

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

Judson Literacy In Motion Conference 2015

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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

Best, C. (2015). *My three best friends and me, Zula*. (V. Brantley-Newton, Illus.). New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

Join an upbeat, first-grade girl named Zula as she tells you about her school, her friends, and the training she has to do to run a race on field day. One of the reasons that she has to train so hard is because she is blind.

**Teaching Idea:** Social Studies—Friendship, School, Understanding Others

Cocca-Leffler, M. (2015). *Janine*. Chicago, IL: Albert Whitman.

Janine is excluded from a party because she is different but, instead of being upset, she has her own party and invites EVERYONE! The author wrote this book about her daughter, Janine, who has bravely navigated her life with disabilities.

**Teaching Idea:** Social Studies—Accepting Differences, Kindness

Federle, T. (2015). *Tommy can't stop*. (M. Fearing, Illus.). New York: Disney/Hyperion.

"Tommy's gotta bop." He also likes to bounce, kick, clomp, and hurdle. He is so full of energy that his family looks for ways to tire him out. Finally, a reluctant Tommy tries tap dancing and discovers he's got talent.

**Teaching Ideas:** Social Studies—Accepting Differences; Read Like a Writer—Parentheses; Grammar—Verbs

Ferry, B. (2015). *Stick and Stone*. (T. Lichtenheld, Illus.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Stick and Stone become friends when Stick stands up to Pinecone who is bullying Stone.

**Teaching Ideas:** Rhyming Text; Inferring Big Ideas (See M-by-M Reading p. 186); Social Studies—Bullying, Friendship

Krall, D. (2015). *Sick Simon*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Do your students sneeze and cough all over the classroom? If so, then this book is perfect for them! Watch your kids' faces as you read about Sick Simon's "best week ever!" The illustrations are disgusting, but they get the point across.

**Teaching Idea:** Science—Healthy Body

Krosoczka, J. J. (2014). *Peanut Butter and Jellyfish*. New York: Knopf.

Best friends, Peanut Butter and Jellyfish, are endlessly taunted by Crabby. One day, Crabby gets caught in a lobster trap. When the duo sets Crabby free, he apologizes for his behavior and they all become friends.

**Teaching Ideas:** Social Studies—Bullying, Friendship; Noticing Characters' Responses (See T.L.T. p. 116-117); Vocabulary

McDonnell, P. (2014). *A perfectly messed-up story*. New York: Little, Brown.

Louie is trying to tell his story when someone messes it up. In the end, he realizes that everything is just fine. Ideal for kids who need to be a bit more flexible in their thinking.

**Teaching Ideas:** Social Studies—Flexible Thinking; Pair with *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes* (Litwin, 2008)

Murphy, B. (2015). *Ready for school, Murphy?* New York: Disney/Hyperion.

After having some bad dreams about school, Murphy pretends to be sick so he won't have to go. When he finds out it's Saturday he feels much better and goes out to play—in his underwear!

**Teaching Ideas:** Beginning of the Year; Read Like a Writer (notice that the story begins on the front end papers)

Petty, D. (2015). *I don't want to be a frog*. (M. Boldt, Illus.). New York: Doubleday.

This amusing story, told all in speech bubbles, is about self-acceptance. A small frog is convinced he no longer wants to be a frog, but his wise father and a hungry wolf set him straight.

**Teaching Ideas:** Read Like a Writer—Speech Bubbles; Pair with *The Mixed-Up Chameleon* (Carle, 1975)

Rosenberg, L. (2015). *What James said*. (M. Myers, Illus.). New York: Roaring Brook.

The main character is mad at James because she believes he said she thinks she's perfect. In the end, she discovers this wasn't exactly true. Rosenberg tells this tale in first-person narrative from a little girl's point of view.

**Teaching Ideas:** Beginning of the Year; Social Studies—Friendship, Misunderstandings

Torrey, R. (2015). *Ally-saurus & the first day of school*. New York: Sterling.

During lunch, Ally, who loves dinosaurs, is turned away by a group of princesses but finds another group of friends—each with their own unique interest. At the end, the teacher takes the class to the library where they all select books to match their interest.

**Teaching Ideas:** Social Studies—Accepting Differences; Reading Workshop—Reading Interest Survey

## BOOKS TO SPARK COMPREHENSION CONVERSATIONS

de la Peña, M. (2015). *Last stop on Market Street*. (C. Robinson, Illus.). New York: Putnam.

CJ and his grandma are taking the city bus to a soup kitchen on the other side of town, along the way grandma teaches CJ some important life lessons.

**Teaching Ideas:** Pair with *Something Beautiful* (1998); Inferring Big Ideas (See M-by-M Reading p. 186)

Hatke, B. (2014). *Julia's house of lost creatures*. New York: Roaring Brook.

Julia's house is lonely so she goes into her workshop and makes a sign inviting lost creatures to join her. Eventually, the lost creatures become a bit unruly so Julia goes into her workshop again, and makes another sign. . .

**Teaching Idea:** Predicting (See M-by-M Reading p. 116)

Messner, K. (2015). *How to read a story*. (M. Siegel, Illus.). San Francisco, CA: Chronicle

This clever step-by-step guide to reading a story includes tips for reading with fluency, predicting, talking about the story, and much more!

**Teaching Ideas:** Launching Reading Workshop; Reading to Families on Curriculum Night or Literacy Night

Nelson, K. (2015). *If you plant a seed*. New York: HarperCollins.

Rabbit and Mouse plant seeds, but their selfishness leads to trouble. They discover that planting a seed of kindness is much sweeter.

**Teaching Ideas:** Science—Spring, Plants; Inferring Big Ideas (See M-by-M Reading p. 186); Pair with *Each Kindness* (Woodson, 2012)

Underwood, D. (2015). *Interstellar Cinderella*. (M. Hunt, Illus.). San Francisco: Chronicle.

In this galactic version of Cinderella, she dreams of fixing fancy rockets and ends up as the prince's chief mechanic instead of his bride.

**Teaching Ideas:** Compare and Contrast Different Cinderella Versions (See T. L. T. pp. 130-132); Traditional Tales (See M-by-M Reading pp. 142-144)

## BOOKS FOR WRITERS

Byrne, R. (2014). *This book just ate my dog!* New York: Holt.

When Bella takes her dog for a "stroll across the page," he disappears into the gutter of the book along with her friend, the rescue squad, and Bella herself. Quick-thinking Bella writes a note to the readers telling them to shake the book and get everyone out.

**Teaching Ideas:** Parts of a Book—Gutter (See morning message in M-by-M Reading p. 40); Reading-Writing Connection

Fox, D., & Fox, D. (2014). *The cat, the dog, Little Red, the exploding eggs, the wolf, and Grandma*. New York: Scholastic.

In this hilarious book, Cat is reading the story of Red Riding Hood, but Dog would rather hear a superhero story.

**Teaching Ideas:** Traditional Tales; Point of View; Parts of a Book—End Papers

Mack, J. (2015). *Look!* New York: Philomel.

He's done it again! Jeff Mack, author of *AH HA!* (2013), has created another two-word masterpiece. This one is about a gorilla, a boy, and the power of books.

**Teaching Ideas:** Read Like a Writer, Sight Words

Rocco, J. (2014). *Blizzard*. New York: Hyperion.

Rocco recounts his experience as a ten-year-old boy in the New England snowstorm of 1978. Notice how he hides the names of the days of the week in the illustrations.

**Teaching Idea:** Personal Narrative Writing (See M-by-M Writing pp. 49-52; See T.L.T. pp. 145-148)

Sheehan, K. (2014). *The dandelion's tale*. (R. Dunlavey, Illus.). New York: Schwartz & Wade.

Dandelion has one wish, to be remembered. So, before her seedpods blow away, she tells her stories to Sparrow. After a storm blows all her seedpods away, Sparrow remembers Dandelion and tells her tales to her children.

**Teaching Ideas:** Writing Workshop—The Power of Storytelling; Pair with nonfiction books about dandelions

## Opinion Writing

Averbeck, J. (2015). *One word from Sophia*. (Y. Ismail, Illus.). New York: Atheneum.

Sophia desperately wants a pet giraffe and presents her arguments (along with pie charts and graphs) to her family. The author has included a humorous, and informative, glossary at the end of the book leading to further discussion about the wonderful world of words.

**Teaching Ideas:** Vocabulary—Introduce Glossary; Argument/Persuasive Writing

Guiberson, B. Z. (2015). *The most amazing creature in the sea*. (G. Spirin, Illus.). New York: Holt.

Similar to her book *The Greatest Dinosaur Ever* (2013), each sea creature argues why it is the most amazing creature in the sea.

**Teaching Ideas:** Science—Ocean or Animal Units; Opinion Writing

## BOOKS FOR POETS

Cleary, B. P. (2015). *Ode to a commode: Concrete poems*. (A. Rowland, Illus.). Minneapolis, MN: Millbrook.

A clever collection of concrete poems about everything from toilets to Christmas trees. Includes explanation of concrete poems and idea starters.

**Teaching Ideas:** Poetry (See T. L. T. pp. 149-150, M-by-M Reading Chpt. 7, M-by-M Writing Chpt. 7)

Engle, M. (2015). *Orangutanka: A story in poems*. (R. Kurilla, Illus.). New York: Holt.

Written in a string of tanka poems that the author likens to a "poetic travel diary," readers meet a family of orangutans living in a wildlife refuge.

**Teaching Ideas:** Poetry (See T. L. T. pp. 149-150, M-by-M Reading Chpt. 7, M-by-M Writing Chpt. 7)

Wardlaw, L. (2015). *Won Ton and Chopstick: A cat and dog tale told in Haiku*. (E. Yelchin, Illus.). New York: Holt.

In the sequel to *Won Ton* (2011), the newly adopted shelter cat's life is upended when a new puppy joins the family.

**Teaching Ideas:** Poetry (See T. L. T. pp. 149-150, M-by-M Reading Chpt. 7, M-by-M Writing Chpt. 7)

## BOOKS FOR HISTORY BUFFS

Applegate, K. (2014). *Ivan: The remarkable true story of a shopping mall gorilla*. (G. B. Karas, Illus.). New York: Clarion.

The touching tale of Ivan, a western lowland gorilla, who was captured and held captive for 27 years at the B & I Circus Store in Tacoma, Washington until 1994 when he was moved to Zoo Atlanta.

**Teaching Idea:** Compare and Contrast with *Winnie: The True Story of the Bear Who Inspired Winnie-the-Pooh* (Walker, 2015) and *Christian the Lion* (Bourke & Rendall, 2009)

Bass, H. (2015). *Seeds of freedom: The peaceful integration of Huntsville, Alabama*. (E. B. Lewis, Illus.). Somerville, MA: Candlewick.

Traces the efforts of the citizens of Huntsville to peacefully integrate their city during the tumultuous time from January 1962-September 1963.

**Teaching Ideas:** U. S. History: A Timeline of Picture Books (See M-by-M Reading p. 164-166); Civil Rights

Cooper, F. (2015). *Juneteenth for Mazie*. North Mankato, MN: Capstone.

Mazie learns more about her family's history as she and her dad prepare for the Juneteenth celebration. Juneteenth is the celebration that commemorates the announcement of the abolition of slavery and the emancipation of African-American throughout the United States.

**Teaching Ideas:** U. S. History—A Timeline of Picture Books (See M-by-M Reading pp. 164-166); Civil Rights

Kostecki-Shaw, J. S. (2015). *Luna & me: The true story of a girl who lived in a tree to save a forest*. New York: Holt.

The author of *Same, Same But Different* (2011) tells the true story of Julia (nicknamed Butterfly) who, as a way of protest, camped out in an ancient Redwood tree for 738 days until the Pacific Lumber Company agreed to protect Luna and the surrounding grove of trees.

**Teaching Ideas:** Earth Day; Perseverance; Women in History

Stone, T. L. (2015). *The house that Jane built: A story about Jane Addams*. (K. Brown, Illus.). New York: Holt.

In 1889, Jane Addams opened a settlement house in Chicago and by 1907 it had grown into thirteen buildings. The Hull House was among her many accomplishments along with being first American woman to win the Noble Peace Prize.

**Teaching Ideas:** Writing Genres—Biography; Women in History

Walker, S. M. (2015). *Winnie: The true story of the bear who inspired Winnie-the-Pooh*. (J. D. Voss, Illus.). New York: Holt.

World War I soldier and veterinarian, Henry Colebourn, adopts a baby bear and brings her to training camp in Quebec and then to England. Once in England, Henry is called to battle, so he takes Winnie to the London Zoo where a young boy named Christopher Robin meets her and the rest is history!

**Teaching Ideas:** Writing Genres—Biography; Compare and Contrast with *Ivan: The Remarkable True Story of the Shopping Mall Gorilla* (Applegate, 2014)

## BOOKS FOR SCIENTISTS

Heos, B. (2015). *I, Fly: The buzz about flies and how awesome they are*. (J. Plecas, Illus.). New York: Holt.

A fly tries to convince a class of students who are currently studying butterflies why they should be studying flies instead.

**Teaching Idea:** Science—Insects or Butterfly Unit

Jenkins, S., & Page, R. (2014). *Creature features: 25 animals explain why they look the way they do*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Discover why thorny devils are spiny and sun bears have long tongues in this engaging nonfiction picture book.

**Teaching Ideas:** Crafting Pattern Books (See T.L.T. p. 145-146)—Question-Answer Pattern

Loy, J. (2015). *Weird and wild animal facts*. New York: Henry Holt.

Fun facts about fourteen different animals including naked mole rats and two-toed sloths.

**Teaching Idea:** Nonfiction—Fun Facts

Paul, M. (2015). *Water is water*. (J. Chin, Illus.). New York: Roaring Brook.

The book begins, "Water is water unless it heats up." This pattern continues as water turns to fogs, clouds, rain, ice, snow, and mud showing that water moves and changes often. In the back matter, there is a brief description of the water cycle.

**Teaching Ideas:** Science—Water Cycle, Seasons; Read Like a Writer (ellipsis, italics, repeated phrase)

## BOOKS FOR MATHEMATICIANS

Banks, K. (2015). *Max's math*. (B. Kulikov, Illus.). New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

Max and his brothers go looking for problems. Along the way they add three numbers, spot some shapes, compose shapes out of other shapes, count backwards, and more. This read aloud will help students answer the question, "What is math?"

**Teaching Idea:** Introduce math concepts

Goldstone, B. (2015). *I see a pattern here*. New York: Holt.

Goldstone has included photographs of complex patterns using different mathematical concepts like symmetry and tessellations.

**Teaching Idea:** Math—Patterns

Shannon, G. (2015). *One family*. (B. Gomez, Illus.). New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

This is so much more than a simple counting book. George Shannon (now a children's librarian) and Blanca Gomez create a playful celebration of family, community, and the diversity in our world.

**Teaching Ideas:** Math—Counting Book; Social Studies—Our Diverse World

## JUST FOR FUN!

Barnett, M. (2015). *The skunk*. (P. McDonnell, Illus.). New York: Roaring Brook.

A skunk follows a man all over town. The man finally loses the skunk and finds a new home. Soon, the man finds he's missing the skunk and goes out to find him.

Davies, M. (2015). *Ben draws trouble*. New York: Roaring Brook.

Much to the chagrin of his teachers, Ben spends a lot of time drawing at school. When his sketchbook falls into the hands Mr. Upright, his wise teacher, he helps Ben discover a use for his creative talent.

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

Graves, K. (2015). *Second banana*. New York: Roaring Brook.

The Amazing Bubbles and his sidekick Oop work at the circus. Bubbles is the star, Oop is second banana until one day when Bubbles can't perform.

## NEW BOOK IN A SERIES

Willems, M. (2015). *I will take a nap!* New York: Disney/Hyperion.

Elephant is desperate to take a nap. Is Piggie disturbing his sleep or is it all a dream?

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

## Professional Resources:

- Biggs-Tucker, K., & Tucker, B. (2015). *Transforming Literacy Teaching in the Era of Higher Standards, 3-5*. Scholastic.
- Fuhler, C. J., & Walther, M. P. (2007). *Literature Is Back! Using the Best Books for Teaching Readers and Writers Across Genres*. 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, K-2*. Scholastic.
- Walther, M. P., & Fuhler, C. J. (2010). *Teaching Struggling Readers With Poetry*. Scholastic.
- Walther, M. P., & Phillips, K. A. (2009). *Month-by-Month Trait-Based Writing Instruction*. Scholastic.
- Walther, M. P., & Phillips, K. A. (2012). *Month-by-Month Reading Instruction for the Differentiated Classroom*. Scholastic.