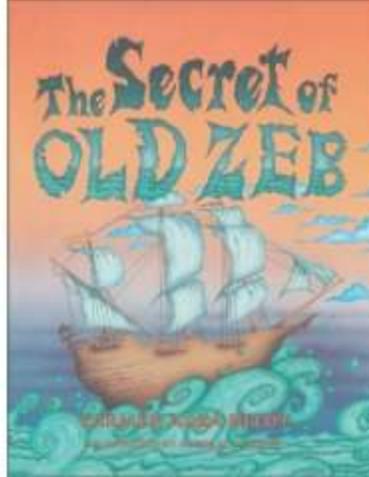


Genre: Picture Book (Fiction)

Deedy, Carmen Agra. (2002). **The secret of old Zeb**. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishers.

Reading Level: 5.1 Flesch-Kincaid Word Analysis (100 word excerpt)



Author Information (<http://carmendeedy.com/>):

Carmen Agra Deedy is the author of numerous award-winning and bestselling books for children. She is also an acclaimed storyteller with amazing wit and style. (I had the honor of hearing her give the keynote story of The Library Dragon at the 2008 MRA Conference and she was OUTSTANDING!). She was born in Cuba and immigrated to a suburb of Atlanta, GA as a young girl. Her books include Martina the Beautiful Cockroach: A Cuban Folktale, The Yellow Star: The Legend of King Christian X of Denmark, The Library Dragon, The Last Dance, TreeMan, amongst others.

Synopsis:

This is the story of Walter who was left with his Great Aunt Hortensia for the summer when his parents went abroad. He envisions the worst summer ever until he meets an old sailor neighbor, Zeb who builds ships in bottles. Walter soon learns that Zeb has even bigger dreams and Zeb lets Walter in on his GSP (“Great Secret Project”). This is a story with a BIG theme of “*following your dreams*” and “*not giving up.*”

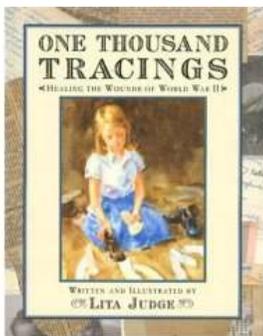
Teacher Notes:

I would use this as a class read-aloud for grades 4 or 5 because of the higher level vocabulary in this text and the fact this is a bit longer and more complex picture book than most. I would also discuss themes in literature: specifically “*following your dreams*” and “*not giving up*” with this text. After reading, I would ask the students to write a short response to the question “*What are your dreams?*” Prior to reading the story, I would do some vocabulary word study activities, because Carmen Agra Deedy writes stories that are RICH in language. Words we would work on with this text are: expedition, tomfoolery, canasta, grizzled, smuggler, swarthy, cobblestone, stowaway, cellar, ballast, stupendous, and corset.

Genre: Picture Book (Non-fiction)

Judge, Lita. (2007). **One thousand tracings: healing the wounds of World War II**. New York: Hyperion.

Reading Level: 4.1 Flesch-Kincaid Word Analysis (100 word excerpt)



Author Information (<http://www.litajudge.com/>):

Lita Judge was born into a family of scientists. Her dad was a geologist and her grandparents were ornithologists. Lita went on to become a paleontologist, exploring her art on the side. When she found the “tracings” in her grandparents’ home, she felt compelled to write the story. She now writes and illustrates books full time. She has illustrated D is for Dinosaurs, S is for S’mores and Ugly. I had the pleasure of having breakfast with her at the Authors/Illustrator’s Breakfast at the MRA Conference in March 2008 and this story was very inspiring to hear in person.

Synopsis:

One Thousand Tracings is the winner of the 2008 IRA Children's Book Award, is a 2008 ALA Notable Children's Book, and is a 2008 Michigan Notable Book. The book is based on the story of Lita Judge’s grandparents who organized a relief effort for people in Europe during WWII. The “foot tracings” were sent by Europeans in desperate need of shoes. Lita’s grandparents organized the sending of over 3,000 care packages of shoes to people in need. This is a very powerful story of compassion, hope and caring for others.

Teacher Notes:

http://www.litajudge.com/tracings_teacher_guide.pdf - teacher guide

As a teacher, I would use this book in grades 4 or 5 to study themes in literature: specifically hope, helping others, sacrifice, and cooperation. I would ask the students to think about these questions as we read the text together (Nettles, p. 148):

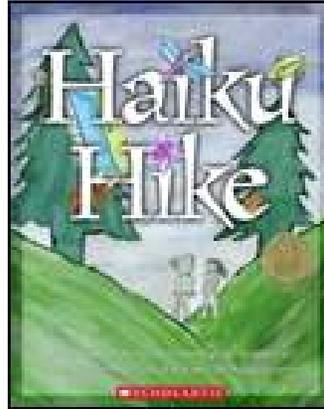
- Why did the author write this book?
- What is the author trying to tell us?
- What does the author want us to figure out?
- What life lesson can we learn from this book?
- How can this book help us understand things that happen to us in our lives?

Subsequent to reading, I would have the students write in their reader’s response journals responses to these questions. I would then have the students participate in a community service activity “*helping others*” like delivering cookies to a nursing home or collecting food for a local food bank. Another extended activity could be to start a pen pal letter exchange with students in another country (e.g. ePals Global Community at <http://www.epals.com/>).

Genre: Poetry

**Fourth Grade Students of St. Mary’s Catholic School in Mansfield, MA. (2005). Haiku hike.
New York: Scholastic.**

Reading Level: 3.1 Flesch-Kincaid Word Analysis (100 word excerpt)



Author Information:

This book was written and illustrated by a group of 4th grade students from St. Mary’s Catholic School in Mansfield, MA.

Synopsis:

This book was the 2005 Kids are Authors Grand Prize Winner for Nonfiction. It is about two friends who set out for a walk and realize they have forgotten their camera. They decide to use the poetry form haiku (a form of Japanese poetry) to capture their pictures instead. The book is sprinkled with added nonfiction nature field notes.

http://www.scholastic.com/bookfairs/books/aw_award.asp

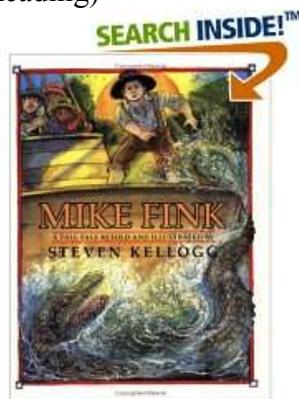
Teacher Notes:

I would use this book in 3rd or 4th grade as an introduction to a poetry unit on haiku. It is my belief that students need authentic reasons to write and by seeing other students’ work published, students are motivated to work on their own writing. Prior to reading this text, I would take my students on a nature ‘hike’ and brainstorm ideas when we returned for creating haikus. Subsequent to this unit, I would invite parents in for a haiku poetry reading or I would podcast the students’ readings of their poetry or I would create our very own “Haiku Hike” book to display in the library or share with our reading buddies.

Genre: Traditional Literature

Kellogg, Steven. (1992). Mike Fink. New York: Scholastic

Reading Level: N: Grade 3 (Guided Reading)



Author Information (<http://www.stevenkellogg.com/>):



Steven Kellogg has illustrated over 100 children's books since 1967. His illustrations are delectable! He is one of my favorite illustrators. His books are whimsical and fun and any child (and adult) can sit staring at them for hours! His beloved character illustrations include Jimmy and the Boa and Pinkerton. He also has retold and illustrated countless folktales such as Mike Fink, Chicken Little, The Three Pigs, Johnny Appleseed, Jack and the Beanstalk, Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, and Yankee Doodle.

Synopsis:

This is tale of Mike Fink who was a legendary boatman (“*King of the Keelboatmen*”) on the Mississippi River and Ohio River during the late 1700s. Boatmen had to pole their heavy boats against the current to return home and were legendarily considered superhuman. The most famous of these keelboatmen was Mike Fink. This story is fun and kids love the wonderful illustrations of Mike “*grappling with gators*” and “*befriending bears.*”

Teacher Notes:

I would use this text with 3rd graders to launch a unit on “*folktales.*” We would discuss how a folktale is a story that was generally never written down, just passed down through the generations orally. Oftentimes the folktale involves a legendary character and I would use this opportunity to study the story element – “*character.*” For Mike Fink, the students could create a character map and come up with 3 traits and 2 supporting details about Mike. We would then read another one of Steven Kellogg’s legends like Pecos Bill or Paul Bunyan or Johnny Appleseed and create a “*compare and contrast*” Venn diagram of the main characters. As a culminating activity, the students could create their own legendary character and make “*trading cards*” of their character to trade with their classmates. These graphic organizers can be found at the following websites:

- Character Map – <http://home.att.net/~TEACHING/litcircl/charmap.pdf>
- Venn Diagram - <http://home.att.net/~teaching/graphorg/venn.pdf>
- Character Trading Cards - http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/trading_cards/

Genre: Biography

Freedman, Russell (1997). **Out of darkness: the story of Louis Braille**. New York: Scholastic

Reading Level: S: Grade 4/5 (Guided Reading)



Author Information:



Russell Freedman is the award-winning author of 47 books, many of which have been translated into many different languages. His book, Lincoln: A Photobiography won the Newberry Medal in 1988. His biographies are known for their vivid details and his ability to bring the figures to life.

Synopsis:

This is the story of Louis Braille, a young boy, who wanted to learn to read more than anything but suffered a crippling injury at the age of 3 that left him blind. By the time he was ten, his parents had enrolled him in the Royal Institute for Blind Youth. It is here that Louis stayed up into the darkness of night punching holes in paper determined to create a system of reading and writing for blind people. Despite many setbacks and frustrations, Louis doesn’t give up until eventually he proves his system to the school. He eventually became a well respected teacher at the Institute but died before his saw his system spread across the world helping countless blind people learn to read and write. This is a true story of courage, tenacity, and dedication. Freedman concludes his biography with these words in reference to the Braille system: *“Other than sight itself, no gift could be more precious to the blind”* (p. 76).

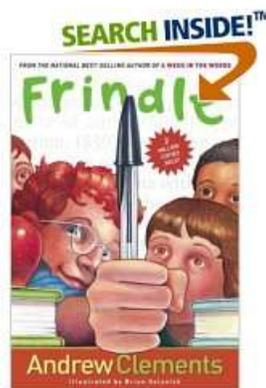
Teacher Notes:

I would use this text in either grade 4 or 5 as a guided reading or literature book selection or as a class read-aloud before teaching a writing unit on biographies. If I were to use this text in a guided reading group, I would concentrate on the comprehension strategy of “visualizing” and creating a motion picture in our minds as we read text, as young Louis must have had to do with everything in his life after becoming blind. If I were to use this text with a writing unit on biographies, I would use the “*Biography Maker*” template created by Bellingham Public Schools at <http://www.bham.wednet.edu/bio/biomaker.htm> as a guide for students to create their own biographical feature articles on a person of their choosing. This template walks students through four steps to creating good biographies: questioning, learning, synthesizing and story-telling. I would use this text to analyze these steps and model for the students how to choose probing questions, how to research and learn more about the person, how to pull it all together and how to tell and write the biographical story of the person as Russell Freedman did in this book on Louis Braille.

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Clements, Andrew. (1996). Frindle. New York: Scholastic.
(<http://www.frindle.com/>)

Reading Level: R: Grade 4 (Guided Reading)



Author Information (<http://www.andrewclements.com/>):



Andrew Clements is a former school teacher turned author of children’s books. His books include Frindle, The Landry News, The Report Card, The Lunch Money, No Talking!, amongst others. His books are big hits with kids because they always include scenarios students can relate to and often includes viewpoints of both the students and the teachers. Frindle remains his best-known work.

Synopsis:

This is the story of a boy named Nick, who likes to liven up school with a little creative trouble. During his 5th grade year, he decides to challenge his dictionary-loving teacher with a new word for pen.... “frindle.” The word catches on and soon the school is in an uproar. Does he win over his teacher in the end? This is a fun story about the power of words and imaginative thought.

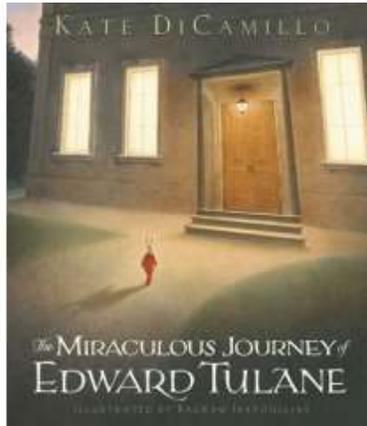
Teacher Notes:

I would use this text in grade 4 as a whole group read-aloud or a guided reading or literature circle selection. Because this book is about a student who creates a new word for pen (“frindle”), I believe this book should be all about word study! I would start the students out with a fun “*Making Words*” activity and challenge the students to create 2, 3, 4 and 5+ letter words from the letters in frindle. (e.g. in, fin, lend, friend). The students could then come up with as many synonyms for “pen” as possible. I would also challenge the students to create their own “new” word in teams and then verify in the dictionary that their word is new and unique. They could then create an advertisement telling people about their new word. This text could also be used for teaching dictionary skills. In addition, this text could be used prior to beginning a writing unit on “Taking a Stand” essays. What is Mrs. Granger’s stand on using the word “pen” instead of “frindle?” What is Nick’s stand on this issue?

Genre: Fantasy

DiCamillo, Kate. (2006). The miraculous journey of Edward Tulane. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Reading Level: Q: Grade 4 (Guided Reading)



Author Information (<http://www.katedicamillo.com/>):



Kate DiCamillo is an American award-winning children’s author who wrote The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane, Because of Winn-Dixie, The Tale of Despereaux, The Tiger Rising and the Mercy Watson early chapter book series. The Tale of Despereaux won the 2004 Newberry Medal and Because of Winn-Dixie was a Newberry Honor in 2001 and was made into a movie.

Synopsis:

The power of love......this is the theme of this book in a nutshell. This is the story of a china rabbit named Edward Tulane owned by Abilene, who one day becomes lost. Prior to becoming lost, Abilene’s grandmother tells her and Edward a story about a princess who loved no one and she asked “How can a story end happily if there is no love?” After being tragically lost at sea from his rightful owner, Abilene, Edward takes quite an incredible journey and must grapple with this question. Can Edward find love? You must read this incredible story to find out.

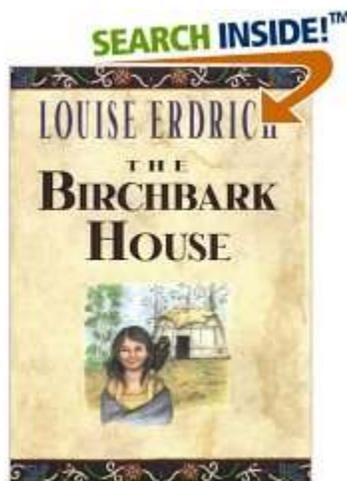
Teacher Notes:

Because this story has such rich story elements, I would start with a predict-o-gram and let the students predict where the pre-selected words will occur: characters, setting, problem, action/events, and resolution. Subsequent to the story, I would have the students come back to their predict-o-grams to see if they were correct in their predictions and then I would have the student create a story map writing about the beginning, middle, climax, and conclusion on either a graphic organizer or a foldable. This story is also a great one for talking about themes.

Genre: Historical Fiction

Erdrich, Louise. (2002). The birchbark house. New York: Hyperion.

Reading Level: T (Guided Reading); DRA=44; Grade Level Equivalent=4.9



Author Information:

Louise Erdrich is a Native American author of novels, poetry and children’s books. For children she has written The Birchbark House, The Game of Silence, Grandmother’s Pigeon and The Range Eternal.

Synopsis:

This book is a work of historical fiction (set in the 1840s) written by Native American, Louise Erdrich, and is based on family history she has collected about her Ojibwa ancestors on Madeline Island off the coast of Wisconsin in Lake Superior. The story is about a young girl named Omakayas (Oh-MAY-kay-ahs) Omakayas is the sole survivor of a smallpox epidemic and is rescued and welcomed into an Ojibwa family on Madeline Island. The story follows Omakayas and her adopted family for a year in 1847, including a smallpox outbreak on the island during that winter. Omakayas is a brave, likable character that students can really relate to as she experiences many emotions and events that all children experience, from sibling conflict, to self-discovery of talents and a growing inquiry and understanding of the big concepts of life and death.

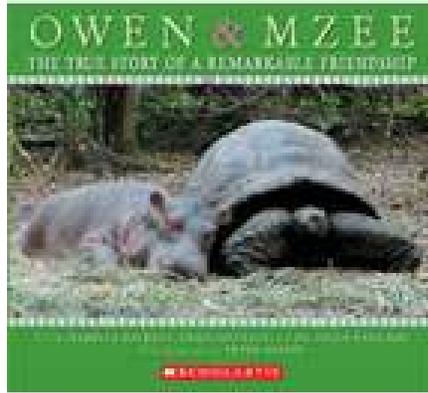
Teacher Notes:

I would use this in 4th grade as we explore Michigan history and a Native American Experience unit as a “*read-aloud*” that the students. I think the students would find the book powerful and engaging as they would be captivated by the daily life and the many adventures of a Native American family and the many differences from their lives to ours, as well as the many similarities of family life that the students may encounter today. After reading the first chapter aloud, I would ask the students to write down in their reader’s response notebooks, at least one question and one prediction they hope to answer by the time we finish the book. When we are done with the book, the students would share their questions and their predictions in groups. In addition, I would have the students create an accordion-style foldable organizer and after each chapter, write a sentence or two about what they may be feeling if they were in Omakayas’ shoes.

Genre: Non-fiction or Informational

Hatkoff, I., Hatkoff, C. & Kahumba, Dr. P. (2006). Owen and Mzee: The true story of a remarkable friendship. New York: Scholastic

Reading Level: T: Grade 5 (Guided Reading)



Author Information:

This book was written by Isabella Hatkoff, her dad Craig Hatkoff and Dr. Paula Kahumbu. This book was first envisioned when 7-year old Isabella and her dad read a newspaper article about a baby hippo orphaned by the 2004 tsunami and his rescue and his subsequent unlikely friendship with a tortoise.

Synopsis:

This is a true story of how a baby hippopotamus named Owen and a giant tortoise name Mzee (emm-zay) become friends. Owen was stranded after the Dec 2004 tsunami and was subsequently rescued by Kenyan villagers. Owen was taken to a nearby animal sanctuary where he befriended Mzee, a 130-year old tortoise. The orphan hippo adopted the tortoise and they became inseparable, swimming, eating, and playing together.

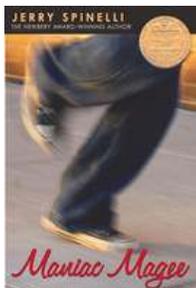
Teacher Notes:

I would use this text as a read-aloud at the beginning of 3rd grade while still in the process of building our classroom community. As a pre-reading exercise, I would have the students split into two groups. One group would work on making predictions about what they think a hippo and a tortoise have in common and the other group would work to make predictions about what they have different. Who has the bigger list? At the end of the reading, I would have the students revisit predictions using books and Internet resources on hippos and tortoises. Once again, is the list of similarities bigger or is the list of differences? As the students will discover, their differences far outnumber their similarities. At the end of the lesson, I would have students write in their reading journals a response to the following questions...***If Owen and Mzee are so different, why do you think they became such good friends? And what do you think makes a good friendship?*** When the students were done they could explore the activities at the Owen and Mzee website at: <http://www.owenandmzee.com/>.

Genre: Award Winning

Spinelli, Jerry. (1990). Maniac Magee. New York: Scholastic

Reading Level: W: Grade 5/6 (Guided Reading)



Author Information (<http://www.jerryspinelli.com/>):



Jerry Spinelli won the Newbery Medal for Maniac Magee in 1991. This book is one of many of his books for young readers. Growing up, he wanted to be a baseball player but became a writer instead. He is the author of Stargirl, Eggs, Wringer, Loser, and many more.

Synopsis:

This is the story about a young boy name Maniac Magee whose parents die and who subsequently begins an adventure in the town of Two Mills. He goes to live with his aunt and uncle but eventually runs away and literally never stops running. Two Mills is a town racially divided. Maniac crosses back and forth between both sides looking for a place to settle down trying to bridge the racial divide as he goes. Maniac creates a legend for himself along the way.

Teacher Notes:

I would use this in 5th grade as a “read-aloud” to the students. I once read a magazine article (http://www.teachngk-8.com/archives/articles/mapping_a_novel_by_laila_lipetz.html) about a really neat activity related to this novel that I would incorporate into my classroom. Because Maniac Magee covers quite a bit of territory in this story, I would have the students as culminating activity use their mapping skills to create a map mural of Maniac’s adventures. The class would be divided into small groups and would be assigned a portion of the text for a close rereading. The students would summarize Maniac’s journey with close details on setting for their assigned portion of the text. Then as a class the setting and plot would be combined and created into a mural map of Maniac’s adventures. An example would look as follows:

