



***READ:***  
***Reading, Exploration, and Discovery***  
*Journal of the* **LOUISIANA READING ASSOCIATION**

Volume 35, Number 1  
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# ***READ:*** ***Reading, Exploration, and Discovery***

Journal of the  
Louisiana Reading Association

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Summer 2018

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## Contents

From the Editors . . . . .	5
<i>Carrice Cummins and Kimberly Kimbell-Lopez</i>	

## Featured Articles

Poetry and the Arts: An Experience Not Soon Forgotten . . . . .	9
<i>Jamie Hipp, Brandie Nijoka McNabb, and Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell</i>	
One School's Response to Disadvantaged, ELL Students: Inquiry Curriculum, New Literacies, and a Positive Culture . . . . .	17
<i>Melissa Stinnett</i>	
The WRITE Technology: Students Telling the Story of their Lives through Digital Storytelling. . . . .	27
<i>Kimberly Kimbell-Lopez, Carrice Cummins and Elizabeth Manning</i>	

## Columns & Departments

Research R&R: Research for Reflection and Renewal. . . . .	35
<i>Using the Relationships in Language as a Structure for Comprehending and "Going Beyond"</i>	
<i>Glenda Lofton</i>	
Children's Book Reviews. . . . .	41
<i>Diversity Matters</i>	
<i>Patricia Austin</i>	
Tools of the Trade . . . . .	55
<i>Scaffolding Schema Development by Using Graphic Organizers</i>	
<i>Kimberly Kimbell-Lopez, Carrice Cummins and Elizabeth Manning</i>	

## LRA/IRA Special Information

LRA Executive Committee 2018-2020 . . . . .	64
LRA Membership Application. . . . .	65
LRA 2018 Conference . . . . .	66
LRA Position Paper: Effective Instruction in Pre-Kindergarten . . . . .	67
ILA Membership Form. . . . .	77
ILA 2019 Conference . . . . .	79

## Extra! Extra!

Call for Manuscripts . . . . .	86
Call for Terrific Teaching Tips. . . . .	86
Call for Student Contributions . . . . .	87

# List of Student Contributors

Caroline Davis	cover
Etienne Adams: <i>Breakfast</i>	33
Jesse Alsobrooks: <i>George the Dragon</i>	38
Anna Bickham: <i>Into the Woods</i>	75
Addisyn Boyd: <i>My New Puppy</i>	59
Makai Boyer: <i>How to Make Squishy Eggs</i>	63
Lauren Bradford: <i>Winter Magic</i>	8
McKayla Bridges: <i>The Exterminator</i>	80
Brylee Broussard: <i>The Unexpected Monster Friend</i>	31
David Broussard: <i>Out of Time</i>	32
Logan Buzbee: <i>The Fight</i>	72
Riley Charlet: <i>Him</i>	73
Kailani Cirilo: <i>The Other Side of Goodbye</i>	13
Austin Cone: <i>Wheels</i>	32
Caroline Crain: <i>The Brother I Never Had</i>	69
Collin D'Aquilla: <i>The Great Hunt that Hurt</i>	25
Michael Dattalo: <i>Floating Friendship</i>	7
Ella Dorsett: <i>Stepping Back in Time</i>	26
Shelby Easley: <i>7:52</i>	61
Harlem Epison: <i>Our Teacher Was Kidnapped by Aliens!</i>	33
Martalisa Fischer: <i>Ignorance and Innocence</i>	88
Laurel Fiser: <i>How the Sun and Stars Came to Be</i>	39
Charli Ford: <i>Little Raccoon Learned Her Lesson</i>	68
Bailey Fortenberry: <i>A Beast</i>	58
Egan Gardiner: <i>My Last Innocent Christmas</i>	76
Austin Gonzales: <i>My Dog</i>	59
Keiley Graffia: <i>Fighting the Dragon</i>	59
Nolan Gunnell: <i>A Day in New York City</i>	38
Elizabeth Hackenberg: <i>The Slow-Moving Moon</i>	52
Rachael Hoyt: <i>Snow</i>	7
Danard Jones: <i>A Champion</i>	26
Lorelai Laborde: <i>Beauty of Danger</i>	14
Emma Lassalle: <i>Lavender Hues</i>	16
Tyron Lucas: <i>Time</i>	62
Carin Marshall: <i>Hamburgers</i>	82
Isaiah Mayes: <i>Stars in the Sky</i>	62
Jaslyn Miller: <i>The Best Day of My Life</i>	63
Echo Monchivaez: <i>Secular</i>	51
Caroline Monier: <i>Too Close to Quit</i>	74
April Munoz: <i>Doughnuts</i>	73
Brady Napolitano: <i>The Chosen One</i>	85

## List of Student Contributors *(cont.)*

Vani Pandian: <i>Death Dance</i> . . . . .	81
Kayanna Patricola: <i>Pink Fluffy Unicorn</i> . . . . .	15
Jeremy Blake Phelps: <i>A New Home</i> . . . . .	40
Harper Pittman: <i>My Horse, Flipper</i> . . . . .	15
Nakiya Pittman: <i>The Feeling of a Moment</i> . . . . .	83
Julie Catherine Ralph: <i>Facing the Future</i> . . . . .	89
Laney Ramirez: <i>The Traumatized Ball of Yarn</i> . . . . .	53
Brandon Randle: <i>School</i> . . . . .	40
Madison Rhodus: <i>Starburst</i> . . . . .	16
Destiny Riley: <i>Best Buddies</i> . . . . .	8
Angela Roark: <i>Dolphin Girl</i> . . . . .	37
Jamie Rushing: <i>My Camping Trip</i> . . . . .	88
Amori Scott: <i>The Final Flash Beginning</i> . . . . .	84
Leslie Singleton: <i>Mysteries from the Antique Store</i> . . . . .	54
Amelia Smith: <i>The Angola Prison</i> . . . . .	25
Chloe Sprehe: <i>Dancing Diva</i> . . . . .	7
Kameron Toles: <i>Best Birthday Ever</i> . . . . .	8
Sophie Tompkins: <i>Welcome to Anxiety</i> . . . . .	82
Eleanor Treagle: <i>Cardinals</i> . . . . .	62
Mary Jane Turner: <i>Jungle Girl</i> . . . . .	34
Destiny Watkins: <i>Saturday Night Fever</i> . . . . .	71
Ethan Pardon Weed: <i>My Life</i> . . . . .	60
Hayden Winters: <i>Pizza</i> . . . . .	14
Brody Young: <i>Hunting with My Dad</i> . . . . .	82
Brody Young: <i>Santa's Best Day</i> . . . . .	70

**Note:** If interested in receiving more information regarding the activities that generated the student contributions, contact Carrice Cummins at [carrice@latech.edu](mailto:carrice@latech.edu).

## List of Educator Contributors

Bernie Hambrice: <i>Walking on Water</i> . . . . .	90
Lisa Holliday: <i>Bonnie and Blanket</i> . . . . .	70
Lisa Holliday: <i>I Was With You Today</i> . . . . .	58
Lisa Holliday: <i>Sing it With Me</i> . . . . .	23
Joan Pace Kennedy: <i>Painted Tapestry</i> . . . . .	15
Kris C. Neyland: <i>She's Building Her Wings</i> . . . . .	6





## From the Editors

Summer has come and gone and a new school year has arrived – Hurray! Ok, so perhaps we tone down the excitement just a little as we are also somewhat sad to see the slow days of summer be replaced with fast-paced days of school but . . . routines, colleagues, and smiling eager students make the transition welcoming!

The new school year also marks a new beginning for READ: Reading, Exploration, and Discovery as we are embarking on our first online journal. This is a small edition as we are progressing slowly into this new medium but are hoping that you will all send in submissions for next year (manuscripts, teaching tips, student work) so be sure to check out the “Extra! Extra!” section of the journal.

Authors Jamie Hipp, Brandi Nijoka McNabb, and Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell not only provide us with ideas for teaching the genre of poetry but also share experiences of working with a new group of students (similar to what you might be experiencing right now) in their article “Poetry and the Arts: An Experience Not Soon Forgotten”. The second article “One School’s Response to Disadvantaged, ELL Students: Inquiry Curriculum, New Literacies, and a Positive Culture” by Melissa Stinnett outlines how motivation for learning, powerful instruction, and a deliberate school culture can make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged youth. “The WRITE Technology: Students Telling the Story of their Lives through Digital Storytelling” by Kim Kimbell-Lopez, Carrice Cummins, and Libby Manning combines digital storytelling with the writing process to help students write a multimodal text.

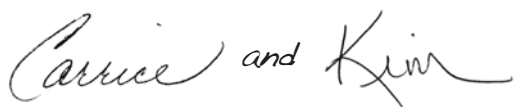
Our dedicated columnists, Glenda Lofton and Pat Austin once again share interesting tidbits regarding areas of interest related to research and children’s literature. Glenda reminisces about her past connections with researchers who helped shape her thoughts about language and creativity and sums up her reflection with a sentiment I think resonates with most of us – I learned as much from my students as they learned from me. Pat’s column “Diversity Matters” reminds us of the importance of honoring and celebrating different races and underrepresented groups with our students and how books can help us in that endeavor. Her book list offers a variety of titles to use in the classroom to help open the world of diversity to our students. Now before I introduce our new column, I just want to say kudos to these two women who have served READ for years (and years) – the journal would not be the same without your columns! A new column has been added this year titled “Tools of the Trade” and will serve as a spot for sharing a variety of professional resources and tidbits for classroom use. To get the column started the journal editors share tidbits for using technology resources to create graphic organizers but we hope to have submissions from our members in the next edition.

The last portion of the journal includes information of interest from both the Louisiana Reading Association and the International Literacy Association. This includes such information as: association leader information, upcoming events, current position statements, etc. Be sure to pay close attention to the information regarding upcoming conferences. The 2018 LRA Conference will be held December 7th in Alexandria, LA and we hope to see all of you there. Also go ahead and put October 10-14, 2019 on your calendar as Louisiana will be hosting the 2019 International Literacy Association Conference in New Orleans!

In addition to the articles, columns, and general information please also take time to enjoy the wonderful writings of our 2017-18 *Young Authors* and *Educators as Authors*. These are scattered throughout the journal for your reading pleasure!

So as you are transitioning into your new school year, take time to enjoy the offerings of our first online journal. As you *read* and *explore* the contents, we hope you *discover* new ideas to use in your classroom.

Happy Reading!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carrice and Kim". The ink is dark and the style is fluid and personal.

## She's Building Her Wings

She's building her wings  
For one day she'll leave the ground.  
One day she'll leave behind the yesterdays,  
The days of past regrets that kept her captive.  
Binding her passion to a cause no one, not even she could save.

She's building her wings  
For one day they'll carry her  
Carry her over the dark seas with its daunting waves,  
Where she'll soar with the peace of knowing she's free  
She can and she will carry herself with the wings she's building.

She's building her wings  
Instinctively to protect and shelter those she loves  
For they're observing and learning  
What they see and believe is what they'll become  
So she'll teach them how to build their own invincible wings too

She's building her wings  
With knowledge and faith.  
Even when doubt clouds the pathways  
Her paths are always set with purpose and passion,  
She's got her eyes set on a mission so clear she will not be deterred.

She's building her wings  
On the way down or is it the way up?  
It may seem at times like she's falling or wavering just a bit,  
Those wings may get tired and the weight of her load tough to bear,  
But she's building her wings for battles tougher than these winds can rage.  
She remembers who she was, how she felt letting go,  
and every ounce of who she's fought to become

She's building her wings and she will conquer the skies.  
She's stronger, wiser, more educated, more beautiful,  
and more loved now than ever before in life.  
She's building her wings and I can't wait to watch her to fly.

Kris C. Neyland  
Teacher

## Floating Friendship

"Son, did you put the fishing poles in the boat?" asked my dad. "Yes," I replied. We are going fishing with my dad's friend, Tom, and his son, Will. Will had autism, and he was still my best friend and no different from all my other friends. We loaded everything into the boat and left. We got to the boat launch, put the boat in the water, and drifted off on our fishing adventure.

We got to the middle of Lake Pontchartrain, and that's when it happened. Suddenly we noticed water in the boat. Upon inspection we noticed leaves were clogging where the plug should be. I was so scared, I rushed to the chest where we keep the life jackets. What I saw made me panic. There were only three life jackets- two for adults and one for a kid. So I had to make a choice to keep it for myself or give it to Will.

The boat was sinking fast so without thinking another minute, I gave the third jacket to Will. I had to tread water for like an hour before help came. Luckily we were saved. Ever since that day I have never been on a boat again. If and when I do, I will be sure to either be with good friends, who can help each other, or have enough life vests to protect everyone on board.



Michael Dattalo  
Sharon Landry, teacher  
N.P. Trist Middle School  
St. Bernard Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
7th Grade

## Dancing Diva

Dancing is so much fun!  
I like to dance for everyone!  
Spinning and twirling in my tu-tu!  
I like to dance, how about you?  
Loud music with a good beat.  
I can't help but to move my feet.  
Whether it's jazz, ballet or tap  
I can do it in a snap.  
On the stage with bright lights  
Like a star I will shine bright.



Chloe Sprehe  
Benita Bush, teacher  
Franklinton Primary School  
Washington Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
Kindergarten

## Snow

I love the snow.  
It's fun to go,  
Out and play.  
It makes my day.  
I make a snowman,  
Three balls high.  
I wish it could reach  
To the sky,  
It's really cold  
And beautiful to see  
I think it snowed  
Just for me!

Rachel Hoyt  
Megan Crain, teacher  
Thomas Elementary School  
Washington Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - poetry  
3rd Grade

## Best Birthday Ever

For my birthday, I went to Chuck E. Cheese. My Maw-Maw, Lexi, and I got coins from the machine to play the video games. The games were so fun. We got a lot of tickets to buy prizes with. The chef made us pizza and brought it to our table. It was so tasty! We celebrated my birthday with Chuck E. and his friends on stage. We sang Happy Birthday with my Angry Birds cake. I blew out my candles and made a secret wish. Everyone ate my cake. It was delicious. My Maw-Maw said I was her king. It was the best birthday ever!



Kameron Toles  
Jamie Mason, teacher  
Chalmette Elementary School  
St. Bernard Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
1st Grade

## Best Buddies

*Best Buddies.*

People who are there for you  
When times are bad and good.

My buddies are Taylor, Pumpkin, Nate, and Josie.

We have each other's backs.

When I need someone there to talk to,  
I turn to my buddies no matter what.

We will all go our separate ways one day.

But I love my buddies; they are cool.

Pals make my world brighter.

Buddies will always be there for you.

I've got a lot of buddies, too many to name.

My buddies sometimes make me crazy,

But I will always forgive them.

Taylor always says, "Hey Destiny," every day.

Pumpkin, she makes me laugh a lot.

Nate is my kin folk; he is a silly person.

Josie is always happy and always willing to help.

Gage is also funny and always joking around.

Nick, he is my best friend, and we love Pokémon.

Selena is my best pal, too.

We both love to play sports and hang out at recess.

Anthony is a very cool person to be around.

My buddies and I will always be best friends forever.

Destiny Riley  
Linda Neal, teacher  
Sicily Island High School  
Northeast Louisiana Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
10th Grade

## Winter Magic

The bitter cold of winter;  
The tiny crystals of snow;  
The coal eyes of snowmen;  
That's the Winter Magic.

The strong scent of evergreen;  
The warmth of hot cocoa;  
The cheer and joy of people;  
That's the Winter Magic.

The loud laughter of families;  
The smoke of the chimney;  
The blinking lights of Christmas;  
That's the Winter Magic.

Lauren Bradford  
Mrs. Arneson, teacher  
Zachary Elementary  
Zachary Area Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
4th Grade



# Poetry and the Arts: An Experience Not Soon Forgotten

Jamie Hipp, Brandie Nijoka McNabb, and Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell

*We thought we were prepared. We meticulously planned for weeks leading up to this day. We ran through the logistics over and over. We arrived ninety minutes before to lay out materials. And then they came. A motley crew of kindergarten through seventh graders stuck with us, two graduate students who are both full-time teachers, for a week of a summer literacy camp. The children's educational histories included a range of public, private, and home-schooling experiences but one similarity emerged quickly: they were all excited and nervous about their first day. They wouldn't be swimming, camping, or roasting s'mores over a fire. They would be writing poetry!*

## Overview

Teachers can empathize with the scenario of the initial meeting of a new class of diverse learners with varied prior knowledge and backgrounds. This opening vignette, illustrating our apprehension, is also reminiscent of the first days each August wherein teachers fret about building community, teaching rigorous curriculum, and how to differentiate to meet learner needs. Our trepidation was somewhat heightened as we were facilitating a one-week summer literacy camp and the children enrolled represented varied ages from 6 to 13. Unlike a typical school, outside of two sibling groups, these children had not attended school together. The purpose of this article is to illustrate simple methods of incorporating the arts in literacy learning.

Our decision to utilize the arts was an easy one. Prior to becoming educators ourselves, our personal educational careers were rich in arts experiences. Additionally, we have sought out and attended numerous arts and creativity-centered professional development opportunities. Independent action research with students in our classrooms demonstrated to us the efficacy of using arts integration across the core curriculum. We drew upon the abundance of prominent arts researchers who cite benefits of arts in K-12 environments. Specifically, we elicited the findings from research that the arts improve retention (Hardiman, Rinne, & Yarmolinskaya, 2014), promote creative and critical thinking (Housen, 2002), and increase engagement (Garrett, 2013).

## Planning for the Week-Long Experience

What follows is a roadmap of recommended strategies and suggestions for teaching the genre of poetry in energizing ways integrating both theatre and visual arts experiences. As teachers, these two art forms represented where we felt most confident in terms of pedagogical skill.

We elected to utilize both arts integration and arts enhancement practices to respect children's vast range of prior arts experience and confidence levels. This decision aligned with the Kennedy Center's Variations of Arts in Schools (2014), which supports three varieties of arts curriculum: Arts Education, Arts Enhancement, and Arts Integration. While some children enrolled in our camp had worked previously with

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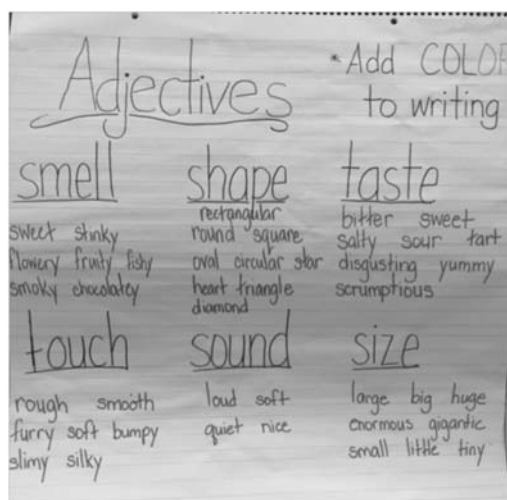
an arts specialist in the school environment (Arts Education), based on our experiences teaching in Louisiana public schools, few had experienced arts enhanced or arts integrated learning in the core classroom.

Louisiana has two resident arts schools, one in New Orleans (The New Orleans Center for Creative Arts), the other in Natchitoches (The Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts). Several entities operate throughout the state that provide select schools with arts integration professional development opportunities including Louisiana A+ Schools, KidsmART, and Any Given Child to name a few. Several districts also offer arts-oriented magnet schools. In our experience, art is offered in some elementary schools as an ancillary subject but not universally across the state.

We began our week with adding depth to poetry lessons. Children created illustrations to enrich their writing, but we did not overtly teach Visual Arts content or standards such as line, texture, color, or shape (Arts Enhancement). As the week progressed, lessons evolved from enhanced experiences towards a truly arts integrated experience through explicitly teaching theatre arts skills – pantomime and facial expression – along with poetry-based content. Afterward, we focused on activities where students achieved both core content and arts goals.

### Monday Visual Arts Enhanced Activity: Brainstorming Adjectives and Poetry Anchor Charts with Colors

Many writing teachers know that much time is wasted while children ‘think’ of a writing topic. They either do not know what to write or keep writing about the same thing. To help our children use time wisely, each created his or her own anchor chart of Lucy Calkins-inspired “Small Moments”. We began with a mini-lesson on adjectives and explored using them with the different senses, sizes, and shapes. They discussed and gave examples of each. When the children explored the sense of smell, for instance, all responses were recorded on an anchor chart: sweet, stinky, flowery, smoky, fruity, fishy, and chocolatey. For shape, they were given time to think of various shapes which were again recorded on an anchor chart: round, square, oval, circular, star, heart, triangle, rectangle, diamond, and star (see below).



Afterward, the children worked together to brainstorm various feelings. We created an anchor chart for both adjectives and feelings that they could reference while writing poetry throughout the week. If they were able to use one of the adjectives or feeling words from the anchor charts, they were encouraged to write the word in a different color to place emphasis on their ability to use the charts.

Children started their Small Moments Chart by writing their name in the middle of a poster board. A feeling from the brainstormed list was read aloud as a prompt for a time in the children's life when they related to that feeling...thus, they recalled a small moment. They then would draw a line away from their name to record that moment. For some, they had two moments for that feeling. For example, one student recalled sadness when her dog was missing and when she fell and hurt her arm.

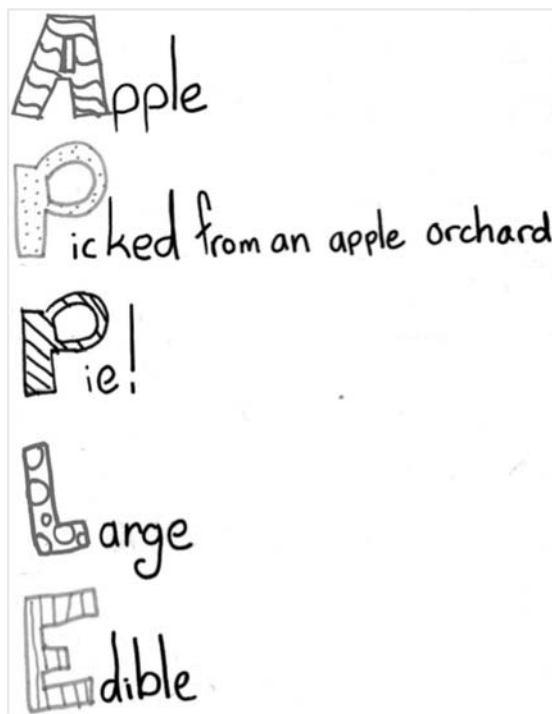
Several minutes of “think time” were given for each prompt. Children were encouraged to use different colors for different feelings. At the end of the session, they had created a web of ideas that they could use for their poetry writing (see below). Because small moments were ‘theirs’, they had a personal connection to the events; the possibilities were endless. Children used this platform throughout the week to support poetry topic ideas.



### Tuesday Visual Arts Enhanced Activity:

#### Self Portraits with Acrostic Poetry, Adjectives, and Watercolors

Acrostic poetry was one form of poetry explored during the week. "Although the form has many variations, the most popular is the traditional acrostic, in which the first letters of the lines, when read downward, spell a word or words" (Harley & Noyes, 2009). For many children, this form is a favorite because of the simplicity of the format. Acrostics provide differentiation for the various abilities included in any classroom setting. Children wrote an acrostic poem using their first name. Some completed a simple acrostic with one word only for each letter (see below) while others explored writing sentences across the letters.



Children later examined their poetry and used it as a springboard to create an original self-portrait using watercolor. The thought of using paint and brushes instantly improved the interest of the children in the room. As we did not offer visual-art instruction or objectives like using washes as background colors and glazes for details, children worked within arts-enhanced instruction. Specifically, the art activity enhanced learning about acrostics.

### Wednesday Theatre Arts Integrated Activity: Rhyme and Pantomime

Wednesday began with introducing the concept of rhyme as it relates to poetry. We additionally taught the elements of pantomime (acting out detailed movement without sound). Afterward, we used the following prompt: "I'm thinking of a word that rhymes with fun. If you would like to guess, please stand up

and begin to pantomime your guess."

Some children rounded their arms above their head and rotated to portray the 'sun,' while others fixed their hair into a 'bun.' The student who began to 'run' guessed correctly and posed the next pantomime prompt. When children had an opportunity to create their own prompt, they stretched themselves towards multisyllabic words. One child stated, "I'm thinking of a word that rhymes with history," (The word was "Mystery").

### **Thursday Theatre Arts Integrated Activity: Synonymous Emotions/Feelings and Facial Expressions**

During each poetry writing session, children were encouraged to use feeling and emotion when they wrote. The children, however, repeatedly used the same two words, 'happy,' and 'sad.' We're certain all writing teachers can relate to the overuse of stale words such as good, nice, or great! In an effort to improve their vocabulary, we reminded them of the anchor chart of emotions and feelings (surprised, nervous, confused, shocked, jealous, suspicious, confident, overjoyed) and encouraged them to create a line of poetry and a facial expression for that emotion. For instance, Sean wrote, "I was shocked when I bit into the sour apple. It did not taste how it normally did." He added facial expression for shocked by making his eyes wide followed by a grimace to represent the taste.

Other children acted as respectful audience members while a peer performed the line using matching facial expressions. The audience then utilized the evidence from the performance to discern which emotion was represented. The activity provided children with a better understanding of relating to and using their emotions more effectively in their writing.

### **Thursday/Friday Theatre and Visual Arts Integrated Summative Assessment: Writing and Performing a Play using Poetry Genres, Script Writing, Character Voices, and Props**

On our penultimate camp day, children chose their favorite topic of the week from the following list.

Poetry Topics	Arts Topics
Acrostic Poetry	Pantomime
Free Verse	Facial Expression
Concrete Poetry	Watercolor Technique

They wrote a range of three to five sentences synthesizing what they had learned and retained from our time together. Children worked in cooperative groups dramatizing these sentences into lines of a play using an explicitly taught script format we designed (see below).

Character Name: (emotion or feeling) Character's line.

Children also learned about performance preparation through rehearsal and prop creation.

We provided assistance with creating a through-line for the show and acting as the 'grandmother characters.' Campers took complete ownership of this project and performed a show on the final day entitled, "Our Week at Camp, Family Edition."

Our primary audience that last day was a group of teachers participating in the University Writing Project's Invitational Summer Institute. As the camp was located in the university's School of Education, several professors and the School's Director and Assistant Director provided an audience as well. As the children entered the performance space, their excitement was visible at seeing an audience; they chattered and whispered in excitement, pointing to audience members.

The interplay between audience and performers was also noticeable. For example, laughter at certain junctures from audience members appeared to heighten the children's performance awareness; they became more focused and intent on delivering their lines. Applause spurred them to greater intensity such as more pronounced expression and clearer delivery.

### **Conclusion**

Our week of poetry and creative learning was not cost-prohibitive. Apart from a few inexpensive visual art materials like watercolor paint, brushes, markers, and poster board, purchased with camp fees, all lesson activities were free. We brought newspapers from our homes for children's prop creation prior to the final

performance. Thanks to the children's excitement and enthusiasm in regards to theatre and visual art activities, our initial stress about the week was reduced. As teachers, we were reminded that preplanning, carefully crafted engagement, and allowing children choice was a formula for success.

Through this experience, we expanded our perceptions of using both arts enhanced and arts integrated techniques, particularly with poetry. As a result, our practice was strengthened. And through this process, children's engagement in learning was intensified.

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## The Other Side of Goodbye

It's not the goodbye  
That hurts, it's  
The flashbacks.  
It won't be easy to  
Say goodbye and  
I know  
It's going to hurt.  
And although  
I also know  
I'll cry,  
I have to let go  
Of some things  
I've loved  
To get to  
The other side  
Of Goodbye.

Kailani Cirilo  
Sharon Johnson, teacher  
Sicily Island High School  
Northeast Louisiana Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
6th Grade

## Painted Tapestry

After steamy, sultry days of summer  
Winds of change begin to blow  
Trees tremble as they shed their leaves  
Making way as autumn enters the door.

Fall, with gusto, bursts on the scene  
Washing foliage with a vibrant glow  
Leaves dress-up in shades of chocolate  
Russet and pumpkin spew palette's row.

Crimson autumn, berry, and royal purple  
Branches adorned with mustard leaves  
Other trees naked as they wait for winter  
And cool, crisp air to replace a fall breeze.

Muted shades blended with dazzling blushes  
A nature tinted tapestry, colors bright and bold  
Hordes flock yearly to absorb the display  
Of glorious canopies that never grow old.

Joan Pace Kennedy  
Teacher

## Beauty of Danger

A few or so openings in every word were weakness.  
A slip of breath breathed wrong were to be cause of a shining knife  
To flash against the marble, that shone just as bright.

Terror hid behind the smiles of every noble in the ballroom of the palace.  
With their pure-bred hunting dogs by their sides,  
Fearing the sound of gunshots would ring out  
Just over the sound of dainty music of violins and pianos.  
If a single person here walks the wrong way  
If their greedy eyes dart too fast  
A guard not be needed, the nobles themselves would riot.

For the brave with nothing to lose dare tread  
Knowing themselves a moth among butterflies  
Walk sure-footed forward not fearing what stalks the grand halls  
Usually never walk out.

I know no Beauty of Danger.  
Only blood and sacrifice for treasure  
Only leads to these events that try souls for everything you have found  
In vain search.

This is why writing these things never end well either,  
I cease to intrigue whoever views this as worthwhile.

Save yourself.  
For there is no Beauty in Danger.

### Pizza

*Pizza looks like a triangle.*  
*Pizza tastes so delicious.*  
*Pizza feels steaming hot.*  
*Pizza sounds like a door bell.*  
*Pizza smells like cheesy bread.*



Hayden Winters  
Jamie Mason, teacher  
Chalmette Elementary School  
St. Bernard Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
Kindergarten

Lorelai Laborde  
Bridget Brown, teacher  
Central High School  
Northeast Louisiana Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
7th Grade

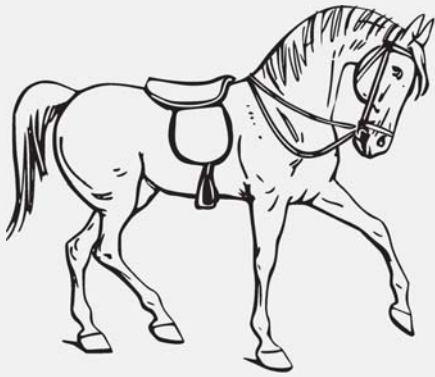


## My Horse, Flipper

Every boy that lives in the country owns or wants to own his own horse. My brother and I started horseback riding lessons. We loved the smell of the horse. We loved riding the horse around the track. One day our riding teacher, Mr. Tyler, gave us a horse. I think my grandparents had something to do with this.

My brother and I named him Flipper. Every afternoon when we carry the feed bucket to his trough, Flipper comes running to us. We give him apples, carrots, and lots of horse feed. I'm not as dependable in feeding him as my brother.

We take turns riding Flipper through the grassy field. Flipper's favorite thing is being led through the tall pine trees. Flipper has a friend. It is our only cow named Cupcake. They both are alike because they have four feet and are kind of lazy.



I wanted to ride Flipper in the Washington Parish Rodeo. MawMaw explained how Flipper has a bad habit. His habit could embarrass our family or blow away the crowd! As you can guess, when Flipper gets excited and jumps up and down and flips around, he poots really bad!

Harper Pittman  
Lacie Baughman, teacher  
Bowling Green School  
Washington Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
1st Grade

## Pink Fluffy Unicorn

Once upon a time, there was a pink fluffy unicorn who loved to dance on rainbows. One day she was dancing on a rainbow and then she fell off. But a handsome unicorn caught her instead of her hitting the ground. The handsome unicorn asked her if she was okay and she said something embarrassing. What she said was "dimples." She got nervous, and started sweating. She tried to talk to him, but it turned out like this "cat, dog, and dimples." The handsome unicorn decided to say, "Are you okay?" The pink unicorn said, "I'm okay, I just was nervous." The handsome unicorn said "Why are you nervous?" "Because, you are so handsome and I'm not so pretty." "So what if you're not pretty. It doesn't mean I can't love you." "I think that means that I cannot love you even though you're a handsome unicorn."

The handsome unicorn told her that looks are not what makes a person pretty and that he wanted to marry her. The pink fluffy unicorn and the handsome unicorn lived happily ever after in a beautiful castle.



Kayanna Patricola  
Linda Eubanks and Hannah Springer, teachers  
Columbia Elementary  
Northeast Louisiana Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
5th Grade

## Lavender Hues



Starburst is the most beautiful unicorn in all of the land. Her mane is the color of the rainbow, just like the starburst candy. That is why I named her Starburst. Starburst is special because she can count to 1,000, and she helps me with my math homework. Starburst lives in a pink, glittery stable deep in the woods behind my house. I sometimes ride on Starburst. She takes me for a ride to the beautiful, blue ocean that has shiny silver sand that looks like glitter and glistens when the sun hits it. I love Starburst. She makes me happy.

Madison Rhodus  
Peggy Leonard, teacher  
Franklinton Primary School  
Washington Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
1st Grade



Emma Lassalle  
Leigh Baltazar, teacher  
Destrehan High School  
St. Charles Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
11th Grade

Fresh lavender placed upon the windowsill  
Strikes up memories of years fulfilled  
The aroma, the scent diffusing fast  
The bouquet acts as a key to the past

Lilac socks placed upon a baby's feet  
Evoke feelings ever so sweet  
The warmth similar to a mother's love  
As the parents give thanks to Heaven above

Purple crayons used by a toddler to draw  
Return memories of coloring with grandpa  
Blue violet boats and indigo-sketched trees  
Rendered while singing the ABC's

Magenta ribbons in a schoolgirl's hair  
Reminiscent of playing kickball in the outside air  
Grape snowballs, the perfect treat  
The summertime delight that cannot be beat

Orchid leotards drenched with sweat  
As an aspiring ballerina turns pirouette after pirouette  
Hours spent at the bar perfecting technique  
Slowly attaining a dancer's graceful physique

Purple, oh purple, bring back the emotions of my first love  
Regret, stress, hardships, all innocent of  
Nostalgia sets in of dates at the park  
And of first kisses moonlit in the dark

Graduation gowns, the color of royalty  
Only strong friendships last after, the key is loyalty  
Caps are thrown, children no more  
Life has so much further in store

University days marked by hydrangeas in the quad  
Studying, working, attempting to put on an adult facade  
Schooldays are almost over and reality will set in  
Interviews, jobs, and bills will soon begin

Lavender flowers draped on the altar  
Marriage to best friends, strong love that will never falter  
A lifelong commitment made today  
Meant to stay together until time washes away

Now as the generation of stagnation rolls in  
Long gone are juvenile days of sin  
Planting lilacs becomes a favorite pastime  
For each waking day could be a last time

Fresh lavender placed upon the windowsill  
Strikes up memories of years fulfilled  
The aroma, the scent diffusing fast  
The bouquet acts as a key to the past

# One School's Response to Disadvantaged, ELL Students: Inquiry Curriculum, New Literacies, and a Positive Culture

*Melissa Stinnett*

When children come to us from high poverty neighborhoods and speak a myriad of languages other than Standard English, what chance do they have for success? The purpose of this article is to show how powerful instruction combined with motivation for learning and a deliberate school culture can make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged youth.

In this article, the response of one school is shared to show how the school addressed the needs of ELL students from one of the most poverty-stricken communities in Auckland, New Zealand. From the work done at this school in New Zealand, generalizations may be made to impoverished schools here in the United States. This article identifies strategies that can be used to overcome these hardships, including how to teach a curriculum based on inquiry, ways to teach Information Literacy and techniques for creating a positive culture.

ELL students at Raven Learning Community dealt with economic deprivation on a daily basis. Raven Learning Community is situated within a low socio-economic neighborhood of tattered-looking houses located in south Auckland. The school was comprised of a highly diverse ethnic population including, 70% Samoan, 10% Maori, (Polynesian descent) and the remaining 20% is a mixture of Pacific Islanders and a few European/Caucasians. The students at Raven Learning Community were predominantly the off-spring of immigrant families, with many students being immigrants themselves. For the majority of students, English was not their first language, but their second or third. English, however, was the language spoken at the school. Raven Learning Community was rated at the lowest economic level by the government. Due to the low socio-economic status, nearly all of the children at Raven Learning Community received free breakfast, snack, and lunches.

Through the stellar inquiry-based curriculum, rigorous instruction on new literacies, and the cultivation of a positive culture, the structure of the school sets the students up for possibility and hope for a successful future.

## **Inquiry Based Curriculum and ELLs**

Inquiry instruction dates back to the research of John Dewey, which focused on knowledge building through social interaction, collaboration, and problem-solving. Dewey articulated a philosophy of education that prepares students for work, citizenship, and life in a free society (Dewey, 1915). Inquiry incorporates the scientific practices of hypothesizing, investigating, observing, explaining, and evaluating (NRC, 2011). This type of instruction has been documented to increase motivation (Mansfield, 1989), content knowledge, and reading comprehension (Romance & Vitale, 2005).

For emerging bilinguals, literacy practices found within inquiry-based classrooms have been shown to assist in meaning construction with expository text and address many of the Common Core State Standards (Guccione, 2011) here in the United States. Inquiry tasks give ELLs practice in the behaviors that proficient readers use including preview and predict, using background knowledge, ask and answer questions, visualize, inference, and summarize (Shanahan, et al., 2010).

## **Curricula of Hope for Disadvantaged**

The students at Raven Learning Community dealt with similar issues to those of other high-poverty families throughout New Zealand and the United States. Many of the students lived with family members who were not their parents, including uncles, aunts, and grandparents. One sixth grade student, Heaven, stated that she lived with her "Nan" (grandmother). She made no mention of her parents. She was the middle child, and both of her siblings also attended Raven

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Learning Community. Her neighborhood, like others in the area, was highly transient, with families coming and going at a regular frequency. Parents who were employed worked in the south Auckland region at blue-color jobs. A few of the parents have custodial-type jobs at the school, working in cleaning, and conducting bus-duty. Alternatively, some of the parents were unemployed while other parents were in jail. Some children lived in homes where drug, alcohol, and other abuses occur. **With the majority of students at this school coming from such economic deprivation, is there any hope for a successful future?**

One vehicle by which an educational institution, such as Raven Learning Community, responded to the economic and circumstantial struggle of its students was by delivering empowering curriculum. The leaders at Raven Learning Community believed that inquiry instruction prepares students for life, and therefore used this instruction as the predominant delivery of curriculum. At this exemplary school in Auckland, New Zealand, inquiry-based curriculum was empowering instruction with the potential to transform the lives of the students. For the purposes of this study, inquiry is defined as a process that involves asking questions, researching answers and thinking in a problem-solving type of way that results in an action that will either benefit the community or will shed new light on an issue, concept or social convention (personal communication, March 22, 2016).

The skills and processes required to conduct a complete inquiry unit are skills that are needed in life. Essential skills include organization, questioning, working cooperatively, vocabulary use, and critical thinking skills. Inquiry requires that students are familiar with different types of questions and that they know the difference between a good question and one that is not so good. The act of conducting inquiry requires an extensive amount of reading and research skills. When the Assistant Principal was asked, "Why not just teach social studies and science as individual subjects?," she responded that Raven Learning Community used inquiry because it allowed students to choose an authentic topic that had meaning for them. The topic must be relevant to them, and it must be something that will help to solve a problem by building new understandings with the goal of benefitting the community.

The teachers at their school incorporated principles of inquiry throughout the day within all subjects. For example, when it is time to reflect after shared reading, they talked about the different types of questions. Then, they identify and explained the different types of questions from Bloom's taxonomy, such as higher order questions like synthesis or evaluation.

The students at Raven Learning Community use *Open Inquiry*, a type of inquiry process where they have freedom to choose the topic that was motivating to them and to ask the questions that were most meaningful to them. The teachers at the school believed that students must choose an engaging topic, one in which they feel a strong connection and this encourages them to explore. With inquiry, the focus is on students learning and coming to know for themselves in a rich and meaningful way. Well-trained teachers guided their students throughout the process, scaffolding their learning so that students do not feel abandoned, attempting to complete tasks for which they may not feel confident. Steps for conducting an inquiry unit of instruction, which could last for 7-8 weeks, are noted below:

Step One—students brainstorm potential topics.

Step Two—Select the topic then determine essential questions that will be investigated.

Step Three—Determine subsidiary questions.

Step Four—Research the topic.

A group of sixth grade students, Kiki, Ana, and Maegh, were asked to describe an inquiry unit they investigated and completed. For teachers who are interested in teaching using inquiry, this example provides some details to help begin the process. Kiki explained that they brainstormed and chose a topic of which they wanted to learn more investigated. The topic they selected focused on *All Blacks*, the hugely popular, professional New Zealand rugby team. This topic was extremely motivating to the students because of the national idolatry attached to this sports team and because most of the students at the school play rugby.

After much discussion, the group decided on the main or "essential" question. This part of the process is important for the students to formulate the essential question so that they become invested, resulting in buy-in from the start. The essential question selected by this group was: What are the characteristics of an *All Blacks* player? In other words, what makes the *All Blacks* successful? The essential question is important because the students will return to this question continuously throughout the unit for guidance. Then, they chose smaller or subsidiary questions that are relevant to the essential question. Kiki said, "The smaller questions get into the top and answer the essential question." Next, they spent considerable time (3-5 weeks) researching the topic in order to become knowledgeable or "experts." They began their research by interviewing people, like their P.E. teachers, who have expert knowledge of what it means to be a



sportsman/sportswomen. As part of this research process, the students conducted interviews, identifying people in their lives (home, school, community) who possessed similar qualities to the *All Blacks*; such as, the quality of *persistence*. Then, they gave surveys to those individuals. The reason that they used surveys rather than another means of gathering information is that it is a method of investigation which is in keeping with inquiry procedures. The students enacted their various roles, such as recorder, organizer, or leader to ask questions, write down the information, report back to their group and make decisions regarding the data. Maegh pointed out that interviewing people around the school helped them relate to the topic. She also said, "It was good seeing the relations between us, the school, and the actual players from the *All Blacks*." The process of relating the information is important because the students must know how to make the topic meaningful in their own lives.

In relating to the topic, the students were asked: "How can the inquiry Unit of study help them in the future?" Anna replied that it could help them when they go to the university. After identifying some of the essential characteristics of the *All Blacks* (self-confidence, role-model, etc.), she added, "Some of the attributes and characteristics are to be persistent, stay on task, and keep focused. So, it might help us when we grow older to keep that in our minds to be persistent when something challenging comes along."

Is inquiry-based instruction effective in terms of academic achievement? Raven Learning Community reported their National Standard scores in reading, mathematics, and writing to the Ministry of Education in New Zealand. The scores reported were for the entire school at the end of the year. In reading, the following percentages were 44% above, 11% at, 9% below, and 36% well-below. This shows a strong performance for reading with over half the school population (55%) performing at or above the standard.

In mathematics, the performance was at a similar level to reading with 54% being either at or above the standard, while 46% is either below or well below the standard. Writing was less strong with 30% above, 15% at, 15% below, and 40% well-below. Overall, the achievement scores demonstrated that inquiry-based instruction promoted learning.

### Rigorous Instruction with 21st Century New Literacies

Being literate today often means being able to use some combination of blogs, wikis, texting, search engines, Facebook, Google Docs, Skype, Chrome, iMovie, Basecamp, or many other relatively new technologies, including thousands of mobile applications, or "apps" (Leu, et al., 2011). Information Literacy (IL) is a set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze and use information sources (Pinto, 2016) in a rapidly growing technological information environment (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, & Caspari, 2007). If students are to be successful in a global community, teachers must integrate and teach the strategies, skills, and dispositions necessary for adapting to the changes in new technologies, the Internet, and other communication vehicles (Leu et al., 2004).

Key skills with Information Literacy include understanding the different types of searches for different purposes (i.e., preliminary, exploratory, comprehensive, summary, and evaluating). Another important skill is evaluating sources of information and selecting what will be most useful for accomplishing the task at hand (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, & Caspari, 2007).

### Information Literacy for Success

Another way in which the school offered hope for its students was by providing excellent instruction in literacy technology, Information Literacy. The teachers at Raven Learning Community understood that their students lived in a different age than the one in which they grew up. With the access of the Internet and its vast amount of information, they knew they must teach their students to be critical thinkers.

### Newsboard

One such means to teach critical thinking as well as Information Literacy skills is called "Newsboard." The Newsboard activity began the school day. This was a beneficial activity as teachers learned how to take current events from the local community or larger world and teach Information Literacy skills.

The instruction for Newsboard was conducted using articles from the newspaper. The students learned to form opinions, to identify the writer's viewpoint, and to encourage critical thinking. To begin, the teacher showed an article on UTube and projects it onto a Smartboard. The teachers were careful to choose articles that created interest in one or more areas: (a) world events, (b) empathy with humanity/animals, global awareness, or (c) topics that link to other areas of interest.

In one such lesson, the teacher chose an article about the 5.7 magnitude earthquake that hit



Christchurch in 2010 (a city in the south island) and the surviving children from that earthquake. The procedure when delivering a Newsboard lesson included pairing technology with strategies for critical thinking. The steps followed were:

- Step One: Show the picture from the article to create interest and to activate background knowledge.
- Step Two: Next, show a snapshot of the article, just a few sentences. From the few sentences exposed, students predict what the story will be about.
- Step Three: Look at the headlines, pictures, and the snapshot to check one source against the other for information. Discuss the information gleaned from each aspect of information. For example, what does the headline say? Does it match with what we see in the picture?
- Step Four: Have the class read the article in its entirety. Then, answer the six main question words: what, where, when, who, why, and how. Talk about each question word as it pertains to the article.

During this process, the teacher incorporated computer skills when conducting the lesson. She used the yellow highlighter to show the title, headings, and charts. The spotlight feature sheds light on one aspect of the article and not others. The teacher used this feature to only show a few sentences and then expanded it to show more of the text. By this demonstration, the students learned features of Information Literacy.

### Online Searches

Another important aspect of Information Literacy was conducting Online research. It is important to provide explicit instruction for Information Literacy skills so that students understand how to conduct searches Online. Rather than letting students loose on the Internet where they might get discouraged with its vastness, it is advisable to limit the search engines that they can use. Some helpful search engines include Ajkids.com, Dogpile.com, Altavista.digital.com, and Google.com.

Information Literacy may be a critical survival skill for those living in marginal conditions, similar to the students at Raven Learning Community. The benefit of mastering skills for Information Literacy is that then the students can search any number of topics; such as, growing a garden or applying to a university.

### Cultivation of a Positive Culture of Success

A positive culture for learning is created by encouraging student-to-student interaction, valuing cooperation, and creating assignments and materials that are interdisciplinary. When students have freedom to "chase their own ideas" (Brooks & Brooks, 1993, p. 22), they are more likely to take risks and approach assignments with a willingness to accept challenges.

Muhtaris and Ziemke (2015) discussed the importance of explicitly teaching students to collaborate starting in the early grades. Creating a positive community must be a school-wide priority. A positive community enabled our students to get to know one another, develop trusting relationships, and take risks in the classroom. This collaboration was helpful to ELLs as it provides multiple opportunities to practice language. Students assisted in the task of creating classroom expectations, including areas in what they felt supported them to have a safe and caring learning environment.

### Creating a Positive Culture

The third way that the school responded to the struggles of their ELL students was by cultivating a positive climate that promoted self-esteem, encouraging students to rise above the deprivation of their lives.

The motto of the school which is part of the school signage states: *BEST, an acronym to meaning, BEST, EVERY, SINGLE, TIME*. Students strive to be the best. The principal of the school explained that since English was not the primary language for the students, the teachers and administrators provided multiple opportunities for success in a variety of modalities, including, sport, music, and art.

The administrators and teachers at the school believed that it was important for students to be the "best" at something. The students at Raven Learning Community had a reputation for excelling at rugby. They regularly beat other school teams within their division. Students and faculty in the school worked hard to build the necessary skills so that students would excel. In addition to sports, the students were also quite gifted in music and the visual arts. The school employed extra teachers to encourage learning in the arts. There was a music teacher who went to the school twice weekly to tutor students interested in violin. An art teacher was employed to work with all of the students. With several options in the curriculum, students had the opportunity to find an outlet for success.

## Hearts for Learning Characteristics

In addition to the students excelling in certain areas, the administrators were intentional about building a culture of learning. Rather than leaving it to chance, there were certain procedures that educators reading this article can employ to enhance the climate in their own classrooms.

One technique used for designing a successful culture that each class used is something called "hearts" (otherwise known as "learning characteristics") which helped to form the basis of the community.

Step One: Each class decided on the 5 most important qualities of a learner, considering the qualities that will help them work together to become a Community of Learners.

Step Two: In accordance with inquiry-based procedures, students surveyed their family members, interviewing those whom they consider to be good learners. They asked them what they thought were the most important characteristics for a learner to possess.

Step Three: The results of the survey were compiled by each class and the top qualities emerged.

The 5 identified characteristics in the sixth grade class included: commitment, focus, hard-work, listening, and respect. These become the 5 hearts for the term. The class revisited these hearts daily and reflected upon their progress with each learning characteristic. At the end of the term, the class decided whether they had achieved a particular heart. They then proceeded to a different heart to replace the one that they have achieved.

Once the 5 hearts were determined, the students were divided into five groups, according to each characteristic. The group work allowed students not only to practice with English, but practice on how to work collaboratively. There was a student leader for each group and that person worked with her group on the chosen characteristic. For example, Valini was the leader for the group *Commitment*, Sioli was the leader for *Focus*, Ana was the leader for *Hard-work*, Kiki was the leader for *Listening*, and Tame was the leader for *Respect*. The member of each group has a designated role to perform, including director, resource person, time-keeper, recorder, and reporter. Students worked within their group, discussing the proper definition for each characteristic.

[See Figure 1: Students created an art project with their chosen term: encourage, respect, risk-taking, challenge yourself, persistent]



During reflection time, the students reported back to the whole class what their definitions were for their heart. This time for reflection and sharing was a constant feature in an inquiry-based classroom. Reflection promoted the metacognition necessary in life for decision-making. Ana stood up and shared with the class what her group decided on for a definition. "Our characteristic is working-hard, believing in ourselves. We know that hard work beats talent." Ana has heard this quote before ("Hard work beats talent") as several slogans were displayed around the school building.

The students create large hearts constructed out of paper mache hearts (see Figure 2) and they labeled each heart with one of the learning characteristics. They used the hearts that they created all year long. When it was time to replace one characteristic for another, they would, for example, remove the word Focus

and replace it with the word Encourage. Then, they would display each heart from the ceiling as a daily reminder.

Another important feature for a successful culture was trust. The teacher explained, "Trust is huge. The students needed to be trusted in different spaces." She continued to explain that she must be able to trust students inside the building and also outside when playing. She said, "If they can't be trusted to behave themselves inside during lunch recess then they might not be able to be trusted outside for sports."



### Learning Pledge

An activity that was done to help solidify the learning climate was writing and signing a pledge. The teacher described a pledge as being similar to a vow. She recalled a slogan that they had looked at that morning stating, "I don't trust words. I trust actions." Creating an action to accompany the goal was important in helping students achieve their goals.

The teacher's instructions on writing the pledge were to be specific and include several sentences on what they want to accomplish and how they will go about it. Instead of saying, "I want to increase my reading level," the student would say, "I want to read at level 14.5 and for my actions, I will go to the library and take out 2 books each day." The practice of being specific and including an action helps students achieve their goal.

The students brainstormed their ideas and shared them with the entire class. Some ideas included balance studying with sports, volunteer for as many things as possible, and take more risks. By writing a learning pledge and striving to meet that pledge, students were creating aspirations for their lives which would help them to rise above the poverty where they live.

The final pledge of Student A included several sentences:

- Become a good learner by being organized, coming early to school and finishing incomplete work.
- Listen to the teacher and follow instructions, using my listening skills.
- Increase my writing levels by putting in interesting words, using correct grammar and using paragraphs.
- Focus on my learning and act like a Raven learner.
- Try hard in math by learning all of my times tables and understand fractions and decimals.

With hearts, collaboration, and pledges, the school created a culture for learning. The positive environment of a classroom is essential. The encouragement of finding their own strengths and excelling creates the self-esteem necessary to aspire to greater things in their future.

### Final Thoughts

The empowering curricula at Raven Learning Community served the needs of ELL, disadvantaged students. The inquiry-based curriculum addressed the whole learner, allowing them to learn about

motivating topics of which they connect. Rather than surface level learning that is easily forgotten, inquiry promotes deep knowledge with meaningful content. The real- world skill of working collaboratively was interwoven into all the areas of the curriculum. The students learned to work together and to negotiate through discussion.

Applying Information Literacy is critical for 21st century learners. Students are learning technology skills daily and applying them in their learning. Raven Learning Community fostered a culture that promoted success by examining the characteristics of the learner. Through explicit instruction, students learned about the kind of person that he/she needed to become in order to be successful in life. By carefully cultivating a positive climate, instruction allowed students to bolster their self-esteem and confidence, equipping them to rise above their economic circumstances.

In conclusion, Raven Learning Community school demonstrated how it set its ELL population up for success. By learning the skills, processes, and dispositions necessary to conduct inquiry, the students were equipping themselves for a hopeful future. With innovative curriculum that promoted life skills, literacy that prepared for the 21st century, and a climate to develop self-esteem, students were able to rise above the deprivation.

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## Sing It With Me: Anything You Can Do...

While tidying up in the kitchen the other day, I heard my oldest daughter randomly and firmly say from the living room, "Nothing." I asked her who she was talking to, and she said a show on television had asked the question, "What can your dad do that your mom can't do?" And her response was: "Nothing."

As I type this, I am recovering from a near mini-breakdown. My stress level and anxiety reached its peak for no particular reasons today, and I was just at the point of reaching the edge of my cliff. I felt it coming which made it worse and no more manageable, but that's part of the deal with anxiety. Once I wrote down everything I had to do (one of my cool-down procedures) and hugged it out with my boyfriend and children (who instinctively recognize when I need a hug but am too consumed to initiate), I remembered that moment with Riley and the feelings I had when she said that.

My first thought was: "It's working." My primary goal of providing a model of a strong, independent woman to my three impressionable daughters is apparently being achieved because my oldest, the emotional and intuitive one, thinks I am capable of anything. What an empowering thought coming from my daughter. The pressure to achieve my goals gets heavy sometimes, but that doesn't make them any less worth working toward. I don't particularly care if my children attend college, get married, or have certain careers; I just want them to know it is perfectly possible to achieve their own goals no matter what circumstances they find themselves in.

Then the magnitude of responsibility that lies in the idea that my daughters think I am capable of anything hit. Even though I try to model independence, fearlessness, high expectations and standards, and ability to them, I also want to teach them that mistakes are okay. Being unable to do something is okay. I can't do everything. I mess up sometimes. I make sure they see that side of me too. Sometimes I get mad at myself and we talk about handling anger and emotions and reactions. Sometimes I laugh at myself and we talk about letting things roll off our backs and not letting trivial things keep us down. I want them to see me as real, not invincible.

And finally, on the most personal level, I felt thankful. My girls have been through a lot in the past few years and some of it was my fault. I've tried to protect them, but they have experienced trials I never wanted for my babies. Through it all, we have grown closer as a family, and our relationships have matured and strengthened. I am thankful that, even with everything they have experienced, they still think I can do anything. They know that I will love them no matter what and fight for them against anyone who wrongs them. I will teach them to stand up for themselves, but I will always have their backs. When they feel like they have no one else to turn to, they know they will always have their momma. Because there is NOTHING I can't do when it comes to my girls.

EDIT: It occurred to me after I wrote that piece that I didn't even address the issue of gender. That's because gender is not an issue in my household. It never occurs to me that being a girl means I can't do something. My daddy taught me and my sister that girls are capable of anything and my mother models that. My own daughters will not grow up thinking they are inferior because of their God-given gender. I guess that's where the song in the title came from.

Lisa Holliday  
Teacher



## The Great Hunt that Hurt

On Sunday, January 1, 2017 my dad asked my brother and me if we wanted to go hunting. I responded, "Yeah," then whispered to my brother, "I said yes, just because I'm bored." I got dressed in my camo clothes and hopped in the car. We borrowed a rifle from my dad's friend, and then went off to the stand.

We sat there for about two hours just watching every inch of the field. This was as boring as taking a test in school. Finally, we were getting ready to leave, but right at that moment a doe popped out of the woods. My heart started feeling like it was going to burst out of my chest. So, we sat back down and waited. I asked my dad if I could shoot the doe, and he said, "No, it's the rut season, and a buck might be coming to chase her." Suddenly, a six point came out. Now my heart burst out of my chest and raced away. My legs were shaking. I grabbed my gun and put my eye right against the scope. My arms were shaking. I kept wiggling and messing up my aim. I finally pulled the trigger. Owwww!!! The scope hit me right above the eye. I was kind of nervous about my eye, but I was also like, "Yes, I hit a deer!" We excitedly went to go look at my deer. My dad was like, "OMG, look at that deer!" I shot him on the edge of his spine. Then my dad saw my eye full of blood. I used my shirt to stop the bleeding. It was a bad scope bite.

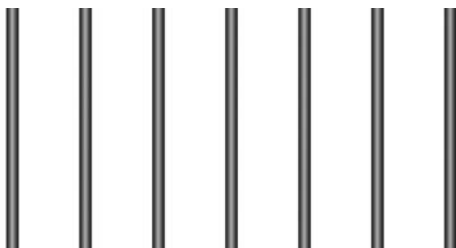
When we got back we decided to go to the doctor. I'm glad we did because the doctor had to glue my skin shut. My scar is still there today. It reminds me of my great hunt. When I go hunting with a new friend, I tell my story with this advice. Never put your eye too close to the scope.



Collin D'Aquilla  
Carla Jackson, teacher  
Bains Elementary  
West Feliciana Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
3rd Grade

## The Angola Prison

I am the Angola Prison.  
I wonder what all these inmates did to be here.  
I pretend to be a master hotel.  
I worry I am going to get too full.  
I cry when people die inside my walls.  
I am the Angola Prison.  
I understand that people love to come see the rodeo.  
I say "Come one, come all. Come see the Angola Prison Rodeo."  
I try to ignore all the screaming and fighting I hear.  
I hope almost everyone gets out one day.  
I am the Angola Prison.



Amelia Smith  
Carla Jackson, teacher  
Bains Elementary  
West Feliciana Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
3rd Grade

## Stepping Back in Time

A couple of weeks ago, my fourth grade class went on a local field trip to Mile Branch Settlement. During the Fair, there are too many people to see all the cabins and participate in the many activities. Being that it was only our class and the first grade class, we all had an opportunity to really enjoy a glimpse into life of the early settlers of Washington Parish.

Each of the seven log cabins had fun hands-on activities or unique stories shared by many of the volunteers dressed like the people from that time period. When we toured the schoolhouse, I was amazed that the children went bare-footed. Their slates were nothing like our “white boards” that we use in our classroom.

At the Sylvest Cabin, I loved the men singing songs and playing fiddles and harmonicas. One of the songs was called “The Train.” His fiddle made a sound just like a train. The harmonica made barking sounds just like a dog. They taught me a new word, dogtrot. I’ll be sure to teach my parents this when we visit during the Fair.

Many of the boys enjoyed shelling corn like they did back in the old days. In each cabin a story was shared, a bit of history learned, or a tasty treat. This was my favorite, the sassafras tea. In fact, I had three cups. I learned that it is made by boiling a sassafras root. It tasted just like root beer.

In the far back of the settlement is the sugarcane mill. Syrup is made here. It was so sweet! I recommend a visit to this exhibit. I’m sure my dad will want to purchase a can of this syrup.

I am so appreciative to Senator Beth Mizell for listing Mile Branch Settlement as a great place to visit in Louisiana. I am grateful for all the volunteers who dressed in those hot outfits. They shared not only their time but helped students step back in time.

Our classes shared in the “picnic spirit” by having our lunch on the grounds of the settlement. Our visit to the settlement gave each of us an insight to our ancestors and our past. It was exciting, fun, and made a memorable experience.

Ella Dorsett  
Mary Wood, teacher  
Bowling Green School  
Washington Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
4th Grade

## A Champion

A champion is a winner. A champion is not a quitter. A champion is a star. I am a champion!

Danard Jones  
Shelley Pann, teacher  
Chalmette Elementary School  
St. Bernard Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
5th Grade



# The WRITE Technology:

## Students Telling the Story of their Lives through Digital Storytelling

Kimberly Kimbell-Lopez, Carrice Cummins and Elizabeth Manning

The technology tools and resources that we and our students have access to continues to constantly evolve. However, students tend to more often be immersed in the social use of technology instead of as a way to enhance and extend their learning. Our job as teachers is to show students how to advance their understanding of content by using a variety of available digital media. Our mission should be to merge good sound teaching practices with media that helps students tap into the digital world in which they live (Kimbell-Lopez, Cummins, and Manning, 2016).

### Utilizing Digital Media in the Classroom

The need to utilize digital media in the classroom is well documented. *The New Literacies and 21st Century Technologies*, a position statement from the International Literacy Association, stated that the Internet and other forms of information and communication technologies (ICTs) are redefining the nature of reading, writing, and communication (IRA, 2009, p. 2). This report also affirmed that literacy educators have a responsibility to integrate these new literacies into the curriculum to prepare students for successful civic participation in a global environment. Our students' personalized learning and experiences can be made more engaging and relevant by incorporating use of technology in our classroom activities (USDOE, 2016).

Considine, Horton, and Moorman (2009) discussed the need to prepare our students for the 21st Century by having educators that address the complex, high-tech media environments that are part of their everyday life. They stressed that this involves teaching students what media and technology "do" as well as what they "do with" the media and technology. It is not simply enough for teachers to teach with or through media or technology as part of classroom instruction. Instead, it is important to provide explicit instruction in media for two reasons: a) "students who can easily comprehend and master the meaning of printed texts may be equally adept at comprehending images, sound, or multimedia texts, and b) students have different strengths, so that the use of both sounds and images enriches instruction, enabling us to reach beyond students whose comfort zone is the printed page" (p. 474).

*Their Space: Education for a Digital Generation Report* (Green and Hannon, 2007) emphasized that "the use of digital technology has been completely normalized by this generation, and it is now fully integrated into their daily lives" (p. 10). This report also emphasized the need for schools to offer learning experiences that are engaging in the short-term and valuable in the long term. "Crucially, this would enable schools to reconnect with what young people are currently doing, and support them to develop the skills they will need in the future—from collaboration to creativity, self-confidence to media literacy" (p. 63). The International Society for Technology in Education assumed a similar stance in their *Top Ten in '10: ISTE's Education Technology Priorities for 2010*. One of the priorities stated that education technology must permeate every corner of the learning process (ISTE, 2011a, 2011b). This priority was also affirmed by Blanchard and Farstrup (2011), who said "today's children are the most technologically experienced generation ever to walk through the doors of our schools and into our classrooms for reading instruction" (p. 286).

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## Digital Storytelling

Our Y-Generation students are growing up in a culture where digital media is readily available at their fingertips and where our students have casual encounters with a wide range of everyday, creative practices (i.e., scrapbooking to family photography to the storytelling that forms part of the casual chat (Burgess, 2007; Burgess and Green, 2010). "It is these everyday and informal encounters with digital technologies and materials that need to be more effectively networked with students' formal media curriculum experiences in schools" (Dezuanni, 2015, p. 8).

One way this networking can be accomplished is through teaching digital media skills as students share their life story. Sylvester and Greenidge (2009) emphasized that students employ old and new literacies when they create a multimedia text. Digital storytelling revolves around the idea of "combining the art of telling stories with a variety of digital multimedia, such as images, audio, and video" (Robin, 2006, p. 709). This use of different media connects to the sociocultural point of view with the idea that learning is social and mediated by sign, symbols, and cultural artifacts (Razfar & Yang, 2010). While engaging in activities with adults and more competent peers, children learn to use semiotic tools (e.g. language, numbers, drawings, maps) to mediate or, in other words, to shape and define their thinking (Ashton, 1996). It is through semiotic mediation that children are able "to participate, negotiate, and interact in cultural and social practices" (Razfar & Yang, 2010, p.115).

A benefit of digital storytelling is that writers are allowed to use different media to create a personal narrative where they are not only readers and writers, but they are also screenwriters, artists, designers, and directors (Kajder and Swenson, 2004). Teachers are able to pair effective teaching practices with powerful technologies when digital images are incorporated into the language arts classroom. The subsequent impact can be that readers and writers are provided with experiences that transform their understanding of events, printed texts, words, and images.

## Trying out Digital Storytelling in the Classroom

As we begin the school year, a good bit of time is focused on building the classroom learning community with our students. We strive to learn more about each other as we participate in "*getting to know you*" activities. Now that school has taken off, it is a great time to expand their understanding of each other and strengthen their sense of community. This can be done by engaging them in a variety of digital tools and resources that help them share the story of their lives.

The focus of this article is to spotlight a five-step process that can be used to involve students in creating a multimodal text. You will find that students will quickly become engaged as they use technology to move through each stage of the writing process:

W-What to write

R-Research

I-Initial Draft

T-Two Kinds of Editing

E-Extend to an Audience

To create this multimodal text, your students will first create a timeline to detail key life events. They then insert the pictures into a slideshow and create a script that tells their life story—once they are done, these slides are saved as picture files. Once students have created the slideshow and script, they are ready to import the picture slides into movie software where they add voice narration and background music. The idea of sharing content is not unfamiliar to your students as they do this on a regular basis through their interaction in social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, My Story, etc.). The Life Story project simply draws upon this idea as a way to know each other in the classroom learning community.

### Stage One: W-What to Write

Stage	Software	Students' Tasks
W- What to Write	Read Write Think <a href="http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/timeline-30007.html">Timeline Generator</a> ( <a href="http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/timeline-30007.html">http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/timeline-30007.html</a> ) or <a href="https://www.sutori.com">Sutori</a> ( <a href="https://www.sutori.com">https://www.sutori.com</a> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorm what will be included in the life story</li> <li>• Create a timeline that details key life events that will be covered</li> </ul>

Stage One, deciding **What to Write** about, has already been identified: students will tell their life story. However, another part of this stage is for students to make decisions about what they will include in their story. They can begin by creating a timeline using ReadWriteThink's [Timeline Generator](#) or [Sutori](#) that details key events they want to share as they tell their story.

For the timeline, students need to make decisions about how many events to include. One general guideline could be to include one event per year that would be spread out from when they were born to the current age. For students in fourth or fifth grade, this might be 10-11 events, whereas it could be 15 or more events for students in high school.

### ***Stage Two: Research***

Stage of Writing Process	Software	Students Working on:
R-Research	Read Write Think <a href="#">Timeline Generator</a> or <a href="#">Sutori</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select pictures representing birth to current age</li> <li>• Make notes about key events</li> </ul>

The **Research** stage requires students to locate the pictures they will use to tell their story. For actual hard copies of pictures, students or parents can take a picture with a cell phone then either air drop, message, or email the picture so it can be saved to a folder on the computer they are using for this project. Sometimes, the quality of the picture is lost when a picture is taken of the picture. If that is an issue, then [CamScanner](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/camscanner-document-scanner-and-pdf-creator/id388627783?mt=8) (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/camscanner-document-scanner-and-pdf-creator/id388627783?mt=8>) is one app that can be used to scan pictures so that picture quality stays intact.

### ***Stage Three: Initial Draft***

Stage of Writing Process	Software	Students Working on:
I-Initial Draft	Google Slides, Microsoft PowerPoint, or Apple Keynote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insert pictures into slideshow</li> <li>• Write script that adds further information about each key event</li> </ul>

The **Initial Draft** stage involves students inserting their pictures into Google Slides, Microsoft PowerPoint, or Apple Keynote. Each key event from their timeline becomes a slide in the slideshow. The title of the slide can be the significant date (ex. August 3, 2008) while the subtitle could be a brief description of the key event (ex. Best birthday presenter ever--My dog, Chica!). Students insert the corresponding picture to the slide, then they write a script that elaborates more on the key event (ex. This was probably my favorite birthday of all times. Mom and Dad gave me my very own puppy. I named her Chica, and we go everywhere together.)

### ***Stage Four: Two Kinds of Editing***

Stage of Writing Process	Software	Students Working on:
T-Two Kinds of Edit	Comments feature in Google Slides, Microsoft PowerPoint, or Apple Keynote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review for content (title, brief description, picture, script)</li> <li>• Review for CUPS (capitalization, usage, punctuation, and spelling)</li> </ul>

The fourth stage, **Two Kinds of Editing**, involves students in first editing for content followed by editing for CUPS (capitalization, usage, punctuation, and spelling). Students can work in teams of three to four with each student's individual task being to review each of the other group member's slideshows for the following content elements:

- Title: Date included on slide
- Subtitle: Brief description of key event
- Picture: Reflects the key event



- Script: Additional information about the key event

Any feedback from the peer reviewers can be provided using the comment option in Google Slides, Microsoft PowerPoint, or Apple Keynote.

For the CUPS editing, a similar process can be followed. The peer reviewer checks the work for capitalization, usage, punctuation, or spelling errors. If errors are found, then the peer reviewer adds a comment. Once this review cycle is finished, each student revisits their slideshow and script to make any needed corrections.

### Stage Five: Extending

Stage of Writing Process	Software	Students Working on:
E-Extend to an Audience	Apple iMovie ( <a href="https://www.apple.com/imovie/">https://www.apple.com/imovie/</a> ) or Windows MovieMaker 10 ( <a href="https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/p/movie-maker-10-tell-your-story/9mvfq4lmz6c9?activetab=pivot:regionofsystemrequirementstab">https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/p/movie-maker-10-tell-your-story/9mvfq4lmz6c9?activetab=pivot:regionofsystemrequirementstab</a> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Save the slideshow pics as jpgs</li> <li>• Import into movie program</li> <li>• Add voice narration</li> <li>• Add background music</li> <li>• Publish as a movie</li> </ul>

The last stage of the WRITE process is **Extend** —students now have the opportunity to publish their life story using a movie format as it can be shared with an audience. Students save the slides as pictures and import into Apple iMovie or Windows MovieMaker 10. Students use their script and add voice narration to provide the additional information for each key life event they shared. The last step is to add a remix of music that plays in the background. Once completed, these life story movies can be shared with the rest of the class so they can learn more about other members of their classroom learning community.

Community building is a critical component of a strong student-centered, collaborative learning environment. Students can only learn and grow when they feel that they can take a risk and try something new without fear of judgment or ridicule. This type of project allows students to recognize and to appreciate that they each have a story to tell and that the community of the classroom would be incomplete without each one. In a classroom with a strong community spirit, there is a sense of encouragement, understanding, and empathy. This type of technology integration is a way to allow students to express themselves using a digital fingerprint while building interpersonal connections with their classmates.

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## The Unexpected Monster Friend

One spooky night I was watching scary videos about the Thirteenth Gate. Unexpectedly, I heard the window shatter. I saw seven eyes pop out of the broken glass. It was a SEVEN-EYED MONSTER! AHHH! I dashed off to my room. My heart was beating like a drum. I hugged my doll tightly and started chewing my necklace. That's what I do when I'm really nervous.

I suddenly had an idea. I put on all black and hid under my bed. I waited and almost fell asleep. About half an hour later, I heard a knock on my door. Craaack! I peered out and saw the seven-eyed monster. He flipped over my doll house and almost everything else in my room. Then he started to creep towards my bed. I tried to be as quiet and stiff as I could because he bent down to look under my bed. He saw my eyes, but instead of me screaming the monster screamed. He sounded like this, "Sgactngap!" I threw one of my Barbie's at him and the tiny Barbie feet hit him in his main eye. I started running around the house screaming in terror.

The monster was running right behind me when I had another idea.

I ran fast and turned every light off in the house. Suddenly, the monster stood there shivering in terror. I thought to myself, "This monster is scared of the dark." I made a laughing sound in my throat. I yelled, "You're scared of the dark, aren't you?" The seven-eyed monster shook his head in shame. Then he said in his terrorizing voice, "Yes, I am frightened of the dark and I am ashamed of it too." I actually felt bad for him so I said to him, "I am too." I really didn't mean it. I think that it did make him feel better because he got a smile on his face. Then he asked me a question, "May...Can," he started. I said, "May we...." He added on, "Be friends?" From that day on, the seven-eyed monster was now my seven-eyed friend. We learned to overcome our fears, his being scared of the dark and mine being scared of him.

Brylee Broussard  
Carla Jackson, teacher  
Bains Elementary  
West Feliciana Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
3rd Grade

## Wheels

It's light as day not a cloud in the sky  
The sun rains on for miles and miles  
Everything seems fun, but here I sit  
There is no sun, here I sit, there is no fun.  
I see the kids run back and forth  
Until the stars shine from the north.

Someone knocked upon my door  
"Mother will get it," I thought.  
So I ignored but after the third loud bang  
I realized, Mother's not home  
Once again, I ignored  
I left from where I perched  
I looked through the door  
to see a shy looking boy  
I opened up the threshold's door  
The boy held a shocked expression  
He shook it off and kindly asked  
"Would you like to play baseball?"  
"Don't mock me kid,"  
and slammed the door  
I wheeled my way back to my room  
Oh what a lonely existence.

Like clockwork the knock came again  
1..2..3....KNOCK.. 1..2..3....KNOCK  
1..2..3....KNOCK.. 1..2..3....KNOCK  
Can't these blasted kids leave me alone?  
They should go march right back home.  
Do what I can't, and walk away, leave me alone!  
I spent my whole life in this house  
and I don't plan on leaving now  
Nine long years here I sat  
I wheeled my way back to the door  
"Why don't you play you look alone--"  
I cut him off with a scream,  
"And that's all I'll ever be!!!"  
I slammed the door and wheeled away.  
"We want you to play,"  
A voice from behind the door.  
"Don't be shy, come on, look,  
I'll wheel you outside."

Austin Cone  
Sharene Dali, teacher  
N.P. Trist Middle School  
St. Bernard Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
8th Grade

## Out of Time

In fairness, we're warned many weeks in advance  
Of this project so dreadful, so hard to get through.  
You'd think that by now, I'd not take the chance,  
But alas, we all know it's too good to be true.

Now I have two weeks to do the assignment—  
To just pace myself isn't that much to ask.  
With priorities subject to much realignment,  
Perhaps... it's best that I don't multitask.

Oh dear, a single week to go—  
And not a word is on the page!  
But to my credit, just remember:  
Time is difficult to gauge.

I've really messed up now—  
Three days 'til it's due.  
This can work somehow,  
But I haven't got a clue.

Tomorrow's it—  
In panic mode!  
And bit by bit,  
My time erodes.

Just one  
Last line;  
It's half-  
Past nine...

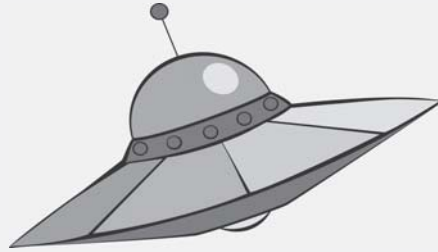
..I'll do it  
In the morning.



David Broussard  
Deborah Unger, teacher  
Hahnville High School  
St. Charles Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
12th Grade

## Our Teacher Was Kidnapped by Aliens!

I was at my house sitting on the couch watching the news. The news said a teacher named Ms. Chunn was kidnapped by tall, green, slimy Aliens! Once I had heard that, I freaked out. The next day was Monday. I dashed to school. Once I had got to class everyone was staring at a HUGE hole in the roof! I was so worried! After three minutes of staring at the HUGE hole in the roof we all decided to save Ms. Chunn, but we knew we needed a plan. We decided to stay at school until midnight. At 9:00, the Aliens returned... ..WITH MS. CHUNN! We all charged at the Aliens. Carter, Charlotte, Chaz and I grabbed Ms. Chunn's arm and pulled her away from the Aliens. The Aliens left. Ms. Chunn's back! Ms. Chunn's back! We all cheered! We all gave Ms. Chunn a big hug. Our teacher had been saved!



Harlem Epison  
Paula Chunn, teacher  
Lacoste Elementary School  
St. Bernard Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
2nd Grade

## Breakfast

When you wake up in the morning,  
you immediately jump out of the bed by the smell of breakfast!  
Nice hot pancakes with the smell of sweet syrup on the side.  
The smell of pepper and salt in your eggs,  
and the smell of cinnamon on your toast!  
A nice large glass of orange juice waiting on the side.

Your mom already has your outfit picked out.  
It just came out of the dryer so it's nice and hot!  
When you go to the kitchen, your mom gives you a big hug.  
She says "Good Morning!"  
She squeezes you so tight that it cracks your back.  
You can smell the smell of mint on her breath.

You sit down to eat,  
and you can feel the heat coming off of your breakfast.  
You immediately dig in!  
When you are done, you take a big gulp of your fresh orange juice.  
For the rest of the day you smell your breakfast throughout your house!



Etienne Adams  
Rhondell Webre, teacher  
R.J. Vial Elementary School  
St. Charles Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
5th Grade

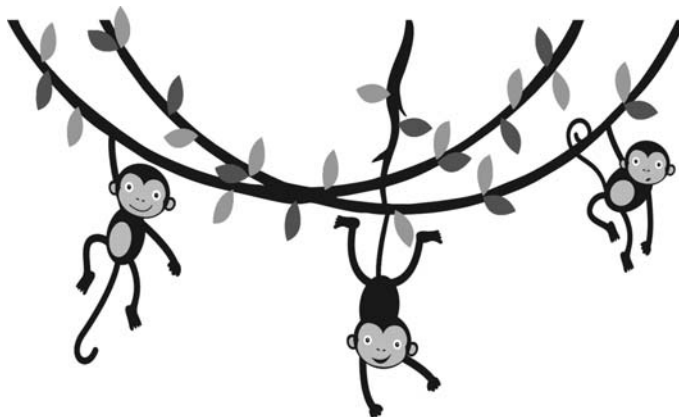
## Jungle Girl

Once upon a time there was a girl who loved adventures. One day she was walking in the jungle and she was lost! It was getting dark and she was hungry. She walked around and found a blueberry bush. While she was eating the blueberries, a bear popped out! He asked her if she was lost. She said, "Yes." So the bear said, "Come with me to my cave." She followed the bear to his cave and slept for the rest of the night.

The next morning she got up and got her stuff. She left the bear's cave to look for a new home. She walked around all day and then she found a peacock. The peacock lived in the bushes. She asked the peacock if she could sleep there for the night. The peacock said, "Yes." The next morning the little girl woke up again and she got her stuff and she went to find a new home. She walked around all day again. She didn't find an animal friend this time.

She made a fort to sleep in. It stormed all night. That morning when she woke up, her fort had collapsed! The little girl was so lucky that she survived all by herself. After she saw that her fort had collapsed, she said, "What will I do now?" Exactly when she said that, a monkey heard her. The monkey slid down the vine and told her, "Hello!" The little girl was so surprised because she was not expecting anything to answer back! The monkey said, "Come with me deep in the jungle where your home can be." The girl asked, "But where will I live in the jungle?" The monkey said, "You silly goose! You're going to live with me!" The girl said, "In the vines?" "Gosh no!" said the monkey, "I live in a cave." The girl did not like rocky places. When she was very little, her parents had gone through a cave and a bear popped out and ate them! But the little girl sighed and whispered to herself, "I guess this will have to work." So she stayed with the monkey for 10 years. Until... She finally said, "I'm leaving! I have been trapped in this cave for 10 years!" So she stomped out of the cave opening.

She walked around the jungle and she knew where everything was. But she didn't want to be with the animals anymore. She wanted to be with humans. She really didn't remember her parents and she was tired of just eating bananas and blueberries. So she walked out of the jungle and found a village. They called her Jungle Girl. The people accepted her into their group and she lived happily ever after.



Mary Jane Turner  
Holly Caffarel, teacher  
Bains Lower Elementary  
West Feliciana Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
1st Grade



# Research R&R: Research for Reflection and Renewal

## *Using the Relationships in Language as a Structure for Comprehending and "Going Beyond"*

Glenda Lofton, Ph.D.

In my last column, I highlighted findings from a study by Roskos and Newman (2014) identifying five practices that had a significant body of research supporting their effectiveness in improving students' motivation, proficiency, and likelihood of becoming lifelong readers and writers. One of the five proven practices was the importance of helping readers pay attention to syntax, the structure of sentences, to strengthen comprehension. Drawing attention to sentence structures and conventions of written language, and showing the difference between speech and writing helped students learn.

I immediately thought of Dr. James Dinnan, my professor at the University of Georgia, whose theory of language (Dinnan, 1976) stressed the inseparable nature of language and thought. His theory helped me to look beyond the syntactic, grammatical structure of language to the semantic, meaningful relationships inherent in language which can also assist the student in comprehending and elaborating on what he reads. When I decided to write this article, I tried to contact him and was saddened to learn that he had died on October 8, 2012. He was one of the wisest people I have ever known, and he made a difference in my life. When I was president of the Louisiana Reading Association, I invited Dr. Dinnan to be the keynote speaker at the state conference, and he shared his theory of language at that time.

### Using Relationships in Language to Comprehend What is Read

In Dinnan's semantic, meaning based approach to comprehension, students are taught the following basic ideas about language:

1. Language helps us communicate the relationship of matter to matter in time, space, and amount.
2. In our language, there are matter words and relational words. Matter words represent things in the world perceived by our senses. They tell who or what. Relational words describe the relationship of matter to matter in time, space and amount. Time references tell when; spatial references tell where; amount references tell how much or

how many.

3. Every sentence, every story, every content area expresses these basic relationships.

For example, in the sentence, "The dog barked at the man," "dog" and "man" are matter words telling who or what the sentence is about." All the other words are relational words giving the relationship of the "dog" to the "man".

"Barked" is a time reference indicating that the action occurred sometime in the past. More specific time references could have been added such as, "Last night the dog barked at the man."

"At" is the spatial reference. "The dog barked at the man, not away from the man, not under the man, but at him." These apparently simple spatial references are often difficult for students to define and comprehend. Comparisons and contrasts aid the student in comprehending these relationships. One could add other spatial references such as, "The dog behind the fence barked at the man."

"The" is the amount reference indicating there was one dog and one man. Amount references could be added: "The tiny dog barked at the huge man."

4. Literature deals with a special kind of matter—man. Literature involves the special relationship of: (a) man to himself, (b) man to man, (c) man to nature, and, (d) man to God or the supernatural.

The sentence, "The dog barked at the man," gives the relationship of man to nature since a dog is part of nature. What is the relationship of the dog to the man? The relationship is implied by the words, "barked at." "Barked at" could suggest that the dog and the man were friends, and the

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dog barked because he was glad to see him. Or, it could suggest that the dog and the man were enemies or strangers. Additional information is needed to determine the exact relationship.

5. In our language are many words that help us express relationships clearly and precisely.

By adding words to the sentence, "The dog barked at the man," the relationship can be made clearer: "The dog bared his teeth and snarled viciously at the old man."

6. Words help us compare and contrast and can be placed on word spectrums.

Word spectrums provide a visual representation of the graduated meanings of related words. At the center of a word spectrum is a word representing the neutral, the normal, or the average. Toward the positive end are words of increasing value, and toward the negative end are words of decreasing value. To describe the relationship of the dog and the man, one might construct a word spectrum such as the following:

--vicious   angry   peeved   civil   polite  
friendly   loving +  
 ^

When students understand that language expresses the relationship of matter to matter in time, space, and amount, and that literature deals with the relationship of man to himself, to other men, to nature, and to God or the supernatural, they have a powerful tool to help them comprehend. Before reading they know to (a) look for the prime matter (usually the main character) in the selection, then (b) look for the other matter (characters or objects) to which the prime matter is related, and finally (c) to see how those relationships are affected by time, space, and amount. If the readers understand these relationships, they understand the story. Comprehending is seeing relationships!

## Going Beyond Comprehension to Elaborate on What is Read

In addition to learning from Dr. Dinnan and his meta theory of language at the University of Georgia, I also had the opportunity to learn from Dr. Paul Torrance (1970) known as the "Father of Creativity". Sadly, like Dr. Dinnan, Dr. Torrance died on July 12, 2003, but I was in touch with him until his death, and even after becoming bedridden he continued to study and write. I wrote a tribute to him in this journal (Lofton, 2004) in recognition of nearly 60 years of research on creativity, and in a more recent column (Lofton, 2013), I reviewed his research on creativity in light of new findings

showing a decline in creativity over the past 20 years in education and the workplace. In a 40 year longitudinal study reported by Torrance and Safter (1990), creativity was found to be a better predictor of achievement than intelligence, and the creative thinking skill of elaboration correlated highest with measures of school achievement.

As a classroom teacher, I had read and applied many of Torrance's ideas on developing creativity with my students. I'm not sure I realized all the benefits then, but the thoughts of children lifted my spirits and brightened my day. When I got ready to do the research for my doctoral dissertation (Lofton, 1977), I designed a creative reading program, later incorporated into the Houghton Mifflin Basal Readers, for fourth and fifth graders using Dinnan's meta theory of language and the relationships of matter to matter in time, space, and amount to enhance comprehension and structure the thinking of students as they engaged in three creative reading tasks used by Torrance to help students elaborate on what was read: (1) asking questions about what the author did not tell; (2) adding their ideas to the story, and (3) changing the story in some way.

After a semester of instruction, the 39 fourth and fifth graders in the creative reading group asked significantly more questions about selections read, made significantly more changes in rewriting the story, and their resulting stories were judged to be more original than those of the 39 students in the regular reading group. Tests of literal and inferential comprehension showed no differences between the groups which was somewhat encouraging given the fact that students in the creative group made significant gains in measures of creativity and spent one day less on the traditional reading lesson than the control group.

Informal observations revealed an enthusiasm for learning as students became "co-authors of what was read" and looked for words to help them elaborate and express their thoughts. On their own, students began to bring in thesauruses to help them find words to better express relationships, and I overheard students reminding each other to be more precise! Years later one of the students, married with children, called to see if I had a copy of a story she had "co-authored". She said that story had been the highlight of her life. Remembering it, had recently given her the courage to register for college. "Yes," I said, "I have the original handwritten version. I've used it to inspire hundreds of teachers, and I'll send you a copy."

## Using Research for Reflection and Renewal

In reflecting on Dr. Dinnan's research on language and Dr. Torrance's research on creativity, I give thanks for their commitment to lifelong learning and to making a difference in the lives of others, especially me and my students. In reflecting on my own research, it seems to me, that I learned as much from students as they learned from me. One of my prized possessions is a poem written by one of the students in my study. She co-authored/elaborated on a poem, "For Jim," which compared life to a race, and made changes in matter, time, space, and relationships in the poem to compare life to art.

### *For Me*

*I paint the waves of life.  
I sketch the shadow of death.  
I wander through the art of being me.  
I draw a line at evil.  
I save nothing for the painting at the end—  
the glory painting, the King of Life.  
My drawing of my life is what I wish to be.  
I will be the very best I can.  
I'll even paint a cross of blood  
To show my loving faith.  
I live to see the glory at the end of my line of life.*

How is it where you live and work? Given the research on the decline of creativity in classrooms and the workplace, what are you doing to help students become thinkers and producers rather than recorders and reproducers? Do you collaborate with students and coworkers to enhance teaching and learning? Are you growing stronger together?

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Research R&R:  
Research for  
Reflection and  
Renewal  
*Best Practices in  
Reading: What  
Works for You and  
Your Students?*

## Dolphin Girl

There once was a girl who was stranded on a boat. She loved dolphins. A storm came in and started to shake the boat. All of a sudden, dolphins came to help the girl. Some came up to the front, while others came to the back and side of the boat. They started to pull her tiny boat towards the shore. They took her to an island. The island was safe, but there was no food for the girl to eat and only coconuts to drink. She started a signal fire with green leaves and was rescued. The dolphins saved her.



Angela Roark  
April McClure, teacher  
Holly Ridge Elementary  
Northeast Louisiana Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
6th Grade

## A Day in New York City

I went to New York City with my Mimi and my mommy. We went from a train from Philadelphia. On that train, we looked out the windows and we went underground and over the water. When we got there, we walked around the buildings and saw where they played basketball. We tried to go see the Empire State Building, and it was really fun.

We went on the subway to go to the big line to the Statue of Liberty. After that, we went to the one World Trade Center. The one World Trade Center is way taller than the Empire State Building. You will be amazed at how tall it is. You will get to go on a lot of subways in New York.

Then we went to the museum, and guess what we saw? REAL dinosaur bones. We went to the store and checked out some things. We saw a moose in the museum. At the outer space store, my mom bought me some Mars mud. We got on the train and went back to Philadelphia then we rode an Uber. The next day we rode another Uber to go to the Eagles football game!



Nolan Gunnell  
Beth Dauthier, teacher  
Northwestern Elementary School  
Zachary Area Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
Kindergarten

## George the Dragon

One day while I was playing on the playground, to my surprise, a huge green and white dragon came out of the woods. We were all scared at first, but then we realized he was just there to play.

The dragon told us his name was George and he just wanted to have some fun. We played hide and go seek first. He wasn't very good at that since he was too big to hide behind anything. Next we tried to play tag. He was too good at tag! He could fly around and tag us, we never had a chance! Last we decided to watch him do tricks. He could blow fire high into the sky. He was extra careful not to catch anything on fire though.

It was almost time to go, but before he left he gave us a ride on his tail! We squealed with excitement as we soared through the air. We were sad to see him go and hope he comes back to school to play again one day soon!



Jesse Alsobrooks  
Megan Crain, teacher  
Thomas Elementary School  
Washington Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
3rd Grade

## How the Sun and Stars Came To Be

Once there were no stars in the sky, just a wide stretch of black, inky darkness. Night covered the world like a blanket, leaving no light for the villagers below it called the Intuneric. All they had were torches lit by "Fyre," a dim, flameless light. Above the blanket lived the Lumina in a village filled with light, where the clouds were grass and the light was always bright.

The Intuneric heard about the village above from the angel who would travel between both lands. "Why, they hoard all the light for themselves and all we have is darkness and Fyre for light!" exclaimed a chief. "We want light!" he shouted. So he gathered all his wise men and magic and together they developed a plan to steal light.

The Lumina were very wise so they were not fooled when the angel from below came speaking of the Intuneric's plan. "They are plotting to attack," the angel shouted. "You must act now!"

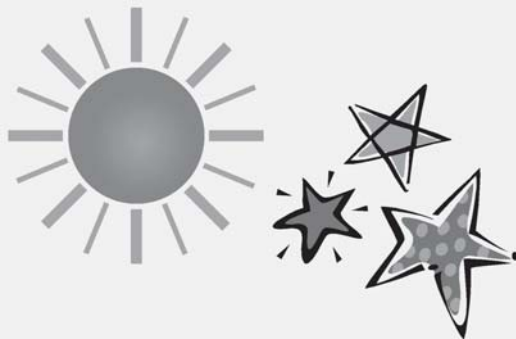
The chief of the Lumina people came up to the angel. "I know what I must and mustn't do. And how did these people hear of light anyway?" The chief, a woman with long blonde hair that was as yellow and as bright as the light around her, stared at the angel closely. She wore a dress woven of the clouds themselves and her pale skin glowed. She was beautiful and her eyes were dark brown, alert, ferocious. Nothing could get past her. She stared at the angel with unforgiving eyes and the angel muttered something. The chief asked her again, "How did these people hear of light?"

The angel looked up with scared and innocent eyes, but the chief knew it was fake. It was the mark of the angels. "The birds! They came from your region and told the people."

The chief called "Out, war is coming." Ready your arms, bring the children to safety and protect the village!" As the people diverged, the chief turned back to the angel. "You can't fool me. As soon as we win this war we will go down to the land of darkness and use their Fyre to burn you alive!" The angel turned and dove down, severing the blanket and light broke through. Later on this would be called the sun.

"Seize him!" the chief shouted, but the angel had escaped. The light from above lit up the Intuneric village and all the land for miles around it. Meanwhile, the Intuneric people were struggling to get to the land of the Lumina people. They threw grappling hooks up about a million times each making holes in the blanket. This made what was to be called the stars.

The intense light seared the Intuneric's faces and they perished. The Lumina fell into the dark holes and were lost. The angel called all his fellow angels to examine the damage, where light and darkness were no longer separated. To this day the angels continue to control the light from above.



Laurel Fiser  
Jean Woodside, teacher  
Bains Elementary  
West Feliciana Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
4th Grade



## A New Home

I am an ant. We have a lot of family members. We live in dirt hills and have to move quite often for different reasons.

One day our home got destroyed by a big foot, so we had to move. We moved to a large place with lots of stuff to play on. I saw swings, slides, a soccer goal, and tables. On the ground there were lots to eat. There were candy wrappers full of sweet stuff, popcorn, cans with drink still in them, and my favorite – sunflower seeds. We thought we had found the perfect home.

For two days everything was great. My friends and I climbed up and down all kinds of things. We played and ate junk food all day long. Then on Monday the ground started to shake. We were invaded by kids. I realized our new home was on the school playground. We heard kids screaming, running, laughing, eating, and all kinds of things. There were kids everywhere.

Once again we had to move to a safer place. There were just too many little feet moving around. It was like going through a field of land mines. I almost got squished two times. A couple of my cousins didn't make it out alive.

We looked around to see if there was a better and safer place for us to live. We found a big building not far from the school. You could still hear the children playing where we thought our forever home would be. We built our new home right next to the building. We made tunnels deep in the ground. I don't think anyone will be able to step on our new home. We should be safe.



Jeremy Blake Phelps  
Lynn Kelly, teacher  
Mount Hermon School  
Washington Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
4th Grade

## School

Science, math, and history  
Are a part of this daily epiphany  
In this place we have some rules  
This establishment is what we call school.

History seems to zip in and out my head  
I cannot remember what Abraham Lincoln said,  
Events are confusing, I have had my fill  
I do not even know where was the battle of Bunker Hill?  
All these facts flowing through my brain,  
It feels so long, how long was Cleopatra's reign?

No more formulas, my head is full,  
Where should I put this decimal?  
"Class, what is the square root of 442?"  
Please help, I do not have a clue  
Least to greatest is what I hate  
You never know the order until it is too late.

Theater, drawing, band, sculpting, and song,  
All these ways to be right, but I am always wrong.  
Poetry that we interpret might as well be Shakespeare,  
As time ticks down my face fills with fear,  
I read the chromatic scale,  
This is impossible; it might as well be braille.

Even when there seems to be no hope,  
Do not be sad, there's no reason to mope,  
There are people, knowledge preachers  
They help us when time is tough, we call them teachers.

Brandon Randle  
Sammi Caillouet, teacher  
Harry Hurst Middle School  
St. Charles Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
6th Grade

# Children's Book Reviews

## *Diversity Matters*

Patricia Austin

I often hear the well-meaning claim: "I don't see color; I only see people." While the intention may be good, espousing colorblindness as a virtue ostensibly denies part of a person's identity. Even though racial identity may not be uppermost in the mind of white people, it is intrinsic to people of color. In the real world, we must honor and celebrate different races; in the world of books, we must do the same. Yet how awkward is it to talk about the race of a character in a book when the point of the story does not entail racial issues at all? For years, when the race of a character was not mentioned, the default meant white. An easy fix would be to always mention the race of the character, but look at any review journal, and that is not happening. It needs to.

In a recent article in the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators Bulletin, Anne Sibley O'Brien (2017) weighs in on this issue: "When children find themselves in the books they read, they feel affirmed, seen, validated.... And when none of this happens, children experience erasure" (p. 10). She acknowledges the findings of neuroscientists that even babies as young as six months notice differences of skin color. "We know that human brains naturally sort what we see as familiar from what we see as different, first without judgment but then in combination with associations" (O'Brien, 2017, p. 10). She further claims that unless children see positive images of all cultures, they'll internalize the images, attitudes, or rhetoric from the dominant culture, and those are not always positive.

In reflecting on the development of African American children's literature, Rudine Sims Bishop (2012), winner of the 2017 Virginia Hamilton award for Lifetime Achievement, details her research from the 1980s in which she categorized three kinds of children's books about African Americans. In this categorization, which was subsequently used by other parallel cultures, she identified books as social conscience, melting pot, or culturally conscious. By "social conscience," she acknowledged those books, often by white writers and illustrators, whose aim was to increase the visibility of children of color yet often missed the mark and conveyed stereotypical images. Books in

the "melting pot" group were those books whose characters could have been any color. The plots didn't focus on issues of social justice; the characters did not embrace cultural features. The final, most-highly praised group, Bishop labeled as culturally conscious books. Many, although not all of these books, were written by authors and artists of color, who were determined "to reflect both the distinctiveness of African American cultural experiences and the universality of human experience" (p. 7).

I have selected books that include melting pot books and culturally conscious books, both of which are needed, and I have included parallel cultures of African, African American, Asian, Asian American, Latino, and Native American. Additionally, I've included as well people with disabilities and women in STEM fields, also under-represented groups in the children's book world. These books help eradicate color blindness by acknowledging race, class, gender, and gender identity as crucial parts of peoples' identities.

### FICTION PICTURE BOOKS

*Thunder Boy* by Sherman Alexie. Illustrated by Yuyi Morales. Little Brown and Company, 2016.

K-Grade 3

Thunder Boy Jr. hates the name he was given by his father (His mom wanted to call him Sam, a normal name). Thunder Boy wants his own name—a name that reflects him, not his dad. Among possible names he lists are Touch the Clouds, Mud in his Ears, Star Boy, and Full of Wonder. Each name he imagines is boldly illustrated with swaths of color and outlined figures all showcasing the proud protagonist as he embraces his own identity. As if reading his mind, his father suggests that it is time for Thunder Boy to have a new name. All resistance and resentment toward



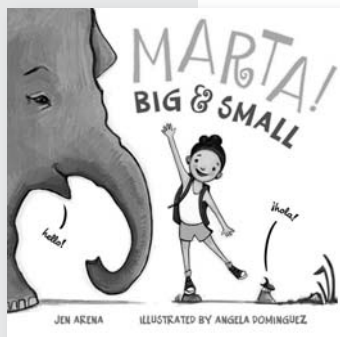
Patricia Austin is a professor of children's literature and curator of the Children's Literature Collection at the University of New Orleans. She can be reached at [paustin@uno.edu](mailto:paustin@uno.edu).

his dad melt away, as the young boy becomes Lightning. He and his dad are now a team. In his first picture book, Native American author Sherman Alexie reflects the power in a name and captures a message with universal appeal—a young child yearning to be himself.

*Marta! Big and Small* by Jen Arena. Illustrated by Angela Dominguez. Roaring Brook Press, 2016.

PreK-Grade 1

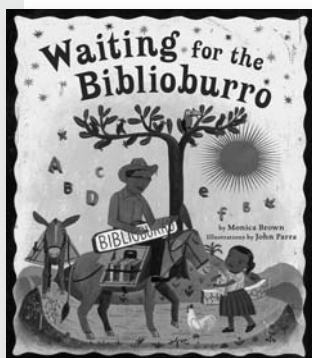
All things are relative as Marta discovers in her walk through the world. "To a bug, Marta is grande. Big, very big. To an elephant, Marta is pequena. Small, very small." She's also sometimes fast/slow and loud/quiet. When she meets a snake that will find her tasty, she's also clever and manages to escape. Also valuable for English language learners, this simple concept book with a spunky Latina protagonist introduces animals, opposites, and the notion of relativity. Bold outlined illustrations are surrounded by lots of white space.



*Waiting for Biblioburro / Esperando el Biblioburro* by Monica Brown. Illustrations by John Parra. Tricycle Press, 2011. Translation, 2016.

Grades K-3

Now available in a bilingual format, this engaging story will be any teacher or librarian's go-to book to share the joys of literacy. In her tiny faraway village, Ana dreams "about the world outside and beyond the hill." She knows other worlds through the one book she owns, given to her by her teacher and through the imaginative stories she tells her brother. When Ana's teacher moves away, Ana has no access to books. She cannot believe her good fortune when a biblioburro arrives bearing books. The village children gather for storytelling and pour over the books the librarian has brought. As the librarian departs, Ana calls to him that

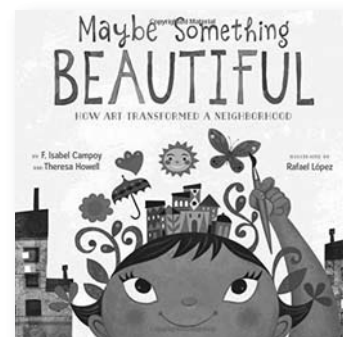


someone should write a book about the books and the burro. You might just guess exactly what Ana does in the many weeks that she waits for the biblioburro's return. Lively folk art, acrylics on board, capture both the book's ambience and charm.

*Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood* by F. Isabel Campoy and Theresa Howell. Illustrated by Rafael Lopez. Houghton Mifflin, 2016.

Grades K-3

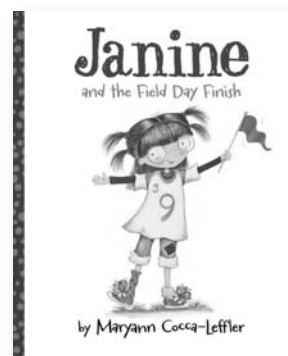
"In the heart of a gray city, there lived a girl who loved to doodle, draw, color, and paint." And so it begins – that one small girl who draws colorful pictures and gives them away also inspires a muralist in this gray city. With bold sweeps of his paintbrush, the artist splashes bright swirls of color on walls and then invites first the young girl and then everyone they meet to join them in bringing color and joy to the bleak urban setting. As detailed in an author's note, the book is based on a true story of how Rafael Lopez transformed East Village in San Diego, California from a drab to vibrant neighborhood. The impact of the art led to other changes to help the lives of the people there. Illustrations by the very same artist who transformed the San Diego community bring the picture book to life with eye-popping, energetic paintings that leave readers with a smile – and a desire to create.



*Janine and the Field Day Finish* by Maryann Cocca-Leffler. Whitman, 2016.

Grades K-3

Janine is good at a lot of things (singing, remembering, spelling, cheering) and she gives a super duper cheer for field day, much to the chagrin of a classmate who haughtily declares, "That's weird." What Janine is not good at is sports. Readers know only this: "She can't see well, and her body doesn't work as well as other kids.'" The lack of specificity about the protagonist's disability makes this delightful book have greater appeal. What Janine does have is spunk; she manages to cope with disparaging comments, has positive thoughts

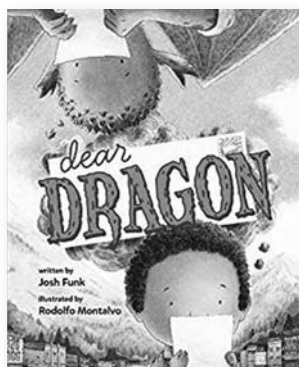


despite lackluster skills and coming in last, and she has the kind of empathy and sportsmanship that any teacher wants to engender in children. The illustrations of the Anglo-American bespectacled Janine, alongside a multicultural cast of characters, including a racer in a wheelchair have spirit galore. This title can jumpstart important discussions about different abilities, acceptance, and attitudes.

*Dear Dragon* by Josh Funk. Illustrated by Rodolfo Montalvo. New York: Viking. 2016.

K-Grade 3

When George's teacher announces that this year's poetry and pen pal projects are combined, the young brown boy George Slair has no idea who his pen pal will be but readers quickly see that Blaise Dragomir is a young green dragon. Being in on the joke makes the book all the more humorous for its readers. As the pair exchanges letters, facing pages convey what each boy imagines as they read one



another's missives. While George's fort is stacked with cardboard cartons, Blaise pictures a castle, his imagination reflecting what he knows. When George asks Blaise's favorite sport, which turns out to be skydiving, George can only picture parachute jumping. In truth, Blaise actually

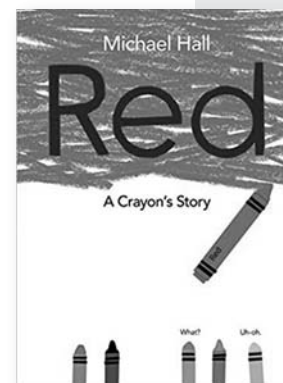
spreads his wings and flies. The hilarious take on perspective builds with each page and climaxes at a pen pal picnic, where each group could not be more stunned. "My pen pal is a dragon?" "My pen pal is a human?" they ask incredulously. The teachers were in the know all the while: "Our plan was a success, my friend, or so it would appear!// The Poetry and Pen Pal Project! Once again next year?"

*Red: A Crayon's Story* by Michael Hall. Greenwillow, 2015.

Grades K-3

It's a story about crayons. Really! But not really. "He was red. But he wasn't very good at it." Indeed the label on the crayon says "red" but the illustrations reveal that the tip of the crayon is blue and of course everything that he colors is also blue. The teacher thinks he needs more practice; his parents want him to mix with other colors. Everyone has advice and

commentary: "I wonder if he's really red at all... He came that way... I don't think he's very bright...he's lazy." And everyone has ideas to fix him, snipping or taping to no avail. That is, until one friend has a different plan: "Will you make a blue ocean for my boat?" Once acknowledging he's blue, not only does the realization change how he thinks about himself but also how everyone else perceives him. From then on, the sky's the limit. Teachers can begin the conversation exploring what people are like on the outside and what they're like on the inside. Author Michael Hall's symbolic treatment enables readers to interpret the book in myriad ways and affords teachers a way to discuss the many concepts surrounding identity, including the concept of transgender.

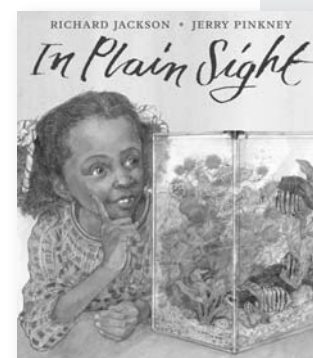


*In Plain Sight* by Richard Jackson. Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. A Neal Porter Book. Roaring Brook Press, 2016.

Preschool – Grade 2

Anyone who knows the inside workings of the children's book world will recognize the name Richard Jackson, editor and publisher for more than fifty years. At 81, he has now written his own picture book, illustrated by another legend in the field, Jerry Pinkney, winner of a 2017 Coretta Scott King honor award for illustration for this gem. On the book's title page, you can't help but notice that the old man in the wheelchair, Sophie's grandpa, is winking at the reader, so something is up. Every day after school, Sophie drops by, and every day Grandpa has lost something and asks Sophie to find it. Yet there it was all along, in plain sight. Readers will love hunting the incredibly detailed watercolors for the missing objects, which are not super easy to find. Organized by the days of the week, which sets up a predictable pattern,

the book offers a celebration of an intergenerational bond. It's worth noting that in the glorious illustrations, Grandpa is often pictured reading newspapers and books, which sends another subtle and lovely message from one generation to another.





*Look Up!* By Jung Jin-Ho. Holiday House, 2016.  
K-Grade 3

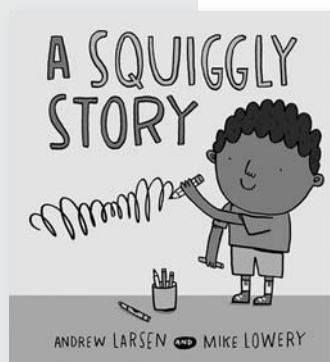
This almost wordless picture book will have readers guessing what they're seeing. A close examination of the cover may (or may not) have children realize that they're seeing an aerial view. As a young girl on a balcony looks down, she sees a dog walker, bike rider, and with each turn of the page a different scene. She implores that someone look up, but no one hears or they ignore her until one boy not only looks up but sprawls on the cobblestones so the child above can see better. When more people join in and lie down, the child on the balcony smiles at the reader. Until the last page, all the illustrations are pen and ink, black and white. On the final spread, the tree branches are dotted with blooms, the bike is festooned with balloons, and two smiling children beside a wheel chair look up. This Korean import will spark wonderful conversations about perspective and attitudes. The point of view provides an even-handed treatment of disability that is refreshing. Too often the view is from the able-bodied perspective that may engender more sympathy than it's more proactive cousin, empathy.



*Squiggly Story* by Andrew Larsen. Illustrated by Mike Lowery. Kids Can Press, 2016.

Preschool - grade 3

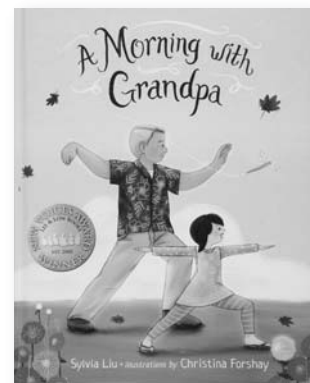
The narrator's sister loves to bury herself in books, whether reading or writing them, and little brother pretends to write, too. Looking jealously on while his sister is writing, he asks if he can write a story. "You can," she tells him. "It's easy." The cartoon characters are brown-skinned and so simply drawn that young readers will buy into the fact that not only is it easy to write, it's easy to illustrate. Sis's just-right question of "Now what?" and feedback from his teacher and classmates give the young boy all the confidence he needs. A perfect complement to any language arts lesson about story development, this meets common core standards about introducing story elements to the very young as beginnings, middles and endings. It's significant to note that the illustrations reflect the girl's eclectic reading tastes from space stories to unicorns, eschewing gender stereotypes.



*Morning with Grandpa* by Sylvia Liu. Illustrated by Christina Forshay. Lee & Low Books, 2016.

Grades 1-3

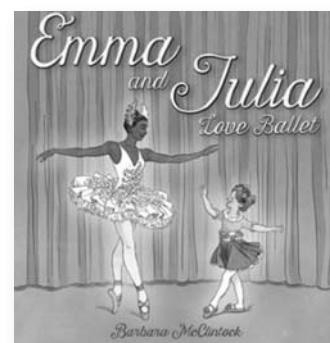
Winner of Lee and Low's New Voices Award, *Morning with Grandpa* portrays an affectionate bond between grandfather and granddaughter. When Mei Mei sees her grandpa in the garden moving "like a giant bird stalking through the marsh," she learns he's practicing tai chi, and Gong Gong teaches her. She does not mimic his slow smooth motions but rather has her own version: to his "cloud hands" as warm summer breeze gently blowing through the trees" is her "frisky fall wind tumbling among the leaves." In turn, Mei Mei teaches Gong Gong yoga, which she is learning in school. Not quite eschewing ageism, the author and illustrator show Grandpa "wobbling like an old dog, creaky at the knees." [It's worth a math problem to figure out just how old Grandpa is – probably 50s at most – and worth exploring physical fitness of adults in their 50s]. Critique aside, the book exposes children to the Chinese exercise of tai chi and the mind-body practice of yoga from India, replete with clear pictures and instructions for both. While children try out the forms of tai chi and postures or asanas of yoga, they can simultaneously explore figurative language. Ideal to integrate movement, cultural elements, and language arts, teachers can invite children to describe their own movements in metaphoric terms.



*Emma and Julia Love Ballet* by Barbara McClintock. New York: Scholastic. 2016.

K-Grade 3

From the moment they get up, Emma, in her home and Julia in hers, live and breathe ballet. Parallel stories trace the rhythm of their days as they follow similar routines, rising early,



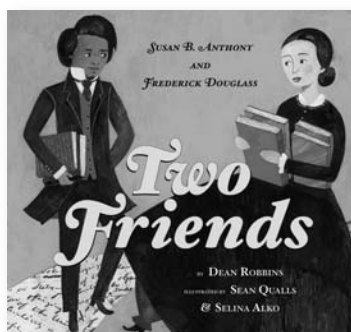


eating, and getting to ballet lessons. Emma is excited about the performance she'll be attending tonight. Julia, equally excited, is the prima ballerina in the performance. The multicultural cast of dancers in each studio, including a chubby boy in Emma's dance class reflect the world, but what is especially important is that the little red-headed white Emma has stars in her eyes admiring the willowy black Julia. The dazzling performance is capped off by a visit backstage where the young girl shares with Julia her dream of dancing on stage –just like Julia and gets an autograph and warm hug. Children will appreciate small things in the crisply detailed illustrations such as Emma's ballet lamp in her bedroom and the ad for the ballet performance at the bus stop. A great book to use to demonstrate parallel plots that follow two sets of characters and come together in the end, this charmer can serve as a mentor text to show young writers how to tell two separate stories that ultimately connect.

*Two Friends: Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass* by Dean Robbins. Illustrated by Sean Qualls & Selina Alko. Orchard/Scholastic, 2016.

Grades 2-5

In this historical fiction picture book, the author imagines the meeting over tea of two American legends on the journey to social justice. One dramatic illustration shows steam rising from the teacup encircling the pair. In the steam are the words: "Right is of no gender....Truth is of no color." Interestingly toying with time, the story begins when Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass meet and uses flashback to tell first her story toward championing women's "right to live free. The right to vote" and then his story as staunch



advocate for blacks' "right to live free. The right to vote." Both text and image sensitively reveal how similar the missions of this powerful duo. Credit is given to the Susan B. Anthony museum for meticulous fact checking; the illustrators also acknowledge copious research of the time period. With acrylics and collage, the imaginative and flowing mixed-media illustrations help make the past accessible to young readers. Patterns

of imagery such as candlelight thread through the book and are well worth exploring for symbolism.

*Ming Goes to School* by Deirdre Sullivan. Illustrate by Maja Lof Dahl. Sky Pony Press, 2016.

PreS-Grade 1

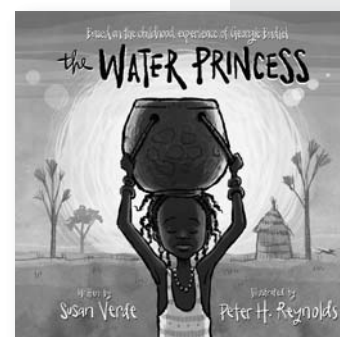
In a quintessential picture book, the illustrations do as much of the storytelling as the words do, and such is the case when Ming goes to school and learns both how to do things and lessons of life. What the words say: School "is where she learns to say hello... and goodbye" is amplified by pictures that convey Ming's joy at meeting new friends and her pain of waving through the classroom window to the departing parent. On one page, where the text says, "growing up takes time," the dispirited Ming looks on while others play on the slide and monkey bars. In the final pages, school is "where all things...are worth waiting for," and an enthusiastic Ming charges to the now-empty playground. While neither words nor images spell out what has transpired (Were older kids not allowed on the playground? Did the bigger kids exclude her?), this opens the door for discussion. Charming watercolor illustrations show a multicultural class engaged in all things wonderful in a pre-k or kindergarten class.



*The Water Princess* by Susan Verde. Illustrated by Peter Reynolds. G. P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2016.

K-Grade 3

Based on a true story of Georgie Badiel, this sumptuously illustrated picture book tells the story of young African child. "I am Princess Gie Gie. My kingdom....the African sky, so wide and so close, I can almost touch the sharp edges of the stars. I can tame the wild dogs with my song. I can make the tall grass sway when I dance." What she cannot do is make the water closer, and each day is a long trek, from sun up to sun down, through the hot desert to collect water for drinking, cooking, and bathing. Beautifully lyrical language

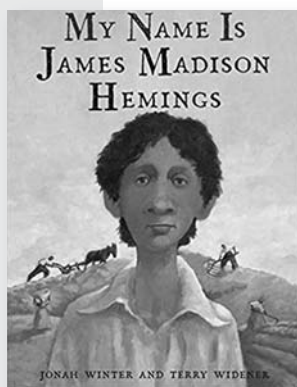


accompanied by equally lyrical earth-toned images lets readers see the hardships that so many people in the world face just to have a basic source of life: water. An afterword implores readers to think about that: "Imagine your life without water. No kitchen faucet to fill your glass when you are thirsty..." With the help of her community and Ryan's Well, Georgie is working to make a difference.

*My Name is James Madison Hemings* by Jonah Winter. Illustrated by Terry Widener. Schwartz & Wade, 2016.

Grades 3-8

Presented as historical fiction, (as detailed in an author's note) this first person narrative of the son of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings was inspired by and partially based on an 1873 newspaper interview in which



Madison Hemings made the claim of his heritage. The author also used the recent groundbreaking work of Annette Gordon-Reed to imagine what Madison Hemings' life must have been like. He begins his story this way: "Slavery: when one human being owns another human being. To the owner, the enslaved person is often no more than a piece of property—a sheep, a horse, a 'slave.'" That his master was

his father, he reveals early on: "We dared not reveal we knew he was our father. This truth, self-evident...was never to be spoken of." He does not reveal, however, until the final page of the book just who his father is. The use of the word "self-evident" is a chilling reminder of the words penned by Jefferson that make this complicated aspect of American history so difficult to understand. This book, however, is a start, opening the door to equally complex race relations, which face America today. For older students, link this book with Kimberly Brubaker Bradley's novel *Jefferson's Sons*.

### PICTURE BOOK BIOGRAPHIES and INFORMATIONAL PICTURE BOOKS

*Whoosh: Lonnie Johnson's Super-Soaking Stream of Inventions* by Chris Barton. Illustrated by Don Tate. Charlesbridge, 2016.

Grades 1-4

As shown on the energetic cover illustration, from boyhood to manhood, Lonnie Johnson was interested in building things. Blueprint

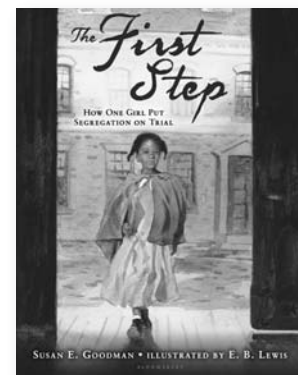
endpapers invite readers into this picture book biography that will inspire fellow tinkerers and future inventors. Raised in Mobile, Alabama, he was encouraged by his parents but discouraged when an exam said he wouldn't be a good engineer. Fortunately, he ignored the prognostication, went on to earn a degree at Tuskegee and impressively became the NASA engineer who figured out how to maintain the power supply to send an orbiter and probe to Jupiter. In problem-solving an environment-friendly cooling system for refrigerators and air conditioners, his experiments led him to invent a super-soaking water gun. Although marketing his invention to toy companies was not an easy path, Lonnie was persistent. He's still in his workshop today, inventing and solving. A teacher can share this book and explore the character traits that led Lonnie Johnson to success.



*The First Step: How One Girl Put Segregation on Trial* by Susan E. Goodman. Illustrated by E. B. Lewis. Bloomsbury, 2016.

Grades 2-8.

In a stunning tour de force that captures the heartbreak of the long road to justice, Goodman begins in 1847 on the streets of Boston as four-year old Sarah Roberts heads to school. With E. B. Lewis's brilliant watercolor drawings, readers see Sarah in the classroom, one lone black face amongst her white peers. One day, a policeman entered the class and kicked her out. Although her parents took the risk to send their daughter to Otis School, the best in the city, they knew that it was against Massachusetts' law for black and white children to attend together. Angry, they took their case to court. Despite the eloquent pleas of two lawyers, one white, one black, the Roberts lost, but the steps toward change had begun. People rallied

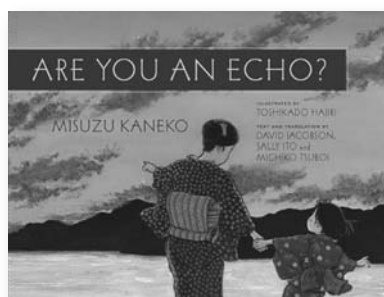


behind the cause and in 1855, Boston's schools were the first to be officially integrated. The book does not end there, however, but caps Roberts' case with the Brown vs. Board case argued almost 100 years later, finally declaring that "separate schools can never be equal." Many appendices—a timeline of integration, follow up biographical sketches about the heroes of the stories (the Roberts' family members and the lawyers), sources, and a detailed author's note about "gathering facts from places we trust" and acknowledging authorial choices about language—add a significant dimension to this amazing story.

*Are You An Echo? The Lost Poetry of Misuzu Kaneko* by David Jacobson, Sally Ito, and Michiko Tsuboi. Illustrated by Toshikado Hajiri. Chen Music Press, 2016.

Grades 3-6

Born in a fishing village in Japan, Misuzu Kaneko (1903-1930) was an observant, thoughtful child who asked lots of questions: "What does it feel like to be snow?...Where do stars go in the daytime?" And what she pondered as a child made its way into poetry as she grew older, clearly evident as the book alternately shares Misuzu's life story and her poems. Although many girls in that era only went through sixth grade, Misuzu went to high school, as her mother, manager of a bookstore, valued education.

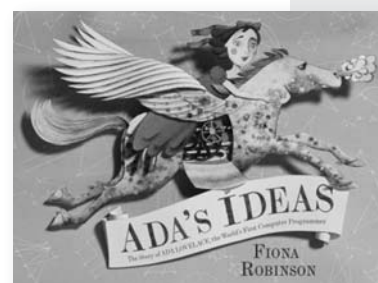


By age 20, Misuzu was a published poet, but her life took a tragic turn when her abusive husband forced her to stop writing and she took her own life. For years, no one heard of her poetry and much was only published decades later. Her words, however, were brought to life after the tsunami of 2011 reaching "millions of people in Japan just when they needed it." Additional poems in both English and Japanese are included. This sensitively-illustrated, picture book biography provides a lens into another culture, and yet the child-friendly poems show universality of feelings the world over. Indeed, the poetry could inspire readers to translate their wonderings to poems.

*Ada's Ideas: The Story of Ada Lovelace, the World's First Computer Programmer* by Fiona Robinson. Abrams, 2016.

Grades 1-5

Given the fact that relatively few women work in science, math, and engineering, *Ada's Ideas* shines a light on Ada Lovelace (1815-1852) a woman well ahead of her time. Computer-language endpapers create a mathematical mindset from the start, yet the fantastical art (Ada astride a winged horse) and the book's opening line, "Once there was a girl named Ada who dreamed of making a steam-powered flying horse" create a quite suitably different mood. The daughter of poet, Lord Byron and mathematician Anne Milbanke was schooled in all things mathematical, but even though she never knew her father (her mother left him when Ada was only two), Ada was singularly creative and found the poetry in mathematics. Born during the Industrial Revolution, Ada was entranced by machines and grew up to be intrigued by Charles Babbage's designs for what would be the prototype of the modern computer. Ada created an algorithm to compute a complicated series of numbers, and while young readers won't understand the mathematics, they will appreciate the illustrations conveying the "Bernoulli numbers." Whimsical collages that create a 3-D effect aptly illustrate this unusual picture book biography and convey the need for imagination in the world of mathematics.



*Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat* by John Steptoe. Little Brown and Co., 2016.

K-Grade 3

Jean-Michel couldn't remember a time when he didn't love drawing, and he knew he wanted to be a famous artist. His mother passed down the love of art, as she read to him, surrounded him with art, and took him to theaters and museums. After being hurt in an accident as a child, Jean-Michel also learned that art has healing powers—a power





he would come to need when his mother suffered mental illness and wasn't there for him. As he grew older, he took his art to the city streets, spray-painting on walls, and it wasn't long before his artwork hung in galleries. With a unique style, people "describe him as radiant, wild, a genius child, but in his heart he is king, so he draws crowns for himself and others he admires." It is the symbol of the crown that most defines his work. Javaka Steptoe provides an afterword in which he not only gives more details about Basquiat's life but also details about how he did the illustrations. Using bits and pieces of things to create mixed-media collages, Steptoe was inspired by and interpreted Basquiat's works. His hope is that he will thus invite readers to create "using the materials, people, and places in the environments." This title won both the 2017 Caldecott Award and Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award.

*To the Stars! The First American Woman to Walk in Space* by Carmella Van Vleet and Dr. Kathy Sullivan. Illustrated by Nicole Wong. Charlesbridge, 2016.

Grades 1-5

With increased emphasis for girls' interest in entering STEM professions, *To the Stars* is an excellent addition for both a science and English Arts lesson. Growing up in the 1950s, Kathy experienced many naysayers to her adventurous dreams. Rather than a chronological pattern, the text moves back and forth from childhood to adulthood tracing Kathy



Sullivan's interest and development in science and her actual experience as a scientist and astronaut. Not only does the content of book send the author's clear message of women's role in science but also the structure of the book

provides the opportunity to explore a way to organize information in a nonfiction text. The gentle but detailed watercolor illustrations help delineate the difference as the pictures during youth are enclosed with a line border, whereas the pictures of Sullivan's adult life bleed off the page. Appendices include a note from the author, further biographical information, and a list of "American Women firsts in NASA History."

*Esquivel! Space-Age Sound Artist* by Susan Wood. Illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh. Charlesbridge, 2016.

Grades 1-3

When Juan Garcia Esquivel was small, growing up in Mexico, he was fascinated by music. He turned his family's player piano into one he could play, and he never stopped. Completely self-taught, Juan focused on how he could arrange sounds and thus created a whole new style. Offered the job of orchestra leader at a radio station at 17, he quickly moved on, ending up at a New York recording studio creating his unique blend of sound. Duly captured by the onomatopoeic text and sound-

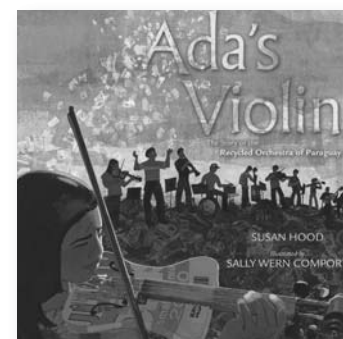


words fused into the illustrations, this picture book biography is perfect to teach about sound devices. As delightful as the book is, do your class a favor by searching Esquivel online so young listeners can truly appreciate why the revival of interest in the Mexican musician at the height of his popularity in the 1950s and '60s. Mexican artist Donatiuh, a two-time 2017 honoree for the Pura Belpre Illustrator Award, used ancient Mexican art for his inspiration, yielding a highly stylized and unusual folk art befitting the one-of-a-kind music. Follow this link to hear Esquivel's music: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kucrl7nVj7U>

*Ada's Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay* by Susan Hood. Illustrated by Sally Wern Comport. Simon & Schuster, 2016.

All ages

Some books defy description that will do them justice, and this inspiring story of the triumph of the human spirit is one of them. It deserves a place in every library. Ada Rios grew up in abject poverty in a town where 1500 tons of trash were dumped every day and

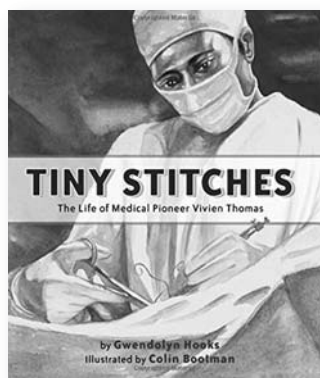


where recyclers scrounged anything salvageable. When Ada was 11, her grandmother saw a sign for music lessons and signed the children up. Without enough instruments, children couldn't practice at home, so the teacher, Favio Chavez, began with the help of recyclers, making instruments from trash: "They transformed oil drums into cellos, water pipes into flutes, and packing crates into guitars!" Ada chose a violin. Without a classroom, Senor Chavez gave three-hour lessons outside, and they braved blistering heat and dodged downpours. Only the determined kept with it, as learning an instrument is hard, but their work paid off. Their orchestra performed first in their village of Cateura and then in other cities and countries. "The world dazzled them... just as they dazzled the world." Embracing the notion of recycling in mixed media illustrations, which also dazzle, Sally Comport creates light-filled images that soar with a musicality all their own. An author's note and more information provide websites with must-watch videos to see and hear these amazing musicians.

*Tiny Stitches: The Life of Medical Pioneer Vivien Thomas* by Gwendolyn Hooks. Illustrated by Colin Bootman. Lee & Low Books, 2016.

Grades 1-5

In telling the astounding story of a medical pioneer, the author hooks young listeners at the same time letting readers know how important this man is: "Needles didn't scare Vivien



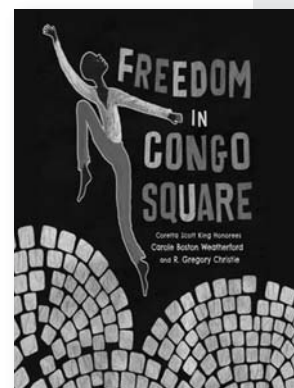
Thomas. In fact, he designed the ones lying on the operating table... In a few hours, they would help save the life of a little girl." Vivien Thomas had always known he wanted to be a doctor but when banks failed in the crash of 1929, he lost the money he'd saved. No longer able to afford college, he took a job with Dr. Blalock at Vanderbilt Medical School. Although distinguishing himself as a research assistant, he learned that his job description was janitor and his pay much less than his white counterparts. Blalock not only raised his pay then but also asked that Thomas come with him when he was hired at Johns Hopkins as Chief of Surgery.

Racial barriers were even greater in Baltimore, but Thomas proved his mettle with research on "blue babies," and virtually guided Blalock every step of the way in groundbreaking surgical techniques. It would be 26 years, however, before Thomas was publicly acknowledged for his role in the operation. With beautiful detailed watercolors, Bootman captures the intensity of the emotions from the mutual admiration between Blalock and Thomas to the cynicism of colleagues who doubted Thomas's skills and knowledge and the pain of racist exclusion.

*Freedom in Congo Square* by Carole Boston Weatherford. Illustrated by R. Gregory Christie. New York, NY: Little Bee Books, 2016.

Preschool – grade 4

In lyrical couplets and dramatic images, author and illustrator paint the picture of the hardworking and cruel life for enslaved people in New Orleans, where each day of the week, they counted down the days to Congo Square. "Wednesdays, there were beds to make, silver to shine, and bread to bake,/ The dreaded lash, too much to bear, Four more days to Congo Square." "Thursdays, there were clothes to clean, floors to scrub, and babes to wean,/ Spirituals rose from the despair, Three more days to Congo Square." Come Sunday, slaves had the afternoon off, and they congregated at an open space they called Congo Square (now in Louis Armstrong Park) with free people of color as well as other slaves. For that one half a day, they tasted freedom: they were free to sing, dance, and speak in African languages. Keeping ancestral roots alive, they shared news, concerns, and goods in the marketplace. A forward and an author's note provide further historical information. Thrumming with drumbeats and bursts of color, this homage to a cultural tradition is singularly valuable for Louisiana schools. R. Gregory Christie received both a Caldecott Honor and Coretta Scott King Honor Illustrator Award for this magnificent book.





## NOVELS

*George* by Alex Gino. New York, NY: Scholastic, 2015.

Grades 3-6

George has a secret. On the outside, to the rest of the world, George may look like a boy, but she knows inside that she's a girl. Using female pronouns from the very first page, the author lets readers in on the secret in this third-person narrative of self-discovery and self-revelation. But even though in her heart, George is a girl, her high school brother doesn't know, her mom doesn't know, and her best friend Kelly doesn't know. Yet. When George's teacher announces that the class will be performing *Charlotte's Web*, George really wants to be Charlotte, but of course she can't even audition because it's a girl's part. Ultimately, when George shares his secret with his best

friend, together Kelly and George hatch a plan that will let him star as Charlotte and reveal her true identity, if only, so far, in small circles. This ground breaking book that fills a gap in LGBT literature is kid-friendly, accessible, and opens up opportunities for discussion that children may be more ready for than adults may think.

*Garvey's Choice* by Nikki Grimes. Honesdale, PA: Wordsong, an imprint of Highlights, 2016.

Grades 5-8

Written in verse, this short novel unveils Garvey's problem from the very first poems. His dad expects him to be a jock and love sports: Garvey loves *Star Trek*, books, and music. He copes with his dad's disappointment by eating, so he's constantly teased. He's the fat boy who doesn't fit in. Orbiting on a different planet, Garvey's dad just doesn't get it, and he keeps suggesting sports. "Who's he talking to?" Garvey wonders. "After all these years, you'd think/ he'd start to know me./ Will he ever stop trying/ to make me someone I'm not?" (p. 18). Still, Garvey struggles feeling comfortable in his own skin and hesitates when his best friend tries to convince him to try out for chorus: "'Look,' says Joe, 'Your voice is choice. / You should let others hear it'" (p. 46). Laced with gastronomic metaphors, the poems employ the Japanese poetic form of *tanka*. They unfold Garvey's decision

to join the chorus, and, as it turns out, to share a bond with his father. The heartwrenching story of a young black boy searching for his voice will resonate with all readers and is a great choice for a class read aloud or book club.

*Juana & Lucas* by Juana Medina.

Grades 1-3

Juana ("pronounced Who-ah-nah") tells readers about where she lives: "I love Bogota. Love. It. And here's why..." She tells readers about her dog ("I love Lucas. Love. Him. And here's why" and about her best friend Juli, telling us as readers: "Here's what you need to know." On each two-page spread in which she shares her reasons, her irrepressible charm spills from the pages (the are made-to-order mentor texts to invite children to write about their own homes, pets, and friends). When Juana and Juli get busted by the bus driver for chewing gum and blowing bubbles, Juana describes the scene: "She stops the bus and walks back to our seats. She's frowning as if a hippo just sat on her toes." (p. 15) What teacher needs more to introduce the concepts of voice and powerful description? What Juana doesn't like is learning English: It's so hard. Asking all kinds of people why learning English might be useful, she hears the best idea from her Grandpa—going to Spaceland in Orlando. The months of studying English, the plans, and the trip itself all lead Juana to new horizons that just might put a new spin on learning a language for readers as well. This short novel, recipient of the 2017 Pura Belpre Award, is perfect for a class read aloud. Teachers, librarians, and kids will Love. It.

*Paper Wishes* by Lois Sepahban. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2016.

Grades 4-6

Children must feel history if they are ever to appreciate it, and this emotional journey of one child and her family makes history matter. When ten-year old Manami and her family are forced to leave their homes and enter a Japanese Internment camp, Manami cannot fathom leaving her dog with neighbors so she hides him in her coat much to the chagrin of her



grandfather. Forced by guards to abandon him, she cries in anguish. Told in first person narrative through Manami's eyes, the story shows how the young protagonist takes in everything—feeling guilt for the pain she caused her grandfather, worrying about secrets she knows about her brother and her teacher, experiencing the agony of their prison-like existence—but she is unable to speak. Encouraged by her teacher to draw, Manami uses art as



her way of expressing herself. For eight interminable months, she draws and sends paper wishes to her dog into the air in the hopes that he will return. This heart-felt debut would be an excellent book to share as a read aloud when studying American history.

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## Secular

She was never religious, not really. The extent of her spiritual endeavors were strung on the rosary wound in her grandmother's knowing fingers, the beads' clacking often sounding like the Lord's prayer her father encouraged her to recite when she was young. The feathering of baby hair at the crown of her head gleams like a halo in the sunlight, but it has never tasted the holy water of a baptism at infancy. She could not help but notice that the monotonous din of hymns sounded too much like a congregation of insects on a suffocating summer afternoon, speaking only to fill the thick air with their static singing.

No, she was not religious, but she could not ignore the divinity brushing at her ankles, wildflowers and clovers pushing through the fragmented sidewalk and demanding attention. She saw it in the soft curve of the asphalt of a back road scarcely taken, her friend's faces washed in the honey color of golden hour at the end of summer. The sun skipping through the leaves made the most beautiful mosaic of light on their wind-whipped hair. She heard it in their rich, infectious laughter that carried on for all the miles they covered piled into that lovingly ugly truck. The world did not seem so unfunny coasting past rolling hills with the windows rolled all the way down, the air muffling all except the overplayed pop music and those larger than life laughs. She felt it in the usually lonely creek, the sand crunching under her weight and earth coating the bottom of her bare feet. They waded into the water despite the chill, their hearts working to thaw their extremities while they heard the concrete click of a camera's shutter in the background. The photographs show them with warm smiles despite the dull ache of frostbite.

The holy hours she spends with the people she holds so close to her are sacred. She has no deity to follow or book to look to. Her prayers are composed of hellos and goodbyes. She finds refuge wherever she finds a friend. She knows it is untraditional. She is not religious, but she is not alone in the world. She cannot be. She can see that there are beings of angelic light around her, celestial bodies built of flesh and bone, full of grace -- and she is endlessly grateful.

Echo Monchivaez  
Layla Dupuy, teacher  
West Feliciana High School  
West Feliciana Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
4th Grade

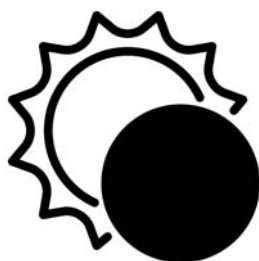
## The Slow-Moving Moon

We feel the world gathering for this day: August 21, 2017. The day the solar eclipse will form a path across the United States. Even in our group of 8 people (my family and our Tennessee acquaintances), we sense the togetherness of the world. Everyone at this fleeting moment stops and shares something. Something we can all have in common. Finally. It is a feeling of pure happiness, joy, and foreignness. Foreignness, because we almost never stand outside at the same time on opposite sides of the country and share something. I can feel the people in Wyoming, I can feel the air in Idaho, I can feel the sky in South Carolina, I can feel the animals in Tennessee, I can feel the plants in Oregon. The energies of the world embody the air. And time finally slows.

We befriend a family who shares their humble home on a mountain in Tennessee. They invite us to watch the solar eclipse in their front yard: a hilly pasture lined by forest and a zig zag horizon. They welcome us with their hospitality of food, kindness, and home. The warm aroma of fresh home-grown vegetables fills my senses as I make my way inside the cottage. I converse with our befriended family while admiring the home. I see no TV, no X-box, and no laptops. I see a husband preparing steamy ears of corn and heads of broccoli, I see real soccer balls begging to be kicked, I see laughter and conversation. I begin to notice the difference between my life and theirs: my home is filled with gadgets of wasting time. TVs, iPhones, laptops, video games. As I begin to engage deeper in thought, my attention is snatched by a guest exclaiming, “4 minutes to totality!” We gasp and clamber through the door to reach the front yard of open opportunity. We snap on our glasses and gaze up to the sky. The moon is making his way on to the sun at a snail’s pace. Phase one: the sun is a nibbled cookie. Phase two: the sun is a stale croissant. Phase three: the sun is a watermelon rind. The moon creeps along the vibrant orange star as if he is trying to tease us. He grasps the knowledge that he is on stage. He wants anticipation and he’s got it. “Come on! You’re almost there,” we shout. He slows his pace, withering our eyes. Slowly and steadily, he sits on the sun with rays spinning, straddling, and shining off the edges, creating a halo of light. The crickets chirp in the forest, the shadows snake on the grass, the sky dims in the atmosphere, and the stars begin to twinkle in the sky. My eyes water with boiling astonishment. The animals, the atmosphere, the people, the grass, the world begins to stir.

It is a moment so alienated, fictional, and wondrous that the tears streaming down our faces are uncontrollable. The endless “oh my gods” slip into our speech with no hesitation. The goose bumps on our skin that run down our limbs are welcoming. The scene blows us away with its beauty, reality, and essence. It becomes a part of us, the idea of it. The idea that the world stopped and shared this moment and it was perennial. The idea that we all shared a snippet of time.

I find that our befriended family and the eclipse have revealed the truth about time. It runs out— so stop, enjoy it and share with the world. The eclipse is a gift from the cosmos, a gift no human could ever replicate. A gift that joins the arms of the world with no question. We, on the path of totality, will share this one moment for the rest of our lives.



Elizabeth Hackenberg  
Tamara Empson, teacher  
LSU Lab School  
Capital Area Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
12th Grade

## The Traumatized Ball of Yarn

"Ahh, life is good isn't it Emerald Green," I said peacefully, soaking in all the greatness. "I guess it's okay, but it would be a lot better if we could find a way out of this crate," complained Emerald. "Why would we want to leave? This place is the best. It's way better than being stuck on the shelf of that boring old craft store. At least here you don't have people constantly picking you up to see how soft your fibers are." And before Emerald could even say yet another, rude comment I was snatched at by the jaws of the unknown. The smell was horrible and the teeth were piercing my durable, strong, and beautiful mauve fibers. Then just as fast as I was snatched I was miraculously dropped.

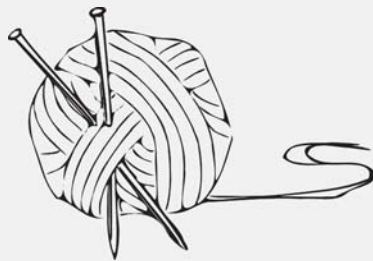
"Phew, that was terrifying, now how do I get back into my wonderful, cozy crate?" I called up to Emerald, waiting for her to tell me how to get up again. But when I saw her face peer over the side of the basket, her mouth was wide open in horror, her eyes, filled with dread, were looking behind me. So I turned around... and my stomach dropped, my heart went in my throat, and my eyes watered, the big, hairy, ugly, terrible, beast was charging. Yes, charging, full speed, ready to attack and shred my fibers. I tried to roll as far as I could but it wasn't far enough, before you could even say "Collapsed Caramel Cream" I was once again locked in the ferocious jaws of the repulsive beast. And just like last time it dropped me... but this time it started swatting at me with gory claws that could cut straight through my fibers, oh my poor fibers. It swatted and swatted until it hit me under the couch.

"HELP! HELP!" I screamed and howled from underneath the filthy couch that hadn't been cleaned since 2009. Then the foul beast started making this awful noise, "MEROOOW," until this great big, soft hand grabbed me just like they used to do in the stores. "Fluffy, don't play with my knitting yarn!" the nice lady who had picked me up and saved me, scolded the beast. I was placed softly back into my crate right next to a much traumatized looking Emerald.

"Are you okay, that Fluffy is incredibly horrid," said Emerald

"Yes, I am fine. But I now wish I was back on the shelf," I cried

For the rest of my life I was never the same, I have been traumatized, and I now believe in nothing good.



Laney Ramirez  
Natasha Waibel, teacher  
St Bernard Middle School  
St. Bernard Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
8th Grade

## Mysteries from the Antique Store

“Wow, did we really have this much stuff,” I called from the other side of the olive colored van.

“I guess so, though I wonder how the old house didn’t bust when you put down a plate,” Mom replied.

Mom and I had just moved from Arkansas to Louisiana. My grandmother had just passed away about two months ago, and mom finally paid all the bills on the old rickety shack of a house where she lived. Though it was 2 stories tall, it used to be an old antique store. It went out of business, so it’s still cluttered with old treasures and “mystic” objects that have mysterious powers. All a bunch of poop if you ask me. But mom said we couldn’t get rid of it because it had sentimental value to it.

“Maybe we could fix the old store up and make some money for spare pocket change.” I just looked at her confused.

“Would you do that just so I come straight home to work at the shop?” She was always overprotective. When I was little, I was only allowed to play with stuffed animals. But if they looked weird, then it would get put back. I guess that’s where I get all of my social skills from.

“You know I only want the best for you,” she replied with an eerie voice. We got a few boxes in, but it will take us all night to get unpacked. Luckily there was a sofa and loveseat in the living room, so we can watch T.V. and sleep on them.

“Your room is upstairs to the left at the end of the hall,” mom called out.

**WAIT...WHAT!** She knows I don’t like sleeping in the last room. I don’t know what it is, but being the farthest away from an exit gives me nightmare fuel for about my entire life.

“Don’t be surprised if I’m up at 2:00 watching movies because I don’t want to sleep in my room!!”

“James! There is only one room so we have to share a room. Be happy I love you or you’d probably be on the couch.”

We got everything unpacked and ready, but our beds wouldn’t come until tomorrow, so we had to sleep on the couch. We had a few bags of popcorn left, so we ate that after our Subway sandwiches. We watched some old corny cartoons because there was no cable. Just antenna T.V. Mom fell asleep instantly. I snooped around to see if there was anything secret or anything cool. I went to the downstairs store and looked around. There was this old sword with writing on it stating “*Whoever holds this sword will be cursed with the pain of a thousand dead souls.*” I instantly dropped it. No, I don’t think I want to be cursed today! I went back to the couch and forced myself to sleep, thinking it wasn’t real. Was it?!

Leslie Singleton  
Tracy Naquin, teacher  
R. K. Smith Middle School  
St. Charles Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
8th Grade



# Tools of the Trade

## *Scaffolding Schema Development by Using Graphic Organizers*

*Kimberly Kimbell-Lopez, Carrice Cummins and Elizabeth Manning*

Graphic organizers are a way of arranging information about a topic based on the patterns and relationships that exist and applying a label to identify that relationship (Cummins, Kimbell-Lopez, and Manning, 2015). Graphic organizers, also referred to as semantic maps, webs, thinking maps, structured overviews, etc., are a powerful learning strategy that can be used in a variety of ways:

- to represent students' background knowledge about a topic,
- to provide a framework for the topic concepts to be learned,
- to deepen analysis of the topic, and/or
- to organize newly acquired information about the topic.

A variety of experts have documented the effectiveness of graphic organizers as a comprehension strategy. This research goes back as far as 1960 when Ausubel first introduced the concept of graphic organizers as advance organizers to link prereading information with a reader's prior knowledge. This prereading introduction to a topic was later modified to an outline format called a structural overview (Baker, 1977; Barron, 1969; Earle, 1969; Merkley & Jeffries, 2009). In the 1980s, structured overview was then replaced with the term graphic organizer with the purpose of being used as a visual aid to assist students' learning as part of before, during, and/or after reading strategies. Since this time, the term graphic organizers have often been used in a broad sense with more specific names being given to represent their use with both narrative and informational texts (i.e. story map, compare and contrast, Venn diagram). A major benefit of using graphic organizers is that students learn to use them as a way to prioritize and organize their thinking (Benson and Cummins, 2000). This process then facilitates the activation of existing schema and helps students chart new knowledge. As a result, students are engaged in a continuous process of establishing cognitive categories, or schema, as they work with the graphic organizers.

### Using Technology Resources to Create Graphic Organizers

In this age of accessible digital resources, there are a variety of graphic organizer applications that can easily be used to support our students' thinking. Students can use these tools to create graphic organizers to facilitate brainstorming ideas, create outlines, illustrate topics or concepts, and plan presentations! The applications are either cloud-based or available for download to your iPad, iPhone, or Android making the apps readily accessible to students.

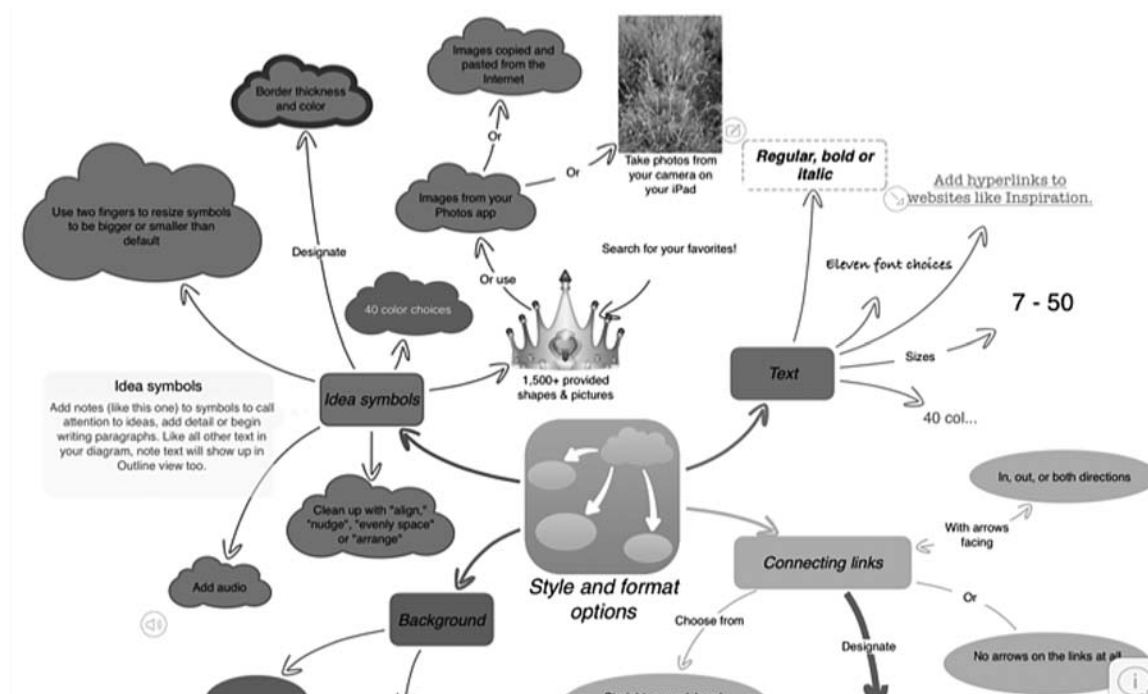
*Inspiration* ([www.inspiration.com](http://www.inspiration.com)) has been around for a while and is a widely known program used in the educational setting. Inspiration has also shown that it can grow with the digital age... the basic version can be downloaded as an application available for the iPhone or iPad for \$9.99. Features include adaptable templates or templates built from scratch as well as a variety of font, color, style, shapes, and graphics. One especially neat feature is that students can add audio to different elements of the graphic organizer they create. The graphic organizer can be shared through iCloud or emailed as an attachment.

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**Carrice Cummins** is a professor in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Leadership in the College of Education at Louisiana Tech University. She has 40 years' experience as an educator with primary areas of interest in comprehension, content area literacy, and teacher development. She served as the 2012-13 president of the International Reading Association. She can be contacted via email at [carrice@latech.edu](mailto:carrice@latech.edu).

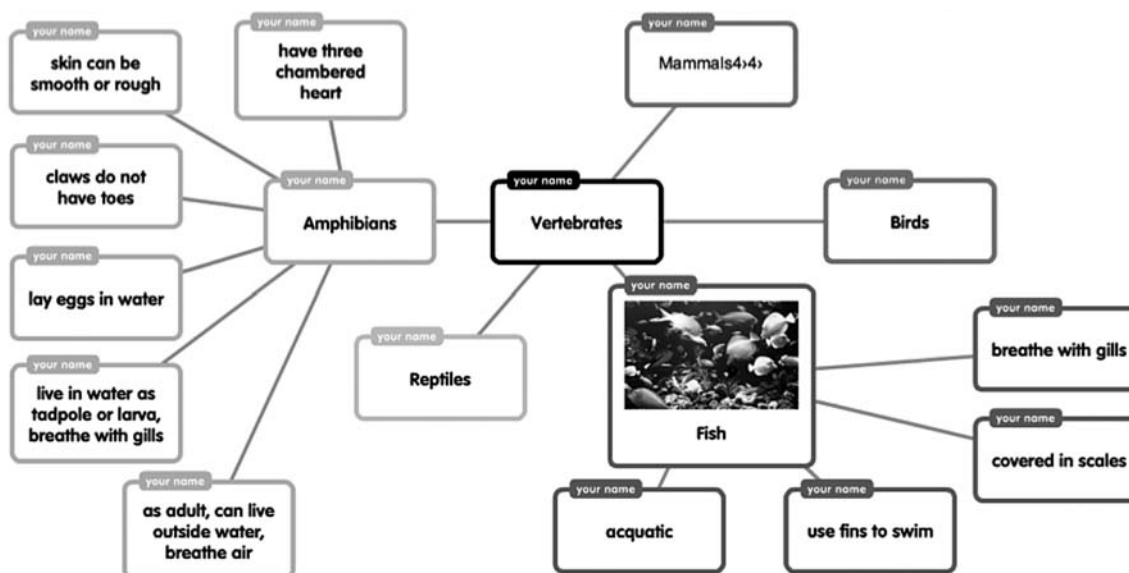
**Elizabeth Manning** is an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Leadership in the College of Education at Louisiana Tech University. A veteran K-8 teacher of over 25 years, her areas of interest include content area literacy, writing workshop, and curriculum design and development. Dr. Manning can be contacted via email at [lmanning@latech.edu](mailto:lmanning@latech.edu).

## Inspiration Example: From the Inspiration web site-Overview of Features

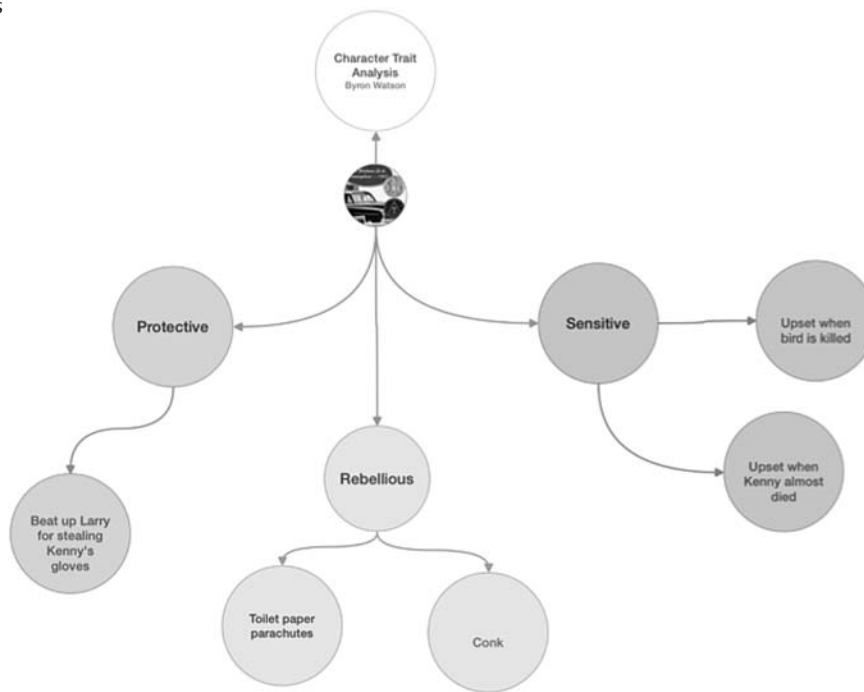


Popplet (<http://popplet.com>) is a cloud-based application designed to make textual and visual experiences available to users. Students can draw or add pictures to illustrate, and they can include lines to show relationships between each element. Once students are done creating, they can save the Popplet to their account, or they can export as jpeg or PDF. Students can either use Popplet through the cloud or download to their iPad.

## Popplet Example: Vertebrates

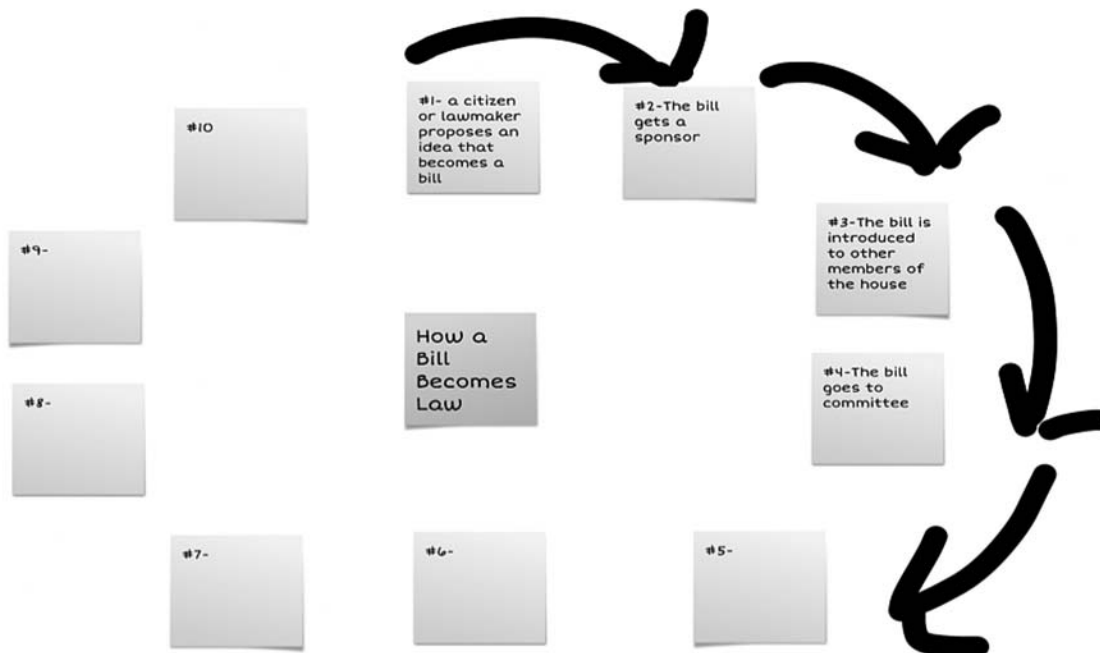


Similarly, *Ideament* (formerly known as *Idea Sketch*, <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/idea-sketch/id367246522?mt=8>) enables students to create a graphic organizer with the additional capability of switching back and forth from visual view for your more spatial learners to outline view for your more linear learners. Students can insert pictures, change text size, add connecting lines, and use the color feature to show relationships between key thoughts or ideas. This app is only available for download for iOS devices.



iBrainstorm (<http://www.ibrainstormapp.com>) facilitates students' ability to capture and share information. As sticky notes are added, then each note can be dragged to change the hierarchy or order, colors can be assigned to indicate relationships, and the freeform drawing tool can be used to add lines or arrows indicating relationships. This application can also be shared between devices.

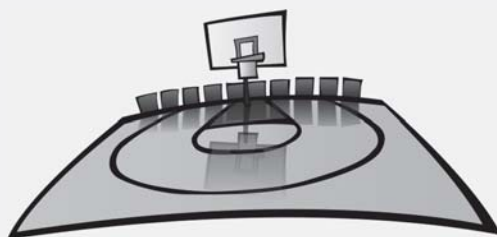
**Brainstorm Example:** How a Bill Becomes Law



Graphic organizers are a time-tested learning strategy that can be used by students to arrange information about a topic, identify patterns and relationships, and apply labels to signal those relationships. The power of the graphic organizer is not as much in the product as in the process of learning to organize information (Benson and Cummins, 2000). Accessing graphic organizers available via the web enhances processes for digital learners as they become more adept in creating new understandings, mapping out their learning, demonstrating their understandings, and developing their cognitive organizing skills.

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### A Beast

I'm a beast on the court; don't you dare step in my way,  
With the dribble of the basketball comes the rhythm of play.  
The ball court is my home; "Please come on in, ya'll,"  
It would be ludicrous to stay out, so come watch me play ball!  
Yeah you can bet basketball is a part of my soul,  
It has a special beat to which I will always roll.  
It does not matter if we play home or away,  
The beast in me is forever ready to play!  
If you dare to challenge me, then give it a whirl,  
However, I must warn you, this beast is a GIRL!

Bailey Fortenberry  
Rhonda Waskom, teacher  
Mt. Hermon School  
Washington Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
7th Grade

### I Was With You Today

I was with you today, but I missed you.  
Precious moments just kept flitting by.  
A sly look exchanged,  
A brush of our hands,  
A knowing glance flew out from your eye.

I was with you today, but I missed you,  
Through the bustle of everyday life.  
The papers from school,  
The food on the stove,  
The tug of war between husband and wife.

I was with you today, but I missed you,  
The passion I so desperately crave,  
Too busy to see,  
Too tired to love,  
It hides deeper within my heart's cave.

I was with you today, but I missed you,  
The damage so brutally done.  
Wrongs not made right,  
Words left unsaid,  
Our love story set with the sun.

Lisa Holliday  
Teacher

## My New Puppy

One bright sunny afternoon, my dad pulled into the driveway at my house like he does every day. Only this would be no ordinary day at my house. My dad stepped out of the truck holding what looked like a little brown ball of fur. To my surprise, it wasn't fur. Instead, it was my new puppy! This was the greatest day ever! I had always wanted a puppy and now I had one all to myself. Then I realized she was a girl puppy. This made me excited because I can dress her up and put bows in her hair. Next, my mom and dad told me I had to name her. I looked at her for a long time trying to decide what in the world I was going to call my new puppy. Then, all of a sudden, out of the blue, it came to me. She looked and smelled just like chocolate. So I decided to name her Coco. Now Coco and I are best friends. She follows me everywhere I go. She loves to play games with her toys. She is very playful and is always happy to see me. Coco chases me all the time. However, there is one thing she does that my mom is never happy about. She chews on things in the house. I know she will grow out of this, and hopefully very soon. I can see Coco and I growing up together. We will always be the very best of friends.



Addisyn Boyd  
Jolie Schenck, teacher  
Thomas Elementary School  
Washington Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
2nd Grade

## Fighting the Dragon

A long, long time ago in a faraway kingdom, there was an evil dragon trying to keep a princess locked in a castle. The princess was sad and did not want to be locked in the castle. A lot of princes tried to rescue the princess, but the dragon killed them all. One day, Prince Charming heard about the princess and wanted to rescue her. So, he left his castle and went to the castle with the dragon. The dragon had fire in his mouth and tried to blow the fire at Prince Charming. But, Prince Charming stabbed the dragon with his sword. He killed the dragon! Finally, the princess was free.

Keiley Graffia  
Jamie Mason, teacher  
Chalmette Elementary School  
St. Bernard Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
Kindergarten



## My Dog

My dog plays ball.  
He comes when I call.  
My dog eats cat food  
and has an attitude.

My dog will bite  
when he wants to fight.  
My dog likes to bark,  
especially at the park.

Austin Gonzales  
Jamie Mason, teacher  
Chalmette Elementary School  
St. Bernard Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
2nd Grade



## My Life

Four years ago something tragic, but good happened to me in my life. It was all over a fight and drugs.

August 27 was a beautiful, sunny afternoon but around noon that day, the cops showed up because my dad and his girlfriend had been fighting and she finally called the cops. However, when the officers came, my dad was at work. They inspected the house and just as they were about to leave, they found drugs in one of my dad's girlfriend's drawers. They handcuffed her and took her away. Arrangements were made for me to live with my nana. Unfortunately, the police discovered there was a warrant for her arrest. A woman from CPS and some undercover cops escorted me to the undercover cop's office. They gave me a golf hat and some reassurance before they took me to the lady's house where I was going to live for the time being, as a foster kid. They dropped me off, talked to her, and then left.

I ate, went to bed, and started a new school the next day. My behavior was pretty bad at first so on certain days I took counseling classes at school during my computer time. After a year of counseling I was a lot better kid. I continued the classes in third grade. In fourth grade I attended one class and I then quit taking the classes.

Some things I would do before I took the classes were flip off my foster mom, Mrs. Kim, spit on the floor, curse at her, and threaten to call CPS and leave. While I was in foster care, I would get to see my parents every other month and we would go to court every so often to see how my parents were doing and if they could get me back. September of 2014 I was adopted. I didn't want to go back, because they didn't have their lives together enough to raise me. I realized that the whole situation and being adopted was God's will. It was his plan for me. Now I'm in the sixth grade and love it.

Being with my new family is great. We spend Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and so on together. We attend church and Sunday School every Sunday. This is my first year in the youth class and I love it! Also, on Wednesdays I attend a kids' program at 6:00 at the First Baptist Church in my hometown. I go fishing, hunting, and build things. As a result of living here I make good grades. I plan to graduate high school and graduate from Louisiana Tech as a bridge engineer, or attend another college and become a spy and work for the CIA which stands for Central Intelligence Agency.

What happened to me was so tragic, but it was the best thing for me and my life.



Ethan Pardon Weed  
Charlene Tucker, teacher  
Mangham Junior High School  
Northeast Louisiana Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
6th Grade

7:52

It's true what they say; life really can change in a minute. One moment, everything is as it should be, and the next, it's as though it's all been flipped and turned this way and that until you can hardly recognize it anymore.

I was in my room when it happened, studying for midterms. I'd just finished highlighting a sentence on the use of catalysts when my mom walked in. Startled, I checked my bedside clock, it read 7:52. She was supposed to be working the night shift. Slowly, she lowered herself to the edge of my bed, and I sat up straighter. When she turned to me, I saw the look on her face, and instantly knew what this was about. Her red, swollen eyes told me all I needed to know.

Something had happened to Will.

At this point, my memory gets fuzzy. I don't exactly remember how she told me, only that she did. I recall walking across the hall into the other bedroom, as if my feet had a mind of their own. I sat on his bed, just staring at the room. It was exactly as it was when he left. He'd promised that he'd come back.

\*\*\*

*We stood huddled under the train station overhang, Mom, Will, and I. It was cold and the wind kept sweeping my hair into my eyes. Will wore the standard green and tan muddled uniform. I resented the intertwining colors, and what they represented. I knew logically that it was not the uniform that was taking Will away from me, but it made me feel better to channel all my anger into one thing.*

*It seemed like all too soon the dreaded train arrived. There was a call for everyone to board, and Will turned around to face us. He kissed the top of Mom's head and squeezed her shoulders before turning to me.*

*"This isn't forever Kiddo, only for three months. I won't even be near the real fighting."*

*He tapped my nose, but I refused to smile. "How about this, when I get back I'll drive the three of us to Disney World?" I managed a small twitch of my lips.*

*"Okay."*

*"Three months, Peanut, and then all the Mickey Mouse you can handle. I promise." And with that, my brother climbed aboard the train, reminding me so much of when he was twelve and left for summer camp. In a lot of ways, he was still young at heart.*

\*\*\*

I grabbed the framed picture off of his bedside table. It was one from last Christmas of the two of us in front of the Christmas tree, smiles forever frozen on our faces. I laid down on my brother's pillow, the same intertwining green and tan color as my last image of him. Only now, viewing the colors did not cause a feeling of anger or rage, but rather a sense of peace. My big brother was, and always will be, a hero.

Shelby Easley  
Ashley Ramirez, teacher  
Destrehan High School  
St. Charles Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
10th Grade

## Time

I am something that everyone dreads.  
I am the beginning and the end.  
I work beside God himself.  
I gave you life, and I am the reason life is sometimes taken away.  
But do not be afraid,  
I can be your friend  
If you use me correctly.

You see, I am the most to blame when things go wrong,  
People always avoid using me purposefully,  
But beg for more  
When I can no longer give them what they desire.

I am also found in times of grief,  
Like when children lose a parent.  
They just want more...well, you get the picture.  
Have you guessed who I am yet?  
No?  
Try harder!

I am the anxiety behind overdue assignments,  
Something that can slip through your fingers like butter.  
Get a good grasp because I am slick, and  
if you don't,  
I will destroy your future.

Have you guessed yet?  
I am Time.  
Time,  
Something that you can't rewind,  
So listen carefully,  
Use wisely,  
or let your future crumble.

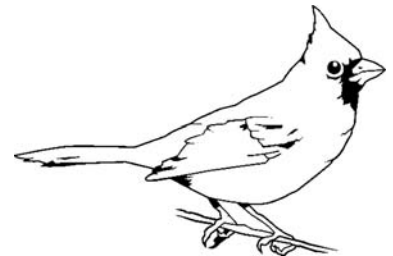


Tyron Lucas  
Kaitlin Ducote, teacher  
Zachary High School  
Zachary Area Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
10th Grade

## Stars in the Sky

Stars in the sky  
The sky is the limit  
Pushing and the feeling  
It's me and you  
Against the world  
Stars and darkness  
You can't start mess  
It's me and you against the world

Isaiah Mayes  
Tara Perkins, teacher  
Carter C. Raymond Junior High School  
Central Louisiana Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
4th Grade



## Cardinals

I'm a little cardinal with red feathers  
I also have some black feathers too.  
I like tweeting from my nest.  
Then I take a little rest.  
I don't migrate as you see.  
I like the cold as cold can be.  
I have a mate that stays with me.  
We will make a family,  
Just wait and see.

Ellie Treagle  
Holly Caffarel, teacher  
Bains Lower Elementary  
West Feliciana Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
1st Grade

## The Best Day of My Life

It was a Sunday in 2017 like many other Sundays. My family and I were at church just like we are most Sundays. This Sunday seemed different to me. I was feeling weird, but it was a good feeling like something was trying to take over me.

The preacher was Brother Scott. He started talking about salvation. I always wanted to be saved. I didn't want to live in the fire. I wanted to live in the sky with angels singing and worshipping the Lord in every way I can. I imagined how wonderful that would be.

The preacher was talking about people who don't go to Heaven and how they could see the angels and wished they wouldn't have done bad things and turned their backs on god.

It was soon time for Children's Church. We talked about salvation again. Then it was time to pray. Our teacher, Mrs. Patty asked, "Would one of y'all like to pray?"

I said, "I would." It was weird because I wasn't embarrassed. I am usually very shy. I prayed, "Dear God, thank you for all the wonderful blessings you did for us. Please help all the wonderful people that need you. Dear Heavenly Father, thanks for letting us wake up this morning. We come to you today. Amen."

I felt good when I prayed. The preacher said another prayer and then continued his sermon.

During the invitation I felt torn. I wanted to be saved, but I didn't think I was ready, but then the preacher said, "If you feel God today, please come up here and pray with me. Any age, even if you are only 7 or even 2. Any age, just if you feel Him."

I couldn't help myself. I had to go to him. I prayed, "Father, I'm sorry for all the wrong things I did. Please save me, Lord. I ask for forgiveness, please. I believe in you."

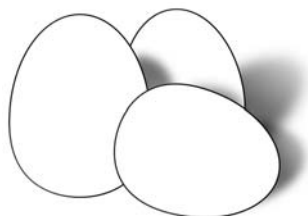
Then Brother Scott said, "You're saved."

I was feeling a lot of emotions, but they were good emotions. That is the day I got saved. It was the best day of my life.

Jaslyn Miller  
Lynn Kelly, teacher  
Mount Hermon School  
Washington Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
4th Grade

## How to Make Squishy Eggs

First, you peel the eggshell from the egg and put the egg inside a bowl. Then, you use a wooden spoon to mix the eggs up. Next, add salt and pepper inside the eggs and mix it together. Now, put the eggs in a pan to cook. Last, you can eat the squishy eggs.



Makai Boyer  
Jamie Mason, teacher  
Chalmette Elementary School  
St. Bernard Reading Council  
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*Area of interest for professional development* \_\_\_\_\_

# Louisiana Reading Association One Day State Conference

*Save  
the  
date*

December 7, 2018  
Best Western Hotel &  
Conference Center  
Alexandria, LA

**GUEST SPEAKER**  
**William VanCleave**

## **TOPICS:**

Literacy

Read-alouds

Vocabulary

Writing

Numeracy

Poetry

Assessment

Reading Profiles

Coaching

Struggling Readers

Music & Literacy

Lottie Crockett – Conference Coordinator

LRA, District III Director – [lottie.crockett@rpsb.us](mailto:lottie.crockett@rpsb.us)

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# Louisiana Reading Association

## Position Paper

### EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION IN PRE-KINDERGARTEN

*Adopted April 20, 2018*

Young learners are active meaning-makers. Parents, teachers, and other adults are critical to the development of emergent literacy skills. These adults can engage a child's interests, create challenging but achievable goals, and support the child's efforts to make meaning by participating in varied experiences and rich conversations.

Children entering the pre-kindergarten classroom are diverse, having many and different experiences, skills, and interests. Therefore, no one teaching method or approach is likely to be the most effective for all students in all settings. The most effective programs emphasize exposure to print, concept development, and content knowledge. Excellent pre-kindergarten instruction builds on what students already know and can do, and it provides the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for lifelong learning.

#### Strategies for Building Literacy Skills in Pre-Kindergarten

- *Shared Reading Experience* – As the teacher shares stories with students, children begin to pay attention to print. They build vocabulary and comprehension. They talk about the pictures, discuss events, and request multiple readings. In addition to fictional texts, providing children with a rich array of informational books will help them learn and understand about self, other people, and the world. Books and other print materials should abound in a pre-kindergarten classroom.
- *Discovery Areas* – Pre-kindergartners need the opportunity to make choices and to practice what they have learned about literacy. Creating discovery areas will allow children to explore and refine their understandings. Play is a crucial feature in early literacy development because it helps children interpret their experiences and to assume the roles and activities of more accomplished peers and adults.
- *Drawing and Writing on Paper* – Pre-kindergarten students need many opportunities to express themselves on paper, without feeling too constrained for standard spelling and proper handwriting. Teachers can organize experiences that both demonstrate the writing process and get children actively involved in it. In the beginning of pre-kindergarten, writing is likely to take the form of drawing and the use of symbols or random letters. With encouragement and appropriate instruction, students will begin to label their pictures, use beginning sounds and some sight words, and see writing as a meaning-making activity in which communication is paramount.
- *Rich Content Instruction* – For students to become skilled readers and writers, they will need to develop a rich language and conceptual knowledge base and good verbal reasoning abilities. Effective literacy programs in pre-kindergarten provide children with opportunities for sustained and in-depth learning, including play; diverse listening and speaking experiences; different levels of guidance to meet the needs of individual learners; varied activities that support content learning and social-emotional development; and the time, materials, and resources to build concepts and reasoning skills.

#### Policies and Programs

In addition to effective instruction within the pre-kindergarten classroom, state, district, and school policies and programs must support the teachers' efforts. Policymakers should:

- Provide comprehensive and consistent systems of learning for soon-to-be and practicing pre-kindergarten teachers. Ongoing professional development is essential for teachers to stay

current in research, teaching strategies, and learning outcomes.

- Provide sufficient resources to ensure that class sizes are small, with a ratio of one adult for every 8 to 10 children, with a maximum group size of 20. Small class size increases the likelihood that teachers can accommodate the diverse needs and interests of all learners.
- Ensure that sufficient resources are available so that all pre-kindergarten classrooms have a wide range of books, computer software, and multimedia material at various levels of difficulty. The resources should also reflect varied interests and diverse cultures.
- Provide resources for individualized instruction for those students who do not meet expected progress. Resources include, but are not limited to, targeted instructional materials, focused time, tutoring by qualified tutors, or other individualized intervention strategies.

### Position of the Louisiana Reading Association

Pre-kindergarten classrooms filled with print, language and literacy play, storybook reading, and writing allow young learners to experience the joy and power associated with reading and writing. Decision-makers at the state, district, and school levels can support students and teachers with appropriate policies and professional development.

What we do in the early years will make a difference in the reading patterns, interests, and lifelong desire to learn of Louisiana students. The Louisiana Reading Association understands the importance of the pre-kindergarten year in children's overall development and literacy learning, and it supports the strategies outlined in this position paper.

### Resource

International Literacy Association. (2018). *What effective pre-k literacy instruction looks like* [Literacy leadership brief]. Newark, DE: Author.

For more information, visit the International Literacy Association's Literacy Leadership Brief at <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/get-resources/position-statements>.

## Little Raccoon Learned Her Lesson

Once upon a time there was a little raccoon. Her name was Haley. She was being mean to everybody at school. She said this to everybody: "When you come to school, I'm going to rip your paper up!"

Then, when someone was treating her nicely, she learned a lesson. A bunny named Skylar wanted to be her friend, but Skylar was scared. The next day, Skylar was being nice to Haley the raccoon. When Haley didn't have a pencil and didn't know where the pencil was at, Skylar gave her pencil to her and said, "You can use it."

Then Haley started to be nice to people that she talked to. Then she said, "I'm sorry everybody for being mean to you."



Charli Ford  
Miss Grace Feucht, teacher  
Woodlawn Elementary School  
Capital Area Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
Kindergarten

## The Brother I Never Had

I had this strange friend growing up. He was different. He always wore this bag on his head with two holes cut out so he could see. His name was Devin and he never took the bag off. We would always hang out; in fact, we became best friends. As close as we were, I never did see his face. And believe me, I tried so hard to see it. The first time Devin stayed the night with me, I had this plan that I would take it off when he fell asleep. That didn't exactly work out though. When I was about to pull it off of him, I looked down and saw it was duck taped to his neck. I decided not to take it off because I knew he would feel it and stop me. After a while, I decided to tell Devin how I felt about that stupid bag.

"Why do you wear it?" I asked. "Tell me why!" I shouted. I must have said that really loud because everyone stopped in the hall and it got very quiet. It felt like a thousand eyes were on me. So, I walked away.

The next day, he told me he was sorry, but that he's meant to be heard not seen. I felt bad that I asked. It was a pretty serious answer.

So, after school, I went to his house to apologize. I had never been inside, only outside with Devin. I knocked, no answer. I knocked again, still no answer. Then, a third time. I thought nobody was home. That's when I looked through the window. I saw what I'd wanted to see since the first day I met Devin, his face. He was asleep but not on any furniture. But, on a counter that was built into the wall. I thought he was alone, but that's when I heard footsteps. A lady walked in. She had greasy hair, a stained shirt, and a cigarette. She was abusing him terribly. He had swollen lips that were cherry red from blood and multiple cigarette burns. He was crying so hard, I could tell his salty tears were stinging the cuts and burns on his face. I ran home crying to my mom. She called the police and we found him help.

After that, I knew why he was different. It wasn't because he wore that bag, it was because he was brave, brave enough to go back to that home yet act okay as if nothing happened. Devin found a foster home, but he didn't find just any home. He found ours. After that, he lived with us. We even shared a room. I don't think we were best friends anymore; we were brothers and always will be. I guess you could say that Devin is the brother I never had.



Caroline Crain  
Tabatha DeShazo, teacher  
Sterlington Middle School  
Northeast Louisiana Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
7th Grade



## Bonnie and Blanket

There once was a little girl named Bonnie who had the most special blanket in the world. She cleverly named it Blanket, and naturally, Blanket was a girl blanket. Blanket had the softest, fluffiest pink teddy bear with polka dots on her, and Bonnie loved snuggling her close.

Bonnie took Blanket everywhere, but every once in a while, Bonnie's mom would sneak Blanket into the washing machine. Bonnie and Blanket went on so many adventures together. They went to daycare, to the beach, to Grandma's house, and to the movies. But when Bonnie turned three, Blanket was no longer allowed to go places with Bonnie. Bonnie's mom said something about needing to grow out of carrying around a blanket, but Bonnie saw no reason to do such a thing.

Blanket slept with Bonnie every night. Bonnie sang songs to her and stroked the teddy bear's fur. They were like best friends. Bonnie missed Blanket now that she was banished from going places with her. Bonnie didn't like hurting Blanket's feelings by leaving her at home, but her mom left her no choice. She made sure to give Blanket extra snuggles when she got home.

Finally the day came when Bonnie started school. She excitedly put on her outfit, grabbed Blanket, and headed out the door. Her mom's firm voice and hand stopped them both in their tracks. Apparently, Blanket wasn't allowed to go to school either. Bonnie cried the whole way there.

When she got home that afternoon, Bonnie bounded through the door, snatched Blanket up, and gave her the biggest, longest hug. She dragged her to the couch where they sat and watched their favorite shows. Bonnie smiled, stroked the soft teddy bear, and said, "I missed you, Blanket."

Snuggled up cozily in her little girl's arms, the teddy bear on Blanket whispered back, "I missed you too."

Lisa Holliday  
Teacher

## Santa's Best Day

Sunday afternoon I was watching the Saints play football in New Orleans when all of the sudden, at the fourth quarter, Santa jumped on the field. It was only four seconds left on the clock. Santa made five touchdowns. He was the champion! All of his elves and all of the players all ran to hug him. Everyone was so excited!



Brody Young  
Annette Maxwell and Susan McKeithen, teachers  
Columbia Elementary School  
Northeast Louisiana Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
2nd Grade

## Saturday Night Fever

Thump! Thump! I sprinted down the hallway to get dressed for the Father-Daughter Dance which promised to be a great evening. Little did I know it would be the most humiliating night of my life.

"Girls, it's time to go. Let's load up!" Dad yelled to my sister Kaitlin and me. When we arrived, I sprang from the car and smoothed out the wrinkles of my new black party dress. As we walked into the gym, one of the chaperones was at the door handing out raffle tickets. *"I sure hope I win something tonight,"* I thought as she handed it to me.

When the opening remarks ended, everyone headed for the dance floor to start the festivities--- everyone except me. Even Dad was out there showing off some dance moves although he looked more like a helpless, flopping chicken than a man! Funny could not even describe it, and I was so embarrassed! There he was, shaking his "tush" to the Electric Slide like he owned the place. Blushing red as a tomato, I bolted to the corner of the gym and went into hiding. Nothing could be as humiliating as having your dad dance like that in front of all your friends. What was I thinking when I invited him?

"Okay, everyone, it's time to draw for some prizes," came the announcement. "Get your tickets out and see if you are the winner of a scrumptious King Cake! And the winner is..."

My sister Kaitlin had won! There she was, wearing my dress, and winning a prize! That sure didn't seem fair!

After we paused to eat, we headed back to the dance floor. This time I thought, *"I guess I'll give it a try,"* and went and joined the others. I had begun to loosen up and enjoy myself when along came Daddy again.

With one swift turn, I bolted to the corner of the gym and hid my face. Soon I heard the announcer requesting everyone back to the dance floor with a partner for dance games, one being a dance-off contest. There was no way I was going to participate, but Kaitlin and Daddy did. He looked like something right out of Saturday Night Fever! I wanted to head to the bathroom and stay there until it was all over but decided to stay. After all, it wasn't me looking like a fool, so why should I care?

At the end of the dance, the announcer drew tickets for more prizes. Nope, not me again! But to my surprise, or should I say, my embarrassment, Daddy and Kaitlin had won the dance-off and were both awarded crowns for their effort.

Dad taunted me all the way home. "Make sure you let me know when next year's dance will be so that I can go."

It had been a fun night that I would never forget, but I think I'll keep the next dance a secret unless I enroll in disco lessons beforehand.



Destiny Watkins  
Gayla Strickland, teacher  
Varnado High School  
Washington Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
8th Grade

## The Fight

Darkness, pain echoes throughout my body. As I lay paralyzed, my mind starts to wonder. Lights and sounds mix, not making any sense. Slowly, my head levels, and the lights and sounds become less and less intense. I realize that I'm on my back looking at a gym ceiling. I can move my legs just enough that I'm able to roll over on my knees. The pain reminds me that it's still there as I lean forward gasping and choking in pain. Dazed, I see the colossus looking down at me with fury in his eyes.

The colossus stands before me ready to fight.

A man screams, "Time."

He runs to my side to help me stand. I move too quickly, and my body reacts with a twist in my stomach. I gasp for air again. The man sits me in a chair and tells me that I have one more round to fight. A wave of familiarity rushes over me, and I remember I'm in a taekwondo tournament.

I am ready to confront the colossus. I get into my stance for the oncoming match. Aggression burns in the colossus's eyes when the bell rings for the match to start. He strikes with a side kick. Unprepared, his foot slams in my ribs like a train. I stumble and clench my side in agony. He tries to rush me to finish me off with another kick. I know this was coming. I practically invite him to do so. Swiftly, I block using my fore arm and kindly repay him with an unforgiving uppercut. The room falls silent as the colossus stumbles and falls to the ground with an earthshattering boom. He looks to me, and I know I won. A wave of relief hits me. I think it's all over, but my master walks to me.

He whispers, "Just one more match, and then you become the new state champion."

The bell rings, and the crowd becomes silent as the defending champion emerges from the bench and gets into her fighting stance. Surprisingly, the challenger is a girl. The match bell rings, beginning the fight. Before I can start to advance, she quickly rushes for a punch. I fall to the ground, spitting up blood.

Dazed, I hear my master scream, "Watch out!"

A number two axe kick lands straight on my back so fast and forceful that my whole-body bounces like a rubber ball. I think to myself, "This is it. I've met my limit."

Suddenly, I hear my dad say, "Get up."

I stand, feeling a spark in my soul. I move around, circling my opponent. I watch her feet move, assessing. I do a hook kick and knock the girl out cold. I hear the ref call my name, and I instantly fall to the ground crying. I realize the greatest lesson is not to be afraid to push your limits. If you don't, you'll never know what you can accomplish.



Logan Buzbee  
Alma Kent, teacher  
West Feliciana High School  
West Feliciana Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
9th Grade

# Doughnuts

I love doughnuts a lot,  
Especially when they are hot.  
Glazed, chocolate, powder, and jelly,  
They taste better in my belly.



April Munoz  
Jamie Mason, teacher  
Chalmette Elementary School  
St. Bernard Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
1st Grade

# Him

His face was one of true beauty--the perfect example of Italian oil and Grecian stone turned flesh. The representation of perfect symmetry. His proud and prominent cheeks would fit perfectly in the curve of her hand, and his ideally sloped nose made it almost impossible for her not to dream of touching. His chin was angled excellence, and his brow bone was one of classic allure. His lips were soft and plumped, reminiscent of a rosebud, new and innocent, untouched by the harshness of nature. Of all his marvelous features, perhaps the most alluring were his eyes. Beautiful, bright blue orbs, rimmed with the slightest touch of green, and she perpetually sought after the tiniest glimpses of them.

She had been enchanted by the boy a few years before he became hers. She fell under the clichéd spell of love at first sight and had silently pursued him ever since. For years, she had watched him from afar, never daring to speak directly, fearing the spell be broken. At night she laid awake for hours, staring at her ceiling, imagining a world where they were together. A world where he was hers, and only hers.

She often found herself thinking of the times before he was hers. Pathetic, she thought. She remembered how she would watch him from a distance and saw him go through many lovers, each one more horrid than the last. At home, she would dream of telling him her feelings, embracing his wide shoulders, moving his lush hair, cupping her delicate hands against his ear, and whispering, "I'm yours." She would drift slowly to sleep afterwards, fantasizing about them together.

She was proud of her accomplishment and kept him by her side as much as possible, even through the mundane moments in her life. She felt safe and protected by him and always carried a piece of him with her. She sat down, his head in her lap with his arresting eyes open and unblinking. She smiled at him. Hers. All hers. She ran her long, pale hands through his hair--like she did every night--although his hair had become more matted with the passing days. She stroked his decomposing forehead and traced the outline of his bloated cheeks. She parted his wilted rosebud lips and removed an insect beginning to make its home in the mouth of her dismembered lover. She sighed. Hers. All hers.

Riley Charlet  
Layla Dupuy, teacher  
West Feliciana High School  
West Feliciana Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
11th Grade

## Too Close to Quit

I've always wondered, what's the purpose in life? Now, I know. I'm here to tell you why. Everyone thinks in life, the main thing you should want to do is win. However, there are few (such as me) who think the main thing in life is to set and achieve your goals with good sportsmanship. The way I found this out is a whole different story.

When I was nine, all I wanted to do was play soccer. So, I tried out for the competitive team at my recreational park, Coquille.

My mom signed me up and five months later, there I was. I had just been dropped off by my mom, and I had a smear of lipstick on my face from the hugs and kisses of good luck. As I was arriving, I started to see girls who looked much better than me. They were juggling balls--with their feet of course! I started to feel sick to my stomach. I wanted to leave. However, my mom had already left so there was no turning back. As I proceeded to tell them I was there, they gave me the number 624 to put on my shorts.

As tryouts began, I started to realize my friend's dad was one of the coaches for an older team and a judge for U-11 competitive try-outs. Along with him was another guy and, hopefully, my new coach. I started to get a feeling of assured happiness in my body. Try-outs went on for a few weeks, and we met about twice a week. Two weeks into practice, my soon-to-be coach left us to coach an older team, and a new coach took his place. This was a disaster because we had to redo tryouts!

After all the fuss of having to do tryouts again, I surely thought my one dream of being on the team had failed. However, there was one phrase I kept repeating in my head, "*I'm too close to quit.*"

A few months later my parents got an email about the results. They called me downstairs, and we sat on the couch and talked about good sportsmanship. I already knew what sportsmanship was, so I didn't pay much attention. I did start to think of a random thought, though: "*How far is my reach?*" My parents were at the point where they were about to spill the beans.

"YAY!" I screamed. I had made the team. I was jumping with joy! I was so happy.

Now, I have made friends on the team, and I'm so glad I didn't give up when I was doubting myself. If it weren't for my outburst of positive thought, I may not be where I am now.

After all of the drama of trying out for the team and finally succeeding, I started to realize what is truly in my reach, and I now live my life by my motto: ***Too close to quit!***



Caroline Monier  
Sarah Meyer, teacher  
Lancaster Elementary School  
Northshore Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
5th Grade



## Into the Woods

It was sweltering in the bus, hotter than a stagnant summer day. Perhaps this was mostly owing to the fact that it was a stagnant summer day. The fact that the bus driver was Mrs. Henny, a middle-aged woman with nicotine-stained teeth and an otherworldly hate for open bus windows certainly didn't help any. This trip was bound to be a nightmare.

Nate Winters sunk deeper into the worn seat, doing his best to avoid the sweaty flesh of the strangers sitting next to him. One day he was throwing home-made Molotovs into dumpsters, the next he was on his way to kiddie prison for "pyromania." The memory of his mother's tear-stained face crossed his mind. She had been worried for his safety when she received this letter. It was true Nate had a fragile appearance. Topping out at five foot six inches tall, he was a sickly child with skin so pale that all his veins were visible beneath it like a blue spider web. He was not, however, fragile. The people who had had the task of getting him onto this bus should know that well enough.

Suddenly, he was pulled from these thoughts by chanting from the rear of the bus. It seemed the twitchy kid, who Nate knew as Ken from the roll call, was being made into a spectacle again. Tourette's made him a prime target for tormenters like the Greek girl who was leaning over the back of her seat to tease him. Nate didn't remember her name, but he had seen her load the bus earlier. It was hard to forget those ghastly silver eyes. Before he could bother to shrug the situation off, he was very roughly launched into the backrest of the seat before him as Mrs. Henny slammed her foot on the brakes.

Her reaction was too late. Nate felt the "thump" of something going under the wheels. Sick fascination welled up in him as the driver swore, ordered all of them to stay put, and went to investigate. This fascinating feeling seemed to be unanimous as everyone immediately got up and went to the front to try to steal a look at whatever poor creature had the misfortune of getting between the wheels and the road. A sudden, more powerful feeling grabbed hold of Nate as he realized nobody was guarding the emergency exit anymore. This was his chance, but an internal debate arose within him.

Freedom was at least ten miles away through rough country. Without thinking again, he made his decision. Nate flung himself at the door and burst free, barreling towards the tree line. He didn't stop until the emergency siren faded behind him. His lungs heaved, his breaths coming out with horrible rattling sounds. His legs and his heart both throbbed. Hunched over, he listened for signs he was being followed as he waited for his body to calm down. By the time he heard the fast-approaching footsteps, it was too late.

Anna Bickham  
Elise Knight, teacher  
Mt. Hermon School  
Washington Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
12th Grade

# My Last Innocent Christmas

*Snow,  
Snow,  
Snow is falling down  
just a little bit  
The world's so quiet  
and still  
Santa's out there flyin' around  
and it's true!*



After the long year of waiting, that special day had finally arrived. Pretty soon, Saint Nicholas would be sending his supply drops of joy to all of the good girls and boys. I silently prayed to anyone who might have been listening that I was on his nice list, or that he had not seen the cookie I stole from my brother, or even when I fell asleep during church-but enough of that- all that mattered was, as childish as it might sound, the presents. Or, even better, the happiness you receive in knowing that someone out there watches every nice thing you do and is grateful for it.

I tiredly glanced over at the clock, rubbing my eyes to get a clearer view of the digital display.  
**4:37 A.M.**

I groaned in frustration, ripping at my hair impatiently, when-  
Knock!

I jumped a bit in fear as a sound filled my dead, quiet home.  
Knock!

It sounded almost like it was coming from.....  
Knock!

The Christmas Tree!

I heard muffled voices and a few *shh!*'s, almost like the exchange of an old married couple, short and squabbled.

I leapt from the bed, teddy bear clasped to my chest tightly, as I made the mad dash to the dining room area.

Just around the corner, I thought, I would finally see Santa! I slowed down, peering the corner quietly, pretending to be a ninja. What I saw almost made me scream in anguish: my parents!

I wheezed a bit, my stuffed bear plopping onto the ground as I stared in horror as they placed the gifts under the tree, stealing Kris Kringle's thunder. My dad grabbed a cookie from Santa's offering plate, eating it slowly, his bites loud and crunchy. My mom spun on an axis, shushing him once more. He raised his hands up, mocking surrender.

The last present was placed in the supply drop zone, and they began the trek back towards their slumber.

I grabbed my teddy, frantically whispering, "Let's bail!" into his ear. I stuffed him down my shirt, eyes darting around with fear as I planned my escape. I crept back towards my humble abode, mouth agape in horror. As my bed swallowed me whole, my blank, but pained, gaze rested on the dull ceiling, feeling as though I just had my teeth kicked down my throat.

And at ten years old, my innocence was lost.

I heard my folks scurry back into their chamber, the door cracking as it closed behind their entry.

Egan Gardiner  
Tamara Empson, teacher  
LSU Lab School  
Capital Area Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
10th Grade

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## The Exterminator

Why is it that pets are always getting themselves into trouble? My family and I have been trying to figure this out for years since my dog, Jessie, is notorious for trouble. For example, once I bought a \$100 pair of shoes and she tore them up! Of all the bad things she's done, one stands out like a sore thumb.

It all started one day when I brought my new hamster named Dave home. I was so excited to have such a great new pet, but unfortunately my dog Jessie didn't feel the same way that I did about Dave. This feeling Jessie had toward Dave should not have surprised me because in the winter when field mice came in our house, she always hunted them down and killed them. To Jessie, Dave was a big mouse!

Late one night, I woke up to the clicking sound of Jessie walking on the kitchen tiles. The thought that she was ludicrous for walking around at one A.M. immediately crossed my mind. Suddenly, the clicking stopped. However, not only did the clicking stop, but so had the sound of Dave's wheel. It was eerily quiet. Something was wrong, but I just ignored the feeling. After all, it was one in the morning. I eventually drifted back to sweet sleep.

Suddenly, I heard Jessie growling. Then she started running up and down the house like she had lost her mind! Once again, I ignored her thinking she was just barking at the neighbors so I yelled, "Be quiet you crazy dog!" Once again, sleep called my name.

The next morning, I woke early for school. My interrupted sleep left me feeling as dead as a zombie. After a sluggish start, I was finally done getting dressed and I opened my door. This is when it happened. Squishy mess was all over the place and I stepped in it! Immediately I looked down and couldn't believe my eyes.

It was Dave's bloody carcass. Disgusted at the sight of his lifeless body, I did my best to hold down my breakfast. Dave looked like a big chunk of meat with patches of fur. My hands covered my eyes as my mouth let out a screechy scream. Finally my mom came to the rescue. I looked over at Jessie as she licked Dave's blood off of her snout. I was absolutely infuriated with her!

"It'll be alright," my mom whispered trying to comfort me.

"Yeah right," I replied sarcastically as I stomped off to school. After school, we buried Dave. Still stunned that Jessie had really killed him, I cried the whole time. As I buried him, Jessie watched and admired what she had done.

In the end, I forgave Jessie. She thought I would be pleased, but I was far from it. She genuinely didn't know any better. It's still a mystery how Dave got out of his cage. Now I know, always trust your instincts.

McKayla Bridges  
Rhonda Waskom, teacher  
Mt. Hermon School  
Washington Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
7th Grade

## Death Dance

My name is Kumari. That name means nothing to you. As of the Time When Everything Changed, that name meant nothing to anyone. Many people have that time in their life that is so monumental that they use it as a landmark around which they place all other events in their life. This event occurred a week ago for me. Before then, it was like I was a different person. I didn't know how to read or write, a knowledge I still don't possess, but I was happy. I was content with simple moments, like feeling wheat graze my fingers, or playing in the spray of a waterfall. I loved playing footsies with my best friends and teasing my mom at the dinner table. But, then everything changed. The soldiers of another kingdom came into our village. They killed my family. They killed my friends. They plucked us off one by one in front of everyone we loved for their own entertainment and then burned our fields, our livelihood, to the grounds, turning our memories, like the gold wheat, into ashes. It amazes me how it takes one moment to turn you from a stubborn, vivacious, confident and naïve girl into a shell of a woman, cold and insecure. But, that is what happened. They took me, the sole survivor, to their castle, showered me in riches, but I had never felt so poor. They ordered me, "Dance!" Dance is supposed to give you wings. I took my steps onto the podium, never feeling more grounded, more aware. As the anklets on my ankles jingled, the costume jewelry glittered, the makeup on my face accentuating features I didn't know I had, I couldn't let them take away what dance did for me, what it let me express. So I danced; I danced to words in my head. I sang, a melancholy song with a pleasant melody, an ode to the people I loved, to those I lost:

*My feet thump, my eyes water,  
My hands clap, my glances wander,  
My dress billows, eyelashes flutter,  
My mind screams, but I don't stutter.  
The music is their cries, the ground is their graves.  
In every tree, stream, and gust of wind inscribed are their names.  
Every tear that greets the ground is in their memory;  
Every leap that I perform only serves as an apology.  
I'm sorry for being alive when all I loved are dead.  
Children, wives, and husbands that should be standing here instead.  
The trees bend, branches trying to reach those who played in them.  
The water rages, red, filled with tears of the dead.*

Vani Pandian  
Rachel Janney, teacher  
Mandeville High School  
Northshore Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
9th Grade

## Welcome to Anxiety

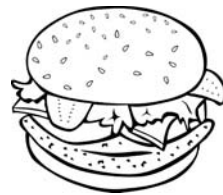
You may be yourself  
But only in the right way  
You may be accepted  
But not for being yourself  
You may put on a face that shows that you're ok  
But in the end you're not  
You may have a friend or two  
But is scared to lose  
You may say whatever but  
You will be judged  
You may enter a crowd  
But start panicking and never come out  
You may cry but  
You don't say anything because you're scared  
I can't do something too much  
Or I will be called out  
You may be loud  
But we choose to be quiet  
Drive to a therapist  
But are scared you will crash  
You may have but  
They don't care  
This goes through our head  
We think of everything that can go wrong  
But nothing happens  
We can have fun  
But we think of everything that might go wrong  
or may happen to be gone  
if we don't do something right  
We care too much  
But they don't.

Sophie Tompkins  
Rosa Delpidio, teacher  
Harry Hurst Middle School  
St. Charles Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
8th Grade

## Hunting with My Dad

This weekend I went deer hunting with my dad. We got up really early in the morning and headed to the woods. We saw ten deer. I shot an eight point buck. Dad's friend, Mark, came to the stand and helped us drag the deer out of the woods. We put my deer in the back of my dad's Toyota and headed back to the camp. I had a great time hunting with my dad.

Brody Young  
Annette Maxwell and Susan McKeithen, teachers  
Columbia Elementary School  
Northeast Louisiana Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
2nd Grade



## Hamburgers

Hamburgers are super delicious.  
They are really nutritious.

I like to watch my cooking mom,  
When she cooks hamburgers that are delicious bombs.

I hope they actually would  
Taste so appetizing and good.

On the burger was yellow mustard  
I was very flustered.

They are exceptionally the best.  
They can be all dressed.

They are incredibly cheesy  
They are super greasy.

Carin Marshall  
Melinda Hall and Shannon Clement, teachers  
Chalmette Elementary School  
St. Bernard Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
2nd Grade

## The Feeling of a Moment

You've been waiting for an hour,  
You're feeling drained of power  
Your stomach begins to rumble  
And then it begins to grumble  
As you look to rebuild power

Way up high in the tall tree stand  
Or way down low in the ground blind blending in  
You hear a buck blow and then you hear his grunt  
How could you get so lucky on this hunt?

Everything gets still and quiet  
The feeling of a moment  
You get so excited

No time to think as you sight the bow in  
Then finally he shows and then you hear his blows  
It looks as if his rack could cradle a baby, so widespread it is totally crazy

You steady your crossbow to get ready  
You lower your finger then pull the trigger  
The exhilaration  
Beat of your heart, not steady but racing as you watch the arrow depart  
Did I hit? Did I miss?  
You wonder as you fret a bit

In the shoulder  
Or the spine  
Even the neck would be just fine  
You watch in hope as he leaps over the fence  
Blood trailing behind him, very dense

You hear a loud thud and knew that it was him  
He dropped dead and suddenly the world around you grew still  
The sound of that  
The feeling of a moment

You have killed a deer and you know it  
Time for tracking him is near as you load up with some gear  
You grab the blood light  
Look around

Then you sight him out on the cold, hard ground  
You see him there as still and stiff as a rock lying on the arrows lighted nock  
You join him and pick up his rack, very heavy, matter of fact  
1-10 you count on  
You jump up and down with joy

You got yourself a deer, of course you think  
First hunt of the season and then more to link  
Thirty yards is not bad at all  
Now you've finally got yourself a deer  
The feeling of a moment



Nakiya Pittman

Jolena Downing, teacher

Bains Elementary

West Feliciana Reading Council

1st Place - Poetry

5th Grade

## The Final Flash Beginning

“Boom!” went the store door. Every single kid was going wild to find the rarest fidget spinner. It forms dragons when it spins. It is golden-colored. When I started looking for it, it wasn’t in the toy stores. My friends Roshan and Joe were looking for the same thing. So I asked them, “You want to team up?”

They said, “Yes!” Roshan, Joe and I saw something gold in the clothing department. We saw three of the rarest fidget spinners under the superhero clothes.

Joe said, “What if the other kids see us with the fidget spinners?”

I responded, “We will sneak quietly by the kids and then check out.”

“HE HAS THE FIDGET SPINNER!” shouted a kid. All the kids came running after us, so we ran into the woods with the kids on our tails.

Roshan said, “How do we get out of here now?”

I responded, “We will climb the trees like ninjas to get out safely with the fidget spinners and get home.”

When Roshan, Joe and I got up a tree, we saw all the kids looking for us. An evil-looking fidget spinner with an evil dragon on it that looked like our fidget spinners showed up. A second later, we were flying. Even the kids were surprised. The evil fidget spinner came back in a person, he was .... my friend ... Angel.

I was shocked because he was different. He had red eyes and a dark body. Joe lost his power and even his gold form. Roshan went down to save Joe. When he saved him, he was still alive but knocked out. So Roshan put him somewhere safe, then it was down to me and Roshan.

We said “LET’S END THIS!” So we got our gold dragon fidget spinners out and we started spinning. We felt a “BOOM!” The fidget spinners were attacking each other. It was epic. The fidget spinners hit the ground and Roshan, Angel and I fell. Out of nowhere, Joe saved us.

When we got home, our moms said, “Come with us.” We went to the bathroom. My mother answered a password on the wall. Then, a big hole appeared.

Then our moms said, “Spin your fidget spinners.” So we got our fidget spinners out and started flying. It became dark, but when Roshan’s mom turned on the light we were in a secret cave.

Then our moms said, “This is going to be the beginning of your power. There will be evil in the world. We want you four to stop them. Will you join?”

We all said, “Yes!”

Joe said, “What should we call our team?”

I said, “We will call our team ... The Final Flash.”



Amori Scott  
Carlos Caldero, teacher  
R.K. Smith Middle School  
St. Charles Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
7th Grade



## The Chosen One

(A recording)

*This story has been translated into English so you are able to understand. Some sounds in the background are told by the author in parentheses. Thanks for understanding.*

(Recording sounds) Hello. I am recording for you and I only have a few hours so I should warn you, my fellow pumpkins. Listen closely. I was just sitting there, scared to death as all of the humans walked by me. I knew that they were going to, at some point, take one look at me and take me to their house. I knew that I was going to be tattooed all over in the shape of a scary face. (Cat meows in background) I knew that it was going to hurt. I knew I would then be thrown in the trash after and die. I knew a lot of things. But I never would have known what would happen next.

I was sitting there, just waiting to be taken, when all of a sudden a little girl came over. Oh Great. I told myself. Now she is going to pick me up and take me away. And I was right. She picked me up and started carrying me. But then instead of taking me away or doing something weird, she did something amazing. She put me on a table and she started putting face stickers on me. I was amazed. She kept putting stickers on me until my whole body was covered. But then, she dropped me. (Recording briefly stops)

Sorry about that. I had to.... deal with something. But that isn't important, so just ignore it. So back to the story, I was so startled when she dropped me I thought I had already died. I looked around, but then saw I just landed in some hay. All of the stickers fell off of me and I sat there. (Leaves blow in the background) She apparently also thought I had splattered, too. She almost started to cry, but then she looked down and saw that I was ok. So she picked me up and she did the thing I thought she would do. She took me to her mom. They started to fight, but apparently the little girl won, so they bought me and took me home.

When we got to her house, they had already prepared to carve me. A fresh set of knives was set on their table ready to carve. They got the knives and took me outside to start to carve me. I was so scared. (Crickets chirping in background) They left this recording device on the table and left. Maybe it was because they are tired or something. So now I am out here, waiting to die. Sharing my final moments with you, fellow pumpkins. So I guess I should.... Oh no! They are coming! No. NO. NO WAIT. STOP. DON'T GET THE KNIFE. WAIT DON'T PICK IT UP. STOP! NOOOOOOO!! --- (Recording stops)



Brady Napolitano  
Trezan Sorapuru, teacher  
Schoeffner Elementary School  
St. Charles Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
5th Grade

## Extra! Extra! Call for Manuscripts

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE:** For Fall 2019 edition, submit by February 28, 2019

### Guide to Prospective Authors

We welcome submissions that relate to a broad variety of literacy topics in a variety of formats, such as articles, interviews, essays, and research reports. Guidelines for submission include:

1. The manuscript should include a cover letter stating the author's name, position, affiliation, address, home phone number, office phone number, and email address. The cover letter should also include a statement concerning the author's desire to have his/her article published in this journal. Name and affiliation should not appear on the pages of the manuscript. Authors will be notified upon receipt of the manuscript. If notification is not received within one week of submission, please contact the editor by email (carrice@latech.edu).
2. All correspondence and manuscripts should be directed to the editor. Editor correspondence will be directed to the first author if more than one author.
3. Manuscripts must be previously unpublished and must not be under consideration by any other publication.
4. Manuscripts should not exceed 20 word-processed double-spaced pages including references, figures, and tables.
5. The manuscript should include a header or footer with a word or phrase that identifies the title and the page number.
6. There should be no author identifying information on the actual manuscript.
7. The reference citations and bibliography in the manuscript should follow the fifth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.
8. Files should be submitted electronically to Dr. Carrice Cummins, Editor, R.E.A.D., at carrice@latech.edu. as PDF, WORD, or as rich text format (rtf).
9. The editor will assume responsibility for pre-screening submissions. Each manuscript will be evaluated using a blind-review process. Members of the editorial board will evaluate each article in terms of its reflection of a clear and sound theoretical base, significance to the audience, and quality of writing.
10. Manuscripts accepted for publication may be edited to improve organization, promote clarity, or delete offensive (i.e. sexist) language. Authors will receive a copy of the journal in which their manuscript appears.
11. If not selected for publication, the first author will be notified. If selected for publication, the manuscript will become the property of R.E.A.D.

### Editorial Policy

*READ: Reading, Exploration, and Discovery* is published semi-annually for the members of Louisiana Reading Association and for all others concerned with literacy learning. Because *R.E.A.D.* serves as an open forum, its contents do not necessarily reflect endorsement by Louisiana Reading Association

## Extra! Extra!: Call for Terrific Teaching Tips

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE:** February 28, 2019

### Guide to Terrific Teaching Tips

*READ: Reading, Exploration, and Discovery* would like to invite teachers to submit practical teaching ideas for publication. Please include teaching ideas and/or classroom activities that have been successful. The article should be approximately 500-750 words, and it may include pictures or illustrations (with written permission).

All correspondence should be directed to the editor; entries should be sent as an e-mail attachment (in Microsoft Word) to:

Dr. Carrice Cummins, Editor  
READ: Reading Exploration and Discovery  
Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Leadership  
College of Education  
Louisiana Tech University  
P.O. Box 3161  
Ruston, LA 71272  
carrice@latech.edu

# Extra! Extra!

## Call for Student Contributions

### SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

February 28, 2019

### Guide to Young Authors and Illustrators

*READ: Reading, Exploration, and Discovery* seeks to encourage students to publish exemplary writing and illustrations. Teachers are encouraged to submit stories, poems, and illustrations created by students in their classes (typed or scanned will be accepted). No class sets will be accepted.

Each entry should be accompanied by the following:

- Completed consent form from parents and student.
- Contact information for the student and teacher (name, address, phone number, and email)

Authors published by *READ* will receive a copy of the issue in which their contribution appears. All student work and correspondence should be directed to the editor. Entries may be mailed or sent as an e-mail attachment to:

Dr. Carrice Cummins, Editor  
*READ: Reading Exploration and Discovery*  
Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Leadership  
College of Education  
Louisiana Tech University  
P.O. Box 3161  
Ruston, LA 71272  
carrice@latech.edu

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## STUDENT CONTRIBUTION RELEASE FORM

**DEAR PARENT:** Your child's writing/illustration has been selected by your child's teacher to be submitted for possible publication in *READ: Reading, Exploration, and Discovery*. This journal is read by over 3,000 teachers throughout Louisiana and the nation. Please complete the following form required for publication.

### PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE:

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

School's Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

School's Phone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher's Email \_\_\_\_\_

I have written this story or poem by myself.

Child's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I give permission to use my child's work and identification information (name, age, grade, school) in *READ: Reading, Exploration, and Discovery*.

Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## My Camping Trip

Last summer my family and I went on a camping vacation to Bogue Chitto State Park. We had a so much fun!

First we went to the playground. They had a bunch of slides and a huge jungle gym. Next we went down to the beach area and played in the sand and water. The water was a little cold but we were having so much fun we didn't even care. The next day we went to the water park, I think it was my favorite part! When the water bucket dumped on my head I screamed! The water slide was kind of scary the first time, but then it was very fun! We ran through the water shooters till dark. That night we made a fire with my friend who was camping next to us. On the last day we rode bikes around the campground and went hiking through the woods. We saw a banana spider and ran out of the woods as fast as we could go.

I wasn't ready to go home when my parents started to pack up. I hope this summer we get to go camping again and have some more adventures.

Jamie Rushing  
Megan Crain, teacher  
Thomas Elementary School  
Washington Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Non-Fiction  
3rd Grade

## Ignorance and Innocence

Some days I want to relive  
The ignorance and innocence of being a child  
To go back to the times of laughter  
Of unbridled joy  
Of happiness unburdened by the world's cares

Some days I want to be five again  
Showing my mom abstract art  
That I painted using my fingers

Some days I want to forget the world  
And the evil that it's shown me  
And the things that have influenced me  
To be someone other than who I am

Some days I want to be blissfully ignorant  
Not knowing and not caring about  
Injustice and cruelty

Some days I want to be innocent  
Unblemished by the world's marks  
A child who can still be pure

Some days I want to yell at the world  
For staining my mind and heart  
For imprinting itself on me in some of the worst ways

Some days I just want to go back  
To the ignorance and innocence

Martalisa Fischer  
Kristina Orlando, teacher  
Hahnville High School  
St. Charles Parish Reading Council  
1st Place - Poetry  
9th Grade

## Facing the Future

“Come on Rebecca! You need to finish packing for New York; we have to be there in 2 hours,” advised my mom.

“I’m almost done!” I answer back to my mom, then finish packing, while taking quite a while looking for my clothes.

“Becca! Are you ready? It’s time to go.”

What? I’m not even finished, I can’t believe how time flies by so fast.

As Dad, Mom, and I get off the plane and enter New York, I brace myself for Christmas at Grandma and Grandpa’s. Christmases there are always crazy, because they live in a small apartment on the 12th story. As we get to the apartment, past all the hugs, kisses, and “I missed you so much!”, I finally get into my room and unpack. I start to get a little hungry, so I look in the fridge. Nothing. I think to go downstairs, maybe they’ll have some cookies or something, so I tell Mom that I’ll be back in a few minutes. I get in the elevator, press the lobby button, and start to go down, until all of a sudden, the elevator stops. Dead silent, I hear my heart pounding, when suddenly the elevator starts to shake. It lasts for about 2 and a half seconds, and then it stops shaking, then comes back on, going down to the lobby. I feel relieved. Very relieved.

As I exit the elevator, I walk out and head straight for the tray of cookies sitting on the front desk. As I reach for the cookie, I look over to the newspaper on the shelf in front of me. December 19, 2023, reads the date. What in the world, I think. I look over at a little girl sitting in a chair next to me. “Excuse me, what year is it?” I ask her, just to confirm that the newspaper is not messing with my mind. She just gives me a confused look, and then turns away, which I probably deserve, considering what a crazy question that is. I look at the TV above, showing the same date. What is going on? Oh no, Have I just traveled in time?

I run back into the elevator, press the 12th floor button. But as I start to go up, the elevator stops. I get ready for it to shake, but nothing happens. That’s when I realize... I am stuck in the future!

I start to panic, then I exit the elevator, and walk outside. I try to calm down, but then all of a sudden, I feel the ground shake. Then, the craziest thing happens; a flash flies across my eyes, and I am magically back in the apartment. I walk outside, only to see that my mother is holding a baby girl. Last time I checked, I was an only child, so I ask her who this is, then she says, “What do you mean, silly? It’s your sister!”



Julie Catherine Ralph  
Jodi Knight, teacher  
West Feliciana Middle  
West Feliciana Reading Council  
1st Place - Fiction  
6th Grade



## Walking on Water

Bible stories have always been a part of my life and there are many that stand out. Do you remember the one, “Jesus Walks on Water”? Jesus had his disciples get in a boat to cross the water while he stayed behind and prayed. A storm came up with the wind blowing ferociously and the waves tossed the boat about. The men saw a figure walking on the water and coming toward them. They thought it was a ghost. Jesus called out to them, “It is I. Do not be afraid.” They were skeptical and Peter said, “If you are really Jesus, let me walk out to you.”

Jesus said, “Come” and Peter started walking out to him, but when he looked down at the tossing waves, he became afraid and began to sink.

My story begins on another stormy night, November 7, 2016. I was visiting with my friend, Zay, in Chalmette who was telling me that the weather was too bad to make the 60 mile trip back to Mississippi that night and was asking me to spend the night at her house. We were laughing and talking when my cell phone rang. It was a relative asking me if I had spoken to my daughter, Samantha, that day. I told them that she was at work and I hadn’t spoken to her. She advised me to stay where I was and hung up. A little later, another relative called me and told me that there was a fire in Samantha’s area and that 2 people were dead.

I immediately tried to find the number for the Jefferson Parish’s Sheriff’s office. I called the Sheriff’s Office in Chalmette and asked them if they could find the number for me. They said that they would connect me with them. When they came on the line I asked them about the fire, but in my confusion, I reversed the numbers and they said that it was not at that address. Just then, my daughter-in-law came in and said that it was their house. We turned the television on and they said that two bodies had been found – one in the house and the other in the yard. My whole world came tumbling down and I fell apart.

Even as I sit here writing this, the pain of that moment returns. I can hardly see the screen with the hot tears streaming down my face. My heart breaks all apart with the memories of what was yet still to come.

My daughter, Holly, had just gotten back from a birthday celebration in Key West when she found out and came to Chalmette to get me. As we drove home, the rain was pouring down like God was shedding tears for the tragedy. Mine and His mingled together on the long ride as I tried to make sense of what was going on. They said that the two people, Samantha and Dwayne, had been shot. They did not die from the fire. I wondered where their 20 year old twins were. I finally heard that Cassidy, one of the twins, was at the Sheriff’s Office and then had gone to Jenny’s . (another granddaughter) house.

We finally found out that after the fire had been put out, they found another body in the house. That was Sydney, the other twin, who was seven months pregnant. All night I cried and rocked back and forth like I could shake it all away.

The reality and horror washed over me with every breath like the stormy waves attacking the shore in a hurricane. I relived every moment that they must have endured. My daughter had been shot 5 times and stabbed over 20 times and she was found in the yard lying in the pouring rain. Dwayne had been shot in the back of the head and was in the kitchen. Sydney was in her bedroom and stabbed repeatedly. She had been covered with paper and set on fire while she was still breathing.

We eventually learned that the crime had been committed by Sydney’s ex- boyfriend whom she had just gotten a restraining order for. He was arrested the next day and finally justice was done when he committed suicide in the jail cell several months later.

This is when I began to walk on water. You see, I had learned a valuable lesson from Peter when he tried to walk on water. He failed because he took his eyes off of Jesus and looked down. I will live in His love and always keep my eyes on Him. Through God, all things are possible.

Bernie Hambrice  
Teacher



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