book about climbing boys. Write your own story using “ingredients” in your environment or selected at random.

***Discussion Questions:***

- How is life for children in Victorian London similar to or different from life for children today?

- Who is your favorite character in *Sweep* and why?
- The theme of caring and protecting one another runs throughout this story. Give examples of the ways in which Nan, Charlie, Toby and others protect one another throughout the story.
- What would you like a Golem to protect you from?
- What is Victorian London like? Find examples in the story that describe and help you understand the setting of the story.
- Nan discovers that you save yourself by saving others. Can you think of examples of this from the story? From your own life?

**Author's Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see

<https://www.thescop.com/>

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

- Applegate, Katherine. *The One and Only Ivan*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2015.
- Avi. *Crispin: The Cross of Lead*. Hyperion Books for Children, 2002.
- Barnhill, Kelly, *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*. Algonquin Young Readers, 2016.
- Bartok, Mira, *The Wonderling*. Candlewick Press, 2017.
- Doyle, Catherine. *The Storm Keeper's Island*. Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2019.
- Oppel, Kenneth. *Inkling*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2018.
- Woods, Matilda. *The Boy, the Bird & the Coffin Maker*. Philomel Books, 2018.

**Robert Beatty**  
**WILLA OF THE WOOD**  
**Disney-Hyperion, 2018.**  
**ISBN: 978-1368005845.**  
**\$16.99, 384 pages.**

As a night-spirit, Willa acts as a talented thief for her clan. She routinely creeps into the homes of humans to steal their interesting artifacts. The pillaged items are then presented to the leader of the Faeran people.

It is risky work. Night-spirits have been killed during these night forays. On one such mission, Willa is accidentally wounded by a human. She is surprised by the human's reaction. He appears to be guilty and ashamed that he wounded Willa and he displays honest concern over her injuries.

Willa begins to question her beliefs and sets out on a dangerous mission to find the truth. Are all humans bad? Is the clan's leader honest with his people? And most importantly: will her clan survive?

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***Environmental Studies:***

- As Willa examines the artifacts in the human's house she is upset by the amount of wood and plant products that the humans waste. She feels that trees may have been needlessly cut destroyed to create the house and many of its contents. Take an inventory of what is around you. What natural resources were used to create the common items that we use? Are we wasteful? How?

#### ***History:***

- The author never directly identifies the setting of the time period of the story. As you read the story collect geographical and historical (human) inferences and research them to try to identify when the story takes place.
- The *jaetter* were sent to collect human artifacts. The leader of Willa's people cherished these artifacts and carefully studied the functions of the artifacts. Collect some obscure tools or kitchen gadgets for your students to study. Have the students theorize the uses of the artifact. Some suggested kitchen tools could include: zester, apple corer, baster, butter curler, cherry pitter, egg piercer, fish scaler, lame, lemon reamer, lobster pick, etc. Workshop tools could include an awl, nail set, spokeshave, etc.

#### ***Discussion Questions:***

- Willa was a *jaetter*. What was a *jaetter*? Were her actions good or bad? Why?
- What was Willa's relationship with nature?
- What was the importance of Willa's grandmother to the colony? To Willa?



- What did the black panther symbolize in the story?
- How did Willa's relationship with the humans change through the book?
- After the colony burned, do you believe the culture survived? Why?

**Author's Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:  
<http://robertbeattybooks.com/books/willa-of-the-wood>

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

- Anderson, John David. *Granted*. Walden Pond Press, 2018.
- Barnhill, Kelly. *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*. Algonquin Young Readers, 2016.
- Brown, Peter. *The Wild Robot*. Little, Brown & Company, 2016.
- Hiaasen, Carl. *Squirm*. Knopf, 2018.
- Unsworth, Tania. *The One Safe Place*. Algonquin Young Readers, 2014.

**Lisa Jenn Bigelow**  
**DRUM ROLL, PLEASE**  
**HarperCollins, 2018.**  
**ISBN: 978-0062791146.**  
**\$16.99, 320 pages.**

In Melissa “Melly” Goodwin's mind, she and her best friend Olivia are about to experience the most epic summer ever at Camp Rockaway, a music camp located deep in the woods of Michigan. It starts looking like Melly’s dream summer may become more of a nightmare, when her parents announce the day before camp begins that they are getting a divorce. Add to that a scary band instructor, Olivia’s sudden infatuation with “Noel” a cute fellow camper, and Melly’s own confusing feelings towards Adeline, a girl to whom she finds herself drawn. Will Melly’s summer hit all the right notes or be a flat out disaster?

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***Music:***

- Learn about the drums! The drums are a fascinating instrument that's origin dates back to 5500 B.C.! <https://kids.kiddle.co/Drum>
- The group “Recycled Percussion” uses found objects as instruments in their band. Check out their amazing performances. <https://recycledpercussion.com/videos/>
- Make a DIY band- Using recycled material have students build instruments and then create their own bands. What’s a great band without a great name, so each band should pick an awesome name and prepare a performance to share with the class. <https://artscraftsymom.com/diy-musical-instruments-for-kids-to-make-and-play/>
- Create the perfect summer playlist of 10 songs including artist names. Write one or two sentences explaining why you chose each one. You can chose real songs by artists that you like, or make a list of pretend songs and artists. Ex. Rocking Summer Nights- By the S’mores.

#### ***Writing Prompts:***

- What would be your dream summer camp experience? What type of camp would it be (music, sports, nature etc.). Who would go to camp with you? Where would the camp be located? How would you get there? What would the accommodations be like (tents, dorm room, cabins?) How long would your stay be? Write a detailed description of your perfect camp answering all the questions above, while adding any additional information you see fit.

#### ***Social Studies:***

- Have the students make a map of their perfect summer camp. <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/map-making>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education/map-skills-elementary-students/>

**Science:**

- Learn about the fascinating science of sound!  
<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/science-sound/>

**Discussion Questions:**

- Why do you think Melly’s parents waited until the day before camp to tell her they were getting a divorce? Do you think this was fair of them?
- How would you feel if a teacher or instructor gave you the assignment to stare into a classmates eyes for 4 minutes a day? Why do you think Donna gave this task to Melly and David? Did it work?
- What does the saying “to face the music” mean? How does Melly have to “face the music” when it comes to her feelings for Adeline?
- Melly and Olivia are best friends at the beginning of the story. What happens that tests their friendship? Do you think that they will ever be as close as they once were?
- Melly get’s frequent letters from her mom while she is at camp. Why do you think it takes her father so long to write? How does Melly feel when his letter finally arrives?

**Other Resources:**

- 10 Facts About *Drum Roll Please*  
<https://www.yayomg.com/drum-roll-please/>
- Great LGBTQ Inclusive Picture & Middle Grade Books  
<http://www.welcomingschools.org/pages/books-inclusive-of-LGBTQ-family-members-and-characters/>
- Create Inclusive, Affirming Schools for LGBTQ Students  
<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/blog-posts/john-depasquale/2017/Create-Inclusive-Affirming-Schools-for-LGBT-Students/>

**Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:  
<https://lisajennbigelow.com/books/drum-roll-please/>

**If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Blake, Ashley Herring. *Ivy Aberdeen’s Letter to the World*. Little, Brown, 2018.

- Dee, Barbara. *Star Crossed*. Aladdin, 2017.
- Kelly, Erin Entrada. *Blackbird Fly*. Greenwillow Books, 2015.
- Perez, Cecelia C. *First Rule of Punk*. Viking, 2017.

**Ann Braden**

**THE BENEFITS OF BEING AN OCTOPUS**

**Sky Pony, 2018.**

**ISBN: 978-1510737488.**

**\$16.99, 256 pages.**

Seventh-grader Zoey has her hands full as she takes care of her much younger siblings after school every day while her mom works her shift at the pizza parlor. Not that her mom seems to appreciate it. At least there's Lenny, her mom's boyfriend—they all get to live in his nice, clean trailer.

At school, Zoey tries to stay under the radar. Her only friend Fuchsia has her own issues, and since they're in an entirely different world than the rich kids, it's best if no one notices them. Unfortunately, she's not totally invisible, and one of her teachers forces her to join the debate club. Even though Zoey resists participating, debate ultimately leads her to see things in a new way: her mom's relationship with Lenny, Fuchsia's situation, and her own place in this town of people who think they're better than she. Can Zoey find the courage to speak up, even if it means risking the most stable home she's ever had?

**Curriculum Connections:**

***Science:***

- Have your own classroom debate about which animal is best. Have students do the research and present their answers with supporting details to the class.

***Social Studies:***

- Define poverty and explore what it looks like around the world. Discuss necessities vs wants. Have students sort through premade index cards of necessities vs. wants.

***Discussion Questions:***

- Zoey often thinks how much easier things would be if she were an octopus. If you had eight arms what would you do with them?
- Discuss Lenny's relationship with Zoey's mom. How does he treat her? Is this a positive relationship? How does this relationship impact the family? Is it fair? How do you think Zoey's mom thinks Lenny treats her? How would this make you feel?
- How do you think Zoey feels about being poor? How is Zoey treated at school because of this? How is her life different outside of school because of this?
- When Zoey asks Connor about his tattoo, he tells her the story of the chakana and the moment he had after. He felt he wasn't running away from, but running *to* what he

needed to find. It was, “A moment when everything is suddenly clear.” Think of a similar moment that you have had in your life. Design a tattoo that could represent that moment.

***Other Resources:***

- Ann Braden has a full educators’ guide available to download on her website for free that is full of lesson plans using common core standards, discussion questions and more.  
<http://www.curiouscitydpw.com/download/17316/>

**Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

<http://annbradenbooks.com/>

**If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Auxier, Jonathan. *Sweep: The Story of a Girl and Her Monster*. Abrams, 2018.
- Benjamin, Ali. *The Thing about Jellyfish*. Little, Brown, 2015.
- DiCamillo, Kate. *The Magician's Elephant*. Candlewick, 2009.
- Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *Esperanza Rising*. Scholastic, 2000.

**Nancy Castaldo**

**BACK FROM THE BRINK: SAVING ANIMALS FROM EXTINCTION**

**HMH, 2018.**

**ISBN: 978-0544953437.**

**\$17.99, 176 pages.**

Activists and animal-lovers alike will be inspired by this non-fiction resource about saving endangered species, complete with full color photography. This book discusses seven threatened species, the threats to their survival, and the ways scientists and other concerned people have worked to pull them away from extinction. The book also emphasizes the interdependence of life on the planet and how the elimination of one species can impact a whole ecosystem.

**Curriculum Connections**

***Social Studies:***

- Contact Congress to support the Endangered Species Act. Follow the link to a form to contact Vermont Representatives in Congress. Be sure to personalize the message and emphasize the continued importance of the Endangered Species Act. <https://act.nrdc.org/letter/congress-gut-endangered-species-act>
- Adopt an endangered animal.

***Science:***

- Try to be a conservationist with the simulation found at [www.condorcountrygame.com](http://www.condorcountrygame.com).
- In the back of the book, the author lists several sites to watch endangered species. Try watching one of these feeds at the same time every day and recording your observations.
- Think about the species of animals that we commonly see in Vermont. Try to predict what would happen if one became extinct. Draw a map with the animal at the center and think about connections that the species has with other animals and plant life. Draw these other impacted species around your chosen animal. Would there be more impacts that are not directly connected to your chosen animal?
- Visit the author's website listed below. She continues to update with further reading and ideas for learning.

***Discussion Questions:***

- Which animal did you connect to the most while you were reading? Why?
- The Endangered Species Act is often under scrutiny. Why do you think this is? Is it still a valuable tool?

**Author's Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

<http://nancycastaldo.com/>

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

- Appelt, Kathi. *The True Blue Scouts of Sugar Man Swamp*. Antheneum Books, 2013.
- Castaldo, Nancy. *Beastly Brains*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017.
- George, Jean Craighead. *Julie of the Wolves*. HarperCollins, 1972.
- Thimmesh, Catherine, *Camp Panda: Helping Cubs Return to the Wild*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018.



**Leslie Connor**

**THE TRUTH AS TOLD BY MASON BUTTLE**

**Katherine Tegen, 2018.**

**ISBN: 978-0062491435.**

**\$16.99, 336 pages.**

Mason Buttle and his family are grieving. Mason lost his mom to an accident and Mason's best friend, Benny Kilmartin, died under suspicious circumstances. Benny's death in Mason's orchard continues to be investigated by Lieutenant Baird and Mason seems to be the focus of the investigation.

Mason has a difficult time understanding the whole situation. He is big for his age and he has a medical condition that leaves him extremely sweaty. He also has a difficult time reading and writing.

Mason finds solace from his grief and neighborhood bullies by visiting his school's social work office (SWOOP) and by making a new friend.

*The Truth As Told By Mason Buttle* is a story of redemption. Readers will rejoice as Mason and his family gain understanding and heal.

**Curriculum Connections:**

***Art:***

- Mason can see emotions as colors. Have students select crayons of different colors and have them brainstorm emotions that might be associated with the selected colors.
- Explore famous examples of primitive cave art from around the world. How does the art from the different regions of the world compare and contrast?

***Language Arts:***

- Mason had saved and shared an acrostic poem that he had written with Benny. Have your students write acrostic poems using- MASON BUTTLE. Have them explore Mason's character traits. Use some of the other characters' names.

***Cooking:***

- Mason's grandmother was famous for her apple pies and then she switched to creating apple crisps. Have your students research recipes and prepare the best one.

***Discussion Questions:***

- Do you believe Lt. Baird effectively communicates with Mason? Why?
- How do the main characters deal with the deaths of their loved ones? How are the folks similar and different with their reactions to grief?
- How are Ms. Blinny's interactions with Mason different from Lt. Baird's interactions with Mason?

- How does Mason use “the Dragon”?
- How does Moonie react to Matt Drinker? How does Moonie react to Mason? Why the difference? How does Matt react to Moonie’s affection to Mason?

**Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

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

**If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Anderson, John David. *Ms. Bixby’s Last Day*. Walden Pond Press, 2016.
- Bauer, Joan. *Close to Famous*. Viking, 2011.
- Cheng, Jack. *See You in the Cosmos*. Dial, 2017.
- Pla, Sally J. *The Someday Birds*. Harper Collins, 2017.
- Schmidt, Gary D. *Orbiting Jupiter*. Clarion, 2015.

**Kate DiCamillo**  
**LOUISIANA’S WAY HOME**  
**Candlewick, 2018.**  
**ISBN: 978-0763694630.**  
**\$16.99, 240 pages.**

Louisiana Elephante’s world gets turned upside down the night her Granny announces that the day of reckoning has arrived and they must leave their home immediately. For Louisiana that means leaving behind her best friends Raymie and Beverly as well as her beloved cat, Archie. As fate would have it, Granny’s mouth full of bad teeth land them in Richford, Georgia, a place that Louisiana at first desperately wants to leave. As Louisiana begins to settle into the rhythm of the town and learns more about her past, she begins asking herself what is the true meaning of home?

*Themes:* Courage, Tenacity, Forgiveness, Trust

**Curriculum Connections:**

- Find great ideas for incorporating *Louisiana's Way Home* into your classroom by visiting the Candlewick Press Teacher Guide:  
[http://www.candlewick.com/book\\_files/0763694630.btg.1.pdf](http://www.candlewick.com/book_files/0763694630.btg.1.pdf)

***Science:***

- Clarence is an extremely special bird. Learn more about the amazing crow by reading: *Crow Smarts: Inside the Brain of the World's Brightest Bird (Scientists in the Field Series)*. By Pamela S. Turner. HMH Books for Young Readers, 2016
- Make a fun crow craft. <https://kidsactivitiesblog.com/58660/make-craft-stick-crows/>

***Writing:***

- Louisiana’s Granny lies to Louisiana about being her grandmother and about her family. Do you think this was the right thing to do? Is it ever ok to lie? Why or why not?
- Elf-Ear, Nebraska is not a real place, but it has a very creative name. Think of an unusual name for a town and write a story about how it got its name.

***Discussion Questions:***

- Why does Granny tell Louisiana that they have to leave Florida immediately? What is a “day of reckoning?”
- When Granny is not well enough to drive, Louisiana decides to drive instead. Do you think she made the right choice? Why or why not?
- What makes Burke Allen a good friend?

- Louisiana warned “that a great deal of this story is sad.” (pg. 9) Do you agree or disagree? Explain why.
- Louisiana has a chance to return to Florida and live with one of her friend’s family. Why do you think she chose to stay with the Burkes?
- What surprised you about Granny’s letter?

***Other Resources:***

- Video of Kate DiCamillo discussing *Louisiana’s Way Home*:  
<https://nerdybookclub.wordpress.com/2018/09/17/video-kate-dicamillo-on-louisianas-way-home/>
- Video interview with Kate DiCamillo  
<http://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/dicamillo>

**Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

<https://www.katedicamillo.com/>

**If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Bauer, Joan. *Close to Famous*. Viking, 2011.
- DiCamillo, Kate. *Raymie Nightingale*. Candlewick, 2016.
- O’Connor, Barbara. *Wish*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016.
- Gemeinhart, Dan. *The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise*. Henry Holt & Company, 2019.

**Susan Fletcher**

**JOURNEY OF THE PALE BEAR**

**Margaret K. McElderry, 2018.**

**ISBN: 978-1534420779.**

**\$16.99, 304 pages.**

In this riveting adventure set in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, 12-year-old Arthur – in hopes of claiming an inheritance in Wales – sets out from Norway on a ship bringing a polar bear as a gift from the Norwegian King Haakon to England’s King Henry. Though the bear terrorizes the crew, Arthur forms a bond with it. A wonderful coming-of-age story based on the true tale of a polar bear who lived in London’s Tower Menagerie.

**Curriculum Connections:**

***Social Studies:***

- Learn more about London’s Tower Menagerie. It was founded in 1204 by King John – the king who gave Robin Hood so much trouble – but who also imported London’s first lion.
- What can you find out about King Henry III of England or King Haakon IV of Norway?
- Trace Arthur’s journey on the map. Where has he come from and where is he going? ;,
- What was life like in the 13<sup>th</sup> century? Make a poster, illustrated booklet, or presentation. What were houses like? What did people wear? Eat? What kinds of jobs did they have? Did kids go to school? And what was life really like on board a 13<sup>th</sup>-century ship?
- Arthur’s father’s family comes from Wales. Locate Wales on the map and find out more about Welsh history, language, and culture. (The Welsh national flag has a red dragon on it. Make one of your own!)

***Science:***

- Learn more about polar bears. From the World Wildlife Foundation, see these 11 Facts You Didn’t Know About Polar Bears: <https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/11-facts-you-didnt-know-about-polar-bears>
- Polar bear habitat is now under serious threat from climate change. Find out more about it. Visit Polar Bears International for petitions and projects to reduce carbon emissions and help save the bears. <http://polarbearsinternational.org>
- What do you know about the Arctic?
- From the National Snow & Ice Data Center, see: <https://nsidc.org/cryosphere/arctic-meteorology/index.html>.

***Language Arts:***

- Is *Journey of the Pale Bear* more effective because it's based on a true story? Pick an exciting event from history and write a fictionalized short story of your own based on it.

***Math:***

- How big is a polar bear? How big is a polar bear's footprint compared to your footprint?

***Arts and crafts:***

- Make snow dough (2 cups cornstarch, 1/3 – 1/2 cup vegetable oil, 3-4 T. silver glitter) and use it to create a polar bear diorama.

***Discussion Questions:***

- From Simon & Schuster, see this [Reading Group Guide](#) for *Journey of the Pale Bear*.
- When the letter came to Arthur's mother from his father's family in Wales, no one could read it. How would life be different if you didn't know how to read?
- Why do you think Arthur was able to form a bond with the bear?
- An important theme in *Journey of the Pale Bear* is freedom. How is that addressed in the book? Is it right to keep animals in cages? What kind of cages do people sometimes feel themselves to be in? What about Arthur? King Henry?
- Why does Arthur protect Ottar, even though Ottar is a supporter of the bully, Hauk?
- What's a birthright? Are there different kinds of birthrights? Does the bear have a birthright?
- After the disappointment of the letter, why does Arthur want so badly to see the bear?

***Other Resources:***

- Author Interview:  
<https://www.crackingthecover.com/15172/susan-fletcher-journey-of-the-pale-bear/>

**Author's Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:  
<https://www.susanfletcher.com/>

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

- Desmond, Jenni. *The Polar Bear*. Enchanted Lion, 2016.
- Morpurgo, Michael. *An Elephant in the Garden*. Square Fish, 2013.
- Pullman, Philip. *The Golden Compass*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1996.
- Woodruff, Elvira. *The Ravenmaster's Secret: Escape from the Tower of London*. Scholastic, 2003.

**Whitney Gardner**

**FAKE BLOOD**

**Simon and Schuster, 2018.**

**ISBN: 9781-418495578.**

**\$21.99, 336 pages.**

AJ has been wondering for years how to get ultra-cool Nia's attention. When he finds out about her obsession with vampire lore, he decides to try something *really* different-- he pretends to be a vampire. As they work together on a project, they become friends. That is, until AJ's plan works better than he predicted and Nia reveals that she sees herself as a *vampire slayer*. How can AJ convince her that it is not her destiny to hunt him?

**Curriculum Connections:**

***Geography & History:***

- Nia and AJ research Transylvania, because of the connection to vampire lore. Geography and historical context can be huge factors in a story. Think about horror or fantasy stories that you know. Find out where one story is set and when. Write a list of ways that the setting has an influence on the plot of the story.

***Art:***

- On the last page of the book, Whitney Gardner added a "Hall of Fame," people who have supported her. Create your own Hall of Fame, featuring your own style of illustration.

***Literature:***

- Several spoof versions of books are featured throughout the story, i.e. *Mary Potter: Don't Mess with Witches*. Think about one of your favorite books. Create the cover of a spoof version of the book.
- Could this book have a sequel? Write a short story featuring AJ and Nia teaming up to fight a new fantastical enemy.

***Discussion Questions:***

- The dialogue between characters is an important part of this book. How does AJ interact with his sister? His friends? Do you think these relationships and interactions are realistically portrayed?
- Nia is fascinated with the lore surrounding vampires. What other types of stories inspire deep connection or obsession? For example, have you ever discussed what Hogwarts house with which you identify or researched Greek Myths after reading Percy Jackson?

**Author's Website:**



For more information about the book and author, see:  
<http://heywhitney.com/>

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

- Anderson, M.T. *The Assassination of Brangwain Spurge*. Candlewick, 2018.
- Alvarez, Lorena. *Nightlights*. Nobrow Press, 2017.
- McCoola, Marika. *Baba Yaga's Assistant*. Candlewick, 2015.
- Ostertag, Molly Knox. *The Witch Boy*. Graphix, 2017
- Stevenson, Noelle. *Nimona*. HarperTeen, 2015.

**Shari Green**

**MISSING MIKE**

**Pajama Press, 2018.**

**ISBN: 978-1772780451.**

**\$16.95, 245 pages.**

Eleven-year-old Cara Donovan is devastated when encroaching wildfires force her family to quickly evacuate their home before she can find her beloved one-eyed dog, Mike Wasowsky. With only her “just in case backpack” hastily stuffed with a few clothing items and two crossword puzzle books, Cara’s family narrowly escapes the fires. Temporarily relocated with a host family in a neighboring community, Cara befriends Jewel, the host family’s foster daughter, and enlists her help to find Mike. Cara is steadfast in her search; faced with so much loss, Cara can’t - and won’t - give up on Mike. Her perseverance and the people she encounters as she searches for Mike leads Cara to discover the importance of community and the true meaning of home.

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***Language Arts:***

- Writing prompts. Throughout the story the author includes the “what if” thoughts of Cara as she tries to imagine what has happened to Mike after being left behind in the wildfires. Have students free write “what ifs” of their own, imagining different scenarios of hope for Mike.
- The original title of this book was One Hundred Words for Home. Cara loves crossword puzzles and creates a long list for the crossword puzzle clue, “five letter words for home.” See what words, five letters or more, students can come up with for home and have them write about or discuss their choices.

#### ***Science:***

- Part of Shari Green’s inspiration for Missing Mike came as she was imagining this story, British Columbia and California were in the height of the worst-ever wildfire season. NASA and The California Institute of Technology’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory “Science of Wildfires” page has information and links to two lesson plan ideas for kids to solve fire science problems using math and data collection.
  - Science of Wildfires page: <https://go.nasa.gov/2QT7btf>
  - Lesson plans:
    - Fired Up Over Math: Studying Wildfires from Space  
<https://go.nasa.gov/2vbgNqC>
    - Pixels on Fire  
<https://go.nasa.gov/2IryNVJ>

#### ***Discussion Questions:***

- Why did Mike have one eye?

- Who and what helped Cara understand the meaning of home?
- What were some of the things Cara imagined might have happened to Mike after he was left behind?
- What would you have done if you were in Cara's situation?

**Author's Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

<https://sharigreen.com/>

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

- Gemeinhart, Dan *Some Kind of Courage*. Scholastic Press, 2016.
- Martin, Ann M. *Everything for a Dog*. Feiwel and Friends, 2009.
- Martin, Ann M. *Rain Reign*. Feiwel and Friends., 2014.
- Pennypacker, Sara. *Pax*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2016
- Pyron, Bobbie. *A Dog's Way Home*. HarperCollins, 2011.
- Tolan, Stephanie S. *Listen!* HarperCollins, 2006.

**Tommy Greenwald**  
**GAME CHANGER**  
**Amulet Books, 2018.**  
**ISBN: 978-141973143.**  
**\$16.99, 272 pages.**

An accident at the end of preseason football practice leaves 13-year-old Teddy Youngblood with a brain injury and in a coma...or was it an accident? Rumors swirl as Teddy, the team, and the town try to recover, and while Teddy is unable to share what he knows, there are plenty of others who just aren't willing to. What really happened at the Rookie Rumble? Will anyone find the courage to tell the truth?

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***Health/Wellness:***

- Chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, is the medical term for damage to the brain that occurs after repeated blunt impact, like head tackles in football. Is football the only sport where head injuries can occur? Explore CTE and its connection to concussions.
- Interview coaches, trainers, and PE teachers about how they try to keep young athletes safe from brain injuries and the protocols they use for assessing a brain injury during practices and competitions.

#### ***Social/Emotional:***

- The Rookie Rumble and Hit Parade put pressure on younger athletes to harm each other in order to impress older players. Invite the school counselor in to review this “fictional” situation with students and explore ways the younger players could have tried to stand up for change.

#### ***Social Studies:***

- Research the average salaries of professional athletes versus other professions: doctors, presidents, lawyers, research scientists, teachers, farmers. Hold a debate: are professional athletes “worth” the salaries they earn? Why or why not?

#### ***Language Arts:***

- The book starts with “Winning the Walthorne Way,” a manifesto for what Wildcat football team members should believe and hold important. Write a similar manifesto for your school as a whole or your school’s sports teams. What does your school hold important? What are student expectations for each other?

#### ***Discussion Questions:***

- How would you describe the format the author used to write the story? Why do you think he chose to write the story the way he did? Do think it was a good choice? Why or why not?
- Describe the culture around Walthorne Wildcats football. What does the team and town value most? How do you think that culture might have contributed to Teddy's injury?
- The doctor instructs Teddy's family to talk to him because even though he can't respond, he can hear them. The doctor also instructs them to "stay positive and strong," "try not to sound upset or scared," and to "talk about anything you want, but stay upbeat." How successful do you feel Teddy's family is at following those instructions? Share specific parts of the text to support your opinion.
- In what ways does the content of the Facebook thread evolve and change throughout the story? At one point, someone posts, "why does wanting the truth make people jerks?" What do you think about that?
- Who do you think is ultimately responsible for Teddy's injury? Why?
- Teddy's football nickname is *Game Changer* because he was "always the one who made the difference." Given the ending of the story, how might that stay the same even if he never plays football again?

**Author's Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

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

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

- Howling, Eric. *Head Hunter*. James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers, 2017.
- Hudson, Maryann. *Concussions in Sports*. ABDO Publishing Company, 2014.
- Lupica, Mike. *Million Dollar Throw*. Puffin Books, c2009, p2010.
- Lupica, Mike. *The Underdogs*. Puffin Books, c2011, p2012.
- Reynolds, Jason. *Ghost*. Atheneum Books For Young Readers, 2016.

**Susan Hood**  
**LIFEBOAT 12**  
**Simon & Schuster, 2018.**  
**ISBN: 978-1481468831.**  
**\$17.99, 310 pages.**

With Nazis bombing London every night, it's time for thirteen-year-old Ken to escape. He suspects his stepmother is glad to see him go, but his dad says he's one of the lucky ones—one of ninety boys and girls to ship out aboard the SS City of Benares to safety in Canada. Life aboard the luxury ship is grand—nine-course meals, new friends, and a life far from the bombs, rations, and his stepmum's glare. And after five days at sea, the ship's officers announce that they're out of danger—but they couldn't be more wrong.

Late that night, an explosion hurls Ken from his bunk. They've been hit. Torpedoed! The Benares is sinking fast. Terrified, Ken scrambles aboard Lifeboat 12 with five other boys. Will they get away? Will they survive?

Award-winning author Susan Hood brings this little-known World War II story to life in a riveting novel of courage, hope, and compassion. Based on true events and real people, Lifeboat 12 is about believing in one another, knowing that only by banding together will we have any chance to survive.

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***Art/Writing:***

- Have students create a brochure for the SS City of Benares. They can describe the ship, it's amenities and purpose of travel. Include an application for passengers.
- Mary Cornish helped pass the time on the lifeboat by telling stories based on Bulldog Drummond, a popular character in British books and movies. Have students write their own story that they think would help them if they were stuck on a lifeboat. Would they base it off of a character from today's media?

#### ***ELA:***

- Play the lifeboat game. There are several lists online to choose from for character descriptions, or you can create your own. The bottom line is that 15 people find themselves together in a lifeboat. The lifeboat however can only support 9 people. If six are not eliminated everyone will die. If you were in command of the lifeboat, which would you choose to survive? Have students discuss their responses. You could also make it about who they would choose to be in their own lifeboat.
- Tell students that they are in a boat and it is sinking. They have time to grab 5 items to take in the lifeboat with them. What would they choose and why?

#### ***Social Studies:***

- Have students create a map of Ken's travel from beginning to end.

- Have students look at newspaper clippings and photos of the rescue, then create their own. <http://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?57989>

***Discussion Questions:***

- If you were in Ken’s shoes, would you rather be sent away or left to stay? Why?
- What do you think the best part about being on The *Benares* was.
- What do you think the hardest part about surviving on a lifeboat would be?
- At first the passengers sang songs to keep their spirits up. What are some songs you would sing if it were you?
- On page 274, Ken says, “For them, books are weapons. For me, stories are lifesavers.” What do you think this means and how can they be both?

***Other Resources:***

- SS *City of Benares*: the Children’s Ship. Merseyside Maritime Museum. [http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/collections/city\\_of\\_benares](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/collections/city_of_benares)

**Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

<https://susanhoodbooks.com/>

**If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Gratz, Alan. *Refugee*. Scholastic, 2017.
- Hoose, Phillip. *The Boys Who Challenged Hitler: Knud Pedersen and the Churchill Club*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015.
- Tougias, Michael J. *The Finest Hours (Young Readers Edition): The True Story of a Heroic Sea Rescue*. Henry Holt, 2014.
- Tougias, Michael J. *A Storm Too Soon (Young Readers Edition): A Remarkable True Survival Story in 80 Foot Seas*. Henry Holt, 2016.

**Gail Jarrow**

**SPOOKED: HOW A RADIO BROADCAST AND *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS* SPARKED THE 1938 INVASION OF AMERICA**

**Calkins Creek, 2018.**

**ISBN: 978-1629797762.**

**\$24.95, 144 pages.**

In this conflicted era of fake news and alternative facts, what could be more timely than an account of Orson Welles’s famous Halloween-Eve radio broadcast that convinced much of America that the Martians were invading? Filled with period photos, art reproductions, newspaper headlines, and quotations.

**Curriculum Connections:**

***Language Arts:***

- Listen to Orson Welles’s original 1938 radio broadcast at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzC3Fg\\_rRJM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzC3Fg_rRJM).
- H.G. Wells, Ray Bradbury, Edgar Rice Burroughs and many other authors have created their own versions of Martians. Research some of these – and write a short story or create a comic strip featuring Martians of your own.
- Invent an invasion hoax of your own. Record it!

***Social Studies:***

- What was life in the United States like in 1938? How was it different from life today?
- Research other famous hoaxes, such as the Great Moon Hoax, published in the *New York Sun* in 1835, and H.L. Mencken’s famous Bathtub Hoax, published in 1917.

***Science and Math:***

- What do we really know about the planet Mars? Research the Red Planet – and check out NASA’s Mars Exploration Program at <https://mars.nasa.gov/>.
- From the San Francisco Exploratorium and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, see these Mars-based activities: <http://www.exploratorium.edu/mars/activities.php>
- Research the radio and how it changed American life. From *Discover* magazine, see “How Radio Changed Everything”: <http://discovermagazine.com/2007/jun/tireless-wireless>
- For young engineers, see “How to Build a Homemade Radio That Really Works”: <https://boyslife.org/hobbies-projects/projects/40/catch-some-radio-waves/>



### ***Discussion Questions:***

- Should Orson Welles have made greater efforts to inform the public that his *War of the Worlds* broadcast was just a science fiction story? Or should people have been able to figure this out for themselves?
- Do you think that a panic such as that brought on by Welles’s radio broadcast justifies censorship of radio or (now) television programs?
- Orson Welles suggested that the fictional Martian invasion terrified so many people because of “mistaken theories of education” – shielding kids from gruesome fairy tales and other scary stories had made the population vulnerable to imaginary situations. What do you think? Should kids be protected from scary stories?
- Welles also said that he wanted to teach people a lesson about trusting everything they heard on the radio. Should you trust everything you hear on radio, television, or social media? How do you determine what to trust and what not to trust?
- What strategies make fake news seem to be true?
- What audiences are most likely to believe a fake news story?

### ***Other Resources:***

- Author Interview: <https://bit.ly/2DcWSvd>

### **Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

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

### **If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Christopher, John. *The White Mountains*. Aladdin, 2014.
- Hamilton, Virginia. *Willie Bea and the Time the Martians Landed*. Greenwillow, 1983.
- Krieger, Emily. *Real or Fake?* National Geographic, 2016.
- Savage, Melissa. *The Truth About Martians*. Crown, 2018.
- Wells, H.G. *The War of the Worlds*. Many editions.

**Watt Key**

**DEEP WATER**

**Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018.**

**ISBN: 978-0374306540.**

**\$16.99, 272 pages.**

Desperate to save his business, Julie's ailing father agrees to take a father/son team of rich, arrogant clients to a deep sea site, but he needs 12-year-old Julie, an experienced diver, to actually take them on the dive. Julie quickly discovers that the clients aren't interested in doing things the right way, and their recklessness results in the trio being lost at sea. With no boat and little hope, it is up to Julie to fend off tragedy and find a way to survive.

**Curriculum Connections:**

***Health/Wellness:***

- Julie and Shane survive because of Julie's survival skills. Have students choose a survival situation they might find themselves in in Vermont (lost in the woods summer or winter, stranded in a car during a blizzard, fallen through ice, etc), research survival tactics, and create a multi-media presentation to teach others what they learn.

***Social Studies:***

- Research the impact "Big Oil" has on the earth's oceans, including the Deepwater Horizon disaster.

***Science:***

- Learn about the ocean's natural and artificial reefs. How are they similar? Different? What is the science behind how tanks and other manmade objects transform into reefs? Use a tech tool like iMovie trailers or Google Slides to explain the process.
- Ocean currents are fascinating. Study their movements and impacts on weather. Find out more about "blue water", where the inland waters of the Gulf and the deep blue ocean waters collide.
- Julie uses compass skills to help figure out the direction in which they are drifting. Challenge students learn basic compass skills.

***Language Arts:***

- Image that Shane's idea did not work in the end. Write an alternative rescue scenario.

***Discussion Questions:***

- Do you have any interest in scuba diving? Why or why not?
- Julie's mom says there are two kinds of people in this world, those who make things

happen and those who watch things happen. Which are you? Why?

- When Julie and her parents visit Shane in the hospital, Julie’s dad tells him, “Thanks for taking care of my girl out there.” Do you think that is an accurate depiction of what happened? Why or why not? Why do you think Mr. Sims said it?
- At the beginning of the story, Julie punches Shane in the face. At the end of the story, Julie realizes that “all Shane had ever done was his best.” What are some specific things that Julie learned about or saw in Shane that helped her develop this new view of him?

**Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

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

**If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Brown, Peter. *The Wild Robot*. Little, Brown, 2016.
- Hobbs, Will. *Crossing the Wire*, Harper Collins, 2006.
- Key, Watt. *Alabama Moon*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2006.
- Olson, Tod. *Lost in the Pacific, 1942: Not a drop to Drink*. Scholastic, 2016.
- Paulsen, Gary. *Hatchet*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1987.

**Ellen Klages**  
**OUT OF LEFT FIELD**  
**Viking, 2018.**  
**ISBN: 978-0425288597.**  
**\$16.99, 276 pages.**

It was the summer of 1957 and Gordon was playing in a pick-up game of baseball. A Little League baseball scout was watching Gordon's pitching performance. He was really impressed with Gordon's "Sunday pitch" which was unhittable. At the end of the game the scout invited Gordon to a special try-out for a Little League team.

When Gordon showed up for the try-out, it didn't go well. Gordon was actually Katy Gordon and in 1957 girls were not allowed to play Little League baseball. Katy was dismissed from the try-outs and was denied a position on the team.

Katy was inspired by her school's civil rights lessons to research the fairness of the Little League's decision. She discovers the lost history of talented female ball-players from the past. Katy becomes determined to change people's minds.

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***History:***

- Construct a timeline of baseball history that mirrors our country's social history. Include famous players (both male and female), famous racial benchmarks, Little League history, etc.

#### ***Language Arts:***

- Katy Gordon uses research to backup her arguments about the unfairness of girls being banned from Little League. She then writes letters to the Little League to express her beliefs. Identify a social injustice. Research the topic and write a letter to an appropriate recipient based on your research.

#### ***Physical Education & Physics:***

- Katy developed her "Sunday pitch" which was unhittable. How do pitchers develop specialized pitches? How do you throw a curveball? A slider? A knuckleball? Research the different pitches and see if you can copy them.

#### ***Discussion Questions:***

- On pp. 79-81 there is a letter written to Katy Gordon from Mitchell K. Grayson, the Public Relations Director of the Little League. How does this letter make you feel? How did Katy feel after reading it?
- How did the neighborhood boys respond to Katy's baseball talents? How did they respond to her treatment by the Little League?

- How did Katy’s mom react to the Little League situation? What advice did she give to Katy?

**Author’s Website:**

For more information and the book and author, see:

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

**If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Bowling, Dusti. *Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus*. Sterling Children’s Books, 2017.
- Lord, Bette Bao. *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*. Harper, 1984.
- Perez, Celia. *The First Rule of Punk*. Viking, 2017.
- Ritter, John H. *The Boy Who Saved Baseball*. Philomel, 2000.
- Sloan, Holly Goldberg. *Short*. Dial, 2017.

**Katherine Marsh**  
**NOWHERE BOY**  
**Roaring Brook Press, 2018.**  
**ISBN: 978-1250307576.**  
**\$16.99, 362 pages.**

How does a community absorb a desperate group of refugees, while keeping everyone safe from terrorism? Fourteen-year-old Ahmed is a Syrian refugee who lost his last remaining family member, his father, on their harrowing journey from Aleppo. He now secretly lives in a concealed basement room of Max's new house, where once Jews hid during World War II. Max, who is thirteen and from Washington D.C., is unhappy about his family's one-year stint in Brussels, Belgium, until he meets Ahmed, and the two become friends. Max's neighbors are angered by terrorist attacks in the news, and would gladly report Ahmed if they saw him. The boys form a bold plan to help Ahmed stay safe in Marsh' gripping and suspenseful novel. Marsh alternates the narratives of the two boys, who feel like real, relatable kids thrown into our modern refugee crisis.

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***Language Arts:***

- What might have happened to Ahmed's father after he disappeared into the ocean? Write an account of his remaining journey.
- Max and Ahmed read a book about heroes, and are very brave themselves. Research a brave young person, like a civil rights activist or a teenager during the War II resistance. Write a short profile of them. What do you admire about them?

#### ***Art:***

- Find an image of the Magritte birdcage painting. What are the boys' responses to it? What's your response? Create a work of art in the style of Magritte.

#### ***Social Studies:***

- In Hungary, Ahmed meets refugees from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Eritrea, Kosovo, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Somalia. Research one of these countries: why are people leaving, and how do they get out? Where do they go, and how are they received by other countries? Give a short multimedia presentation including facts, quotes, photographs, and maps.
- If you were fleeing Syria, what choices would you make for your family? Step into the shoes of a Syrian refugee traveling 1,500 dangerous miles to Europe. *Syrian Escape Route* (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32057601>) is a virtual challenge produced by the BBC. What route should you take? What items do you bring?

#### ***Discussion Questions:***

- Max comes to understand that “no one could be a hero alone” (p. 349). What does it mean to be a hero? Who do you consider a hero, whether or not they’re famous?
- How do Max’s family members interact - give positive and negative examples. Why does Max feel like Claire betrays him and Ahmed? What explains her actions?
- How do Max’s parents react to his trip to Hungary? How do you think their family dynamics might change in the future?
- How does Max change in the novel? What does he consider the problems in his life at the beginning? How does knowing Ahmed change Max?
- Max worries that lying to his parents to help Ahmed is betraying them, but also “wrong and right at the same time” (p. 222). What are some of his lies? Do you think they’re justified, and why or why not? Is it possible to do something you consider wrong for the right reasons?
- Author Katherine Marsh did massive amounts of research before writing this book. What do you think are some differences in researching to write historical fiction, vs. a work of nonfiction?
- If your school has access to YouTube, watch a short UNICEF videos about young Syrian refugees. Relate them to Ahmed’s situation. Compare the different strengths of novels and videos.
  - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDy8\\_8L3s0A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDy8_8L3s0A)
  - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_btyYMCzIw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_btyYMCzIw)
  - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=bcrvKtmQTZs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bcrvKtmQTZs)

### **Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:  
<https://katherinemarsh.com/books/nowhere-boy/>

### **If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Gratz, Alan. *Refugee*. Scholastic. 2018.
- Nielsen, Jennifer. *A Night Divided*. Scholastic. 2015.
- Park, Linda Sue. *A Long Walk to Water*. HMH Books for Young Readers, 2010.
- Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *The Red Pencil*. Little, Brown. 2014
- Senzai, N.H. *Shooting Kabul*. Simon & Schuster, 2010.

**Wendy Mass and Rebecca Stead**

**BOB**

**Feiwel and Friends, 2018.**

**ISBN: 978-1250166623**

**\$16.99, 208 pages.**

It's been five years since Livy last visited her grandmother in Australia – and when she finally returns she finds Bob, a greenish zombie-like creature in a chicken suit, who has been obediently waiting in her closet all this time. (He's spent the years crying and building Lego pirate ships.) A tale of friendship, love, and magic, told in the alternating voices of Livy and Bob.

**Curriculum Connections:**

***Social Studies:***

- Research Australia. Make a list of cool Australian facts - or invent your own Australia trivia game.
- The game of chess is about 1500 years old and originated in India. Try a game! See this set of printable paper chess pieces (<https://www.timvandevall.com/printables/printable-chess-pieces-red/>) and check out the Rules of Chess here: (<https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/chess-for-kids>). (Helpful hint: glue the paper pieces to pennies or bottle caps.)

***Science:***

- How good is your memory? Try these online Memory Games : <http://www.kidsmathgamesonline.com/memory.html>
- Try these great Memory Experiments from the Neuroscience for Kids website. Learn about short-term memory, memory for faces, and memory for everyday objects, and find out whether or not you'd make a good eyewitness. <https://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/chmemory.html>
- What's a drought and what causes it? Find out. See Weather Wiz Kids Drought for general information and stories about drought in the United States. [http://www.weatherwizkids.com/?page\\_id=89](http://www.weatherwizkids.com/?page_id=89)
- See these great STEAM activities to accompany *Bob*, including building a flashlight and, of course, a Lego pirate ship. <https://wendymass.com/resources/>

***Language Arts:***

- Write a story to entertain Bob while he's shut in the closet. Record it.
- What would you put in a time capsule? Make one of your own. See some suggestions



here: <http://www.mykidsadventures.com/time-capsule/>

***Discussion Questions:***

- What do you remember from when you were five years old? Why did Livy forget Bob?
- Why does Danny think Bob is really a chicken?
- Are “Old Livy” and “New Livy” really different people? Are you the same person now that you were when you were five years old?
- Why does Bob’s mother want Livy to forget about Bob and the well dwellers?

**Authors’ Websites:**

For more information about the book and authors, see:

<https://wendymass.com/>

<http://www.rebeccasteadbooks.com>

**If you loved this, you’ll like:**

- Almond, David. *Skellig*. Hodder Children’s Books, 2007.
- Applegate, Katherine. *Crenshaw*. Square Fish, 2017.
- Applegate, Katherine. *Wishtree*. Feiwel & Friends, 2017.
- Paterson, Katherine. *Bridge to Terebithia*. HarperCollins, 2017.
- Summy, Barrie. *The Disappearance of Emily H.* Yearling, 2016.

**Stacy McAnulty**  
**THE MISCALCULATIONS OF LIGHTNING GIRL**  
**Random House, 2018.**  
**ISBN: 9781524767570.**  
**\$16.99, 293 pages.**

Lucy Callahan was struck by lightning. She doesn't remember it, but it changed her life forever. The zap gave her genius-level math skills, and ever since, Lucy has been homeschooled. Now, at 12 years old, she's technically ready for college. She just has to pass 1 more test--middle school!

Lucy's grandma insists: Go to middle school for 1 year. Make 1 friend. Join 1 activity. And read 1 book (that's not a math textbook!). Lucy's not sure what a girl who does calculus homework for fun can possibly learn in 7th grade. She has everything she needs at home, where nobody can make fun of her rigid routines or her superpowered brain. The equation of Lucy's life has already been solved. Unless there's been a miscalculation?

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***Science:***

- Discover the science behind lightning: <https://www.britannica.com/science/lightning-meteorology>
- Make lightning two different ways <http://www.learnplayimagine.com/2013/04/how-to-make-lightning.html?m=1>

#### ***ELA:***

- Explore different dog breeds. <https://www.akc.org/dog-breeds/page/4/> Then pick a breed and create a brochure, newspaper article or blog about a pretend dog that needs to be adopted.
- Research and do a report on either Acquired Savant Syndrome: or obsessive compulsive disorder.

#### ***Math:***

- Take a class poll of favorite dog breeds and graph the results using a pie chart.
- Learn about using PI. <https://www.mathsisfun.com/numbers/pi.html>
- See PI to the 100,000 digit. Have students see how much of PI they can memorize. <http://www.geom.uiuc.edu/~huberty/math5337/groupe/digits.html>

#### ***Discussion Questions:***

- If you were Lucy would you want people to know about your genius-level math skills? Why or why not?
- What do you think about the way Lucy reacts to Windy’s “betrayal”? How does she make it right?
- How did Lucy change throughout the story and what do you think influenced this change?
- Levi cheats off of Lucy in math class without her knowing. Have you ever had someone cheat off of you without you knowing? How did you find out? How did you handle the situation?
- Uncle Paul gave Lucy the nickname “Lightning Girl.” Do you have a nickname? How did you get it? Who gave it to you? Do you like it or dislike it?
- Lucy receives a letter from NCASME letting her know whether she was accepted to the school. She hesitates to open it because she realizes she doesn’t know which answer she wants to see. Do you think Lucy should stay at her middle school or go to the academy? Discuss why you chose your answer.

***Other Resources:***

- An Interview with Author Stacy McAnulty and Giveaway:  
<https://beaglesandbooks.com/2018/04/23/the-miscalculations-of-lightning-girl-blog-tour-an-interview-with-author-stacy-mcanulty/>

**Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

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

**If you loved this, you’ll like:**

- Baskin, Nora Raleigh. *Anything but typical*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2009.
- Cavanaugh, Nancy J. *This journal belongs to Ratchet*. Sourcebooks Jabberwocky, 2013.
- Draper, Sharon M. *Out of my mind*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2010
- Jamieson, Victoria. *All’s faire in middle school*. Dial Books, 2017.
- Sloan, Holy Goldberg. *Counting by 7’s*. Dial Books, 2013.

**Meg Medina**  
**MERCI SUÁREZ CHANGES GEARS**  
**Candlewick Press, 2018.**  
**ISBN: 978-0763690496.**  
**\$16.99, 355 pages.**

Middle school is hard even in the best of circumstances. Merci Suárez is grateful to go to an excellent private school. Really, she is. Even if she was able to forget how fortunate she is, the extra required community service hours would be there to remind her. She also knows how lucky she is to be surrounded by family. Even though that has its own challenges, as her grandfather ages and she has to make some sacrifices to support the whole family. How can Merci navigate her changing worlds at home and at school?

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***Social Studies:***

- Merci lives in the midst of family in Las Casitas. Think about your extended family and draw a picture of the type of family living arrangement you might try. Think about who would live there. Draw multiple adjacent houses or one large house and map out which family members would live where. Next to the person's name, list advantages to living close to them and disadvantages, if any.
- Merci's friends enjoy the home cooked meal that her aunt made. Try to find a cookbook from another culture at your local library. Use it to create a meal that is outside of your usual diet. Think about the similarities and differences with the ingredients.
- Merci recreates an Egyptian tomb in her social studies class. Read about death in other cultures and make a memorial for a person, real or fictional, from a different time and place.
- Work as a classroom to host a multigenerational day, like grandparent's day. Ask each guest prepare a story or activity that is related to their adolescence.

#### ***Art & Geography:***

- Merci creates a relief map in school. She works to convince her teammates to try creative supplies. Create a relief map of Vermont. What kind of creative supplies can you use?

#### ***Language Arts:***

- Loss and change are both themes in the story. Look back at the text and find 3-5 sentences about these themes. Try to shape these ideas and phrases into a piece of "found poetry."
- Foreshadowing is when an author gives hints that lead to a bigger conclusion. Think about the ways that Merci notices the changes in Lolo that lead up to his diagnosis. Write

a one page story about finding out a secret. Try to use foreshadowing to hint at the conclusion.

***Discussion Questions:***

- What do you think about the Sunshine Buddies program? Is it an effective way to welcome someone to the school? Why or why not?
- Think about your closest friends. Do they identify as the same gender as you? What are the advantages and disadvantages of different types of friendships across the gender spectrum?
- Merci is expected to give up soccer to take care of her cousins. Have you ever had to sacrifice something you wanted to help someone else? How did it make you feel?
- Who do you think you would be friends with at Merci's school?

**Author's Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

<https://megmedina.com>

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

- Cartayo, Pablo. *The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora*. Puffin Books, 2018.
- Hiranandani, Veera. *The Night Diary*. Kokila, 2018.
- Kelly, Erin Entrada. *You Go First*. Greenwillow Books, 2018
- Magoon, Kekla. *The Season of Styx Malone*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2018
- Oh, Ellen. *Flying Lessons & Other Stories*. Crown Books for Young Readers, 2017.

**Susin Nielson**  
**NO FIXED ADDRESS**  
**Wendy Lamb Books, 2018.**  
**ISBN: 978-1524768348.**  
**\$16.99, 288 pages.**

What do a Westfalia van, a hamster named Horatio and a gnome all have in common? To 12 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  year old Felix Knuttson, they are all important parts of his rapidly changing world. The van is his home that he shares with his depressed and not always dependable mom. The hamster, is named after the host of his favorite TV quiz show, which with some luck, Felix thinks he could win. Mel is his steadfast *tomte* that Felix believes protects he and his mom from all that could go wrong. Life living in a van isn't easy and Felix must keep his living arrangement a secret, from everyone, even his best friends. Can Felix find a solution to his family crisis before it is too late?

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***Math:***

- **Financial Literacy:** These lessons plans will help teach students how to keep track of their money and make responsible choices about their spending.  
<http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3757932>
  - **Budgeting- Grades 6-8**  
<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/sponsored-content/unexpected-math/17-18/basics-in-building-a-budget/>

#### ***Geography:***

- ***Plan your ultimate road trip.*** Where will you start and finish? Who will be traveling with you? Create a map showing the route that you will travel. What type of vehicle will you be traveling in. What will you stop to see along the way?

#### ***Language Arts:***

- ***Create a “Who, What, When, Where & Why” game*** - categories could include vocabulary from the story, characters, etc.
- ***Writing prompt:***  
You find out that you have 24 hours to move out of your house. In addition to your clothes and other necessities (toothbrush, eyeglasses...) you can only bring 5 personal items with you. What would you choose and why?
- ***Learn about the Tomte and their place in Nordic folklore***  
<https://www.ingebretsens.com/culture/traditions/legend-of-nisse-and-tomte>

#### ***Foreign Language:***

- Felix and his friends go to a French Immersion school meaning that all their learning is

done in this second language. Visit one of these free sites to get an introduction to French basics or to learn more about the country.

- **Doulingo-** Learn French online- <https://www.duolingo.com/course/fr/en/Learn-French>
- **The French Experiment-** <https://www.thefrenchexperiment.com/>
- **National Geographic Kids-** All about France- <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/countries/france/#france-eiffel-tower.jpg>

### ***Discussion Questions:***

- No Fixed Address opens with Felix agreeing to tell his story up until now to Constable Lee, on the November night before he is due to go to the hotel. The story then goes back in time to the previous summer. How does this affect your expectations as you read the book? Can you think of other examples of stories (whether novels, films or television) where this device is used?
- Felix tells the story of Astrid's childhood and her life up till now. What events from her past do you think have contributed to her situation in the novel? What could she have done differently, if at all?
- The novel is told from Felix's point of view. Discuss the reasons why the author, Susin Nielsen, chose to tell the story in this way.
- Felix makes lists in his mind as a coping mechanism for his difficult and lonely life. Look at the different kinds of lists that appear in the book, for example in the chapters 'A Brief History of Homes' and 'Astrid's Guidebook to Lies'.
- We aren't told until half-way through the full story of Felix's dad, Daniel. Why do you think Felix takes so long to tell the reader about him?
- Discuss Dylan and Winnie, Felix's two very different friends. In what ways are they similar and different.

### ***Other Resources:***

- Additional discussion questions: <https://www.andersenpress.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/NFA-discussion-guide.pdf>
- National Coalition for the Homeless Teaching Resources: <https://nationalhomeless.org/references/teaching/>
- Teaching about Homelessness in Grades K-12 - Lesson plans and activities from COTS, Burlington, VT. <https://cotsonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Unsheltered-Lives-2010.pdf>

- 60 Minutes Segment: “ **Hard Times Generation: Families living in cars**”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2hzRPLVSm4>

**Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

<https://www.susinnielsen.com>

**If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Applegate, Katherine. *Crenshaw*. Feiwel & Friends, 2015.
- Lambert, Mary E. *Family Game Night and Other Catastrophes*. Scholastic Press, 2017.
- O’Connor, Barbara. *How to Steal a Dog*. Square Fish, 2009.
- Van Draanen, Wendelin. *The Secret Life of Lincoln Jones*. Knopf, 2016.



**Kenneth Oppel**

**INKLING**

**Knopf, 2018.**

**ISBN: 978-1524772819.**

**\$17.99, 272 pages.**

Only the cat was awake to see Inkling form on Ethan's father's sketch pad. It doesn't take long, however, for Ethan's whole family to be caught up in the wonder of this ink blot that escaped the world of the sketchbook and can now read, draw, and communicate with humans. Inkling can even do homework, transform into a puppy for a little sister, and help a troubled dad overcome writer's block! But as the kind, creative blotch soon discovers, its best efforts and adventures can lead to misunderstandings and even danger. Sometimes trying to help people get "unstuck" can make things even more sticky for everyone, especially for an ink blot who's just trying to help out.

**Curriculum Connections:**

***Health/Wellness:***

- Inkling's "diet" impacts his health and actions. Research what a well-balanced diet looks like for humans. Examine whether or not class eating habits and/or school lunch programs support a well-balanced diet.

***Social/Emotional:***

- Ethan finds himself backed into corner when his project group just assumes he can draw because his dad is a famous graphic novelist. Write a dialogue between Ethan and his friends where Ethan tells them he does not have his father's talent and he wants to do a different part of the project.
- Grief is a major theme of this story. Invite the school counselor to talk about the grieving process and how we can help ourselves and others through an experience.

***Language Arts:***

- After he reads a book, Inkling takes on the style, language, and personality of the characters in the story. Write what you imagine a conversation between Ethan and Inkling would sound like after Inking has read about one of the following: Star Wars, a Western, a War movie, or a superhero of your choice.
- Mr. Worthington kept a few drops of Blotter. How might the next book start? Write a summary of what might happen, or even the first page or two of the story!
- Interview writers and/or teachers to collect some strategies for overcoming writer's block.
- Team with the art teacher to create a graphic novel project.

- Start a book club: Try one of the books Inkling loved: *Secret Garden* or *Anne of Green Gables*

***Discussion Questions:***

- Describe Inkling’s diet and how it coincides with how he is feeling and acting. What comparisons can you draw to the human diet of food. How about screen time? What do we consume that makes us more like Inkling? More like Blotter?
- What kind of a big brother is Ethan? Find specific examples in the text to support your answer.
- Ethan is very unhappy with how others want to use Inkling to complete their work. Why does he feel this way? Is he justified? Why or why not?
- Do you feel sorry for Blotter? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Vika has a change of heart?

**Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

[www.kennethoppel.ca](http://www.kennethoppel.ca)

**If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Crilley, Mark. *The Drawing Lesson*. Watson-Guptill Publications, 2016.
- Clements, Andrew. *Frindle*. Simon & Schuster, 1996.
- Hiaasen, Carl. *Hoot*. Knopf, 2002.
- Oppel, Kenneth. *Airborn*. Eos, c2004, p2005.
- Oppel, Kenneth. *The Boundless*. Simon & Schuster, 2014.

**Mae Respicio**  
**THE HOUSE THAT LOU BUILT**  
**Wendy Lamb Books, 2018.**  
**ISBN: 978-1524717940.**  
**\$17.99, 240 pages.**

Twelve-year-old Lou thrives in wood shop, loves her vibrant extended family and her Filipino culture, *and* has a plan to build a 100-square foot Tiny House on a beautiful piece of land her father left her when he died. Building a house on that land was her dad’s dream, too. Lou and her mom have been living with her grandmother for years as her Mom works to put herself through nursing school. Sharing a bedroom with your Mom when you are about to start 8th grade is a little tough, so Lou’s plan for a tiny house is a plan for some personal space...and a chance to work with her hands and fulfil her dad’s goal. But when back taxes and a possible move to another state threaten Lou’s dream, she’s got to build on her resources and resilience to find a way to make it happen!

**Curriculum Connections:**

***Geography:***

- Use Google Earth to explore the Philippines and San Francisco. Check out Muir Woods.

***Social Studies:***

- Barrio Fiesta is a big deal to Lou and her community. Explore the history of this and other Filipino festivals/celebrations.
- When a boy tells Lou that “girls don’t build houses--they only vacuum them,” Lou points out that “woman build and invent lots of things.” Find out more about women inventors and their creations. Create an interactive timeline
- The world is full of many different types of houses, and many designs, like the *bahay kubo*, reflect something about the environment or culture in which they are built and used. Research houses from around the world and discover other unique houses. Share how their designs are influenced by their environment.

***Math:***

- Find some recipes for the Filipino food Lou highlights: *halo-halo*, *bibingka*, *lumpias*. Adjust the amounts in each recipe so that the recipe would make enough to serve the entire class...and then maybe try to make some Filipino food!
- Lou’s tiny house is 100 square feet. Research tiny house design and then, using Google Drawings or by hand, create a own blueprint of a house that same size. Include interior walls, furniture, fixtures, etc. If the space is available, try to recreate the blueprint on the floor, using painter’s tape. Or, build a diorama that is to scale.

### ***Physical Education:***

- Research the Tinikling dance and try to do it!

### ***Writing:***

- Mr. Keller nominates Lou for a student of the year award. Have students nominate themselves or classmate for such an award by writing a 150-200 word “student of the year” nomination letter.

### ***Art:***

- Lou and her cousins have a vision heart, a poster on which they put pictures or representations of things they want. The belief is that if we look at the things you want, they will show up in our lives. Have students create their own vision boards. What is on them? Why?

### ***Discussion Questions:***

- Lou and Lola don’t want the move to happen. Lou’s mom does. Compare each person’s reasons. Who in your opinion has the stronger case? Why?
- Early in the story, Lou believes that the homes people live in echo their personalities and what is important to them. What do you think your current home “says” about you and your family? Or, what sort of home would you like to live in, and why?
- Why does Lou think finishing her house will change her mom’s mind about moving?
- The woodworking class Lou went to got cancelled because parents thought it was too dangerous for students to work with power tools. Lou makes the point that organized sports are “way more hazardous”. What is your take on the point Lou is trying to make? Why do you agree or disagree?
- Lou discovers that “home isn’t necessarily a place; it’s more of a feeling”. How do you think Lou would describe what home feels like? How would you?

### **Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

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

### **If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Holm, Jennifer L. *The Fourteenth Goldfish*. Random House, 2014.
- Perez, Celia C. *The First Rule of Punk*. Viking, 2017.
- Rubino, Ann. *Inga’s Amazing Ideas*. Catree.com, 2018.
- Rubin, Susan Goldman. *Maya Lin: Thinking with Her Hands*. Chronicle Books, 2017.

- Thinmesh, Catherine. *Girls Think of Everything: Stories of Ingenious Inventions by Women*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018.

**Jewell Parker Rhodes**  
**GHOST BOYS**  
**Little, Brown, 2018.**  
**ISBN: 978-0-316-26228-6.**  
**\$16.99, 224 pages.**

Jerome is twelve and mostly just a quiet kid. He's bullied at school and tries to keep to himself, even eating his lunch in the bathroom. One day, he meets Carlos and the two become fast friends. Carlos brings a toy gun to school, uses it to scare bullies, and offers to let Jerome borrow it. Jerome reluctantly accepts, but finds that he enjoys pretending with the gun on the way home. A police officer mistakes him for a threat and shoots him. But this isn't the end of Jerome's story. As a ghost, Jerome meets Emmett Till, another boy who was killed in a racially charged misunderstanding. Jerome learns about Emmett's life and the aftermath of his own death. He meets Sarah, a living girl who can see him, who is also the daughter of the police officer who shot him. Jerome's story has an impact on those who are left behind.

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***Social Studies:***

- Listen to accounts from the Civil Rights Movement on StoryCorps. <https://storycorps.org/> What do these stories have in common with Emmett Till's account in the book? What do they have in common with Jerome's story? Are there significant differences?
- Black Lives Matter. Read about Trayvon Martin- <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2018/07/31/631897758/a-look-back-at-trayvon-martins-death-and-the-movement-it-inspired> Discuss with other students why the movement exists and why it is still important to keep fighting for racial equality in 2019.

#### ***Literature:***

- People of color have been fighting for their right to safety for as long as America has been colonized. Use the following links to find stories about the history of Black American:
  - <https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/slavery/resources/kids.html>
  - <http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/african-american-and-slavery-book-list>

When you have read some of the stories, write a short story where you have a conversation with a person who died fighting for freedom and equality. What messages do you think they would want to share with you in 2019?

#### ***Art:***

- Harriet Powers was an African-American slave and artist, known for her story-telling quilts. Read her story here <https://blackthen.com/the-storytelling-quilts-of-harriet-powers/> or check out a picture book about her *Sewing Stories: Harriet Powers' Journey from*

*Slave to Artist*. In the book and through the link, you can see pictures of Harriet's quilts. Draw a quilt that tells Jerome's story.

***Discussion Questions:***

- Why does Jerome take the gun from Carlos?
- How does Jerome's experience with bullies impact direction of the story?
- How do you think Jerome's death impacts other people at school? Do you think there are long term changes to some of the interpersonal relationships?
- Why do you think Sarah is the only person who can see Jerome?
- Officer Moore claims he was in fear of his life from Jerome. Do you think this is true?
- Racial bias is a major theme in the book? Have you witnessed or experienced racial bias? How did it feel?
- For more discussion questions, see the discussion guide in the back of the book.

**Author's Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

<http://jewellparkerrhodes.com/children/>

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

- Beals, Melba Pattillo. *March Forward, Girl*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018.
- Slater, Dashka. *The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime That Changed Their Lives*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017.
- Moore, David Barclay. *The Stars Beneath Our Feet*. Knopf Books, 2017.
- Thomas, Angie. *The Hate U Give*. Harper Collins, 2017.

**Aisha Saeed**  
**AMAL UNBOUND**  
**Nancy Paulsen Books**  
**ISBN: 978-0399544682.**  
**\$17.99, 240 pages.**

Amal dreams of being a teacher, but she soon discovers that for a girl in Pakistan, an education is not guaranteed. When her mother sinks into postpartum depression after the birth of her baby sister, 12-year-old Amal is pulled out of school to take care of her home and her two young sisters. Frustrated by this and the fact that everyone else seems so disappointed that the baby wasn't a boy, Amal lapses into a moment carelessness, after which her life changes forever. She is forced to live as an indentured servant in the household of the village landlord, but before long she uncovers the depth of the family's corruption. Amal must then weigh the risk of trying to expose their treachery in a small village where girls are not always believed and their dreams are not always honored.

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***Geography:***

- Amal describes her village in Pakistan as being so small “it didn’t even register as a dot on a map.” Use Google Earth and an atlas to explore Pakistan and the surrounding countries. Create an itinerary of 4-5 places to visit. Also, what is so interesting about Pakistan’s northeast border?

#### ***Social Studies:***

- The country of Pakistan was formed in 1947, but of course the history of the land and people goes back centuries. Research this history and create a timeline that introduces some of the major events and historical figures. Google Drawings can be used to create an interactive timeline.
- In her Author’s Note, Aisha Saeed writes “We don’t have to make the headlines to help change the world for the better. Everything we do in our communities and beyond to impart good is important and matters.” Try to discover some of the people, adults and students, in your community who make a difference without making headlines. Interview them and figure out a way to honor their efforts: a display at the local library, a thank you note, or some other simple way of saying letting people know their efforts are noticed.
- Indentured servitude is a worldwide practice. Explore its history (including in the US) and current use.

#### ***Social/Emotional:***

- Amal’s frustration and anger at her situation cost her dearly. Interview the school counselor to learn about strategies for coping with stress and/or anger. Create a poster or how-to video to share with other classes.



### ***Writing:***

- Jamal Sahib throws away Amal’s phone before she can contact her family to let them know that she is okay and to tell them how things are going. Imagine Amal has found a way to slip them a short note about her situation. Try to write that note: In 75 words or less, try to convey to Amal’s family her feelings and situation in a way that tells the truth but also soothes their concerns.

### ***Language:***

- When Amal and her teacher talk about poetry, Amal tells her she doesn’t have anything to write about, unlike the great poets Ghalib, Rumi, and Iqbal, who “had things to say.” Look up these poets and some of their works. Collect and share a few favorite poems you discover. What might they be trying to say?
- Amal wants to be a teacher and enjoys teaching Fatima how to read. Have students think of ways they could share their love of reading with younger students in school to encourage them to keep reading. Maybe gather some friends and create book trailer videos for favorite picture books? Host a lunchtime read aloud for younger students? Become a reading buddy?

### ***Discussion Questions:***

Follow this link to a collection of excellent discussion questions provided by the publisher:  
[http://images.randomhouse.com/teachers\\_guides/9780399544682.pdf](http://images.randomhouse.com/teachers_guides/9780399544682.pdf)

- Amal’s life changes in an instant when she refuses to give Jawad Sahib the pomegranate. What do you think the pomegranate represents to Amal in that moment?
- Imagine you are the voice inside Amal’s head during her run-in with Jalad Sahib. What would you suggest to her that she think and/or do to calm herself down so that the outcome of the interaction might be very different? What are some strategies you use or have seen others use to calm themselves in stressful moments?
- Unlike in Amal’s village, in the US there is equal access for boys and girls to elementary and high school educational opportunities. Or is it equal? In your experience, do all aspects of education at your school feel equal for boys and girls? Do you think family circumstances can impact kids’ education here in the US, too? How? What could be done to change that?
- At one point, Amal wonders why it took “leaving my ordinary life behind to find out how truly precious it was.” If you had to leave your family, your home, and your education behind, what would you miss the most, besides the people and, perhaps, pets? Why? If you had to leave and couldn’t come back for months, what would be the first thing you would want to do when you returned? Why?

- Amal discovers how regret is “the sharpest knife.” What does she mean by that? Have you regretting something that made you feel the same?

**Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

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

**If you like this book, you might also like these:**

- Bridges, Ruby. *Through My Eyes*. Scholastic, 1999.
- Hiranandani, Veera. *The Night Diary*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2018.
- Kelly, Jaqueline. *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*. Henry Holt, 2009.
- Kahn, Hana. *Amina’s Voice*. Salaam Reads, 2017.
- Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *The Red Pencil*. Little, Brown, 2014.
- Yousafza, Malala. *I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World* (Young Readers Edition). Little, Brown, 2014.

**Lindsey Stoddard**  
**JUST LIKE JACKIE**  
**HarperCollins, 2018.**  
**ISBN 978-0062652911.**  
**\$16.99, 256 pages.**

Robbie Hart has a fierce temper and a big heart. For as long as she can remember, her only family has been her Grandpa. They may look like an odd pair, because her pale skin and blond hair don't match his dark complexion-but those differences don't mean anything to Robbie. She's been covering for Grandpa at home and at his auto repair shop: she worries the authorities will learn about his Alzheimer's and take her away from him. Robbie wishes, though, that he'd tell her about their family history. With his memory getting worse and worse, she's afraid he'll never tell her anything about her mom. Robbie's anger issues lead her into fights and other trouble at school. Vermont author Lindsey Stoddard's debut deftly mixes themes of family, acceptance, race, gender, and friendship.

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***Language Arts:***

- Think about a time when you felt angry, or scared, or proud, embarrassed or hurt. Think about how you felt, then write a story where one of your characters feels the same way.
- Explore your family's history - even create a family tree. Talk to your family and write down a story from their past.
- Robbie must overcome a significant and difficult event in her life. Write about a time you had to overcome a tough situation.
- Read a biography or watch a video about Jackie Robinson (like <https://thekidshouldseethis.com/post/jackie-robinson-a-mini-bio>), then compare Robbie to Jackie. In what ways are their stories similar? How is Robbie trying to be more like Robinson?

#### ***Science:***

- Learn some practical science, such as how an engine works (<https://study.com/academy/lesson/how-car-engines-work-lesson-for-kids.html>), or about mechanics and engineering (<https://www.yourmechanic.com/article/a-kid-s-guide-to-mechanics-and-engineering-by-maddy-martin>).
- Explore how maple syrup is produced, either from a local sugarmaker, or watch a video such as: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZj\\_4-iqwII](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZj_4-iqwII). If the season is right, tap a tree!

#### ***Discussion Questions:***

- What can you learn from grandparents or older family members? Why is it important to hear their stories?
- Watch the short film “My Name is Lisa” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZiRHyzjb5SI>) about a girl whose mother suffers from Alzheimer's. How would you cope if a family member developed the disease? Do you think you would sometimes feel angry?
- Did Robbie have the right to hit Alex Carter? Is the use of violence ever okay?
- Being from Vermont, do you think this book had a bigger impact on you? Why or why not?
- Did you like Robbie? Why or why not?

**Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

<https://www.lindseystoddard.com/>

**If you loved this title, you may like:**

- Braden, Ann. *The Benefits of Being an Octopus*. Sky Pony, 2018.
- Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. *The War That Saved My Life*. Dial, 2015.
- Draper, Sharon. *Blended*. Atheneum, 2018.
- Hunt, Lynda Mullaly. *Fish in a Tree*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2015.
- Ramée, Lisa Moore. *A Good Kind of Trouble*. Balzer + Bray, 2019.
- Stoddard, Lindsey. *Right as Rain*. HarperTeen, 2015.

**Christina Uss**

**THE ADVENTURES OF A GIRL CALLED BICYCLE**

**Margaret Ferguson Books, 2018.**

**ISBN: 978-0823440078.**

**\$16.99, 320 pages.**

Bicycle, raised at the Mostly Silent Monastery where the monks are permitted only eight words (yes, no, maybe, help, now, later, sleep, and sandwich) is being sent to the Friendship Factory camp (“Three Guaranteed Friendships or Your Money Back”) to improve her social skills and make friends. Instead she runs away and sets off on an incredible solo cross-country journey to meet her cyclist hero at San Francisco’s Blessing of the Bicycles – encountering en route a host of quirky characters, among them a lonely Civil War ghost. A story about perseverance, sticking to your own goals, and the true art of making friends.

**Curriculum Connections:**

***Language Arts:***

- Imagine you can only say eight words. Which eight would you pick? (And how well do your eight work for daily living? Give it a try.)
- Imagine you’re setting off on your own on a cross-country trip. How would you do it? Create a plan!

***Social Studies:***

- Track Bicycle’s path across the country! (How many states did she ride through?)
- Learn about the First and Second Battles of Manassas. See the Manassas National Battlefield Park website at <https://www.nps.gov/mana/index.htm>.
- Research famous races. There’s the Kentucky Derby and the Tour de France – but what about the Running of the Bulls and the Great Wall of China Marathon? See <https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/articles/the-16-most-epic-races-in-the-world/>.
- Check out the history of bicycles. See [How Bicycles Paved the Way for Women’s Rights](#) and Sue Macy’s *Wheels of Change* (National Geographic, 2017).

***Science:***

- Chef Marie’s Slowdown Café is dedicated to healthy and seasonal eating. Research the advantages of seasonal eating. Invent some seasonal recipes.
- The Wheels of Fortune 713-J bike is spectacular. Design your own perfect long-distance traveling machine.

**Art:**

- Design picture postcards for Bicycle to send home to the Mostly Silent Monastery from all the states along her way.

**Physical education:**

- Organize a group bike ride!

**Discussion Questions:**

- Why would monks – or anyone – want to be silent or nearly silent? What would it be like to give up talking?
- Why did Sister Wanda think it was so important to send Bicycle to the Friendship Factory? Was it a good idea?
- How important is luck?
- What’s the best way to make friends?
- Is it important to always finish what you start? Why or why not?

**Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

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

**If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Alexander, Lloyd. *The Remarkable Journey of Prince Jen*. Puffin, 2004.
- Balkan, Gabrielle. *The 50 States*. Wide Eyed Editions, 2015.
- George, Jean Craighead. *My Side of the Mountain*. Puffin, 2004.
- Konigsberg, E.L. *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. Atheneum, 1998.
- Pinkwater, Daniel. *Borgel*. Aladdin, 1992.

**Jen Wang**

**THE PRINCE AND THE DRESSMAKER**

**First Second, 2018.**

**ISBN: 978-1250159854.**

**\$16.99, 276 pages.**

A graphic novel with a modern, fairy tale vibe. Prince Sebastian has a secret: at night, he dresses up in fantastic ball gowns and enjoys 19th-century Paris nightlife as his alter-ego, the fashionable ‘Lady Crystallia’. Frances is the lowly but brilliant seamstress who becomes his special designer. Sebastian’s parents, the king and queen, have been introducing him to potential brides, but Sebastian is only 16, has his secrets to keep, and anyway, he’s developing feelings for Frances. Charming, romantic, joyful and subversive, this is a story about gender identity, self expression, family pressure, and the joy of truly beautiful clothes.

**Curriculum Connections:**

***Language Arts:***

- Compare and contrast this story to classic stories of knights, chivalry, and fantasy. How is it similar to these other works? How is it different? How are these differences beneficial?
- Have a ‘French Fashion Day’ and try some of the language/fashion activities at this site: <https://blog.eftours.com/tours/language/paris-chic-french-fashion-culture-and-vocab>

***Social Studies:***

- Learn about France at <https://www.kids-world-travel-guide.com/france-facts.html>, and share your knowledge through a video, slide show, brochure, or a non-fiction comic strip.

***Art:***

- Frances designs stunning and original ball gowns. Draw some super-fancy dress-up clothes you’d like to wear. You could use some fashion templates, such as [these](#), to get you started.
- Learn more about dressmaking, or about fashion as a political statement.
- Continue the story: what happens next for Frances and Sebastian? Create a few more comic panels to show your own epilogue.

***Discussion Questions:***

- How does physical appearance affect our perception of others?
- How is Prince Sebastian different when he is Lady Crystallia? How is he the same?

- What are the secrets held by different characters? How do those secrets help them? When do those secrets harm them?
- Frances and Sebastian treat each other like equals in almost every regard. So why do you think Frances always wears her peasant clothes when they go out in public together?
- How does the cover manage to give us so many and yet so few cues about the story at the same time?
- Discuss male and female stereotypes in our society, vs at the time of this story.

**Author's Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:

<http://jenwang.net/>

**If you loved this title, you may like:**

- Clarke, Cat. *The Pants Project*. Sourcebooks Jabberwocky, 2017.
- Dee, Barbara. *Star-Crossed*. Aladdin, 2017.
- Hale, Shannon. *Princess Academy*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2005.
- Ostertag, Molly Knox. *The Witch Boy*. Scholastic. 2017.
- Stevenson, Noelle. *Nimona*. HarperTeen, 2015.



**Jacqueline Woodson**  
**HARBOR ME**  
**Nancy Paulsen, 2018.**  
**ISBN: 978-0399252525.**  
**\$17.99, 176 pages.**

Six kids, pulled from their regular classrooms into a new “special classroom” for kids who learn differently. One Friday afternoon their teacher Ms Laverne brings them to room 501, the ARTT (A Room to Talk) room, a space without any adults and she tells them they will be meeting here every Friday afternoon because she wants them to have a space to “talk about the things kids do when no grown ups are around.” It is in the ARTT room where these students discover a safe haven to share their struggles and to find support. It is a space where phones are away and hurtful words are not allowed. Issues of identity, bullying, racial profiling, immigration, incarceration and more are shared. As each story unfolds Amari, Haley, Holly, Tiago, Estaban and Ashton learn that life can change in an instant and is full of so many beginnings and endings, and they discover courage, hope and strength in the community they’ve created and the bonds they’ve made.

### **Curriculum Connections:**

#### ***Language Arts:***

- **Speaking and listening skills:** Haley uses a voice recorder to capture the conversations in the ARTT room. The conversations are deep and personal and the kids participating listen, ask questions, challenge and encourage one another. They talk about issues affecting them and ask important questions. Structure a conversation for students around any of the topics covered in this book and consider recording it to let students listen back and critique their skills at listening, speaking, questioning, etc.

#### ***Social Studies:***

- Research opportunities:
  - Current Events: Immigration and deportation, racial profiling, police shootings, incarceration of a family member, and education are topics discussed in *Harbor Me* and would lend themselves to research projects.
  - Lenapehoking and the Lenape people (the real Native New Yorkers)-Ms Laverne teaches New York history and includes a lesson on the Lenape people. She asks her students if they would have stood by the Lenape when they were being attacked and their land was being taken from them. [Research the Lenape](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/true-native-new-yorkers-can-never-truly-reclaim-their-homeland-180970472/) and Abenaki to learn more about their history and their struggle for recognition.
    - Smithsonian article about the Lenape:  
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/true-native-new-yorkers-can-never-truly-reclaim-their-homeland-180970472/>
    - VPR Brave Little State Story about the Abenaki

<https://www.vpr.org/post/what-status-abenaki-native-americans-vermont-today#stream/0>

***Social/Emotional Learning:***

- Building empathy/Helping others: Ms. Laverne encourages the six students to ask themselves everyday: “If the worst thing in the world happened, would I help protect someone else? Would I let myself be a harbor for someone else who needs it?”

Have students identify what it means to harbor or help someone else? What people or other beings in their life need harboring? What actions can students take to help or harbor someone in need?

***Discussion Questions:***

- Which story do you relate to the most and why?
- Do you think it is important for kids to have a space to talk without adults present? Why or why not?
- How would the stories of a group of kids from Vermont be similar to or different to the stories of the six kids living in New York City?
- What are the ways in which kids are made to feel different at school by other kids or by adults?
- Ashton talks about never having to think about his “color” until he started at this school where he feels like the only white kid. Holly, another kid in the room says, “Lucky you ...Because every other kid in this room had to think about themselves like that already. And that’s the way a whole lot of people feel everyday.” What does Holly’s comment mean?

**Author’s Website:**

For information about the book and author, see:

<https://www.jacquelinewoodson.com/>

**If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Bowles, David. *They Call Me Guero: A Border Kid’s Poems*. Cinco Puntos Press, 2018.
- Draper, Sharon. *Blended*. Atheneum, 2018.
- Moore, David Barclay. *The Stars Beneath our Feet*. Knopf, 2017.
- Watson, Renee. *Piecing Me Together*. Bloomsbury, 2017.

**Kelly Yang**

**FRONT DESK**

**Arthur A. Levine Books, 2018.**

**ISBN: 978-1338157796.**

**\$16.99, 286 pages**

While some kids are at sports practice or music lessons after school, ten year old Mia Tang is manning the front desk of the motel in which she and her Chinese immigrant parents live and work. The Calavista Motel owned by the cruel Mr. Yao is not only a respite for weary travelers, but also home to a colorful cast of full time residents and it doesn't take long for kindhearted Mia to be drawn into the trials and tribulations of day to day life at the motel. Even though she is faced with daily challenges, Mia has big dreams for herself, as well as her friends and family. Does Mia have what it takes to turn dreams into reality?

Themes: Racism & Prejudice, Immigration, Privilege

**Curriculum Connections:**

Classroom Ideas by Walker Books - Australia

<http://classroom.walkerbooks.com.au/home/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Front-Desk-Classroom-Ideas.pdf>

***Social Studies:***

- ***Immigration and assimilation experiences*** - Check out this great site from Scholastic that offers a wide range of activities and resources to teach about the immigration experience.  
<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/search-results/?search=1&text=Immigration%20and%20Assimilation%20Experiences>

***Writing Prompt:***

Imagine that you come home from school one day and your parents tell you one of them is being transferred to another country because of their job. Not only is the country on the other side of the world, but English is not the native language. What would your first reaction be? Are you excited or freaked out? Will this be an awesome experience to see the world or your worst nightmare? Why? Pick a side and describe what the last month before you leave will look like. Will you be crying with your friends or mapping out cool sounding places to check out in your new home town. Remember to include details and the reasoning behind your choice.

***Discussion Questions:***

- Mia's parents are educated and had good paying jobs in China, how come they are unable to secure such jobs in their new country?
- What little thing does Mia do to make the "weeklies" lives better?

- Why is it dangerous for Mia’s family to allow other immigrants to stay in empty rooms at the motel? How does Mia let them know when it’s safe for them to stay?
- In what ways is Mia smart, clever and innovative?

***Other Resources:***

- Book Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sDoefzSrY>

**Author’s Website:**

For more information about the book and author, see:  
[www.kellyyang.com](http://www.kellyyang.com)

**If you loved this title, you’ll like:**

- Alvarez, Julia. *Return to Sender*, Yearling, 2010
- Applegate, Katherine. *Home of the Brave*, Square Fish, 2008
- Burg, Anne E. *Serafina's Promise* Scholastic Books, 2013
- Hilton, Marylin. *Full Cicada Moon* Puffin Books, 2015

### 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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