

Novel-Ties: New Fiction for Literature Circles
Presented by the Multnomah County Library School Corps
August 14 & 21, 2007
Hollywood Library

Ethics

Gutman, Dan. The Homework Machine. Simon & Schuster, 2006. [j GUTMAN]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Honesty, cheating, friendships, family relationships, teachers/students

Summary: Four fifth-grade students--a geek, a class clown, a teacher's pet, and a slacker--as well as their teacher and mothers, each relate events surrounding a computer programmed to complete homework assignments.

Booktalk: Brenton, Kelsey, Judy and Sam were the last people anyone would expect to be friends. Brenton was brilliant, but didn't have many friends. Sam was known as a troublemaker. Judy was considered the teacher's pet, while Kelsey didn't put much effort into anything. The only thing they had in common was the table where they sat in school. Because their last names all started with D, their teacher had them sit together; everyone called them the "D Squad."

So why were the D Squad hanging out together every day after school by October?

Read Judy's section on p. 25-26.

Brenton insists his machine is real. And that afternoon, he takes the rest of D Squad to his house to show them. Brenton scans in their worksheet with questions about the solar system—and a few minutes later, a completed worksheet (in Brenton's handwriting) comes out the printer!

The rest of D Squad are amazed, and pretty soon, the homework machine (which they name Belch) is doing their homework, too! Can you imagine all the things you could do if you didn't have to spend time on homework? Is there anything bad that could happen if a machine did your homework for you? Find out what happens to D Squad in The Homework Machine by Dan Gutman.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the homework machine. Why would you want (or not want) a homework machine?
- The kids in D Squad have different ideas about the war. Whose opinion do you agree with?
- Design your own homework machine! Create a drawing of what it might look like.

Related websites:

ChessKIDS Academy

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

Learn to play chess like Brenton and Sam. This site has interactive chess lessons, quizzes, games and puzzles for kids. You can even play chess against the computer!

It's My Life: Cheating

<http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/school/cheating/index.html>

From the PBS Kids site, this site has discussion questions, online polls, and ways to take action against cheating.

Lisle, Janet Taylor. Black Duck. Sleuth/Philomel, 2006. [y LISLE]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Friendship, honesty, corruption

Summary: Years afterwards, Ruben Hart tells the story of how, in 1929 Newport, Rhode Island, his family and his best friend's family were caught up in the violent competition among groups trying to control the local rum-smuggling trade.

O'Connor, Barbara. How to Steal a Dog: A novel. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007. [j OCONNOR]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Homelessness, poverty, family relationships, honesty, stealing

Summary: Living in the family car in their small North Carolina town after their father leaves them virtually penniless, Georgina, desperate to improve their situation and unwilling to accept her overworked mother's calls for patience, persuades her younger brother to help her in an elaborate scheme to get money by stealing a dog and then claiming the reward that the owners are bound to offer.

Visual Interest

Selznick, Brian. The Invention of Hugo Cabret. Scholastic Press, 2007. [j SELZNICK]

Genre: historical

Major themes: French history, history of film making, use of illustration in storytelling

Summary: When twelve-year-old Hugo, an orphan living and repairing clocks within the walls of a Paris train station in 1931, meets a mysterious toy seller and his goddaughter, his undercover life and his biggest secret are jeopardized.

Booktalk: Tick, tock, tick, tock, someone has to keep all the clocks in the turn-of-the century Paris train station running. Little do passengers rushing through the station know that that duty falls on twelve-year old orphaned Hugo, who lives illegally in the walls of the old building. Hugo's father died recently, leaving behind a cryptic notebook of drawings and an automaton, a mechanical human, who's frozen stiff with a pen in his hand, as if he were about to write a message. Hugo is obsessed with getting the machine to work, so he can learn what that message was. His search for an answer leads him to an old toy maker, who he thinks might have the tools he needs to fix the machine.

Just like an old silent movie, this book is told in words and pictures. And the pictures are as important to read as the words. Here's Hugo spying on the toymaker from behind a clock (show 3 picture spreads that precede p. 46). Can you see his eye peeking out?

When Hugo meets a bookish girl, Isabelle, he finds she has a mysterious key around her neck that *looks* like it might make the automaton run! Hugo's search takes

him into the world of early silent films, when he stumbles on hidden sketches and plans from movies he's seen, like *Trip to the Moon*, by the famous film maker George Méliès. (show in book sketches following p. 283). But right when he's about to figure out the mystery of the mechanical man, a chase breaks out – the station manager's on to him – can Hugo escape? (show several pages of the chase scene that follow p. 415). Read - and *watch* – to find out.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- This is a book about the early days of silent movies. Can you think of some ways this book itself works like a silent movie?
- When Hugo goes to the library he sees a mural painting of Prometheus. Later Papa George admits he was the one who painted it. Read the story of Prometheus from the website below. Then look at what Papa George says on p. 494. Why do you think Prometheus is used as a symbol for Papa George?
- Write a story of your own that like this book, is told with words, and sequences of pictures without words.
- Compare this book to graphic novels, comic books, or manga that you like to read. How are they alike and how are they different? Talk about what parts of a story work best, in text vs. pictures.

Related websites:

Invention of Hugo Cabret website-lots of information about the creation of the book

<http://www.theinventionofhugocabret.com/index.htm>

Prometheus

<http://www.theoi.com/Titan/TitanPrometheus.html>

George Melies

http://www.earlycinema.com/pioneers/melies_bio.html

Watch George Melies' film *A Trip to the Moon*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aI0BmQallR4>

Kinney, Jeff.. Diary of a Wimpy Kid; a Novel in Cartoons. Amulet Books, 2007.

[j KINNEY]

Genre: Humor, Friendship

Major themes: Friendship, School Stories, Humor, Diaries, Illustrated Novel

Summary: Greg records his sixth grade experiences in a middle school where he and his best friend, Rowley, undersized weaklings amid boys who need to shave twice daily, hope just to survive, but when Rowley grows more popular, Greg must take drastic measures to save their friendship.

Klise, Kate. Regarding the Bathrooms; a Privy to the Past. Harcourt, 2006. [j KLISE]

Genre: Humor, School Stories

Major themes: School Stories, Humor, Mystery/Detective, Illustrated Novel

Summary: In this novel told through letters, newspaper articles, and police reports, a middle school principal's bathroom renovation project leads to the discovery of stolen Roman antiquities.

Stewart, Trenton Lee. The Mysterious Benedict Society. Little Brown, 2007.

[j STEWART]

Genre: Adventure

Major themes: Adventures, School Stories, Science Fiction, Illustrated Novel

Summary: After passing a series of mind-bending tests, four children are selected for a secret mission that requires them to go undercover at the Learning Institute for the Very Enlightened, where the only rule is that there are no rules.

Prejudice

Woodson, Jacqueline. Feathers. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2007. [j WOODSON]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Race relations, African Americans, Family life, Religion, People who are deaf.

Summary: When a new, white student nicknamed "The Jesus Boy" joins her sixth grade class in the winter of 1971, Frannie's growing friendship with him makes her start to see some things in a new light.

Booktalk: "His coming into our classroom that morning was the only new thing. Everything else was the same way it'd always been. The snow coming down. Ms. Johnson looking out the window, then after a moment, nodding. The class cheering because she was going to let us go out into the school yard at lunchtime. It had been that way for days and days. And then, just before the lunch bell rang, he walked into our classroom. Stepped through the door white and softly as the snow.

The class got quiet and the boy reached into his pocket and pulled something out. *A note for you, Ms. Johnson*, the boy said. And the way his voice sounded, all new and soft in the room, made most of the class laugh out loud. But Ms. Johnson gave us a look and the class got quiet.

The boy was pale and his hair was long—almost to his back. And curly—like my brother's hair but mama would *never* let Sean's hair grow that long. I sat at my desk, staring at his hair, wondering what a kid like that was doing in our school—with that long, curly hair and white skin and all." (p. 1-2.)

You see, where Frannie lives and goes to school, there are no white kids. The white kids go to school on the other side of the highway. So when this boy, this white boy who calls himself Jesus, shows up at her school, it causes quite a commotion. Then he starts telling the kids he's not white. But if he's not white, then what is he? And why does he call himself Jesus? Frannie is determined to get to the bottom of it.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Frannie really likes the line, "hope is the thing with feathers," from the Emily Dickinson poem that Ms. Johnson reads the class. Why is this line so important to Frannie? What does it mean to you?

- The Jesus Boy says that his family did not fit in on the other side of the highway. Why do you think they moved? Do they fit in on Frannie's side of the highway? Do you know of any neighborhoods that are segregated like Frannie's?
- Religion is a major theme in *Feathers*. Frannie seems to think that the Jesus Boy could actually be Jesus until he shows his human side. What does he do that makes her change her mind? Do you think she is disappointed? What are some of the differences between Frannie's and her friend Samantha's ideas on religion? Is religion an important part of your life? How do you feel about people who believe differently than you?

Related websites:

Book Clubs/Reading Guides: Feathers

<http://us.penguin.com/static/rguides/us/feathers.html>

Discussion questions for the novel created by Penguin Group.

Jacqueline Woodson

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

Official Jacqueline Woodson website. Information on the author, what she has written, what she is working on, and FAQs.

Ehrenberg, Pamela. Suspended. Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2007.

[y EHRENBURG]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Friendship, race relations, middle schools

Summary: After a school suspension and his parents' separation, Ethan is sent to live with his grandparents in Washington, D.C., which is worlds apart from his home in a Philadelphia suburb.

Salisbury, Graham. House of the Red Fish. Wendy Lamb Books, 2006.

[y SALISBURY]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: World War II, Japanese Americans, Hawaii

Summary: Over a year after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and the arrest of Tomi's father and grandfather, Tomi and his friends, battling anti-Japanese-American sentiment in Hawaii, try to find a way to salvage his father's sunken fishing boat.

Online Safety

Cooney, Caroline B. Code Orange. Delacorte, 2005. [y COONEY]

Genre: Science fiction

Major themes: Online safety, validity of online research, terrorism

Summary: While conducting research for a school paper on smallpox, Mitty finds an envelope containing 100-year-old smallpox scabs and fears that he has infected himself and all of New York City.

Booktalk: Mitty Blake is in big trouble. Months ago, his biology teacher assigned a research paper on an infectious disease—and now the notes are due on Monday, and

he hasn't even chosen a topic yet. Mr. Lynch says the notes have to come from books, not Internet research.

That weekend, Mitty's family is going to their house in the county—no libraries or bookstores nearby. When Mitty remembers his assignment on Sunday afternoon, he thinks it's too late—or is it? Mitty's mom is an interior designer, and she has a bunch of old books she uses to decorate her client's homes. Mitty digs through the books and finds one on infectious disease.

Read p. 10 from "He sat cross-legged..." to p. 11 "The stuff really was scabs."

Mitty soon finds out that VM stands for variola major, also known as smallpox, a very infectious disease that is supposedly extinct. But he can't help but wonder...he touched those scabs—could they still be contagious all these years later?

Mitty's favorite place to do research is the Internet, so he sends out a message about his predicament. Soon he's heard back from numerous people who want to find out about the scabs. And then Mitty disappears...

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Mitty's teacher requires that the students use at least four books in their research. Why do you think he wants students to use books in addition to the Internet? What are the pros/cons of using each for research?
- Discuss how Mitty's maturity grows as the novel progresses.
- How were Mitty's kidnappers able to find him? How could he have protected his identity more carefully?

Related websites:

Frequently Asked Questions about Smallpox

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/smallpox/disease/faq.asp>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention answers commonly-asked questions about smallpox.

NS Teens

<http://www.nsteens.org/>

"Comic-book-style characters address social networking and cyberbullying through animation, videos, and webcomics. Get safety tips, educational resources, and more!"

Bullying

Codell, Esmé Raji. Vive La Paris. Hyperion Books for Children, 2006. [j CODELL]

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Major themes: Bullying, nonviolence, The Holocaust

Summary: Fifth grader Paris learns some lessons about dealing with bullies of all kinds as she wonders how to stop a classmate from beating up her brother at school and as she learns about the Holocaust from her piano teacher, Mrs. Rosen.

Booktalk: "Miss Pointy says our greatest export besides garbage is entertainment, so as good Americans we should know the difference... She said, 'We're going to have a film festival, and if anyone asks, tell them it is cultural literacy.'"

If you read Sahara Special, and even if you didn't, you'll enjoy visiting Miss Pointy's class where Paris McCray wonders about more than just what movies to watch.

Like, what should she do about her brother, Michael, who won't fight back when he gets beaten up everyday at recess...by a girl! And, what is that club that her piano teacher belonged to? Mrs. Rosen has a tattoo on her arm and she gave Paris a gold star they all used to wear. Her twin bothers think it must be a gang. Paris's misunderstandings cause her to blunder but in the end, she begins to understand the choices of others and those that are hers to make as well.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Do you think Michael is a chicken when he doesn't fight Tanaeja? Do you agree with Paris and her brothers when they say that Michael can't have a younger sister defend him?
- Do you think Paris "had gone crazy" when she asks to spend the money differently than Mrs. Rosen had planned? What would you have done with the money if you were Paris?
- In Sahara Special, Miss Pointy says the main character is the one who changes the most. In Vive La Paris, who do you think changes the most - Paris? Tanaeja? Michael? Someone else? How do they change?

Related websites:

Stop Bullying Now!

<http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/index.asp>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services offers flash movies, games, and information about bullying and how to prevent it.

The ABCs of Bullying

<http://www.tolerance.org/teach/activities/activity.jsp?p=0&ar=771&pa=1>

Tolerance.org is a web project of The Southern Poverty Law Center.

Introduction to the Holocaust

<http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/nrule.htm>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

The Holocaust

<http://webtech.kennesaw.edu/jcheek3/holocaust.htm>

Jerrie's Curriculum Hotlists - Educational Technology Training Center at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw University

Almond, David. Clay. Delacorte Press, 2006. [y ALMOND]

Genre: Suspense/Scary

Major themes: Bullying, religion, friendship, magic

Summary: The developing relationship between teenager Davie and a mysterious new boy in town morphs into something darker and more sinister when Davie learns firsthand of the boy's supernatural powers.

Immigration

Budhos, Marina. Ask Me No Questions. Atheneum, 2006. [j BUDHOS]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Immigration

Summary: Fourteen-year-old Nadira, her sister, and their parents leave Bangladesh for New York City, but the expiration of their visas and the events of September 11, 2001, bring frustration, sorrow, and terror for the whole family.

Booktalk: 14 year old Nadira's family left Bangladesh years ago. At first when they arrived in the US, they lived so that at a moment's notice they could pack up all their belongings in the same nylon suitcases they brought from Bangladesh. Over time, though, they settled in, bought a bed, a TV, a book case. Their visas were expired, but they would get that straightened out one day. Nadira's father worked many jobs. Her mother learned English from TV. Nadira and her sister Aisha went to school like other kids and made friends, but they never brought their friends home, nor told them personal things about their family. Other than that, they were just like everybody else, in fact, Aisha was the top of her high school class, expected to be valedictorian and the recipient of college scholarships.

But then everything changed. After the Sept 11 attacks and the Patriot Act, Homeland Security began cracking down on immigrants from certain Muslim countries such as Bangladesh. Illegal immigrants were particularly at risk. When Nadira's father is arrested and detained indefinitely, her mother takes up residence at a nearby Salvation Army shelter. The two sisters, sworn to secrecy by their parents, move in with their aunt and uncle and try to continue their lives as if everything is the same. But now nothing is the same. "Ask me no questions" becomes the way of life for the girls. But just how long can anyone live this way? And is it really living? Read Ask Me No Questions by Marina Budhos and find out.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Aisha tells her sister, "Nadira, the trouble with you is you don't fight. You just give in." How does the relationship between the sisters change, when they are forced to live without their parents in New York? How does Nadira end up fighting?
- Their immigrant status affects everything the Hossain family does. List some of the ways they are forced to hide their status, and some of the ways doing ordinary things becomes much harder for them.
- Illegal immigration is a hot topic right now in the U.S. Some people feel all illegal immigrants should be sent back to their country of origin. Others feel they have a right to stay and better their lives. Read this article about Illegal immigrants who helped clean up Ground Zero.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/10/07/AR2006100700834.html>

Discuss what you feel might be a fair solution to help these people.

Related websites:

Marina Budhos- Author's website

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

Cynsations – Interview with Marina Budhos about Ask Me No Questions

<http://cynthialeitichsmith.blogspot.com/2006/02/author-interview-marina-budhos-on-ask.html>

Living the American Dream, and article on immigrants after 9/11 by Marina Budhos

<http://www.india-seminar.com/2004/538/538%20marina%20budhos.htm>

Lupica, Mike. Heat. Philomel, 2006. [j LUPICA]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Immigration, baseball

Summary: Pitching prodigy Michael Arroyo is on the run from social services after being banned from playing Little League baseball because rival coaches doubt he is only twelve years old and he has no parents to offer them proof.

Booktalk Michael Arroyo has an arm. He can throw a ball so good, he uses one to stop Ramon when he steals a neighbor's purse. Michael is the star of his Bronx all-star team, and it's his dream that he'll someday pitch in Yankee Stadium, like his Cuban hero El Grande, who was also a Cuban refugee. But in order to keep playing, Michael has to hide a big secret. Michael lives with his older brother Carlos because their papa died of a heart attack a month ago. They don't want to be separated so no one knows about it except Michael's best friend Manny, and their neighbor Mrs. Cora, who helps the two brothers out. But his secret is challenged when the team wants him to produce a birth certificate – a document that's still in Cuba – to prove that a player with his ability is really twelve years old. And then there's Ellie, who plays ball too, who also has a secret, and who's the first girl to make Michael want to chase girls. Michael is always worried that he and his brother will be discovered.

Then one day on the street he sees two cops walking Ramon the thief and his brother Carlos over to a police van.

Was Carlos being arrested?

And if that was true, what had he done to *get* arrested?

And what in the world was he doing with Ramon?

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Discuss the benefits and barriers created by Michael and his brother Carlos by keeping their father's death a secret.
- Why did Ellie keep her father's true identity a secret?
- Michael has to coach third base during a play-off game. Talk about what kinds of contributions he makes to his team as a coach instead of as a player.

Related websites:

Biography of Mike Lupica

<http://www.teenreads.com/authors/au-lupica-mike.asp>

An interview with Mike Lupica about his book Travel Team

<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/booksearch/isbninquiry.asp?ean=9780142404621&displayonly=ITV&z=y>

Ball Players from Cuba are now Flee Agents – an article from the L.A. Times about smuggling ball players

<http://www.latimes.com/sports/la-sp-smuggle1jul01,0,7735528.story?coll=la-home-center>

Orlando "El Duque" Hernandez – biography

http://www.baseballlibrary.com/ballplayers/player.php?name=Orlando_Hernandez_1965

The Chosen One; Castro made him an Outcast and New York is rejoicing.

Orlando “El Duque” Hernandez is the Cuban Missile that Struck at the Heart of America.

<http://www.julianrubinstein.com/choosen.html>

Himmelblau, Linda. The Trouble Begins Alfred. Delacourte Press, 2005.

[j HIMELBLAU]

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Major themes: Immigration, Vietnamese-Americans, Family, School.

Summary: Reunited with his family for the first time since he was a baby, fifth grader Du struggles to adapt to his new home in the United States.

Jaramillo, Ann. La Línea. Roaring Brook Press, 2006. [j JARAMILLO]

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Major themes: Immigration, Mexican-Americans, Brothers and Sisters.

Summary: When fifteen-year-old Miguel's time finally comes to leave his poor Mexican village, cross the border illegally, and join his parents in California, his younger sister's determination to join him soon imperils them both.

Friendship

Yee, Lisa. Stanford Wong Flunks Big-time. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2005. [j YEE]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Summer school, friendships, family relationships, basketball

Summary: After flunking sixth-grade English, basketball prodigy Stanford Wong must struggle to pass his summer-school class, keep his failure a secret from his friends, and satisfy his academically demanding father.

Booktalk:

Basketball camp is out, summer school is in, and Stanford Wong's life is officially over. He flunked English, and will spend his summer at summer school instead of at basketball camp. If he doesn't pass English, he'll have to spend a second year in sixth grade, and instead of being the only seventh grader on the A basketball team, he won't be on any team at all. Kids who flunk out aren't allowed to play sports.

His dad's ballistic about it. He even hung Stanford's book report with its big red F on the refrigerator where everyone can see it! Stanford doesn't dare tell his friends. He's sure they'll dump him for being such a loser. And Emily Ebers, the gorgeous new girl in town, won't want to have anything to do with him if she finds out how dumb he is.

And then things go from bad to terminal when his parents hire a tutor for him. They don't hire just any tutor, they hire the one person Stanford wants nothing to do with: Millicent Min, a certified girl genius who's skipped so many grades she's in high school, even though she's only eleven. Their grandmothers are best friends, and they've known each other, and hated each other, all their lives.

It gets worse: Millicent and Emily Ebers are best friends, so the only way to be around Emily is to be with Millicent. And even that's complicated, because Stanford told Emily that *he's* tutoring *Millicent*, not the other way around.

Can Stanford juggle summer school (including three book reports), tutoring, basketball, Emily, his friends and his family without dropping anything? He's been a hero on the basketball court for years, but can he be a hero off the court as well?

(booktalk adapted from Joni Bodart)

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Describe Stanford. What are his strengths and weaknesses?
- Which character would you like to be: Stanford, Millicent or Emily?
- Discuss Stanford's relationship with his father. Is his father too hard on him?
- Stanford lies to Emily so that she'll be his friend, but later those lies threaten to ruin her friendship with both him and Millicent. Why did Stanford lie?

Related websites:

Lisa Yee

<http://www.lisayee.com/MainMenu.html>

Lisa Yee's own website has information about herself, her books, and links to her MySpace and LiveJournal pages.

Scholastic Kids After Words

<http://www.scholastic.com/afterwords/friendship.htm>

Rate and review the book, and discuss it with other kids.

Spinelli, Jerry. Eggs. Little, Brown and Company, 2007. [j SPINELLI]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Friendship, family

Summary: Mourning the loss of his mother, nine-year-old David forms an unlikely friendship with independent, quirky thirteen-year-old Primrose, as the two help each other deal with what is missing in their lives.

Sachar, Louis. Small Steps. Delacorte Press, 2006. [y SACHAR]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Juvenile delinquents, Rehabilitation, Interpersonal relations, People with disabilities, African Americans

Summary: Three years after being released from Camp Green Lake, Armpit is trying hard to keep his life on track, but when his old pal X-Ray shows up with a tempting plan to make some easy money scalping concert tickets, Armpit reluctantly goes along.

Booktalk: Who here has read the book Holes? Have you seen the movie? Remember Armpit? Well, Armpit's back. It's been two years since he was released from Camp Green Lake, and he's trying hard to turn his life around and do the right thing. But it's hard to do because he has a police record, and everyone expects the worst from him. In fact, the only person who believes in him is Ginny, his ten-year-old neighbor.

When he left Camp Green Lake, he spent six months at a halfway house where he went to school and received counseling. The counselor told him his life would be like walking upstream in a rushing river. The secret was to take small steps and just keep moving forward. If he tried to take too big a step, the current would knock him off his feet and carry him back downstream. Upon returning home, Armpit decided to work on taking five small steps:

1. Graduate from high school.
2. Get a job.
3. Save his money.
4. Avoid situations that might turn violent, and
5. Lose the name Armpit.

He's doing pretty well on his goals, until...X-Ray shows up. Remember X-Ray? Well, X-Ray has a business proposition for Armpit – he promises Armpit can double his money in less than two weeks. Armpit knows he shouldn't listen, but it's very hard to say no to X-Ray. He knows he's going to regret it – the question is only, how much?

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- At the beginning of the book, the counselor tells Armpit that his life will be like walking upstream in a rushing river and he'd need to take small steps or the river would knock him off his feet and carry him back downstream. What does she mean by this? How does Armpit take small steps? Does he ever take too big a step? Does it ever feel like you are walking upstream in a river?
- What are the differences in the friendships Armpit has with X-Ray and with Ginny? Do you have friends like either of them?
- Armpit's parents have an image of the type of people who go to rock concerts. Armpit tells them, "Just because people have tattoos or pierced tongues doesn't mean they're crazy." (p. 94) Discuss the relationship between labeling, image, and prejudices. How are Armpit's parents expressing a prejudice? (from Random House teachers guide.)

Related websites:

Teachers Guide: Small Steps

<http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780385733144&view=tg>

Teachers guide provided by Random House which includes an interview with the author, discussion questions, and pre-reading activities.

Broach, Elise. Shakespeare's Secret. Henry Holt and Company, 2005. [j BROACH]

Genre: Mystery

Major themes: William Shakespeare, British history, neighbors

Summary: Named after a character in a Shakespeare play, misfit sixth-grader Hero becomes interested in exploring this unusual connection because of a valuable diamond supposedly hidden in her new house, an intriguing neighbor, and the unexpected attention of the most popular boy in school.

Pearsall, Shelley. All of the above. Little, Brown, 2006. [j PEARSALL]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Friendships, family relationships, foster children, teachers/students, challenges for urban public schools

Summary: Five urban middle school students, their teacher, and other community members relate how a school project to build the world's largest tetrahedron affects the lives of everyone involved.

Booktalk: [Show a tetrahedron shape.]

Does anyone know what kind of shape this is?

[If anyone in the audience answers “pyramid,” ask them if they know what kind of pyramid it is.]

It’s called a tetrahedron, a kind of pyramid which has sides made of 4 equal triangles.

And if you combine 4 smaller tetrahedrons, you can make a bigger one.

[Show a bigger tetrahedron, made of 4 smaller tetrahedrons.]

And you can keep combining them to make bigger and bigger tetrahedrons.

One afternoon in Mr. Collins’ math class at Washington Middle School, the students aren’t thinking about tetrahedrons. They aren’t thinking about anything much at all. Listen as James Harris III describes what his math class is like.

[Read James Harris III’s section, from p. 5 to “it’s only September” on p. 6.]

That Friday afternoon, Mr. Collins cracked. He started yelling and threw the chalk down. “James,” he asks, “what would make you care about being here?”

“Maybe some kinda contest,” another student mumbles.

So Mr. Collins decides they’ll have a contest—a contest to build the world’s largest tetrahedron. A tetrahedron made of 16,384 of these little tetrahedrons. If they do it, they’ll break the world record.

Read All of the Above, based on a true story, to find out if they do.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Talk about what makes a good teacher. Is Mr. Collins a good teacher?
- Discuss the challenges that students at Washington Middle School have in comparison to the private school students whose record they were trying to beat.
- Use the template on Shelley Pearsall’s website (below) to create your own tetrahedrons.

Related websites:

Shelley Pearsall: All of the Above

<http://www.shelleypearsall.com/allOfTheAbove.htm>

Shelley Pearsall’s own website has a teacher’s guide, an interview, and a tetrahedron pattern to download.

Birdsall, Jeanne. The Penderwicks: A summer tale of four sisters, two rabbits, and a very interesting boy. Knopf, 2005. [j BIRDSALL]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Friendships, social class, single-parent families

Summary: While vacationing with their widowed father in the Berkshire Mountains, four lovable sisters, ages four through twelve, share adventures with a local boy, much to the dismay of his snobbish mother.

Flake, Sharon. The Broken Bike Boy and the Queen of 33rd Street. Jump at the Sun/Hyperion Books for Children, 2007. [j FLAKE]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Friendship, poverty, family relationships

Summary: Ten-year-old Queen, a spoiled and conceited African American girl who is disliked by most of her classmates, learns a lesson about friendship from an unlikely “knight in shining armor.”

Lin, Grace. Year of the Dog. Little, Brown & Co., 2006. [j LIN]

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Major themes: Friendship, Taiwanese Americans, Chinese New Year, schools

Summary: Frustrated at her seeming lack of talent for anything, a young Taiwanese American girl sets out to apply to her own life the lessons of the Chinese Year of the Dog: making best friends and finding oneself.

Booktalk: It's the Year of the Dog, and Pacy's mom tells her that this is the year she's supposed to find her best friends and discover her passion. But Pacy doesn't have a passion. According to her big sister, Lissy, she doesn't even have any talents! But she has plenty of good luck. (Read from page 20 to end of page 21: "Like an alarm clock, the bell rang and we lined up to go into the cafeteria...")

A new friend! And one who looks just like her. It's shaping up to be an exciting year. Together, Melody and Pacy enter a science fair and a book contest, dye red eggs for a party, and try out for the school play. This is all lots of fun, but Pacy doesn't feel like she's getting any closer to finding her passion. Can she find herself before the Year of the Dog is over?

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- The lunch lady in the cafeteria believes that Pacy has already gotten spaghetti and French fries. Why did she make this mistake? How do you think Pacy feels when the lunch lady doesn't believe her? Have you ever had to convince someone that you were telling the truth? What did you do to be believed?
- Pacy asks Melody, "How come Chinese people are never important? ...You never see a Chinese person in the movies or in a play or in a book." Why does she say the Chinese books in the library aren't real? Can Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz* be Chinese?
- Pacy is Chinese-American but sometimes she doesn't fit in with the American girls or the Chinese girls. What would it be like to be between two different cultures? Why do you think her mother tells her stories from her childhood?
- Have you had a Year of the Dog? Did you discover a friend, a passion or a talent?

Related websites:

The Year of the Dog – Activities on Grace Lin's website,

http://www.gracelin.com/content.php?page=book_yearofdog&display=activities

The author suggests lessons and crafts to do when you finish the story – make a New Year banner, write your own memoir or learn to draw a dog like Pacy does!

The Chinese Animal Zodiac,

<http://www.c-c-c.org/chineseculture/zodiac/zodiac.html>

The Chinese animal symbols are on a twelve year cycle. Can you figure out what year you were born?

Celebrations - A Social Studies Resource Guide for Elementary Teachers,
Department of Elementary Education, College of Education, Utah State University,

<http://teacherlink.ed.usu.edu/tlresources/units/Byrnes-celebrations/chinese.html>

Dowell, Frances O'Roark. Chicken Boy. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2005. [j DOWELL]

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Major themes: Friendship, families

Summary: Since the death of his mother, Tobin's family life and school life have been in disarray, but after he starts raising chickens with his seventh-grade classmate, Henry, everything starts to fall into place.

Family Secrets

Holm, Jennifer L. Penny from Heaven. Random House, 2006. [j HOLM]

Genre: Realistic fiction/Historical fiction

Major themes: Family secrets, coming of age, family history

Summary: As she turns twelve during the summer of 1953, Penny gains new insights into herself and her family while also learning a secret about her father's death.

Booktalk: Penny Falucci is an only child, but she has a large extended family. There's her grandmother, Nonny, who pretty much cries every time she sees Penny. There's her other grandmother, Me-Me, who cooks vegetables until they turn to mush. Her one grandfather is Pop-Pop, and he's always listening to the radio, turned up really loud. There's a bunch of Italian uncles and aunts and cousins – all of whom are constantly treating her to candy, clothes, toys, and trips to the Jersey shore and other exotic locations. Oh, one of her uncles, Dominic is a little weird: he lives in his car in Nonny's backyard, and he'll only wear slippers, not shoes.

It's just too bad that one side of her family isn't speaking to the other. Or more particularly, her mother isn't speaking to her father's family. Something happened when Penny's father died, something pretty awful, that no one wants to talk about. But Penny would really like to know why her families are so angry, and this is the summer she is determined to find out.

Read Penny from Heaven by Jennifer L. Holm.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Penny's family keeps her father's history secret from her. The way Italians like her father, were treated in America around WW II was, and still is, a secret to many Americans. What are some reasons, both good and bad, that people, and countries, keep secrets? Think of several recent examples of secrets that were exposed in the news. Compare the consequences of keeping these secrets, vs. exposing them.
- Penny's family shares their Italian culture through their food. Have students discuss ways their families share their culture and family history, through food.
- At the back of the book, the author has included some photos from her own family that inspired this book. Have students talk about family stories, or bring in photos from their family's past. Then have them write a story (true, made-up, or a combination of both) based on their own family history.

Related websites:

Jennifer L. Holm

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

The author's website has a link to a teacher's guide, and FAQs about the author.

Live Journal

<http://slayground.livejournal.com/195406.html>

Interview with Jennifer L. Holm

Lisa Scottoline

<http://scottoline.com/Site/Internment/>

Adult author Lisa Scottoline's fact sheet on the internment of Italian-Americans

Ellis, Sarah. Odd Man out. Greenwood Books/House of Anansi Press, 2006. [j ELLIS]

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Major themes: Family Secrets

Summary: A month on an island in a rambling house with his grandmother and five girl cousins leads to Kip's discovery of a mysterious binder, that once belonged to his dead father. Are his dad's stories of espionage true, or was his dad having paranoid delusions?

White, Ruth. Way Down Deep. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007. [j WHITE]

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Major themes: Orphans, Identity, Family Secrets

Summary: In the West Virginia town of Way Down Deep in the 1950s, a foundling called Ruby June is happily living with Miss Arbutus at the local boarding house when suddenly, after the arrival of a family of outsiders, the mystery of Ruby's past begins to unravel.

Grief

Bryant, Jen. Pieces of Georgia. Knopf, 2006. [y BRYANT]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Family relationships, death, grief, substance abuse, friendships, teachers/students, getting to know oneself

Summary: In journal entries to her mother, a gifted artist who died suddenly, thirteen-year-old Georgia McCoy reveals how her life changes after she receives an anonymous gift membership to a nearby art museum.

Booktalk: Read the first poem (p. 4-6).

Georgia's life has been quiet since her mother died six years ago. Her father doesn't talk much. She doesn't have many friends. She likes to draw, but her dad remembers how her mother was an artist, too, and it makes him sad to see Georgia's drawings.

But then Georgia receives a membership to the art museum on her birthday. The letter says the gift is from "anonymous."

Who could have given it to her? And that is the moment that Georgia's life starts to change.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- How do Georgia and her dad deal with their grief? Do different people handle grief in different ways?
- What kind of person is Georgia's friend Tiffany? How is she a good friend for Georgia? What kinds of problems does Tiffany have?
- Research some of the artists and the works that Georgia views at the Brandywine Museum.

Related websites:

Pieces of Georgia

<http://www.randomhouse.com/teens/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375832598&view=tg>

Random House has created this teacher's guide with information about the author, discussion questions, and suggested activities.

Brandywine River Museum

<http://www.brandywinemuseum.org/>

Check out the website of the museum that Georgia visits in the book.

Brown, Susan Taylor. Hugging the Rock. Tricycle Press, 2006. [j BROWN]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Divorce, family relationships, mental illness

Summary: Through a series of poems, Rachel expresses her feelings about her parents' divorce, living without her mother, and her changing attitude towards her father.

Safety vs. Personal Liberties

Cushman, Karen. The Loud Silence of Francine Green. Clarion Books, 2006.

[y CUSHMAN]

Genre: Historical Fiction

Major themes: Friendship, conformity, family relationships, Catholic schools, Los Angeles, McCarthyism/Communism.

Summary: In 1949, thirteen-year-old Francine goes to Catholic school in Los Angeles where she becomes best friends with a girl who questions authority and is frequently punished by the nuns, causing Francine to question her own values.

Booktalk: Francine is one of the good girls at her Catholic school. She's quiet, she's patient, and she follows the rules. But then Sophie shows up and Francine's life is turned upside down. Sophie got kicked out of public school for writing 'There is no free speech here' on the gym floor. In red paint. Francine never thought much about free speech and fascism before Sophie became her best friend, and she'd never known anyone who had disappeared before.

Suddenly the market down the street (which is owned by a Russian couple) is being vandalized every day, the news keeps talking about Russia having the bomb, and Francine's own dad is building a bomb shelter in their backyard. The FBI is following Sophie's dad's friend because he might be a communist and Francine's dad won't let her hang out with her best friend anymore. When Sophie and her dad leave their house

with all their furniture still in it and don't return, Francine stops being such a good girl and starts asking questions.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Free speech is very important to Sophie. How does Francine feel about free speech? What is free speech? Are there times when free speech should not be allowed?
- Fear plays a big role in this story. What are the different characters afraid of? Do you have similar fears? What are you afraid of?
- What happened to Sophie and her dad? Where did they go? Will Francine ever see Sophie again?

Related websites:

The Loud Silence of Francine Green Discussion Guide:

http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/readers_guides/cushman/francine.shtml
Discussion guide created by Houghton Mifflin which includes discussion questions and classroom projects.

CNN: Cold War

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/>

Interactive website by CNN includes pages on espionage and the bomb.

Grolier Online Encyclopedia

<http://www.multcolib.org/>

You will need a Multnomah County Library card to do this search.

Choose "Resources," then select "Databases," then select "Grolier Online Passport." Do a quick search on terms like "cold war" and "McCarthyism."

Hautman, Pete. Rash. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2006.

[y HAUTMAN]

Genre: Science fiction

Major themes: Self control, individuality, football

Summary: In a future society that has decided it would "rather be safe than free," sixteen-year-old Bo's anger control problems land him in a tundra jail where he survives with the help of his running skills and an artificial intelligence program named Bork. In the late twenty-first century Bo Marsten is unjustly accused of causing a rash that plagues his entire high school. He loses it, and as a result, he's sentenced to work in the Canadian tundra, at a pizza factory that's surrounded by hungry polar bears. Bo finds prison life to be both boring and dangerous, but it's nothing compared to what happens when he starts playing on the factory's highly illegal football team. In the meantime, Bork, an artificial intelligence that Bo created for a science project, tracks Bo down in prison. Bork has spun out of control and seems to be operating on his own. He offers to get Bo's sentence shortened, but can Bo trust him? And now that Bo has been crushing skulls on the field, will he be able to go back to his old, highly regulated life?

Journeys

Birney, Betty G. The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2005. [j BIRDSALL]

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Major themes: Families, journeys

Summary: Eben McAllister searches his small town to see if he can find anything comparable to the real Seven Wonders of the World.

Booktalk: This is a book about a dried-apple-head doll, a bookcase, a saw, a kitchen table, a ship in a bottle, an old piece of cloth and a carved model of the town. Don't sound like much, do they? But in Sassafras Springs, these things are pretty amazing.

Nothing ever happens in Sassafras Springs, Missouri! It's the small town that makes other small towns look like Chicago or New York City. According to Eben McCallister, who has lived here all his life, there is nothing to see and nothing to do in Sassafras Springs. Eben's going to travel; he's going to see things like the Seven Wonders of the World. But, since Eben's only 12 years old, it's going to be awhile before he can leave town.

But then his father throws him a lifeline. There's an almost Wonder in the state of Colorado: the magnificent Rocky Mountains. And Eben's dad will buy him a train ticket to go see those mountains if he can do just one small thing: Find the Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs in one short week. An impossible task ... but Eben really wants to see those mountains.

And that's where the dried-apple-head doll, the bookcase, the saw, the kitchen table, the ship in a bottle, the old piece of cloth and the carved model of the town come in. How can they be Wonders? Like Eben, you'll have to do a little sleuthing to find out. Read The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs by Betty G. Birney.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Eben is reading about the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. What seven things would you select as Wonders of the Modern World? Why?
- What seven wonders can you find in your city or community? What makes them wonderful?
- Why did Eben's father want him to find seven wonders in Sassafras Springs before he could go on his trip? What did Eben learn from doing this?
- How did the people of Sassafras Springs get involved in Eben's search? What did they learn about each other?

Related resources:

Seven Wonders of the World

<http://library.thinkquest.org/J002388/ancientwonder.html>

This website about the Seven Wonders was created by a group of Wisconsin fourth and fifth graders.

New Seven Wonders vs. Ancient Seven Wonders

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2007/07/photogalleries/seven-wonders/index.html>

This National Geographic News photo gallery portrays the Ancient and the "New" Seven Wonders of the World selected by a recent "American Idol" style poll.

The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs

<http://bettybirney.com/sassafras.html>

Learn more about how Betty Birney got her ideas for the book by consulting her website.

Curlee, Lynn. Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2002. [j 709 C975s 2002].

DiCamillo, Kate. The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane. Candlewick Press, 2006. [j DICAMILLO]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Family, love, journeys

Summary: Edward Tulane, a cold-hearted and proud toy rabbit, loves only himself until he is separated from the little girl who adores him and travels across the country, acquiring new owners and listening to their hopes, dreams, and histories.

Growing Up

Smith, Roland. Peak. Harcourt, 2007. [y SMITH]

Genre: Realistic fiction, adventure

Major themes: Friendships, family relationships, achievement, making sacrifices, survival, growing up

Summary: A fourteen-year-old boy attempts to be the youngest person to reach the top of Mount Everest.

Booktalk: When your parents are famous mountain climbers, you can end up with a weird name. Peak Marcello figures his could have been worse. Instead of Peak, he could have been named Glacier, or even Abyss.

Peak knows that he has climbing in his blood. His dad took him for the first time when he was only five years old. When he lived in Wyoming with his mom, he used to practice climbing on the rock wall behind their log cabin.

But then his mom married his step-dad, Rolf, and they moved to New York City. What kind of tall things could he climb in New York City?

That's right, buildings! The only problem—it's not legal to climb skyscrapers. And though Peak is extra careful, while he's climbing his sixth building, he gets caught. Before he knows it, he's facing three years in jail...until his dad shows up.

Peak's real dad is Josh Wood, one of the most famous climbers in the world. He hasn't bothered to play much of a part in Peak's life...until now. He shows up at Peak's court hearing and says he'll take Peak to live with him at his home in Thailand.

So Peak finds himself on a plane...thinking he'll move into his dad's house and start school. But before he knows it, they are on a flight to Nepal—and to Mt. Everest, where Peak's dad is leading a climbing expedition.

Peak goes from jail...to getting to climb Mt. Everest? Could it get any better?

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Do you think Peak made the right decision about summiting Mt. Everest? Why or why not?
- Discuss Peak's father, Josh Wood. What kind of a person is he? What are his strengths and weaknesses? Would you want him to be your father?
- Research other Everest expeditions, using the "Everest" website listed below.

Related websites:

Roland Smith's Curriculum Page

<http://www.rolandsmith.com/curriculum/index.htm>

Roland Smith's website has a curriculum guide for teachers and a packet of materials for students who are reading Peak.

Everest

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

This site, from the creators of the IMAX film about Everest, includes information about the history of Everest, the culture of the Sherpas, and a detailed teacher's guide with activities to use in the classroom.

Canales, Viola. The Tequila Worm. Wendy Lamb Books, 2005. [y CANALES]

Genre: Realistic fiction, Multicultural fiction

Major themes: Mexican Americans, Family life, Boarding schools, Catholicism, Growing up, Neighbors.

Summary: Sofia grows up in the close-knit community of the barrio in McAllen, Texas, then finds that her experiences as a scholarship student at an Episcopal boarding school in Austin only strengthen her ties to family and her "comadres."

Booktalk: Read from the beginning of pg. 36 to the end of 37 "...all over my white sweater."

Instead of withdrawing and becoming depressed, this scene in the cafeteria motivates Sofia to become the best student and athlete she possibly can. She's determined to show those kids that she's more than a "taco head." She soars to the top of the class and becomes an outstanding soccer player. She does so well, that she wins a scholarship to a prestigious boarding school hundreds of miles away from her home. She really wants to go, but first she has to convince her parents that she can be a good comadre, and to do that, she'll need the help of her best friend and her little sister. Can she do it? Read The Tequila Worm to find out!

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- What is a comadre? Why is it so important to Sofia's family that she learn to become a good comadre? Are you a comadre?
- Berta's quinceañera is very important to her. What is the quinceañera and why is it so important to Berta but not to Sofia? Do you have anything similar to a quinceañera in your culture/family?
- Why does Sofia want to go to the school in Austin? Why are her parents unsure about it? Do you think she will be successful at the school in Austin?

Related websites:

Beauty of Beans

<http://www.harvardmagazine.com/on-line/010611.html>

Article on Viola Canales and the inspiration for The Tequila Worm from Harvard Magazine.

Jones, Traci L. Standing Against the Wind. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.

[y JONES]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Self-confidence, family problems, African Americans, boarding schools

Summary: As she tries to escape her poor Chicago neighborhood by winning a scholarship to a prestigious boarding school, shy and studious eighth-grader Patrice discovers that she has more options in life than she previously realized. Patrice Williams was happy living in Georgia with her grandmother, who called her "cocoa grandbaby." Then her mother lured her to Chicago and ended up in jail. Now Patrice lives with her Auntie Mae, and her new nickname is "Puffy" - thanks to her giant poof of hair. But Patrice's hair isn't the only reason she sticks out: she cares about her grades and strives for the best. That's why Monty Freeman, another eighth grader who lives in the building, asks Patrice to tutor his little brother. Even though Monty's friends make Patrice uneasy, Monty himself is friendly, confident, and surprisingly smart. When he becomes her guardian angel, Patrice begins to think something stronger than friendship might be growing between them. Still, nothing will stop her from applying for a scholarship at prestigious Dogwood Academy - her ticket out of the project and a school populated by gangs and drug runners.

Political Activism

Nye, Naomi Shihab. Going Going, 2005. [j NYE]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Political Activism

Summary: In San Antonio, Texas, sixteen-year-old Florrie leads her friends and a new boyfriend in a campaign which supports small businesses and protests the effects of chain stores.

Booktalk: Not all teens love franchise stores like Starbucks and the Gap. Florrie, especially, has a personal reason to want to save the mom and pop stores and the unique businesses of her town, San Antonio – for years her folks have run a local Mexican diner called El Viento. When big corporations threaten to close a lot of the small businesses that make her home town unique, Florrie decides to take action. She launches a 16-week campaign against companies like Walmart and Taco Bell. With the help of her friends and family, she organizes a rally to support small local businesses.

But then, she and some of her friends get more daring. They sneak out to Walmart at 3 AM, and cover the store's sign "WE SELL FOR LESS" with *their own* sign, painted on a sheet, that says: LESS IMAGINATION, LESS INDEPENDENCE, LESS LITTLE BUSINESSES, LESS LOVELY TOWNS. The next morning when the store opens, they sneak back to watch people's reaction. Will they get caught? Can the action of a group of teens make their community aware? If you've ever felt frustrated as a kid, about how to get your voice heard, change things, and make your actions count, this might be the book for you.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- When you voice your opinion, some people agree with you, and some don't. How do Florrie's family and friends react, when she wants to take action?
- Near the end of the book, Taco Bell is going to move in near Florrie's family restaurant, El Viento. As a class, make a list of the pros and cons for each restaurant, based on what you know from the book. Discuss where you would go to eat, and if this list affects where you might go?
- Do some research about the place where you live, like Portland or Seattle, using the Internet or back issues of the newspaper. Try to find out if any group has opposed stores like Walmart or Starbucks. Were they successful? What did they do to make their opinions known?

Related websites:

Bill Moyers Interview with Naomi Shihab Nye

http://www.pbs.org/now/transcript/transcript_nye.html

Nomad, switchboard, poet: Naomi Shihab Nye's multicultural literature for young readers: an Interview

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2278/is_2_27/ai_92589734

Frontline: Walmart: Good for America?

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/walmart/interviews/lehman.html>

Independent America – watch film trailer

<http://www.independentamerica.net/>

Opposing Viewpoints – pros and cons of urban sprawl and eco-activism

<http://www.multcolib.org/>

You will need a Multnomah County Library card to do this search.

Choose "Resources," then select "Databases," then select "Opposing Viewpoints." Do a quick search on terms like "urban sprawl," "urban planning," "environmental activists," "ecoterrorism" and "radicalism."

Hiaasen, Carl. Flush. Alfred. A Knopf, 2005. [j HIAASEN]

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Major themes: Environmental Protection

Summary: With their father jailed for sinking a river boat, Noah Underwood and his younger sister, Abbey, must gather evidence that the owner of this floating casino is emptying his bilge tanks into the protected waters around their Florida Keys home.

Winthrop, Elizabeth. Counting on Grace Wendy Lamb Books/Random House, 2006. [j Winthrop]

Genre: Historical Fiction

Major themes: Child Labor, Labor Reform, New England Mill Life, Friendship

Summary: It's 1910 in Pownal, Vermont. At 12, Grace and her best friend Arthur must go to work in the mill, helping their mothers work the looms. Together Grace and Arthur write a secret letter to the Child Labor Board about underage children working in the mill. A few weeks later, Lewis Hine, a famous reformer arrives undercover to gather evidence. Grace meets him and appears in some of his photographs, changing her life forever.

Self Image

Levine, Gail Carson. Fairest. HarperCollins, 2006. [y LEVINE]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Self image/self esteem, honesty, identity, talents/abilities, love, friendship

Summary: In a land where beauty and singing are valued above all else, Aza eventually comes to reconcile her unconventional appearance and her magical voice, and learns to accept herself for who she truly is.

Booktalk: Aza was born singing. At least that's what her family has always told her. No one really knows for sure, since Aza was abandoned at her family's inn when she was only one month old. Her parents, the innkeepers, took her in and treated her just like one of their own children.

Singing is hugely important in the kingdom where Aza lives. People sing all day long, while they work and during important ceremonies. And it's a good thing that Aza has a beautiful voice, because her physical appearance is not so beautiful. Aza describes herself as having skin the color of skim milk, lips as red as a dragon's tongue, and hair as black as an old frying pan. The older she gets, the bigger and more awkward she feels. She often finds the customers at the inn staring at her.

Luckily Aza discovers she has a new talent. When she sings, she can make her voice sound like it is coming from somewhere else in the room. She can make it sound like the fireplace or the flowerpot is singing! Aza calls it illusing.

A few months later, Aza gets the surprise of her life. A woman staying at the inn is traveling to attend the king's wedding. When her traveling companion cannot travel on, she asks Aza to go to the wedding with her. Aza, a commoner, has never attended a royal event before. She is both thrilled and worried—what will everyone think of her appearance?

At the wedding, Aza meets Ivi, the king's new bride. Ivi is spectacularly beautiful. Aza feels intimidated around her, but Ivi is very friendly. In fact, it turns out they have something in common. Aza fears her appearance is ugly, and Ivi fears that she has an ugly singing voice.

The new queen asks Aza to be her lady-in-waiting, and Aza is thrilled...at least she is until she hears what the queen wants her to do. The queen wants Aza to illuse for her...to make it sound like Aza's beautiful voice is coming from Ivi's body. Should she do it?

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Did Fairest remind you of a fairy tale you had heard before? Which one? What was similar and what was different?
- Discuss the character of Ivi. What made Ivi behave the way she did? What were Ivi's strengths and weaknesses?
- How would you define beauty? Would you consider Aza beautiful?
- Read Ella Enchanted and identify characters who also appear in Fairest.

Related websites:

Fairest Teacher's Guide

http://www.harperchildrens.com/webcontent/teachers_guides/pdf/0060734086.pdf

This guide from the publisher contains discussion questions and lesson ideas.

Fairy Tale Novels

<http://www.framinghamlibrary.org/kids/fairytale.htm>

Find examples of other fairy tale novels at this site from the Framingham Public Library.

Greene, Stephanie. Queen Sophie Hartley. Clarion, 2005. [j GREENE]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Self image/self esteem, talents/abilities, family relationships, friendship

Summary: A suggestion from her mother leads Sophie to befriend the new girl at school and an elderly, grouchy woman, and helps her overcome the feeling that she is not good at anything.

Families

Stauffacher, Sue. Harry Sue. Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. [j STAUFFACH]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Mothers and daughters, prison, friendship, people with disabilities.

Summary: Although tough-talking Harry Sue would like to start a life of crime in order to be "sent up" and find her incarcerated mother, she must first protect the children at her neglectful grandmother's home day care center and befriend a paralyzed boy.

Booktalk: Harriet Susan Clotkin is not the sort of name you'd imagine for the first lady president of the United States and that's just fine with Harry Sue. She has no intentions of running for political office. Harry Sue plans on following in her parents footsteps: a life in the joint. That's jail or prison to you fish who might not speak joint jive.

Unfortunately, time is running out for Harry Sue to become a juvenile delinquent, she's already eleven and hasn't even started a rap sheet! Problem is, she's got a heart condition that needs fixing before she can start a serious crime spree. Her heart's as lumpy and soft as a rotten tomato. She can't stand to see things hurt, so there's no way she can get tossed in the joint before she makes sure her granny can't hurt any of those crumb snatchers that she babysits. And what would her road dog Homer do without her to wipe the tears from his ears? Harry Sue's gonna need to harden her heart like cement if she expects to ever make it into the joint and find her mom.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- What does Harry Sue have in common with a Lost Boy like Baba?
- Harry Sue agrees with the Tin Man in the Wizard of Oz when he says, "Once I had brains and a heart also. Having tried them both, I should much rather have a heart," (p. 165.) Which would you rather have?
- Is Harry Sue really cut out for a life of crime?

Related websites:

Harry Sue Teachers Guide

<http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375832741&view=tg>

Teachers guide created by Random House which includes teaching ideas, vocabulary and similar titles.

Sue Stauffacher

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

The author's website with information about all of her books. Find real poems and letters written by incarcerated moms to their children by clicking on the Harry Sue link and then the Look what we did! link. Click the School Visits and Curriculum link for a Q&A about Harry Sue, a printable joint-jive vocabulary handout, news articles and more!

Lost Boys of Sudan

<http://www.redcross.org/news/in/africa/0108lostboyspage.html>

Information on the journey of the Lost Boys of Sudan out of Sudan and to America provided by the American Red Cross.

Grimes, Nikki. The Road to Paris. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2006. [j GRIMES]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Foster home care, African Americans, brothers and sisters

Summary: Inconsolable at being separated from her older brother, eight-year-old Paris is apprehensive about her new foster family but just as she learns to trust them, she faces a life-changing decision.

Ryan, Pam Muñoz. Becoming Naomi León. Scholastic Press, 2004. [j RYAN] and [SPANISH j RYAN]

Genre: Realistic fiction, multicultural fiction

Major themes: Family, Mexican Americans

Summary: When Naomi's absent mother resurfaces to claim her, Naomi runs away to Mexico with her great-grandmother and younger brother in search of her father.

Misconceptions about Other Cultures

Marsden, Carolyn. When Heaven Fell. Candlewick Press, 2007. [j MARSDEN]

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Major themes: Cultural misconceptions, Vietnam

Summary: When her grandmother reveals that the daughter she gave up for adoption is coming from America to visit her Vietnamese family, nine-year-old Binh is convinced that her newly-discovered aunt is wealthy and will take care of all the family's needs.

Booktalk: She has traveled out of her village once, but (pg. 17) "from the movies Binh watched at Café Video, she knew that Americans lived in sparkling new houses that never needed fixing. Americans wore beautiful new clothes that never needed mending. And all Americans went to school and learned all they wanted." In her village, school is only for the children of paid Communist Party members and large business owners - those who can afford to buy books, school uniforms and the fruit and sodas from the dusty roadside cart where Binh works every day.

That will all surely change. Binh has just learned that her grandmother has a daughter that she sent to live in America after the war – and this new aunt is coming to visit. As the family prepares for her arrival, they imagine the gifts that

she will bring, but Binh's special wish is for stories of the world beyond her village and the chance to live in America.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Describe a typical day for Binh and Cuc. Compare it to a typical day in the life of a nine-year-old in America.
- Compare the way your family prepares for a special family visit to Binh's family's preparations. What things are the same regardless of where a family lives? What details are different?
- Why was Di not raised in Vietnam? Can you imagine leaving your family at age five? How is Di not Vietnamese and not really American either? What would it be like to be in between two worlds like this?

These and other questions are available from the Candlewick Press discussion guide, http://rla.oakland.edu/~childlit/MARSDEN_DISC_GDE.pdf

Related resources:

Operation Babylift

<http://www.pbs.org/itvs/preciouscargo/babylift.html>

Historical information accompanies this site for *Precious Cargo*, a PBS production that charts the return to Vietnam of several young people adopted during Operation Babylift.

WGBH Documentary *Daughter from Danang* – [VIDEO 959.7044 DAUGHTER]

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/daughter/peopleevents/e_babylift.html

More information about Operation Babylift is included in this site for an episode of *American Experience* which follows the reunion of two women very much like Ba Ngoai and Thao.

Caputo, Philip. 10,000 days of Thunder: A History of the Vietnam War. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2005. [j 959.7403 C255t 2005]

Resau, Laura. What the Moon Saw. Delacorte Press, 2006. [y RESAU]

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Major themes: Cultural misconceptions, learning about yourself, Mexico

Summary: Fourteen-year-old Clara Luna spends the summer with her grandparents in the tiny, remote village of Yucuyoo, Mexico, learning about her grandmother's life as a healer, her father's decision to leave home for the United States, and her own place in the world.

Child Labor/Drug Trafficking

Ellis, Deborah. I am a Taxi. Groundwood Books, 2006. [j ELLIS]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Child labor, drug trafficking, Bolivia

Summary: When Diego's parents are mistakenly imprisoned for drug possession, he has to help pay for family expenses. But instead of making money, Diego ends up deep in the jungle, working as a virtual slave in an illegal cocaine operation and wondering if he'll ever see his family again.

Booktalk:

Diego lives with his mom and baby sister in jail. His parents have been wrongly accused of smuggling drugs, and are serving 16 year sentences in prisons in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

Diego's lucky; he has a job. He works as a taxi, a kid that delivers messages for jailed people to the outside world. He also goes to school, babysits his sister, and sells his mom's knitted goods to help pay for their cell and their food.

Then his friend Mando comes up with a proposal to make a bundle of money, quickly. They end up working for cocaine manufacturers deep in the jungle, who make them walk around and around in pits, stomping on coca leaves and chemicals for hours on end. The gangsters treat the kids badly, and try to cheat them out of their earnings. When kids die, Diego is forced to escape.

"A spray of machine gun fire followed Diego into the bush. Birds rose up from the trees, and their shrieking propelled him forward. He scrambled over fallen logs, smacked into trees, and tripped over things he couldn't see."

Diego fears for his life. Even if he escapes the gangsters' bullets, can he escape the quicksand, survive in the jungle, and make it back alive to see his family again?

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Talk about the ways Diego's life is affected by his parent's imprisonment. Is what happens to him different in Bolivia, compared to if he lived in the U.S.?
- At first Diego doesn't listen to his friend Mando's money making schemes. What changes his mind to go along with Mando and work for Paulo and Rock?
- Some countries allow child labor, believing that if families need money, every family member should be able to help out. But many countries have made child labor illegal. What do you think? You can read through the website below "Images of Child Labor" for more information.

Related websites:

Interview with Deborah Ellis

<http://www.allenandunwin.com/Authors/apEllis.asp>

Interview with Deborah Ellis where she discusses *I am a Taxi*

http://www.papertigers.org/interviews/archived_interviews/dellis.html

Streetkids International

<http://www.streetkids.org/>

Images of Child Labor

<http://www.childlaborphotoproject.org/childlabor.html>

UNICEF – Child Labor Quiz – test yourself!

http://www.unicef.org/voy/cgi-bin/zquiz.cgi?quiz=work&lang=en&exit_url=/voy/index.html

Relating to People with Disabilities

Lord, Cynthia. **Rules**. Scholastic, 2006. [j LORD]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: People with disabilities, differences, friendships, sibling relationships

Summary: Frustrated at life with an autistic brother, twelve-year-old Catherine longs for a normal existence but her world is further complicated by a friendship with a young paraplegic.

Booktalk: Catherine is always making rules for her brother David. Rules like:

- Chew with your mouth closed.
- Say “excuse me” after you burp.
- Don’t stand in front of the TV when other people are watching it.
- If the bathroom door is closed, knock (especially if Catherine has a friend over)!
- No toys in the fish tank.

David is autistic, and Catherine dreams that someday he will wake up and be a “normal” brother. But she knows that’s not possible.

Catherine is dreading the summer, when her best friend will be gone to California, and she’ll have to babysit David a lot. She even goes with him to his appointments with his therapist. Why can’t her life be normal?

It’s at the therapist’s office that Catherine becomes friends Jason, who is in a wheelchair. Jason can’t speak, but he communicates by pointing at pictures in his notebook. He and Catherine both love music, and soon Catherine is making new pictures to put in his notebook: words he didn’t have before like “Dazzling!” and “Awesome!” and “Gross!”

Soon her friendship with Jason causes Catherine to wonder: what is normal? And is it what she wants?

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Talk about rules, and what Catherine learns about rules in the book. What are the advantages/disadvantages to having rules?
- What does Catherine learn about being a friend based on her relationships with Kristi and Jason? What are the qualities of a good friend?
- If, like Jason, you had to use a communication book to talk to others, what would be the most important words/phrases you would want to include in it? (If you would like to see example of communication books, visit this website: <http://www.incrediblehorizons.com/Picture%20this%20soft.html>.)

Related websites:

Materials for Teachers and Librarians

<http://www.cynthialord.com/materials.html>

Cynthia Lord’s website has a discussion guide, worksheets, writing tips and an interview.

Science Ambassador Lesson Plans: Autism

http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid/ambassador_pgm/lessonplans_autism.htm

Lesson plans to help middle and high schools students better understand autism and related disorders.

Nuzum, K.A. A Small White Scar. Joanna Cotler Books, 2006. [y NUZUM]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Family relationships, growing up, people with disabilities

Summary: Fifteen-year-old Will Bennon leaves his family and begins life as a cowboy, but his mentally retarded twin brother follows him and joins the journey.