

# CATCH a spark!

## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



### Ain't Burned All the Bright

Written by Jason Reynolds / Illustrated by Jason Griffin  
384 pages / Grades 5 and up

This book stands alone. It is impossible to not interact with this piece as a reader. It is powerful, haunting, and real. All readers will connect to it on some level and the more times you read it, the more you will feel it. A book that deals with real world topics in a real and honest way, combining words and art in a way no one else has done.

### C

#### Context

Poetry and word choice

Metaphors

Race relations

Covid and quarantine

Effects of the news on the audience.

Analyze each "Breath" of the book, each sentence. Look at the sentence structure and creation.

### A

#### Arts

Multi-media art: looking at texture, form, value and space along with the materials likely used to create the pieces.

Color choices

Analyze the illustrations. They were all created in moleskin notebooks.

Can you see techniques and try to replicate portions?

### T

#### Themes

Family

Isolation

Breathing

Oxygen and what it gives us, where we find it

Moving from anguish to hope

### C

#### Create

Create blackout poetry with students.

Work to create your own "breath" as the story does in relation to world events.

What are the haunting images you will create as you debate word choice?

Record the audio for this book. Listen to the [book trailer](#) for inspiration. This could also be done with their own "breaths" they have written.  
\*\*There is also a very powerful audio version of the text, read by the author and an ensemble of young voices.

### H

#### Heart Words

*The dedication:  
"For everyone we lost and everything we learned, in the strangest year of our lives - 2020."*

*"...I wonder if maybe an oxygen mask is hiding amongst the crumbs of memories caught between the cushions of this couch."*

*"...why my mother won't change the channel, and why the news won't change the story, and why the story won't change into something other than the every hour re-run about how we won't change the world, or the way we treat the world, or the way we treat each other."*



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## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



### Every Little Kindness

Written by Marta Bartolj

72 pages / Grades K-3

A wordless graphic novel that carries a big message, readers will go on an adventure that shows the ripple effects of little acts of kindness and generosity over the course of one short day.

### C

#### Context

Circle stories

Theme

Inferencing

Plot and story sequence

Where does kindness begin? In the case of the story, it starts with a girl who is actually quite upset, but moves past it to be kind to someone else.

### A

#### Arts

Color choice and emphasis. The story is largely told in black and white, with the exception of a few details. An interesting conversation can be started as to why this is an important technique.

Art that tells stories, through details.

### T

#### Themes

Kindness - why it matters

Generosity

Hope

Inclusivity

### C

#### Create

Create circle stories.

Issue a random acts of kindness challenge.

Chart the acts and see if there is a ripple effect. Rather than asking students to report on the things they do themselves, ask them to report on the kindness they see others do, or is done to them.

### H

#### Heart Words

*As this is a wordless book, ask students to determine the moment that spoke the most to them. Why and how did it effect them?*



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## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



### Pawcasso

Written by Remy Lai  
240 pages / Grades 2-5

Readers will fall in love with a special friendship built between one of the coolest dogs around and a lonely little girl. Pawcasso appears at the perfect time for Jo, who plays alone with a misunderstanding that suddenly finds her as a dog owner, with many friends. What will happen when the truth is discovered?

### C

#### Context

Little lies that snowball into big lies.

Pets and responsibility

How we treat other people

Making change and making a difference, using your voice.

### A

#### Arts

The book has many references to art history including: Picasso and cubism, Duchamp

Structure of graphic novels (layouts, color choices, style, word bubbles, thought bubbles)

### T

#### Themes

Truth and lies

Friendship

Loneliness

Honesty

### C

#### Create

What is something you would like to see change? Create a petition and see what you can make happen.

Write a story/graphic novel of the "other life" of your pet when you aren't with them.

### H

#### Heart Words

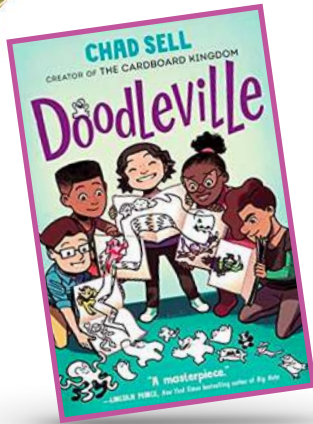
*"If love comes from the heart, does hate come from the brain?"*

*"...maybe I just learned to not give myself a reason to cry."*



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## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



### Doodleville

Written by Chad Sell

288 pages / Grades 2-6

Drew is a girl who loves to draw. She has created Doodleville for all her doodle characters, and they come to life in mischievous ways. When one of her creations becomes a monster, the heroes created by her classmates will save the day. Will her art club friends help her save Doodleville before it's too late?

### C

#### Context

Doubt - it can become a monster of its own and is a metaphor for the monster in this book.

Friendship and banding together.

Drawing as an escape.

Fantasy as a genre.

### A

#### Arts

Doodling as an art style.

The frustration that comes with the fun of drawing. Of great value to readers and artists is the author's note at the end, where he shares how this book and its characters were ten years in the making, from the time he was a young child. The artist shares the history of each of the characters.

### T

#### Themes

Imagination

Doubt

Friendship

Determination

### C

#### Create

As the author describes his own drawing origins, give each student a notebook for their doodles. Encourage them and let them "come to life"

Create a doodle character that you can create consistently. Create an adventure for this character, perhaps combining characters with a friend.

### H

#### Heart Words

*"Artists can bring beauty to the world that will last long past their own lifetimes."*





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## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



### Bolivar

Written by Sean Rubin  
224 pages / Grades 2-6

Sybil's neighbor is a dinosaur, but no one realizes it except for her. Set in the busy, bustling New York City, is it possible for Bolivar to continue living unnoticed in a city with so many people? A new lovable character makes a big statement on how we listen to children as well as the fact that we all get so wrapped up in our daily lives, we often fail to notice the big things happening right in front of us. Stunning illustrations make the story leap off the page.

### C

#### Context

New York City  
Slowing down and being observant.  
Natural History Museum

### A

#### Arts

Intricacy of details in art. Readers will spend time with each page, finding clues, finding Bolivar. The illustrations are all individual works of art.  
Movement in art.  
Layouts of graphic novels, including variety of panel size. Is this a graphic novel or a novel...or both?

### T

#### Themes

Truth and consequences  
Being seen and heard  
Friendship  
Noticing things around you  
Listening

### C

#### Create

Create a fantastical tale, that feels like it could happen. In other words, write a realistic story, but change just one element (such as a dinosaur being your neighbor).  
Choose one illustration and analyze the details of it. What makes it come to life?  
Challenge yourself to create just one scene, including as many details as possible. Keep coming back to it, asking peers for thoughts. Consider the scale and time this takes, and then consider the time for an entire book, like *Bolivar!*

### H

#### Heart Words

*"People never notice ANYthing."*  
*"You noticed me?"*



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## Using children's literature to SPARK CREATIVITY



### To Dance

Written by Siena Cherson Siegel / Illustrated by Mark Siegel  
88 pages / Grades 3 - 8

There are not too many little girls that don't dream about being a ballerina at some point in their lives. Siena's dream started when she was six on the braces of Puerto Rico and stayed with her straight through her debut performance with the New York City Ballet. This graphic memoir is a story of passion, determination and following your dreams.

### C Context

Memoir as a genre  
Pursuing a dream and making it reality.  
How history impacts and inspires new generations.

### A Arts

The history of ballet, from the Bolshoi to the New York City Ballet, including legendary choreographers and dancers such as George Balanchine.  
Lincoln Center as a performing arts institution.  
Thematic elements in art: the ribbons of a ballerina's shoes are a common thread throughout the illustrations. The idea that theme in drawing exists as well as a writing element.

### T Themes

Perseverance  
Grit  
Hard-work and determination  
Following a passion and dream.

### C Create

Challenge students to create a graphic memoir from a section of their own life.  
Chart the challenges and perseverance of Siena. How does this align with their own dream and path, or with the path of another athlete or performer?  
As ribbons are a theme in this book, what is the thematic detail in your own life? How can you continue to weave that through your work, essentially "branding" yourself?

### H Heart Words

*"Big empty spaces always make me dance."*  
*"A dancer needs so much training, so much strength. You get hurt, injured, bashed... transformed."*  
*"In spite of all my struggles, it was peaceful time."*  
*"Why do people realize they've made a mistake when it's too late?"*  
*"Dancing fills a space in me."*

