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For many more children's book titles, literacy extension ideas, and book reviews visit: <http://abookor2.blogspot.com>. Marciano can be reached at: [dmarciano@valdosta.edu](mailto:dmarciano@valdosta.edu).



# Books You and Your Students Need To 'Check Out'!

BY CHRISTINE A. DRAPER

In 2012 the number of children's book titles published was 32,624 (Statista, 2015). This number is staggering for any teacher or media specialist to keep up with. Unfortunately, you can't always trust reviews you see posted online as well since these could have been written by the author's friends and family members (Bucher & Hinton, 2014). So, what is a teacher or media specialist to do? This new column is designed with the busy teacher and media center specialist in mind. In the spring and fall, I will highlight and review several high quality books that you may want to add to your reading list. Here are a few of my favorites:

## For younger readers

Holub, J. (2013). *Little red writing*. (M. Sweet, illus.). San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, unpagged.

Once upon a time in pencil school, Ms. 2 tells her pencil class that it is time to write a story. The main character, Little Red, sets out on a story-telling journey with her basket of nouns and learns first-hand about the importance of different parts of speech, the value of punctuation, and the benefits of other ideas about writing. Hidden within the pages of this book are basic tips for the beginning writer. Holub presents a hilarious and engaging re-telling of Little Red Riding Hood that brings all key characters into play, including the Wolf 3000, a pencil sharpener on a rampage! Sweet's watercolor, pencil, and collage illustrations include many additional details that readers will not want to miss. Suggested grades: 3 and up!

Mack, J. (2013). *Ah ha!* San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, unpagged.

Can a person use only two letters to create an entire story? Jeff Mack proves that with creative punctuation and lively, engaging mixed-media illustrations, two letters (H and A) can be used to create a delightful story young readers will enjoy. Poor frog is trying to have a relaxing day in his pond, but through a series of both fortunate and unfortunate events, frog's day might not be as relaxing as anticipated. This clever and unique story will take readers of all ages on a rollicking grand adventure that highlights Frog's daring (and quite lucky) day. With its open-ended conclusion, this book begs to be read repeatedly and invites readers of all ages to speculate just what might happen next! Suggested grades: K-3.

## For middle level readers

Balliett, B. (2013). *Hold fast*. New York, NY: Scholastic Press, 274 pages.

Early's father, Dasher Pearl, spoke about the power of words to his children from the day they were born. "They are for choosing, admiring, keeping, giving. They are treasures of inestimable value" (p. 6). But now, he is gone. Missing. Vanished. "Gone. Four miserable letters. What does the word mean?" (p. 2) and due to his disappearance, Early and her family are forced to move into the city shelter. Early must use all she learned about language and its rhythms from her father Dash to try and save her family and find her father. Throughout this novel, Balliett enchants the reader with the beauty and power of language and vocabulary. Suggested grades: 5-8.

Cervantes, A. (2013). *Gaby, lost and found*. New York, NY: Scholastic Press, 220 pages.

Sixth grader Gaby Ramirez Howard is counting the days until her mother can return from Honduras. After a raid on the place where she worked, she was deported there since she didn't have the proper papers. Despite her father's best intentions, he has no idea how to care for his daughter, and he often forgets to buy groceries or pick up food from the food pantry leaving Gaby to fend for herself. What saves her from emotional trauma is working at the local animal shelter as part of a school service project and writing profiles and adoption advertisements. This is the story of a girl who loves to care for animals in need but is also in need of a home herself. The book also addresses important controversial buissues such as illegal immigration, poverty, and child neglect. Suggested grades: 5-8.

Vanderpool, C. (2013). *Navigating early*. New York, NY: Delacorte Press, 306 pages.

A fabulous book that engages students in a multitude of stories and mysteries that intertwine beautifully. Thirteen-year-old Jack Baker's father is finally coming home at the end of WWII. Unfortunately, his return is marred by the death of Jack's mother, and Jack is forced to leave his home in Kansas abruptly to attend boarding school in Maine. There, Jack meets Early Auden, "the strangest of boys" (inside jacket flap). Early often skips classes and listens to records in the school

basement, spends time reading the number Pi as a story, and collects news clippings about the sightings of a Great Appalachian Bear. Readers' hearts will surely break at some of the encounters, while pounding in excitement at the ways the individual stories all seem to magically intertwine. Math aficionados will enjoy the amazing tale of Pi woven throughout the text. Suggested grades: 6-8.

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**Tiffany Flowers** is an Assistant Professor of Education at Georgia Perimeter College. She is the author of various children and young adult books for children. Her research interests include children's literature, diversity issues in education, and emergent literacy. Correspondence concerning this book review may be e-mailed to [tflowers@gpc.edu](mailto:tflowers@gpc.edu).



## Children's Book Reviews About Reading

BY TIFFANY FLOWERS

Joiner, R. (2015). *The amazing things books can do. Book 1*. 2nd Ed. Iowa: RJC.

*The amazing things books can do. Book 1* is a great book to add to any PreK-Grade 2 reading collection. The book is written in a neat format that details the aesthetic and functional purposes of books. This is a great book for reading teachers, librarians, and parents that want to expose children to the importance of reading. The illustrations in the book are amazing. The storyline in the book is timeless and inviting. The message behind the importance of reading is uplifting. This is a great book choice for international reading day and for introducing the reading workshop to children. I highly recommend this book for teachers that want to do a lesson on the importance and purpose for reading.

Stewart, S. (2008). *The library*. New York: Squarefish.

*The Library* is a great addition to the curriculum and bookshelf of those that love to teach reading. This children's book is about a character named Elizabeth Brown that loves to read. Elizabeth loves to read so much that she reads rooms full of books and takes books wherever she goes. At one point during the story, she actually made it her mission to get others to love to read as well. After accumulating hundreds of books and not being able to leave her home, Elizabeth donates all of her books to the town where she lived. She donates the books and they establish a library in her honor. At the end of the story, Elizabeth decides to live out her life as a Bibliophile with her best friend and cat. There are about 40 pages contained in this book. This book is written in a rhyming format. It is a friendly read for teachers that want to read to

children in grades 1-3. This is a great independent read for children in grades 2-3. The illustrations were engaging and the use of earth tone colors adds to the rich language contained in this work. Some of the harder words included in this book were tutoring, incredible, and Olympiad. This text is a great choice for teachers that begin teaching reading by teaching the love of reading. Also, this is a great school library or classroom library choice for those that want to put this book out during various literacy holidays such as International Literacy Day.

Sierra, J. (2004). *Wild about books*. New York: Knopf Doubleday.

*Wild about books* is a fun-filled book about animals in the wild that fall in love with books. They find so much information and adventure in the books that they keep reading. The book is written in a friendly format with rhyming and engaging language. The illustrations are vivid and plentiful. The author and illustrator added captions to many of the illustrations to illuminate humor. This text is written for children in grades pre K through grade 2. This is a great book to use during the first few weeks of school to encourage children to explore different books. This is a great book to use on a lesson about exploring book genres. A teacher could read the book for enjoyment. Then reread the book on a different day and go back to the sections about books about different subjects, concepts, and characters. The teacher could then introduce children to different genres of literature prior to a genre study unit. It is the perfect book to add to any classroom or library collection to encourage children to read a variety of books.

## Curl up with a good group

You live to read. You can hardly wait to get cozy in your favorite spot and crack the pages of a good book. You're also an educator. Why not curl up with a good group, too? Membership in the Georgia Reading Association will connect you to others like you who inspire and teach others about reading.

Visit us at

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