

CATCH a spark!

Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



The Rembrandt Conspiracy

Written by Deron R. Hicks

206 pages / Grades 3-6

Art's father works at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington DC and comes across information that leads him to believe a huge heist is about to take place at the museum. After convincing his best friend Camille that it is real, the two team up to stop a theft that could involve billions of dollars of art. A fast paced mystery filled with twists, turns and art history which uses QR codes to introduce students to the art mentioned in the story.

C Context

Mysteries as a genre. A great way to teach being observant readers and gathering clues, along with plot twists and elaboration.

QR codes as an engagement tool and ways to use them.

The infamous **Gardner Museum Theft** in 1990. Much is tied in to this real life, still unsolved event which will grab readers to know this could truly (and did!) happen.

A Arts

Art History. The book is filled with mentions of the masters of art. (Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Cassatt, and so many more. The author cleverly uses QR codes throughout the book to allow students to instantly view the art spoken of throughout the book.

Art Museums. An in-depth look at art preservation, galleries, displays and artists. In particular, the National Portrait Gallery is explored in-depth, including maps of the layout to all students to visualize what is happening.

T Themes

Friendship

Art preservation

Confidence

Honesty

C Create

Engage students in a virtual or real session around art preservation.

Students choose one piece of art from the [National Portrait Gallery](#) and write a mystery around it.

Take an online tour of the [National Portrait Gallery](#), particularly the areas mentioned in the book.

Students create their own "Millennium Exhibition" as in the book, working together to choose which art pieces should be represented and why.

H Heart Words

"He understood the power of art."

"And so he lingered in the shadows for another day. "



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Many Points of Me

Written by Caroline Gertler

347 pages / Grades 4-8

Georgia's late father is a famous artist who passed away before he could finish the last painting in his most famous series. Georgia is unsure about so much in her life, but when she discovers a sketch her father left behind that may have been meant as the final painting, she sets out to discover the truth, and along the way discovers a great deal about friendships and herself.

C Context

Family and friendship dynamics.

Looking at how friendships ebb and flow, and the many layers of emotion that are grounded in families.

Personalities and alter egos - the real you compared to the you that you wish was seen by other people.

In this case, it is represented as their superhero selves.

A Arts

Abstract art as a style, along with different artists and meanings behind abstract art.

Connecting **colors, emotions** and **personality**.

[The Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) in New York City.

Automatic Drawing - letting your hand draw without looking at the paper for a set time, then discovering what is there in the art.

Color names and shades - hue and values

T Themes

Family

Loss / Grief

Friendship

The power of art

Creativity

Home

C Create

Create a list of the people around you that you know well and assign them colors. What color do you see when you think of them? Why? Create a piece of abstract art that represents the people you have chosen.

Create an abstract self-portrait. This could take so many different forms and shapes, as Georgia's did.

H Heart Words

"Self-portrait is about making a visual representation of yourself. Sometimes you need to skew things on the outside in order to show how shattered you feel inside."

"Be the peace. As an artist, and a person."

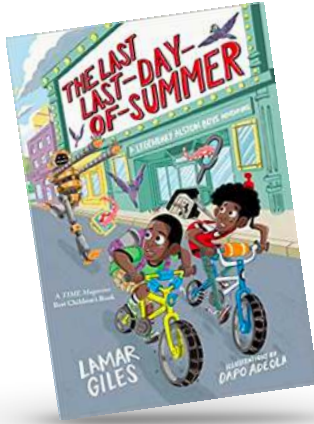
"All the different parts of me have been put back together in a different way."

"Maybe all I've learner is that the points of me don't always connect, but at least there's a glimmer of something - a vision of who I can become."



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The Last Day-Of-Summer

Written by Lamar Giles

320 pages / Grades 4-6 (independent) / Grades 2+ as a read-aloud.

This novel is pure imaginative fun, filled with figurative language. Otto and Sheed are cousins who want to have one last adventure before school starts tomorrow, and they sure get it! We have all said the phrase, "If only we could stop time". What if you could? When the boys find a camera that does just that, chaos follows!

C Context

Figurative Language and plays on words (such as Crunch Time, Second Guess, Father Time, etc)

The concept of **missed opportunities:** recognizing them as well as considering their consequences.

How the past effects the future, and how one might want to change the past if they could.

Keeping track of characters as you are reading.

Newton's Laws of Motion

A Arts

Tie in using **frames of a movie.** Consider how people and objects literally freeze in many poses and movements in each frame.

Movement. How do you slow it down or stop it, how it can speed up, how it connects to everyday life. Have students really stop to think about their movements. They likely aren't conscious of them.

Photography - focus, setting the picture, what is captured.

T Themes

Time

Family/Friendship

Adventure

Loyalty

Opportunities

Risks

Bravery

C Create

Randomly "Freeze" students. They must fret in an exact position at the time you call it. How long can they keep their pose? Why or why not. What happens to your body as you try to hold positions?

Consider this in relation to the events of the book.

What moment of your life would you photograph as "the best time of your life" and to freeze time at that moment. Is that something you would really want?

H Heart Words

"You can't be brave without fear."

"...humans deciding what to do with time. With opportunity. How often do you think they make the right decisions?"

"There will always be...people who want to tell us no, and can't, and shouldn't."



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Forever Neverland

Written by Susan Adrian

272 pages / Grades 2 (read-aloud) - 7

Clover and Fergus, direct descendent of Peter Pan's Wendy, head to Neverland for their own adventure with Peter, Fergus is autistic, and Clover is his nervous caring sister, but they each discover they have different voices in Neverland. A modern sequel to the beloved classic, filled with the same sense of adventure and familiar characters, while introducing us to many new ones.

C Context

Greek mythology. A fan of Greek Myths, Fergus brings many of them to life in the story, and considers whether Peter himself may be a relative of the Greek gods.

A look at **autism**, through the eyes of a boy with autism and a girl who is caring for him.

Changing **narrative voices.** Each chapter changes between Clover and Fergus, two very different characters. How can students tell they have changed characters without being told?

A Arts

Classic literature and its **visual representations.** How do we visualize Neverland and why? How can we use descriptive language to picture new places.

T Themes

Acceptance

Bravery

Finding your voice

Siblings

Adventure

C Create

Illustrate a descriptive scenic passage of the story (such as p. 53 or pg. 58 when they arrive in Neverland).

Have everyone illustrate and do not share their work until the end. Look at the similarities and differences.

Create your own Neverland adventure. Knowing people bring their own villains to their adventure and there are different foes for different people, who are the villains you unknowingly bring with you, and why? How do you defeat them?

H Heart Words

"You cannot doubt while you are flying. You must think happy thoughts. Believe."

"They wanted me to come."

"I feel like maybe I could fly right now even without pixie dust."



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The One Thing You'd Save

Written by Linda Sue Park

72 pages / Grades 3 - 6

Newbery Award winner Linda Sue Park brings us a quiet, simple but powerful story told through a form of Korean poetry. In just 72 short pages, we meet a middle school class and get to know them well. An engaging piece of literature that captures middle schoolers well as they grapple with a teacher's question: What is the one thing you would save if your house was on fire?

C Context

Sijo - a form of Korean poetry that has three lines of thirteen to seventeen syllables.

Socio-emotional decisions. How do we make them and what drives the choices.

What is valuable?

Purposeful word choice in developing characters and emotion.

Author style and craft. How do authors give us insight into characters by showing us, not telling us details. How do we **infer** knowledge about characters?

A Arts

Point of view, layout, and focus in illustration. How does choice in editing come into play when depicting illustrations? How can you give meaning to illustration through purposeful layouts and design?

Pencil drawing - gaining depth, layers and color using grayscale.

T Themes

Emotions

Value

Memories

What is important? /
What really matters?

C Create

Infer while reading to discover the names and backgrounds of each character. Use the clues given by the author to choose a character and develop their backstories. Write a short story about your chosen character.

Create a pencil drawing that uses layout and focus to direct audience attention in gaining meaning. How can you develop depth and meaning using just one pencil?

Debate what is really important and what matters. Why do we place value on material items?

H Heart Words

"...it's from the day that Pete Alonso looked at me, right at my eyes, and that's not on ink or paper, it's for real, so it can't ever fade."

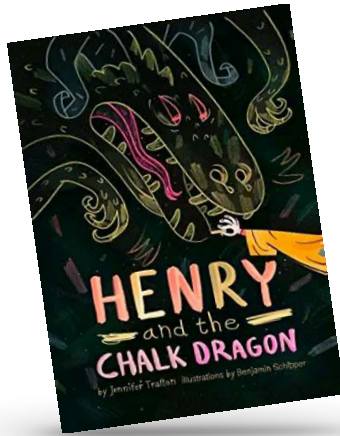
"I don't need the grade books to remember you... because you're unforgettable. Don't you ever forget that."

From the author's note: *"Using old forms in new ways is how poetry continually renews itself, and the world."*



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Henry and the Chalk Dragon

Written by Jennifer Trafton / Illustrated by Benjamin Schipper

240 pages / Grades 1- 4

Henry has more than a wild imagination. He escapes into art and draws ALL the time. When his drawings come to life, adventure follows that no one sees coming. This highly entertaining story will be a fabulous read-aloud and have your students wanting their artwork to come alive like Henry's!

C Context

Similes and metaphors. Not only are the children in the story taught about these terms, the book is filled with them!

Classic literature. Throughout the book, nods are given to beloved characters and poems, such as *The Jabberwocky*, *Wizard of Oz*, *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, and so many more. A full list is found in the back of the book.

Keeping imagination. Many of the adults in the book are challenged to think differently and remember when they could.

A Arts

Chalk as an artistic medium. What are the challenges and benefits of using it?

The artistic process and journey into confidence of sharing your art.

Telling story through pictures.

T Themes

Imagination

Bravery / Courage

Confidence

Friendship

Trust

Bullying.

C Create

Create a panel in or a section of your classroom which is chalkboard paint. Allow students to create on their whims.

Create a collaborative piece of art, with little to no guidance, as happens towards the end of the book.

Give every student a plain notebook to fill with their drawings, and then to write new adventures based on their drawings.

H Heart Words

*"I don't need glasses!
I see more than
everyone else!"*

*"It is a dangerous
thing to open a door.
But that, after all, is
the only way to find
an adventure."*

*"You have to be
brave to be an artist."*

*"Once you make
something, a picture,
or a story, or a song,
or an invention, or
even a delicious meal,
it isn't yours anymore.
It has a life."*

*"Let your imagination
be as wild as the
spinning universe. Let
it be beautiful and
adventurous and even
terrifying. Let it go
free."*

