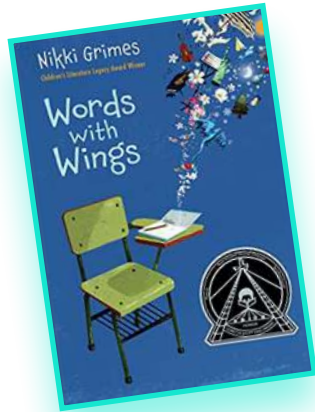


CATCH a spark!

Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



Words With Wings

by Nikki Grimes

83 pages / Grades 4-8

Gabby is a daydreamer. Say any word and her mind takes her to vivid, clear places. What started as an escape from reality has become her way of life. It hasn't always been a good thing for her, but when a special teacher connects with her through her imagination and the power of words, those daydreams open a door that give her confidence and will allow her to fly.

C Context

The entire story is told in **short verse**, with each page its own poem to advance the story.

Word choice and intent. This is a wonderful mentor text to discuss deliberate word choice and author's craft. Though the words are few on each page, we become connected and tied to characters in a very unique way, seeing deep inside of them.

Author's craft is front and center.

A Arts

The **art of language.** Not only is this a text that uses the power of words, it is a tool for discussing page **layout, font**, word placement.

Visualization and transferring artistic ideas to language.

The **art of the spoken word.** The short verse of each page aligns beautifully with the idea of spoken language. How can you orate the words to enhance meaning and interpretation?

T Themes

Loneliness

Survival

Friendship

Fragmented families

The power of words to both carry us away and comfort us

Imagination

Trust

C Create

Allow students to daydream and see what it inspires them to do! Give them creativity and freedom on this. Use the same concept Mr. Spicer gives his students on pg. 75.

Illustrate words, from the simple to the complex.

Ask students what their favorite words are and to think why. Does their reasoning have complex meaning? Challenge them to start really noticing words and thinking about them more deeply. Keep a word journal and collect them.

H Heart Words

"Whenever I described my daydreams it was like helping her see the rainbow"

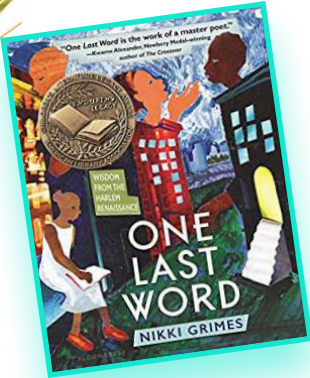
"Words have wings that wake my daydreams."

Due to the vivid writing in this book, the Heart Words are endless. Challenge students to find their own set of Heart Words in the book. What speaks the most to them and why?



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Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



One Last Word: Wisdom from the Harlem Renaissance

by Nikki Grimes

126 pages / Grades 5-8

A very special collection of poetry inspired from the Harlem Renaissance which showcase a unique method of writing poetry, "The Golden Shovel". Included with each new original poem is the poem which was the inspiration, from the world's master poets. With each poem is exceptional art from today's African American illustrators.

C Context

The **Harlem Renaissance** in the early 20th century was considered to be a golden age of African American culture fostering masterful pieces of literature, music, performing arts and visual art.

Golden Shovel Poetry asks writers to take a line from another poem to create a new poem, using the words from the original as the last word of each line in the new poem. A challenge which fosters critical thinking and creativity! Directions are given on pg 6-7.

A Arts

Methods of illustration. The illustrations throughout the book have a variety of styles, from media to pencil to collage and more. The 15 illustrators are all today's rising artists. Included in the book are artist biographies and a glimpse into their process.

A strong mentor text for discussing aligning illustration with text. Analyzing intent and the perspective of an audience/reader.

T Themes

Defining ourselves. Grimes' original poems foster reflection, connection and conversation into important topics.

Setting a path in life

Survival

Positivity

Hope

Inspiration

Finding reasons to hope and dig deeply for strength inside ourselves

C Create

Immerse students in poetry from the masters to upcoming poets of today. Ask students to collect their favorite lines. Challenge them to try the Golden Shovel method to create their own original piece.

After writing a poem, collaborate with a peer who will develop the art to go with it. Discuss the author's choices as well as the intended style of the artist. Foster collaborative conversations with students and showcase their final pairings in a gallery style show.

H Heart Words

"Life's stairway got dips, spirals."

"I'll just show you my heart."

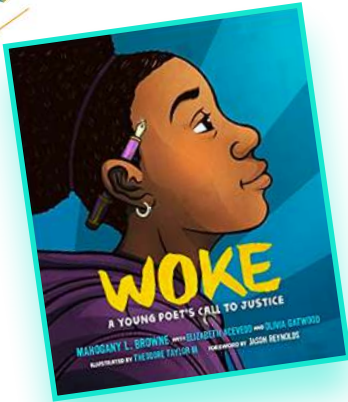
"The past is a ladder that can help you keep climbing."

"No matter what, don't let a few mean people shake you till your young dreams lose their feathers and fall."



CATCH a spark!

Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



Woke: A Young Poet's Call to Justice

Written by Mahogany L. Browne, Illustrated by Theodore Taylor III

56 pages / Grades 5-8

New poems by women of color cover topics ranging from discrimination to speaking up and out, to activism and social justice. What may be heavy topics are paired with bright and targeted art, inspiring students to think about justice and expressing themselves.

C Context

Relevant and important topics of the poems will foster deep and important conversations.

Discrimination, racial justice, activism, determination, prejudice, and so many more.

Using the **power of words** to share emotions, thoughts and feelings. Trace poets of the past to see how their work aligned with social happenings in the world at the time.

What it means to be "**woke**" and aware of the world around you.

A Arts

The style and purpose of **digital art**. How does it differ in its interpretation and usage from other forms of art?

The **art of language**. How is word choice in poetry purposeful and targeted in style compared to other forms of writing. How does it lend itself to being a mode of powerful communication?

T Themes

Being aware

Fighting for what you believe in

Asking and discussing hard questions

Perspective

Justice

Empathy

C Create

Foster conversations among students in about the topics they are "woke" about.

Following these talks, give students time to reflect in silence and express themselves using art, whether that is in the form of visual art or using words as art. Allow the next conversations to happen from their own work. Pair students with similar topics together. Can they find ways to align their visions and their words to create unified works and personal calls to justice?

H Heart Words

"...we must nourish and care for one another if we are to grow."

"...the lighthouse shining a path to a brighter possibility and it is up to us to follow the sharp beams of truth..."

"Say the names of your heroes and then say your own name too."

"...rock the boat with love and hope..."

"A silence can sound like many things..."



CATCH a spark!

Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



Mary Blair's Unique Flair: The Girl Who Became One of the Disney Legends

Written by Amy Novesky / Illustrated by Brittney Lee
40 pages / Grades K-4

From her earliest days, Mary Blair loved color and wanted to do nothing but create art. She collected color and saw the world through an eye of imagination. Don't we all envision a turquoise moon? Follow her from being an imaginative child to becoming a Disney Legend, an illustrator who shaped a world of fantasy.

C Context

A brief historical look into the world of **Walt Disney** and so many of the films we have all come to love. A chance to share with students original designs for animated movies such as Cinderella and Dumbo, as well as beloved rides like "It's a Small World".

Geography - Mary collected colors from around the world. Her adventures allow an introduction to the world and locating places on a map, while also acknowledging the culture and contribution of each place.

A Arts

Color - Mary didn't just see basic colors, she saw shades and hues. Color vocabulary is very rich and robust.

Cut paper illustrations. The illustrator used Mary's unique style and blended it with cut paper illustrations. There is a glimpse into the process at the end of the book.

The art of **whimsical design**. Mary found a way to blend imagination and magic with reality and that paired hand in hand with the work of Walt Disney.

T Themes

Being a dreamer

Imagination

Magic

Believing

Following a passion

Breaking the rules

C Create

Build a color dictionary. Collect colors and examples of colors from their own journeys.

Create a new color and name it. Challenge students to create a color a day. How do they choose their name?

After collecting and creating colors, ask students to break the rules and color their worlds differently. Close their eyes and just imagine the real world with magic thrown in. For older students, follow up with a written artist statement.

H Heart Words

"...and her favorite color - blanco - the color of a blank piece of paper, of possibility."

"She painted colors you weren't supposed to paint together."

"It was a small world after all."

"...colorful happily ever afters."



CATCH a spark!

Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



Pocket Full of Colors: The Magical World of Mary Blair, Disney Artist Extraordinaire

Written by Amy Guglielmo and Jacqueline Tourville

Illustrated by Brigette Barrager

48 pages / Grades 2-5

Mary Blair lived her life in wild, vivid, imaginative colors which paved the way for her at a time when the job market was filled with men who saw the world in black and white - except for one.

C Context

Role of **women in the workforce**, particularly in the 1940s.

Geography - Mary's adventures foster using maps and globes, while also acknowledging the culture and contribution of each location.

The rise of **Walt Disney Studios** to becoming the institution we all know. Looking at perspective.

Adjectives are used richly throughout the story to help students visualize in the way Mary did.

A Arts

Color names - there is a treasure trove of color names throughout the book.

The **"rules" of color**. How do we traditionally see colors working together, what is a color palette in illustration and what happens when that changes?

The **Art of Walt Disney**. Use this as a launching point to dive into the unique world of imagination and illustration. Many will recognize Mary's work, but few will know her name.

T Themes

Perseverance

Trailblazing

Imagination

Whimsy

Breaking the rules

Standing strong to one's beliefs.

Finding a style

C Create

Collect colors and create your own. Let students go on a color word hunt in the book, many which they will not know. Ask them to decide what kind of color goes with each word and why. Then show the true colors.

Live and dream outside the lines. Be wild and vivid and look at the world differently. Take a picture of a place in your world, and then color it differently. A purple sky? Challenge students to not be random in their work, but to make deliberate, inspired choices.

H Heart Words

"Under a wide blue sky, on a red-dirt road, in a lemon-yellow house..."

"...she had new colors to collect."

"She kept those colors in her heart."

"...a place for her colors to run and dance and play as they pleased."



CATCH a spark!

Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats

Written by T.S. Eliot, Illustrated by Edward Gorey
56 pages / Grades 2-8

Originally written in the 1930s, this book of poetry served as the inspiration for Andrew Lloyd Weber's legendary musical, CATS. Incredibly rich in language, each poem creates rich characters with unique personalities, fostering visualization and creativity. A look into a classic piece of literature fostering imagination and whimsy.

C Context

A rich look at **vocabulary**. Written in a style we don't often see anymore, Eliot blends rich vocabulary with unique word choice. A perfect mentor text to read slowly for meaning. Challenge students to consider why these poems work so well to foster imagination.

Each poem brings to life a cat with **strong character and strong personality traits**. Students will learn much about each cat simply in one poem when considering tone author's craft. The craft of **personification**.

A Arts

What is **Musical Theatre** and how did Weber see this book lending itself so well to the craft? There are multiple videos easily accessible into the way the book was brought to life.

Using **dance** to create the artistry of personality. This piece of theatre is unique to musicals in that it is strictly told through dance and poetry. Why do these two art forms lend themselves so well to this piece?

T Themes

Personality
Uniqueness
Artistry
Character

C Create

Choose a "cat" to analyze deeply and then challenge students to bring that cat to life through music (tone/style), costume, dance style and voice. After doing so, share the artistic choices of that cat from the musical. Play the soundtrack to each poem and let the words come to life through song. (There are many videos of most of the cats on YouTube)

Using Eliot's style, have students create a poem about their own cat or dog, bringing them to life.

H Heart Words

"The naming of cats is a difficult matter...it isn't just one of your holiday games."

After reading the various cats, students will naturally gravitate with one of the poems/cats. Within their chosen poem, have them identify their own heart words and explain their choice. It likely aligns with their reason for having that particular poems a favorite.

Note: For differentiation and younger readers, there are picture book versions of many of the single poems available. The titles of these books are the titles of the poems.

