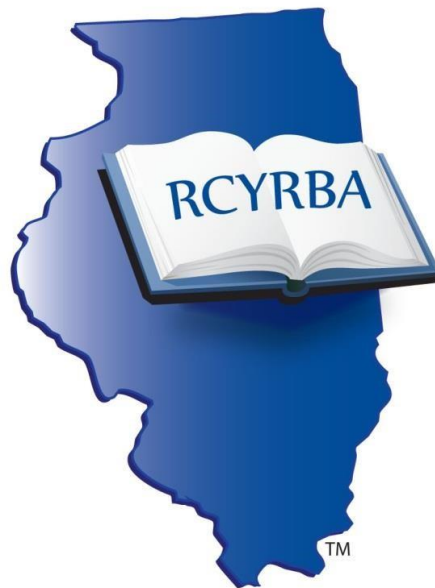


# LET'S TALK ABOUT BOOKS

Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award List 2020

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 first 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 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 2020. 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 2020 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 26, 2019 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 Committee would appreciate comments and suggestions concerning the packet. Please direct communications to anyone on the committee or to the editors of the packet.

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

**Atkins, Laura and Yogi, Stan. *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up*. Heydey, 2016.**

**SUMMARY:**

Told through a combination of free verse and objective narrative this is the story of Fred Korematsu, a Japanese American who defied the internment camp programs and created a case that went to the United State Supreme Court. While the free verse tells Fred's story, the narrative gives the background challenges faced by non-Caucasian populations at the time of World War II. This is the first in a series entitled "Fighting for Justice."

**QUESTIONS:**

What was the reasoning behind placing people in internment camps?  
Why did Fred believe that he was being treated unfairly?  
How did the opinion of the Japanese community regarding Fred's actions change over time?  
After the war, why were there jobs that Fred could not get?  
Have you ever spoken up when you saw something that wasn't right?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

I would define an American as ....  
The proper way to treat other human beings involves.....

**ACTIVITIES:**

Research the contributions of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans to the culture of the United States.  
Create a collage of images of the Japanese internment camps and the people who lived there?  
Create a presentation on the work currently being done by the American Civil Liberties Union.  
Pick a local issue that you believe needs attention and determine if there is an action your group can take to change it.

**INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-7**

**BOOK TRAILER:**

**District 158:** <https://tinyurl.com/yx8t3frj>

## **BOOKTALK:**

***“Sometimes people treat one another badly. Sometimes rules and laws are unfair. It can take one brave person, or a group of people acting together, to speak up and made a difference.”*** ---Introduction to Fred Korematsu Speaks Up

When Fred Korematsu was threatened with the prospect of being sent to an internment camp at the beginning of the second World War, he knew in his bones that it was wrong. He fled and was later caught. His was discriminated against by Japanese and non-Japanese communities. His case went all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States, and he lost. Through sheer force of will, Fred made a life for himself and almost forty years later, found himself a hero. Speaking up makes a difference!

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki. *Farewell to Manzanar*. Houghton Mifflin, 1973

Kadohata, Cynthia. *Weedflower*. Atheneum, 2006

Mochizuki, Ken. *Baseball Saved Us*. Lee & Low, 1993

Uchida, Yoshiko. *The Bracelet*. Philomel, 1993

Wolff, Virginia. *Bat 6*. Scholastic, 1998.

## **RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Laura Atkins:** <http://www.lauraatkins.com>

**Fred Korematsu Study Guide:** <https://library.miracosta.edu/korematsu/resources>

**Fred Korematsu:** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred\\_Korematsu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred_Korematsu)

**Fred Korematsu Institute:** <http://www.korematsuinstitute.org/homepage>

**Children of the Camps: Internment History:** <https://www.pbs.org/childofcamp/history>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Kirkus* (December 1, 2016)

**Beatty, Robert. *Serafina and the Black Cloak*. Disney/Hyperion, 2015.**

**SUMMARY:**

Serafina is a feisty twelve-year-old who secretly lives in the basement of the old Biltmore estate with her pa, hiding and catching rats. The time is 1899, the height of the Gilded Age. Once she witnesses a mysterious man in a black cloak on the prowl after children, her search leads her to the extravagance of the upper floors, despite her pa's warnings. There she meets and befriends Braeden Vanderbilt, a beloved nephew of the owners of the estate. Together, Serafina and Braeden continue the quest to stop the man in the black cloak before any more children die. Eventually this journey leads them into the woods, where Serafina learns surprising things about her heritage. *Serafina and the Black Cloak* is an exciting page-turner that is part adventure, part fantasy, part history, part mystery, and all absorbing and enjoyable.

**QUESTIONS:**

How do you think the Biltmore Estate played the role of another character in the story?  
Why do you think Serafina's pa thought it was so important for them to hide?  
Why do you think it was important for Serafina to meet her mother and learn about her identity?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

A secret I've kept before is....  
If I had some form of animal powers, I'd...

**ACTIVITIES:**

Study some traits of cats (night vision, sneakiness, etc.) and discover how there are hints throughout the book that Serafina is part cat.  
Look at pictures online of the Biltmore estate and take a virtual tour.  
Draw what you think the man in the black cloak would look like.  
Read some Southern mythology and note some ways it has influenced the book.  
Play a game of hide-and seek with your friends and note why you chose the hiding places you did.  
Study pictures from the Gilded Age and see if you can figure out why the book was set during this time.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 5-7

**BOOK TRAILER:**

**Robert Beatty Books:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFZvSzfnm6I>



## **BOOKTALK:**

If you like history, adventure, magic, or mystery, or all of the above, this is the book for you! It's set all the way back in 1899 at a historic mansion called the Biltmore Estate, which is \*huge\*--it has 35 bedrooms and 43 bathrooms, if you can imagine that! Serafina lives in the basement of the house and always has to hide in the shadows, since nobody knows she or her father are living there. However, one day, a mysterious man in a black cloak begins making children disappear, and Serafina feels like she must come out of the shadows to help. She is seen by a nephew of the Biltmore's during a fancy party, they become friends, and he joins her on this exciting journey that leads them all around the house and out into the woods. Serafina learns a big secret about herself in the woods. What is the secret? You'll have to read to find out!

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Auxier, Jonathan. *The Night Gardener*. Amulet Books, 2014  
Beasley, Cassier. *Circus Mirandus*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2015  
Johnson, Jaleigh. *The Mark of the Dragonfly*. Delacorte Press, 2014  
Kelly, Jacqueline. *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*. Henry Holt and Company, 2009

## **RELATED WEBSITES:**

Robert Beatty's website: <https://robertbeattybooks.com/author>  
Educator's guide: <https://books.disney.com/book/serafina-and-the-black-cloak>  
Biltmore Estate History: <https://www.biltmore.com/visit/biltmore-house-gardens/estate-history>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (July 1, 2015)  
*Kirkus Reviews* (May 1, 2015)  
*Publishers Weekly* (August 31, 2015)  
*School Library Journal* (June 1, 2015)

**Bowling, Dusti. *Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus*. New York: Sterling Children's Books, 2017.**

**SUMMARY:**

Aven spent the first thirteen years of her life in a small town in Kansas. The fact that she was born with no arms did not attract stares, awkward silences, or embarrassing questions. Everyone in town knew Aven and never thought about her lack of arms as a disability. When dad gets a job in Arizona, everything changes. Starting over again is by no means easy, but when she meets Connor, who has Tourette's Syndrome, they uncover some interesting secrets about her life.

**QUESTIONS:**

How are Aven and Connor's disabilities alike? How are they different?

How does an individual's attitude about his/her disability affect the way others see them?

How do you feel about Aven's parents making her do everything herself? How did it shape her attitude toward life?

How did Aven meet Zion?

What was the significance of the necklace Aven found buried in the dirt? How did it help her solve the mystery?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

Think about all the activities we do that involve one or both of our arms. How would you modify them if you had no arms?

Imagine a student with a disability like Aven's or Connor's starting as a new student at your school.

What kinds of things could you say or do to make their first days more comfortable?

Write a letter to your mom or dad explaining why you don't want to move to another state.

**ACTIVITIES:**

Invite a physical therapist into the classroom to talk about working with people with missing limbs.

Create a scavenger hunt and have students complete a list of tasks to accomplish with a partner. Students will not be able to use their arms.

Research the climate of Arizona and other desert habitats. What types of animals and vegetation thrive there? Why?

Create a desert terrarium in the classroom and have the students plant and care for different varieties of cacti.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-8.

## BOOK TRAILERS:

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

**Colby Sharp Book Talk:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lo8mBhHnFrU>

**Barnes & Noble author promotion:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5jj\\_iBDL2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5jj_iBDL2s)

## BOOKTALK:

Did you ever try to eat with your feet? Well, Aven Green is pretty good at it. She has no choice because she was born with no arms. Despite her disability, she is a very well adjusted 13-year-old. Aven lives in a small town in Kansas where she knows everyone at school, and they know her and never pay any attention to her lack of arms.

Aven's whole world turns upside down when her dad announces they are moving to Arizona to manage *Stagecoach Pass*, a rundown amusement park with a western theme. Aven is correct when she thinks it will not be an easy transition. She makes up outlandish stories about how she lost her arms to offset the stares and mean remarks. Things begin to look up when she meets a new friend. Connor has Tourette's Syndrome, but that doesn't bother Aven at all. Together they explore the hidden secrets at *Stagecoach Pass*.

## READ-ALIKES:

Auch, M.J. *One-handed catch*. New York: H. Holt and Co., 2006.

Bingham, Kelly. *Shark girl*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2007.

Bowling, Dusti. *The Momentous Events in the Life of a Cactus*. New York: Sterling Children's Books, 2019.

Lord, Cynthia. *Rules*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2006.

Sloan, Holly Goldberg. *Counting by 7s*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2012.

Van Draanen, Wendelin. *The Running Dream*. New York: Knopf, 2011.

Venkatraman, Padma. *A Time to Dance*. New York: Speak, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA) 2015.

## RELATED WEBSITES:

**Dusti Bowling:** <https://www.dustibowling.com/>

**Discussion Guide:** <https://www.dustibowling.com/discussion-guide>

**Sterling Publishing:** <https://tinyurl.com/yxf8a93c>

**Kids Health: Tourette's Syndrome:** <https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/k-tourette.html>

## REVIEWS:

*Booklist* (August 1, 2017)

*Kirkus* (July 1, 2017)

*Publishers Weekly* (June 19, 2017)

*School Library Journal* (May 1, 2017)

**Cartaya, Pablo. *The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora*. Viking Press, 2017**

**SUMMARY:**

Arturo Zamora's summer plans include hanging out with his crew on the basketball court, working at his Abuela's Cuban restaurant, and attempting to stay cool in the Miami heat. This year his plans heat up, with the arrival of Carmen, a cute family friend who moves into Arturo's apartment complex. As if that isn't enough, a pompous land developer rolls into town, hoping to make big changes to Arturo's neighborhood and way of life. Arturo will begin to discover who he is as he uses his voice to take a stand for his family's way of life.

**QUESTIONS:**

Why is Arturo happy to work at the restaurant the coming summer? How do his feelings change about working and the restaurant in general throughout the story?

Abuela gave Arturo a wooden cigar box. What did the box represent?

How did Canal Grove get its name?

Why does Carmen think it is a bad idea for Arturo to tell Abuela about the restaurant?

How does Arturo's family restaurant help shape the community?

How do differing ideas of what constitutes "progress", including gentrification, impact community?

**JOURNAL STARTER:**

If I were Arturo, I would explain that Abuela's restaurant should get the expansion over Wilfrido place because:

**ACTIVITIES:**

Choose one of the recipes from the book to make and share.

Find three Spanish phrases from the book and translate them.

Research the poet Jose Marti and read a few of his poems. Discuss why you think the author chose to highlight his poetry in the story?

Use the internet to find a local restaurant in Miami and write or draw an advertisement for it.

The Malecon is mentioned multiple times in Arturo's grandfather's letters. Research where and what the Malecon is and describe it in a poem.

The book talks about gentrification and how it will affect Arturo's neighborhood. Research communities in your region where gentrification may be happening and find any articles about how it is affecting their own community.

Imagine you are going to have to speak at a city council meeting to protest someone like Wilfrido. Write a speech to give at this meeting or make a protest sign to convince others of your stance.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 5-8

## **BOOK TRAILER:**

**Penguin Kids:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5t-Lujv36Wc>

## **BOOKTALK:**

Imagine your everyday life turned upside down over the course of a summer. Instead of chilling out by the pool with your crew, you are forced to do worst, most disgusting job at your family's business, all the while a beautiful, new, poet-loving, girl has moved in upstairs! To make matters worse, a bully businessman has decided to develop a fabulous new complex on the property where your family earns its living! Pablo Cartaya's story will have you cheering on Arturo to win a place in the heart of his community as well as the new girl, in the hopes of keeping him from being an EPIC FAIL!!

## **READ-ALIKES:**

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

Medina, Meg. *Merci Suarez Changes Gears*. Candlewick Press, 2018

Perez, Celia. *The First Rule of Punk*. Viking Press, 2017.

Torres, Jennifer. *Stef Soto, Taco Queen*. Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2018.

## **RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Pablo Cartaya:** <http://www.pablocartaya.com/>

**Jose Marti:** <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jose-Marti>

**Florida State Study Guide:** <https://tinyurl.com/y2mmjetd>

**Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award 2018-2019:** <https://tinyurl.com/yyxyvdvc>

**Traditional Cuban Food:** <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Algeria-to-France/Cuba.html>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Booklist:* (April 1, 2017)

*Kirkus:* (May 16, 2017)

*Publishers Weekly:* (May 15, 2017)

*School Library Journal* (May 2017)

**Connor, Leslie. *The Truth as Told by Mason Buttle*. Katherine Tegen/Harper Collins, 2018**

### **SUMMARY:**

Mason Buttle is a seventh grader who has a lot to deal with - excessive sweating, dyslexia, bullies and the deaths of his best friend, mom and grandfather. Mason's family has an apple orchard which has been neglected since his mom and grandfather died. Parts of the property were sold off to home builders bringing lots of new people into the town. Some of the new boys are bullies but another, Calvin, becomes great friends with Mason. A new neighbor's dog, Moonie, arrives and is like a ray of sunshine in Mason's life while a cloud of suspicion about his friend's death brings darkness. Then Mason's new friend, Calvin, goes missing and things really blow up. Two best friends missing with Mason the last to see them both means big trouble. Will Mason figure out where Calvin is? Could Calvin and Benny's accidents be related?

### **QUESTIONS:**

Mason talks about his problems reading as the words slide, swell or fade when he looks at them. Do you think his trouble reading and writing make him feel like he isn't smart, if so, what are some examples? During the novel, does Mason ever change his mind and start to see himself as an intelligent person? If so, what are some examples of Mason showing how smart he really is?

When Mason sees people in the town, he says they look at him with "sad to see you faces." What would make them look at him that way? Do you think they were right to treat him like that?

Lieutenant Baird questions Mason quite often about the events surrounding his friend Benny's death.

How does this make Mason feel? Can you give specific examples? The Lieutenant gave Mason a notebook to write in. How does Mason feel about that and why?

Near the end of the book, Mason figures out what Lieutenant Baird really thought about Benny's death.? Did Mason or the Lieutenant react differently to one another once the mystery of Benny's death was solved? If so, how did they behave?

Do you think Mason's Grandmother and Uncle supported and protected him well after Benny's accident? Why or why not?

Mason goes to the SWOOF when he is at school because he feels comfortable there. What does the social worker, Ms. Blinny, do to make him feel at ease and help him with his problems?

Mason and Calvin become good friends. How are they alike and how are they different?

### **JOURNAL STARTER:**

Mason uses the Dragon, a voice activated writing program, to help him tell his story. This is my story...

## ACTIVITIES:

Ms. Blinny is always crafting up something new in the SWOOF. Make rocks with character! Use paint, glitter, markers or any other materials to create a unique rock for yourself or to share with someone else. Ms. Blinny keeps it positive in the SWOOF with posters and other things. Gather materials like old magazines, etc. to create your own motivational posters, cards, etc.

Is there an anti-bullying or kindness club at your school or public library? Get involved, raise awareness and help make your school and neighborhoods safer, friendlier places.

Find an interesting recipe with one of the types of apples Mason grows in the orchard. Make the recipe to share with your family and friends.

Start a journal of your own to tell your life story.

Mason and Calvin paint images on the cellar walls. Research the Caves of Lascaux and look for Mason's auroch and Calvin's dead man. Draw or paint your own cave picture.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Ages 8-12 years

## BOOK TRAILER:

**One Minute Books:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvtvDYw7Hgl>

## BOOKTALK:

Imagine being a big, super sweaty, seventh grader who can barely read or write. Mason Buttle is just such a guy. He's pretty sure there's a big, black cloud of bad luck following him everywhere. Mason lost his grandfather, mother and recently, his best friend, Benny. Benny died when he fell from Mason's treehouse and now most of the people in town look at him with "sad-to-see-you faces." The local police lieutenant adds to Mason's worries as he is never satisfied with Mason's answers about what happened the night of the accident. If all this isn't enough, classmates Matt and Lance enjoy calling Mason butt face and lobbing apples at him with their lacrosse sticks. Mason's black cloud does have a silver lining though, he meets and befriends, Calvin, a boy, and Moonie, a dog. You'll want to read *The Truth as Told By Mason Buttle* to find out if the mystery of Benny's death is resolved and what, if anything, happens to those bullies.

## READ-ALIKES:

Graff, Lisa. *Lost in the Sun*. Philomel Books, 2015.

Howard, Greg. *The Whispers*. G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2019

Kelly, Erin Entrada. *Hello Universe*. Greenwillow Books 2017

Arnold, Elana K. *A Boy Called Bat*. HarperCollins Children's Books, 2017.

Philbrick, Rodman. *Freak the Mighty*. Blue Sky Press, 1993.

Weeks, Sarah. *Save Me a Seat*. Scholastic Books, 2016

## RELATED WEBSITES:

**Leslie Connor:** [www.leslieconnor.com](http://www.leslieconnor.com)

**BookPage Interview with Leslie Connor:** <https://bookpage.com/interviews/22275-leslie-connor-childrens#.XKUjHZhKiUk>

**Educators Guide:** <https://tinyurl.com/y2lt5uo2>

**Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award 2019-2020:** <https://tinyurl.com/yxgybnt9>

**Bullying:** [pacerkidsagainstbullying.org](http://pacerkidsagainstbullying.org)

**Apples:** [www.fruitsinfo.com/apples.php](http://www.fruitsinfo.com/apples.php)

**Lacrosse:** [www.uslacrosse.org/about-the-sport/history](http://www.uslacrosse.org/about-the-sport/history)

**The Dougy Center- The National Center for Grieving Children & Families:** <https://www.dougy.org/>

**Schneider Family Book Award:** <http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/schneider-family-book-award>

**Dyslexia:** <https://tinyurl.com/yy9sm4oy>

## REVIEWS:

*Booklist* (November 1, 2017)

*Kirkus Reviews* (October 15, 2017)

*School Library Journal* (November 1, 2017)



## **Gibbs, Stuart. *Space Case*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2014**

### **SUMMARY:**

It is the year 2041 and Dashiell Gibson is twelve and lives on the moon in a colony called Moon Base Alpha. He lives with his two scientist parents. The whole family is some of the first people to live on the moon. There are very few kids on the moon and Dash can't go on the lunar surface because he's too young. One day, Dr. Holtz, the head scientist, turns up dead. The night before his death, Dash overheard him talking about an important discovery. Dash suspects that Dr. Holtz's death is not an accident and he begins to investigate what happened. He works with different people on Moon Base Alpha. Eventually through footage from the airlock he discovers that Dr. Holtz was sending a message in sign language. Once Dash figured out what Dr. Holtz was trying to say he realizes that Mr. Grisan is the murderer. He killed Dr. Holtz because he didn't want Holtz to tell the world about the alien life form he discovered.

### **QUESTIONS:**

What is the nickname of the people who live on the moon?  
Who is Roddy and what is his relationship to Dash?  
What kinds of food did they eat on Moon Base Alpha?  
What language helped Dash to figure out that Dr. Holtz's death was murder?  
Why did Dash and Kira go out onto the lunar surface?  
Who makes up Dash's family?  
What was Dr. Holtz exciting news?  
Explain the final events of the book that exposed Dr. Holtz's murderer.

### **JOURNAL STARTERS:**

If I were going to live on the moon, the five items I would need to have with me are.....because....  
The challenges that Dash faces on the moon are like challenges that I face on earth in the following ways....

### **ACTIVITIES:**

Research how to become an astronaut. Determine what steps you would need to take to train and prepare for space travel.  
Pick a scene from *Space Case* and draw a picture that shows what happened.  
Find a picture that shows you about sign language. Learn how to sign a sentence about traveling to space or living on the moon.

### **INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-7

## **BOOK TRAILER:**

**Bluebonnet Book Trailer:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oySDQImg\\_IM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oySDQImg_IM)

## **BOOKTALK:**

Have you ever thought about what life would be like in the year 2041? Now try to imagine what it could be like to live on the moon. That would be pretty hard too! Well for Dashiell Gibson those things are a reality. He lives on a colony, called Moon Base Alpha. It is the first of its kind where humans live on the moon. He travels there with his scientist parents. Life is normal, until one day the leader of the colony, Dr. Holtz, mysteriously dies. Dash right away believes his death is murder, but others don't believe it! This book takes you into an out of this world mystery as Dash tries to discover what really happened to Dr. Holtz.

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Brown, Peter. *Wild Robot*. Brown Books for Young Readers, 2016  
Cheng, Jack. *See You in the Cosmos*. Dial Books, 2017.  
Korman, Gordon. *Ungifted*. Balzer + Bray, 2012  
McDougall, Sophia. *Mars Evacuees*. Harper Collins Publishers, 2015.  
Ponti, James. *Framed!* Aladdin, 2016.

## **RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Stuart Gibbs:** <https://stuartgibbs.com>

**Curriculum Guide:** <http://www.simonandschusterpublishing.com/stuartgibbs/assets/cg-spaced-out.pdf>

**What Would It Be Like to Live on the Moon?** <https://tinyurl.com/y4lsxwhb>

**NASA:** <https://www.nasa.gov/>

**The Reality of a Moon Colony:** <https://tinyurl.com/y5b7lw58>

**Signs of Alien Life:** <https://www.space.com/29041-alien-life-evidence-by-2025-nasa.html>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (September 1, 2014)

*Kirkus Reviews* (June 15, 2014)

*School Library Journal* (July 1, 2014)

**Gratz, Alan. *Refugee*. Scholastic, 2018.**

**SUMMARY:**

*Refugee* is the story of three families with one thing in common: escape to safety. Josef is trying to escape Nazi Germany. Isabel is trying to escape from Cuba and Mahmoud is trying to escape from Aleppo, Syria. These three young children are traveling and struggling to escape from their homeland. Theirs is a harrowing story of escape and betrayal. Although their stories are separate, taking place years apart, the common thread of hope is woven through each journey.

**QUESTIONS:**

What is the destination for each refugee family?  
How is each family leaving their homeland?  
What is Josef's father arrested for doing?  
Where is Josef's father sent as a result of his arrest?  
What is Isabel always listening for when she plays her trumpet?  
Why is Isabel and her family fleeing Cuba?  
How does Mahmoud keep himself out of trouble in Aleppo, Syria?  
What happens to Mahmoud's family to make them leave Syria?  
What is the path that Mahmoud's family must take to leave Syria?  
Each family encounters someone along their journey that helps them. Who were the significant helpers for each family?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

In *Refugee*, children are seen taking on the responsibility of adults. I have had to act mature and responsibly when....

**ACTIVITIES:**

Research the St. Louis (the ship Josef was on)  
Using Google Maps, follow Mahmoud's journey from Syria  
Listen to some Cuban music

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 5-8

**BOOK TRAILER:**

**Scholastic Book Trailer:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89sO3y75hF8>

## **BOOKTALK:**

Josef is a young Jewish boy whose family is trying to escape the Nazis in 1939 Germany.  
Isabel is a young Cuban girl whose family is trying to escape Fidel Castro's Cuba in 1994.  
Mahmoud is a young Syrian boy whose family is trying to escape Aleppo, Syria in 2015.

Will these 3 refugees escape the hatred and suffering they are trying to leave behind, or will it follow them on their journey to safety?

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Long, Loren, and Phil Bildner. *Home of the Brave*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2011.  
Naidoo, Beverley. *The Other Side of Truth*. HarperCollins, 2001.  
Patterson, Katherine. *The Day of the Pelican*. Clarion Books, 2009  
Pinkney, Andrea Davis, and Shane Evans. *The Red Pencil*. Little, Brown and Company, 2015.  
Senzai, N. H. *Shooting Kabul*. Simon & Schuster, 2011.

## **RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Alan Gratz:** <https://www.alangratz.com/writing/refugee/>

**Scholastic Discussion Guide:** <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plans/17-18/refugee-discussion-guide>

**Book Club Guide:** <https://nancymcginleymyers.wordpress.com/2018/04/29/discussion-questions-refugee>

**Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award 2018-2019:** <https://tinyurl.com/yyxyvdvc>

**What Does It Mean to be a Refugee? TED ed** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25bwiSikRsI>

**MS St. Louis:** <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/voyage-of-the-st-louis>

**Operation Pedro Pan:** <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/no-greater-love-operation-pedro-pan>

**UNICEF/Syrian Crisis:** <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/syrian-crisis>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Horn Book* (November/December, 2017)

*Kirkus* (June 1, 2017)

*Publishers Weekly* (May 22, 2017)

**Hautman, Peter. *Slider*. Candlewick Press, 2017.**

**SUMMARY:**

David Allen is an average middle child sandwiched between an older sister who is a perfectionist and a younger brother who struggles with autism. With two high-maintenance siblings in the family, Mom and Dad are often overwhelmed, distracted, or busy, leaving David to fend for himself. That's how he gets himself into an online auction bidding war, using his mom's credit card without her permission, and mistakenly spends \$2,000 when he only wanted to spend \$20. He has until her credit card bill arrives in the mail to earn enough money to pay her back. His plan? He will enter a series of eating competitions until he is eligible for one that has a big cash prize. After all, eating large amounts of food is David's special skill. Buoyed by the help of his two best friends and a lot of locals, David naively thinks he is ready to take on the sometimes-duplicious world of competitive eating. But this is not the only challenge he will face during the summer of his fourteenth year. For better or for worse David, his family and his friends will experience some big changes in their lives.

**QUESTIONS:**

What other choices did David have after he realized he'd made a mistake at the online auction?

David insists that he is only good at eating. What other things is David good at?

What reason did David's parents give for allowing him to participate in competitive eating? If you had been a parent, what would you have done?

What is "the zone" that David finds himself in during competition? When, if ever, have you found yourself in "the zone"?

What is a stereotype? How could Mr. Pigorino's use of a fake Italian accent be considered stereotyping?

Did you find the accent strange? Funny? Offensive?

Why do you think Egon Belt tells David "You don't want nothing to do with this business"?

Why do you think David should or should not have accepted payment for caring for Mal?

What does David's father mean when he says, "Sometimes you just have to do the wrong thing for the right reasons."? Do you agree?

What surprises are in store for the reader at the end of this book? How would you have ended the story?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

My position in my family is \_\_\_\_\_ (oldest, middle, youngest, only) child and I \_\_\_\_\_ (would, would not) change it because \_\_\_\_\_.

**ACTIVITIES:**

Research competitive eating contests in Illinois and in the U.S. Which competitions are open to kids? Practice eating mindfully. Try the raisin meditation in the **RELATED WEB SITES** section of this guide to get started. The exercise should take at least 5 minutes. How does this experience differ from the practice of competitive eating?

Create a wall of things like Mal does in this story.

Keep a journal like one that David would have kept during the 6 weeks he cared for Mal.

Learn all you can about autism, what causes it, and how this disorder can be managed.

Brainstorm with friends about some interesting and fun ways that you could earn money.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 5-8

**BOOK TRAILERS:**

**Texas Bluebonnet Award:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BI7zy9sBgoE>

**One Minute Books:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wtr6NitkJS0>

**BOOKTALK:**

14-year-old David Allen needs a lot of money, and quickly. A deal he made at an online auction site has gone terribly wrong. He thought he bid \$20.00 for an item but, because he misplaced a decimal, he is now on the hook for a lot more....\$2,000 to be exact. Worst of all, he used his mom's credit card for the transaction without her permission. Now he's got to come up with the money before her credit card bill arrives. His best friends Cyn and HeyMan can help him with about fifty bucks. He can also assist with the care of his younger brother, who has autism, for the twenty dollars a day his parents are willing to pay him. But David has another plan. His special skill is eating mass quantities of food and, with practice, he's sure he can do it in record time to win the big cash prize in a state fair eating competition. The problem is, there are some big-time professional eaters vying for the same prize. Can David eat his way out of this mess?

**READ-ALIKES:**

Banks, Tristan. *My Life & Other Stuff I Made Up*. Random House, 2011

Choldenko, Gennifer. *Al Capone Does My Shirts*. Puffin Books, 2006.

Dixon, Franklin W. *Feeding Frenzy*. Simon & Schuster, 2008.

Dumas, Alexander. *The Three Musketeers*. Pegasus Books, 2018.

Halverson, Deborah. *Big Mouth*. Delacorte Press, 2008.

Lord, Cynthia. *Rules*. Scholastic Paperbacks, 2008.

Montgomery, Sy and Temple Grandin. *Temple Grandin: How the Girl Who Loved Cows Embraced Autism and Changed the World*. HMH Books for Young Readers, 2014.

Stefanski, Daniel. *How to Talk to an Autistic Kid*. Free Spirit Publishing, 2011.

Stine, R.L. *The Big Blueberry Barf-off!* HarperCollins, 2008.

## RELATED WEBSITES:

**Pete Hautman:** <http://www.petehautman.com>

Pete Hautman Interview: <https://literaryfeaturessyndicate.com/2017/11/07/qa-with-slider-author-pete-hautman>

**Candlewick Press Discussion Guide:** [http://www.candlewick.com/book\\_files/0763690708.bdg.1.pdf](http://www.candlewick.com/book_files/0763690708.bdg.1.pdf)

**4H Clubs:** <https://4-h.org/about/what-is-4-h/>

**Autism New Jersey (download free books about autism for kids and teens):**

<https://www.autismnj.org/information-services/publications/>

**Autism Speaks:** <https://www.autismspeaks.org/>

**Centers for Disease Control:** <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/kids/autism.html>

**Forbes Magazine:** <https://www.forbes.com/sites/geoffwilliams/2016/06/22/from-burgers-to-sauerkraut-eating-contests-are-one-way-restaurants-can-get-your-attention/#5bcca47f11bf>

**Major League Eating Safety Rules:** <http://www.majorleagueeating.com/safety.php>

**Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest:** <https://www.nathansfamous.com/hot-dog-eating-contest>

**Raisin Meditation:** [https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/raisin\\_meditation](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/raisin_meditation)

## REVIEWS:

*Booklist* (July, 2017)

*Horn Book* (September/October, 2017)

*Kirkus Reviews* (Sept. 1, 2017)

*Publishers Weekly* (July 24, 2017)

*School Library Journal* (July 1, 2017)

**Hiranandani, Veera. *The Night Diary*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2018.**

**SUMMARY:**

Nisha's mother died when she and her twin brother Amil were born. The only way Nisha can reach out to her is through journal entries in which she pours out her heart. The diary was given to her by Kazi, the family's Muslim servant who tells Nisha that someone needs to keep a record.

The record that Nisha creates reflects her personal experience and a very important time in history. It is 1947 and India has just been freed from British Rule. Where there was one nation, there are now two, India and Pakistan. Nisha's family is half-Muslim and half-Hindu and the home they've known forever is no longer safe. They must leave everything familiar to them and create a new life.

**QUESTIONS:**

Why does Nisha share her thoughts and feelings through the diary?

How are Nisha and Amil alike and different?

How does Papa's treatment of Nisha and Amil change from before, during, and after the journey?

How does food and cooking play a critical role in Nisha's life?

How might Nisha's life have been different if her mother was alive? Would they have still moved to India?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

Nisha asks, "Can you hate half a person?" I would answer that question as follows.....

Nisha struggles to determine if it is the brain or the heart that make people love and hate. My answer to her would be.....

**ACTIVITIES:**

Invite someone with an Indian background to share some authentic Indian food with your group. If that isn't possible, try some recipes on your own.

Play a round of Cricket

Research some of the major figures in power during this time: Mohammed Ali Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League; Jawaharlal Nehru, leader of the Indian National Congress; Lord Mountbatten, the British Viceroy who was sent to India to help in the transition; and Mahatma Gandhi, former leader of the Indian National Congress.

Explore the idea of nonviolent resistance.

Using an online map, trace Nisha's journey. How long was it? If you traveled that far, where would you end up?

Research the different religions mentioned in the book: Hindu, Muslim, Sikhism. How does the front cover represent these different religions?



**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 5-8

**BOOK TRAILER:**

**Book Tasting:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urGFeI82XtU>

**BOOKTALK:**

Nisha never knew her mother, who died when Nisha and her twin brother were born. But she's spent twelve years in a happy home with her brother, her physician father, her grandmother and the family servant, Kazi. All that changes in 1947, when India, once under British rule, becomes independent and is split into two countries, India and Pakistan. Because Nisha's family is half-Hindu and half-Muslim, their old home no longer feels safe and they must flee to the new nation state of India as refugee. It's a dangerous trek and not for the fainthearted.

Before they leave, Kaia gives Nisha a diary and instructs her to tell the story. She does this in the form of diary entries addressed to her mother that tell the tale of the family's brave journey and eventual homecoming.

**READ-ALIKES:**

Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. *The War That Saved My Life*. Dial, 2015.

Kahn, Hena. *Amina's Voice*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2017.

Lai, Thanhha. *Inside Out and Back Again*. Harper Collins, 2011.

Saeed, Aisha. *Amal Unbound*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018.

**RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Veera Hiranandani:** <https://www.veerahiranandani.com>

**NPR Interview:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Q5Tzyjl8iU>

**An Educator's Guide to *A Night Diary*:** <https://tinyurl.com/yxp9qleq>

**Brightly's Book Club for Kids:** <https://tinyurl.com/y6zavccw>

**Indian Recipes for Kids:** <https://www.harighotra.co.uk/indian-recipes-kids>

**What Was the Partition of India?** <https://tinyurl.com/y4vc9tfl>

**Cleft palate:** <https://cleftline.org/>

**REVIEWS:**

*Kirkus* (January 1, 2018)

*Publishers Weekly* (January 1, 2018)

*School Library Journal* (January 1, 2018)

**Jamieson, Victoria. *All's Faire in Middle School*. Dial Books. 2017**

## **SUMMARY**

Imogene (Impy) has lived her whole life with her family at the Renaissance Fair where her parents work. This is the first time that she'll be attending a public school and living in an apartment like everyone else. When she starts middle school, she makes friends with a group of girls who seem really nice, but after a while, these girls start to make fun of where she lives, her secondhand clothes, the way her parents act, and what they do for a living. Impy then makes a decision that she knows is wrong and starts to feel bad and wonders how she can repair all the damage she has done.

## **QUESTIONS:**

Why do you think Imogene is letting her new friends influence her?  
Why do you think these girls are bullying Imogene?  
How do you think Imogene handles herself at the end?  
Why do you think that was hard for her to do?

## **JOURNAL STARTERS:**

Describe a time when you thought someone who was your friend started to make you feel bad about yourself.  
My parents never understand when I try to talk about...  
I should have apologized when....

## **ACTIVITIES:**

Create a trading card about each family member and list information about their role at the Renaissance Fair  
Create a journal entry from the perspective of each girl who bullied Imogene.  
Pick 5 important scenes in the book and 5 songs that connect to those scenes. Then create an album cover for them.  
Pretend you are a casting director and you are going to make a movie of the book. Create a casting call that explains how you want the actors to behave to become these characters. You can then choose real actors that would portray these characters for the movie.  
Be a TV or radio reporter and give a play by play report of an important incident in the novel. Have your script prepared along with any pictures that will help enhance your broadcast.  
Design either a character or an event timeline. Show the changes the character of your choice went through during the entire story.  
Story Bag: Put together a bag that contains at least 10 items that would be useful to or significant to a character in your novel. Include a description of each item and its relevance to the story.

Select a character from the book. Then select 10 frames from the graphic that you feel reveals the character's personality through words or images. You must explain what each piece tells you about the character. You must also tell which page the information came from.

**Interest Levels:** Grades 5-8

**BOOK TRAILER:**

**Penguin Middle School:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjxTjBaBK3A>

**BOOKTALK:**

Imogene (Impy) has lived her whole life with her family at the Renaissance Fair where her parents work. This is the first time that she'll be attending a public school and living in an apartment like everyone else. When she starts middle school, she makes friends with a group of girls who seem nice and very friendly. But sometimes looks can be deceiving and after a while, these girls start to make fun of things that Impy did not realize were so important. Such as where she lives, her secondhand clothes, the way her parents act, what they do for a living, or how she is in training to be a squire. But when Impy makes a decision that she knows is wrong and starts to feel bad about it, she wonders if she has the right to be in training as a knight at all. How can she fix this problem and survive middle school by being true to herself as well?

**READ-ALIKES:**

Broskol, Vera. *Be Prepared*. First Second, 2018  
Chmakova, Svetlana. *Awkward*. Yen Press, 2015  
Hale, Shannon. *Real Friends*. First Second. 2017  
Holt, K.A. *Rhyme Schemer*. Chronicle Books. 2014  
Libenson, Terri. *Just Jaime*. Balzer + Bray. 2019

**RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Victoria Jamieson:** <http://www.victoriajamieson.com>  
**Down the Hobbit Hole:** <https://tinyurl.com/y229y2ct>  
**Renaissance Fair:** <http://renfair.com>

**REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (September 15, 2017)  
*Publishers Weekly* (July 17, 2017)  
*School Library Journal* (September 1, 2017)

**Korman, Gordon. *Restart*. Scholastic Press, 2017**

**SUMMARY:**

Chase does not remember falling off the roof, in fact he does not remember anything about himself, and when he get back to middle school he begins to learn who he was through the reaction of the other kids- trouble is, he really is not sure he likes the Chase that is being revealed, but can he take the opportunity amnesia has proved and restart his life?

**QUESTIONS:**

Who does Chase like to make videos with?

Why does Shoshanna Weber dislike Chase so much?

**JOURNAL STARTER:**

If I could “restart,” I would....

**ACTIVITIES:**

Learn about the various kinds of amnesia.

“*The Ethan I Was Before*” by Ali Standish is an excellent book to compare and contrast with “*Restart*”. Both stories center on main characters who are starting their lives over. Both characters go through many changes over a major event that happened in their life.

Ask students to list ways in which human accomplishments are honored and then, make a “Medal of Honor” craft and present it to someone in their life. (E.g. accomplishment; Pulitzer Prize, Olympic Medal, etc.)

Make a video or start a video club at your school.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-8

**BOOK TRAILER:**

**Gordon Korman Book Trailer:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rf56kldZo78>

## BOOKTALK:

What if you got a second chance to really start fresh?

Nobody liked 13-year-old Chase Ambrose and he had burned too many bridges to count. But then Chase fell off his roof and when he regained consciousness, it was apparent that he was suffering from amnesia. That's a lot for anyone to cope with, but especially difficult for Chase. The new Chase is very different from Chase before the fall and it's a challenge for Chase and all the people around him.

Chase had been the school bully and a football jock who was ever pushed forward by his Dad. When he and his friends were arrested, words like *pattern of intimidations, zero remorse...pathway to criminality if left unchecked* were used. His friends think he'll just step into his former life, but he's drawn in another direction. It's to the geeks in the video club, many of whom he had estranged before the fall.

The most significant person is Shoshanna Weber. Chase had persecuted her brother Joel to the point that Joel was taken out of Hiswashee Middle School and sent to a boarding school. There is no love lost between Shoshanna and Chase.

But, when a series of events surrounding a Video Competition pairs Shoshanna and Chase that slowly begins to change.

As he attempts to change his life and make retribution, Chase looks at his past and is able to make a good start at a different future with his family and friends

## READ-ALIKES:

Anthony, John. *Mascot*. HarperCollins, 2018

Butler, Dori Hillestad. *The Truth About Truman School*. Albert Whitman & Co., 2008

French, Simon. *My Cousin's Keeper*. Candlewick Press, 2014

Korman, Gordon. *Schooled*. Hyperion, 2007.

Lenz, Niki. *Bernice Buttman, Model Citizen*. Random House, 2019

Palacio, R.J. *Wonder*. Knopf, 2012

Spinelli, Jerry. *Crash*. Knopf, 1996

Standish, Ali. *The Ethan I was Before*. HarperCollins, 2017

## RELATED WEBSITES:

Gordon Korman: <http://gordonkoran.com/>

Two Bookworms Discussion Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/y5fqpw3f>

Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award 2018-2019: <https://tinyurl.com/yxyvvdvc>

Memory Matters: <https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/memory.html>

8 Steps to Stop Bullying: <https://tinyurl.com/y42qpk39>

## REVIEWS:

*Booklist* (March 15, 2017)

*Publishers Weekly* (April 3, 2017)

*School Library Journal* (May 1, 2017)

**Moore, David Barclay, *The Stars Beneath Our Feet*. Random House, 2017**

**SUMMARY:**

Lolly is a twelve-year-old boy living in Harlem. His older brother was recently shot and his mother and he are struggling to deal with the death of Jermaine. Lolly deals with the problems and “crews” that are in his neighborhood daily. He has a passion for building with Legos. Lolly finds himself an escape from the daily struggle through the building with Legos with his new friend, Big Rose.

**QUESTIONS:**

Why do you think Lolly wants to keep Jermaine’s bed in his room?  
Why does Lolly feel like the game console that Rokit brought to him was a gift for another kid?  
Why doesn’t Lolly want to talk to Mr. Ali about what happened between he and his brother?  
How does Lolly’s challenge to Big Rose backfire on him?  
Big Rose keeps saying “I’m not autistic.” Why do you think she answers Lolly this way?  
How does Vega react after the run in with Harp and Gully?  
How has Lolly gotten all the Legos that they are using on their city?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

Steve says to Lolly, “If you only expose yourself to whatever everybody else does, you’ll never create anything new.” This statement means...  
Lolly escapes from the daily struggle with his Lego city. We all have struggles in our lives, I can escape or deal with those struggles by...  
The people in my life who are “stars beneath my feet” are....

**ACTIVITIES:**

Hold a Lego Tower Challenge  
Build a Lego City  
Lolly and Big Rose take an architectural tour of the city. Take a tour of your city or town and take pictures of the building you see.

**INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 6-8**

**BOOK TRAILER:**

**Liz Friend:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sv20ZnqOr88>

## **BOOKTALK:**

Lolly lives in a rough neighborhood and everyday he must be aware of the people around him. He can't show his phone or show off his new tennis shoes for fear of being jumped and robbed. His older brother has just been shot and killed in a gang related incident. Lolly has some tough choices to make. Does he follow his brother's path and find the protection of the neighborhood gang or does he forge his own path without the protection?

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Chase, Paula Jeanne. *Dough Boys*. Greenwillow Books, 2019  
Macaulay, David. *Castle*. Houghton Mifflin, 1977  
Magoon, Kekla. *The Rock and the River*. Aladdin, 2010.  
Magoon, Kekla. *The Season of Styx Malone*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2018.  
Maldonado, Torrey. *Tight*. Nancy Paulsen, 2018

## **RELATED WEBSITES:**

**David Barclay Moore:** <http://www.davidbarclaymoore.com/5101.html>  
**Random House Discussion Guide:** <https://tinyurl.com/yykfpps7>  
**Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award 2018-2019:** <https://tinyurl.com/yyxyvdvc>  
**Lego Club Activities:** <http://www.educatingyoungengineers.com/lego-club-activity-ideas>  
**Virtual Tour of New York City:** <https://www.youvisit.com/tour/nyc?pl=v>,  
**Poetry of Richard Chenevix Trench:** <https://www.poemhunter.com/richard-chenevix-trench/>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Horn Book* (November/December, 2017)  
*Kirkus* (June 15, 2017)  
*Publishers Weekly* (July 10, 2017)

**Perez, Celia. *First Rule of Punk*. Viking, 2017**

**SUMMARY:**

There are no shortcuts to surviving your first day at a new school—you can't fix it with duct tape like you would your Chuck Taylors. On Day One, twelve-year-old Malú (María Luisa, if you want to annoy her) inadvertently upsets Posada Middle School's queen bee, violates the school's dress code with her punk rock look, and disappoints her college-professor mom in the process. Her dad, who now lives a thousand miles away, says things will get better if she remembers the first rule of punk: be yourself.

The real Malú loves rock music, skateboarding, zines, and Soyrizo (hold the cilantro, please). And when she assembles a group of like-minded misfits at school and starts a band, Malú finally begins to feel at home. She'll do anything to preserve this, which includes standing up to an anti-punk school administration to fight for her right to express herself!

**QUESTIONS:**

How does the conversation between Malú and her father during chapter 2, give us insights into Malú's relationship with her mother?

Malú dresses very punk on her first day of school. What image is she hoping to present to her new classmates? What do her new classmates think of her? Provide support from the book. (chapter 6)

Malú keeps talking about being punk. What does that mean to her?

Several times, Malú's mom tells her to be more *senorita* and less punk. What does mom mean?

Chapter 11 – Describe Ellie's personality using support from the book.

In Chapter 13, Mrs. Hidalgo starts talking about punk bands from Mexico. This is related to one of the themes of this book. What is the message here?

At the end of chapter 14, Malú's mom tells her that she wants Malú to be "proud of everything you are." What is her mom trying to tell Malu?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

What makes me unique? And as a group activity to relate with this question, "What do we group members all have in common outside of school?"

Several times, Malú's mom tells her to be more *senorita* and less punk. Are you more than one thing?

Do not answer just yes or no! Explain yourself!

After chapter 23 Should the members of the band host an anti-talent show if they will get a punishment from the principal?

**ACTIVITIES:**

Research Frida Kahlo, the artist.

Make a collage to represent yourself, ala Malu.

Research must visit sites in Chicago and the nearby area and create a poster on it. Include hours of operation, cost if appropriate and what to do at that site.



Malú talks about food. You could have students bring in foods from their heritage or, if you are worried about allergies, have them bring in the recipe.

Have students go to the website below for the museum of Mexican Art in Chicago and research a painting or an artist. Get maps of Illinois (from the rest stops) and have students plan the bus trip to the Mexican Art Museum in Chicago. Have them use the scale to calculate the distance.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-7

**BOOK TRAILER:**

**Helen Bibler:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZN4PgOGjZI>

**BOOKTALK:**

The first rule of punk is: *Be Yourself*. This is easier said than done when you are starting a new middle school in Chicago and your dad is now one thousand miles away in Florida. Malú refers to her Mom as a “Super-Mexican” and is quite aware that she is expected to be a perfect *senorita*. However, she tends to identify more with her dad, who owns a vintage record store and shares a love of punk rock music with her.

Her biggest source of comfort is creating zines. In those creations and in her newly created middle school band, her creativity shines through. She won’t stay in anybody’s box. Taking a stand to ensure her band gets to perform for her school community shows her the value of the first rule of punk. She’s part her Mom, part her Day and all Malú!

**READ-ALIKES:**

Bowles, David. *They Call Me Guero: A Border Kids Poems*. Cinco Puntos Press, 2018.

Chmakova, Svetlana. *Awkward*. Yen Press, 2015

Jamieson, Victoria. *Roller Girl*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2015

Medina, Meg. *Merci Suarez Changes Gears*. Candlewick Press, 2018

Torres, Jennifer. *Stef Soto, Taco Queen*. Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2017

**RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Celia Perez:** <http://celiacperez.com>

**Carol Hurst’s Teacher’s Guide:** <http://www.carolhurst.com/titles/firstruleofpunk.html>

**Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award 2018-2019:** <https://tinyurl.com/yyxyvdvc>

**Florida Media Study Guide:** <https://tinyurl.com/y2jxa5e7>

**National Museum of Mexican Art:** <http://nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org>

**REVIEWS:**

*Kirkus* (June 15, 2017)

*Publishers Weekly* (August 7, 2017)

*School Library Journal* (June 1, 2017)

**Rappaport, Doreen. *42 Is Not Just A Number*. Candlewick Press, 2017**

**SUMMARY:**

Jackie Robinson is best known in American history as the first African American athlete to break the “color barrier” playing professional baseball for the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. What many don’t know is that Robinson was athletically talented in many sports having played baseball, basketball, football, tennis, as well as running track as a youth and in college. But athletic prowess wasn’t the only thing that led Jackie Robinson to a racially controversial player position with the Dodgers. Author Doreen Rappaport introduces readers to an exemplary athlete who was also well-educated, well-spoken, courageous, and self-controlled enough in the face of adversity to be called an American hero.

**QUESTIONS:**

Re-read the passage on page 9 that talks about International Day in 1930’s Pasadena, California? What was International Day? Was it a day of celebration? Why or why not?

Jack’s mother believed that “education was the one thing white people couldn’t take away from a person.” What did she mean by this statement? Do you agree? Explain your thoughts.

Although baseball made Jackie Robinson famous, it wasn’t the only sport at which he excelled. What other sports did Jackie play? What awards and records are accredited to him?

What barrier did Jackie Robinson break while in the Army? What was significant about this achievement?

Explain the events that led up to Jackie being “honorably relieved from active duty” from the Army during World War II?

Describe the difficulties Jackie and other Negro League players faced? How do you think they were able to maintain their dignity in the face of such humiliations?

Other than being talented at baseball, which other qualities helped Jackie Robinson gain a position with the Brooklyn Dodgers? Why do you think these qualities are important for any person to possess?

What actions by the Philadelphia Phillies and their manager Ben Chapman helped unite the Dodgers during Jackie’s rookie season?

Describe the change in attitudes of both the Brooklyn Dodgers players and baseball fans as the 1947 baseball season progressed. What factors contributed to these changes?

What is an odyssey? Explain how Jackie Robinson’s life story is an odyssey as started in the title *42 Is Not Just a Number: The Odyssey of Jackie Robinson, American Hero*.

**JOURNAL STARTER:**

Jackie Robinson is rightly called a hero in American history. Another hero I admire is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

## ACTIVITIES:

Define the following words:

Prejudice	Acquitted (p. 35)	Effusively (p. 62)
Indignity (p. 29)	Segregation (p. 36)	Punitive (p. 69)
Bigotry (p. 35)	Reproach (p. 53)	Epithet (p. 69)
Contemptuous (p. 35)	“Jim Crow” (p. 58)	Intimidated (p.

With a partner or small group brainstorm a list of questions a sports reporter might ask Jackie Robinson in an interview about his life and career. As you create the interview questions, write down responses Jackie would give the reporter based on what you read in *42 Is Not Just a Number*.

Use your interview questions and answers to create one of the following products:

1. Write a feature article about Jackie Robinson for a sports magazine such as *Sports Illustrated Kids*.
2. Create a live “in-person” television interview between Jackie Robinson and a sports reporter. Dress up for the parts and perform the interview for your class or use technology to film your interview to share with your class.

Use non-fiction books and the Internet to research other significant events in Jackie Robinson’s life that support the idea that Jackie Robinson was an American Hero. Look for biographical information as well as qualities of Jackie’s character that both complement and add to the information provided by author Doreen Rappaport in the book *42 Is Not Just a Number: The Odyssey of Jackie Robinson, American Hero*. Choose one of the following activities to share your research.

1. Use technology and presentation tool/app of your choice to create a timeline of the major events of Jackie Robinson’s life that illustrate his path from childhood to American Hero.
2. Create a colorful Infographic that helps define “American Hero” using Jackie Robinson as an example of such a hero. This may be accomplished with hand drawings or apps such as Canva or Piktochart.
3. Write a patriotic poem that shows how Jackie Robinson’s life story is the story of an American hero.

## INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-8

### BOOK TRAILER:

Elizabeth Lundeen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6Xmd9SYVRg>

### BOOKTALK:

*42 Is Not Just a Number*. For anyone who has followed the history of baseball or the history of the civil rights movement in American, *42* can only mean one thing: Jackie Robinson.

He was the first African American to play major league baseball in 1947. The story of his baseball career points out how deep discrimination ran and the courage of the brave men and women who stood up

against it. Jackie had everything in the book thrown at him but handled it all with the grace of a gentleman and the support of his family.

Watch a baseball game and appreciate the diversity you see on the teams. Then, pick up *42 Is Not Just a Number!*

### **READ-ALIKES:**

Bryant, Howard. *Legends: The Best Players, Games & Teams in Baseball*. Philomel, 2015

Burgan, Michael. *Breaking Barriers: The Story of Jackie Robinson*. Capstone, 2019

Golenbock, Peter. *Teammates*. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1990.

Green, Michelle. *A Strong Right Arm: The Story of Mamie "Peanut" Johnson*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2002.

Gutman, Dan. *Jackie and Me*. Scholastic, 1999.

Nelson, Kadir. *We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball*. Jump at the Sun/Hyperion, 2008

Robinson, Sharon. *Promises to Keep: How Jackie Robinson Changed America*. Scholastic, 2004.

Time for Kids: *Jackie Robinson: Strong Inside and Out*. HarperCollins, 2005

### **RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Doreen Rappaport:** <http://doreenrappaport.com>

**Candlewick Press Discussion Guide:** [www.candlewick.com/book\\_files/0763676241.bdg.1.pdf](http://www.candlewick.com/book_files/0763676241.bdg.1.pdf)

**Jackie Robinson Museum:** <https://www.jackierobinsonmuseum.org>

**Social Justice Books:** <https://socialjusticebooks.org/42-not-just-number>

**42 Facts About Jackie Robinson:** <https://tinyurl.com/y2r9qjms>

**Biography:** <https://www.biography.com/athlete/jackie-robinson>

**Biography Channel: Jackie Robinson:** <https://tinyurl.com/y6a4lhrg>

### **REVIEWS:**

*Kirkus* (June 1, 2017)

*Publishers Weekly* (July 10, 2017)

*School Library Journal* (July 1, 2017)

**Reynolds, Jason. *As Brave As You Are*. Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books, 2016.**

**SUMMARY:**

Genie and Ernie are about to embark on a great summer adventure together. For the first time, they are leaving their home in Brooklyn to go spend the summer with their grandparents in the country in Virginia while their parents go to Jamaica together to try to save their marriage. Once they arrive, Genie finds out that his grandfather is blind! It is hard to notice since his grandfather can do everyday activities without a walking cane or assistance. Every morning, Genie and Ernie must get up and help with the chores around the house and yard like scooping poop. One thing about Grandpop that Genie notices is that he never leaves the house, but why? Instead Grandpop has a room off the kitchen that he goes into and locks the door after he is done. What is in there and why does Grandpop keep it a secret? During the summer, Ernie is about to turn 14. Grandpop tells him that in order to become a man he must learn to shoot a gun. Ernie is very afraid and does not want any part of this, but Grandpop insists. Something goes wrong and Ernie and Genie's parents come back early and things start to heat up. How will the relationship between the family end?

**QUESTIONS:**

Why don't Grandpop and Dad get along?  
Why does Grandpop have his secret room?  
Why is turning 14 important?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

A time that I spent with my grandparents was .....

If I were Ernie turning 14, I would have.....

**ACTIVITIES:**

Draw a picture of Grandpop and Genie in the secret room.  
Keep a notebook of questions you have that you can research using Google just like Genie.  
List any items in the book that are significant to the story and why they are important. Example: model firetruck  
Draw a picture of Grandma and Grandpop's house and surroundings  
Make a list of all the things you have done that you consider "brave".

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-7

## BOOK TRAILERS:

**Heather Baucum:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMDrU1YrKHs>

**Karrie Powers:** <https://youtu.be/LeaE8Y-pNaQ>

## BOOKTALK:

Genie and Ernie have to go spend the summer with their grandparents in Virginia while their parents go on vacation to help save their marriage. When they arrive, Genie finds out that his Grandpop is blind and there is a secret in the family that no one wants to talk about. Genie and Ernie explore the countryside and meet a girl along the way that lives down the hill. Together they have some great adventures and when Ernie turns 14, Grandpop says it is time for him to be a man and learn how to shoot a gun. Ernie does not want to and when he does, something bad happens. What will happen at the end of this summer adventure? Read to learn more.

## READ-ALIKES:

Curtis, Christopher Paul. *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*. Delacorte, 1995

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

Magoon, Kekla. *The Season of Styx Malone*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2018

Watson, Renee. *Some Places More Than Others*. Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2019

Williams-Garcia, Rita. *Clayton Byrd Goes Underground*. Amistad, 2017

## RELATED WEBSITES:

**Jason Reynold's Website:** [www.jasonwritesbooks.com](http://www.jasonwritesbooks.com)

**Simon & Schuster** [www.simoneandschuster.com/authors/Jason-Reynolds](http://www.simoneandschuster.com/authors/Jason-Reynolds)

**Responsive Reads:** [www.responsivereads.com/responsive-reads-blog-posts/as-brave-as-you](http://www.responsivereads.com/responsive-reads-blog-posts/as-brave-as-you)

**Four Rules of Gun Safety:** <https://www.agirlandagun.org/training/4-rules-of-gun-safety>

**Operation Desert Storm:** <https://www.history.com/news/history-vault-operation-desert-storm>

## REVIEWS:

*Horn Book* (July/August 2016)

*Kirkus* (April 15, 2016)

**Sands, Kevin. *The Blackthorn Key*. Aladdin, 2016.**

**SUMMARY:**

In 1665, Christopher Rowe is an orphan apprenticed to the great apothecary master Benedict Blackthorn. Except for a few explosions here and there, his life is great. His master is kind and intelligent, and Christopher has what it takes to become a great apothecary himself. But when a mysterious cult starts murdering all of London's apothecaries, Christopher's world is turned upside down. He and his friends are in danger, and only a cryptic warning and some coded clues can stop the cult. It's up to Christopher to solve riddles upon riddles, codes within codes, and learn the truth about the Cult of the Archangel.

**QUESTIONS:**

- Who is the apprentice of Master Benedict Blackthorn?
- What did Christopher do in the beginning of the book that got him in trouble?
- What kind of metal did Christopher receive from Mr. Blackthorn?
- Why did Master Benedict hit and scold Christopher before sending him away?
- Who was able to take in Christopher after he was sent away from his apprenticeship? How could this affect his family?
- What was happening to many of the Apothecaries in the city during this time?
- How did Hugh end up dying?
- Who helped Christopher get an apprenticeship again?
- What really happened to Master Benedict and how did Christopher solve the mystery?

**JOURNAL STARTER:**

If I was to be an apprentice, I would like to be apprenticed to \_\_\_\_\_ in order to learn about \_\_\_\_\_

**ACTIVITIES:**

- Keep a personal journal from Christopher's perspective and chronicle what happens through the novel.
- Complete a character sketch on one of the characters in the book.
- Research some of the characters and historical groups mentioned in the novel, such as Joan of Arc, Galileo, Knights Templar, etc.
- Select 20 words from the text to write a five-line poem with 3 words on each line.
- Design questions for a character in the book and partner with another reader who will provide the answers.
- Write a letter to one of the characters in the novel.



**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 6-8

**BOOK TRAILER:**

**Kevin Sands:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSOJNWvuxQA>

**Simon and Schuster Canada:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=InHiOzdWRD0>

**BOOKTALK:**

What would you do if all you have ever known was suddenly taken away from you, and your world was turned upside down? Following a series of murders, an apprentice must solve puzzles and codes to figure out what and who is trying to destroy his world. Master Benedict Blackthorn is teaching Christopher Rowe all his secrets, including how to turn simple ingredients into powerful medicines, potions, and even weapons. As Christopher discovers a cult in London trying to kill all the apothecaries, it is up to him and his best friend, Tom, to figure out who or what is responsible for the murders and chaos.

**READ-ALIKES:**

Avi. *The Book without Words: A Fable of Medieval Magic*. Hyperion Books for Children, 2005

Hannigan, Kate. *The Detective's Assistant*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2015.

Hopkinson, Deborah. *The Great Trouble: A Mystery of London, the Blue Death, and a Boy Called Eel*. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2013.

Maile, Meloy. *The Apothecary*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2011

Scott, Michael. *The Alchemist: The Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamen*. Random House, 2007.

**RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Kevin Sands:** <http://www.kevinsandsbooks.com/>

**Book Guide:** <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-Blackthorn-Key/Kevin-Sands/The-Blackthorn-Key/9781481446525>

**Live Science: History of Alchemy:** <https://www.livescience.com/39314-alchemy.html>

**REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (September 15, 2015)

*Publisher's Weekly* (June 29, 2015)

*School Library Journal* (August 1, 2015)

**Shusterman, Neal. *Scythe*. Simon & Schuster, 2016.**

### **SUMMARY:**

In a futuristic utopian America, death has been conquered by science. Scythes are now responsible for 'gleaning' to control the population. Teenagers Citra and Rowan are chosen as apprentices to Scythe Faraday where they will learn the art of death for a year, and then one of them will become an official scythe. But as they learn more about the world behind the scythes, all is not as perfect as it appears to be.

Note: It is important to note that this book deals with many acts of graphic violence from suicide, mass murder, beatings, torture and other acts of violence. Awareness of young people's sensitivities and reading needs is always helpful when sharing books with them

### **QUESTIONS:**

How does the author bring this post-death world of Scythe to life?

What aspects of the world do you find the most interesting or troubling?

What makes this world familiar to our own world and what makes it different?

Do you agree with the statement: "Without the threat of suffering, we can't experience true joy"?

What are the consequences of a world without natural death?

Does the threat of death actual propel people to lead better lives?

What are some of the cracks in this perfect world? Would you want to live there?

Why does not wanting to be a scythe act as a prerequisite for the role, according to Scythe Faraday?

\What makes a 'good' scythe? What makes a 'bad' scythe? What makes Citra and Rowan good candidates?

How are the laws, attitudes and norms of the scythedom designed to create checks to unfettered power?

How do The Scythe Commandments (67) function to prevent corruption and yet, are doomed to fail?

How do Scythe Faraday and Scythe Goddard differ in their approaches to wielding their power?

How do the Tonists approach the world they live in? How do their beliefs conflict with the views of the scythes? Why do you think they oppose immortality? Why is sound so important to them?

Throughout the novel, Citra and Rowan grapple with what kind of scythes they want to be. Consider the following quotes that examine the roles of scythes:

"Those who wish to have the jobs should not have it, and those who would most refuse to kill are the only ones who should" (42).

"Never lose your humanity... or you'll be nothing more than a killing machine" (239)

"The thrill of the hunt and the joy of the kill simmers in all of us. Bring it to the surface and then you'll be the kind of scythe this world needs" (240).

Why does not wanting to be a scythe act as a prerequisite for the role, according to Scythe Faraday? What makes a 'good' scythe? What makes a 'bad' scythe? What makes Citra and Rowan good candidates?

Scythe poses fundamental questions about the nature of power, as Scythe Curie says, "Where power is concerned there are always those who find ways to grasp for it" (169). How are the laws, attitudes and norms of the scythedom designed to create checks to unfettered power? How do The Scythe Commandments (67) function to prevent corruption and yet, are doomed to fail? Why do scythes exist

above all human laws? How is society an accomplice in the scythe's work? How do Scythe Faraday and Scythe Goddard differ in their approaches to wielding their power? What makes Scythe Goddard's views so appealing to his followers? What do the following quotes reveal about Scythe Goddard's beliefs and approach to gleaning?

- "Make no mistake - we scythes are above the law because we deserve to be" (162)
- "We are now a force greater than nature" (202)
- "I am the highest power I know, and I like it that way" (228)
- "We are angels of death..." (255)

### **JOURNAL STARTERS:**

A quote from the book that was meaningful to me was.....because.....  
I felt the same way Rowan or Citra did when...

### **ACTIVITIES:**

Write a journal entry from the point of view of a scythe encountering our world, a scythe at the beginning of the formation of the scythedom, or a character whose point of view is not shared in *Scythe*.

Research modern innovations in artificial intelligence, surveillance and information collecting and consider the parallels between our world and the Thunderhead

Research the ethical implications of issues such as euthanasia, physician assisted suicide, etc.

### **INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 7-8.**

### **BOOK TRAILER:**

Neil Shusterman: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYPiWDEiVvU>

### **BOOKTALK:**

In the future, death no longer haunts us around every corner. Instead, through the power of science, we have found a way to defeat it. People are essentially immortal and live like it. But in order to maintain this utopian society, the population must be controlled by scythes, those with compassion and decency to glean people ethically and fairly. When teenagers Citra and Rowan are selected to become apprentices to Honorable Scythe Faraday, they discover the unknown world behind their own, one that separates them from everyone they love. In a twist of fate, they are set against each other, with one of them destined to become a scythe and the other fated to be gleaned by the victor. This action-packed thriller will keep you in suspense until the last page. If you are a fan of *The Hunger Games* or *Divergent*, or ever wanted to know what would happen if the world really was perfect, this is the book for you.

## READ-ALIKES:

Ahmed, Samira. *Internment*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2019.  
Anderson, M.T. *Feed*. Candlewick Press, 2002.  
Buckell, Tobias S. & Joe Monti (eds.). *Diverse Energies*. Tu Books, 2012.  
Dimaline, Cherie. *The Marrow Thieves*. Cormorant Books, 2017.  
Doctorow, Cory. *Little Brother*. Tor Books, 2008.  
McKinney, L.L. *A Blade so Black*. Macmillan, 2018.  
Pon, Cindy. *Want*. Simon Pulse, 2017.  
Shusterman, Neal. *Thunderhead*. Simon & Schuster, 2018.  
Shusterman, Neal. *Unwind*. Simon & Schuster, 2007.  
Westerfeld, Scott. *Imposters*. Scholastic Press, 2018.

## RELATED WEBSITES:

Neal Shusterman's website: <http://www.storyman.com/books/scythe/>

Reading Group Guide: <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Scythe/Neal-Shusterman/Arc-of-a-Scythe/9781442472433>

Walker Books Scythe Classroom Ideas:

<http://classroom.walkerbooks.com.au/home/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Scythe-Classroom-Ideas.pdf>

Four Questions with Neal Shusterman: <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-authors/article/75774-four-questions-for-neal-shusterman.html>

Our Favorite Fan Art from Neal Shusterman's Art of the Scythe Series:

<https://rivetedlit.com/2018/10/05/our-favorite-fan-art-from-neal-shustermans-arc-of-scythe-series/>

Thunderhead Author Neal Shusterman, As Interviewed By His Characters:

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/blog/teen/ithunderhead-author-neal-shusterman-interviewed-characters/>

BookPage Interview with Neal Shusterman:

[https://bookpage.com/interviews/20722-neal-shusterman-teen#.XJ\\_zKetKhUM](https://bookpage.com/interviews/20722-neal-shusterman-teen#.XJ_zKetKhUM)

## REVIEWS:

*Booklist* (October 1, 2016)

*Publishers Weekly* (October 3, 2016)

*School Library Journal* (October 1, 2016)

*Kirkus* (July 26, 2016)

**Van Draanen, Wendelin. *Wild Bird*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2017.**

**SUMMARY:**

14-year-old Wren Clemmens finds herself being sent away to a wilderness therapy camp by her parents. They are no longer able to deal with Wren's drug and alcohol use and violence, and they fear for her safety and those around her. Wilderness therapy camp is extreme, but they are running out of options. Wren is transported from her home in California, sometimes blindfolded, to an undisclosed location in Utah. She is "sentenced" to 8 weeks at this camp. She must learn basic survival skills if she is even going to have shelter and stay warm. Wren is livid, bitter and frustrated. Wren does not want to participate or belong here, and she thinks her parents are unbelievably mean and unfair. As time passes, Wren starts to learn the physical skills needed to live in the wilderness, and with that comes a growing sense of accomplishment. It isn't until Wren is sent on a 3-day quest away from the camp and is all alone that she finally faces what she has done, comes to terms with it and takes responsibility for her actions. Wren learns much more about herself over the course of the 8-week desert stay than she ever imagined.

**QUESTIONS:**

Why was Wren blindfolded on her way to the camp? Do you think this was extreme or necessary? Why? Why was rain so important to everyone at the camp? List ways it was both good and bad. What might be some consequences of not being able to start a fire? The one person in Wren's family with whom she was not angry was her little brother, Mo. What kinds of letters did Wren send to Mo? Why did Wren not tell Nico that she wasn't in high school? Did this end up being a good choice? How? Do you think Wren's older sister, Annabella, is really a narc or is she concerned about Wren's well-being? Does this change from the beginning of the book to the end? What special talent did others at camp see in Wren that she did not see in herself? At the end of the book, how do you feel that Wren is better equipped to make good choices?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

If I were forced to go to wilderness therapy camp, I would feel....  
The most important skills to master at wilderness therapy camp would be....

**ACTIVITIES:**

Start a fire using only the items Wren used at wilderness therapy camp.  
Hand write a letter to someone and send it "snail mail."  
Sleep outside under a tarp tent.  
Cook a one pot meal or foil packet meal over a campfire.  
Learn different bird calls. Go on a hike and see how many you recognize.  
Using brown craft paper and charcoal, create a mural like you might find in a cave in the Southwest U.S.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 7-8

**BOOK TRAILER:**

Stacey Conrad <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OO81jNDdT3M&t=5s>

**BOOKTALK:**

14-year-old Wren Clemmens is out of control. How did she get there? It is a gradual progression. She meets a girl named Meadow in sixth grade, and Meadow introduces her to smoking pot and shoplifting. Wren catches the eye of a “bad boy” high schooler named Nico. She is not in high school yet, but she doesn’t tell him that. Hanging out with Nico and his best friend, Wren starts drinking and running errands for Nico, which we later find out are illegal. Her erratic and uncontrolled behavior leads to a violent rampage at home. Her parents, concerned for everyone’s safety and running out of options, enroll her in wilderness therapy camp. She is taken from her home in California in the middle of the night to a desert in Utah. Wren is livid, and bitter, and blaming everyone else for her actions. She must learn wilderness survival skills just to live. She does learn the necessary skills to keep herself physically alive, but she also learns a lot more about herself during her 8 weeks in the desert.

**READ-ALIKES:**

Van Draanen, Wendelin. *Runaway*. Penguin Random House, 2006  
Van Draanen, Wendelin. *The Running Dream*. Penguin Random House, 2011  
Long, Denise. *Survivor Kid: A Practical Guide to Wilderness Survival*. Chicago Review Press, Inc., 2011  
Myers, Walter Dean. *Lockdown*. Amistad/Harper Collins, 2010  
Sachar, Louis. *Holes*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998

**RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Wendelin Van Draanen’s website:** [www.wendelinnvand.com](http://www.wendelinnvand.com)

**Therapy Gone Wild – American Psychological Association:**

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/09/therapy-wild.aspx>

**Why Wilderness Therapy Works – Psychology Today:**

<https://psychologytoday.com/us/blog/brainstorm/201712/why-wilderness-therapy-works>

**7 Critical Survival Skills to Keep You Alive in an Emergency:** <https://tinyurl.com/yypzwqr4>

**Birding – Audubon:** <https://www.audubon.org/birding>

**Native American Symbols, Pictographs & Petroglyphs-Legends of America:**

<https://www.legendsofamerica.com/na-symbols>

**REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (August 1, 2017)

*Kirkus* (June 15, 2017)

*Publishers Weekly* (July 3, 2017)

## **Wang, Jen. *The Prince and the Dressmaker*. First Second, 2018**

### **SUMMARY:**

Frances, a dreamer and a dressmaker, from the poor side of town wants to become a designer, equal to the woman who created costumes for a ballet she saw as a child. Given the opportunity to make a dress for a churlish teen Duchess who has an invitation to the Prince's ball, Frances generates something entirely new. Fired for producing such a wild dress, all seems lost until a night visitor invites her to create dresses for a secret patron who saw her work but prefers to remain anonymous. Frances takes on the challenge and the blindfold. When she accidentally discovers her new patron is Prince Sebastian, Frances rises to the occasion making dresses for the Prince who goes out disguised as Lady Crystallia. That is, until his father, the king, becomes ill and Sebastian grapples with the responsibilities of becoming a Prince regardless of his own desires.

### **QUESTIONS:**

What kind of friends did Frances & Prince Sebastian become? What were the characteristics of their friendship?

What qualities distinguish Frances as an artist?

Is it more important to be yourself, or accept the role you are born to fulfill?

What do clothes say about you?

### **JOURNAL STARTERS:**

When Prince Sebastian chose to accept his responsibility as a Prince, complete with getting married, he....  
Frances is an artist because ....

### **ACTIVITIES:**

Samantha Berger, the award-winning picture book author, challenged herself to take on a Dress-a-Day project where she would create art with found objects. <http://blaine.org/sevenimpossiblethings/?p=4593>  
Share examples of her art, provide a variety of found materials (readers can even contribute their own) and create fantastical designs: use scraps, buttons, feathers washi-tape, tissue paper, whatever you can find. To enhance this experience read *What If...* by Samantha Berger, illustrated by Mike Curato, (Little Brown, 2018).

Investigate Fashion magazines and books about historic costumes to inspire your own ideas. Create costumes for paper dolls using resources & ideas from <https://www.opdag.com/index.html>.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 6 - 8



## **BOOK TRAILER:**

**Sarah Joseph:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NaqKpw57jWs>

## **BOOKTALK:**

When you're a prince, you can do anything...or can you? Sebastian happens to like dressing up, as a character he creates, the fabulously dressed Lady Crystallia. Frances wants to design dresses more than anything, but for a working girl to keep her job, she must sew what her boss demands. That is, until she tries something new and gets fired for her work. A Prince who wants to dress up like a femme fatale and a girl who wants to be an artist might also have more in common than dresses.

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Bigelow, Lisa Jenn. *Drum Roll, Please*. Harper, 2018  
Hennessey, M.G. *The Other Boy*. HarperCollins, 2016  
Ostertag, Molly. *The Witch Boy*. Graphix, 2017  
Polonsky, Ami. *Gracefully Grayson*. Hyperion, 2014  
Stevenson, Noelle. *Nimona*. HarperTeen, 2015

## **RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Jen Wang:** <http://jenwang.net>

**For the Love of Books (Discussion Guide):** <https://tinyurl.com/y5vft8j>

**Forbes Interview with Jen Wang.** <https://tinyurl.com/y3fpyf55>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (January 1, 2018)

*Publishers Weekly* (December 11, 2017)

*School Library Journal* (December 1, 2017)

*New York Times Full Text Review* (March 25, 2018)

**Watson, Renée. *Piecing Me Together*. Bloomsbury, 2/14/2017**

**SUMMARY:**

Jade isn't looking for friends or popularity or "opportunities" to give her a hand up. She's looking for ways she can give back and pay it forward. Too bad her "well-meaning" white school is only interested in what they can offer her, and not what she has to offer. Fortunately, Jade finds her tribe and her voice in a place where she wasn't even looking. A mentorship program she is offered instead of the service trip she was working towards, with a mentor who doesn't have it all together. Not even close.

**QUESTIONS:**

What are some examples of how being black changes the way that Jade experiences the world compared to her white classmates?

What are some examples of how Jade's socioeconomic status changes the way she experiences the world compared with her classmates at St. Francis? What about in comparison to Maxine?

Jade initially thinks that she and Maxine don't have much in common, and that Maxine is a poor mentor. Why does she think this? Does Maxine change throughout the events of the book, or does Jade's opinion of her change?

When confronted with her white privilege during their shopping trip how does Sam react? Do you think she handled this situation correctly? What would you do in her position?

Jade is very invested in her art and is surrounded by friends with other talents. They find a way to use these talents to help someone else. What is a talent or interest you have that could be channeled to help others? How would you go about making that happen?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

The best opportunity I ever had was...

**ACTIVITIES:**

Choose one of the real people Jade includes in her art piece and find out more about them. Pick the person you know the least about and think about why you did not know about them before as you do this project. Create a collage that means something to you. Jade found the story of York fascinating and wanted to tell that story. She also saw news stories that connected and hit close to home. What could you bring to light with a visual representation?

What are some cultural opportunities that exist in your community? Poetry readings? Outdoor theatre? Gallery openings? Art Fairs? Find a free one and attend with your family or friends.

Draw or print a map of the town or city where you live. Where is the "bad" part of town? The other side of the tracks? Across the river? Indicate these areas on your map. Interview two (unrelated) people who have lived in the town for more than 20 years and try to find out if these unofficial borders have changed over time and why they exist. When did they start? Do they know why? What were they told about these areas and how were they created?

Find a news article about one of the events or people mentioned in the book. Examine the perspective of the author and the way the individuals are portrayed. Now find this story from a different source, on television, YouTube, through twitter or other social media. How is this perspective different? Write the headline for your own story about this event.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 7-8

**BOOK TRAILER:**

**Battlefield Public Library:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOoOV2z70OM>

**BOOKTALK:**

“Sam is not on the first bus, and for one moment - just one - I think, what if something happened to her? The whole story plays out in my mind - she will be on the news every day because she is a white girl, and white girls who go missing always make the news. I will volunteer and join the other searchers. We will search all the many places a body could be. Cathedral Park. Some hidden bush under the St. John’s bridge. For months people will tell girls and women to be careful and walk in pairs, but no one will tell boys not to rape women, not to kidnap us and toss us into rivers.”

These are the thoughts Jade has as she waits for her friend at the bus stop. Are these the kinds of thoughts you have as you walk home at night? As you wait for a friend? And if you did, what would you do about it? Jade decides to do something about it. But what will it cost?

**READ-ALIKES:**

Acevedo, Elizabeth. *The Poet X*. HarperTeen, 2018  
Sanchez, Erika. *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*. Knopf, 2017  
Stone, Nic. *Dear Martin*. Crown, 2017  
Thomas, Angie. *The Hate You Give*. Balzer + Bray, 2017

**RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Renee Watson:** <http://www.reneewatson.net>  
**Modern Mrs. Darcy:** <https://tinyurl.com/y2m8wfe8>  
**PIECING ME TOGETHER: A Discussion Guide About Race, Class, Gender, and Intersectionality:**  
<https://tinyurl.com/yy9hpw4d>  
**Renee Watson’s Address to Urban Teachers:** <https://tinyurl.com/y6zmesdw>

**REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (December 1, 2016)

*Kirkus* (November 15, 2016)

*Publishers Weekly* (November 21, 2016)

*School Library Journal* (January 1, 2017)