

# The Best New Books for K-3 Readers and Writers

Judson Literacy In Motion Conference 2014

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Note about Teaching Ideas References:

T. L. T. = *Transforming Literacy Teaching in the Era of Higher Standards* (Walther, 2015)

M-by-M Reading = *Month-by-Month Reading for the Differentiated Classroom* (Walther & Phillips, 2012)

M-by-M Writing = *Month-by-Month Trait-Based Writing Instruction* (Walther & Phillips, 2009)

Poetry = *Teaching Struggling Readers With Poetry* (Walther & Fuhler, 2010)

L. I. B. = *Literature Is Back!* (Fuhler & Walther, 2007)

## BOOKS TO BEGIN THE SCHOOL YEAR

DiPucchio, K. (2014). *Dog days of school*. (B. Biggs, Illus.). New York: Disney/Hyperion.

When Charlie's wish comes true and he becomes a dog, Norman, his dog, goes off to school. Charlie soon discovers that being a dog isn't as relaxing as he thought!

**Teaching Ideas:** *Beginning of Year; Read Like a Writer (Days of the Week Structure)*

Hood, S. (2014). *Rooting for you: A moving up story*. (M. Cordell, Illus.). New York: Disney/Hyperion.

Bud, the seed, is reluctant to sprout and grow until his underground friends support him and cheer him on.

**Teaching Ideas:** *Creative Conventions (See Morning Message in M-by-M Writing p. 78); Inferring Big Ideas (See Mini-Lesson in M-by-M Reading p. 186); Great gift for graduates*

Pearson, T. C. (2013). *Elephant's story*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

An elephant finds Gracie's lost book and sniffs the letters up his trunk. Elephant takes the mixed-up letters to all of his friends who are unable to put them back in order. Finally, Gracie returns, put the words back in order, and shares the beginning of the story with her new friend Elephant.

**Teaching Ideas:** *Reading (perfect for Kindergarten); Friendship*

Reynolds, P. H., & Reynolds, P. A. (2014). *Going places*. (P. H. Reynolds, Illus.). New York: Atheneum.

The "Going Places" contest is underway and Rafael wants to win. So, he builds his go-cart to the exact specifications. Then, he notices that Maya has taken a different approach. Together, they create their own unique vehicle.

**Teaching Ideas:** *Beginning of the Year; Inferring Big Ideas (See Mini-Lesson in M-by-M Reading p. 186) (For more beginning of school year books see L. I. B. p. 128)*

## MENTOR TEXTS FOR COMMON CORE FOUNDATIONAL & LANGUAGE STANDARDS

Banks, K. (2013). *City cat*. (L. Castillo, Illus.). New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

A stray cat stows away with a family on a European vacation. Then, using various modes of transportation follows the family on their travels.

**Teaching Ideas:** *Vocabulary—Three Read Aloud Words: beckoning, pounces, squints (See M-by-M Reading p. 15-16), Grammar—Verbs (sprinting, striding, dancing, prancing, floating, boating, humming, drumming . . .)*

Best, C. (2013). *Beatrice spells some lulus and learns to write a letter.* (G. Potter, Illus.). New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

Beatrice and her grandma share a love of words and of spelling. Once grandma teaches her how to spell, Beatrice goes on a "spelling spree" and even corrects misspelled words around town. When her classmates don't share her enthusiasm for spelling, she decides to change "show-and-tell" to "show-and-spell."

**Teaching Ideas:** **Creating enthusiasm for spelling; Spelling strategies**

Deacon, A. (2013). *Cheese belongs to you!* (V. Schwarz, Illus.). Somerville, MA: Candlewick.

"This is rat law: Cheese belongs to you." Unless a gang of big, quick, strong, scary, hairy, dirty rats wants it. Filled with adjectives, this book is sure to inspire your writers!

**Teaching Ideas:** **Read Like a Writer (Video clip found in T. L. T); Grammar—Adjectives**

Hamburg, J. (2013). *A moose that says moo.* (S. Truesdell, Illus.). New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

Begin reading this book by looking carefully at the title page and noticing the items strewn around the yard. Each appears in this rhyming tale of a girl's imaginary zoo.

**Teaching Ideas:** **Phonemic Awareness—Rhyming text (CCSS—RF.K.2a); Imagination**

## **BOOKS TO SPARK COMPREHENSION CONVERSATIONS**

Bardhan-Quallen, S. (2014). *Duck, duck, moose!* (N. Z. Jones, Illus.). New York: Disney/Hyperion.

Two neat and tidy ducks prepare a surprise party for their clumsy roommate Moose. Each time they make something, Moose unwittingly messes it up.

**Teaching Ideas:** **CCSS Standard 7—Use illustrations to understand characters, setting, or plot**

Sullivan, M. (2013). *Ball.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Using only one word, "ball," the illustrations in this book clearly depict the dog's feelings, and dreams, as he waits patiently for his ball-throwing companion to get home from school.

**Teaching Ideas:** **CCSS Standard 7—Use illustrations to understand characters, setting, or plot**

Neubecker, R. (2013). *Winter is for snow.* New York: Disney/Hyperion.

A winter-loving brother is trying to convince his reluctant sister to join him outside for a fun-filled time in the snow. The text is written in two different colors, making it clear who is speaking at different points in the story.

This book could also lead to opinion writing about winter!

**Teaching Ideas:** **Fluency Fun! Partner Read with Different Voices; CCSS RL.1.6/RL.2.6 Point of View**

Portis, A. (2014). *Froodle.* New York: Roaring Brook.

Find out what happens when an inventive little brown bird decides that rather than peeping he will sing his own silly song.

**Teaching Ideas:** **Inferring Big Ideas (See Mini-Lesson in M-by-M Reading p. 186); Pair with *Sing!* by Tom Lichtenheld.**

Raposo, J., & Lichtenheld, T. (2013). *Sing*. New York: Holt.

If you watched Sesame Street as a young child, you might remember the song "Sing." This song of courage, pride, and hope comes to life with Tom Lichtenheld's brilliant illustrations. The book picture also includes a CD so that your class can sing along!

**Teaching Ideas:** Song Picture Books; Inferring Big Ideas; Author's Note—Shows revision as the song was being written

Dudley, R. (2013). *Hank finds an egg*. White Plains, NY: Peter Pauper.

After several attempts to put the egg back in the nest, Hank perseveres and, with mother bird's help, figures out a way to return the egg right before it hatches.

**Teaching Ideas:** Wordless Book (For more wordless book lists see L. I. B. p. 52, M-by-M Writing p. 63, M-by-M Reading p. 55, T. L. T. p. XX); Comprehension Conversation—Inferring Big Ideas, Predicting

Wiesner, D. (2013). *Mr. Wuffles*. New York: Clarion.

Mr. Wuffles, the cat, doesn't play with any of his cat toys until one day he discovers a tiny alien spaceship. After Mr. Wuffles tosses it around, the insects help the aliens repair their ship and flee.

**Teaching Ideas:** Wordless Book; Inferring

Kirsch, V. X. (2013). *Freddie & Gingersnap*. New York: Disney/Hyperion.

Freddie, the dinosaur, and Gingersnap, the dragon, both want to learn how to fly. After becoming friends, Freddie figures out the secret and teaches Gingersnap how to fly.

**Teaching Ideas:** Social Studies—friendship, working together; Key details in illustrations; Pair with *Horsefly and Honeybee* (Cecil, 2012)

Offill, J. (2014). *Sparky!* (C. Appelhans, Illus.). New York: Schwartz & Wade.

A determined young girl convinces her mother to let her get a new pet sloth. Written in 1<sup>st</sup> person point-of-view.

**Teaching Ideas:** Create a multi-genre text set using: "Slow Sloth's Slow Song" (p. 65) found in Jack Prelutsky's book *Something Big Has Been Here* (1990), *Let's Look at Sloths* (Piehl, 2011), *A Little Book of Sloth* (Cooke, 2013).

## BOOKS FOR WRITERS

Hanlon, A. (2012). *Ralph tells a story*. Las Vegas, NV: Amazon.

Ralph can't think of any ideas for his story. After trying everything, including roaming the hallways, he writes his first story. Notice all of Ralph's stories on the back end papers.

**Teaching Ideas:** Launching Writing Workshop (T. L. T. p. XX), Writing Traits—Ideas (M-by-M Writing), Encouraging Reluctant Writers

de Las Casas, D. (2013). *The Little "Read" Hen*. (H. Stone-Barker, Illus.). Gretna, LA: Pelican.

Who will help me brainstorm, research, outline, draft, edit, and proof my story? "Not I," said the Dog, Cat, and Pig. So, the little "read" hen completes the story herself and finally decides to share it with her friends. Although the book does not include revising, it is still worth reading to young writers.

**Teaching Ideas:** Introduce writing process vocabulary; Traditional Tales (For mini-lessons and book lists see M-by-M Reading Chapter 5; T. L. T. p. XX)

Morris, R. T. (2014). *This is a moose*. (T. Lichtenheld, Illus.). New York: Little, Brown.

Director Duck is trying to make a film about a moose doing "moose things" but discovers that moose has other plans.

**Teaching Ideas: Read Like a Writer**

Diesen, D. (2013). *Picture day perfection*. (D. Santat, Illus.). New York: Abrams.

A boy has planned all year for the "perfect" picture and all of his hard work is ruined when he smiles for his school picture.

**Teaching Ideas: Writing Genres—Personal Narrative (For more information on personal narrative writing see M-by-M Writing p. 46, M-by-M Reading p. 102, T. L. T. p. XX); Sentence Fluency—Transition Words**

Scillian, D. (2013). *Memoirs of a hamster*. (T. Bowers, Illus.). Ann Arbor, MI: Sleeping Bear.

In the sequel to *Memoirs of a Goldfish* (2010), Seymour, the hamster, is content in his cage until Pearl, the cat, entices him to explore the outside world. He quickly learns that she only wants him outside his cage for one reason—to eat him.

**Teaching Ideas: Writers get ideas from their lives (See mini-lesson in M-by-M Writing p. 43); Pair with *My Humongous Hamster* (Freytag, 2013)**

## Opinion Writing

Carle, E. (2014). *What's your favorite animal?* New York: Holt.

"What is your favorite animal?" Eric Carle asked 14 different children's book artists this question and got 14 very different answers. As you share this book with your students, discuss the various ways the artists went about answering the question. Notice the different styles and genres of writing. Then, ask your students the same question to discover their opinions.

**Teaching Ideas: Read Like a Writer; Opinion Writing (See T. L. T. p. XX)**

Guiberson, B. Z. (2013). *The greatest dinosaur ever*. (G. Spirin, Illus.). New York: Holt.

In first person voice, each dinosaur argues why it was the greatest dinosaur of all. The pronunciation of each dinosaur's name is located directly underneath (helpful for those of us who are not dinosaur experts!)

**Teaching Ideas: Opinion Writing: Which was the greatest dinosaur and why?**

## Procedural Writing

Morstad, J. (2013). *How to. Simply Read Books*.

If you are looking for a book to spark ideas for procedural writing, this one fits the bill.

**Teaching Ideas: Ideas for "How To" pieces (See T. L. T. p. XX)**

Robinson, M. (2013). *How to wash a woolly mammoth*. (K. Hindley, Illus.). New York: Holt.

A young girl shares her step-by-step guide to bathing a pet woolly mammoth. This book would be an ideal mentor text for informational how-to pieces.

**Teaching Ideas: Informational writing mentor text—"How To" book; Pair with informational text about woolly mammoths**

## BOOKS FOR POETS

Muth, J. J. (2014). *Hi, Koo! A year of seasons*. New York: Scholastic.

Join Koo, the panda bear, on a joyful journey through the seasons while reading this beautifully illustrated collection of 26 poems. Before sharing this book with your students, it is important to read the Author's Note as Muth has chosen not to adhere to the rigid structure of the five-seven-five syllable pattern.

**Teaching Ideas:** Poetry

## BOOKS FOR HISTORY BUFFS

Meltzer, B. (2014). *I am Abraham Lincoln*. (C. Eliopoulos, Illus.). New York: Dial.

This is one of the biographies in the "Ordinary People Change the World" series. These books are ideal for young readers because they are told in an engaging manner that connects with children, while also clearly illustrating the lasting importance of the accomplishments of each individual.

**Teaching Ideas:** Writing Genres—Biography (For more information on writing a biography see M-by-M Writing p. 124 & M-by-M Reading Chapter 6); Social Studies—Inspiring Individuals (For more books & ideas see M-by-M Reading Chapter 6)

Bunting, E. (2013). *The cart that carried Martin*. (D. Tate, Illus.). Watertown, ME: Charlesbridge.

Bunting's carefully crafted, poetic text captures the mood of the country the day "the humble cart" carried Dr. King's body through Atlanta in April, 1968.

**Teaching Ideas:** Social Studies—Black History; Pair with *Rosa's Bus: The Ride to Civil Rights* (Kittinger, 2010) or *Abraham Lincoln Comes Home* (Burleigh, 2008) about Lincoln's funeral train to discuss historical events told from unique perspectives.

McGinty, A. B. (2013). *Gandhi: A march to the sea*. (T. Gonzalez, Illus.). Las Vegas, NV: Amazon.

You can almost hear their footsteps in the rhythm of McGinty's words as you travel with Gandhi and his fellow protestors on their March to the Sea. Create a text set with books about other peaceful protests like *We March* (Evans, 2012), *A Sweet Smell of Roses* (Johnson, 2007), *Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins* (Weatherford, 2007).

**Teaching Ideas:** Social Studies—Inspiring Individuals (For more books & ideas see M-by-M Reading Chapter 6)

## BOOKS FOR BOYS (AND GIRLS)

Chin, J. (2014). *Gravity*. New York: Roaring Brook.

Author of *Redwoods* (2009) and *Coral Reefs* (2011) depicts what would happen without gravity in an imaginative tale told mainly in the illustrations.

**Teaching Ideas:** Books for Boys; CCSS Standard 7—Use illustrations to understand characters, setting, or plot

Chung, A. (2014). *Ninja!* New York: Holt.

A young ninja has to overcome obstacles to complete his mission—snatching the cookies and milk from his sister.

**Teaching Ideas:** Books for Boys; Pair with *Nighttime Ninja* (DaCosta, 2012)

Cyrus, K. (2014). *Motordog*. (D. Gordon, Illus.). New York: Disney/Hyperion.

A boy named Flip orders Motordog on the Internet. When Motordog uses all his high-tech features to chase a cat, he almost loses Flip. In the end, Flip decides that a low-tech dog is just as nice.

**Teaching Ideas: Books for Boys; Phonemic Awareness—Rhyming Text; Read Like a Writer**

Griffiths, A. (2014). *Ed and Ted and Ted's Dog Fred*. (T. Denton, Illus.). New York: Macmillan.

If you haven't discovered Andy Griffiths' hilarious books *The Cat on the Mat is Flat* (2006) and *The Big Fat Cow That Goes Kapow* (2008), buy those first! This book is an adapted version of one of the stories from *The Cat on the Mat is Flat*.

**Teaching Ideas: Books for Boys & Reluctant Beginning Readers**

## NEW BOOKS IN A SERIES

DiCamillo, K. (2014). *Leroy Ninker saddles up*. (C. Van Dusen, Illus.). Somerville, MA: Candlewick.

Shea, B. (2014). *Dinosaur vs. school*. New York: Disney/Hyperion.

Willems, M. (2014). *My new friend is so fun!* New York: Hyperion.

Willems, M. (2014). *The pigeon needs a bath*. New York: Hyperion.

## Professional Resources:

Fuhler, C. J., & Walther, M. P. (2007). *Literature Is Back! Using the Best Books for Teaching Readers and Writers Across Genres*. New York: Scholastic.

Richardson, J., & Walther, M. P. (2013). *The Next Step Guided Reading Assessment, K-2*. New York: Scholastic.

Richardson, J., & Walther, M. P. (2013). *The Next Step Guided Reading Assessment, 3-6*. New York: Scholastic.

Walther, M. P. (2015). *Transforming Literacy Teaching in the Era of Higher Standards: Model Lessons and Practical Strategies That Show You How to Integrate the Standards to Plan and Teach With Confidence*. New York: Scholastic.

Walther, M. P., & Fuhler, C. J. (2010). *Teaching Struggling Readers With Poetry: Engaging Poems With Mini-Lessons That Target & Teach Phonics, Sight Words, Fluency & More—Laying the Foundation for Reading Success*. New York: Scholastic.

Walther, M. P., & Phillips, K. A. (2009). *Month-by-Month Trait-Based Writing Instruction: Ready-to-Use Lessons and Strategies for Weaving Morning Messages, Read-Alouds, Mentor Texts, and More Into Your Daily Writing Program*. New York: Scholastic.

Walther, M. P., & Phillips, K. A. (2012). *Month-by-Month Reading Instruction for the Differentiated Classroom: A Strategic Approach With Comprehension Mini-Lessons, Vocabulary-Building Activities, Management Tips, and More to Help Every Child Become a Confident, Capable Reader*. New York: Scholastic.