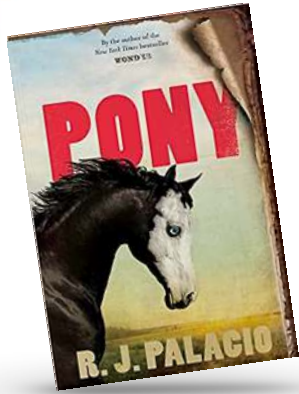


# CATCH a spark!

## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



### Pony

Written by R.J. Palacio  
304 pages / Grades 6-8

An adventure that will pull readers in, inspiring them to be brave and courageous. Twelve-year old Silas suddenly finds himself all alone after three men take his father away by horse, with the exception of a pony and his best friend, Mittenwool, who happens to be a ghost. A haunting, powerful, rich reminder that it is love that ties us together, and that love transcends time.

### C

#### Context

The **western territory**, post Civil War era.

**Chemistry** - how chemicals react with ink in terms of printing and photography development.

#### **Foreshadowing and figurative language.**

Each chapter begins with a quote from a writer or artist of the time period. After reading the chapter and rereading that quote, you have extra insight about the chapters. This is an important exercise in creative thinking.

### A

#### Arts

The **process of photography**, particularly daguerreotypes and the collodion process.

### T

#### Themes

Courage

Bravery

Grit and Determination

Love

Family

### C

#### Create

Find an old photograph, either on the internet, or perhaps even an old (many generations ago) family photo. Notice the different style, and how haunting it likely appears to be. Write the story of that person.

Consider a person in your family who is likely "always with you" though they are no longer alive.

Create a representation to show how you know they are there. It can be real or invented.

Research and share the history of photography.

### H

#### Heart Words

*"...maybe life knows where it's going before you do sometimes..."*

*"...there are people who won't understand it because they can't see that kind of wonder."*

*"People see the world they believe in."*

*"...time is like the dappled light inside the Woods. It comes and goes. Hides and shines. And all the while, we're just running through it."*

*"You can travel thousands of miles, over strange lands, and still never find anything as unknowable as love."*



# CATCH a spark!

## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY

### Maya Lin: Artist-Architect of Light and Lines

Written by Jeanne Walker Harvey, Illustrated by Dow Phumiruk

32 pages / Grades 2-5

The daughter of artists and future designer of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, Maya Lin was always aware of the space around her. She thought and made art with her hands. The simplicity of the written language and illustration aligns with the memorial and draws readers in.



### C Context

The **power of names**.  
Not only a person's name, but the process of naming art.

#### Vietnam War

**Memorials** - what are they and why do we create them?

**Symbols** - looking at the reasoning behind the choices made around the creation of the memorial will have students thinking about symbols and meaning.

The **role of women** in an occupational field traditionally held for men.

### A Arts

The art of **architecture**. Finding patterns and purpose. maya Lin was extremely purposeful in her choices and design. Allow this to begin important conversations to artistic **choice** and **purpose**.

**How - and why - do people make art?** A look at many forms - clay, with words, light, etc.

**Light and color:** how does light influence the viewing of art?

### T Themes

Thinking freely

Grit

Determination

Artistry

Tributes

### C Create

Connect to a chosen piece of history being studied (or an event in their family/ community) and ask students to design a memorial/tribute to it. They will need to include symbols, color choice and artistic design. They will write an artistic statement to explain their choices.

### H Heart Words

*"A name brings back all the memories of a person."*

*"Dream, think again and create something new."*



# CATCH a spark!

## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY

### Sticks and Stones

Written and Illustrated by Patricia Polacco  
48 pages / Grades 1-5



A cherished author doesn't disappoint in this book celebrating friendship and the power of the arts for building confidence in children. As many of her books are, this one is autobiographical and timeless, reminding readers that it is our differences that define us and make us who we are, no matter the challenges we face along the way.

### C Context

**Growing up**, new schools, real friends.

**Bullying** and the ways it can be dealt with positively rather than negatively.

**Story structure.** The book takes place over the course of a year. Identify ways in which the author advances the story and let s the readers know that. Follow the story arc.

**Narratives** as a genre. How do we know it is real? Be sure to read the final page that tells you what happened in life to the characters.

**Dealing with challenge** in positive ways.

### A Arts

**Authors as illustrators.** Why is this likely important to some authors? What would be hard about having someone else be your illustrator?

View the **illustration style** of Patricia Polacco and discuss how she might work. [Read about her process.](#)

Choose an illustration before reading the story, and have students tell the story that goes with it.

Note how **informative illustrations** can be and detailed, even though the artistic style might not feel detailed.

### T Themes

Friendship

Pursuing talent

Achieving dreams

Dealing with bullying

Celebrating individuality

Staying true to yourself

Power of positive thinking

Overcoming challenges

### C Create

Identify an artist (of any form of the arts) and research their backstory. How did they overcome their challenges? How did their art form inspire them?

Research the lives of the characters in the story as they grew up.

Identify which of the arts motivates you. Why? How can you use the art form to express yourself during a hard time?

Write a song, create a play or a dance, or write a script which highlights overcoming a challenge by way of positive action rather than negative reaction.

### H Heart Words

*"We watched that ship sail across the sky, through our glorious kites with their streamers moving like jellyfish in the sea."*

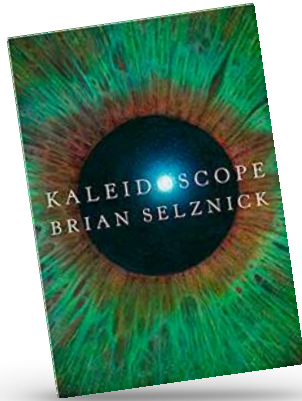
*"I don't think I had ever seen pure rapture in someone's eyes until then."*

*"We didn't say anything. There was no need to."*



# CATCH a spark!

## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



### Kaleidoscope

Written by Brian Selznick

208 pages / Grades 5-8

Time, memory, dreams, love, life, death. When you put them all together, sometimes they seem to fit, sometimes they don't. They may appear to be like the shattered pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope. An award-winning author shares a collection of short stories that connect two people together in many different facets. It's up to the reader to figure those connections out, which may require multiple readings to do so.

### C

#### Context

This is an excellent **mentor text** to track critical thinking that readers do. Many short stories that weave together and are connected. Create a chart while reading to record thoughts, figure out connections, and record clues.

**Perspective** - how do different views ultimately connect?

#### Personification

#### Emotion in writing.

How can writing about sadness still make the reader feel uplifted?

### A

#### Arts

The creation of and artistry of **kaleidoscopes**. How does **color, light** and **shadow** work within the fragmented pieces to create art?

### T

#### Themes

Time

Friendship

Memory

Dreams

### C

#### Create

Build a kaleidoscope, considering the amount of pieces, color, and the way light goes through it.

Fragment a story from your past into different perspectives of the people involved.

### H

#### Heart Words

*"Is what something looks like all that matters?"*

*"Most people think time is a machine that needs to be oiled and wound with a key.*

*They think it's something you control and maintain. But maybe it's more wild than that. Maybe it's bigger and stranger. Maybe time is uncontrollable and endless..."*

*"If I knew everything, there would be no mysteries....You don't feel wonder at things you know the answers to."*



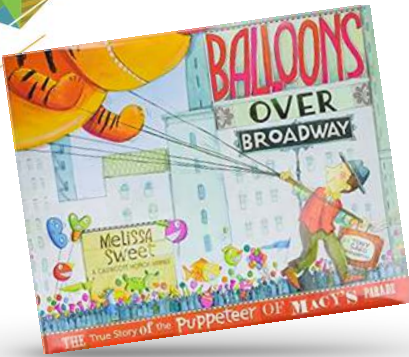
# CATCH a spark!

Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY

## Balloons Over Broadway: The True Story of the Puppeteer of Macy's Parade

Written by Melissa Sweet  
40 pages / Grades K-5

Who doesn't love the time-honored tradition of the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade? Tony Sarg, the master puppeteer who created the infamous balloons was an imaginer, who accepted challenges and found ways to solve problems creatively. A book for all that will be sure to start conversations and inspire through amazing mixed media collage illustrations.



### C Context

Origins of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

**Force and Motion**  
(ropes and pulleys, gears)

Making **plans** and **blueprints** to guide thinking.

### A Arts

**Puppetry** and it's many different forms:

- marionettes
- rod puppets

**Articulation:**  
movements and gestures

**Mixed Media Illustration:** The illustrations include watercolor, collage, photographs, paper maché, paint, fabrics and found objects.

### T Themes

Accepting challenges

Thinking outside of the box

Invention

Creativity

### C Create

Design a new balloon for the Macy's parade.

Research the history of the animated Macy's Holiday windows.

Make puppets of various sizes, styles and formats. Allow students to use them freely, creating puppet shows, which will layer in the skills of performance and storytelling.

Watch a documentary on the Macy's Parade and balloons, and then launch an inquiry into the creation of them.

### H Heart Words

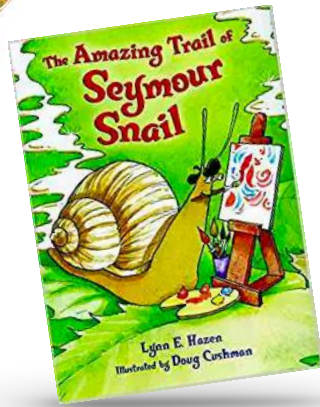
*"Every little movement has a meaning of its own."*

*"They shimmied and swayed through the canyons of New York City."*



# CATCH a spark!

## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



### The Amazing Trail of Seymour Snail

Written by Lynn Hazen  
64 pages / Grades K-2

Seymour Snail dreams of being an artist, but his shyness prohibits him from showing his work...plus, he's small and slow! A perfect early chapter book for newer readers, who will be rooting for Seymour to find success with his creativity. A touching, hopeful story, that will inevitably lead readers to ask if snails can "really do that?"

### C

#### Context

**Insects and bugs** - especially snails and the way that they move.

#### Adjectives and adverbs

**Puns** - what they are and finding them. This book is filled with them! This also allows you to address the idea of **humor in writing**.

### A

#### Arts

**Art descriptions** - have students go on an "art word hunt" throughout the book, looking for words that can describe art.

**Art Galleries** - an introduction to them and what they are.

### T

#### Themes

Determination

Pride

Confidence

### C

#### Create

Research jobs that are creative and would allow someone to make art.

If possible, find a Zen Board (also known as a Buddha Board) and allow students to experiment with art that "disappears". How does it make them feel?

Paint the bottom of feet and let students make their own "amazing trail" outside on the sidewalk.

### H

#### Heart Words

*"...oozing along at a snail's pace and leaving his own glittery mark on the world."*

After reading, ask students to identify the pun in the book they liked the best and explain. Did they realize it instantly, or did it take them a minute to figure it out?

