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Sam Houston State University
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EDITOR’S NOTE...

Jacquelyn K. Vasquez , B.S.
Graduate Student
Sam Houston State University
Layout Editor, READ: An Online Journal for Literacy Educators
read@shsu.edu

Dear Readers,

The READ Editorial Team wants to thank all who submitted a manuscript!!

We hope you enjoy reading the fourth issue of this journal. The theme for this issue is:
(Re) envisioning Literacy for Struggling Readers.

The theme for the **December 2017** publication will be an **un-themed issue**. We invite Feature Article and Column submissions that offer a variety of viewpoints and visions related to literacy in the 21st century. The viewpoints and visions can be across multiple settings and modalities. This issue will contain an assortment of articles that helps to expand our viewpoints and visions about literacy education and literacy practices.

The theme for the **June 2018** publication is: Literacy in a Social Justice Era. The deadline to submit for the June publication is April 1, 2018.

Please go to the website to review submission guidelines:
<https://www.shsu.edu/academics/language-literacy-and-special-populations/read-journal/>

We look forward to reading your manuscript!

Sincerely,

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“You Mean that Really Happened?!”: Using Nonfiction to Engage Struggling Readers

Carolyn J. Stufft, Ed.D.
Berry College—Georgia

Abstract

*Nonfiction texts used in a middle school classroom encouraged struggling readers to explore other nonfiction texts and to write about the world around them. Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of reader response posits that an interaction takes place among reader, author, and text during reading. The nonfiction texts *Guts: The True Stories Behind Hatchet and the Brian Books* (Paulsen, 2001) and *Night* (Wiesel, 2006) sparked students' interest in real-life stories of survival and prompted struggling readers to read other nonfiction stories and to reflect upon and share text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections through discussion and writing.*

Keywords: nonfiction texts, struggling readers, middle school literacy

Recently, I was fortunate enough to have an opportunity to return to the classroom to teach 6th, 7th, and 8th grade reading classes in a small, rural district. I quickly discovered that my students were fond of series of the *Twilight* variety and naturally gravitated toward fiction books on days that we visited the library. When I began using nonfiction texts in the classroom, I met with resistance from many students who told me that nonfiction is “boring.” Others chimed in that nonfiction passages are only

found on “those tests we take in the spring.” Over the course of a few days, some students conceded that nonfiction may be relevant in their science and social studies classes but that it was not something they would choose to read. My struggling readers, in particular, voiced displeasure for nonfiction. These responses concerned me, not because I wanted to prepare students to ace the nonfiction comprehension questions on standardized tests but because I wanted to help students appreciate nonfiction for what it is – an entrance into other places, historical settings and events, real people's lives – a way to explore the world around us.

At first, I tried to select newspaper or magazine articles that I thought would interest my students. A few articles were popular with some of the students, but I could not seem to move the class toward that “light bulb” moment when nonfiction became relevant and interesting. I focused particularly on my 8th grade class because I wanted to prepare them for the more challenging texts they would encounter in high school. I hoped that my quest would lead to ideas for engaging my 6th and 7th grade students in nonfiction, too. Over the course of several days, I introduced one article after another without finding one that captured the attention of the whole class. As I started to become discour-

aged, I came across the nonfiction text *Guts: The True Stories Behind Hatchet and the Brian Books* by Gary Paulsen. I knew that my 8th grade students had read *Hatchet* the year before and had enjoyed it. I introduced *Guts* by asking the students to tell me what they remembered about *Hatchet*. Although months had passed between the time the students read the text in 7th grade and the day I asked them to retell the story in 8th grade, the students could relay an impressive amount of detail. For the first time in weeks, they were excited to talk about reading, and this encouraged me to move forward with the Gary Paulsen nonfiction text.

I first asked the students to look carefully at the pictures on the front cover of *Guts* and to make predictions about the stories Gary Paulsen might share within the text. The 8th graders quickly pointed to a photograph of sled dogs on the cover and were able to connect the picture to other Paulsen books. Several struggling readers also joined the conversation by making personal connections with the pictures of Paulsen drawing back a bow string and casting a fishing line. I read aloud the first several pages of the book, and then stopped to ask questions about the text. At the end of class, I asked students to complete a quick write reflecting on the day's reading. I was pleasantly surprised to see that each student was able to write something based on the passage from *Guts*. The next several class periods followed a similar pattern – I would read aloud, sometimes pausing to think aloud, other times pausing to ask questions and allow for discussion. Each class ended with a quick write; over time, I noticed that the students had more and more to say in their writing, so quick writes evolved into full-length journal entries.

According to Rosenblatt (1978), readers respond to reading in unique ways because each

individual possesses a unique set of background knowledge and experiences. A central tenet of the transactional theory of reader response is that an interaction takes place among reader, author, and text (Hancock, 1993; Rosenblatt, 1978). Based on this theory, nonfiction texts may represent a way to introduce students to a topic or experience that may lead to different reactions or interpretations that can be shared in class discussions and through writing.

Later in the week, we read a passage in which Paulsen describes himself and his sled dogs being rescued from terrible weather by a pilot flying a small Cessna plane. In the description, Paulsen first explains that he had to pull and throw his entire team of fourteen sled dogs, still harnessed together, into the plane. Once inside, the engine noise frightened the dogs, who attempted to run away from the sound; this movement caused the tail of the plain to tip and required Paulsen to toss the dogs toward the front of the plain to even the weight distribution. Paulsen goes on to explain that each time he threw a dog toward the front of the plane, the dog would go running toward the tail once more. Paulsen “threw another, then another, then another, every time hitting the pilot, who was swearing at me and screaming at the dogs” (2001, p. 25). My students reacted with incredulity and laughter to the seemingly absurd events. Several struggling readers, in particular, came to life while reading this description.

When it was time for students to write about their reading at the end of class, all decided to write about the plane rescue scene. One student asked if it was okay to connect the passage to a movie he saw that depicted a plane crash. The student reasoned that he could only really connect with TV or movies

because the story “wasn’t real.” This comment led to an energetic discussion of Paulsen’s experiences, with others in the classroom reminding one another that nonfiction text describes real events. After several minutes of debate regarding the plane rescue story, the students agreed that it had really happened and were even more intrigued and impressed with Paulsen’s life. As the students returned to their writing, one struggling reader who had been particularly quiet during the class discussions that day blurted, “You mean that *really* happened?!” This student went on to explain that he thought nonfiction was just a more descriptive, less imaginative type of fiction until the class discussion sank in that day. This observation spurred the class into another discussion of what it might have been like to really live through the experiences we read about. Realizing that the nonfiction text was true engaged struggling readers in the story to an even greater extent.

Following that day’s discussion, the students began searching on their own for nonfiction texts related to the Iditarod and wilderness survival tales; several began reading about planes and helicopters. The use of the nonfiction text *Guts* provided an entryway for me to bring nonfiction articles into the classroom once more; this time, the articles were met with a warm reception because the students were motivated to read more about sled dogs, snow storms, surviving in the wild, and other nonfiction topics related to the true tales told in *Guts*. Students then were interested in moving beyond quick writes and journal entries, asking if they could write “reports” based on articles and other nonfiction text they read related to wilderness survival and the topics included in Paulsen’s text. As we continued to read *Guts* in class, students began reading more nonfiction on their own outside of class and chose to write about

their reading using a variety of genres. At one point, the students asked if our class could create a survival newsletter that presented overviews of real-life wilderness survival stories, along with tips for living in the wild. The use of nonfiction text encouraged students not only to read nonfiction but to write about the world around them.

Our reading of *Guts* also guided the class to another nonfiction text on a different topic. In one particularly poignant passage of *Guts*, Paulsen talks about his time as an emergency medical technician in a rural area and recounts the experience of arriving too late to save a heart attack victim. In the passage, Paulsen mentions the “thousand-yard stare” visible in the patient’s eyes (2001, p. 4). My students were initially puzzled by the expression, so we paused to think about the phrase. Several students made a connection with the length of a football field and calculated that it would take ten fields to make a thousand yards. One student asked if it was possible to really see anything that far away. The conversation moved back to the passage, and another student mentioned that the patient was probably staring at the ceiling, which would have been much closer than a thousand yards. Over the course of several minutes of thoughtful consideration and discussion, the students came to understand that this expression related to the look of a person who had experienced severe trauma; in this case, a person who was near death. The class ended on a somber note that day, but the next day students came in buzzing about the expression. Several students had searched online for more information about the thousand-yard stare and had asked parents and grandparents about the phrase the evening before. One student brought in a copy of the

book *The Two Thousand Yard Stare: Tom Lea's World War II* (Lea, 2008) and shared with the class pictures of the USS *Gleaves* and the USS *Zircon* contained in the book. Finally my students, including struggling readers, were not only making text-to-self connections but also making text-to-text and text-to-world connections.

My class finished reading *Guts*, not with relief to have finished a nonfiction text but with regret that the stories had ended. The students asked to read more nonfiction and returned again to the thousand-yard stare phrase, asking to read something that connected with the expression. I had planned to move on to the topic of the Holocaust later that year, but encouraged by my struggling readers' interest in nonfiction text, I decided it was time for the class to surge forward and read *Night* (Wiesel, 2006). I used the picture book *Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust* (Bunting, 1989) to spark discussion before beginning *Night*. The fictional picture book *Terrible Things* relates to the events of the Holocaust and prepared students for reading *Night*. The use of a picture book surprised my students, with several commenting that they had not read a picture book, or had one read to them, since early elementary school. However, the picture book provided a way for me to introduce a complex topic by using a text that was accessible to all of my students. Throughout the next several weeks of reading, *Night* sparked students' interest in reading more about World War II in general and the Holocaust in particular. Students searched for information online and looked for nonfiction books during library visits to learn more about this time in history. They also made connections with their history class and started to see the ways in which nonfiction can be more than a textbook chapter or a standardized test passage.

Together, we viewed pictures of concentration camps, maps of 1940s Europe, and read passages written by Anne Frank. The content of *Night* encouraged my 8th graders to explore more about this time in history and the people who were part of it. Throughout the rest of the school year, students would bring to class books that they found or articles they came across related to World War II. Through their own reading, students explored topics such as the Danish Resistance and shared their new knowledge with the class. One student came across an article about Simon Wiesenthal and Adolf Eichmann and read more information on the website for the Simon Wiesenthal Center. In response, I incorporated the picture book *The Anne Frank Case: Simon Wiesenthal's Search for the Truth* (Rubin, 2010). After reading the book to my 8th grade class, I used the text with my 6th graders and found it to be a dynamic way to engage them in nonfiction, too.

Night provided content that led my students to create character mind maps and to write diary entries from the point of view of a Holocaust survivor. Students also wrote letters to Elie Wiesel, as well as to other historical figures from the era, such as Anne Frank; although the recipients could not write back, my students were able to communicate their questions through a letter-writing variety of Question the Author (QtA). Through reading both *Guts* and *Night*, students became interested in reading more nonfiction and also in writing about these texts. From brief quick writes to more in-depth journal responses, letters, reports, and newsletters, students explored their text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections stemming from nonfiction texts. Through thought-provoking nonfiction stories, my middle school students

were able to think about their world and to write about the world around them. These nonfiction texts and the associated writing activities engaged my struggling readers in ways that were meaningful and that extended far beyond the traditional nonfiction text associated with standardized testing.

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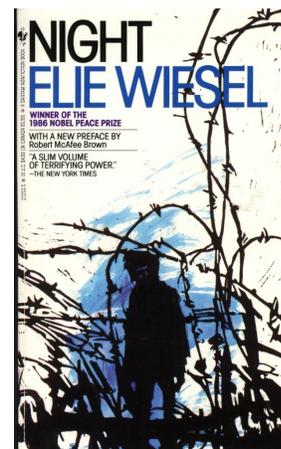
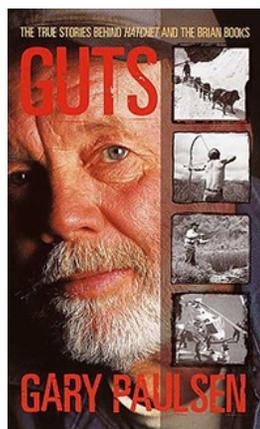
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Author's Biography

Carolyn J. Stufft is an assistant professor of Teacher Education at Berry College in Georgia. She received her doctorate in literacy, with an emphasis in digital literacies, from Sam Houston State University. She is a certified English/Language Arts/Reading (ELAR) teacher, Reading Specialist, and Master Reading Teacher; she has taught grades 4-8 in charter and Title I public schools. Her research interests include the use of digital literacies to promote tweens' and teens' literacy practices. She is interested in preparing pre-service teachers to effectively incorporate new literacies within the curriculum.

Correspondence

All correspondence should be sent to Carolyn Stufft at cstufft@berry.edu or Berry College, 2277 Martha Berry Hwy NW, P.O. Box 495019, Mt. Berry, GA 30149-5019. Voice calls should be made to 706-368-6703.



Using Authentic Literature to Enrich Young Children's Literacy Experiences

Kristi L. Dudley, M.S.
Ramona T. Pittman, Ph.D.
Rebekah E. Piper, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University—San Antonio

Abstract

This article focuses on the five components (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) needed to effectively teach children to read. Early childhood educators can teach these five skills through the use of authentic literature. To be classified as authentic literature, books and texts need to utilize “real life” writing that is written to engage the reader. Authentic narrative texts generally appeal to the reader and offers a theme and a moral to the story. The article explains the five components needed to teach children to read and offers some authentic texts, synopses, and lesson ideas specifically for each of the components. Although children may not be able to read the texts, the texts selected are at the child’s listening comprehension level. In addition, the selected texts will aid early childhood educators and parents in infusing these skills for engaging implementation.

Keywords: authentic literature, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension

Literacy is an essential skill to development in the early years (Pittman, 2014). When preparing young children for educational success, one can use children’s literature to help promote the five components of effective reading instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000). The National Reading Panel stated that phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension are needed to be able to successfully teach children to read. Most school agencies and districts build their literacy curricula around these five pillars. Prior to kindergarten, early childhood educators should use authentic children’s literature to cultivate these skills in young children.

Authentic literature is characterized by “real life” writing that is written for the sole purpose of emotionally engaging the reader. Authentic literature can be narrative or expository and include texts that are usually enjoyed outside of a classroom (Purcell-Gates & Duke, 2004). Authentic literature does not specifically seek to provide fundamental reading instruction and for this very reason, can be used as a powerful instructional tool (Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, & Tower, 2006/2007). When parents read bedtime stories to their children, they tend to automati-

cally read authentic literature. These stories generally are fun for the child to listen to and allow them to use their imagination. This sort of engagement is the first step to molding the child into becoming an aesthetic reader. Aesthetic readers read for pleasure and, as noted by Applegate and Applegate (2004), “see reading as active immersion into a text and the opportunity to live vicariously through the situations and lives of its characters” (p. 554)

Furthermore, educators can continue to nurture children’s love for literature by intertwining the components of reading with authentic literature to achieve the main goal of creating strong, future readers. In order to understand how authentic literature can be used to incorporate the five pillars of reading, each pillar should be explained.

Phonemic awareness is a component of a larger umbrella term, phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is the ability to manipulate sounds in *spoken* language (Yopp & Yopp, 2009). Phonological awareness skills from easiest to most difficult include: 1) hearing rhyming words (e.g., *cat, hat, mat, flat*) and alliteration (e.g., *The blue bike is broken.*), 2) segmenting sentences to hear that sentences are made up of individual words (e.g., *She is happy.* is comprised of three words), 3) onset and rime blending and segmenting (e.g., /d/ + og = dog), and phonemic awareness.

Phonemic awareness is the highest skill level on the phonological awareness continuum. Phonemic awareness is defined as the ability to notice, think about and manipulate individual sounds or phonemes in words (e.g., *Dog* has three phonemes or individual sounds, /d/ /o/ /g/ (Armbuster, Lehr, & Osborne, 2001). According to the National Reading Panel, a child’s ability to complete phonemic awareness tasks is the greatest predictor of success in reading during

the first two years of school. To enhance these skills, early childhood educators should select children’s books written using simple, rhyming words and/or words that focus on particular sounds and word play which can teach children how to manipulate sounds to form different words in engaging ways.

Secondly, the approach to *teaching* letter-sound correspondence is called *phonics*. During phonological awareness tasks, children would have been manipulating sounds in *spoken* language. Phonics combines written language with spoken language so that children will learn to decode words in print by mapping speech to print (Moats, 2010). Phonics instruction begins with letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, and sight word activities. Phonics instruction advances to teach students how to read words with multiple syllables. Early childhood educators, however, should focus on the first three skills.

Moreover, fluency is the ability to read connected text accurately, quickly, expressively, with good phrasing and good comprehension (Rasinski & Nageldinger, 2015). When a fluent reader can accurately and quickly decode words with automaticity, the reader can, therefore, focus his efforts on comprehending what is being read. As with any skill, once a student’s literacy skills have evolved enough, they become almost automatic, to the point where the student no longer has to focus his attention on recognizing the fundamentals, but instead can see the whole “picture”. Fluency brings text to life and introduces students to the endless potential uses for literature. Authentic literature represents examples of each of these possibilities. Early childhood educators can help young children to understand fluency by

modeling reading at a conversational rate and using appropriate expression. Authentic literature that provides dialogue is an excellent way to practice these skills.

Next, vocabulary is understanding the meanings of words. Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) state "...a large vocabulary repertoire facilitates becoming an educated person to the extent that vocabulary knowledge is strongly related to reading proficiency in particular and school achievement in general" (p. 1). Knowing the meaning of words is essential to listening and reading comprehension. Early childhood educators should choose books that include a wide range of vocabulary so children can be immersed in good vocabulary. Beck et al., provide an explanation for teaching vocabulary to children. The authors suggest by placing words in tiers (Tier, 1, 2, and 3), a teacher would know which words to teach students. Tier 1 words are basic, everyday words that children should know; therefore, the words do not have to be taught (e.g., baby, table, car). (Please note that these words may need to be taught for English Language Learners or students with limited vocabulary knowledge and experiences.) Tier 2 words are words frequently used in language, are central to comprehension, and are understood by most mature language users (e.g., *gigantic, sophisticated, ecstatic*) (Honig, Diamond, & Gutlohn, 2008). Tier 3 words are those words that are generally used within the content of study (e.g., *altitude, longitude, peninsula*). Although young children may not be able to read, authentic literature provides students with ample opportunities to hear good Tier 2 words, which helps build their knowledge of words and aid in comprehension.

Reading comprehension is the ultimate goal of why we read. Without understanding what the author is telling the reader, the words

on the page are useless. The RAND Study Group defines reading comprehension as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (Kirby, 2002, p. 11). Authentic literature is the ultimate tool for enhancing reading comprehension because it encompasses such a large variety of writing styles and topics. Early childhood educators should use authentic literature because books with good storylines aid in the development of comprehension. These books tend to have great characters and a good plot with a problem, a solution, and a sequence of events.

All pillars of reading are necessary to ensure young children's success in learning to read. The following is a list of authentic texts that can be used with young children to help develop their literacy skills in each of the five pillars of reading.

Phonemic Awareness

Andreae, G., & Parker-Rees, G. (2001). *Giraffes can't dance*. New York: Orchard Books.

Synopsis of Literature:

Gerald is a clumsy giraffe. He wants to dance at the yearly jungle dance but is ashamed of his awkward dancing, and the other animals make fun of him. With the help from a friend, Gerald is able to overcome his fear and discovers that he truly can dance.

Lesson Idea:

Giraffes Can't Dance is a great book for developing phonemic awareness using rhyming words. When the teacher reads the book aloud to the class, the students will be-

come familiar with the rhythm and rhyme pattern of the text. During the next read, the teacher should have the class determine which words rhyme. Last, the students should toss a ball to each other, and once the ball is caught, they should say a word that rhymes with the previous student's word.

Seeger, L. V. (2005). *Walter was worried*. New Milford, CT: Roaring Brook Press.

Synopsis:

In this fun text, *Walter was worried...*, *Priscilla was puzzled...*, and *Shirley was shocked*, each character is in a mood that starts with the same sound (phoneme) as their first name.

Lesson Idea:

Teachers can use this book to teach phonemic awareness. One of the major skills that will be taught in kindergarten is the ability to isolate the initial or first sound in words, such as /v/ in van or /sh/ in ship. This is an excellent book to have young children develop a sentence based upon the initial sound of their name (e.g., *Holly was happy*.) Next, the children can draw a picture similar to the cover page of *Walter Was Worried*. The picture should help illustrate their sentence.

Phonics

Shaw, N., & Apple, M. (1986). *Sheep in a jeep*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Synopsis:

In this story, a group of sheep run into some trouble while driving their jeep, and the further they go, they continue to run into more

and more trouble.

Lesson Idea:

Sheep in a Jeep can be used to focus on the long "E" sound. A major skill that students must learn is the common sounds that letters represent. After the reading, the teacher should help students identify words with the Long "E" sound, as some words were not spelled with the double "E." Next, the teacher should have the story written on chart paper. Then, she should ask the students to help her highlight all the long "E" words in the story. In this story, there are 32 total words with the long "E" sound!

Kellogg, S. (1987). *Aster Aardvark's Alphabet Adventures*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Company.

Synopsis:

This fun book progresses through each letter of the alphabet with different animals doing different activities that involve the letter that is shown on each page (e.g., *Kenilworth, the kind kangaroo, kissed his kin Katherine Koala, who had kept his kite and his kitchen key in her kayak*.) This book is excellent for teaching alliteration, as well.

Lesson Idea:

After the teacher has read the book to the young children, the teacher can assign a letter to each student so that a class alphabet book can be created. The students will use magazine pictures to create pictures based upon their letter. Parents can help the children develop a sentence based upon the pictures used for their alphabet book page (e.g., *Buddy the beaver baked a beef berry soup for the big bear ball in Batesville*.)

Roberts, D. (2003). *Dirty Bertie*. London: Little Tiger.

Synopsis:

Dirty Bertie is a dirty little boy. He does all sorts of nasty things that are frowned upon. He finally changes and cleans up his act with the exception of one gross habit.

Lesson Idea:

This lesson focuses on r-controlled vowels. “In r-controlled vowels the letter R affects the sound of the vowel(s) that precedes it” (Honig, Diamond, Gutlohn 2008). After reading the text, the teacher will underline the -er and -ir spelling patterns for the /er/ sound. The teacher should write both spelling patterns on a piece of chart paper and write the words Bertie and Dirty. The students will then go through the book to find words that fit into each column. Although they may not yet be able to read, the students can still find and differentiate words that have the r-controlled spelling pattern. -ir (dirty, first, bird, girl, skirt, shirt, circle, thirty, birthday)
-er (Bertie, her, serve, person, every, perfect, expert, water, germ)

Fluency

Pulver, R., & Reed, L. R. (2003). *Punctuation takes a vacation*. New York: Holiday House.

Synopsis:

Mr. Wright’s class is suffering through a lesson on commas when they decide to give punctuation a vacation and go to recess. The only problem is that punctuation actually does leave and all of a sudden nothing makes sense.

Lesson Idea:

As the teacher reads this text, the teacher should focus on expression. Punctuation use is critically important in modeling good reading. The ability to model good reading keeps young children from reading monotone once they learn to read. While reading this text, the teacher should draw students’ attention to how the sentences do not sound like normal or conversational speaking when the punctuation is missing.

Schachner, J. B. (2003). *Skippyjon Jones*. New York: Dutton Children's Books/Penguin Young Readers Group.

Synopsis:

Skippyjon Jones is like most young children with an imagination filled with lots of excitement. He is always getting into some sort of trouble, and this time he is spending time in his room thinking about what it means to be a Siamese cat. As he is bouncing around and playing his imagination takes hold, and he is suddenly on an adventure in old Mexico.

Lesson Idea:

Skippyjon Jones is a great book for teaching fluency because the author uses multiple techniques to express emotion in the story. The important thing to note is that there are several changes of pace, some made up vocabulary, some language crossover, and some poetry in this text. As the teacher reads the story, he should make sure to emphasize the words with the way they are written on the page and do the clapping and singing that goes along with the text. This will emphasize to the students that the way print is portrayed, lets the reader know that the author wanted

the literature to be enjoyed a certain way.

Vocabulary

Fox, M., & Denton, T. (1989). *Night noises*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Synopsis of Literature:

Lilly is a little old lady who lives with her dog Butch Aggie. One night while they are sleeping, Butch Aggie is alarmed by some strange and interesting noises outside. He wakes Lilly up only to find out the sounds are her family planning a surprise birthday party for her.

Lesson Ideas:

Night Noises uses a variety of onomatopoeias to help describe the noises that are heard by Butch Aggie. While reading the text, use expression to show how important the sound words are to the story. After reading the text, give students pictures of different items and animals that make noises. The teacher will verbally make the noise, and the students will hold up the picture that fits the noise's description.

Byrne, R. (2014). *This book just ate my dog!* New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Synopsis:

Bella is taking her dog for a walk when the book all of a sudden eats her dog, her friend, and the ambulance. It is quiet odd that the book is eating everything, so she goes to investigate. She, then, gets eaten by the book. Eventually the problem is solved by turning the book and emptying everyone out on the other side.

Lesson Idea:

After the teacher reads the book, the teacher can complete an example/non example

activity. Examples of the activity are provided in *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* (Beck, McKeown, Kucan 2013).

Tier 2 Words (e.g., *stroll*, *ridiculous*)

Example of *Example/Nonexample*:

Variation 1: "*If what I am describing sounds like a stroll, say stroll...*"

-jogging

-a walk through the park

-running

-taking your dog for a walk

Variation 2: *Which of these sound ridiculous?*

-Eating an enchilada at a restaurant or eating an enchilada on the moon.

-Scoring a thousand points in a football game or scoring a touchdown.

-Dancing with your mom or dancing with Justin Beiber.

Comprehension

Soman, D., & Davis, J. (2011). *Ladybug Girl and the Bug Squad*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.

Synopsis:

Lulu is super excited about a playdate she has planned for her and the bug squad. During the bug squads play date, Lulu learns a lesson about friendship. At the end of the story, the bug squad heads off on a new adventure.

Lesson Idea:

With the use of transition words, the comprehension skills addressed in this text are sequencing and prediction. There are op-

opportunities during the story to stop and assist the students in making predictions as to what will happen next. The end of the book is a cliff hanger where the author leaves the readers wondering what will happen next as the bug squad heads out on their final adventure. At the end of the book the teachers should have the students to draw and share what they predict will happen on the bug squad's next adventure.

Young, E. (1992). *Seven blind mice*. New York: Philomel Books.

Synopsis:

Seven blind mice find a strange new thing by their pond. Each mouse investigates and comes back to the group with their prediction of what the item may be. Each mouse is only observing a part of the whole item but the final mouse investigates the whole object along with what each of the other mice observed, and he makes a conclusion.

Lesson Idea:

Teachers can use story retelling. As the teacher is reading the book, she will place pictures of the main events and characters on the board, which will aid the students in retelling the story from beginning to end.

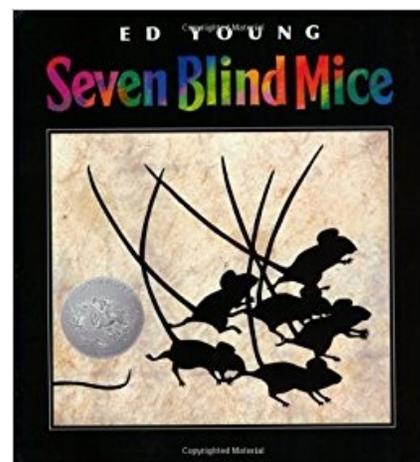
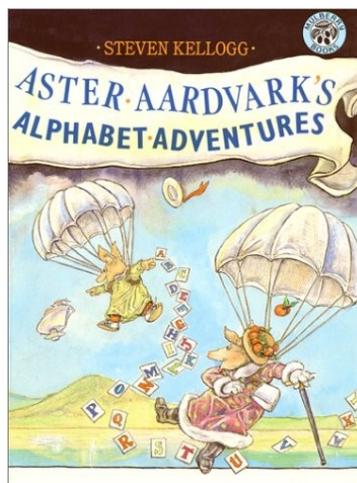
Authentic literature provides engaging and educational opportunities that teachers can use to their advantage in the classroom especially when they are paired with a lesson focused on one of the five pillars of reading. The students find that authentic literature usually is fun to listen to and therefore, it keeps their attention longer than the classic textbook or decodable text. In addition, this type of literature is similar to what children are encouraged to listen to at home. For this reason, reading may seem less

rote and more engaging. Bridging the gap between children who enter kindergarten with no exposure to authentic literature versus children who have had immense exposure is greatly needed. The National Reading Panel (2000) stated that five components are needed to effectively teach children to read. Because of the age of early learners, we argue that these components can be infused in authentic literature and with those opportunities when early childhood teachers are reading aloud to students.

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Authors' Biography

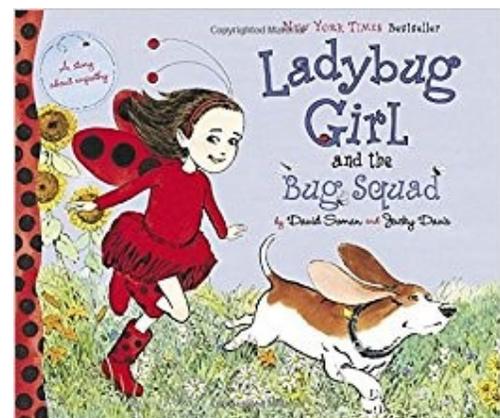
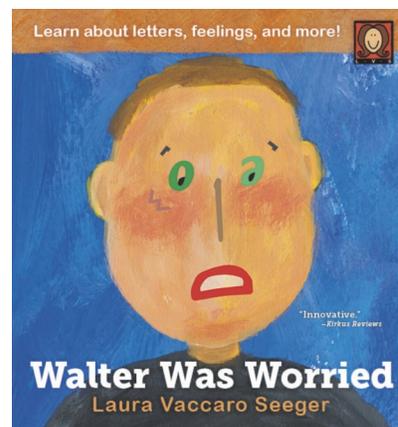
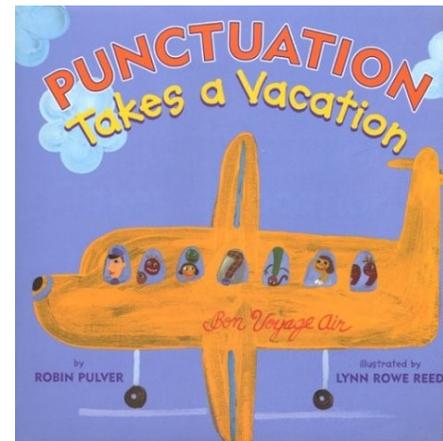
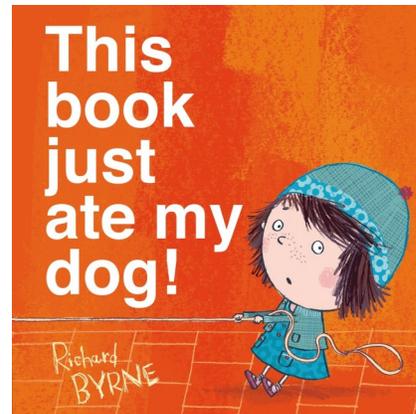
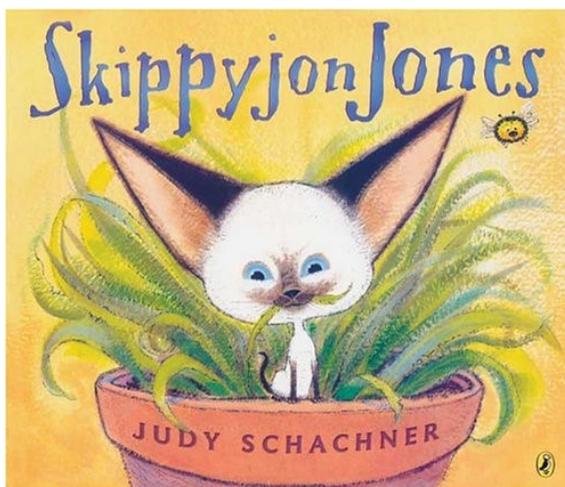
Kristi L. Dudley is a December 2016 graduate of Texas A&M University-San Antonio. She has a Master of Science in Reading degree. Currently, Kristi is a certified teacher in San Antonio.

Ramona T. Pittman is an associate professor in the Department of Educator and Leadership Preparation. She has seven years of teaching experience in PK-12. Currently, she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in literacy. Her research interests include: literacy development, struggling readers, and teacher preparation.

Rebekah E. Piper is an assistant professor in the Department of Educator and Leadership Preparation. Currently, she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in literacy education. Her research interests include: children's literature, multicultural education, and literacy development.

Correspondence

All correspondence should be sent to Ramona T. Pittman at ramona.pittman@tamusa.edu or Texas A&M University-San Antonio, One University Way, San Antonio, TX 78224. Voice calls should be made to 210-784-2557.



Columns

Struggling Emerging Literacy Learners: The Importance of Text Selection and Supportive Book Introduction

Jolene B. Reed, Ph.D.
Sam Houston State University—Texas

Abstract

For the majority of young learners, learning how to read comes relatively easily. However, some young children experience difficulty and require particularly specific thought and planning by the teacher. When early literacy behaviors are not securely evident in the struggling literacy learner, the teacher can support the development of those behaviors through selection of novel text and a book introduction that is tailored specifically to the needs of the learner experiencing problems. Specific attention needs to be paid to the types of information in the text that the young student is either utilizing or neglecting. The teacher needs to know the student well, including an awareness of specific high-frequency words that the student knows in either reading or writing. The teacher then can make decisions based on the knowledge base specific to the struggling emerging literacy learner. This article details how teaching decisions resulting from knowing a child's specific reading behaviors supports the struggling emerging literacy learner.

Keywords: emergent literacy, struggling reader, reading recovery

For the majority of young learners, learning how to read comes relatively easily. However, for some, the learning becomes tangled (Clay, 1982). It becomes the responsibility of teachers to provide the extra support needed to help the confused emerging literacy learner untangle misconceptions. Teachers can accomplish this by understanding what literary knowledge the young learner controls, supporting that young learner through a careful selection of text for the child to read, and then introducing that novel text in a manner that supports the child and ensures a successful first reading of the new text. This article will detail how a struggling emergent literacy learner can be supported by these three items. This will be accomplished through the example of Eric (all names are pseudonyms), a first-grade student who struggled to grasp that sometimes elusive thing that we call reading.

Eric was a first-grade student who had been placed in his school's Reading Recovery program. Reading Recovery (Clay, 2016) is an early intervention for first grade students who are having difficulty learning to read and write. Reading Recovery operates on the premise that students who get off to a

slower beginning in literacy development need accelerated instruction that will catch them up to the average band of their class. A specially trained teacher accomplishes acceleration in Reading Recovery through one-on-one tutoring for thirty minutes of daily reading and writing instruction. The goal is for the Reading Recovery student to make these accelerated gains in reading and writing during a relatively short (usually 12-20 weeks) period of time (Clay, 2016).

Eric's Reading Recovery teacher, Mrs. Hyde, became frustrated with his inconsistent performance in reading text. Looking for additional help to problem solve how to further support Eric, Mrs. Hyde asked that I (her Reading Recovery Teacher Leader) observe Eric in an effort to obtain an additional set of eyes in understanding Eric's reading behaviors. Mrs. Hyde stated that she found it difficult to determine exactly what Eric did and did not understand in reading. She further commented that he appeared to have an excellent memory for text. This memory for the repeated textual patterns that he heard during the book introduction allowed him to perform well on text that was simple, predictable, and patterned with supportive illustrations. Mrs. Hyde expounded on this observation by saying that Eric experienced difficulty when she asked him to read text that was simple and predictable, but unpatterned. Reading unpatterned text requires the reader to attend more closely to the visual information of the printed text. Eric's substitutions when reading unpatterned text were always meaningful and followed the storyline, but he did not appear to be using the high-frequency words that he knew how to write or the beginning letters of unknown words to self-monitor and self-correct his incorrect reading.

As Eric read his short books, I observed

the same behaviors his teacher had described. The books he read were comprised of simple, repetitive texts and Eric's reading sounded phrased and fluent. The tonal quality of his voice contained the inflection of a reader. He was "talking like a book" (Clay, 2015, p. 77). But then he began doing something I found extremely interesting. He began reading rapidly—albeit accurately—quickly turning the pages of his book. I leaned in for a closer look and kept my gaze focused on his eyes. As he turned each page, his eyes stared steadfastly at the picture, never moving to concentrate on the print. What his teacher described in our conversation prior to Eric's reading lesson came back to my mind. She described him as having a good memory for the text, but not appearing to monitor his reading with words that he knew. I realized that he could not visually monitor what he was not looking at. I also wondered if Eric realized that it was the print and not the pictures that carried the message of the text (Barr, Blachowicz, & Wogman-Sadow, 1995, p.24).

I continued to watch as Eric and his teacher proceeded to the writing portion of their lesson. They engaged in a brief conversation where Eric described events of the prior evening when his grandmother helped him make a kite. After a short dialogue, Eric's teacher suggested that they write about a brief part of the conversation. Eric generated the sentence that he wanted to write: "Me and my sister and my grandma made our kites." He opened his writing journal, selected a purple marker as a writing instrument and began writing. For the next ten minutes, I was mesmerized as the teacher and student worked together to record Eric's message. Eric's eyes rarely left the page while the two of them were writing. I was fascinated as I

watched Eric's total involvement with print as he produced his story on the blank page in front of him. Eric wrote the first three words independently. He articulated and recorded the /s/ and /r/ in "sister". (The notation of a letter between slash marks such as /s/ denotes that the child articulated the sound. Notation of a letter in brackets such as <s> indicates that the name of the letter was spoken.) His teacher supplied what Eric was unable to record. In "grandma", Eric said that he could hear a <g> and an <m>. Again, his teacher wrote the parts that Eric did not state that he could hear. When he came to "made", Eric quickly and silently wrote "m", "a", and "d". His teacher placed the silent letter "e" at the end. For "our", Eric repeated the word and placed a solitary "r" on the paper. His teacher supplied the missing "o" and "u". Eric sounded /k/ as he wrote the "k" in "kites". His teacher finished the word.

Eric's teacher quickly wrote his sentence on a narrow strip of paper and then cut the words of the sentence apart. She asked Eric to reassemble the cut-up words to reformulate the sentence. Eric looked attentively at the small pieces of paper in front of him and began selecting each word needed to reconstruct his sentence. He quickly located "me", "and", and "my", placing them in the correct order. As Eric searched for each remaining word, he first stated the word softly and then began sounding the initial letter as his eyes attentively moved from one word to another until the word beginning with the correct letter was located. This process continued until his entire sentence was reconstructed. He completed the task independently. Not once did he appeal to his teacher for assistance.

I sat in my chair, spellbound by what

just occurred. This child, identified by teachers as a struggling literacy learner, read three books with only minimal engagement of the print with his eyes. However, Eric's apparent passive approach toward print in the books changed to total involvement with print as he engaged in the writing task. During both the writing process and the reassembly of the cut-up sentence, Eric demonstrated that he was capable of monitoring and searching print for the high-frequency words that he had written independently as well as searching the initial letters of words to locate words not yet fully recognized by him.

The Importance of Early Reading Behaviors

One of the many things I have learned from working with children throughout my educational career is that they have just as much to teach us as educators as we have to teach them. What can be learned from this encounter with Eric? Eric demonstrated, through his interaction with text in writing that he had several strong understandings of how print works. First, he understood that print is meaningful when he generated the sentence that he wanted to write. He had an enjoyable experience with family members as they created and flew kites in the windy spring weather. With the simple message that he generated, he wished to convey a portion of that experience to his reader. Eric also demonstrated that he knew some high frequency words by recording them quickly as he wrote. Additionally, Eric demonstrated an understanding of the alphabetic principle as he recorded the dominant consonants heard in the words he wished to write. Knowing the sounds of letters also supported Eric as he searched for words he didn't recognize by

sight. He understood that sounding the first letter of the word he was searching for could help him locate the needed word as he reassembled a cut-up sentence.

The question for Eric's reading instruction became how to use what he knew and understood when he wrote to support his process of learning to read. How Mrs. Hyde selected the next text for Eric to read and how she introduced the text to Eric would be an important part of the answer to that question. Both teaching decisions had to occur based on the teacher's observations of what Eric knew and understood about novel text. Before she even selected Eric's next text, she had to first consider the early ready behaviors that Eric controlled: left to right directionality in reading, control of one-to-one matching when reading text, and using words he knows as anchors to check on his reading of novel text (Clay, 2016).

Eric demonstrated control of left to right directionality in both reading and writing. In reading, his finger moved across the page in a left to right direction as he read, verbalizing the text he was reading. In writing, Eric wrote his sentence in a left to right direction, leaving exaggerated white spaces between the words that he wrote. In writing, he also included a return sweep to the left of the blank page when he needed to do so to complete his sentence.

Eric's control of one-to-one match (realizing that for each word printed on the page, one word needed to be spoken orally) was not obvious based on Eric's reading in the aforementioned scenario. Eric's finger had slid across the page in one smooth movement. His eyes looked only at the picture as he read, while his mouth echoed the repeated pattern that he knew went with the text, altered only with the change that was represented in the picture. A crisp pointing with his finger to each word as it

was read would have indicated that Eric understood that a single printed word required that a single word be spoken orally. However, Eric's lack of crisp finger pointing did not necessarily mean that he did not understand the concept of one-to-one match. There simply was not enough information based on his reading alone to decide whether Eric understood this early literacy concept.

Eric's writing, however, did give some additional insight. The very act of writing caused Eric to slow down his literacy processing behavior as he wrote each word of his sentence. This unhurried act of recording each word is what would allow adult observers to better understand how Eric looked at print. As he slowly articulated individual words and then recorded what he heard, he provided evidence that he understood the relationship between letters and words. As he left spaces between each word in his writing, he further indicated that he was at least beginning to grasp the concept of one-to-one match in print.

Lacking in Eric's reading performance was the use of words he knew as anchors to check on his reading in novel text. This was evidenced when his eyes stared steadfastly at the illustration as he read and never moved from the picture to the printed words in the text. Eric was reading accurately. However, that accurate reading was based on his memory for text, rather than any behavior of checking to ascertain if the printed text looked like the words he stated. Eric needed text that, while still highly repetitive, reinforced a need for Eric to check the printed word against what he heard as he read orally.

The Importance of Text Selection

The challenge for Mrs. Hyde became one of helping Eric to use what he knew and understood in writing to support his reading novel text. Simultaneously, she needed to help Eric understand the importance of attending to the print of the text while reading. The selection of the next text for Eric to read was crucial. From Eric's writing sample, it was clear that he knew at least three high frequency words: "me", "and", and "my". Eric's teacher had also previously administered the Ohio Word Test (Clay, 2005) as a quick determination of sight words that Eric recognized. On this assessment, Eric had correctly read the words "the", and "and". His teacher had also administered Clay's (2005) Observation Task for Writing Vocabulary. In this assessment, the student is asked to write all the words they know within a ten-minute time limit. During this assessment, Eric had written the words "I", "a", "mom", "dad", and his name. Knowing specifically which words Eric controlled in reading and in writing and that Eric needed a repeated text pattern with highly supportive illustrations in reading novel text aided Mrs. Hyde as she looked through various texts to select Eric's next book to read.

In selecting his next book, it was imperative that Mrs. Hyde keep in mind specifically what Eric already knew and what he needed to control next. Eric's teacher's greatest concern was that he did not appear to be attending to the text of the story as he read. Armed with the knowledge of words he knew and that his next book needed to have a slightly varied text pattern, Mrs. Hyde needed to find a book that would support Eric by using what he already knew, and also encouraging new learning by asking him to perform something that was on the upper cusp of his Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). After careful consid-

eration, Mrs. Hyde selected the book, *Danny Likes Red* by Mia Coulton (2003). She made this choice because the text was generally patterned and contained the highly supportive illustrations that Eric still relied on. The significant difference in this text was that each page contained slight variations in pattern. However, those changes were in words that Eric had shown he knew and controlled. Accurate reading would require that Eric attend to the print on the page and use what he knew. At the same time, supportive illustrations would help Eric with what he did not yet control.

The text (Coulton, 2003, pp. 2-10) read in part:

A leaf is red. (The illustration shows a dog, Danny, with a red leaf on his head.)

My ball is red. (The illustration shows Danny with a red ball in front of him.)

The apple is red. (The illustration shows Danny with a red apple on his head.)

The bow is red. (The illustration shows Danny with a red bow on his head.)

My scarf is red. (The illustration shows Danny wearing a red scarf around his neck.)

Selection of this text was on the upper cusp of Eric's learning because it provided Eric just the right amount of support to let him read the text accurately. However, the

intermingling of the words “a”, “my”, and “the” would force Eric to attend to the print as he read. The illustrations still supported the words that Eric could not yet read conventionally, but the slight changes in text would require that Eric attend to the print and use just a quick glance at the illustrations to supply the unknown word in the sentence.

The Importance of the Text Introduction

Once Eric’s teacher had selected a new book for him, it was extremely important that she set him up for success in reading the text by giving him a supportive book introduction. Clay (2016) states that “The first reading of the new book is not a test. It needs to be a successful reading. Prepare the child for correct responding on the first encounter by introducing the language and the ideas through oral conversation (p. 115).” In preparing Eric to successfully read this particular book, Mrs. Hyde needed to ensure that Eric was familiar with how the book worked, including any terms or concepts that would be unfamiliar to him.

In planning book introductions, it is helpful for any teacher to follow some general guidelines that Mrs. Hyde followed when she planned the book introduction for Eric. Of course, each book introduction must be unique and the guidelines Mrs. Hyde followed must be tweaked to meet the needs of the individual text and the unique needs of the learner.

First, Mrs. Hyde needed to ensure that Eric understood the gist of the text’s storyline. This needed to be brief, just long enough to give him an idea of what the book would be about and how the book worked. Mrs. Hyde then asked herself if there were any vocabulary words or concepts with which Eric might not be familiar. From looking through the above-mentioned book, Mrs. Hyde decided that Eric

might not be familiar with the word “scarf”. She knew she needed to draw attention to that word in her introduction to the text. Finally, Mrs. Hyde wanted to plant the language of the text in Eric’s mind, again setting him up for a successful first reading of the unfamiliar text. With these elements in mind, the book introduction for *Danny Likes Red* (Coulton, 2003) sounded something like this:

“This book is about a dog named Danny who likes the color red. He is going to show you some red things. Let’s look through the book and see what the red things are.” Mrs. Hyde and Eric then looked through the book together to see what objects Danny would be showing the young reader. When they come to the page with the scarf, Mrs. Hyde pointed out through natural conversation that the thing around Danny’s neck was called a scarf. Mrs. Hyde then invited Eric to locate the word “scarf” in the text. She provided some additional support by asking Eric what letter he might expect to see at the beginning of the word “scarf”. After Eric located the word, Mrs. Hyde had him run his finger under the word as he articulated the word slowly, allowing him to notice how the sounds he articulated when saying the word aligned with the letters he saw in the written word. Once the two of them had looked at the pictures and discussed the word “scarf”, Mrs. Hyde invited Eric to read. With this introduction, Eric had the information needed to help ensure success on the first reading.

Just prior to Eric’s beginning to read the new text, Mrs. Hyde reminded him that he needed to look at the words as he read. She had Eric locate the words “a”, “my”, and “the” on the first three printed pages of the text. She told Eric that these three words would be changing at the beginning of each

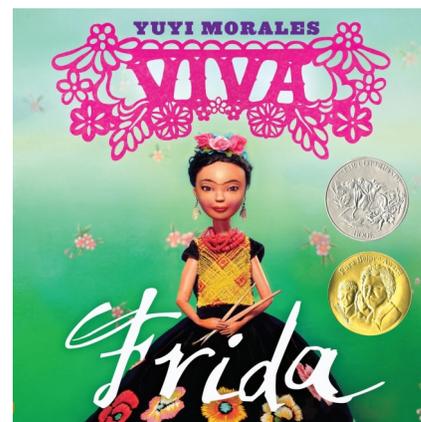
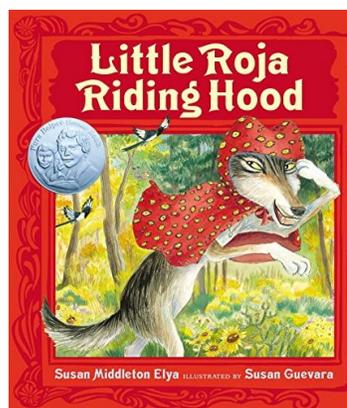
page that he read and that the only way to know which word would be used was to look closely at the beginning word and then use what he knew to accurately read each page. With this supportive book introduction, Eric was successful on his first reading of the new text. His reading slowed somewhat from the rate at which he read previous text, but the slower rate was the result of taking extra time to look at the words, rather than repeat the patterned text from memory. Even with this slightly reduced reading rate, Eric's reading of the text was still fluent as he parsed the words on each page appropriately.

Careful text selection and a good book introduction makes the new text more accessible to the struggling emerging literacy learner. To facilitate the child's success, however, the teacher must carefully consider the specific reading behaviors of the individual student and then plan accordingly. To have the child reading novel text with a high degree of successful processing should always be the goal of reading teachers. Careful text selection and a quality book introduction provides the struggling literacy learner with the needed scaffold to experience the success that comes with initiating the needed work to problem solve on unknown text. Vygotsky (1978) tells us that the teacher, as the more knowledgeable other, possesses the ability to lift the student's learning to a higher plane. Careful text selection and a supportive book introduction are tools that teachers can utilize to accomplish that feat.

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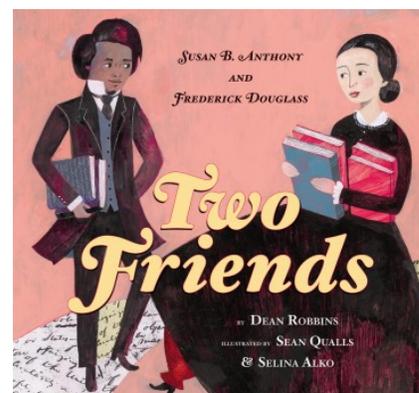
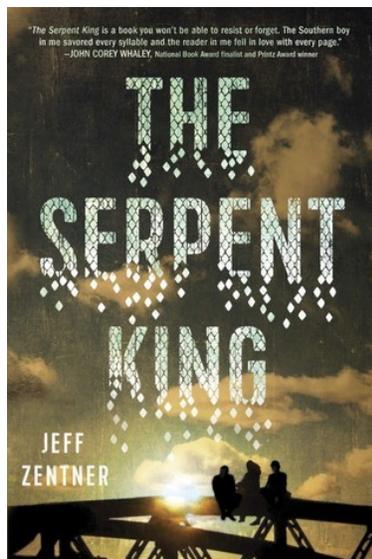
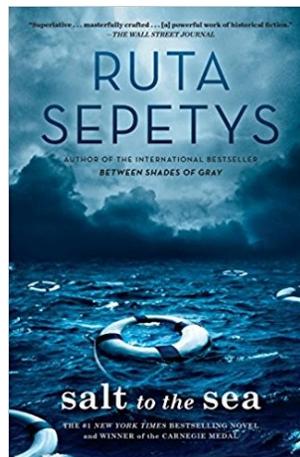
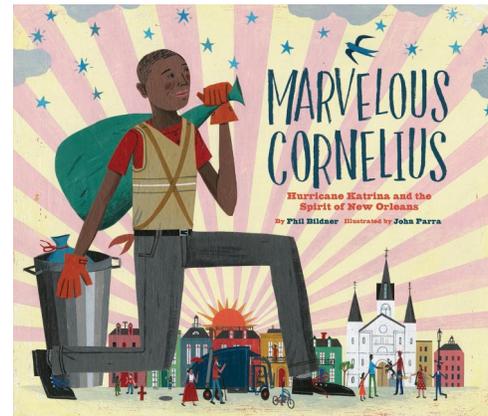
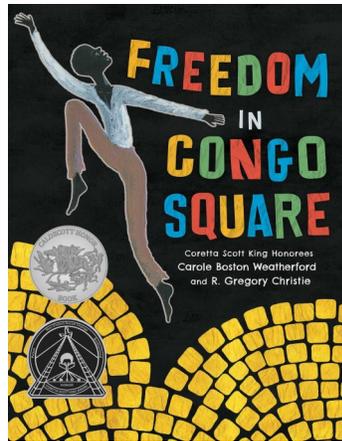


Author's Biography

Jolene Reed is an assistant professor in the Department of Language, Literacy and Special Populations at Sam Houston State University. She has previously been an elementary classroom teacher, a Reading Recovery teacher and teacher leader, and a K-5 literacy coordinator. She currently teaches courses in literacy. Her research interests include: emergent literacy, struggling readers, and teacher preparation.

Correspondence

All correspondence should be sent to Jolene Reed at jreed@shsu.edu or Sam Houston State University, Box 2119, Huntsville, TX 77340. Voice calls should be made to 936-294-1112.



An Online Book Club with Graphic Novels

Mae Lane, Ed.D
Jaime Coyne, Ph.D.
Sam Houston State University—Texas

Graphic novels have a place in the classroom. Carter (2007) defined them as “book-length sequential art narrative featuring an anthology-style collection of comic art, a collection of reprinted comic book issues comprising a single story line (or arc), or an original, stand-alone graphic narrative” (p. 1).. Not only do they have the potential to reach a range of student interests, they can also reach a variety of students’ zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Readers of all kinds, including struggling readers, of all ages and across elementary, middle and high school grade levels can benefit from graphic novels. This format offers a range of topics and covers a variety of issues, giving readers a multitude of options from which to choose (Pantaleo, 2011).

Increased motivation for reading has been noted as one benefit to including graphic novels in the classroom. In Brenna’s study (2013) of the connection between comprehension and graphic novels in a fourth grade classroom, the fourth grade teacher noted an increased preference for graphic novels when reading for pleasure among the students participating in the study. Additionally, she had to remind students to put them away when they needed to work on other subjects. Increased circulation in school libraries, sparking interest in male students in particular, and creating new

readers are just a few of the benefits of using graphic novels (Carter, 2009).

Another advantage of graphic novels is they “can teach literacy skills and critical thinking in ways that other formats can’t” (Rapp, 2012, p. 64). This is primarily because graphic novels include text and visual images, which work together to encode meaning (Park, 2016). The multimodal structure of these types of novels includes blending the text and pictures, enhancing the reader’s comprehension of the story (Pantaleo, 2011). Making connections across these text elements and making predictions, which require the reader to make inferences, is an important part of literacy supported by this format. Because every action cannot be depicted in pictures, these novels require readers to infer what is not pictured. These inferences not only help readers enhance their understanding of the story, but they also encourage application of literacy skills necessary for comprehension (Rapp, 2012).

Graphic novels also benefit students who are struggling and/or reluctant readers by promoting engagement, especially for readers who need extra help (Cook, 2016), as well as English Language Learners. According to Chun (2009), engagement in reading also reinforces achievement. In addition to promoting engagement, the comprehension

skills of struggling readers is aided by reading graphic novels (Brenna, 2012). Further, this format can encourage students who may be hesitant to choose books comprised of only text to be more likely to read (Cook, 2016). Finally, the multi-modality of text and visuals aid readers in making meaning from the reading (Park, 2016).

Because of the many benefits to readers, and because graphic novels can offer a number of teaching opportunities, I chose to include an assignment developed by Dr. Jaime Coyne and me using graphic novels in one of my university courses for pre-service teachers. During a course entitled *The Middle Level Child*, offered at a mid-size university in southeast Texas, a group of 14 pre-service educators participated in an online book club as part of a class assignment. All of the participants were female and were elementary level education majors. Prior to this book club, none of the participants had previously read a graphic novel. Initially, they were unsure about whether or not they would enjoy this type of book; by the end of the assignment, the students reported that they did enjoy reading their graphic novels.

The curriculum for this course includes the developmental changes, such as emotional development, physical development and cognitive development that children undergo from birth through adolescence. Because of this focus, students were asked to read one of four young adult graphic novels that were related to and appropriate for this age range of readers.

Students formed four separate book club groups, and each group was asked to choose which graphic novel they wanted to read from an online list of current Young Adult graphic novels. The list was offered by the Young Adult Library Services Association and entitled *Great Graphic Novels for Teens*. To ensure stu-

dents would be interested in and motivated to read their books, they had the freedom to self-select the books they wanted to read. The only criteria for their selections were that the books needed to be graphic novels; in addition, the books should be written for a young adult audience about issues in which a young adult audience would be interested. From the list, students selected the following texts: *El Deafo* by Cece Bell; *Nimona* by Noelle Stevenson; *Roller Girl* by Victoria Jamieson; and *Tru Detective* by Norah McClintock. Students selected these texts based on their interest in the books' topics as well as their availability in the university library.

After my students selected the books, each group was then asked to create a reading schedule for their books (see Appendix for sample schedule). I wanted to provide some structure to the online book clubs, but at the same time, I wanted students to have as much control as possible within that structure.

Students participated in a total of three online book club meetings using the discussion board tool on Blackboard, an online learning tool used by the university. Each of the three book club discussions had a different focus, and students were given a great deal of flexibility and choice regarding how they approached each discussion.

For the first book club meeting, students were given a list of social issues questions from which to choose to direct the discussion. The questions were taken from *Read-Write-Think* (2009) written by Darla Salay. The social issues addressed in the questions included the ideas of fairness, gender, race, class, and power. Each group selected two to three questions from the list to post online to guide their book club meeting. Some of the questions they chose include the

following:

1. What person or group do you think is being treated differently or unfairly?
2. Who is responsible for the unfair treatment in the story, and what are the characters' reactions to the unfair situation?
3. Which person or group is controlling another person or group? What are the characters' reactions to the power structure?
4. Is one individual preventing another from living the way he or she wants to live? If so, explain how.

Students were then required to post an individual response to the questions as well as to respond to at least two other group members. This was required for all three online discussions.

For the second book club meeting, each group created two to three questions over the chosen book about topics related to early adolescence. They were to consider the course readings and class discussions when creating these questions. Some of the questions the groups created include the following:

- 1). Have you ever gone through major changes in your appearance while discovering your identity? If so, explain how;
- 2). Have you and a friend ever had a disagreement due to different interests?;

- 3). What kind of emotions do you think Truman is experiencing because of his friends murder and investigation? (for the graphic novel *Tru Detective*); and

- 4). Is CiCi getting the support she needs from her teachers? (for the graphic novel *El Deafo*).

For the final book club meeting, students were again asked to write two to three questions. This time, they were asked to create questions related to the following areas: what the novel teaches early adolescents, and how it relates to their lives and interests; how the pre-service teachers could eventually use their novels when teaching early adolescent students; and how their novels addressed the developmental needs of early adolescents. Some of the questions included the following:

- 1). What emotional development characteristics does Nimona show throughout the book that is similar to those of an early adolescent?;
- 2). For what we learned from *Roller Girl*, what can we take from this to incorporate in our classrooms?;
- 3). Does the protagonist feel accepted the way she is (at home, neighborhood, and school)? Why or why not? (for the graphic novel *El Deafo*); and

4). What does this novel teach early adolescents? (for the graphic novel *Tru Detective*).

The participants reported an overall positive response to the book clubs. One student stated about the novel *Tru Detective*, “I feel like this novel teaches early adolescents that life can and will be a roller coaster. One minute someone can be in your life and then not be the next. They need to learn to appreciate the people in their life and to realize when someone needs help.” Another student wrote this response, “I think this graphic novel (*Tru Detective*) can teach several important lessons to adolescents. I think the main lesson to be taught is to not take for granted the people in your life. I think it can teach how fast life can change for the good or bad. I think it helps adolescents understand life may not always be happy go lucky and that bad things can happen.”

In particular, the students indicated that they saw many areas where adolescents could benefit and learn from these graphic novels in their future classrooms. For example, one student wrote, “Morality is a great way to explain *Nimona* because of the fact that the Institute is trying to portray the role of a hero when in fact they are causing more harm to the city than Ballister! That is a great explanation of how this book could relate to young adolescents because they are still trying to figure out who they are, too.” Another student reported, “I think this book (*El Deafo*) will be good to teach early adolescents to understand that if they feel different and that nobody understands them the way they are, to imagine how a peer feels if he/she in addition have a special need.” Finally, a student responded, “This book (*El*

Deafo) is good for young adolescents and teaching them to accept others. In this book Cece is different and is treated differently due to this. I think that this book could show kids in this age range that it's okay to be different and it shows the perspective of the child who is different and how it makes them feel. It can show kids how hurtful it can be when people look at you funny or make you feel strange. It can really help show acceptance to young adolescents.”

Finally, students mentioned different ways their chosen graphic novels could help them with their future classrooms. One student stated, “We can incorporate the differences between friends and how it's okay to make new friends and do different things. Astrid and Nicole (from *Roller Girl*) have been best friends for a while and as they are begging to attend junior high, they see they are not the same. So you can bring up a class discussion on what they would do if their friends do not want to hang out with them anymore because of differences.” Another student reported, “Teachers really do need to take their students' feelings into consideration at this age because they are going through a lot developmentally and learning content is not what they care about most. This book really helps understand how social and emotional issues can impact all areas of a student's life.” Yet another student wrote, “I feel like I can connect with my students better by reading this graphic novel because it points out all that early adolescents go through during junior high. I knew boys would be an issue, but I never considered friendships being lost over different interest. I feel like I can be more sensitive to students' feelings and moods. If I have a child come to class with blue hair, I know that she is most

likely going through a phase.”

Based on my students’ responses, the in-class assignment using graphic novels in an online book club was successful. The students indicated they found the online format more convenient and easy to use. All students participated and all responses were submitted on time. Students did receive a grade for their participation in the book club and the online discussions. Most importantly, all 14 students indicated their willingness to use graphic novels with their future students. This willingness to include a type of text with which the students had not been familiar prior to the book club was very encouraging. Because graphic novels support struggling readers by aiding in comprehension (Cook, 2017), using this type of novel with students should particularly benefit those who read below grade level. Participating in this assignment reshaped the pre-service teachers’ views regarding graphic novels; in particular, they were not aware of their positive impact for struggling readers. If we are to encourage reading among all students, we must be creative in how we encourage a love for it!

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Appendix

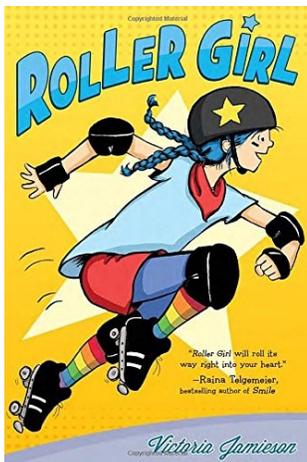
Novel: Roller Girl by Victoria Jamison

Reading schedule:

Chapters 1-5 by June 9th

Chapters 6-10 by June 15

Chapters 11-16 by June 22



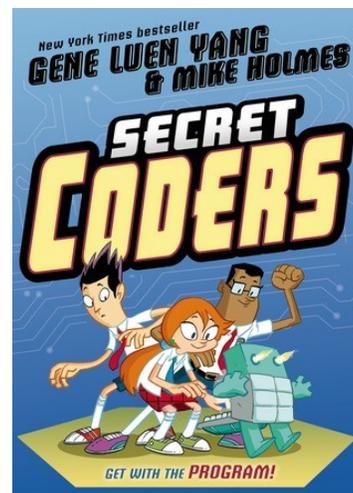
Authors' Biography

Mae A. Lane is an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at Sam Houston State University. She has 18 years of experience in public schools as a teacher and administrator. Currently, she teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses in preservice teacher preparation. Her research interests include adolescent literacy, disciplinary literacy, and teacher preparation.

Jaime Coyne is an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. Her Ph.D. is in Curriculum and Instruction from Texas A&M University. Her research interests include teacher preparation, literacy, pre-teachers' self-efficacy, and curriculum development. She is also the Coordinator for the Post-Baccalaureate Program.

Correspondence

All correspondence should be sent to Mae Lane at MAL024@SHSU.EDU or Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX 77340. Voice calls should be made to 936-294-1128.



Math ABC Book

Gladys Prieto, Teacher Candidate
Sam Houston State University—Texas

Someone once told me, “Be the teacher you wish you had growing up.” With that in mind, I always think back when I was in grade school. I always preferred art class over any of my other classes. If I could stay there all day, I would be the happiest person in the universe. Unfortunately, that was never an option. I always enjoyed doing crafty projects in class. I remembered one project that I enjoyed in my U.S history class during my sophomore year in high school. It was the last project of the academic year. Mrs. Betancourt assigned the class to do a ABC book related to history. She asked the class to pair up with a classmate for the project. She required the book to have one vocabulary word for every letter in the alphabet. She instructed us to include a definition written in our own words and an illustration that best represented the vocabulary word related to history. My partner and I decided we would split up the assignment. I volunteered to do the illustrations and help her write the definition for some words. As the creative person that I am, I thought about doing history puns for the drawings that would describe the word in a comical way. I do not remember any of my illustrations in the book, but I do remember my friend and I earned a 100 on the project.

During the spring 2017 semester, I enrolled in grades 4-8 literacy block for teacher candidates seeking certification in mathematics,

mathematics/science, or English/language arts and social studies. Our literacy block required us to complete field experience hours in an assigned mentor teacher’s classroom. One assignment in this course required us to complete a genre study. Fountas and Pinnell (2012) described the genre study as an instructional framework that is inquiry-based. According to Pytash and Morgan (2013), it is an inquiry-based instructional framework that supported students’ development as writers in single-subject areas or across disciplines. Our professor wanted us to go through the process of learning how to integrate writing into our content areas. It was also for us, an opportunity to practice teaching the writing process to students in our content area in small groups. Since I am seeking certification to teach mathematics, I had to think of a fun but interactive way to integrate writing. Our professor provided examples from previous students to give inspiration to the class. The examples included various genres that revolved around the TEKS.

At first glance using the comic strip to teach biography caught my attention because of the visual arts involved in making it, but as the week went on, I remembered the project I made the previous semester for one of my math classes. I hand made a short biography book about Euclid of Alexandria, a mathema-

tician that helped create a set of books called *The Elements*. The set of books had little math information that was known at the time, but we now consider such terminology such as: definitions, postulates, and axioms part of everyday knowledge. On every page, I wrote about Euclid of Alexandria and included a drawing about other mathematicians who made fun of him; I also included math puns. Then, I thought this assignment was too easy to write about a mathematician. How will a biography book help the students towards the end of the year? How much do 8th graders know about the founders of mathematics? I learned many of the students did not know much about mathematicians or why they were important? Then, I remembered the project from U.S history and thought I could easily modify it to fit a math classroom. The short biography book on Euclid of Alexandria intergraded writing and visual arts in mathematics (see Appendix I: Euclid of Alexandria).

Why a short biography book is important in mathematics?

As a future teacher, I try my best to engage all students whenever I teach. I always have in mind their learning preference, particularly students who are visual and kinesthetic learners. I believe including visual arts is important because it caters to most students learning needs. Having students create a short biography book in a mathematics classroom provides opportunities for visual, kinesthetic and auditory students to excel in writing. According to Cunningham, Kantrowitz, Harnett, and Hill-Ries (2014), the arts are excellent vehicles for fostering higher order thinking skills; they encourage students to closely examine, reflect on, and analyze works of arts, and promote thoughtfulness creativity and the formulation of rich connections. In their report, Cunningham et al.

(2014) discussed how the “Framing Student Success: Connecting Rigorous Visual Arts, Math and Literacy Learning” experimental demonstration project integrated visual arts, math, and literacy. Funded by the U.S Department of Education Art in Educational Model Development and Dissemination (AEMDD) grant, this project brought together school based visual art teachers, math and literacy specialists and classroom teachers. The curriculum created was taught in three New York City Title I elementary schools from 2009-2012.

The report stated that in every unit, the student viewed works of visual art and used artistic and descriptive language, analogic reasoning and interpretive skills (Cunnington, Kantrowitz, Harnett, & Hill-Ries, 2014). This helped the students develop skills needed to interpret written text. The results from the project indicated that the project improved students’ visual arts skills and literacy and math achievements over three years. Knowing this, I concluded that a visual arts curriculum can also impact students in the middle grades, particularly those students struggling with believing the misconception that math is boring, a waste of time or all about completing worksheets. Creating a mathematics ABC book is a great project to do with middle school students. The main objective of the ABC book is to help with recalling key content specific vocabulary words learned during the academic year. Another objective is to help students add to their home library. If they do not have one, then this will help them establish a library in the home.

How to make an ABC Math Book?

For this project, I wanted to know how well each student knew content specific vocabulary words. It took two days to complete my book. On the first day, I wrote each word and the definition. Then, I typed and printed the vocabulary words and the definitions. On the second day, I gathered supplies. I put my book together by pasting the background paper to the page; I proceeded to glue the letters with the vocabulary word and the definition. When I finished, I thought about funny math puns I could illustrate to make my book a bit more interesting and appealing to my audience (see Appendix II: Math ABC Book). In my ideal book, I wish to have had enough space to do a small comic explaining every vocabulary word, but time is limited in the classroom. I knew it would take students longer due to the limited class time. For this reason, I would assign this project as a year-long endeavor allowing in-class time for students to work on it. This is the best option for students who struggle in mathematics.

Nonetheless, this project can take less time to complete if the teacher has a word wall visible in the classroom. It is easier for the students to choose vocabulary words if they can see their options instead of spending time looking for the words. It will also take less time depending on the students enrolled in the class. The book consists of using every letter in the English alphabet, one letter per page. On each page, they must include a definition in their own words and a picture or example that describes the content specific vocabulary word. To help students with time management, it is imperative to write a schedule to show students how to manage their time. An example is provided below.

Day 1: Select the vocabulary words (10 minutes).

Day 2: Write the definitions for vocabulary words A-M (20 minutes).

Day 3: Write the definitions for N-Z (20 minutes).

Day 4: This is a computer lab day for students to type and print what they need for this project. If the students finish early, then they can start putting the book together.

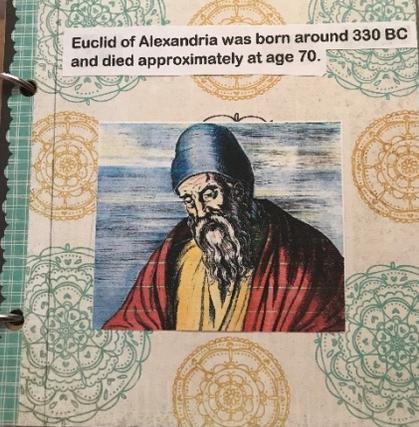
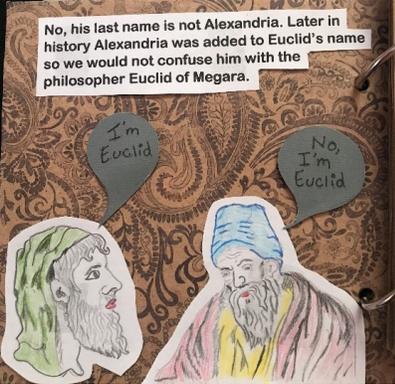
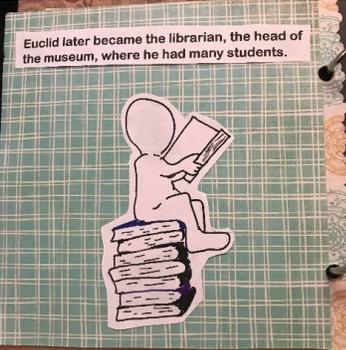
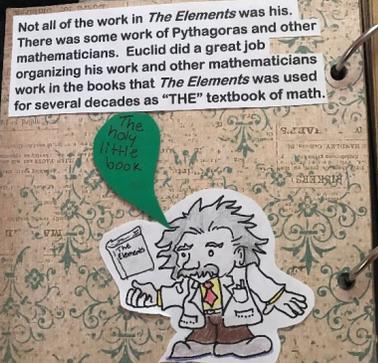
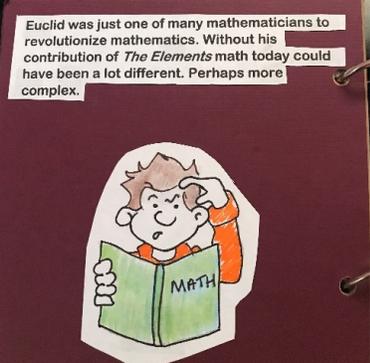
Day 5: Begin gluing and illustrating examples to explain the vocabulary words. If the students do not finish the project on day five, then allow in-class time on the next school day. As stated previously, this project can be a yearlong endeavor.

In sum, infusing the visual arts and writing in a mathematics classroom can be frightening and overwhelming, but the outcome can be surprising for teachers and students. Once I completed this project for my course in content area reading in the middle school, I realized crossing the arts, mathematics and literature boundaries gave me additional tools to teach lessons that will engage my future students and cater to their learning needs.

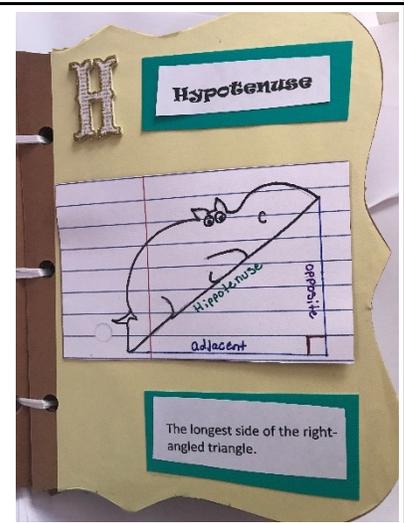
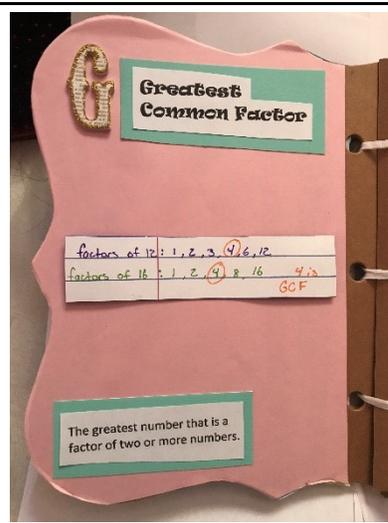
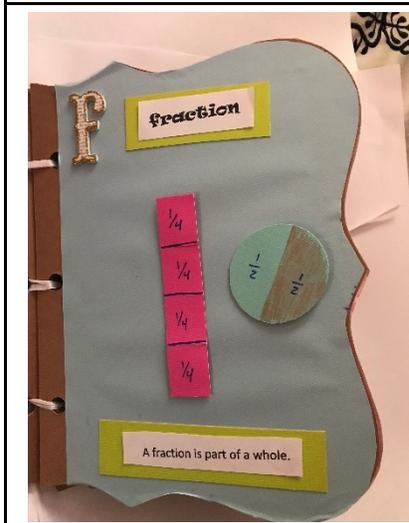
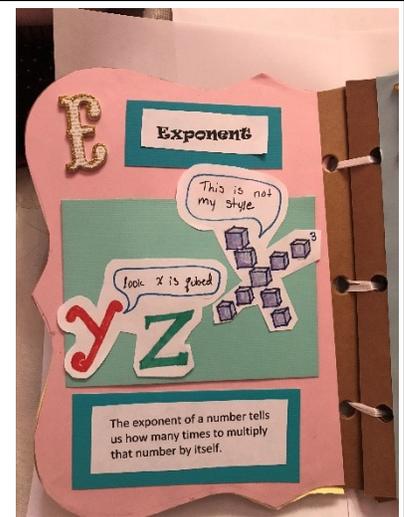
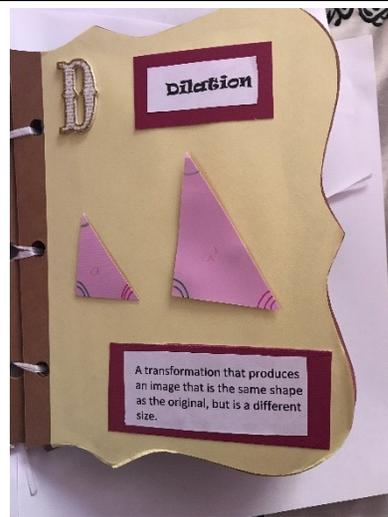
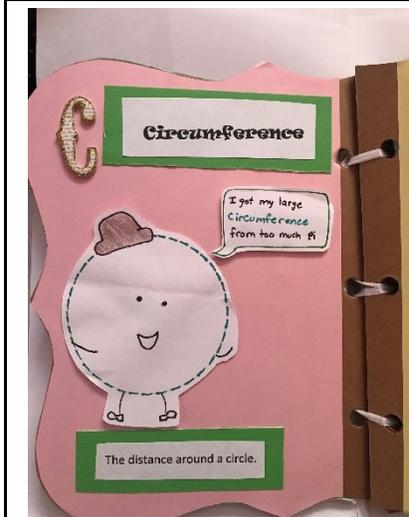
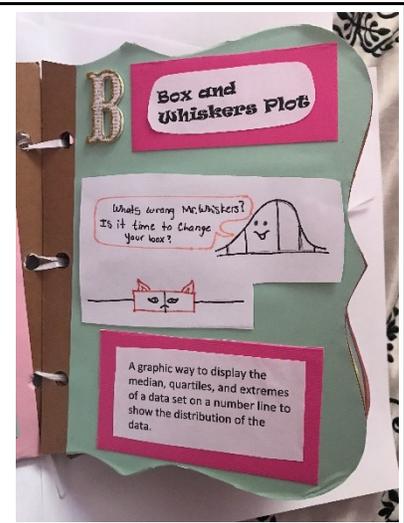
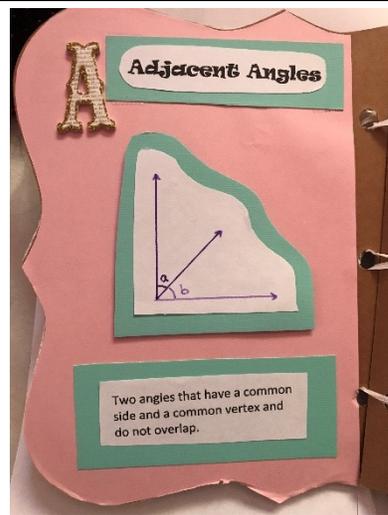
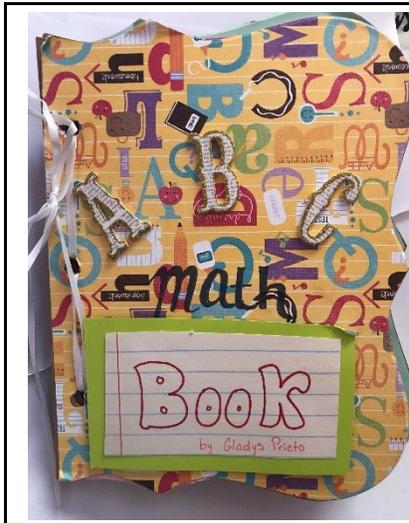
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Appendix I: Euclid of Alexandria

<p>Euclid of Alexandria</p>	<p>Euclid of Alexandria was born around 330 BC and died approximately at age 70.</p> 
<p>No, his last name is not Alexandria. Later in history Alexandria was added to Euclid's name so we would not confuse him with the philosopher Euclid of Megara.</p> <p>I'm Euclid</p> <p>No, I'm Euclid</p> 	<p>He received an advanced education at Plato's Academy in Athens. After learning all there was to learn he moved to Alexandria. Where he worked in the museum, the greatest research institution, that was being organized by his childhood friend Ptolemy Soter.</p> <p>Congratulations you have been accepted to Plato's Academy in Athens</p>
<p>Euclid later became the librarian, the head of the museum, where he had many students.</p> 	<p>He wrote <i>The Elements</i>, a collection of 13 books with definitions, postulates, propositions and proofs.</p> <p>T H E E L E M E N T S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13</p>
<p>Not all of the work in <i>The Elements</i> was his. There was some work of Pythagoras and other mathematicians. Euclid did a great job organizing his work and other mathematicians work in the books that <i>The Elements</i> was used for several decades as "THE" textbook of math.</p> <p>The Now little book.</p> 	<p>Euclid was just one of many mathematicians to revolutionize mathematics. Without his contribution of <i>The Elements</i> math today could have been a lot different. Perhaps more complex.</p> 

Appendix II- Math ABC Book



I Integer

A number with no fractional part.

J Jordan Camille

French mathematician whose work on substitution groups and the theory of equations first brought full understanding of the theories of the eminent mathematician Evariste Galois.

K Kilo

A prefix meaning one thousand.

L Lateral Area

sides of a 3-D object except for its top.

M Median Absolute Deviation

$$\frac{\sum |x - \bar{x}|}{n}$$

The average distance between each data value and the mean.

N Number Line

A line with numbers placed in their correct position.

O Order of operations

Parenthesis ()
 Exponents x^2 5^3
 Multiplication \cdot
 Division \div
 Addition $+$
 Subtraction $-$

The rules that say which calculation comes first in an expression.

P Pythagorean Theorem

In a right triangle, the square of the long side is equal to the sum of the squares of the two sides.

Q Quadrant

Any of the 4 areas made when we divide up a plane by an X and Y axis.

R Rational Number

A Venn diagram with four overlapping circles. The largest circle is labeled 'Rational' and contains '.../...' and '...'. Inside it is a circle labeled 'Integer' containing '... -4, -3, -2, -1, ...'. Inside that is a circle labeled 'Whole' containing '0'. The smallest circle is labeled 'Natural' containing '1, 2, 3, 4, ...'.

A number that can be made by dividing two integers.

S Simple Interest

$$I = P r t$$

Interest accumulated principal (\$) rate (%) time (years)

Interest calculated as a percent of the original loan.

T Translation

A coordinate plane with a square labeled 'B' at the top left and another square labeled 'B'' at the bottom right. Arrows indicate the movement from B to B'.

"sliding": moving a shape without rotating or flipping it.

U Unit Rate

20 words
1 min

A ratio that is used to compare different kinds of quantities.

V Variable

Face it Harry,
you're not the solution
you're part of the problem.

$$X + Y = Z$$

A symbol for a number we do not know yet.

W Whole Number

0 1 2 3 4 5

Positive numbers, including zero, without any decimal or fractional parts.

X X-Intercept

A coordinate plane with a line intersecting the x-axis. The intersection point is labeled 'x-intercept'.

The point where a line crosses the x-axis.

Y Y-intercept

A coordinate plane with a line intersecting the y-axis. The intersection point is labeled 'y-intercept'.

The point where a line crosses the y-axis.

Z Zero

A cartoon character shaped like the number zero with a face and arms, standing on a coordinate plane.

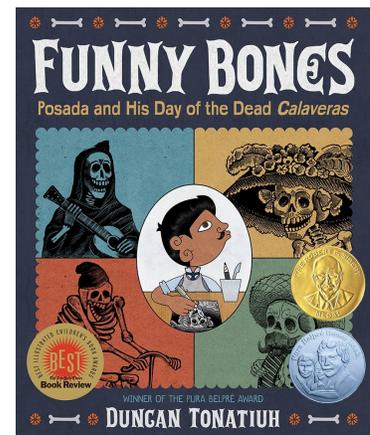
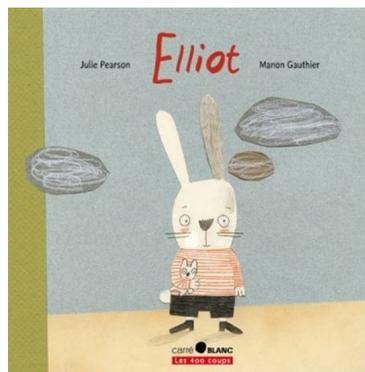
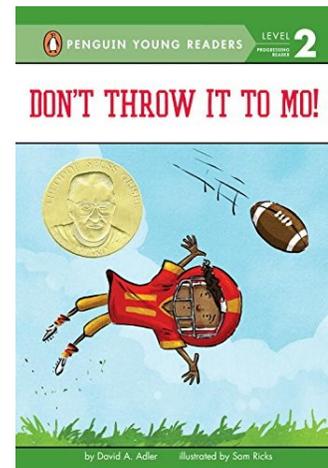
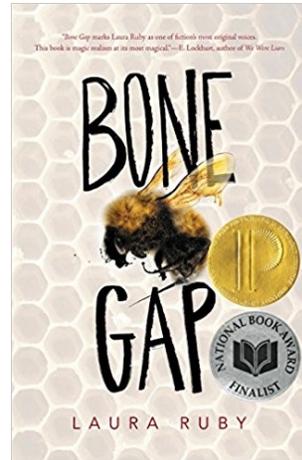
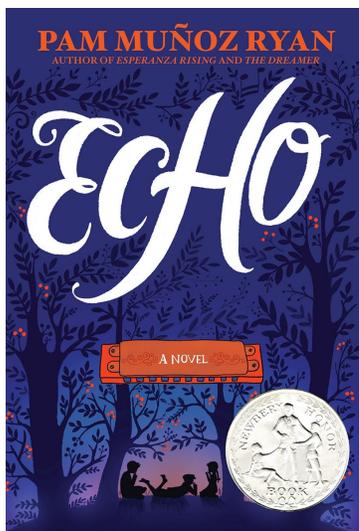
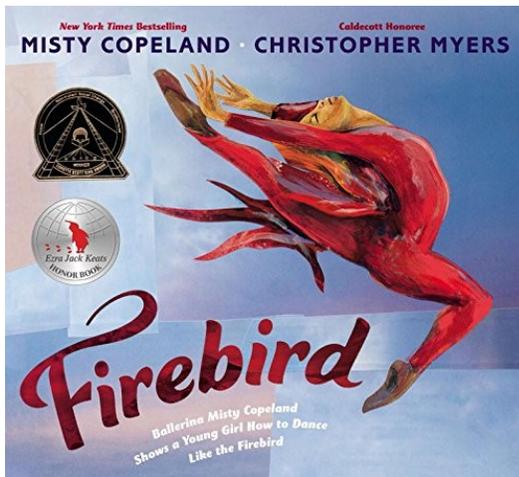
A number that is neither positive nor negative.

Author's Biography

Gladys Prieto is a senior at Sam Houston State University. She will graduate in the spring 2018 with a Bachelor of Science degree in interdisciplinary studies with a minor in mathematics. She is the Vice President of Kappa Delta Pi, an international honor society in education. She wants to start her career teaching 7th or 8th grade mathematics. After teaching five years, she wants to go back to school and earn a master's degree in educational leadership.

Correspondence

All correspondence should be sent to Gladys Prieto at gxp030@shsu.edu or Sam Houston State University, Box 2119, Huntsville, TX 77340.



Sam Houston Writing Project

My Sister's Keeper

Dianna Green
Judson Robinson Elementary
Houston Independent School District

“Let’s play,” Ann said, as soon as I stormed through the front door.

“Not today, I don’t ever want to play this stupid game with you again!” I snapped, as I slapped the game out of her hand, continuing down the hall to my bedroom, slamming the door behind me. Feeling sick to my stomach for treating my sister that way, because of some stupid kids.

I remember that day as if it happened yesterday. My sister Ann, is older than I am by 8 years. Ann is the oldest in our family. She is also special needs. Growing up in our household, there was always some type of game being played that would, as our parents would say, ‘*stimulate our brains*’. The game that we played most often was Scrabble, to increase our knowledge of words, according to our parents. We often played this game, right after dinner with our parents. All of us sitting around the kitchen table, often with a bowl of hot buttered popcorn and iced-cold sweet tea, would engage in a challenging game of Scrabble with a twist. When we played a word, our parents would make us define the word and use it in a sentence. During our time playing, my mother would often have Ann occupied with some other activity, until we

finished. Then we would play Ann’s version.

Being special needs, Ann only knew how to spell a few three letter words, so her version included letters that did not make up any words. However, she would always call out the words she was ‘spelling’. Playing Scrabble became the only game she wanted to play with us growing up. As soon as we would walk through the door, she wanted to be engaged in a game. We would always indulge her and play with her. Every time she spelled her words, she would clap and smile her beautiful smile, proud of the fact that she spelled such a great word. There were times when we would tell her that her word was spelled incorrectly, she would just smile.

My brother, Mitchell was the one who would often tell her that she did not spell a word. He often said, “Why should she be allowed to win with words that don’t make any sense?”

Our father responded by saying, “What harm is there in letting her win? Besides, I don’t think it is a matter of winning, it just makes her day to play with you guys.”

This conversation happened only when my brother could not score a word, because of the placement of the tiles from our sister.

Although, she was the oldest of the four of us, in reality she has always been the youngest one in the family. She was always considered our baby sister because of her disability. Mentally, Ann is presently considered to be between the age of 12 to 13 years. Then she stood about 4 feet tall, petite, with long curly hair that she always wanted in a ponytail and had a smile that could light up a room.

The day I snapped at my sister when I came home from school, was the first time I had ever been short with her. Our parents, I recall, always taught us patience with her. She was in essence, our little princess. I remember laying across my bed, torn between going back out and apologizing to her or just wallowing in my own feelings. I chose to wallow. I was deep in thought when the door to my room opened. My mother walked in, sat on the bed next to me, gently stroking my back.

After a few minutes she spoke, “Hey, Sugar Momma, what’s going on with you today? You know that type of behavior is not tolerated in this house. I will excuse it just this once.”

“I don’t want to talk about it,” I said.

“Well, just listen. I don’t know what happen, but I cannot help you if you don’t tell me. So, for right now, I want to talk about the way you treated your sister, because you hurt her feelings. Whatever happened today, should not have made you treat her that way and I am disappointed in your behavior. You owe her an apology.”

Before my mother could say anything else, I spoke, “I don’t owe her anything! It is because

of her, that the kids at school laughed at me.”

The stroking of my back stopped and my mother turned me over to speak directly to me.

“Come again?” how is your sister at fault for something that happened to you.

“I don’t want to talk about it!” I said and began to turn over, only to be stopped.

“Sit up, now,” my mother said sternly.

“Now tell me what happened,” she stated.

Before I could open my mouth and say I did not want to talk about it, she said, “I don’t want to hear, ‘*I don’t want to talk about it*’. Tell me what happened.”

Sitting there staring at my mother, I knew when I told her what happened she would be as upset, as I was at what was said about my sister. I sat there for a few minutes trying to find a way to say what I had to say, but before I could open my mouth, there was a knock on the door.

“Yes?” my mother called out. My brother opened the door, with downcast eyes.

“What do you need, Mitch?” my mother asked.

“I just wanted to make sure, Sugar Momma is alright, after what happened after school.”

“I’m fine, now leave!” I shouted.

“Dianna Lynn Lawrence watch your tone. What is going on?”

When my mother used our full names, we knew she meant business, so I closed my mouth and glared at my brother. I was thinking how dare he come in and open his mouth.

Looking at me, she stated, “Since you are refusing to tell me what happened,” turning to my brother she demanded, “Mitch tell me, what happened.”

Before he could speak I said, “I will tell you myself.”

When I looked at my brother, I could see the relief on his face. He quickly backed out the room and closed the door.

I turned my head away from my mother and began to speak, “Today in class, Jason said his brother Ernest said Ann was a freak and a retard.” Ernest came over to our house the previous weekend to play with my brother and his friends.

Taking a deep breath, I continued, “He said she belonged in a zoo with all the other animals, and he felt sorry for me for having to live with a retard. And he just kept saying stuff like this all day, then when we were walking home from school, he started all over again and the kids we walk home with were laughing and started in about Ann too. Rodney and Kim, told him to shut up, but he and the other kids just kept making fun of her and us.”

My mother sat there not speaking, I don’t know if she was waiting on me to continue speaking or if she was upset.

I turned to her and said, “I’m sorry.”

Looking at me she replied, “What are you sorry about? You didn’t do anything wrong.”

“You didn’t say anything, so I thought you were mad at me.”

“No, Sugar Momma, I am just trying to find the right words for this conversation.”

We both sat there, lost in thought when my mother got up from the bed and walked to the door of my bedroom.

“Lady Bug and Mitch, come in here please.”

She came back and sat down next to me on my bed. My younger sister and brother came in and sat on my sister’s bed, both looking upset.

My mother started softly speaking, “First of all, your sister is not a freak or a retard. Just like the three of you, she was created by the Almighty and He does not make any mistakes. She is one of God’s most precious creations. No one knows why we are created the way we are, we just have to know that everyone, no matter how they were put in this world the way they are for a reason. I believe that your sister was put here in this world, in our family for a reason, she is the heart of this family. Let’s think about all the times any of us have been upset for any reason, who is the one that makes us feel better in some way? It is your sister. She is like a ray of sunshine, for us. How often, she is sad? Or mad? Or cranky about anything? Not often. How many of your friends can say the same about their sibling(s)? Do you think you guys would get along as well as you do, if not for her?”

She looked at each of us, waiting for an answer.

My little sister finally said, “No.”

“So, guys don’t hold your heads down in shame, because of the actions of others.”

Looking directly at me she continued, “You are going to hear a lot of hateful things in your lifetime, but you have to know they are just words and they do not define who you

are. You have to rise above the hate of others. Find something positive in the negative. Sugar Momma, you had friends to come to your aid, these are your true friends, that's a positive. In life, there are people who will try to bring you down, by saying hurtful things, you have to find a way to ignore their hurtful words and not strike back with hurtful words yourself."

Just then the door opened, standing there with the Scrabble game in her hand was my sister, smiling at us, "Let's play."

My mother and brother both turned and looked at me, waiting for my response.

I rose from the bed, walked over to my sister and kissed her cheek, "Let's play."

Ann ran to the table ahead of us. My earlier behavior, had not affected her in the least. Somehow, she knew to give me the space I needed, before coming to ask. "*Let's play*". It was in that brief moment, I realized how much of a blessing my sister really was to our family. I thought to myself, "*I will protect my sister for as long as I live. I would never be ashamed of who she is, because she is beautiful and I am lucky that God blessed our family with someone as special as her.*"

This would be the first of many conversations we would have regarding the intolerance of others and how people view those that are labeled different. We learned early on how to stand up for those who need us most. It has been forty, plus years since that life-changing day in which I made that vow to myself, a vow that I have managed to keep. I have always and continue to be my sisters' keeper; her biggest fan, ally and champion.

It was no surprise when my mother knew she was dying and no longer able to care for my sis-

ter, that she asked me to be my sister's guardian. It was one of the easiest decisions, I had ever made. Little did my mother know that my decision, had been made four decades ago.

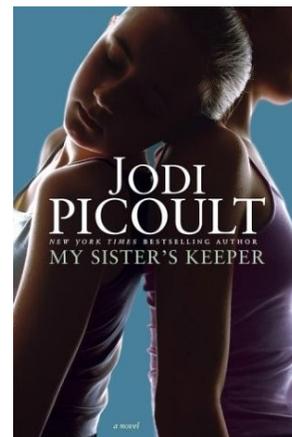
My sister, as well as the rest of us, have long since stopped playing Scrabble, however the game is present in all of our homes. It is the game that bonded us as a family and set the stage for one of the most important conversations my mother had with us as children.

Author's Biography

Dianna Green, is a 5th grade teacher at Judson Robinson Elementary School in Houston, Texas. She received her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, from the University of Houston-Downtown. She received her teacher certification from Texas Teacher's. She is a certified English/Language Arts/Reading (ELAR) teacher. She is also ESL certified. She has taught grades 3-5 in a Title I public school. She is currently a graduate student at Sam Houston State University, getting her master's degree in Reading/Language Arts with a Reading Specialist certification. She is interested in becoming a reading specialist or an instructional coach.

Correspondence

All correspondence should be sent to Dianna Green at pikachu13507@gmail.com.



Fiction Rap

Ashlyn Williams-Teacher Candidate
Kelly Davis-Teacher Candidate
Sam Houston State University-Texas

Hold one eight count

One, two, three third person
I'm fiction, yeah, I'm fiction
I'm fiction, yeah, I'm fiction
I'm fiction, yeah, I'm fiction

Pull up to the school with my novels missing
Pull up to the school with my novels missing
Pull up to the school with my novels missing
Pull up to the school with my novels missing
Characters and theme are a part of fiction

Pull up to the school, but my books gone
Writing fiction all day, can't get it wrong
So listen to me, hear our new song
Teaching elements of fiction all day long

Two eight count breaks

Setting tells the place where the person at
It gives us an image. Can y'all hang with that?
Characters gotta be dynamic or remain static.
Always lookin' for the hero? I about had it.

Got some beef with me? Call it conflict.
External, internal don't get it mixed
Theme is constant throughout a whole book
Can't find it, you gotta really look!

I'm fiction, yeah, I'm fiction
I'm fiction, yeah, I'm fiction
I'm fiction, yeah, I'm fiction

Pull up to the plot, got some drama in it
Pull up to the plot, got some action in it
Pull up to the plot, got some drama in it
Pull up to the plot, got some action in it
Drama, action, drama, action
Call that satisfaction

Got these elements of fiction all laid out
See ya later, homies, now let me hear ya
shout

Word...to your protagonist

Mathematics and Science Rap Battle

Kirsten Baston-Teacher Candidate
Sam Houston State University-Texas

When the American Idol Day activity came up in literacy methods for grades 4-8, I immediately thought I wanted to do a parody. My group decided that this was a great idea, but there was one problem; we had two different content areas within our group. I thought back to some videos that I had seen on the Internet with people doing a rap battle and thought that this would be a great opportunity to create one of our own. While mathematics and science are different content areas, they are also very similar. Parts of science use mathematics in order to complete certain tasks. While writing the rap, I wanted to ensure that it was something that students and other teachers could buy into without favoring one content area over the other one.

I began to look at the different aspects of each content and narrowing it down to those that were more similar. As a future mathematics teacher, I wanted to create something that my students would be interested in and something that they could possibly recreate for a project of their own. I started thinking about ways to pick fun at each other, like they do in a typical rap battle, while keeping it as a playful and engaging in a way to keep our students thinking.

Each verse was put together in order to keep our students in the mindset of both the mathematics and science classrooms. While each content is boasting about itself, they are

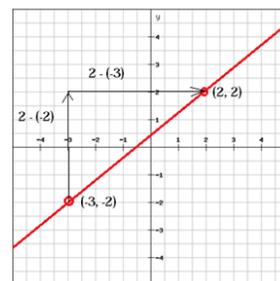
also bringing up components from the other. Mathematics and science contain older components than other contents, but that's what makes them so special. Many students tend to dislike the content areas, so my group wanted to shed light on these topics.

I feel that if mathematics and science teachers recreated this, then the students would respond well to knowing that their teachers are serious when it comes to their classroom and know how to have fun. This also shows students that mathematics and science are used outside of just that specific classroom. As a teacher, we all strive to connect to our students interests and I have personally never met a student who does not enjoy some sort of music. Showing or performing this can help with building relationships from the very beginning.

I thoroughly enjoyed creating this rap battle and performing it in front of both professors and peers. I plan on showing our video to my own students to set the tone and mood for how I would like my classroom to be. I would love to be able to have a classroom that creates a safe and creative environment for students to learn.

Math

Another teacher in my shadow come to steal my crowd
You science geeks wanna throw down with the best in this town?
It's a legendary story from teachers to students
Rhymes sharper than a pencil and I'm giving out potential (ha!)
Like a decreasing slope you can't step to my flows
These teachers are trippin', did they work with my foes?
I deserve (all) the praise for the grade scale these days
I've got little bitty kids, but A's for days
Let's look at your material, your work is not imperial
The Solar System Story: Earth's forces and gravity
Of course you're bitter, I'm the number one star
Solve equations, various notations, no one cares who you are



$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

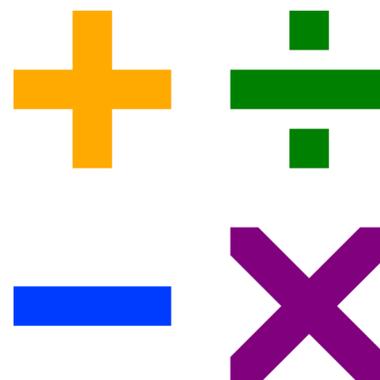
Science

What's my name? (Frizz!) What's my game? (Science!)
I'm the perfect combination of brains and duty
While I'm gaining knowledge you're losing your chumps
Like Ms.Liz I'm serving schools and dishing out pumps
She's dreaming she's important, well, somebody should wake her
This problem solving math teacher's the classes paper maker
Fear the nerdy, wordy teach 'cause I'm throwing more shade
Than the willow tree growing in your math teachers cave
Your pen and paper approach sets us back fifty years
Show your work, find the x 'til your answer appears
You're crazy and obsessed with work and how it looks
You wanna live like Einstein? (Hmmm?) Leave our bus



Math

Oh, I'm the one who's crazy 'cause your work was kinda scary?
Your teach was in the think zone when she gave that dictionary
Your points have no merit, you're jealous, declare it
Like I've always said: if the shoe fits, wear it
I'm the School Systems dream with a math-intended heading
You use test tubes and lens for the crazy lies your spreading
Some things are meant to be like mysteries in the night
Bibbidi-bobbidi-booyah and I did it without a kite.



Science

An experiment rookie wants to rap about science?
 You can't find the answer after just one glance
 My work saved my life and don't be misled
 I don't believe in your worksheets cause the old age is dead
 Your work stars two plus two with an old school equation
 Your silly room is said to be freakin' lame and wary
 You say you are a smarty, next you run off down the halls
 That's why your always broke when you make it to the malls.



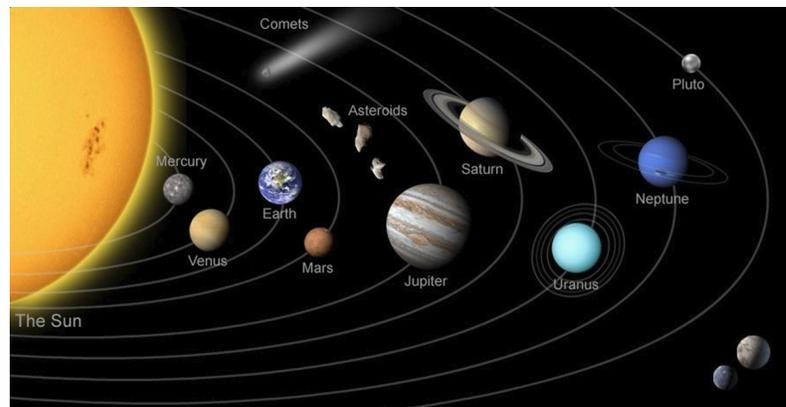
Math

You think that's funny? Here's a history lesson, honey
 My work saves your experiments it is actually quite funny
 You followed in my footsteps, without me there's no you
 The World built an empire with these tiny class clues



Science

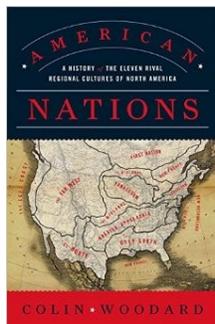
If you're so adored where's your Nobel Prize Award?
 I'm the smart female heroine that can't be ignored
 The moral of our quarrel and why I've got you beat
 It's what's you can prove that matters not your cries on this beat.



Link to video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0kol0BLn6MQ&feature=youtu.be>

Book Reviews

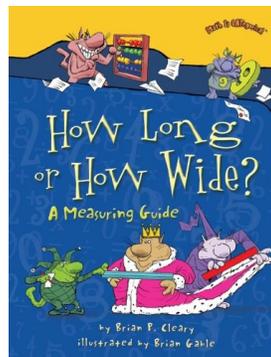


American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures

Written by: Colin Woodard
(2012) New York, NY: Penguin Group

Reviewed by: Christine Benedict, Kristin Pesz, and Charles Pipes, Sam Houston State University's Grades 4-8 Teacher Candidates

Imagine for a moment that the United States wasn't comprised of 50 states but instead of eleven regions; eleven regions with different names, distinct cultures, and fiercely developed identities. That is the scenario postulated in *American Nations*. An American history book written for advanced readers with a firm grasp of early US history, *American Nations* explores the early story of the United States. The author suggests that these regions were created from deep-reaching histories that were influenced by people, geography, and circumstance. Rather than New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Florida being the final word on US territorial divisions, this nation is divided into regions such as El Norte, Yankeedom, The Left Coast, and New France. The case made for each region is built on a foundation of the region's history – notable who lived there, where they came from, how they lived, and what their worldview was. The author goes on to assert that these regional divides are the reason why Americans have trouble agreeing on fundamental issues. Using reliable history, *American Nations* encourages readers to take another look at who we are as a nation and to think critically about how our foundations have influenced who we are today. A highly recommended read that would be a good fit in the classroom to promote next-level thinking and historical analysis.



How Long or How Wide?: A measuring guide

Written by: B. P. Cleary
(2007) Minneapolis: Millbrook Press

Reviewed by: Becky Deluna and Arghya Dhar, Sam Houston State University's Grades 4-8 Teacher Candidates

What is a decimeter? What can we measure with a meter stick? There are things we never really think about in our daily lives, but are used when we need to purchase or construct things. This fictional book is an exciting way to learn how to measure the width, height and length. This will help student learn the correct way to measure as well see the compare and contrast different units of measurements. Students will be able to visually see as they read through the book many examples. Also they will use their critical thinking skill in order to solve a few problems found in the book. This book will be great to read before learning about measurements or converting units in a math or science class. It will work well with both contents and the students will find this book very fun and engaging.

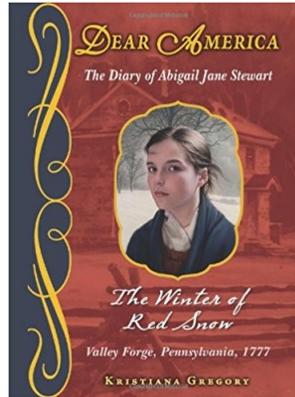


Last to Finish: A Story about the Smartest Boy in Math Class

Written by: B. Esham
(2008) Ocean City,
MD: Mainstream Connections

Reviewed by: Luisa Dominguez and Meghan Janecek, Sam Houston State University's Grades 4-8 Teacher Candidates

“All I could think about was that terrible timer ticking that terrible tick-tick-tick!” Poor Max, the struggles, and the anxiety he endured! The work load that his math class had him going through was not only affecting his ability to complete his tasks but his social life as well. Feeling as if his world was falling apart, Max found it hard to believe that he was capable of being great at anything ever again and all because he just couldn't function the same as the rest of his classmates. Many students today could definitely relate themselves to Max on how they feel about mathematics and not only that, however, this story does a magnificent job on turning Max's life around for the better! Just the motivation every student needs to hear and experience when learning gets tough. Although this book is aimed for young children, I say it is fit for all ages up to 13 since a strong resemblance can be made directly between the characters in the story and the reader. This story will help students to continue down their path of being a successful math student by having them realize that although everyone's learning capabilities may contradict one another, each individual will always carry a unique trait that makes them special in their own way.

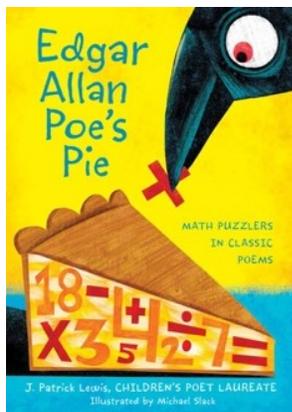


Dear America: The Winter of Red Snow; The Revolutionary War Diary of Abigail Jane Stewart

Written by Kristiana Gregory

Reviewed by: Kristian Evans, Zack Nichols, and Taylor Alexander, Sam Houston State University's Grades 4-8 Teacher Candidates

The Winter of Red Snow follows fictional eleven-year-old Abigail Jane Stewart as she writes about her life in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania during the climax of the American Revolution. Readers can see as she gives a personal account to dealing with the tragedy and hope brought on by the uncertain times in 1777 and 1778. Abigail is able to give new insight to the struggles and victories the General George Washington and his soldiers faced during the winter at Valley Forge. This book, appropriate for middle grades, also students to read a fictional firsthand book on what someone might have dealt with during that time. Students are able to see a young girl close to their age dealing with situations that are way about their age level. In an effort to make the American Revolution a more personal story this piece of literature would be help to bring students to the reality of the people alive during that time frame.

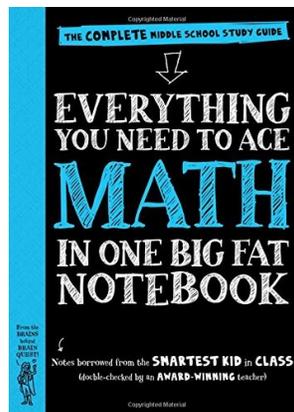


Lewis Carroll's Fish and Chips in Edgar Allan Poe's Pie: Math Puzzlers in Classic Poems

Written by: J.P. Lewis and M. H. Slack (2012) Boston: Harcourt Mifflin Harcourt

Reviewed by: Lindsay King and Jennifer Novark, Sam Houston State University's Grades 4-8 Teacher Candidates

This fun puzzle poem catches students' eyes because it is about an argument between a young boy and an old man. The old man quizzes the young boy with different math problems and says that the fish and chips are the only way the old man can solve the problem. This poem will really get the kids to pay attention because they have to listen to the poem closely to find the math problems. But do not let the old man trick you! These are all different types of math problems, addition, subtraction, and even converting a decimal!



Everything You Need to Ace Math in One Big Fat Notebook: The Complete Middle School Study Guide

Written by: A. Peterson and C. Pearce

Reviewed by: Lesli Serano and Erica Turner, Sam Houston State University's Grades 4-8 Teacher Candidates

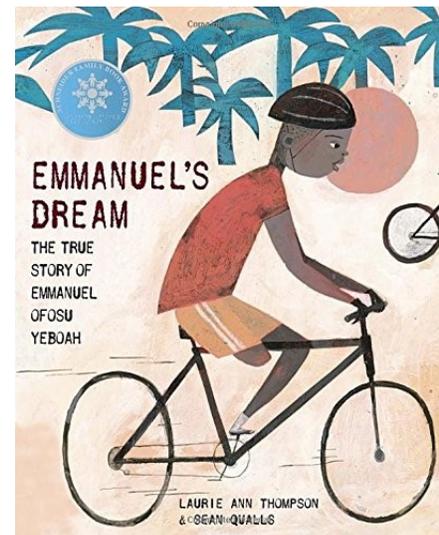
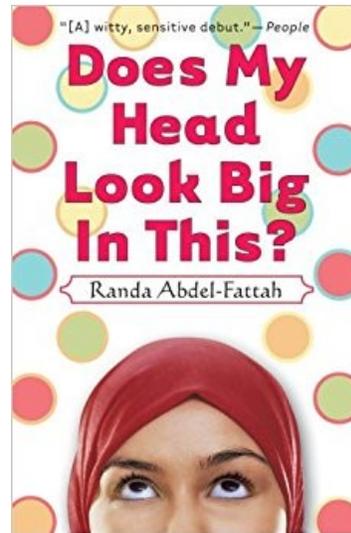
In middle school students begin learning how to take their own notes to study and use on homework and tests. This guide is full of diagrams, colorful hints and tips, easy instructions, and clear examples. Students will need to learn how to take notes to advance in all content areas, the layout of this book shows a great strategy students could use when beginning to take notes. The section of dividing fractions is short and sweet to the point but provides a visual aid for students that use visual learning to tap into understand this concept. Teachers could also use the layout as skeleton notes for students to follow along with during a lesson. Understanding how to divide fractions is extremely important in math because this is something that will follow them through their academic journey. The authors of this book prove that short and simple is effective and can easily teach students new content as well as help them review content they have learned previously.

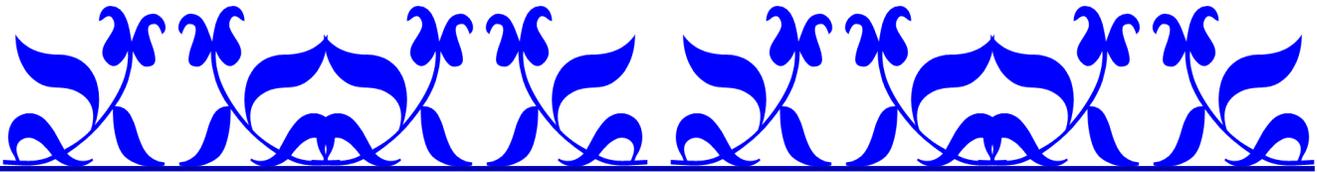
Teaching Percentage ideas and Suggestions

Written by: D. J. Glatzer

Reviewed by: Kayla Siegert, Sam Houston State University's Grades 4-8 Teacher Candidate

Have you ever eaten at a restaurant, gotten your bill and wondered how much to tip? Well not to fear, Glatzer is here! *Teaching Percentage Ideas and Suggestions* by David J. Glatzer is an easy to read, relatable article that breaks down teaching percentages. For example, in the beginning Glatzer states an example by using percentages when tipping. Tipping is a good topic to easily relate to children because most are already familiar with the concept. All ages have experience with eating at a restaurant where it is custom to give gratuity, but few are familiar with how to actually calculate it by hand. This article will help educators learn how to better reach our children and turn the, "math is boring" switch off. Also noted in the article, are fractional percentages, in which an example is given by relating percentages to news headlines. This is also great opportunity to teach cross-curricular ideas and concepts. Glatzer does a great job at incorporating percentages into interesting and relatable topics for students of the middle grades.





FUTURE THEMES

DECEMBER 2017—UN-THEMED ISSUE

SUBMISSIONS DUE OCTOBER 20, 2017

JUNE 2018—LITERACY IN A SOCIAL JUSTICE ERA

SUBMISSIONS DUE APRIL 1, 2018

SEND SUBMISSIONS TO READ@SHSU.EDU

