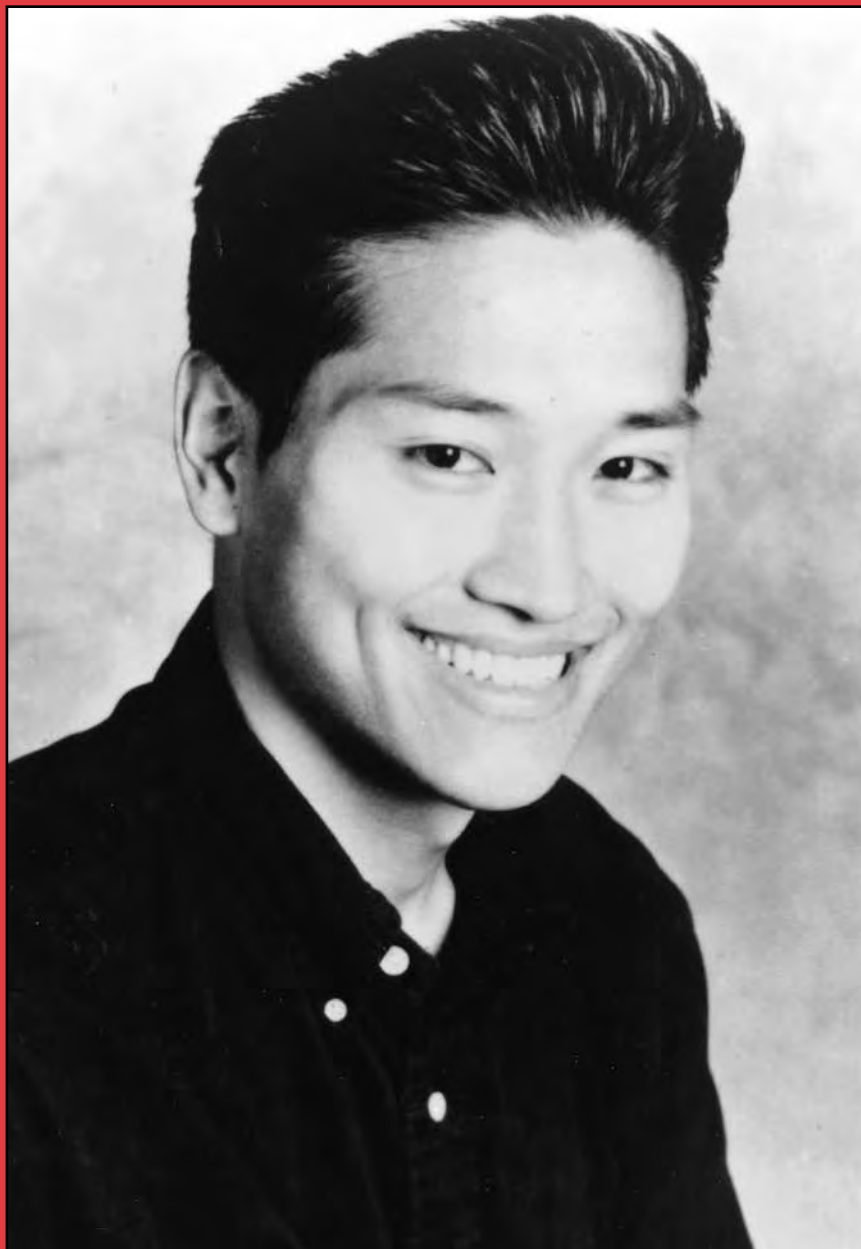


Tennessee

# Reading Teacher

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**Chris Soentpiet:** *Award Winning Illustrator*

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# Tennessee Reading Teacher

## Journal of the Tennessee Reading Association

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# Tennessee Reading Teacher

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# What is Evidence-Based Reading Instruction?

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## A position statement of the International Reading Association

Adopted June 2002

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There are few instructional tasks more important than teaching children to read. The consequences of low achievement in reading are costly both to individuals and society. Low achievement in literacy correlates with high rates of school dropout, poverty, and underemployment (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Wagner, 2000). The far-reaching effects of literacy achievement have heightened the interest of educators and noneducators alike in the teaching of reading. Policymakers, parents, administrators, and teachers seek the same end—to provide literacy instruction that is most likely to lead to high rates of achievement for all children.

As we pursue this goal, we must be mindful of the critical lesson provided by investigations of the past and of the present: There is no single instructional program or method that is effective in teaching all children to read.

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*There is no single instructional program or method that is effective in teaching all children to read.*

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Rather, successful efforts to improve reading achievement emphasize identification and implementation of *evidence-based* practices that promote high rates of achievement when used in classrooms by teachers with diverse instructional styles with children who have diverse instructional needs and interests (Bond & Dykstra,

1967/1997; National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform, 2001)

Also, as we seek effective programs and practices, we must remain mindful of the powerful influence teachers have. Time and again, research has confirmed that regardless of the quality of a program, resource, or strategy, it is the teacher and learning situation that make the difference (Bond & Dykstra, 1967/1997). This evidence underscores the need to join practices grounded in sound

and rigorous research with well-prepared and skillful teachers.

In its simplest form, *evidence-based reading instruction* means that a particular program or collection of instructional practices has a record of success. That is, there is reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence to suggest that when the program is used with a particular group of children, the children can be expected to make adequate gains in reading achievement. Other terms that are sometimes used to convey the same idea are *research-based instruction* and *scientifically based research*.

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*In its simplest form, evidence-based reading instruction means that a particular program or collection of instructional practices has a record of success.*

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This relatively simple concept becomes more complicated when we attempt to define the types of evidence that are reliable and trustworthy indicators of effectiveness. The central question is, What counts as evidence of success? In general, educators agree that such evidence should be as follows:

- ♦ objective – data that any evaluator would identify and interpret similarly
- ♦ valid – data that adequately represent the tasks that children need to accomplish to be successful readers
- ♦ reliable – data will remain essentially unchanged if collected on a different day or by a different person

- ◆ systematic – data that were collected according to a rigorous design of either experimentation or observation
- ◆ refereed – data that have been approved for publication by a panel of independent reviewers

In addition to evaluating the quality of the data by which programs or practices are judged, teachers also must examine the generalizability, or fit, of the evidence. In other words, teachers might ask if the children in their classrooms closely resemble the children from whom the evidence was collected: Are they the same age? Do they have similar language and cultural backgrounds? Do they have similar learning profiles? Teachers might also ask if the learning contexts are the same: Are class sizes and teacher-student ratios similar? Is the allocation of instructional time and resources similar? Do teachers have similar funds of knowledge? Has more than one study produced particular findings? If the answer to all of these questions is *yes*, then teachers might conclude that there is a good fit and that their students might be expected to make similar achievement gains with the same program or practice. If, however, the answers to some or all of these questions is *no*, then it is difficult to predict whether similar results might be achieved.

Research studies used to collect evidence about programs and practices may have a variety of designs. In general, studies that demonstrate effectiveness using experimental designs (studies that compare results from the program or practices of interest to results from a control group with random assignment to the groups), and quasi-experimental designs (studies that do not use random assignment to the program or comparison group, but use adequate statistical procedures to control preexisting differences) give the strongest evidence of effects of a program or practice on the “average” student—

particularly when the studies are carried out in naturalistic environments. Quantitative studies such as these generally investigate program effects on relatively large numbers of students. In addition, they can be aggregated by using meta-analysis. In contrast, qualitative studies typically focus on small samples or on

individuals and are especially valuable in helping teachers understand how particular programs or approaches affect individuals who may not represent the mainstream or average student.

However, no single study ever establishes a program or practice as effective; moreover, it is the convergence of evidence from a variety of study designs that is ultimately scientifically convincing. When evaluating studies and claims of evidence, educators must not determine whether the study is quantitative or qualitative in nature, but rather if the study meets the standards of scientific research. That is, does it involve “rigorous and systematic empirical inquiry that is data-based” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 43).

The quest to find the “best programs” for teaching reading has a long and quite unsuccessful history. Most notable among such efforts is a group of studies conducted in the mid-1960s that became known as the First-Grade Studies (Bond & Dykstra, 1967/1997). This series of U.S. federally funded investigations examined popular approaches to teaching beginning reading. Included were examinations of basal reading, phonics, language experience, and linguistics approaches to reading instruction. The collection of 27 studies comparing different methods and materials found as many differences between and among teachers using the same program or approach as there were between and among teachers using different programs or approaches, leaving the authors unable to identify a “best” program. Instead, the results led the authors to conclude,

Children learn to read by a variety of materials and methods.... No one approach is so distinctly better in all situations and respects than the others that it should be considered the one best method and the one to be used exclusively. (Bond & Dykstra, 1967/1997, p. 416)

Indeed, many large studies have come to similar conclusions. For example, consider the recent findings related to the evaluations of Comprehensive School Reform. Once again the focus was on reading programs and methods, and the findings echo those of the First-Grade Studies, that “no models had uniformly positive effects, and no models had uniformly negative or neutral effects. In other words, no model worked in every case and every situation” (National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform, 2001, p. 2).

Despite many attempts at program studies in the years since the First-Grade Studies, and many claims of program excellence, literacy scholars (e.g., Allington, 2001;

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*When evaluating studies and claims of evidence, educators must not determine whether the study is quantitative or qualitative in nature, but rather if the study meets the standards of scientific research.*

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Stahl, Duffy-Hester, & Stahl, 1998) argue that careful examination of such studies reveals the use of either flawed designs or selective reporting of the available data. Furthermore, attempts to find the “right program” for large-scale implementation is complicated by the diversity of student needs, teaching styles, and classroom conditions that exist in any school or group of schools.

Whereas efforts to find “best programs” have centered largely on the materials teachers use, attempts to identify best practices have focused on the *actions* teachers take and the *practices* in which they routinely engage students. In contrast to the discrepant findings of studies designed to identify best programs, examinations of best practices have led to highly consistent results when such studies have been rigorously designed and systematically analyzed and compared. The results of the First-Grade Studies again provide a relevant starting place. Although findings failed to show superiority of any particular approach or program, evidence did indicate strong relationships between particular practices and high achievement. Most recently, the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) took a similar approach to its study of effective instruction of reading, examining evidence related to practices in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension instruction. They found 22 phonics programs that varied along several dimensions that were effective. The results support a conclusion

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*... examinations of best practices have led to highly consistent results when such studies have been rigorously designed and systematically analyzed and compared.*

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that it is particular practices and not the specific programs that are effective.

Current critical and comprehensive research reviews (e.g., Gambrell, Morrow, Neuman, & Pressley, 1999; Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999; Kamil, Mosenthal, Pearson, & Barr, 2000; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Pressley, Wharton-McDonald, Hampson, & Echevarria 1998; Taylor, Pressley, & Pearson, 2002) indicate widespread agreement among literacy experts concerning the particular literacy practices and experiences in which effective teachers routinely engage children. The following list of 10 research-based best practices posed by Gambrell et al. (1999) is representative of the current state of literacy knowledge and provides an effective template for understanding best literacy practices:

1. Teach reading for authentic meaning-making literacy experiences for pleasure, to be informed, and to perform a task.
2. Use high-quality literature.
3. Integrate a comprehensive word study/phonics program into reading/writing instruction.
4. Use multiple texts that link and expand concepts.
5. Balance teacher- and student-led discussions.
6. Build a whole-class community that emphasizes important concepts and builds background knowledge.
7. Work with students in small groups while other students read and write about what they have read.
8. Give students plenty of time to read in class.
9. Give students direct instruction in decoding and comprehension strategies that promote independent reading. Balance direct instruction, guided instruction, and independent learning.
10. Use a variety of assessment techniques to inform instruction. (p. 14)

A list such as the one presented above provides an important starting point in the development of evidence-based reading instruction. But how might we learn more about each of these practices and the steps toward effective implementation? Rigorous, peer-reviewed, comprehensive research syntheses provide an excellent starting place for teachers, administrators, and policymakers who wish to learn more about effective teaching of reading. Such syntheses are important and useful because they are based on comprehensive and systematic reviews of many studies, and allow us to predict outcomes when the practices are used under similar conditions with children similar to those who participated in the reported investigations. There are at least three types of research syntheses: large-scale reviews conducted by a team of researchers appointed by a funding agency; edited handbooks, generally compiled by a team of researchers who invite professional colleagues to provide comprehensive reviews of particular topics within a series of chapters; and individual analyses of a particular topic. Individual analyses may be

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*The challenge that confronts teachers and administrators is the need to view the evidence that they read through the lens of their particular school and classroom settings.*

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published as book-length monographs, as articles in refereed research journals, or as chapters in edited volumes. (See Appendix A.)

The challenge that confronts teachers and administrators is the need to view the evidence that they read through the lens of their particular school and classroom settings.

They must determine if the instructional strategies and routines that are central to the materials under review are a good match for the particular children they teach. That is, are the instructional practices likely to provide their students with the types of experiences that research predicts will result in successful reading? The list of best practices in literacy presented previously may be used to frame questions that will be useful when considering whether there is a good fit between the program or approach under examination and a particular school or classroom setting. The International Reading Association recommends teachers and administrators ask the following questions when reviewing materials:

- Does this program or instructional approach provide systematic and explicit instruction in the particular strategies that have been proven to relate to high rates of achievement in reading for the children I teach?
- Does the program or instructional approach provide flexibility for use with the range of learners in the various classrooms where it will be used? Are there assessment tools that assist teachers in identifying individual learning needs? Are there a variety of strategies and activities that are consistent with diverse learning needs?
- Does the program or instructional approach provide a collection of high-quality literary materials that are diverse in level of difficulty, genre, topic, and cultural representation to meet the individual needs and interests of the children with whom it will be used?

In addition to examining the match between the instructional approach or program and the children they teach, administrators and teachers also must consider the match between the instructional approach or program and the resources available for implementation (e.g., Hayes, 1997; Richardson, 1994). Questions such as the following may help teachers and administrators assess appropriateness of resources and professional development opportunities:

- What instructional personnel will be required to effectively implement the program or instructional approach? That is, can the program be imple-

mented by a classroom teacher alone, or will it require additional instructional personnel within or outside the classroom?

- What types of professional development will be necessary for effective implementation of the program or instructional approach?
- What adjustments to existing academic programs and practices will be necessary for effective implementation of the program or instructional approach?

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### Appendix A

(Large-scale, U.S. federally funded research reviews)

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Edited handbooks

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### Research Journals

- American Educational Research Journal*  
*Journal of Educational Research*  
*Journal of Learning Disabilities*  
*Journal of Literacy Research*  
*Reading Psychology*  
*Reading Research and Instruction*  
*Reading Research Quarterly*  
*Remedial and Special Education*

## Ready, Set, Read ... in Circles

By Dixie Bowen

Are you looking for a reading activity that allows powerful, meaningful discussion and thinking among students? Get ready, get set, and read ... in circles.

Literature circle time is a time for students to:

- Pick, read and discuss books they select themselves
- Connect with books
- Take responsibility as readers and group members
- Learn to take part in fruitful and meaningful discussions

Exactly what takes place in a literature circle? I have seen animated talk, serious sense of purpose, reading aloud of favorite passages, laughter, and stopping to talk about difficult words. Further, and perhaps most important, I have observed a passion for reading that has developed among students.

Teachers and students at our school have demonstrated that literature circles are places of informal, energetic, and natural conversations about books. In the circles, student roles are rotated daily in an interwoven pattern. A very helpful resource is *Moving Forward with Literature Circles* by Jeni P. Day, Dixie Lee Spiegel, Janet McLellan, and Valerie Brown. This book, published in 2002, is available from the Professional Books division of Scholastic.

Students independently select a book from a variety of offerings (we use our Accelerated Reader List). They are given time to meet on a regular schedule with a circle of students (usually 4 or 5, all of whom have chosen the same book). In the circle, they take turns playing specific roles that help the students remain focused on the book they are reading. By learning what each of the four roles entails, students become experts at analysis while the reading process is constantly enhanced. Teachers may create as many roles as they please, but I have found that four basic roles help students focus on important areas:

1. Discussion Director: has the responsibility to think up good discussion questions and ask for contributions from group members
2. Passage Master: takes readers back to memorable, important passages and reads aloud (and/or acts out)

3. Connector: takes the group from the book world into the real world where the readers' experiences connect with literature

4. Illustrator: provides a graphic response to the text.

Just as the name Literature Circles conveys, reading becomes connected for the students. Students do the talking, make choices, and genuinely enjoy sharing responses to books. Their understanding deepens. Their reading skills are enhanced. And ... a spirit of fun and playfulness pervades the classroom! Ready, Set, Read!

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Dixie Bowen is principal at Anderson Elementary School in Bristol, TN.

## A Great Children's Literature Web Site

By Melissa Bray

Sometimes it seems that there are more web sites than snowflakes in Alaska and finding truly useful ones relative to children's literature is difficult. However, I found a great one! *Just for Kids Who Love Books* describes hundreds of books, provides information on author web sites, has reviews of books, biographical information on several hundred authors including pictures, and is very child friendly. This site is also very helpful to teachers. Information is presented on how to purchase books but this is definitely not a "hard sell" or over commercialized web site.

This site is excellent for encouraging children to "find out more about the author" when they are doing a variety of types of reports on books read. There are even links where children can have stories read to them. Also, there is worthwhile information on book series. You might find *Just for Kids Who Love Books* a wonderful resource in your classroom. The cite is: <http://www3.sympatico.ca/alanbrown/>

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Melissa Bray is a resource teacher for children in grades K-3 at Church Hill Elementary School in Church Hill, TN.

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## Integrating Geometry and Reading

*By Mona S. Gordon*

Before studying our unit on geometry, I try to introduce my students to as many vocabulary words as possible by doing a geometry scavenger hunt. I introduce each term that we are going to study. With a handout as reference, each student is paired up with a partner to go on a scavenger hunt from old magazines and newspapers that the students have brought into class. The search through the magazines is fun for the students, and it really makes the students apply the terms to real life. I have found that the students also retain the definitions in their memory better after doing this exercise as compared to rote memorization. If students cannot find a picture illustrating the term, I always allow them the opportunity to draw a picture or even take a picture illustrating the term. For example, for parallel lines, a pair of students once took a picture of railroad tracks.

I give the students a few days to find the pictures so they can also look around books and magazines at home. At the end of the week, students gather all of their pictures in class to compile a book of geometric terms. They glue their pictures on construction paper and write the word and the definitions beside each picture. A really creative cover for the book is a picture of the kids lying on the floor in various shapes. For example, five students can form a pentagon. This really allows the kids to feel ownership for the project and makes a unique cover.

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Mona Gordon teaches seventh grade mathematics at Indian Trail Middle School in Johnson City, Tennessee.

## Book Report in a Bag

*By Angela Sheckels*

It is important that we teach children how to comprehend what they read. It is equally important that we instill the love of reading in our students. One of the strategies teachers use to make sure students understand what they read is to have the students do a paper bag book report. The paper bag book report is an interesting and exciting variation on the typical written book report. This activity makes doing a book report project fun as well as academically profitable for the students.

### Procedures:

1. The students will need a plain paper bag. It is best if the bags have no writing on them. The bag should be medium to large in size. Stores will often provide bags free of charge or at cost (large paper bags cost stores 5 cents per bag). If only bags with store logos are available, students can write and/or draw on plain paper and use a glue stick to cover the store logo with their work.
2. The students use the front of the bag to design their own cover for the book they have read. The cover should include the title and author of the book. I always tell my students to draw it so that it can be seen all the way across the classroom.
3. The students use the back of the bag to draw their favorite scene. At the bottom of their drawing, the students write a brief description of their favorite scene. I usually require one to three sentences because I don't want this to turn into a lengthy written book report.
4. On one side of the bag, the students list and illustrate the main characters of the book. It's best to remind the students that they have limited space and to only include the main characters.
5. The other side of the bag should include an illustration of the major theme or themes of the book. I have also used this side to depict a conflict and solution. On the other hand, I sometimes encourage the students to put whatever they want on this side of the bag.
6. After the bag is decorated and the written information is completed, I set a number of items that the students need to include in their bags. Remind the students that the items must fit in their bags. The items should represent characters, the setting, problems, solutions, themes, favorite scenes, etc. The students need to be prepared to explain why they chose that particular item as representative of the book. The last step is to have the students present their bags to the class. The presentation should include a description about their bag and of the items.
7. At the end of the presentations, I have the students write in their journals. I tell the students to list two things they like about their bags and two things they liked about other students' bags. Then I have the students tell a way that they could have improved their bag or presentation. Then I have the students share their journals with the class. This helps students to feel good about what they have done.

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**Procedures:** Students' interest in reading really soars when making book reports in a bag. This idea can also be adapted to fit any grade and any level of students. Teachers have a lot of freedom with this idea because they can

change the bag to fit their needs. My students and I really enjoy book reports in a bag.

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Angela Sheckels teaches fifth graders at Maynardville Elementary School in Maynardville, TN

## **International Reading Association Responds to Final Passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Legislation in the House and Senate**

**Released for publication on December 13, 2001**

NEWARK, DELAWARE, USA — “The passage of the ESEA legislation in the House and Senate means we can move forward in our efforts to achieve our goal of helping all children learn to read,” according to Donna M. Ogle, president of the International Reading Association in her response today to the final passing of ESEA.

“The key to making the new ESEA legislation work for our children is to support our teachers and increase our professional development resources. The legislation allocates substantial funding for the President’s Reading First Initiative,” she said, “which makes it a national priority to support teachers in helping every child learn to read.”

Among the many provisions of ESEA, the Association strongly supported the Reading First legislation, which impacts high-need districts by increasing funding so schools can provide support for more effective assessment and instruction tailored to the needs of all students. The International Reading Association has also advocated more support for bilingual education, increased accountability of schools, and more funding for Title I programs. Several of these issues are put forth in the Association’s key position statement, *Making a Difference Means Making It Different: Honoring Children’s Rights to Excellent Reading Instruction*.

“We are pleased that Reading First is being passed as part of the ESEA legislation,” Ogle continued. “We see this as a good beginning, but we still have far to go to accomplish the goals we all share.”

Additionally, the Association has recognized the need to train teachers on how best to implement the Reading First legislation in their local districts and schools and has established a series of workshops

entitled “Evidence-Based Reading Instruction—Reading First, Early Reading First and the New Title I.” This workshop helps educators to communicate with policy makers, and to understand terms such as “supported by scientifically-based research” and “evidence-based reading instruction,” found in the language of the bill. Sessions are held at various conferences and seminars throughout the year, including the Association’s upcoming Legislative Workshop in February 2002, held in Washington, DC.

The Reading First Initiative focuses on effective, proven methods of reading instruction backed by scientific research, and in 2002, it will triple federal reading funding from the \$300 million to \$900 million. This bill will also lay the groundwork for reforms in special education and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the next major education reform project.

In addition, funds specifically earmarked for teacher quality in the ESEA legislation will give local schools new freedom to make spending decisions with up to 50 percent of the non-Title I federal funds they receive. With this new freedom, a local school district could decide to use additional funds for hiring new teachers, increasing teacher pay, and improving training and development.

For further information on the Association’s position on Reading First and the passing of the ESEA legislation, visit the advocacy section of the web site at [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org).

The International Reading Association is a community of professionals with a shared goal: promoting higher levels of literacy, reading, and communication skills by continually advancing the quality of reading instruction.

## Meet the Author

By Betty and Mike Roe

# Chris Soentpiet: A Study in Contrasts

Award-winning illustrator Chris Soentpiet's life is a study of contrasts and rich textures. The first time we met Chris, we were impressed by his infectious smile and the twinkle in his eyes. His light-hearted demeanor as he chats with people contrasts with the serious tone of his illustrations. Chris's Dutch last name (pronounced soon-peet), which comes from his adoptive father, contrasts with the appearance of this Korean-born artist. His adoptive family has the variety of his artwork: he and his sister were adopted by an American family composed of an English-speaking Indonesian father and an Irish/French/German mother who was born in America, their biological children, and a younger adopted son who was native Hawaiian. Country living in America also contrasted with the bustle of life in Seoul, Korea.

Chris's adoptive parents spoke no Korean, and Chris spoke no English. Learning English as a second language was, says Chris, "a challenge." His determination to master English led him to voluntarily stay after school for extra tutoring. He had different ESL teachers work with him as his family moved around, and he stopped speaking Korean to work on his English. He wanted his English to be just right, and it is. As a result, however, he lost the Korean language that he had known.

Chris's memory of his early life in Korea is spotty. He was the youngest of six children. His mother died when he was six, and his father died when he was seven. His brother and three of his four sisters were old enough to live on their own, but were not able to take care of him and the youngest sister. When Chris was eight, he and his twelve-year-old sister were adopted by a Mormon couple in Hawaii. (Chris's birth parents had been Mormon, so the adoption was arranged by the Mormon Church.)

When Chris was 22 years old, he had a chance to visit his Korean siblings for the first time since he was adopted,

while doing the research for the award-winning book, *Peacebound Trains* by Haemi Balgassi. The trip resulted in a joyous reunion, but he found that he couldn't communicate with his Korean siblings. Fortunately, the sister who was adopted with him could still speak fluent Korean, as well as English, and she translated for them.

"Being adopted has more of an impact on my illustrations than being Korean. Being adopted gave me the opportunity to see the world," Chris said. His new family moved from Hawaii to Oregon soon after he was adopted. In Oregon, they lived in several different towns. They also lived in several Alaskan locations, before moving back to Oregon.

Most of his family members, especially his adoptive mom, encouraged him in his pursuit of art. She is an art lover herself, and she understands it. She paints and sculpts for fun. When he was in high school, she pushed him a bit at times when he didn't want to go to the art class that he attended on a scholarship at the Pacific College of Northeast Art School in Portland. He says, "I was able to go four years—all

through high school. I was able to take different courses each year. And, of course, there were times that I didn't want to go because I wanted to hang out with my friends. I was in high school." Now he is glad she pushed. He admits, "When I went to college, I was ahead of a lot of kids because I had that training."

His high school art teacher, Ron Janson, is one of Chris's heroes. Seeing promise in Chris's work, this teacher secretly sent pictures of some of Chris's watercolors around the country in an attempt to earn Chris a scholarship to college. Chris did obtain a scholarship to Pratt Institute in New York, and earned a Bachelor in Fine Arts degree there.

During his college days, he met Ted Lewin, a children's book illustrator. He told us, "Now the way I actually met



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Ted was . . . he came and did a lecture at my college. It was towards the end of my junior year. It was kind of funny, because I came in late. The lecture hall was packed, and I could only get a little seat in the back. When I looked in the front, I thought, 'Boy, he looks really familiar.' I was trying to figure out where I had seen Ted. Later on, at the end of the session—of course, like everybody else, I had some of my paintings in my portfolio, and I wanted to meet him, but there was a huge long line. But I waited, and, as I got closer, I kept looking at him. I said, 'Boy, oh, my gosh.' When I finally got up to him, I said, 'I didn't know you did watercolor.' He said, 'Oh, yeah.' And I talked to him like I knew him only because months before he was going to the gym that I was going to, and we were actually working out together."

The coincidences continued when Chris discovered that Lewin lived right across the street from him. After examining his portfolio of work, Lewin convinced Chris that he should pursue a career in illustrating children's books, rather than in commercial art. Chris admired Lewin's work in watercolors, and, even before he met Lewin, he had tried to emulate him. He "really knows his craft," Chris says as he heaps praise on his hero and mentor.

Chris set out to show his work to publishers of children's books. The first ten publishers turned him down. Finally he found an editor at Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard (now HarperCollins) who was willing to give him a chance. She told him that his artwork looked like it already told a story and asked if he had thought about writing his own book. Up until then he hadn't, but he was willing to do it. He had taken writing courses for electives at Pratt Institute, so he had some training in writing, but he admits that writing "comes harder than illustrating" for him. He says his writing "has to come straight from his personal experiences." The result of his first attempt at writing and illustrating a book was *Around Town*, a book about New York City that ALA book list says "captures both the diversity and community of city life." That book was just the beginning.

Chris has illustrated more than fifteen children's books that have received praise and awards from such organizations as the International Reading Association, the American Library Association, the New York Times, American Booksellers, Parents' Choice, Junior Library Guild, and School Library Journal. Authors he has worked with include Eve Bunting; George Ella Lyons; Cynthia Rylant; Haemi Balgassi; Marie Bradby; his wife, Yin (her pen name); Alice McGill; Liz Rosenberg; Sharon Dennis Wyeth; Susan M. Nunes, and T.A. Barron. His two collaborations with his wife are *Coolies*, which is based

on Yin's Chinese American ancestors who journeyed to America to help build the transcontinental railroad, and *Dear Santa, Please Come to the 19th Floor*, based on Yin's childhood in a 19th floor apartment in Lower Manhattan. *Coolies* was a Junior Library Guild Selection for 2001, a winner of the 2002 International Reading Association Award, and an ALA Notable Book for 2002. His illustrations in various books depict people from many cultures, and he tends to choose projects that have serious themes. *More Than Anything Else*, written by Marie Bradby and illustrated by Chris, is a great book for reading teachers to use. It is a fictionalized story about the life of young Booker T. Washington and his intense desire to learn to read. Visit Chris's web site ([www.soentpiet.com](http://www.soentpiet.com)) for more information about him and his work.

Chris does his work in a home studio, which he tries to keep organized. The studio has both writing and photographic equipment in it, because he photographs models for his illustrations.

He follows a strict routine because he likes what he does and he knows that, if he doesn't do it, it doesn't get done. He and his wife have breakfast about 7:00 and work until about 6:00, with only lunch and dinner breaks. He takes Sundays off. When he is not sketching or drafting, he is painting. He can do nine hours of painting a day. He says, "I got that discipline from Ted [Lewin]."

A computer is used for writing and for art layouts. Chris scans some work in or does it directly on the computer with PhotoShop. Actual sketching, however, is all done with pencil, and painting is done by hand, as well.

The most satisfying experience Chris has had as an illustrator was doing his first book. That experience was exciting. Chris adds, "When something works is the best day in my life" because painting involves "constant problem solving."

Chris is proud of the books he has done. When talking about himself and his wife, he says of the development of books, "This is basically our life. We spend all of our time on them." Of course, part of the reason is that he loves what he is doing. When asked what he likes to do in his spare time, he replies, "Paint fine art works." This type of painting has different context and rules from book illustration. There are fewer restrictions. He likes to paint things that he can hang on his walls.

He likes having his wife involved in children's books. She offers him a second view and a second opinion. She also helps with business matters, frequently models for him, helps him assemble costumes, and helps with research. He enjoys collaborating with her on books because it is "very creative. Things can change in a minute,"

allowing a project to be enhanced because of their interaction. With other writers, he would never suggest changing their words, but, when he works with his wife, sometimes they see a better way to do the words or the illustrations as they work. The only problem with working so closely together is that they need to find some personal time together. They try to stop working at 6:30 or 7:00 at night to have this time.

Chris's favorite of the books he has done is one on which he and Yin collaborated, *Coolies*. It is larger in size and longer (40 pages, rather than the typical 32) than usual. He said he experimented and grew with the paintings that he did for it. He also felt that the subject matter was important: both he and Yin wanted to "celebrate America in general" and provide "a voice for how America was built."

Chris does school visits and professional presentations across the United States. He will be presenting at the Literature Conference at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee, on March 29, 2003.

Chris loves receiving letters from the children who have read his books. He says, "They are so funny. I keep most of them. I can tell the kids who really read the book." He tries to answer most of them. He may write a letter to the teacher herself.

Chris greatly respects teachers. He says, "Teachers have a huge impact on students." He suggests that teachers help turn students into artists by showing them different forms of art. For example, his own art is realistic, like that of his mentor, Ted Lewin. Ted's wife, Betsy, does "cartoony" art. (Betsy illustrated the hilarious *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type.*) Students need exposure to all kinds. He also would encourage the students to hone in on their particular skills.

Chris has had a life as richly textured and as vibrant as his illustrations. The final contrast perhaps is between the childhood filled with losses and the adulthood filled with awards and success—success that is richly deserved.

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## *Improving Comprehension with Think-Aloud Strategies*

By Jeffrey D. Wilhelm (2001). New York: Scholastic Professional Books, 176 pp., paperback. ISBN 0-439-21859-4.

This is the first book in Scholastic's *Action Strategies for Readers* series that is intended to show teachers how they can be more effective in working with students. Jeff Wilhelm explains what he actually does with his students in his classroom and then takes his readers through the steps that will enable them to do what he does. His underlying philosophy is based on Vygotsky's ideas, and his book is a practical approach to getting young readers to think deeply about how and what they read.

Using a graphic to illustrate his point, Wilhelm shows how students progress from the *Zone of Actual Development* through the *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)* to the *New Zone of Actual Development*. In the first stage the student is working unassisted; at the second level the student is receiving assistance from more capable others while making the transition to self-assistance; and in the final stage the student assumes self responsibility for learning at a higher level. The critical stage for teachers is the ZPD in which they can assist students in learning things they could not do before. Students who are provided with help at this level learn new strategies for reading and achieving understanding of how text works to make meaning. The rest of the book demonstrates, often step-by-step, ways that teachers can help students move through this zone.

According to Vygotsky, teachers must model how to work through tasks by identifying ways that students can use particular strategies in order to complete these tasks. He believes that any child can learn a more difficult strategy or concept with supportive instruction. A strategy is worth teaching only if a student doesn't already know how to use it, if there is a need to use it, and when it is within a student's ZPD. Six steps for helping students gain knowledge about using strategies are as follows:

- Teacher explains what the strategy is.
- Teacher explains why it is important.
- Teacher explains when to use the strategy while reading (what cues to look for when the strategy might be helpful).
- Teacher models how to use the strategy in an actual context (i.e., using a think-aloud while reading and

letting students observe the process).

- Teacher guides the students' practice as they attempt to use the strategy on their own.
- Students use the strategy independently when they read.

In actual practice, the procedure might look like this. Choose a short selection that is interesting but somewhat challenging to the students, something they would have some difficulty reading on their own. Give each student a sheet of paper with the text on the left side and notebook lines on the right side for writing responses. Decide on one or two strategies to highlight and explain how a think-aloud works and what strategy(ies) you'll be using. Give your purposes for reading this particular selection and ask the students to pay close attention to the strategies you use as you think aloud so that they can tell you what, why, how, and when you used them. Read the selection orally while thinking aloud about it. Ask the students to underline the phrases that they think led you to use the strategy, then to list the signals that prompted the use of the strategy. Next ask the students to think of other situations in which they could apply these strategies, and, finally, reinforce the think-aloud with follow-up lessons. In other words, provide guidance and practice until students internalize the new strategy.

Although many strategies can be helpful, the focus of this book is the *think-aloud*, "in which a reader makes his reading process manifest to others by articulating all that he is noticing, thinking, feeling, and doing as he reads a text" (p. 8). This strategy has been traced all the way back to the time of Aristotle and Plato as a way of analyzing thinking. "Think-alouds are a powerful way to teach because they give students the expert's keys to unlock a text's fullest construction of meaning" (p. 9). Wilhelm views think-alouds as a means to an end, the end being engaged and reflective reading. They enable students to hear how others figure out text clues so that they can begin using these strategies on their own. Think-alouds support readers by

- Helping them realize that reading should make sense.
- Enabling them to move beyond literal decoding to comprehending global meanings.
- Modeling *how* to use a variety of strategies as they read.

- Showing that specific strategies are appropriate for particular types of texts.
- Allowing them to share books and ideas about reading in a social context.
- Encouraging reflection that they learn about themselves and their own thinking.

The students in Mr. Wilhelm's class found reading to be an intensely visual experience. They related their reading to their own lives, projected themselves into the stories, evaluated characters, role-played scenes, thought of authors and characters as friends, visualized physical features, and created mental images. As a result, one of the students asked Mr. Wilhelm if they could draw their think-alouds instead of writing them. He readily accepted the idea and found that many students, particularly those labeled as LD, began responding with drawings.

Wilhelm suggests a number of questions, or prompts, to guide students' reflections.

These are useful for discussions or for written responses. Some examples follow (p. 76).

How did you read this passage? Did you make a lot of personal connections? Was it emotional? What kinds of things grabbed your attention or interested you? What did you learn about how you read? What did you learn from group members about other ways of reading? What did you learn about how the text works? How might we use this text to think about our theme or inquiry question?

In this book there are frequent references to "Does this make sense?", which is really the ultimate goal of reading. For example, Wilhelm says (p. 97), "I start off telling students to continually pause and ask themselves the question: Does this make sense? I tell kids who answer 'no, this isn't making sense' to use the most basic fix-up strategies of 1) rereading, 2) reading ahead, 3) skipping or filling in a word." The focus is always on ways to help students find meaning in text.

I found this book to be easy reading, highly interesting, and full of explicit teaching strategies for encouraging students to think about their reading. I liked the format with its graphic organizers, clearly marked headings and subheadings, and boxed features such as *What the Research Says*, *Consider This*, and *Idea Box*. Wilhelm gives examples that show text on one side of the page and his think-alouds on the other. He uses real-life scenarios to make many of his points, and his explicit directions are easy to follow.

Some teachers in Tennessee use a reading program primarily to encourage children to read large numbers of books without involving them in thinking deeply about what they are reading. Wilhelm offers an alternative, or supplement, through his think-alouds which cause readers to reflect, contemplate, relate to personal experiences, and probe for meanings. He does this in such a way that any teacher who wants to encourage thinking can see the sense of it.

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# Why Use Picture Books in the Middle School Curriculum?

*Patricia E. Murphy*

This we know: All things are connected like the blood that unites us.

We did not weave the web of life,

We are merely a strand in it.

Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.

We love this earth as a newborn loves its mother's heartbeat.

If we sell you our land, care for it as we have cared for it.

Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you receive it.

Preserve the land and the air and the rivers for your children's children and love it as we have loved it. (no pp.)

Susan Jeffer's adaptation of Chief Seattle's speech in *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* (1991) is a poignant beginning for this paper on picture books. This book brings Chief Seattle's belief, caring for all things, to life. Chief Seattle believed we are one with the earth; therefore, if we take care of the earth, we take care of ourselves. Purported to have been delivered over a century ago, Chief Seattle's powerful words still impact children today. Listen carefully! The distant drums and the pungent odor of buffalo hides pervade the classroom.

Why not introduce important concepts and issues with picture books? Middle school teachers have an abundant and readily available but often untapped resource in beautiful and highly apropos picture books (Tiedt, 2000). However, most still view picture books as only for the very young, or at best, students in the elementary grades.

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*In some picture books, the language and key concepts presented in picture books are more appropriate and provocative for children in the middle grades than for children in the early grades.*

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There are popular assumptions about picture books; namely, that they are written only for the very young (toddlers to about 8 years of age); they are therefore written in the simplest of language; and they are about the most general of topics, such as the changing seasons. (Sheridan, 2001, p. 1)

In the last 20 years, however, the genre of picture books has expanded. Today various social issues are tackled such as wars, riots, alcoholism, drugs, divorce and issues relating to various cultures. In some picture books, the language and key concepts presented in picture books are more appropriate and provocative for children in the middle grades than for children in the early grades. The exploration of ideas, enhanced by elements of language, art, and subject presented in a picture book can be very important for this more mature audience.

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*Clearly, the key is taking advantage of this adolescent mindset and helping students find meaningful ways to channel their energies.*

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Picture books in the middle grades are an important curriculum issue because of the methodology used by teachers for instruction. Many teachers arrive at school with thoughts of controlling student conduct, teaching skills, covering textbook content, and making it through the day without explosive adolescent behavior erupting in the classroom. Nancie Atwell (1998) asserted that:

Clearly, the key is taking advantage of this adolescent mindset and helping students find meaningful ways to channel their energies. Picture books are one medium good teachers use to motivate learners and to provide background and context for learning.

Providing relevance of subject matter is one of the most important obstacles to overcome when teaching in

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the middle school. Owens and Nowell (2001) state, “Failure to provide relevance is often tantamount to an instructional disaster” (p. 33). Adolescent learners want lessons to connect with them on a personal level. Picture books make that connection for middle school students at a time of cognitive development when their lives and emotions seem to be in constant turmoil or upheaval.

“Picture books entertain, they inform, they lead to greater understanding of the world around us. They teach about content, about the world they represent, about form, about literature and about language and about how stories can be told” (Benedict and Carlisle, 1992, p. 10). Picture books are the perfect medium for adolescents to learn content when many are not very interested in specific content or academic learning in general. Picture books can be the spice that piques the interest of many adolescent students who, on the surface, appear to be bored and apathetic.

### Picture Books Defined

Over 300 years ago, a teacher and Moravian bishop, Johann Amos Comenius, created what is now recognized as the first picture book made expressly for children. In 1658 he entitled the book *Orbis Sensualium Pictus (The Visible World in Pictures)*. This is most often referred to as *Orbis Pictus*. He was among the first to appreciate the belief that children remember things best if they see them (Saunders, 1999). “For it is apparent that children (even from their infancy almost) are delighted with pictures and willingly please their eyes with these sights” (Comenius as cited in Saunders, 1999, p. 8). Teachers who use picture books with older children are pleasantly surprised at the depths of insight and interest initiated by their students.

What is a picture book? Many definitions exist. They typically include, but are not limited to, board books, counting books, concept books, wordless picture books, predictable books, ABC books, beginning reader picture

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books, picture storybooks, and informational books. The term “picture book” is often used for children’s books in which “the illustrations are the dominant feature with little or no text” (Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1991, p. 76).

Picture books average 32 pages in length, with a picture appearing on every page or on every two-page spread. Illustrations in picture storybooks are just as important as the text, and a symbiosis exists that is sometimes difficult to describe. Just about any definition of a picture book,

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*Illustrations in picture storybooks are just as important as the text, and a symbiosis exists that is sometimes difficult to describe.*

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however, includes the requirement that, in a marriage of words, and pictures, the two partners share the responsibility of making the books work (Benedict and Carlisle, 1992).

In a picture book, text is only part of the story. The illustrations expand, dramatize, embellish, contrast, and make the story clear. The pictures set the mood, reinforce the story, tell a different story, or reveal details not in the text. Picture books by design are easily incorporated in any curriculum and classroom to explore serious subjects, teach themes and literary devices, and stimulate classroom discussion.

Typically adolescent learners do not like to read, and they know what they don’t like about reading. It is a challenge for teachers to convince them that books hold

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*The teacher’s task is to nurture and cultivate transactions between individual readers and literary works.*

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secrets, adventures, and revelations worthy of their time and attention. Through unlocking the secrets, participating in the adventure, and learning from the revelations within a picture book, students can find themselves overcoming their down their own reluctance to read. The starting point for growth must be each individual’s effort to interact to the stimulus of the printed page. The teacher’s task is to nurture and cultivate transactions between individual readers and literary works. Routman (2000) said, “When we teachers demonstrate how to explore literature and guide students in doing so, readers of all ages can and do construct their own meaning” (p. 171). Students respond well to reading once they understand how to remove their own reading blocks. By using picture books, teachers help break down barriers to reading.

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Some picture books are more complex, challenging, and provocative than is often thought to be the case, (e.g. Eve Bunting's (1980) *Terrible Things* and C. Gallaz and R. Innocenti's (1985) *Rose Blanche*). Teachers need to evaluate the appropriateness of a picture book before use in class. Will the literary work say something worthwhile to the students? Will the book support and complement learning objectives? Is the book appropriate for the grade level?

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*Picture books provide an array of art styles and offer endless aesthetic experiences for readers of all ages.*

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The middle school classroom offers many compelling reasons for the presence of picture books. First, they are usually short enough to be read in one sitting. Ruth Culham (2001) suggested that, "They are short on pages, but long on meaning" (p. 2). With precious little classroom instructional time, teachers and students can read a picture book from start to finish and still have time for meaningful subsequent assignments, discussions, or activities. Second, picture books contain intriguing illustrations and are pleasurable to view. Picture books provide an array of art styles and offer endless aesthetic experiences for readers of all ages. Third, picture book texts, with their trademark in brevity, contain carefully considered and chosen words. The texts are often used as writing models. Fourth, picture books are reader friendly. Young people can relax and enjoy the reading without the often daunting challenges of a formidable text.

Galda and Cullinan (2002) presented an extensive and highly appropriate listing of "picture books for intermediate and advanced readers" (pp. 118-119).

Unfortunately, not all students learn to read by third grade. McCray, Vaughn, and Neal (2001) noted that even with reading intervention programs begun in the primary grades, struggling readers continue to experience problems well into their adolescent years, having developed negative attitudes toward reading. They perceive reading as difficult and unappealing. Carol Hurst (as cited in Sheridan, 2001) recommended using picture books with small groups as an effective way for weaker students and special education students in inclusion programs to have a meaningful role in classroom learning. For struggling readers in the middle grades, that success is vital to future reading and learning and certainly impacts on whether they will stay in school or drop out.

Teachers find that wordless picture books are the perfect vehicle for students in creating their own text. Some wordless picture books suitable for creating language are *Clown* (Blake, 1995), *Dylan's Day Out* (Catalanotto, 1989), and *Tuesday* (Wiesner, 1992). Also, wordless picture books help English language learners gain a sense of competence with the English language through discussions related to the pictures presented. "Wordless picture books guarantee successful reading experiences simply because they contain no "right" words" (Cassady, 1998, p. 429).

Finally, picture books are easily integrated into many aspects of the curriculum, allowing the students to make important connections among different subjects. "Connecting with literature has the power to humanize us – to help us understand the viewpoints, perspectives, hopes, sufferings, and longings of others" (Routman, 2000, p. 172). It encourages students to see "the big picture." Being able to see the big picture encourages students to make those connections with their own life experiences. This is the captivating moment when readers are able to bridge their reading with prior knowledge. This learning and understanding is a pivotal point in enhancing students' chances of becoming life-long readers.

### **Picture Book Utilization**

Several characteristics of picture books foster their use in the classroom. They must be brief and straightforward, contain a limited number of concepts, contain concepts the intended audience can comprehend, be written in a style that is direct and simple, and include illustrations that complement the text. As a result of these characteristics, using picture books with middle school students is very beneficial. Picture books provide models of good writing techniques, and as a result, inspire young

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*Picture books provide models of good writing techniques, and as a result, inspire young authors.*

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authors. Picture books have been used as a tool for writing and reading in primary and elementary schools for many years. Regie Routman frequently uses *Getting' Through Thursday* (1998) by Melrose Cooper to encourage her students to move beyond the story, to connect it to their own lives, and focus on what the author and illustrator have done to hook them in, keep them interested, and inspire them. "I always use a great picture book as an ice

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breaker – to capture students’ attention, engage their sensibilities, and get them thinking about their own narratives. Carefully chosen picture books with outstanding literary quality can be wonderful models for encouraging focused student writing” (Routman, 2000, p. 382).

Reading and discussing picture books leads to many opportunities to improve oral communication. It is not surprising to see a quiet, reticent student express an opinion in literature circles or during small-group reading. When a particular book holds meaning, students learn that they have a voice in the outcome of the meaning of a picture book. Adolescents need outlets to share their feelings and emotions about certain topics. Picture books provide this necessary outlet.

Picture books furnish opportunities to integrate the arts with content subjects. They are designed to be more interesting and relevant than textbooks because they must sustain and engage the reader. Picture books in social studies curriculum enable students to understand life in other historical periods or geographical regions as they develop understanding and appreciation of differing cultures. Some examples include *The Wall* (Bunting, 1990), *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki, 1993), *Pearl Harbor Child* (Nicholson, 1998), Hesse’s (1997) *Out of the Dust* and *When Jessie Came Across the Sea* (Hest, 1997). Patricia Polacco’s *Pink and Say* (1994) and Rylant’s *Something Permanent* (1994) are two examples of literature which depict grim realities of life that touch readers far more deeply than what would be found in a typical social studies textbook. On the other hand, grim realities are often depicted in picture books but the authors and illustrators almost invariably provide hope in the outcomes.

Informational picture books are especially valuable in thematic science and social studies units. These nonfiction books report on one topic. Writers of nonfiction weave information and details of the subject enabling readers to find the book irresistible. Darigan et al. (2002) list five characteristics of a good informational book of which one or more “catch” the reader’s attention: They are (1) attractive in format and design, (2) compelling with details, (3) offer fascinating comparisons, (4) unusual subjects or viewpoints, and (5) personalized content.

Language arts teachers find picture books illustrate simple forms of literary elements found in more difficult texts. *My Man Blue* (Grimes, 1999) is an excellent set of poems that provides a starting point for discussion of character development, point of view, voice, and setting. Yolen’s *Encounter* (1992), Johnson’s *Old Dry Frye*

(1999), and Bunting’s *Fly Away Home* (1991) are examples of picture books illustrating literary devices. Other books illustrating parts of speech are Ruth Heller’s *Kites Sail High: A Book About Verbs* (1988), *Many Luscious Lollipops: A Book About Adjectives* (1989), and *Behind the Mask: A Book About Prepositions* (1995). R.M. Schneider’s *Add It, Dip It, Fix It: A Book of Verbs* (1995) has a very modern look. More humorous type books include Brian Cleary’s *A Mink, a Fink, a Skating Rink: What Is a Noun?* (1999) and *Hairy, Scary, Ordinary: What Is an Adjective?* (2000). Gwynne’s *The King Who Rained* (1970) provides a great introduction to the world of homophones.

In the science and math curriculum, picture books are used to relate content to the world beyond school. *Starry Messenger* (Sis, 1996) recounts the story of Galileo, the scientist, mathematician, astronomer, philosopher, and physicist, in simple language but with colorful illustrations. *Snowflake Bentley* (Martin, 1998) is the story of Wilson Bentley who discovered that no two snowflakes are alike. Demi’s *One Grain of Rice* (1997) demonstrates how numbers doubled, grow from one to one billion in thirty days.

Picture books are a source of personal pleasure and aesthetic satisfaction for all ages. Teachers and other professionals are quick to point out the benefits of teaching with picture books, but the first goal in sharing picture books is for enjoyment. A story is a strong teaching tool, but the pleasure or satisfaction gained remains with students longer and promotes life-long reading.

## Conclusion

Picture books are effective teaching tools in the middle-level classroom setting. They appeal to early adolescent students because of their interesting artwork, accessible language and brief text that stimulate enjoyment. Picture books, aside from enhancing the vocabulary of students, foster independent reading and promote diversity in the classroom. They also serve as rich sources for research projects (Miller, 1998). Learning is more likely to happen when students like what they are doing, when students are involved, active, and learning from and with other students.

Picture books are for all ages; they are about all subjects. With the information provided, envision the broadened social consciousness brought about from the use of picture books. Picture books are filled with valuable teaching tools that all educators need to know how to use and always have on their educational tool belts. Teachers must continue to inspire students to examine

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their social world and not only to learn subject matter, but also think for themselves. Because of the sophistication and experience older students bring to the meaning of print, the educational rewards of sharing picture books are without limit.

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# Notable Books for Young People

By Karen I. Adams and Pam Petty

## A Single Shard

By Linda Sue Park

Winner of this year's Newbery Award, **A Single Shard** is reminiscent of Katherine Paterson's tales of medieval life in Japan, including **The Sign of the Chrysanthemum** and **The Master Puppeteer**. Placed in the mid- to late 12<sup>th</sup> century in "a small village on the west coast of Korea," Park has built her tale around the historic work of Korean celadon potters who practiced during the Koryo era from A.D. 918-1392. The central character, a thirteen-year-old orphan named Tree-ear, has a burning desire to learn to work on a potter's wheel and, most particularly, to create the beautiful works of celadon pottery he has admired from a distance. Sneaking from his home under a bridge with his protector, the crippled Crane-man, Tree-ear observes the world around him and listens to learn all that he can as he scavenges for food among the village's rubbish heaps. He secretly watches the master potter Min, fascinated by his work and hoping to learn from him.

In this tale of loss, fear, determination, expectation, and finally love and belonging, Linda Sue Park has created an intriguing story that will skillfully capture the attention of early adolescent readers who enjoy historical fiction of far distant times and places. Although the satisfying ending may be somewhat anticipated and seem slightly contrived, it is nevertheless satisfying and interesting to watch as it unfolds.

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Linda Sue Park. **A Single Shard**. New York: Clarion Books, 2001.

## When My Name Was Keoko

*A Novel Of Korea In World War II*

By Linda Sue Park

This year's winner of the Newbery Award for **A Single Shard**, Linda Sue Park, has a newer work of historical fiction that many adolescents will enjoy. Told as a shared narrative by thirteen-year-old Sun-hee and her seventeen-year-old brother Tae-yul, **When My Name was Keoko** chronicles the war years from 1940-1945 in a Korea occupied by Japan. Sun-hee and her family are forced to take Japanese rather than Korean names, thus the book's title, to speak only Japanese and never Korean, and to hide or destroy all signs of Korean patriotism. This

is a rather different slant on the second World War, hearing about the attack on Pearl Harbor and ultimately the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki from the Japanese perspective.

Parks has based parts of this story on her own family history, of childhood events her parents had remembered from an occupied Korea. Realistic historical events are portrayed such as General MacArthur's encouraging leaflets dropped from planes over Korea, the Japanese government's insistence that the Olympic gold medal in 1936 was won by the Japanese named "Kitei Son" rather than the Korean Sohn Kee Chung, and finally the liberation of Korea by the Americans and their introduction of such unusual taste treats as chewing gum and chocolate. Sun-hee's family faces many humiliations and losses during the years described. Some seem less drastic such as the burning of Sun-hee's diary by the local guards or her realization that her friend's family are Japanese sympathizers. Others are major. Her uncle goes into hiding as a member of the resistance, printing Korean newspapers, and her brother joins the special Japanese Imperial Air Corps as a kamikaze pilot. While her brother does return, her uncle is caught in the Communist takeover in North Korea and separated from his family by the newly instated border, a geographic barrier still in existence.

**When My Name was Keoko** is a well written and moving story with many analogies to much of today's news with stories of long-time strife continued and of families divided and enforced occupations. To connect with her readers, Linda Sue Park also has a web site at [www.lindasuepark.com](http://www.lindasuepark.com) for visits. This is a fascinating book to read, offering insight on a period of time and place about which many young readers will have little knowledge.

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Linda Sue Park. **When My Name Was Keoko: A Novel of Korea in World War II**. New York: Clarion Books, 2002.

## Carver: A Life In Poems

By Marilyn Nelson

It must have been a very difficult choice for this year's Newbery Award winner with such strong contenders as Marilyn Nelson's deeply moving collection of poetry about the remarkable life of George Washington Carver.

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Following a chronological approach, Nelson begins with Carver's birth into slavery in 1864, his early kidnapping, and his return to his "family," the Carvers who had owned his mother. It is the Carver's name that George takes, later adding the flourish of a middle initial that grows into an entire name. It is the Carvers who encourage him to attend school, loving him and his brother Jim as their own. After attending a segregated school in Kansas, Carver first attends Simpson College in Iowa and later receives a baccalaureate degree from Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts. Nelson skillfully balances her story between lighthearted poems with which all adolescent readers can readily identify and those of more serious social weight. They range from "Cafeteria Food," describing Carver's meals at Iowa State where "even when it's good, it's bad" and a characterization of him as the "Curve-Breaker" or over-achiever in his class to more darkly serious poems such as "The Perceiving Self" in which Carver witnesses a lynching and the "The Year of the Sky-Smear" which tells of the death of his guardian Moses Carver in the year of Halley's Comet.

Adolescent readers will learn the usual information about George Washington Carver, the botanist. They will also learn about this man who was such an accomplished artist that he was named a Fellow in the British Royal Society for the Arts, the first black man ever so named, as well as about the man who crocheted practical gifts for his friends. Readers will also learn about his deeply spiritual side and the impact that he was able to have on the many young men whom he encountered during his teaching and lectures throughout the United States.

Nelson has clearly accomplished the seemingly challenging task of writing a book of poetry that is extremely difficult to put down. Even if the reader knows the basics of Carver's life, just the beauty of her telling makes the words compelling. This is a book to recommend readily to older adolescents who will very much enjoy this unique biographical book of poetry, supported by pictures of Carver and his belongings, detailing the important parts of his personhood. It is clearly deserving of the Newbery Honor status it now holds as well as its selection as one of this year's Coretta Scott King Author Award Honor books.

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Marilyn Nelson. **Carver: A Life in Poems.** Asheville, North Carolina: Front Street Books, 2001.

## **Money Hungry**

*By Sharon G. Flake*

Sharon Flake, who has already won the Coretta Scott King-John Steptoe Award for her recent book **Praise for the Skin I'm In**, has this year had her work **Money Hungry** named as one of the two Coretta Scott King Author Award Honor books. A quick read, **Money Hungry** offers a very harsh and realistic look at life in the projects. While the projects may not be desirable, they are nevertheless far superior to the time the book's protagonist, Raspberry Hill, spent living on the streets with her mother. Raspberry introduces herself to the reader as someone who is "always trying to think of ways to make a dollar ... a thirteen-year-old girl who loves money." She buys cheap pencils by the gross and sells them individually for a profit at school. She buys out-of-date candy and sells it to her classmates. She bakes brownies and sells them at school. She even cleans houses for elderly women in her neighborhood and beyond. Never is Raspberry without a plan for making money, but always it is with an eye toward self-protection, to ensure that she and her mother never return to the streets and that they are never without cash.

But as the story unfolds, things are changing in her life. Her mother is dating Dr. Mitchell, the divorced father of one of Raspberry's best friends. Her mother is trying to move into a real house in Pecan Landings, but unfortunately the neighbors do not want someone from the projects moving into their neighborhood based on government assistance. Another of Raspberry's friends, Ja'nae, suddenly makes contacts with her long-absent mother, finds a new boyfriend, and suddenly is in desperate need of some of Raspberry's hard-earned money. Her mystery is quite long in unfolding and quite surprising.

Raspberry must come to grips with the violence inherent in her home in the projects and her mother's intense desire to move out. She must deal with conflict at home and at school and with a sudden turn of events that takes away her much-loved stash of money. This realistic and poignant story is a quick and compelling read that has much truth about life for adolescents who know nothing of the life Raspberry must face while offering encouragement to those who know this life far too well. Sharon Flake is clearly deserving of her Author Award for **Money Hungry**.

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Sharon G. Flake. **Money Hungry.** New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2001.

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## Everything On A Waffle

By Polly Horvath

**Everything on a Waffle**, written by Polly Horvath whose earlier popular work **The Trolls** was named as a National Book Award Finalist, is a rather simplistic work in the midst of the other Newbery medal books this year. It seems rather dated in its content and tone, perhaps more a book that might have been written in the 1950s. Placed in Coal Harbour, on the coast of British Columbia, the story recounts the experiences of eleven-year-old Primrose Squarp whose parents are lost in a storm at sea. While the entire town believes that they have indeed perished, Primrose never loses confidence that they are still alive and simply stranded on an island somewhere.

Characterization is disappointingly flat for this award-winning book. The action is predictable and unenticing. To state the story simply, following her parent's disappearance, the town council, influenced by Ms. Honeycut, the local school guidance counselor, locates Primrose's Uncle Jack who actually moves across Canada to Coal Harbour to care for her as well as to "develop" this pristine area. Ms. Honeycut is seemingly interested only in herself, and perhaps flirting with Uncle Jack, as well as forcing others to conform to her ways of helping Primrose "adjust" to the loss she has suffered. The characters of Uncle Jack and Primrose's friend Ms. Bowzer, who owns The Girl on the Red Swing restaurant, are equally uninteresting.

Following in the steps of popular contemporary adult books such as Laura Esquivel's **Like Water for Chocolate** and Isabel Allende's **Aphrodite**, Horvath includes recipes for all of the foods mentioned in **Everything on a Waffle**. Unfortunately, the recipes, like the book, are also uninteresting.

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Polly Horvath. **Everything on a Waffle**. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2001.

## The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins

*An Illuminating History of Mr. Waterhouse Hawkins, Artist and Lecturer*

By Barbara Kerley

One of this year's Caldecott Honor books, **The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins**, is an unusual picture book detailing the first drawings and sculptures ever made of dinosaurs. Contemporary children are almost always fascinated by dinosaurs and, no doubt, assume that we have always known how these extinct creatures looked. They have no realization that there was a time in the 1800s when people had only a few bones and nothing else to define the dinosaur. Some, in fact, did not even believe such creatures might ever have lived.

Barbara Kerley presents her books as "a true dinosaur story in three ages," beginning with Hawkins' childhood love of art and progressing to his dinosaur models for the Crystal Palace in London and finally concluding with his disappointment in a much-anticipated but unrealized display of dinosaur creations in New York City. Brian Selznick's illustrations, many of which he says are "based on the original sketches of Mr. Hawkins," provide perfect support for this fascinating story. He details the specific process followed by Hawkins as he envisions his dinosaurs, starting with just a few bones and progressing to a full-bodied creature. He also illustrates the specifics of the various models created by Hawkins, starting with a drawing, moving to various sizes of clay models, and through to the finished full-sized dinosaur made of "bricks, tiles and broken stones, all held together with cement, covered with casts and painted."

Young audiences will find his models, presented at the grand opening of the beautiful Crystal Palace in London, a most satisfying event, but following this high point in Hawkins' life is the great disappointment of an invited exhibition he is to create for Central Park in New York City. Thrilled as he begins this new project in a new country, he is soon victimized by the political corruption of "Boss" Tweed who then controlled the city. Tweed decides that this project is a waste of money and ultimately sends his thugs to destroy Hawkins' models—chopping them to bits and burying any remaining pieces throughout the Park. Hawkins is ultimately invited to provide exhibits for Princeton University and for the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.

Hawkins returns to retirement in London, nevertheless eagerly listening to news of newly discovered dino-

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saur fossils and wondering “what other surprises would scientists dig up as they searched the world for dinosaurs?” Although the Crystal Palace was ultimately destroyed by fire, his creations were saved and relocated in Crystal Palace Park. As a haunting note, the final pages note that “while his American dinosaurs no longer stand, somewhere, buried in Central Park, pieces of his dinosaurs remain.” These simple words are accompanied by an intriguing illustration of a young boy wearing a dinosaur t-shirt and seated on a park bench sketching birds, while hidden in the ground beneath him one of Hawkins’ buried dinosaur heads gazes up at him—a kind of decaying modern fossil. Much additional information is provided in closing notes, and the reader learns of additional discoveries that have been made to slightly change or add to Hawkins’ ideas about dinosaurs, but he remains, nevertheless, a towering figure of great imagination and insight from the mid nineteenth century. Young readers and listeners, as well as older readers, will respond to this book with equal enthusiasm. It provides not only much of historical fact but also provides a real sense of what it is like to be a pioneer ahead of the imaginings of others.

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Barbara Kerley. Illus. by Brian Selznick. **The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins: An Illuminating History of Mr. Waterhouse Hawkins, Artist and Lecturer.** New York: Scholastic Press, 2001.

## Goin’ Someplace Special

By *Patricia C. McKissack*

**Goin’ Someplace Special** is surely representative of its award-winning team of creators, Patricia McKissack and Jerry Pinkney, who share numerous Caldecott and Newbery Honor medals and Coretta Scott King Awards for their wonderful work. Their previous work together has included **Mirandy and Brother Wind**, a Caldecott Honor Book and Coretta Scott King Award recipient. Their most recent creation, **Goin’ Someplace Special**, has been named as this year’s Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award winner.

It is not until the Author’s Note at the book’s conclusion that the reader learns that this story of ‘Tricia Ann’s important journey to “Someplace Special” is, indeed, autobiographical. It is Patricia McKissack’s story of growing up in segregated Nashville, Tennessee, with signs and rules all around her that remind her that she is separated—riding in the back of the bus, sitting in the last

rows of the balcony at the movie theater, attending a separate school, and drinking from a separate water fountain. As the story begins, ‘Tricia Ann is begging her grandmother to allow her to travel to “Someplace Special” all by herself for the first time. While her Mama Frances vacillates, ‘Tricia Ann is convinced that she is more than capable of making the journey to her favorite place.

The adventure is a bit more than ‘Tricia Ann had expected. The reader sees her walking to the back of the bus to the “colored section” where she grumbles to herself that this is not fair. She is reminded, however, by one of her grandmother’s friends to “Carry yo’self proud.” This pride and strength is tested as she inadvertently sits on a bench in the park reserved “for whites only” and as she inadvertently slips into a hotel with a crowd following a local celebrity, only to be told loudly that “no colored people are allowed.” After numerous adventures, ‘Tricia Ann finally arrives at her favorite “Someplace Special,” a location still unknown to the reader. And it is, in fact, the Public Library, where a sign engraved across the front states that “All Are Welcome.” Warned by a friend not to let the signs of segregation “steal” her happiness, this is a sign that can encourage her to read and imagine a better world. What a wonderful conclusion to this short but deeply moving story detailing just a few of the indignities a young black girl would have endured growing up in the South of the 1950s.

In her Author’s Note, McKissack explains that “the more I read, the better I understood why my grandmother believed the library was someplace more exciting, more interesting, and more informative than hotels, movies, restaurants, and amusement parks. She, like Andrew Carnegie, whose great wealth helped to build the library, knew that ‘reading is the doorway to freedom.’” McKissack, as usual, has used words beautifully to tell this story, more than just one simple adventure of a young girl’s first trip alone to the library, but really a much larger story of a journey through a segregated world to one of freedom and welcome. Pinkney’s illustrations perfectly match the beauty of the words and portray the world encountered by ‘Tricia Ann. This is a book to be read often and with great reverence and appreciation. Readers of many ages will be encouraged by the wonderful story of **Goin’ Someplace Special**.

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Patricia C. McKissack. Illus. By Jerry Pinkney. **Goin’ Someplace Special.** New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2001.

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## Martin's Big Words

*The Life Of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

*By Doreen Rappaport*

One of this year's Caldecott Honor Books and recipient of a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor Award, **Martin's Big Words** is an excellent presentation of the life of this larger than life figure. In an Author's Note, Doreen Rappaport explains her personal interest in the philosophy of nonviolence embodied by Dr. King. She had been challenged by the "courage and determination" of Black Americans in the South during the Montgomery bus boycott and the many "sit-ins" at segregated lunch counters. She subsequently went to Washington in 1963 to march and to Mississippi in the summer of 1965 to teach in a freedom school. Bryan Collier also explains his efforts to portray Dr. King's life through art as he illustrated **Martin's Big Words**. He explains that stained-glass church windows were a major focus and metaphor for him, providing beams of light to enlighten in a variety of colors that represent for him many races. Collier continued the use of metaphor in such illustrations as the four candles in the last picture to "represent the four girls who were killed in the Sixteenth Street Baptist church" in Birmingham. His skillful blend of painting and collage for him "piece together" the many events of Dr. King's life. Masterfully tying text and illustration together are, indeed, Martin's "Big Words."

Through the bold illustrations and sparse text, Rappaport and Collier present the segregated world in which Martin Luther King, Jr. grew up with signs everywhere reminding him that many things were for "WHITES ONLY." But Martin is encouraged by his mother to remember, "You are as good as anyone." As a young child, Martin is inspired by his father's preaching and expresses a desire to use "big words" too. And, of course, it is his powerful use of language that so stirs a nation to social change as he grows up. A number of quotations from Dr. King's speeches are included, as he reminds his congregations that "Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that," "Love is the key to the problems of the world," and that "Sooner or later, all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together." When the Montgomery bus boycott is described, the events are summarized with Martin's statement that "When the history books are written, someone will say there lived black people who had the courage to stand up for their rights." And, finally, the immortal words of his "I have a dream" speech are given as he envisions that "one day in Alabama little black boys and black girls will join hands

with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers."

Following the sparsely stated facts of Dr. King's assassination, Rappaport reminds her young readers that "His big words are alive for us today." She offers a concluding chronology of important dates in Dr. King's life that teachers might want to use in classroom discussions, as well as a list of additional books suggested and notes about use of the more than 200 Web sites about Dr. King. This is genuinely a strongly written and beautifully illustrated book that stands up well in quality to the "Big Words" and the life presented.

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Doreen Rappaport. Illus. By Bryan Collier. **Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2001.

## The Stray Dog

*From a True Story by Reiko Sassa*

*By Mark Simont*

Mark Simont has had a long and prestigious career as an illustrator, beginning with his first children's book in 1939. Ruth Krauss's **The Happy Day**, for which he provided the illustrations, was named a 1949 Caldecott Honor Book, and later his illustrations for Janice May Udry's **A Tree is Nice** received the 1957 Caldecott Medal. His other works include the modern classic, Karla Kushkin's **The Philharmonic Gets Dressed**. How good to see him continuing as an award winner with **The Stray Dog**, one of this year's three Caldecott Honor Books. Although he credits the actual incident to a story told to him by Reiko Sassa in 1983, it is indeed Mark Simont who has carefully matched his simple and straightforward text with beautiful watercolor illustrations.

The story begins with a family's picnic adventure outside the city and their encounter with a stray dog they nickname Willy. After playing with him all afternoon, the children want to take Willy home, but their mother explains that "He must belong to somebody, and they would miss him." But the little girl in this nameless family is concerned that "Maybe Willy doesn't belong to anybody." Throughout the following week, the entire family misses Willy and on Saturday eagerly return to their picnic spot, where the reader sees them waiting expectantly at their picnic table with a bowl of water and burger on the ground, hoping for Willy's appearance. Instead, Willy speeds by, hotly pursued by the dog warden as a stray who "doesn't belong to anybody." The

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boy and girl convince the warden that Willy is, instead, their dog, and they take him home where he “settled in where he belonged.”

**The Stray Dog** is indeed a sparsely told story of a simple event, but young listeners and readers will enjoy the warmth of illustrations and the love evidenced by Willy and his family as they delight in coming to belong to one another.

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Mark Simont. **The Stray Dog**. New York: Harper Collins, 2001.

### **The Three Pigs**

*By David Wiesner*

This newest work by the award-winning David Wiesner, while it has been awarded the Caldecott Medal for this year, is nevertheless a disappointment. It lacks the enthusiasm and mystery of his previously Caldecott award-winning **Tuesday**, and it lacks the depth of his Caldecott Honor books **Free Fall** and **Sector 7**. Containing the basic structure of the traditional tale of The Three Pigs, Wiesner seems to have borrowed from the creativity exhibited in Jon Scieszka’s **The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales** in which a number of fairy tale witches figure significantly, and the successful filming of William Steig’s **Shrek**. Unfortunately this borrowing has produced a rather boring story. The three pigs deconstruct their story book in order to save their lives from the huffing and puffing wolf, and as they wander, they encounter all the characters from “Hey Diddle Diddle,” including the jumping cow and fiddling cat. They even save a dragon from a prince sent to slay him. Ultimately, they reconstruct the brick home, and “all lived happily ever aft.”

There just is very little of real entertainment and intrigue that one expects of Wiesner. The illustrations are quite lovely, but, unfortunately, the story does not support them sufficiently.

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David Wiesner. **The Three Pigs**. New York: Clarion Books, 2001.

### **The Land**

*Prequel to Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

*By Mildred D. Taylor*

For those who have loved Mildred Taylor’s previous novels about the Logan family, **The Land**, this year’s winner of the Coretta Scott King Author Award, will in no way disappoint. This prequel to **Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry** can be enjoyed both by those who have already read that novel and others about the Logans and by those who have never been introduced to this wonderful family. Beginning at the end of the Civil War, **The Land** details the family history from the great-great grandparents of Cassie Logan and her brothers. This book is most certainly for older readers, largely due to the harshness of the content and the abuse and difficulties faced by the mixed race great-grandfather Paul Edward. Taylor speaks in her opening note to her readers about this realistically harsh content in **The Land**. Acknowledging that “there are those who wish to ban my books because I have used language that is painful,” she explains, “I have chosen to use the language that was spoken during the period, for I refuse to white-wash history. The language was painful and life was painful for many African Americans, including my family.”

As the story unfolds, the Logan Family Tree provided helps a great deal because of the large time period covered and the recurring family names among the Logans. The same family strength is present as in other of Taylor’s books about the Logans, including **Song of the Trees**, **The Friendship** and **The Road to Memphis**. Although the aspect of the white slave-holding great-great grandfather Edward causes many problems for young Paul Edward, it is ultimately clear that he had loved Deborah, his former slave, and had also loved her children. The times in which they lived and societal pressures clearly impacted the way in which they enjoyed their love, but it was nevertheless present.

The central focus of land ownership, so important in other stories about the Logans, and the difficulty of obtaining this land is described, including humiliations and losses at the hands of others and acts of kindness by both whites and blacks. This is a story that is disquieting and emotionally wrenching to read, but it also holds the reader throughout. Mildred Taylor explains again the autobiographical nature of this story and all that her family had shared with her to make it her own. **The Land** is clearly an award winner in every way.

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Mildred D. Taylor. **The Land**. New York: Penguin Putnam, 2001.

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Karen I. Adams taught children to read in grades three through seven and served as reading coordinator for several years for the Russell County Schools in Alabama. She also served as Right-to-Read Director and Title I reading supervisor in Yanceyville, North Carolina. She served as dean of the College of Education at Tennessee Technological University until her appointment as Dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green.

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Pam Petty taught for several years at Carthage Elementary School in Carthage, Tenn. In her teaching and in a leadership role in the Tennessee Reading Association, Pam has provided great support for one of her great passions, the art of storytelling. After recently completing doctoral studies at the University of Tennessee, Pam joined the faculty at Western Kentucky University.

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# “Reading with Rover” On the Iron Range

*By Mary-Beth Kafut*

I am not sure how information sharing is done in other professions, but librarians are very good at borrowing ideas wherever they spot a good one. *Reading with Rover* is one such borrowed idea that has taken hold at the Eveleth Public Library in the Iron Range country in northern Minnesota.



**Reading with Rover in the library.**

Earlier this year, a staff member visited a library in the state of Washington. Although she was not able to observe their *Reading with Rover* program, the title caught our eye, and we decided to do our own version. This was not much of a challenge, for I already have two dogs certified with Therapy Dogs International.

I know many people that have wonderful dogs, and they will use any excuse to bring them to work with them. Although some of these dogs would work wonderfully with the public, I strongly suggest contacting Therapy Dogs International (TDI) at [TDI-dog.org](http://TDI-dog.org). Most TDI-certified dogs are just average pets you meet on the street and in homes everywhere. The big difference, however, is that the owner has decided to share their pet with others and they have taken the time to properly train the dog. They have also taken one more step by requesting that an

objective person test the dog to see if it has what it takes to work with the public in the capacity of a therapy dog.

The TDI test is a fairly standard obedience test with the dog heeling, coming when called, and allowing a stranger to pet it. However, there are additional requirements such as warmly greeting someone who is in a wheelchair or using a walker. The TDI evaluation determines how the dog reacts when startled when someone drops a stack of metal trays on the floor and when meeting a new dog or a stranger.

Our “Rover” is named Badger and he has gone into nursing homes, daycare centers, hospitals, mental health clinics, group homes for troubled youths and, of course, he has visited libraries. He has met young and old, sick and healthy people. He has been patted, hugged, sat on, and kissed. He even had little fingers go up his nose when a little boy was faster than I was. Badger has taken this all with a wagging tail. If your dog would take this kind of treatment with the “smile” Badger does, find a TDI evaluator fast because dogs with this kind of temperament are needed everywhere.



**Children and their canine friends at the library.**

When we decided to try a *Reading with Rover* program, we already had two things going for us. First, we had the dogs, Badger, an eight-year-old yellow Labrador that TDI certified in 1999, and Frankie, a four year old Springer Spaniel mix that TDI certified in April, 2002. The second thing working in our favor was our group of summer library helpers, who are headed for the fifth grade and higher. They come in weekly to help with odd jobs around the library. Some of these young people have helped with story times, so we combined the two areas. We had library helpers read dog stories to the other children and the dogs. It has been a lot of fun and has worked very well.

The Eveleth Public Library is in Eveleth, Minnesota, which is in the state's arrowhead region. Our town is just shy of 4,000 residents and its main industries are mining and tourism. During the summer months, like most libraries, we do our best to bring children into the library and encourage them to become life-long readers. *Reading with Rover* helps us to accomplish this goal. I suggest visiting the Internet, and doing a simple keyword search for "Reading with Rover". The last time I tried, I had too many hits to even begin to go through all of them, but the ones I visited all had suggestions and ideas. I am also positive that most of them would be happy to share information.

Since both "Rovers" belong to me, no one will be surprised that our reading list contains dog-related titles. It makes me smile every time a Clifford book goes out for I was reading the Clifford series when I was a child many moons ago, but there are others that we have helped introduce to the children. Since our program has older children reading to the dogs and young children, all of the titles listed are picture books.

### Recommended Books

**Lisa Copper** delights all ages with her series of "Daisy" books.

The series follows the journey of Daisy, an English Bull Terrier, from her delightful experiences with her human family to having puppies of her own. Recommended age range is 4 to 8:

*Daisy Thinks She Is a Baby* (1994) Knopf

*Daisy Is a Mommy* (1997) Dutton Books

*Daisy Knows Best* (1999) Dutton Books

*Daisy's Babies* (1999) Dutton Books

*Good Dog, Daisy* (2001) Dutton Books

**Alexandra Day** has several great books about a rambunctious rottweiler named Carl. Recommended age range is 5 to 6:

*Good Dog Carl* (1985) Simon & Schuster

*Carl Goes Shopping* (1992) Farrar Straus and Giroux

*Carl's Afternoon in the Park* (1992) Farrar Straus and Giroux

*Carl Goes to Daycare* (1993) Farrar Straus and Giroux

*Carl's Birthday* (1997) Farrar Straus and Giroux

**Mark Inkpen** delightfully chronicles the adventures of Kipper the dog and his animal friends. Recommended age range is 3 to 7:

*Kipper* (1999) Harcourt

*Kipper's Snowy Day* (1999) Harcourt

*Kipper's Book of Colors* (1999) Harcourt

*Kipper's Birthday* (2000) Harcourt

*Kipper and Roly* (2001) Harcourt

**Constance McGeorge** brings us a popular series featuring Boomer, a playful golden retriever. Recommended age range is 1 to 4.

*Boomer's Big Day* (1996) Chronicle Books LLC

*Boomer Goes to School* (1998) Chronicle Books LLC

*Boomer's Big Surprise* (1999) Chronicle Books LLC

Another well-liked dog series is the "Tiny" series by **Carri Meister**. Don't be fooled by the name, however, because this dog is anything but tiny! Recommended for ages 4 to 8.

*When Tiny was Tiny* (1999) Puffin

*Tiny's Bath* (1999) Puffin

*Tiny Goes to the Library* (2000) Puffin

*Tiny the Snow Dog* (2001) Puffin

**Joseph Slate** presents wonderful adventures about a dog, a kindergarten teacher, and a variety of students. Recommended age range is 4 to 8:

*Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* (1996) Puffin

*Miss Bindergarten Celebrates the 100th Day of Kindergarten* (1998) Dutton Books

*Miss Bindergarten Stays Home from Kindergarten* (2000) Dutton Books

*Miss Bindergarten Plans a Circus with Kindergarten* (2002) Dutton Books

**Rosemary Wells** brings to life the lovable terrier, McDuff. Recommended age range is 1-5:

*McDuff Comes Home* (1997) Hyperion Press

*McDuff and the Baby* (1997) Hyperion Press

*McDuff's New Friend* (1998) Hyperion Press

*The McDuff Stories* (2000) Hyperion Press

*McDuff Saves the Day* (2002) Hyperion Press

Children will also enjoy *Bubba and Beau, Best Friends* (Harcourt 2002) by **Kathi Appelt**. This delightful book tells about Bubba, a blue-eyed baby, and a hound puppy named Beau. Recommended age range is 2 to 5.

In *A Rose for Pinkerton* (Dial 1981) by **Steve Kellogg**, the Great Dane Pinkerton switches roles with his new friend Rose, a kitten. Recommended age range is 4 to 8.

**Madeleine L'Engle** helps children cope with the birth of a new sibling in *The Other Dog* (Seastar Pub. 2001). Recommended for ages 4 to 8.

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Children look through a pet store window to see which dog is chosen by which customer in **Claire Masurel's** *Ten dogs in the Window: A Countdown Book* (North South Books 1997). Recommended age range is 4 to 8.

**Gloria Rand** teaches children valuable lessons about caring for animals in *A Home for Spooky* (Henry Holt & Company 1998). Recommended age range is 4 to 8.

*Pretzel* (Houghton Mifflin Co. 1997) by **H.A. and Margret Rey** is a thoroughly enjoyable story about the longest dachshund in the world and his quest for love. Recommended age range is 4 to 8.

An all time personal favorite guaranteed to get children and dogs alike going is *Doggies* (Little Simon 1995) by **Sandra Boynton**.

Dogs and stories about dogs are enormously popular with children. Further, the children who help with our summer library program also learn a lot about reading, young children, sharing, and dogs. The *Reading with Rover* concept might well work in a variety of situations such as after school reading/tutoring programs, homework clubs, and maybe even in elementary schools. Don't just look at your dog as an affable buddy; your dog might just be the key to fostering a love of reading among children!

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Mary-Beth Kafut is a librarian at the public library in Eveleth, Minnesota. She may be contacted at the library located at 614 Pierce St., Eveleth, MN 55734.

### *Workers, Hard Workers* – By Sigmund A. Boloz

Not simple hirelings,  
Compensated to serve.  
Not domestics, who get  
Only what they deserve.

But workers, hard workers,  
Laboring none-the-less  
Striving and sweating  
To guarantee success.

Not menial laborers, employees,  
who profit by toil,  
Not unskilled, minimum-wage earners scraping by  
On scraping the soil.

But workers, hard workers,  
Always struggling none-the-less,  
Grappling and straining  
To ensure each child's progress.

Quite a profession,  
This teaching field,  
Full of rocks, boulders  
And stones concealed.

But full of professionals  
Enablers of distinctive dreams,  
Magicians, facilitators,  
And directors of genius-like themes.

But most of all, workers,  
Hard workers, yes, indeed,  
Exceptionally hard workers  
Who teach our children to read.

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Sigmund A. Boloz recently retired after working as an educator on the Navajo Nation for the past 30 years. He can be reached at [saboloz@msn.com](mailto:saboloz@msn.com).

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# Teaching Science Through Trade Books: An Integrated Approach

*By Martha P. Simmons and  
Daniel Lucas*

Children find science very abstract, and if science is to be understood and remembered, it must be seen as part of their own personal world. Children should simultaneously learn to read for information, ideas, insights, and entertainment. Knowledge and learning reach across lines that divide disciplines to create a total learning experience. Integration of science trade books as extensions of textbooks into an activity-based science curriculum can improve children's reading proficiency and

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*Knowledge and learning reach across lines that divide disciplines to create a total learning experience.*

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understanding of science concepts. This article explores the use of science trade books in K-6 elementary and middle school classrooms.

Comprehension of the knowledge and conceptual basis of the everyday things that constitute our world should be the major purpose for studying science. Specific facts are not as important as the strategies and process skills needed to understand and interpret the scientific world. Learning to solve problems is the primary goal of science instruction. Training children to merely repeat specific information should become secondary to providing opportunities for children to make first-hand observations, to restate ideas, and to make inferences (Butzow, & Butzow, 1990). Providing science trade books will facilitate children's learning to read. A classroom library that contains a wide variety of science-related trade books, both fiction and nonfiction, as well as stories with scientific themes is an important component of an effective science curriculum (Moser, 1994). Emergent literacy interests and abilities can be fostered through the use of various science trade books and activities. Trade books serve as a natural springboard for explora-

tions of science related topics. Use of science trade books is a valuable science tool because they generate interest

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*Trade books serve as a natural springboard for explorations of science related topics.*

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and motivation, provide context, invite communication, and connect science with the rest of the child's world (Barclay & Bernelli, 1999).

In order to increase children's science skills, such as observation, prediction, and hypothesizing, and their knowledge of facts and concepts regarding the natural universe, science is taught, yet many middle school teachers do not feel comfortable teaching science and perceive it as being difficult to teach (Bethel, 1991). A more reasonable expectation for those teachers is the use of science trade books in a literature-based approach. Through the use of trade books, teachers can introduce students to the scientific method, transmit knowledge about the world, and give students the chance to experience the excitement of discovery (Janke & Norton, 1983).

Instructional techniques that utilize activity-based science programs can be strengthened through the use of science trade books. The major benefit to a child's reading proficiency from the use of science trade books as a teaching tool is that the child reads more. Teachers have found that children will choose for their own reading pleasure those trade books that relate to topics that are under discussion in the classroom. This is especially true when children are intimately involved with the subject matter through investigative science. Using science trade books with activity oriented science can greatly enhance the general reading level of elementary and middle school students (Esler, & Esler, 2001).

Science trade books can serve as a vehicle to introduce concepts or to complement a lesson that has been taught because such books usually offer an applied setting for learning or reinforcing material. The science

trade books should not serve as a substitute for skills-directed instruction in reading (Martin, Sexton, & Gerlorvich, 2001). It is not wise to supplant or supplement the science content area textbook. Instead, the use of science trade books should vitalize the science content area.

Science trade books compliment nearly any science unit. These books are appropriate for a wide range of reading levels and are diverse in subject matter and depth of coverage. Such books provide a welcome change from reading difficult science textbooks. Students who are more independent or gifted are encouraged by having a

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*Using science trade books with activity oriented science can greatly enhance the general reading level of elementary and middle school students.*

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variety of science trade books in the classroom as they move beyond the assignment and explore at a more advanced level.

There is an aesthetic dimension on nonfiction science trade books, which is a deviation from many science textbooks. Connections between facts in the reading and real-life concepts are more easily made when engrossed in a lively story. Children read and learn with enthusiasm as they are drawn to the detailed illustrations, photographs, paintings, woodcuts, or diagrams. Moreover, trade books with up-to-date information are continually being published while science textbooks can become outdated quickly (Cook & Lehman, 1990).

A salient question arises: What are the criteria for selection of science trade books for use in elementary and middle school classrooms? Two suggestions are emphasized, namely: (a) select trade books that are clearly related to a subject-matter theme, and (b) use graphic organizers to clarify the

science content of the trade books. Graphic organizers provide visualization making the concept more concrete and less mysterious to the minds of children (Royce, & Wiley, (1996).

Assistance for making choices is available to the classroom teacher including the annual list of the National Science Teachers' Association (NSTA)-Children's Book Council (CBC), " Outstanding Trade Books in Science K-12," published annually in March as well as numerous journal articles that list trade books by theme and grade level. The following criteria are used by the NSTA and the CBC in their annual list: (a) Science content is substantial in the book; (b) there is clear, accurate, and up to date information; (c) facts and theories are distinguished; (d) information is not misleading as facts are not oversimplified; (e) significant facts are not omitted, and generalizations are supported by facts; and (f) there is no gender, ethnic, and socioeconomic bias (NSTA , & Children's Book Council Joint Book Review Panel, 2002).

What types of science trade books grab children's attention and cultivate their curiosity? Publishers have created many eye-catching, user-friendly titles, great activity books, and science books that are as hard to put down as novels. The books that hold the most child appeal fall into the following five categories: (a) science in action, (b) biographies, (c) kids doing science, (d) gross-outs, and (e) mysteries. The science- in-action books



**Martha Simmons (right) visiting Clarence Pettway and his fourth graders at Seth Johnson Elementary School in Montgomery.**

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possess a great potential to convince students to pursue careers in science. Reading about the life and career of one person is one way to see science in action through biographies. The best titles dealing with students doing science aren't about geeky young geniuses, but ordinary youngsters who are doing interesting work. Examples of the gross-outs include books offering scientific explana-

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*Publishers have created many eye-catching, user-friendly titles, great activity books, and science books that are as hard to put down as novels.*

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tions for such high-interest topics as eye gunks, burps, and mummies. Books dealing with such mysteries of the disappearance of the dinosaurs captivate youngsters' interests (Hamilton, 1999).

The following guidelines are recommended to improve students' understanding of science especially correcting children's misconceptions through the use of trade books. After identifying children's misconceptions through oral or written responses to open-ended questions, interviews, and large- and small-group discussions, search for related science trade books. Demonstrating a discrepant event as this compels children to justify and analyze their prior understanding. Reading one book about the concept will not be enough to cause beliefs to change. Use several trade books and sensory experiences to confront inappropriate prior knowledge. Making a Know-Want to Know-Learned (KWL) chart incorpo-

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*Trade books may serve the same purpose as texts during the concept introduction stage when science terms and examples are introduced.*

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rates these strategies. Creation of a learning log by students indicating predictions compared to actual data can also be used as a form of assessment. (Miller, Steiner, & Larson (1996).

It is fairly easy for teachers to assemble a stack of trade books related to a science theme, but it is more difficult to make sure each book in that stack is presented in a meaningful way. Presentational evidence of students' energy, interest, and literacy development needs to be gathered. Response notebooks rich in writing and sketching, a timeline extending in hallways, individual

expert studies using a variety of research approaches, and a musical program are examples of ensuring that each book's identity is not lost (Kaser, 2001). One such way that trade books can be integrated into hands-on activities is the learning cycle. Trade books may serve the same purpose as texts during the concept introduction stage when science terms and examples are introduced. The development of research skills in scientific inquiry can be fostered by allowing children to find information on their own particularly through various resources including trade books. Appropriate uses of trade books include prompts for writing in science and facilitating small group or whole-class discussions (Rice, Dudley, & Williams, 2001). In addition, after students research a particular animal for a science report, a children's story is written and illustrated featuring the same animal for their English class (Olson & Meyer, (1996).

## Conclusions

Science trade books can foster emergent literacy interests and science abilities of elementary and middle school students. The information and ideas included will help teachers facilitate students' learning in science and foster students' growing understanding of the purposes and functions of such printed materials.

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- 
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## Promoting Reading Comprehension Through Analysis of Character Traits

### WHY:

Most narrative revolves around the characters. It's who the people are and what happens to them that makes a story. Students may need help understanding characters in their reading and developing characters in their writing.

### WHO:

The following strategy is designed to help students recall and describe characters in greater detail.

### HOW:

- A. Children in the lower grades might read the delightful Miss Nelson books by Harry Allard. Those books center on the character more than the story line. Children in upper grades might read a book like Roald Dahl's *The BFG* for the same reason. Through discussion, identify the attributes that make the characters distinctive. The children might "web" the character's attributes.
- B. The teacher then provides the group with cards or a work sheet that contains four or five discussion extenders. The story *Miss Nelson is Missing* is used as a sample but virtually any story character can be substituted where there are italics:
  1. How is Miss Nelson different from all of the other characters in the story titled, *Miss Nelson is Missing*?
  2. What would Miss Nelson do if faced with a day like Alexander experienced in the book, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst? What makes you think so?
  3. What do the other characters in the story think of Miss Nelson? How do you know?
  4. What would Miss Nelson say if she met Alexander? Why do you think so?

### THEN:

After the discussion extenders have been completed, the children list on chart paper what they know about this character. For example, they might have a list of character features for Miss Nelson. They then brainstorm to determine what they don't know about the character under consideration. The teacher may have to model this the first time because it is easier to recognize attributes relative to a main character than what is not evident in the reading. For example, the teacher might post the list of characteristics about Miss Nelson generated by the students and with the students encourage the development of a parallel list of characteristics not known about Miss Nelson, e.g. Where does she live? Does she have any pets? What is Miss Nelson's favorite color? What is her favorite food?

The students provide answers to questions they have based on known characteristics but; further, they attempt to draw conclusions concerning attributes and behavioral traits of the character for which they have no direct information. They can then discuss possible story ideas and situations that come to mind as a result of ideas generated by these discussions. Further, new information about this character is added based on traits created or inferred. Teachers are encouraged to foster discussion extender strategies so the children can really delve into what makes literary characters "come alive" in stories. Such study develops competencies in making inferences and critical thinking and critical reading. That is, the children infer traits based on what the character said and did and/or what other characters in the story said about him/her.

Writing stories and plays, role playing, and creating oral stories can begin with analyses of traits of story characters and then by extending the character into other situations. That is, they can project the character into situations not addressed in the material read. Character studies with books by the same author or where the same character appears in several different books are highly

valuable for expanding application of this strategy. The key, of course, is that it all starts with good books that have especially rich characters. Books by Bill Peet, William Steig, Tomie dePaola have marvelous characters for development with children in the lower grades while Katherine Paterson, Gary Paulson, Patricia MacLachlan present us with great characters for study with children in the upper grades. A word of caution, however, is in order: Do not overburden the children with detailed character analysis. This strategy is highly worth while but must be used in an enjoyable manner. Of course, not all characters need to be analyzed.

Character study helps students to get beyond surface events in a story and become more acquainted with the mystery of a literary figure. Further, character study unquestionably fosters comprehension and critical thinking.

For further information on character study, see: Emery, D.W. (1996), Helping readers comprehend stories

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# Between the Lions

## Get Wild About Reading – Tune in to a new children’s series on PBS

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### About the Series:

*Between the Lions* is named for a family of lions who run a library like no other on earth. The doors “between the lions” swing open to reveal a magical place where characters pop off the pages of books, vowels sing, and words take on a life of their own. The series combines innovative puppetry, animation, live action, and music to transform the sometimes confusing process of learning to read into an entertaining adventure for children ages 4 to 7 and their families.

*Between the Lions* is based on a comprehensive literacy curriculum that follows a “whole-part-whole” approach recommended by many reading experts. The curriculum emphasizes both the pleasures and the value of reading, as well as the skills needed for learning how to read. The “whole” is provided by read-aloud story, poem, or song, while a series of “parts” focuses on specific phonics skills.

### Visit the Web Site: [pbskids.org/lions](http://pbskids.org/lions)

A place for kids and their families to play and learn together, the Web site will offer a wide range of interactive literacy activities, games, and stories to extend the fun and learning online. Parents will also find practical activities and suggestions for turning everyday situations into opportunities that encourage their kids to read, write, listen, and talk. Visit the site to sign up for a special e-mail newsletter, The Paw Print, filled with activities, *Between the Lions* news, and more.

### Stay Tuned...

A variety of educational activities and materials will be available to accompany the series, including:

- ◆ Designated Reader literacy campaign
- ◆ Companion books published by Golden Books (Fall, 2000)
- ◆ School and library products