

Novel-Ties: New Fiction for Literature Circles
Presented by the Multnomah County Library School Corps
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North Portland Library

Mystery and Suspense

Henry, April. [Girl, stolen](#). Henry Holt, 2010. [y HENRY 2010]

Genre: Mystery

Major themes: Kidnapping, blindness, fathers and sons, Stockholm syndrome

Summary: When an impulsive carjacking turns into a kidnapping, Griffin – a high school dropout – finds himself more in sympathy with his wealthy, blind victim – 16-year-old Cheyenne – than with his greedy father.

Booktalk: Cheyenne is curled up in the back of her family's SUV when she feels her stepmother get in the car and shift into Drive. Her stepmom left the engine running while she ran into the pharmacy to pick up Cheyenne's prescription for antibiotics. But there were "a thousand little things that told Cheyenne something was wrong." The person's breathing was odd – all speeded up and harsh. She smelled cigarettes. Even the way the door slammed felt too fast and too hard. But it still takes her a few moments to figure out what's going on.

The keys were in the ignition. Someone has stolen the car! Cheyenne's pretty sure the thief doesn't know she's there ... until she makes a small sound. "Who the hell are you?" the thief says. He picks up speed as she screams and yells. He recklessly heads out of the parking lot and drives on through the suburbs until, all too soon, they are alone on a quiet road in the country. Let me go, she begs him, I won't tell anyone about you. Cheyenne feels the barrel of a gun against her temple: "Shut up or I'll shoot you."

Cheyenne's kidnapper is a teen named Griffin who thought he'd impress his dad if he brought home the SUV. His dad runs an illegal "chop shop:" a place where stolen cars are torn down into parts and then the parts are put back together into a car that can be bought cheaply on the black market. But Griffin's dad isn't going to be particularly happy when he learns that Griffin has brought home a passenger.

Then Griffin and his dad learn two things about Cheyenne. Two things that make her a whole lot more interesting to them as kidnappers. Cheyenne's dad is the president of Nike, which means he's got a whole lot of money to spend on his beloved only child. And Cheyenne is blind, which means she doesn't know where she is or how to get away. They can just tie her to the bed and wait for the money to come in. But then what will they do with her?

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Cheyenne and Griffin seem to become friends while she is being held for ransom. How does this happen? Do you think they are friends at the end?
- Cheyenne has been blind for just three years; do you think she could have managed to escape if she'd been blind from birth?

- Some readers might think there is another victim in this story. Which character is this? What makes him or her a victim? And, a victim of what?
- The author was inspired by an incident she read about in the newspaper. Go through your local newspaper and see if there's an article that you think might turn into an interesting story.

Related websites:

Author's website: April Henry Mysteries: [Girl, Stolen](http://www.aprilhenrymysteries.com/teen_books/girlstolen.php)

http://www.aprilhenrymysteries.com/teen_books/girlstolen.php

Read about and watch the real-life incident that inspired the author.

Book's website: [Girl, Stolen](http://us.macmillan.com/girlstolen) from Henry Holt Books for Young Readers

<http://us.macmillan.com/girlstolen>

Watch the book trailer.

A brief history of Stockholm Syndrome

<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1919757,00.html>

Stockholm Syndrome is a psychological condition where victims become emotionally close to their captors.

Balliett, Blue. [The danger box](#). Scholastic Press, 2010. [j BALLIETT 2010, CD Children BALLIETT, downloadable audiobook]

Genre: Mystery

Major themes: Families, friendship, journaling, puzzles

Summary: In small-town Michigan, 12-year-old Zoomy and his new friend Lorrol investigate the journal found inside a mysterious box and find family secrets and a more valuable treasure, while a dangerous stranger watches and waits.

Broach, Elise. [Missing on Superstition Mountain](#). Henry Holt, 2011. [j BROACH 2011]

Genre: Mystery

Major themes: Brothers, disappearances, mountain survival

Summary: When brothers Simon, Henry, and Jack move with their parents to Arizona, they are irresistibly drawn to explore the aptly named Superstition Mountain, in spite of warnings that it is not safe.

Davies, Jacqueline. [The lemonade crime](#). Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, 2011. [j DAVIES 2011]

Genre: Mystery

Major themes: Brothers and sisters, trial by jury, school story

Summary: When money disappears from 4th-grader Evan's pocket and everyone thinks that his annoying classmate Scott stole it, Evan's younger sister stages a trial involving the entire class, trying to prove what happened.

Lane, Andrew. [Death cloud \(Sherlock Holmes, The legend begins\)](#). Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011. [y LANE 2011, CD YA LANE, downloadable audiobook]

Genre: Mystery

Major themes: Murder investigation, private detection, logic, adventure

Summary: In 1868 – with his army officer father suddenly posted to India, and his mother mysteriously “unwell” – 14-year-old Sherlock Holmes is sent to stay with his eccentric uncle and aunt in their vast house in Hampshire, where he uncovers his first murder and a diabolical villain.

Potter, Ellen. [The Kneebone boy](#). Feiwel and Friends, 2010. [j POTTER 2010]

Genre: Adventure

Major themes: Brothers and sisters, missing parents, eccentricity, mystery

Summary: Otto, Luca, and Max Hardscrabble – whose mother has been missing for many years – have unexpected and illuminated adventures in the village of Snoring-by-the-Sea after their father, who paints portraits of deposed monarchs, goes away on a business trip.

Ruiz Zafón, Carlos. [The prince of mist](#). Little, Brown, 2010. [y RUIZZAFON 2010, CD YA RUIZZAFON, downloadable audiobook]

Genre: Suspense, horror

Major themes: Brothers and sisters, shipwrecks, supernatural, evil

Summary: In 1943, in a seaside town where their family has gone to be safe from war, 13-year-old Max Carver and his 15-year-old sister Alicia – along with a new friend, Roland – face off against an evil magician who is striving to complete a bargain made before he died.

Ethics

Oppel, Kenneth. [Half brother](#). Scholastic, 2010. [y OPPEL 2010]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Human/animal relationships, growing up, family

Summary: In 1973, when a renowned Canadian behavioral psychologist pursues his latest research project-- an experiment to determine whether chimpanzees can acquire advanced language skills-- he brings home a baby chimp named Zan and asks his 13-year-old son to treat Zan like a little brother.

Booktalk: Ben Tomlin’s mom and dad are behavioral scientists. That means that they closely study how animals (including humans) behave and why. Ben’s dad has just received a whole lot of grant money to study language acquisition – to determine whether humans are the only animals who can learn a language. And he’s got a unique approach to this study. Ben’s parents are going to adopt a baby chimpanzee, bring it into their home, treat it like a human and teach it American Sign Language. This chimp isn’t going to be caged up in a lab; this chimp will become a member of the family.

Ben isn’t very happy at the arrival of a new baby brother ... but at least he doesn’t have to share a room. In fact, Ben works hard to keep his distance – he doesn’t want to hold him, doesn’t want to teach him the signs, and most particularly he doesn’t want to call him brother. But one day, Zan ends up cuddled in Ben’s arms, quietly sleeping, and Ben is smitten. Zan is smitten too – when given a choice about who will feed him, change his diaper, or play with him, he always chooses Ben.

There's one thing that that Ben's parents seem to have overlooked, though. Zan might be sleeping in a bed, eating at the table and speaking with them using sign language. But Zan is *not* human ... and all too soon, things begin to get complicated.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Do you think Ben made the right choice for Zan? What would you have done in his situation?
- Ben decides he wants to be the “dominant male” at his new school. What does this mean? Does it work for him?
- How do you feel about the use of animal testing? Does it matter if animal testing saves human lives?
- Kenneth Oppel got the idea for this book from two research projects that happened in the 1970s. Visit the last two websites listed below to compare how these projects were similar to the one in Half Brother.

Related websites:

Half Brother

<http://www.kennethoppel.ca/pages/studyguides04.shtml>

The author's website includes a discussion guide which includes an interview about how he got the idea for the book.

Half Brother: Book Trailer

<http://www.kennethoppel.ca/pages/trailer.shtml>

A book trailer for Half Brother

Project Nim

<http://www.project-nim.com/>

Kenneth Oppel has said that he based the scientific experiment in Half Brother on some research projects that happened in the 1970s. One of them, Project Nim, has just been covered in a documentary. Read more at this site.

Friends of Washoe

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

“Washoe was cross-fostered and acquired American Sign Language from her human companions. She was the first non-human in history to acquire a human language.” Learn more about this chimp, who helped to inspire the story of Half Brother.

Deuker, Carl. Payback time. Houghton Mifflin, 2010. [y DEUKER 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: sports, growing up, exercise/eating right

Summary: Overweight, somewhat timid Mitch reluctantly agrees to be the sports reporter for the Lincoln High newspaper because he is determined to be a writer, but he senses a real story in Angel, a talented football player who refuses to stand out on the field--or to discuss his past.

Tubb, Kristin O'Donnell. Selling hope. Feiwel and Friends, 2010. [j TUBB 2010]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: family, grief, friendship, disasters (potential)

Summary: In 1910, just before the earth passes through the tail of Halley's Comet, 13-year-old Hope McDaniels, whose father is a magician in a traveling vaudeville

show, tries to earn enough money to quit the circuit by selling "anti-comet pills," with the help of fellow-performer Buster Keaton.

Wong, Janet S. [Me and Rolly Maloo](#). Charlesbridge, 2010. [j WONG 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: cheating, school story, friendship, popularity

Summary: An unpopular girl cheats on a math test when the most popular girl in school asks her to give her answers.

Dystopia

Mulligan, Andy. [Trash](#). David Fickling Books, 2010. [y MULLIGAN 2010, ebook]

Genre: Dystopia

Major themes: Dystopia, multicultural, science fiction

Summary: Fourteen-year-olds Raphael and Gardo team up with a younger boy, Rat, to figure out the mysteries surrounding a bag Raphael finds during their daily life of sorting through trash in a third-world country's dump.

Booktalk: Raphael, Gardo and Rat have no parents, no homes, and no money. What they do have is trash, a big stinking heap of it, on the outskirts of the town where they live, in an unnamed third-world city, in the not so distant future. The trash pile gives them a place to live and a place to dig through where they might find food, clothing, or sometimes something valuable, like money.

When Raphael finds the small leather bag, he's excited. He shows it to Gardo, and they find it holds eleven hundred pesos inside...good money! The rest of the bag's contents seem less interesting...a map, a key, some old papers and photos, and an old ID for a Jose Angelico, age 33. They split the money, and Raphael tucks the bag into his pants.

But then some cops show up, offering ten thousand dollars reward money. Ten thousand dollars for a lost bag. Instead of turning the bag in, the boys take it to their aunt's home to hide it. When the cops show up again, they start to get scared. They have to get the bag out of the house! They decide to hide it with their friend Rat.

Rat focuses in on the key.

"I can tell you exactly where that is and what it's for." When his friends agree to pay him, he tells them, "It's a locker key, for a locker at Central Station. We can go there now."

What could be in the locker? Will the cops be waiting there for them? Why do they want this bag so much? And who is Jose Angelico? The three boys have no parents, no homes, and very little money. But they do have a map and a key. And they resolve to find the answers to their questions, and nothing, not even getting bullied by the police, will stop them.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- When Raphael and Gardo first find the bag, they lie to the police and to Raphael's Auntie about what they found. What clues let them know the bag is valuable?
- Give some examples of how the boys are able to find out the information they need, even though they're kids and very poor.

- Throughout the book, there are lots of keys, doors, and locks. How do they work as symbols in this story?
- Try writing a message using the book code described on pages 172-173.

Related websites:

Andy Mulligan Talks Trash

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/dec/20/andy-mulligan-trash-blue-peter>

An interview with the author.

Trash

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nc-RpeZBiwo>

Watch the YouTube trailer.

Coman, Carolyn and Rob Shepperson. [The memory bank](#). Arthur A. Levine, 2010. [j COMAN 2010]

Genre: Dystopia

Major themes: Dystopia, memory, dreams

Summary: When Hope learns that, while her memory account is seriously low, she is a champion dreamer, she stays at the World Wide Memory Bank trying to locate her sister Honey, whom their parents abandoned and told Hope to forget.

DeStefano, Lauren. [Wither](#). Simon & Schuster, 2011. [y DESTEFANO 2011]

Genre: Dystopia

Major themes: Dystopia, genetic engineering

Summary: After modern science turns every human into a genetic time bomb with men dying at age twenty-five and women dying at age twenty, girls are kidnapped and married off in order to repopulate the world.

Fantasy

de Quidt, Jeremy. [The toymaker](#). David Fickling Books, 2010. [j DEQUIDT 2010]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes:

Summary: When Mathias' grandfather – the conjuror in a traveling circus – dies, he leaves Mathias a piece of paper that several people will kill to get hold of.

Booktalk: Mathias has been a part of the Lutsmann's traveling circus for as long as he can remember. It's a fairly cheesy circus and the Lutsmanns are cruel and unpleasant. Mathias' grandfather is the circus's conjuror. But grandfather Gustav has just died, leaving Mathias nothing but questions. ... And the mysterious piece of paper that Gustav tried to swallow as he died.

The Lutsmanns sell Mathias to a Dr. Leitner [pronounced Light-ner]. Dr. Leitner seems very interested in Gustav's belongings, almost as if he was looking for something. He asks Mathias if his grandfather gave him anything before he died. Mathias says no.

But Dr. Leitner has a doll. She's like one of those mechanical fortunetellers – the ones that move their hands and then it spit out a card with your fortune on it. Dr. Leitner's doll can tell whether or not you are lying. And the doll tells Dr. Leitner that Mathias just lied when he said that he hadn't taken anything from his grandfather.

Dr. Leitner also has a dwarf, named Valter [p. 67]. And Valter has a knife, a very sharp knife. Mathias has already seen what Valter can do with his knife – two huge wolves with their throats cut. Somehow Mathias knows that even if he told Dr. Leitner about that piece of paper, Valter would still have the opportunity to use his knife.

Amazingly, Mathias escapes from the doctor, with the help of a girl named Katta. They take refuge in a tunnel being used by smugglers. But Valter follows them there (he also has a very good sense of smell), and soon the boy and girl are trapped by Valter and his very sharp knife. But Katta thinks quickly and is able to set him on fire. The tunnel collapses on top of him and Katta and Mathias escape into the night.

Except ... [show p. 105]

What is on that piece of paper? Why does Dr. Leitner want it so badly? Can Mathias trust Katta? Why won't Valter die? And why is this book called *The Toymaker*?

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Why won't Valter die? When did you begin to suspect and why?
- What did the Burner boy do to Katta? What happens to her when she seeks revenge?
- It's not clear that there will be a sequel. What do you think will happen next?

Related websites:

Author's website: David Fickling Books – Author page – Jeremy de Quidt
<http://bit.ly/kuxA3z>

The author blogs and answers questions at his publisher's website.

Devices of Wonder (Getty Museum)

<http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/devices/flash/>

The Getty Museum of Art created an online exhibit of automata and other mechanical wonders.

Maillardet's Automaton at The Franklin Institute

<http://www.fi.edu/learn/sci-tech/automaton/automaton.php?cts=instrumentation>

Another museum provides information on an automaton it received as a gift and restored to action.

Crum, Shutta. [Thomas and the dragon queen](#). Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.

[j CRUM 2010]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Knights, princesses, dragons, short stature

Summary: When the princess is kidnapped by a dragon queen, 13-year-old Thomas – a new and very small squire-in-training – boldly sets out on a quest to rescue her.

Epstein, Adam Jay and Andrew Jacobson. [The familiars](#). Harper, 2010.

[j EPSTEIN 2010]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Friendship, loyalty, magic, special abilities

Summary: A scrappy alley cat names Aldwyn passes himself off as a magical animal companion to Jack – a young wizard in training – but must convince his fellow “familiars” that he is authentic.

McCann, Jim. [The return of the Dapper Men](#). Archaia Comics, 2010.

[GN MCCANN 2010]

Genre: Steampunk, graphic novel

Major themes: Time, childhood, robots, change

Summary: When the Dapper men arrive in Anorev to restart time, Ayden, Zoe, and Dapper Man 41 seek to repair whatever made time stop.

Stephens, John. [The emerald atlas \(The books of beginning, Book 1\)](#). Alfred A. Knopf, 2011. [j STEPHENS 2011, CD Children STEPHENS, ebook]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Brothers and sisters, magic, prophecies

Summary: Kate, Michael, and Emma have passed from one orphanage to another in the ten years since their parents disappeared to protect them; but now they learn that they have special powers, a prophesied quest to find a magical book, and a fearsome enemy.

Stroud, Jonathan. [The ring of Solomon](#). Disney/Hyperion Books, 2010.

[j STROUD 2010, CD Children STROUD, downloadable audiobook]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Magic, djinni and other fantastical creatures, adventure, slavery, King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba

Summary: Wise-cracking djinni Bartimaeus finds himself at the court of King Solomon with an unpleasant master, a sinister servant, and King Solomon's magic ring.

Fairy Tales Retold

Shulman, Polly. [The Grimm legacy](#). G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2010.

[y SHULMAN 2010]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Friendship, adventure, family, mystery

Summary: New York high school student Elizabeth gets an after-school job as a page at the "New-York Circulating Material Repository," and when she gains coveted access to its Grimm Collection of magical objects, she and the other pages are drawn into a series of frightening adventures involving mythical creatures and stolen goods.

Booktalk: What kind of job do you see yourself having when you are in high school? Maybe flipping burgers? Babysitting? Shelving books at the library?

Elizabeth, lonely at her new school, is glad when her teacher recommends her for a job as a page at the New-York Circulating Material Repository, which is something like a library. Except, instead of lending books, the repository lends objects. Objects like musical instruments, sports equipment, and even specialized cooking tools. They have many historical objects, even some which belonged to famous people, like a hat that belonged to Abraham Lincoln or Marie Antoinette's wig.

But not long after she starts, Elizabeth realizes that something is seriously wrong at the repository. One of the pages has disappeared, and the other keep talking about a huge bird that they feel is threatening them. Then Elizabeth finds out about the Grimm

collection—a special collection at the repository that contains magical objects—like Snow White’s mirror or the shoes of the Twelve Dancing Princesses. And they all work...just like they did in the stories. But some of the objects from the Grimm collection have been disappearing. Can Elizabeth capture the thief?

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Did you know all of the Grimm’s fairy tales referenced in the story? Which ones were familiar/unfamiliar to you? Use the first website (below) to find any of the stories you didn’t know.
- Why does Aaron dislike Marc so much? Is he fair to Marc?
- If you could check out any item from the Grimm collection, which would it be?

Related websites:

The Grimm Brothers’ Children’s and Household Tales (Grimms’ Fairy Tales)

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimmtales.html>

Need help remembering the details of some of Grimms’ fairy tales? Find the online text of the tales here.

The Grimm Legacy Book Trailer

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XlpgXWeE0>

A book trailer for The Grimm Legacy

Pneumatic Tube System Basics

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

Did you have a hard time picturing the pneumatic tube system described in the book? Pneumatic tube systems are still used in some places today, and this video shows how one such system works.

Dixon, Heather. [Entwined](#). Greenwillow, 2011. [y DIXON 2011, downloadable audiobook]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Family, grief, magic, evil, romance

Summary: Confined to their dreary castle while mourning their mother’s death, Princess Azalea and her eleven sisters join The Keeper, who’s trapped in a magic passageway, in a nightly dance that soon becomes nightmarish.

Gidwitz, Adam. [A tale dark and Grimm](#). Dutton Children’s Books, 2010. [j GIDWITZ 2010]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Adventure, family, horror (gory)

Summary: Hansel and Gretel walk out of their own story and into eight more tales, encountering such wicked creatures as witches, along with kindly strangers and other helpful folk.

Tomlinson, Heather. [Toads and diamonds](#). Henry Holt, 2010. [y TOMLINSON 2010]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Family, social class, religion, special abilities, romance

Summary: A retelling of the Perrault fairy tale set in pre-colonial India, in which two stepsisters receive gifts from a goddess and each walks her own path to find her gift's purpose, discovering romance along the way.

Fairies

Walsh, Pat. [The Crowfield curse](#). Chicken House, 2010. [j WALSH 2010]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Fairies, orphans, magic

Summary: In 1347, when 14-year-old orphan William Paynel, an impoverished servant at Crowfield Abbey, goes into the forest to gather wood and finds a magical creature caught in a trap, he discovers he has the ability to see fays and becomes embroiled in a strange mystery involving Old Magic, a bitter feud, and ancient secrets.

Booktalk: “My leg! Oh, my leg, mylegmylegmyleg, my leeeeg....”

William is collecting firewood in the frost rimed forest in the dead cold of winter.

Who was whimpering?

“Who’s there?”

As he looks around, William accidently stumbles and falls to the ground.

“Kill me why don’t you?” the voice said. “Land on top of me and finish the job.

What is one hob more or less?”

There at William’s feet is a small cat-sized creature, with green eyes, a long tail, skin the color of beechnuts and point ears tufted with reddish hair. The creature’s leg is trapped in the jaws of a cruel iron trap.

Of course William frees it. But where can he take the hob, which he knows is a fairy creature, while its leg heals? William is a servant at Crowfield Abbey, where the monks have taken him in when he was orphaned by a fire. He decides to take the hob to Brother Snail, the only monk who would know how to heal the creature, and who would agree to protect it.

But William also has to dispose of the trap. He decides to throw it into the dark swamp at Whistling Hollow. He grits his teeth as he makes his way through the brambles and dusk. Brother Gabriel had warned him of this unholy place. No birds sang in the dark grove. William could see his breath, and hear his heart beating. When he reached the pond near the old hazel tree, he tossed the trap into the black water. And then he heard it...the whispering... as if someone were standing right next to him! *This will not be forgotten*, the voice said. William turned and ran, but he couldn’t escape the power inside him, the power the hob calls The Sight.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Will discovers he has the Sight. What powers does he have that makes him different from other humans?
- Look up *Seelie and Unseelie*, which are types of Irish fairies, (and the term used in this book), in Wikipedia or other encyclopedias or websites. Does the description match the way the fairy creatures in the book look and behave?
- Will’s feelings towards Master Bone and Shadlok change, as the book progresses. How do they change, and why?

Related websites:

Pat Walsh

<http://www.pat-walsh.com/>

The author's official website.

The Daily Life of a Medieval Monk

<http://www.middle-ages.org.uk/daily-life-monk-middle-ages.htm>

Learn more about what life in a medieval abbey was like.

Bauer, A.C.E. [Come fall](#). Random House, 2010. [j BAUER 2010]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Fairies, foster kids, Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*

Summary: Drawn together by a mentoring program and an unusual crew, middle school misfits Salman, Lu, and Bloss form a strong friendship despite teasing by fellow students and the maneuverings of fairies Oberon, Titania, and Puck.

Booraem, Ellen. [Small persons with wings](#). Dial, 2011. [j BOORAEM 2010]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Fairies, magic

Summary: When Mellie Turpin's grandfather dies and leaves her family his run-down inn and bar, she learns that for generations her family members have been fairy guardians, and now that the fairies want an important ring returned, the Turpins become involved in a series of magical adventures as they try to locate the missing ring.

Trafton, Jennifer. [The rise and fall of Mount Majestic: by Professor Barnabas Quill, historian of the Island at the center of everything](#). Dial, 2010. [j TRAFTON 2010]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Fairies, giants, adventure

Summary: Ten-year-old Persimmony Smudge, who longs for heroic adventures, overhears a secret that thrusts her into the middle of a dangerous mission that could destroy the island on which she lives.

Valente, Catherynne M. [The girl who circumnavigated Fairyland in a ship of her own making](#). Feiwel and Friends, 2011. [j VALENTE 2011]

Genre: Fantasy

Major themes: Fairies, dragons

Summary: Twelve-year-old September's ordinary life in Omaha turns to adventure when a Green Wind takes her to Fairyland to retrieve a talisman the new and fickle Marquess wants from the enchanted woods.

Science Fiction

DiTerlizzi, Tony. [The search for WondLa](#). Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2010. [j DITERLIZZ 2010, CD Children DITERLIZZ]

Genre: Science fiction

Major themes: Adventure, identity, human-alien relationships

Summary: Living in isolation with Muthr, a robot, on what appears to be an alien world populated with bizarre life forms, a 12-year-old human girl called Eva Nine sets out on a journey to find others like her.

Booktalk: Eva Nine wakes up in a fog. The last thing she remembers is diving off the bridge to escape the bounty hunter, but now she finds herself locked inside a glass container that feels like she's inside a large test tube. When the two unknown creatures enter the room, Eva watches in horror as they paralyze, pose, and then flay the small water bear in the container next to her. As if it was being prepared for a museum exhibit. It's all too easy for Eva to understand. She's the only one of her kind she's seen in her short time in this world. Will Eva be joining the water bear as an exhibit in this macabre museum?

Let's go back a few days. Eva Nine was living with her Muthr (that's a Multi-Utility Task Help Robot) below ground in the Sanctuary. Muthr's job is to raise Eva to be able to survive on Earth, but Eva is sick to death of the lessons and training. She's eager to leave the Sanctuary and find out what is going on in the world above her head. Unfortunately, that opportunity comes much too soon. The bounty hunter has located the entrance to the Sanctuary and is breaking down the door. Sent to the surface by Muthr, Eva discovers how completely unprepared she is for survival. Nothing up there is recognized by the Omnipod, the handheld "smartphone" that Eva carries with her. Eva must survive on her wits and the help of a strange, bright-blue creature named Rovender [p. 70-71]. But is Eva on Earth? If she is, where are the other humans? She aims to find out in *The Search for WondLa* by Tony DiTerlizzi. Caution: Book 1 in a trilogy! Ends on a cliffhanger!!

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- How does technology help Eva Nine when she leaves the Sanctuary? Are there instances when her technology hinders her? Why couldn't it help?
- When you learn what WondLa is, can you think back to instances in the novel that reflect that well-known story?
- There is one hint given about Eva Nine's origins (p. 132). Do you have any ideas about how she ended up in the Sanctuary and what she's supposed to do on Earth?
- If you tried WondLa-Vision, does it enhance your understanding of Eva Nine's world?

Related websites:

Author's website: Tony DiTerlizzi's Imaginopolis

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

Book's website:

<http://wondla.com/>.

To experience the 3D "WondLa-Vision" requires a webcam and a software download.

Klass, David. [Stuck on Earth](#). Farrar Straus Giroux, 2010. [y KLASS 2010]

Genre: Science fiction

Major themes: Extraterrestrial beings, bullying, enhancement fantasy, friendship

Summary: On a secret mission to evaluate whether the human race should be annihilated, a space alien inhabits the body of a bullied 14-year-old boy.

Reichs, Kathy. [Virals](#). Razorbill, 2010. [y REICHS 2010, ebook, CD YA REICHS, downloadable audiobook]

Genre: Science fiction

Major themes: Viruses, animal experimentation, human mutation

Summary: Tory Brennan is the leader of a band of teenager “sci-philes” who live on an island off the coast of South Carolina. When the group rescues a dog caged for medical testing, they are exposed to an experimental strain of canine parvovirus that changes their lives forever.

Twentieth Century Historical Fiction

Sharenow, Robert. [The Berlin boxing club](#). Harper Teen, 2011. [y SHARENOW 2011]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Historical fiction, identity, courage

Summary: In 1936 Berlin, fourteen-year-old Karl Stern, considered Jewish despite a non-religious upbringing, learns to box from the legendary Max Schmeling while struggling with the realities of the Holocaust.

Booktalk: During the school year of 1934, fourteen-year-old Karl Stern’s five biggest problems in order of importance are:

1. Finding a way to gain weight.
2. Getting rid of his acne.
3. Getting inside Greta Hauser’s pants and having her find her way into his.
4. His father’s financial struggles.
5. Hitler and the Nazi Party.

These priorities quickly shift after Karl is cornered after school by a group of budding Hitler Youth (the Wolf Pack) who jump him for being Jewish. Before his altercation with the Wolf Pack, Karl doesn’t even consider himself Jewish. [Read page 8-9. Paragraph 2.]

Furthermore, Karl’s father’s art gallery is struggling because the Nazi Party is censoring the impressionist art in which his father specializes. Luckily, his father is known by at least one very important patron, German boxing king, Max Schmeling, who comes to Karl’s father’s gallery. He notices Karl has been beaten up. Max makes a deal with Karl’s dad: In exchange for a painting of himself, Schmeling offers Karl Stern boxing lessons.

Karl immediately jumps at the chance to train with a professional boxer. He is, however, no one-trick pony, only interested in sport. One of Karl’s favorite pastimes is entertaining his younger sister, Hildy, with his comics (examples of Karl’s artwork appear in the book). He has a keen eye and talent for art, quite the opposite characteristics of a stereotypical boxer. Despite his father’s objection Karl is motivated to be a cartoonist and comic book creator as well as German Youth Boxing Champion.

As the Nazi Party becomes stronger in Germany, Karl realizes he has no choice but to acknowledge his Jewish heritage in order to keep himself safe, especially after his school gets taken over by Nazis. This realization, along with his boxing training, makes him mentally and physically stronger. And he’ll need this strength to help his family survive the fury of the Third Reich.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- What kind of connections can be made concerning Karl Stern's training as a boxer and his struggles as a Jewish teenager during the rise of the Third Reich.
- Discuss what it means to be Jewish. Karl and his family were not religious but were still considered Jewish by the Nazis. What does it mean to belong to different ethnic or religious groups? What are the differences between religion and ethnicity?
- Have you ever been grouped in with people that you either didn't see yourself as involved with and been treated differently because of it? Relate your experience to that of Karl Stern.

Related websites:

Robert Sharenow - Author

<http://robertsharenow.com/>

Max Schmeling lesson

<http://bit.ly/nVyEZn>

A teacher's guide from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum discusses the role of prominent Germans and their choices during the late 1930s. Using Schmeling as an example, the lesson explores the many dimensions of human experience prominent Germans experienced during this time.

Kristallnacht

<http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/kristallnacht/frame.htm>

Also from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, this website describes the events of Kristallnacht, the climax of The Berlin Boxing Club. This site describes the impact on synagogues, Jewish businesses and how the events affected Jewish emigration from Germany. Further resources included.

Max Schmeling v. Joe Louis

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lihT_ewxVko

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GusM4lgmLe8>

Videos of boxing matches that occur during the time in which The Berlin Boxing Club is set. The first video is Max Schmeling's 12th round knockout of Joe Louis. The second is the first round knockout of Schmeling by Joe Louis.

Flood, Nancy Bo. [Warriors in the crossfire](#). Front Street, 2010. [y FLOOD 2010]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Historical fiction, indigenous population, family, courage

Summary: Twelve-year-old Joseph helps his family to survive when the natives of Saipan are caught in the crossfire between the Japanese soldiers and the American troops at the end of World War II.

Partridge, Elizabeth. [Dogtag summer](#). Bloomsbury, 2011. [j PARTRIDGE 2011]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Historical fiction, family secrets, adoption, identity.

Summary: In the summer of 1980 before she starts junior high school in Santa Rosa, California, Tracy, who was adopted from Vietnam when she was six years old, finds an old ammo box with a dog tag and picture that bring up painful memories for both her Vietnam-veteran father and herself.

Pinkney, Andrea Davis. [Bird in a box](#). Little, Brown, 2011. [j PINKNEY 2011, CD Children PINKNEY]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Grief, orphans, loss, courage.

Summary: In 1936, three children meet at the Mercy Home for Negro Orphans in New York State, and while not all three are orphans, they are all dealing with grief and loss which together, along with the help of a sympathetic staff member and the boxing matches of Joe Louis, they manage to overcome. Includes author's notes.

Vanderpool, Clare. [Moon over Manifest](#). Delacorte, 2010. [j VANDERPOO 2010, CD Children VANDERPOO]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Family, secrets, friendship,

Summary: Twelve-year-old Abilene Tucker is the daughter of a drifter who, in the summer of 1936, sends her to stay with an old friend in Manifest, Kansas, where he grew up, and where she hopes to find out some things about his past.

Whelan, Gloria. [Small acts of amazing courage](#). Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2011. [y WHELAN 2011]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Family, ethics, colonialism, loss

Summary: In 1919, independent-minded 15-year-old Rosalind lives in India with her English parents, and when they fear she has fallen in with some rebellious types who believe in Indian self-government, she is sent "home" to London – where she has never lived and where her older brother died – to stay with her two aunts.

Historical Fiction – 19th and early 20th Century

Bond, Victoria and T.R. Simon. [Zora and me](#). Candlewick, 2010. [j BOND 2010, CD Children BOND]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Historical fiction, mystery

Summary: A fictionalized account of Zora Neale Hurston's childhood with her best friend Carrie, in Eatonville, Florida, as they learn about life, death, and the differences between truth, lies, and pretending. Includes an annotated bibliography of the works of Zora Neale Hurston, a short biography of the author, and information about Eatonville, Florida.

Booktalk: Carrie thinks her best friend Zora sometimes goes too far telling tales. Zora's most recent one is creepy; it's about a shape-shifting gator man that prowls the swamps around Blue Sink in search of souls and beautiful voices. And Zora thinks Mr. Pendir, who lives nearby, might be the gator man.

Then the body of a young man is found by the tracks in their hometown of Eatonville, Florida. A body with no head. Wearing overalls, beat-up boots, and a braided red strap across his shoulder.

"We knew him!" Zora said. "The man without a head. We knew him."

Carrie stood, wiped her eyes and swallowed hard. “Who would do that? Why would somebody do that to a man? Why?”

Something moved across Zora’s face. “You remember what Ivory said? That he was going swimming in the Blue Sink last night!”

“But Zora, that doesn’t mean it was Mr. Pendir who killed him!”

“Ain’t no regular folks do nothing like we just heard, Carrie. It’s not a somebody that cuts off and steals a man’s head—it’s a *something*.”

Only a monster could do what was done to Ivory. When Zora and Carrie resolve to track down Ivory’s murderer, they discover that the gator man isn’t the only creepy thing going down in their town.

This book is based on Zora Neale Hurston’s childhood in the early 1900s. She was a famous anthropologist who loved collecting stories and studying people.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Zora’s father favors her sister Sarah over Zora. What is it about Zora that makes her father so angry? Why do you think he likes Sarah better?
- This book is fiction based on the life of Zora Neale Hurston, which is different than if it were a biography. Talk about how the two writing forms are different. What parts of this book do you the writers had to make up?
- Towards the end of the book, Carrie says, about Gold and Mr. Pendir, “She and Mr. Pendir had something in common. They both felt afraid and cheated by the cards life had dealt them, but they took that fear and channeled it in different ways...and both of them ended up alone.” Explain what she means.

Related websites:

Zora and Me

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

The website for the book let’s you explore the town where Zora lived, crafts she may have done and more.

Zora Neale Hurston

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

Learn about the famous anthropologist and writer at her official site.

An interview with T.R. Simon and Victoria Bond

<http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3755660>

A young reporter interviews the authors. Scroll to the bottom of the article to find the video.

Dagg, Carole Estby. [The year we were famous](#). Clarion, 2011. [y DAGG 2011]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Historical, mother-daughter, walking

Summary: A novel based on the true story of 17-year-old Clara Estby's walk across America with her mother Helga in 1896, to win a ten thousand dollar prize and save their home from foreclosure.

Holm, Jennifer L. [The trouble with May Amelia](#). Atheneum, 2011. [j HOLM 2011]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Historical, frontier life, Washington state.

Summary: Living with seven brothers and her father, who thinks girls are useless, a 13-year-old Finnish American farm girl is determined to prove her worth when an enterprising gentleman tries to purchase their cash-strapped family settlement in Washington State in 1900.

Kephart, Beth. [Dangerous neighbors](#). Egmont USA, 2010. [downloadable e-book]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Sisters, twins, grief, Centennial Exhibition 1876 Philadelphia, PA.

Summary: Set against the backdrop of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, Katherine cannot forgive herself when her beloved twin sister dies, and she feels that her only course of action is to follow suit.

Kluger, Jeffrey. [Freedom stone](#). Philomel, 2010. [j KLUGER 2010]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Historical, Civil War, slavery, magic

Summary: With the help of a magical stone from Africa, a 13-year-old slave travels to the battle of Vicksburg to clear her father's name and free her family from bondage.

Family Secrets

Bolden, Tonya. [Finding family](#). Bloomsbury, 2010. [j BOLDEN 2010]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Family, secrets, African American history, photographs

Summary: Raised on off-putting tales of family members she has never met, told by the grandfather and great-aunt who are raising her, 12-year-old Delana is shocked when – after Aunt Tilley dies – she learns the truth about her parents and some of her other relatives.

Booktalk: Boys who set off firecrackers, people who pray loud, saloons, chopping, slicing or peeling (anything involving a knife), a curious cat, and lazy fools. These things are all in Delana Hannibal's "Book of Bewares." Delana's great aunt Tilley – who's raised her – insists that all these things, and much more, present a terrible danger to her beloved little girl. Delana, who is going on thirteen, is just beginning to think that maybe Great-Aunt Tilley has been taking things a little too far. I mean, beware a curious cat?

Once Great-Aunt Tilley dies, Delana discovers that Tilley and her grandfather were protecting her from something they thought was more dangerous than the things in her "Book of Bewares." And that is Delana's family history. Tilley shared a lot of family photographs with Delana, but now Delana isn't sure that the stories she heard about the people in them are even true. Is Cousin Ambertine "trash and trouble?" Aunt Rachel a "floozy?" Did Aunt Eula (whose photograph is signed Emma for some reason) decide to "live a lie?" Why are there no pictures at all of Delana's mother, who died giving birth to her? And did Delana's father just take up with her mother when he realized how rich her family was and then "run off for better pickings," as Great-Aunt Tilley told her?

Delana doesn't know what to believe. Are fairs, pawnbrokers, and boys who go *Psst!* from behind a bush something to beware? Are her relatives as bad as Tilley painted them? Did her father leave her without regrets? Delana means to find out the truth, but what if what she learns *really* belongs in her "Book of Bewares?"

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Delana's Great-Aunt Tilley makes her keep "The Book of Bewares." If you had to keep one, what might your parents want you to put in it?
- At the end of the novel, we see that Grandfather and Great-Aunt Tilley may have over-protected Delana. But were they right to do so when she was younger? Should they have done what they did when Delana was born [spoiler: about her father]?
- What do you think about the author using photographs as her inspiration for her story? Why do you think she collects them?
- Bring in some old postcards and make up a story as Delana does about the postcards she receives on page 76.

Related websites:

Author's website: Tonya Bolden Books

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

Read about the author's many books for young readers.

African American Genealogy/History Detectives

<http://video.pbs.org/video/1485831080/>

One of PBS's "history detectives," Tukufu Zuberi, gives a brief video primer on researching family history.

Nolan, Han. [Crazy](#). Harcourt, 2010. [y NOLAN 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Friendship, mental illness, grief and loss, fathers and sons

Summary: Fifteen-year-old Jason struggles to hide his father's declining mental condition after his mother's death; but when his father disappears he must confide in the other members of a therapy group he has been forced to join at school.

Parkinson, Siobhán. [Long story short](#). Roaring Brook Press, 2011.

[y PARKINSON 2011]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Brothers and sisters, runaways, parent-child relationships

Summary: Fourteen-year-old Jono and his 8-year-old sister Julie run away when – soon after their grandmother's death – their alcoholic mother hits Julie; but when the police find them in Galway, Jono learns he is in big trouble.

Families

Schmidt, Gary D. [Okay for now](#). Clarion Books, 2011. [y SCHMIDT 2011, downloadable audiobook]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Friendship, art, growing up, overcoming stereotypes

Summary: As a 14-year-old who just moved to a new town, with no friends, an abusive father, and a louse for an older brother, Doug Swieteck has all the stats stacked against him until he finds an ally in Lil Spicer – a fiery young lady. Together, they find a safe haven in the local library, inspiration in learning about the plates of John James Audubon's birds, and a hilarious adventure on a Broadway stage.

Booktalk: Doug Swieteck has just moved to Marysville, New York, otherwise known as “The Dump.”

Here are just a few of the things he hates about living there:

1. Their house is as big a dump as the town.
2. All his dad does is yell, hit, and hang out with his loser friends after work.
3. Doug has to share a room with his brother, the juvenile delinquent.
4. Everyone in Marysville seems to think he’s a juvenile delinquent, just like his brother.
5. Eighth grade has barely started, and he’s already in detention.
6. That smart-aleck girl named Lil won’t leave him alone.

One day, when Doug sees Lil on the steps of the library, she tells him, “A library is a place where they keep books. You probably have never been in one.” The truth is, Lil is right, but Doug would never admit it. So he follows Lil inside. Surprisingly, the library is the one place in Marysville that is *not* a dump. Trying to avoid Lil, Doug climbs the marble staircase and enters a room with a glass display case in the center.

[Read p. 19, from “I went over to the table...” to “...the most terrifying picture I had ever seen.”]

The picture is in John James Audubon’s book, *Birds of America*, and oddly enough, that book will turn Doug’s life upside down.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Doug feels like many people misjudge him, making assumptions based on his family or his looks. Have you ever felt misjudged? How?
- Who do you think stole the merchandise from the hardware store? Why?
- At what point did you figure out that Doug couldn’t read? Was it before the author told you? What clues are included in the book?
- Why do you think the title of this book is *Okay for Now*?

Related websites:

Okay for Now by Gary Schmidt

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtv3UO:9HNq>

Meet Gary Schmidt and learn more about Okay for Now in this video.

Okay for Now Educator Guide

http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/kids/resources/OkayForNow_educatorsguide.pdf

This guide from the publisher contains discussion questions and curriculum-related projects and activities.

Audubon’s Birds of America

http://web4.audubon.org/bird/BoA/BOA_index.html

An online version of the book that Doug views in the Marysville Library

Atkinson, Elizabeth. I, Emma Freke. Carolrhoda Books, 2010. [j ATKINSON 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Growing up, friendship, fitting in

Summary: Growing up near Boston with her free-spirited mother and old-world grandfather, 12-year-old Emma has always felt out of place but when she attends the family reunion her father's family holds annually in Wisconsin, she is in for some surprises.

De Goldi, Kate. [The 10 p.m. question](#). Candlewick Press, 2010. [y DEGOLDI 2010, ebook]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: School, friendship, anxiety, humor, illness

Summary: Twelve-year-old Frankie Parsons has a quirky family, a wonderful best friend, and a head full of worrying questions that he shares with his mother each night, but when free-spirited Sydney arrives at school with questions of her own, Frankie is forced to face the ultimate 10 p.m. question.

Henkes, Kevin. [Junonia](#). Greenwillow, 2011. [j HENKES 2011]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Growing up, dealing with change

Summary: The week of her tenth birthday, Alice and her parents go to Sanibel Island, Florida, just as they do every year, but this time some of the people who are always there are missing and some new people have come, which unsettles Alice, who wants things to be exactly the same as they always are.

Jackson, Alison. [Eggs over Evie](#). Christy Ottaviano Books, 2010. [j JACKSON 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Growing up, animals, friendship

Summary: Evie feels unsettled and sad after her parents divorce, her father remarries and takes the family dog, and his new wife becomes pregnant, but a cooking class and helping the elderly lady next door with her cat give Evie a way to cope with the changes in her life. Includes recipes.

Special Abilities

Angleberger, Tom. [The strange case of Origami Yoda](#). Amulet Books, 2010. [j ANGLEBERG 2010]

Genre: School story

Major themes: Special abilities, schools, Yoda

Summary: Sixth-grader Tommy and his friends describe their interactions with a paper finger puppet of Yoda, worn by their weird classmate Dwight, as they try to figure out whether or not the puppet can really predict the future. Includes instructions for making Origami Yoda.

Booktalk: Raise your hand if you know who Yoda is – [call on someone to give you an explanation](#). Yes, he's a little green guy from the Star Wars movies, a Jedi Knight, a very good fighter and a very wise person, but who says things in a different kind of way, like, [\(use high, warbly voice\)](#) "Named must your fear be before banish it you can" and "much to learn you still have."

OK, now raise your hand if you know what origami it – *call on someone to give you an answer*. Exactly – it’s the art of folding paper into different shapes.

Now there are lots of patterns out there online on how to make a Yoda character out of origami – I did a Youtube search and came up with 56 different hits. So just about anyone can fold up a piece of green paper to look like a Star Wars character...but only Dwight folded up a green piece of paper that looks like a Star Wars character that tells the future. And he does seem to tell the future, time and time again – he’s right about the pee stain on someone’s pants, he’s right about the Cheetos, he’s right about the pop quiz in science...he’s amazing!

Not everyone believes that Origami Yoda really does tell the future – they think it is just that weirdo Dwight running around with an finger puppet, talking in a high, squeaky voice and being even stranger than he normally is – after all, this is the guy that uses a straw to eat hamburgers and wore a cape to school every day last year, asking everyone to call him “Captain Dwight”. But Tommy thinks that there might be something real about Origami Yoda – and when Origami Yoda gives him some advice that means taking a huge chance on humiliating himself in front of the whole school, Tommy has to decide for himself, the truth about The Strange Case of Origami Yoda.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Each chapter of this book is written by a different character, as if it were part of a case file. What is a case file? Why does Tommy create the case file?
- Does having the Origami Yoda puppet change the way Dwight’s classmates think of him?
- It’s hard for Tommy to know, even by the end of the book, if Origami Yoda is real or not. If Origami Yoda isn’t real, why do you think his advice makes things work out for everyone?

Related websites:

The Strange Case of Origami Yoda

<http://origamiyoda.wordpress.com/>

The official website for the book. Learn how to make your own origami Jedi Master.

An Interview with Tom Angleberger

<http://www.squealermusic.com/madclips/wordpress2/?p=364>

Learn how the author was able to use the name of the famous Star Wars character and more.

Ferraiolo, Jack D. [Sidekicks](#). Amulet, 2011. [j FERRAIOLO 2011, CD YA FERRAIOLO]

Genre: Humor

Major themes: Special abilities, superheroes, humor

Summary: Bright Boy, a.k.a. Scott Hutchinson, is an ordinary dude by day and a superfast, superstrong sidekick by night, fighting loyally next to his hero, Phantom Justice ...despite his doubts about the social benefits of wearing yellow tights.

Grant, Michael. [The call](#). Katherine Tegen Books, 2010. [j GRANT 2010, ebook]

Genre: Special abilities

Major themes: Special abilities, adventure, humor

Summary: A seemingly average 12-year-old learns that he is destined to gather a team of similarly gifted children to try to save the world from a nameless evil, which has reappeared after having been imprisoned for three thousand years.

Harrington, Kim. [Clarity](#). Point, 2011. [y HARRINGTO 2011]

Genre: Special abilities

Major themes: Special abilities, psychic powers, mysteries

Summary: Sixteen-year-old Clare Fern, a member of a family of psychics, helps the mayor and a skeptical detective solve a murder in a Cape Cod town during the height of tourist season--with her brother a prime suspect.

TenNapel, Doug. [Ghostopolis](#). Graphix/Scholastic, 2010. [ygn TENNAPEL 2010]

Genre: Ghost story

Major themes: Special abilities, ghosts

Summary: When Garth Hale is accidentally zapped into the ghost world by Frank Gallows, a washed-up ghost wrangler, he discovers that he has special powers. Soon he finds himself on the run from the evil ruler of Ghostopolis, who wants to use Garth's newfound abilities to tighten his grip on the spirit world. After Garth meets Cecil, his grandfather's ghost, the two search for a way to get Garth back home, nearly losing hope until Frank Gallows shows up to fix his mistake.

Growing Up

Allen, Crystal. [How Lamar's bad prank won a Bubba-sized trophy](#). Balzer + Bray, 2011. [y ALLEN 2011]

Genre: Humor, realistic fiction

Major themes: Friendship, brothers, bowling, asthma

Summary: When 13-year-old, bowling-obsessed Lamar Washington finds out that his idol is coming to town, he finds himself involved in some unsavory activities as he tries to change his image to impress people.

Booktalk: [Read yellow post-it note prop:] This spot reserved for Lamar's first trophy. You'll always be my little superstar. Love, Mom.

This post-it note is all that Lamar has left of his mom, who died about a year ago. The note sits on the family's mantle, and is pretty much the only blank space left. Every other trophy there has been won by Lamar's older brother, Xavier the Basketball Savior. X would really like to take over that little bit of mantle real estate, but even he knows that is simply not possible.

Lamar hopes to put a bowling trophy there. Bowling is the only sport that his doctor would allow him to try, since Lamar's got pretty severe asthma. And he's pretty darn good ... no, wait! Lamar is EXCELLENT at bowling. He's "the maddest, baddest, most spectacular bowler ever." He is the King of Striker's Bowling Paradise in Coffin, Indiana. And this summer, the coolest thing ever is happening at Striker's: Bubba Sanders, the best pro bowler ever, is coming to Coffin. He's going to give away four of his Pro-Thunder bowling balls to the winners of an essay contest. Lamar is Bubba's

biggest fan: He's trying to grow a Bubba-sized Afro, and he would love a Bubba bowling ball to go with it.

Bowling? [yawn] When you get to know the L-train, you love his wisecracks, his slow strut, and the way he just keeps digging himself a deeper and deeper hole. What with his girl troubles, best-friend troubles, brother troubles, and a whole lot of trouble from a kid from juvie, will Lamar get it together to write that essay and hand it in to his hero?

To find out read *How Lamar's Bad Prank Won a Bubba-Sized Trophy* by Crystal Allen.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- What are some of the things Lamar does before his "bad prank" that get him in trouble? Why does it take the "bad prank" for him to see what other things he's not proud of?
- What is the "Bubba-sized trophy?" Do you agree?
- Talk about Lamar's relationship with his brother. Why did it turn out so badly?
- Pretend to be Lamar *before* he pulled his "bad prank" and write his essay to Bubba Sanders.

Related websites:

Author's website: Crystal Allen

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

The author includes a brief biography and some information about her book.

Tips from the Pros: Bowling

<http://www.sikids.com/sikidstv/tips-pros-bowling>

PBA Tour star Sean Rash shows you how to roll more strikes at the lane.

Asthma Center

http://kidshealth.org/kid/asthma_basics/

Find out more about asthma and why Lamar can't play soccer.

Gourlay, Candy. [Tall story](#). David Fickling Books, 2011. [j GOURLAY 2011]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Brothers and sisters, superstition, basketball, Philippines

Summary: Bernardo – sixteen years old and eight feet tall – suffering from a condition called Gigantism, leaves the Philippines to live with his mother's family in London, much to the delight of his 13-year-old half sister Andi, a passionate basketball player.

Roy, Jennifer. [Mindblind](#). Marshall Cavendish, 2010. [y ROY 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Asperger's syndrome, friendship, genius, music

Summary: Fourteen-year-old Nathaniel Clark – who has Asperger's Syndrome – tries to prove that he is a genius by writing songs for his rock band, so that he can become a member of the prestigious Aldus Institute, the premier organization for the profoundly gifted.

Rupp, Rebecca. [Octavia Boone's big questions about life, the universe, and everything](#). Candlewick Press, 2010. [j RUPP 2010, downloadable audio]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Families, religious fundamentalism, friendship, science fairs

Summary: Seventh-grader Octavia puzzles over life's biggest questions when her mother seems to find the answers in a conservative Christian church, while her artist father believes the writings of Henry David Thoreau hold the key.

Tashjian, Janet. [My life as a book](#). Henry Holt, 2010. [j TASHJIAN 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Reading, summer, novel with pictures, mystery

Summary: Dubbed a "reluctant reader" by his teacher, 12-year-old Derek spends summer vacation learning important lessons even though he does not complete his summer reading list.

Telgemeier, Raina . [Smile](#). Graphix, 2010. [ygn 617.645 TELGEMEIE 2010]

Genre: Memoir, graphic format

Major themes: School, friendship, braces, self-esteem

Summary: From sixth grade through tenth, Raina copes with a variety of dental problems that affect her appearance and how she feels about herself.

Environment

Lewis, Gill. [Wild wings](#). Atheneum Books, 2011. [j LEWIS 2011]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Friendship, secrets, bullying, family

Summary: Callum becomes friends with Iona, an almost feral classmate who has discovered an osprey, thought to be gone from Scotland, on Callum's family farm, and they eventually share the secret with others, including Jeneba who encounters the same bird at her home in Gambia.

Booktalk: Callum and his friends first see the strange girl on a cold day in late March. They are riding their bikes along the river that runs through Callum's family's property, and when they look down, they see a pale, skinny girl with long red hair. In spite of the fact that the river is raging with water that's barely above freezing, she's reaching into the water, trying to catch a fish with her bare hands.

Then the girl looks up, and Callum's friend Rob recognizes her. "Iona McNair!" he calls out. "You're a thief, just like your ma."

Iona flees, leaving her coat and shoes, and Rob explains that Iona's mother stole money from his father's business years ago. No one has seen her since.

When Callum returns Iona's coat and shoes, she tells him that she knows a secret about his farm...something that even Callum, who has lived there his whole life, doesn't know. The next day, she takes Callum to see it.

I won't tell you what the secret is...but I will tell you that it is an animal, an animal so endangered that Callum and Iona can't tell anyone what they have seen.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Have you ever seen an osprey? If so, where? Ospreys are less endangered in some parts of the world. Research why osprey are so rare in Great Britain.

- At Iona’s funeral, Callum’s mother says, “Fiona was our friend once. What did we do to keep an eye out for her little girl?” What do you think Callum’s friends and their families could have done for Iona?
- Visit author Gill Lewis’s website (below) to track ospreys as they migrate from the UK to Gambia.
- Connect your students with pen pals in another country. Some places that do this are International Pen Friends (<http://usa.ipfpenfriends.com/>), The Teacher’s Corner (www.theteacherscorner.net/penpals/index.php), and ePals (www.epals.com/).

Related websites:

Gill Lewis

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

The author’s website has biographical information and a link to her blog, where she is keeping track of her osprey tracking expedition in summer 2011.

Welcome to the Rutland Osprey Project

<http://www.ospreys.org.uk/>

This site has information out ospreys, conservation projects, and even a webcam where you can watch ospreys.

The Gambia

<http://www.visitthegambia.gm/>

Would you like to know more about Jeneba’s home? While this website mostly focuses on tourist information, it also highlights the history, government, economy, and culture of The Gambia.

French, S. Terrell. [Operation Redwood](#). Amulet Books, 2009. [j FRENCH 2009]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Friendship, family

Summary: In northern California, Julian Carter-Li and his friends old and new fight to save a grove of redwoods from an investment company that plans to cut them down.

Grief

Watson, Renée. [What Momma left me](#). Bloomsbury, 2010. [y WATSON 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Family, abuse, Portland

Summary: After the death of their mother, 13-year-old Serenity Evans and her younger brother go to live with their grandparents, who try to keep them safe from bad influences and help them come to terms with what has happened to their family.

Booktalk: Some things you talk about. Some things you don’t. And Serenity doesn’t want to talk about how her mother died. She and her brother have moved in with their grandparents, in Portland, Oregon. They both hope their dad will come back, but no one knows where he is.

Serenity and Danny struggle to adjust to a new school, a new church, a new neighborhood, and making new friends. Serenity discovers she likes writing poetry, and uses it to understand more about what’s happened to her family. Danny’s different, he gets angry, and starts getting in trouble. Serenity gets a big crush on Jay, a boy she

meets, and Danny starts hanging around him too, because Jay knows some ways to make quick cash, even if they aren't exactly legal.

All this time, Serenity works hard to keep her secrets, even if it means telling lies. But then her friend Maria shares a secret with her. Things get worse; Serenity gets the news about her dad, Danny gets in trouble, and Maria's boyfriend gets shot. There's just too many lies and secrets. Serenity finally decides someone needs to start talking about things. And that someone is her.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- You don't find out what happened to Serenity's mom until you've read some of the story. Why do you think the author waited, instead of telling you right at the beginning?
- Serenity has a big crush on Jay. What do you think about him? Is he a good or bad influence for Serenity and Danny? Why does Serenity give back the gift bags?
- In the beginning of the book, Serenity says "I'm good at keeping secrets." But towards the end of the book, she discovers keeping secrets isn't always a good thing. Why does she change how she thinks?
- This book is set in Portland. Are there some things you recognize?

Related websites:

What Momma Left Me

http://www.bloomsburykids.com/books/catalog/what_momma_left_me_hc_467

The website for the book.

Renee Watson

<http://reneewatson.net/ReneeWatson/Home.html>

The official website of the author, who lived in Portland and went to Jefferson High School.

Almond David. Slog's dad. Candlewick, 2011. [j ALMOND 2011]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Grief, father-son

Summary: When Slog's father died he promised to return for one last visit in the spring, but when Slog spots a scruffy man on a bench outside the butcher shop and identifies him as his father, his best friend Davie is skeptical.

Klise, Kate. Grounded. Feiwel and Friends, 2010. [j KLISE 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Grief, swindlers

Summary: After her father, brother, and sister are killed in a plane crash, 12-year-old Daralynn's life in tiny Digginsville, Missouri, proceeds as her mother turns angry and embittered, her grandmother becomes senile, and her flamboyant aunt continues to run the Summer Sunset Retirement Home for Distinguished Gentlemen, while being courted by the owner of the town's new crematorium.

Matti, Truus. Departure time. Namelos, 2010. [j MATTI 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Grief, animals, father-daughter

Summary: A tale of a girl in two stories, one involving a fox and rat, the other involving her constantly-traveling father.

Silberberg, Alan. [Milo: Sticky notes and brain freeze](#). Aladdin, 2010.
[j SILBERBER 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Grief, parents, friendship

Summary: In love with the girl he sneezed on the first day of school and best pals with Marshall, the "One-Eyed Jack" of friends, 7th-grader Milo Cruikshank misses his mother whose death has changed everything at home.

Springstubb, Tricia. [What happened on Fox Street](#). Balzer + Bray, 2010.
[j SPRINGSTU 2010, downloadable audiobook]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Grief, family, friendship, father-daughter

Summary: Fox Street means everything to Mo Wren, who is nearly eleven, and so she is very upset when a land developer offers to buy her father's house, especially since she has not yet found the fox she is sure lives in the nearby ravine.

Prejudice

Frazier, Sundee Tucker. [The other half of my heart](#). Delacorte Press, 2010.
[j FRAZIER 2010, downloadable audio]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Sisters, identity, biracial children, family, beauty pageants

Summary: Twin daughters of a white father and a black mother, 11-year-olds Keira and Minni have very different skin color and personalities, but it is not until their African American grandmother enters them in the Miss Black Pearl Pre-Teen competition in North Carolina that red-haired and pale-skinned Minni realizes what life in their small town in the Pacific Northwest has been like for her more outgoing, darker-skinned sister.

Booktalk: Minni and Keira are twins, but they couldn't be more different: Minni is shy and has no trouble getting As and Keira is very social and can barely achieve a C+ average. Minni likes history and Keira likes fashion. Minni is named after the moon and Keira the sun. Minni is white and Keira is black.

Minni and Keira *are* twins. Can there be one black twin and one white twin? Actually, Minni and Keira are just like you are – they are a combination of their parents' physical characteristics and behaviors. It's just that Minni was born closely resembling their dad and Keira resembles their mom. And Minni has always felt funny about this: Every time she's with Keira and her mom, she hears that Sesame Street song in her head: "One of these things is not like the other, one of these things just doesn't belong."

But while Minni is worrying about not belonging in her family, she just doesn't see how the wider world treats Keira. There's the teacher who ignored Keira's learning disability because she doesn't expect black children to have good grades. Or the lady in the fancy dress store who lets Minni pull out and admire the dresses, but when Keira does this, she rushes over and tells her to stop. Minni doesn't see this until the twins

visit their African American grandmother in North Carolina in order to compete in a scholarship program (what I really mean to say is “beauty pageant,” but the program’s organizers don’t like it when you use that term!) to crown Miss Black Pearl Pre-teen of America. In a crowd of beautiful, confident African American girls, Minni truly learns about what it means to just not belong.

But when she hears her own grandmother criticize Keira’s tight curly hair and comment on how black her skin is, Minni is really confused. She starts to ask some serious questions: How come color matters so much? What does it mean to belong? Where do Minni and Keira fit in? And will the answers to these questions forever harm Minni’s close relationship to the person who matters most, her twin?

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Why do we instantly make decisions based on what we see? How do Keira and Minni deal with people’s first impressions of them?
- Why does Grandmother Johnson think Keira’s hair needs more help to be “good” than Minni’s?
- Were you surprised at how the pageant ... um, program turned out? Why or why not?
- In Chapter 7, Minni and her mother talk about the things she’s inherited from her parents that you can’t easily see. Can you think of something like this that you’ve inherited from your parents?

Related websites:

The author’s website: Sundee Frazier

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

Be sure to find the page about this book so you can see pictures of the author dressed up in her pageant finery, as well as links to some “real-life” black and white twins.

Black Beauty: Millionaire C.J. Walker

<http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=4779>

More than 100 years ago, Madame C.J. Walker made millions of dollars inventing and selling beauty products for African American women, including the precursor of the relaxer Keira wants to put in her hair.

Miss Black USA Talented Teen

<http://www.missblackusa.org/teen/index.php>

Find out who is competing in a pageant ... um, program similar to Miss Black Pearl.

Fusco, Kimberly Newton. [The wonder of Charlie Anne](#). Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. [j FUSCO 2010, ebook, downloadable audio]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Friendship, racial prejudice, poverty, the Depression

Summary: In a 1930s Massachusetts farm town torn by the Depression, racial tension, and other hardships, Charlie Anne and her black next-door neighbor Phoebe form a friendship that begins to transform their community.

Myers, Walter Dean. [The Cruisers](#). Scholastic Press, 2010. [j MYERS 2010, downloadable audio]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Race relations, school, freedom of speech

Summary: Friends Zander, Kambui, LaShonda and Bobbi – caught in the middle of a mock Civil War at DaVinci Academy – learn the true cost of freedom of speech when they use their alternative newspaper, *The Cruiser*, to try to make peace.

Adventure

O'Connor, Barbara. [The fantastic secret of Owen Jester](#). Frances Foster Books, 2010. [j OCONNOR 2010]

Genre: Adventure

Major themes: Friendship, family, animals

Summary: After Owen captures an enormous bullfrog, names it Tooley Graham, then has to release it, he and two friends try to use a small submarine that fell from a passing train to search for Tooley in the Carter, Georgia, pond it came from, while avoiding nosy neighbor Viola.

Booktalk: Owen Jester is lying in bed, thinking about all the bad luck he's had recently:

1. His dad lost his job, so Owen's family had to move in with his grandfather.
2. His friends Travis and Stumpy live a long way from his grandfather's house, which makes it hard for them to hang out.
3. His grandfather is sick, and his caregiver, Earlene, is as mean as a snake. She doesn't let him get away with anything.
4. Case in point: This afternoon, Owen thought it would be funny to put his pet bullfrog in the soup Earlene was fixing for his grandfather. The soup wasn't even hot, but Earlene went ballistic and told his parents. Now Owen has been banished to his room.
5. Viola lives next door to his grandfather. Viola is nosy, bossy and a know-it-all. She makes Owen's life miserable.
6. The sixth thing started out as good luck. Owen worked for an entire month to capture Tooley, the biggest bullfrog in the pond, as his pet. But now Tooley seems unhappy. Viola says he should let Tooley go—Owen says no way.

While he's lying in bed, pondering all that has gone wrong, Owen hears an unusual sound. He can hear a freight train whooshing down the tracks behind his grandfather's house. Clatter, clatter, clatter. And then Owen hears a thud, the crack of wood, and a tumble, tumble sound. It sounds to Owen as if something has fallen off the train. And when he finds, it will turn his summer upside down.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Why do Owen and his friends dislike Viola? How does Viola prove that she can make a good friend? Do you know anyone like Viola?
- Why is Tooley unhappy in his cage in the pond? What kinds of animals do you think make good pets, and what kinds don't?
- The submarine that Owen finds is considered an "ambient-pressure submersible." Research this type of submarine to find out how it is different from larger military subs.
- Owen finds that he enjoys telling stories to his grandfather. Is there someone in your life that you like to tell about your adventures? Who is it?

Related websites:

[The Fantastic Secret of Owen Jester](http://www.barboconnor.com/pages/books/novels/bk_owenjester.html)

http://www.barboconnor.com/pages/books/novels/bk_owenjester.html

The author's website includes her biography, a book trailer, and a PDF download of the first chapter.

International VentureCraft Corp.

<http://www.ivccorp.com/home.html>

This company makes ambient pressure submersibles like the one Owen find. If you had trouble picturing what the submersible looked like, check here to see pictures of several models.

Book Trailer

http://us.macmillan.com/BookCustomPage.aspx?isbn=9780374368500&m_type=2&m_contentid=1687711#video

Share this book trailer with your students.

Bryant, Jen. [Kaleidoscope eyes](#). Alfred A. Knopf, 2009. [j BRYANT 2009, ebook]

Genre: Adventure

Major themes: Family problems, friendship, pirates, prejudice

Summary: In 1968, with the Vietnam War raging, 13-year-old Lyza inherits a project from her deceased grandfather, who was using his knowledge of maps and the geography of Lyza's hometown to locate the lost treasure of Captain Kidd.

Deutsch, Barry. [Hereville: How Mirka got her sword](#). Amulet Books, 2010.

[jgn DEUTSCH 2010]

Genre: Adventure

Major themes: Family, religion, fantasy, growing up

Summary: Eleven-year-old Mirka Herschberg dreams of fighting dragons and spends her days honing her skills, even though there are no dragons in her Orthodox Jewish community, but when she accepts a challenge from a mysterious witch, Mirka just might win her dragon-fighting sword after all.

Preus, Margi. [Heart of a samurai](#). Amulet Books, 2010. [j PREUS 2010,

CD Children PREUS]

Genre: Adventure, historical fiction

Major themes: Cross-cultural experiences, prejudice, growing up

Summary: In 1841, rescued by an American whaler after a terrible shipwreck leaves him and his four companions castaways on a remote island, 14-year-old Manjiro, who dreams of becoming a samurai, learns new laws and customs as he becomes the first Japanese person to set foot in the United States.

Renier, Aaron. [The unsinkable Walker Bean](#). First Second, 2010.

[jgn RENIER 2010]

Genre: Adventure, graphic novel

Major themes: Friendship, mystery, loyalty, fantasy

Summary: Walker Bean is happiest when he gets to spend time tinkering on his inventions in his grandfather's workshop, but when his grandfather acquires a

curse, Walker must embark on dangerous quest to return a pearl skull to the witches who made it.

Immigration

Budhos, Marina Tamar. [Tell us we're home](#). Atheneum, 2010. [y BUDHOS 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Immigration, class, domestic workers

Summary: Three immigrant girls from different parts of the world meet and become close friends in a small New Jersey town where their mothers have found domestic work, but their relationships are tested when one girl's mother is accused of stealing a precious heirloom.

Booktalk: Sometimes, having friends makes all the difference in the world, especially when the world doesn't seem like it's on your side. That's how Jaya, Lola and Maria feel, when they discover they're all outsiders in their hometown of Meadowbrook, New Jersey.

Jaya lives with her mom who works cleaning houses for Americans. They used to live in Trinidad, before her artist dad died, and everything got worse. Lola's family emigrated from Slovakia, where her dad was an engineer. But in America, the land of the plenty, he can't even get a job. He's depressed, her mom has health problems, and Lola feels like she's going to explode. Maria's family is crammed into a small apartment that feels like it's bursting at the seams. She dreams of dating Tash, the white boy who she helps with Spanish, but he barely notices her.

What makes it all worse is that the three of them are in eighth grade with some of the same kids whose families their mothers work for as maids. The girls' one escape is hanging out together, giggling and sharing a Starbucks frappe.

But then Jaya's mom is fired, accused of stealing jewelry from the woman for whom she works. The girls know they have to prove Jaya's mom is innocent; but instead their actions tear their friendship apart. Lola just can't keep her mouth shut; Maria ignores her friends trying to win Tash's attentions, and deep down, Jaya's worried her mom might truly be a thief.

Without each other's camaraderie, they are truly alone. It isn't until they reunite that they're able to put their dreams into action, to help their families, and change Meadowbrook into a place they can call home.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- All three girls in this book are very affected by what their parents do. Which kids in the story do you identify with? Why does their story connect with you?
- Why do you think Lola likes reading books about revolutions?
- Read the author's acknowledgements at the back of the book. Where do you think some of the ideas in this book originated?

Related websites:

Marina Budhos

<http://www.marinabudhos.com/books/tell-us-were-home>

The author's official website includes a video trailer for this book.

Tell Us We're Home

<http://www.myfitv.com/videos/671451/web-original-marina-budhos-talks-about-tell-us-were-home>

The author discusses her book in this short video.

Lai, Thanhha. [Inside out & back again](#). Harper, 2011. [j LAI 2011]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Immigration, novels in verse, Vietnamese Americans

Summary: Through a series of poems, a young girl chronicles the life-changing year of 1975, when she, her mother, and her brothers leave Vietnam and resettle in Alabama.

Moving and Changes in Circumstances

Krishnaswami, Uma. [The grand plan to fix everything](#). Atheneum Books, 2011. [j KRISHNASW 2011]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Friendship, moving, India, movies

Summary: Eleven-year-old Dini loves movies, and so when she learns that her family is moving to India for two years, her devastation over leaving her best friend in Maryland is tempered by the possibility of meeting her favorite actress, Dolly Singh.

Booktalk: Maddie and Dini are just at the end of the latest Dolly Singh movie. Dolly is on the cliff, hanging on for dear life, when she remembers the cell phone!! The cell phone has the TV station's number on speed dial!!! Dolly can let go one hand to dial and ... she is rescued!!! The joyful singing and dancing begins and the credits roll. Does this sound familiar to anyone?

Have you ever heard of Bollywood? For those who haven't, Bollywood is where movies are made in the country of India. These movies are full of romance, adventure and lots and lots of singing and dancing. Dolly Singh might be the most popular Bollywood star, ever! And Maddie and Dini are big, big fans. The best friends are planning on attending camp to learn Bollywood dancing this summer.

Until Dini's mother announces that her family is moving to India. For two whole years. Suddenly, it's no more dance camp, no more movie marathons, no more best friends within biking distance. Maddie – a true friend – suggests that Dini will now be in the very same country as Dolly Singh and that maybe Dini could meet her. There's a little spark of hope, until Dini finds out that she's headed for the tiny village of Swapnagiri, so small it's not even on the map. And it's miles and miles from Bollywood.

Swapnagiri means dream mountain. And Dini thinks she must be dreaming when – jetlagged after her long flight from the United States to India – she hears their crazy cab driver (he likes to drive FAST with his hands OFF the wheel!) say that Dolly Singh is living in Swapnagiri! Is it true? Will Dini have a chance to tell Dolly Singh that she was born on the very same day that Dolly's first movie was released? That she and Maddie are her biggest fans? Dini needs a plan ... and she comes up with a grand one. Somehow it ends up looking more than a little bit like a big Bollywood movie.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- The author has produced an extensive discussion and activity guide at her website: http://www.umakrishnaswami.com/sites/default/files/GrandPlan_activitykit.pdf.

Related websites:

Author's website: Uma Krishnaswami

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

Read all about the author's books, her thoughts on being South Asian, and many other things.

National Geographic: Bollywood

<http://bit.ly/6Y5MnS>

National Geographic magazine profiled Bollywood in 2005, and made this multimedia introduction free on the web. (The full magazine article can be retrieved from the Academic OneFile database [found here:

<http://www.multcolib.org/ref/a2z.html>]. Use Advanced Search with the keyword Bollywood, limiting Publication Title to National Geographic.)

Choldenko, Gennifer. [No passengers beyond this point](#). Dial Books for Young Readers, 2011. [j CHOLDENKO 2011, CD Children CHOLDENKO]

Genre: Realistic fiction, fantasy

Major themes: Brothers and sisters, imagined worlds, foreclosure, moving

Summary: With their house in foreclosure, sisters India and Mouse and brother Finn are sent to stay with an uncle in Colorado until their mother can join them, but when the plane lands, the children are welcomed by cheering crowds to a strange place where each of them has a perfect house and a clock that is ticking down the time.

Giff, Patricia Reilly. [Storyteller](#). Wendy Lamb Books, 2010. [j GIFF 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction, historical fiction

Major themes: Families, American Revolution, study of history

Summary: Forced to spend months at an aunt's house, Elizabeth feels a connection to her ancestor Zee, whose picture hangs on the wall, and who reveals her story of hardships during the Revolutionary War as Elizabeth comes to terms with her own troubles.

Lord, Cynthia. [Touch blue](#). Scholastic Press. [j LORD 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Families, foster care, communities

Summary: When the state of Maine threatens to shut down their island's one-room schoolhouse because of dwindling enrollment, 11-year-old Tess – a strong believer in luck – and her family take in a trumpet-playing foster child, to increase the school's population.

Sherrard, Valerie. [Tumbleweed skies](#). Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2010. [j SHERRARD 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction, historical fiction

Major themes: Families, grandmothers, separation, farm life

Summary: Ellie’s grandmother doesn’t want her around the farm, but times are tough, and her salesman father can’t take her on the road. Ellie’s challenge is to break through her grandmother’s isolation and find kinship among strangers.

Snyder, Laurel. [Penny Dreadful](#). Random House, 2010. [j SNYDER 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Families, moving, city life and country life, friendship

Summary: When her father suddenly quits his job, the almost 10-year-old, friendless Penelope and her neglectful parents leave their privileged life in the city for a ramshackle property in the eccentric town of Thrush Junction, Tennessee.

Hurricanes

Rhodes, Jewell Parker. [Ninth Ward](#). Little, Brown, 2010. [j RHODES 2010, CD Children RHODES]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Survival, growing up, disasters, family

Summary: In New Orleans' Ninth Ward, 12-year-old Laneshia, who can see spirits, and her adopted grandmother have no choice but to stay and weather the storm as Hurricane Katrina bears down upon them.

Booktalk: Laneshia is 12 years old, living with Mama Ya-Ya, the old woman who took her in after her mom died when Laneshia was born. They live in the Ninth Ward, a neighborhood in New Orleans, which Laneshia loves. She also loves learning and words and bridges and math. She loves the color blue, chocolate cake and Mama Ya-Ya. And Laneshia knows she is special - she can see ghosts, and Mama Ya-Ya is teaching her to see signs in the world. And the signs are telling Mama Ya-Ya that something is coming, something that is going to flood the streets with sadness. It is late August, 2005, and their lives are about to be turned upside down by Hurricane Katrina, one of the worst hurricanes ever to hit the United States. And if you’ve ever wondered what it is like to be in a hurricane, Laneshia knows first-hand.

“It’s the end of the world. Sounding like the explosions and screams in the D-day movies Mr. Gregg made us watch in history...Rain whipping wood, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, smacking at trees, beating out any sap....The house shakes, teetering, in the wind and rain’s violent game... Shakes, sways, and I swear, it’s going to fall, fall, fall over...The bed is rattling, creeping across the floor like it grew feet... The house shudders and groans, creaks and complains like it’s alive... Then there’s quiet - like the world outside has disappeared. A pocket of deep silence... Then, boom. The roar is back again, stones are shattering the house... Like a bullwhip, the rain lashes and lashes... Smacking up, down, like a giant pounding with his fists. The world is falling apart. First, the sky, then the roof. Falling, falling, I’m sure. To crash down on our heads. We’re going to die.” [excerpted from pages 128-132]

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Both Laneshia and TaShon are picked on at school for being different. Have you ever been picked on? How did you react?
- Find some pictures of the Ninth Ward and the damage from Hurricane Katrina to enhance students’ understanding of the story (see the last two websites below).

- Lanessa's favorite teacher is Ms. Johnson. Why? What do you think makes a good teacher?
- Have you (or has someone in your family) ever lived through a natural disaster of any kind? Describe the experience.
- Lanessa becomes interested in the different types of bridges. Research different types of bridges and build models of each.

Related websites:

Jewell Parker Rhodes: Ninth Ward

<http://jewellparkerrhodes.com/children/books/ninth-ward/>

The author's website includes a teacher's guide (with many discussion questions), biography, pictures of the Ninth Ward, and links to further information.

New Orleans' Ninth Ward

<http://www.life.com/gallery/47621>

View a slideshow that shows the damage in the Ninth Ward after Hurricane Katrina.

Lower 9th/Katrina Timeline

http://www.makeitrightnola.org/index.php/work_progress/timeline/

This site, from Brad Pitt's Make It Right Foundation, has information about the Ninth Ward before Katrina, has photos of storm damage, and mentions the efforts being made to rebuild.

Engle, Margarita. [Hurricane dancers](#). Henry Holt, 2011. [y ENGLE 2011]

Genre: Historical fiction

Major themes: Slavery, identity, novels in verse

Summary: Quebrado has been a slave on captain Bernadino de Talavera's pirate ship for years, but when a hurricane sinks the ship and kills most of the crew, Quebrado escapes to safety and finds acceptance and refuge in a nearby village.

Journeys

Abdel-Fattah, Randa. [Where the streets had a name](#). Scholastic Press, 2010. [y ABELFATT 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Israeli-Palestinian conflict, families

Summary: Thirteen-year-old Hayaat of Bethlehem faces check points, curfews, and the travel permit system designed to keep people on the West Bank when she attempts to go to her grandmother's ancestral home in Jerusalem with her best friend.

Booktalk: All Hayaat wants to do is bring back a handful of soil to her grandmother, from her grandma's ancestral home in Jerusalem. Ever since Israelis destroyed their home, thirteen-year-old Hayaat and her family have lived in a cramped apartment in Bethlehem. Hayaat's father mopes about the olive groves he used to own, her sister dreams of her imminent marriage, and Hayaat wishes the scars on her face would go away. When Hayaat's grandmother is rushed to the hospital, Hayaat decides a hummus jar of soil from her old home is the only thing that will save her Sitti Zeynab. So without telling her family, she sets out on a journey.

It's only a few miles from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, but that trek involves checkpoints, curfews, and crossing the wall that divides the West Bank. It also involves Israeli soldiers. To make matters worse, Hayaat's best friend Samy is coming too, and he attracts trouble like a magnet. When Samy gets in a stare-down with one of the armed men, things go from bad to worse.

"And why are you traveling alone and not with parents?" the soldier demands.

"Because you killed one and imprisoned the other," Samy replies, his eyes a stony glare.

They've been at the checkpoint for over two and a half hours. Hayaat's bladder is about to burst. They're less than six miles from home, a simple car ride. And yet Hayaat feels like she's lost in another country.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- What things surprised you about Hayaat's family? How were they the same or different from your family?
- Hayaat takes a great risk to try and bring her grandmother a handful of soil. What does the soil represent?
- One of the peace activists Hayaat and Samy meet says, "The occupation steals from the humanity of the occupier and the occupied. We are all losers." Explain what she meant.

Related websites:

Randa Abdel Fattah

<http://www.randaabdelfattah.com/index.asp>

The author's official website.

Park, Linda Sue. [A long walk to water](#). Clarion, 2010. [y PARK 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Immigration, refugees, Sudan, water

Summary: When the Sudanese civil war reaches his village in 1985, 11-year-old Salva becomes separated from his family and must walk with other Dinka tribe members through southern Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya in search of safe haven. Based on the life of Salva Dut, who, after emigrating to America in 1996, began a project to dig water wells in Sudan.

Paterson, Katherine. [The day of the pelican](#). Clarion, 2009. [j PATERSON 2009, downloadable audiobook]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Immigration, refugees, Kosovo

Summary: In 1998 when the Kosovo hostilities escalate, 13-year-old Meli's life as an ethnic Albanian, changes forever after her brother escapes his Serbian captors and the entire family flees from one refugee camp to another until they are able to immigrate to America.

Weing, Drew. [Set to sea](#). Fantagraphics, 2010. [GN WEING 2010]

Genre: Adventure/graphic novel

Major themes: Adventure, sea stories, journeys

Summary: When a landlubber poet is shanghaied and taken out to sea, he discovers that real life adventures, violence, romance and sorrows are the best inspirations for good art.

School Stories

Winters, Ben H. [The secret life of Ms. Finkleman](#). Harper, 2010.

[j WINTERS 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: School, rock music, teachers, mystery

Summary: Spurred by a special project from her social studies teacher, 7th-grader Bethesda Fielding uncovers the secret identity of her music teacher Ms. Finkleman, which leads to a most unusual concert performance and a tutoring assignment.

Booktalk: In order to prepare for the Choral Corral contest, the seventh graders at Mary Todd Lincoln Middle School have been divided into three groups. Each group is a rock band and will be performing music from the '60s, '80s and '90s. (Why not the '70s? Don't ask.) Principal Van Vreeland is tired of losing "friendly" wagers with the principal of Grover Cleveland Middle School, so the seventh graders had better be good.

The teacher, Ms. Finkleman, gives each group 90 seconds to come up with their bands' name. Naturally, this takes up the rest of the period. Band Number One (the '60s) spends way too much time debating between Barf Hammer or Barf Machine. They waste so much time that they decide to stick with Band Number One.

Everyone in Band Number Two (the '80s) has an idea. Should it be the longest word in the English language (and I'm holding up a piece of paper with that word because I don't have a prayer of pronouncing it) [floccinaucinihilipilification]? Or what about the name of Hayley Eisenstein's dead dog, Mr. Pinkbottom? They give up and name it for the first thing that Hayley pulls out of her backpack: Half-Eaten Almond Joy.

Band Number Three (the '90s) is the band that Bethesda Fielding and Tenny Boyer are in. Tenny's a huge rock and roll fan, and for once in his lackluster educational career he is excited about the schoolwork. Bethesda's actually responsible for the entire rock-band business. She just *had* to go and dig up Ms. Finkleman's secret; so that Principal Van Vreeland pretty much insisted that Ms. Finkleman give up the program of traditional English folk ballads from the 16th century she had planned for the Choral Corral. It turns out, though, that Ms. Finkleman's secret isn't the one that Bethesda thinks it is, and it's her real secret that may mean that Principal Van Vreeland will once again have to wear the giant hot-dog costume as Mary Todd Lincoln Middle School goes down in ignominious defeat one more time.

Oh, and the name of Band Number Three: The Careless Errors.

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Why does Bethesda select Ms. Finkleman as the mystery in her life that she must solve? How does she go unraveling the mystery?
- Do you have any ideas about why Tenny Boyer is such a poor student? Can you think of a way to teach a subject so that the "flickering and buzzing" Christmas lights begin to make patterns for a learner like Tenny?

- The pianist Kevin McKelvey finds that rock and roll music speaks to him in a way that the classical music he plays doesn't. Can you think of some reasons why?
- You have 90 seconds to come up with a name for your band!

Related websites:

Author's website: Ben H. Winters: Writer, etc.

(<http://www.benhwinters.com/>).

Book's website (from publisher):

(<http://bit.ly/fxtqSy>).

Check out *The Secret Life of Ms. Finkleman* hidden object game!

Watch the bands' three numbers on YouTube:

- **I Got You (I Feel Good)** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTA19M9rB5k>).
- **Livin' on a Prayer** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDK9Qqlzhwk>)
- **Holiday** (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-xD_wSSJ8U)

Buyea, Rob. [Because of Mr. Terupt](#). Delacorte Press, 2010. [j BUYEA 2010]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: School, teacher-student relationships

Summary: Seven fifth-graders at Snow Hill School in Connecticut relate how their lives are changed for the better by "rookie teacher" Mr. Terupt.

Dowell, Frances O'Roark. [Ten miles past normal](#). Atheneum Books, 2011.

[y DOWELL 2011]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Friendship, family, high school, farm life, civil rights era

Summary: Because living with "modern-hippie" parents on an organic goat farm means 14-year-old Janie Gorman cannot have a normal high school life, she tries joining Jam Band, making friends with Monster, and spending time with elderly former civil rights workers.

Greenwald, Tom. [Charlie Joe Jackson's guide to not reading](#). Roaring Brook Press, 2011. [j GREENWALD 2011]

Genre: Humor

Major themes: School, friendship, reading, writing, graphic elements

Summary: Middle schooler Charlie Joe is proud of his success at avoiding reading, but eventually his schemes go too far. Check out two funny book trailers on YouTube: <http://bit.ly/pQcyCq> and <http://bit.ly/gmFpMf>.

Kimmel, Elizabeth Cody. [The reinvention of Moxie Roosevelt](#). Dial Books for Young Readers, 2010. [y KIMMEL 2010, ebook]

Genre: Realistic fiction

Major themes: Identity, school, friendship

Summary: On her first day of boarding school, a 13-year-old girl who feels boring and invisible decides to change her personality to match her unusual name.

Animals

Spratt, R. A. [The adventures of Nanny Piggins](#). Little, Brown, 2010.

[j SPRATT 2010]

Genre: Adventure

Major themes: family, humor, animals

Summary: When Mr. Green, a stingy widower with three children he cannot be bothered with, decides to find a nanny for his children, he winds up hiring a glamorous ex-circus pig who knows nothing about children but a lot about chocolate.

Booktalk: [Read 1st paragraph.]

Ever since their mother died in an accident, the Green children, Derrick, Samantha and Michael have been cared for by a succession of nannies. But Mr. Green is so cheap that he hates paying for a nanny, and he especially hates to pay for advertising to find one. So for the last three weeks, the most he has done is posted a sign outside the house which reads, "Nanny wanted: Enquire within."

Then one dark, stormy evening, a loud knocking comes from the front door. Mr. Green opens the door.

[Read 1st two paragraphs on page 6.]

Mr. Green is hesitant. But Nanny Piggins assures him that she can start immediately and that she has no criminal record. When she announces that she only charges 10 cents an hour, Mr. Green is sold.

The children are delighted to find out that their new nanny is former flying pig from the circus. It turns out she is amazingly talented. Nanny Piggins can paint masterpieces, capture burglars, bake fantastic pies, and get rid of their evil Aunt Lydia. And what other nanny would serve dessert for dinner, have a giant, dancing bear for a best friend, or squander their school uniform money on a trip to the amusement park? You'll love [The Adventures of Nanny Piggins](#).

Discussion topics/extension ideas:

- Which of the adventures was your favorite? Why?
- The author drops several hints that Mrs. Green may not be dead. Do you think she is still alive? If so, where do you think she is?
- Have you ever had a nanny? Or a babysitter? What do you think makes a good babysitter?

Related websites:

Nanny Piggins

<http://bit.ly/qxWF2G>

At the author's (hilarious!) website, you can watch of video of Nanny Piggins, read an interview with her, and find a recipe for her shortbread cookies.

R.A. Sprat...Answers Ten Terrifying Questions

<http://blog.booktopia.com.au/2010/12/01/r-a-spratt-author-of-the-adventures-of-nanny-piggins-answers-ten-terrifying-questions/>

A humorous interview with the author

Cronin, Doreen. [The trouble with chickens: A J. J. Tully mystery](#). Balzer & Bray, 2011. [j CRONIN 2011]

Genre: Mystery

Major themes: Animals, humor

Summary: A hard-bitten former search-and-rescue dog helps solve a complicated missing chicken case.

Nelson, Marilyn. [Snook alone](#). Candlewick, 2010. [jE NELSON 2010]

Genre: Adventure

Major themes: Human/animal relationships, stories in verse

Summary: Through the power of faith, a monk named Abba Jacob and his loyal rat terrier, Snook, are reunited after being separated by a ferocious storm.

Pyron, Bobbie. [A dog's way home](#). Katherine Tegen Books, 2011.
[j PYRON 2011]

Genre: Adventure

Major themes: Human/animal relationships, survival, friendship, family

Summary: After a car accident strands them at opposite ends of the Blue Ridge Parkway, 11-year-old Abby and her beloved sheltie, Tam, overcome months filled with physical and emotional challenges to find their way back to each other.

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