

# CATCH a spark!

## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



### The Boy Who Grew a Forest

32 pages / Grades K-3

An inspiring, true story of Jadav, a young boy in India who saw what erosion and deforestation was doing to his island home in India. Determined to do something about it, Jadav began planting trees and ultimately grew a forest of over 1,300 trees.

#### C Context

A multilayered look at life sciences including **life cycles, ecosystems, ecology, climate** (rain seasons and flooding) and **erosion**.

**Plant** life cycle and diversity of **wildlife** in given **regions**.

**Simplicity of language** and minimal word choice to add to the meaning of a story.

#### A Arts

Using **light** and **color** in illustrations to **highlight** and add to the setting. The use of light and color adds to the warmth of the story and the climate of this particular location.

#### T Themes

Determination

Making a difference

The power of one person

Starting small - the ripple effect.

#### C Create

Think about what your community needs. It may not be a "forest" but how can you start small to "plant" what it needs and watch it grow. (i.e. "planting kindness,")

Create your own forest, imaginatively. Think about what "seeds" you plant. This may not be planting actual seeds. Be creative! A candy forest perhaps?

#### H Heart Words

*"Each day he planted."*

*"Only by growing plants the earth will survive."*



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### Flashlight

Written by Lizi Boyd

40 pages / Grades K-1

A delightful story told completely in images, students will explore light, shadow, night and nature while telling the story of a young child's imaginative adventure through the woods at nighttime. A book with multiple layers of context and ways to view, this will be a book all of your students, including struggling readers, will read again and again.

### C Context

A fun and whimsical look at **light**. Light sources such as flashlights and the moon. Engage students in conversations as to whether things exist and happen if you can't see them.

**Telling stories with pictures.**

**Animals** (particularly nocturnal) and **habitats**.

**Visual poetry.**

### A Arts

Using **layers** and **cutouts** in illustration.

**Positive and negative space.**

**Color vs. black and white.**

**Light and dark**

### T Themes

Wonder

Imagination

Adventure

Magic in darkness

### C Create

Create a "darkroom" with hidden treasure for your students. This could be as simple as play scenes set up with toys, new pictures to find. Provide them flashlights to discover. Think about what happens in your classroom at nighttime.

Encourage students to take a picture at nighttime outside in their yard, with a flashlight illuminating one area. Encourage them to tell the story of that scene.

### H Heart Words

Find a moment for students to narrate their own Heart Words, as this is a wordless book. Which picture speaks the most to them?



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### Perfect Square

Written and Illustrated by Michael Hall  
40 pages / Grades K-1

Be sure you have lots of colored paper available when you read this book about all the things you can do with a square! Students will want to try everything for themselves as they learn new techniques for art and working with paper, while connecting to math and various artistic tools in this fun, playful book that blends fact with story.

### C Context

A fun and playful look at **geometry**. Think big! Talk about so much more than squares - corners, length, width, and rectangles. A great book to introduce **tangrams**.

#### Colors

#### Days of the Week

What does **perfect** mean?

**Visualization and imagination** - how can one thing, such as a square, be seen in multiple ways?

**Repurposing and reimagining**.

### A Arts

**Techniques** for working with **paper** include hole punching, shredding, tearing, cutting, ripping, wrinkling.

**Colors** - encourage students to think about why certain colors were chosen with certain features.

### T Themes

Transformation

Being "perfect"

Reimagining and repurposing.

### C Create

Give students a shape each day and let them repurpose it, like the events of the book. Allow them to add a *little* more to the new creation, and to write a sentence about it. Give them as little guidance as possible to foster their own imagination and creativity.

Challenge students to find shapes repurposed in their surroundings.

### H Heart Words

*"...it waited to see what would happen."*

*".....it babbled and giggled and clapped."*

After reading the book and allowing students to reimagine a new creation, have them write a sentence of their own heart words about it.



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### Lift

Written by Minh Lê, Illustrated by Dan Santat  
56 pages / Grades K-2

A wordless picture book (beginning graphic novel) that sparks imagination and celebrates the power of possibility as a young girl attempts an escape and exploration on her own to gain independence, but ultimately discovers the importance of family and the people who are most important to you.

### C Context

**Sibling rivalry** and the **importance of family**.

**Making inferences.** The story has a great deal of emotion and character, without being discussed directly. A great book to begin talking about what inferences are and **justifying thinking**.

**Literal and figurative meanings** of words. (i.e. the idea of a physical lift, but also an emotional lift)

**Fantasy as a genre**

### A Arts

What are **graphic novels**? This beginning graphic novel will introduce students to the craft, and how they are written, fostering conversations about **layout, storyboarding, and telling stories through pictures**.

### T Themes

Independence  
Family  
Coming home  
Giving a lift

### C Create

Work in teams to create a wordless story, which could be done in illustration or through photography for younger learners.

Connect to fictional writing by having students create their own story of the adventure their elevator would take them on and including what it is that brings them back, much like the character in the story.

### H Heart Words

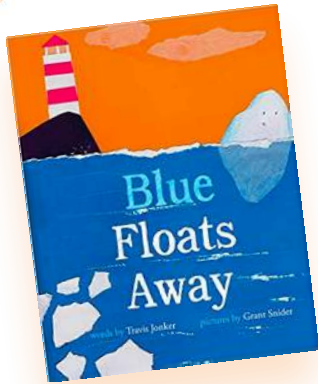
*"After all, everyone can use a lift sometimes."*

As there are few words in this story ask students to choose their favorite panel or their "heart art" and explain their choice.



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## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



### Blue Floats Away

Written by Travis Jonker, Illustrated by Grant Snider  
40 pages / Grades K-2

This wonderful picture book brings so many opportunities with it! Follow the journey of Little Blue, an iceberg who lives at the North Pole until he breaks away and experiences so many new things, which ultimately transforms him. A wonderfully delightful story about the Water Cycle, also layering in many artistic conversations and the idea of growing up.

### C

#### Context

##### Water cycle.

Reinforce and teach the steps of the water cycle in a creative way that will stick with your students.

##### Growing up.

Little Blue's journey will start conversations about wanting to grow and be independent, while still missing and keeping hold of family.

**Being open to new experiences**, thinking positively and embracing change.

### A

#### Arts

What are **layers** in illustration?

**Creating texture** when using paper. How can torn edges and shape enhance a mood or feeling? What about wrinkles, or a few additions of color or pencil.

Choosing a **color palette** to focus and connect artistic work.

**Opaque** and **transparent** papers.

Using a minimalistic illustration style to reach viewers

### T

#### Themes

Growing up

Water cycle

Perspective

Positive attitude

Transformation

### C

#### Create

Choose an illustration. Work together to decide how it was created using only paper, scissors and one crayon. Try to recreate it and then make your own.

Write the next chapter of Little Blue's story, using both writing style and characterization and scientific vocabulary for the water cycle. What happens to him next and how?

Engage in a discussion - how would Blue's journey have been different if he hadn't been open to new things?

### H

#### Heart Words

*"After days of seeing nothing, Blue began to see things. New things."*



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### The Little Blue Cottage

Written by Kelly Jordan, Illustrated by Jessica Courtney-Tickle  
32 pages / Grades K-3

A heartwarming story, this charming picture book will have us all fondly remembering our own favorite places we visited in childhood. Told from the point of view of a summer cottage by the sea, we follow the journey of the house who deals with embracing change and cherishing family. This is a book you will read again and again...and smile as you escape to visit the little blue cottage.

#### C Context

Told from the point of view of the cottage, a perfect lead-in to teaching **personification** and **perspective**.

**Purposeful, targeted use of repetitive text.**

**Cherishing traditions and family memories** through time, whether you are a child or an adult.

**Lyrical text** as a method to creating feeling in readers.

**Tone of text**, as this book as a natural calming, nostalgic, sweet feel to it.

#### A Arts

Illustration as a way to build **mood** and **tone** in stories.

**Shading and color choice** when creating illustrations to build feeling and texture.

**Combining techniques** to create depth in illustration.

While there is an incredibly cohesive feel in these illustrations, upon closer look, there is clearly a focused set of techniques being used.

#### T Themes

Growing up

Summer memories

Family traditions

Favorite places as a grounding force in life

Simple pleasures

The more things change the more they stay the same.

#### C Create

Write the story of your own favorite place, through the eyes of an object that is always there. (A treehouse, a special room, a grandparent's house, etc)

Experiment with combining two different artistic techniques to create depth and focus in an original illustration. Be selective in how you use them.

Set the story to music. What would you have playing in the background as you read it aloud, and why? Does the music change?

#### H Heart Words

*"Nose to window, the girl stared at the waves and whispered, "You are my favorite place."*

*"Gray dolphins dove and white seagulls sang. Bright-colored boats bounced over the bay."*

*"Year after year, and night after day - the girl and the cottage.....they grew up together from summer to summer."*

