

# CATCH a spark!

## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



### The Chance to Fly

Written by Ali Stroker and Stacy Davidowitz

272 pages / Grades 5-8

A middle-school girl who is obsessed with theatre defies all expectations in this heartwarming story about friendship, gain independence and following your heart. Readers will root for Natalie, who steps up and takes charge to put on a show when everyone else is ready to give up. A story for anyone, but especially for musical theatre lovers, you will be reminded that we all are unlimited in what we can do, despite being differently abled.

### C

#### Context

**Representation** - of cultures and abilities.

There is nothing anyone can't do when determined.

**Figurative language.**

The book is filled with musical theatre references that lend themselves to real life - such as "defying gravity, and even in the chapter titles, which all are a line from a song, but perfectly adhere to the theme of the chapter.

**Theme** - how does one story give us important, big ideas? What can we learn from a fictional story and characters?

### A

#### Arts

A chronicle of **musical theatre** references and vocabulary, from putting on a show to many, many show references and plays on words.

**Dance** being a representation of feeling, no matter one's ability.

**Theatre** as representative and the role it plays in life.

### T

#### Themes

Overcoming obstacles

Representation

Being different is more than ok

Friendship

Following your passion

Gaining independence

Determination

Putting yourself in someone else's shoes

Everyone is fighting a battle whether you are aware of it or not.

### C

#### Create

Using the scene where Hudson puts himself in Nat's wheelchair, have students consider how they would follow their passion if limited. Ask them to identify their passion, and reinvent the way they would do it if thrown a challenge, as Nat has been.

How have you defied gravity? Ask students to consider how they have overcome odds in their own lives to achieve a dream. How have they been challenged, and how did they push themselves through? Allow them to create a representation.

### H

#### Heart Words

*"I don't want to be the next anyone...I want people to be the next me."*

*"I just feel like theater is the one place where we can try on different roles and show the world that there's more to us than what people might see."*

*"....telling my story reminds me of what I've been through..."*

*"No matter who you are and what challenges you face, remember: Creativity is Key. You can break boundaries. You can burst through boxes."*



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### Fearless

Written by Mandy Gonzalez

240 pages / Grades 4-8

Twelve year old Monica arrives in NYC about to achieve her dream of a role in a Broadway show. However, rumors of a curse on the theatre begin to appear to not be rumors, and threaten that the show may not even open. It is up to Monica, her new friends and castmates, as well as some theatre magic and superstition to break the curse and hopefully save the show, and their dreams.

### C

#### Context

**Folklore and family history** along with tradition and story.

**Superstition** and the role they play in history - whether theatrical history or family history.

Using **suspense** and **mystery** as an author's craft / studying the genre.

**Realistic fiction**

### A

#### Arts

**Theatre history** - Broadway theatres (and all theatres) have rich, storied pasts that are fascinating to discover as evidenced in the novel.

**Songwriting** and the power of word choice.

**Using your voice** both musically and figuratively.

**Powerful women of Broadway** - Ethel Merman is a central name, as should be the author, a powerful Broadway voice herself.

**Theatrical superstitions**

### T

#### Themes

Being fearless

Finding your voice

Discovery

Being yourself

### C

#### Create

Research the history and theatrical lore of Broadway theatres, or a cultural building in your own city.

Use the picture book, *A is for Audra* (by John Robert Allman) to learn about and discover the powerful leading ladies of Broadway.

Write a mystery based in a cultural, artistic building (either invented or real) grounded in fact.

Use the author's song, *Fearless* (and other songs on the album) as a parallel text for meaning. Thought not written together, they all align perfectly

### H

#### Heart Words

*"The world has been looking for you."*

*"The theatre is a place where stories are told and released into the world and given life."*

*"Never be good enough."*

*"Learn from each other. Trust each other."*

*"We have to conquer our fears together."*

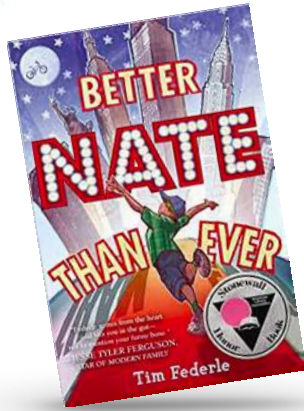
*"Thought I'd lost my voice, but it was here all along, just waiting for me to discover my song"*

*"When darkness comes, hold it, love it, lean to understand it."*



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## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



### Better Nate Than Ever

Written by Tim Federle

275 pages / Grades 6-8

8th grader Nate has big dreams but is stuck in the small town of Jankburg. With the help of his best friend and alibi Libby, Nate makes an escape to New York City, to audition for 'E.T. the Musical'. Things don't go as planned, and an adventure in the city ensues which allows Nate to feel more at home and comfortable in his own skin than he ever has before. Readers will fall in love with Nate and become his biggest cheerleaders, despite a true cliffhanger ending!

## C

### Context

#### Characterization.

Nate is not only realistic, but embodies humor, solicits empathy, and finds readers in his corner.

#### Growing up and Identity

**Bullying** - being bullied, how to handle it and what the often unseen effects of it can be.

How to **hook readers** as a writer. The book is a mentor text for writing with humor and wit, plot twists and suspense.

## A

### Arts

**Casting process** of musical theatre. The book gives readers a nice inside view of what the "cattle call" audition and casting process can be like.

## T

### Themes

Being and feeling different

Independence

Decisions and Consequences

Friendship

Family

Determination

Confidence

Effects of bullying

Acceptance

## C

### Create

Ask students to choose a city and have them research it. (Even better if it's a city they know and have been to) Write an adventure of a kid escaping to that city...and making it! Another text to use with this as a mentor is *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E Frankweiler*.

Nate is asked what his special skills are. Ask students theirs, have them demonstrate, and discuss how these skills can and will help them in life.

Who is your co-star? Create a scenario for you and your co-star.

## H

### Heart Words

*"There's nothing to be scared of....You're small and scrappy and can get out of any situation the world throws at you."*

*"All of this, all of this adventure and novelty, it would be nothing without someone to share it with."*

*"You just can't have a scene without a co-star"*





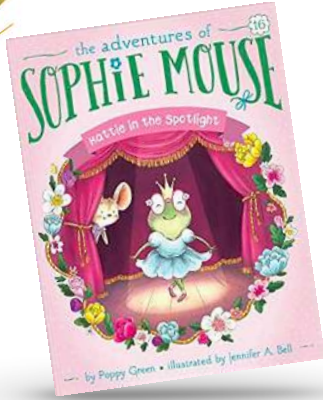
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## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY

### Hattie in the Spotlight

Written by Poppy Green

118 pages / Grades K-3



What could be better than lovable animal characters and friendship? Throw in the theatre. Hattie Frog and her friends Sophie Mouse and Owen Snake learn that a play is going to be done in a brand new theatre in their town, and they are able to audition. Hattie is known for being shy and doesn't know if she can do it. A look inside a production both onstage and backstage for beginning chapter book readers or a read aloud for the youngest readers.

## C

### Context

**Structure of chapter books** - a perfect model for young readers.

**Fluency** - with short sentences and chapters, along with characters and dialogue, a great text to use for fluency work and reading with expression. Short reader's theatre pieces could easily be created.

**Character arcs** - how do characters change in a story, using Hattie and Sophie as examples

## A

### Arts

**What a play is** and all that is needed to put one on, from auditions, to scenery and lights.

**Theatre Vocabulary**

## T

### Themes

Friendship

Teamwork

Confidence

Bravery

## C

### Create

Determine how the characters would sound and move in certain parts of the story. Ask students to perform sections of the story.

Discuss the various roles and jobs in the theatre mentioned in the story. Ask students to "audition" for one of the jobs (both onstage and backstage). Why do they feel like it would be the best fit for them?

Take a virtual field trip to a theatre, or bring theatre professionals in to explain more to students.

## H

### Heart Words

*"Maybe the next star of the stage is....you"*

*"This was going to be even better than trying out herself."*

*"Her voice was loud and forceful and clear as day. Sophie's heart soared."*



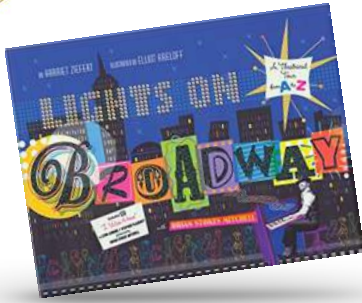
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## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY

### Lights on Broadway

Written by Harriet Ziefert, Illustrated by Elliot Krelloff  
48 pages / Grades K-8

An Alphabet book for all ages, Lights on Broadway gives readers an in-depth look at everything in the theatre and involved with a show, from the cast and crew to designers, vocabulary, technical elements, front of house and audience...this book has it all. Add in extremely colorful and engaging illustrations, and you have a book that readers of all ages will want to read again and again to absorb all the information they will learn about the theatre. .



### C

#### Context

**Alphabet books** - looking at how they can be a structure to teach so much more than the alphabet.

**Quotations** - each page of the book has quotes related to the topic of the letter at hand. Explore why quotes can be so powerful.

### A

#### Arts

**Use of color and style** in illustrations.

**Theatre Vocabulary**

### T

#### Themes

Vocabulary

Theatre

### C

#### Create

Each student chooses a letter to research more about the topic and gain a deeper insight into the concept, then jigsaw it to the class, being the expert.

Develop an alphabet book for a topic of their choice which they are passionate about, also using quotes from people in the field of their topic.

Students create one page (an alphabet book collaboration, and after finishing the text, focus on the color, style and illustration they will use to bring it to life.

### H

#### Heart Words

*"Collaboration. Like the tiny crystals in a colossal cloud, it is contact and interaction that give us the ability to create a thunderbolt, which can illuminate the heavens and shake the earth.*

*Collaboration.*

*It is the power behind the arts - behind the book and the music, the dance and the design.*

*Collaboration."*



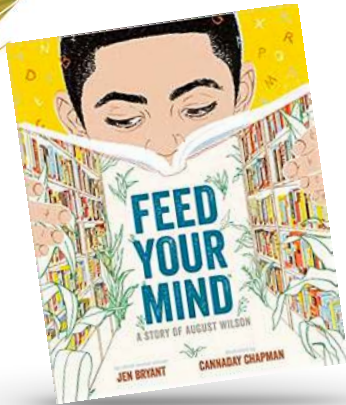
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## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY

### Feed Your Mind: A Story of August Wilson

Written by Jen Bryant, Illustrated by Canada Chapman  
48 pages / Grades 3-8

August Wilson is a two-time Pulitzer winning playwright and one of the nation's greatest playwrights in history. This story, told in two acts and multiple scenes, is told in powerful language and imagery, which embodies Wilson in everyday. Readers will be amazed at his path to success, being self taught in the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh when he couldn't find a school to accept him for himself.



### C

#### Context

**Racial prejudice** - America in the 1950s and 1960s

**Importance of words, language and reading**

**Poetry, language** and inspiration of authors.

**Author's Notes** as an important resource of knowledge.

### A

#### Arts

**Play structure** - scenes, climax, characters

**Spoken Word** as a way of public speaking

**August Wilson**, the playwright. The book includes a detailed timeline and listing of his plays. He is one of America's most influential playwrights.

### T

#### Themes

Determination  
Persistence

Words and language

Power of listening

Knowledge is power

### C

#### Create

Just like Freddy did...  
*Write a paper on someone from the past that you admire.*

Create your life as play with scenes.  
What are the standout moments that deserve to be highlighted?

Sit in a crowded room and listen. Write down some of the sentences you hear. Turn those sentences into a story or piece of art.

### H

#### Heart Words

*"If you can read, you can do anything - you can be anything."*

*"He reads with delight and with a fearsome hunger, like a guest at a royal feast, the table so wide, so vast - all he can do is try to taste a bit of everything."*

*"Connection - a word that's all about how the 'I' becomes 'we. how the artist becomes the voice, the spirit of his own community."*

*"... a whole world can flower from some small, single thing."*

