

Nye, Naomi Shihab. (2007). *I'll Ask You Three Times, Are You OK?* NY: HarperCollins-Harperteen.

Naomi Shihab Nye has given teens of all ages – and their “all ages” readers – another refreshing and thoughtful reading. A truly easy-flowing text with quiet, thoughtful content.

Perkins, John. (2007). *Perceval: King Arthur's Knight of the Holy Grail. (Retold) From Chretien de Troyes.* Ill. Gennady Spirin.

The story of Perceval of the late 12th century is from the romances of the courts of Marie of Champagne and Phillip of Flanders. Author and illustrator notes are included. Ancient art technique provides generous illustrations for a middle grade delight.

Rosas, Heather. (2007). *My Very First Signs.* NY: Penguin.

Sign language for the youngest through illustrations in board book format. Good introduction for non-users.

Hofstra University
School of Education and Allied Human Services
2008 Summer in Sorrento/Rome Program

Study abroad is an opportunity to learn new cultures and languages. It helps develop our appreciation for diversity and the way that different cultures influence and enter our own society. This is extremely important for teachers because today's classrooms are increasingly more diverse in their nature and composition.

The Summer in Sorrento/Rome study abroad program is based in the Italian capital and the picturesque town of Sorrento, located on western Italy's Amalfi Coast at the southern tip of the Bay of Naples. The program includes excursions to Pompeii and Mount Vesuvius, Rome, Naples, Positano, Paestum and the island of Capri. Guest lecturers, field visits to schools, and briefings with local educators are featured.

**Summer II, July 1-22, 2008:
Building Literacy Strategies by Exploring the Connection Between Cultural Influences, Italian Folklore and Children's Literature (Professor Esther Fusco)**

This course considers the influence of society and culture on children's literature and the development of literacy. Folktales, myths and tall tales are stories about people and their nature. They find their way into American literature from a variety of sources. This course explores the Italian influence on various aspects of American literature and relates these influences to other cultures.

For more information, please call Martin Blum at (516) 463-5389 or Dr. Esther Fusco at (516) 463-7704.



Spotlight on

LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND LITERATURE

VOLUME 19

FALL 2007

NUMBER 1

A Newsletter of the ASCD Network

Facilitator's Message

**Lenore Sandel, Ed.D.
Professor Emerita
Literacy Studies**

Dear Friends,

A new year for each school family begins with anticipation, expectation, dedication – and too – trepidation. Teachers, administrators and students in all grades experience the range of personal hopes, wishes and fervor. Combined, the peoplehood of a school reflects abundant human energy!

“In the beginning was the word” – from traditional text and so it is ... the initial “welcome,” “good morning,” “hello,” “my name is” – with a smile sets the tone – and so the school year begins.

You have done it all! Some of our newer Network members will become familiar with this “Blue” newsletter of selected information for readers' use.

Please respond on the enclosed questionnaire indicating your preferences for information. Your words and thoughts are important!

Do focus some of your attention on the approaching federal legislation regarding the renewal of No Child Left Behind. The law's unspoken principle is the serious commitment to “learning-for-all” that can indeed make it so. Surely there is a mix of impassioned criticism and effusive praise, which tends to blur the commitment to the “highly qualified teacher” in every class.

You are that teacher! Your own sense of responsibility for student learning does make a difference in student learning and achievement. In summary, teachers who think they should make a difference do! Administrators please take note: Supportive administrative leadership can make a substantial difference in whether teachers hold themselves responsible for student learning.

The beginning of the school year is a dynamic time for mutual goal setting, support measures and encouragement! In the myriad of record-keeping directives, standards, schedules, meetings and so much more, which consume calendar and clock, do your personal self – and ultimately your teaching self – a favor. Approach the curriculum not only from the fact-side, but also from the heart-side. Strike first for what each subject has in common with life as it exists in your world – and the students' world. “See it all as an outlet, not only as an inlet.”

A good 2007-08!
Lenore Sandel

Co-Facilitator's Message A Book Review: *Reading Against Democracy*

**Esther Fusco, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Hofstra University**

Shannon, Patrick. (2007). *Reading Against Democracy: The Broken Promises of Reading Instruction.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Reading Against Democracy is a must read book. Rarely do you find an education book that is a page turner. This is one such book, and it should be at the top of your reading lists. The focus of the book is on education's commitment to business profit and the loss of our commitment to civic responsibility. It explains “how political ideologists of three presidential administrations found common

ground in the rejection of American liberalism, enabling science and business to work dialectically in order to reestablish the authority of the one best method of teaching reading in American classrooms” (p. 97).

Shannon is passionately concerned about the teaching of reading. He convincingly asserts that **there is no such thing as one method of reading** and writes that administering a test as an indicator of reading achievement is a pretense designed to disguise the government's agenda to withhold federal funds from children with special needs and those in poverty. The author's message is that we as an educational community must expose this charade and restore the promise to educate America's children.

Under our current system, basals have become the key to effective reading instruction, and their successful adoption by any of the “big three” states of Texas, California or Florida represents a financial windfall for the textbook companies. It is important to note that the new testing has spawned an annual \$2.3 billion budget, which is a small part of the \$500 billion spent annually on education. Of the \$2.3 billion, 90 percent of this money goes to five companies – Pearson Education Measurement, ETS, CTB/McGraw-Hill, Harcourt Assessment and Houghton Mifflin. Not only do these companies produce the tests, but they produce the materials to support the test preparation

Continued on next page.

IN THIS ISSUE

Using Literature to Teach Math	2-3
Books in the Classroom	3
For Your Interest	4
Board Books	5
Young Readers	5
Professional Development	6-7
Too Good to Miss	7-8
Summer in Sorrento	8

Spotlight on Language, Literacy and Literature

A Newsletter of the ASCD Network

**Lenore Sandel, Ed. D., Facilitator
Professor Emerita of Reading
Hofstra University**

**Esther Fusco, Ph. D., Co-Facilitator
Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Teaching
Hofstra University**

Spotlight on Language, Literacy and Literature is co-sponsored by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and Hofstra University's School of Education and Allied Human Services, Departments of Literacy Studies and Curriculum and Teaching. The ideas and opinions expressed herein by contributing authors do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, facilitator, directors, ASCD, or Hofstra University. *Spotlight on Language, Literacy and Literature* has been published and printed at Hofstra University.

To continue receiving this ASCD Network newsletter, return the application immediately for 2007-2008 enrollment.



HOFSTRA
UNIVERSITY.

www.hofstra.edu



HOFSTRA
UNIVERSITY.

find your edgeSM

(p. 141). Our goals of educating our citizens have been supplanted by incentives for business and sanctions for schools under NCLB.

Does Shannon feel that we should give up? Has our government frozen the model for education? Is the reading war really over? Has our profession come to a consensus about this? Is the basal reader really the answer for all children? Has the factory model devoid of individual interests and teacher talents become the future of education? Can reading ability be measured solely by tested skills? The book addresses each of these questions and details how the government has shaped the reading debate.

In Shannon's description of the conditions that led to No Child Left Behind and the Reading First Initiative, we recognize that the government's proposal to use tests to achieve equity for socially and economically marginalized groups is merely rhetoric (p. 169). These federal programs force school districts to compete for needed funds rather than having funds available based on need. Shannon comments that from the beginning, the art of reading instruction was replaced with evidence-based acts that are supposed to improve school test scores. He states that we have been lulled into believing that economic security will result from higher test scores. "The fact is there is no scientific basis to the structure of NCLB or the Reading First Initiative – no research that suggests that higher standards create a totally literate populace, that annual testing raises reading test scores or that quotas for gains in achievement scores will improve teachers' reading instruction or students' test scores" (p. 212).

The author argues that what is really driving change in our education system is a market-driven attitude that promotes commercially driven curriculum and instruction. The current practice is to water down the state standards to a skills model, where success is measured only by test results. Shannon observes that while there are some problems with reading instruction in our country, our test scores have remained steady over the past 30 years (p. 124). In fact, he indicates that NCLB, Reading First and the Reading Excellence Act have falsely claimed that our reading scores have dropped.

Shannon says, "In the end, NCLB only provides more justifications that the existing social, economic and political hierarchies in America are valid, legitimate and normal" (p. 210). Passing scores determine who will be considered acceptable. The idea that everyone will be proficient ignores the consequences and impact of the economic and social conditions of each student who arrives at the schoolhouse door. Shannon asserts that NCLB is putting an end to public school teaching and higher-level thinking

and, ultimately, only those children who pass the tests will be fit to be educated.

In reading this book, it becomes apparent that our current government wants to withdraw federal funds from schools and take away the states' responsibility to educate America's children. The government wants public schools to compete in a free market with private schools. To bring this about, you have to discredit the public schools and blame them for moral and economic decline. Fear of decline is a powerful weapon.

Shannon describes the circumstances that surround today's reading climate as the "perfect storm." "The enactment of Education Science Reform Act of 2002, the Reading First Initiative, NCLB, the grip of adequate yearly progress, and businesses poised to supply new testing, instructional, test preparation and required tutoring services keep even the best schools in America in continuous triage activities to keep themselves afloat" (p. 165). Perhaps most difficult to understand are the many reading experts and professional groups who have supported the government's efforts in these changes. Shannon reminds us that many of those who supported the government in the takeover of reading have profited from their support. The profits have come in the form of grants, textbook editorships, and commercial successes.

While schools should produce predictable results that enable all students to learn to read, the reality is that America has never truly offered equal opportunity for all. While NCLB pretends to address inequality, it will deepen the differences among groups in an economy where many more people are expendable. Shannon argues that the purpose of NCLB is "to provide scientific evidence that the historical inequalities in America are legitimate, justified and natural" (p. 193). He presents a case study of how the current structures of reading instruction will eventually provide the data to reorganize public schools according to high-stakes tests that purposely exclude some social groups from higher levels of schooling. "In this way, the biases of the past are furthered by NCLB, which provides scientific justifications for American history" (p. 193). Shannon concludes that we cannot continue to allow the interference of the federal government in our educational system. He concurs with Rebecca Powell and Carole Edelsky that we need to return reading to its social nature, which forms the moral core of democratic citizenship (p. 221). School should be a place that allows all students the opportunity to grow and understand how the promise of education was established for all. This book inspires the reader to become rededicated to the efforts to support the right of all children to learn to read and become contributors to their community. Parts of this review were taken from the December 2007 Encounter: *Education for Meaning and social Justice*.

References

Smith, C. Alphonso. (1913). *What Can Literature Do for Me?*, NY: Doubleday.

Using Literature to Teach Math

Danielle VanBlerck
Hofstra University Undergraduate Student

Literature can be a powerful tool for teaching children mathematics. There is an abundance of children's literature that directly illustrates mathematical concepts in a manner that is void of stress and relative to the everyday language, lives and interests of children. For children who feel uneasy about math, mathematical literature has the potential to bring the content area to life. The following books are just some of many recommended supplements for teaching mathematical concepts such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, measurement, money, graphs and charts, and even simple counting.

Adler, David A. (2006). *You Can, Toucan, Math. Illustrated by Edward Miller. New York: Holiday House.*

Unique birds and colorful illustrations accompany this creative math book of word problems and riddles. Addition, subtraction, multiplication and division are needed to solve the problems, and answers can be found at the bottom of each page.

Dobson, Christina. (2003). *Pizza Counting. Illustrated by Matthew Holmes. New York: Scholastic Inc.*

Pizza is at the heart of this book about counting, adding, multiplying and fractions. Fascinating pizza facts and creative pizza toppings make this educational book fun and exciting.

Elliott, David. (2007). *One Little Chicken: A Counting Book. Illustrated by Ethan Long. New York: Holiday House.*

As the chickens dance the night away, readers can count from one to 10. This is a bright and colorful book that encourages children to count and dance along.

Jenkins, Steve. (2004). *Actual Size. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.*

This uniquely illustrated book shows the actual size, with measurements, of some of the world's largest and smallest animals and animal parts. It also provides some information about each animal.

Special Note of Interest: From the Center of the Book, Library of Congress:

"Braille Ink" (brailleink.org) publishes existing books in a new format, one that adds Braille to existing text and illustration. Special advantage: Print and Braille readers can share books. First two books: *The Dot* and *Guess How Much I Love You*.

Research

"A longitudinal study of bullying, victimization and peer affiliation during the transition from primary school to middle school" (A.D. Pellegrini, M. Bartini). AERJ, Fall 2001, Vol. 37, No. 3, 699-725.

Changes in peer affiliation indicated that youngsters' casual contacts with peers initially decreased from primary to beginning of middle school, but recovered by end of year. Close relationships decreased; isolation increased. Being embedded in an affiliated network of peers inhibited victimization.

*Importance of social affiliation in minimizing victimization in early adolescence.

Too Good to Miss

Barad, Alexis. (2004). *What's in Grandma's Closet? Illustrated by Tammie Lyon. NY: HarperCollins.*

Here is a book that can delight many readers and listeners. It is a fine read-aloud for the early reader, an independent high-interest for the beginning reader who responds to text and rhyme-and also, an especially delightful read-aloud for the reluctant reader to younger listeners.

Bridwell, Norman. (2007). *Clifford: A School Boy's Treasury. NY: Scholastic Cartwheel.*

The popular pup – with padded pages, amusing stories for beginning readers.

Capucilli, Alyssa Satin. (2007). *Bathtime for Biscuit (available with CD). NY: HarperCollins.*

The new pup "on the block" is endearing and a real invitation to reading for the pre- and early readers. This is a fine example of the effectiveness of illustration and the familiar setting. (Try to match young reluctant readers with the pre-reader in a "read-to" pairing.) Note: A big book is available for group activity.

Cleary, Brian P. (2007). *Peanut Butter and Jellyfishes – A Very Silly Alphabet Book. Minneapolis, MN: Millbrook (Lerner).*

Every silly letter is hidden in this silly book's silly pictures.

Cronin, Doreen. (2007). *Diary of a Fly. Pictures by Harry Bliss. NY: HarperCollins.*

For youngest readers, a humorous story for read-aloud and early independent reading with bold illustrations.

Edwards, Michelle. (2007). *Papa's Latkes. Illustrated by Stacey Shuett. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick.*

Celebrating a festival for the first time without mother is a challenge that is met openly and well by this devoted family. Papa assumes the critical role and all contribute to maintaining a traditional ritual – and treat.

Farrell, Juliana, and Beth Mayall. (2007). *MiddleSchool: The Real Deal. NY: HarperCollins.*

From cafeteria food to combination locks, cliques to class schedules, the reader will find it all. All the student (reader) needs to know, uniquely styled text and reader-friendly approach. **Frederick, Anthony D. (2007). *The Tsunami Quilt. Sleeping Bear Press.***

This outstanding and timely story for a wide range of middle graders, builds on the history of the earthquake in Hawaii in 1946, which killed 24 students in one school. In 1997 students at the school created the quilt as a memorial. The touching tale gives the reader a vivid association with current tragedy.

Goode, Diane. (2006). *Mind Your Manners! NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.*

This intriguing book reveals the origins of familiar manners in context. Amusing presentations for young readers.

Grodin, Elissa. (2006). *The Happy Prince. Illustrated by Laura Stutzman. Sleeping Bear Press.*

Based on the Oscar Wilde fairytale of 1888, this retelling is a gem of literature. We recommend it again, for those who may have missed the initial review. The nuances of shared feeling, of empathy at many levels, are excellent for discussion of personal values, sense of community and more.

Hampton, Wilborn. (2007). *War in the Middle East: A Reporter's Story: Black September and the Yom Kippur War. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick.*

The reporter of *September 11th* and *Kennedy Assassinated* has told the full reporter's

story of the critical era in the current, continuing political issues. Reader-friendly for middle grades and up.

Hearne, Betsy. (2007). *Hauntings: And Other Tales of Danger, Love and Sometimes Loss. NY: HarperCollins-HarperTeen.*

A "what would you do if?" collection of eerie tales of troubled and grieving characters. High-interest stories by a recognized author who grasps the interest of teen readers.

Jeffers, Oliver. (2007). *The Incredible Book-Eating Boy. NY: Penguin.*

A delightful tale of the boy who ate books until he discovered books were fun to read.

Keller, Holly. (2007). *Help! A Story of Friendship. NY: Greenwillow.*

A delightful tale of familiar creatures demonstrates the best of human relations in meaningful context. (For youngest readers.)

Kennedy, Marlane. (2007). *Me and the Pumpkin Queen. NY: HarperCollins-Greenwillow.*

For the middle grader who enjoys reader-friendly text and appealing characters and situations, this is a perfect read, especially for girls.

Lesinski, Jeanne. (2007). *Bill Gates (Rev.). Minneapolis, MN: Twenty-First Century Books.*

A newly revised biography with photos of the "richest man" in the U.S., perhaps in the world. Bill Gates started his remarkable career while in high school. High-interest reading for a wide range of readers.

McCarthy, Mary. (2007). *A Closer Look. NY: Greenwillow (HarperCollins).*

Simple text and collage illustrations will draw young readers' attention to the world around them. This is a truly unique book of color, form and majesty of nature.

McGinty, Alice. (2007). *Eliza's Kindergarten Surprise. NY: Marshall Cavendish.*

For young readers, Eliza's encounter with kindergarten presents a familiar situation of separation from Mommy. Her solution is satisfying.

Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds. (2007). *Simply Sarah: Patches and Scratches. NY: Marshall Cavendish.*

Sarah Simpson, who loves to get big ideas that will solve problems, does come up with the right big idea to get her friend a dog. This delightful chapter book is fine fiction for elementary to middle graders.

Continued on back page.

The author urges readers to “speak out” to encourage decision makers to re-examine the policies concerning young learners.

Abramson, Beverly. (2006). *Off We Go*. NY: Tundra.

The natural state of toddlers and young children is motion, and Beverly Abramson’s splendid photographs are an appreciation of the many ways in which we can move. Children spin and whirl, run, jump and climb through the seasons in photographs that beg for discussion and storytelling. Whether it is flying a kite or kicking a ball, skipping on the grass or riding a tricycle, Beverly Abramson has captured kids experiencing the sheer pleasure of exploring the world through movement.

Chauncey, Caroline. (2005). *Recruiting, Retaining and Supporting Highly Qualified Teachers*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press.

A tool kit for principals and administrators to improve the quality of classroom teaching. Thirty (30) percent of teachers have their jobs within three years, 50 percent within five years. The book provides an overview of cultural factors that shape teaching; examines preparation of teachers and principals; outlines hiring practices; and assesses strategies, including induction programs, career ladders for teachers, school-based coaching, and effective supervision.

Garvin, Patty. (2003). (Ed.). *Developing Knowledgeable Teachers: A Framework for Standards-based Teacher Education Supported by Institutional Collaboration*. Washington, DC: AACTE. *The STEP Reports, Volume 1, Number 2*. Foreword: David Inig & Raymond V. “Buzz” Bartlett. AACTE, Council for Basic Education.

Education policy today, both federal and state, mandates a variety of steps intended to guarantee that all students are taught by knowledgeable and skilled teachers. The cornerstone of current federal education policy – the No Child Left Behind Act – requires a “highly qualified” teacher in every classroom by 2005.

CBE and AACTE created STEP in 1996; since then, 25 colleges and universities in five states have participated in STEP. The multiple approaches developed by the STEP campuses offer exemplary models to states and other institutions seeking to improve the quality of their new teachers.

STEP is based on three principles: 1) Teachers must know the subjects they are teaching; 2) Teachers must know how to teach students to learn at high levels; and 3) Teachers must know how to monitor and assess how well students are learning.

Table 1.3 Evidence of Teacher Candidate Quality:

- Inputs of the program
- Performance of candidates
- Results with students (p. 32, STEP Report, 2003)

Gile, John. (2007). *Oh, How I Wished I Could Read!* Rockford, IL: John Gile.

This unique approach to stimulating reading motivation is one of the outstanding books by John Gile. “The First Forest” highlights concern for each other and the environment. The author offers programs for staff development. Phone 815-968-6601/Fax 815-968-6600.

Head Start Teachers. (2007). *Building Language Throughout the Year: The Preschool Early Literacy Curriculum*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

This field-tested, research-based curriculum is an excellent resource for teachers who want to improve the quality of children’s language learning experiences in their classrooms. Theoretically designed.

Luby, Joan L., M.D. (Ed.). (2006). *Handbook of Preschool Mental Health*. CT: Guilford.

Normative social, emotional and cognitive development, together with descriptions of disorders, is included in this professional reference for teachers and specialists.

Roskos, Kathleen, and James Christie. (2007). *Play and Literacy in Early Childhood* (2nd ed.). NJ: Erlbaum.

A new paradigm reflecting the attack on children’s play is organized around a different set of perspectives, on the play-literacy interface: *The Playful Mind*
The Play-Literacy Instructional Environment
The Play-Literacy Social Context

This book challenges researchers to use their imaginations to strive for multidisciplinary perspectives, and to push harder for the incorporation of play into the literacy education of young children.

Spodek, Bernard. (Ed.). (2006). *Handbook of Research on the Education of Young Children* (2nd ed.). NJ: Erlbaum.

This second edition is an essential reference on research and practice in early childhood education not only in the United States, but throughout the world. Organized in four parts: development, curriculum, foundations of policy, and evaluation.

Sumara, Dennis. (2002). *Why Reading Literature in School Still Matters: Imagination, Interpretation, Insight*. NJ: Erlbaum.

“Like the gardener who cares about his garden, the reader who is interested in creating insight must develop a dedicated attention to the work at hand, understanding that the immediate products are not necessarily the most important ones. Acts of reading deeply, like the acts of cultivating, nurturing and tending that are part of gardening, generate knowledge that transcends the acts themselves.” (Preface XIII)

Tan, Amy Lin. (2005). *Chinese American Children and Families*. MD: Association of Childhood Education International (ACEI).

The author combines bicultural insight and professional experiences while weaving in available literature and gives educators the tools they need when providing culturally sensitive services. Other ACEI resources include: *Children’s Fears of War and Terrorism* (Lisa F. Moses et al.) and *The World’s Children and Their Companion Animals* (Mary Renck Jalongo, ed.).

Weiter, Ellen. (2005). *The Internet Playground*. NY: Peter Lang.

Based on four years of experience teaching computers to 8-12 year olds, the author relates the features and uses of the Internet with middle graders. Excellent, useful reporting.

Whited, Lana A. (Ed.). (2006). *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press.

Contributors from Britain, the United States and Canada offer serious examination of Rowling’s books from a broad range of perspectives. Many elements are examined and the wide range of topics appeal to a broad audience.

Wolf, Shelby A. (2004). *Interpreting Literature With Children*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. (From the Prologue)

“My goal in this book is to spark your own passion for reading or to fan the flames if you’re already on your way.” (p. 3)

Zaragoza, Nina, and Eric Dwyer. (2005). *Look, I Made a Book*. NY: Peter Lang.

Kindergarteners publish their own stories and keep them on the same shelves as books from libraries and bookstores. Zaragoza invites new teachers along as they take one class of children through a month-by-month journey of authorship, literacy, development, poetry, positive interaction and imagination.

Lanczak Williams, Rozanne. (2001). *The Coin Counting Book*. Watertown: Charlesbridge Publishing.

An introduction to pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, half dollars and dollars, this rhyming book teaches about counting money, adding money and trading money.

Leedy, Loreen. (2005). *The Great Graph Contest*. New York: Holiday House.

Gonk the toad and Beezy the lizard are competing to see who can make better graphs in this educational math book. Gonk and Beezy create bar graphs, Venn diagrams, pie charts and more, based on the interests of children. The back of the book provides explanations of graphs and instructions for making one.

Martin Jr., Bill, and Michael Sampson. (2006). *Chicka Chicka 1 2 3*. Illustrated by Lois Ehlert. New York: Scholastic Inc.

Personified numbers climb and then fall out of an apple tree in this counting story. In addition to its vibrant colors, the book includes counting forward from one to 20, counting forward by tens from 20 to 90, counting backward from 20 to one, counting backward by tens from 90 to 20, and even addresses zero and 100.

Pallotta, Jerry. (2003). *One Hundred Ways to Get to 100*. Illustrated by Rob Bolster. New York: Scholastic Inc.

One, two, three and four digit numbers paired with addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, present 100 different ways of forming the number 100 in this interactive book.

Pinczes, Elinor J. (1995). *A Remainder of One*. Illustrated by Bonnie MacKain. New York: Scholastic Inc.

As the bug army attempts to form perfectly even rows with 25 bug soldiers, soldier Joe is repeatedly left as the “remainder of one.” After many failed efforts, Joe finally figures out how to divide 25 in such a way that yields no remainder.

Teague, Mark and Jane Yolen. (2004). *How Do Dinosaurs Count to Ten?* New York: Scholastic Inc.

A short book that counts to 10 using dinosaurs and the household items they might enjoy. The book also educates about dinosaurs, as it includes the scientific names for each one shown.

Books in the Classroom

**Ginny O’Sullivan and Fredi Norris
Wilson School, Rockville Centre, NY**

***Ginger and Petunia*
By Patricia Polacco
Philomel Books**

Are you ready for a good laugh? Virginia Vincent Falsum, also known as Ginger, and her pet pig Petunia are the hilarious duo that romp through these pages. Add an out-of-town trip, a pet sitter who never shows up, Ginger’s hectic social calendar, a closet full of fancy clothes, and a governor who likes to tango, and you are about to watch Petunia cope and triumph. The hilarity of this story is enhanced by Polacco’s merry illustrations. Our students laughed out loud when they heard this story!

***The John Hancock Club*
By Louise Borden
Simon & Schuster**

Third grade was hard for Sean McFerrin. He worried about all the new thinking he would have to do. And now, on top of everything else, Mrs. Tovani announced that the class was about to learn cursive writing. “I hope all of you will learn this third grade skill so I can induct you into The John Hancock Club,” said Mrs. Tovani. As Sean works hard to master cursive handwriting, he also discovers new and interesting information about the original John Hancock. This is a perfect book for youngsters learning to write in script. It would work for independent reading, as well as a class read aloud.

***At Ellis Island: A History in Many Voices*
By Louise Peacock
Atheneum Books for Young Readers**

Here is a book that introduces the reader to the many facets of Ellis Island. We meet a young, modern-day visitor, walking through the halls and exhibits of Ellis Island. Her thoughts are highlighted in red text. We also meet Sera, an Armenian girl from the early 1900s, and learn her story through a series of handwritten letters and softly colored sketches. Supplementing the fiction are actual photographs and quotes from immigrants who entered our country through Ellis Island. This story can work on many levels. Your students can enjoy a rich piece of fiction or focus on the real quotes and photographs to get a real sense of what the immigrants actually experienced.

***The Top Job*
By Elizabeth Cody Kimmel
Dutton Children’s Books**

It’s Career Day in Mrs. Feeny’s class, and everyone is sharing the interesting jobs their parents have. Emma’s dad is a UFO hunter, scanning the skies for unusual flying objects. Elizabeth’s mom designs magnificent jewels from diamonds and rubies. How can our narrator ever top these jobs? Her dad changes light bulbs! The delight in this book comes when the reader finds out WHERE the dad goes to change a special light bulb ... the top of the Empire State Building! A great story!

***Where I Live*
By Eileen Spinelli
Dial Books for Young Readers**

Peek into the life and heart of Diana, our young poet. Through short, sweet poems, we learn about her family, her friends and the everyday experiences in her life. Diana loves her house, her little sister Twink and her best friend Rose. But suddenly Diana’s life changes as her dad loses his job and the family must move. Her poetry carries her through these life changes and helps her to understand that there is poetry and good things to be found even in the middle of change. Here is a book that students can use as a model for their own narrative poetry. It is a gem!

Good Books

**Emilia Osborne Bodnarchuk
Winding Creek Elementary School
Stafford, Virginia**

***If It Weren’t for You*
By Charlotte Zolotow
Illustrated by G. Brian Karas
HarperCollins Publishers
New York, 2007**

This is a wonderful book about sibling relationships. While simply told, it carries a real understanding of the connections between siblings.

***Baseball Treasures*
By Stephen Wong
HarperCollins Publishers
New York, 2007**

This is an amazing book for those who love baseball and those who are collectors. This book describes what it might be like to hold the bat that Babe Ruth once used to hit a home run. While I am not a baseball fan, I got chills reading some of this book. It really is a

touch of history from a different perspective. I loved all the wonderful pictures.

Sitting Bull

By Ann Turner
HarperCollins Publishers
New York, 2007

How it used to be! This is a very inviting story as we daydream with Sitting Bull. He remembers what it was like when the Sioux Nation had its freedom. The events and battles between the Sioux and the U.S. government are well presented.

How Animals Use Their Senses

By Pamela Hickman
Kids Can Press Ltd.
Tonawanda, NY, 2006

This is an interesting informational book that invites readers to explore how animals use their senses. There are interesting facts about frog and bat vision, octopus and antelope special scents, and a fox’s hearing. This is a well-illustrated book.

For Your Interest

Book Links, 15th anniversary issue, July 2006, “Celebrating the Classroom.”

A resource of familiar and respected titles, illustrations and recaps of the timeless delights. Older students will recall – young students will discover. All can recognize features of lasting quality. Attention to pp. 51-53, “Teaching Writing With 15 Informational Classics.”

For high-interest, critically acclaimed books for teens, several of which have sparked films, seek out books by Meg Cabot, who also writes for adults. Look for **Avalon High, Princess Diaries, and Mediator series** (HarperCollins).

For a free subscription to the Information Bulletin of the Library of Congress, contact: The Library of Congress, Public Affairs Office, 101 Independence Ave. S.E., Washington, DC 20540-1610. April 2007 issue announces “Women Who Dare” series – 64-page books with illustrations – outstanding resources!

For reading about science: Exploring the Elements. Kids Can Press.

Using simple concepts of science, these books answer questions about wind, sun, rain and snow and encourage young readers to explore their surroundings anew. Look for **Who Likes the Snow? Who Likes the Sun? Who Likes the Wind?**

For the early reader, seek out the **Kids Can Read** series of high-interest stories and inspiring lives (Helen Keller and Alexander Graham Bell). Available for three levels of reading ability and interest.

For the young teen, the new series **Planet Girl** offers project instructions for creative handiwork in book four: **Fully Woolly.**

Teen Manga is a new series from HarperCollins, which has added TokyoPop to Harperteens. Manga in Japanese means “comics” and the books are written in a comic book style of pictures and “bubbles” of text. Miki is the first available with Miki summer and Miki spring titles.

More Good Books

Bennett, Veronica. (2007). Cassandra’s Sister: Growing Up Jane Austen. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Filled with romance and humor, this coming-of-age novel reveals the timeless concerns of a young girl who was to become the endearing author of famous novels. This is a gem of a read for teens that harbor writing skills – and a reader of Jane Austen novels.

Bloom, Suzanne. (2007). Treasure. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.

A picture book of simple text and little action. Treasure concept required of reader-listener.

Crawley, Dave. (2007). Dog Poems. Illustrated by Tamara Petrosino. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.

A celebration of dogs and their canine world, with many breeds described for special responses and behaviors. With spirited illustrations, *Dog Poems* is an affectionate and humorous look at “man’s best friend.” A treat for middle grade readers – especially dog lovers.

Davies, Nicola. (2007). Poop: A Natural History of the Unmentionable. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick.

This small book, complete with index and glossary, offers detailed information on the physical description of familiar and not-so-familiar animal defecation. It provides a natural rationale for the common function, which provides an easier approach to the common experience for all readers.



Hampton, Wilborn. (2007). September 11, 2001: Attack on New York City. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

The paperback edition of the 2003 edition is complete in its detailed eloquence of photos, text, personal accounts, graphics and index. Hampton has created a book for all ages.

Helmer, Marilyn. (2007). One Splendid Tree. NY: Kids Can Press.

The setting of the World War II economy prevents the luxury of the usual Christmas tree, but an innovative approach proves to be an unexpected joy. Junior converts a discarded plant into a lavish tree with the participation of neighbors in the apartment house. This story is a reminder of the Stone Soup tale – with true and real events.

Kaner, Etta. (2007). Who Likes the Rain? NY: Kids Can Press.

With a wonderful sense of movement and color, this unique book invites children to explore their world with delight and curiosity. Young readers will open the pages to find the science of rain and related topics clearly explained: why rain falls, what raindrops look like, why air smells different in rain – and more!

Lamstein, Sarah Marwil. (2007). Letter on the Wind: A Chanukah Tale. Illustrated by Neil Waldman. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.

The retelling of this Jewish folktale reminds readers of the first Chanukah and Mattathia’s bravery in protecting his faith. The elegant prose is complemented by Neil Waldman’s logical ink and watercolor illustrations.

Luxbacher, Irene. (2007). 123 I Can Paint! 123 I Can Sculpt! 123 I Can Draw! 123 I Can Make Prints! NY: Kids Can Press.

This starting art series for the young in art encourages play and experimentation with everyday materials and tools and unlocks the creative spirit in every young child. Uniquely clear, step-by-step, illustrated techniques. Projects lead to discovery and a sense of accomplishment.

Sitarski, Anita. (2007). Cold Light: Creatures, Discoveries and Inventions That Glow. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.

Awe-inspiring, full-color photographs join cool facts and ingenious experiments. With light humor, the author brings the thrill of discovery to life. At last, luminescence sheds light on the adventure of science. A gem for middle grades and higher.

Slavin, Bill. (2007). Transformed: How Everyday Things Are Made. NY: Kids Can Press.

An excellent source of information presented in reader-friendly text with explicit illustrations, this book is for adults and children. More than 60 items are described.

Ungar, Richard. (2007). Even Higher. NY: Tundra.

Adapted from a beloved I.L. Peretz story, Richard Ungar captures the joyous spirit of the Jewish folktale with humor and vibrant color. Excellent middle grade fiction/ethnic folklore. Author offers interesting personal study of art, writing and law.

Board Books

Capucilli, Alyssa Satiri. (2007). Katy Duck, Big Sister. NY: Little Simon.

With a competing baby brother, Katy struggles to remain in the spotlight and learn a valuable lesson: there’s enough room on the stage for two ducks. Good personal associations and discussion.

Dale, Penny. (2007). Ten in the Bed. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick.

Among the many counting books for the youngsters, this board book is uncluttered, both in text and illustration. It is clear in the repetition, concept and “reader” interaction.

Fry, Sonali. (2007). Make Me a Princess: A Mix-and-Match Dress-up Book. NY: Little Simon.

This interactive board book comes with two dolls to dress – open pages, drop in fabric, close pages – and dressed dolls appear. Six swatches for interchanging – different colors and textures – to create original outfits. Several areas of experience present opportunities for language, decision making and creativity.

Harper, Jamie. (2007). Night Night, Baby Bundt. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick.

This delectable board book is a tempting invitation to bedtime reading and a delectable morsel of sibling devotion.

Katz, Karen. (2007). Where Is Baby’s Dreidel? NY: Little Simon.

Readers can lift flaps and find foil Hanukah symbols on every page. The interactive search-and-find with use of flaps promotes language experience.

Krauss, Ruth. (2007). Goodnight, Goodnight, Sleepyhead. Illustrated by Jane Dyer. NY: HarperCollins.

Familiar author and artist have produced an appealing bedtime reading that invites young authors – and artists – in the classroom to highlight other times of a youngster’s day.

Lee, Jeanie. (2007). Now It’s Fall. NY: Little Simon.

The interactive use of the pull tab (which requires paper-over-board) encourages learning about fall and the colorful jack-o-lanterns and falling leaves.

Lee, Spike, and Tonya Lewis Lee. (2007). Please, Baby, Please. NY: Little Simon.

From the heralded hardcover, this exuberant board book by the well-known producer, explodes with the energy of childhood and toddler surprises, and concludes with the patience and unconditional love of parent.

Lukas, Catherine. (2007). Jingle Bell Christmas. NY: Simon Spotlight.

The Backyardigans celebrate (to the reader’s delight) with 18 pages to reveal gifts. The sled-shaped board book adds to the festivities. (TV tie-in)

McMahon, Kara. (2007). Big Sister Blue. NY: Simon Spotlight.

With her baby brother Sprinkles, Blue shows how special it is to be a big sister or brother. (TV)

Ricci, Christine. (2007). Dora’s Favorite Adventures. NY: Simon Spotlight.

Large format board book of favorite adventures includes a mini bilingual board book on inside back cover with Dora’s drawings. (TV)

Sollinger, Emily. (2007). Dance! Dora’s Pop-up Dancing Adventure. NY: Simon Spotlight.

Different kinds of dancing are explored with Dora in the pop-up in every spread. This is a delight for young “readers.” (TV)

Stanley, Mandy. (2007). Who Do You Love? NY: Little Simon.

Love is everywhere with Mandy Stanley – bees, rabbits, ants. But who does Owl love? Here is a loving sharing for the youngest.

Board Book Gems from Little Simon:

Pancakes, Pancakes!

By Eric Carle

The Greedy Python

By Richard Buckley and Eric Carle

Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me

By Eric Carle

When Mama Comes Home Tonight

By Eileen Spinelli

A House for Hermit Crab. By Eric Carle

The Tiny Seed. By Eric Carle

I Love You, Good Night. By Jon Buller

Good Dog, Carl. By Alexandra Day

Young Readers

Fletcher, Ralph. (2007). How to Write Your Life Story. NY: HarperCollins.

Here are the basics of autobiographical writing for middle graders. The guide is encouraging and provides specific ideas for selecting and ordering information. The book may inspire those who haven’t yet thought about writing.

Mitchard, Jacquelyn. (2007). Ready, Set, School! NY: HarperCollins.

This is a feel-good book designed to help families cope with the pangs of separation anxiety. From “sleep over” to school, young readers share positive feelings of separation from the familiar setting.

Senning, Cindy Post, and Peggy Post. (2007). Emily’s Magic Words: Please, Thank You and More. NY: HarperCollins.

This colorful etiquette book is a delightful reading experience for the youngest readers and a fine read-to for the older reader. A fine discussion starter in sharing experiences.

Congratulations to HarperCollins Children’s Books on the 50th anniversary of the “*I Can Read*” Series. These stories have set standards for early readers. From humor to history, poetry to sports, nature to adventure – *I Can Read* helps young readers to love reading. It all started with the 1957 publication of the now-classic *Little Bear!* Also, look for *Amelia Bedelia* and so many more!

Professional Development

From: Reading Today (International Reading Association), August/September 2007 (p. 20). Mimi Brodsky Chenfeld, Handcuffed in the Garden of Thorns: “We have permitted developmentally inappropriate practice to become realities, squeezing the joy from children’s early days in ‘real school.’”