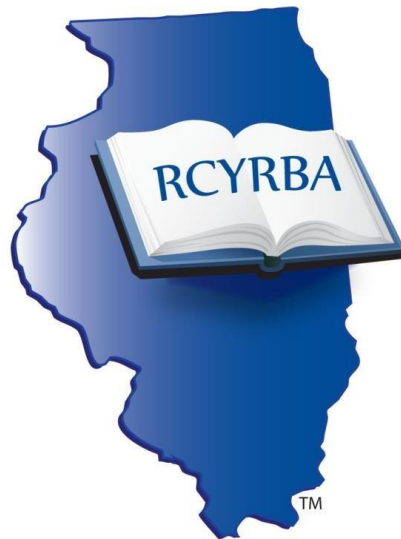


LET'S TALK ABOUT BOOKS

Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award List 2021

Suggestions for Use



Edited by Ellen Popit

Table of Contents

Contributors to 2021 <i>Let's Talk About Books</i>	2
INTRODUCTION	2
Abdul-Jabbar, Kareem with Obstfeld, Raymond. <i>Becoming Kareem Growing Up On and Off the Court</i> .	5
Arden, Katherine. <i>Small Spaces</i>	8
Auxier, Jonathan. <i>Sweep: The Story of a Girl and Her Monster</i>	11
Bigelow, Lisa Jenn <i>Drum Roll, Please</i>	13
Brimner, Larry Dane. <i>Twelve Days in May: Freedom Ride 1961</i>	15
Cervantes, Angela. <i>Me, Frida, and the Secret of the Peacock Ring</i>	17
Craft, Jerry. <i>New Kid</i>	19
Diaz, Alexandra. <i>The Only Road</i>	22
Johnson, Varian. <i>The Parker Inheritance</i>	24
Leatherdale, Mary Beth. <i>Stormy Seas: Stories of Young Boat Refugees</i>	27
Marsh, Katherine. <i>Nowhere Boy</i>	29
McAnulty, Stacy. <i>The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl</i>	31
Nielsen, Jennifer A. <i>Resistance</i>	34
Oh, Ellen. <i>Spirit Hunters</i>	37
Ramée, Lisa Moore. <i>A Good Kind of Trouble</i>	39
Reynolds, Jason. <i>Long Way Down</i>	41
Saeed, Aisha. <i>Amal Unbound</i>	43
Schmitt, Adam P. <i>Speechless</i>	45
White, J.A. <i>Nightbooks</i>	47
Yang, Kelly. <i>Front Desk</i>	49

Contributors to 2021 *Let's Talk About Books*

Lindsay Allison Kuczek	Jay Stream Middle School (Carol Stream)
Rose Marie Anichini	Northside Catholic Academy/retired (Chicago)
Sara Brunkhorst	Indian Trails Public Library District (Wheeling)
Erin Carr	Adler Park School (Libertyville)
Sandra Getowicz	River Trail School (Gurnee)
Ruth Gheysen	Fredrick School (Grayslake)
Liv Hanson	Chicago Public Library
Chrissy Harold	Jack London Middle School (Wheeling)
Sarah Hemrich	Nuttall Middle School (Robinson)
Andrea Lenaberg	Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School (Chicago)
Claire Lund	Gower School District #62 (Willowbrook)
Garnett Miller	Zion-Benton Public Library
Joan Mommsen	Belle Aire School (Downers Grove)
Alyssa Osterman	Oak Grove School (Green Oaks)
Christina Soberalski	Clinton Elementary School
Rikki Steinmetz	Pleasantdale School District (Burr Ridge)
Janet Thompson	Chicago Public Library
Christy Winemiller	Albion Grade School
Erin Wyatt	Highland Middle School (Libertyville)

Introduction

The Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (RCYRBA) is now celebrating its thirty second 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 2021. 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 2021 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 July 31, 2020 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!

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

SUMMARY:

Mention the name Lew Alcindor in a conversation about basketball greats and you might get a blank stare. The moniker Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, however, will certainly spark recognition. In his memoir of growing up, *Becoming Kareem, Growing Up On and Off the Court*, Abdul-Jabbar traces his journey as a shy child who towered over his classmates even in kindergarten to an all-star college and professional basketball player. He pays special homage to his “coaches” along the way, those people who guided him along his path. He also documents the rise of his social consciousness, his relationship with God, and his eventual conversion to Islam. With 16 pages of photographs and chapter titles like “How I Discovered I Was Black,” “Boarding School: A Good Boy in a Bad Place,” and “Girls and Me and Basketball Make Three,” even non-sports-minded readers will find something to relate to within Kareem’s journey.

QUESTIONS:

When Lew sees himself in his third-grade class photo he is surprised. Why?

What is young Lew’s view of religion? How does it evolve over the years? Why do you think he is ~~he~~ drawn to Islam?

Kareem never met James Meredith, yet Meredith’s life inspired him. How can someone you have never met have an influence on your life?

When the tall, thin Lew meets the massive Wilt Chamberlain at the YMCA gym he says he “felt like a pencil standing next to a mailbox.” What other examples of creative language can you find in this book? Kareem witnessed many historical events during his lifetime. How did they affect him? Which do you think had the greatest influence on his political consciousness?

Kareem describes being raised in a multi-ethnic housing project. How might this experience have shaped his view of the world and himself? How do you think the following experiences shaped the young Lew Alcindor?

- playing ball with his dad
- boarding school
- practicing with the debate team
- playing streetball
- being Catholic
- taking part in the Heritage Teaching Program Project for Harlem Youth

When have you felt rage about a social injustice like Lew does during the Harlem riots?

Coach Donahue’s use of the n-word has a profound effect on Lew. Why? What do you think of the coach’s explanation to Lew?

Why do you think Coach Wooden reacts as he does when he overhears his players discussing religion on the bus trip to South Bend? (pp. 269-274)

What did you learn from reading this book? How has it changed your ideas about race, politics, religion or education?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

The day I met _____, one of my personal heroes, this is what happened...

If I could change my name, I would change it to _____ because_____.

ACTIVITIES:

Watch some videos of Kareem's signature "Skyhook" shot. If you are able, try making this shot yourself.

Select an interesting, amusing, disturbing or sad scene or incident from the book and write it as Reader's Theater. Perform it for your class.

Research Islam. Use the read-alikes and websites sections in this guide to start.

Read the poem "*Incident*" by Countee Cullen (website below). What is the narrator's frame of mind at the beginning of the poem? What happens to him? What is the significance of the last stanza? Use the poem as a springboard to begin a small group discussion about race.

Write a letter to the person you will be ten years into the future. Describe who you are now and who you hope to become. You can talk about who and what has influenced your life, and your values and your challenges. What advice and/or questions do you have for your future self? When you have written at least a page, seal it in an envelope and write DO NOT READ UNTIL____ (select a date 10 years into the future). Store it away in a safe place until the date you have selected.

Examine Kareem's professional statistics on the NBA link in the website section. See if you can use the charts to obtain the following information (you may have to use some math):

-Calculate the total number of points (PTS) Kareem made during his career regular season.

-How many 3-pointers (3PM) did Kareem make during his entire career?

-In what categories and in which years was Kareem ranked #1?

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 6-8

BOOK TRAILER:

Summer Reading, 2018: <https://tinyurl.com/ybob7ybv>

BOOKTALK:

"The world knows me as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. I'm in the basketball record books under that name. I traveled the world as a US global cultural ambassador under that name. Google lists me about five hundred thousand times under that name. I was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame under that name. I received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Obama under that name....But that wasn't the name I started life with or grew up using. When I was a child, my friends and family knew me as [Lew] Alcindor....The road from Lew Alcindor to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar was dangerously twisting, overgrown with thick, thorny weeds, pocked with craters of muddy water and filled with snakes." Travel that bumpy road with basketball legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, come to know the memorable life coaches

who guided Kareem on his journey and discover what remarkable challenges he encountered along the way in his absorbing memoir. Watch the tall kid with the big ears develop into one of the U. S.'s greatest and most outspoken basketball stars in *Becoming Kareem Growing Up On and Off the Court*.

READ-ALIKES:

Gordon, Matthew. *Islam* (Understanding Religion). Rosen, 2009
Jordan, Michael. *For the Love of the Game*. Crown, 1998
Haskins, James. *The Story of Muhammad Ali*. Bloomsbury, 2018
Malcolm X. *The Autobiography of Malcom X*. Ballantine Books, 1999
McWhortner, Diane. *A Dream of Freedom*. Scholastic Nonfiction, 2004
Muhammad, Ibtihaj. *Proud*. Little Brown and Company, 2018
Rappaport, Doreen. *42 Is Not Just A Number*. Candlewick Press, 2017

RELATED WEBSITES:

Legends Profile: <https://www.nba.com/history/legends/profiles/kareem-abdul-jabbar>
NBA: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar Stats <https://stats.nba.com/player/76003/career/>
Skyhook Shot: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlB8X101kME>
Kareem's 7 Learned Lessons for Success: <http://becomingkareem.com/>
Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award: <https://tinyurl.com/yyxyvdvc>
"Incident": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TYn844thuM>
Harlem Riots: <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/harlem-race-riot-1964/>
Islam: https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/conversion/beginner_1.shtml
Langston Hughes: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/langston-hughes>

REVIEWS:

Horn Book (March/April, 2018)
Kirkus (November 1, 2017)
School Library Journal (November 1, 2017)

Arden, Katherine. *Small Spaces*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2018.

SUMMARY:

Eleven-year-old Ollie is very smart but prickly and disengaged with school as she struggles with the recent death of her mother. The story gets creepy right away when she saves an old book from a strange woman that she encounters at the creek who warns her to keep to “small spaces.” Ollie begins to wonder if the farm she reads about in the book is the same as the one she is currently visiting on her class’ fall field trip. The suspense builds as she interacts with the strange farmworkers and notices the overabundance of smiling scarecrows. The situation worsens when the bus breaks down and her teacher leaves to find help. Ollie must decide what to do when darkness falls, and a mist rises. Is there something out there or is she just imagining things? Will Ollie band together with her classmates or go alone into the darkness?

QUESTIONS:

If Ollie didn’t like Coco, why did she care that she was getting picked on?

Why wasn’t Ollie sorry when the rock hit Brian instead of the bully Phil? Why were people mean to Coco?

It was very bold of Ollie to take the book from the woman she encountered at the creek. What would you have done in that same situation?

What are your impressions of Ollie’s dad? Can you describe their relationship?

Why did Brian choose to stick up for Ollie when the principal questioned her about throwing the rock?

Why does Ollie accuse Brian of being sexist? What does ‘chivalrous’ mean?

Who is the Smiling Man? What did he do for Jonathan?

What makes Ollie think that the characters in the book and the owners of Misty Valley Farm might be in the same family?

In what ways do you think Ollie had changed after the death of her mom?

What were some of the details at the farm that didn’t seem right to Ollie?

What would you think if your broken watch suddenly started flashing ‘RUN’ with a countdown?

What do you think happened to the rest of the class who stayed on the bus?

What were some clues that the cozy cabin was not what it appeared to be?

What did Ollie learn in the farmhouse?

Who were the scarecrows at the farmhouse?

How did Ollie trick the Smiling Man and save her classmates?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

If I were in Ollie’s situation, this is what I would have done differently...

I might be willing to bargain with the Smiling Man for...

ACTIVITIES:

Research the history of scarecrows. Design an invention that could serve the same purpose.
Find out about local farms in your area. What is grown or produced there? Come up with questions for a phone interview to find out what a day in the life of a farmhand is really like.
Learn sewing basics by creating a mini scarecrow version of yourself using felt and/or fabric.
Use science experiments to discover conditions that create mist or fog.
The characters in *Small Spaces* were classmates but then became friends after spending time together.
Find someone in your class that you do not know that well. Spend 20 minutes getting to know them.
Afterward, share what you have in common with the class.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-8

BOOK TRAILER:

Ashley Goodnite: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYmUv9Ig9Gw>

BOOKTALK:

How would you feel if a boring school field trip took a creepy turn for the worst? What would you do if your bus broke down and you had a bad feeling that something was coming? Would you stick with your classmates or run? How would you keep it together when the numerous scarecrows started getting closer? Eleven-year-old Ollie must keep her wits as she navigates the dark woods in this eerie tale. Fans of mystery, suspense, friendship, and fantasy will enjoy this spooky adventure.

READ-ALIKES:

Auxier, Jonathan. *The Night Gardener*. Amulet Books, 2014
Beatty, Robert. *Serafina and the Black Cloak*. Disney/Hyperion, 2015
Baptiste, Tracey. *The Jumbies*. Algonquin Young Readers, 2015
Starmer, Aaron. *The Riverman*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2014
Stine, R.L. *The Scarecrow Walks at Midnight*. Scholastic Paperbacks; Reprint, 2010

RELATED WEBSITES:

Katherine Arden: <http://katherinearden.com/>
South Carolina Junior Book Award: <https://www.studysc.org/sc-book-awards/small-spaces>
Discussion questions and Apple Pie Bites Recipe: <https://tinyurl.com/y9bsbb9h>
History? Because It's Here: <https://tinyurl.com/y76zhq2f>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (August 1, 2018)

Kirkus: (July 15, 2018)

Publishers Weekly: (August 8, 2018)

Auxier, Jonathan. *Sweep: The Story of a Girl and Her Monster*. Amulet Books, 2018

SUMMARY:

Eleven-year-old Nan Sparrow is one of the best chimney climbers in Victorian London. She belongs to a cruel man named Wilkie Crudd. One day, Nan is caught in a deadly chimney fire, but she is miraculously saved by a protective golem named Charlie. Nan and Charlie learn important lessons about friendship and help each other survive, all while Crudd continues to search London for Nan's hiding spot, threatening her freedom and safety.

QUESTIONS:

Why do you think the other children dream of the Sweep when Nan is nearby?

What do you think about the way the girls at the school react to seeing Nan? Why do they treat her so poorly?

What does it say about Nan that she even brings a Christmas gift for Roger, after he's been so cruel to her?

Why does the author choose to include both poems about chimney sweeps -- one from the Songs of Innocence and one from the Songs of Experience?

What lesson can be learned from the way Miss Bloom helps the children organize a protest on May Day?

JOURNAL STARTER:

In the book, Toby says, "That's what it is to care for a person... if you're not afraid, you're not doing it right." Discuss how this statement supports the theme of the entire book.

ACTIVITIES:

Based on descriptions in the book, draw a picture of what you think Charlie looks like.

Imagine you were a journalist during this time, and that you were at the May Day protest. Write a newspaper article about what you witnessed.

Do some research about child chimney sweeps in Victorian London and write a persuasive paragraph about why this should or should not be allowed.

Nan and Charlie get to name all the rooms when they stay in the House of One Hundred Chimneys. Design a room and name it.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-7

BOOK TRAILERS:

Jonathan Auxier introduces Sweep: www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PabaaV_I EQ
Sweep Book Trailer (BPLibraryKids): www.youtube.com/watch?v=HV Vb4qak1iA

BOOKTALK:

Imagine having to squeeze inside a chimney that is only nine by nine inches square. And then imagine that chimney catches on fire, but you are saved by a magical golem. That's exactly what happens to Nan Sparrow in *Sweep*. The golem Charlie, made of soot and ash, is very protective of Nan, and she teaches him about the world. But her cruel old boss, Wilkie Crudd is searching for her, and if he finds Nan, she's in serious danger. Charlie vows not to let that happen, but at what cost?

READ-ALIKES:

Applegate, Katherine. *Crenshaw*. Feiwel & Friends, 2015.
Auxier, Jonathan. *The Night Gardener*. Amulet Books, 2014.
Oliver, Lauren. *Liesl & Po*. HarperCollins, 2011
Oppel, Kenneth. *Inkling*. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2018.
Snyder, Laurel. *Orphan Island*. Walden Pond Press, 2017.

RELATED WEBSITES:

Jonathan Auxier: <https://www.thescop.com/>
Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award: <https://tinyurl.com/yxgybnt9>
Golem: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/golem-Jewish-folklore>
Victorian Child Labor: <https://victorianchildren.org/victorian-child-labor/>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (August 1, 2018)
Kirkus (August 1, 2018)
Publishers Weekly (July 9, 2018)
School Library Journal (August 1, 2018)

Bigelow, Lisa Jenn *Drum Roll, Please*. Harper, 2018

SUMMARY:

Shy and insecure, Melly has allowed her best friend to take the lead in their friendship. Olivia convinced her to take up the drums and to attend rock and roll camp with her. Worst of all, the night before they leave for camp, Melly's parents announce they are getting a divorce. Olivia assures Melly that she will be by her side no matter what. That is, until Olivia meets Noel, a cute guitarist, and starts spending all her free time with him. Being abandoned by her best friend isn't so bad after all because the camp is filled with talented, fun girls. Especially Adeline, who Melly can really talk to and whose touch can make her heart buzz like a swarm of bees. Melly has never felt like this before and doesn't know what to make of it. Melly is determined to be a dependable member of her band, a good friend, and to speak up for herself.

QUESTIONS:

Would staring into someone's eyes, like Melly and David do help you to communicate better with them? Did your feelings about Olivia change throughout the book? When and why?

How do Melly's feelings toward Arjit differ from hers for Adeline? How do your feelings towards individual friends differ?

If you were in a band, what instrument would you play? Why?

Of all the situations where Melly swallowed her fear and just did something, which one was the most important?

How do the drums sing "louder and truer" than Melly believes she ever could herself? What things do you have that sing louder and truer than you can by yourself?

JOURNAL STARTER:

I overcame being a mouse like Melly when I...

ACTIVITIES:

Write about a time when you went to a new place where you discovered something about yourself.

Write the lyrics to your rebel song.

Listen to the songs that Melly's band play at the concert and imagine what they would sound like with the changes the Leftovers made to them. Write a review of one.

Design a camp with a theme. What are some of the "punny" names you would give to the cabins, the rest period, the swimming area, etc.?

Research the origins of the phrase "This guitar kills Nazis."

Research the history of rock and roll.

Write a letter to someone about things you wish you could talk to them about. Rip it up.

At the end of the book, Melly is about to tell her parents about Adeline. Write what you believe she said.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-7

BOOK TRAILER:

Illinois Reads: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpiyTuNI3uM>

BOOKTALK:

Although she didn't think she was very good at it, Melly loved playing the drums because she felt that they could say what she couldn't because she was so shy. But when she goes to rock and roll camp and she learns her parents are getting a divorce and her best friend isn't much of a friend after all. Melly wants to say how angry and afraid she is without the drums. Can her bandmates, the counselors, and a very special girl help Melly to express herself through music?

READ-ALIKES:

Blake, Ashley Herring. *Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2018

Dee, Barbara. *Star-Crossed*. Aladdin, 2017

Federle, Tim. *Better Nate Than Ever*. Simon & Schuster, 2012

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

Larson, Hope. *All Summer Long*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018

RELATED WEBSITES:

Lisa Jenn Bigelow: <https://lisajennbigelow.com>

Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award: <https://tinyurl.com/yxgybnt9>

Rainbow Books: <https://glbrt.ala.org/rainbowbooks/archives/1324>

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame: www.rockhall.com

Little Kids Rock <https://www.youtube.com/user/littlekidsrock>

REVIEWS:

Kirkus: (March 27, 2018)

School Library Journal (February 12, 2018)

Publishers Weekly (April 16, 2018)

Brimner, Larry Dane. *Twelve Days in May: Freedom Ride 1961*. Calkins Creek, 2017.

SUMMARY:

Twelve Days in May is an informational photo book about the thirteen people who took a daring bus ride from Washington D.C. to New Orleans, Louisiana where they faced racism and violence in May, 1961. The Freedom Riders took this bus ride as a form of nonviolent protest against segregation in the United States, specifically the South. Brimner presents the information in a clear, concise layout which is great for any reader to follow. Includes primary sources, a bibliography, source notes, and an index.

QUESTIONS:

Do you think participating in the Freedom Ride would have been a difficult decision? Why or why not?
The book uses a lot of pictures from this time period. How does seeing these pictures make you feel?
Do you like reading ~~the books~~ in this format?
How much do you think things have actually changed in America since 1961?
Look at the picture on page 62, what is your initial reaction to that picture?
Of all of the people involved in the Freedom Rides, who do you think risked the most? Why?
Look at the picture on page 57. Do you think Cowling was doing his job well?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

If I were on the bus while it was in Alabama, I would... (explain how you would react)
If I could go back to 1961, the first person I would talk to is... (talk about what you would say, questions you might ask)
The most interesting picture in this book is... (explain why)

ACTIVITIES:

Look at the drawing on page 52, "We don't want no troublemakers from the United States" / Herblock ([Link to library of Congress](#)). Write a letter to the editor regarding your feelings towards that drawing. Have students visit the Library of Congress to view more information about this drawing.
Use the images in this book to discuss primary sources. "Primary sources are the evidence of history, original records or objects created by participants or observers at the time historical events occurred or even well after events, as in memoirs and oral histories."
Use this book to examine the parts of an informational text. Include headings, images, bibliography, titles, drawings, source notes, index, and picture credits.
Read "*Sit-In*" by Andrea Davis Pinkney. Have students discuss how the two events are connected and how they may have affected each other.
Write a letter to Eugene "Bull" Connor explaining how his actions have affected race relations to this day.
What other books have received the Robert F. Sibert Informational Book award?

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-8

BOOKTALK:

Take a trip with me to the past! We are going to travel back in time to 1961 and join a harrowing bus ride to take a stand against racism and segregation along with a group called the Freedom Riders. Let's learn together about what happened during these stressful, yet important days in May of 1961. And you will get to meet some very interesting people along the way.

READ-ALIKES:

Beals, Melba. *March Forward Girl: from young warrior to Little Rock Nine*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018
Freedman, Russell. *Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott*. Holiday House, 2006
Lewis, John and Aydin, Andrew. *March. Book 1*. Top Shelf Productions, 2013
Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *Sit-In: how four friends stood up by sitting down*. Little, Brown, 2010
Rubin, Susan Goldman. *Freedom Summer: The 1964 Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*. Holiday House, 2014

RELATED WEB SITES:

Larry Dane Brimmer: <https://brimmer.com/>

Siebert Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghR85a_o2oE&feature=youtu.be

Freedom Riders: <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/freedom-rides>

Freedom Riders Then and Now: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-freedom-riders-then-and-now-45351758/>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (October 15, 2017)

Horn Book (November/December, 2017)

Publishers Weekly (September 18, 2017)

School Library Journal (September 1, 2017)

Cervantes, Angela. *Me, Frida, and the Secret of the Peacock Ring*. Scholastic Press, 2018.

SUMMARY:

This book is full of mystery, culture, art, and so much more. Paloma travels to Mexico City to visit her deceased father's birthplace. While there, she meets Lizzie and Gael who enlist Paloma in trying to find a ring that is missing. This ring is no ordinary ring. It is a very valuable ring that once belonged to a famous Mexican artist, Frida Kahlo. As Paloma starts her search for the ring, friendships start to form, secrets are revealed, and so is the history of this ring.

QUESTIONS:

What is Paloma's first reaction when she enters Mexico?

What does Paloma learn about Frida Kahlo and her life?

What are Paloma and her mom's plans while in Mexico?

Who are Gael and Lizzie and what friendships unfold throughout the story with Paloma?

What secret is Gael and Lizzie hiding from Paloma?

What is the importance of the peacock ring?

How does Paloma find out who took the ring and what is her step-by-step plan to reveal the true robber?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

If I were to visit any country, I would go to..... and why?

One famous person that I know a lot about is....

ACTIVITIES:

Create a self-portrait of yourself with pictures from magazines that represent you around it.

Research Frida Kahlo or another famous artist and learn why they created the art they did.

Create a collage of different languages for one specific word that you use a lot.

Write or illustrate a poem about a famous artist.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-5

BOOK TRAILERS:

Angela Cervantes: <https://youtu.be/eFYcQFpKTJM>

Texas Bluebonnet Trailer: <https://youtu.be/MD3QMxxkETo>

BOOKTALK:

Traveling down to Mexico to visit her deceased father's birthplace, Paloma becomes friends with local kids Lizzie and Gael. She also finds out that there is a mystery to be solved. A famous artist's ring is missing. Who is the culprit? What is the secret that Lizzie and Gael are not telling Paloma? *Me, Frida, and the Secret of the Peacock Ring* is a mystery full of adventure, culture, and art. What more can you ask for in a book?

READ-ALIKES:

Balliett, Blue. *Chasing Vermeer*. Scholastic, 2004, 201
Fitzgerald, Laura Marx. *Under the Egg*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2014
Konigsburg, E.L. *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. Atheneum, 1967
Novesky, Amy. *Me, Frida*. Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2010
Vance, Alexander. *Behind the Canvas*. Feiwel and Friends, 2016

RELATED WEBSITES:

Angela Cervantes: <http://www.angelacervantes.com/>
Scholastic Discussion Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/y882rmxt>
Texas Bluebonnet Award: <https://tinyurl.com/ydg62z9w>
Frida Kahlo: A Brief History: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfbLR15Bh74>
Frida Kahlo; Projects for Kids: <https://tinyurl.com/yckbohqz>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (February 1, 2018)
Kirkus (January 15, 2018)
School Library Journal (Dec. 1, 2017)

Craft, Jerry. *New Kid*. HarperCollins, 2019

SUMMARY:

Seventh-grader Jordan Banks loves nothing more than drawing cartoons about his life. But instead of sending him to the art school of his dreams, his parents enroll him in a prestigious private school known for its academics, where Jordan is one of the few kids of color in his entire grade.

As he makes the daily trip from his Washington Heights apartment to the upscale Riverdale Academy Day School, Jordan soon finds himself torn between two worlds—and not really fitting into either one. Can Jordan learn to navigate his new school culture while keeping his neighborhood friends and staying true to himself?

QUESTIONS:

Dad stresses the importance of a handshake as a way to make a good initial impression. Why is this so important?

Jordan's teacher announces that everyone has to either try out for a sport or the school musical. The school wants everyone involved. What do you think of this strategy?

This book deals with being "The fly in the buttermilk." Explain that phrase and what it means in Jordan's situation.

How does Jerry Craft use the art on pages 101 -103 to convey how Alexandra feels about being able to hang out with Jordan and Alex?

On p. 114 Jordan's grandfather talks to him about ordering food from the Chinese restaurant and Jordan later says he understands the metaphor. What is Jordan's grandfather trying to tell him?

This book deals with the assumptions we make about other people. Andy makes assumptions about Ramon preferring his mom's tacos to the school's, Drew and Jordan state that people assume they both like basketball. Drew gets upset because he assumes his secret Santa has made assumptions about him. It turns out she did not. She knew he liked basketball because of the posters in his locker and she picked KFC because "everyone likes KFC." Maury gives Drew a book on the Mean streets of South Uptown. Use this information to come up with the author's message about making assumptions. What would you suggest people ~~can~~ do to avoid that?

Look at pp. 142-145 when the Kirk and Jordan are hanging out together over winter break. They hadn't spent any time together during that fall semester and Jordan explains that he has so much work at school that he tends to just sleep on the weekends. If you look on p. 145, you can see that Kirk looks happy when he hears that. What assumption had he made about Jordan and their friendship?

On p. 151, Liam mentions that he never feels like he fits in at the school because no one gets him. Why doesn't Liam feel like he fits in?

On p. 217 -218, what does Jordan's sketchbook drawings say about being called the wrong name?

What is Jordan trying to tell Ms. Rawle on pp. 218-220? Does she hear him? What is she trying to tell him?

Do you think Jordan will transfer to art school? Provide support **for your opinion** from the book.

How is Andy so offensive? ~~Isn't~~ he just joking? What happens to Andy at the end of the book?

What makes Jordan feel like a "New Kid" at the end of the book?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

Have you ever felt that you were “falling without a parachute”? Please describe.
I felt that I didn’t fit in when

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-8

ACTIVITIES:

Look at a map of Manhattan and identify important landmarks.
List some unspoken rules at your school or among your group of friends.
Research some strategies about how to discuss difficult topics.
Create a storyboard that explains a challenge you are currently facing.
Make a poster that describes the qualities of a true friend.
Interview someone in your group who has been a “new kid.”

BOOK TRAILERS:

Shelf Stuff: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpmqqHl_zOA
HarperKids: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCy7gjdMvjU>

BOOKTALK:

Jordan Banks’ friends are all planning to go to the local middle school. Although Jordan’s heart is set on art school, his parents have chosen an elite private school for him. He knows no one and is one of the few people of color enrolled. Middle school is hard enough but navigating political correctness and microaggressions make this transition a real challenge for Jordan. He weathers them all, but not without some storms and plenty of lessons learned. See what makes him a real “New Kid.”

READ-ALIKES:

Hale, Shannon. *Real Friends. First Second*, 2017
Jamieson, Victoria. *All’s Faire in Middle School*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2017
Lai, Remy. *Pie in the Sky*. Henry Holt and Company, 2019
Watson, Rene. *Piecing Me Together*. Bloomsbury, 2017

RELATED WEBSITES:

Jerry Craft: <https://jerrycraft.com/about/>
In the Key of Books: <https://tinyurl.com/y9cd3cb4>

Young Hoosier Book Award: <https://tinyurl.com/yb76whz5>

HarperCollins: <https://tinyurl.com/y9hqyfsw>

Talking About Microaggressions with Kids: <https://tinyurl.com/ychedob2h>

Virtual Newbery Celebration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKrGHWats5k>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (November 15, 2018)

Kirkus (November 1, 2018)

Publishers Weekly (November 26, 2018)

School Library Journal (November 15, 2018)

Diaz, Alexandra. *The Only Road*. Simon & Schuster, 2016.

SUMMARY:

Jaime and his cousin Ángela are forced to flee their home in Guatemala in order to avoid being recruited by the Alphas, a powerful and violent gang that killed Ángela's brother, Miguel. As they make their way to the United States to live with Jamie's older brother, they must avoid gangs, drug dealers, and corrupt immigration officials. However, they also find unlikely friends in a priest who wears brightly colored Hawaiian shirts, an injured dog they nurse back to health, and other teenage travelers who aren't all that they seem to be.

QUESTIONS:

- Why do Jaime and Angela have to leave Guatemala?
- Who are the Alphas?
- What is Jaime's most important possession and how does it help him on his journey?
- What friends do Jaime and Ángela make and why do they decide to travel together?
- Why do the children name their dog Vida?
- Who has a worse experience on the train, Jaime and Ángela who ride inside the car, or Xavi and Joaquín who ride on top?
- Describe Padre Kevin. How is he different from other priests?
- How does Padre Kevin feel about El Gordo?
- How does Vida help them when they are crossing the Río Brava?
- What part of Jaime and Ángela's journey do you think is the most difficult or frightening?

JOURNAL STARTER:

If I were forced to leave home, with only a small backpack, I would take....

ACTIVITIES:

- Create a map of Jamie and Angela's journey.
- Write one last chapter of the book that details what happened next to Jaime and Angela.
- Using Jaime's drawings as a model, create a sketchbook that describes one of your experiences.
- Research gang violence in Guatemala. Determine if gang violence is a real problem.
- Look into organizations that support child immigrants and determine if there is a way you can help.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 6-8

BOOK TRAILER:

Alexandra Diaz: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LSmgOhJ-7Y>

BOOKTALK:

Can you imagine leaving behind your home, your friends, your family, and everything you've ever known to travel to another country? That is what happens to 11-year-old Jaime and his 15-year-old cousin Ángela. After Ángela's brother Miguel is killed by a local gang, the two must leave their home in Guatemala and escape to the United States in order to avoid a similar, or even worse, fate.

READ-ALIKES:

Bowles, David. *They Call Me Guero: A Border Kid's Poems*. Cinco Punto Press. 2018.
Grande, Reyna. *The Distance Between Us*. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2016
Guerrero, Diane. *My Family Divided*. Henry Holt & Co. 2018.
Hiranandani, Veera. *Night Diary*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2018
Lai, Thanhha. *Inside Out and Back Again*, HarperCollins, 2011
Venkatraman, Padma. *The Bridge Home*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2019

RELATED WEBSITES:

Alexandra Diaz: <https://alexandra-diaz.com/>

Reading Group Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/ybxl9sk7>

Spanish Version Reading Group Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/yd6gmnwg>

Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services: <https://brycs.org/>

A Flood Of Kids, On Their Own, Hope To Hop A Train To A New

Life: <https://tinyurl.com/ydbmx5mn>

70,000 Kids Will Show Up Alone at Our Border This Year. What Happens to Them?:

<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/06/child-migrants-surge-unaccompanied-central-america/>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (September, 1, 2016)

Kirkus (August 15, 2016)

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

SUMMARY:

Twelve-year-old Candice Miller's summer is off to a strange start. Candice's parents have recently separated, and she and her mother are moving into her late grandmother's home in Lambert, S.C. for the summer. Candice isn't sure what to expect from a sleepy town like Lambert, but when she uncovers a clue about a buried ~~town~~ treasure – a town treasure that cost her grandmother her career – life starts to seem a whole lot more exciting. With the help of new neighbor and fellow book lover Brandon, can Candice solve the mystery, expose a historic injustice, and clear her grandmother's reputation before summer ends? Author Varian Johnson explores themes of race and social justice and how past wrongs can still affect the present.

QUESTIONS:

What was the Parker inheritance? What does the town have to do to earn it? How will it be used? What would you do with the Parker inheritance? Was Candice correct in her belief that her grandmother wanted her to solve the puzzle?

Who was James Parker? Why did he make the choices he made? Would you have done the same? Why do you think so many people kept his secrets? Would you have done the same?

Many of the adults in *The Parker Inheritance* make mistakes. What are some of the mistakes ~~that~~ they make? What do you think it means to not allow your mistakes to define you? Does everyone deserve a second chance?

Candice and Brendan talk about lots of books. What are some of the books they mention? Have you read any of them? Why do you think the author uses these titles and not others? What does Candice mean when she says there aren't girl or boy books, but people books?

Adam Douglas tells Reggie "Here's the truth about people: We make a lot of assumptions about each other" (p. 288). What are some of the assumptions that people make in *The Parker Inheritance*? Have you ever made an assumption about someone that turned out to be incorrect? Where do you think it came from?

Prejudice is a major theme in *The Parker Inheritance*. What is prejudice? What are some examples of prejudice from the book? Have you ever encountered prejudice? What did you do? Would you do anything differently now? Have you ever been prejudiced? What can you learn? How will you do better next time? What can you do when you see prejudice?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

The past shouldn't always stay in the past because...

One thing I would like to know more about in my community is...

ACTIVITIES:

In *The Parker Inheritance*, Mr. Gibbs advises Brendan and Candice to begin their research at the Perkins Memorial Room, a community archive dedicated to Perkins High School. Research to find out when your school opened. Can you find a newspaper article or photograph of your school from the year it opened? What might be different? What stayed the same?

To solve the mystery, Candice and Brendan interview a number of older adults in their community about events that happened in 1957. What was your community like in 1957? Come up with a list of questions about what life in your community was like in 1957. Who are the adults you can interview?

The Parker Inheritance references a number of historic names and events including: Althea Gibson, Briggs vs. Elliott, Brown vs. Board of Education, Juneteenth. How many do you know?

Set a timer for 30 minutes. Use an online database or encyclopedia to answer the following questions about the individuals and events listed above: Who or what are they? Why are they significant? What are the major dates associated with them? Share your answers when the timer goes off. Why did Varian Johnson include them in the story?

The Langston Hughes poem, “I, Too, Sing America” appears in the book more than once. Read the poem again. What do you think it means? Why do you think Varian Johnson includes it? Discuss. Then write a response poem of your own.

Think of a landmark in your town: a park, a restaurant, a movie theater, etc. Then write a letter where each sentence is a clue that could help your teammates decipher the location. (See p. 249 for an example.)

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-8

BOOK TRAILER:

Mrs. Sanford’s Library: <https://tinyurl.com/y9r6zwhj>

BOOKTALK:

Have you ever wanted to hunt for buried treasure? Once upon a time, in Lambert, SC, Candice Miller’s grandmother was the first African American to be appointed city manager. But she staked her entire career and reputation on finding a mysterious buried treasure and she lost. Was she wrong? This summer, Candice and her mother are headed back to Lambert. When Candice finds a mysterious box in the attic – a box that contains a letter, the letter that started the treasure hunt – she can’t resist. With the help of new neighbor, Brandon, Candice sets out to find the treasure and clear her grandmother’s reputation. Will Candice and Brandon succeed in finding the Parker inheritance before summer’s end? You’ll have to read and find out! This book will put your detective skills to the test, but if you slow down, pay attention, and take some careful notes – you might just be able to crack the case along with them!

READ-ALIKES:

Bertman, Jennifer Chambliss. *The Book Scavenger*. Henry Holt & Company, 2015

Cartaya, Pablo. *The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora*. Viking Books for Young Readers, 2017
Ecton, Emily. *The Ambrose Deception*. Disney Press, 2018
Grabenstein, Chris. *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library*. Random House, 2013
Raskin, Ellen. *The Westing Game*. Dutton, 1978
Stone, Nic. *Clean Getaway*. Crown Publishing, 2020

RELATED WEBSITES:

Varian Johnson: <http://varianjohnson.com>
Iowa Center for the Book: <https://tinyurl.com/y8o5s5n3>
Publisher's Weekly: <https://tinyurl.com/y86h3hyc>
Young Hoosier Book Award: <https://tinyurl.com/y8jn45s9>

REVIEWS:

Horn Book Magazine (March/April, 2018)
Kirkus Reviews (January 1, 2018)
Publishers Weekly (January 22, 2018)
School Library Journal (December 1, 2017)

Leatherdale, Mary Beth. *Stormy Seas: Stories of Young Boat Refugees*. Annick Press, 2017.

SUMMARY:

This nonfiction book tells the story of five young refugees fleeing their countries by boat. Each of the young refugees comes from a different country and different time period. Middle-grade readers will learn how these brave people found asylum. The creative layout of the book includes many text features such as timelines, sidebars, and picture collages.

QUESTIONS:

- How would it feel to have to leave the only country you've ever known?
- What would you take with you on your journey?
- Which story did you relate to the most and why?
- What do you notice about the timelines in the book?
- Why did the illustrator use picture collages?
- What did you think of the colors used?
- Why did the author include the text boxes explaining where the people are now?
- How did the timelines help you understand the book?

JOURNAL STARTER:

I was most touched by the story of _____ because.....

ACTIVITIES:

- Choose one of the countries the young people are fleeing from and research it.
- Identify one of the countries the refugees find asylum in and research it.
- Create a map that shows all of the countries mentioned in the book.
- Research the people in the book to find out what has happened to them since the book was written.
- Create a photo collage similar to the one in the book that represents you and your family.
- Create a timeline of your life or a trip you've taken.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-8

BOOK TRAILER:

Annick Press: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7AIG1USvGQ>

BOOKTALK:

You have to leave your homeland, the country you were born in. War and poverty have become overwhelming. Your family decides to seek asylum in a new place. The best choice is by boat. Where will you end up? How long will it take to get there? How will the journey go?

READ-ALIKES:

Colfer, Eoin. *Illegal*. Sourcebooks Young Readers, 2018
Gratz, Alan. *Refugee*. Scholastic, 2017
Heiligman, Deborah. *Torpedoed*. Henry Holt, 2019
March, Katherine. *Nowhere Boy*. Roaring Brook Press, 2018
Roberts, Ceri. *Refugees and Migrants (Children in Our World)*. B.E.S., 2017.
Senzai, N.H.. *Escape from Aleppo*. Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman Books, 2018

RELATED WEBSITES:

Mary Beth Leatherdale: <https://www.marybethleatherdale.com/about>
Story Seas Lesson Plan: <https://tinyurl.com/yyctl683>
Save the Children: What is a Refugee? <https://tinyurl.com/ya5mvbd4>
What is a Refugee? Facts, FAQs, and how to help: <https://tinyurl.com/y7wmfnfe>

REVIEWS:

Publishers Weekly (March 27, 2017)
School Library Journal (April 1, 2017)

Marsh, Katherine. *Nowhere Boy*. Roaring Brook Press, 2018

SUMMARY:

This is the story of two boys whose lives collide.

Ahmed is a fourteen-year-old Syrian refugee. He and his family were forced to flee from Aleppo, Syria. Ahmad loses his father on the journey and arrives in Brussels, Belgium as the sole survivor of his family. He is truly all alone.

The last thing Max wants to do is move from his home in Washington D.C. to Brussels, Belgium and he isn't looking forward to repeating 6th grade. Max is a lonely and homesick thirteen-year-old boy who just wants to go home to spend time with his friends.

When Max and Ahmed's paths cross they find friendship where they least expect it.

QUESTIONS:

Ahmed's father volunteers to pull the dinghy. Would you be willing to jump in and pull the dinghy to safety?

Why do you think Max's parents waited until the day before school started in Brussels to tell Max he would be repeating 6th grade?

Why does Ahmed feel alone even though he is with Ibrahim Malaki?

Why doesn't Ahmed want to file for asylum in Brussels?

Why does Max feel like he is going to school in a "different century?"

Who is Max hoping to avoid in "Scoots?"

Why does Max associate Ahmed with Muslim terrorists?

How do Madame Pauline and Inspector Fontaine feel about the Muslim refugees?

How does Max feel during the lockdown?

What is Max's plan to get Ahmed into the School of Misery?

Do you think Max can trust Claire with he and Ahmed's secret?

How do Max's parents find out about Ahmed?

Why does Ahmed leave the safety of Max's basement?

Where you surprised by Ibrahim's announcement?

JOURNAL STARTER:

I would define a hero as

ACTIVITIES:

Find a detailed map of Brussels. As you read, mark the places in Brussels to which the boys travel throughout the city.

Create a timeline of the Syrian War.

Create a character map for Ahmed and Max, notice how they change throughout the novel. Max and Ahmed read stories from *Boy Heros*. Research a young hero. Map out Max and Ahmed's journey by train through Europe.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-8

BOOK TRAILER:

MacKids: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmb1SpkD7uA&t=8s>

BOOKTALK:

Would you help a young refugee who had no one else? Would you be brave enough to trust someone that you just met? Is it okay to break a rule that you don't think isn't right or fair? Max and Ahmed have to do exactly that. Max is a transplant to Brussels from Washington D.C. and he's not happy about being there and repeating sixth grade. Ahmed is a Syrian refugee who was separated from his father during their flight. He has no one. Can two young boys make a difference when even the adults aren't sure what to do?

READ-ALIKES:

Gratz, Alan. *Refugee*. Scholastic, 2017
Hiranandani, Veera. *The Night Diary*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2018
Leatherdale, Mary Beth. *Stormy Seas*. Annick Press, 2017
Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *The Red Pencil*. Little, Brown and Company, 2014
Senzai, N.H. *Escape from Aleppo*. Simon & Schuster, 2018

RELATED WEBSITES:

Katherine Marsh: <https://katherinemarsh.com/books/nowhere-boy/>
Katherine Marsh Interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acoc2ZPuTxg>
Macmillan Teachers Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/ycocesqc>
Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award: <https://tinyurl.com/yxgybnt9>
Unicef: How to Help Syria and Its Children: <https://tinyurl.com/y8zog83j>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (June 1, 2018)
Publishers Weekly (November 19, 2018)
School Library Journal (September 1, 2018)

McAnulty, Stacy. *The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl*. Yearling, 2018.

SUMMARY:

Lucy Callahan was struck by lightning when she was eight years old. She is now twelve, and while she can't remember the event, she lives with its repercussions daily- the lightning strike left her with acquired savant syndrome. What does that mean? She is a human math computer- super fast and super accurate. She lives with her Nana, and has been homeschooled since the accident, which is good because she has some obsessive-compulsive habits and also recites the digits of Pi to calm herself down when things become stressful. Unfortunately for Lucy, Nana has decided that Lucy needs to attend seventh grade at the local middle school in order to interact with children her own age. Lucy thinks this is a horrible idea. Nana says they can reassess after a year, if she has made at least one friend, joined at least one activity, and read at least one book. So, Lucy begrudgingly goes to public school. What follows is a tale of new friendships, a community outreach project, and one amazing dog, Cutie-Pi.

QUESTIONS:

Do you think same-age friends and interactions are important? What is Lucy missing out on by not going to a regular school?
What is a friend? Do you think Lucy's friends on her online math chatrooms can really be called friends?
How do Lucy's behaviors make school and friend-making difficult for her?
Why do you think Lucy wants to hide her math abilities from the people at school?
What are Lucy's, Levi's, and Windy's strengths? How does each help the others?
Why do you think Maddie is so mean to both Windy and Lucy?
Lucy feels bad after she stands up to Maddie--why? How would you feel if you were Lucy? How would you feel if you were Maddie?
What do you think of Mr. Stoker?
In many ways, Lucy feels different from regular kids her own age- how is she similar to them?
Cutie-Pi has a medical issue- do you think the way Pet Hut decides to handle her situation is fair?
The title of the book refers to Lucy's "miscalculations"- what does she miscalculate?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

If a girl like Lucy started attending my school, I would...
If someone treated me the way Maddie treated Lucy or Windy, I would...

ACTIVITIES:

Find out about acquired savant syndrome. Make a poster or Google Slide Show to share what you've learned.
Find out about obsessive-compulsive disorder. Make a poster or Google Slide Show to share what you've learned.

Contact a speaker from a local animal shelter and find out how animals are cared for.
Make a flyer with information to help an animal shelter adopt their animals/get volunteers/or get needed supplies.
Research ways kids can make a difference in their communities.
Try some math puzzles and share with friends. Create a booklet of your favorite ones.
Research lightning. What causes it? What does it do to things when it strikes? How have people who have survived lightning strikes been affected by the experience? How can people stay safe from lightning strikes?
Find out about homeschooling in Illinois- what do you need to do to show that you've been learning?
What are the requirements that need to be met in Illinois? What do you need to learn about in your grade?
What activities are there for homeschooled children to meet and socialize with other children (homeschooled or not)?

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-7

BOOK TRAILERS:

Texas Bluebonnet Award: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKBIaL9norM>
Jessica Scott Fitzpatrick: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWeqShUjp4o>

BOOKTALK:

What if you could do any math problem instantly? What if you needed to stand up and sit down numerous times before you felt like you could remain in a seat? What if you had been homeschooled, but found that you have to go back to your local middle school, where you know nobody? These are the concerns of Lucy Callahan. *The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl* is a work of realistic fiction about twelve-year-old Lucy Callahan, who must face these issues and learn what it means to make and be a friend.

READ-ALIKES:

Cavanaugh, Nancy J. *This Journal Belongs to Ratchet*. Sourcebooks, 2013
Jamieson, Victoria. *All's Faire in Middle School*. Dial Books, 2017
Martin, Ann M. *Rain Reign*. Square Fish, 2018
Mass, Wendy. *A Mango Shaped Space*. Little, Brown, and Co., 2003
Sloan, Holly Goldberg. *Counting By 7s*. Penguin Random House, 2013
Thompson, Lisa. *Goldfish Boy*. Scholastic, 2017

RELATED WEBSITES:

Stacy McAnulty: <http://www.stacymcanulty.com/mlg>
Stacy McAnulty Interview: <https://tinyurl.com/y7c625wx>

Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award: <https://tinyurl.com/yxgybnt9>

South Carolina Book Awards: <https://www.studysc.org/sc-book-awards/miscalculations-lightning-girl>

Texas Bluebonnet Award: <https://tinyurl.com/y9br9q59>

Young Hoosier Book Award: <https://tinyurl.com/y9rfqdbb>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (April 4, 2018)

Kirkus (March 15, 2018)

Publishers Weekly (April 2, 2018)

School Library Journal (February 1, 2018)

Nielsen, Jennifer A. *Resistance*. Scholastic Press, 2018.

SUMMARY:

Chaya Lindner is a Jewish teenager living in Poland during WWII. She is able to pose as a Christian and infiltrate the Ghettos to help the Jews trapped there. As the Nazis' goal of eliminating all Jews comes closer to reality, Chaya's role in the resistance becomes more and more dangerous. She risks her own life to save as many people as she can.

QUESTIONS:

What did Chaya's family do to survive after the Nazi government closed her father's business?

How did the Judenrat order change the lives of Jewish families?

What made Chaya a good courier for the resistance? What did she wear around her neck to reinforce this idea?

How were Chaya and her family originally separated?

What happened to Chaya's younger brother Yitzchak and her younger sister, Sara?

Knowledge is power is a popular expression. How was it a matter of life and death for Jews in the Ghetto? How did Chaya help this effort?

How did the attack on the Cyganeria Café change Chaya's role in the resistance?

Explain Chaya's constant struggle between being a proud devout Jew who follows the rules and saving her life and the lives of others.

Why did Chaya's parents refuse to leave their home in the Ghetto?

Explain how the relationship between Chaya and Esther changes throughout the story.

How could you apply Chaya's courage and determination to make a difference in a situation in our world today?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

If your parents were determined to stay in their home regardless of the danger, what would you say to convince them to escape with you?

If survival were the only priority in your life 24/7, how would you keep yourself alert and your attitude positive?

Chaya's attitude toward Esther evolves throughout the book. Explain how you could apply the example of their friendship to your own life.

ACTIVITIES:

Take a field trip to the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie or the Holocaust Museum in St. Louis

Invite a Holocaust survivor to speak at school.

Borrow materials from the Teaching Trunk program at the Illinois Holocaust Museum.

Research resistance movements in other European countries during WWII. How did the courage of resistance fighters change the course of war? Present your findings as a written paper, an oral presentation, a collage, or a video.

Research 20th Century Polish history and explain how the Holocaust impacted it.

Do a Holocaust novel study and assign a different Holocaust novel to each student. Present and compare findings.

Mordecai Anielewicz is mentioned and quoted in this book. He was a real person who fought in the resistance. Research his work and determine how much of the resistance described in this fictional book is historical fact. The Afterword of this book can give you a good start.

Research and compare the Holocaust to other genocide events.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 6-8

BOOK TRAILERS:

Jennifer Nielsen for Scholastic: <https://youtu.be/ATYCDrdFfnQ>

Jennifer Nielsen: <https://youtu.be/RyaTLggaT1U>

Scholastic: <https://youtu.be/-WXcUepOKWE>

BOOKTALK:

Teenager Chaya becomes a courier (messenger) ~~in~~ **for** the Jewish resistance movement in Poland. As the danger escalates, Chaya becomes more involved than ever. She risks her life on a daily basis to feed one mouth, cover one cold child with a blanket, or help one person escape from Nazi capture. As friends and family members continue to disappear, Chaya never gives up. Your heart will pound along with hers as she escapes **from** one close call after another. If you like historical fiction or just a great adventure, *Resistance* is the page-turner you have been waiting for.

READ-ALIKES:

Nielsen, Jennifer. *A Night Divided*. Scholastic, 2015

Neilsen, Jennifer *Words on Fire*. Scholastic, 2019

Freedman, Russell. *We will not be silent: the White Rose student resistance movement that defied Adolf Hitler*. Clarion Books, 2016.

Gratz, Alan. *Allies*. Scholastic, 2019

Gratz, Alan. *Prisoner B-3087*. Scholastic Press, 2013.

Leyson, Leon. *The Boy On the Wooden Box*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2013.

Lowry, Lois. *Number the stars*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1989.

Meyer, Susan. *Black Radishes*. Delacorte Press, 2011.

Morpurgo, Michael. *The Mozart Question*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Candlewick Press, 2008.

Palacio, R.J. *White Bird: A Wonder Story*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019. (Graphic Novel)

Roy, Jennifer. *Yellow Star*. Tarrytown, New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2006.

RELATED WEBSITES:

Jennifer Nielsen: <http://jennielsen.com/>

Jennifer Nielsen Interview: <https://tinyurl.com/ycgskfar>

Discussion Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/y9f3kv6c>

Illinois Holocaust Museum: <https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/>

History Channel/Warsaw Ghetto: <https://tinyurl.com/y8juhka>

REVIEWS:

Kirkus Reviews (June 15, 2018)

Publishers Weekly (June 25, 2018)

School Library Journal (August 1, 2018)

Oh, Ellen. *Spirit Hunters*. HarperCollins, 2017

SUMMARY:

Harper Raine is being uprooted from her childhood home to a brand new house and a brand new city. Soon after her family is relocated to Washington, DC she begins experiencing strange occurrences in her creepy and creaky new house. Her little brother Michael finds a new imaginary friend, Billy, and begins acting very strangely, almost like he is being possessed at times. Joining forces with her new friend, Dayo, Harper begins researching the house's history. The more Harper learns about the house and the odd family that once lived there, the more she begins to remember about a similarly spooky occurrence in her own past.

QUESTIONS:

Did you find this story creepy or scary? Why or why not?

Harper can see spirits or ghosts. Would you like to have the same ability? Why or why not?

Harper does not want to move from her home in New York to Washington, DC. Have you ever had to move to a new house or go to a new school?

Harper and Dayo become friends almost immediately. Why are they good friends with each other? Do you have any friendships that are similar?

Harper is able to solve her ghost problem with traditions and stories from her Korean heritage. Do you have any family traditions or stories that have helped you solve problems?

What is similar about Michael's ghost experience and Harper's experience when she was younger? What is different?

When Billy locks Harper in the basement she learns something about herself from a dream she has. How does this change the story?

Harper's parents think that the strange things that are happening in their new house, and that happened when Harper was younger, can be explained by ordinary causes. Why do you think they do not believe the cause is supernatural?

Harper is surprised to learn that her grandmother is a mudang (shaman) who is the spirit hunter that Mrs. Devereux promised. Were you also surprised to learn this information?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

If I had a "imaginary friend" he/she would . . .

ACTIVITIES:

Write a ghost story that could be told around a campfire.

Read about the history of the Woodlawn Cemetery in Washington, DC.

Create your own book trailer using iMovie or Animoto.

Present the Reader's Theater version of Spirit Hunters: <https://tinyurl.com/y94aam9w>
Make and taste Peperos: <https://eugeniekitchen.com/pepero/>

INTEREST LEVEL: Grades 4-7

BOOK TRAILER:

Shelf Stuff, Official Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_jZeh0k2MY

BOOKTALK:

When Harper Raine and her family move into their new house in Washington, D.C. she immediately feels like there is something evil lurking there. At first, she just thinks that the house itself is creepy and rumored to be haunted but then strange things begin happening and her little brother begins acting less like himself. Michael has found a new “imaginary friend” Billy and the more time Michael spends with Billy, the odder his behavior becomes. Over time Harper begins to regain her memories of the “accidents” that befell her years before and realizes there was nothing accidental about what happened to her. Will Harper be able to save her brother before the same things happen to him?

READ-ALIKES:

Baptiste, Tracey. *The Jumbies*. Algonquin Young Reader, 2015
Bell, Alice. *Frozen Charlotte*. Scholastic Press, 2016
Black, Holly. *Doll Bones*. Doubleday Children's, 2013.
Kidd, Ronald. *Room of Shadows*. Albert Whitman & Company, 2017
Schwab, Victoria. *City of Ghosts*. Scholastic Press, 2018.
Stroud, Jonathan. *Lockwood & Co.* series. Disney-Hyperion, 2013.

RELATED WEBSITES:

Ellen Oh: <https://www.ellenoh.com/>
Colorín colorado!: <https://www.colorincolorado.org/author/ellen-oh>
Teaching Books : <https://www.teachingbooks.net/tb.cgi?tid=55751>
Texas Bluebonnet Award: <https://texasbluebonnetaward2019.wordpress.com/spirit-hunters/>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (May 1, 2017)
Kirkus (May 15, 2017)
School Library Journal (May 1, 2017)

Ramée, Lisa Moore. *A Good Kind of Trouble*. Balzer & Bray, 2019

SUMMARY:

Shayla and her two best friends are starting middle school. They have plans to be the best friends on this new journey. However, the rules in middle school seem to have changed from elementary. On top of the typical middle school angst of friendship and crushes, Shayla is struggling with kids at school saying she isn't "black enough." After attending a protest, Shayla starts to relate to the Black Lives Matter movement. Shayla has always been a rule follower but when she is given an ultimatum, she has to decide if some rules are meant to be broken.

QUESTIONS:

What do Shayla and her friends call themselves and why?
What happens to Shayla in English class that makes her uncomfortable?
What is the command game?
How would you describe Shayla's mom and dad?
Do you think track is a good activity for Shayla?
How does Bernard change through the novel?
How does Shayla's family respond to the police shooting?
What do you think Mr. Powell is trying to do by talking about this event in class?
What did Shayla choose for her costume?
What was Principal Trask's reaction to Shayla's costume? Do you think that it was fair?
What happens at the dance?
How are the two protests different?
How does the verdict change things at school?
Was Principal Trask fair to Bernard and Alex after the trash can incident?
Why is the armband such a big deal at school?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

Things that make me nervous about middle school are...
Shayla's opinion of Bernard changes as she gets to know him. When was a time that your opinion of someone changed and why?
I didn't think I deserved it, but I got in trouble when.....
A good kind of trouble is...

ACTIVITIES:

Create a timeline of the Civil Right Movement
Research one of the cases of social injustice that the Black Lives Matter movement has supported.
Watch the short NBC News segment on the [Black Lives Matter](#) movement.

Research Black Lives Matter protests and find a sign or posters that you find powerful and explain why.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-7

BOOK TRAILER:

Casey Bowles: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDKG9j9W7L0>

BOOKTALK:

You've seen the headlines, the social media posts, and the news articles describing the protests for Black Lives Matter. But have you ever looked at those through the eyes of a 13-year-old girl? Shayla is trying to find "the person she is going to be" while in 7th grade. She is dealing with the typical middle school drama, friends, boys, pleasing her parents. But after a police shooting in her hometown, things begin to change around her. When the case goes to trial and a verdict is reached, Shayla's community responds in a variety of ways. Will Shayla find a good kind of trouble?

READ-ALIKES:

Craft, Jerry. *New Kid*. Harper, 2019

Draper, Sharon. *Blended*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2018

Lockington, Mariama. *For Black Girls Like Me*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2019

Moore, David Barclay. *The Stars Beneath Our Feet*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2017

Watson, Renee. *Piecing Me Together*. Bloomsbury, 2017

Williams, Alicia D. *Genesis Begins Again*. Atheneum, 2019

RELATED WEBSITES:

Lisa Moore Ramee: <https://www.lisamooreramee.com/about>

Author Interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQabGIIB-6w>

South Carolina Junior Book Award: <https://tinyurl.com/ybexu83u>

Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award: <https://tinyurl.com/y856wlae>

Black Lives Matter at School: <https://blacklivesmatterschool.com/>

Teaching Tolerance Classroom Resources: <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources>

REVIEWS:

Kirkus (December 15, 2018)

Publishers Weekly (December 24, 2018)

School Library Journal (February 1, 2019)

Reynolds, Jason. *Long Way Down*.

SUMMARY:

Will is reeling after the death of his brother Shawn, who was shot and killed. The rules of the neighborhood where Will lives are “no crying,” “no snitching,” and “get revenge.” The bulk of the book takes place on an elevator ride as Will travels to avenge his brother and shoot the guy he believes killed Shawn. During this ride from floor seven to the ground level, a variety of people from Will’s life who have been killed by gun violence enter the elevator and question his plans. Written in free verse, this quick read explores family, futility, and the impact of the cycle of gun violence on the community and individual people.

QUESTIONS:

There are rules to living in Will’s community that have been passed down. How did he learn about these rules? Can you think of any rules that govern behavior at your school? In your neighborhood?
Will seems convinced that Riggs is the one who killed his brother. As you read the book what things made you question the assumption upon which Will was basing his decision?
Describe the seven characters Will meets on his journey down the elevator - Buck, Dani, Uncle Mark, Mikey, Frick, and Shawn - what did you learn from each of them about their stories? What did Will learn from seeing them?
How does the free verse format of the book impact you as the reader?
On page 302 the elevator is described as a cell and a coffin. How does the elevator work as a setting for most of this story?
How has gun violence impacted Will’s life?
How is the gun Will takes described in the book? How is it noticed and not noticed?
When Shawn asks Will, “You coming?” at the end of the book. What action does Will decide to take?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

When I need to make a difficult decision, I

A person that I have lost with whom I would like to have a conversation with is I want to talk about

If I could give Will advice, I would tell him.....

Some rules that govern my community include.....

ACTIVITIES:

Several times in the book there are Anagrams that give more insight about what is happening in the book. For example, on page 37 ALIVE = A VEIL. Develop an anagram that gives insight into your life.
Challenge activity: Develop an anagram for the title of this book, *A Long Way Down*.
Create a labeled diagram that shows the connections between the people riding in the elevator.

Write a review of *A Long Way Down* in verse.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 7-8

BOOK TRAILER:

Katherine Webb: <https://tinyurl.com/yb8ab2uo>

BOOKTALK:

In just sixty seconds, the length of one elevator ride, Will will make a decision that will impact the rest of his life. Gun tucked into his waistband, he feels he must follow the code of his neighborhood and get revenge for his brother's death. During this ride one person? ghost? enters the elevator on each floor to check in with Will. Written in verse, this is a book that will grab you and keep you turning pages until the elevator door dings to open on the ground floor.

READ-ALIKES:

Acevedo, Elizabeth. *Poet X*. HarperTeen, 2018

Alexander, Kwame. *Swing*. Blink, 2018

Myers, Walter Dean. *Monster*. Harper Collins, 1999

Neri, Greg. *Yummy: Last Days of a Southside Shorty*. Lee & Low Books, 2008

Reynolds, Jason and Kiely, Brendan. *All American Boys*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2015

Rhodes, Jewell Parker. *Ghost Boys*. Little Brown & Co, 2018

RELATED WEBSITES:

Jason Reynolds: <https://www.jasonwritesbooks.com/>

Jason Reynolds Reads from *A Long Way Down*: <https://tinyurl.com/yblaxyyk>

NPR Interview and Article: <https://tinyurl.com/y7a57177>

Simon and Schuster Discussion Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/y7a57177>

One Book Baltimore Discussion Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/y8rf6fz7>

Britannica Digital Learning: <https://britannicalearn.com/blog/long-way-down/>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (July 1, 2017)

Publishers Weekly (July 31, 2017)

School Library Journal (July 1, 2017)

Saeed, Aisha. *Amal Unbound*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2008

SUMMARY:

Amal lives in Pakistan and dreams of being a teacher. She is the oldest daughter in the family and loves going to school. Even though Amal is told she has to stay home to help around the house, her dreams are not dashed. She finds other ways to learn and stay busy. One day she upsets the son of the corrupt village landlord. As her punishment, she is taken to live on the landlord's estate and must work off her family's debt. Amal must learn how to make the most of this situation and find a way to still pursue her dreams.

QUESTIONS:

- What is Amal's family like?
- What does the landlord do to indicate that he is corrupt?
- Why does Mehnaz struggle to leave her bed?
- What does Amal think of Khan Sahib?
- Why must Amal help her family?
- Where do Jawad's servants eat at his place?

JOURNAL STARTER:

The character traits that Amal exhibits that get her through her ordeal include.....

ACTIVITIES:

- Research girl's education in Pakistan. Write a letter to your US Representative or US Senator asking our government to help education in Pakistan.
- Write a play that allows you to act out your favorite scenes from the story.
- Write the next chapter of Amal's story. What happens to her after the book ends?
- Read a book from the read-alike section below. Create a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts what the main characters in the book went through.
- Write a letter to Amal. What more would you want to know about her? What advice would you give her?

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-7

BOOK TRAILER:

BP LibraryKids: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_jgfpgoyn8

BOOKTALK:

Amal is a 12-year-old girl who has hopes and dreams that are probably similar to yours. She has siblings that annoy her and chores to do, which you also probably have. But what makes Amal different than you is that she is living in Pakistan, where education for girls is not a priority. When Amal is needed to stay at home and care for her siblings, her parents don't hesitate to pull her out of school. Amal's family struggles and they are in great debt. While Amal is home, she angers a boy from the village, only to learn that the young man is the son of the village landlord. When the village landlord hears about this, he forces Amal to come ~~and~~ live on his compound ~~and~~ to work off her family's debt. Amal must learn to navigate difficult people and figure out a way to expose the criminal operations of the landlord. Can she do it?

READ-ALIKES:

Hiranandani, Veera, *The Night Diary*, Kokila, 2018
Jordan-Fenton, Christy. *Fatty Legs*. Annick Press, 2010
Reedy, Trent, *Words in the Dust*, Arthur A. Levine Books, 2011
Sheth, Kashmir. *Boys Without Names*. Balzer & Bray, 2010
Venkatraman, Padma. *The Bridge Home*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2019
Warga, Jasmine, *Other Words For Home*, Balzer and Bray, 2019
Whelan, Gloria. *Homeless Bird*. Harper Collins, 2000
Yousafzai, Malala, *I am Malala*, Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2014

RELATED WEBSITES:

Aisha Saeed: <https://aishasaeed.com/>
I Am Malala: <https://malala.org/>
Random House Discussion Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/y9rafmj5>
Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award: <https://tinyurl.com/yxgybnt9>
Girls Deprived of Education: <https://tinyurl.com/y8c8zo6f>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (April 1, 2018)
Kirkus Reviews (April 1, 2018)
School Library Journal (June 1, 2018)

Schmitt, Adam P. *Speechless*. Candlewick, 2018.

SUMMARY:

Patrick, 13, is dead, but maybe that's a relief. His cousin Jimmy is tasked with delivering the eulogy at Patrick's funeral. It's not like he has ever attended a funeral, but readers and Jimmy get an education about those rituals while Jimmy tries to come up with words to speak in front of everyone about his challenging cousin. While he works on his eulogy, Jimmy remembers various incidents with Patrick who ruined every birthday, broke every toy, and was always setting him up for disappointment. When Jimmy finally stands at the front of the church, he doesn't have a prepared speech, but he does finally have space to say what he feels, and so he begins, "Patrick was kind of an asshole."

QUESTIONS:

Are Patrick's parents bad parents? What about Jimmy's parents?
Why is Jimmy unable to resist his mother's demand that he deliver the eulogy for his cousin?
What could/should have been done when Patrick played the pig at Jimmy's 7th birthday?
Do you think Patrick was a bad brother to Sophia?
Why don't Patrick's parents speak sign language? How do Sophia's friends react to that?
How do Sophia & Jimmy communicate?
Does Jimmy's Mom change after she slaps him?
Do you have a family member who is challenging to be around?
How is a funeral wake like a wedding?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

If I knew someone like Patrick....
When my (brother, sister, cousin) aggravated me, I... (describe what they did as well as your reaction)
If I could change something that happened in the past, it would be

ACTIVITIES:

Examine books on sign language and learn to sign your own name.
Invite a funeral home director to speak to your group about funeral rituals and etiquette
Pick your favorite character from the wake and create a collage (from drawings, magazines, or websites) of images that depict how they look, act, dress, eat, and any other characteristics you can imagine.
Ask a mental health professional to read the book and speak to your group about Patrick.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-8

BOOKTALK:

Not only is it his first funeral, but his pants from last year are way too small. Jimmy has to figure out this entire wake thing while trying to come up with a speech about his cousin for everyone at the church service the next day. All Jimmy can remember about him is how Patrick always tormented him, broke every toy he touched, always made Jimmy spill his ice cream, and ruined every birthday. While Jimmy goes back through memories of Patrick, he also tries to find some paper on which to write his eulogy while he observes the various rituals and attendees at Patrick's wake. There's a trick to wakes, kind of like weddings. When he finally stands before everyone at the church, Jimmy begins his speech without notes or direction while he tries to tell the truth.

READ-ALIKES:

Benjamin, Ali. *The Thing About Jellyfish*. Little, Brown and Company, 2015
Doughty, Caitlin. *Will My Cat Eat My Eyeballs?* W.W. Norton & Company, 2019
Reynolds, Jason. *The Boy in the Black Suit*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2015
Schmidt, Gary. *Pay Attention Carter Jones*. Clarion Books, 2019

RELATED WEBSITES:

Adam P. Schmitt: <http://www.adamschmittwrites.com/>
Teachers' Guide for Illinois Reads: http://illinoisreads.org/images/2019_Guide_Speechless.pdf
Interview with Adam Schmitt: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Os57EoefUo>
What is a Eulogy?: <https://www.legacy.com/advice/what-is-a-eulogy/>
Funeral Etiquette: <https://www.joincake.com/blog/funeral-etiquette/>
Common Issues Facing Tweens: <https://tinyurl.com/y7dv242l>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (November 1, 2018)
Horn Book Magazine (January 1, 2019)
Publishers Weekly (November, 19, 2018)

White, J.A. *Nightbooks*. Katherine Tegen Books, 2018.

SUMMARY:

On his way to burn the scary stories for which he has been ridiculed, Alex ends up on the wrong floor of his apartment building. Curious about what appears to be the sound of the movie, *The Night of the Living Dead* coming from an apartment, he enters. Alex unwittingly becomes the next victim of the witch Natacha. With no way out of the apartment, he is forced to read the witch scary stories to restore her power every night. Together with another victim, Yasmin, and Natacha's cat, Alex must work to find a means of escape before his stories run out.

QUESTIONS:

Yasmin states that she will not be Alex's friend. How would this help her and how could it hurt her?
Why do you think Alex has trouble finishing some of the stories in his notebook?
Do you think that Natacha is a victim too?
Do you agree with Mr. Calkin's opinion that Alex's writing indicates he might be a danger to himself or others?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

Some things that would make me curious enough to enter a strange place might include.....
Sometimes I am embarrassed by this activity....
When I have writer's block I try....

ACTIVITIES:

Write a continuation of one of Alex's stories.
Research the pros and cons of using essential oils.
Find a scary story and share it with your group.
Make a playlist of scary music.
Create a representation of Alex's apartment house.
Perform the Reader's Theater Booktalk to entice your group to read this title. It can be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/y87s8ndp>

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-7

BOOK TRAILER:

Texas Bluebonnet Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6t5J-86w3Gg>

BOOKTALK:

The moans of a zombie apocalypse were enough to lure Alex to the apartment. The smell of his favorite pie was enough for him to come inside. By then it was too late. “The movie’s for you, not me” the witch Natacha tells him. He finds himself trapped in an apartment with no exit forced to read Natacha scary stories night, after night, after night.

READ-ALIKES:

Gaiman, Neil. *Coraline*. Harper Collins, 2002.

Gidwitz, Adam. *A Tale Dark and Grimm*. Dutton. Children’s Books 2010.

Grant, Holly. *The League of Beastly Dreadfuls*. Random House 2015.

Mbalia, Kwame. *Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky*. Rick Riordan Presents, 2019

McCoola, Marika. *Baby Yaga’s Assistant*. Candlewick Press, 2015

McGowan, Keith. *The Witch’s Guide to Cooking With Children*. Holt 2011.

Schwartz, Alvin. *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*. J.B. Lippincott, 1981

Ursu, Anne. *Breadcrumbs*. Walden Pond Press 2011.

RELATED WEBSITES:

J.A. White: <http://jawwhitebooks.com/>

J.A. White introduces Nightbooks: <https://youtu.be/yRl4qMeL3cY>

Texas Bluebonnet Award: <https://tinyurl.com/yb9oppa8>

Common Sense Media: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/book-reviews/nightbooks>

The History of Ghosts: <https://www.history.com/topics/halloween/historical-ghost-stories>

How To Write a Scary Story: <https://thewritepractice.com/get-freaky/>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (May 1, 2018)

Kirkus (June 15, 2018)

Publishers Weekly (May 14, 2018)

School Library Journal (March 1, 2018)

Yang, Kelly. *Front Desk*. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2018

SUMMARY:

Mia Tang and her family run the Calivista Motel. Her parents work hard cleaning rooms while Mia runs the front desk. While working on her secret dream to become a writer, Mia helps her parents hide fellow immigrants in their motel, and hopes that the nasty motel owner, Mr. Yao, doesn't find out.

QUESTIONS:

Would *Front Desk* make a good movie? Why or why not?

What was your favorite part of the book?

What would you do if you were Mia when dealing with Mr. Yao?

Was Mia's family right to help their community? Why or why not?

What do you think about Mia's relationship with Jason?

Would you enjoy working at a motel? Why or why not? What skills would you need to have?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

Mia was right when...

Mia was wrong when...

I would tell Mr. Yao...

The most important motel guest was...

ACTIVITIES:

In the author's note, Kelly Yang mentions there were 536,000 immigrants from mainland China living in the United States in 1990. Research more current immigration data through migrationpolicy.org or another credible website. What numbers are surprising to you?

Design an advertisement for the Calivista Motel? Be sure to include its amenities, room rates and other relevant information.

Write your own application for the Vermont Motel Giveaway Essay Contest.

Invite someone from the hospitality industry to speak to your group about managing a hotel.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-6

BOOK TRAILERS:

Kelly Yang Book Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sDoefzSrY>

Gersten Studios: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayeYJvRJ0Y4>

BOOKTALK:

Mia and her parents live and work at the Calivista Motel in California. They are immigrants from China and struggle every day to make their lives in America better. Mia suspects the motel owner, Mr. Yao, is taking advantage, but she's not quite sure how to handle that. Complicating matters is that Jason, Mr. Yao's son, is in her new class at school! Mia helps her parents hide fellow immigrants at their motel when they fall on hard times, and Mia also works on her writing every chance she gets with the dream of being a writer someday. Will Mr. Yao find out the secrets that Mia is keeping?

READ-ALIKES:

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

Dumas, Firoozeh. *It Ain't So Awful, Falafel*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016

Holt, Kimberly Willis. *Blooming at the Texas Sunrise Motel*. Henry Holt and Company, 2017

Tores, Jennifer. *Stef Stoto, Taco Queen*. Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2017

RELATED WEBSITES:

Kelly Yang: <https://kellyyang.com/>

Front Desk: The Book: <https://www.frontdeskthebook.com/>

Walker Books, Classroom Ideas: <https://tinyurl.com/yb7q3vzg>

Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award: <https://tinyurl.com/yxgybnt9>

South Carolina Junior Book Award: <https://www.studysc.org/sc-book-awards/front-desk>

REVIEWS:

Booklist (April 15, 2018)

Publishers Weekly (June 18, 2018)

School Library Journal (March 1, 2018)