

Launching Nonfiction Author Studies:

A Focus for Teaching the Common Core State Standards

Authors Include:



LOUISE BORDEN



ROBERT BURLEIGH



LYNNE CHENEY



LESA CLINE-RANSOME



LYNN CURLEE



BRIAN FLOCA



SANDRA MARKLE



MEGHAN MCCARTHY



APRIL PULLEY SAYRE



MARCIA SEWALL



JEANETTE WINTER



JONAH WINTER

Why Author Studies?

Beyond seeing the author as a person—a writer with information and a point of view to share—author study (studying several books by one author) provides us with a rich yet manageable way of looking at the decisions an author makes when creating a work of nonfiction. These decisions are about content, word choice, illustration, and original thoughts and interpretations.

Thinking about how an author creates nonfiction raises many questions for young readers and writers to think about: After researching a topic, what information goes into the book? What doesn't? Why? How should the book begin in order to grab the reader's attention? How should it end in order to keep the reader thinking about the topic? What information is best introduced through pictures, photographs, graphs, or tables? What features like sidebars and primary sources would add interest to the page? In what ways are the author's books similar? How are they different? As students engage in author study they think about how an author answered these questions.

Not surprisingly, these same questions are highlighted in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The Standards emphasize reading informational text to determine key ideas and details, an author's point of view, how the author structures and crafts information, how new vocabulary is introduced, and how visual material works together with written text. It's a match! That is, by engaging in author studies students are also meeting many Common Core Standards for reading and understanding informational text.

This guide features books and suggested activities that can be used to jumpstart a nonfiction author study. This will open the door to critical inquiry and focused discussion of informational text. By aligning activities to Common Core State Standards, students learn content while becoming critical consumers of that content. That's powerful instruction.

—Myra Zarnowski, Queens College, CUNY





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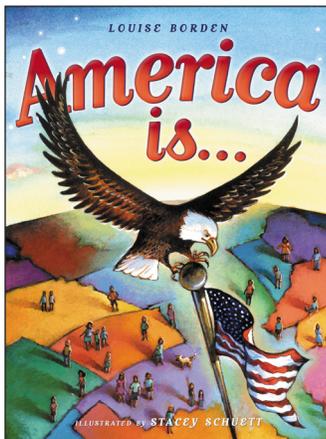
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Launching Nonfiction Author Studies:
A focus for teaching the Common Core State Standards with books by

LOUISE BORDEN



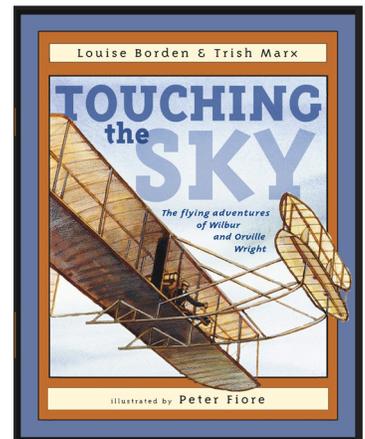
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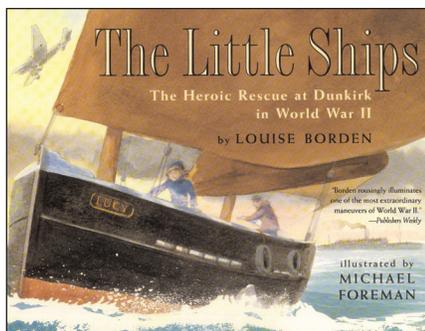
America Is...



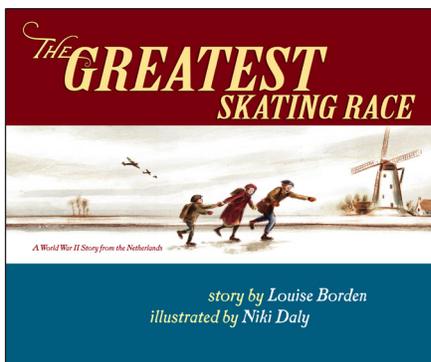
*Fly High!
The Story of
Bessie Coleman*



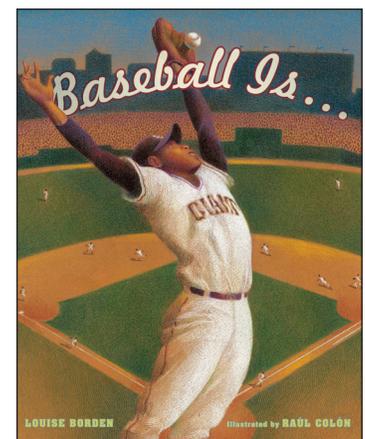
*Touching the Sky:
The Flying
Adventures of Wilbur
and Orville Wright*



*The Little Ships:
The Heroic Rescue at
Dunkirk in World War II*



*The Greatest Skating Race:
A World War II Story
from the Netherlands*



Baseball Is...

Background Information

Books by Louise Borden introduce children to historical events. Two books, *The Greatest Skating Race* and *The Little Ships*, narrate history from the point of view of a child who showed courage and determination in the face of dangerous circumstances during World War II. These stories show how children have achieved heroic feats. Two other titles, *Fly High!* and *Touching the Sky*, deal with pilots, a particular interest of the author, whose father was an officer in the Army Air Corps and took her flying in his own plane. Each of the books listed above is told in free verse, full of descriptive details that bring the past to life.

Activities for Launching Your Author Study

CCSS Connection: The activity below deals with acknowledging differences in points of view among characters (RL.2–4.6).

1. **Writing and Presenting Poems for Two Voices.** *The Greatest Skating Race* takes place in the Netherlands during World War II. It tells how, after German soldiers arrest a neighbor, a young boy named Piet successfully takes the family's two children across the border into Belgium to stay with their aunt. This involves skating across frozen canals and even facing hostile soldiers. Yet inspired by a great Dutch skater who set an amazing record in the Eleven Towns Race, the greatest skating race in the world, Piet succeeds, arriving safely with both children at their aunt's house.

You can use Paul Fleischman's book *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices* to show how Piet and Johanna, one of the children he guided to Belgium, feel about this experience. A poem for two voices has lines read by two speakers. Some of the lines are for SPEAKER #1 only, some for SPEAKER #2 only, and some for BOTH SPEAKERS to read together. Both speakers say the words in the middle.

Ask students to complete the poem on the next page by adding more information about the trip—confronting German soldiers, feeling tired, being unsure of which way to go, and finally arriving.



PIET

BOTH

JOHANNA

My grandfather told me that he had an important task for me.

I am a good skater, a very good skater, a skater like my hero— Pim Mulier. I will skate with Johanna and her brother, accompanying them to their aunt's house in Belgium.

We would be traveling together.

My mother told me that it was no longer safe to stay in our home.

My brother and I are to stay with our aunt Ingrid. It's safe there. I can skate there with Piet, but I am worried that my younger brother isn't strong enough.

2. *The Little Ships* tells how, during World War II, a small but sturdy fishing ship was one of many boats used to save British and French soldiers who were trapped by the Germans across the English Channel at Dunkirk. This story is told by a young girl who accompanies her father on this mission. After reading and discussing the book, have students tell the story from the perspective of her father or one of the rescued soldiers.

CCSS Connection: The activity below highlights the meaning of one specific word as it is used in a text (RL.3–5.4).

3. In *Fly High!*, authors Louise Borden and Mary Kay Kroeger make use of the word *somebody* to show how Bessie Coleman, the famous aviator, became determined to become a *somebody* and then told other people to do the same. Here are some quotes from the book:

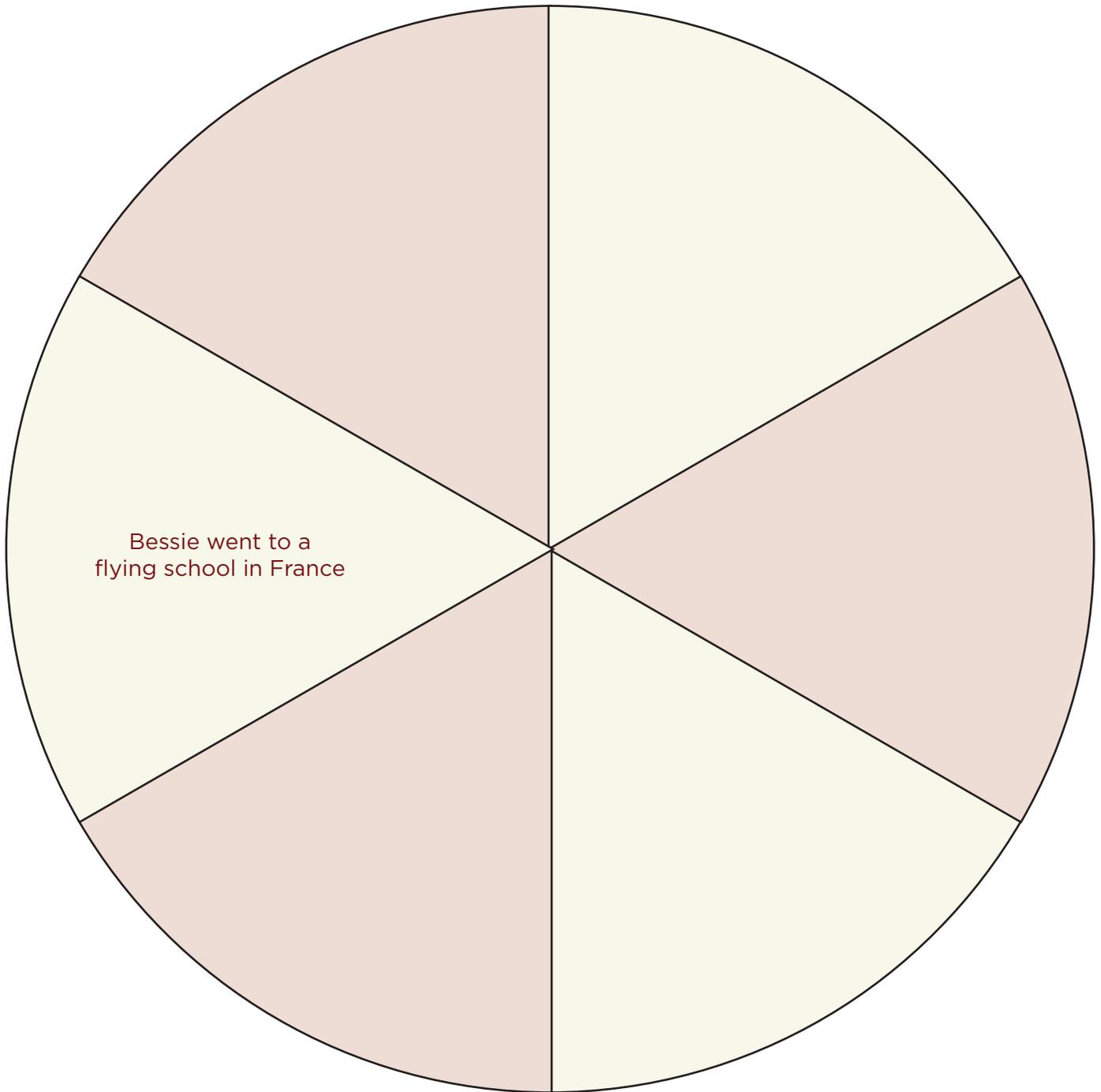
- “With more schooling, she could be *somebody*.”
- “In Chicago, you could be *somebody*.”
- “Every day she read the pages of the *Chicago Defender*, a newspaper published by Robert Abbott. Robert Abbott was *somebody*...”
- “Those French lady pilots, they are *somebody*.”
- “Some day she would be a *somebody* on Chicago’s South Side.”
- “She would fly high and be *somebody*.”
- “You can be *somebody* too.”

First, discuss each quote, especially how the word *somebody* helps you understand the life story of Bessie Coleman.

Second, in a small group, make a list of all the things Bessie Coleman did to become *somebody*. Select the six most important things she did to illustrate. Cut out the circle template on the next page and have the students illustrate and label each of these sections. Paste the circle back together in chronological order and have the students explain how each section shows what Bessie did to become *somebody*. For example, one important thing Bessie did was to go to a famous flying school in France.



FLY HIGH! CIRCLE TEMPLATE

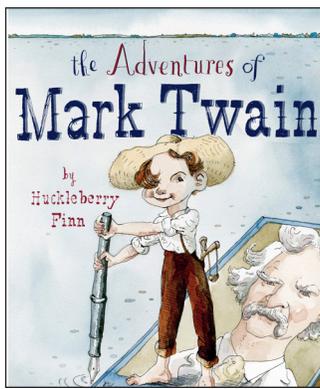


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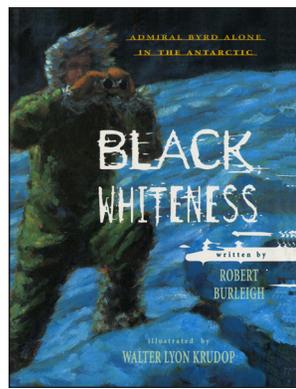
ROBERT BURLEIGH



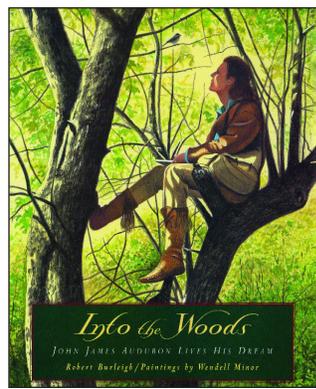
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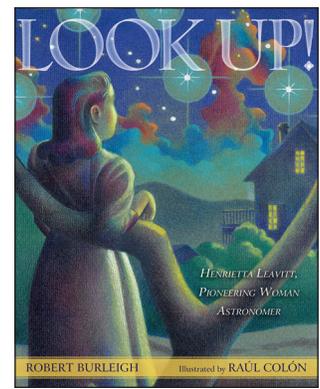
The Adventures of Mark Twain
by Huckleberry Finn



Black Whiteness: Admiral Byrd Alone in the Antarctic



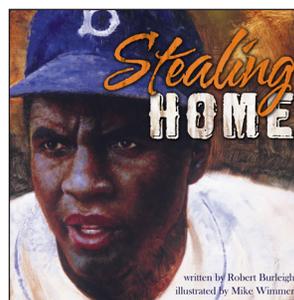
Into the Woods: John James Audubon Lives His Dream



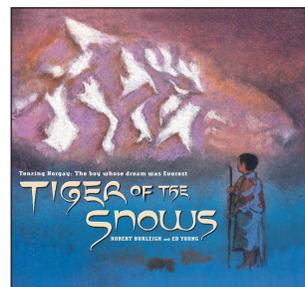
Look Up!: Henrietta Leavitt, Pioneering Woman Astronomer



Night Flight: Amelia Earhart Crosses the Atlantic



Stealing Home: Jackie Robinson: Against the Odds



Tiger of the Snows: Tenzing Norgay: The Boy Whose Dream Was Everest

Background Information

Robert Burleigh's unique approach to biography combines both facts and feelings. He gives readers lots of information but also a sense of immediacy—of being there. Sometimes this means readers get the feeling of flying with Amelia Earhart (*Night Flight*). Other times it means joining Admiral Byrd in the Antarctic (*Black Whiteness*). Still other times it means joining John James Audubon on a walk in the woods (*Into the Woods*). In these books and others, Burleigh adds drama and feeling to biography. Many of Burleigh's biographies are written in free verse. In addition, two biographies quote directly from the journals written by the subject—Admiral Byrd and John James Audubon.

Books by Robert Burleigh can be used to show students that biography can be written in many different ways. Check out *The Adventures of Mark Twain by Huckleberry Finn* for a surprising approach. In this book Huck Finn (with considerable help from Robert Burleigh and illustrator Barry Blitt) tells us about the famous author. In addition, Robert Burleigh’s books have been illustrated by some of the best known illustrators in children’s literature: Barry Blitt, Raúl Colón, Walter Lyon Krudop, Wendell Minor, Mike Wimmer, and Ed Young. Take the opportunity to study additional work by these illustrators.

Activities for Launching Your Author Study

CCSS Connection: The activities below focus on the craft of writing, showing students how techniques such as alliteration, simile, metaphor, personification, and repetition help create meaning (RL.1–3.4).

1. **Well-Crafted Language.** After reading *Night Flight*, find examples of how Robert Burleigh uses well-crafted language to describe Amelia Earhart’s flight across the Atlantic. Samples of five techniques—alliteration, simile, metaphor, personification, and repetition—are given below. Read each example aloud and discuss how the language makes you feel about the topic. Then find additional examples of each technique. How does the language used in the book help you feel like you were in the plane with Amelia?

- **Alliteration** is the repetition of initial consonant sounds. Here’s how the takeoff is described:
The plane swoops like a swallow...
- **Simile** is a comparison of one thing to another, using the words *like* or *as*. Here’s how Amelia’s view from her plane is described:
Mountains like wrinkles in the earth,/cities like toy blocks, cars like ants...
- **Metaphor** is a comparison of two unlike things that have something in common. The words *like* or *as* are not used. Here’s how heavy rain is described:
Fists of rain pummel the cockpit windshield.
- **Personification** is giving human abilities and features to something that is not human. Here’s how a bolt of lightning is described:
Lightning scribbles its zigzag warning...
- **Repetition**, or the repeating of words and phrases, provides emphasis and rhythm. Here’s how the early morning is described:
It is 3:00 a.m. Hour of drowse and snap-awake.
Hour of white knuckles...

Try using alliteration, simile, metaphor, personification, and repetition in your writing. What is the effect?

2. Using examples collected in Activity 1, fill out the chart on the following page. Show how the author uses well-crafted language to explain Amelia Earhart’s feelings as changing from **calm** during the takeoff, to **tense** during the rainstorm, back to **calm** once she lands safely. Write examples of phrases showing how this is done.

CALM (TAKEOFF)	TENSE (RAINSTORM)	CALM (LANDING)
The plane swoops like a swallow...	The blackness erupts.	The countryside spreads out like a smooth fan beneath her.

CALM (TAKEOFF)

TENSE (RAINSTORM)

CALM (LANDING)

3. **List Poems and Couplets.** Two biographies written by Robert Burleigh—*Black Whiteness* and *Into the Woods*—are told in verse. In *Black Whiteness*, one technique the author uses is a list poem. In the example below, he makes a general statement and then lists details to support it:

Cold, terrible cold:

At -50° a flashlight dies in his hand;
at -55° kerosene freezes;
at -60° rubber turns brittle and snaps,
juice bottles shatter
canned food from the tunnel becomes hard as a rock...

Try changing a portion of a biography into verse, using this list approach. Here's an example about Frederick Douglass, the abolitionist who was once a slave:

Freedom, Fabulous Freedom:

Frederick Douglass would not be owned by anyone.
He would learn as much as he could.
Reading and writing would be allowed.
Being “rented out” would be a thing of the past.
No master would decide his future.
He would take charge of his life.

Into the Woods uses rhyming couplets, or two lines that rhyme. Here's how Robert Burleigh described John James Audubon's walk in the woods:

This morning on my morning walk
I spied inside its nest a hawk.

I brought it down and home with me,
Wrapped in a cloth, so tenderly.

Try changing a portion of a biography into verse, using a series of couplets. Here's an example about Frederick Douglass:

Frederick Douglass was not born free,
But he hoped and prayed for liberty.

He always wanted to learn to read,
And eventually he did succeed.

He planned to run away with friends,
But that's not how the story ends.

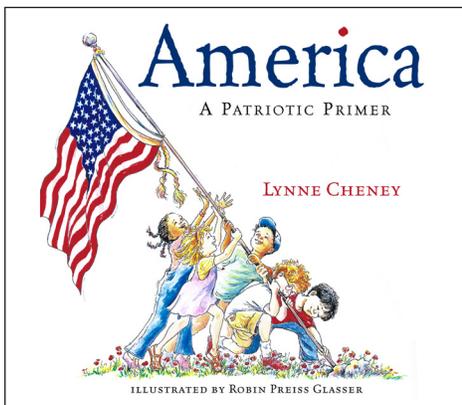


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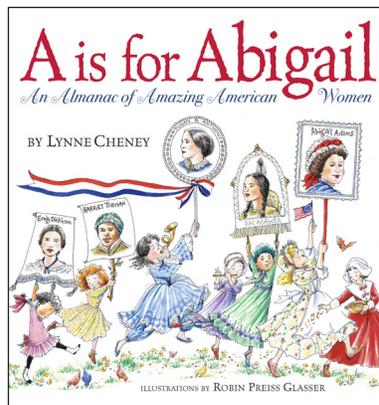
LYNNE CHENEY



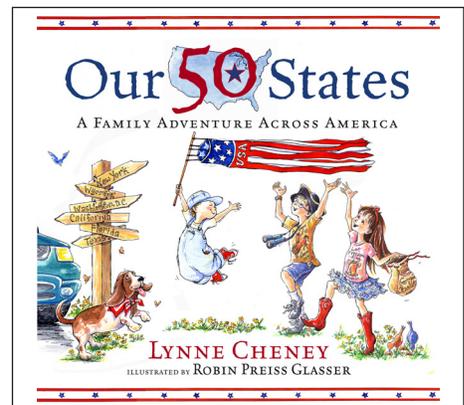
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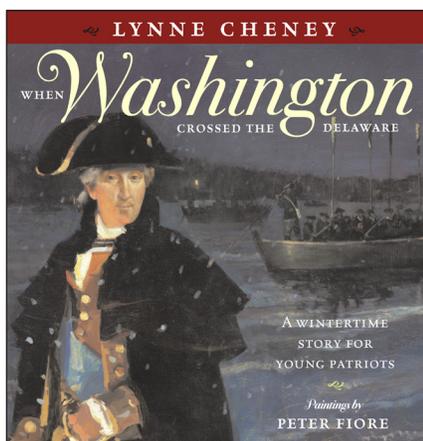
*America:
A Patriotic Primer*



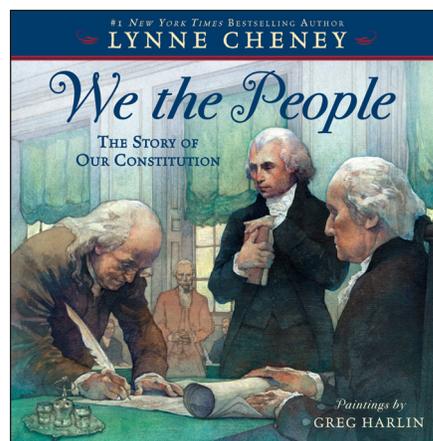
*A Is for Abigail:
An Almanac of Amazing
American Women*



*Our 50 States:
A Family Adventure
Across America*



*When Washington
Crossed the Delaware:
A Wintertime Story for
Young Patriots*



*We the People:
The Story of
Our Constitution*

Background Information

Lynne Cheney's books cover different topics in American history and geography. *A Is for Abigail: An Almanac of Amazing American Women*, *America: A Patriotic Primer*, and *Our 50 States: A Family Adventure Across America* follow a similar format. They feature a variety of information and illustrations, and they are excellent choices for browsing. They even have endnotes at the back of the book to offer more resources and information. *A Is for Abigail* and *America* are both organized according to the alphabet. *Our 50 States* is organized according to a travel route across the US. All of these books can be used as mentor texts for writing, especially in terms of structure and content. The illustrations by Robin Preiss Glasser are also models of inventiveness for young artists.

Two books, *When Washington Crossed the Delaware* and *We the People* explain issues and events in American history. These books are well illustrated and also contain many quotes from a variety of people involved in our history. Use books by Lynne Cheney to show how an author can use different formats to introduce information. The choice depends on the author's purpose for writing.

Activities for Launching Your Author Study

CCSS Connection: The following activity focuses on examining the craft and organization of nonfiction text (RI.1–4.5) and writing factual information using a mentor text (W.1–2.2).

1. **Write Your Own American History A-B-C.** *America: A Patriotic Primer* is organized according to the alphabet. For each letter of the alphabet, there is a single page or two-page spread. For example, A is for America, B is for our nation's birthday, and C is for the Constitution. Each page is also well illustrated, using a variety of page layouts. The words and the illustrations work well together. After reading and examining the book, ask students to use the same format to write additional pages about American history. Have students brainstorm a list of topics they can write about and do some research to add interesting information and illustrations to their work.

Here are some suggestions to get you started:

- A is for the American astronauts.
- B is for the Boston Tea Party.
- C is for Congress.
- D is for democracy.
- E is for our economy...

If you are ambitious, you can do a whole class book from A to Z. If you are very ambitious, you can also do an A-B-C book of famous women, using *A Is for Abigail* as a mentor text. If you are *very, very* ambitious, you can also do a book about states, following your own travel path and using *Our 50 States* as a mentor text. In each case, the alphabet or a travel route provides a useful way of organizing information.

CCSS Connection: The activity below asks students to identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text (RI.1–5.8)

2. **Find the Evidence.** Based on research and careful thinking, authors make claims that they back up with evidence and reasons. In *We the People* and *When Washington Crossed the Delaware*, Lynne Cheney made claims about *persistence*. Find the evidence she used to support these claims.



FIND THE EVIDENCE: THE QUALITY OF PERSISTENCE

Persistence means that a person keeps trying to accomplish something even though it is difficult or other people might try to interfere. Was George Washington persistent? Were his men? Were the framers of the Constitution? Lynne Cheney thinks so and she tells you why.

- In *When Washington Crossed the Delaware*, she says that Washington and his men were “models of persistence.” What evidence does she give to support this?

- In *We the People*, she says that the story of the Constitution is “a tale of persistence.” What evidence does she give to support this?

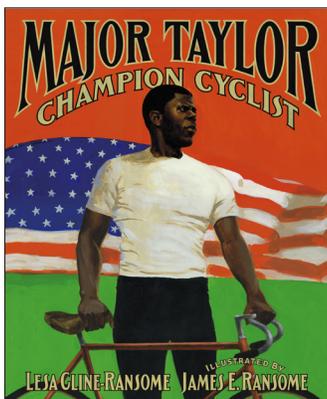
- Is persistence a good quality? Why?

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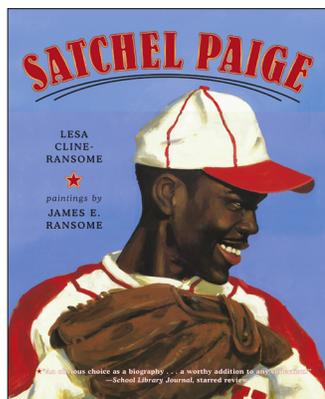
LESA CLINE-RANSOME



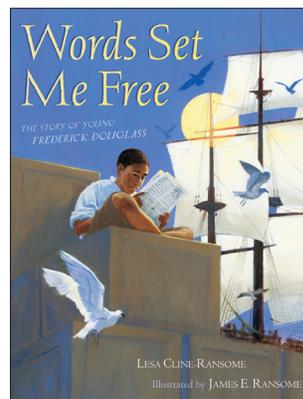
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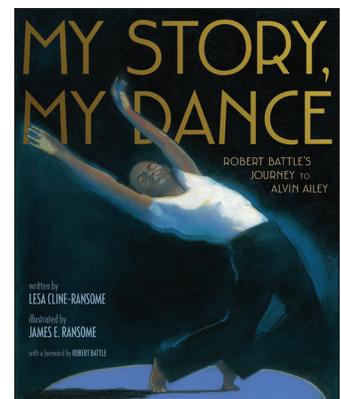
*Major Taylor,
Champion Cyclist*



Satchel Paige



*Words Set Me Free:
The Story of Young
Frederick Douglass*



*My Story, My Dance:
Robert Battle's
Journey to Alvin Ailey*

Background Information

Author Lesa Cline-Ransome and illustrator James E. Ransome, a husband and wife team, create books showing how some well-known and not-so-well-known historical figures have successfully confronted slavery and racial prejudice. Readers learn about African-Americans of note—people like Major Taylor, a champion cyclist; Satchel Paige, an incredible baseball player; and Frederick Douglass, a determined abolitionist. Lesa Cline-Ransome's rhythmic style, which is excellent for read-alouds, is perfectly matched by James E. Ransome's lifelike oil paintings, which give a clear sense of time and place. These books are excellent for showing how words and illustrations work together.

Activities for Launching Your Author Study

CCSS Connection: The activities below provide practice in examining how illustrations extend, clarify, and reinforce written text (RI.2–4.7) and identify the point of view from which a story is narrated (RL.1–5.6).

1. **Illustrations and Information in *Major Taylor*.** As you read *Major Taylor*, what is the source of your information? Is it the illustrations? The words? Or both? Study the pages noted on the charts on the corresponding page. Then write down information you learn from the **words only**, from both the **words and illustration**, or from the **illustration only**.



WORDS ONLY

WORDS & ILLUSTRATION

ILLUSTRATION ONLY

--	--	--



WORDS ONLY

WORDS & ILLUSTRATION

ILLUSTRATION ONLY

--	--	--

Back at the shop, Marshall's dreams now stretched far beyond the walls of Hay and Willie. More than anything, he wanted to be a professional cyclist.

One by one, he committed to memory the names of racers who'd visited the shop—Arthur Zimmerman, Willie White of Massachusetts, and Louis "Belle" Morgan, who had recently opened a racing workshop in town.

As Marshall grew to know Morgan, he began spending more and more time at his shop. He'd follow him to the track, pleading, "Tell me about the new riders. . ."

Belle was tickled by Marshall. In fact, the boy reminded him of a younger version of himself. "You've got talent, but you've got to keep working," Belle instructed after one of Marshall's many visits. Since Marshall had been hired as his assistant, running errands and doing chores.

When Belle decided to move to Hometown, Massachusetts, he invited Marshall along. After a brief farewell to his family, Marshall set off with Belle to begin training. To anyone who'd listen, he would boast, "I am going to make Major Marshall Taylor the fastest bicycle rider in the world."

Marshall's talent grew as fast as his popularity. It wasn't long before racing fans—although they may not have known the name Marshall Taylor—knew there was a young talent rising quite a bit.



WORDS ONLY

WORDS & ILLUSTRATION

ILLUSTRATION ONLY

--	--	--

Bury! The starting pistol sounded, and Marshall was off, pushing hard and feet beating with to keep pace with the others.

"Start off I got tired . . . just till I got tired. . . ." he kept repeating, his legs pumping as fast as his heart. Gradually the rhythmic sounds of the other bicyclists faded and all he could hear was his own panting. Time fell away as he struggled to maintain speed, and the wind whipped his face. Out of nowhere Mt. Hay appeared, towering and dangling the gold medal.

"You're a mile ahead! Keep going!"

Now he thought he could make out a crowd of spectators gathered at the finish. Pushing, pushing with everything he had, his legs cramped with exhaustion, he burst through the winning tape . . . and then collapsed.

"When he came to, sore, stiff, and exhausted, the crowd's cheers were ringing in his ears.

At thirteen years old, Marshall Taylor had won his first race.



WORDS ONLY

WORDS & ILLUSTRATION

ILLUSTRATION ONLY

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After completing the charts, discuss how illustrations help us learn. Sometimes they repeat information that is in the writing. Other times, they add new information. And sometimes, the information is only in the writing.

2. **Point of View.** *Words Set Me Free: The Story of Young Frederick Douglass* is told from the point of view of Frederick Douglass. Other points of view are also possible. For example, it would be interesting to hear what Captain Anthony (Frederick's owner), Hugh Auld (master he was rented to), or Sophia Auld (woman who taught him the letters) might have said.

Below are several quotes from the book, told from one person's point of view. After each quote, write what you think a different person might have said about the same topic.

QUOTE #1 _____

HUGH AULD: "If you teach him to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave."

SOPHIA AULD:

FREDERICK DOUGLASS:

QUOTE #2 _____

FREDERICK DOUGLASS: "At twelve years old, with tips I saved from my errands, I bought my first newspaper and learned new words—*liberty*, *justice*, and *freedom*. Abolition was the word the newspapers used when they called for ending slavery. These were the words my master would never want me to see."

CAPTAIN ANTHONY:

JOHN (DOUGLASS'S FRIEND):

QUOTE #3 _____

FREDERICK DOUGLASS: "We would steal a boat from the neighboring Hamilton farm, and make our way in the night on the Chesapeake Bay. From there we would follow the North Star."

JOHN:

MR. WILLIAM FREELAND (DOUGLASS WAS HIRED OUT TO HIM.):

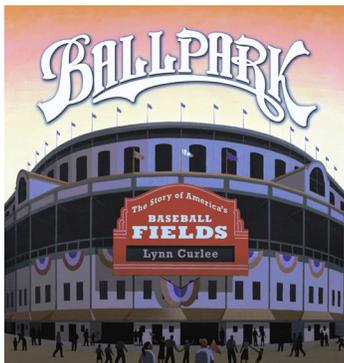
SOPHIA AULD:

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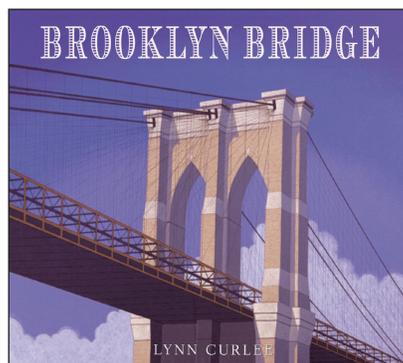
LYNN CURLEE



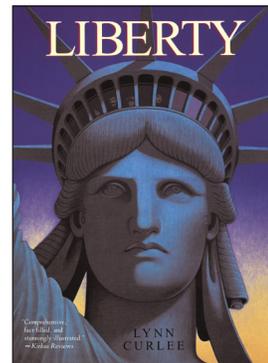
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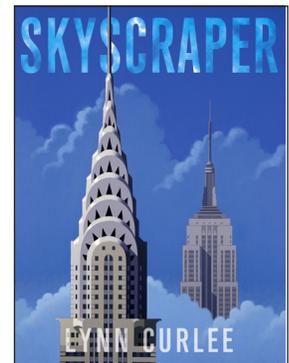
Ballpark: The Story of America's Baseball Fields



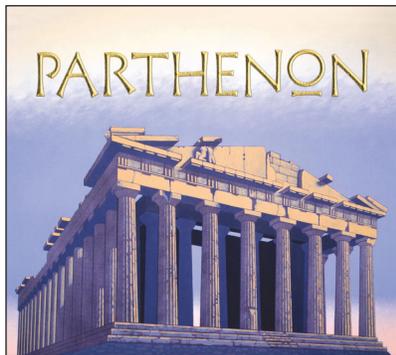
Brooklyn Bridge



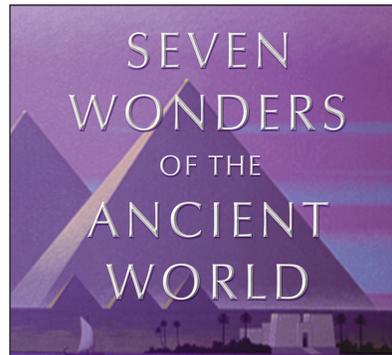
Liberty



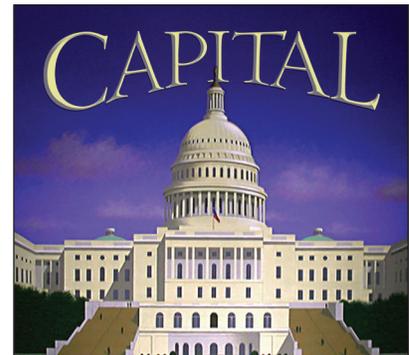
Skyscraper



Parthenon



Seven Wonders of the Ancient World



Capital

Background Information

Books by Lynn Curlee introduce the history, beauty, and unique qualities of landmarks and famous places. Whether the books are about single landmarks in the United States—*Brooklyn Bridge*, *Liberty*, *Capital*—or multiple sites—*Seven Wonders of the Ancient World*, *Ballpark*, *Skyscraper*—each title combines poetic language, information about awe-inspiring creations, and full-page acrylic paintings that work together to create a sense of time and place. While explaining the majesty of each landmark or place, Curlee also reveals the intriguing stories of the people who made these structures possible.

Activities for Launching Your Author Study

CCSS Connection: The activity below involves students in examining the craft of writing informational text and engaging in collaborative discussions with partners to build on each other's ideas (SL.4–6.1)

1. **Golden Lines.** After reading one or more books by Lynn Curlee, have students select five sentences that are powerful examples of how he describes that landmark or the challenges of creating and maintaining it. Ask students to share their examples with a partner or small group, discussing what makes these sentences examples of powerful writing. Here are some quotes from *Liberty* to get you started:

- “Draped in the heavy robes of an ancient Roman goddess, she seems to move forward, her sandals treading upon broken chains, which symbolize the forces of oppression and tyranny” (p. 1).
- “She is not pretty, but she is beautiful, her features majestic and severe, her glance stern and full of concentration” (p. 1).

CCSS Connection: The activities below ask children to write opinion pieces on topics, supporting a point of view with reasons and information (W.4–5.1); write informative/explanatory texts and convey ideas and information clearly (W.4–6.2), and write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences (W.4–6.3).

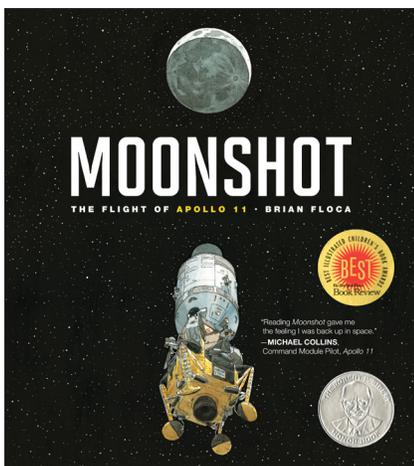
2. The Brooklyn Bridge was called the “eighth wonder of the world” when it opened in 1883. Does it deserve this title? Give reasons to support your opinion. (Refer to *Brooklyn Bridge*.)
3. Explain what Lynn Curlee means when he calls the National Mall “an open-air museum of US history and a shrine to the promise of America” (p. 40). (Refer to *Capital*.)
4. Imagine you could step into the shoes of one of the people below and tell how you designed or worked on a landmark structure:
 - As John A. Roebling, designer and chief engineer of the Brooklyn Bridge, describe the challenges you faced.
 - As Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, describe how you designed and created the Statue of Liberty.
 - As Pierre L'Enfant, explain how you designed the capital city for our young nation, but were later fired from your position.



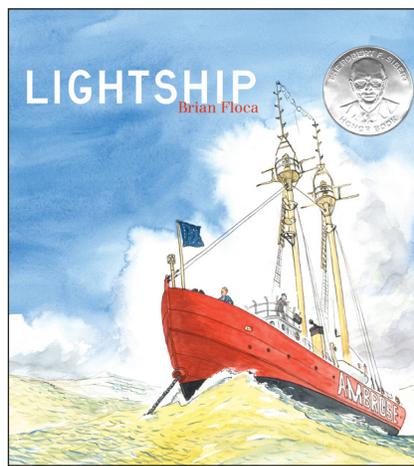
Launching Nonfiction Author Studies:
A focus for teaching the Common Core State Standards with books by
BRIAN FLOCA



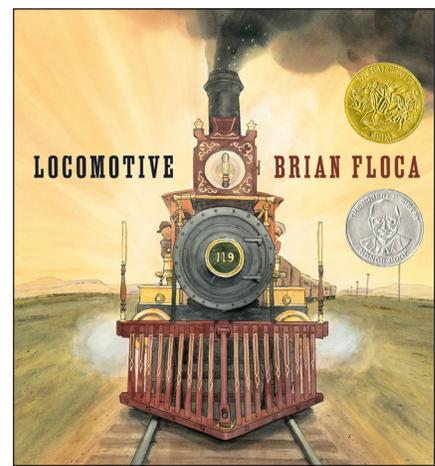
Books



*Moonshot:
The Flight of Apollo 11*



Lightship



Locomotive

Background Information

Brian Floca's books provide an exceptional blend of well-crafted free verse and detailed watercolor and ink illustrations. His books are not only enjoyable to read and savor, but also useful as mentor texts for studying how writing and illustration work together. *Lightship*, a description of ships that served as "floating beacons" in places where lighthouses could not be built, and *Moonshot*, a description of the Apollo 11 space flight, were both named Sibert Honor books for excellence in nonfiction. *Locomotive*, the author's newest title, has also received a 2014 Sibert Honor, an Orbis Pictus Honor, and is a 2014 Caldecott Medal winner. *Locomotive* combines detailed artwork and poetic text to describe a trip on the transcontinental railroad in its early years. Use these titles to show children a truly appealing way to present information.

Activities for Launching Your Author Study

CCSS Connection: The activity below draws attention to the integration of knowledge and ideas by having students carefully examine how a diagram contributes to and clarifies a text (RI.2–4.7)

1. Studying a Labeled Diagram. *Lightship* begins with a labeled diagram of the ship. Notice that the outside of the ship has been peeled away so that we can look inside. Use this diagram to find additional information about places that are mentioned and illustrated in the main part of the book. For each location below, tell what information is provided in the diagram and what information is provided in the text and illustrations. Complete the following chart as a class. Discuss how diagrams work together with written text and illustrations to help us understand key ideas. The examples below show that both the diagram and the text and illustrations contribute to our understanding of lightships. Use the reproducible on the next page to come up with even more examples.

ITEM/PLACE	ANSWER	INFORMATION IN DIAGRAM
Information in Diagram	The horn is above the deck. It is used when there is a fog. The sound is so loud it makes the ship shake.	The horn is located in the middle of the ship. It is between the two lanterns and above the engine room.
The light (lantern)	The lantern is bright enough to shine through the fog.	There are two lanterns. One is an extra, or auxiliary. A radio beacon antenna is attached to the top of each lantern.
The crew's quarters		
The pilot house where the helmsman steers the ship		
The anchor		
The area below deck where the engines and generators are located		

Challenge the students to make a diagram of an object that interests them. This could be an animal (elephant, whale, snake), plant (rose, pumpkin, tree), or an invention (bicycle, kite, lightbulb). Provide time for the research needed to complete this activity. There are also many examples of other labeled diagrams on the Internet to examine as models. Search Google Images and type in *labeled diagrams*. Encourage students to also write about the subject of their diagram, adding additional information.

CCSS Connection: The activities below focus on understanding key ideas and details (RI.1–4.2) and asking and answering questions to demonstrate understanding of a text (RI.1–3.1).

ITEM/PLACE

ANSWER

INFORMATION IN DIAGRAM



2. Key Ideas and Details. In *Lightship*, the author writes:

Here is a ship
That holds her place.

Ask students to explain what that means. Then have them give evidence from the text of what the ship *does* and *does not* do to hold her place. Discuss why it was important for a lightship to hold its place.

Share the Author’s Note at the end of the book, which tells why lightships were originally built and why they were later discontinued. What additional information is provided in the Author’s Note?

3. Hot Seat. Have one student pretend to be the captain of the lightship. That student takes the “hot seat” for questioning. Ask the other students to think up questions to use to interview the captain. At the beginning of the interview, the captain should introduce himself or herself. Following the Q&A period, have one student summarize the important information shared by the captain.

CCSS Connection: In the activity below, students carefully examine the book *Moonshot* to learn more about the craft and organization of nonfiction, paying attention to how different text features provide information (RI.1–4.5).

4. Examining the Craft and Structure of Nonfiction. After reading *Moonshot*, take time to examine how the author not only *informs* us about the Apollo 11 space mission, but also captures the *excitement* and *wonder* of the event. Look carefully at each of the features below and take notes on the next page about how the author uses that feature to inform and create a sense of excitement and wonder. Sample ideas to discuss are printed below.

Text Feature How the Feature Informs and Creates a Sense of Excitement and Wonder

Endpapers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Front endpapers provide an illustrated time line of the Apollo 11 mission, from rollout and launch to the astronauts’ successful return to Earth. Readers anticipate a start-to-finish narrative. •Back endpapers provide a great deal of additional information, including an explanation of what Neil Armstrong meant to say when he landed on the moon. Readers can certainly understand how during such an exciting time, Armstrong didn’t precisely say what he intended to.
Repetition of Words and Phrases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Repeated use of the phrases to describe the Moon provide a sense of excitement: High above/there is the Moon,/cold and quiet,/ no air, no life,/but glowing in the sky. •Repeated use of the word <i>click</i> appeals to our sense of hearing as we learn about how the astronauts dressed for their launch and later strapped themselves into their seats. This adds to the excitement. •Repeated use of the word <i>GO</i>, as each scientist at the Houston Mission Control approves of the launch. This adds to the excitement and anticipation about what will happen next.
Print	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Large print adds to the excitement of the event, as in these examples: •Countdown numbers get bigger as they approach ZERO. •LIFTOFF! in large, bold type emphasizes the excitement. •ROAR written in large, overlapping type gives us a sense of the loudness, which the author describes as shaking the air and the earth.
Color	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Illustrations of the Earth have a light, sunny background, while illustrations of the moon are dark and mysterious.

Text Feature How the Feature Informs and Creates a Sense of Excitement and Wonder

Endpapers	
Repetition of Words and Phrases	
Print	
Color	

5. Examining the Language of *Moonshot*. In this book, the author writes about three different settings—Earth, the Moon, and the spacecraft. Collect examples showing how he describes each setting by appealing to our senses of sight, sound, and smell. Add to the chart below:

Descriptions of Earth, Spacecraft, and the Moon

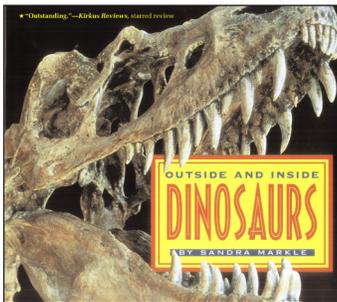
EARTH	SPACECRAFT	MOON
<p>Back to family, back to friends, to warmth, to light, to trees and blue water.</p>	<p>Here, where everything floats, it takes some skill to go to sleep. There are no beds or pillows, night or day. There is always, though, the hum of circuits, the whir of machines...</p>	<p>In the dust and stone Beneath their feet, No seed has ever grown, No root has ever reached...</p>

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A focus for teaching the Common Core State Standards with books by

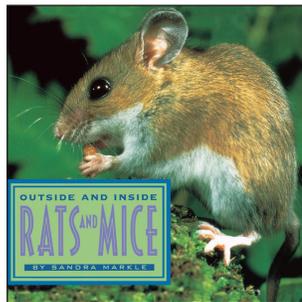
SANDRA MARKLE



Books



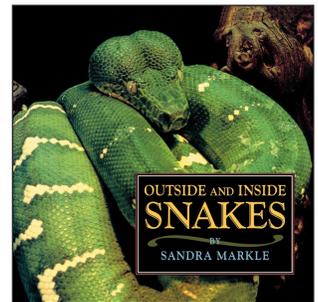
*Outside and Inside
Dinosaurs*



*Outside and Inside
Rats and Mice*



*Outside and Inside
Sharks*



*Outside and Inside
Snakes*

Background Information

With over two hundred science books to her credit, author Sandra Markle is well-known for her outstanding use of photographs and clearly written text. The books in the Outside and Inside series involve readers in answering questions raised by scientists and using photographic evidence to make tentative conclusions. An inviting style, interesting photographs, and challenging content make reading this series a fine choice for promoting scientific literacy. Students will enjoy looking at the pictures, learning to think like a scientist, and learning information about animals.

Activities for Launching Your Author Study

CCSS Connection: The activity below focuses on how the author integrates visual information and written text (RI.3–4.7) and uses reasons and evidence to support conclusions (RI.4–5.8).

1. **Photographs and Words Working Together.** In each book in the Outside and Inside series, the author does the following:
 - Raises questions about an animal.
 - Directs the reader to examine photographs to find the answers.
 - Shares what scientists conclude based on the evidence. Sometimes scientists do not agree about what the evidence shows.

Use the chart on the corresponding pages to take notes on how Sandra Markle uses photographs and written text in each of her books. Then discuss your findings. A sample response based on *Outside and Inside Dinosaurs* is given to start you off.

How Photographs and Words Work Together

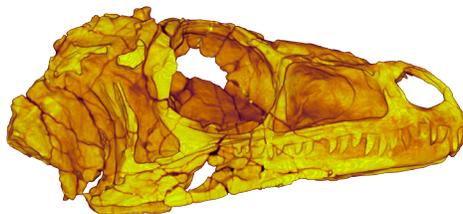
QUESTION	PHOTO EVIDENCE	CONCLUSION
An alligator is a living animal that is similar to a dinosaur. So if an alligator's legs are at its sides, why did experts put the dinosaur skeleton together with its legs straight under its body?	A photograph of dinosaur footprints shows that they walked straight ahead the way we humans walk, not swinging from side-to-side like an alligator.	Experts decided that a dinosaur's legs were probably straight under its body.

CCSS Connection: The activity below focuses on Sandra Markle's writing craft (RI.3.4), specifically her use of comparisons to promote understanding of science content:

2. **Using Comparisons to Support Understanding.** When Sandra Markle explains the *outside* and *inside* of animals, she uses phrases like *just like you* and *unlike you* to compare an animal's body to yours. As you read each book, find these comparisons and discuss how they help you learn about the animal. A sample quote for each book is given below. Then add your own comparisons to the chart on the corresponding page.

Comparing People and Animals

BOOK TITLE	COMPARISON
<i>Outside and Inside Dinosaurs</i>	"You can also learn if the dinosaur was walking or running. Just like you , a running dinosaur took longer steps than one that was walking. So a running dinosaur's footprints are farther apart" (p. 6).
<i>Outside and Inside Rats and Mice</i>	" Just like you , a rat's teeth have a hard coating of enamel. A rat's front teeth are much harder than yours, though—hard enough to gnaw through bone or wire. Unlike your teeth, a rat's front teeth also keep growing longer. So as much as it gnaws, there is always new tooth material to replace what wears away" (p. 6).
<i>Outside and Inside Sharks</i>	"Open your mouth and look in the mirror. Your teeth are different shapes— some pointed, some flattened—so you can bite and chew the different types of foods you eat. Similarly, sharks have teeth shaped just right for what they eat " (p. 11).
<i>Outside and Inside Snakes</i>	"After this python lies on the sunny rock ledge for a while, its body temperature will likely be about the same as yours . Usually, though, a snake's temperature is lower than yours . So if you touch a snake, it will feel cool" (p. 6).



How Photographs and Words Work Together

QUESTION	PHOTO EVIDENCE	CONCLUSION

Comparing People and Animals

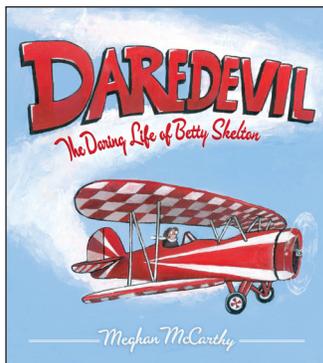
BOOK TITLE	COMPARISON

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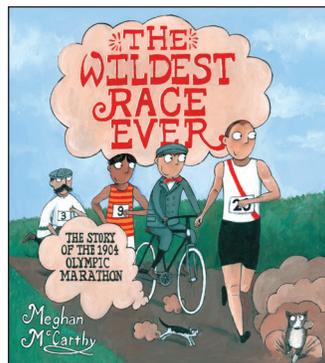
MEGHAN MCCARTHY



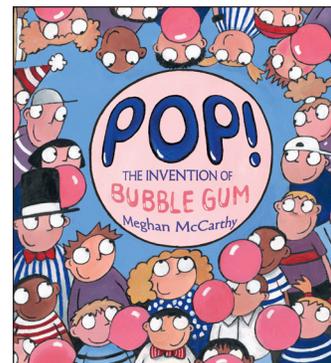
Books



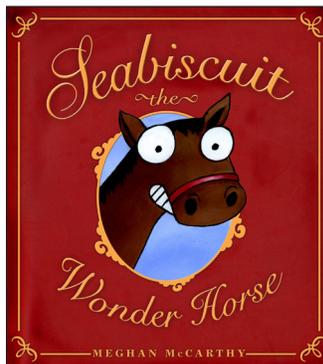
*Daredevil:
The Daring Life of
Betty Skelton*



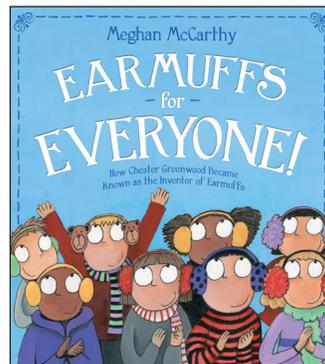
*The Wildest Race Ever:
The Story of the 1904
Olympic Marathon*



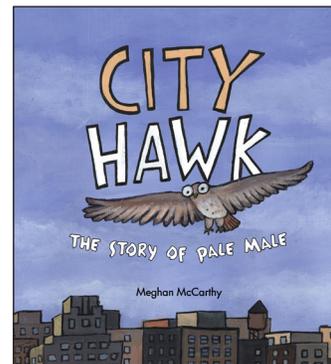
*Pop!:
The Invention of
Bubble Gum*



*Seabiscuit
the Wonder Horse*



*Earmuffs for Everyone!:
How Chester Greenwood Became
Known as the Inventor of Earmuffs*



*City Hawk:
The Story of Pale Male*

Background Information

Introduce younger readers to picture book biographies of daring and inventive people such as “daredevil” Betty Skelton—who broke speed records on the ground, in the air, and in the water—and Walter Diemer, the accountant-turned-experimental-scientist who invented bubble gum. Learn about animals that people have taken to their hearts, such as Pale Male, the red-tailed hawk that built a nest on the side of an apartment building overlooking New York City’s Central Park, and Seabiscuit, the horse who went from being an underdog to being a champion racehorse. Each story is complemented by Meghan McCarthy’s bold, acrylic paintings featuring her trademark “googly-eyed” portraits. These biographies are perfect for supporting content area learning and for introducing the features of biography. Encourage students to discuss the content of these books and share their ideas in writing.

Activities for Launching Your Author Study



CCSS Connection: The first two activities below deal with asking and answering questions about a text, identifying the main topic and key details that support it, and describing the relationship between a series of events, concepts, or ideas (RI.1–2.1) (RI.1–3.2).

These activities are based on *Daredevil: The Daring Life of Betty Skelton*. At a time when most women did not even consider flying airplanes, driving race cars, or training to go into space, Betty Skelton did just that. *Daredevil* shows young readers how one woman *dared* to pursue her goals and dreams—even when they did not match those of most other girls growing up in the 1930s.

1. **Imaginary Interview.** Here's your chance to create an imaginary interview. Imagine that you could ask Betty Skelton questions about her daring career and that she would answer you. One person in the class should pretend to be Betty Skelton. The others should ask her questions about her life. Include questions about big, important events like her first plane ride and small details like the fact that her dog, Little Tinker, always flew with her.

While you are preparing your interview, you might be interested in listening to a real interview with Betty, which can be found at C-SpanVideo.org/Program/292945-1. See if you can add questions and answers based on what you heard Betty say. Also visit author Meghan McCarthy's website at Meghan-McCarthy.com to see a video of Betty Skelton, as well as newspaper articles and photographs.

2. **Scrapbooking.** Make a scrapbook of important events in Betty's life. Draw three or four pictures showing Betty as a daredevil. You can show her in a plane, in a race car, in a speedboat, and training with future astronauts. Write a sentence below each picture to describe what is happening. What would Betty want to remember? You can Google pictures of Betty that you can also include in your scrapbook. How does your scrapbook show that Betty was a daredevil?

CCSS Connection: The next two activities provide practice writing informative and explanatory text. These activities provide experience writing to give an opinion, to inform, and to explain a sequence of events (W.1–3.1, 2, 3).

These activities are based on *Seabiscuit*. During the 1930s, when many people were suffering from tough economic times, they found momentary diversion at the racetrack. An unusual horse named Seabiscuit—a wild, lazy, angry, stubborn horse—was transformed from a loser to a winner through the loving care of his owner, trainer, and jockey. As a result, Seabiscuit went from being a battered underdog to being a celebrated hero, finding his way into the hearts of millions of people.

3. What is your opinion of Seabiscuit. Was he a hero? Write your thoughts about this horse.



Seabiscuit: The Wonder Horse

RAFT Writing Activity

RAFT stands for Role, Audience, Format, and Topic.

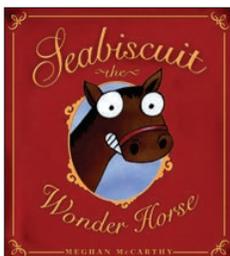
Role refers to who is doing the writing. **Audience** refers to who is receiving the writing. **Format** refers to the kind of writing being done. **Topic** refers to what the writing is about.

ROLE	AUDIENCE	FORMAT	TOPIC
Charles Howard, Seabiscuit's owner	Samuel Riddle, War Admiral's owner	Letter	I challenge War Admiral to try to beat my horse Seabiscuit in a race. Why I think Seabiscuit will win.
Samuel Riddle	Newspaper reporter	Interview	Why the goofy-looking Seabiscuit will not win.
Red Pollard	George "The Iceman" Woolf	Conversation	Please race for me. Ride Seabiscuit when he races War Admiral.
Charles Howard	Himself	Scrapbook of photos and items to remember about Seabiscuit	Memories of Seabiscuit and how he changed from a slow, angry horse to a champion and hero.
Fan of Seabiscuit	Herself	Diary	Why I went to the racetrack to root for Seabiscuit

Here are the writing ideas from the chart above:

- As Seabiscuit's owner, write a letter to Samuel Riddle, challenging War Admiral to a race with Seabiscuit and stating why he predicts Seabiscuit will win.
- As Samuel Riddle, respond to the questions of a newspaper reporter. Tell him why the goofy-looking Seabiscuit will not win.
- As Red Pollard, convince George "The Iceman" Woolf that he should ride Seabiscuit in this place when he races War Admiral.
- As Charles Howard, make a scrapbook of photos and items to remember how Seabiscuit changed from a slow, angry horse to a champion and a hero.
- As a fan of Seabiscuit, write a diary entry about how you went to the racetrack to root for Seabiscuit when he raced War Admiral.

Try adding your own ideas to the chart. Share these ideas with your classmates.



Seabiscuit: The Wonder Horse

By Meghan McCarthy
Paula Wiseman Books
REPRODUCIBLE

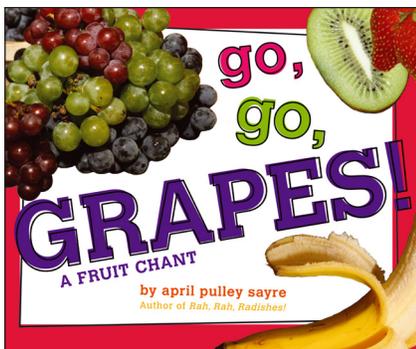


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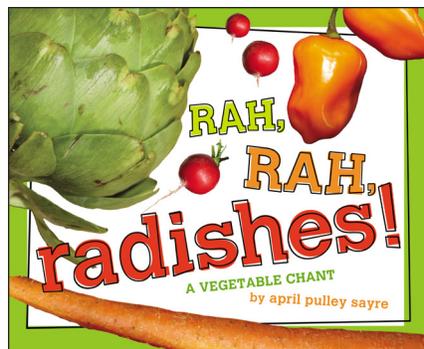
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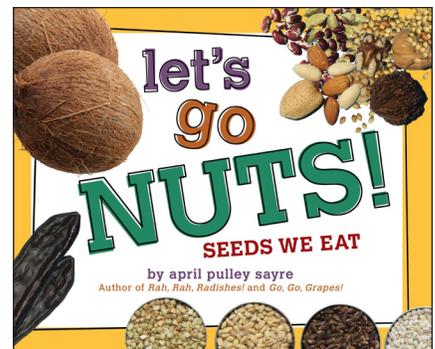
Books



*Go, Go, Grapes!:
A Fruit Chant*



*Rah, Rah, Radishes!:
A Vegetable Chant*



*Let's Go Nuts!:
Seeds We Eat*

Background Information

If you are interested in sharing information about nourishing foods in a way that is upbeat and engaging, then these books are for you. The language is dynamic and designed to be read aloud and chanted. (Note the word chant in two of the titles.) The photographs are large enough and interesting enough to be the focus of careful study. Additional written information is provided in the back of each book—a frequent feature of nonfiction literature that is important to point out to young readers. Begin with the suggested books listed above, and then seek out additional titles by this prolific author.

Activities for Launching Your Author Study

CCSS Connection: The activity below shows how phrases with alliteration provide meaning and suggest feelings (RL.1–2.4).

1. Let's Hear It for Vegetables.

First, enjoy the book *Rah, Rah, Radishes!* As you read it aloud, invite the children to *chant* along.

Second, reread the book, pointing out the author's use of alliteration—repetition of initial consonant sounds. Discuss how the phrases below make us feel enthusiastic about these foods. Use the list below to discuss the use of alliteration found in *Rah, Rah, Radishes!*

Alliteration in *Rah, Rah, Radishes!*

- **R**ah, rah, radishes!
- **C**arrots are calling.
- **P**ile up peppers.
- **C**all for cayenne.
- **H**ola, habanero!

Third, add original phrases to the list. Then challenge students to write and illustrate their own cheers for vegetables, fruits, and nuts, using alliteration the way April Pulley Sayre does. Share the results. Here are a few samples to get you started:

- **Z**oom for zucchini!
- **F**lip for fennel.
- **A**pplaud for asparagus.
- **C**ome in, cauliflower.
- **B**ravo, beans!

CCSS Connection: The activity below shows how images contribute to and clarify a text (RI.2–4.7)

2. Looking at Photographs.

After reading and chanting *Go, Go, Grapes!*, have the students take a closer look at the photographs. Select several photographs for close examination, especially those that have written signs as well as fruits. For example, you can select the photograph showing strawberries. It also has signs about the kind of strawberries they are, their cost, and who grew them. Have students complete the T-chart on the next page, sharing what they see, what they think, and what questions they have. A sample begins below.

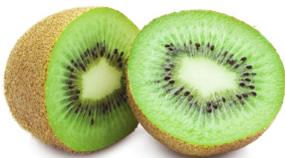
FRUIT	OBSERVATIONS	THOUGHTS	QUESTIONS
	<p>Flats of strawberries</p> <p>Stems and seeds</p>	<p>The strawberries look delicious!</p>	<p>How many strawberries are produced on the farm? Where is the farm?</p> <p>What is special about Michigan organic strawberries? Is \$25 a flat expensive?</p>

FRUIT

OBSERVATIONS

THOUGHTS

QUESTIONS



CCSS Connection: The activity below deals with identifying main ideas and key details (RI.1–4.1)

3. **The Scoop on Seeds.**

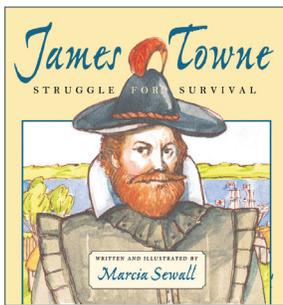
After reading *Let's Go Nuts!*, spend time examining the back matter: "A Few More Handfuls: The Scoop on Nuts." This material at the end of the book raises questions and provides answers. After reading each Q&A, have students fill in the Question-Answer-Details chart below. The first question has already been answered.

QUESTION	ANSWER	DETAILS
Are nuts, beans, and grains really seeds?	Yes.	An unshelled almond, an uncooked kidney bean, and a grain of wheat can grow into a plant.
Why are seeds such good food?		
Are the seeds we eat the same kind of seeds we plant?		
Why don't seeds we eat grow inside our stomachs?		
Are peanuts nuts?		
What are nut allergies?		
What is so good about beans?		

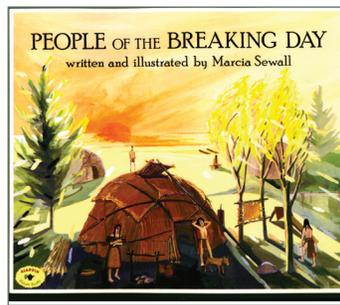
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MARCIA SEWALL



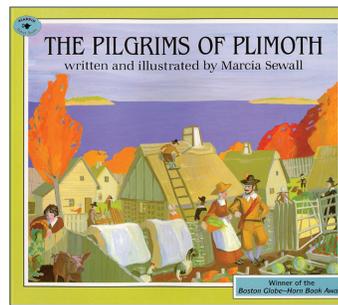
Books



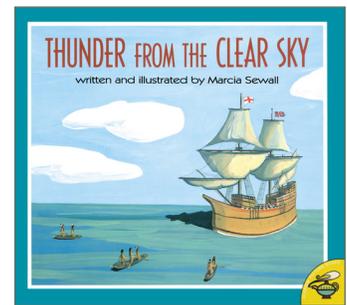
*James Towne:
Struggle
for Survival*



*People of the
Breaking Day*



*The Pilgrims
of Plimoth*



*Thunder From
the Clear Sky*

Background Information

What was it like for the Wampanoag Indians before the arrival of the Pilgrims? What was life like for the Pilgrims once they arrived? How did the Wampanoag Indians and the Pilgrims view each other? Why was the settlement of James Towne such a struggle? These questions are dealt with in books by Marcia Sewall, making them useful material for social studies inquiries into the early settlement of our country. Informative watercolor illustrations complement and extend the text. These books, told from different perspectives—Wampanoag Indian, Pilgrim, and a settler seeking a better life—help children understand that there is no single story of the past. There are, instead, multiple stories.

Activities for Launching Your Author Study

CCSS Connection: The activity below gives children practice in referring to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly (RI.4.1) and using writing to gather relevant information from print (W.4.8).

1. **Comparison Chart.** *People of the Breaking Day* and *The Pilgrims of Plimoth* are companion texts that are powerful sources of information when read together. *People of the Breaking Day* describes the lives of the Wampanoag Indians before the arrival of the Pilgrims. *The Pilgrims of Plimoth* deals with the arrival and settlement of the Pilgrims and other settlers. After reading both books, complete the chart on the corresponding page to compare the roles of men, women, and children.

WHAT WORK DID MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN DO?

WAMPANOAG INDIANS

PILGRIMS

Men		
Women		
Children		

2. **Written Conversation: Writing about the Life of a Wampanoag Child.** This activity makes note-passing acceptable! In fact, it makes it required. Students use the information from *People of the Breaking Day* and *The Pilgrims of Plimoth* to have a *written conversation* with a partner. There's no talking, only writing. Follow these steps:

- Pair the students.
- Tell them they will be writing *simultaneous* notes to each other about the life of a Wampanoag child. That is, they will both be writing comments at the same time. They will switch papers three times. When they switch, they should comment on what their partner has written and add new thoughts and ideas. It's just like a conversation, only there's no talking.
- Students should write for the entire time—approximately two-to-three minutes before each switch. **When writing, consider the following features of the life of a Wampanoag child:** chores, home, family, foods eaten, celebrations, and spiritual beliefs. Above all, do not stop writing. Raise questions. Wonder about things. Make connections to your life. Stay on the topic.
- After the three switches, have a class conversation about the life of a Wampanoag child.
- Follow this up by having a written conversation about the life of a Pilgrim child.

CCSS Connection: The activity below provides practice with determining the central idea of a portion of a text and how it is conveyed through details (RI.2–6.2) and determining the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text. (RI.3–6.4).

3. **Annotating a Two-Page Spread.** After reading *James Towne*, which details the settlement of the colony and its struggle to succeed and prosper, have students annotate a two-page spread. Each spread consists of written text, illustration, and a quote from one of the settlers.

Annotation requires writing on the text itself, so make copies of the spread for each student to write on. When students annotate, they make a record of their thinking. This is an activity that supports active construction of meaning.

Here are some ways to annotate a two-page spread:

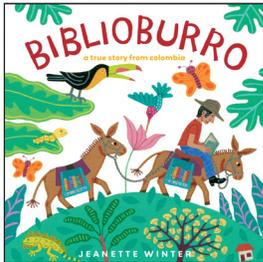
- Define unfamiliar words.
- Rewrite words in the quote that have unfamiliar spellings.
- Underline important words and phrases.
- Ask questions about information that is puzzling.
- Ask questions about topics you want to investigate further.
- Translate—or put an idea in your own words—so that you understand it better.
- Summarize the information presented. What's the big idea?
- Predict what will happen next.
- Make a drawing or sketch that will help you remember the information.
- Connect the information given to other parts of the book or to other books.



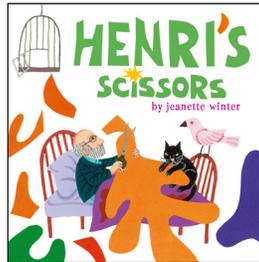
Launching Nonfiction Author Studies:
A focus for teaching the Common Core State Standards with books by
JEANETTE WINTER



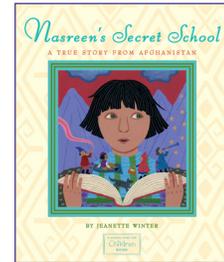
Books



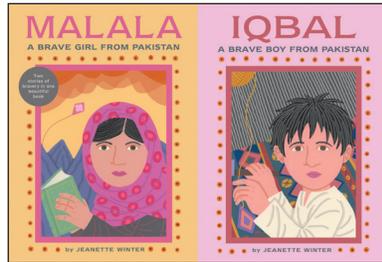
Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia



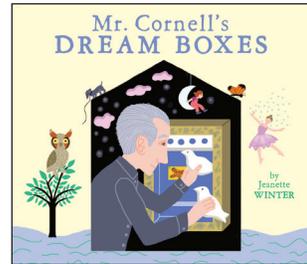
Henri's Scissors



Nasreen's Secret School: A True Story from Afghanistan



*Malala, a Brave Girl from Pakistan/ Iqbal, a Brave Boy from Pakistan:
Two Stories of Bravery*

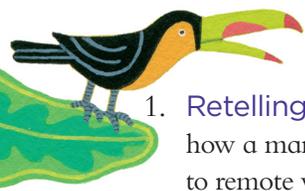


Background Information

As the author and illustrator of outstanding picture book biographies, Jeanette Winter is well known for her colorful, folk-style illustrations and her clear, well-researched writing. Her books, many of which emphasize the contributions of individuals to improving the lives of others, can be read with an emphasis on promoting peace and social justice. Jeanette Winter is the winner of the 2010 Jane Addams Children's Book Award in the Younger Children category—an award given for books that encourage children to think about peace, social justice, world community, and equality. Use these books to introduce your students to thoughtfully crafted picture book biographies.

Activities for Launching Your Author Study

CCSS Conection: The speaking and listening activity below gives students practice recounting a true story that consists of a short sequence of events, and adding appropriate facts and relevant details (SL.2–3.4). Working with a partner, students can practice telling the story to each other.



1. **Retelling a True Narrative: How Luis Soriano Brought Books to the Faraway Hills.** *Biblioburro* tells how a man who loved books brought stories to children in isolated villages. Using two burros, Luis Soriano traveled to remote villages in Colombia, bringing crates of books to share. On the way to the village of El Tormenta he faced a bandit, but still succeeded in reaching his destination, sharing a story, leaving books, and heading home.

Working with a partner, have the students cut out the words and phrases listed on the corresponding page and then put them in order so that they can retell the story. There are several possible ways to order the words. Have the students practice retelling the story. Encourage them to use words like *first*, *second*, *next*, *after that*, and *finally* to show the order in which things happened. Ask them to include relevant facts and details in their retelling.

How Luis Soriano Brought Books to the Faraway Hills

Luis	Alfa and Beto	Biblioburro	burros
bandit	books	Colombia	children
Diana	borrowed books	jungles	El Tormenta
crates	faraway villages	masks	choose books

CCSS Conenection: The activity below gives students practice in expressing an opinion and backing it up with evidence (W.1–3.1).

2. **Writing an Opinion: Was Nasreen’s grandmother right to take her to the secret school?** After the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan, girls were not allowed to attend school. *Nasreen’s Secret School* tells how—after soldiers took her father away and her mother set out to find him—Nasreen’s grandmother decided to take her to a secret school. Despite the danger, the school opened up the world of knowledge to Nasreen, making her feel less alone.

After reading *Nasreen’s Secret School*, have students work in partners to complete the discussion web below, writing all the reasons they can think of to answer the question with a YES and all the reasons to answer with a NO. Then have the students write a conclusion, giving the strongest reason they can think of to support their opinion.

QUESTION:

WAS NASREEN’S GRANDMOTHER RIGHT TO TAKE HER TO THE SECRET SCHOOL? WAS IT TOO DANGEROUS?



DISCUSSION WEB

YES

NO

CONCLUSION:

CCSS Connection: The activity below provides students with the opportunity to participate in collaborative conversations to build understanding (SL.1.1, 2)



3. Discussing Goals, Actions, and Character Traits

The subjects of Jeanette Winter’s biographies—Luis, Henri, and Nasreen and her grandmother—all work hard to pursue their goals. Have students work with a partner or small group to discuss each person’s goal, what that person did to achieve that goal, and what character traits the person displayed. Use the chart on the next page to record details such as those shown below.

PERSON	GOALS	ACTIONS	CHARACTER TRAIT
Luis	To share books and stories with children	He bought two burros and brought books to faraway villages	Determination
Nasreen	To be less lonely, to learn	Attended the secret school	Persistence
Nasreen’s grandmother	To open up the world to Nasreen	Took her to the secret school	Courage
Henri	To continue to create art	Began to cut colored paper with scissors to create colorful environment	Flexibility, Adaptability

Consider the ways that you are most like one of these four people. Explain how.

PERSON

GOALS

ACTIONS

CHARACTER TRAIT

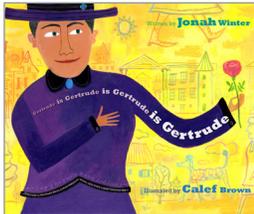
Luis			
Nasreen			
Nasreen's grandmother			
Henri			

Launching Nonfiction Author Studies:
A focus for teaching the Common Core State Standards with books by

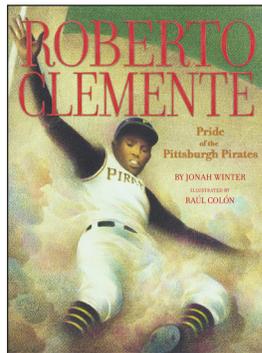
JONAH WINTER



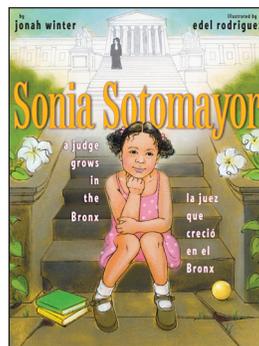
Books



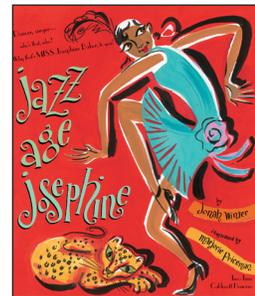
*Gertrude is
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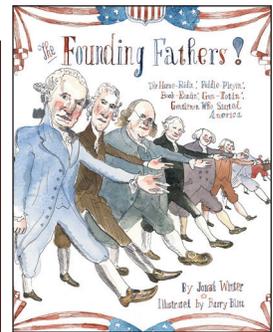
*Roberto Clemente:
Pride of the
Pittsburgh Pirates*



*Sonia Sotomayor:
A Judge Grows in
the Bronx*



*Jazz Age Josephine:
Dancer, singer—
who's that, who?
Why that's Miss Josephine
Baker to you!*



*The Founding Fathers:
Those Horse Ridin',
Fiddle-Playin',
Book-Reading,
Gun-Totin' Gentlemen
Who Started America*

Background Information

Jonah Winter's poetic style and varied use of language make his picture book biographies distinctive. You can see this in his free verse writing in *Roberto Clemente*, in his use of rhyming couplets in *Jazz Age Josephine*, and in his writing that closely parallels Gertrude Stein's style of writing in *Gertrude Is Gertrude Is Gertrude Is Gertrude*. In each biography, the language captures the essence of the person being written about. Readers also learn how a strong-willed, determined young person triumphed over obstacles to achieve a cherished goal. Sonia Sotomayor realized her childhood goal of becoming a judge. Josephine Baker left the US to find the recognition she wanted as a singer and dancer in Paris. Roberto Clemente pushed himself to become the greatest all-around baseball player of his time. Their stories are inspirational.

Activities for Launching Your Author Study

CCSS Connection: The activity below shows how phrases with alliteration provide meaning and suggest feelings (RL.1–2.4).

1. **Goals, Obstacles, and Successes.** Josephine Baker, Roberto Clemente, and Sonia Sotomayor all achieved success by pursuing their goals with determination. Have students complete the chart on the corresponding page to identify each person's goal, the obstacles each had to overcome, and how each person did it.

PERSON

GOAL

OBSTACLES

HOW THE
OBSTACLE WAS
OVERCOME

Josephine
Baker

Roberto
Clemente

Sonia
Sotomayor

After completing the chart, discuss how these three people were alike. What characteristics do they share? Then ask students to write about their own goals for the future and the obstacles they will need to overcome in order to reach them.

2. **Newspaper Article.** Josephine Baker, Robert Clemente, and most recently Sonia Sotomayor have all been written about in newspapers. Have students write an article that could have appeared in the newspaper when one of them achieved a major goal. Articles should have a short, descriptive headline, an opening paragraph that covers the five Ws, and details that add interest to the article. Students can find photographs on the Internet to illustrate their articles. Have students use the newspaper template on the next page to create their newspaper outline.

CCSS Connection: The activities below deal with nonfiction craft and structure—learning about nonfiction text features (RI.1–3.5).

3. **Text Features.** As you read and discuss each book, examine the following text features:

- **Cover:**

What information is provided on the front and back covers?

How do the illustrations reflect important information in the book?

- **Flaps:**

What can you learn about the content of the book by reading the flaps?

What can you learn about the author and illustrator?

- **Author's Note:**

What additional information is provided?

- **Lettering:**

What do you notice about the size of the letters?

What do you notice about the placement of the words?

4. **How the Author Supports His Ideas.** Below is a quote from *Sonia Sotomayor: A Judge Grows in the Bronx*. In writing, explain what the quote means. Then identify the reasons Jonah Winter gives to support this idea.

“You never know what can happen. Sometimes the most beautiful moonflower blossoms in an unexpected place—on a chain-link fence, near broken glass, next to an abandoned building—watered by someone whose name you might not even know. And sometimes the most amazing person blossoms in just such a place as well.”



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Date	Newspaper Logo

Photo	Article One Headline by Text
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Article Two Headline by Text

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*Guide written in 2014 by Myra Zarnowski, a professor in the Department of Elementary and Early
Childhood Education at Queens College, CUNY.*

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