

Teaching Reading in the 21st Century

By Mr. Jordan Parks

Purpose of Presentation

The purpose of this presentation is to share the information I learned in my graduate class and how I created intentional opportunities to allow my 6th grade students to experience a diverse reading class. I have also created this presentation to share with future employers if they ask for a digital resource that shows my experience in teaching reading strategies and building relationships with students. I have taught a 6th grade reading elective for three years, but I decided to spice it up for this semester in an attempt to reach a wide variety of students with a diversified set of texts and projects. This write up explains what I learned in my TE 849 class, what I shared with students in my classroom, as well as the feedback I received from students through multiple surveys of the class.

Introduction

It was difficult to include all of the information and topics from TE 849 in the class due to time constraints. So, please inquire should you need any extra information that's not included. I also pulled a few bits of information from my Language Arts class instead of my elective class "Literature" because there are simply too many books to read in one specific class during one marking period. All of the information shared in this powerpoint is authentic and has been taught to students in my classroom - and the feedback I received has been placed after each unit! Enjoy!



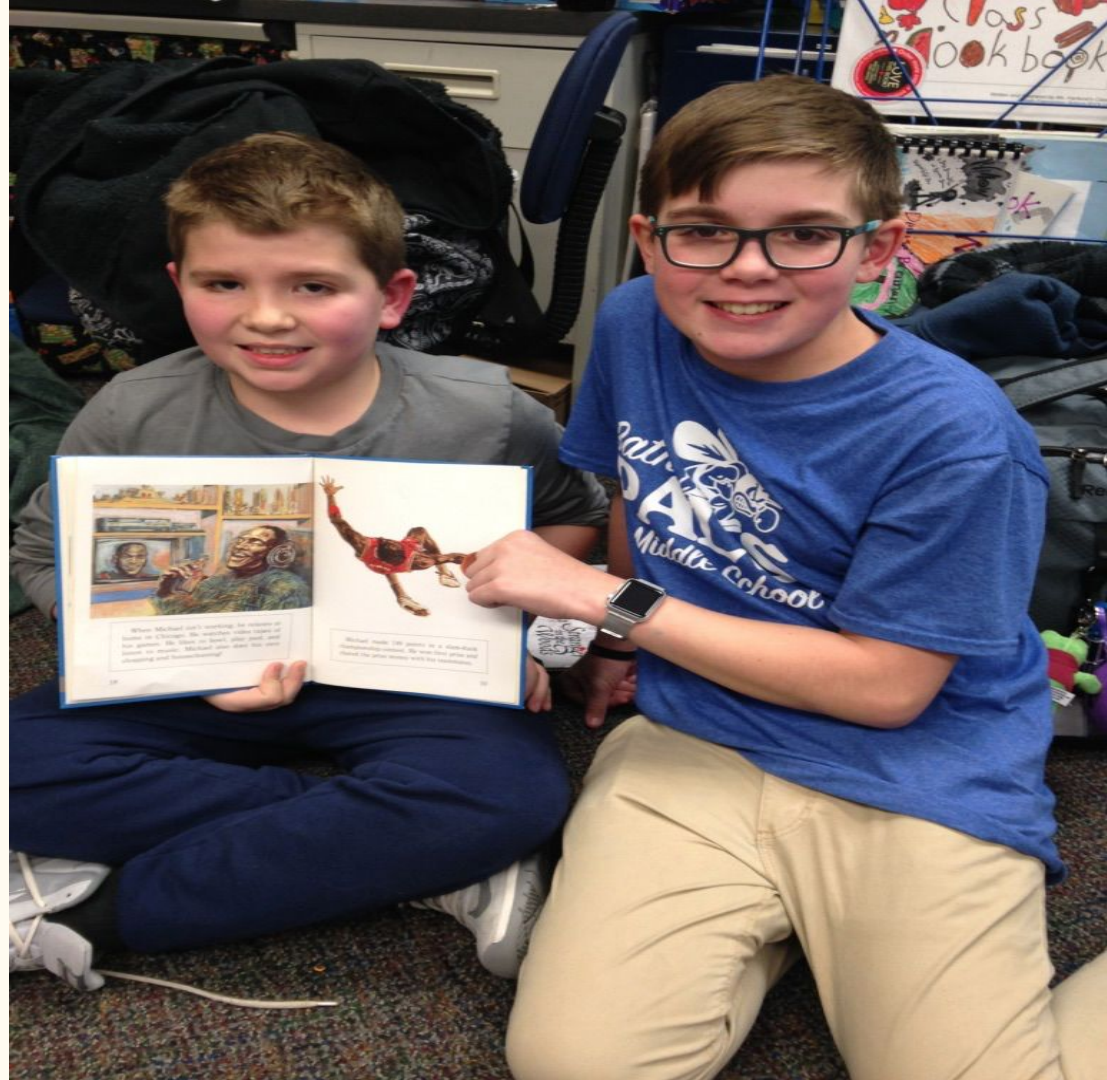
Why English?

I'm an English teacher because of my love for reading. During March of 2017, I took my reading class to the elementary school for share my passion (and theirs) with younger students.



Relationships

Building relationships with students is so important to me. I try to take time for each class period and check in with as many students as I possibly can to understand their personal lives, the challenges they face, and the success they have both in and out of school. I know that I will be better able to create a community of successful readers who can connect with the world around them if I first have a great relationship with them.

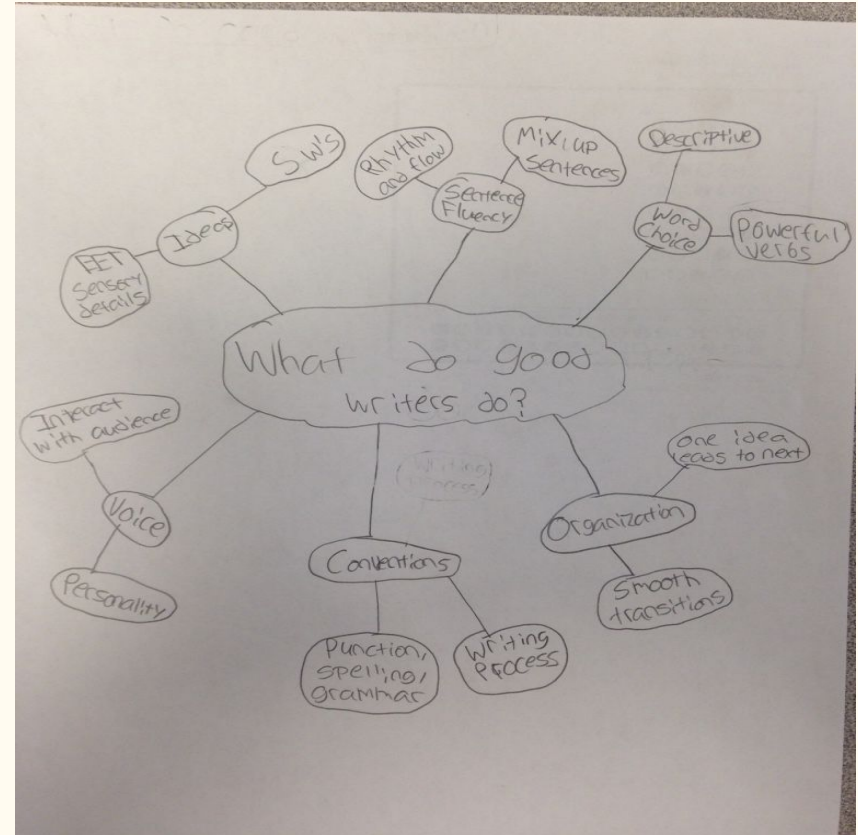
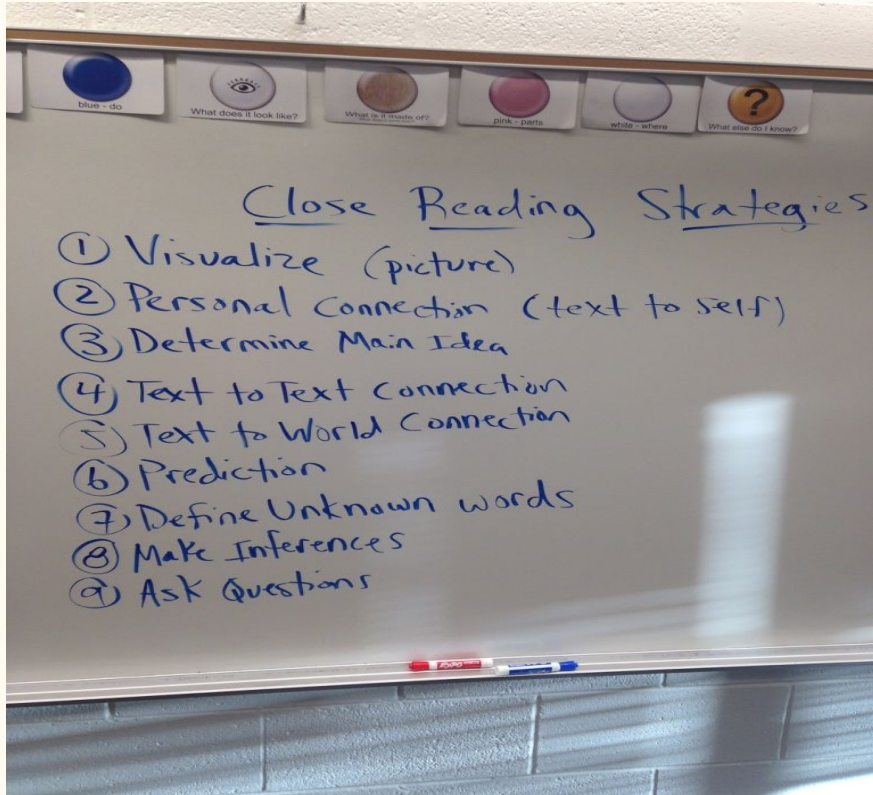


Teaching Strategies for Reading

- Group Collaboration
- Whisper Reading/Choral Reading
- Think, Ink, Link
- Vocabulary Squares
- Graphic Organizers (Cause/Effect, T-Chart, Venn Diagram, Paragraphs)
- Summaries
- Book Projects
- Partner Sharing
- Speaking and Listening
- Fluency Growth Tracking

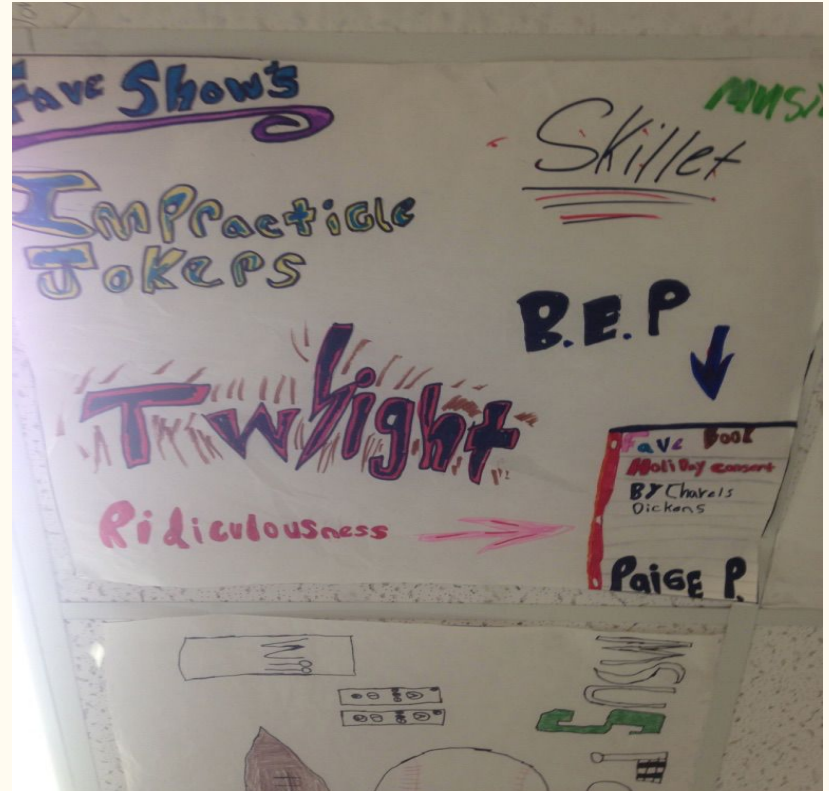


Making Thinking Visible



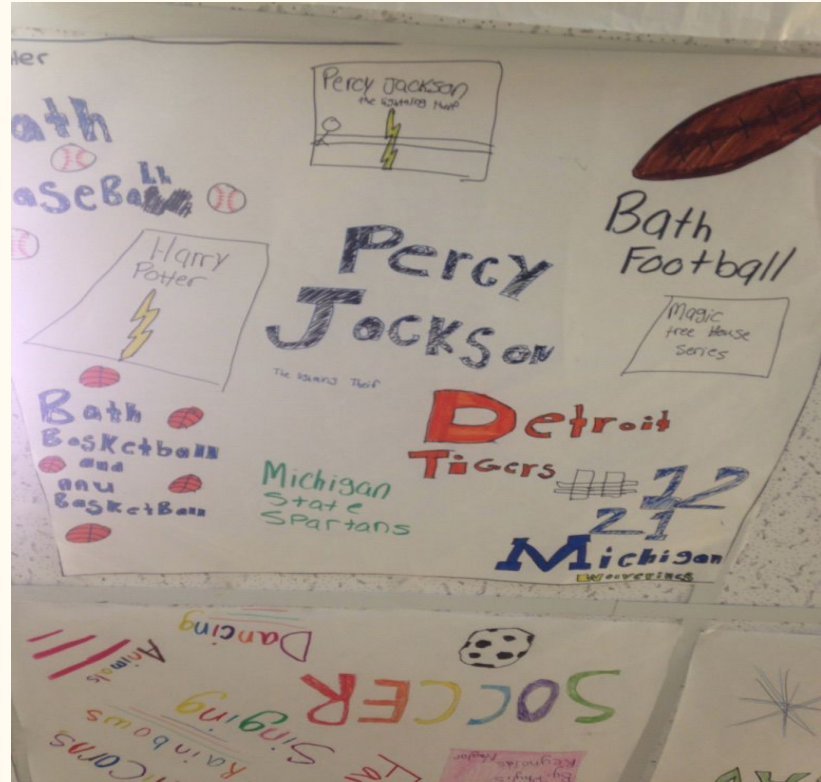
Unit 1: Book Talks

- In TE 849, we had to reflect on our own reading experiences as children and explain how literature impacted our lives. I used a similar introduction method for my elective 6th grade “literature” class. They created “About Me” posters which had to include their favorite book(s) and I hung them on my ceiling!

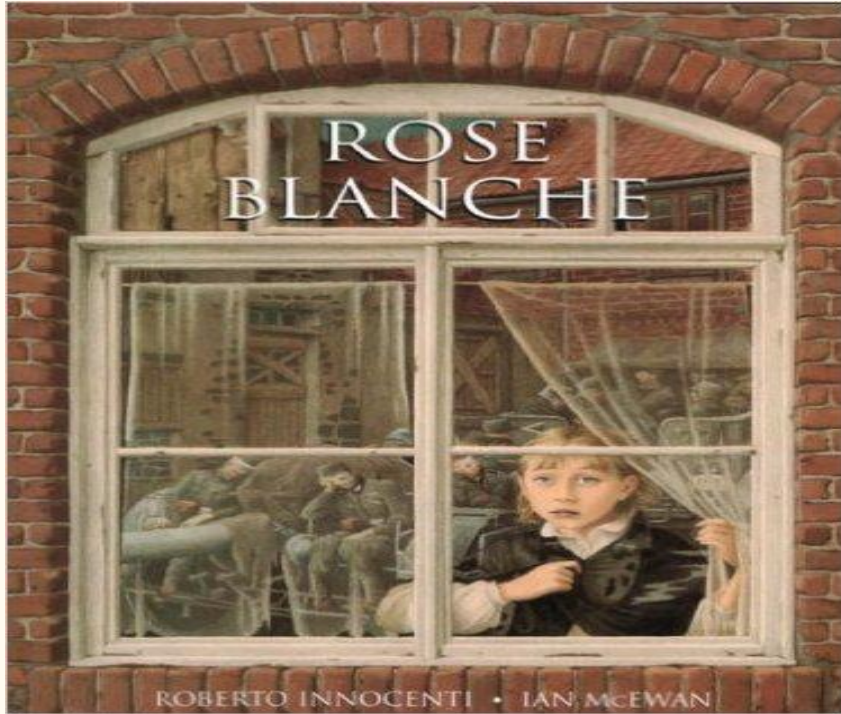


What Students Said about “Book Talks”

- “I really enjoyed making my poster”
- “I liked drawing the Harry Potter book cover on my About Me poster. Now all the students in my grade know i’m a Harry Potter fan because they will see the picture on your ceiling”



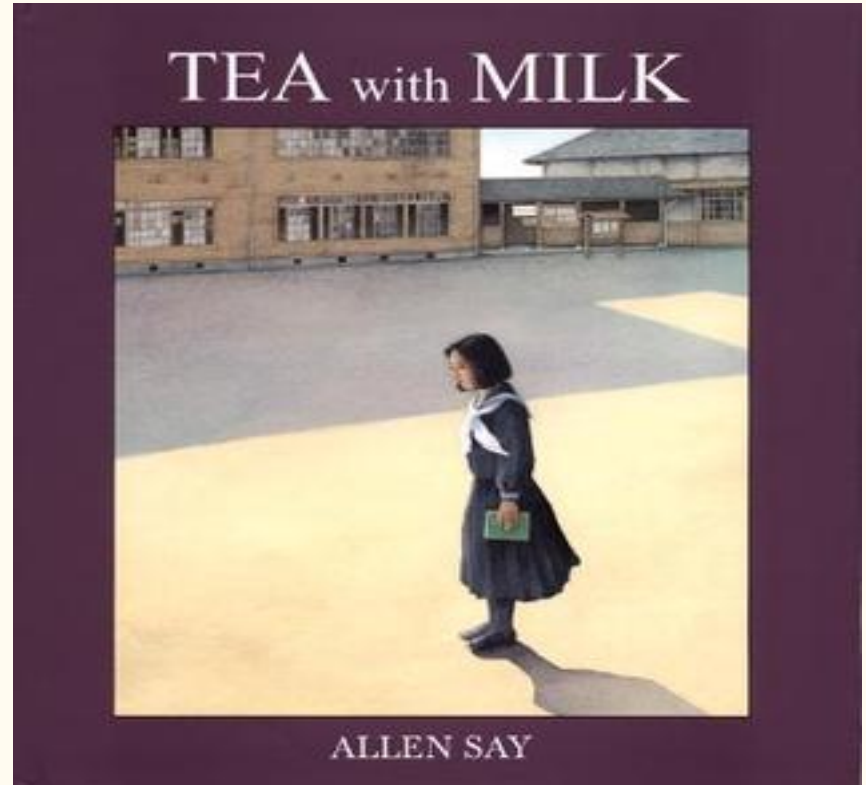
Unit 2: The Power of Picture Books



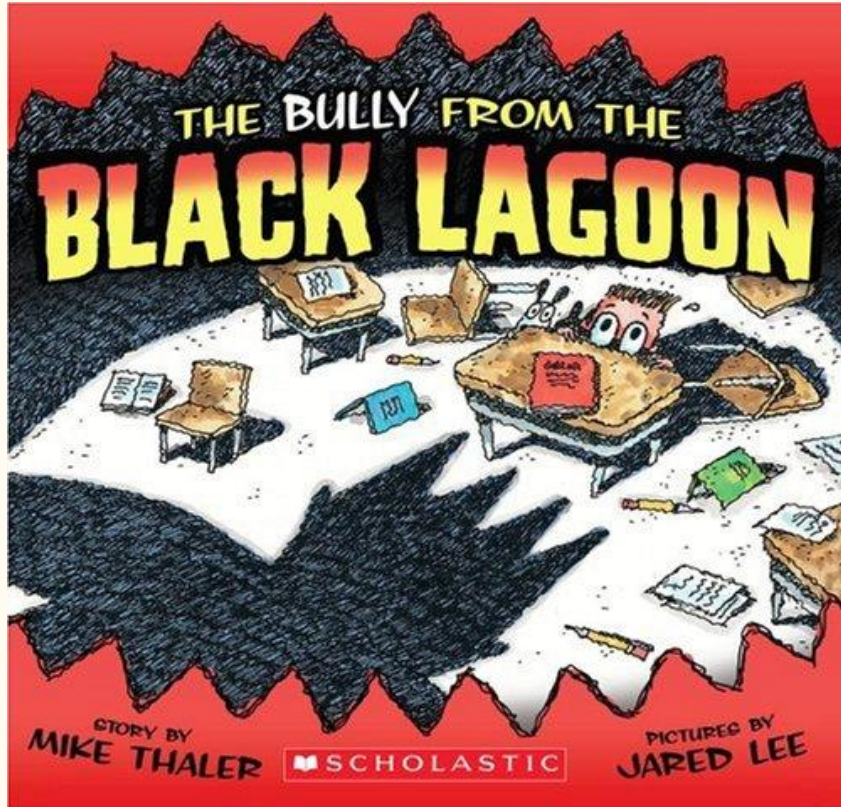
- In our learning groups, we talked about how important information can be discussed at younger ages due to picture books!
- We focused in TE 849 on discussing inferences drawn from pictures, and how certain texts need the pictures to convey the meaning of the story.
- We learned new vocabulary too!

Unit 2: The Power of Picture Books

- *Tea with Milk* was another informational story we read in class that focused on the idea of being a woman in a male dominated society.
- This protagonist has to face challenges in her home country because women are expected to stay at home - gender stereotypes is just one topic covered here!



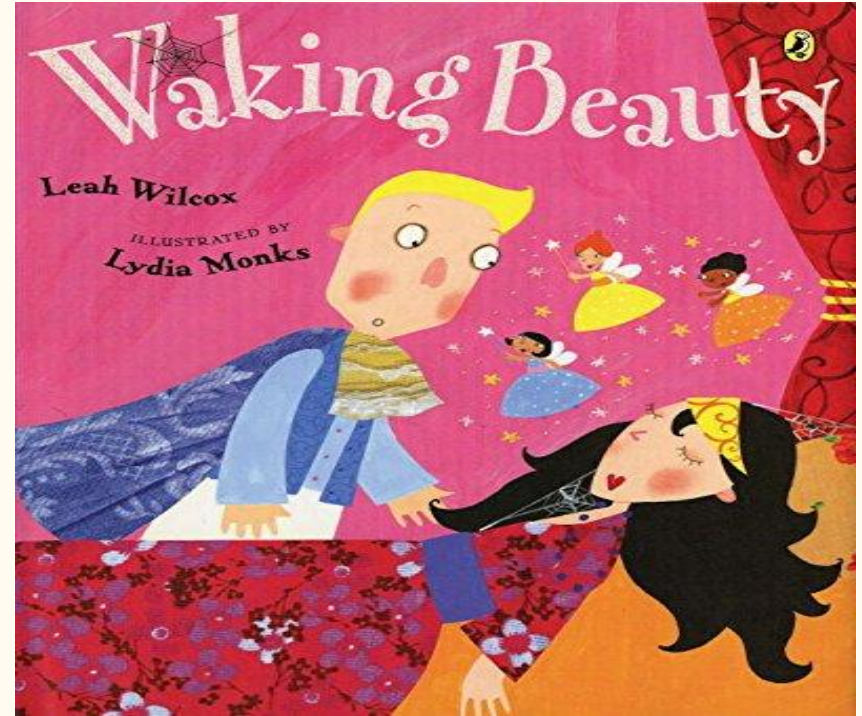
Unit 2: The Power of Picture Books



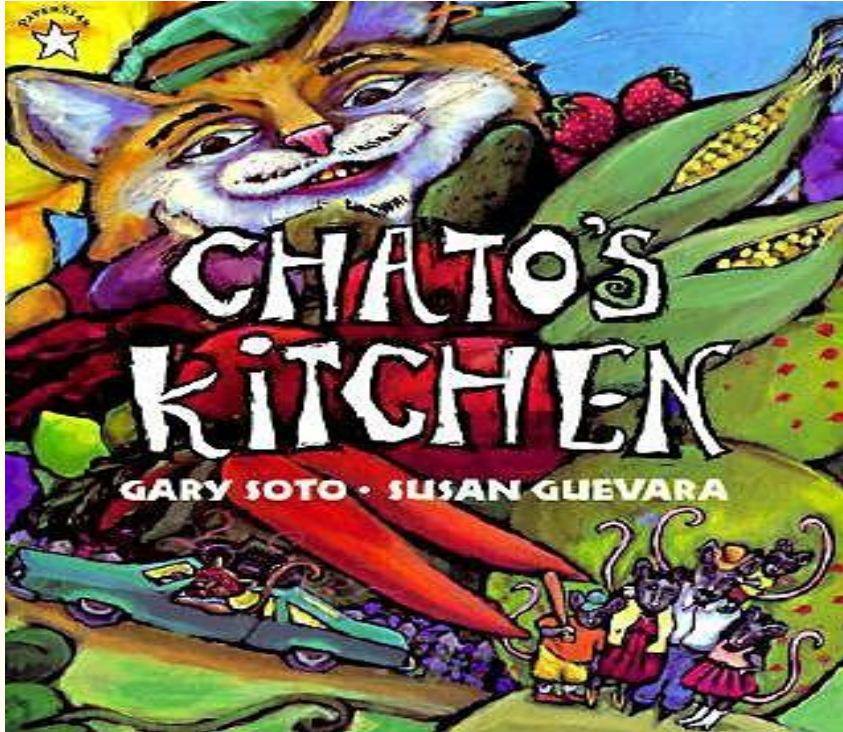
- In my sixth grade class, we read *The Bully from the Black Lagoon* as a picture book! There are several pictures that add meaning to the story - such as how rumors spread. The rumor was a bully came from the “State Pen” but he was really from the state of Pennsylvania! We had good discussions about Bullying.

Unit 2: The Power of Picture Books

- *Waking Beauty* was a hilarious picture book we read in class. The pictures really helped communicate the challenges the prince was facing to wake up his princess.
- Students used this book to discuss theme, main idea, and examples to support those claims.



Unit 2: The Power of Picture Books



- Lastly, we read *Chato's Kitchen* which allowed for students to learn some new spanish vocabulary!
- The story focused on a cat who wants to eat mice for dinner - only to be surprised by a dog!
- The pictures in the book won several awards!

What Students Said about “Picture Books”

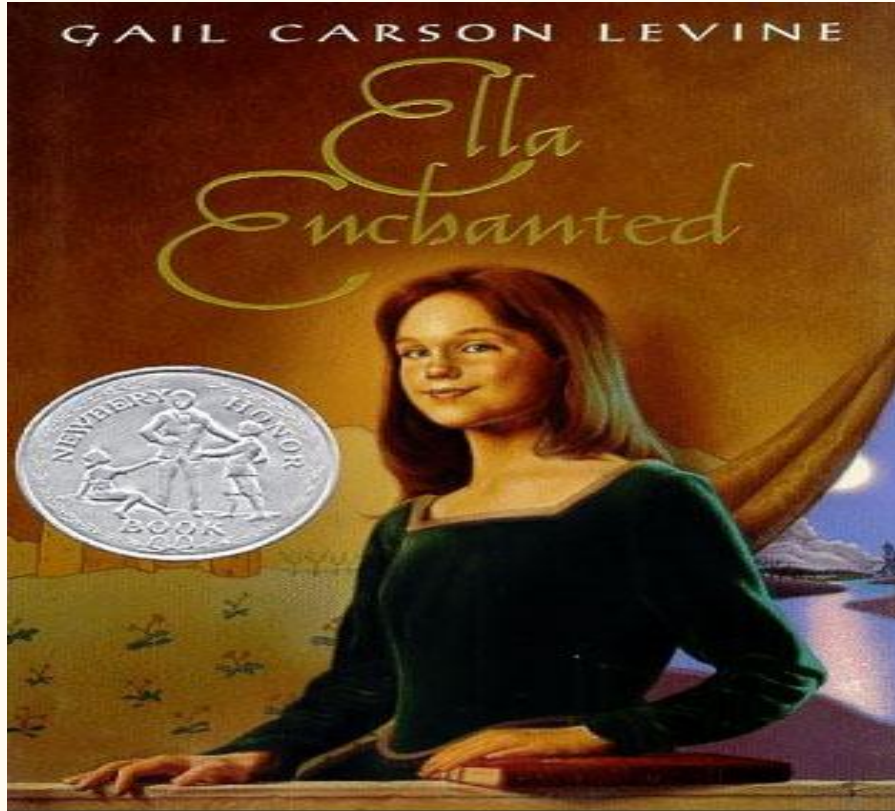
- “*Chato’s Kitchen* was my favorite picture book, mostly because the dog surprised me I thought he was a cat at first!”
- “The picture books were more fun for me than *Tuck Everlasting* because of all the pictures”
- “I like how Mr. Parks changes his voice for all of the characters”
- “This unit was fun”
- “It was easy to understand the stories because they are kids books, but I liked how we had adult conversations about them”
- “I wish we would have read more than just those three books”

Unit 3: Fantasy/Traditional Literature



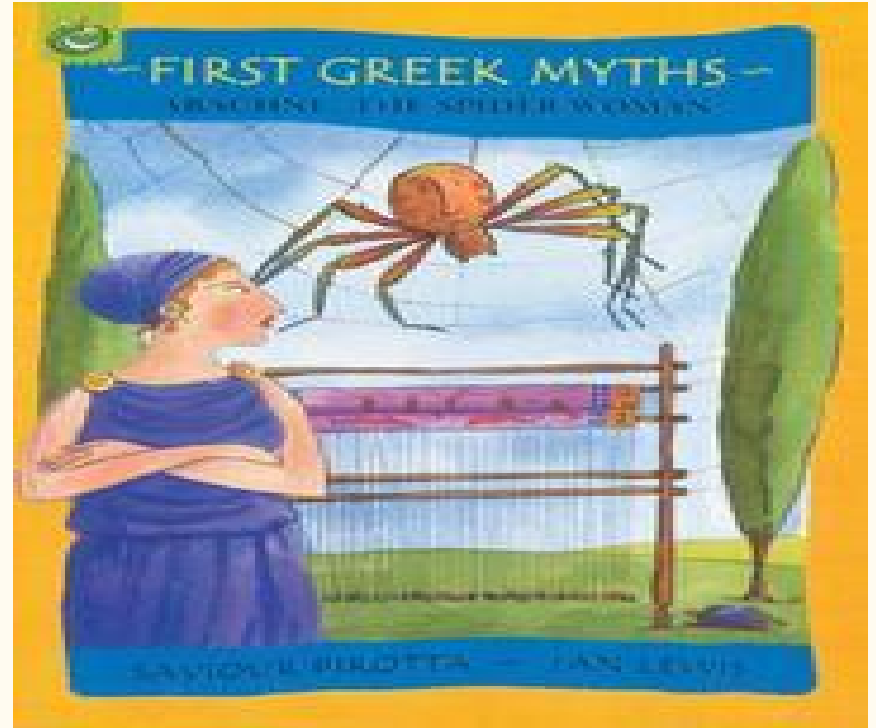
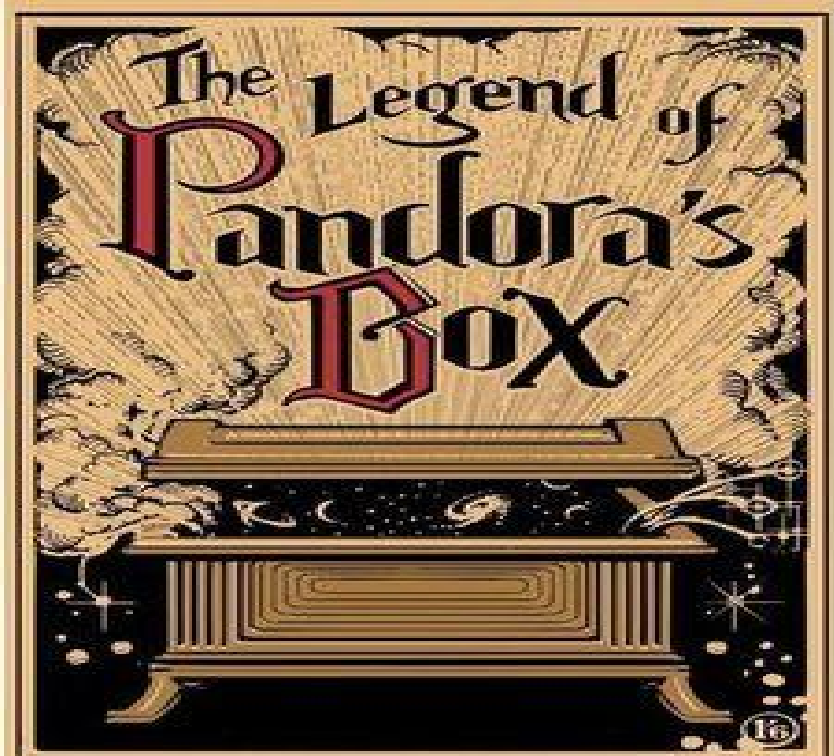
- In TE 849, we read “Coraline” and discussed the elements that made this story a fantasy novel. In this “educating the imagination” novel we discussed how things can be blurred between realistic and complete fantasy. This Traditional Literature was very engaging as a young girl escapes the world she knows to search for more, only to find her “other mother” stealing souls and putting buttons on eyes. In addition to fantasies, we talked about reading stories that have been passed down for generations (Folktales)

Unit 3: Fantasy/Traditional Literature



- In 6th grade, we read *Ella Enchanted* as a fantasy novel.
- Students enjoy the relationship between Prince Char and Ella, and how she has to obey all of the commands because of the spell Lucina put on her. I felt this would be good comparison to *Coraline* because of the home-away-home plot structure.

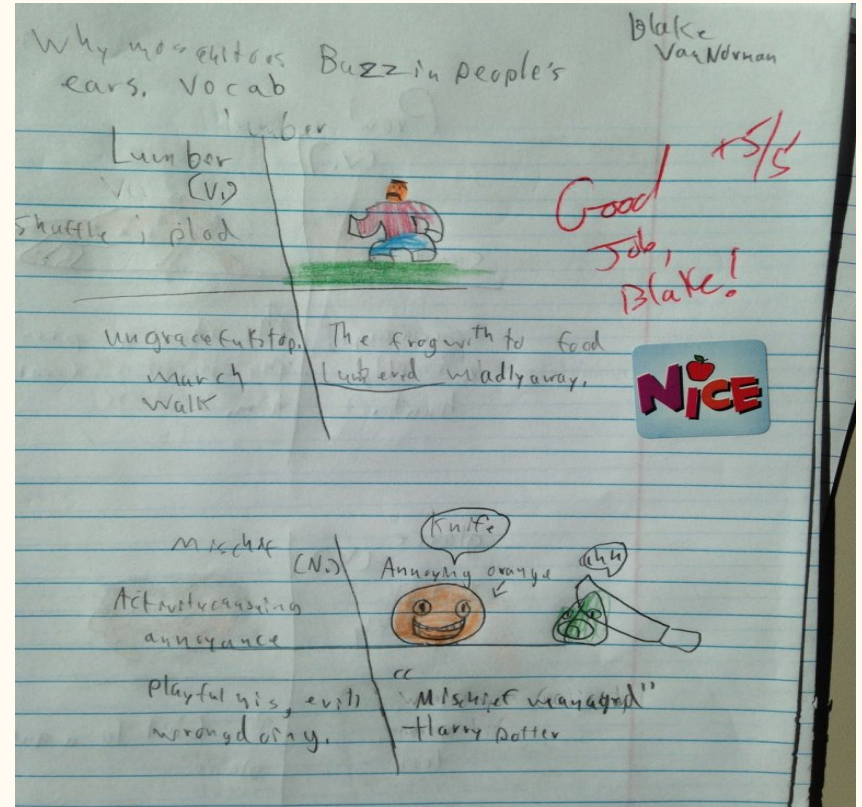
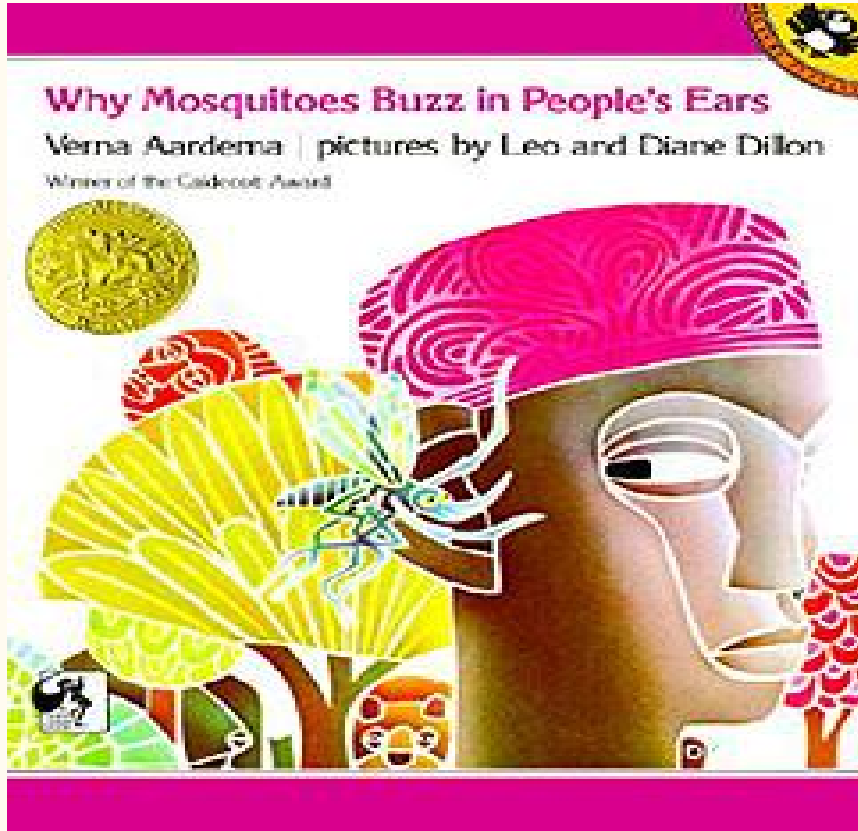
Unit 3: Fantasy/Traditional Literature



Unit 3: Fantasy/Traditional Literature

- We read *Arachne* and *Pandora's Box* to discuss Myths as a type of traditional literature. The students really enjoyed how there was a moral to each story and a lesson we're supposed to learn.
- I was surprised that most students were already familiar with some of the stories about myths, legends, fables, and tall tales. We also read *Paul Bunyan*, *King Arthur*, and *Jason and the Golden Fleece*.
- Lastly, we read *Why Mosquitos Buzz in People's Ears* as an African Folktale. It is meant to be read orally as it was passed down in this manner. We used it to learn about cause/effect and how one idea leads to another - we wrote summaries! You will see a picture of the vocab strategy used on the next slide!

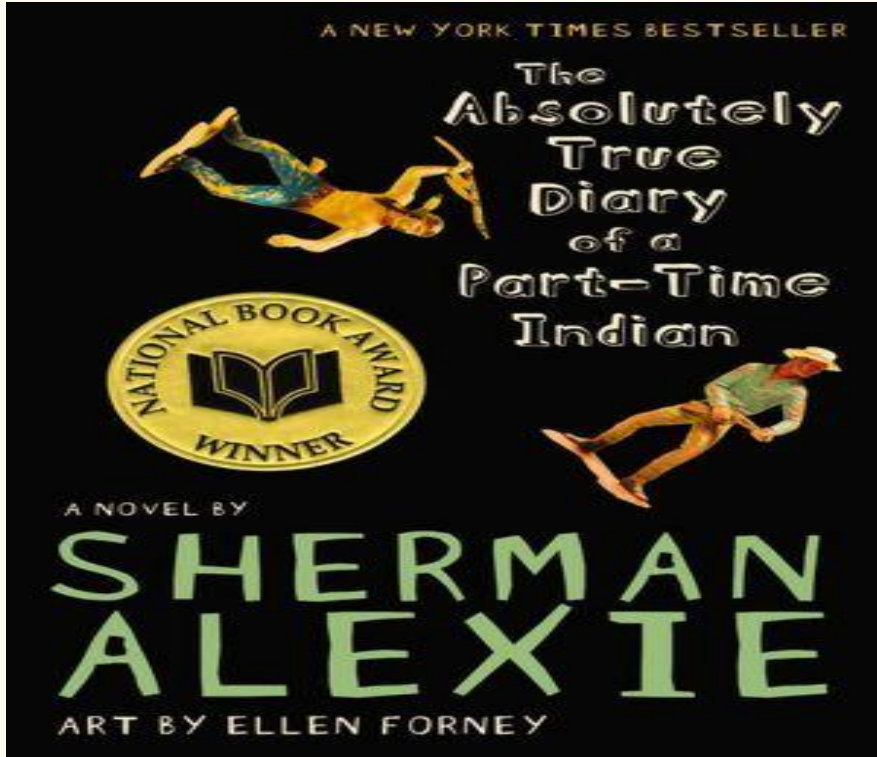
Unit 3: Fantasy/Traditional Literature



What Students Said about “Traditional Literature/Fantasy”

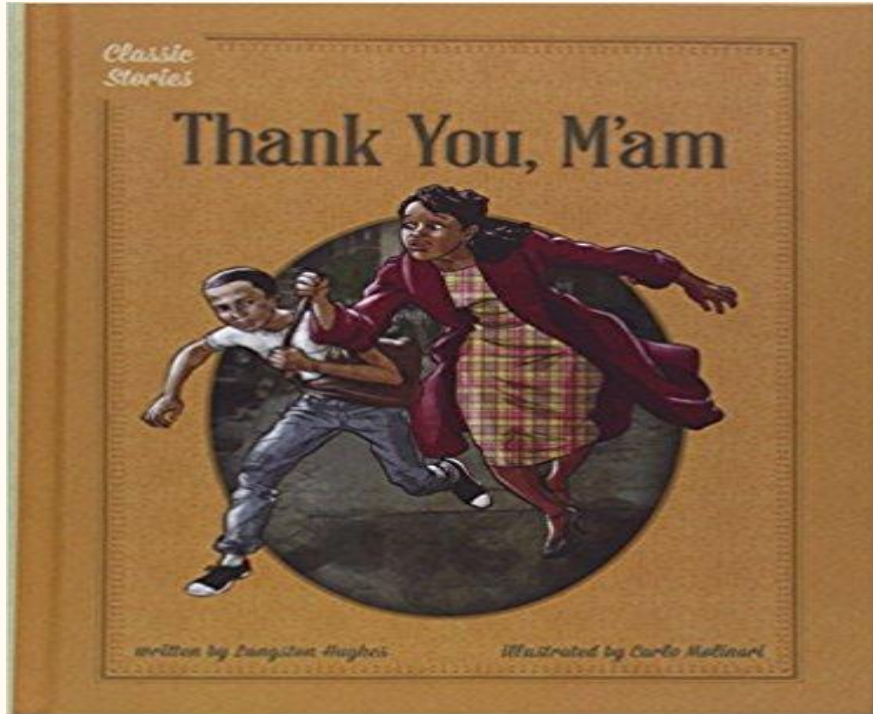
- “My favorite story was the mosquitos one because it was easy to write a summary”
- “I don’t know anything about African culture so it was neat to read a story about Africa”
- “The myths were my favorite type of Folktale. It was cool Arachne was bragging against Athena so Athena turned her into a spider!”
- “I thought *Ella Enchanted* was more girls were some parts were fun like the Ogres”
- “I like how we watched the movie *Ella Enchanted* too”

Unit 4: Whose Story Is It? Race, Ethnicity, and Culture



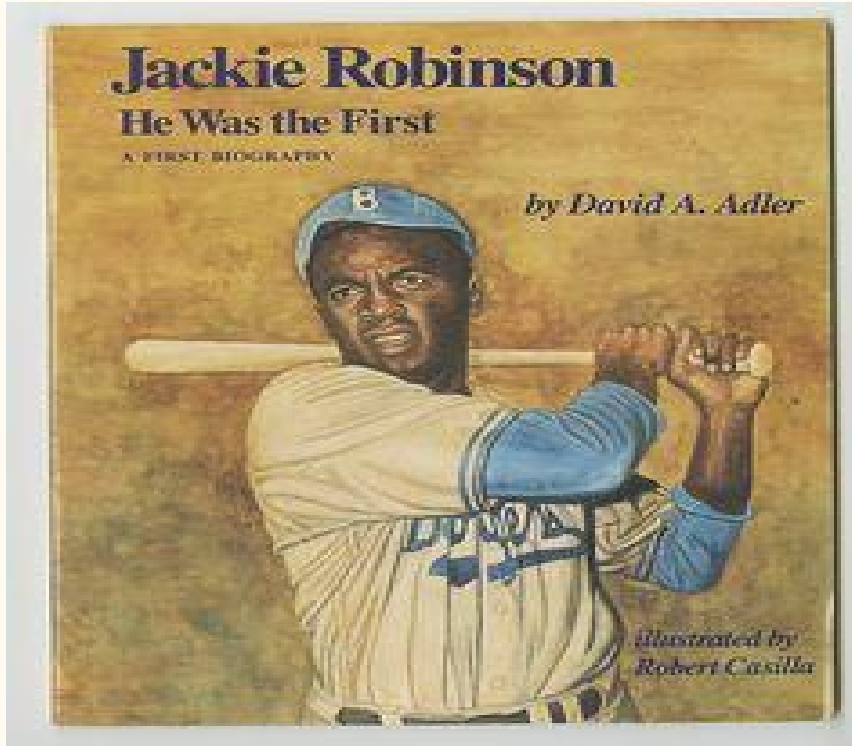
- I read this story for TE 849 and it was hilarious! It's about a young kid trying to make it living on a reservation and his family is poor. I suggested it to one particular student who struggles to engage with reading and he's enjoying it so far. I had to tell his parents in advance that some of the content is for adults, and they were okay with that. This book helps students think about marginalized groups in the U.S. (Native American Tribes) and what their lived experience is like - so we looked at other underprivileged groups in 6th grade!

Unit 4: Whose Story Is It? Race, Ethnicity, and Culture



- We read the short story *Thank You, Ma'am* by Langston Hughes which gives us insight to life in the south during the first half the 20th century.
- We explored lessons learned from this novel as a young boy tries to steal and learns a lesson from an older lady. This particular text focused on two African American characters.

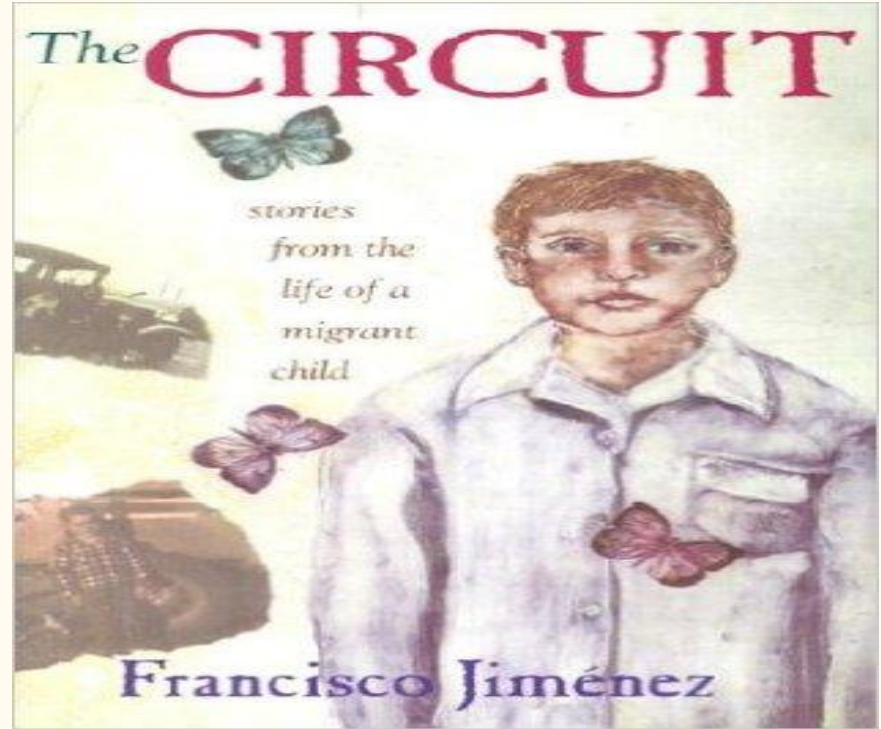
Unit 4: Whose Story Is It? Race, Ethnicity, and Culture



- I read a story to students that was a short biography about Jackie Robinson. I also read one about Roberto Clemente. Both of these stories share the challenges they faced (Clemente as an immigrant and Robinson breaking the color barrier for African American baseball players) playing professional baseball.

Unit 4: Whose Story Is It? Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

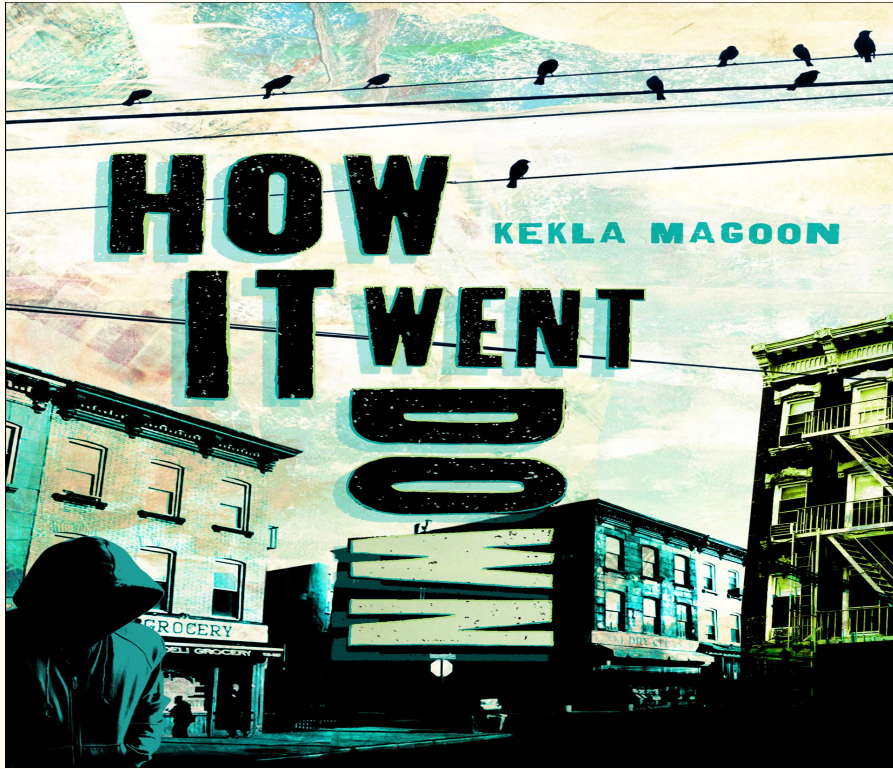
- We read this story in 6th grade to discuss the challenges of immigrant fruit pickers in California.
- They work all day in the blazing heat and get paid hardly anything - even the kids have to skip school to work on the farms to help make money to support their families.



What Students Said About: “Whose Story Is It? Race, Ethnicity, and Culture”

- “My favorite story was *The Circuit* because it was so sad how the family continually couldn’t get out of poverty”
- “I was happy the kids were still happy despite their circumstances - the family was really close”
- “*Thank You, Ma’am* was funny!”
- “I’m glad the boy learned his lesson but still got the money to pay for the shoes”
- “It’s so sad Roberto Clemente died in a plane crash, he had so much to offer”
- “I’m surprised Jackie Robinson didn’t lash out more against all of the racist people”

Unit 5: Current Events and YA Literature



- *How it Went Down* was an interesting fictional novel about a young black boy who was shot and there was an uproar in the community about whether it was gang violence or a hate act because a white person shot him. Then, the story follows a few gang members and their affiliations and whether or not they can learn to control their emotions and not resort to violence for everything. It was difficult to find a texts closely related to this to share with my students and get feedback for, but we talked about some of the police brutality happening in the U.S. and the different perspectives that go along with it. The next few slides show stories we did address that are connected to the themes from this text.

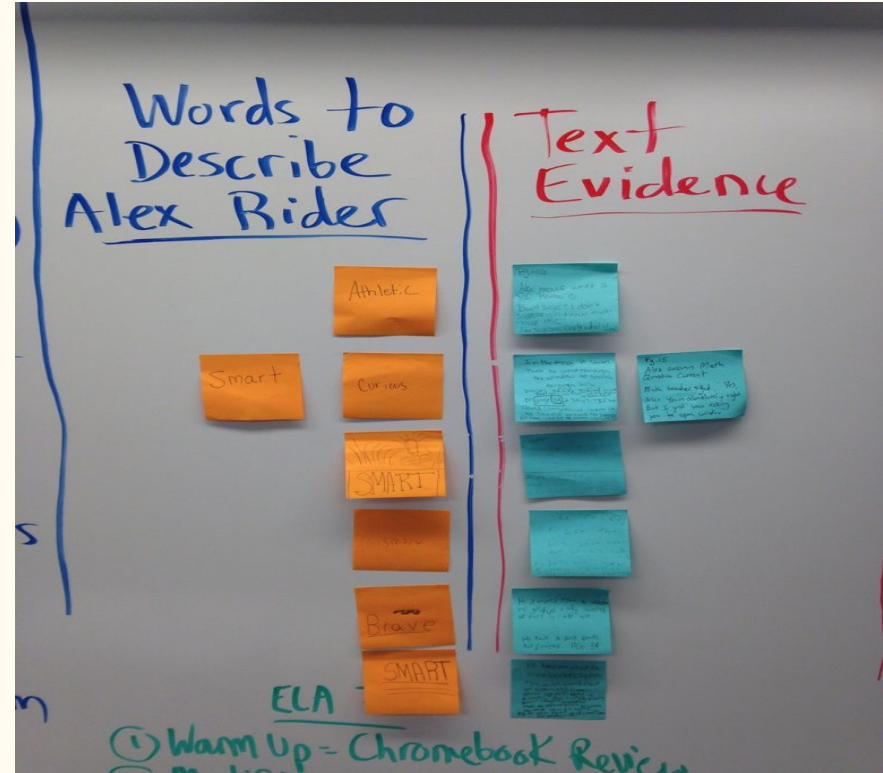
Unit 5: Current Events and YA Literature



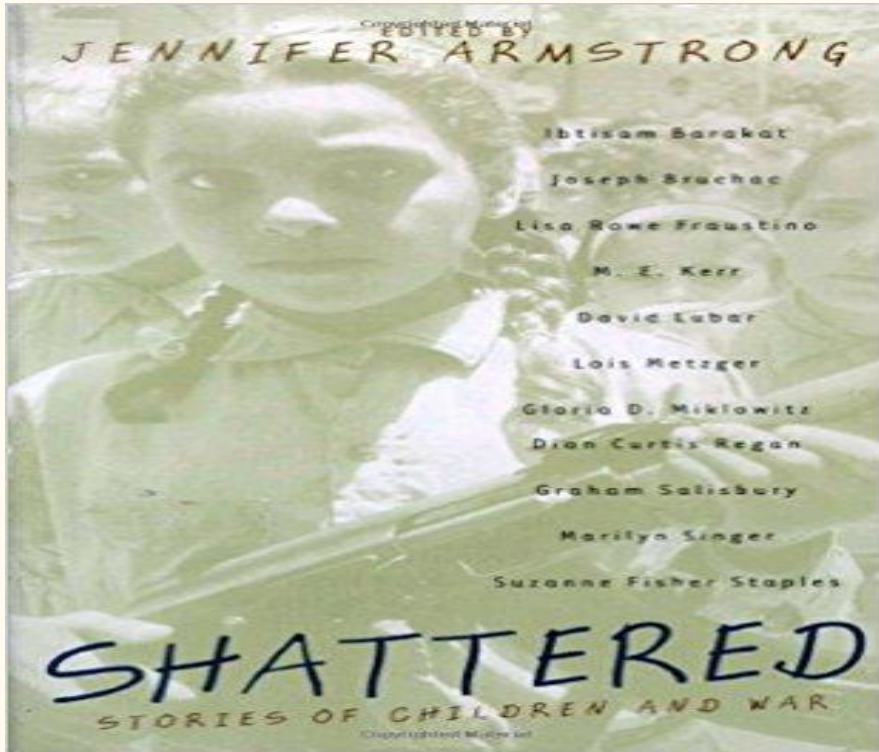
- We read this book in Language Arts (not literature), and *Stormbreaker* is about a young spy who tries to stop a terrorist from killing millions of innocent children. It's connected to *How It Went Down* because we're always hearing about terrorism and ISIS in the news and Herod Sayle's character is very similar to a widely known terrorist.

Unit 5: Current Events and YA Literature

- I had students create a T-chart analyzing the main spy character, Alex Rider, and the text evidence that supports the words we used to describe him.
- This helped students consciously think about their line of reasoning for backing up claims they make about a text (which is our English goal for our middle school)

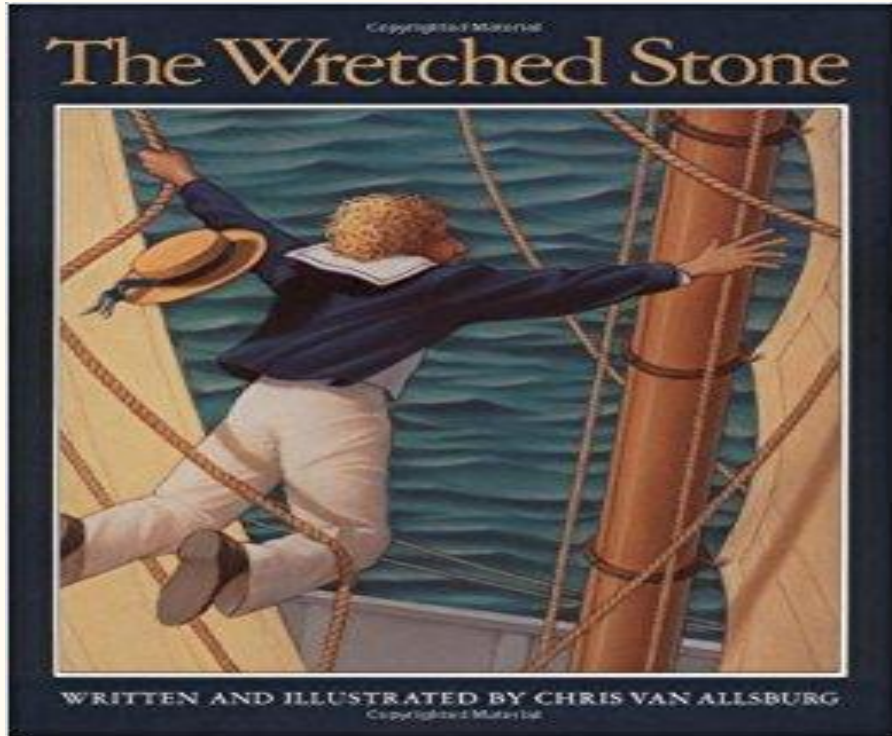


Unit 5: Current Events and YA Literature



- In Literature, I read *Golpe De Estado* - a short story from *Shattered* - aloud to students. It focuses on the violence that erupted during a government overthrow in Venezuela.
- The horrific scenes described in this text are very scary for young children, and we discussed how fortunate we are to not live in a country that has to deal with government overthrows constantly.

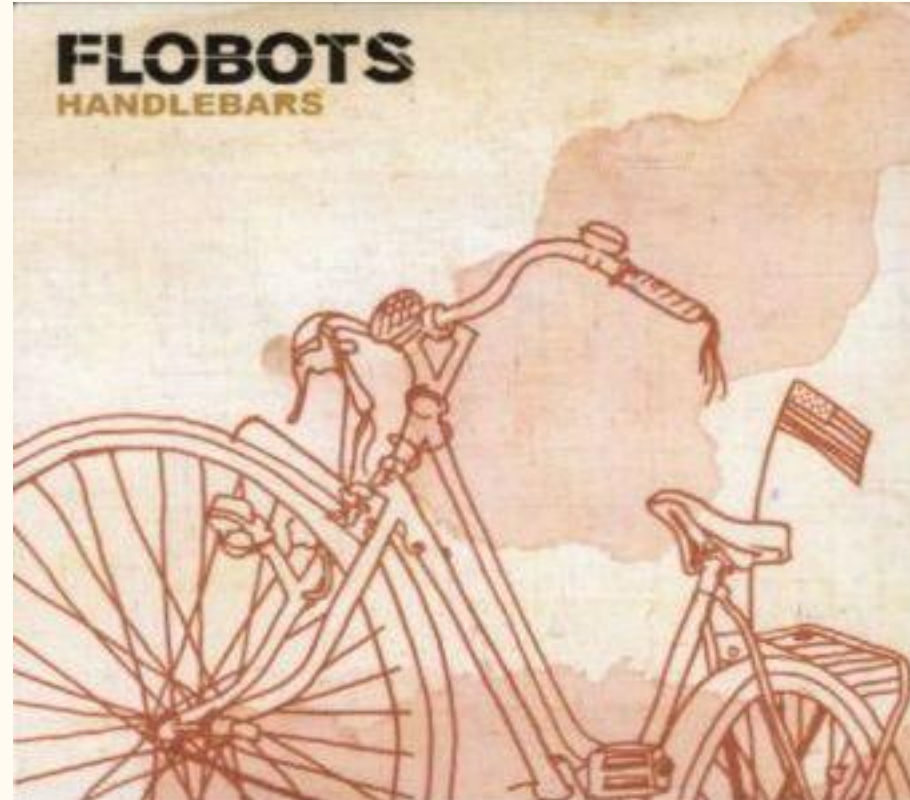
Unit 5: Current Events and YA Literature



- We read this book in Literature - it's an allegory about sailors becoming obsessed with a shiny rock on their ship. They become infatuated by this shining light and end up turning into monkeys. Slowly, they turn back into humans and realize how careful they need to be about idolizing things. We talked about cell phones, television, and the media, and how we become obsessed with these things.

Unit 5: Current Events and YA Literature

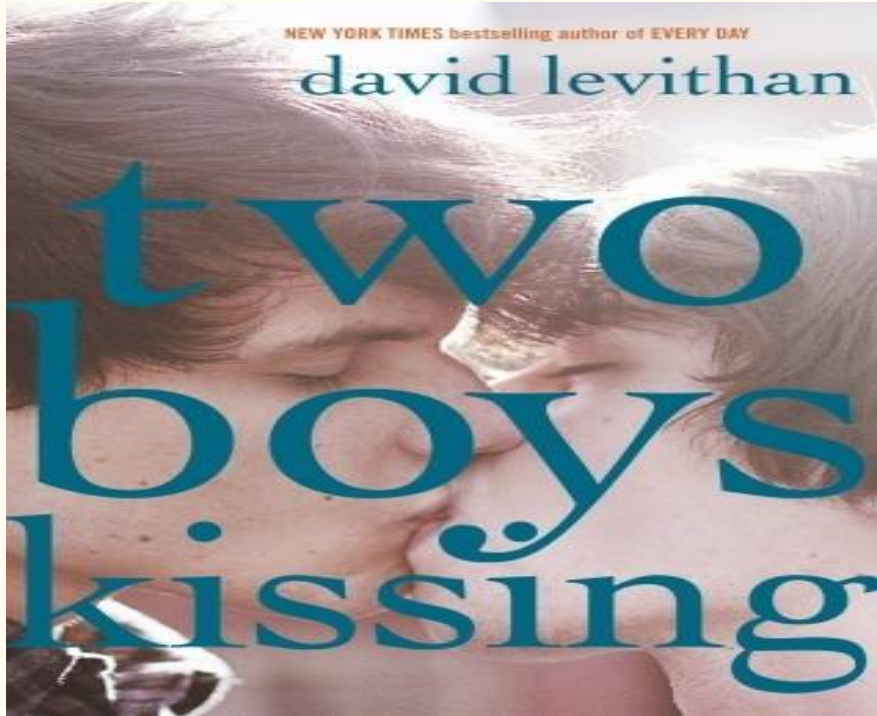
- I had to be creative to connect more current event issues into my literature class, so we spend one lesson breaking down a popular song “Handlebars” by the Flobots and reading the lyrics as text.
- The students connected to the themes of government greed, evil leaders, and violence.



What Students Said About “Current Events and YA Literature”

- “Listening to ‘I Can Ride My Bike With No Handlebars’ was the best lesson i’ve had in 6th grade so far”
- “The story about Venezuela was really scary, I don’t want to go there!”
- “I wish we looked at current events more often in class because it’s all going on right now”
- “The story about the monkeys was funny”
- “I think Alex Rider was a great book to read, I want to read more of the books about him”
- “Thanks for reading these books Mr. Parks”

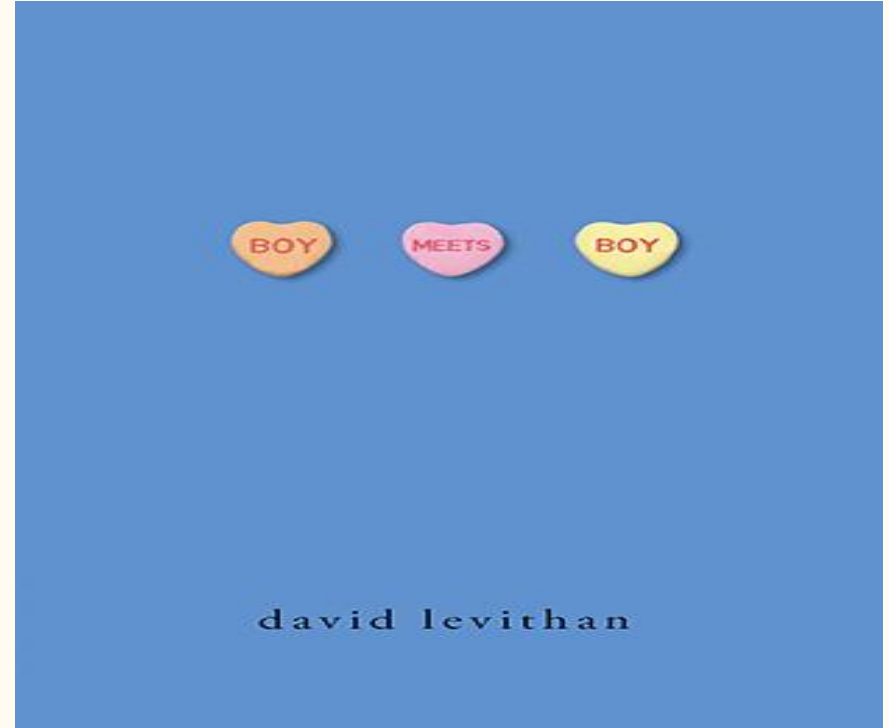
Unit 6: Complicating Normal: “Genders and Sexuality”



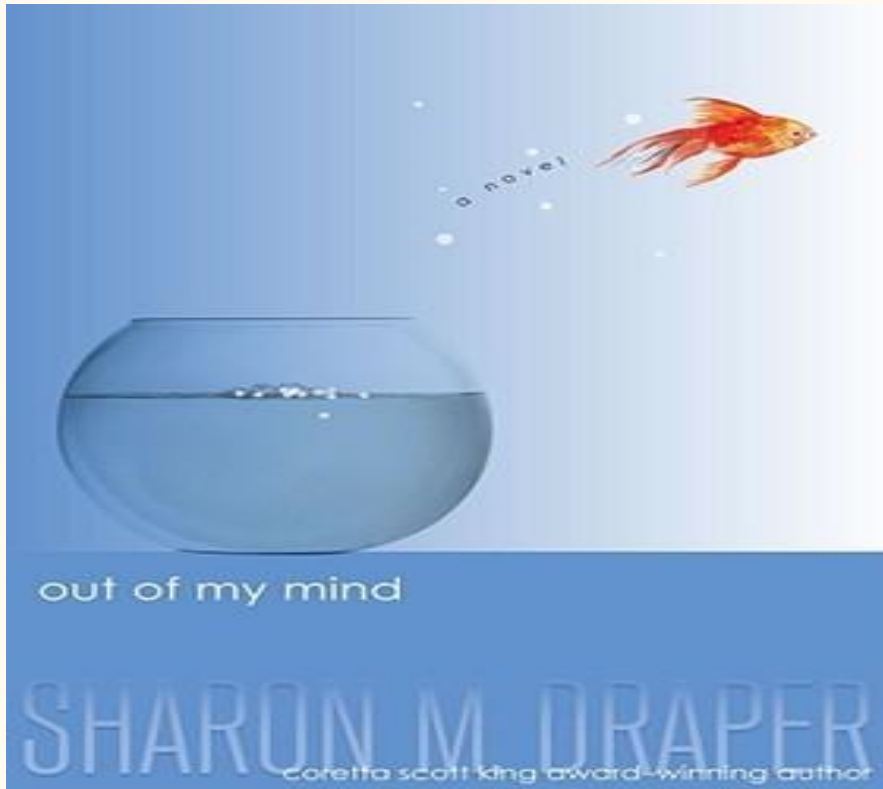
- We read this story in TE 849 and it's about two boys who kissed for record breaking time and how difficult life can be for the LGBT community when they don't feel accepted by others. For students who connect with this community, this book would be powerful for them. It may also help students who don't connect with this community to understand the perspective more.

Unit 6: Complicating Normal: “Genders and Sexuality”

- I did not intentionally read a book to my class about the LGBT community - I teach 6th grade and in my professional opinion some of the 6th graders are not mature enough yet to handle this topic. I personally read *Boy Meets Boy*, however, and it was also really good. If I taught at the high school level I would recommend these books to students I think it could benefit.



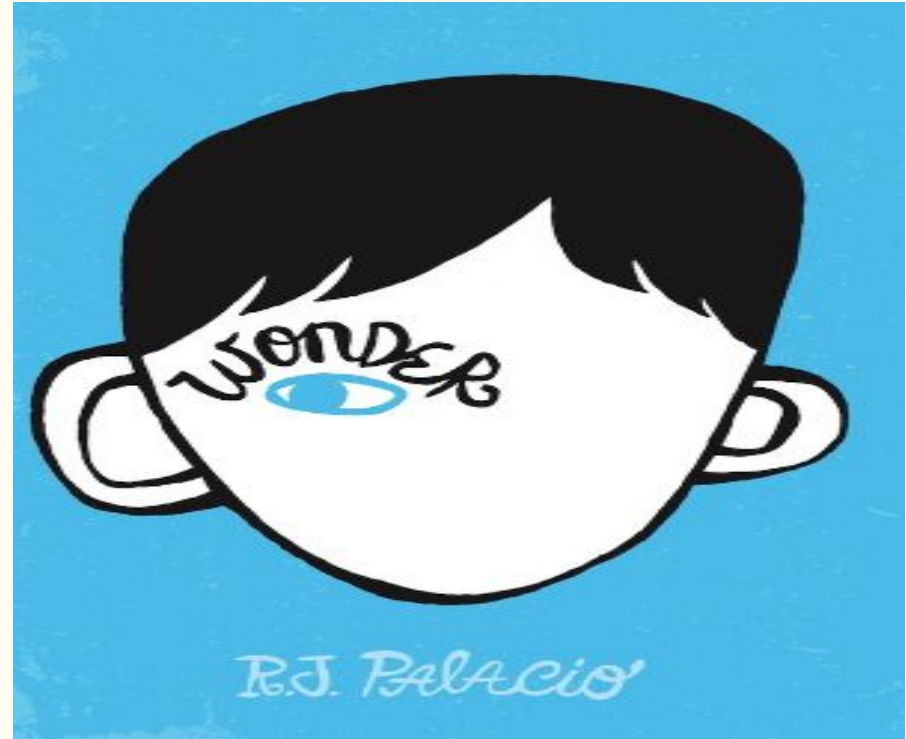
Unit 7: Disabilities



- I read the book *Out of My Mind* for TE 849. It's about a young girl with Cerebral Palsy and it's told from her perspective so we gain an understanding of her life and how she perceives the world - which is basically the same as everyone else! It's an eye-opener for students who think those with cerebral palsy aren't able to process things. It's powerful because she gains a speech typing tool toward the end and can connect with other students more!

Unit 7: Disabilities

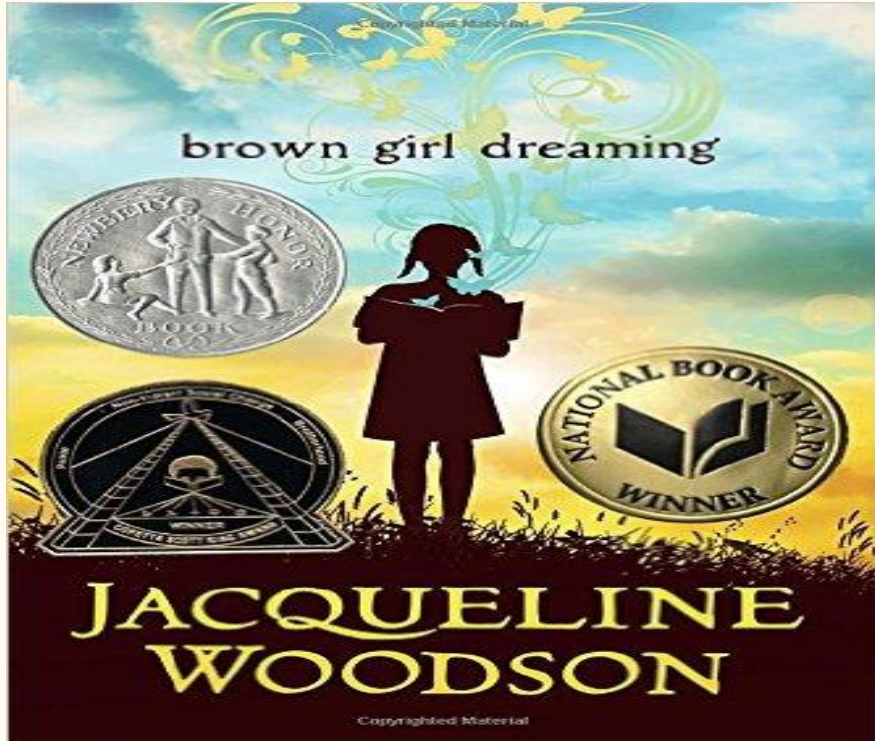
- I read *Wonder* as a read aloud to my 6th graders - and they loved it. The story was about Auggie Pullman and the challenges that go along from looking different from other students at school. He faces extreme anxiety and is bullied at school. Again, it's told in 1st person so we can understand his emotions as the story unfolds. The students learned a good lesson about empathy and understanding other perspectives.



What Students Said about “Disabilities”

- “*Wonder* was a really sad book. It made me think of some students I have known in school that are different from everyone else”
- “I wanted everyone to just be August’s friend because he’s really nice and funny, but everything thought he looked weird so they weren’t his friend”
- “It was really sad when he was excited about his halloween costume but after the kids made fun of him at school he didn’t even go trick or treating”
- “This book made me think about bullying”
- “I want to be like the people in the book that were nice to Auggie”

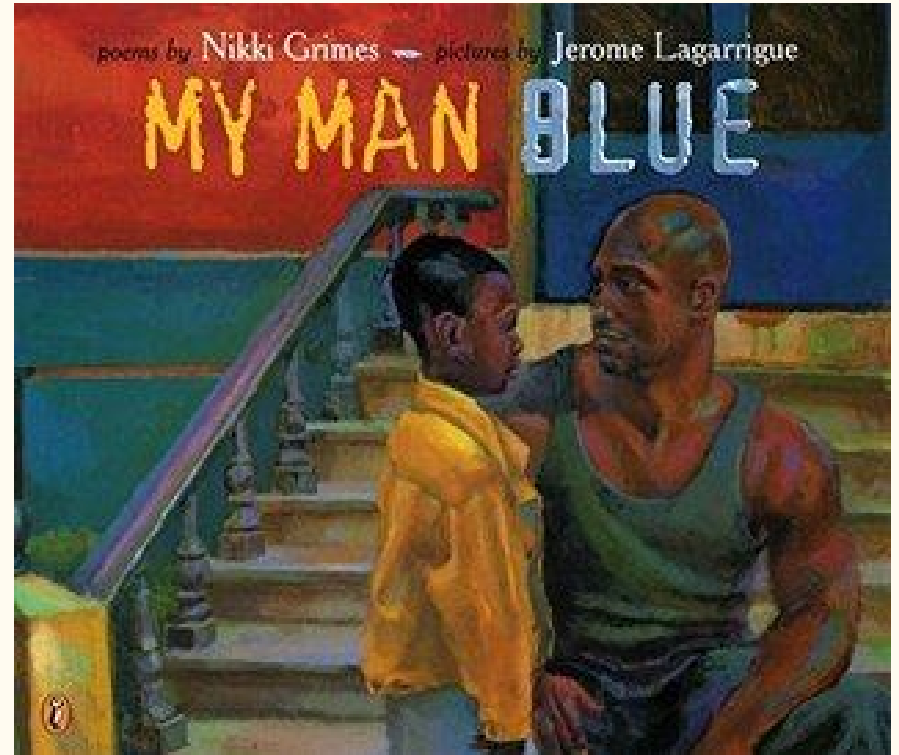
Unit 8: Poetry and Verse Novels



- We read this story in TE 849 and it shared about life as an African American family moving to the south during the 1960s from the north. During a time of racial intensity, it served as an interesting memoir to think about her childhood and how life has changed. The verse novel made each poem very easy to understand!

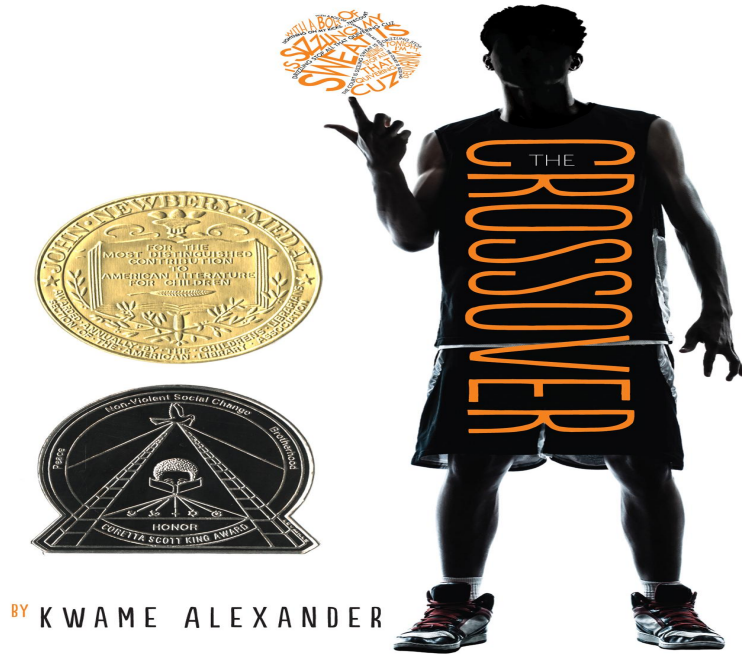
Unit 8: Poetry and Verse Novels

- *My Man Blue* was a much short text we read in TE 849 about a young black boy who needs a male role model in his life, and he finds one in his new friend Blue.
- This story also made me think about the lack of direction and positive role models young students have.
- The poems and structures in this text were interesting to analyze.



Unit 8: Poetry and Verse Novels

"BOLD! EXPLOSIVE! . . . I LOVE *THE CROSSOVER*. EVERYONE WILL." —NIKKI GIOVANNI



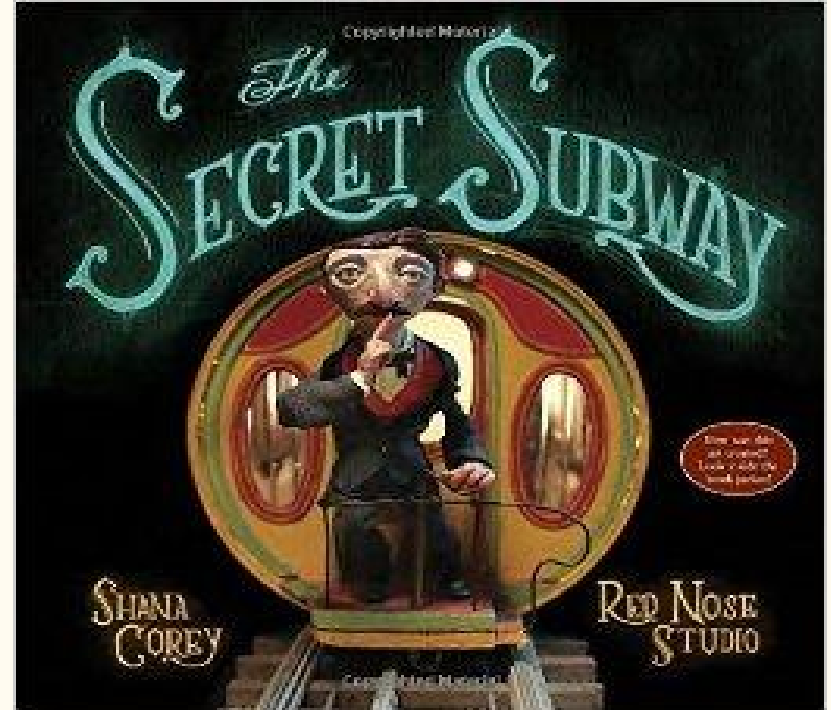
- Kwame Alexander's *The Crossover* was a fantastic verse novel about two young African American boys that love basketball and also face the challenges of middle school.
- My 7th graders really enjoyed this story because it's very funny, the wordplay and rhyming scheme makes it a great story to listen to
- Lastly, the themes are so relatable for students. There are crushes, death, sports, school, and so much the kids already connect with.

What Students Said About “Poetry and Verse Novels”

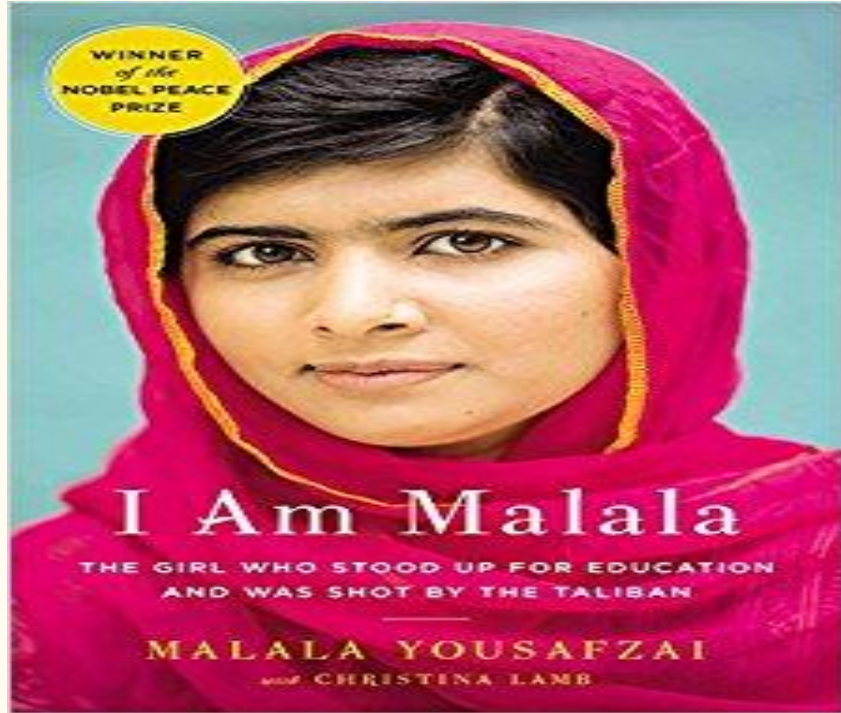
- “Everytime Mr. Parks stopped reading the book, I would get so upset because I wanted him to read more!”
- “*The Crossover* was really really sad, I couldn’t believe the dad actually died. I cried.”
- “I could tell from the beginning it was going to be a really good book because of all of the rhymes”
- “I liked the vocabulary and how we always stopped to make sure we understood what the words meant”
- “I know how it feels to have a crush on someone but them not like you back”

Unit 9: Informational/Expository/Non-Fiction

- This book shared the story of Alfred Ely Beach and how he created the blueprints for the New York Subway system before underground trains existed! It was an award winning Social Studies book in 2016. This made me think of how important innovation is.

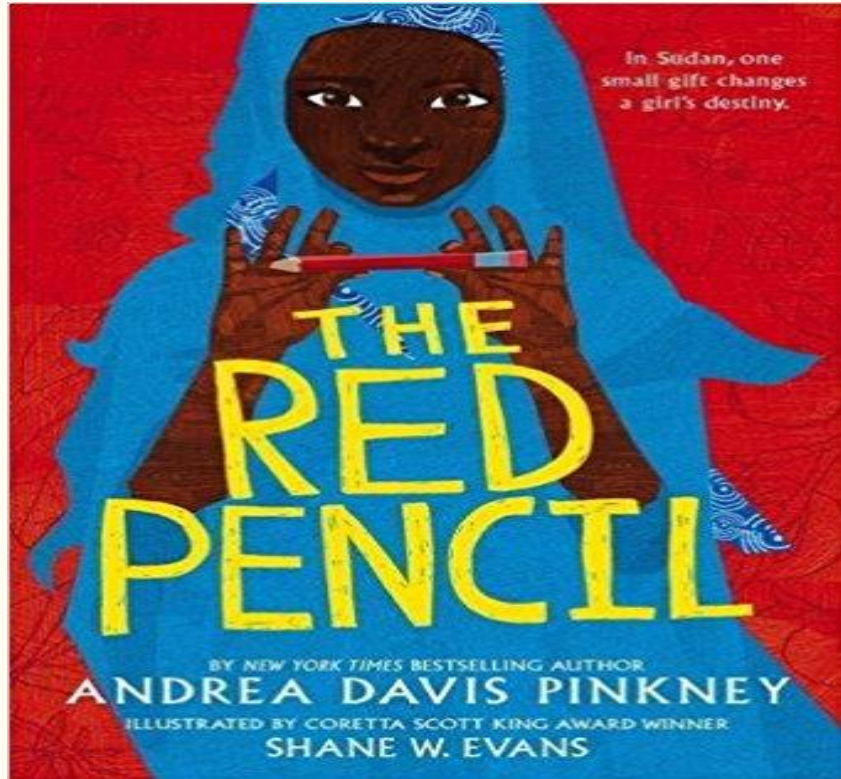


Unit 9: Informational/Expository/Non-Fiction



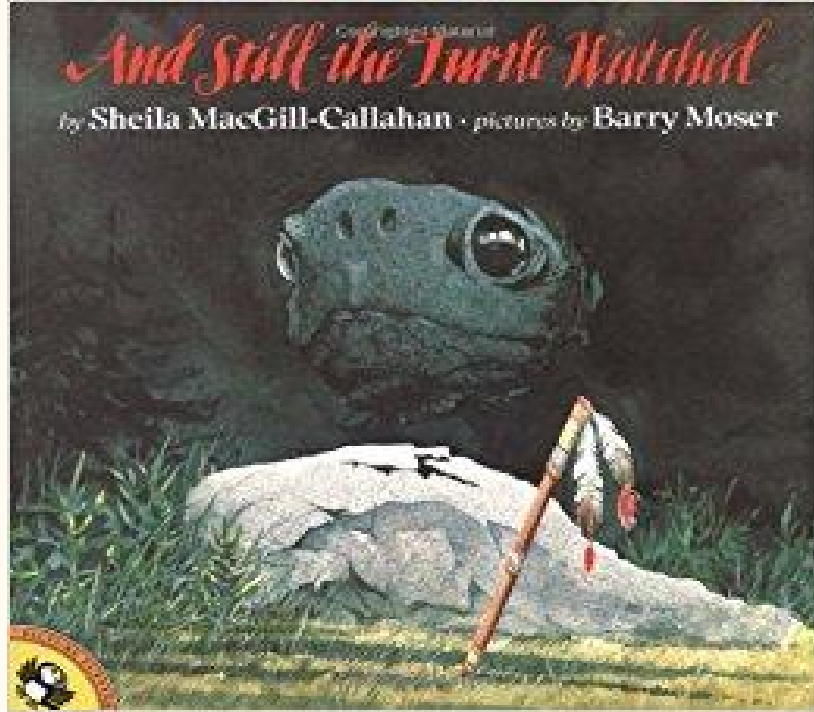
- I read this story in the “Nonfiction: Telling A True Story” unit in TE 849. It’s the powerful story of how Malala Yousafzai had to go to school in fear everyday because the Taliban didn’t approve of this. I learned a lot about the lifestyle of people in Pakistan post 9/11.

Unit 9: Informational/Expository/Non-Fiction



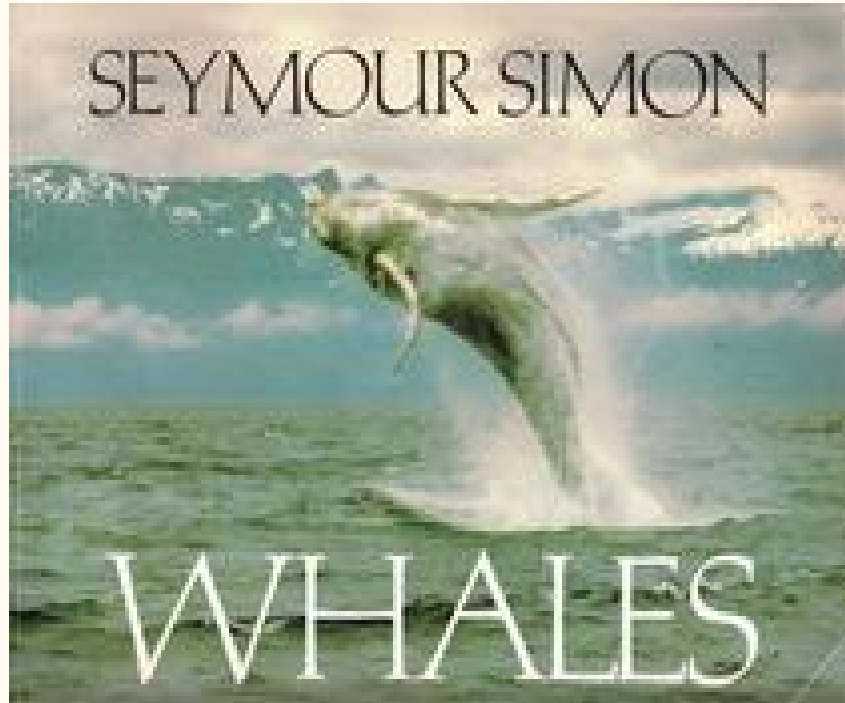
- This story is written in verse and so it could easily be included in that unit as well. It's a sad story about life in Sudan and how easy it is to become an IDP - Internally Displaced Person. This young character lost her dad, fought against Sandstorms and evildoers who overtook her city near Darfur.

Unit 9: Informational/Expository/Non-Fiction



I read this story aloud to students in my literature class. It tells about the displacement of the Delaware Tribe and it's based on a true story. Students learned about how english settlers slowly took over Native American Tribe lands and assimilated them to their ways. It shows how some of the things the settlers did were really bad - such as pollute the earth which dimmed the stars and turned the water brown.

Unit 9: Informational/Expository/Non-Fiction



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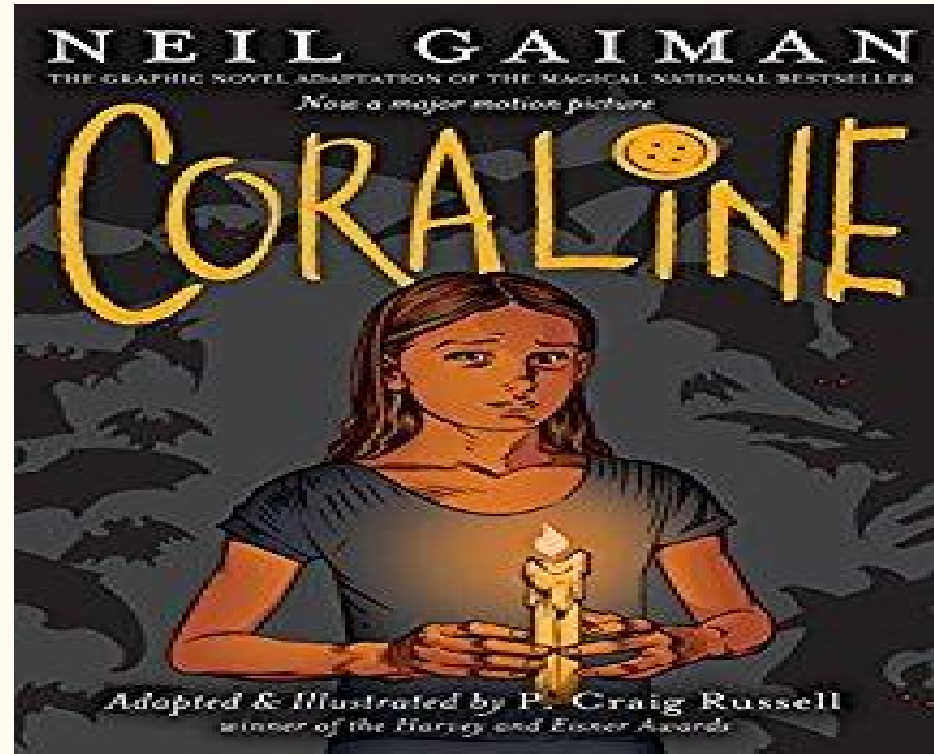
- Students created projects based on the information they read about, and shared during class.
- This particular student is much more of a “hands on” learner, and he struggled to connect with fictional books. He loved creating a “shark” based on the informational texts he read after I read a different “Shark” book to the class.
- Other projects were Google Slides presentations, 3d models, video games, talk shows, posterboards, and much more!

What Students Said about Non Fiction

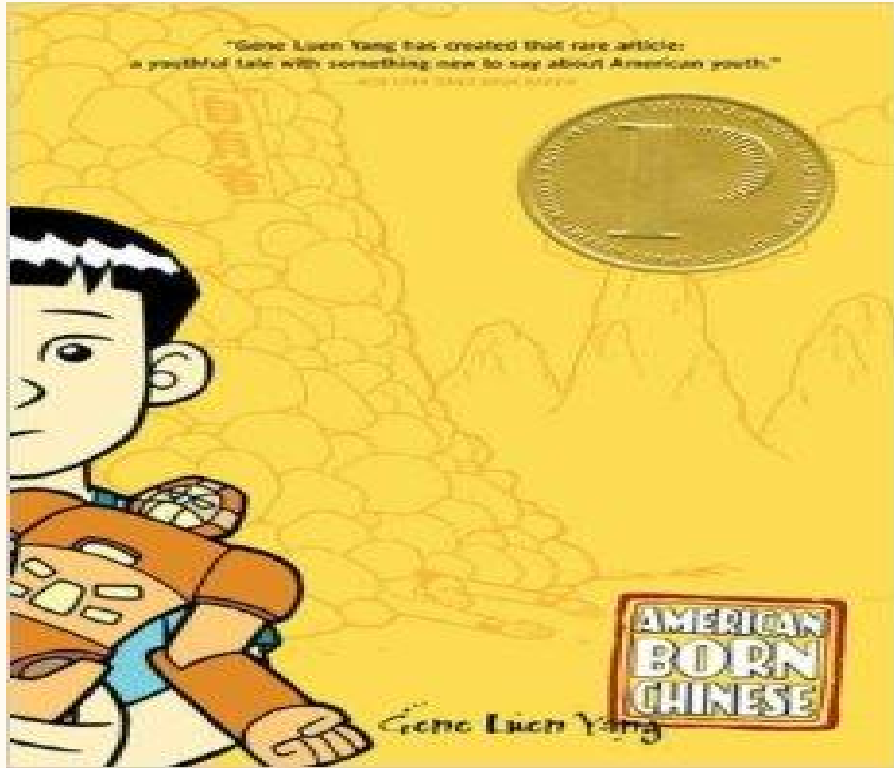
- “The book project was a great way for me to be creative. I felt like I could connect with the material any way I wanted”
- “I chose to make cupcakes for the class because my book was about how to make different kinds of cupcakes”
- “Since I like Kanye’s music, it was really fun to be able to do more research on his life. I learned a lot about his childhood.”
- “I guess it was fun to read about whales, I didn’t know that there tongues alone could weigh as much as a bus”
- “I don’t like that Americans just took over the land of the Native Americans”
- “The textbook reading about air pollution wasn’t really that fun but I did learn a lot about how we are polluting the earth with our cars and stuff”

Unit 10: Graphic Novels and Film

- We read the graphic novel Coraline in the last unit of TE 849 which allowed us to visually see the events unfolding throughout the text. We also watched the film and noted how the elements of the film/graphic novel impacted our understanding of the events in the story.
- Having already read the book version, this text helped aid my comprehension (and sometimes slightly change it).

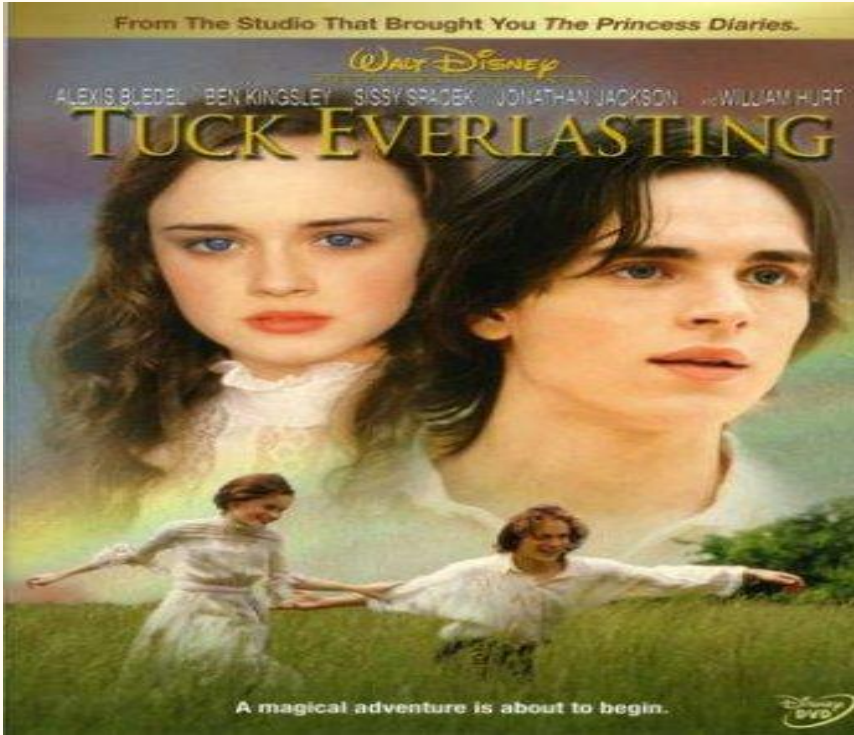


Unit 10: Graphic Novels and Film



- I have graphic novel copies of *Maus*, *Bone*, *Coraline*, and *Persepolis* in my classroom for students to read as graphic novels, but I bought a classroom set of *American Born Chinese* to read with my literature class.
- The story also focuses on culture, and how difficult it can be to adjust to a new setting.
- We read the story as a class, panel by panel, and the kids enjoyed understanding how the three identities of the Monkey King all came together at the end. Lastly, we had a great discussion about how an inflated sense of self can lead to our doom.

Unit 10: Graphic Novels and Film



- We compared the film version of Tuck Everlasting to the book!
- Students enjoyed not only identifying similarities and differences, but understanding why the filmmakers may have made those differences. For instance, the protagonist is much older in the movie - therefore making the romantic relationship more believable.

What Students Said about “Graphic Novels and Film”

- “*Tuck Everlasting* was such a good movie. I enjoyed it more than listening to the book. The music made the scenes much more scary and realistic”
- “The book and the movie were very good, I was so sad when Winnie Foster died!”
- “*American Born Chinese* was really funny. It made me think about my own identity and how i’m proud to be myself - I don’t need to be anyone else”
- “Jin Wang really seemed confused about who he was and who he wanted to be - I liked that Mr. Parks made us think about who we are as people”