**The Benefits of Being an Octopus**

Ann Braden

Sky Pony Press 2018

254 pages

SUMMARY:

Seventh-grader Zoey juggles taking care of her younger siblings, doing homework when she feels like it, and avoiding her mom’s boyfriend with whom they live. If only she were an octopus with eight arms, it would make her life easier to juggle all her responsibilities. Zoey goes to school each day hoping to go unnoticed by the rich kids, but when a teacher makes her join the debate team, she begins to see her life differently. Zoey finds her voice to speak up when her friend, mom, and even she needs it most.

GENRE TAG(S):

* Realistic Fiction
* Poverty
* Family problems

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARD(S):

* AASL II B--Learners adjust their awareness of the global learning community by evaluating a variety of perspectives during learning activities and representing diverse perspectives during learning activities.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY…

* *Halfway Normal,* Barbara Dee
* *Falling Over Sideways,* Jordan Sonnenblick
* *The Third Mushroom,* Jennifer Holm

WEBSITES:

Ann Braden Books, <https://annbradenbooks.com/books/> The website includes a book trailer, educator guides, and resources for tackling tough topics with students as well as giving student’s a voice.

BOOKTALK:

When seventh grader Zoey goes to school each day, she tries to stay under the radar of the rich kids at her school. Her life is not like theirs. She spends her afternoons taking care of her younger siblings while her mom works at the pizza parlor they can’t even afford to eat at. They live with her mom’s boyfriend in his trailer while many of the other school kids live in nice homes. When her teacher forces her to join the debate team, Zoey begins to see things differently in her life. Will her new understanding of the relationships and people around her give her the courage to speak up even though it could come at a heavy cost?

Prepared by:

Michelle Spires, Gray Court-Owings School, mspires@laurens55.org

**Deep Water**

Watt Key

Farrar Straus Giroux, 2018

260 pages

SUMMARY:

Twelve-year-old Julie Sims is used to helping her father with his diving business, but when he gets sick on this particular trip, it’s up to Julie to take care of his two clients. Except these aren’t ordinary clients, they’re father and son, Mr. Jordan and Shane, both of whom think they know more than Julie or her dad. However, it’s not just their knowledge of diving that’s put to the test, but their survival skills as well.

GENRE TAG(S):

* Realistic Fiction
* Adventure
* Survival
* Suspense

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARDS:

* ELA (Inquiry-Based Literary Standards) 1.1 - Develop questions to broaden thinking on a specific idea that frames inquiry for new learning and deeper understanding.
* 2.1 - Transact with text in order to formulate logical questions based on evidence, generate explanations, propose and present conclusions, and consider multiple perspectives.
* (Reading – Literary Text) 5 - Determine meaning and develop logical interpretations by making predictions, inferring, drawing conclusions, analyzing, synthesizing, providing evidence, and investigating multiple interpretations.
* 8.1 - Describe how a plot in a narrative or drama unfolds and how characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution; determine the impact of contextual influences on setting, plot and characters.
* 11.1 - Explain how an author’s development of the point of view of the narrator or speaker impacts content, meaning, and style.
* 13.1 - Engage in whole and small group reading with purpose and understanding through teacher modeling and gradual release of responsibility.
* 13.3 Read and respond to grade level text to become self-directed, critical readers, and thinkers.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY…

* *Overboard*, Terry Lynn Johnson
* *A World Below*, Wesley King
* *Stranded*, Jeff Probst
* *Crash*, Joseph Monninger

WEBSITES:

Watt Key, <https://wattkey.com/books-2/deep-water/>, author’s website with

personal information, as well as information on other books and appearances.

Scholastic, <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/diving-deep-sea/>,

informational article on underwater observation and work, breathing, diving techniques and equipment.

Dive Training, <https://dtmag.com/thelibrary/scuba-q-a-common-questions-asked-by-nondivers/>,

magazine article with commonly asked questions and answers to learn more about scuba diving.

BOOKTALK:

You’re twelve-years-old and responsible for taking care of a “know-it-all” father and son on a scuba diving expedition. When you surface with your reluctant clients, the boat with your sick father is gone. There’s no one around and you’re hundreds of miles from shore. The sun is beating down, your legs are tiring from treading water, and sharks are circling your group. What will you do to try and survive?

Prepared by:

Rebecca Adams, Waccamaw Middle School, radams@gcsd.k12.sc.us

**Endling: The Last**

Katherine Applegate

Harper, 2018

383 pages

SUMMARY:

Byx, a dog-like creature known as a Dairne, fears that she may be the last of her kind. In a daring quest to find others like herself, she journeys through the kingdom of Nedarra, encountering new friends and foes along the way.

GENRE TAGS:

* Fantasy
* Adventure
* Animal Stories

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARDS:

* National School Library Standard: Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by: 1. Reading widely and deeply in multiple formats and write and create for a variety of purposes.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY:

* *Bob*, Wendy Mass
* *The Book of Boy*, Catherine Gilbert Murdock
* *The Quest Begins*, Erin Hunter

WEBSITES:

Katherine Applegate, <https://katherineapplegate.com/>, The author’s website features information about the author and the books she has written.

Endling, the series, <https://www.harpercollins.com/childrens/endlingbooks/>, The publisher’s website provides summaries of the books in the series as well as educator resources for the book.

World Wildlife Fund Species Directory, [https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/directory?direction=desc&sort=extinction\_status#](https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/directory?direction=desc&sort=extinction_status), The webpage shows a list of animals and their conservation status.

BOOKTALK:

Although small and sometimes clumsy, Byx has always found comfort in being part of the pack. So imagine her sadness and fear when she finds herself alone, the last of her kind. What should she do? Where should she go? Recalling rumors of other Dairnes in the far reaches of the kingdom, Byx bands together with new friends and allies to seek the truth. Is she The Endling?

Prepared by:

Carolyn Gause, Hammond School, cgause@hammondschool.org

**Every Shiny Thing**

Cordelia Jensen and Laurie Morrison

Abrams / Amulet Books, 2018

352 pages

SUMMARY:

*Every Shiny Thing* is written by two authors, each writing a different main character. Lauren, writing in prose, is a wealthy girl who is adjusting to her autistic brother being away at a boarding school. Sierra, writing in verse, is the child of an alcoholic mother who is being fostered by Lauren’s next door neighbors. Both girls are dealing with their changing circumstances. Lauren copes with her brother’s absence by trying to get money for charitable causes, but instead of raising money, she steals them instead. Sierra likes her new friend Lauren, but feels increasingly guilty about covering for her transgressions.

GENRE TAGS:

* Realistic Fiction
* Novel in Verse
* Autism

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARDS:

* Inquiry-Based Literacy Standard 2: Transact with texts to formulate questions,

propose explanations, and consider alternative views and multiple perspectives.

* Reading Literary Text Standard 11: Analyze and provide evidence of how the author’s choice of point of view, perspective or purpose shapes content, meaning, and style.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY …

* *Jasmine and Maddie*, Christine Pakkala
* *The Summer of Broken Things*, Margaret Peterson Haddix
* *Train I Ride*, Paul Mosier
* *Being Sloane Jacobs*, Lauren Morrill

WEBSITES:

*Every Shiny Thing*, <https://www.abramsbooks.com/product/every-shiny-thing_9781419728648/>,

Abrams Publishing Site that includes a Teaching Guide.

*Cordelia Jensen*, <http://www.cordeliajensen.com/>, author site.

*Laurie Morrison*, <https://lauriemorrisonwrites.com/>, author site.

BOOKTALK:

Have you ever been in a new life situation where you didn’t know what to do anymore? Meet Lauren, who is used to caring for her autistic brother; now that he is at a boarding school, she worries about him and doesn’t know what to do with her time. Meet Sierra, who usually takes care of things her alcoholic mother does not; currently she is living in foster care next door to Lauren. Lauren turns her energy towards befriending Sierra; she also decides to help people in need by taking things from people that have enough. Lauren and Sierra will have to decide which is more important - staying friends or doing the right thing.

Prepared by:

Alana S. Lewis, Deer Park Middle School, alana\_lewis@charleston.k12.sc.us

**Everything Else in the Universe**

Tracy Holczer

G. P. Putnam’s Sons Books for Young Readers, 2018

272 pages

SUMMARY:

When Lucy Rossi’s father returns from fighting in the Vietnam War with his left arm missing, Lucy decided to dedicate herself to helping her dad adjust to his prosthetic arm. But her Mom decides to send her to spend the summer with relatives to give her dad “some space.” This leaves Lucy confused and hurt when her father, who always showered her with love, is suddenly pushing her away. Lucy’s Uncle Giovanni tries to help her adjust to all these changes. Lucy meets a young next-door neighbor with a secret, Milo, who is waiting for his own father to return from the war. The pair begin to spend lots of time together talking, laughing and exploring. On one of their adventures, they discover some photos, a helmet and a Purple Heart buried next in Lucy’s back garden. This leads them on a quest to find out to whom these items belong, and who placed them there—which in turn leads them to various veterans’ organizations—most of them offer help to veterans returning from war. While Lucy tries to figure out if her Dad will ever be the same, she discovers that Milo is struggling with his own secrets.

GENRE TAGS:

* Historical Fiction
* Mystery

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARDS:

* Inquiry-Based Literacy Standard 2: Transact with texts to formulate questions,

propose explanations, and consider alternative views and multiple perspectives.

* Reading Literary Text Standard 11: Analyze and provide evidence of how the author’s choice of point of view, perspective or purpose shapes content, meaning, and style.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK TRY . . .

* *One For the Murphys,* Lynda Mullay Hunt
* *Rules,* Cynthia Lord
* *Shooting the Moon*, Frances O’Roark Dowell
* *Right as Rain*, Lindsay Stoddard

WEBSITES:

Author’s Website, Tracy Holczer, <http://tracyholczer.com/>, The author’s website offers information about both of her published books, links to interviews she has given, a link to her blog information about how to books her for author visits and Skype sessions and teacher resources to go along with her book *A Secret Hum of a Daisy.*  The author also shares a list of some of her favorite books from her childhood and adolescence.

Vietnam War Facts for Kids: American Historama, <http://www.american-historama.org/1945-1989-cold-war-era/vietnam-war.htm>, This website provides basic facts about the Vietnam War which lasted 20 years (1955-1975) which cost over 58,000 Americans their lives.

BOOKTALK:

Who buried a Purple Heart medal, some old photos and a helmet in a backyard garden? 12 year old Lucy and her new friend Milo are determined to find out who they belong to so they can return them. It is 1971 and Lucy’s world is falling apart—her dad just returned from Vietnam missing his arm. He refuses to use his prosthetic arm and he has become emotionally distant. Milo, whose father also went to Vietnam, is waiting for his own father to return from the war. Their new friendship is what they both need to keep them from worrying about their dads. While they go looking for clues about the mysterious found items, they are welcomed at an informal refuge for veterans, but are turned away from the Veterans of Foreign Wars, who despise Vietnam Vets. Will they get the opportunity to return the items to their rightful owner and solve this mystery? Will Lucy and Milo each be reunited with their dads, and be able to return to their normal lives? Read *Everything Else in the Universe* by Tracy Holczer to find out.

Prepared by:

Patti Barker, Bryson Middle School, pbarker@greenville.k12.sc.us

**Front Desk**

Kelly Yang

Arthur A. Levine Books, 2018

298 pages

SUMMARY:

Based on the author’s own life story, Mia Tang and her parents are first-generation immigrants from China in the early 1990’s. Her parents manage a motel as a job, and also for a place to live. The workload is tremendous, and their boss Mr. Yao expects a lot from the Tangs; in order to complete all the work, Mia helps run the front desk of the motel, checking people in and out. At the same time, Mia is also adjusting to a new school. Her mom wants her to excel at math, but Mia wants to be a writer. Can she be a writer if English isn’t even her first language?

GENRE TAGS:

* Historical Fiction
* Immigrants fiction

SC STATE ELA STANDARDS:

* Inquiry-Based Literacy Standard 2: Transact with texts to formulate questions,

propose explanations, and consider alternative views and multiple perspectives.

* Reading Literary Text Standard 11: Analyze and provide evidence of how the author’s choice of point of view, perspective or purpose shapes content, meaning, and style.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY …

* *Stef Soto, Taco Queen*, Jennifer Torres
* *I’m OK*, Patti Kim
* *Everlasting Nora*, Marie Cruz
* *It Ain’t So Awful Falafel*, Firoozeh Dumas

WEBSITES:

*Front Desk* Website, <https://www.frontdeskthebook.com/> . The *Front Desk* site includes

information about the book, teacher guides for classroom discussions, writing prompts, and Yang’s videos for the Global Read-Aloud.

*Meet Young Immigrants*, <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/young_immigrants/>, Scholastic site for teachers, where they can share the stories of modern children who are immigrants.

BOOKTALK:

Imagine that you are ten years old; trying to fit in (or at least not stand out) at a new school; trying to realize your dreams as a writer, but having to write in a second language; and helping your family run their business. This is what life is like for Mia Tang. Her family has moved to America for China; her mom expects her to do well in math, but she wants to be a writer. She thinks she needs to embellish her life in order to make friends at school, when in reality, she has to run the front desk of the motel that her family manages. Can Mia help her family realize their dreams, even with their boss, Mr. Yao, causing them trouble at every opportunity? Find out in *Front Desk*!

Prepared by:

Alana S. Lewis, Deer Park Middle School, alana\_lewis@charleston.k12.sc.us

**Genesis Begins Again**

Alicia D. Williams

Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books 2019

384 pages

SUMMARY:

In *Genesis Begins Again*, thirteen-year-old Genesis struggles with a self-contempt that is made worse by her father’s verbal abuse and her grandmother’s backward ideologies about skin color. Genesis keeps a list of the things she hates about herself which includes her skin color, her family’s poverty, and her struggle to find a friend group where she really belongs. When her family is evicted from yet another home, her father manages to land a big house in a nice neighborhood. This means Genesis must start all over as the new girl at a mostly white school. Moving doesn’t solve all of her problems, but with the help of new friends, teachers, and music, Genesis learns to love herself again.

GENRE TAG:

* Realistic Fiction
* Peer pressure
* Bullying
* Prejudice

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARDS:

* Inquiry-Based Literacy Standard 2: Transact with texts to formulate questions,

propose explanations, and consider alternative views and multiple perspectives.

* Reading Literary Text Standard 11: Analyze and provide evidence of how the author’s choice of point of view, perspective or purpose shapes content, meaning, and style.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK TRY . . .

* *A Good Kind of Trouble*, Lisa Moore Ramee
* *For Black Girls Like Me,* Mariama J. Lockington
* *Blended,* Sharon M. Draper
* *Roll with It,* Jamie Sumner

WEBSITES:

Blog – Afoma Umesi, All My Beautiful Things, <https://afomaumesi.com/alicia-d-williams-interview-genesis-begins-again/>, Excellent interview with the author covering how she came up with the character of Genesis, the authenticity of Genesis’s voice, and how her background as a teacher influenced her writing.

QCityMetro, <https://qcitymetro.com/2019/01/24/alicia-d-williams-finds-literary-success-writing-about-colorism-and-black-girl-angst/>, This is a thorough article about Alicia D. Williams, her life as a teacher and her debut novel. It includes a question/answer section with the author.

BOOKTALK:

It is an exciting day for Genesis. Her friends have finally agreed to hang out at her house after school. They plan on watching music videos while drinking Sprite and eating chips. But everything changes when they turn the corner to her house and everything Genesis owns is sitting out on their lawn. Evicted again. And the girls she thought were her friends mock her and call her names. Just another item to add to the list of why Genesis hates herself. She’s already up to #95. The eviction leads to a move to a new house and a new school, and Genesis has the opportunity to reinvent herself. Will she find a way to overcome her doubts and love herself again?

Prepared by:

Carly Huerta, Catawba Ridge High School, huertac@fortmillschools.org

**A Good Kind of Trouble**

Lisa MooreRamée

Balzer + Bray 2019

368 pages

SUMMARY:

Twelve-year-old Shayla is allergic to trouble. She is a good student and is determined to follow the rules in junior high. She loves hanging out with her friends Isabella and Julia, wants to join the track team and get the attention of a cute boy in her classes. Shayla’s older sister Hana is Shayla’s polar opposite, and is very active in the Black Lives Matter movement. When the trial of a local police officer accused of shooting an unarmed black man ends in an acquittal, Shayla sees a protest first hand. This prompts her to take a stand and she begins her own form of protest by wearing a black armband in support of the protestors and Black Lives Matter. Soon everyone is taking sides and Shayla is told by the principal to remove the armband or risk being kicked off the track team. But Shayla’s view have change and maybe there is such a thing as a good kind of trouble if you stand up for what you believe is right.

GENRE TAG:

* Realistic Fiction

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARDS:

Inquiry-Based Literacy Standard 2: Transact with texts to formulate questions,

propose explanations, and consider alternative views and multiple perspectives.

Reading Literary Text Standard 11: Analyze and provide evidence of how the author’s choice of

point of view, perspective or purpose shapes content, meaning, and style.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK TRY . . .

* *Genesis Begins Again, Alicia D. Williams*
* *The Hate U Give, Angie Thomas*
* *Dear Martin*, Nic Stone
* *Ghost Boys,* Jewell Parker Rhodes
* *All American Boys,* Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely

WEBSITES:

Author’s Website, Lisa Ramée More, <https://www.lisamooreramee.com/about>, the author’s website offers information about her debut novel, a journal/blog and information about where Lisa Ramée Moore will be appearing in the near future.

Black Lives Matter, <https://qcitymetro.com/2019/01/24/alicia-d-williams-finds-literary-success-writing-about-colorism-and-black-girl-angst/>, this website provides information about the Black Lives Matter movement, upcoming events, how to get involved, history of the movement and interviews with founding members.

Time Magazine: Black Lives Matter Protests in New York Attract Teens <https://time.com/4400211/black-lives-matter-new-york-protest/>, this article discusses how teens have become more aware of social justice issues, specifically police brutality and have joined adults at protests.

BOOKTALK:

Twelve-year-old Shayla is allergic to trouble. What she really wants is to make it through junior high with goof grades, great friends and maybe get the cute boy to notice her. When she begins to notice things happening in her community, such as protests against police brutality, she decides, at the encouragement of her older sister, to take a stand. After attending a protest following the acquittal of a local police officer accused of shooting black man, Shayla decided wears a black armband like the black Lives Matter protesters and attract the attention of her principal who tells Shayla if she wants to keep her spot on the track team, she better remove the armband. Instead, Shayla brings armbands for her friends and classmates who want to support her and even though some of them have no clue, what Black Lives Matters is. Will Principal Trask kick Shayla off the track team, or worse, kick her out of school? Will Shayla stand up for her beliefs? Read *A Good Kind of Trouble* by Lisa Ramée Moore to find out.

Prepared by:

Patti Barker, Bryson Middle School, pbarker@greenville.k12.sc.us

**Harbor Me**

Jacqueline Woodson

Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018

176 pages

SUMMARY:

Six children are taken to their school’s old art room and told it’s a place for them to talk with each other. They will do this every week. Without a teacher to direct the conversations or monitor what is said by the children, words begin to bridge divides and the students begin to understand that sharing their stories might be what they needed to give them the courage and strength to handle situations that made them feel so isolated and alone.

GENRE TAG(S)

* Realistic Fiction
* Social Issues
* Special Needs
* Prejudice
* Racism

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARD(S):

* CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY...

* *All of the Above,* Sheley Pearsall
* *Mr. Terupt Falls Again,* Rob  Buyea
* *Paper Things,* Jennifer Jacobson
* *Look Both Ways,* Jason Reynolds

WEBSITES:

C-SPAN, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4747648/jacqueline-woodson-harbor>, Author interview about *Harbor Me*with C-SPAN.

National Council of Teachers of English, <http://www2.ncte.org/national-write-in/intermediate/>, *Harbor Me*activity guide.

Penguin Random House, <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/33705/jacqueline-woodson/>, Author biography on Penguin Random House website.

BOOKTALK:

Mrs. Laverne opens the door to the old art room and says, “Welcome to room 501.” Then she tells us she is going to leave us alone for an hour. Not just today but every Friday. We are to talk. Talk? I don’t even know these kids. Except for being in the same ‘special’ class, what could we have in common?

Prepared by:

Michelle Martin, South Middle School, michelle.martin@lcsd.k12.sc.us

**I Am Still Alive**

Kate Alice Marshall

Viking Books for Young Readers, 2018

336 pages

SUMMARY:

Jess Cooper recently relocated to the Canadian wilderness to live with her father. Her new home is a cabin in the middle of nowhere. They have no neighbors, and the only person who knows where they live is gone and won’t return for at least three months. Less than 24 hours later, her father is dead, and she is left alone to fend for herself. Will the skills she learned from a weekend Girl Scout camping trip be enough to save her life? Or will revenge against her father’s killers fuel her determination to survive? Find out in *I Am Still Alive*.

GENRE

* Realistic Fiction
* Adventure/Survival
* Thriller

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARDS:

* Standard 8: Analyze characters, settings, events, and ideas as they develop and interact within a particular context.
* Standard 9: Interpret and analyze the author’s use of words, phrases, and conventions, and how their relationships shape meaning and tone in print and multimedia texts.
* Standard 11: Analyze and provide evidence of how the author’s choice of point of view, perspective or purpose shapes content, meaning, and style.
* Standard 13: Read independently and comprehend a variety of texts for the purposes of reading for enjoyment, acquiring new learning, and building stamina; reflect on and respond to increasingly complex text over time.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY...

*Burn My Heart*, Beverley Naidoo

*Dry,* Neal Shusterman

*The Taking of Room 114*, Mel Glenn

*The War Outside,* Monica Hesse

*Notes From My Captivity,* Kathy Parks

WEBSITES:

Kate Alice Marshal, [Kate Alice Marshal](http://katemarshallbooks.com/), Author’s website - contains information about the book and author.

BookPage, [Bookpage.com,](https://bookpage.com/interviews/22948-kate-alice-marshall-ya#.XeQg3ZNKjIU) An interview with author Kate Alice Marshall.

BOOKTALK:

Jess Cooper is strong, funny, quick on her feet, terrified, and all alone in the Canadian wilderness. Actually, she has Boomer, her recently inherited dog to protect her. She faces danger from a lack of shelter, water and food, but the greatest danger she faces is from the men who killed her father. He took something they want and they’re coming back to get it. Can Jess stay alive long enough to survive living in the woods, or will the men who killed her father come back for her? Read *I Am Still Alive* to find out who wins: nature, murderers, or Jess.

Prepared by:

Dana Anderson, Cario Middle, Dana\_anderson@charleston.k12.sc.us

**Jigsaw Jungle**

Kristen Levine

Penguin Random House, 2018

368 pages

SUMMARY:

Claudia’s dad is missing. As she searches for signs of what might have happened to him, she begins to receive puzzle pieces with clues as to where he is and why he has disappeared.

GENRE TAGS:

* Realistic Fiction
* Mystery/clue trails

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARDS:

* SC ELA Reading Literary Text Standard 8.1 Describe how a plot in a narrative or drama unfolds and how characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution; determine the impact of contextual influences on setting, plot and characters.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY…

* *Smack Dab in the Middle of Maybe*, Jo Watson Hackl
* *Secret Hum of a Daisy,* Tracy Holzcher
* *I Am Princess X,* Cherie Priest
* Blue Balliett’s Mystery Series: Includes *Chasing Vermeer*, *The Wright 3, The Caulder Game*, and *Pieces and Players*

WEBSITES:

Author Website, <https://kristinlevine.com/> Check out the author’s website for bio, contact information and other books by this author.

Jigsaw Explorer, <https://www.jigsawexplorer.com/> Play online jigsaw puzzles for free at this site!

PFLAG, <https://pflag.org/>, Families dealing with the issues in this novel might like to connect with this organization.

SPLIT, <http://www.splitfilm.org/> This is a documentary featuring children of divorce speaking candidly about how it affects them.

BOOKTALK:

When her dad doesn’t come home from work one night, Claudia is worried. Is he sick? Has he been kidnapped? Then she discovers a clue, a puzzle piece planted by her father. So he isn’t missing after all. He has left them! Claudia wrestles with her feelings of abandonment by her father, as well as being angry at her mother for not seeming that interested in finding him. As she uncovers each clue, she enlists the help of friends and family and embarks on a journey into her past relationship with her father, in order to bring him home.

Prepared by:

Rebecca Roper, MLIS, Carver Middle School, rbroper@spart7.org

**Lifeboat 12**

Susan Hood

Simon & Schuster, 2018

314 pages

SUMMARY:

Thirteen-year-old Ken and five other boys must survive in the Atlantic Ocean in a life boat after the ship carrying them to safety from London during World War II is torpedoed.

GENRE TAGS:

* Historical Fiction
* Novel in verse
* World War II fiction
* Survival

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARD(S):

* Standard 7-4: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the causes and effects of world conflicts in the first half of the twentieth century.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY…

* *Refugee,* Alan Gratz
* *The War That Saved Me,* Kimberly Brubaker Bradley
* *The Watcher,* Joan Hiatt Harlow

WEBSITES:

Susan Hood, [www.susanhoodbooks.com](http://www.susanhoodbooks.com), official author website.

Merseyside Maritime Museum, [www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/collections/city-of-](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/collections/city-of-)

benares/index.aspx, details the true story of the Children’s Ship from the city of

Benares.

BOOKTALK:

Based on an actual event, *Lifeboat 12* takes place in 1940 during World War II. Thirteen-year-old Ken lives in London with his father and step-mother. London is being bombed nightly by the Nazis. In an effort to keep Ken safe, his father signs him up to be one of ninety children who will travel to Canada aboard a fancy ship. Once the ship sails, all appears to be safe. The children are enjoying life on the ship and meeting new friends on the voyage to Canada. The ship’s captain even gives the all clear that the ship is out of danger. But is it? During the night, the ship is hit with a torpedo! Ken and five other boys make their way aboard Lifeboat 12. Will they survive?

Prepared by:

Pam Moore, Walhalla Middle School, pmoore@g.oconee.k12.sc.us

**Marcus Vega Doesn’t Speak Spanish**

Pablo Cartaya  
Viking, 2018  
249 pages

SUMMARY:  
Marcus Vegas Doesn’t Speak Spanish is the story of an eighth grade boy who wants to meet his father. Marcus, his brother Charlie, and mother live in Pennsylvania. Marcus serves as a bodyguard to the neighborhood kids who are constantly bullied but when he takes money for his services, Marcus gets suspended. This leads his mother to finally relent and take the family on a vacation to Puerto Rico. Marcus has high hopes to meet his dad and have an instant connection. Will Marcus get his wish or discover that fantasy doesn’t always equal reality?

GENRE TAG:

* Realistic Fiction

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK THEN TRY:

* *The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora,* Pablo Cartaya
* *90 Miles To Havana*, Enrique Flores-Galbis
* *The Only Road*, Alexandra Diaz

WEBSITES:

Marcus Vega Doesn’t Speak Spanish, <http://pablocartaya.com/marcusvega>, The book’s website.

Pablo Cartaya: <http://pablocartaya.com>, More about Pablo Cartaya.

Stop bullying, <https://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/groups/special-needs/index.html>, More about bullying children with special needs.

Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEw8JB6UzOk>, book trailer.

BOOK TALK:  
Marcus Vega has a reputation that speaks for itself: don’t mess with me. Students cringe in fear at the mention of his name but when they need help and protection, Marcus is their go-to guy. Because of his huge size, Marcus has many nicknames: the Mastodon of Montgomery Middle, the Springfield Skyscraper, the Moving Mountain, and the Terrible Tower. Do not let his size fool you though; Marcus has a heart of gold especially for his younger brother. Marcus helps the kids at school by operating a business that helps protect the students from bullies and in his mind, enforces the school rules. However, once he has found out, Marcus lands in a heap of trouble that gets him suspended. This leads his mother to rethink her priorities and take them on a vacation to Puerto Rico where Marcus hopes to find his father that he has never met.

Prepared by:

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**The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl**

Stacy McAnulty

Random House Books for Young Readers, 2018

304 pages

SUMMARY:

Twelve-year-old Lucy has “acquired savant syndrome” and has been a math genius ever since she was hit by lightning and survived. Lucy also struggles with OCD which causes her to have to do things in threes and germaphobia which makes her need to clean everything around her. If she does not perform her rituals of threes, she is compelled to recite the digits of Pi in her head to the 314th decimal place, preventing her from concentrating on anything else.

Lucy was homeschooled by her grandmother since she was eight and thinks she is ready to head to college at age twelve. But first, Nana wants her to go to middle school for one year, make one friend, try one new activity, and read a book that isn’t about math. Lucy seems weird to most of her new classmates and she makes some miscalculations about people along the way. Lucy’s Uncle Paul calls her math abilities her super power, but can a super genius survive a year of middle school?

GENRE TAG(S):

* Realistic Fiction
* Bullying
* School and friendship stories

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARDS:

* AASL II. B. 2. Evaluating a variety of perspective during learning activities.
* II. B. 3. Representing diverse perspectives during learning activities.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY…

* *Counting By Sevens,* Holly Goldberg Sloan
* *The Science of Breakable Things,* Leslie Connor
* *Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus,* Dusti Bowling

WEBSITES:

Author’s Website, <http://www.stacymcanulty.com/mlg>, This site is packed full of information

about the author, curriculum guides with common core standards references, interviews with the author, links to reviews and articles, and more!

Popular Science, <https://www.popsci.com/science/article/2013-02/when-brain-damage-unlocks-genius-within/>, Learn more about acquired savant syndrome.

North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, <https://www.ncssm.edu/>, This is the official website for the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, which is mentioned in the book.

MENSA for Kids, <https://www.mensaforkids.org/learn/mathematics-courses/>, This website offers mathematics courses for kids who are math geniuses.

BOOKTALK:

“Life is like an equation. And mine is perfectly balanced. Nana plus Uncle Paul plus math equals happiness. Other people might need to add in friends or sports or money or something else. But my equation is already solved.”

Since being struck by lightning at the age of eight, Lucy has grown very comfortable with her reclusive life which revolves around Nana, Uncle Paul, and conversations about math with her online “friends." Her favorite number is Pi. She sees numbers as different colors and marvels at the intricacies of math theorems.

This is a fascinating and compelling novel that will draw you in from the beginning, whether you are a math-lover or not. You will not soon forget Lucy. A look at the world through her eyes will make you think twice about how you treat others around you and give you a better understanding of what others may be facing in their daily lives.

Prepared by:

Kristi Benson, Lake Carolina Elementary Upper Campus, kbenson@richland2.org

**The Night Diary**

Veera Hiranandani

Dial Books for Young Readers, 2018

264 pages

SUMMARY:

In the midst of the 1947 split of India into two countries, Pakistan and India, twelve-year-old Nisha and her family become refugees in the struggle to find a new home while being both Hindu and Muslim.

GENRE TAGS:

* Historical Fiction
* Family Life
* India Independence; Pakistan; Hindus; Muslims
* Siblings
* Diaries
* Refugees

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARDS:

* 7-6.2 Compare features of nationalist and independence movements in different regions in the post—World War Il period, including Mohandas Gandhi's role in the non-violence movement for India's independence, the emergence of nationalist movements in African and Asian countries, and the collapse of the apartheid system in South Africa.

IF YOU LIKE THIS BOOK, TRY…

* *Amal Unbound*, Aisha Saeed
* *Blended*, Sharon Draper
* *Front Desk*, Kelly Yang
* *Illegal,* Eoin Colfer
* *Others Words for Home*, Jasmine Warga
* *Without Refuge*, Jane Mitchell

WEBSITES:

Veera Hiranandani Author and Speaker, [https://www.veerahiranandani.com](http://www.veerahiranandani.com),

The author of The Night Diary’s website, here you will find information about Ms. Hiranandani as a writer and a teacher, along with information about other books she has written.

BOOKTALK:

Step back in time into the life of twelve-year old half Hindu/half Muslim Nisha living in 1947 India and newly formed Pakistan. That year will bring many changes and heartbreak as Nisha’s country is divided, along with her family and those she loves. Discover through letters written to her deceased mother via her diary whether her family will stay together and make it a new home where they will not be persecuted for being Hindu.

Prepared by:

Angela Thoele, Chapin Middle School, athoele@lexrich5.org

**Not If I Save You First**

Ally Carter

Scholastic Press, 2018

293 pages

SUMMARY:

Maddie does not live a typical suburban life; after all, her dad is a Secret Service agent and her best friend happens to be the president’s son. But her life abruptly changes when her dad moves her to the Alaskan wilderness and Logan never responds to her letters. When Logan shows up six years later she is furious, but she has to put her anger aside when they are attacked by an assailant and left to defend themselves in treacherous conditions. With Maddie’s survival skills they just might make it, but can she stand to be around Logan without killing him? To find out she will have to save him first.

GENRE TAGS:

* Romance
* Adventure

STANDARDS:

* AASL Standard Framework for Learners: I.A.2. Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.
* AASL Standard Framework for Learners: V.A.2. Reflecting and questioning assumptions and possible misconceptions.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY…

* *Salt to the Sea,* Ruta Sepetys
* *Wolf by Wolf,* Ryan Graudin
* *Heartless,* Marissa Meyer

WEBSITES:

Alaska Wilderness League, <http://www.alaskawild.org/>, Information about wilderness areas in Alaska from an organization focused on protecting the state’s natural resources.

Ally Carter, <https://allycarter.com/>, Author website with links to books and other news & events.

BOOKTALK:

Meet Maddie. Her Secret Service agent dad suddenly moves them to the Alaskan wilderness forcing Maddie to learn survival techniques. She masters jeweled hatchets and the many uses of bobby pins but struggles with the isolation of not hearing from her best friend, the president’s son. When he shows up six years later she is furious, but an unexpected attack forces them into the treacherous wilderness. Her survival skills are their only hope. If she wants to be mad at Logan, she has to save him first.

Prepared by:

Tiffany Forrest, Cayce-West Columbia Library, tforrest@lex.lib.sc.us

**The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise**

Dan Gemeinhart

Macmillan Children’s Publishing Group, 2019

346 pages

SUMMARY:

It’s been five years since Coyote lost her mom and two sisters in a tragic car accident. Since that time, she and her dad, Rodeo, have been living on the road and traveling cross country in an old school bus. When Coyote learns that the park in her old neighborhood is about to be demolished, she hatches a plan to get Rodeo to travel over 3,600 miles in 4 days back to Washington state. How does she “trick” Rodeo into making the journey home, and why is it so important for Journey to get back there before the park is gone are just two of the many questions readers will be trying to answer while they cheer for Coyote to make it there in time.

GENRE TAG(S):

* Realistic Fiction
* Grief fiction
* Travel

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARDS:

* Standard 8: Analyze characters, settings, events, and ideas as they develop and interact within a particular context.
* Standard 9: Interpret and analyze the author’s use of words, phrases, and conventions, and how their relationships shape meaning and tone in print and multimedia texts.
* Standard 11: Analyze and provide evidence of how the author’s choice of point of view, perspective or purpose shapes content, meaning, and style.
* Standard 13: Read independently and comprehend a variety of texts for the purposes of reading for enjoyment, acquiring new learning, and building stamina; reflect on and respond to increasingly complex text over time.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY …

* *Counting by 7s,* Holly Goldberg Sloan
* *See You in the Cosmos,* Jack Cheng
* *Sweeping Up the Heart,* Kevin Henkes

WEBSITES:

Dan Gemeinhard, <http://dangemeinhart.com/>, Visit the author’s website to learn more.

Macmillan,

<https://images.macmillan.com/folio-assets/teachers-guides/9781250196705TG.pdf>, Access the teacher’s guide for this book from the publisher.

BOOKTALK:

What is your favorite book? What is your favorite place on Earth? What is your favorite sandwich? The answer to these three questions are the key to being able to board Rodeo and Coyote’s bus and join them on their cross-country travels. When Coyote’s grandmother tells her that the park in their old neighborhood is about to be demolished, Coyote devises a secret plan to get her dad, Rodeo, to drive back “home” so that Coyote can rescue the memory box buried there. Burying the memory box was one of the last things that Coyote did with her mom and two sisters before they were killed in a tragic car accident. Coyote, Rodeo, and their fellow travelers have 4 days to get there, 900 miles to cover per day, and a whole lot obstacles trying to get in the way. And as Coyote and Rodeo get closer to their destination, they discover that going home can sometimes be the hardest journey of all.

Prepared by:

Pam Lorentz, Northside Middle School, [plorentz@lex2.org](mailto:plorentz@lex2.org)

**Shouting at the Rain**

Lynda Mullaly Hunt

Nancy Paulsen Books, 2019

278 pages

SUMMARY:

Raised by her grandmother, Delsie longs for a regular family unit. Delsie knows a lot about weather patterns and can predict a storm brewing, but does not predict a good friend outgrowing her and the storm of feelings and questions she begins to have as she struggles to understand why her mother left her. She makes a new friend, Ronan, who is also troubled by his own family issues. As their friendship grows, and with the help of supporting neighbors, they search for understanding and strength within themselves as they share adventures around Cape Cod.

GENRE TAG(S):

* Realistic Fiction
* Adventure
* Grief and Loss
* Coming of Age

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARDS:

* ELA (Inquiry-Based Literary Standards) 1.1- Develop questions to broaden thinking on a specific idea that frames inquiry for new learning and deeper understanding.
* 2.1 - Transact with text in order to formulate logical questions based on evidence, generate explanations, propose and present conclusions, and consider multiple perspectives.
* (Reading – Literary Text) 5 - Determine meaning and develop logical interpretations by making predictions, inferring, drawing conclusions, analyzing, synthesizing, providing evidence, and investigating multiple interpretations.
* 8 – Analyze characters, settings, events, and ideas as they develop and interact with a particular context.
* 9.1 – Determine the figurative and connotative meaning of words and phrases as they are used in text; analyze the impact of specific word choice on meaning and tone.
* 10.1 – Use context clues to determine meanings of words and phrases.
* 13.1 - Engage in whole and small group reading with purpose and understanding through teacher modeling and gradual release of responsibility.
* 13.3 Read and respond to grade level text to become self-directed, critical readers, and thinkers.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY…

* *Caterpillar Summer*, Gillian McDunn
* *Louisiana’s Way Home*, Kate DiCamillo
* *Merci Suarez Changes Gears,* Meg Medina
* *Heartbeat*, Sharon Creech

WEBSITES:

Lynda Mullaly Hunt, <https://www.lyndamullalyhunt.com/books/shouting-at-the-rain/>, Author’s

website with personal information, as well as information on other books and

appearances.

Penguin Random House, <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/318338/shouting-at-the-rain-by-lynda-mullaly-hunt/>, Informational page about the title including a summary, excerpt, audio sample, information about the author, and book reviews.

Weather for Kids, <http://www.weatherforkids.org/> , Informational page about different types of

weather, includes links to weathercams.

BOOKTALK:

Delsie loves a good summer storm, but the storm that is brewing has nothing to do with the weather. She doesn’t remember her mom and wants to know why her mother left her to be raised by her Grammy. Was it because something is wrong with Delsie? Didn’t her mother love her? As Delsie struggles to understand the absence of her mother, her oldest friend outgrows her, and she meets a newcomer to Cape Cod. Ronan is an angry boy with a reputation as a liar and a thief and has his own family problems. On their adventures around Cape Cod, their friendship grows as they strive to weather the storms that their lives have become. Will Delsie and Ronan be the same after weathering the storms they are facing or will the storms change them? Read *Shouting at the Rain* by Lynda Mullaly Hunt to find out!

Prepared by:

Jenny Cox, Georgetown Middle School, jmcox@gcsd.k12.sc.us

**Small Spaces**

Katherine Arden

Puffin Books, 2019

218 pages

SUMMARY:

Ollie mistakenly stumbles into a mystery from the past that is still haunting the present. After a strange encounter with a woman in the woods, an old book, and a field trip to a farm, Ollie finds herself stuck on a broke down bus. The bus driver warns of what is coming when the sun goes down and tells Ollie and her friends they must stick to the small spaces in order to be safe. See how Ollie unravels this mystery, stands up to her fears, and ends the age-old mystery of where the people disappeared.

GENRE TAGS:

* Fantasy
* Horror
* Paranormal
* Friendship
* Survival

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARDS:

* Reading Literary Text: Meaning and Context: Standard 5: Determine meaning and develop logical interpretations by making predictions, inferring, drawing conclusions, analyzing, synthesizing, providing evidence, and investigating multiple interpretations.
* Standard 6: Summarize key details and ideas to support analysis of thematic development.
* Standard 8: Analyze characters, settings, events, and ideas as they develop and interact within a particular context.
* Language, Craft, and Structure: Standard 9: Interpret and analyze the author’s use of words, phrases, and conventions, and how their relationships shape meaning and tone in print and multi-media texts.
* Standard 11: Analyze and provide evidence of how the author’s choice of point of view, perspective, and purpose shape content, meaning, and style.
* Standard 12: Analyze and critique how the author uses structures in print and multimedia texts to shape meaning and impact the reader.
* Range and Complexity: Standard 13: Read independently and comprehend a variety of texts for the purposes of reading for enjoyment, acquiring new learning, and building stamina; reflect on and respond to increasingly complex text over time.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK, TRY…

* *Nightbooks,* J.A. Whiteder
* *Tunnel of Bones,* Cassidy Blake
* *Sweep: The Story of a Girl and Her Monster,* Jonathan Auzier
* *Pumpkinheads,* Rainbow Rowell
* *Watch Hollow,* Gregory Funaro

WEBSITES:

Katherine Arden’s Official Website: <http://www.katherinearden.com/>, Learn more about the author!

Small Spaces Website: <http://katherinearden.com/book/small-spaces/>, Visit this website to learn more about the book.

BookPage, <https://bookpage.com/interviews/23208-katherine-arden-childrens#.XeVosNVOncs>, Katherine Arden *Small Spaces* interview.

BOOKTALK:

How many of you like to go on field trips? Well, after reading this book, you may never look at field trips the same way again. Travel with Ollie and her class on a one-of-a-kind field trip where they visit a farm, get advice from the school bus driver, run from scarecrows that are alive, hide in small spaces, unravelling a web of mystery that goes back decades, and set people free after them being trapped for a very long time. You just might have to sleep with the lights on after you read this book!

Prepared by:

Rhoda Coleman, Greeleyville Elementary School, rcoleman@wcsd.k12.sc.us

**The Unteachables**

Gordon Korman

Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins, 2019

288 pages

SUMMARY:

In *The Unteachables*, the worst teacher in all of Greenwich Middle School, Mr. Kermit, is assigned to Room 117 and the worst group of students--SCS-8, also known as “The Unteachables.” Mr. Kermit has a past, and The Unteachables know all about it and are not afraid to use it against him. He doesn’t teach, doesn’t discipline - pretty much all he does is sit at his desk drinking lots of coffee from a gigantic mug and doing crossword puzzles as he waits for June so he can retire. However, things begin to change when the teacher next door (who has a connection to Mr. Kermit’s past) gets involved with her unconventional classroom management, and in what is happening in the classroom. Ultimately, Mr. Kermit stands up for his students and begins to realize they are not so unteachable after all. Each chapter shares the story from a different perspective-- that of the students, teachers and administrators at Greenwich Middle School.

GENRE TAGS:

* Realistic Fiction
* Humor
* School stories

STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LIBRARY STANDARDS:

* Reading Literary Text: Meaning and Context: Standard 5: Determine meaning and develop logical interpretations by making predictions, inferring, drawing conclusions, analyzing, synthesizing, providing evidence, and investigating multiple interpretations.
* Standard 6: Summarize key details and ideas to support analysis of thematic development.
* Standard 8: Analyze characters, settings, events, and ideas as they develop and interact within a particular context.

IF YOU LIKED THIS BOOK TRY . . .

* *Restart*, Gordon Korman
* *The Next Great Paulie Fink,* Ali Benjamin
* *Shouting at the Rain,* Megan Mullaly Hunt
* *The Benefits of Being an Octopus*, Ann Braden

WEBSITES:

Author’s Website – Gordon Korman, <https://gordonkorman.com/>, An excellent resource with links to resources for each of the author’s 225+ books, a link to his blog, a readers’ forum, information about booking Gordon Korman for school visits, etc.

NBC News Learn- Writers Speak to Kids: Gordon Korman,

<https://www.nbclearn.com/writers-speak-to-kids/cuecard/61020>

This website, by NBC News, contains a video interview (and transcript) with author Gordon Korman. The interview from 2012, discusses some of his popular books and different aspects of his writing process.

BOOKTALK:

What happens when you pair a burned out teacher with a classroom full of misfit students, including one who is not even registered to attend school? You get *The Unteachables* by Gordon Korman, the story of Mr. Kermit, who used to be one of the best teachers in the school but after a cheating scandal in his classroom 22 years earlier is now just trying to make it through the year so he can retire. Mr. Kermit is assigned to teach SCS-8, a class with seven middle school students who no teacher can handle and no teacher wants. It takes the teacher next door (who has a connection to Mr. Kermit’s past) to make Mr. Kermit realize he is still a great teacher. Mr. Kermit in turn inspires his students to believe in themselves even if no one else does and accomplish what no one thought that they could. Gordon Korman tells this engaging story in alternating chapters told from the perspective of the students, teachers and administrators in Room 117.

Prepared by:

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