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ON THE COVER: Twelve-year-old Becca reads with her five-year-old brother Jacob.
Photo courtesy of Judi Moreillon.



Editor's Note Growing a Reader

By Sharon Verbeten

It's hard for me to believe that by the time you get this issue, my "baby," my only child, Holland, will be eleven years old. She's grown up with me as *CAL* editor—even travelled with me, in vitro!—to the ALA Annual Conference two months before she was born in 2006.

And with me also working as a children's librarian, and spending much of my free time reading, it's no doubt Holland has grown up loving books and reading. Despite the fact that she was lucky enough to be born with one extra chromosome, reading has never been much of a struggle for her. I guess that's firmly embedded in her genes!

When I thought reading might be a bit challenging for Holland, I decided to give audiobooks (and Tumblebooks) a try. Not only were they great to keep her interested and busy (while I was making dinner!), but hearing the words and following along in books really helped her learn to read. I'm convinced of that. She listens to them in her room (on an old-school pink boombox), in the car (on a CD Walkman!), and even when riding in the boat!

Thanks to my role as editor, I've been able to meet some amazing authors and illustrators at ALA conferences, and I get as many books signed for my daughter as possible. It's worth the heavy suitcase home to see her excitement as I unpack books signed JUST FOR HER!

Making up silly stories at night, giving books as prized gifts, and visiting bookstores often only add to raising a literary child and growing a reader. Holland's voraciousness for reading is exciting to see. I no longer worry about what reading level she's at or if she's listening to a Disney audiobook for the umpteenth time. I'm just glad my love of words, reading, and books has rubbed off on her . . . *now, if I could just get my husband to pick up a book . . .* 📖



So proud of my not-so-little reader!

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“Somebody Signed Me Up”

North Carolina Fourth-Graders’ Perceptions of Summer Reading Programs

KIM BECNEL, ROBIN A. MOELLER, AND NITA J. MATZEN

The long-term goal of the researchers involved in this study is to discover methods that public libraries can use to improve their summer reading programs (SRP) and expand participation of students from traditionally under-represented groups. This small pilot study was designed to answer some important preliminary questions: How do children decide whether or not to participate in SRPs? What motivates children to participate and what barriers might inhibit participation? Finally, what factors might motivate those who do not participate to take part?

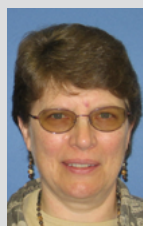
To answer these questions, researchers conducted focus groups with fourth-grade students who had participated in their local public library’s summer reading program and those who had not. The results enhance the current picture of SRP participants and add a new piece to the puzzle by beginning to describe the nonparticipant population as well.

With library budgets growing ever tighter, public libraries are being asked to provide evidence to justify the existence of some of their most revered programs and services, such as the annual summer reading program, which typically involves asking children to read a certain number of books in exchange for modest prizes. To comply with this request, librarians and scholars have begun to conduct research to try to illustrate the

power of these programs. However, many of these studies have come under fire for demonstrating only what we already know:¹ Children who read more, read better.² But do SRPs actually motivate children who otherwise wouldn’t read to do so? And if not, how might they do better?

A recent study by Justice et al., in cooperation with the Columbus Metropolitan Library, begins to answer these crucial questions, finding that the children who participate in SRPs are already typically good readers who come from homes in which reading is a prioritized activity and who have easy access to libraries. The authors noted that future studies should focus on the nonparticipant population with a view toward expanding the reach of SRPs for children who aren’t naturally motivated to read or do not have the resources at home to pursue their reading interests. Indeed, it is through reaching these children that the power of SRPs to close the achievement gap would truly be realized.³

With this in mind, the researchers of this study have sought not only to investigate the motivations of children who participate in SRPs, but to turn the spotlight on the nonparticipant population as well, describing the motivations and barriers they encounter in relationship to summer reading.



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The Current Conversation

Reading Motivation Theory

Most researchers who have studied reading motivation and children have reported generally that intrinsic motivation has a much more positive impact on recreational reading than extrinsic motivators. Children who do possess intrinsic motivation to read do so often, work toward becoming better readers, and generally value reading or belonging to a community of readers.⁴ Prior research also suggests that appealing to children's interests and providing them with a variety of choices are much more powerful reading motivation tools than implementing the use of extrinsic motivators such as treats and toys.⁵ Researchers who have examined the use of such external motivators to encourage children to read have noted that they either have no impact or a negative impact on children's motivation to read and that they can turn reading into a competition.⁶

Finally, researchers have noted that when extrinsic motivators have proven to be successful, they are in the form of literacy incentives, in which books are given away as prizes for reaching a goal.⁷

Summer Slide

Research has demonstrated that “summer slide,” the reading fluency loss that occurs while students are away from school, is a significant contributor to the achievement gap between learners of different socioeconomic backgrounds both in the short term and the long term.⁸

Barbara Heyns found that while students of all socioeconomic groups progressed at a similar rate during the school year,⁹ disadvantaged students lost considerably more learning than their peers over the summer months. Similarly, Cooper et al. found that while most students see decreases in their learning over the summer equivalent to one month, economically disadvantaged students see a loss of up to three months of learning.¹⁰ The amount of time spent reading has also proven to be a factor in the extent to which summer slide occurs. Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding conducted a study that illustrated that the most accurate predictor of reading improvement is time devoted to reading independently.¹¹ Similarly, in a review of hundreds of studies, the National Reading Panel concluded that reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary all increase as time spent reading increases.¹²

Traditional Summer Reading Programs—Measuring Success

While several studies have concluded that SRPs are effective at helping children who participate maintain or improve their reading fluency,¹³ some scholars have pointed out the potential flaws inherent in this type of research. For example, in an Institute of Museum and Library Services-funded research project known as the Dominican Study, the authors lauded the effects of public library SRPs, reporting that youth who had participated in a public library summer reading program had

more motivation, confidence, and skill in reading than did their same-age counterparts and that they achieved better scores on reading tests in the next academic term than they had previously.¹⁴ In a direct response to this report, Lyons pointed to self-selection bias as a major problem of the Dominican Study, noting that the students who chose to participate in the summer reading program had scored higher than students who chose not to participate before the study was conducted, so it is clear there was already some difference between the groups.

Lyons also noted that though the post-summer test scores of the participating group were higher, the scores of nonparticipants had actually risen more over the course of the summer than those of participants, suggesting that the nonparticipants had actually gained more during the summer. Finally, for Lyons, the main takeaway of the study is that libraries are not reaching the population of underserved children in need of reading help and that the focus needs to shift to how well libraries are serving at-risk children and how they can do better.¹⁵

Research conducted in 2013 by Justice et al. echoes these critiques and concerns, finding that the children who tend to participate in SRPs are already strong readers with parental support and abundant literacy resources. They call for additional research into the group of children who do not typically participate in SRPs, including how public libraries can begin to reach them.¹⁶ In a 2015 study, Dynia, Piasta, and Justice found that by the end of the summer, all children in the sample, both those who participated in SRP and those who did not, saw their reading comprehension improve, suggesting that participation did not influence the children's reading development or behaviors. They noted that since children who are inclined to participate in SRPs tend to be strong, motivated readers already, public libraries might be more effective in combatting the issue of summer slide if they were able to reach those children who might be unmotivated or struggling readers, particularly those from less affluent families.¹⁷

Breaking the Mold: Alternative Approaches to Summer Reading

Some libraries have begun to move away from the traditional prize-for-reading SRP model, opting to reward learning experiences and participation in programs, in addition to reading, and to make those rewards literacy-related and/or experiential in nature. An example of this practice can be found at Charlotte Mecklenburg Library (CML), in Charlotte, North Carolina. CML allows a combination of reading time and learning activities to count toward completion of their SRP, for which participants are rewarded with a book and fine waivers. Participants are also eligible to win “grand prizes,” which are tickets to community events and local attractions.¹⁸

Wake County (NC) Public Libraries has shifted its focus to rewarding library interactions, offering children stickers when they “visit a desk, share a favorite book, attend a program, or bring a bag for their books.”¹⁹ There are many other examples of public libraries throughout the country adapting their programs

to better align with what research has to say about reading behaviors and to try to expand the reach of their programs to children who may not typically choose to participate.

Some librarians, like Aimee Meuchel of Washington County (OR) Cooperative Library Services, choose to flip the script even more dramatically, giving away a book as a prize for signing up for SRP. Meuchel argues that this process is more reflective of the spirit and mission of public libraries, which is getting books into the hands of children.²⁰

Methods

The researchers issued a call through professional electronic discussion lists, soliciting help from elementary school librarians willing to arrange focus groups, and they selected at random three schools, all of which were located in rural or semirural areas in central and western North Carolina. To make data collection manageable and to generate results that are more easily comparable to similar studies, focus groups were conducted with fourth-grade students only.

After obtaining parental permission, researchers spoke to two groups of fourth graders at each of the three participating schools, one comprised of students who had participated in their local public library's summer reading program the previous summer and one made up of students who had not. Researchers spoke with all students who returned permission slips from their parents. Researchers asked a series of predetermined questions to each group of students, video recording each of the thirty-to-forty-five-minute conversations. Researchers then transcribed the conversations, grouped the participant interviews and nonparticipant interviews into two separate data sets, and individually coded the transcriptions, using an inductive approach to identify emerging themes. The researchers then met to compare and agree on themes and codes before completing a second round of coding. After the second round of coding, researchers met again to compare results and resolve any differences that appeared in the coding.

Findings and Implications

Our results suggest that students who self-identified as readers were slightly more likely to participate in SRPs than those who did not. When asked about summer leisure activities, three participants mentioned reading while twelve nonparticipants mentioned reading (37.5 percent and 46 percent of the samples, respectively), but it is important to note that the majority of students in both groups reported engaging in regular reading throughout the summer.

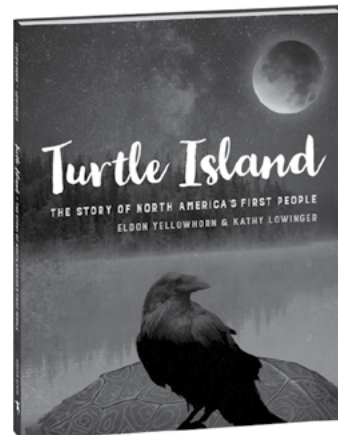
Those who participated in SRP cited parental influence and boredom as their primary motivations. Prizes, reading enjoyment, and ability to freely choose from a wide variety of books were mentioned as the things they valued most in the program. This group pointed to learning new things (50 percent) and receiving prizes (25 percent) as factors that motivated them to read.

Those students who did not participate in their public library's summer reading program cited being too busy doing other summer activities and being unaware of the program as the top reasons that they had not participated. Additionally, several students seemed to view SRP as a remediation or intervention that they did not need because they were already frequent and/or strong readers. In the words of one student, "I don't have to have something to get me in the habit of reading. Because I like to read now. So I don't have to, you know, I do it every day. I've got the habit."—Of the nonparticipants, one-third mentioned prizes or treats and books they enjoy as motivations that might encourage them to read more. Other motivational factors students mentioned included interesting books, new books in popular series, access to a good place to read, and the inclination to learn new things and "get smarter."

Access to Appealing Material

One of the most significant results of this study concerns the importance of free choice of a range of appealing material. SRP participants mentioned this

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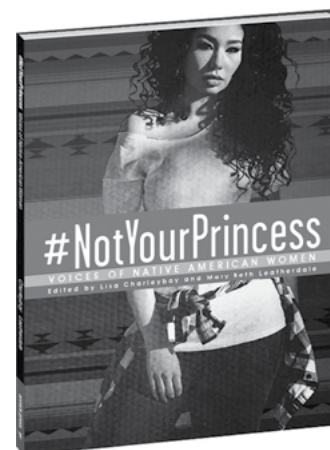


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as one of the main reasons they participated in the program, and nonparticipants cited it as a potential motivating factor to encourage their reading.

Not all reading material is created equal in the eyes of students, and the ability to select their own books is critical. Children in the participant group talked at length about the difference between “books [you] read because [you] have to read them” and “books [you] really want to read.” Some books, one participant exclaimed, you “just want to throw in the trash can.”

When asked what they liked most about SRP, one student remarked, “What I really liked about it was that I get to read the books I really want for free from the library,” and another noted “that you could pick your own little book that you wanted to read and stuff. That was interesting and was different. They had more interesting books.”

As for the nonparticipant population, many of them mentioned books they enjoy and new books in popular series as factors that motivate them to read, yet most seemed unaware that this type of material could be obtained for free at their local public libraries. There are exceptions to this, however; two of the nonparticipants in SRP did mention that they had visited the library in the summer for reading material because there were “no books to read at home.”

Taken together, these responses suggest that libraries should continue to collect a diverse array of popular literature for young readers, and they should continue to train staff in readers’ advisory so that patrons who walk in the door will walk out with titles they are likely to truly enjoy. Further, it is important to think about actively marketing and promoting collections and helpful staff, in this way focusing on relevant intrinsic motivators that may increase participation in summer reading and help children find joy and pleasure in leisure reading.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement was brought up by both the participants and nonparticipants, with several participants indicating that their parents or grandparents had them sign up for SRP and a couple of nonparticipants revealing that their parents would not take them to the library. Half of the participant group revealed that they took part in SRP because a parent or other adult had signed them up for the program. In the words of one participant, her mother had signed her up over her protests; “She just signed me up anyway. She signs me up for everything.”

In contrast, one nonparticipant mentioned that his parents both worked long hours and so were unavailable to take him to the library, for example, and another remarked that his family didn’t typically engage in many activities during the summer, preferring to “stick around the house.”

Another student mentioned he didn’t participate because “I was at my Dad’s house and I didn’t think he would let me do it.”

These comments suggest that at this age, parental priorities heavily influence the types of activities they engage in and how they spend their leisure time. While much of SRP advertising tends to be aimed squarely at children to get them interested, these findings suggest that libraries should strive to communicate with parents as well. They should be made aware of the existence of the SRP program and the benefits it might offer their children so that they might be more likely to encourage participation and provide necessary transportation.

Prizes and Rewards

Finally, both participants and nonparticipants mention receiving tangible rewards as a factor that might motivate them to read, suggesting that this cornerstone of most SRPs need not be entirely jettisoned. The children in the nonparticipant group obviously did not take part in a program that would have provided them with prizes for reading; nevertheless, they mentioned toys, ice cream, money, trophies, and books when asked what motivates them to read.

Several participants noted the fun of the program’s rewards. One seemed to enjoy being rewarded for behavior she would have engaged in anyway, noting, “I like reading, so I liked how we got prizes if we read a certain amount of books.” Another student, however, seemed to be motivated to read by the possibility of earning prizes; “I like the part that you read and that you get a prize. I’m not that much of a reader. But if you read and get a prize then you want to read.”

Although research suggests that focusing on prizes as a motivational strategy can have negative repercussions, studies also show that small prizes, particularly literacy-related items, can be effective, often helping students to move from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation as they discover the inherent pleasure of reading.²¹ Thus, scarce library resources might be better spent on small, literacy-related rewards in addition to beefing up collections, training staff, and educating parents about the academic benefits of summer reading than on purchasing substantial prizes for children who participate in the program.

Perceptions of the Library

Although many of the students we spoke to assumed the library did not have the current popular titles and series they were interested in reading, the group as a whole seemed to have positive associations with their local public libraries. Several SRP participants described their trips to the library as fun and agreed when one participant remarked that visits were so pleasant because “they were really nice” there.

In addition, some of the students who had not participated had still visited the library in the summer and expressed their appreciation for it. For example, one of these students said, “I really like it. They have this skeleton body set up. It’s like a

puzzle and you put the body parts together and make him look like a real body." Another explained, "I went so I could read. I like the quiet in the library."

Whether they participated in SRP or not, the students seemed to perceive the library as a welcoming place where they could both have fun and find a bit of quiet when they needed it. Libraries might consider building on these positive associations by encouraging students to visit libraries, attend programs, and interact with staff instead of or in addition to logging their reading to earn prizes.

Limitations and Further Study

In total, the researchers traveled to three North Carolina public schools and spoke to thirty-four students, eight of whom had participated in summer reading programs at their local libraries and twenty-six of whom had not. The small numbers, particularly of students who had participated in public library summer reading programs, is the primary limitation of this study. It is not clear whether there was an extremely low number of students in these fourth-grade classes who had participated in summer reading programs or whether most of those who participated simply decided not to take part in the focus group conversations.

Whatever the case, our picture of nonparticipants is richer than our picture of SRP participants, and thus much of our analysis focuses on this particular group, which is underrepresented in the literature, in part because of the logistical and administrative hurdles researchers encounter when trying to focus on children who did not participate in SRP. Further studies should involve not only a larger population, but include children of other ages from a larger geographic area as well, as this study was restricted to fourth-grade students in North Carolina.

Additionally, the researchers spoke to the students in a focus group format, which successfully generated conversation and allowed the students to build on what others were saying. However, there is the chance with this type of social interaction that participants might make remarks designed to impress or challenge other participants or that they might feel too inhibited to provide honest responses. Thus, individual interviews might be a helpful addition to this research.

Using a review of the professional literature and data collected from a series of focus groups, this study provides librarians a glimpse into some motivating factors and barriers regarding participation in summer reading programs. These programs can be a powerful tool for equalizing academic and literacy achievement across diverse populations and socioeconomic lines if we can successfully broaden their reach.

To accomplish this may require rethinking incentive structures and prizes, a push to educate parents about the importance of summer reading, and possibly increased marketing of not only summer reading programs and experiences the library offers,

but also its current, popular collections for recreational reading and expert, helpful staff ready to help connect kids with the books they will love. ☺

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This fall, literary fans will be able to stamp their letters with the delightful art from the groundbreaking and Caldecott-winning *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats, published in 1962.

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Diversity as Evolutionary in Children's Literature

The Blog Effect

EDITH CAMPBELL

The call for better representation of African Americans in children's literature can be traced back about eighty years through the works of social and literary leaders including Sterling Brown. In 1933, he wrote of the pervasiveness of stereotypes of African Americans in literature, happy slaves and the representation of African Americans in American literature.

But whether Negro life and character are to be best interpreted from without or within is an interesting bypath that we had better not enter here. One manifest truth, however, is this: the sincere, sensitive artist, willing to go beneath the clichés of popular belief to get at an underlying reality, will be wary of confining a race's entire character to a half-dozen narrow grooves. He will hardly have the temerity to say that his necessarily limited observation of a few Negroes in a restricted environment can be taken as the last word about some mythical the (sic) Negro. He will hesitate to do this, even though he had a Negro mammy, or spent a night in Harlem, or has been a Negro all his life. The writer submits that such an artist is the only one worth listening to, although the rest are legion.¹

The 1930s, the age of the Harlem Renaissance, was a transformative period for African American literature. *The Journal of Negro Education* was one of the few journals that allowed Brown a public forum. While African American scholars of the 1930s found limited avenues for scholarly communication, today's scholar activists, educators, and librarians are able to reach audiences through social network sites and through these vehicles affect significant change in children's literature. This article focuses particularly on the transformative power of blogging. It accomplishes this by reviewing the history of blogs that focus on diversity in children's literature, and examining four incidents of diverse bloggers as change agents.

Librarians and Educators in the Blogosphere

Librarians often take to blogging to build a community to discuss books, technologies, or services relating to librarianship but may also find themselves serving communities as advocates or change agents. They also use blogs to address social issues in ways that initiate change.² When librarians or



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educators focus their blog on diversity in children's or young adult literature, advocacy and transformation may be an intentional goal.

With only 14 percent of the books published in the United States depicting Children of Color or Native Americans,³ it is not surprising that many from marginalized groups who blog about children's books focus their efforts on diversity, social justice, equity, and inclusion. Social media provides marginalized voices a decolonized platform for self-expression, critical analyses, and the creation of content. While some question the influence of blogs,⁴ significant changes enacted in children's literature seem to suggest otherwise.

Children's Literature Diversity Blogs

It seems that the first children's literature diversity blog was *Into the Wardrobe* (<http://peteredmundlucy7.blogspot.com>), which was founded in February 2005 by Tarie Sabido, a Filipina blogger located in the Philippines. It was followed in April by South Asian American author Mitali Perkins' *Mitali's Fire Escape* (<http://www.mitaliblog.com>). While neither blog was originally created to reflect the bloggers' Asian heritage, they did eventually venture in that direction. Sabido began exclusively promoting Filipino books and authors while Perkins' post "Writing Race: A Checklist for Writers" has become a seminal essay for those who are writing outside their own cultural experience.⁵

Change Agents

Dr. Debbie Reese, a tribally enrolled Nambe Pueblo woman and scholar, began blogging at *American Indians in Children's Literature* (AICL; <https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/>) in 2006 when she recognized what others speak to as the need for scholars to "write in public spaces as a form of advocacy and professional empowerment."⁶ Reese uses her blog to proactively ensure the dignity and presence of Native Americans in literature for all children. Her critical analyses of works with Native American characters or cultures consistently and comprehensively educate her readers. By combining her expertise as a Native American children's literature scholar with her lived experience as tribally enrolled Native American, Reese articulates and shares her expertise with the express purpose of informing her readers, many of whom are educators, librarians, editors, and caregivers.

One of the most popular of the early diversity blogs was *Reading in Color* (<http://blackteensread2.blogspot.com/>). It was established in 2009 by African American/Dominican American teen blogger Ari Valderrama, who described her blog as one "that reviews YA/MG books about people of color (poc). There is a serious lack of books being reviewed by teens that are YA/MG about people of color, I hope my blog is one step closer to filling in this void."⁷ Ari found her voice and came of age through her social networking.⁸

Ari networked with readers across the blogosphere, creating a dialog about diverse books. Around the time her blog began, an advanced reading copy of the US edition of *Liar* (Larbalestier, Bloomsbury Kids US) appeared with a close up image of white teen's face on the cover, although the book was actually about an African American female. This misrepresentation is often referred to as whitewashing. Ari spearheaded a movement, asking people to contact the publisher to share their displeasure with the cover. It was changed prior to release.

Ari graduated high school and went to college, leaving her blogging behind. Consequently, she wasn't around in 2014 when the #WeNeedDiverseBooks movement was founded on Twitter and made diversity a mainstay in children's literature discussions. And, she was not around when controversies arose over *A Fine Dessert: Four Centuries, Four Families, One Delicious Treat* (Jenkins and Blackall; Schwartz & Wade) and *A Birthday Cake for George Washington* (Ganeshram and Brantley-Newton; Scholastic). Reese's AICL blog maintains posts with complete timelines relating to both *A Fine Dessert* and *A Birthday Cake*.⁹

Elisa Gall, a white school librarian in Illinois, first blogged about problems with *A Fine Dessert's* portrayal of smiling, working slaves in a blog post. In August 2015 she wrote, "I appreciate the creators' efforts to not ignore that part of history, but I wonder: Showing smiling slaves might not be ignoring this part of history technically—but isn't it ignoring a huge, essential part of it? Is illustrating a watered-down snapshot any better than leaving it out all together?"¹⁰

Debate about the book's portrayal of enslaved people expanded in November to author Ellen Oh's blog (<http://elloecho.blogspot.com/>), author Varian Johnson's blog (<http://blog.varianjohnson.com/>), and to the *Reading While White* blog (<http://readingwhilewhite.blogspot.com/>). More blogs picked up the story, and momentum of protests against the depiction of enslavement spilled into popular media sources. This controversy evolved into necessary conversations about effective ways to teach with this book, the portrayal of enslavement in children's books, insider/outsider authorship, and the existence of Whiteness of publishing. On November 1, author Emily Jenkins apologized for her work in a comment on *Reading While White*, stating, "As the author of *A Fine Dessert*, I have read this discussion and the others with care and attention. I have come to understand that my book, while intended to be inclusive and truthful and hopeful, is racially insensitive. I own that and am very sorry."¹¹ Sophie Blackall, the illustrator, continues to stand by her work.

These conversations were too close for those involved in the production of *A Birthday Cake for George Washington* to reconsider their book. Scheduled for release in January 2016, this picturebook also contained problematic portrayals of enslavement. Vicky Smith's review at *Kirkus* alerted many to concerns.¹²

My own blog, *CrazyQuiltEdi* (campbele.wordpress.com) carried a critical review of the book on January 13, 2016.¹³ On that same day, Leslie MacFadyen, founder of the Ferguson Response

Network, entered the dialog on Twitter by creating the hashtag #slaverywithasmile. African American scholar and blogger Dr. Ebony Elizabeth Thomas "storified" her tweets, creating an important document of the debate around this book.¹⁴

Parents and activists started to become aware of what many of us have known for years: children's literature is fraught with misrepresentations of marginalized people. Nathalie Mvondo, a Cameroonian American blogger at *Multiculturalism Rocks* (<https://multiculturalism.rocks/>) wrote, "The topic of slavery in picturebooks will remain a sensitive one as long as parents will fear for their children's safety, every time they step outside of the house, and as long as children themselves will refrain from smiling or get nervous simply because they have spotted a police officer."¹⁵ Thousands signed a protest petition directed at Scholastic on Change.org,¹⁶ while Deborah Menkart and Allyson Criner Brown at Teaching for Change used their online network to disperse news of the offensive text that was about to be released.¹⁷ Once again, articles began appearing in mainstream publications. Scholastic seemed to have been aware enough of the instance of *A Fine Dessert* to have prepared a marketing campaign with statements from the book's author and also from the editor, Andrea Davis Pinkney, yet they only added fuel. On Sunday, January 17, Scholastic released another statement on their blog: they were stopping distribution of the book because they did "not believe this title meets the standards of appropriate presentation of information to younger children."¹⁸

Scholastic's January 17 statement did not acknowledge the voices on Twitter, on blogs, or even the press that led to their decision. Without a doubt, there were also individuals engaging with Scholastic through other channels and thus amplifying the furor social media generated. Those disengaged from social media may think that the company acted solely on their own merits when nothing could be further from reality.

As effective as blogs are in creating change, many disengage from social media because of the disruptive tones in the conversation, whether actual or perceived. Conflict can arise from the unmonitored and unfiltered exchanges that occur in these

environments. Many find that the only solution to maintaining a sense of civility is to withdraw completely from the sites.

Some perceive a negative tone when their way of thinking is challenged. This perception often develops when a white person faces a person of color or Native American intentionally speaking publicly about race in order to address a problematic situation. There can be discomfort caused by the very nature of the conversation, by a person of color speaking up in such a way, or a combination of both. Dr. Robin DiAngelo credits this unease to white fragility, "a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves."¹⁹ Justine Larbalestier describes it by saying, "my theory is that it makes us feel like we are the baddies. A notion we recoil from because we have been taught all our lives that white people are the goodies. So many of our stories are about us saving (some part of) the world from racism and exploitation: *Dances with Wolves*, *The Help*, *Avatar* (some other world) etc."²⁰ While conversations develop among those already comfortable with race, many with fragile feelings are offended and leave, finding little chance to grow. Still others watch, read, and learn from the transparent discourse.

These public conversations when held by marginalized persons are replete with opportunity but they can also be mired in situations that breed misunderstanding, hostility, public shaming, and tone policing.²¹ Scholars of color tread in this space without a net,²² with no support other than their willingness to engage and educate. Despite it all, this public forum shines light in unseen places while enabling colonized voices to not only be heard, but also to be empowered. Even when publishers refuse to openly recognize those who have called them out, blogs revolutionize the public discourse by empowering previously unheard scholars, librarians, and educators, and leave a public record.

More recently, there were concerns about *When We Was Fierce* by Latinx author e. E. Charlton-Trujillo.²³ The book received starred reviews in *Publisher's Weekly*, *Kirkus*, and *Booklist* and these reviews avoided many of the issues contained in the text. During an online conversation between myself and Jennifer Baker, creator of the *Minorities in Publishing* podcast,

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we quickly realized that she needed to prepare a review of the book.²⁴ Her review posted on *CrazyQuiltEdi* critiquing the narrative structure of the book, contrasting its artificial dialect to authentic African American Vernacular English appearing in other children's and young adult books.²⁵ The critical analyses in the reviews provided textual evidence of the stereotypes, misrepresentations, and poorly created language. How did the professional reviewers get so much wrong about these books?

This review, along with additional reviews written by K. T. Horning, a white blogger and children's literature scholar,²⁶ and by myself,²⁷ spread through Twitter. These reviews enlightened readers and led to proclamations of "mea culpa" and "how did I miss it." Dr. Zetta Elliott, blogger and children's book author, wrote, "There's the actual annihilation of Black bodies that's reported on the nightly news, and then there's the symbolic annihilation where White editors and agents show preference for non-Black writers and their narratives that distort our image/voice."²⁸ Candlewick announced their decision to postpone release of the book.²⁹

With Aboriginal author and scholar Ambelin Kwaymullina blogging about the relevance that this protestation to *When We Was Fierce* should have among Australian readers, as well as with newspapers in London, Paris, and Stockholm reporting on this story,³⁰ the global importance of voices of resistance becomes discernible. As publishers continue to respond to the voices of individuals of color that are expressed through blogs and microblogs and as these voices grow to receive a global awareness, it becomes apparent that we're looking at the empowerment of change agents.

Conclusions

The autonomy of these voices as described by Korean American scholar and blogger Dr. Sarah Park Dahlen intersects here along with scholarship and activism.³¹ When marginalized people intentionally speak in free and open spaces, the conversations they generate become transparent, effective, and transformative. Global alliances are created and the ability of these communities to negotiate, create, and mobilize for themselves in their own voices begins to lead more people to not only question why there are so few diverse books, but also to demand more, and to demand better quality.

Talk continues as it has for the past eighty or so years around the representation of children who are African American, Native American, Latinx, Asian American, LGBT+, or disabled. But now, thanks to social media, voices from these same marginalized groups become revolutionary as they connect with audiences and allies, and the talk becomes an unstoppable movement.

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CCSS Collaboration

How Librarians Can Collaborate with Teachers on Common Core

CODY LAWSON AND FAYE LADUKE-PELSTER

Librarians play a crucial part in planning and implementing effective literacy instruction that serves the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for both ELA (English Language Arts) and social studies. The CCSS are a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and ELA, developed by a collaborative group of teachers, school chiefs, administrators, and other education experts.

School librarians may contribute as literacy experts for teachers as they plan and deliver social studies instruction aligned to the CCSS. Librarians offer a wealth of knowledge about resources valuable to social studies teachers. The strategies librarians provide can support classroom teachers as they guide students in analyzing and synthesizing their thinking about a social studies text. Librarians' role in relation to the CCSS is to support teaching and learning in information literacy, as well as selecting and finding resources for learning.

Consider the following CCSS for ELA and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects:

6.RI.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

7.RI.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

8.RI.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

It's clear that citing evidence from the text to support the reader's thinking is an important skill that readers need to successfully comprehend informational text. Therefore, one instructional method librarians can share with classroom teachers is the **think aloud method**, a practice that involves modeling how skilled readers construct meaning from a text.¹

More specifically, a librarian could suggest a teacher use *Henry's Freedom Box*, Ellen Levine's captivating picturebook



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about a slave who mailed himself to freedom, to read aloud and think aloud to model for students what it looks and sounds like to keep track of one's thinking while reading and use evidence from the text to support that thinking. Librarians can encourage teachers to use the think aloud method to demonstrate various strategies that engaged readers use.

In addition to thinking aloud and demonstrating what it looks and sounds like to use evidence from the text to support thinking, a librarian could also suggest that classroom teachers use *Henry's Freedom Box* to help students identify important aspects of the pivotal time period. This could also take place using a think aloud during which time the teacher could share his/her thinking about the sorrow and sadness the main character feels after being separated from his family.

Librarians can support teachers in utilizing **shared reading** as an avenue to support readers as they navigate text.² Shared reading involves providing all students with a copy of the informational text (individual copies or displaying the text on a large screen) so they can access it as it is read aloud by the teacher and students. Frequent pauses are included in the reading for the teacher to share his/her thinking in addition to asking questions to prompt deep thinking from the students.

Here are a few additional resources librarians can use when supporting teachers specific to informational reading instructional strategies:

- “Supporting Student Comprehension in Content Area Reading” (www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/supporting-student-comprehension-content-30517.html)
- *Texts and Lessons for Content Area Reading* by Harvey Daniels and Nancy Steineke (Heinemann, 2011)
- *Do I Really Have to Teach Reading? Content Comprehension, Grades 6-12* by Cris Tovani (Stenhouse, 2004)
- *Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (Stenhouse, 2007).
- *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Content Area Strategies at Work* by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey (Pearson, 2015)

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) standards call on librarians to teach students to “find, evaluate, and select appropriate sources to answer questions.”³ These standards are in place to guide students as they search for the most relevant source of information. This information may be in the form of databases, websites, books, or other multimedia.

“With the CCSS, explicit literacy instruction is now shared responsibility of all teachers, librarians, reading specialists, and technology integration specialists throughout the school.”⁴

In describing what successful collaboration looks like between a teacher and librarians, imagine this scene: A social studies teacher posts a map of current world conflicts on the classroom wall. As students enter the class, they begin asking questions about the highlighted regions.

Student curiosity inspires the teacher to work with the librarian to develop a unit for this topic. This teacher prefers project and problem based learning and decides to assign students to research one of the current world conflicts. Collaboration with the librarian is essential in the preparation, organization, and implementation of this unit plan.

As media literacy experts and guides for students as they research online, the librarian spends time demonstrating and illustrating website reliability as well as what it looks and sounds like to evaluate website courses using Kathy Schrock's guide to all things tech savvy found at www.schrockguide.net/critical-evaluation.html.⁵

During the planning phase, the teacher and librarian work together to create an online database of reputable websites for students to access. The teacher and librarian also select novels and create a reserve section in the library specific to the topic of world conflict.

As students enter the school library, attention is drawn to scrolling news (MSNBC) on the projector screen. Several tables are set up with displays for student exploration. Displays feature maps and a wide variety of informational texts. In the back of the library, a group of computers with headphones await students to view videos and news broadcasts. As students browse the displays, watch news broadcasts, and use computers, questions, comments, and concerns of our global world fill the air. “How many conflicts are there in the world today?” “What countries are involved?” “What are the disputes about?”

Using these student-generated questions, the teacher and librarian continue to co-plan daily lessons as well as co-teach the entire unit. The culminating project includes creation of a website that houses student-produced news broadcasts about several world conflicts.

This collaboration is aligned with steps suggested to librarians by AASL, including the approach they are to take in implementing the CCSS—to understand it, create a plan, and act on it. This interdisciplinary project described spans the social studies content standards for grades 6–8.

Here are a few tips to make the collaboration between classroom teachers and librarians successful:

1. Build trust and rapport. Share a little bit about yourself as a person and professional so you can begin to establish a working relationship.
2. Identify teaching beliefs and philosophies. This will be

essential as you begin to plan and implement instruction as a team.

3. Clarify the role each of you will take in planning and delivering instruction. Make sure to plan time to share with students that each of you are teachers. Students will thrive when they know the roles librarians and teachers are filling in helping them learn.
4. Map out the logistics (e.g., materials, schedule for time devoted to the instruction, class location—library, classroom, or both, etc.).
5. Set aside time after each lesson to reflect. Address what went well and what factors caused the lesson to go well. Also, look back at what didn't work well and identify the causal factors. Use the answers to these reflective questions to enhance future lessons. ☺

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The Mighty Picturebook

Providing a Plethora of Possibilities

JUDI MOREILLON

Picturebooks are books in which both words and illustrations are essential to the story's meaning. . . . In a true picturebook, the illustrations are integral to the reader's experience of the book and the story would be diminished or confusing without the illustrations."¹ Readers may agree with this definition, but that is not the end of the conversation. Picturebook readers continue to engage in discussions in the library world and children's literature field about the audiences for, formats of, and uses of picturebooks in the literacy lives of readers, listeners, and viewers.

Young Audiences for Picturebooks

Many picturebooks are created expressly for a young readership. Reading to babies from birth is a critical way to help a child's brain form the connections that support cognitive development.² As the child grows, picturebooks offer ideal read-aloud experiences that develop familial bonds and literacy routines as well as a child's vocabulary, enjoyment of books, and readiness for schooling.³ Picturebooks are a cornerstone of PLA/ALSC's Every Child Ready to Read 2nd Edition program that provides youth librarians, early childhood specialists, preschool teachers, childcare providers, and others with research-based practices that can help young children develop emergent reader skills.

Picturebook authors, illustrators, and designers can create books that maximize the impact of a page turn by building suspense and leaving clues to foreshadow the print and illustrations on the next page. Clever word play and other surprising elements in print and illustrations also stretch story listeners' independent cognitive abilities and engage them in enriching literacy experiences.

For example, an older sibling can model fluent reading while engaging her brother in interactive conversations related to the book's print and illustrations. Picturebooks and wordless picturebooks are ideal for dialogic reading in which the more proficient reader engages the child in making meaning by asking open-ended questions about the print and images. This process develops children's ability to express themselves orally and make personal meaning from the text.

Word Count and Book Length

A picturebook's word count or page length can be a factor for families that struggle to make time for a daily read-aloud or bedtime story. Many picturebook publishers have responded to today's family pressures by reducing the number of words in the text or by keeping to a strict thirty-two pages. Childcare providers and library-based storytime readers may also reach



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Teacher Kathi Stalzer and school librarian Debra LaPlante at Saints Simon and Jude Cathedral School in Phoenix, Arizona, co-teaching a strategy lesson with fourth-grade students.

for shorter books. They may believe these selections will more easily hold the interest of an audience of young children who may have varied read-aloud experiences. However, “children’s willingness to listen to stories grows with experience, which may result in a younger child who has been read to regularly having a much longer attention span than an older child with no story experience.”⁴

Many parents and members of the general public think young children are the sole audience for picturebooks. Others realize there are multiple audiences for these texts. For example, researchers have studied how family literacy is portrayed in picturebooks and have found a tension between reading as a pleasurable parent-child experience and reading as parental “work”—another task in a long list of childrearing tasks.⁵ Picturebooks can also carry positive messages to the more proficient reader peer or adult reader that promote a love of books and reading. Reading picturebooks with young children can be a joyful family bonding experience that plays an important part in a child’s development. Evaluating and choosing picturebooks to share with others requires a close examination of the book itself as well as knowledge of the book’s intended audience and use.

Visual Literacy

The ability to make meaning from images is an essential twenty-first-century skill. Visual images dominate access to ideas and information via the screens that are all-pervasive in daily life. In addition, researchers estimate that people with typical vision process 80 to 85 percent of their perception, learning, cognition, and activities through vision. Many school librarians, reading specialists, and classroom teachers use picturebooks to teach visual literacy. “The illustrations in picturebooks often contain the details regarding setting, tone, and characters, and so children need to be able to use the visual elements as well as the literacy elements to create meaning and analyze a text.”⁶

In a recent *Children & Libraries* article, Jennifer Gibson wrote, “The visual sophistication of the author’s/illustrator’s work allows readers of all ages to interpret the story for themselves, whether orally, in writing, or in a different form of creative response.”⁷ Readers can explore how the media and style illustrators choose impact readers’ responses to the story or information. In addition to the illustrations, researchers Thomas Phinney and Lesley Colabucci suggest that the typography of a picturebook can support the print, enhance the tone of the story, accurately reflect the historical time period, or even detract from the book’s themes or authenticity.⁸ Today’s printing techniques support the creative use of typography to add visual interest as well as meaning to the story.

Reading Comprehension and Inquiry Learning

Picturebooks are also ideal for reading comprehension strategy lessons. Rather than select a passage from a longer work or use an excerpt found in a textbook, many educators use these complete, authentic texts and align them with content-area curriculum, such as science and social studies. They carefully select picturebooks that provide a complete set of story elements. Picturebooks that present a complete story arc with character development and thought-provoking themes can be ideal as mentor texts for strategy instruction.

In reading comprehension strategy instruction, educators use the mentor text to model the strategy for the learners. Educators think aloud while reading the text. They can share connections, questions, or confusions that go through their minds while they are engaged with a text. Picturebooks allow educators to model the strategy and give students opportunities to practice it with in a relatively short timeframe.

Informational picturebooks that present topical information in a narrative format support developing readers as they transition to books with text features such as tables of contents, headings and subheadings, glossaries, and indexes. Many of today’s topical informational books are creatively illustrated. Although the books are not usually shelved with picturebooks, illustrators of these nonfiction texts do indeed use art to convey a large percentage of the information in these books.

Picturebooks can also be used as inquiry invitations for students of any age. Cyndi Giorgis and Lettie Albright note picturebook read-alouds can stimulate engaging discussions and critical thinking among secondary school readers and offer them an entry point into knowledge in content-area learning.⁹ Tom Bober notes a picturebook about women’s suffrage such as Mara Rockliff’s book *Around America to Win the Vote: Two Suffragists, a Kitten, and 10,000 Miles* can launch an investigation into the struggle for the Nineteenth Amendment.¹⁰ To deepen learning experience, this true story can be paired with primary sources, including historical newspaper articles found in databases.

Making Meaning as Discovery

When students and educators enter into a dialogue with the text's author and illustrator, they can individually and collectively discover "truths" and develop theories about how the world works. The text questioning strategy called Question the Author, or QtA, is one way for readers to deepen their understandings of texts.¹¹ This strategy is designed to increase readers' engagement with the text and activate their sense of discovery. With QtA, readers learn to deconstruct the writer's craft and share authority with the author and illustrator through questioning and interpreting text. When readers ask why an author uses a particular genre to convey ideas, they learn more about the choices writers make when they compose a text. When readers question authors' word choice and illustrators' images, they learn how picturebook creators use words and images to set a tone for the story and evoke a particular mood in the reader.

The meaningful connections readers make with texts position them to use these texts as a springboard for critical thinking, problem solving, and taking action. While making meaning is essential for developing reading proficiency, creative and thoughtful educators promote a sense of discovery in students' interactions with picturebook texts. When teaching comprehension strategies, educators engage readers as problem solvers who interrogate texts. Taking the role of detectives who "uncover" the clues the author or illustrator planted in the text is one way to challenge readers to dig deeper. Reading for meaning goes beyond a superficial level of extracting facts. It involves readers in making personal meaning and interpreting text; it is what strategic readers do.

Picturebooks offer exceptional opportunities for literacy learning and teaching as well as pleasure reading in preK-12 schools and libraries. When authors and illustrators create and publishers publish picturebooks with complete story arcs, compelling themes, intriguing illustrations, and rich information, parents and families, school and public librarians, classroom teachers and reading specialists can use these authentic texts in a plethora of ways. Those involved in creating picturebooks can further the impact of this literary art form by authoring, designing,

and publishing picturebooks that reach multiple audiences and present exciting and varied formats to expand the uses and roles of picturebooks in homes, schools, and libraries. ↻

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The “Longer” Picturebook

Taking a Fresh Perspective

DOROTHY STOLTZ AND CONNI STRITTMATTER

We can become our own worst enemy by carrying around comfortable assumptions, unquestioning acceptance, and old theories. In Plato’s *Apology*, Socrates is portrayed as someone focused on revealing the pomposity of the “wisdom” of Athens’ leaders. His adversaries falsely accuse Socrates of corrupting youth by asking questions and encouraging people to think things through.

Libraries have much in common with this focus to get people to think. Civilization’s achievements in music, art, science, and technology have developed because individuals and communities have an innate interest in learning and growing. Libraries play a role in life-long learning, community engagement, and thinking things through.

The picturebook has become a symbol of early childhood learning and school readiness. The importance of childhood play as a key ingredient to learning can be traced back to Plato, who talked about good play.

What is “good” play? Plato recognized good play as that which leads to the good. He contrasted it to “bad play” as that which deflects the learner from this goal. We may think in terms of physical play when we talk about children’s play. However, play

involves more than a physical interaction of engaging with others or things.

Mental play stimulates the imagination and helps to teach children to pursue the good in themselves and the good in life. Picturebooks are well-suited to help children grapple with unexpected challenges and important life experiences. After all, what does a child *learn* when he or she bullies another child? Bullying behavior reinforces a selfish outlook on life. Good play should take a child beyond personal needs. The “good play” that Plato refers to teaches children to interact for the good of all.

Children who learn how to play in an ideal spirit and develop a habit of playing together in pursuit of the “good” are more likely to grow up with playful and inquisitive minds. The word “mind” stems from the Proto-Germanic derivative *manus*, meaning “to think.” Is it time to rethink the picturebook? Is the standard length of the modern picturebook—thirty-two pages—too confining for many of today’s children? Is the length of the book primarily a conventional printing decision, as opposed to encouraging all children to up their ante, learn to think things through, and develop a playful mind? Perhaps it is time to create longer picturebooks for that reason.



Dorothy Stoltz is co-author of *Inspired Collaboration: Ideas for Discovering & Applying Your Potential*, *Tender Topics: Picture Books about Childhood Challenges*, as well as the ALSC white paper, *Media Mentorship in Libraries Serving Youth*. She works as Programming and Outreach Services Manager at Carroll County Public Library in Maryland. **Conni Strittmatter** has worked for Harford County Public Library in Maryland for six years, the last two years as the Coordinator for Children’s and Teen Services. Prior to her work in libraries, she taught tenth grade English and creative writing in Baltimore City through Teach for America. She serves on the ALSC Children and Technology Committee.



Longer Stories Expand Curiosity

Can four- to six-year-olds handle listening to a fifty-six, or even ninety-six, page story in one sitting? Of course! Children are curious, patient, and are eager to experiment. When we talk about picturebooks, we are focusing on books which draw children who want to read into the text. Children have a built-in mechanism for learning. They want to read. They want to be able to read the words. They are eager to enjoy longer and more interesting stories. If given the opportunity, children will often respond.

If we stay with only shorter books, are we, in effect, censoring a child's ability to learn? The goal is to expand their curiosity and sense of discovery. Longer stories are one way to do that.

Dramatic or imaginative play in children forms the basis for their coexistence with the world as adults. This kind of play can exercise the mind. The more a child plays with ideas, the stronger his or her mind will be in adulthood. In play, a child is working out a system of methods of interaction with others and situations which they will carry with themselves for the rest of their lives. For children to be inspired by dramatic and imaginative play, these tales need three things: story, complex characters, and conflict.

If you tell children something, they will listen, and they will most likely gain some knowledge. However, if you place children in situations where they have to apply their own problem solving skills, they may not only gain knowledge, but they may also strengthen their ability to think for themselves. The more we “teach” our children, the more we encourage them to be rote learners who will tend to always look to us for the next “lesson.” Instead, we want to encourage all children to become independent learners and thinkers.

Learning is more than accumulating knowledge and experience, mastering facts and figures, increasing comprehension and skills, and becoming aware and informed. It is the deliberate study, understanding, and ability to build within our self that which is needed to ask the right questions, be innovative, and achieve worthwhile results. It is the process that transforms knowledge into wisdom.

Shorter books tend to become pre-digested “messages” for kids. Long form narratives allow children to step into a world in which they can identify with characters confronting real situations, and through that experience create their own personal “message.” Can a short book offer more than a simple message or lesson? Probably not. However, a longer narrative story can go beyond the simple message and create a dynamic learning experience.

Readers have to be able to put themselves in the shoes of the protagonist and ask themselves, “Uh-oh, how am I going to get myself out of this mess!?” That’s when it gets exciting for a reader. That’s when a story starts to shine. A narrative that poses a problem or situation, where something is at stake, combined with no easy answers, leads to the discovery of what a child may lack. A child needs honesty, compassion, patience, self-control, and courage to think beyond personal needs to forgive a friend, rescue the king, or face the big bad wolf. Generating solutions to a problem and finding ways to successfully meet a challenge make a story sparkle.

The Zest for Learning

In K-12 schools, picturebooks can be used to teach reading comprehension strategies. Educators use shorter texts, such as picturebooks, that can invite children to love stories and reading. These texts can be aligned with content area curriculum, including English language arts, math, science, and social studies. Thoughtful educators carefully select titles that provide a complete set of story elements (characters, setting, problem, plot, resolution, and theme).

Picturebooks can be shared and discussed in a relatively short timeframe. They offer opportunities to model reading and to take meaning from the illustrations as well as from the print. Reading beyond a superficial level of extracting facts is important. Motivating children to love books, stories, and reading is the overarching goal. In this way, the skill of reading becomes a private kind of experience for children—and adults—to have a dialog with the author.

As Plato suggested, when children experience learning as "play," they learn more about themselves while they are learning about the world. The love of reading, the zest for learning, and the joy of curiosity can help develop a playful and mature mind.

Thinking Things Through

Many classic picturebooks offer the rich story arc that can help generate a playful mind and encourage the habit of thinking things through. Examples include *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter, published in 1902 (seventy-two pages), *Curious George* by H. A. Rey from 1941 (sixty-four pages), and *Make Way for Ducklings* by Robert McCloskey from 1941 (seventy-two pages). Most picturebooks published today are much shorter, however, stalled at the enigmatic and puzzling threshold of thirty-two pages.

Have children become less intelligent since the 1940s? Absolutely not! A few exceptions to the standard page length can be found in popular, bestselling titles such as *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale* by Mo Willems and the *Pete the Cat* series by Eric Litwin, tallying forty pages each. Do we want to stop at forty pages? Goodness no! Do we want children's attention spans and thinking skills to expand? Goodness yes! Is anyone experimenting today with longer picturebooks for younger children amounting to fifty or seventy or ninety pages? Absolutely yes!

Sheila Purdin, director at The Schiff Preschool of Temple Emanu-El in Atlanta, was intrigued by *The Good Dog*, a ninety-six page picturebook by Todd Kessler (Coralstone, 2015). She pondered whether a group of young children with differing attention spans and from a range of backgrounds could attend to the story. She experimented with two classes reading the same book to each. Purdin said, "The first class was very engaged. The children asked a lot of questions, made predictions, shared anecdotal stories relating to the story, and followed along to the very end. Although the second class was quieter, the children were able to appropriately answer any questions I asked, making it apparent they were comprehending the story. The second group asked me to read it again when I finished!"¹ Length apparently made no difference. The second group was paying attention too. If the tale is well told, it can excite the imagination of the child.

Reading long books or long stretches of text to young children can sometimes seem intimidating. We may think, erroneously, that the length causes their interest to wane. If given the chance, however, many young children will naturally stay with a longer story, waiting for it to unfold. *The Good Dog* is a cheerful

Examples of Longer Picturebooks

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reminder that a good book is always worth reading. Children deserve good books, no matter the length. ☺

The authors would like to thank David Hemphill, Megan Dowd Lambert, Judi Moreillon, and Jessica Salans for their insights on this topic.

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Exit Stage Left

Bringing out the Bard at Library Drama Camp

ALEXA NEWMAN

Most people would agree that the public library is an unconventional agency to host a youth drama camp, let alone a Shakespeare drama camp for children. So, how did I end up creating exactly that at my library?

STEAM programming has been getting a big push recently, but most of the emphasis seems to be on the STEM part, and I wanted to focus on the arts. I had participated in youth theater myself back in the day, and it was a transformative experience. I loved the idea of having a theater program, especially for younger school-age kids, so I started brainstorming on how I could bring the theater experience to our young patrons.

Why Shakespeare?

The reasons for using Shakespeare in youth theater are myriad—the Bard is considered the premiere playwright of the English language. His plays examine universal themes and yet, they were written for the common man.

Is Shakespeare too hard for kids? Absolutely not! Like fish to water, they respond to the stories and absorb the language quickly. They love the ageless humor and the compelling characters.

It is great to gain exposure to the Bard at a tender age, before children begin to believe that Shakespeare is considered too hard or highbrow. Let's celebrate Elizabethan English in all its glory. Huzzah!



Fifth-year camper Bella, facing, practices mirroring techniques with veteran camper Lanie.

Assessing a Need

In our community, there is a definite interest in youth theater. In fact, there is more interest than opportunities, especially ones that are free or low cost. After having many discussions with parents about the lack of local youth theater options, I began planning a way to offer the experience through the library.

Our two-week Drama Camp runs Monday through Friday for two hours a day, and it has been met with enthusiastic public response. We have room for twenty-four students, and the program, free to participants, usually fills up immediately. This limit enables me to fill all the parts and make adjustments for



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the shyest campers, ensemble, narrators, understudies, etc. Since there are few Shakespeare plays with that many actors in the cast, expect to divide roles into multiple parts or to pad the ensemble.

Due to high demand, I've been asked to run multiple sessions. The program also has a wonderful retention rate, with more than 50 percent of attendees returning in following years, either as campers or as teen counselors.

Our camp is open to students going into grades 3 to 8. I chose third grade as the lower limit because campers need to be able to read the scripts. At the top end, I went with eighth grade because there are several theater programs in the area for older kids. And, second, high schoolers are eligible to apply to be teen counselors.

Camp culminates in a performance on the last day. Meeting daily fosters a more immersive experience for the campers, as well as creating intensity and continuity for the kids.

Low Budget? No Budget? No Problem.

This program can be run on very little money. Outside of staffing costs, there is not much outlay involved. You don't need elaborate sets, costumes, and props to make the production successful. It can be accomplished with minimalist staging—just leave the rest to the imagination, as they did in Elizabethan England.

Youth services programming money is used, and costs are a little different each year; stage rental runs \$220 to \$290, with props running \$50 to \$75. Scripts cost \$30, so total cost is less than \$400. Not bad for ten days (twenty hours) of programming for twenty-four kids. That's \$16.67 per child, or \$1.67 per child per day.

One of the most challenging parts is selecting a play and finding a script. I select the play by February, five months before camp is held. When the play is selected, I have no idea how many boys or girls will sign up or what their exact ages will be, so I have to pick a script and then fit the campers into the roles.

This means reading many different scripts. Shakespeare's comedies are well suited to youth theater. So too, are many of the tragedies. (Although I'd recommend avoiding *Titus Andronicus*, who is a general who presents his enemy with a banquet, only to tell him after he's eaten that the meat pie was made from his child's remains. Saying it's a little grim might be the understatement of the year!) The campers adore performing death scenes, so *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are not out of the question. Our

past productions have included *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

I usually choose abridged scripts, but not ones that have been adapted or changed. The shortened plays make memorization more manageable for the younger actors.

I've also chosen to use Shakespeare's original language, for a variety of reasons. The first is for authenticity. Changing it up alters the very fabric of the play. Secondly, the original language is fun. The campers get a real kick out of learning what some of the "archaic" phrases mean. It's also great for vocabulary development. They learn about rhythm and meter and how to interpret iambic pentameter.

If You Build It, Will They Come?

One of the most important pieces of advice I can share is to create an attendance policy and give it to the parents/guardians at registration. Stress the importance of attendance; every camper needs to attend for the production to be successful.

Stress, too, that attendance at the dress rehearsal and performance is mandatory. It might seem that is a no-brainer, but I learned through experience, if you don't tell campers outright, there can be a misunderstanding.

I don't hold traditional auditions. Instead, I evaluate all the campers on a variety of criteria

which includes memory games, group interactions, and cold readings. Roles are not assigned based on age or gender. If a girl is the best fit for a boy's role and vice versa, that is how they are assigned.

I always have a few nonspeaking roles reserved for timid campers. Understudies are also a necessity. Having one or two, just in case, is a wise precaution, which you'll hopefully never have to implement. Having to scramble to recast at the last minute is stressful for everyone—kids, parents, and directors.

Rehearsals

How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice! Our campers might not be performing on the Great White Way, but they do practice, practice, practice. We rehearse two hours a day, five days a week for two straight weeks.

I have a detailed schedule planned out before camp starts, including day's exercises, theater and history lessons, break times, small rehearsal groups, games, and run-throughs.



Five-year veteran Emily performs as Feste the Clown in *Twelfth Night*.

Getting Teens Involved

Our Drama Camp program uses teen volunteers who assist as camp counselors, and we wouldn't be able to do it without them. Camp counselors must be entering ninth grade or later.

Candidates are asked about their theater experience and are evaluated for leadership skills. Having the teens allows me to break the campers into four or five different rehearsal groups. Each teen is assigned to a specific rehearsal group, allowing me and my co-director to float around the room and pull out campers to work one-on-one, or to observe scenes.

I meet with the volunteers before and after camp each day to discuss and review production, who might need attention, to pass on directors' notes to teens, and get feedback on how each group is doing. The counselors work with small groups during rehearsals, participate in the acting exercises, and fill a variety of roles during the performance including stage director, director's assistant, props/scenery masters, and line prompters.

We start with team building exercises, which include memory testing/building exercises. The memory exercises serve a dual purpose, as I use these as one part of our casting evaluation. Each day's rehearsal also will include one or two improvisation games or exercises. Daily mini-lessons on theater basics, Shakespeare, Elizabethan England, and vocabulary are also included.

On Day Three, we usually announce the cast assignments and perform the first reading of the play with assigned parts. From Day Four onward, the campers break into small groups to run lines for specific scenes. Each day's rehearsal culminates in a run-through of the entire play. The last few days of camp we will do three full run-throughs, back-to-back. The next to last day of camp is our full dress rehearsal.

Staging

For staging, I keep it simple. I recommend having a stage of some sort, since it is hard to see the performers from the back of a packed room. I rent a stage and steps from a local rental center and use masking tape to lay out stage dimensions on the floor during all rehearsals until our stage arrives for dress rehearsal.

If you don't have an auditorium or stage, you can still put on your production, but you might want to change to a theater-in-the-round setup for more visibility.



Fourth-year camper Gavin waits for his cue in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

Scripts in Hand

Each camper gets a script with their lines highlighted. Teen counselors and the directors have master copies with blocking and stage notes included.

Campers are responsible for their scripts and are encouraged to bring pencils/pens to write notes on them. Each day, I take attendance for both the camper and the script. I do have extras, but I really want them to learn the importance of always having their scripts with them.

We also then approach blocking—simply put, the positioning of actors on the stage. The sooner the campers learn their marks, entrances, and exits, the smoother the performance will run. For each production, I create a sketch of the stage layout, one for each page of the script.

Costumes, Hair, and Makeup

As with our props and sets, our costumes are minimalist. Most of the roles require simple costumes—leggings and oversized belted tees. This keeps costs down for the parents and gives a uniform look to the acting ensemble.

I also offer the parents the option to buy or make more elaborate costumes. Some really nice, inexpensive costumes can be found online. When roles are assigned, I send home a letter to parents/caregivers outlining the costume requirements for their camper's assigned role. There will be a few campers who don't want to dress in costume, so be prepared to work with their parents to get them on board.

All the actors need to have their hair pulled back so the audience can see their faces. Girls in male roles usually braid or put their hair up. Boys in female roles may wear wigs. Beards and moustaches are the most common makeup addition I've used. These can be either drawn on with eyeliner or face paint or glue-on costume beards. Certain characters may require

masks, or specialized makeup, such as a donkey head used in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Backdrops, Props, and Other Scenery

Because they can be costly and time consuming to construct or set up, backdrops, props, and other scenery are not necessary. Less can be more.

I keep props to a minimum in our productions; in the past, we've used swords, baskets, tables and chairs, jewelry, and parchment letters wrapped with ribbon.

Backdrops are an easier addition to youth productions. I added backdrops to our production for the first time last year. The library's graphic artist made some simple panels that indicated where the action was taking place—the forest, a castle, the city, or on a street.

Parents/Caregivers

Parents and caregivers can sometimes be more challenging to deal with than the campers themselves. I have learned through trial and error to require both a registration form and permission slip, along with a caregiver's letter, which explains rules and expectations for all campers. This was the single most useful tool I added in year two to make the camp run more smoothly.

Parents/caregivers have to sign the form at registration; this includes an acknowledgment that campers will accept their assigned role. This simple addition to our process has eliminated most (*but, alas, not all*) tears when casting is announced and stage parent syndrome kicks in.

Community Partners

Since the inception of Drama Camp, I've collaborated with our two villages' park departments. We open registration to residents of the park districts that are not residents of the library district, which is a goodwill gesture. The camp is advertised in the parks' program guides, and parks department director and staff help with ushering, filming the production, keeping tabs on the performers, etc. In the future, as the program continues to grow, we may move our performances to either a park facility or an auditorium in one of our three local school districts.

Performance

Somehow it all magically comes together. Forgotten lines are memorized, cues are remembered, costumes are lovely, and the campers are energized.

Seating for the show is on a first come first serve basis, and the campers perform to a full house; we can seat one hundred, but often have standing room only. We haven't had to issue tickets yet, but if you have limited space you might want to consider that option.

To avoid parents fighting for prime aisle space to film their stars, we do film the production. A reception with light refreshments is held after the show.

Due to space and time constraints and a very active summer programming schedule, we only hold one performance. I am looking for alternative, off-site performance spaces for next year's camp, which would open up the possibility of having multiple performances.

Huzzah and break a leg! 🍀

To view Algonquin's Drama Camp performance of Two Gentlemen of Verona, visit <https://youtu.be/rehQzYN3UMM>.

Young Voices from the Field and Home Front

World War II as Depicted in Contemporary Children's Literature

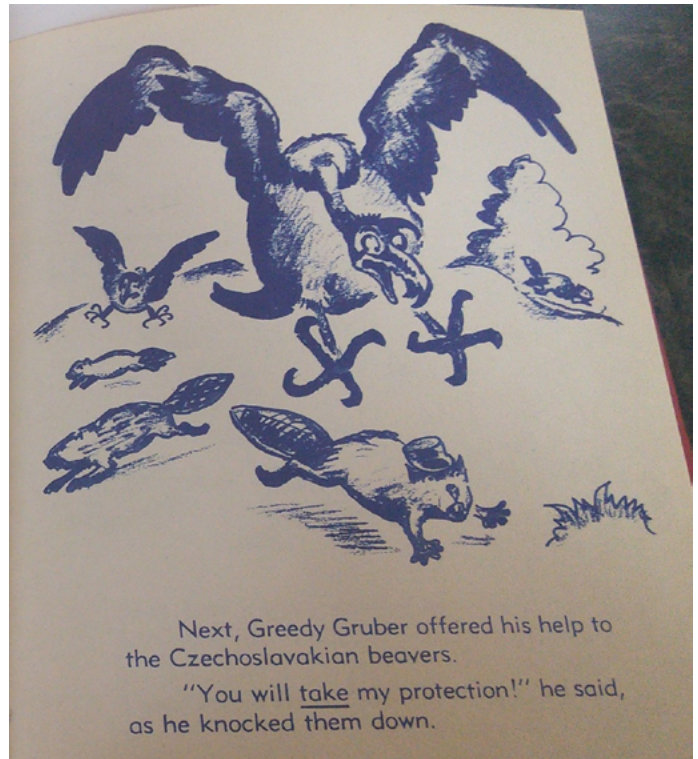
WENDY STEPHENS

Promoting support for Allied Forces was a central theme of contemporary children's literature in the eve of and during World War II; the body of work captures a surprisingly complex and conflicted view of armed conflict and nationhood.

Amid the expected imperatives that American children scavenge scrap metal for war bonds and cozy stories of English children evacuated to safety in North America, there is nostalgia for pastoral Russia and an unabashed celebration of the Soviet collective effort. In one of the most charged depictions, a pair of dachshunds forced to wear Nazi uniforms outwit their master. An Austrian refugee, the creation of a refugee writer, pointedly informs a naïve French peasant boy: "There are a great many Germans who hated the Nazis, didn't you know that?"¹ before revealing his father was a prisoner at Dachau.

As a 2016 Louise Seaman Bechtel Fellow, I was fortunate to spend a month at the University of Florida studying their Baldwin Collection of historical children's literature. My study topic emerged from my experience working as a school librarian, particularly my work at Buckhorn High School in Madison County, Alabama, a Gilder-Lehrman history high school that included an elective on the Great Wars.

During the associated study of the Holocaust, the students often asked what was known stateside about the atrocities being committed in Europe, especially as personal accounts from the liberating forces seemed to relay surprise at the brutality



Sidney Lazarus envisions an ominously taloned bird in Nila Arah Mack's *Animal Allies* (1942).

they discovered. I began to wonder how contemporary young people constructed the conflict intellectually and emotionally and, indeed, how much they might have known about the situation in Europe. It seemed a topic that might be best explored through the range of contemporary children's literature about the war, and the Baldwin Collection holds the second-largest collection of historical children's books in the country.

I began by isolating the books in the collection with the subject heading "World War II, 1939–1945" and looked exclusively at books published those same years to ensure I wasn't getting a retrospective viewpoint. A handful of the titles in the collection were actually written for adults, and others seemed to have little to do with the war apart from having been produced under wartime guidelines for publishing or promoting the purchase



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of war bonds on their dust jackets. But there are some subtle indications of the national tenor.

One of the novels I originally discounted, *The Shoo-Fly Pie* by Mildred Jordan, depicts a Pennsylvania Dutch family in Berks County.² Though no mention is explicitly made about the war, the prominent inclusion of a two-page glossary for the many German phrases peppered throughout the text might make its own subtle statement about the contributions of German-Americans in that region.³

I expanded my working list by executing the same search in WorldCat, as well as some titles I serendipitously ran across on flyleafs or in review sources. Because so many of the books published during the period were relatively pulpy and tended to use an enemy as an excuse for an action-packed plot, I focused on the more unique depictions of wartime, but only after spending several days reading Better Little Books and other popular career novels like *Cherry Ames, Chief Nurse* (1944), which finds the heroine in the South Pacific, *Ann Bartlett at Bataan* (1943), and *Norma Kent of the WAACs* (1943), set at Corregidor.

Several books tied in to the *Captain Midnight* radio serial or were spun off from *Little Orphan Annie* or *Gasoline Alley* comic strips. Other books which fit my criteria were relatively formulaic. Ten of the fifty-three books I identified initially were the products of prolific author Roy J. Snell, including *The Ski Patrol* (1940) with its Finnish setting, *Wings for Victory* (1942), about Pearl Harbor, *Sparky Ames of the Ferry Command* (1943), *Secrets of Radar* (1944) with a spunky female heroine, *The Jet Plane Mystery* (1944), and *Punch Davis of the U.S. Aircraft Carrier* (1945). But, as in the career books, Snell's protagonists are necessarily older, of age to enlist, and are less indicative of childhood impressions during the period.

I found many of the more interesting pieces of contemporary literature for children about the war were created by European refugees, and, interestingly, these tend to have the most sympathy for the German people (and animals).

Nazi-occupied North Africa is the setting for *Yussuf the Ostrich*, Emery Kelen's picturebook story of a once-wild ostrich who is a pet of Abou, one of the Arab children who captures him. "One day, many strange animals appear in the desert. Some of them had skins like rhinoceros hides. Others looked and sounded like noisy birds. Abou told Yussuf they were not animals at all, but American tanks and airplanes."⁴

Yussuf, like the local children, is drawn to the American camp, and he volunteers his service.

"Now the general was a very intelligent man. He knew that animals and birds make very good soldiers. He remembered the brilliant records of many dogs and pigeons and he could see what an unusual bird Yussuf was." The general enrolls the bird in the Signal Corps, "to carry important documents from one commander to another in the midst of battle."⁵

"He ran so swiftly that the Nazi gunners grew dizzy trying to get to him," but he is eventually captured and swallows his message. Despite not finding any incriminating evidence, "at last the exasperated Nazis threw him into prison."⁶

The mix of full-color cartoons, which Kelen uses to illustrate the text, includes a range of other animals, including two small dachshunds. The dogs save Yussuf from execution, knowing "the Nazi general was very fat, very stupid, and very vain," they convince the general to keep Yussuf alive for his plumage. Once Yussuf is saved, "his job was to take the dogs for a walk every day and to clean the general's boots three times a day."⁷ Later, the dogs help Yussuf again, barking as a distraction so he can escape to the American lines with secret plans. The subsequent press coverage of Yussuf's heroism attracts the attention of his mother ostrich, and they are reunited.

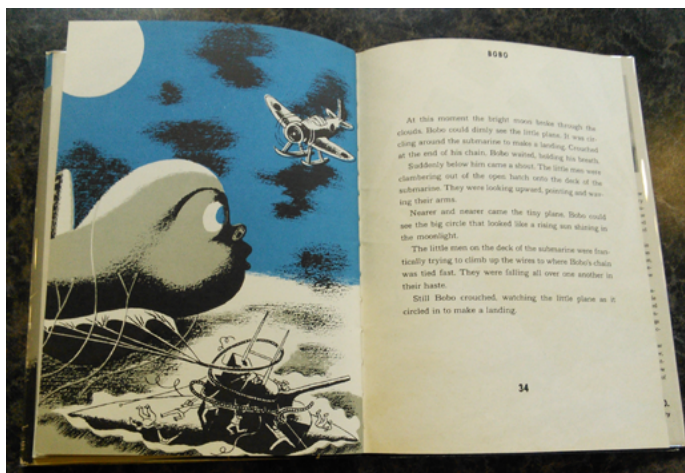
Kelen was a Hungarian-born illustrator who served in the Austro-Hungarian army in the First World War. He and his partner Alois Derso immigrated to the United States in 1938, where their often-political work was featured in many prominent publications.⁸ In Yussuf's story, his dog characters punctuate the realities of German life under the Nazi regime. "They were the Nazi general's pets, but at heart they hated the general, all the other Nazis, and the swastikas which they forced him to wear."⁹ This trope of German opposition to Hitler and his adherents recurs in the work of other European emigres.

A story of the German invasion of Holland, *My Sister and I: The Diary of a Dutch Boy Refugee*, was published by Harcourt Brace in 1941. Critic Paul Fussell, investigating the book decades after its publication, believed the book was not an authentic diary but was "brilliantly engineered in the months before Pearl Harbor by a rabidly pro-British interventionist," editor Stanley Preston Young, then in the employ of Harcourt, calling it "The Brave Little Dutch Boy and the Wonderful British People Hoax."¹⁰

Yet in the preface to *My Sister and I*, the "translator," Mrs. Antoon Deventer, asserts its provenance, stating "Dirk van der Heide is a Dutch boy, from the outskirts of Rotterdam, who lived through the five-day blitzkrieg in Holland. He is twelve years old; a sturdy boy with straight taffy-colored hair that falls over his forehead, mild blue eyes, and a smile that quickly lights up his rather solemn face. His real name is not Dirk van der Heide and the names in the diary have all been changed to protect his family."¹¹

The author of *My Sister and I* makes no effort to portray German as internally conflicted. What De Jong called "war psychosis," this author calls "war fright."¹² Dirk's Uncle Pieter plays a Cassandra role, presciently warning about the German threat: "The German Nazis came on May 10th and surprised everyone except my father and Uncle Pieter:"

Uncle Pieter came today and talked a great deal. He says we are doing to get into the way in spite of everything and that a government official at his hotel said the Germans had moved many troops for Bremen and Dusseldorf to our fron-



Tibor Gergely's anthropomorphized anti-aircraft balloon is the hero of Margaret McConnell's *Bobo the Barrage Balloon* (1943).

tiers. Father said *Dat is geek* [crazy] and Mother said please stop talking about the war. Uncle Pieter says no one worries and that's the trouble. Look what happened to Denmark and Norway and all the others, he says.¹³

My Sister and I is full of colorful and historically accurate detail. Parachutists "had come down in the black robes and flat hats of Dutch priests."¹⁴ The long relationship between Holland and Germany is emphasized when one of the invaders proves familiar:

Mijnvrouw Klaes went out to see the parachutist and came back very excited. She swore she knew him and that he was named Frederich Buehler and had grown up in Holland after the other war. This caused a great deal of talk and excitement and Uncle Pieter said, "the damned ungrateful swine. We took their war babies and fed them and this is what we get back."¹⁵

Dirk describes the invasion in detail before declaring, "This war is terrible. It kills just about everybody. I'm glad we're going to England where it will be quiet. I hope the Germans don't come there the way they did in Holland."¹⁶ Once they are in England, Holland surrenders to the Germans, beginning the occupation: "I just asked Uncle Pieter if we couldn't go back now that the war is over and he said never, never could we go back there while the Germans were there. He says it is worse than death for Hollanders to live as slaves. I hope the Germans don't make a slave out of Father. I don't think they could. Father gets very angry and would not stand for it."¹⁷ Uncle Pieter tells Dirk that the invasion of Holland is also a threat to England, and that they must try to get to America.

Dirk and his sister make it to the home of another uncle in New York City, but the account ends by emphasizing the increasing privations felt by the occupied Dutch:

Father is safe and back in Rotterdam. The letter we got from him had a Swiss stamp. It must not have been seen by the Germans, Uncle Klaas says. Father tells about what Holland

is like now. There is not much food and many things like coffee and cocoa cannot be bought. The Germans have done many things. They have changed the names of the Royal Museum and anything with the word royal in it to National. No taxis are running. None of the Dutch can listen to anything but Spanish, Italian, and German programs without being fined 10,000 guilders and two years in prison. People have to stay home after 10 o'clock at night. The food is getting worse and worse.¹⁸

Another heavily pro-interventionist story, *Animal Allies* (1942) by Nila Arah Mack, makes use of Sidney Lazarus's single-tone lithography to illustrate a heavy-handed allegory featuring a menagerie of animals in the Pleasant Forest. Their Greedy Gruber the Vulture, pictured with swastika-shaped talons, educates a force of vultures to do his bidding, cajoles the Viennese kittens and terrorizes the Czechoslovakian beavers, "And so—the vultures became fatter and fatter, while the small animals became thinner and thinner—and fewer and fewer."¹⁹ Greedy Gruber is eventually joined in his efforts by Mussy the Gorilla and Sneaky Tokyo the Snake. The small animals appeal to Stoutheart the Lion and chief Sam Eagle, "who lived far off across the ocean, in the Land of the Open Sky," "too far away to hear the cries of the little animals in the Pleasant Forest."²⁰

"In the meantime, Shaggy Sovietsky was hibernating, Kid Aussie was too far away to help, and Chang the Dragon was having troubles of his own with Sneaky Tokyo the Snake."²¹ When both Shaggy Sovietsky and Stoutheart the Lion resist Gruber's attacks, "it seemed as though the wide oceans everywhere were shrinking."²²

Pearl Harbor is reflected as "Sneaky Tokyo slid stealthily through the ocean. He robbed one of Chief Sam Eagle's nests!"²³ The eagle's response sparks courage among the small fauna in the forest, the animals that had been holdouts (variously characterized as goats, mules, and cows) put on uniforms, and Stoutheart, Sovietsky, and Chang the dragon renew their efforts. With "victory for the animal allies," the book closes with, "Love and laughter and music again for the whole world—forever and forever."²⁴

Promoting support for our allies is a central theme of contemporary children's literature during World War II, resulting in books that must have looked like strange relics on library shelves in the midst of the Cold War. Promotion of citizen spying and guerilla warfare are at the heart of *Young Fighters of the Soviets* (1944).²⁵ The novel opens with evacuation, Dmitri being sent to live with his grandmother in Moscow as Nazis approach his home in Belarus, his mother is leaving to be a Red Army nurse and his father has left with his regiment. His cousin Marfa from Leningrad joins him in Moscow, and they do some sight-seeing before the Germans approach that city, the center of the rail system, with a pincer maneuver.

In the midst of the initial onslaught, Dmitri spots a beggar with an overly fancy accordion, which turns out to house a short-wave radio. Though he suffers frostbite from his pursuit of

the spy, he is heartened by the Russian victories and the novel ends with celebration as “America has now declared war on the Nazis, too. America is our ally! America, with her industrial genius, and her great love of freedom! Yes—the peace-loving nations of the world will soon put an end to war forever!”²⁶

In a parallel story, Dmitri’s friend Marko goes to hide in the woods, where he falls in with a partisan guerilla band, using stores of dynamite and ammunition hidden in the forest to delay the approaching Germans, who they hope the winter will starve out. “They have the tanks and guns and planes, but those things don’t count for much in the forest.”²⁷ The band is led by the manager of a collective farm where Marko and his father, ethnic Gypsies, lived. Marko’s father is gone: “We don’t know what happened to him. Maybe they sent him to Germany as a slave.”²⁸

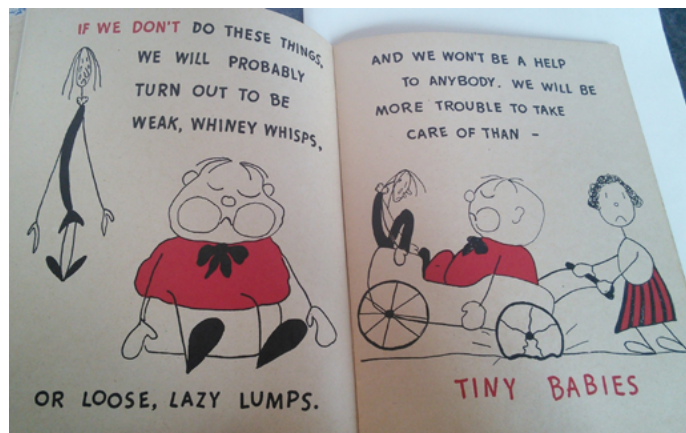
Author Edelstadt establishes her qualifications for writing about the country in an author’s note:

When you read about a foreign land you have a right to know how much the author himself knows about it. And so I would like to give you this information about myself. The stories of old Russia were told to me by my mother who was born there. It was she who taught me the old songs and poems that are dear to every Russian. She remembers them still, although she has been a devoted American for nearly fifty years. The stories of new Russia are taken from my own memory of a four months’ visit to the Soviet Union some years ago.²⁹

Edelstadt goes on to praise “the courageous deeds of Russia’s children,” saying, “even children have the opportunity to fight the cruel invader of their motherland.”³⁰

The text has its moments of idyll in descriptions of birch trees, samovars, ballet, and museums, describing a society where ammunition factories have their own orchestras that perform special concerts when they meet their production quotas. The split between nostalgia for pastoral Russia and depiction of the industrial nature of the modern Soviet is apparent in the two very different illustration styles used by Florian. Folkloric motifs and brightly colored plates are used to depict the woods where Dmitri hides, while modernist etchings are used for Dmitri’s mother in her uniform and the Moscow street scenes. Like Kelen, Florian Kraner himself was an exiled Viennese artist who immigrated to the United States in 1935.³¹

Another book about our Soviet allies, *Timur and His Gang* (1943) by beloved Russian author Arkady Gaidar, was first published in the Soviet Union where it was credited with sparking a Timurite movement, mobilizing “tens of thousands” of children to aid the families of the Red Army.³² Gaidar was killed in action before its 1943 US publication in translation by Zina Voynow. Scribner’s promoted this book alongside Dola de Jong’s *The Level Land* and *Watling Green* by Mollie Panter-Downes as “about our allies, how they lived before the war and what



Munro Leaf’s doctrinaire *A War-time Handbook for Young Americans* (1942) urges the youngest children to join in the war effort.

happened when the war came. Each is written by an outstanding author of the nationality of the particular country. Together they give a fine picture of children and courage in war-torn lands.”³³

Timur’s story is set in a countryside village that is the summer home of Red Army commanders, where the children “mark” the homes under their protection and use military vernacular to describe their operations. Timur borrows a motorcycle without authorization to take his friend Jenya to see her father in Moscow while on leave. During their second summer together, the gang becomes more organized and begins drilling in formation. There is some earlier speculation about whether the war will come, but on June 22, 1941, a radio announcement interrupts a holiday celebration to assert, “today, at 4:00 o’clock in the morning, without any claim having been presented to the Soviet Union, without a declaration of war, German troops attacked our country.” Timur rallies his troops, telling them:

People are leaving for the front . . . so there is a lot of work to be done. Some of it will be just the same things we used to do, only now it won’t be play. There is a war on, now. You boys and girls are all nodding your heads and shouting “Tell us what to do! We’ll do anything.” But we’ll have to do what the defense corps needs done, and maybe it won’t all be fun. Maybe it will be weeding vegetables.³⁴

The ways in which Timur and his gang help presages many of the wartime exigencies promoted in the home front American novels:

They were cheerfully doing the garden work they had despised before the war. Many of the girls, and even some of the boys, were helping to mind babies so their mothers could go shopping; and all the children were beginning to gather scrap. Already they had gathered up everything they could carry off easily, and they knew where all the big, heavy iron things were to be found. Now they were starting to rake the sides of the

roads, and open fields, looking for bits of metal and rubber, and gathering brushwood for kindling.³⁵

A final missive from Jenya's father tells her that she must pledge "for the sake of all of us fighting at the front—that you far away in the rear will live honestly, modestly, study well, work stubbornly. Then, remembering this, even in the fiercest battles, I'll be happy, proud and calm."³⁶

The same sort of "help" for the war effort Timur promotes is the central theme of *A War-time Handbook for Young Americans* (1942) by Munro Leaf, best known for his *The Story of Ferdinand the Bull*. *A War-time Handbook for Young Americans*, and another Leaf volume, *My Book for America*, are patriotism-informed manifestos prefiguring his 1946 didactic treatise on manners, *How to Behave and Why*: "Remember, it only takes one noisy, quarrelsome brat to spoil a home. Everybody had to work harder now that we are at war, and everybody needs to rest and relax more when not working. If there is one unpleasant person around he or she can upset everybody else's peace and quiet."³⁷ The book ends with a blunt prohibition against "Faking Bullies" and "Rumor Spreaders."³⁸ Leaf's reductive illustrations of stick people manage to be equally shrill.

Most of the wartime books focus on more practical actions, but even the youngest children were encouraged to help. In H. A. Rey's *Tommy Helps, Too* (1943), mechanical pages "reveal" the result of home front war efforts through four double-page spreads. Tommy is depicted performing work like collecting scrap metal (transformed into a tank for Tommy's soldier brother Pete), collecting books for his sailor brother Bill, and babysitting for his mother since his sister has joined the WAACs, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.³⁹

The collection of scrap is a recurring trope. In *Nicodemus Helps Uncle Sam* (1943), Inez Hogan's young African American character Nicodemus is told by his grandfather to stop his pretend drilling to instead collect rubber and metal for the war effort. Nicodemus and his multicultural band sell the junk they scavenge to buy war bonds.⁴⁰ Amid patriotic touches of red and blue, Hogan's illustrations are now shocking to today's readers in their reductive racial depictions, but her message promoting the collection of junk for the war effort echoes in a range of other books published during the period.

In another book from a series about a mischievous young boy, *Augustus Drives a Jeep* (1944), Le Grand's character Augustus has a father away in the army. When an army jeep with a secret metal box is left by Colonel Baxley to his safekeeping, Augustus, along with his friend Jeems and Jeems' Uncle Sam, goes through a series of small trials to return the vehicle to the officer who entrusted him with it. The minor deceits the threesome carry out along the way are justified as "We're a-tryin' to help our

country."⁴¹ The emphasis is on their role as "guards for their country's secret inventions," but there are hints at wartime: "We can't stop at a gas station with this jeep. And besides, what are we going to use for gas ration tickets?"⁴² Eventually, a fire breaks out in the military hospital where Colonel Baxley is recuperating, and the jeep is used to pump water to extinguish it.

In *Primrose Day* (1942), another novel about an English girl evacuated to the United States, Merry Primrose Ramsay is a seven-year-old Londoner sent abroad to her aunt and uncle when her school closes for the duration. Merry is able to bring her dog on the ship. The novel is chiefly concerned with Merry's experience as a fish out of water, "I wish I were home where people talked the way I do. Nobody laughs at me in England."⁴³ There are many misunderstandings due to language differences, and she mourns the lack of primroses in North America until her aunt finds a special garden filled with imported species. Eventually, three other English evacuees join her class, and her father is able to visit her over the holidays.

A more domestic British look at the effects of war, *Watling Green* (1943), was penned by Mollie Panter-Downes. According to the book's flyleaf, "well known for her delightful 'London Letter' in the *New Yorker* [Panter-Downes] writes with humor and informality about a family that might be her own—for she has three children. We had a number of books about English children who came to America; this is the story of children who stayed home."⁴⁴

Like Panter-Downes' *New Yorker* column, the novel is epistolary in format. Judy is a twelve-year-old in Sussex writing to her cousins in New York:

It's quite a job for me to remember what it was like here before the war, because it seems to have been going on forever. But if you come to think of it, quite the biggest chunk of our lives hadn't got any way in it, so I thought I ought to write something about that part first. It's even harder for Jane than it is for me to remember. She was only four when it start-

ed, and she has forgotten the time when you could pile all the brown sugar you wanted on your porridge, really thick with a nice little puddle of cream in the middle, and when it didn't matter if you came into a room at night and switched on the light without bothering to draw the curtain. The other day we were in London for a visit to the dentist, and Jane pointed to a lamp post and asked, "Mummie, What's that for?" She thinks there's always been a blackout, for ever and ever.⁴⁵

Amid typically English middle class childhood pastimes as Pony Club, paper chases, and holidays in Cornwall, the war breaks out in 1939:



Scribners features stories from Allied nations including *Timur and His Gang*, *The Level Land*, and *Watling Green* with serial heraldic covers.

Jock and I knew there was probably going to be a war with the Germans, and of course, though we didn't know what it would be like, Jane didn't understand what would be happening, but she heard Nannie talking to Mrs. Boxall about Hitler, and she decided it would be a lovely name for her new black kitten. He luckily turned out to be a perfectly terrible character, and came to a bad end in a fight with Miss Spry's old tabby tom.⁴⁶

The day Poland is invaded, the village receives some additions from London, "labels tied on their wrist, with their new addresses on them, just as if they were brown paper parcels:"

Then we heard the word "evacuee" for the first time. I didn't know what it meant, but Mummie explained that it looked as though the war was coming, and that our Government had arranged to send as many boys and girls as possible out of London and other big cities in case there were German air raids. They were all going to stay at people's houses in the country until the war was over.⁴⁷

As the war edges close, her parents reject the idea of sending their own children to safety:

Just at that time Paul and Alice's mother, our Aunt Marion, cabled asking Mummie if she would send us children over to America to stay with them for the rest of the war. Mummie only told about it later, but she had an awful time wondering whether to send us or not. Then she thought of all the thousands of children who couldn't possibly be sent, and would have to stay here, and she decided with Daddy that it would be best for us to stop and take our chances with them. She said that she thought we might be sorry later on, when we grew up, if we missed such a chunk of what was going to be important English history which would make you feel quite warm and proud to have lived through.⁴⁸

In another British wartime tale, pencil drawings of natural world, scenic Scottish landscape, gamboling birds, and machines in flight enliven *Watching for Winkie* (1942), a "ripped from the headlines" account of an Aberdeen boy's pigeons, used by the forces to carry messages. The picturebook opens with: "Tommy MacIntosh started the day like many other days. He hurriedly dressed, gulped his breakfast, and ran down the narrow cobbled street to his work. An important job had to be done! It was a man's job, but men were scarce these days. Britain was at war."⁴⁹

Tommy tells his father, "the tall man in the blue R.A.F. uniform," that he wants to be a pilot, too, but his father stresses that Tommy is making his own contribution:

You know son, there are eighteen ground men to every pilot. The ground man's job is just as important as my job, Tommy. We get into tight spots sometimes, the wireless is dead, and our one hope is the carrier pigeon. It's up to you to keep 'em flying or we wouldn't have even that hope.

Thanks, Dad! I never thought of it that way. Every time I clean the cote I'll just say to myself: "Tommy MacIntosh, you are a ground man. Your job is to keep 'em flying. It's up to you to do the messy job and do it cheerfully."⁵⁰

After a dogfight in the North Sea while offensive duty patrol off the coast of Norway, Tommy's father and three other members of the crew are stranded on a raft. But they are saved by Winkie and Tommy's knowledge of Winkie's rate of flight. One of the crew tells him, "Her code number and your information of her flying speed, plus a faint S.O.S. helped the aerodrome navigator to where Winkie left the plane. She flew one hundred miles! A reconnaissance plane located your father and members of the crew. Later they were picked up by an R.A.F. rescue launch." Tommy is feted for his hard work: "The squadron gave Tommy a rousing cheer as he accepted a bronze plaque with the figure of a tiny bird flying over the sea. Inscribed on the plaque was the squadron's thanks to a gallant bird."⁵¹

In his cultural history of the war years, Norman Longmate wrote that, in England, "the war was not a good time for books and most of the best war memoirs and novels were not published till several years later."⁵² Nonetheless, two early British Carnegie Medalists are set in the early days of the war. The 1940 winner, *Visitors from London* (1940) by Kitty Barne, which was published stateside by Dodd, Mead and Co., deals with cultural conflicts between Londoners and those in the countryside, but doesn't stretch much beyond recurring statements that they were "in a war." In stark contrast, next year's winner, Mary Treadgold's *We Couldn't Leave Dinah* (1941), plumbs the German occupation of nearby Channel Islands as well as exploring conditions behind both Hitler's rise to power and its effects on the populace. Peter, a half-French, half-German refugee lectures the English children, "You are like everybody else," he said, "Nobody knew anything about Germany. Not France nor England nor America nor the Great League of

Nations. If they had known—thought a little harder, watched a little closer—there would have been no war."⁵³ Treadgold also uses the term "concentration camp," something that tended to be termed elsewhere as "slave labor."

The examination of contemporary literature available to American children about the war proved more nuanced and pulled fewer punches than I'd imagined. I did not anticipate finding such a diaspora or European authors and illustrators



Watching for Winkie (1942) provides an account of an Aberdeen boy's pigeons, used by RAF to carry messages.



Emery Kelen's *Yussuf the Ostrich* (1943) is captured and put in charge of the Nazi commander's Dachshunds.

eager to depict what was going on in Europe, or to find the names of death camps used in wartime children's literature. The time I spent with the Baldwin Collection enabled me to appreciate that the extent to which the European atrocities were comprehended by an American populace, itself peppered with refugees, was not as small as so many subsequent narratives would assert. &

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Back to (School) Basics

Jenna Nemec-Loise



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I love fall for a whole bunch of reasons. First off, you can't beat the Midwest maples, oaks, and birches on fire with autumn color. I wonder if there's anyone who sees those dazzling hues splashed against gray skies and doesn't think they're spectacular.

How about apples? Sure, you can get them year-round, but there's nothing quite like the apple pies, apple cider, apple anything made from fall's red, green, and gold bounty. And if you can get to a local orchard to pick your own pecks and bushels—well, that's even better.

And let's not forget the glories of what my mom calls "sweater weather." Summer can have its bathing suits and heat indexes because forty degrees and a crisp breeze are where it's at in my book. Really, what's more awesome than a warm woolen, a cozy blanket, and a steaming mug of something delicious on a chilly night?

Of course, fall is also back-to-school season for students across the country. When I was a kid, I loved the new shoes, new school supplies, and new starts that went along with another year of learning and discovering at St. Mary School on Cleveland Avenue in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin. I couldn't wait to walk into the classroom on that first day and find out what new adventures were waiting for me.

This fall I get to rekindle that back-to-school magic in my new role as head librarian at North Shore Country Day School (NSCDS) in Winnetka, Illinois. There's so much to learn and know about the tweens, teens, colleagues, and families I'll be serving, and I want to make sure I'm putting them first in every aspect of my work.

Sounds like the perfect time for Everyday Advocacy, doesn't it?

You don't have to be taking a new career direction to join me in making a new start. As libraries nationwide welcome students back during the busy back-to-school season, you can start fresh with a back-to-basics agenda that celebrates the five tenets of Everyday Advocacy: Be Informed, Engage with Your Community, Speak Out, Get Inspired, and Share Your Advocacy Story.

What in the world am I on about? Here's a sneak peek at my plans for taking on new advocacy challenges this fall.

Be Informed: Clarify Your Advocacy Role

What I'll do: Since I'll be brand new at my school, the very first thing I'll do is talk with our Assistant Head of School about my advocacy role in three different capacities—as head librarian, as a member of the NSCDS community, and as someone working in the Village of Winnetka. Even though I'm ready to dive right into my advocacy work, I want to make sure I don't go cowboy right off the bat (or at any other time, really). We're not talking anything fancy or formal here. A fifteen-minute conversation with my

supervisor to clarify expectations and limitations should give me a few solid starting points.

Why it's important: You can't advocate successfully for a library community's kids and families if you don't know your boundaries. More often than not, you don't get to make the call about what those are—your library director, library board, or supervisor does. Make sure you know what's allowed and what isn't, both on work time and on any occasion you're representing the library. Ask questions about who's done what in the past and how you can contribute to the efforts of others. Seeking forgiveness rather than permission isn't a sound philosophy here. Know before you go and do.

Engage with Your Community: Listen—Especially to Kids

What I'll do: From the time I submitted my application to NSCDS, I knew school leaders were seeking a candidate who could build library momentum amongst tweens and teens. What kinds of things can elevate the library experience for sixth through twelfth graders? I'll have to ask them. In fact, I've already started doing just that. As part of my on-campus interview, I had lunch with five upper school students eager to share their thoughts on the future of Hall Library. I told them I couldn't make the library awesome without their help and that I hoped our conversations could continue if I got hired. All five students were thrilled to have my ear, and I was equally pleased to have their voices. I'm ready to make good on my promise this fall.

Why it's important: How can we advocate on behalf of our library users unless we listen to what they want and need? In the April 2016 issue of *Everyday Advocacy Matters*,¹ I wrote about the silent side to advocacy and the art of listening to understand. When we listen to understand, we let go of preconceived notions and the urge to respond right away. Setting aside our biases lets us really hear what others are saying and allows us to be better Everyday Advocates for them. Sadly, adults don't validate kids'

experiences, beliefs, and opinions as often as they could. As librarians and library workers, we can be the adults who "get it."

Speak Out: Articulate the Library's Vision

What I'll do: As part of my application to NSCDS, I was asked to submit a vision for Hall Library and to be creative within that vision. I made an infographic (Fig. 1) to visually present my ideas, and I plan to include it in my outreach efforts to students and colleagues this fall. Naturally, I expect my vision to grow and change as I have great conversations about how to create meaningful experiences for Hall Library users. However, using my current vision as a starting point can help me foster learning partnerships with faculty and cultivate understanding about the role of twenty-first-century school libraries in shaping global citizens.

Why it's important: Getting the word out about what libraries can do for kids and communities is just the beginning. As Everyday Advocates, we must be ready to articulate both the short- and long-term impacts of library engagement on the youth we serve. That's where great elevator speeches crafted using value-based language (VBL) come in handy. Instead of saying, "I conduct a volunteer program at the library," you can say, "I help teens increase their civic engagement at the library so they can become global citizens who vote on the issues that matter to them." That's a vision if I've ever heard one, and it's a message that keeps the focus squarely on the role of libraries in kids' lives.

Get Inspired: Seek Feedback from Interest Groups

What I'll do: What am I most excited about this fall? Recruiting interest and participation in what I'm calling the Hall Advisory Team (HAT). See, one-time focus groups just aren't my thing. I want an enthusiastic group of middle and upper school students to keep me on

HALL LIBRARY VISION

for an award-winning program

Guided by North Shore Country Day School's mission and values, Hall Library empowers 21st-century leaders through access to experiential learning, peer-to-peer engagement, diverse media collections, and caring mentor-librarians who inspire students to:

<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: #c0392b;">TALK OPENLY.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Free from judgment and censure, students step outside their comfort zones to ask challenging questions and exchange ideas on issues and topics that matter to them.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: #c0392b;">READ BROADLY.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">With high-quality print and digital media at their fingertips, students read an array of fiction and nonfiction to meet their scholarly, recreational, and developmental needs.</p>
<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: #c0392b;">IMAGINE VIVIDLY.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Imbued with agency and choice, students turn <i>would</i> and <i>could</i> into <i>will</i> and <i>can</i> through library programs that celebrate the artist, writer, speaker, and leader in each of them.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: #c0392b;">DISCOVER PERSONALLY.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">In a vibrant, supportive atmosphere, students ignite connected learning and self-discovery through resources that are both mirrors and windows to diverse experiences.</p>
<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: #c0392b;">THINK CRITICALLY.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">By welcoming and understanding multiple perspectives, students refine information-seeking behaviors to distinguish between trustworthy and unreliable media sources.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: #c0392b;">ENGAGE GLOBALLY.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">As they "become self-confident, ethical citizens of the world," students seek knowledge of diverse cultures, backgrounds, abilities, and experiences in the global community.</p>
<p style="font-weight: bold; color: #c0392b; margin: 0;">SERVE MINDFULLY.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">Skilled in knowledge-based decision making, students embrace their roles as 21st-century change agents committed to shaping positive outcomes for future generations of world leaders.</p>	

Jenna Nemecek-Loise | Librarian Candidate | January 2017

my toes, inspire me to try new things, and help me keep things fresh and fun throughout the year. As HAT members share their hopes and dreams for the library with me, I can make sure my Everyday Advocacy efforts align with what I'm hearing them say. Tweens and teens don't just need me to be their cheerleader and champion. I need them to be mine, too.

Why it's important: We all love talking to colleagues about how we can make libraries awesome for kids and families. Sometimes, though, we need to get out of our own way and let library users inspire us to take our next great steps. When we do that, we're doing more than opening ourselves to a wealth of diverse perspectives. We're saying, "You matter. You belong. You're so welcome here!" Limiting ourselves to library lenses limits our Everyday Advocacy impact. Let

yourself be inspired by kids, teens, parents, teachers, co-workers, and community members, and take your advocacy efforts to new heights.

Share Your Advocacy Story: Keep It Strong and Simple

What I'll do: You probably already know my plan, right? I'll keep you posted on my new adventures through this column and the quarterly *Everyday Advocacy Matters* e-newsletter. But I'll also tweet, post to ALSC-L, blog, and even send handwritten notes now and again. I can't wait to share my successes and challenges with all of you!

Why it's important: We all struggle from time to time with this whole advocacy thing, so it's critical we embrace our roles as advocates for one other. You don't have to write a research-based journal article or publish a book to spell it all out. Snapping up informal opportunities—conversations, phone calls, e-mails—to share what's worked for you and what hasn't helps you cultivate the next generation of Everyday Advocates. With demands on our time growing by the day, keeping it simple and strong keeps us all ready and relevant. 🔄

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ALSC thanks the following sponsors of the 2017 Pre-Conference in Chicago!



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Play, The Library, and Every Child Ready to Read 2

Judy T. Nelson



Judy T. Nelson is Customer Experience Manager, Youth, at Pierce County (WA) Library System.

Play is one of the five practices every parent uses to help their young children get ready to read. Through research and evaluation, Dr. Susan Neuman identified five simple but powerful practices and simplified the language used in Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR 1st edition) from the six skills (print awareness, letter knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary, narrative skills, and print motivation) to the practices (reading, writing, singing, talking, playing) used in ECRR 2nd edition.

Four of the practices—reading, writing, singing, and talking—are ones librarians easily incorporate into storytimes, collections, programs, library environments (both inside and out), and outreach activities. But play, especially gross motor play, is a bit more difficult to include.

Librarians add small motor activities such as bending, stretching, playing with a parachute, or tossing small balls into their storytimes with great regularity. And while libraries are no longer the quiet places they once were, most libraries still do not have a basketball hoop or slide in their children's area to encourage the development of gross motor skills, yet this category is as important as its smaller cousin. Especially in today's screen-filled sedentary world, children need to develop both small and gross motor skills; plus play is a primary way children learn about their world, its boundaries, and how things function. Sometimes being physical is the only way to figure something out.

How can we think about large motor play in an appropriate way? I use the word "appropriate" for two reasons. The first is, just because something is good for children and families, fun, or even easy to add to our services does not mean a library should offer it. Secondly, in my libraries, floor space is always at a premium. So if I am going to include play, I need to have really solid reasons for doing so, and I need to consider how to store these play items that I believe add value to the library.

Five years ago, the Pierce County Library (WA) chose to focus on finding meaningful ways to incorporate STEM activities into our early literacy practice. We already used ECRR2 as the basis for developing any activities, collections, and services for our preschool families, but our STEM offerings were limited. We developed a block program for preschoolers.

Research clearly showed that block play, when done with deliberation, allowed children to develop language skills,¹ social emotional skills, and STEM skills.²

We developed a Block Play brochure³ to tell our community why we, as their public library, were offering these programs. The library also determined that we wanted to build our community connections.

We added block centers to all of our facilities and now host block play programs, both closed sessions for Head Start and ECEAP classes and open public sessions for the community, all year round. This type of play has allowed us to incorporate STEM activities for children from a very early age.



Learning through play at the library!

Over the years, we have developed a programmatic structure for the closed sessions that is adapted for the open sessions. It's very simple. We begin each block play event with at least one story, often about building things, creating things, or various people in the community. That's followed by a reminder of the block play rules. We only have two: no throwing blocks and no destroying someone else's structure.

If there is time, we add a song or physical game to get the children moving, and then it is time to get out of the children's way and let them build. The adults are there to scaffold the children's play by doing things like asking open-ended questions about what is being built or who might utilize the structure. Questions are intended to get children talking about what they are working on, not direct what is being built. The program ends with a free book distribution, where every child in the closed sessions gets a free book to take home and keep. Our book giveaway is funded through our Pierce County Library Foundation.

Block play has proved incredibly popular over the years and has grown to encompass most of the Head Start and ECEAP classes across our service area. But I am always on the lookout for ways to enhance these core services. What else could we do to enhance and support play in our service area?

Last fall, I was introduced to a new concept for us. We applied for and recently were awarded an Imagination Playground from KaBoom, a nonprofit organization dedicated to making sure all kids have the opportunity to thrive through play. (The grant application can be found at www.KaBoom.org/grants.)

We added a very large mobile foam block center for use with our library's STEM and play mix. The Imagination Playground pieces are similar to our wooden unit blocks, only much, much bigger. With them, children build structures they can actually ride on or climb inside. They are using their gross motor skills to recreate some of the same building projects they build with unit blocks, only now the constructions are almost life sized.

The blocks come in four-wheeled bins, with an easy-to-remove cover, and they are lightweight and easy to clean. We store them alongside our wooden block center in the empty meeting rooms of our Administrative Center and Library.

Next step? We are determining how to transport the Imagination Playground to our branches and to community events. Our aim is to make it possible for children all over our county to enjoy playing with this equipment. We will continue to use the block play program structure so that children still get stories, and, where possible, a free book because we like to infuse all events with literacy.

Needless to say, offering programs with these new blocks has been a huge hit, and our observation so far is that it does not matter what size the blocks are—big or small, they still engender the same types of learning among children: math, literacy, science, social emotional development, and technology skill building. The added bonus is that we are able to offer a gross motor development program for a county that has limited parks and playgrounds. Inspired by ECRR2, this large block play has enabled the library to further and more deeply connect literacy and play. 📖

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The Column Explained . . .

Plus Conference Roundup, Part 2!

Betsy Diamant-Cohen and Annette Y. Goldsmith



Betsy Diamant-Cohen is an early literacy trainer and Executive Director of Mother Goose on the Loose, Baltimore, Maryland. **Annette Y. Goldsmith** is a lecturer at the University of Washington Information School who teaches online from her home in Los Angeles, California.



For more than two years, *Children and Libraries* has been hosting this column, and we thought it was time to share our vision. “Research Roundup” is a grouping of resources meant to give readers easy access to tools for doing their own research or to familiarize them with research done by others. We have included short descriptions of research studies that have a direct impact on librarians’ work with children. We have directed readers to specific resources. We have shared our column with a guest researcher. We have also provided descriptions of ways research has been successfully used.

Once a column theme has been chosen, the content may include links to relevant websites, descriptions of research studies, information about related upcoming conferences, lists of open journals, and/or focus on particular works.

Since the column began, it has covered music in children’s programming, the economic value of children’s programming, good websites for gathering useful statistics, open source journals, conferences that might be of interest to children’s librarians, media mentorship, international children’s books, digital media, and the value of math for young children.

To make this column as useful as possible, if there is a topic you would like to see, please let us know.

This is our second column about conferences of value to children’s librarians. For the earlier column, see “Conferences to Expand Your Horizons” in the Summer 2015 issue. Here are conferences we think you might enjoy presenting at or attending. Do tell us about your favorites too!

Children’s Music Network (CMN)

<https://childrensmusic.org/conference/>

At the annual conference, attendees share songs, ideas, and resources, plus teaching tools, songwriting techniques, community building skills, and marketing tips. There are spontaneous song swaps and networking, as well as structured workshops and presentations. Nonmembers are welcome to attend. **Where:** Hyannis, MA. **When:** October 13–15, 2017. Legendary Canadian roots singer and producer Ken Whiteley is the keynote speaker.

Digital Shift—now called TechKnowledge

<http://tinyurl.com/y76ntsv3>

Library Journal and *School Library Journal*’s free annual day-long virtual conference for library professionals from around the world focuses on the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital transition’s impact on libraries and their communities. Expert speakers and panelists present on topics of interest to school, academic, and public libraries. This year’s theme

is *Creating Equity through Technology*, and the conference will be held on October 18, 2017.

International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY)

<http://www.ibbycongressathens2018.com/>

IBBY, a worldwide organization that promotes peace and social justice through children's books, holds an International Congress in even years. (IBBY is also represented by regional conferences in odd years: see the entry for USBBY below.) The next IBBY Congress will be in Athens, Greece, from August 30 to September 1, 2018, and hosted by IBBY Greece. The theme is *East Meets West* around Children's Books and Fairy Tales. This Congress coincides with the celebration of Athens as the UNESCO World Book Capitol for 2018, so there will be lots of festivities in store!

Learning and the Brain

<https://www.learningandthebrain.com/education-conferences>

This provider of professional development for educators holds three conferences a year—Fall, Winter, and Spring—along with one-day seminars and summer institutes. The Fall conference is in Boston November 10–12, 2017, with the theme *Merging Minds and Technology: Transform Classrooms with Robotics, Brain Science, and Virtual/Maker Spaces*. Very à propos for children's librarians!

National Storytelling Festival

<http://www.storytellingcenter.net/events/national-storytelling-festival/>

Every year, on the first Friday in October, the National Storytelling Festival brings together storytellers from around the country in Jonesborough, Tennessee, for three days of exceptional storytelling. Librarians who have attended rave about the storytelling skills they have gained, as well as increasing stock of good stories to tell. Children's author Carmen Agra Deedy will perform at this year's event, held October 6–8. To view the 2017 brochure, visit http://www.storytellingcenter.net/content/img/main/2017_June_Festival_brochure_web.pdf. (See also *Tellabration!*, below.)

Public Library Association (PLA)

<http://www.placonference.org/>

PLA holds a conference once every two years. Because it focuses on public librarians, many relevant topics for children's librarians are covered. The next conference will be held in Philadelphia March 20–24, 2018, with a theme and challenge to all attendees to *Imagine the Possibilities*.

Tellabration!

<http://www.tellabration.org/>

It's not exactly a conference, but this international fall celebration of storytelling also brings opportunities for networking and learning. Check the website to find the closest venue for this year's *Tellabration!* on November 17. You may discover a local storytelling guild or other group where you can attend story swaps and hone your skills as a teller! (See also the *National Storytelling Festival*, above.)

United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY)

http://www.usbby.org/conf_register.htm

USBBY is one of approximately seventy national sections of IBBY (see entry above). This IBBY Regional Conference, held in odd years, is October 20–22, 2017, at the University of Washington Information School in Seattle. The theme, *Radical Change beyond Borders: The Transforming Power of Children's Literature in a Digital Age*, pays tribute to our late colleague Dr. Eliza T. Dresang, author of *Radical Change* theory. This conference offers the rare opportunity to hear China's Cao Wenxuan, winner of the 2016 Hans Christian Andersen award for text, commonly called the "little Nobel."

Come to UW a day early—October 19—and (for free!) you can also hear Young People's Poet Laureate, Margarita Engle, deliver the Spencer G. Shaw Lecture. This prestigious children's literature lecture honors the memory of beloved librarian, storyteller, and professor Spencer Shaw. For details, see <http://tinyurl.com/y6womk4j>. 📖

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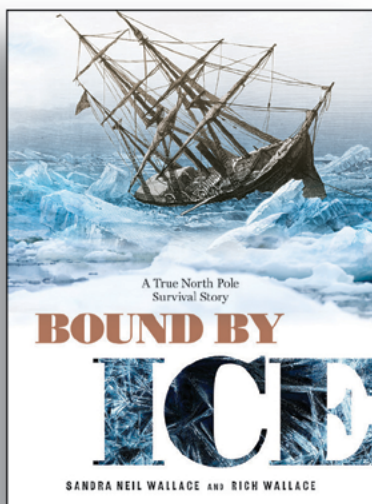


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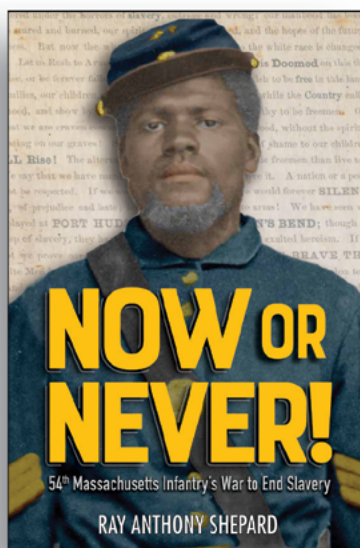
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