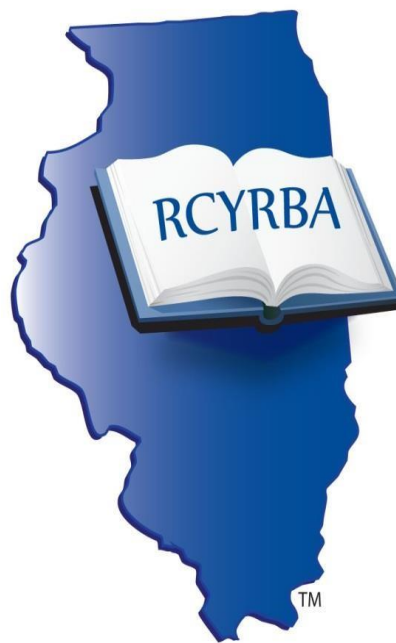


LET'S TALK ABOUT BOOKS: The 2025 RCYRBA Activities Packet

Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award List 2025
Suggestions for Use



Edited by Ellen Popit

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Introduction

The Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (RCYRBA) is now celebrating its thirty sixth year! Twenty titles are nominated each year, and any students in grades four through eight in participating Illinois schools and public libraries, who have read or heard of three books, may vote for the most outstanding book in February. The winner is announced in March. Children are encouraged to read the books on this list and share their thoughts and reactions with others, thus making the reading experience more enjoyable.

This packet of materials is meant to be a guide for librarians and teachers to help children enjoy and interpret what they read. It is designed as a beginning step when looking in depth at the books on the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award Master List for 2025. It is hoped that the packet will start creative thoughts flowing in librarians, teachers, and children who are trying to read books enthusiastically and with joy. All the materials developed are meant to be used "with" children and not given to them in isolation.

The following suggestions for the twenty titles on the 2025 RCYRBA Master List were developed by a group of librarians and teachers. Information is provided in ten areas: a summary, questions for students, journal starters, and activities designed to extend the book into other curricular areas, reading recommendations, promotional booktalks, related materials, web sites, and book review citations.

Summary: The summary provides an overview of the book for anyone who has not read a title.

Questions: The questions included are primarily open-ended with neither a right nor a wrong answer. Since readers' reactions to stories are different, they should be encouraged to express different points of view. The questions encourage students to relate reading to their everyday lives and are designed to promote more questions and discussion as a result. Questions can be given to students when they begin to read the book so they can think about their responses as they read and focus on the ideas that the author is trying to convey.

Journal Starters: These questions are designed to engage students in the writing process and to encourage them to put themselves in situations presented in the books.

Activities: There are a wide variety of activities included to suit different age and interest levels. Some are designed for groups, others for individuals.

Interest Levels: Interest levels are included to help librarians and teachers decide if a title will be of interest to a group of students or to an individual. The recommendation is only made with consideration for grades four through eight, which are the grades included in the award. Occasionally, a caution is listed when a sensitive topic is included that may cause concern in some communities.

Book Trailers: Online "commercials" for books on this list have been added when available.

Booktalks: Booktalks have been added for the convenience of librarians and teachers who would like a prepared piece to use for book promotion. They are short, sometimes including a passage

from the book, since hearing the voice of the author is often important when students are deciding whether to read a specific title.

Read-Alikes: A listing of related books that will aid in extending literature activities. Titles were suggested by teachers and librarians who have had experience with them. This list is not exhaustive, and materials have not been screened for literary merit. These related books are divided into three general categories: additional books by the same author, topics which are mentioned in the story, and books which are similar. Because of their broad appeal throughout the curriculum, picture books are also included in this listing.

Websites: Sites were selected to expand the activities and learning of the students. Some sites are for author information and others for organizations, locations or topics related to the book. The sites were checked on September 23, 2024, and were active at that time. If links to .pdf files or other sites do not load, try copying and pasting them into your browser.

Book Review Citations: Book review citations have been included to aid teachers and librarians in case a challenge to any of the books on the list should occur.

This activities packet has been edited with care from materials developed by the contributors. The Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award Board would appreciate comments and suggestions concerning the packet. Please direct communications to anyone on the committee or to the editor of the packet.

Developing this packet was a challenging and invigorating experience for the participants. Enjoy!

Barnes, Jennifer Lynn. *The Inheritance Games*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2020.

SUMMARY:

Avery Grambs is still trying to recover from the loss of her mother years earlier. Having moved in with her older half-sister, she is working to survive high school, get a scholarship, and get into college. Just when life seems to be giving her its worst, Avery receives a visit at her school that changes her life forever.

Tobias Hawthorne, one of the richest men in the world, has named Avery as the main recipient of his fortune, much to the anger and resentment of his family who expected to inherit billions. The Hawthorne family has been raised on puzzles, games, and challenges. They have always played to win, and Avery is now in the crosshairs of one of the most intelligent, demanding, dangerous, and charismatic families in Texas.

To inherit the Hawthorne fortune, Avery must survive one year living with the Hawthornes on the family estate, all while trying to navigate life in the public eye.

QUESTIONS:

What are some anagrams you can make with your full name?

Would you take the challenge to stay on the Hawthorne estate for the year? Why or why not?

If you inherited billions of dollars, what is the first thing you would do and why?

Avery's life has totally changed, she is constantly being watched by her bodyguard, the Hawthorne family, and the public. How would that make you feel?

How has Emily's storyline impacted Jameson and Grayson Hawthorne?

Some of the Hawthorne family does horrible things to Avery. Evaluate their actions. Are some of them justified or just plain wrong? Can you see both sides of the story?

Analyze Tobias Hawthorne's choice to include Avery in his will. Do you agree with it?

Would you decide to trust any of the Hawthorne brothers? How about Rebecca or Alisa?

Describe the importance of last names in this novel?

Should Avery go to find Toby?

If you had \$1 billion dollars to donate to a charity. What one would it be and why?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

If I inherited billions of dollars, I would.....

My favorite Hawthorne family member is.....

ACTIVITIES:

Compare and contrast the Hawthorne brothers. What are their positive and negative character traits? Focus on their strengths and weaknesses.

Every year, Tobias Hawthorne added a room onto the estate. Design the room you would add? Draw and write a paragraph explaining your choices.

Avery's mom dreamed of traveling. Design the perfect trip for Avery and her mom.

Chess is mentioned often in this game. Introduce the basics of chess and play some in your class.

Create a scavenger hunt for your classmates.

Research charities that matter to you and share the information with the class.

Pretend you are one of the Hawthorne family members. Write a letter to Tobias Hawthorne after the will reading. How would they feel? What would they say to him?

Heights Country Day School is quite different from the average school. If you could design a school, what would your ideal school look like?

From Avery's perspective, write a letter to your mother sharing how you are feeling at the end of the novel.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 7-8

BOOK TRAILERS:

Liz Friend: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o096tD5wpAg>

Kelsey Moran: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlV_j4n6E4o

BOOKTALK:

You are about to inherit billions, more money than you can even imagine, but there is one catch: You have to live for one year at the Hawthorne house full of hidden passages, puzzles, mysteries, and the disinherited Hawthorne family.

Avery Grambs, struggling to recover from her mom's death and to survive high school has fallen on tough times. Having moved into her car, she arrives at school one day to find a mysterious stranger requesting her presence at a will reading for a man she has never met.

Avery Grambs has inherited BILLIONS of dollars. However, she is required to live for one year in the Hawthorne House with the family of Tobias Hawthorne. Avery is surrounded by the mysterious and magnetic four grandsons, two angry daughters, and a distraught caretaker and his wife. With twists and turns at every chapter, Avery works to discover the mystery of why she is there and the true meaning of Tobias Hawthorne's letter to her, with his infamous words, "I'm sorry." Will she survive long enough to find out the truth?

READ-ALIKES:

Grabenstein, Chris. *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library*. Yearling, (2014).

Johnson, Varian. *The Parker Inheritance*. Arthur A Levine, (2018).

Raskin, Ellen. *The Westing Game*. Puffin Modern Classics, 2004. (1978).

Stewart, Trenton Lee. *The Mysterious Benedict Society*. Little Brown Books for Young Readers, (2007).

RELATED WEBSITES:

Jennifer Lynn Barnes: <https://www.jenniferlynnbarnes.com/inheritancegames.html>

Little Brown Library: <https://tinyurl.com/2bdyzk3n>

History of Chess Facts for Kids: [History of chess Facts for Kids \(kiddle.co\)](https://www.kiddle.co/history-of-chess-facts-for-kids)

REVIEWS:

Booklist (October 15, 2020)

Kirkus (August 15, 2020)

Publishers Weekly (July 27, 2020)

School Library Journal (July 1, 2020)

Cisneros, Ernesto. *Falling Short*. Quill Tree Books, 2022

SUMMARY:

Sixth graders Marco and Isaac are next door neighbors and the best of friends. They are also complete opposites! Marco is short, academically gifted, and bad at sports. Isaac is athletic, tall, and struggles in school. They are starting middle school and Marco decides to join the basketball team, in hopes that his sports-loving father will want to be part of his life again. Isaac wants to improve his grades so his mom and dad will stop fighting and maybe things will get better between them during their separation. Together they navigate the ups and downs of middle school and their family issues, while trying to not fall short of their goals and dreams.

QUESTIONS:

What do Marco and Isaac learn about basketball both ON and OFF the court?
Why do you think Isaac and Marco are friends when they have nothing in common?
Why do you think the author wrote this book? What was his purpose or goal?
What were the main themes or messages of the book?
In what ways did Marco change and grow in the book?
In what ways did Isaac change and grow in the book?
What was the most memorable scene in the book? Why?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

My favorite part of the novel was...
I identified most with the character...
Three adjectives that describe Marco are...
Three adjectives that describe Isaac are...
The most important friendship quality to me is...

ACTIVITIES:

As a class, discuss the themes of the story. Create a list of themes. Select 1-2 themes from the list and create a playlist of songs that highlight the theme(s). For each song on the playlist, include a summary explaining why you chose those songs and how they relate to the theme(s). Listen to the playlist and enjoy!

Several famous basketball players are mentioned throughout the book. Marco discovers Muggsy Bogues, the shortest basketball player to ever play in the NBA.

Research different athletes and create a collage, poster, or slideshow that highlights the ways that athletes inspire you and others to be the best version of yourself, on and off the court.

Try this [quizlet](#).

Try this quiz: [What's Your Best Friendship Quality?](#)

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-6

BOOK TRAILER/BOOKTALK:

Colby Sharp: <https://tinyurl.com/3uarswpj>

BOOKTALK:

This year is going to be different. Goodbye elementary school, hello middle school! For best friends and next-door neighbors, Isaac and Marco, this is the year of change. For Isaac he is ready to focus on his grades. He knows he rules the basketball court, but classroom stuff is hard. And he hates when his parents fight about his grades and missing homework. If he can just get his academics together, maybe his dad won't drink as much, and he'll move back home. Marco is ready to change things up this year. His grades are always the best, but he wants to impress on the basketball court. Even though he is one of the shortest kids in 6th grade, and has never played any sport before, maybe if he makes the team, his dad, who moved out and moved on with a new wife and kids, will actually notice him and want to spend time with him. Will these two best friends figure out their new goals and dreams or will they fall short?

READ-ALIKES:

Alexander, Kwame. *The Crossover: a basketball book*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014
Bishop, Jenn. *Free Throws, friendship and the things we fouled up*. Chronicle Books LLC, 2023
Grimes, Nikki. *Planet Middle School*. Bloomsbury Childrens, 2011
Perez, Celia C. *The First Rule of Punk*. Viking, 2017
Reynolds, Jason. *Ghost*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2016

RELATED WEBSITES:

Ernesto Cisneros: <https://www.ernestocisneros.com/>
Discussion Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/yp34ytyd>
How to Play Basketball: <http://www.wikihow.com/Play-Basketball>
Al-Anon Family Groups: <https://al-anon.org/>
Alateen: <https://al-anon.org/newcomers/teen-corner-alateen/>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (February 15, 2022)
Kirkus Reviews starred (January 15, 2022)
School Library Journal starred (January 1, 2022)
Publishers Weekly starred (January 24, 2022)

Fipps, Lisa. *Starfish*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2021.

SUMMARY:

This novel in verse is about Ellie, who has been bullied about her weight her whole life. To survive, she lives by what she calls “Fat Girl Rules.” These rules help her to fly below the radar and fit in. Her mom does not make things easy. She’s constantly on Ellie to diet and lose weight. The place that she feels happiest is in the pool. Fortunately, Ellie has allies in her dad, her therapist, and her new neighbor, Catalina, who love Ellie for who she is. Ellie must learn to be who she is and not be sorry about it!

QUESTIONS:

What is it like for Ellie when Catalina’s siblings let her sit in the front of the minivan? This could seem like a small action; does it feel that way to Ellie?

What makes Ellie feel so good about burning the Fat Girl Rules?

How would you have managed the situation with Marissa and Kortnee? What do you think Ellie did right?

How did you feel when Ellie finally confronted her mom? What events in the book made Ellie ready to do this?

In what aspects of your life do you “starfish”? What does it mean and look like for you?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

We should celebrate everyone for who they are because...

Being a starfish means...

ACTIVITIES:

Create a PSA poster encouraging body positivity.

Take sticky notes and write down all the things that make you proud of yourself. Put them on your bathroom mirror.

Design a bulletin board that talks about the impacts of bullying.

Create sketch notes of themes and big ideas while reading the book.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-8

BOOK TRAILERS/BOOKTALKS:

[Lisa Fipps Introducing *Starfish*](#)

[Middle School Bookmarkers YouTube:](#)

BOOKTALK:

Have you ever felt like you didn't fit in? Have you ever felt like you couldn't be who you really were? This is what Ellie goes through every day. She is bullied for her weight by the other kids at school. Even worse is that she's also picked on by her mom. Ellie has one place that she can call her own and a place where she feels like herself - the pool! This novel in verse tells the story of Ellie learning to love herself and find her place in the world.

READ-ALIKES:

Christmas, Johnnie. *Swim Team*. Harper Alley, 2022.
Firestone, Carrie. *Dress Coded*. Penguin Random House, 2020.
Ortega, Claribel A. *Frizzy*. Macmillan, 2022.
Rivera, Lilliam. *Barely Floating*. Kokila, 2023
Warga, Jasmine. *Shape of Thunder*. Harper Collins, 2021

RELATED WEBSITES:

Lisa Fipps: <https://authorlisafipps.com/>
Penguin Classroom Discussion Guide: <https://www.penguinclassroom.com/books/starfish/>
National Marine Aquarium, Fun Facts About Starfish: <https://tinyurl.com/3edswwdn>
StopBullying: <http://www.stopbullying.gov>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (December 1, 2020)
Kirkus (February 1, 2021)
Publishers Weekly (February 22, 2021)

Gibbs, Stuart. *Charlie Thorne and the Last Equation*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2019.

SUMMARY:

Charlie Thorne is not who you'd expect to save the world. For starters, she's a criminal genius. She's also only 12 years old with no intention of living up to her potential. But it turns out that she's the CIA's last chance to find Einstein's secret code before a group of terrorists do. If the terrorists get it first, who knows what destruction they can cause? So, Charlie (reluctantly) and 2 CIA agents set off on a race around the world following clues Einstein left in hopes they can avert disaster.

QUESTIONS:

What should Charlie do with the last equation?
When should kids be sheltered from events in the world?
Why was part 2 called the "Navel of the World"?
Does Charlie live up to her potential?
What would you do with the last equation and why?
Would you want to work for the CIA? Why or why not?

JOURNAL STARTER:

I would make a good spy because...

ACTIVITIES:

Create a map that demonstrates where Charlie has traveled through the course of this novel.
Create a travel brochure for one of the locations Charlie visits.
Einstein has a lot of quotes in the book. Choose one of his quotes and write about what it means.
Research secret codes and ciphers. Using a cipher wheel, write/decode your own message.
(<https://www.exploratorium.edu/explore/secret-language>)

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 6-8

BOOK TRAILER:

Simon & Schuster trailer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-oQyMi1_aQ

BOOKTALK:

Genius. Thief. 12 yr old. Those all describe Charlie Thorne, now a CIA operative. Only problem is she'd much rather be skiing or skipping her college courses than saving the world. But when the CIA comes knocking you can't turn them down, no matter how much Charlie tries. Now, Charlie is off on a high stakes chase around the world to find Einstein's missing code that will change the world as we know it. She just must get to it before a secret terrorist group does. Will she get there first, and if so, can the world trust her with the code?

READ-ALIKES:

Child, Lauren. *Ruby Redfort Look into My Eyes*. Candlewick Press, 2012.
Daneshvari, Gitty. *The League of Unexceptional Children : [when greatness calls... average answers]*. Little, Brown and Company, 2015.
Gibbs, Stuart. *Spy School*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2012.
Korman, Gordon. *Masterminds*. Balzer + Bray, 2015
Poti, James. *City Spies*. Aladdin, 2020.
Stewart, Trenton Lee. *Mysterious Benedict Society*. Little Brown & Company, 2007.
Yee, Lisa. *The Misfits: A Royal Conundrum*. Random House, 2024

RELATED WEBSITES:

Stuart Gibbs <https://stuartgibbs.com/books-2/charlie-thorne-and-the-last-equation/>
Simon & Schuster: <https://tinyurl.com/2z2r7j48>
University City Public Library Discussion Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/4ejy3yr6>
The History Channel-Albert Einstein: <https://tinyurl.com/4vkb5j3s>
The Central Intelligence Agency: <https://www.cia.gov>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (July 2019)
Publishers Weekly (July 22, 2019)
School Library Journal Xpress (September 20, 2019)

Glaser, Karina Yan. *A Duet for Home*. Clarion Books, 2022

SUMMARY:

Following her father's death, June, her sister Mirabelle and her mother are evicted from their home and forced to relocate to the Huey House, a family shelter being run by the city. Her mother has completely shut down, forcing June to take charge of the family. After a rocky start in which a couple of kids play an unfortunate prank, June quickly begins to make friends and adjust to her new life. She even finds a viola teacher willing to continue her lessons.

June's chapters alternate with those of another Huey House resident, Tyrell. Tyrell is a longtime resident of the shelter. His mom can never seem to pull it together enough to keep a job and move out. Tyrell and his best friend, Jeremiah, are infamous at Huey House. The amiable duo are well-known pranksters, terrorizing some residents and helping others.

Together, all three kids discover that the shelter is planning on moving families out into substandard housing in an effort to make the city's homeless numbers artificially low. Many families are not prepared for this move, and it will only make their lives harder. It is up to June, Tyrell and Jeremiah to save the residents of Huey House.

QUESTIONS:

Candy plays an important part in this story. Why do you think this is?

Why do you think Tyrell and Jeremiah play so many pranks? Do you think this means they have bad character?

What are some of the things that bring comfort to the different residents of Huey House?

Do you think commuting to their old school was the right choice for June and Maybelle? What are the pros and cons?

What role does music play in this story?

When June's mom finally shows up at a Huey House meeting, June immediately leaves. Why do you think that is?

Why is it so important to Tyrell that he learn to play the violin?

Why does Jeremiah wait so long to share his "good news" that he and his mom are moving out of Huey House?

Marcus's parting words to Jeremiah are "Do good in this world." What good could you do in the world?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

When life is difficult, experiences and things that bring me comfort include.....

If I were June or Maybelle, the things I would take with me would be.....

A cause that I would be willing to fight for is.....

ACTIVITIES:

Contact your local PADS or other homeless shelter to see what needs they have. Start a drive at your school to collect toiletries and other necessities to donate to the homeless.

Search for performance videos of the viola pieces mentioned in the book.

Since food is such an important part of this book, talk with your family about what foods are comforting to them and choose one to make together.

What sign would you have carried to protest the new housing policies at Huey House? Make that sign or a sign protesting another cause you care about.

Look up who your local politicians are. Do you have a city council? A mayor? Try writing a letter expressing your concerns about something in your town.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-7

BOOK TRAILER/BOOKTALK:

Oklahoma Library Association: <https://youtu.be/7wASWwahgyE>

BOOKTALK:

June's mother has always been superstitious and convinced bad luck is lurking just around the corner. This time, she might be right. Nothing in June's life feels very lucky right now. Her family was just evicted and now they are left with no option but to move into Huey House, a shelter for homeless families in the Bronx. June's mother is so consumed with grief over her husband's death, she stops talking and leaves June to take care of the family herself.

Despite a rocky start in which June and her sister, Maybelle, become the unfortunate targets of a practical joke gone wrong, they quickly settle in and find friends, including the infamous prankster, Tyrell.

Tyrell is a longtime resident of the Huey House and the other voice we hear throughout this story. Despite his outwardly goofy personality, Tyrell is struggling, too. His mom has no interest in parenting, his dad is in jail, and his future is uncertain.

Together, June and Tyrell uncover a plan that could harm all the residents of Huey House, and they must come together to save the only home they have.

READ-ALIKES:

Applegate, Katherine. *Crenshaw*, Feiwel & Friends, 2015.

Bauer, Jane. *Almost Home*. Viking Juvenile, 2012.

Jacobson, Jennier Richard. *Paper Things*, Candlewick Press, 2015.

Matheson, Christie. *Shelter*. Random House, 2021

O'Connor, Barbara. *How to Steal a Dog*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.

O'Shaughnessy, Kate. *Lasagna Means I Love You*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2023.

RELATED WEBSITES:

Karina Yan Glaser: <http://www.karinaglaser.com/>

Q & A with Karina Glaser: <https://tinyurl.com/4ty6t3sc>

First Chapter Preview: <https://tinyurl.com/yw3hd4kh>

Instrument-Viola: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XierDLeUiYg>

The Facts - Stop Child Homelessness: <https://stopchildhomelessness.org/the-facts/>

REVIEWS:

School Library Journal (October 1, 2022)

Horn Book (July 1, 2022)

Kirkus (February 15, 2022)

Publisher's Weekly (February 7, 2022)

Hood, Susan with Greg Dawson. *Alias Anna: A True Story of Outwitting the Nazis*. Harper. 2022.

SUMMARY:

A biography written in verse about musical prodigies Zhanna and Frina Arshanskaya, Jewish sisters living in Ukraine. This is their story of losing family, fighting to stay together, and hiding from the Nazis. The sisters create new identities to keep them under the German radar, but are forced into the spotlight, risking everything to keep up their charade. They learn who to trust and when to hide. A beautiful telling of a brave girl who holds fast to what she believes.

QUESTIONS:

How did this story's writing style of free verse change the way we work our way through the book? Would this story have the same impact if written in a different style? Why or why not? On page 18, Zhanna was quoted as saying "Nothing could stop me" referring to her exploring nature as a small girl, but it was foreshadowing Zhanna's upcoming journey. What are some ways that this line was true throughout Zhanna's life?

Zhanna ran back for her Chopin sheet music when they were evacuating their town. What is something that you would make sure you had if you were forced to quickly leave your home? After the sisters were reunited, they left Kharkov headed to their father's hometown. Frina lays down in the snow, refusing to get up and continue. What do you suppose Zhanna is feeling at that moment? What would you do if it were your sibling?

The woman who sewed costumes for the ballerinas was questioned on the true identities of "Anna" and "Marina." Why do you suppose she lied to the Nazis? Would you have done the same thing?

Zhanna's son, Greg, did not know much about his mother's childhood until his daughter wrote the letter to her. Why do you suppose it took so long for Zhanna to share her story?

While at the tractor factory, Zhanna sneaks away in search of food for her family. She is taken in each night by an unknown family who gave her food and a place to sleep. Why did they do this knowing they could be arrested or killed for helping a Jew? Would you help someone you do not know? Why or why not?

Zhanna had to be brave and smart to escape the Nazis. Name a time when you were scared and needed to be brave.

Throughout the story, we heard Zhanna's voice in addition to the prose the authors wrote. Why do you suppose the entire story wasn't written in Zhanna's voice?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

If I had to leave my home quickly, I would take.....

If I could play any instrument, it would be because.....

ACTIVITIES:

Write a letter to your grandparents, or other relatives, asking what life was like when they were your age (current events, popular songs/movies, everyday life, etc.).

Research the different poetic techniques and forms that were used in this book. Write your own poem using one of these styles.

Plan a trip to one of the places of interest given in the back matter (p. 318-319). Be sure to include travel times, special exhibits, admittance fees, etc.

Music played a key role in Zhanna's and Frina's survival. The back of the book lists the titles of the pieces that were mentioned. Look up a few of those musical pieces and listen to them. What does the music make you feel?

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 6-8

BOOK TRAILER:

[Alias Anna Novel in verse Summer 2022](#)

BOOKTALK:

This story begins with a letter from granddaughter to grandmother for a school project. That one letter brought forth Zhanna Arshanskaya's story of her dangerous, terrifying, risky life during World War II. Zhanna's early life was full of exploring, trips to the market with her father, and embracing a love of music. Her father taught Zhanna and her sister to play the piano when they were young girls, and they became spotlight performers at ages eight and six. Their lives took a turn when the Germans stormed their town and forced the families to leave, but Zhanna held fast to her love of music and her family. Upon being separated from her parents during a death march, Zhanna's father told her to "just live" no matter what happens. And Zhanna does just that. She realized that she and her sister must create new identities for themselves to stay safe from Nazi soldiers. As they do, their musical talents put them in the spotlight once again as they perform for Germans. Filled with rich history, this nonfiction novel written in verse tells the true story of Zhanna and her sister in their fight to stay together while evading Nazi rule during World War II. Co-written with Zhanna's son, author Susan Hood give us **Alias Anna** and brings Zhanna's beautiful strength to light in this story of loss and resilience. The novel is complete with extensive back matter that includes photographs, poetry notes, music information, and more.

READ-ALIKES:

Baron, Chris. *The Magical Imperfect*. Feiwel & Friends, 2021

Blankman, Anne. *Blackbird Girls*. Viking, 2020

Freeman, Megan E. *Alone*. S&S/Aladdin, 2021

Gratz, Alan. *Refugee*. Scholastic Press, 2017

Hood, Susan. *Lifeboat 12*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2018
Lai, Thanhha. *Inside Out and Back Again*. HarperCollins, 2011
LaRocca, Rajani. *Red, White, and Whole*. HarperCollins/Quill Tree, 2021
Marsh, Katherine. *The Lost Year*. Roaring Brook Press, 2023

RELATED WEBSITES:

Susan Hood: <https://www.susanhoodbooks.com/about-me>
Hiding in the Spotlight: www.hidinginthespotlight.com
Alias Anna-Discussion Questions: <https://tinyurl.com/wnz3ap79>
Booktalk and Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XsyYvVIWlwM>
What is Antisemitism? <https://www.ushmm.org/>
The Holocaust Explained: <https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (February 1, 2022)
Kirkus Review (Jan. 1, 2022)
School Library Journal (February 3, 2023)
Publishers Weekly (March 2022)

Korman, Gordon. *The Fort*. Scholastic Press, 2022

SUMMARY:

After a hurricane rips through their town, four boys discover a bomb shelter that has been unearthed by the storm. It is fully stocked with everything needed to survive a nuclear attack. The boys decide to keep the existence of this shelter a hidden, so that it is their own secret clubhouse. This story is told in alternating voices that reveal that the bomb shelter is not the only secret each boy is keeping. Issues include domestic abuse, divorce, OCD, and drug usage.

QUESTIONS:

- Why and how do the boys exclude Ricky?
- What was the Cold War? Why did people like Bennett Delamere build bomb shelters?
- Why do the boys keep secrets from each other?
- What is OCD and how does it affect people?
- Why does Luke hang out with Jaeger?
- How is it that Ricky can figure out CJ's secret, even though the other boys who have known him longer?
- How did each boy change from the through the novel from the beginning until the end?
- Have you ever had a clubhouse? Describe it and what you liked best about it.

JOURNAL STARTERS:

The character in *The Fort* with whom I identify is....., because.....
Items I would want to have in a secret clubhouse would include.....

ACTIVITIES:

- Research bomb shelters and design one of your own.
- Research one event that took place during the Cold War.
- Divide your group into teams and create some clubhouses.
- Invite a school counselor or another mental health professional to discuss the characters in the novel.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-7

BOOK TRAILER:

Kim Moss: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbPvyhBoiZ8>

BOOKTALK:

Imagine having a secret clubhouse filled with food, movies, and comfortable furniture. Well, that's exactly what four best friends discover one day after walking in the woods after a hurricane. They decide to keep it a secret so that they can enjoy having a something all to themselves. However, the clubhouse is not the only secret each boy is keeping.

READ-ALIKES:

Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. *Fighting Words*. Dial Books, 2020
Gratz, Alan. *Two Degrees*. New York : Scholastic Press, 2022
Key, Watt. *Terror at Bottle Creek*. Square Fish/Farrar Straus Giroux, 2017
Woodson, Jacqueline. *Harbor Me*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018

RELATED WEBSITES:

Gordon Korman: <https://gordonkorman.com/the-fort>
Gordon Korman Study Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/zay7m3ny>
What Was the Cold War and Are We Headed for Another One?: <https://tinyurl.com/394jdjbn>
Digging Up the History of the Nuclear Fallout Shelter: <https://tinyurl.com/ycyws9p5>
Facts About Hurricanes That Will Blow You Away: <https://tinyurl.com/bde3ehkc>

REVIEW:

Kirkus (April 15, 2022)

Lloyd, Natalie. *Hummingbird*. Scholastic Press 2022.

SUMMARY:

An eleven-year-old girl, with osteogenesis imperfecta, also known as brittle bone disease, longs to attend public school and make some friends. Things do not go as she had hoped, and she finds herself searching for a magical hummingbird with the ability to grant wishes. With the help of some unlikely people, she learns the truth about the bird and discovers more about herself than she imagined.

QUESTIONS:

If you had the chance to have one wish granted, what would it be and why?

If a new student, like Olive, were to come to your school, how would you treat them? How would you help them adjust to their new school?

How do you think it feels to be a new student at a school? What are things you could do to make them feel welcome?

Do you think Olive's parents make the right decision to let her attend public school? Why or why not?

JOURNAL STARTER:

We could make new students feel comfortable at our school by doing the following.....

ACTIVITIES:

Invite a health professional to speak to your group about brittle bone disease.

Make a list of feelings people often feel--how many words can you list that describes each?

Brainstorm what students could do or who they could reach out to when they have strong feelings and need support.

Have the class choose a topic and write a poem together, like Olive did throughout the book.

Research the poet, Emily Dickinson, and identify five of your favorite poems.

INTEREST LEVEL: Grades 4-6

BOOK TRAILER:

Scholastic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFCMaOfCl6M>

BOOKTALK:

Olive is twelve years old and has been homeschooled all her life because she has osteogenesis imperfecta, which is also known as brittle bone disease. But Olive's life is about to change. She has been begging to attend public school and she finally gets her chance. She has dreamed about this moment for what seems like forever. Olive is excited to finally make some friends and not be alone. But her first day at Macklemore Elementary is a disaster and Olive feels like she will never fit in.

Olive hears stories of a magical hummingbird that can grant your deepest wish that lives somewhere nearby. If she could just find that hummingbird, she could have it grant her wish! She can't do it on her own though. She finds some unlikely people and together they learn the truth about the bird. It turns out that the parts of us that seem fragile might just be the strongest.

READ-ALIKES:

Bowling, Dusti. *Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus*. Sterling Publishing Company, 2017

Bell, Cece. *El Deafo*. Abrams Books, 2014

Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. *The War That Saved My Life*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2015

Draper, Sharon. *Out of My Mind*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2010

Harrell, Rob. Wink. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2020

Kelly, Lynne. *Song for A Whale*. Random House Children's Books, 2019

Kuyatt, Meg Eden. *Good Different*. Scholastic Press, 2023

Stroker, Ali. *The Chance to Fly*. Amulet Books, 2021

Sumner, Jamie. *Roll With It*. Atheneum, 2019.

RELATED WEBSITES:

Natalie Lloyd: <https://www.natalielloyd.com>

Hummingbird Discussion Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/5n6kkjky>

Osteogenesis Imperfecta: <https://tinyurl.com/5auhpszp>

Audubon Adventures: https://www.audubonadventures.org/hummer_crm.htm

The Poetry Foundation/Emily Dickinson: <https://tinyurl.com/mr25kynu>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (July 1, 2022)

Kirkus (June 1, 2022)

Publishers Weekly (August 22, 2022)

Marsh, Katherine. *The Lost Year*. Roaring Brook Press, 2023.

SUMMARY:

It's spring 2020, and COVID has confined everyone to their homes, including Matthew, his mom, and his 100-year-old great-grandmother, Nadiya, who they call GG. The isolation is frustrating enough, but now Matthew has lost use of his Nintendo Switch after almost hitting his great-grandmother with an arrow. He can get the Switch back once he goes through GG's boxes with her, which she is reluctant to do. Matthew turns to his reporter father in Paris, who he's unable to see due to COVID, to give him ideas on how to get GG to open up about her past. He finds that GG was a child during the 1933 Ukrainian famine. GG's story becomes known in chapters that shift between Mila and Helen, cousins of Nadiya's, and Matthew. Matthew finds that GG has secrets she's never shared, and she entrusts Matthew to share that secret past with others.

QUESTIONS:

How does Mila change during the course of the story?

Compare Mila, Nadiya and Helen. How were their lives different? How were they the same? When Matthew talks about his life during COVID, did it remind you of your life during that time?

If you were faced with the same decision as Mila when she had a chance to come to the U.S., what would you have done?

Why do you think the Soviet Union insisted that no one was starving in their country?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

The hardest part of COVID for me was...

The family member about whose life I would like to write is.....because.....

ACTIVITIES:

On page 99, Matthew draws a Lomachenko family tree, but it's missing some family members. Complete the family tree with other family members mentioned in the book.

Using ideas that Matthew's father shared with him on thinking like a reporter, interview a family member.

In conjunction with Chapter 21, teach a lesson on mis/disinformation.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-8

BOOK TRAILER/BOOKTALK:

Katherine Marsh introduces *The Lost Year*: <https://youtu.be/-SALgVV5Zpc?si=ZT3DCRnIE-OmNQq5>

BOOKTALK:

Have you ever had your phone or gaming system taken away as punishment? That's the situation Matthew's in after almost hitting his grandma with an arrow. It's 2020, and the COVID pandemic keeps Matthew, his mom, and GG, his 100-year-old great grandma at home with no other contact. Matthew needs to go through GG's boxes brought from the nursing home with her to get his Switch back, but she's reluctant. Are the memories of growing up during the Ukrainian famine too difficult, or do the boxes hold secrets GG's never been willing to share?

READ-ALIKES:

Brown, Robin Terry. *Breaking the News*. National Geographic Kids, 2020
Forman, Gayle. *Not Nothing*. Alladin Press, 2024
Mills, Claudia. *The Last Apple Tree*. Holiday House, 2024
Skrypuch, Marsha Forchuk. Winterkill Scholastic, 2020

RELATED WEBSITES:

Katherine Marsh: <https://www.katherinemarsh.com>
Teacher's Guide: <https://www.mackidsschoolandlibrary.com/teachers-guide-the-lost-year/>
Holodomor: <https://kids.kiddle.co/Holodomor>
Holodomor: <https://britannica.com/event/Holodomor>
A Year Full of Emotions: <https://time.com/6071300/kids-pandemic/>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (December 1, 2022)
Horn Book Magazine (March/April 2023)
Kirkus Reviews (November 15, 2022)
Publisher's Weekly (November 21, 2022)

McNicoll, Elle. *A Kind of Spark*. Yearling, 2020.

SUMMARY:

Addie, an eleven-year-old autistic girl, finds herself being bullied by students in her class as well as her teacher. Luckily, the school librarian supports her as well as her family and a new student, Audrey. In school, the students learn that in their small Scottish town, women long ago were accused of being witches and subsequently killed. However, these women were not witches; they were simply different. Addie, being different herself, strongly relates to these women and believes if she lived during these times, she would have been killed. She decides that a memorial plaque should be made in honor of these women. She goes to the town meeting, speaks about her idea and is shut down. Addie continues to go to these meetings, showing persistence and grit. Supported by her loving family and her new friend, she raises awareness in her community. Neurodivergent herself, McNicoll shows through her characters what autism is like and debunks many myths.

QUESTIONS:

What kind of teacher is Ms. Murphy? Have you ever had a teacher like her? What are some qualities that make a teacher “good”?

Compare and contrast Addie’s twin sisters, Nina and Keedie. Why does Addie prefer Keedie’s company?

What is masking? Why would anyone do that? Why is it so hard to do if you are autistic?

What does it mean to be a friend? Why does Addie think that Jenna is not really her friend, but Audrey is? What do you think being a good friend is?

What two personality traits of Addie do you admire and why? For each trait, find quotes in the book that prove these traits.

According to Addie, why was it important to put up a plaque for the women who were accused of being witches? How did she finally convince the members of the town council to put up a plaque?

Who is the narrator of this story? Why is that important to know as you are reading the book?

How would the story be different if another character were the narrator?

If you could sit next to a character in this book on an airplane, who would you want to sit next to and why?

After reading this novel, what do you think is one message (theme) the author wants you to learn from this book?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

Addie was brave when...

If I was Addie’s mother, I ...

Addie calms herself down by...

ACTIVITIES:

Invite a special education teacher, a psychologist, a person who works closely with autism or a person who is autistic to find out more about this topic. Brainstorm questions before the person comes in.

Do some research into the witches of Scotland, the Salem witch trials or other areas where people were accused of being witches. Write about some of these people who were accused. Create a collage of what traits make a good friend.

What is something you believe would change your community for the better? Make a speech about it explaining why the change needs to happen.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-7

BOOK TRAILER:

Heather Baucum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IypO1DNtHT0>

BOOKTALK:

Have you ever been bullied by other children or teachers for who you are? Addie, the main character of *A Kind of Spark*, has been bullied for being different, for being autistic. When Addie learns about women who were killed for being “witches” in her small Scottish village hundreds of years ago, she wants to do something to memorialize them. Even when the town council says no, Addie does not give up. Does Addie change their minds? Stir in some family dynamics and friendship issues and you have a book that is hard to put down.

READ-ALIKES:

Balfe, Abigail. *A Different Kind of Normal*. Crown Books for Young Readers, 2022

Erskine, Kathryn. *Mockingbird*. Philomel Books, 2010

Hayden, Chloe. *Different, Not Less: A Neurodivergent's Guide to Embracing Your True Self and Finding Your Happily Ever After*. Murdoch Press, 2022

Kuyatt, Meg Eden. *Good Different*. Scholastic Press, 2023

Martin, Ann M. *Rain Reign*, Feiwel & Friends, 2014

Sass, A.J. *Ellen Outside the Lines*, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2022

Scott, Libby. *Can You See Me?* Scholastic, 2019

RELATED WEBSITES:

Ellen McNicoll: <https://ellemnicoll.com/home>

Q & A with Ellen McNicoll: <https://diversebooks.org/qa-with-elle-mcnicoll-a-kind-of-spark/>

A Kind of Spark Discussion Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/nrs36hee>

Explaining Autism to Kids: <https://www.bridgecareaba.com/blog/explaining-autism-to-kids>
The Witchcraft Act in Scotland: <https://tinyurl.com/rrzaf8ph>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (October 1, 2021)

Kirkus (September 1, 2021)

Publishers Weekly (October 25, 2021)

School Library Journal (October 1, 2021)

Melleby, Nicole. *How to Become a Planet*. Algonquin Young Readers, 2021

SUMMARY:

This book is about a young girl named Pluto who lives with her mom near the boardwalk where they own their own pizza company. Pluto has been recently diagnosed with depression and anxiety and this book takes you on a very intimate journey into just what that entails. The heartbreaking push and pull of Pluto trying her very best to be the person she wants to be versus the person the depression is causing her to be is eye opening to any reader who has never felt the grips of these mental illnesses. This book is raw and emotional and does a fantastic job of getting a glimpse into what life is like for a child dealing with these giant obstacles in her day-to-day life. Both Pluto and her mom are characters you want to root for and see to reach the happiness they deserve.

QUESTIONS:

Are you able to relate to Pluto not having her bedroom door? Have you ever had your private space taken away from you?

What would be the benefits and downfalls to owning a pizzeria in your family?

Early in the book, Pluto made a list of events that she believed will make her feel real again.

How did that list evolve throughout the book?

Why is it easier for Pluto to become friends with Fallon then to maintain her friendship with Meredith?

The book makes references to Pluto's grandmother. What similarities can we assume she has with Pluto?

Why do you think Pluto makes her lists?

How does the title of this book relate to the story?

Pluto has an interesting name. What name would you change your name to if you could?

JOURNAL STARTER:

Pluto knows a lot about space, I know a lot about....

ACTIVITIES:

Make Sensory Space Bottles: <https://tinyurl.com/52rj4bbc>

Invite the owner or manager of a local pizza establishment to speak to your group.

Invite a counselor to discuss anxiety and depression in young people.

Visit a planetarium if one is in reasonable distance.

Create a list of things you would like to accomplish.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 6-8

BOOKTALK:

“Pluto felt a familiar feeling rise from her stomach up into her throat, one that made her want to scream and cry and argue, if only she weren’t so tired. Tears came anyway. Twelve-year-olds couldn’t stay in bed all day on their own, no matter how much they might need to. If she were older, an adult, she would stay in bed and no one could force her to do anything, a fixed planet around which everything else moved while she ignored it. But for now, Pluto was the moon, and her mom was the planet she was forced to orbit....

“The little orange bottles sat right on top of her desk, next to the broken book. *Take 1 with food. Take ½ in the morning. Take 1 as needed.*”

Depression and anxiety. Two words. One brand-new diagnosis.

READ-ALIKES:

Allen, Sarah. *What Stars Are Made Of*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020

Day, Christine. *The Sea in Winter*. Heartdrum, 2021

Kelly, Erin Estrada. *We Dream of Space*. Greenwillow Books, 2020

Legrand, Claire. *Some Kind of Happiness*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2016

RELATED WEBSITES:

Melleby, Nicole: <https://www.nicolemelleby.com>

How to Be a Planet Discussion Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/mwsb4bbv>

Childhood Depression: <https://tinyurl.com/bdfnk83f>

The Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/careers/>

Hayden Planetarium Question and Answer Hotline: <https://tinyurl.com/5492mk5h>

5 Things You May Not Know About the Challenger Disaster: <https://tinyurl.com/4hyr5ncm>

Easy Cheese Pizza: <https://thestayathomechef.com/easy-cheese-pizza/>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (March 15, 2021)

Kirkus (March 15, 2021)

Publishers Weekly (March 01, 2021)

School Library Journal (March 05, 2021)

Najem, Muhammad; Neus, Nora & Robine, Jule. *Muhammad Najem, War Reporter*. Little Brown, 2022

SUMMARY:

Muhammad Najem is no stranger to war and violence. Growing up in Syria, he had experienced both things on a daily basis. Each year, however, the violence got worse, and his family became increasingly threatened by Assad’s regime. By the time Najem was fifteen, however, he decided to do more than stand by and watch or hide in a shelter. He decided to start filming the violence firsthand. To interview those whose lives had been affected by the terrible conditions. To get up close to those who have lost so much due to the fighting. Armed with his camera and a social media account, Najem was determined to fight back, not with guns or other weapons, but with information— by letting the world know just how badly the citizens of his beloved Syria were doing under the dictator’s rule. And, due to his persistence and personal involvement in each video, he did just that.

QUESTIONS:

- What is the moment or turning point where Muhammad decided to act?
- What advice did Firas give Muhammad about using social media safely?
- What importance does the idea of “Everyone has a story” mean for Muhammad?
- List several ways that Muhammad demonstrated bravery throughout the book.
- How did getting on CNN change Muhammad and his family’s lives?
- How does Muhammad feel after he moves?
- Compare and contrast the illustrations by Robine and the photos at the end of the book. How well do you think the illustrator did at capturing the people and the events of the story?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- One thing I learned in this book about social media was....
- One way I think I could make a difference in my world would be...
- Three things that I am thankful for after reading this book are...

ACTIVITIES:

Create an activism video. Highlight something in your community (or, if you cannot think of something specific in your own community, the world) and report as if you are “on the scene.” Assign students to “create” fake social media profile accounts in Docs or Word using a template. Have some students create “legitimate” looking accounts, while others create suspicious-looking ones. Then, have other classes look at the accounts and analyze which appear to be “real” and which would only be used to scam someone.

Select a lesson or two from [Social Media Test Drive](#) to complete online.

Map out Muhammad's journey throughout the book on a world map. Feel free to zoom in on the regions that are most important for Muhammad.

Research the Syrian Civil War and develop a Slides or PowerPoint that could explain the significance of the war in 3 minutes to a middle school audience.

Research a person who was an activist in their teenage years and put together a poster. Students can then compare each of the activists and create a list of traits that they seem to have in common.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-8

BOOK TRAILER:

Muhammad Najem: Official Book Trailer: <https://tinyurl.com/5c257drh>

BOOKTALK:

Imagine that the world around you is crumbling. People are dying. It seems like the violence is never ending. What would you do to make your world a better place? This is the question that Muhammad Najem, a young teenager from Syria, asked himself. Rather than ignore the war around him, Najem decided to make the war known by more than just his country. He posted several videos throughout the war, each gaining a few more viewers than before until finally, his videos attracted one of the largest news outlets in the world. This is his story of fighting to show his country in the most honest way possible with the hope of changing his world, and really, everyone's world, for the better. The incredibly realistic illustrations by Julie Robine will amaze you in their accuracy. Told by Najem himself along with Nora Neus, who is a journalist, this graphic novel will open your eyes to the bigger picture of our world.

READ-ALIKES:

Fleming, Melissa. *A Hope More Powerful Than the Sea*. Flatiron Books, 2018.

Reynolds, Emma. *Drawn to Change the World: 16 Youth Climate Activists, 16 Artists*. HarperAlley, 2023

Roumani, Rhonda. *Tagging Freedom*. Union Square Kids, 2023

Senzai, N.H. *Escape from Aleppo*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2020

Yousafzai, Malala. *I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World*. Little Brown, 2015.

RELATED WEBSITES:

Muhammed Najem's YouTube Channel: <https://tinyurl.com/y9kmr8v7>

Muhammad Najem, The 15-Year-Old War Reporter: <https://tinyurl.com/2rw7k2cc>

15-Year-Old Documenting Ghouta Massacre: <https://tinyurl.com/55pmfa65>

How Young People Use Social Media to Engage Civically: <https://tinyurl.com/6zvnnx5h>
Social Media for Social Action Lesson Plan: <https://tinyurl.com/4wjzdtts>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (September 15, 2022)

Horn Book Magazine (November 1, 2022)

Kirkus Reviews (July 1, 2022)

O’Shaughnessy, Kate. *Lasagna Means I Love You*. Knopf, 2023.

SUMMARY:

After the death of her grandmother, eleven-year-old Mo is put into foster care after her uncle is unwilling to care for her. In her new home with her foster parents, she becomes interested in family recipes and the stories that surround them. Through her desire for her own family recipe, she creates a blog and begins collecting the family recipes of strangers in New York City and around the world. When she begins making the recipes, she builds connections and through it, finds a new family where lasagna truly means love.

QUESTIONS:

Why do you think Gran wanted Mo to find a hobby after she died?

What made Crystal a great friend to Mo?

Do you think Mo would have been happy continuing to live with Tate and June? Why or why not?

What about Joe and Carlota made them the perfect family for Mo?

What would you have on the menu for your own pop-up restaurant?

Which of the recipes in the book would you like to try and why?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

Do you have any family recipes? If you don’t, what kind of recipe would you create?

If you’re able, have a family recipe potluck that will allow everyone to sample.

What do you think makes a family?

We’ve all been through tough situations and changes in our lives. What situation or change do you think made you stronger?

ACTIVITIES:

Have a special family recipe? Ask a caregiver for help making it. If you don’t, pick a recipe from the book to try!

Create a blog entry that demonstrates what you truly care about.

Write a letter to someone you love telling them all about what is happening in your life.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-6

BOOK TRAILER:

Bethel Park Public Library: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TF-uopZVHQk>

BOOK TALK:

What does it mean to be a family? And can you have a second shot at finding one? After her grandmother dies, Mo is sent to live in a foster home. While the first home she goes to doesn't work out, a chance encounter with a family recipe book leads Mo to becoming interested in learning about family recipes and the stories attached to them. She begins asking for the family recipes of people she meets as well as creating a blog to get recipes from people all around the world. But while she enjoys the recipes she receives; she wonders if she has any distant relatives. Could she have a family recipe of her own? Through her letters to her Nan, blog posts, and recipes, learn about what it means to be a family and how lasagna can mean "I love you."

READ-ALIKES:

Farr, Bridget. *Pavi Sharma's Guide to Going Home*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2019.

Faruqi, Saadia and Laura Shovan. *A Place at the Table*. Clarion Books, 2020.

Guerrero, Tanya. *All You Knead is Love*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021.

Hunt, Lynda Mullaly. *One for the Murphys*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2013.

O'Shaughnessy, Kate. *The Lonely Heart of Maybelle Lane*. Knopf, 2020.

Stamper, Phil. *Eli Over Easy*. HarperCollins, 2023.

RELATED WEBSITES:

Kate O'Shaughnessy: <https://www.kloshaughnessy.com/>

Responding to Change and Loss: <https://tinyurl.com/fdy6xtm9>

Easy Recipes for Kids: <https://www.delish.com/easy-kid-recipes/>

Making Your Own Website: <https://tinyurl.com/2rw3v92f>

REVIEWS:

The Horn Book (March 8, 2023)

Kirkus Reviews (February 21, 2023)

Publishers Weekly (January 9, 2023)

School Library Journal (March 1, 2023)

Ortega, Claribel A. & Bousamra, Rose. *Frizzy*. First Second, 2022.

SUMMARY:

Marlene is a girl who sees herself as smart, a good friend, funny, lover of music, and great at video games, but her family sees her as a mess, disappointing, and a problem causer. Why can't she just leave her hair alone and be grateful for her mom's weekend trips to the salon to straighten it? The thing is, Marlene hates the weekend salon trips. When she tries to wear curls at school though, she is relentlessly bullied. With the help of her super cool Tia Ruby and encouragement from her best friend Camillia, Marlene starts embracing her curls and they try to convince her mom to stop the salon trips. A bully even apologizes.

QUESTIONS:

Should your parents get to decide how you wear your hair? Should your school?
Do you think Marlene's mom's insecurities are what she's pushing off onto Marlene?
Why do you think the author uses Tia Ruby to finally get Marlene's point of view across?
Has a fictional character ever helped you boost your confidence?
Do you watch any YouTube/TikTok/Insta bloggers? Why do you like them?
Have you ever been bullied? Have you ever been a bully?
What would you do if someone put tape in your hair?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

A time I was bullied was when...
If I had a superpower, it would be...
An adult who makes me feel safe is...
My favorite YouTuber/TikTok/Insta/Blogger account is... because...
Something I wish my guardian knew about my feelings is...
Something I love about myself is...
,

ACTIVITIES:

Have students get their backpacks and make a list of what's inside/hanging from them. Next, have students draw an illustration of their dream backpack, and illustrate at least five things inside or hanging from it.
Have students write a self-perception essay on how the outside world sees them (others) vs. who they feel they really are on the inside.
Have students research a comic or graphic novel they relate to, and then write about which character is their favorite and why.
Make a video like the videos that Marlene watched of @SammieVCurls on hair.
Invite a stylist to discuss all the diverse types of hair they encounter.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-8

BOOK TRAILER:

Kaiya R: <https://tinyurl.com/5n96hawh>

Jasmine C: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQn3EPOyk94>

BOOKTALK:

In a beautifully illustrated story about friendship, bullies, family pressure, self-image, life after loss of a parent, and wild curls, Marlene wonders, “if being beautiful is the only thing that matters?” You see, she has very curly Dominican hair, but her mom makes her have it straightened every weekend at the salon. Marlene hates the weekend trips and just wants to go back to her carefree elementary days when no one cared about her curls. Can Marlene get past the peer bullying and learn to embrace her curls with the help of her best friend Camilla and her super cool Tia Ruby? Read to find out!

READ-ALIKES:

Acevedo, Elizabeth. *Inheritance: A Visual Poem*. Quill Tree Books, 2022.

Fajardo, Kat. *Miss Quinces*. Graphix, 2022.

Fipps, Lisa. *Starfish*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2021

Miller, Sharee. *Curlfriends: New in Town*. Little Brown Ink, 2023.

Sax, Sarah. *Picture Day*. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2023.

Wientge, Kristi. *Karma Khullar’s Mustache*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2017.

RELATED WEBSITES:

Claribel Ortega: <https://www.claribelortega.com/educators-teachers>

Interview with Ortega and Bousamra: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWFA5aFUUWc>

Podcast Interview with Illustrator Rose Bousamra: <https://tinyurl.com/2rh5ncx5>

The History of Curly Hair: <https://tinyurl.com/3z7vvp9y>

REVIEWS:

Horn Book (January 31, 2023)

Kirkus (August 1, 2022)

School Library Journal (July 22, 2022)

Partridge, Elizabeth & Tamaki, Lauren. *Seen and Unseen: What Dorothea Lange, Toyo Miyatake, and Ansel Adams's Photographs Reveal about the Japanese American Incarceration*. Chronicle Books, 2022.

SUMMARY:

“On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066. It authorized the removal of more than 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast” *Seen and Unseen* tells the story of Japanese and Japanese American incarceration during World War II through the lenses of three different photographers: Toyo Miyatake, who was a prisoner in Manzanar, Dorothea Lange, and Ansel Adams. Through the perspective of each photographer’s lens, the reader examines the history of Japanese American incarceration during World War II. Readers are left with the echo of Dorothea Lange’s questions: “This is what we did. How did it happen? How could we?”

QUESTIONS:

What makes an American?

How can a photographer craft a message by choosing what to include and what to leave out of the photograph?

What is the difference between a candid and posed photograph? Why might a photographer choose one or the other?

How were the Constitutional Rights of Japanese Americans violated during World War II?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

An image tells a story. But is it the whole story?

ACTIVITIES:

Illustrator Lauren Tamaki fills in details outside what is visible within the “frames” of the photographs with her drawings Bring a personal photograph or print one found online. Glue it to a paper. Illustrate the rest of the “story” outside the frame.

Analyze media about Japanese Internment During WWII.

Compose biographical profiles of the three photographers featured in this book.

Research and tell the stories of the lives of Toyo Miyatake, Dorothea Lange, and Ansel Adams.

INTEREST LEVEL: Grades 6-8

BOOKTALK:

Seen and Unseen by Elizabeth Partridge tells the story of Japanese and Japanese American incarceration during World War II.

“On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066. It authorized the removal of more than 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast. The government called it an ‘evacuation.’ ‘Evacuees’ would be taken to ‘assembly centers’ until ‘internment camps’ were ready.

The Truth: It was not an ‘evacuation.’

People are evacuated from an emergency, like a fire or flood. The ‘evacuation’ was a forced removal. The few Japanese Americans who did not comply faced criminal charges.

‘Assembly centers’ were temporary detention centers, with fences and armed guards.

‘Internment’ or ‘relocation’ camps were prison camps where the Japanese and Japanese Americans were imprisoned for most of World War II. It was a separate system from the US criminal justice system.

‘Evacuees’ were prisoners” (Excerpt pp. 12-14).

READ-ALIKES:

Ahmed, Samira. *Internment*. Little, Brown and Company, 2019.

Atkins, Laura, et al. *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up*. Heyday, 2014.

Brown, Daniel James, and Kelsey Murphy. *Facing the Mountain: A True Story of Japanese American Heroes in World War II*. Viking, an Imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2023.

Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki, et al. *Farewell to Manzanar*. Clarion Books, 2023

Hughes, Kiku. *Displacement*. First Second, 2020.

Larson, Kirby. *Dash*. Scholastic, Inc., 2016.

Takei, George, et al. *They Called US Enemy*. Top Shelf Productions, 2020.

RELATED WEBSITES:

Elizabeth Partridge’s Website: <https://www.elizabethpartridge.com>

Dorothea Lange: Central Photographic File of the War Relocation Authority (National Archives): <https://catalog.archives.gov/search-within/536000?q=dorothea%20lange>

Toyo Miyatake: Manzanar: <http://www.toyomiyatake.com/manzanar.html>

Ansel Adams's Photographs of Japanese-American Internment at Manzanar (Library of Congress): <https://www.loc.gov/collections/ansel-adams-manzanar/about-this-collection/>

Project Look Sharp (Constructivist Media Decoding):
<https://www.projectlooksharp.org/index.php>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (October 15, 2022)

Publishers Weekly (October 2022)

School Library Journal (October 28, 2022)

Santat, Dan. *A First Time For Everything*. First Second, 2023.

SUMMARY:

In this memoir, it is the summer of 1989 and author-illustrator Dan Santat is a 13 year old boy dealing with many transitions. He's just finished middle school, he's traveling to Europe for the first time on a school trip with no parents, and he's trying to figure out who he is. On this trip, Dan experiences many firsts, some disappointing, some exciting, all completely unexpected.

QUESTIONS:

What changed for Dan when he went to middle school?

How do you think the trip to Europe changed Dan?

What part of his trip seemed the most exciting to you? The least exciting?

How do you think the trip would have been different if Dan had been on it with his parents?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

One thing Dan did on his trip that I would never be allowed to do is...

To me, the hardest thing about traveling to a new country would be...

One moment when I felt really embarrassed about myself was...

One moment when I felt proud of myself was...

ACTIVITIES:

Research a place you've always wanted to go. How would you get there? Where would you want to stay? Come up with an itinerary of sites you would want to see, and how much time you think it might take you to do all the things you would want to do.

In *A First Time For Everything*, Dan Santat reflects on a meaningful time in his childhood. Think about a moment in your life that has really stuck with you. First, write out the moment, and then draw that moment in the style of a graphic novel. What did you have to change? What could be illustrated, and what did you need to write out?

Write a letter to yourself in the future. Talk about what you want to be when you grow up, where you see yourself in the future, who you want to become, but also talk about yourself now—your interests, your friends, and all the things you love. See if you can save that letter to open when you've grown.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 6-8

BOOK TRAILER:

The Word Nerd: <https://tinyurl.com/7kubf33u>

BOOKTALK:

Before Dan Santat was *Dan Santat* (the author or illustrator or sometimes both of great books like *The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend*, *After the Fall*, and *Ricky Ricotta's Mighty Robot*, among others) he was a 13-year-old boy in 1989 who had just finished middle school. And middle school? It was a terrible time for Dan, full of moments he would just as soon forget. His parents have just signed him up for a three-week trip through Europe with his school, which should be very cool except it's with people Dan doesn't know or who don't like him, the teacher who embarrassed him in front of the entire school, and a cute girl. In *A First Time For Everything* Dan Santat brings together amazing art with a story for anyone who has ever felt a little out of place in the world.

READ-ALIKES:

Chmakova, Svetlana. *Awkward*. Hachette Books/Yen Press, 2015

Craft, Jerry. *School Trip*. Quill Tree Books/HarperCollins, 2023

Fahmy, Huda. *Huda F Cares*. Dial Books for Young Readers/Penguin Random House, 2023.

Martin, Pedro. *Mexikid: A Graphic Memoir*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2023.

Oh, Ellen (editor). *You Are Here: Connecting Flights*. Allida/HarperCollins, 2023.

RELATED WEBSITES:

Dan Santat: <https://us.macmillan.com/author/dansantat>

Books That Slay: Summary and Analysis: <https://tinyurl.com/58ec8es2>

Duolingo: <http://www.duolingo.com/>

The Arc De Triomphe: <https://www.paris-arc-de-triomphe.fr/en/>

Wimbledon for Kids: <https://tinyurl.com/u875dw3e>

The Eiffel Tower: <https://www.toureiffel.paris/en/the-monument/history>

Dan Santat on Tumblr: <https://dansantat.tumblr.com/>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (February 1, 2023)

Kirkus (December 15, 2022)

School Library Journal (January 1, 2023)

Smith, Niki. *The Golden Hour*. Little Brown and Company, 2021.

SUMMARY:

In this graphic novel, Manuel has witnessed a violent attack at school. He is working through his shock and grief using a technique called finding anchors. He takes pictures to remind himself that he is safe and in the present, not reliving the trauma. The budding friendships of two students in his art class encourage him to join them in the local Agriculture Club and help him on his healing journey.

QUESTIONS:

The author changes color palettes and uses other techniques when Manuel remembers the traumatic incident. What are the techniques you notice that differentiate between the traumatic incident (or the remembering) and when Manuel is in the present?

How do the style changes help the reader understand what Manuel is feeling?

How do the pictures affect your impression of the three friends?

What triggers Manuel to get lost in the past, and what brings him back to the present?

Manuel is willing to get into trouble in order to keep his word. Would you have done the same?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

Some coping strategies I use when I feel overwhelmed include...

Some things I like to do for fun...

My friends and family help me when I am sad by....

If I entered the county fair, I would display my.....

An animal that I am responsible for is.... The tasks I do to take care of it daily and in the long term include....

ACTIVITIES:

Practice Anchoring: Manuel does it by noticing small things and taking a picture of it. This is not always possible. You could practice anchoring by using your senses. What are five colors you see, four sounds you hear, three things you can touch, two things you smell and one thing you taste?

The book introduces you to the photographic Rule of Thirds. Can you find examples of the Rule of Thirds in the art in the book?

Look into displaying something at your local county fair. It could be animals, drawing, gardening, sewing, baking, collections, photography, or talent. So many possibilities!

Research pictures of the famous artists hinted at in the book, and notice what they included in their photographs: Ansel Adams, Weegee (Arthur Fellig), Dorothea Lange, Louis Daguerre

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 6-8

BOOK TRAILER:

Niki Smith: <https://vimeo.com/555896149>

BOOKTALK:

Manuel is a witness to gun violence at his school when his art teacher is shot. Recovering is a struggle and “anchoring” is the technique that seems to be the most helpful for him. Spending time with his friends on the farm is a great anchor for him and offers a measure of stability. What becomes an unexpected source of healing is photography. Manuel has learned through using the camera on his mother’s old phone and is far better than anyone expected. Moving forward is a struggle for Manuel, but his friends and a camera lens lead him to the light at the end of the tunnel.

READ-ALIKES:

Bow, Erin. *Simon Sort of Says*. Disney Hyperion, 2023
Draper, Sharon. *Blended*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2018
Meyerowitz, Joel. *Seeing Things: A Kid’s Guide to Looking at Photographs*. Aperture, 2016
Puller, J.S. *The Lost Things Club*. Little Brown and Company, 2021
Warga, Jasmine. *The Shape of Thunder*. HarperCollins Children’s Books, 2021
Wolkenstein, M. Evan. *Turtle Boy*. Delacorte Press, 2020

RELATED WEBSITES:

Niki Smith: <https://www.niki-smith.com>
The Golden Hour Quizlet: <https://quizlet.com/891335024/the-golden-hour-flash-cards/>
70 Photography Activities for Kids: <https://tinyurl.com/253azyn9>
Talking With Your Child About Stress: <https://tinyurl.com/3xjs656m>
PTSD in Children: <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/ptsd.html>
County Fair: <https://tinyurl.com/3vfwyzy9>

REVIEWS:

Booklist, (December 21, 2021)
Kirkus Reviews (September 15, 2021)
Publishers Weekly (August 23, 2021)
School Library Journal (October 1, 2021)

Smith, Tommie. Barnes, Derrick & Anyabwile, Dawud. Victory. Stand! : Raising My Fist for Justice. Norton Young Readers, 2022

SUMMARY:

“Victory, Stand” is the powerful story of Olympic track star Tommie Smith from his childhood to his historic moment in the spotlight when he won the gold medal at the 1968 Olympics. Tommie Smith, along with author Derrick Barnes and illustrator Awud Anyabwile tell readers about using a worldwide platform to protest racial injustice with teammate John Carlos and the backlash that followed.

QUESTIONS:

What do you think you would have done if you were the other person on the podium with Tommie Smith and John Carlos?

Do you think there was a different way Tommie Smith could have protested racial injustice?

Put yourself in Tommie Smith’s shoes. How do you think he was feeling when he made the decision to raise his fist? How do you think he felt 1 year later?

Is there a way the Olympic officials could have managed this event better? Why did it take so long to change their decision?

If you won a gold medal at the Olympics, how would you use the platform?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

When I look at the picture of Tommie Smith and John Carlos on the podium I wonder...

If I were in the Olympics, the sport I would most want to participate in would be...

ACTIVITIES:

Have students read other titles from Derrick Barnes and Awud Anyabwile, then have them compare the stories and illustrations with “Victory, Stand!”

Have students read a story, article, or watch a short video about another athlete who broke barriers or fought for social change. Have students create their own format to retell their story.

Ask students to read about 3-5 people in the 1960s-1970s that were making big choices to protest racial injustices. Have them compare the events by creating a timeline. What do they notice about how the dates line up?

Listen to an interview with Derrick on The Yarn podcast.

After reading the book, have students watch the interview with Derrick Barnes and Tommie Smith. Is there anything new they learned? Has anything changed after hearing the author speak about his experience?

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 7-8

BOOK TRAILER/BOOK TALK:

Rhode Island Teen Book Award: <https://riteenbookaward.org/victory-stand>

BOOKTALK:

Put the [picture of Tommie Smith and John Carlos](#) on the podium on a screen for students to see.

1968 Olympics. Tommie Smith wins the Gold Medal for the 200-meter run. As he stands on the podium, he must make a decision that may change his life. He waits for the United States national anthem to begin. He raises his fist. This silent protest against racial injustice in the United States alters Tommie Smith's life forever. Read this graphic novel memoir to see how Tommie went from running against his sister in Texas to college track in California to the Olympics in Mexico City to becoming an activist for equal rights. This book is perfect for anyone who loves sports, history, or stories about making a positive change.

READ-ALIKES:

Abdul-Jabbar, Kareem. *Becoming Kareem : Growing Up On and Off the Court*. Little, Brown and Company, 2017

Kaepernick, Colin. *Colin Kaepernick: Change the Game*. Scholastic, 2023

Muhammad, Ibtihaj. *Proud: Living My American Dream*. Little, Brown and Company, 2010

Rapinoe, Megan. *One Life: Adapted for Young Readers*. Razorbill, 2021

Rappaport, Doreen. *42 Is Not Just a Number: The Odyssey of Jackie Robinson, American Hero*. Candlewick Press, 2017

Sheinkin, Steve. *Undefeated: Jim Thorpe and the Carlisle Indian School Football Team*. Roaring Brook Press, 2017

RELATED WEB SITES:

Tommie Smith: <https://www.tommiesmith.com>

Tommie Smith and Derrick Barnes Discuss Victory. Stand!: <https://tinyurl.com/6f22jd92>

Olympic Games, Mexico City, 1968: <https://tinyurl.com/4d9xvybe>

Mackin Community Interviews: <https://tinyurl.com/4782zvjj>

10 Young Racial Activists You Should Know: <https://tinyurl.com/42cyktm7>

20 Teen Activists Who Inspired Us To Do Good: <https://tinyurl.com/jazw4ksa>

REVIEWS:

Kirkus (July 15, 2022)

Publishers Weekly (July 4, 2022)

Soontornvat, Christina & Cacao, Joanna. *The Tryout*. Graphix, 2022.

SUMMARY:

Christina Soontornvat is starting middle school, but she's feeling apprehensive without her best friend Megan in her class. Christina is Thai American and Megan is Iranian American, but the majority of their school is white, and they both deal with racist bullying that the other students just don't understand. The two of them decide to try out for their school's cheer squad with the hopes that it will make them more popular, and maybe they'll even be seen as more "normal," too. Throughout the story, Christina examines her identity as the daughter of white and Thai parents who own a Chinese restaurant, as a Thai American girl, and as a potential future cheerleader. Although she and Megan don't make the squad, she gains the confidence to stand up to Tobin, the school bully, and begin following her passion as a storyteller.

QUESTIONS:

What is the biggest challenge you've overcome? How did you overcome it?

When Christina starts middle school, she notices that sports become a big deal. What are some major changes you notice this school year that are different from your last?

Christina learns it was fashionable for everyone to have long hair and wear bell-bottom blue jeans when her parents were young. What are some generational differences between you and your family members? What are some similarities?

Christina states that the cheerleading "tryouts were open to boys... but none signed up." Discuss other sports/activities that are gendered and ways they can be made more inclusive.

What is the most important thing Christina learns from trying out to be a cheerleader?

Christina and Megan face consistent bullying from Tobin, which they often have to handle on their own. Why didn't some of their classmates, teachers, or other community members stand up for them? What could the people around them have done differently to support them?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

The biggest challenge for Christina was...

The part I related to most was when...

The story I want to tell is...

ACTIVITIES:

Split into groups and make up a cheer routine for anything you want - your favorite sports team, video game, TV show, food, etc.

At the end of the book, Christina enters an impromptu speech competition. Have students write down speech topics on a piece of paper and put them in a bowl/jar. Make sure all topics are appropriate and something that anyone can speak on. Then have students volunteer to come up and pull a topic out of a jar to speak on after giving them a few minutes to prepare.

Invite a local high school cheer squad to your class to talk about what it's like to cheer, common misconceptions and other challenges they face.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-8

BOOK TRAILER:

Scholastic Book Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tsNvIpdVwY

BOOKTALK:

Middle school begins, and already everything is different - the school is bigger, the bullies are meaner, and Christina doesn't even have one class with her best friend, Megan. As the only two people of color in their school, they've always stuck together and stood up against bullies. Will trying out for the cheer squad strengthen their relationship, or will their friendship fall flat?

READ-ALIKES:

Dee, Barbara. *Unstuck*. Aladdin, 2024
Wang, Andrea. *Summer at Squee*. Kokila, 2024
Kim, Jessica. *Make a Move, Sunny Park!* Kokila, 2023
LaRocca, Rajani. *Mirror to Mirror*. Quill Tree Books, 2023
Moreno, Nina. *Join the Club, Maggie Diaz*. Scholastic Press, 2022
Chase, Paula. *So Done*. Greenwillow Books, 2018

RELATED WEBSITES:

Christina Soontorvat: <https://soontorvat.com/books/the-tryout/>
Growing Up in a Small Town in Texas: <https://tinyurl.com/mw58ufc6>
Get To Know...Christina Soontorvat!: <https://tinyurl.com/jy7a64ch>
Joanna Cacao: <https://www.joannacacao.com>

REVIEWS:

Publisher's Weekly (September 5, 2022)
Kirkus (August 15, 2022)

Warga, Jasmine. *A Rover's Story*. Balzer + Bray, 2022

SUMMARY:

A Rover's Story follows Resilience (Res), a Mars rover, from the moment he becomes aware of his existence. As a robot, Resilience should not experience human emotions. However, as he learns and grows fond of the scientists in his lab (Xander and Rania), he begins to incorporate human emotions into his vocabulary and perception, often sharing this capacity with the other robots. As the story unfolds, we see Res struggle with what makes him similar to Journey, another Rover, and different from Xander and Rania, the scientists who work closely with him. As Res matures, he comes to understand and appreciate his purpose.

QUESTIONS:

Through Sophie's letters to Res, we learn about the great sacrifice that Rania is making—torn between her passion for science, this important mission and time with her family. What advice would you give to Sophie? What advice would you give to Rania?

This story is mostly written in observational diary form, almost a stream of consciousness. What are your thoughts on this style of storytelling?

It's clear that Res is developing emotions that his sister rover Journey is not. She believes these emotions will make for poor decisions, what do you think? Will Res' emotions help or hinder his decision-making processes??

How does Res make sense of his encountered surroundings? What are the ways in which Res uncovers new words and emotions? Do you believe he is truly observing and learning?

What does Res mean when he says he is "never creating"?

From Sophie's letters, what evidence can we glean about Rania's relationship with her daughter?

How do memories of the lab and Xander and Rania help Resilience accomplish his mission in space?

What brings Resilience "hope" and strength throughout his space mission?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

If I had the chance to go to Mars, I would...

I want to know more about....because....

ACTIVITIES:

Pretend you are Sophie and write a letter to Perseverance, a current Mars Rover collecting data. Browse the internet for photos taken from a Mars Rover and write a description of the landscape on Mars.

Create a welcome home sign for one of the Mars Rovers.

Prepare a report for the group detailing the status of the current Mars Rover program.

Interest Levels: Grades 4-6

BOOK TRAILER:

Texas Bluebonnet Award: <https://tinyurl.com/3mhrz2uz>

BOOKTALK:

Meet Resilience, a Mars rover determined to live up to his name.

Res was built to explore Mars. He was not built to have human emotions. But as he learns new things from the NASA scientists who assemble him, he begins to develop human-like feelings. Maybe there is a problem with his programming....

Human emotions or not, launch day comes, and Res blasts off to Mars, accompanied by a friendly drone helicopter named Fly. But Res quickly discovers that Mars is a dangerous place filled with dust storms and giant cliffs. As he navigates Mars's difficult landscape, Res is tested in ways that go beyond space exploration.

As millions of people back on Earth follow his progress, will Res have the determination, courage — and resilience — to succeed... and survive?

READ-ALIKES.

Angleberger, Tom. *Fuzzy*. Amulet Books, 2016

Applegate, Katherine. *Odder*. Feiwel & Friends, 2022

Barate-Logstead, Lauren. *I Love You Michael Collins*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2017

Brown, Peter. *The Wild Robot*. Little, Brown and Company, 2016

Cheng, Jack. *See You in the Cosmos*. Dial, 2017

Kelly, Erin Entrada. *We Dream of Space*. Greenwillow Books, 2020

Ewing, Eve L. *Maya and the Robot*. Kokila, 2021

Sorosiek, Charlie. *Always Clementine*. Walker Books, 2022

Van Eekhout, Greg. *Cog*. HarperCollins, 2019

RELATED WEBSITES:

Jasmine Warga: <http://www.jasminewarga.com>

Q & A with Jasmine Warga: <https://tinyurl.com/yj93txy4>

Texas Bluebonnet Award Study Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/3t54599n>

Teaching Resources: <https://school.teachingbooks.net/tb.cgi?tid=85427>

First Chapter Friday: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7I5RwXp0Wp0>

NASA Mars Rover Explorations: <https://tinyurl.com/y3mru8dh>

Rover's Story Vocabulary: <https://www.vocabulary.com/lists/5lxmlmoe/rovers-story>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (September 15, 2022)

Kirkus (August 1, 2022)

Publishers Weekly (August 15, 2022)

School Library Journal (October 1, 2022)