

Texts for Younger Readers (As of Summer 2023)

Suggestions from the Students of READ 500 / Montclair State University

Contact: Erik Jacobson jacobson@montclair.edu

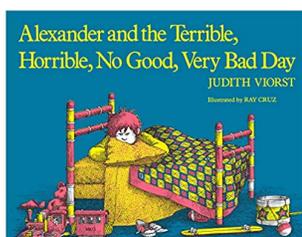
Resources:

Thinking in Stories: Reviewing Philosophy in Children's Literature

<https://www.montclair.edu/iapc/thinking-in-stories/>

Wise Owl: Talking and Thinking About Children's Literature

<https://www.montclair.edu/iapc/wise-owl/>



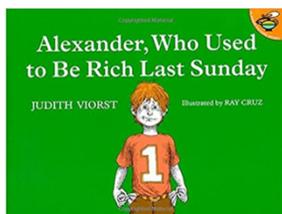
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

Judith Viorst

Potential Appeal: Alexander's moments of frustrations. I love how his solution is to move to Australia.

Suggested Activities: I think this would be a wonderful book to use to guide some cause and effect discussions. Also maybe the kids can have dramatic play using these scenarios.

Submitted by Estefania Rios



Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday

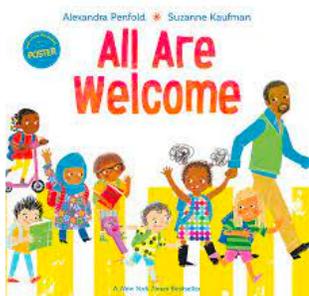
Judith Viorst

Themes: Responsibility; financial literacy; decision-making

Appeal: This book is part of the Alexander Book Series. *Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday* tells the story of a young boy, Alexander, who was given a dollar by his grandparents. His goal is to save the dollar and put it towards a new walkie talkie. However, Alexander faces a series of temptations in the story, which causes him to spend his money little by little until it is all gone. In this story, Alexander learns how fast a dollar can disappear and the importance of making responsible choices.

Suggested Activities: This book can be used for a variety of activities, across multiple grade levels. In the upper elementary grades, this book can be used to teach narrative story elements including character traits and problem/solution. In the lower elementary grades, teachers can use this book to integrate literacy into mathematics. The primary focus of the book is money. Alexander references all of the different types of coins that he is spending throughout the book. When students begin learning about money and differentiating coins, teachers can use this book and have their students use their knowledge of money to follow along with Alexander's spending and repeatedly subtract various amounts of money from \$1.00 until they are left with nothing, just like Alexander. In even earlier grades, where students are learning to count to 100 or subtract single digit numbers from 100, students can begin with 100 pennies (or other objects/manipulatives) and follow along with the story, subtracting a little at a time until they are left with nothing.

Submitted by Crystal Nzegwu



All Are Welcomed

Alexandra Penfold and Suzanne Kaufman

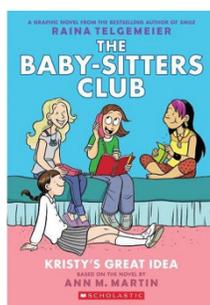
Theme: Inclusivity; Diversity; Kindness; Empathy; Acceptance of Differences

Appeal: All Are Welcomed is a children's book that promotes inclusivity and diversity. It celebrates the idea that no matter who you are or where you come from, you are welcome in a community that values kindness, empathy, and understanding. The story takes place in a school where children from different backgrounds and cultures come together to learn and play. The illustrations are bright and colorful, and they show children of all races, abilities, religions and genders. The text is written in rhyming verse, and it emphasizes the importance of being respectful and kind to others, even if they are different from you.

Activities:

1. Cultural show and tell: Students can bring in an item that represents their culture or background, and share it with the class. This is a great way to learn about different cultures and traditions.
2. Pen pal program: partner with another classroom or find another school and encourage students to write letters to each other. This is a great way to learn about different cultures and make new friends.

Submitted by Amy Glarner



The Baby-Sitters Club: Kristy's Great Idea

Ann M. Martin

Themes: Responsibility, Acceptance of differences, Friendship, Honesty, New relationships

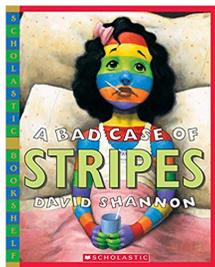
Appeal: The Babysitters Club Graphic Novel: Kristy's Great Idea is the first book of the Babysitters Club Series. This book is a story about four friends who come together to create a babysitters club. Although babysitting is easy, it comes with many new challenges; finding families, meeting new families, strict parents, and difficult children. Kristy, Claudia, Mary-Anne, and Stacy all learn communication, responsibility, hard-work, friendship, honesty, and trustworthiness.

Suggested Activities: This book could be used to teach a variety of lessons and subjects. This graphic novel has four main characters that we can use to teach voice in writing and reading. This book can also be used to exemplify narratives. During the narrative writing unit: we could use this book to show us the important aspects that make up a narrative.

This book could also be used to exemplify responsibility and group projects. The four girls working together to create a babysitting club is a great model that students could mimic in math breakout groups or other group activities. The responsibility can be a model used throughout life in and out of school.

Lastly, one of the main characters, Stacy, is new to Kristy's friend group and interested in creating this babysitting club. With that, the girls realize she looks a lot different than they do and learns to get to know her and accept her differences. In and out of school, we see and learn about differences, whether that pertains to disabilities, culture, religion, or appearances. This book can be a great resource to use to teach acceptance.

Submitted by Melisa Akdemir



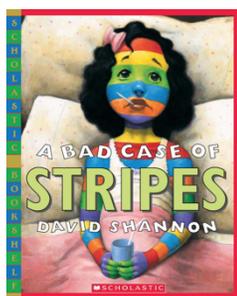
A Bad Case of Stripes

David Shannon

Potential Appeal: This book is a favorite amongst students as the main character turns different colors and shapes because she is experiencing a bad case of stripes! This book teaches students that it is okay to like things (lima beans in this book) even if other people do not like them.

Suggested Activities: As students are learning about character traits they can use the main character to identify a character traits and support their thinking. This book also shows character change which can be discussed as a class. I have also used this book to show the proper way to punctuate dialogue and add paragraphs through our writing.

Submitted by Katelyn Fabiano



A Bad Case of Stripes

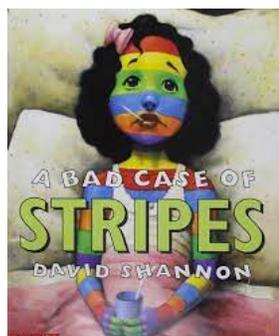
David Shannon

Themes: Being yourself, Confidence, Personal Identity, Self-Perception, Bullying, Being true to yourself

Appeal: A Bad Case of Stripes is a children's book written by David Shannon. Camilla is the main character of this story. Camilla is a young girl who cares very much about what other people think of her. Camilla loves lima beans, but her friends at school do not. On the first day of school Camilla comes down with a bad case of stripes on her entire body. As the story continues it seems as though whatever her classmates say to her becomes a pattern on her skin. Through this the reader can see that Camilla's body is trying to please everyone around her by becoming what they say. Camilla becomes almost unrecognizable. Toward the end of the story, an old woman arrives at the house with a cure for her bad case of stripes. The cure was to eat lima beans. Camilla at first refuses stating no one likes lima beans. As the woman goes to leave, Camilla finally reveals she loves lima beans. Camilla then learns the importance of being true to yourself and not caring about what other people think. The most important thing is to be yourself and be happy.

Suggested Activities: One suggested activity to go along with this book would be for each student to pick out a characteristic that makes them unique. They could then create a poster presentation describing how they are unique and what makes them different. This will allow the students to share with their classmates something special about themselves and allow them to embrace this special piece of them. It also helps students to learn more about one another and learn the importance of being different and how that makes us all unique. Students could also complete a journal writing assignment on what makes them unique and the importance of being different.

Submitted by Emma Oppido



A Bad Case of Stripes

David Shannon

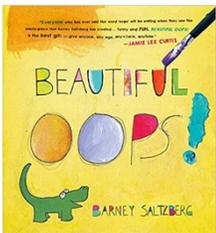
Themes: Fitting In, Self- Confidence/Identity, Peer Pressure

Appeal: This book tells the story of a young girl named Camilla who is perpetually afraid of what others think of her. She loves lima beans, but will not eat them because she is seemingly the only person who enjoys them and she does not want to

be different. While getting ready for the first day of school (and stressing about what to wear), her body breaks out into stripes. Throughout the process of attempting to be cured, Camilla's body takes on the patterns and forms of everything suggested to her (ie. a doctor gives her a pill to try and cure her and she wakes up the next morning in the shape of a pill). After many trials, a woman gives Camilla lima beans to help fix her condition. At first she is hesitant to eat them because she does not want to stand out, but once she indulges in the food she loves so much, her stripes are cured and she is able to be herself. The colorful pictures and silly designs her skin takes on make this book especially appealing for young children.

Suggested Activities: This book is especially useful for lower elementary children's Social Emotional Learning. Prior to reading the book the teacher may ask students to share their favorite foods and have a discussion during which the differences in everyone's answers are pointed out. While reading the story, after each pattern Camilla's skin turns, the teacher may call upon students to guess why to work on inferences. Students may work in groups to discuss something that makes them unique or different and how it makes them feel. They may put themselves in Camilla's shoes with their fears, thus practicing empathy. This story provides opportunities for students to learn about cause and effect; the teacher may review the concept and then give students several examples of effects throughout the story (ie. Camilla never ate lima beans even though she loved them) and have students determine the causes (Nobody else liked them and she was afraid of standing out). This text also presents strong opportunities for discussing the importance of respect.

Submitted by Meg DiNapoli

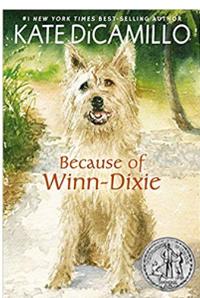


Beautiful Oops
Barney Saltzberg

Potential Appeal: I read this book to my kindergarten students this year. This book conveys that it is okay to make mistakes. When making a mistake, you can make a beautiful oops out of it. The students really loved it and it taught them a lesson that nobody is perfect and it is okay to make mistakes. When you make a mistake, you are able to learn from it or make it into something beautiful. There are different examples in the book such as a torn piece of paper or a bent piece of paper. The author turned those mistakes into a dinosaur mouth, and a penguin nose. The students are able to visualize and see the mistakes that are made and what was created from them.

Suggested Activities: After I read this book to my class they made their own Beautiful Oops class book. They each got a piece of paper that had a mistake on it and they turned it into their own beautiful oops. Some mistakes that they were given were a circle on the paper, a zig zag line, and black dots on the paper. Out of those mistakes the students used the circle as a car tire and drew a car, they used the zig zag line and made a kite using the zig zag as the kite string. Lastly, the black dots were used as chocolate chips and they made a chocolate chip cookie. By doing this activity, the students had to think outside of the box. For some students it was very difficult, because they had to visualize their mistake and think what they could turn it into. Seeing their finished product was amazing and it was interesting to see what students really understood and what students struggled.

Submitted by Genine DellaValle



Because of Winn-Dixie
Kate DiCamillo

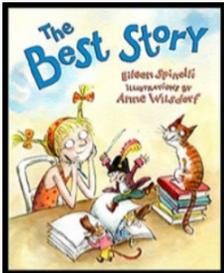
Potential Appeal: I think what first grabs young readers attention to this book is the cover page with the dog. A majority of young students love dogs and puppies. This story is about a young girl named India, but mostly goes by Opal in the story, who moves to Florida with

her father who is a preacher. Opal finds this dog, who she later named Winn-Dixie, in a supermarket and claimed the dog is hers. Opal herself was abandoned by her mother, similarly to the dog she found in the supermarket. She then demands her father to make a list and tell her facts about her mother. Her father agrees to tell her 10 facts, one for each year of Opal's life. Throughout the story, Winn-Dixie introduces Opal to many new people in the town. She tends to judge these characters quickly, as young kids do, but throughout the story she gets to know certain characters more and learns how to look beyond the surface. This is how she is able to gain empathy for her mother and why she abandon her. Overall, this story is about friendship, compassion, and forgiveness. Opal creates friendships with animals, young, and old people. All of the characters she meets and gets to know also has a unique story of their own which she can understand and connect to.

Suggested Activities:

- Compare and contrast activity - Students can make a t-chart and compare and contrast themselves with Opal.
- Interview with Opal or the preacher. Students can prepare 5 questions, which can't be yes or no questions. Then they can answer the questions based on how they think the main characters would respond.
- Students can create a quiz and answer key based off a couple of chapters in the story.
- Writing - Students can write a paragraph making a connection to something in the book and can create an illustration to match.
- Compare the setting of the story to where the students live using a Venn diagram.

Submitted by Jacqueline Doria



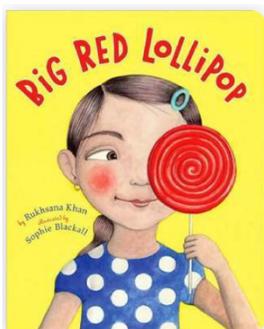
The Best Story

Eileen Spinelli

Appeal: “*The Best Story*” by Eileen Spinelli is a picture book about a young girl who finds out about a writing contest. If she wins, the prize is riding a rollercoaster with an author. This author is her absolute favorite author, so she is very motivated to win. As she explores what her topic should be, she uses the support of her family and others to help her select an idea. By the end of the story, with the help of her family, she discovers that writing from the heart produces the best kind of writing.

Suggested Activities: “*The Best Story*” is one of my first read alouds of each school year prior to our first reading/writing unit. I pair this story with an activity where the students design a heart map for their Writer's notebook. This activity is a two day process, as the first day the students brainstorm ideas about what “belongs in their heart.” Then, the students are encouraged to bring this home to discuss more ideas with their family. The second day, the students are given a blank heart and fill it with pictures and words representative of their brainstorm reflecting their identity. This heart is then pasted on the very first page of their notebook so whenever a student is struggling with idea generation, they have this tool to refer back to. I have done this activity with both second and third graders.

Submitted by Natalie van de Vliet



Big Red Lollipop - By: Rukshana Khan

Themes: Family, sibling rivalry, diversity, forgiveness

Appeal: This picture book story focuses on the relationship between two sisters Rubina and Sana. The story begins when the older sister, Rubina, gets invited to a

birthday party. Ami, Rubina's mother, is unfamiliar with the traditions and culture of birthday celebrations. Rubina needs to first explain what birthday parties are to Ami, and then try to convince her mother to allow her to go to the party. After some persuasion Ami decides that Rubina can go, however - she needs to bring her younger sister Sana with her. Rubina pleads with Ami to not bring Sana, but Ami says that it wouldn't be fair to leave her out.

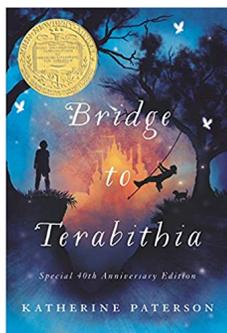
At the party Sana has a tantrum and embarrasses Rubina. Ami becomes disappointed with Rubina for not sticking up for her sister. Younger sibling Sana then takes a lollipop that Rubina has been saving from her goody bag. After another argument, Rubina gets blamed for being selfish and becomes frustrated with her role as the oldest.

Big Red Lollipop ends by wrapping up with a flash forward that brings the story full-circle. Some time later Sana gets invited to a birthday party. Ami decides that Sana can go, but only if she brings Rubina and their youngest sister Maryam. Rubina stays out of it by declaring that she does not want to go, and it's Sana's turn to beg and plead not to bring Maryam. Ultimately, Rubina remembers how she felt when she had to bring a younger sibling. She spends a few quiet moments with Ami, and instead of looking for revenge - she convinces Ami to let Sana attend the party alone. Sana ends the book grateful and appreciative for her older sister.

Suggested Activities: This story is a great choice for Grades 2 - 5 and works especially well when studying characters. The story works wonderfully as a read aloud, and offers many suspenseful details to pause and predict. Ami, Rubina, and Sana are great characters for work to identify traits and support choices with story details. Writing responses based on the characters work well for this story. Many students can relate to the siblings and to Rubina's perception of being treated unfairly. Students can also compare and contrast the different characters or compare the character from the beginning to the end of the story.

Big Red Lollipop does not identify the specific cultural background of the family, but there is an amazing opportunity to explore diversity in the scene when Rubina explains birthday parties to her mother. Lessons related to identifying a theme also work well for this text. Students will enjoy thinking through Rubina's loyalty and watching her confidence grow.

Submitted by Amy Smith



Bridge to Terabithia

Katherine Paterson

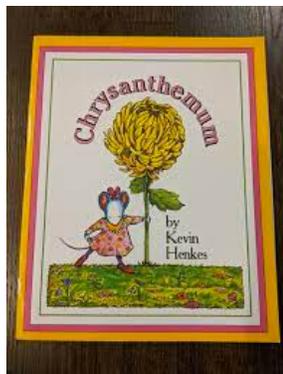
Potential Appeal: *Bridge to Terabithia* is intriguing to students for many reasons. My students loved reading this book, because they can connect with the main character, Jess Aarons, who struggles from undiagnosed 'middle child syndrome'. Jess' family also struggles financially, which is something students were astounded to learn about, especially in terms of receiving hand-me-downs from his older sisters. When Jess meets Leslie, students are first confused about his new friendship with a girl. However, they quickly realize that Leslie's quirkiness is a good match for Jess, as he sometimes worries about too much. Leslie teaches Jess to let go of the seriousness, and introduces him to their utopia of 'Terabithia'.

Jess and Leslie's friendship continues to grow, until there is a sudden turn of the climax as Jess faces the hardship of losing a friend and grieving. This turn throughout the novel was both saddening and enlightening for my students to deal with, as I felt they began to understand how important their friendships truly are.

A major theme of this novel is friendship, and how special our loved ones are to us. My students did not fully understand how important some people are to them, until they put themselves in Jess' shoes and thought about how they would ultimately feel losing Leslie.

Suggested Activities: After reading *Bridge to Terabithia*, one activity that would be beneficial to the students is identifying how they would connect with Jess and Leslie's friendship. Students should identify any type of relationship they have that is similar to Jess and Leslie's. They can then analyze of the theme of friendship is portrayed, and older students should be able to identify a more complex theme to this novel.

Submitted by Sarah Laveratt



Chrysanthemum by Kevin Henkes

Themes: Kindness, Self-Acceptance

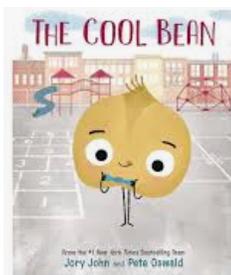
Appeal: This book features a young mouse named Chrysanthemum who is attending school for the first time. Chrysanthemum loves her name, but her classmates make fun of her because her name is long and she is named after a flower. After a few days of attending school, Chrysanthemum hates her name and wishes she could change it. Through a journey of self-acceptance and a little help from the music teacher, Chrysanthemum and her classmates learn that Chrysanthemum's name is unique and beautiful.

This book is especially useful during the early weeks of the school year in a K-2 classroom. Students relate to the nerves of starting a new year with new classmates. It generally evokes a reaction of empathy, and serves as a springboard for discussions about kindness.

Suggested Activities: This book lends itself to activities of both a social-emotional and academic nature. When reading this book for the first time, teachers can distribute paper hearts to the students. Each time a classmate says something unkind to Chrysanthemum, the students crumple their paper heart. After reading, students attempt to flatten the heart and notice that they cannot return it to its original condition. The teacher can then lead the students in a discussion about how their words can affect others, and the importance of kindness. As a follow up activity, students can name acts of kindness and put band-aids on a large paper heart.

This book can be used to identify character traits. Teachers can select a specific passage to re-read, and have students generate character traits based on the evidence in that passage. This can be done with multiple characters, such as Chrysanthemum, Victoria, and Mrs. Twinkle. There are also a number of post-reading activities that relate to names. One activity is creating a collaborative class graph of student names, and identifying how many letters in each. As a math extension, teachers can help students analyze the completed graph (how many letters are in the longest name? etc.)

Submitted by Anna Kisker



The Cool Bean

Jory John and Pete Oswald

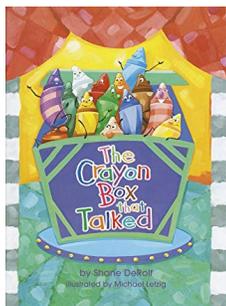
Themes: friendship, empathy, kindness, acceptance

Appeal: A bean used to be friends with a group of cool beans, but they never hang out anymore. The bean does not think he is as cool as his old friends. The bean tries to be cool by changing his hair, his clothes, and trying to be just like his old friends. This backfires on the bean, and everyone just laughs at him. After the bean fell on the playground, one of

the cool beans comes to the rescue. Another cool bean helps out when the bean gets embarrassed in class. The bean realized that the kindness shown by the cool beans is what really matters. Being kind is cool. In the end the group of friends start to hang out again.

Suggested Activities: This book can be used across multiple grade levels. It can be used for social/emotional learning, as well as literacy development. One suggested activity for upper elementary grades is to compare/contrast the cool beans and the main bean. This can be completed with a variety of graphic organizers. Another activity for upper elementary students is a group discussion on what makes a good friend. How does this book fit in with your idea of friendship? For early elementary students, this book can be useful to identify the story elements, particularly problem and solution. This text also lends itself to making predictions and personal connections. Students can write about a time they experienced an act of kindness. Lastly, this story ties in really well with social/emotional learning. Helping students realize that having empathy for others and being kind is highlighted throughout the entire book. After reading, you can challenge students to complete one act of kindness every day, or be on the lookout for kind acts they see others complete. Challenge students to see if they can complete/identify 50 acts of kindness in a week.

Submitted by Heather Manochio



The Crayon Box that Talked

Shane Derolf

The Crayon Box that Talked is a colorful fictional story about a crayon box that doesn't get along with each other. The crayons in the box are mean to each other but the little girl shows them that each one of them is important. The crayons learn the meaning that being different is special and unique. By the end of the story, the crayons realized that working together can create beautiful pictures. Students love this story they can really connect to the crayons and how they feel.

Activities: I use this book at the beginning of the year to connect the crayon box to the classroom community. I show the students that if we work together during the year, anything is possible. After reading, I give the students a post-it to draw and write one way we can work together this year and what it would look like in the classroom. You can also use this book throughout the year for summarizing, personification, connections to Black History Month and diversity

Submitted by Dina Stadnicki



The Crayon Man

Natascha Biebow

Themes: biography, invention, solving problems, importance of creativity, ideas and perseverance, aspects of science and history

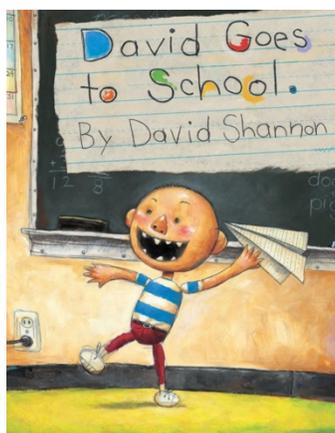
Appeal: The Crayon Man by Natascha Biebow is a biography about Edwin Binney which tells his story as well as the process of his invention of Crayola Crayons. This book was currently being featured at my local Library and it really drew me in. It was a very interesting way to introduce the genre of biographies to children. The story begins with Edwin's dark and bland inventions of chalk and pencil and then introduces a problem that he was facing, how to create an inexpensive color crayon. Through colorful graphics and a compelling story, the book goes through his process of experimenting with different recipes and ingredients until he landed on the perfect crayon and Crayola name that we recognize today. At the end of the book, there is also a two-page infographic on how crayons are

made today at the Crayola factory. I think this book would appeal to students because the story uses language that is fun as well as photos that are colorful that really make this biography come alive. It is also a creative way to introduce biographies or inventions to young children who recognize the Crayola name.

Suggested Activities:

1. Crayola Crayons are known for their unusual descriptive names, such as tickle me pink and macaroni and cheese. The students could work on a lesson of adjectives as well as descriptive words that they would like to use to name and describe their own crayons.
2. The students could also talk about how other items in their pencil cases were invented and by who. They could create a step-by-step infographic to describe the process of their chosen invention such as the one at the back of this book.
3. The students could create and write about their own inventions to be used in the classroom as well as what Crayola colors those inventions would include.

Submitted by Victoria Buchholz



David Goes to School by David Shannon

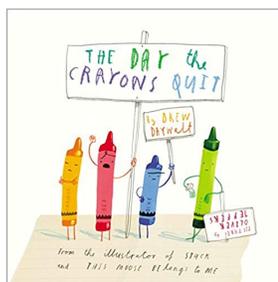
Themes: classroom/school expectations, classroom school rules

Appeal: This book is part of the David series, which shares the author's own experiences as a child. The book is narrated by David's teacher and focuses on David's first experiences in school. David is constantly getting in trouble and reminded of classroom/ school expectations. At the end David learns his actions have consequences and is rewarded for being accountable for his actions. The illustrations are appealing and support student comprehension of the text.

Activities:

1. Students create a list of rules for David. Students use creative writing and draw pictures to illustrate each rule. Students discuss why each rule is important and how the rules will help David and other classmates.
2. Turn and Talk: What rules are difficult to follow? Why? Students will share responses.
3. Encourage students to choose a part of the story where David is not following the rules. Encourage students to make an illustration of what it would look like if David was following the rules. Ex: David does not wait his turn during lunch time; students may draw David waiting at the end of the line. Students discuss why their illustrations show David following the rules.
4. After discussing David's behavior in school and why it is not appropriate. Invite students to reflect on how David's classmates feel when David does not keep his hands to himself. Encourage students to draw the emotions his classmates feel and write why they feel the way they do in a letter to David. Students should reflect on how they would feel if they were David's classmates.

Submitted by Angelica Abreu



The Day the Crayons Quit

Drew Daywalt

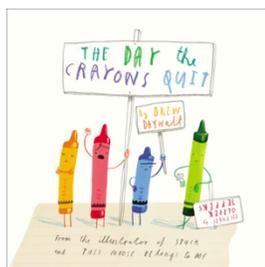
Potential Appeal: Characters

This is a compilation of letters from crayons to their owner, Duncan. Each crayon writes a letter describing why they are ready to quit. Each crayon's personality comes through their words.

Suggested Activities:

1. Have students complete a character sketch in which they determine traits about each of the characters based on evidence from the letters.
2. It is a great way to practice letter writing, introduce point of view, perspective, and discuss the intended audience of writing with students. An activity may include having students select a different color crayon and write their own letters. For example, if the letter is being written to a teenage boy- the crayon may be complaining about never being used anymore, whereas if the letter is being written to a 4 year old little girl- the crayon may be complaining about overuse and misuse.
3. Another activity could be to have the children pretend to be Duncan and respond back to the crayons.

Submitted by Natalie Baho

**The Day The Crayons Quit**

Drew Daywalt

The Day The Crayons Quit is a children's picture book. The book is written from the point of view of crayons in a student, Duncan's crayon box. Each crayon writes a letter to Duncan expressing how they feel. Some crayons explain they are being used too much and others feel they are not being used enough. Each letter also has illustrations that match the specific crayon. For example, in the red crayon's letter he explains that he is tired of coloring all the fire trucks, santas, and hearts. The illustration on that page is pictures of a crayoned colored fire truck, santa, and hearts. The crayons tell Duncan they are quitting. In the end, Duncan uses each of the crayons equally to create a picture.

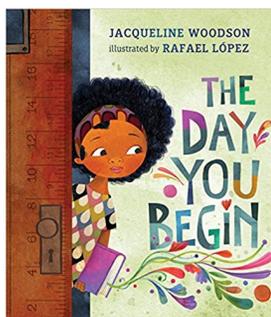
Suggested Activities: *-Letter Writing:* Teachers can use this text as a mentor text to teach about letter writing to students. For example, teachers can use specific pages in the text to refer to elements of writing a letter such as, addressing a letter as well as closing a letter.

-Character Traits/ Point of View: As stated above, the characters of the book each write a letter to the main character. In that letter, each character expresses their own feelings. Teachers can discuss how characters can have different points of view in a book. Within that, teachers can discuss character traits.

-Persuasive Writing: Teachers can do extension activity with persuasive writing. Students can write what their favorite crayon to use is, what the most important crayon in a box is and why.

-Colors: Teachers at the younger levels can use this as a read aloud targeted towards teaching colors. The illustrations would be a great visual for students.

Submitted by Kayla Miller

**The Day You Begin**

Jacqueline Woodson

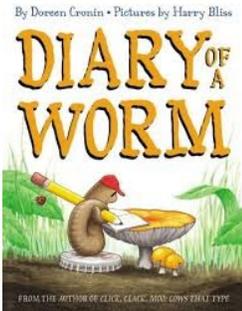
Potential Appeal: Teaches inclusivity and confidence

The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson is a K-3 appropriate text that is a fantastic story to read out loud at the beginning of the school year. This lovely story encourages children to find the beauty in themselves and others. It is an empowering story that is versatile in that it can support kids who have different skin colors, speak languages other than English, have a different culture, have a disability, are economically disadvantaged or who may have just moved from somewhere else. There are multiple characters in this book which all share the ways in which they feel different or uncomfortable with their peers at school. One beginning of the year activity that

could be derived from reading this story is doing an activity such as get-to-know-you-bingo. This activity helps students find out how much they have in common with their classmates and motivates them to be comfortable with themselves and others.

Woodson's language outlines scenarios many of us face in our life such as "There will be times when you walk into a room and no-one is quite like you". This provides an opportunity for student-led conversations formed from questions that could also lead to a writing assignment. One question that could be derived from this story is, "Describe a time when you felt like you did not fit in. How did that make you feel?" or "How can we as a class create an environment where everyone feels like they fit in?".

Submitted by Christine Nicholson



Diary of a Worm

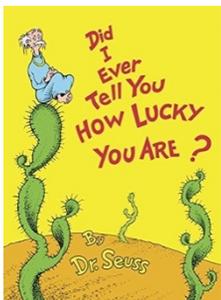
Doreen Cronin

Themes: Friendship, earth conservation, daily routine, embracing differences

Appeal: Diary format of short paragraphs makes it fun and easy to read for young readers. The main worm character is funny and is relatable to students. In this story he is writing about his life and all the ups and downs of being a worm. He also writes about his friend spider and ways in which they are similar and different.

Suggested Activities: Diary of a Worm can teach about perspective and point of view. Students can create their own diary entries from the point of view of an animal or insect of their choice. This also can include research skills. The teacher can have students gather information about their animal/insect and identify the environment they live in, what they eat, predators they might encounter etc. Students can also compare and contrast the worm and spider characters by discussing what makes them similar and different in the story as well as what makes worms and spiders similar and different in real life. Students could compare and contrast other types of animals and insects.

Submitted by Madison Nelson



Did I Ever Tell You How Lucky You Are?

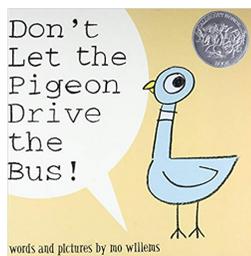
Dr. Seuss

Themes: Gratitude

Appeal: This book is about being grateful and thankful for what you have. The wise old man is sitting in a prickly place but yet he sat with a smile on his face. The wise old man tells the little boy even when things don't go your way and they get bad to tell yourself you are lucky and others may be more unlucky than you. There are many people that come talk to the wise old man and he tells each and every one of them that they are luckier than others and their bad day may not be that bad. He teaches them the importance of looking at the positives and how they should appreciate what they have rather than be upset about what they don't have.

Suggested Activities: An activity I would have the students do is write down all the things they are thankful for. I would also have them write down some things that make them upset to show them they have way more to be grateful for in life. This book is eye opening for younger kids and teaches them at an early age that they should be grateful for all the good in their life.

Submitted by Michelle Handal



Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!
Mo Willems

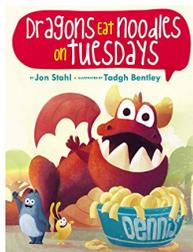
Potential Appeal:

- Recurring favorite character
- Large print, short sentences on each page
- Wordless pages
- Text features include a lot of punctuation, speech bubbles and thought bubbles
- Point of view from an interesting character, Pigeon
- Theme about morality, ethics and following the rules
- Simplistic pictures, few colors used, yet interesting and funny
- Rich with character's expression and feelings
- Inferring required for full comprehension of ending

Suggested Activities:

- There could be quite a few possibilities for practicing concepts of print. The text is organized differently on each page, but all of the text is spoken from the main character, in speech bubbles. I have read this book to introduce the usage speech bubbles, before students attempt to add speech into their own writing. Since there are not a lot of words, it could also be used to teach how books are read left to right, how print is read left to right and that for every written word is a spoken word. In addition, there is a lot of punctuation used which could lead into a grammar lesson. As a class, you could tally the amount of question marks, periods and exclamation marks then, have students add them into their own writing.
- There is a lot of potential for meaning making with this text. The plot encompasses a Pigeon trying to convince the reader to let him “drive the bus.” He begs and pleads the reader by stating “I’ll be careful!” or “Please?” Students could discuss how the pigeon is feeling and possibly share if they have ever wanted to do something they were not supposed to, making a text-to-self connection. There could be teacher prompting for conversation like “Why shouldn’t we let the pigeon drive the bus?” and “Why is it important to listen to rules that keep us safe?” At the end of the book, the bus driver comes back and thanks the reader for not letting the pigeon drive the bus. However, then a truck goes by and the pigeon is shown with a thought bubble of him driving a truck. This is a great chance for students to infer what the ending means. Students could share their ideas in a whole group setting or with a partner.
- For emergent readers, this text would be a great resource to teach one-to-one correspondence. This text is very well known and I find it is one of the books most of my students memorize. In a whole group, we have done a shared reading, and all have come up and pointed under the words as we read. Even non-readers can do this with a predictable text. I find this is one of the first books my students like to state they can “read.”
- For higher readers in Kindergarten, I have used this book to help practice inflection. The reader must give the pigeon a voice which sometimes is trying to convince like “I’ll be your best friend” or a voice that may be frustrated like “LET ME DRIVE THE BUS!!!” I have also used this book to demonstrate a “flat” reading voice and a “teacher” reading voice to a whole group. I first read the book with no emphasis on words and no inflection. Then I read it a second time, reading it as intended by the author. Students discuss what was different and which way was “better.”

Submitted by Alexandra Hunt



Dragons Eat Noodles on Tuesdays

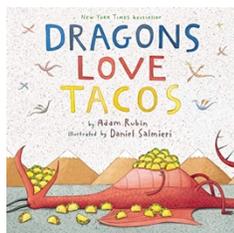
Jon Stahl

Potential Appeal: Teaching story structure

This story is about a little blue monster trying to tell the best story. He starts out with “Once upon a time, the end,” which would spark conversation with the students (is that a good story? Why?). He keeps trying to tell the perfect story and he begins creating one with another monster who comes along. They then create a story with a beginning, middle, end, conflict, and resolution. It has a funny twist at the end as well.

Activities: This is a great text to teach story structure to children. While the little blue monster is trying to compose his story, the teacher could have a discussion with the students about what’s wrong with his stories and what he needs to add to it. One activity you could do is simply discuss and identify the elements of story structure in this text. Doing this in small groups, for instance during guided reading, will give students the opportunity to come up with the elements on their own instead of the teacher telling them the parts. You could read the text multiple times, then during the second read, set a purpose for the students to find the elements, giving them post-its to mark the pages, and having a discussion. Another activity to complete after reading this book is writing an alternative ending, a continuation of the story, or one’s own story. Considering the age of the class and the writing skills, this can be independent writing, partner writing (like this text models), or shared writing (partner writing and shared writing are my two favorites).

Submitted by Giuliana Coccia



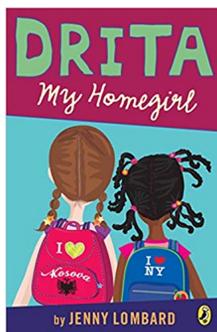
Dragons Love Tacos

Adam Rubin

Appeal: *Dragons Love Tacos* is a funny, engaging picture book perfect for young readers! The story is about a little boy who hosts a taco party for dragons that goes terribly wrong. When the little boy accidentally gives them salsa with jalapenos in it, the dragons breathe fire and burn down the little boy’s house! This book is extremely appealing to young students because of the silliness. The main characters are dragons, their favorite foods are tacos, and all kinds of silly things happen with the tacos. When I read it to my students, they were falling over laughing the entire time.

Activities: There are many different activities that can be done with *Dragons Love Tacos*. In the past, I’ve read this book during my How To unit, and had my students create their own recipes for tacos. They choose their own ingredients, write the directions, and draw pictures to match. I have also read this book later in the year and had students mimic the plotline of the story. They choose an animal and have to come up with a food that would do something crazy to that animal, the way salsa made the dragons breathe fire. They then write a story about what happens when that animal eats the forbidden food!

Submitted by Georgia Racanelli



Drita My Homegirl

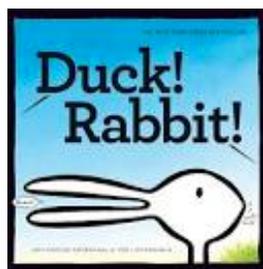
Jenny Lombard

Potential Appeal: I really enjoy this novel, because it gives students two different perspectives as they read the story. This novel is about a young girl, Drita, who moves to America with her family, to NYC for the American Dream. Maxie, is a typical New Yorker, who is spunky and very popular in school. This novel touches on a lot of themes

like acceptance for example, because Drita starts a new school and has to try and make friends in a group of students that can be judgmental and mean. Each chapter is given in a different point of view. It makes it fun to read, because students get to learn the same story from several different points of views, so they are learning more aspects about the same topic based on certain personal experiences. As the story develops, Drita and Maxie go beyond any stereotypes students deal with, and build a great friendship.

Suggested Activities: Since this novel talks a lot about acceptance through different point of views, I think a lot of activities can be done surrounding different aspects of point of view. Students can act out scenes from the novel as well as go further into analyzing how both Drita and Maxie might've felt during parts of the story. I think since this is a lighter read for students, and I know my fourth graders really enjoy this, so I believe a lot of group activities can be incorporated using this novel.

Submitted by Patricia Da Cunha



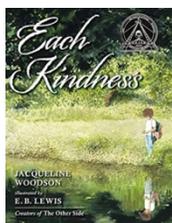
Duck! Rabbit! By Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Tom Lichtenheld

Themes: Point of View, Perspective-taking

Appeal: *Duck! Rabbit!* is a dialogue between two friends who have different opinions about the drawing that appears on the cover. One friend thinks that it's a rabbit (it has floppy ears!) and the other friend thinks that it's a duck (it has a beak!). Throughout the book, the reader is encouraged to look at the same drawing in different ways, and consider the two conflicting opinions. In the end, the two friends (and the reader) realize that it's all a matter of perspective. This book lends itself to conversations about differing opinions and considering new perspectives. It can also be used as an engaging introduction to opinion writing in the primary classroom. Young students frequently find this book humorous and are quick to share their own opinions about the drawing.

Activities: Before reading this book, the teacher can show students the black and white drawing from the cover on a separate piece of paper, and allow students to form an opinion about what animal is depicted. The teacher should encourage students to share the reasons for their opinion. The class can discuss the fact that they have different opinions and interpretations of the drawing. During or after reading, the teacher and/or students can create an anchor chart with the various reasons that that drawing may be a duck or a rabbit. As a post-reading activity, students can compose their own opinion piece about whether they think it is a duck or a rabbit.

Submitted by: Anna Kisker



Each Kindness

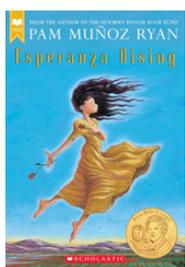
Jacqueline Woodson

Appeal: Theme of inclusivity and kindness, personal connection

Each Kindness is a picture book about a young girl who moves to a new school. She is mistreated and ignored by her peers because she is visibly lower socioeconomic status than them. It focuses on different situations of where a child might experience exclusion or bullying at school. It allows for connections to the classroom, lunchroom, recess and outside of school. The most interesting part of this story is the ending. The new girl, Maya, ends up moving away and no one gets the chance to be kind to her or allow her to be their friend. This touches upon a real-life possibility of not being able to get the last word in and do the right thing.

Suggested Activities: I used this book in my classroom when I wanted to address unkind social behavior among my students. I had some issues with exclusion, telling secrets, laughing at others, etc. It was extremely helpful because it was a setting and age my first grade students could relate to. I also like how the main character is of lower socioeconomic status because not a lot of my students are exposed to that in their town. With this book as an introduction, we did a “ripple of kindness” activity where we talked about an act of kindness being the rock thrown into the water which creates a ripple of more acts. I let each student put a rock into a bowl to create a ripple after stating something kind they would’ve done for the girl in the book. Students then were assigned a random student in a class to write a kind note to in order to start a “ripple” in our classroom. Other writing extensions would be for students to write a letter of kindness to someone in their life, or a card, or to write about a time they felt excluded like Maya. Other literary connections include *The Invisible Boy*, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today*, and *What Does it Mean to be Kind?*

Submitted by Rachel Shanagher

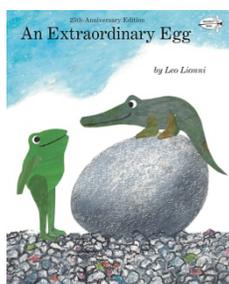


Esperanza Rising
Pam Muñoz Ryan

Appeal: Esperanza always lived in Mexico with her family in a beautiful and quite large ranch; she always wore the most beautiful dresses. One night her whole life had changed when her father was murdered. Her uncles were two very powerful men in Mexico, and they wanted to take over the ranch. One of her uncles had wanted to marry Esperanza’s mom, however; she was not in agreement with the arrangement. One night the ranch was set on fire and all the crops were destroyed. Esperanza and her mother had to escape to California during the Great Depression. Esperanza struggled to adapt to her new social statuses. They arrived at her new home, which was a cramped cabin in a migrant’s workers camp. Esperanza had to learn to do chores and complete things she was never asked to do before. One afternoon after a storm her mom became quite ill and had to be relocated to the nearest hospital because of Valley fever. Esperanza had to start working on the fields to take care of her mom and the medical bills associated with her recovery. Esperanza became the new head of the household. Esperanza grew tremendously from a life experience perspective and was able to balance everything in her life. A year after her father’s death Esperanza life is complete again. Her family was together again, and she was able to find happiness once again.

Suggested Activities: One suggested activity would be for the students to write a life changing experience and how they were able to overcome this experience. I would have them list out what obstacles they needed to overcome to call this a life changing experience. Another activity would be for the students to find out more about their family ancestry and go past their immediate families. This was an excellent novel due to the fact we are currently going to several alterations with regards to how our culture views immigrants and racism.

Submitted by Angela Ebrahimzadeh



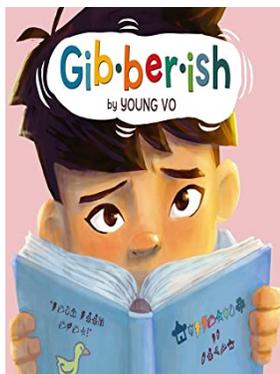
An Extraordinary Egg
Leo Lionni

Themes: friendship, acceptance, kindness

Appeal: This book is about a young frog named, Jessica, who enjoys going on adventures to look for new places and new items including pebbles or rocks. One day, she finds a large pebble that turns out to be an egg. Jessica and her friends believe that it is a chicken egg. They take care of the egg until it hatches. Once the egg hatches, Jessica and her frog friends go on various adventures with the “chicken.” A bird finds Jessica and the “chicken” and tells them that the “chickens” mother has been looking for them. Jessica and the “chicken” meet the mother who reveals the chicken was an alligator all along.

Suggested Activities: Young students can practice a few reading comprehension skills with this book. Students can practice sequencing events since this book contains a few key events in a specific order (ie. finding the egg, the egg hatching, various mini adventures, alligator finding its mother), using partners, graphic organizers or pictures. Students can also practice recalling the events of the text as well using graphic organizers or the five finger retell. Students may also practice making predictions with this text during a read aloud. During the read aloud, the teacher can pause and ask students what they think may happen next by writing it down on a post it or turn and talking with a partner. This strategy helps students connect events of the text.

Submitted by Sam Russo



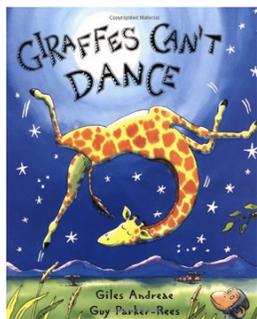
Gibberish
Young Vo

Appeal: This book tells the story of an ELL student who has recently moved to a new country where he does not speak the language. Dat feels as an outsider, shares his frustration and constant emotions he goes through as he is trying to fit in, adapt, to his new environment. Thankfully, with the help of his new friend, he learns to interact with her with partial language.

Themes: Kindness, ELL, language barrier, friendship.

Suggested activities: Have students share if they are able to connect with this book, or have them think from an ELL student's point of view and how they may feel. Pair students and have them come up with ideas as to what they can do to help students like Dat feel welcomed.

Submitted by Alejandra Zavala Guaman



Giraffes Can't Dance
Giles Andreae

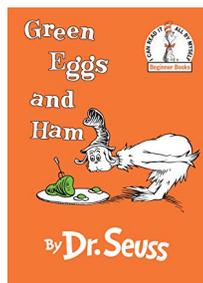
Themes: Friendship, Confidence, Self-Love

Potential Appeal: I suggest young readers to read *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae and illustrated by Guy Parker-Rees, which is a fiction children's book published in 1999. Some of the themes in this book are friendship, confidence, self-love and the idea that it is okay to be different. The book is about is about Gerald the giraffe who wishes to dance but his legs are too skinny and his neck is too long. At the Jungle Dance, the warthogs waltz, the chimps cha-cha, and the lions tango but when it's Gerald's turn to dance he gets teased by the other animals. However, as Gerald was leaving for home he came across a cricket. Now this wise little creature gave him a piece of advice saying, "Sometimes, when you're different, you just need a different song." So to the sound of the trees and the wind, Gerald starts to dance. With the support of the cricket, Gerald is able to learn how to dance and the other animals in the jungle were left in amazement. I would highly suggest this book because it is a feel good book that will have the children laughing but also shows them it is okay to dance to your own song and to accept our own uniqueness. It also shows how kind the cricket was to Gerald instead of teasing him when he was sad.

Suggested Activities: One suggested activity I would have for this text would be for students to write about things they can do and things they can't do yet but want to learn how to do. This can focus on the fact that they can achieve anything they want if they put their mind to it. Another activity can be a writing prompt on what it means to be brave. They can list what being brave looks like, sounds like and acts like. I also like the

idea of creating a worksheet where the students can find words that rhyme in the book and then write them down. We can then as a class go over these words and write down all the rhymes they found. All these activities can be done individually or even in a group.

Submitted by Marie Emberger



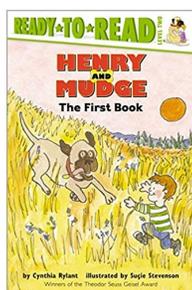
Green Eggs and Ham

Dr. Seuss

Potential Appeal: The idea is trying new foods that might not appear to be appetizing. The story lines rhyme and the idea of green eggs is silly, which is why most children enjoy hearing it read to them. They can relate to the idea of eating new foods and they learn to react to the silly pictures and predict what the characters will say about not wanting to eat green eggs and ham.

Suggested Activities: Students can listen for rhyming words and count. They can also think of words that rhyme that aren't in the story.

Submitted by Marissa Chirico



Henry and Mudge

Cynthia Rylant

Themes: The central theme of this story is **Friendship**

Appeal: This is the first book in a series, and for many that can be a draw in itself. There is appeal in becoming close and connected with the characters that we read about. In Henry and Mudge it is pretty easy for young readers to be able to relate to the characters and the story. It is genuinely good fun watching the characters develop throughout the books. This is a good read for everyone. Kids who have dogs can relate to Henry and Mudge's friendship, and those who don't can live vicariously through their adventures. In this first story Henry and Mudge get a rude awakening when Mudge gets lost. They both learn how much each means to the other, and by the end have a greater appreciation because of it. Mudge was always my favorite character growing up. I also grew up a lonely only and in an area where not too many other kids lived. These books really resonated with me, and often times I could not wait to be read to, at night.

Suggested Activities: When thinking of this book in the series in particular, I immediately am drawn to vocabulary activities. The beginning of the book poses a great opportunity to take a deeper look at the language used. Specifically, when Henry is describing the type of dog he wants. There are so many descriptive words used: Floopy, Drooled, curly, are just a few. Also, a story map activity would be ideal for these books. There is a clear beginning, middle, and end that students can follow, as well as detailed, and memorable characters that the students can easily describe. Lastly, a writing prompt about something that you really enjoy, or love, that you may have lost. What was it, and how did it make you feel? Did you ever find what you lost? How did that make you feel? Or perhaps the students can "help" Henry and create a lost dog poster to find Mudge. They could take what they learned from the story and what they know about Mudge and apply it to the poster.



Heroes In Training-Series of novels

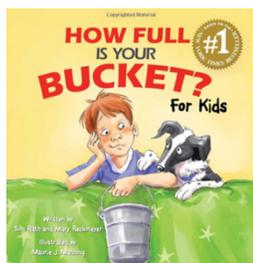
Joan Holub & Suzanne Williams

Potential Appeal: The series discusses the journey of all the Greek Gods (Zeus, Poseidon, Hades, etc.) as they were young boys and girls. At this time, the Gods did not know they had

powers because they are all little kids. They all go through different quests proposed by the Oracle of Delphi so that in the end they all discover that they have special powers. While on the quests they battle the different henchmen of Cronus and other monsters to try to stop them from achieving their goal. The novel includes many examples of figurative language and even character development.

Suggested Activities: Every chapter has many examples of figurative language. I will have the students complete a figurative language hunt after each chapter. The students will identify the types of figurative language and then analyze the meaning of each example. To continue, we will also take a battle scene and write it from the perspective of the monster or one of the henchmen of Cronus. Students enjoy reading this series in guided reading groups because it contains action and it also relates to the Greek mythology unit as they are learning all about the Greek Gods through shared reading.

Submitted by Waleska Burgos



How Full is Your Bucket? For Kids

Tom Rath

Themes: kindness, social emotional learning, teaching students to increase positive moments & decrease negative moments

Appeal: This book teaches a valuable lesson that how people are treated matters. Felix starts his day off with this imaginary bucket being full and feeling great. As the day progresses and people say unkind things, Felix's bucket empties. When the bucket is empty, Felix feels terrible. When people say and do kind things, Felix's bucket begins to fill up again, and he feels confident and happy again. Felix learns that you should fill other people's buckets as well. Making others feel great by doing nice things for them also helps Felix feel good about himself. This story teaches children that kindness matters and that being kind to others makes them feel good and helps fill your bucket as well.

Activity: The activity chosen for this book is an activity to be used in first grade. Students are given a bucket and strips of paper to write kindness notes. The students write something nice on each strip of paper for each student. The students then go around the class and place them in their classmates' buckets. When the students receive all their notes and their buckets are full, they read the messages the other students have written for them. Some examples of notes that students can write are; you are very artistic, I think you are funny, and you are good at math. This activity can help show the students how to fill someone's bucket that they can see in a tangible way and how good it feels to have your bucket be full.

Submitted by Kelly Palermo



How to Be a Lion

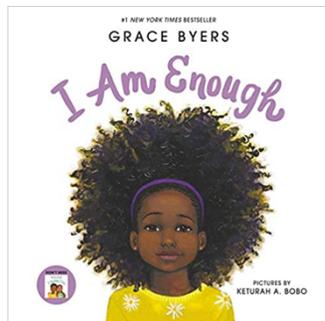
Ed Vere

Appeal: Themes of compassion, friendship, and acceptance

How to Be a Lion follows Leonard the lion as he teaches the reader how to be a lion. While being a lion includes hunting for prey, Leonard proves that lions are also gentle and thoughtful. Leonard faces the conflict of peer pressure from other lions to be more aggressive and “lion-like” he stands up for himself and, with his best friend Marianne, a duck, writes a poem to sway this thinking of unacceptance. This story teaches young readers ways in which he or she can empower him or herself and show compassion while doing so.

Suggested Activities: An activity for young readers to complete after this story is to make a lion out of construction paper and include a way in which the student has been compassionate to another.

Submitted by Rachel Norton



I Am Enough

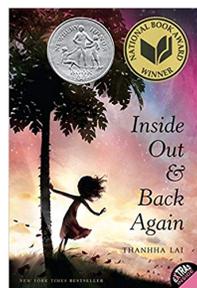
Gracey Byers

Themes: Inclusivity, Acceptance, Self-Worth, Appreciation of others

Appeal: This book is tailored toward a younger Kindergarten audience and promotes the ideas of inclusivity, acceptance of others, and diversity particularly for individuals who identify as female. It brings these individuals who tend to be marginalized and demonstrates females of different races, cultures, ethnicities, and disabilities engaging in activities together and supporting each other when others are struggling. This book helps to bring unheard voices to the forefront and promotes equality in the classroom.

Suggested Activities: Create an “I Am” chart that allows students to highlight parts about themselves that are different from others unique to themselves. This activity will promote self-worth and acceptance and embrace differences among people in a positive light. A second activity is to have the students draw a picture of themselves with their friends/classmates. This will allow students to visualize themselves with each other and engage in an activity where they can demonstrate how they get along with one another and support each other.

Submitted by Will Randall-Goodwin



Inside Out and Back Again

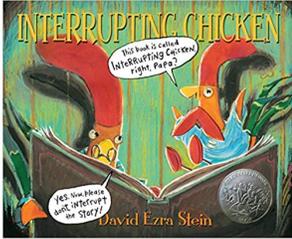
Thanhha Lai

Potential Appeal: The book has a number of items that students can immediately relate to that would have the students engaged in the book. First, the main character (a 10 year old girl named Ha) moved from her country of Vietnam to Alabama, in 1975. Some students will identify with moving as a family to another location as well as the related aspects of making new friends, the prospect of encountering bullies, and getting one’s bearings after settling into a new town. Second, Ha and her brothers have typical sibling relationships with each other which evidently brings episodes of conflict as well as love and respect. From an educational perspective, the story is about a family of refugees escape a country, Vietnam in 1975, that was being conquered by Communists. The family in this story was approved to be in the United States and was sponsored by an American family. The specific theme is very relevant to the current (and widely publicized) situation on the U.S. southern border, and a number of worthwhile activities can be utilized to present, examine, and compare and contrast both the refugees from Vietnam as well as the immigrants/refugees from Latin America. Another aspect of the book that is noteworthy is that the story is written in as a series of free-verse poems that are descriptive and free to read. This unique quality provides the students a new type of text structure that will “break up” the series of books and texts that have very similar, if not the same, storytelling format that most books stories are presented in.

Suggested Activities: A multidisciplinary unit that meshes Poetry (that is routinely covered annually at each grade level) and Current Events (which is also covered on a routine basis). The book could also be used by one main subject area with other subjects or topics overlapping it. One individual activity can be the

students comparing and contrasting the government's actions during the end of the Vietnam War and what is currently happening at the southern border of the United States. Another activity is a student writing a letter or journal entry about how he/she is being treated at the southern border with references (and possible comparisons) to the book.

Submitted by James Curley



Interrupting Chicken

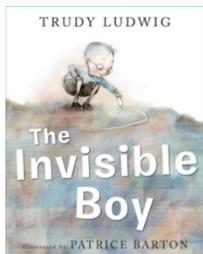
David Ezra Stein

Potential Appeal: Interrupting Chicken is a story about a little chicken and her father. Papa chicken is going to read her a bedtime story, but everytime he begins to read, she just can't help herself from interrupting. As soon as the story gets going, little chicken interrupts and puts herself into the story.

This is a fun story to read at the beginning of the year. My classes have all loved it.

Suggested Activities: This story lends itself well to teaching beginning of the year expectations. I have used it in Kindergarten, first and second grade classrooms. We made text-to-self connections and discussed when we are like little chicken. I also had the students compare being a respectful listener and an interrupting chicken.

Submitted by Melissa Cetta



The Invisible Boy

Trudy Ludwig

Appeal: Interesting Pictures, Relatable Characters

The Invisible Boy is a children's picture book about how Brian feels invisible at school until a new friend changes his outlook. The picture depicts Brian as looking invisible until his character meets his new classmate, Justin and feels welcomed in the classroom. As Justin makes Brian feel more comfortable, Brian begins to gain confidence in himself. Themes of friendship, celebrating differences and acceptance of new people continue throughout the book.

Suggested Activities:

Class Discussion about Characters:

-Identifying characters' actions and traits and how they impact the story.

-How characters feel, react and interact with other characters

-What changes happen within the characters as the story progresses?

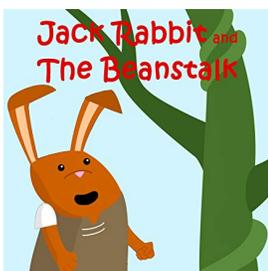
Point of View

-Pick a part of the story and write about it as if you were a character other than Brian.

Draw and Write

-In the story, Brian writes notes with drawings to Justin which Justin finds cool. Students can draw and write a note like Brian would write to Justin about the ending of the story.

Submitted by Rachel Cordero



Jack Rabbit and the Beanstalk

Katherine Applegate

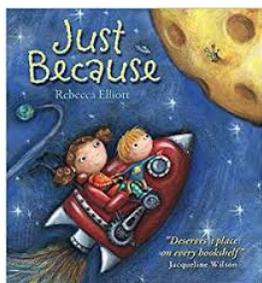
Potential Appeal: This book is for YA readers, the story is about a rabbit named Jack who loved carrots and ate up all the carrots his family had and forgot to plant more carrots. Jack decided to go to the market and sell his wheelbarrow for some carrot

seeds. On his way to the market, Jack the rabbit sold his wheelbarrow to a fox for some golden magic beans. He planted the golden beans thinking they were going to grow lots of carrots. The next morning, Jack discovers the beans have grown into a giant beanstalk. He climbs to the top and discovers a whole new world where everything is gigantic. In the distant, Jack sees a castle with a treasure, and he met a lot of animals who became his friends along the way. Jack rabbit finds that friendship is the true treasure to be found at the top of the beanstalk in this lively version of the classic tale.

Suggested Activities:

1. Use stuffed animals, toys, as props to retell the story.
2. Act out the story.
3. Let the students tell the story in his or her own words.

Submitted by Alicia Fletcher



Just Because

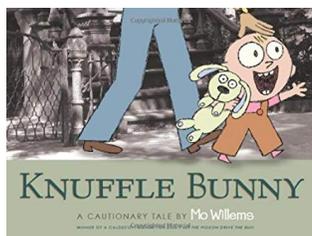
Jacqueline Wilson

Potential Appeal: This book is about a girl that learns that she will be getting a baby brother. While the girl is not excited about sharing her parents with a new baby boy, through a conversation about all the things in which she will get to do with him she begins to get excited. Eventually the narrator and her family learn that the baby brother will be born with down syndrome. While the narrator was not sure what this actually meant she knew that all the things she discussed with her father would be different. In another conversation with her dad the narrator learns that Isaac will be able to everything they plan, however it might take him longer to some activities or he may do them differently.

Suggested Activities:

1. Have conversations about down syndrome and critical thinking discussions where the students are able to reflect to reflect on the characters.
2. Have students write a letter congratulating the new sister.

Submitted by Angelica Abreu



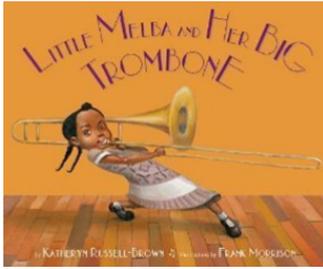
Knuffle Bunny A Cautionary Tale

Mo Willems

Knuffle Bunny is the story of a little girl that loses her favorite stuffed animal while running errands with dad through the city. Unfortunately for Trixie and Dad, Trixie is a toddler and cannot express what happened because she speaks only in invented language. Finally, mom realizes they forgot Knuffle Bunny at the laundromat and quickly run back to retrieve it. The book is visually appealing because it uses photographs to show the scenery and illustrations on top to show the characters. This allows children to connect visually to what they see around their town.

Activities: Students can create a map of the places Trixie and Dad passed in the story. They can also create a trail on the map so Trixie can retrace her steps back to Knuffle Bunny. Students can bring in their favorite toy and talk and write about all of the places they take it.

Submitted by Gianna Allegretti



Little Melba and Her Big Trombone

Kathryn Russel-Brown

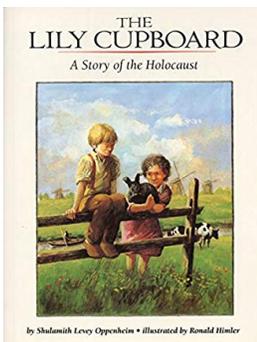
Theme: Perseverance

Appeal: This is a book based on the life of Melba Doretta Liston, the first woman trombonist to play in big bands in the 1940s and 1960s in the United States. This book begins by describing Melba's love for music. The story continues as Melba starts playing the trombone at only seven years old. At first she was discouraged because of the difficulty of handling such an instrument. However, with the help of her grandfather, she managed to play and excelled in her abilities when she realized her potential. She played on the local radio station and joined an all man band by the time she was 17. Being the only woman in an all man band, as well as a Black woman in America, Melba experienced discrimination for her skin color and gender. Despite segregation and hateful words she received from audiences, she persevered. Because of her perseverance, Melba was able to share her music with various audiences across the globe from Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.

This book can serve as inspiration for young children of color to not be discouraged. For young girls especially, growing up in a male-centered world, this book shows that what women have to offer this world is valuable as well. This aligns with the Black Lives Matter principle: Black Women is the building of women-centered spaces free from sexism, misogyny, and male-centeredness. The kid friendly version of this is: "There are some people who think that women are less important than men. We know that all people are important and have the right to be safe and talk about their own feelings."

Suggested Activities: This book is suggested for children in grades 1-5. In a second grade classroom, students can discuss their experiences with perseverance and write them down. Afterward, they can share (if they are comfortable to) with the class or with a small group. Another writing activity for this book can include students writing a letter to Melba. They can write why she should persevere despite the challenges she faced. These activities place focus on the value of perseverance and what it means to keep going, even if the world is against you.

Submitted by Dina Rodriguez



The Lily Cupboard

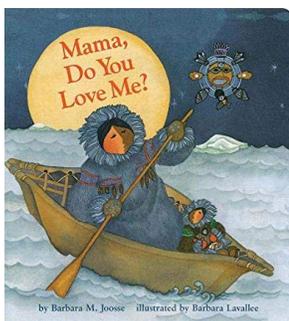
Shulamith Levey Oppenheim and Ronald Himler

Potential Appeal: This book is designed for older elementary students that are learning about the Holocaust. This is a fictional story is about a jewish girl who has to go live with a non-jewish family during Hitler's rule.

Suggested Activities:

- Students could write a letter from the character's point of view.
- Students could build knowledge what life was like for a child.
- Character traits and how to help people during difficult times.

Submitted by Samantha Leone



Mama, Do You Love Me?

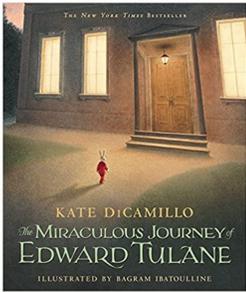
Barbara M. Joosse

Appeal: *Mama, Do You Love Me?* would appeal to young readers both because of the relatively simple writing style, though there are some unfamiliar words and animals, and because it reinforces the idea of a parent's unconditional love for their

children. It also holds appeal because it takes place in the Arctic and the conversation is held between a mother and her child from a native tribe. It shows that the bond between a mother and her child, or a parent or guardian and their child, is a universal concept, as is the concept of a mischievous child.

Activity: Students will write their own “what if?” and “then I...and I would love you” phrase pairings using examples or ideas relevant to their cultures or communities. Then the students will illustrate their writings. This story and project could be timed to align with Mother’s Day.

Submitted by Aliza Enker



The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane
Kate DiCamillo

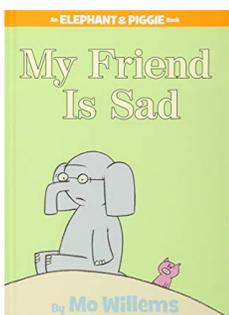
Themes: loss/grief, love, friendship, acceptance

Appeal: A vain, china rabbit was gifted to Abilene Tulane, who lived on Egypt Street. Abilene was infatuated with Edward and treated him as if he were a real person. She crafted him the finest silk suits, nightgowns, even gave him a gold pocket watch. An unfortunate event leaves Edward lost from Abilene and everything he knew. There begins the journey of Edward Tulane. He needs to get back to his home on Egypt Street with Abilene. The journey to find Abilene is not easy. Edward gets lost and found again and again by many different characters. Each new owner recreates Edward’s identity leaving him lost and confused, only yearning to find home even more. As the years pass, and Edward moves on to have new owners with their own life stories, he starts to feel something he has never felt before. He starts to miss the ones who took care of him in the past, and he also learns to love the ones who currently hold him. Edward learns that there is no worse feeling than losing somebody you love and home is wherever the people you love are. I read [The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane](#) year after year to my class and it is always a favorite! They cherish the time that we spend reading this book together and always beg for one more chapter.

Suggested Activities:

- **Story Patterns/Predictions:** There is a clear story pattern in this book where Edward gets lost, found, falls in love, and then gets lost again. After identifying that story pattern, students can use it to help guide them in making predictions.
- **Symbolism/Author’s Craft:** Throughout the story, there is a consistent mention of stars and constellations. This is an opportunity to teach students about symbolism and author’s craft. Students can talk about why they think Kate DiCamillo included so many scenes about stars and constellations. It also brings up conversations about symbolism. What do the stars and constellations represent?
- **Character Change:** This book lends itself very well to discussing how and why characters change throughout a story. Students can create a story mountain that can track Edward’s problems and how he reacts to those problems. It’s important to note how his reactions change as the book progresses because Edward’s personality changes slightly with each chapter as he is put into new, challenging situations. Students can see how a character’s journey can constantly change.

Submitted by Ariel Kaplan



My Friend is Sad
Mo Williams

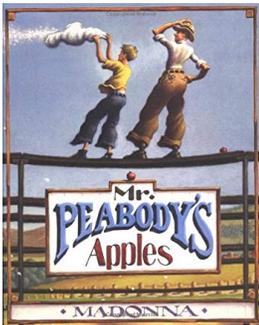
This story is a great way to show kids emotions and friendships. In the story, Elephant is sad. Piggie tries to cheer him up by dressing up as a clown, cowboy, or robot. None of

these seem to cheer up Elephant. In the end, the way to cheer up Elephant was when he saw his friend Piggies presence.

Suggested Activities: Students can create a “Kindness is Key” anchor chart/poster to display in the class. Each student would be given a paper key to write a kind act on. The kind act can be one the child has done already or one the child will work on completing in school. After all of the children have written on a key then the teacher can tape them to the chart to make one poster to hang around the room for students to see and revisit when needed.

Another kindness activity can be to encourage students to use “cotton ball” words instead of “sandpaper” words. Students are initially given a cotton ball to hold and asked to describe what it feels like. Then students are given sandpaper to describe. After they discussion of the two objects are over, then the students discuss which felt better. Students then begin to think of “cotton ball” words to use instead of “sandpaper” words. In their journals students would write examples of “cotton ball” words instead of “sandpaper” words.

Submitted by Kelly Cofrancesco



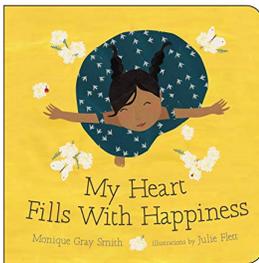
Mr. Peabody's Apples

Madonna

Potential appeal: This is a story about a boy who, believing he's telling the truth, spreads incorrect information about a popular teacher/ Little League coach. It shows the impact that spreading rumors can have and shares the lesson that the little boy learned about making amends once a rumor is spread.

Suggested activities: In my school we have monthly virtues that we study. I use this often during the month of honesty. We talk about the fact that what we hear or think we know may not always be the whole story. We also discuss how harmful telling something about another person can be, even if you believe it to be true. I have the students brainstorm and then share (through discussions or writing) times when they might have done something similar and what they could have done instead. A lot of times this also leads to recess discussions since we end up with many issues between kids where they are fighting because of something someone else told them happened that they have taken as truth instead of trying to figure out what really happened.

Submitted by Katie Lombardo



My Heart Fills with Happiness

Monique Gray Smith

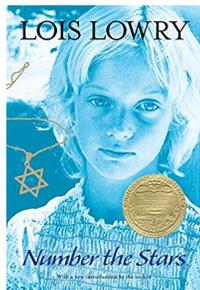
Appeal: Theme of gratitude

This picture book highlights all of the small things that happen in our day when our hearts “fill with happiness.” There are little things like feeling the sunshine on your back and bigger things like getting a hug from someone you love at the end of the day.

The book has simple illustrations that are beautifully done and children can easily relate to.

Suggested Activities: Before reading discuss gratitude with your class see if they can come up with examples of things that they are grateful for. Tell children that when they see a picture on the page that also makes their heart fill with happiness they can give the hand signal for a connection. During reading stop to discuss the illustrations and connections to the text. After reading, create a Garden of Gratitude. Children will have access to pre-cut flowers throughout the day and when they feel something that makes their heart happy they can illustrate it and place it in the garden.

Submitted by Carly Norman



Number the Stars

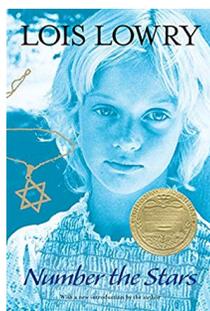
Lois Lowry

Potential Appeal: This book takes place during World War II and is set in Copenhagen, Denmark. As Nazis make their way into Denmark they begin to “relocate” the Jewish people in the city. The story is told from the perspective of Annemarie Johansen, a ten year old girl. Annemarie has a best friend named Ellen Rosen who is Jewish. Through their friendship, the reader is given the story of the Johansen family that courageously helps the Rosen family escape Denmark. The Rosen family leaves behind their daughter Ellen in the hopes that she will be safer with the Johansens. Annemarie recounts her experiences and tells the tale of her parents acts of bravery. As the story unravels Annemarie, unknowingly aids in granting safe passage to other Jewish families seeking to escape Denmark.

Themes: Bravery, Family Dynamics, Friendship, Warfare, Prejudice

Suggested Activities: Students will analyze how understanding the setting is important in the development of this story. Students can work in small groups to read an excerpt from the text that vividly describes the setting. As they closely read the excerpt, they will identify and discuss key details of that setting. They will analyze how the setting contributes to the conflict and the reader’s overall understanding of the text.

Submitted by Karheline Abad



Number the Stars

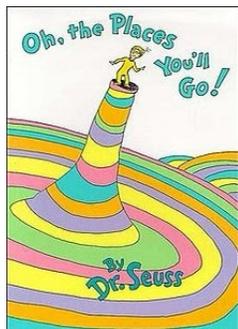
Lois Lowry

Potential Appeal: “As the German troops begin their campaign to "relocate" all the Jews of Denmark, Annemarie Johansen’s family takes in Annemarie’s best friend, Ellen Rosen, and conceals her as part of the family. Through the eyes of ten-year-old Annemarie, we watch as the Danish Resistance smuggles almost the entire Jewish population of Denmark, nearly seven thousand people, across the sea to Sweden. The heroism of an entire nation reminds us that there was pride and human decency in the world even during a time of terror and war.”

Our fourth graders study World War II and some details of the Holocaust during social studies. This book provides a realistic fiction accompaniment to their content area studies. The main characters, Annemarie and Ellen, are of a similar age to the students, which really resonates with them. The book is suspenseful and passionate - leading to highly engaged students during interactive read alouds of the book.

Suggested Activities: This book is read at the end of the year with my fourth graders. They have previously studied themes relating to racism and discrimination of those with disabilities, etc. This text brings another layer to the theme of discrimination and the need for equality. It provides many strong talking points regarding both historical references and thematic connections. The characters in the story face many challenges that require specific characters traits to confront - the theme of holding true to what you believe in (regardless of religion, bullying, race, etc) always comes to the foreground during student conversations. In addition, the short story, “The Yellow Star” by Carmen Agra Deedy, is an excellent paired text. It is the telling of a legend from Denmark regarding the King’s reaction to the Nazi invasion in Copenhagen - the same place and time “Number the Stars” takes place. It continues the theme of unity and holding strong to what you believe in, but also has a strong symbolic component that can be referenced.

Submitted by Kristin DelVecchio



Oh, the Places You'll Go

Dr. Seuss

Theme: Discovery

Potential Appeal: This book has always been a favorite of many people. The illustration and message of the story are timeless and beautifully done. I think it is important for students to know they can achieve anything they want in life even if it seems unattainable. You are in control of your life and I think that is a great point for students to understand. It also shows that accountable for your actions is important. You are the

one who decides your future.

Suggested Activities: (Time Capsule) Have students create a time capsule detailing the goals they want to accomplish for that year. Students can make posters, drawings, etc. At the end of the year, the students can look back to see what they have accomplished or what they still need to work on. (Transportation) The teacher and students can work collaboratively to create a list of ways to travel. Through air, land, and water. (Geography/Map) Have each student color in a map and also them to interview their friends and family to see all the different places people have traveled.

Submitted by Crystal Cordero



One

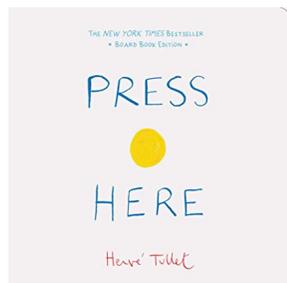
Kathryn Otoshi

Theme: Anti Bullying, Kindness, Everyone Counts

Blue is a happy calm color who is bullied by Red. None of the other colors stand up to Red to help. As Red bullies the colors he gets larger and makes others feel afraid and very small. Until the day 1 comes along. 1 stands up to Red saying "NO". 1 helps the other colors to stand up and stand together, they all change to numbers because they understand and believe that they each 'count'. They learn about accepting each other's differences and coming together. Red then becomes afraid and very small. Red feels left out and starts to roll away. In the end the numbers show their kindness by inviting Red to join in with them. They extend their friendship to Red and he turns into '7'. He can join in because everyone counts!

Activities: This book is good for Pre-K to about 3rd. The book illustrates colors and feelings associated with the colors and counting. Teachers could have a discussion with questions about being kind and what that means, possible questions are: 1. What does it mean if someone picks on you? 2. How does it feel if someone says something unkind to you? 3. What could you say if someone says something unkind to your friends? Teachers can use this to start a discussion about feelings, being kind, and mindfulness. Students could draw on a picture of the number 1 to illustrate how they would be kind to someone. Use a sentence starter: Sometimes it only takes one to Writing, students could write about ways to be kind and stand up for themselves and others.

Submitted by Theresa Jones



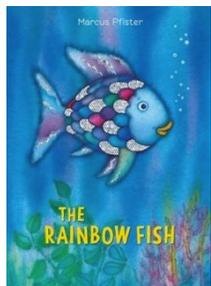
Press Here

Hervé Tullet

Potential Appeal: This work is a fun and interactive book that grabs its listeners' attention. For young readers, it draws their attention to the text in anticipation of what directions will be given next. To their delight, after following the book's instructions, their actions have meaning and shape the pages of the book before them.

Suggested Activities: Have the students create their own interactive book that engages the audience by directing them to interact with the book and see what cause and effect takes place.

Submitted by Sarah Veniero



The Rainbow Fish

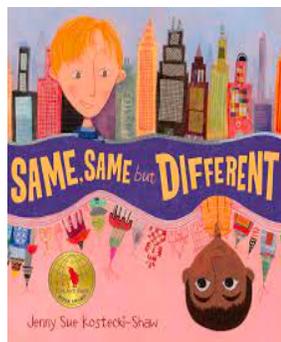
Marcus Pfister

Themes: Beauty, Greed, Sharing, Happiness

Appeal: This book tells the story of a beautiful, colorful fish with shimmery scales living in an ocean full of ordinary fish with dull scales. At the beginning of the book, the Rainbow Fish swims by all of the other fish, showing off his beauty, refusing to share any of it. He becomes confused/sad when he realizes the other fish do not have any interest in being his friend and ignore him until goes to the octopus for advice. The octopus advises him to share his scales (his source of beauty) with the other fish in the sea. The Rainbow Fish is reluctant to do so at first, but eventually gives a shimmery scale to each of the other fish. This act of sharing is appreciated by the other fish and by the end of the book he is happily living with the other fish, enjoying life with them as his friends.

Suggested Activities: This book can be used to teach young children in the lower elementary grades (K-2) about the importance of sharing. Teachers may have students call upon a time when they did not want to share their belongings or toys with siblings or classmates, but did and ended up enjoying playing with them even more. It is a good story to read before breaking out into play centers to serve as a reminder about the benefits of sharing. *The Rainbow Fish* can also be utilized in the upper elementary grades (3-5) to bring literacy into Social Emotional Learning. Teachers might have students brainstorm what it means to be beautiful and how beauty relates to happiness. It may be the basis for students to work in groups and hold conversations about whether or not having beauty makes a person happy if he/she does not have anyone to appreciate it, how beauty can be appreciated etc. Students may also explore the friendships in this story and relate them to their own personal experiences as they are navigating friendships in school. Discussions may be facilitated during which students explore whether or not the other fish are true friends considering they did not want anything to do with Rainbow Fish until they had some of his beauty.

Submitted by Meg DiNapoli



Same, Same but Different

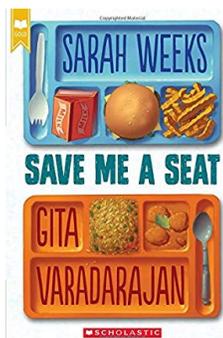
Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw

Themes: Relatability; Diversity; Class

Appeal: This book is about two young boys, Elliot and Kailash, who are pen pals. Elliot lives in a small apartment in a large city with his mom, dad, and babysitter. Kailash lives in a small village in India with his family, all 23 of them, and their animals. Elliot and Kailash appear to be roughly the same age, share some interests, but are equally just as different as they are similar. Though the two are somewhat the same, somewhat different, they become best friends. Aside from writing back and forth to each other, the two boys also share their drawings. Elliot eventually hangs Kailash's drawings above his bed and Kailash does the same with Elliot's drawings so that they can always be reminded that they have each other, regardless of how far away they live. At the end of the book, we see that they are not so different at all!

Activity: This text can be used for children aged four to seven, or grades P-2. Since this book touches on diversity and classism, it can be used to incorporate history and how we may come from different backgrounds, cities, cultures, etc., our skin color might be different, but we are essentially the same. Students can be instructed to make a venn diagram, comparing similarities and differences between themselves and their classmates, or even historical people they are learning about in their lessons. Students will realize that although they may look different than their peers, we can always find some commonalities with others.

Submitted by Maya Lopez



Save Me a Seat

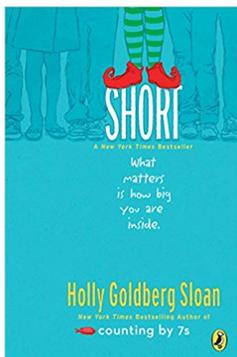
Sarah Weeks and Gita Varadarajan

Potential Appeal: This book has a similar appeal to *Wonder* in that students will be drawn to the underdog appeal of the two main characters, Ravi and Joe, as they face bullying, xenophobia, and ableism. The story is set in a fifth grade lunchroom setting, taking place throughout the first week of school. Ravi is a boy who recently moved to America, straight from India, and deals with a lack of appreciation for his culture and attempts to fit in. He is immediately labeled as different, and struggles with others not understanding him, both physically (he has a strong accent) and socially (such as the meals he brings to lunch). The other perspective told through this story is that of Joe Sylvester, by contrast a large, brooding, white boy. Joe struggles with acceptance due to his Auditory Processing Disorder, and does not feel like his mother's new job in the cafeteria helps improve his popularity situation. The appeal of this book is developed as these boys struggle to understand one another. Over the course of the week, their friendship grows out of the realization of a common enemy, the school bully, Dillon. The themes of bullying, acceptance, diversity, and friendship will all draw older elementary students to this book. Teaching this book in an area with a large immigrant community would also help students better understand each other, and would likely comfort those who feel outcasted by their heritage.

Suggested Activities:

- This would be a great mentor text to use to study multiple perspectives and POV. As students see both perspectives of the boys, they can develop an understanding of how point of view changes the events of a story. The boys' struggles to connect initially would create great conversations in the classroom about this literary element, such as different contributing (internal) factors to POV. Further, it would be easy to take this a step further by having students choose a scene of the story and write it from another character's POV, showing that there are additional perspectives not being considered as well.
- Teaching setting through this story would also be a very interesting lesson/unit. The setting of the story does not change, despite what may occur outside of the cafeteria. Also, each section of the text is labeled by the day of the week, with the whole story taking place between the Monday and Friday of the first week of school. After the day of the week, the section title is followed by the lunch menu item for that day, signifying the importance of food in this text. It would be a very interesting discussion to talk with students about the role of the setting, as well as how the story would be different if the setting changed and followed the characters around.
- Teaching writing through this text would be a great lead in to realistic fiction writing. The characters are complex and fully developed, and the use of internal thought is essential to the understanding of these characters and their perspectives. The setting is also simple and the story takes place over a short period of time, which is something that students often struggle with when developing realistic fiction writing. Further, this could lead to a great lesson on dialect, as Ravi is often misunderstood due to his strong accent. Since it plays such a central role in the story, students are nearly explicitly taught about dialect through simply reading this text.

Submitted by Jessica Buznitsky

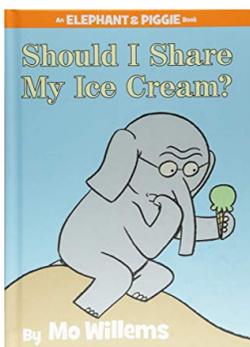
**Short**

Holly Goldberg Sloan

Julia Marks has dwarfism and is in an inclusive classroom and school and is trying to be like any other kid, but her size gets in the way. Julia's mother makes her audition for the *Wizard of Oz* and she is cast as a munchkin. This book is a great story to prove that size is just a number and that people shouldn't judge a book by its cover. It is also a great story to show how diversity and disability is overcome.

Suggested activities: History of Disabilities Lessons; Character Education- Judging people based on the outside and before getting to know them; Type Casting and Media Discussion

Submitted by Melissa Van Eck

**Should I Share My Ice Cream?**

Mo Willems

Appeal: Piggy and Elephant books are always so funny to kids because of how they talk to each other. It engages younger students when the reader talks in different voices. The story is usually based on the friendship that these two characters have with one another. It is a storyline that younger students can relate to and it is also a book that they can read themselves because it is at a lower level for some.

Activity: During the opinion writing unit, I use this book to help students think about their opinions. In the story Elephant is debating on whether or not he should share his ice cream with Piggy. After reading this story I have the students come up with 3 reasons as to why or why not they would share their ice cream. A lot of them come up with some really great responses like, "I would not share my ice cream because I could get sick" or "I would share my ice cream because that's what friends do."

Submitted by Melissa Marchand

**Stellaluna**

Janell Cannon

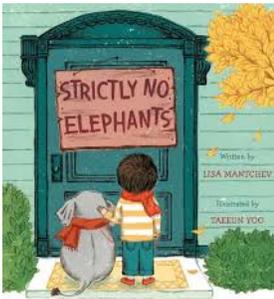
Themes: Acceptance, resilience, diversity, bat habits

Appeal: This book is about a mother fruit bat who loses her baby (Stellaluna) in a skirmish with an owl. After falling from her mother's grasp, Stellaluna wakes up in a nest full of baby birds and, not knowing any better, believes she is also a bird. Even though she does not naturally follow the other birds' ways, Mother Bird accepts Stellaluna as one of her own babies and makes her feel accepted. Eventually, Stellaluna discovers the truth and even encounters her own mother bat, who reintroduces her into the family. Stellaluna is forever thankful for what the other birds have taught her.

Suggested Activities: Students can learn about diversity and acceptance through the story of *Stellaluna*. This narrative can help them understand that even though some people may not look like their relatives, families come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. The story perfectly illustrates the obstacles that blended families can encounter, as well as the journey that children within that family dynamic may take to accept themselves as unique individuals. In addition, this book can be integrated into a science unit on bats, because it not only instructs students about various characteristics of the bat, but it also includes an easy-to-read section of paratext at the end of the book to explain all of the terms within the story. Using details from

the story, students can identify the habits of bats as well as those of birds and compare and contrast them within a Venn diagram to understand how animals can be both different and similar.

Submitted by Jennifer Bulmer



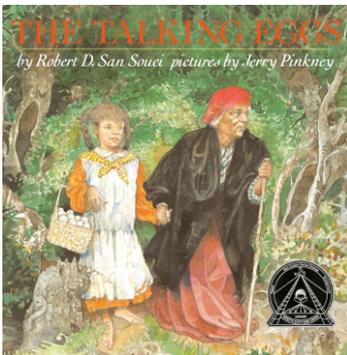
Strictly No Elephants

Lisa Mantchev

Appeal: *Strictly No Elephants* is a children’s picture book about a young boy living in the city and has a pet elephant. The little boy and his pet have a very close friendship that is noticed by the way they care and look out for each other. Storyline continues with “Pet Club Day” when the little boy attempts to bring his pet elephant as a show and tell. However, on the door there is a sign with “Strictly No Elephants” written on it. Both characters are deeply saddened with not being allowed into the club. Eventually the little boy meets other boys and girls with unique pets just like him. Together they make their own club and allow anyone to join no matter what kind of pet they have. Towards the end, their club is filled with many special friends and having fun with each other. This picture book includes many illustrations and a common phrase “because that’s what friends would do…” is found throughout the story. Drawings include tall buildings and busy streets to depict the city lifestyle and characters of varied racial backgrounds. Themes noticed in *Strictly No Elephants* are friendship, identity, and belonging. Listeners experience the little boy’s journey of rejection but then finding acceptance for his unique feature, his pet elephant.

Suggested Activities: After discussing the story plot and themes with K-2 students, they can be asked to turn and talk with a partner to make up a club that allows anyone to come. From there, they can include details about their club like “what would they do when they are together”. Additionally, students can also write a narrative story that connects with the main theme of friendship. As mentioned the boy says several times, “That’s what friends do ” students can be asked to write a story based on that idea and encourage as many details as possible.

Submitted by Lisbel Torres



The Talking Eggs

Robert D. San Souci

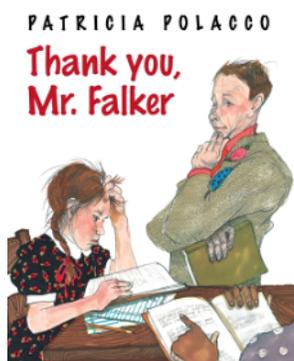
Themes: Good and bad; kindness and generosity; perception

Appeal: *The Talking Eggs* is a Creole folktale about a young girl, Blanche, who lives with her cruel and manipulative mother and older sister, Rose. The tale begins with Blanche, who bears the brunt of household chores, being sent to fetch water for her sister. While out getting water, Blanche runs into an old woman. The woman desperately needs water, which Blanche readily gives her. Blanche's kindness catches the old woman's eye, and she invites Blanche back to her magical house. However, the old woman warns Blanche that she must not laugh at anything unusual she may see. As promised, Blanche does not laugh and continues to be kind and helpful. At the end of her visit, the old woman tells Blanche she may take eggs from her hen house, but only the plain eggs. She is not allowed to take any of the beautiful ornate eggs. As expected, Blanche does as she is told and only takes the plain eggs. The old woman instructs Blanche to throw the eggs over her shoulder on her way home. Thus, Blanche is rewarded with treasures and, ultimately, a happier life. When Blanche's mother and sister, Rose, discover Blanche's treasures, Rose sets off to find the old woman. Rose shows her cruel nature by mocking the old woman and her home and stealing the decorated eggs. Rose

does not heed the woman's instructions and is met with frightening creatures that hatch out of the stolen eggs. The moral of the story is to practice respect, kindness, and that things may not always be as they appear.

Activities: In the later elementary grades, students can engage in discussion about the folktale genre compared to other oral narratives. They can also discuss story elements such as theme and character traits. Graphic organizers can be utilized to complement the discussion by comparing and contrasting characters, and exploring cause and effect. In the early elementary grades, students can understand narrative elements through the use of story maps. In addition, students can engage in a craft activity where they hollow out eggs to decorate. Students can also create paper eggs to decorate and write vocabulary words they have encountered in the story for classroom display. A word search can also be utilized and tailored from easy to difficult for further vocabulary instruction.

Submitted by Laura Bonvini



Thank you, Mr. Falker

Patricia Polacco

Themes: Overcoming adversity, courage, bravery, discovering one's own gifts and talents

Appeal: *Thank you, Mr. Falker* is a celebrated children's book by acclaimed author, Patricia Polacco. It tells the story of her life as a young student with dyslexia. In school, Trisha loves to paint and draw, however, when it comes to reading and writing, she realizes that she does not possess some of the same abilities as her classmates.

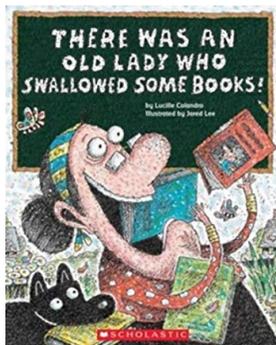
Over time, Trisha's struggles with literacy begin to become an overwhelming burden. She is even taunted and bullied by her peers. Trisha hopes things will be different when her mother gets a new job and her family moves across the country to California. However, things are still troublesome for Trisha at her new school until her reading teacher, Mr. Falker recognizes her artistic talent.

When Mr. Falker becomes aware of Trisha's learning disability, he encourages her to stay after school to work on her reading and writing skills. With his help and guidance, Trisha perseveres and finally learns to read. She expresses gratitude to Mr. Falker for helping her discover another one of her many gifts.

Suggested Activities: While the text, *Thank you, Mr. Falker*, is a wonderful story for children of all ages, related activities might be best suited for students in grades third through fifth grade. Activities related to this story can be based on theme, vocabulary, comprehension, finding the author's purpose, and using text evidence to make claims for a literary essay.

These activities allow students to explore the various themes that are within Patricia Polacco's story such as overcoming adversity, courage, bravery, and discovering one's own gifts and talents. For instance, teachers can take note of certain vocabulary words within the text and discuss them with the class. New vocabulary words should be added to the word wall in the room and students should be given a daily opportunity to connect those vocabulary words to their own personal experience.

Submitted by Sophie Wolf



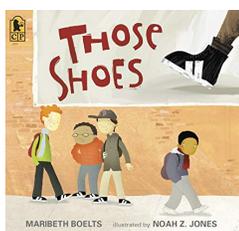
There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed Series

Lucille Colandro

Appeal: These books can be used to focus on teaching holidays and seasons. Students think these books are funny because she swallows silly things and then burps or sneezes them out at the end. The students enjoy making the ACHOO and burp sound at the end with me.

Activity: I like to use these books with my students when working on sequencing. I enjoy making the actual item at the end of each book. For example, *There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed Some Leaves* is about the Fall season and at the end she sneezes out a scarecrow. I have my students get into groups and sequence the things that she swallowed by going up and getting the hay, the pants, etc. in order. They will then have all the items and are able to make their own scarecrow. The same can be done with the snowman, sand castle, etc.

Submitted by Samantha Picciuti



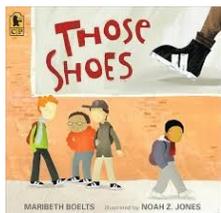
Those Shoes

Maribeth Boelts / Illustrated by Noah Z. Jones

Potential Appeal: *Those Shoes* is a fictional story in picture book format about a young boy named Jeremy who wants the shoes that all of his peers have, but his grandmother cannot afford to buy them for him. Jeremy is African-American and the story is set in an urban city environment, at his grandmother's house, and in school. Jeremy narrates the story, starting his tale with "I have dreams about those shoes. Black high-tops. Two white stripes." His grandmother explains to Jeremy that they have no room for *want* in their lives - "just 'need.'" In school, Jeremy faces social pressure to fit in with his peers who all own the same pair of shoes, except from one boy named Antonio who also does not have the shoes. Jeremy starts to obsess over them, and when his own shoes fall apart during a game of kickball, his struggle is heightened when he must use school-provided shoes "for kids who need things." All of his peers make fun of him except Antonio. Jeremy's grandmother attempts to buy him the shoes, but succumbs to the fact that they are just too much money. When Jeremy and his grandmother spot the shoes in a thrift shop, Jeremy is elated. He tries them on and they are way too small, but he doesn't care. He buys them with his own money and limps around school hoping they will stretch. Jeremy befriends Antonio and notices his shoes are tattered and his feet are much smaller than his own. Jeremy repeats in his mind, "I'm not going to do it," to the point where he is sleepless. The next day, snow begins to fall and Jeremy's grandmother gives him snow boots for winter. Jeremy decides to leave his beloved shoes on Antonio's doorstep. The next day, he witnesses Antonio getting compliments on his new shoes, and Jeremy is at peace with his decision.

Suggested Activities: This story can be done as an interactive read aloud for elementary school and middle school children to emphasize the themes of peer pressure, kindness, gratitude, and wants vs. needs. Many different cultures are represented in the illustrations, and I feel that students of all backgrounds can make connections to wanting to fit in by owning the latest popular fad in their school. Students can make inferences about how Jeremy, the grandmother, and Antonio feel through indirect and direct description, and they can learn the difference between internal and external conflict based on what Jeremy says, does, how he thinks, and how he feels.

Submitted by Dina Veltri



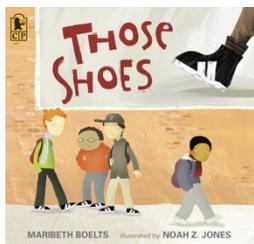
Those Shoes

Maribeth Boelts

Appeal: This book is about a boy, Jeremy, who just wants the shoes that everyone has at school. He is told by his grandmother that they have room just for what they “need” not “want. At school, Jeremy’s shoes fall apart and he is given a pair that makes him stand out when he doesn’t have the same shoes as everyone else. His grandmother tries to purchase the shoes for him that he wants, but they are just too expensive. When Jeremy goes to the thrift store, he spots the pair of those shoes that everyone has. There is only one problem that they are one size too small. Still, Jeremy buys them with his own money and soon realizes that having sore feet is not worth it. When Jeremy has the chance to help a friend, Antonio, who also seems to be wearing old, taped up shoes, he willingly gives up his shoes. He soon learns that it isn’t about what you don’t have, but more about appreciating what you do have.

Suggested Activities: This book is suggested for grades K-4. I use this book in the classroom to talk about wants and needs. After reading this book, I have pre made objects, activities and food that students can sort as wants and needs. We then have a discussion about what observations they have made. Students then get to color what “their” shoe would look like and surround it with their favorite things they are grateful to have in their life. For third and fourth grade, students can expand on this during writing by writing a story that follows the same theme and shows what they would be willing to do to support a friend.

Submitted by Dana Levenback



Those Shoes

Maribeth Boelts

Potential appeal: A boy named Jeremy desires a popular pair of shoes worn by many of his classmates. When Jeremy’s old shoes fall apart, his guidance counselor gives him a pair of shoes from the ‘Lost and Found’ that everyone makes fun of—except Antonio. Soon, Jeremy realizes that he never needed those shoes all along; rather, warm boots, good friends, and a loving grandma are all worth more than the things he wants.

Themes: Generosity, friendship, needs vs. wants

Suggested Activities:

1. Before reading, students will be asked what the difference between *needs* and *wants* are. Examples of what we *need* at the store versus what we *want* are given as a way for students to brainstorm ideas. Then, ask the students to point out what they notice on the front cover of the book. From the front cover, students will make predictions about what will happen in the story. As the teacher reads, students will listen and be asked to pay close attention to how the main character feels about his shoes versus what the other kids in his class wear.
2. As a class, we will create a list of needs and wants. Using colorful magazines, drawings, or words, students still work together to sort through these items. We will talk about each picture as we sort, questioning what makes it a need or a want?
3. Students will describe acts of generosity they can complete for friends or family members that they know will really appreciate.
4. Students will design and draw a pair of shoes that they would love to wear. Students will label its features, using descriptive words to show how unique their shoes are.

Submitted by Monica Kang



Tomorrow I'll Be Brave and Tomorrow I'll Be Kind

Jessica Hische

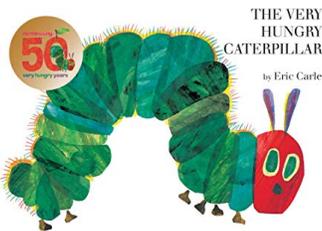
Themes: introduces the ideas of good character traits and behaviors to children as well as how perseverance and trying again tomorrow is an important goal

Appeal: Tomorrow I'll Be Brave and Tomorrow I'll Be Kind are two children's books by Jessica Hische that introduce positive character traits to young children. Each book features seven character traits, such as helpful, patient, creative, confident, and brave using a rhyming text and colorful graphics that explains the trait as well as introduces how a child could easily practice that trait. The end of each book recaps all of the traits and then reaffirms that even if a child could not be all of those things today, they can always try again tomorrow. The end of Tomorrow I'll Be Brave goes, "Tomorrow I'll be all the things I tried to be today...and if I wasn't one of them I know that it's ok. But tonight I'm very sleepy, so now it's time to rest. Tomorrow I'll be all these things or at least I'll try my best." I believe these books would appeal to children and teachers because they use colorful graphics and easy rhymes to introduce an important message. Children should always try their best, but know that it is ok if they make mistakes because they can try again tomorrow.

Suggested Activities:

1. Some of the characteristics featured in the books may be words that are unfamiliar to the children, such as generous or adventurous. The class could look at the examples of these words in the book and create their own simple definitions, for example, I am generous when I share my lunch, or I am adventurous when I go down the big slide. The class could create posters with the character trait in the middle and then their simple definitions or drawings around it. These posters could be hung around the classroom as reminders of how the students can practice these traits and do their best each day.
2. The students can make a list of which character traits they see in themselves and which they would like to work on during the school year and how. They could also talk about which character traits they see in their classmates as a way to build community.
3. Reciting positive affirmations in the morning is something I've seen a lot of on social media lately. As a class, the students can pick which character traits they find most important for them and turn them into a positive affirmation poem that they can recite together each morning.

Submitted By Victoria Buchholz



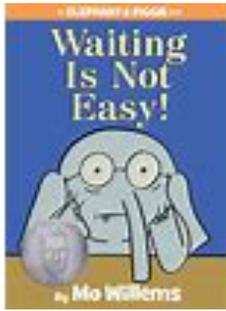
THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR
by Eric Carle

The Very Hungry Caterpillar Eric Carle

This is a fun book for young children. It is about a caterpillar snacking throughout the book and going through stages of growth to become a beautiful butterfly. In the book there is a little hole that the young readers can physically put their little finger through to feel that the caterpillar is eating through the foods. I like how this grasps the readers' attention and making the reading more fun and engaging.

Activity: After reading the book, an in class activity could be asking students to draw the foods that they like to eat when they are hungry and then share with the class.

Submitted by Tammy Le



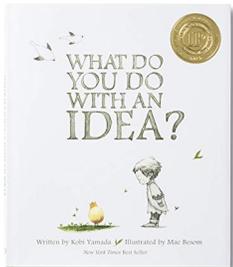
Waiting is Not Easy! By Mo Willems

Themes: Patience, Friendship

Appeal: Elephant and Piggie books are appealing to students because of their lovable characters, relatable themes, and easy-to-read text. In each book of this series, two best friends work through some type of conflict. In *Waiting is Not Easy!* Piggie has a surprise for Gerald, but he has to wait until the end of the day. Gerald becomes very impatient and struggles to control his emotions. However, when the end of the day comes, Gerald understands why he had to wait, and the wait was worth it.

Suggested Activities: Elephant and Piggie books are great for making connections, because most students find them relatable. Students could describe (through journaling or a turn and talk activity) a time where they had to wait for something. They could compare their reaction to Gerald's—did they find it very hard to wait, like Gerald did? Was the thing they waited for worth it? Students could also do a retelling activity in pairs. They can use Gerald and Piggie puppets, with each student taking on the role of one character. After “stepping into the role” of a character, students can reflect on how their character was feeling at different points during the story. This book also lends itself to talking about text features such as italics, bold words, and punctuation. Students can practice using these text features to determine the tone or feeling behind the character’s speech.

Submitted by Anna Kisker



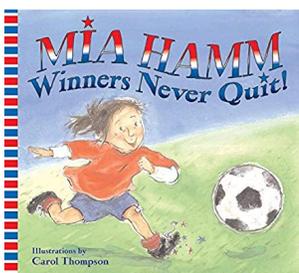
What Do You Do With an Idea?

Kobi Yamada

The story centers around a little boy (he is not named) who is being “followed around” by an idea. In the book, the idea is made to look like a golden egg. At first, the boy wants the idea to just go away, but over time he realizes he likes having it around. He learns to feed, play with, and befriend his idea. The book also emphasizes not letting others ruin your ideas. By the end of the story, the boy falls in love with his idea and shows his idea could change the world.

Suggested Activities: For this book, I often ask students to come up with a “wildly wacky and weird” idea in their heads. We share them in groups and discuss how everyone’s ideas are valuable and important. I usually tie this into idea generation in Writer’s Workshop because it shows the importance of good ideas without handing the idea to the students. It can also be used to teach self-confidence and risk-taking to students who don’t do this naturally (which is many). I would also ask students to create a picture of themselves with their idea in a speech bubble.

Submitted by Jay Faigenbaum



Winners Never Quit

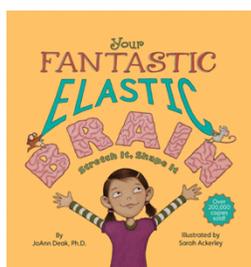
Mia Hamm

This book is great for elementary students. I have used it within my third and fourth-grade resource room. It is written by the famous soccer player Mia Hamm. The story is about how the main character, Mia, would play soccer with her brothers and sisters every day. However, she would often quit the game because she got frustrated when she would miss a goal. Until, one day, her siblings started

the game without her because she always quits on them. Mia learns quitters never win, and that she would rather lose a game than not be able to play soccer at all. Ultimately she ends up being okay when she misses a goal.

Winners Never Quit offers many different elements of text within it. I use it multiple times throughout the year for different elements. At the beginning of the year, I use it to practice summarizing. Then I use it to teach plot and theme. Towards the end of the year, when we are studying characters, I use it to talk about the different character in the book. One topic we discuss is character change through Mia from the beginning of the book to the end. Another topic we discuss is how one character's actions can affect events that take place in the book. It is also a great book to discuss character traits through dialogue, actions, and thoughts of the different characters.

Submitted by Cassandra Kusnic



Your Fantastic, Elastic Brain

JoAnn Deak

Theme: Growth mindset, plot: provides students through illustrations how their brain works and progresses each year. It helps children realize that their brain does all the things that makes them who they are!

Appeal: *Fantastic Elastic Brain: Stretch it, Shape it* is a nonfiction children's book. It was written by JoAnn Deak and illustrated by Sarah Ackerely. It was published in October 2013 by Scholastic Inc. This book helps young readers understand that your brain helps you do many things including thinking, remembering, naming things you see, knowing things you hear. It helps you do all the things that make you, you. This picture book helps children with their growth mindset and helps them realize that mistakes help your brain grow. This book introduces the different ways in which your brain helps you to not only do school work but also sing, dance, cook, etc. The book goes into detail about the parts of the brain and which function each part controls. This book encourages students to learn from their mistakes, think deeply, and push them to keep doing what they love. The more that we do for our brain, the more it grows!

Suggested Activities: This book is for readers in grades 1-4. In a second grade classroom, a suggested activity could be students will create their own template copying the page in the book that states "Your brain does all the things that make you, you!". Students will be asked to draw a picture of themselves in the middle of the paper. Around their drawing, there will be 4 sentence starters including, My favorite word is, I am good at, I love, and I enjoy. They will fill in the blanks in full sentences. For example, I like to hang out with my family, I enjoy going to the beach, etc. Once the student has completed the activity, he or she will be able to share one thing about themselves to the class.

Submitted by Devin Stabile



Zero

Kathryn Otoshi

Potential Appeal: This is an interesting story about the number zero and her search to figure out a way she can join the other numbers and count too. It combines the concept of numbers and their mathematical values with a story plot that allows readers to come up important themes. Although on the surface it seems like a counting book, it is more than that. The word choice used throughout can lead to a discussion of multiple meaning words and increased word knowledge. Children will enjoy the basic illustrations and how the number zero changes shape based on her feelings.

Suggested Activities: This book can be used to help students determine the author’s message. I have used it as an introduction to our thematic unit of *Living in a World of Differences* where the essential question focuses on characters finding their place in the world. I start out by asking the students what they think of when they hear the word zero. I record responses to come back to later. I stop to pose questions throughout, so students can focus on what is happening to the character, Zero. For example, I ask, “What is happening to Zero’s shape on this page? Why did the illustrator do that?” Paying attention to what a character says and does in the story is one of the steps to determine theme/author’s message. I also ask questions to elicit a discussion of what is meant by certain words like count, value, and worth. After reading, ask students, “What lesson(s) did you learn? Connect the message to the thematic unit. Students can also free write about a time where they felt like they did not belong or felt different from everyone else.

Submitted by Connie Fischer