

CATCH a spark!

Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



The Sixty-Eight Rooms

Written by Marianne Malone

280 pages / Grades 3-8

The Thorne Rooms are 68 intricately created miniature rooms located in the Art Institute of Chicago, designed down to every minute detail of different time periods. While on a field trip, Ruthie and Jack discover a key that allows them to shrink small enough to explore the rooms. While doing just that, they realize they weren't the first ones to do it, and that someone who had been there before them left something quite important behind!

C

Context

Maps - take a virtual tour of the Thorne Rooms, easily found online, and have students create a map of the layout based on the tours and the references in the book.

Math and Scale Drawings Much of the book discusses perspective and scale. A perfect setting to make the topic alive for students.

Historical Time Periods - With a room for almost every European and America time period, there are solid visual and written details for students.

A

Arts

Miniatures and dioramas as art forms, and the importance of scale. A worthwhile companion text is the book *Miniature Rooms: The Thorne Rooms at the Art Institute of Chicago*, which has beautiful photographs of each room.

Museums - curators, layout, acquisitions and security.

Historical dress/costumes - There are multiple references to clothing styles throughout, based on the rooms themselves.

T

Themes

Friendship

Adversity

Insecurity

Magic - believing in the impossible

Memories

Historical past

C

Create

Create a dialogue or story about a conversation you have with someone from a long-ago time period. What historical context would you need to know? How could you give them clues about the future without sharing too much?

Choose a time period and work to create a replica diorama

Do some research as to the content of the Thorne Rooms. What style room do you think is missing? Create it to scale.

H

Heart Words

"Her heart had never pounded so hard and... but she had the strongest instinct not to let fear stop her."

"...artists like her create their lives rather than letting other people set the rules."

"Of course, you have to be open to these feelings for the magic to work, and not everyone is."

"I have discovered that knowledge is the only property that endows its owner with power."

"Truth is always precious. But memories are part of life - a wonderful part."



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The Marvels

Written by Brian Selznick
672 pages / Grades 5-8

Don't let the number of pages scare you away from this incredible novel, which combines two independent stories which weave together. One story is told through over 400 pages of sequential pictures, the other through traditional prose, taking readers from the year 1766 to 1990. This is a powerful adventures that will grab readers from page one as readers strive to discover how the two stories will connect. A tale of family, mystery, and the past.

C Context

Literary classics - multiple stories and characters are regularly referred to, particularly Shakespeare and Yeats.

There are multiple references to numerous topics that open up discussions:

- Physical tics
- The AIDS epidemic is hinted at

The power of **crafting stories**. What makes a good story?

A Arts

Storytelling as an art form and creative process.

Visual Observation - the story told through pictures is a class in observing in itself. While reading the story in prose, readers will find them selves going back to the illustrations to look for certain details. Did they spot them the first time?

Theatre - particularly the history of theatre in England, with original rigging and theatres being built.

T Themes

Acceptance

Love

Family

Home

The power of storytelling

Feeling different

C Create

Challenge students to "get lost in a story". What would happen to them if they somehow managed to converse with some of their favorite characters.

Go on a Shakespeare scavenger hunt. What are all the ways our world is filled with references to Shakespeare?

Dive into theatre archives - playbills, costumes, photographs. Craft a new story based on something you see.

Write the backstory of a simple item.

H Heart Words

"Even a broken watch is correct twice a day."

"You either see it or you don't."

"It's what we all need in life. A direction."

"I don't know, but there's always something you can do, even if it's small."

"That's what life is... miracles and sadness, side by side."



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The Magic Misfits

Written by Neil Patrick Harris

289 pages / Grades 3-6

Runaway magician Carter settles in a new town as he escapes the idea of magic being used for bad behaviors and reasons. While escaping villainous characters, Carter meets a band of new friends who help him realize that magic can be used for good. An adventure ensues with a classic battle of good vs. evil between a group of crooked carnival workers and a moveable gang of "misfits", with the added bonus of learning magic tricks along the way.

C Context

Vocabulary - the book breaks the fourth wall with the audience and speaks directly to the reader, particularly with vocabulary and words that can have double meanings

"Misfits" through time - looking at success stories that didn't always start off that way and how their misfit status became celebrated.

A Arts

Magic as an art form. An opportunity to look at slight of hand as a visual art form.

The **history of carnivals** and how their place in society has changed over time, as well as their structure.

T Themes

Home

Family

Good vs bad

Decisions and consequences

Perspective

Hope

C Create

Give students a bin of "misfit" paper and materials - the misfits/leftovers. How can they combine them to create a single, connected piece of art?

Stage a magic show

Showcase magicians in your classroom, potentially through research and video with students. Consider what a magician is. It doesn't always have to be about tricks. Is someone who makes something out of nothing also a magician?

H Heart Words

"Magic is all around us. We just have to pay attention."

"Trust your instincts. They will serve you in ways you've yet to witness..."

"Mistakes are part of mastery. Try again."

"Families come in all different shapes and sizes...Like a snowflake or a thumbprint, no two look alike."

"...magic is about more than stagecraft. It's about happiness. It's about laughter. It's about that feeling you get inside."



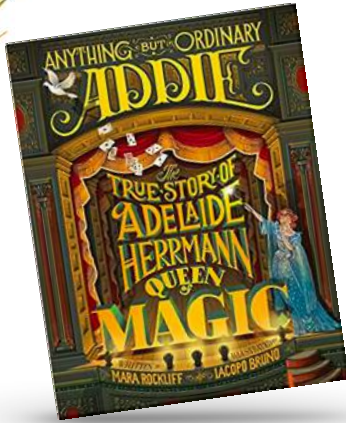
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Anything but Ordinary Addie: The True Story of Adelaide Herrmann, Queen of Magic

Written by Mara Rockliff, Illustrated by Jacopo Bruno
48 pages / Grades K-3

A name you have likely not heard, Adelaide Herrmann, longed for thrills at a time when such excitement was not conventional for young girls. She defied the odds in more ways than one, on her quest to "astonish, shock and dazzle.", becoming the first female magician. With captivating illustrations, readers will be longing to learn more about Adelaide and on the edge of their seats.



C

Context

Gender roles through society and how they have changed over time.

Descriptive and purposeful language choice - filled with colorful, strong adjectives and phrases that lend the reader to the world of magic.

Author's notes as a writing tool. The end of the book has in-depth detailed notes about the real Adelaide and as a bonus, gives readers all the details for one of her most famous tricks.

A

Arts

Bruno's **illustrations** are remarkably intriguing. A combination of pencil and digital coloring with layers of colorful cutouts, they combine to transport readers back in time, popping off the page. Students will want to look at them endlessly and analyze the many layers of depth. Scenes are made to look like paper dolls almost, with the layering of characters and backgrounds.

Words as images - another layer to the illustrations are the visual layout and use of key words.

T

Themes

Gender in society
Determination
Courage
Forging a path
Breaking rules

C

Create

Ask students to create an illustration in Bruno's style. Create separate characters, and layer them into one illustration, with a paper doll feel. For older students, add in digital art by scanning in their original creations.

Research and write a picture book biography of another woman who "broke the rules". How will they use purposeful word choice on the page as they illustrate and write?

H

Heart Words

"Addie never wanted to be ordinary."

"I WILL DO IT MYSELF."



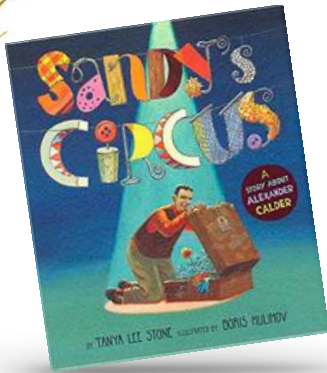
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Sandy's Circus: A Story About Alexander Calder

Written by Tanya Lee Stone, Illustrated by Boris Kulikov
40 pages / Grades K-3

Sandy was always tinkering and creating as a boy, seeing the magic of life in new ways. When he began creating wire sculptures, he stumbled upon a new kind of art, creating an entire traveling circus. Sparking imagination, this delightful picture book will bring the artist Alexander Calder to the forefront as he creates a magical, moveable circus out of ordinary materials.



C Context

Biography as a writing style, particularly in picture book format. What choices does an author need to make to create a full story without too many details.

The **history of the circus** - how was it more prominent in past times?

A Arts

Alexander Calder, the artist

Sculpture as an art form, no matter the materials being used. How is 3-D art different?

Combining art forms - the illustrator uses two unique styles of art within the illustrations. Why?

Mobiles - the art of motion and space

T Themes

Thinking outside of the box

Imagination

Seeing and believing

The power of art to bring people together

C Create

Create a collaborative "magical, moveable" classroom. Challenge students to create wire sculptures of themselves, and play with the classroom as Calder did his circus.

Create a mobile that has personal meaning through abstract art. Write artist statements about the reasoning behind the creation.

Give students a supply of "odds and ends". What can they tinker with and create?

H Heart Words

"In Paris it's a compliment to be called crazy."

"He has discovered, in playing, a new world. His art "has the force of the ocean."



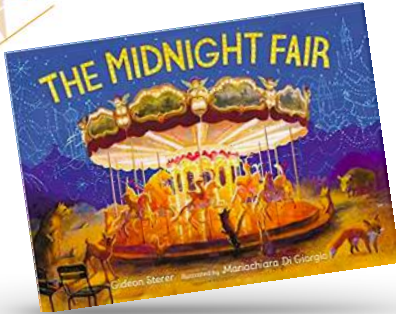
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The Midnight Fair

Written by Gideon Sterer, Illustrated by Mariachiara Di Giorgio
40 pages / Grades K-2

Who among us hasn't wondered what happens at nighttime? Does the unexpected come true and our wildest imagination come true? At the Midnight Fair, when everyone has gone away for the night, the animals come out of the woods and a nocturnal world comes alive as the rest of us are sleeping. This wordless picture book will naturally have readers writing the story at hand, and thinking about the impossible becoming possible!



C Context

Wordless picture books - how do they tell a story? How do we read them?

Graphic novels and comics - when drawings aren't laid out from right to left, how do we read them?

Thinking and reading - a wonderful mentor text for thinking aloud as you are reading, comprehending, and processing the story.

A Arts

Color, light, shadows as artistic elements.

Look at the illustrations through each of those lenses.

How does the illustrator use them to help craft and share the story? How do they each add feeling to the text?

Watercolor

T Themes

Imagination

Believing and seeing

Color, light and mood

Perspective

C Create

Add the text to the story. This could be in the form of thought bubbles to the panels, or the prose to match the sequence of the story.

Create the tale (orally, visually, written) of what happens at nighttime in your own environment. (i.e your pets while you are sleeping, the city you live in during the night, etc)

H Heart Words

As this is a wordless picture book, have students select the panel/painting that stands out the most to them and share why. It seems to strike them a little differently.

