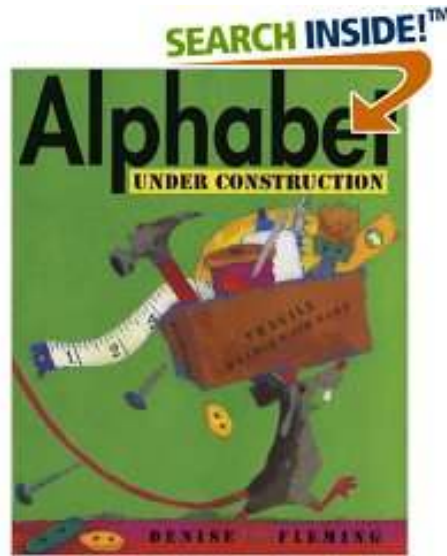


Alphabet Book

Fleming, Denise. (2002). Alphabet under construction. New York: Henry Holt and Company.



Author (www.denisefleming.com) and Book Background

Denise Fleming is an artist/author who has written many children’s books, including In the Tall, Tall Grass and In the Small, Small Pond, a Caldecott Honor Book. She is from Ohio, but went to Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids, MI. She “*makes*” her books, literally! She creates the colored cotton pulp from construction paper and pours it through hand cut stencils. She also uses other “*real*” ingredients like...coffee grounds, kernels of oats, burlap, etc. If you’ve never picked up a Denise Fleming book, you need to! The words are simple and eloquent and the paintings are beautiful. Children and adults alike will fall in love with her books.

Intended Grade Level and Suggested Activities

I would read this book aloud to **kindergartners**. I would then assign each student in the class a letter of the alphabet. We would use ideas for “*constructing*” our alphabet letters from www.denisefleming.com. When the students were done, I would have them sort themselves in ABC order. We would hang them for display in ABC order around the classroom walls. We would then make bookmarks to keep track of the books are reading. The students could also create “*mouse hats*” for fun. (Bookmark and mouse hat templates also available from www.denisefleming.com)

In addition to the aforementioned activities, I would also read aloud Count by Denise Fleming that features counting from 1-10 and by tens from 10-50. We would integrate this with our math lesson. We would compare and contrast the two books, as well.

Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Blume, Judy. (1972). Tales of a fourth grade nothing. New York: Scholastic.



Author (www.judyblume.com) and Book Background

Judy Blume has written many books for children and adults as well. Her books have won over 90 awards. However, some of her books are not without controversy, especially, with middle school age level students and some of her frankness in her books about sexuality. However, her “Fudge” books are fairly innocuous and are appropriate for ages 8 and up.

This story is about a 4th grader name Peter Hatcher and his little brother, Fudge (Farley Drexel Hatcher, otherwise known as “Fudge”). Fudge is constantly getting in Peter’s way and getting into his things. This book and the other related books are all about Peter, his younger brother Fudge, their youngest sister Tootsie, their neighbor Sheila and various pets and adventures around their neighborhood in New York City. Students at this age (8-10 years old) can really relate to these stories and enjoy the connection to their lives.

Intended Grade Level and Suggested Activities

I would read this book aloud to **3rd graders** toward the end of the school year. This book is actually a Level Q reading level (Fountas and Pinnell) for 4th graders. However, by the end of 3rd grade, many students would be able to read at this level and by reading aloud this book, many students will get interested in the many other related stories by Judy Blume over the summer and into fourth grade (Fudge-a-mania, Doublefudge, Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great, etc.).

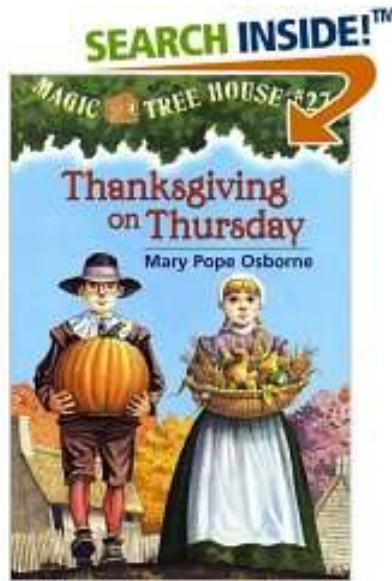
I would use this book to introduce and discuss the following literary elements: setting, characters, plot, point of view, mood, theme, style and conflict/resolution. I would introduce each of the elements in a minilesson, one-by-one, as we went along in the story. The students would work with a buddy in reader’s workshop, to answer questions on each of the elements. Once students are familiar with the literary elements of a story, they can use them to support their own independent reading.

For example, for the literary element, “*characters*” the students would answer and reflect on the following questions:

- Who are the main characters in the story? Do you like them? Tell me why or why not.
- Choose one character and tell why you think this character is important to the story.
- Do any of the characters change? If so, in what way?
- Do any of the characters do things that you think are good? If so, what?
- Do any of the characters do things that you think are wrong? If so, what?

Historical Fiction

Osborne, Mary Pope. (2002). Thanksgiving on Thursday. New York: Random House.



Author (www.marypopeosborne.com) and Book Background

Mary Pope Osborne grew up as a military child and traveled quite a bit as a child. She loves adventure and has traveled quite extensively in her life time. She also is trained in drama. She has written over 50 books and is the author of the acclaimed Jack and Annie, Magic Tree House Series. This is a milestone in a child’s literacy road, when they can break loose and read Jack and Annie Stories. The Magic Tree House series are leveled around M in the Fountas & Pinnell leveling system and are the ending benchmark for 2nd grade. Once students reach this level they begin to break free and explore the world of “*chapter books*.”

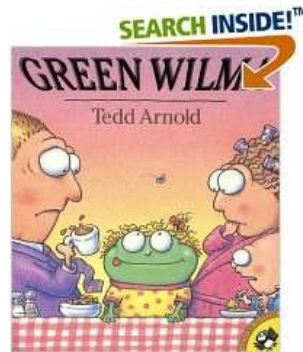
The Magic Tree House series is also great for teaching kids that books really do let us travel around the world and through time on grand adventures. Each book is a new adventure for Jack and Annie as their Magic Tree House whisks them away to a new place and a different time.

Intended Grade Level and Suggested Activities

I would read this book aloud to **2nd graders** in the Fall along with other Magic Tree House books by Mary Pope Osborne: Civil War on Sunday and Revolutionary War on Wednesday and tie it into a social studies unit on “*America’s Past*.” Prior to reading the three titles, I would have the students construct a timeline of when the books took place. After completing this book just before Thanksgiving, I would have the students write an essay on what they think the first Thanksgiving would have been like if they could travel back in time like Jack and Annie do in the book. I would then have the students work with a buddy to create a “*Thanksgiving Quilt*,” completing each “*square*” with words and/or pictures of things they are thankful for. (See <http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/magictlh/pdf/thanksgiving.pdf> for template).

Fantasy

Arnold, Tedd. (1993). Green Wilma. New York: Scholastic.



Author (<http://www.geocities.com/~teddarnold/>) and Book Background

Tedd Arnold has written and illustrated over 30 books. He is a former commercial illustrator who was inspired to create children’s picture’s books by his wife who is a kindergarten teacher. Some of his more popular books are No Jumping on the Bed!, No More Water in the Tub!, Parts, More Parts, Even More Parts, Hi! Fly Guy and the Huggly series.

“One morning Wilma woke up green, and much to her surprise....She sat up on her bed and croaked and started eating flies.” This story is about a little girl who wakes up one day and looks and acts like a frog. Her parents and her teachers and school all don’t know what to do with her. The book has a fun twist for an ending too, which is great for getting students to think beyond the text. Every time I read this book, I laugh out loud. The illustrations are awesome! Tedd Arnold is a great author/illustrator. His words are fun and very rhythmic.

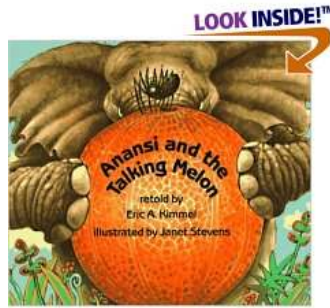
Intended Grade Level and Suggested Activities

I would read this book aloud to **1st graders** and I would create a word “*concentration*” game for children to work on “*rhyming*” patterns with words from Green Wilma during reader’s workshop. The following 22 words would be printed on cardstock. Students will work with a book buddy and place the words face down in 4 rows of 5, plus 2. Students will take turns turning over 2 cards. If the set of cards turned over rhyme (as noted below), they are a “*match*” and the student gets to take them out of the pile and take another turn. The student with the most matches at the end of the game wins. Being aware of rhyming patterns is the most basic level of phonological awareness.

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Surprise-flies | Hall-all |
| Bed-said | Rule-school |
| Fuss-bus | Beyond-pond |
| Seat-beat | Splash-flash |
| Great-ate | Frog-log |
| Cry-fly | |

Folk Literature

Kimmel Eric A., retold by. (1994). Anansi and the talking melon. New York: Holiday House.



Author (<http://www.ericakimmel.com/>) and Book Background

Eric Kimmel has written, retold and adapted a number of stories from around the world, including Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock and Anansi Goes Fishing. The Anansi tales originated from West Africa (within the Ashanti tribe, it is believed), but are enjoyed in Caribbean culture as well. I know a few Americans who enjoy them also!

In this tale, Anansi eats his way into the melon and is too fat afterwards to get out. He then proceeds to fool everyone into thinking the melon is a “*talking melon*.” The story continues with many animals being fooled along the journey to see the king. The illustrations are also very lively and fun.

Intended Grade Level and Suggested Activities

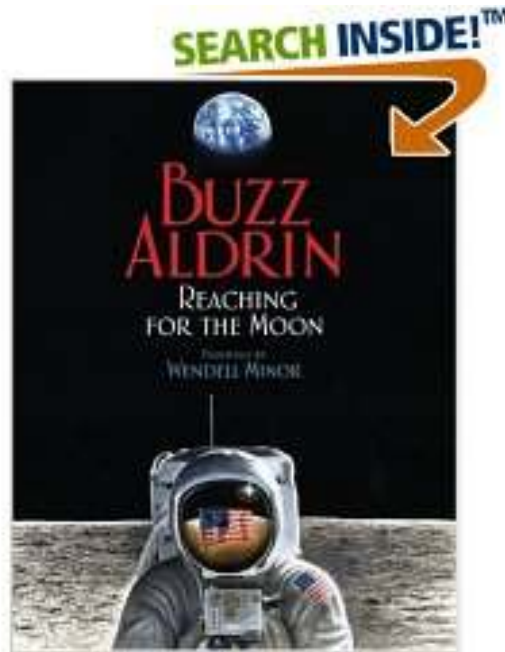
I would read this book aloud to **1st graders** as an introduction to our “*folktale*” genre unit. We would discuss the characteristics of folktales and create a “*retelling*” of the story as a class language experience activity. We would then post our story on the wall for several weeks for everyone to read and reread. It might start like this... “*One fine morning, Anansi the spider....*” and then...”*Along the way, he ran into Hippo....*” and then “*By and by, they ran into Warthog,*” etc.

I would also create a “*Favorite Folk Tales*” chart and ask students to bring in their favorite folktales from home or the library to share with the class. For additional folktale unit ideas, I might refer to “*Folktale Unit Ideas*” for K-2 at: <http://www.atozteacherstuff.com/pages/315.shtml>.

When I read this story, I couldn’t help thinking about poor Winnie-the-Pooh when he visits rabbit in his hole and eats a little too much honey and gets stuck on his way out. I am certain I couldn’t resist following up the reading of this Anansi tale with the reading of the delightful Chapter II, “*Pooh Goes Visiting and Gets into a Tight Spot,*” from Winnie-the-Pooh by A.A. Milne. I would discuss with the students how I was reading Anansi and the Talking Melon and how I made this connection to a similar story that I had read a long time ago about Winnie-the-Pooh. Maybe the students had heard the same story or had seen the Winnie-the-Pooh video. By making connections to things in our lives, it helps us to understand what we are reading better.

Autobiography

Aldrin, Dr. Edwin Eugene “Buzz,” Jr. (2005). Buzz Aldrin: Reaching for the moon. New York: Harper Collins.



Author (www.buzzaldrin.com) and Book Background

This book is an autobiography written for children by “Buzz” Aldrin in 2005 and illustrated by Wendell Minor. The book debuted as #2 on the NY Times Bestseller’s List for Children’s books. This is his first children’s book.

Buzz Aldrin was named Edwin Eugene, but the name his sister gave his was the one that stuck...”Buzzer” (for brother) and later shortened to “Buzz.” This book wonderfully captures the life story of Buzz Aldrin and his historic *Apollo 11* moon walk on July 20, 1969, a historic moment that all children should hear and read about.

Intended Grade Level and Suggested Activities

I would use this book in **2nd or 3rd grade** as an introduction to our science unit: “*Finding the Moon.*” In addition, I would read the book, If You Decide to Go to the Moon, by Faith McNulty as a text-to-text connection and to help students picturing themselves in Buzz Aldrin’s shoes. Building background knowledge and creating visual images as we read are important aspects in supporting reading comprehension. I would also tie this book into writer’s workshop and have students explore writing their own autobiographies or memoirs.

Biography

Levine, Ellen. (2007). Henry’s freedom box. New York: Scholastic.



Author and Book Background

Ellen Levine has always been fascinated by stories of survival and was particularly moved by this story of Henry “Box” Brown whose ingenious idea of “*mailing*” himself to freedom is not only incredible, but inspiring. This book was moving to me as well and really brought the idea to my mind that freedom is priceless and we are very fortunate to live in a free country now. As I read the book, I found myself hanging on the edge of every word, waiting to see what happened next.

Ellen Levine has also written other books, including Freedom’s Children, which won the Jane Addams Peace Award and an ALA Best Book for Young Adults; as well as Darkness Over Denmark which is a Jane Addams Peace Award Honor Book and an ALA Best Book for Young Adults.

The paintings for the book by Kadir Nelson were inspired by an antique lithograph of Henry “Box” Brown that was created in 1850 as a fundraiser for the anti-slavery movement.

Intended Grade Level and Suggested Activities

I would read this book to **3rd graders** as an introduction to a social studies unit, “*The Underground Railroad*.” As a text-to-text connection on the Underground Railroad, I would also read Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom, a 2007 Caldecott Honor Book. I would use these books in writer’s workshop, using some of the following prompts:

- Write a letter to a slave owner telling him why you think it is wrong to own slaves.
- Write a poem about Henry “Box” Brown or about Harriet Tubman.
- Think of a creative way that you might try to get to freedom if you were a slave. Write a short story.

I would also do some vocabulary work on 6-8 words in the story to help the students build their background knowledge (schema): slave, master, freedom, steamboat, tobacco, market, warehouse, and vitriol (I had to look this one up!).

Informational Book

Branley, Franklyn M. (1983). Down comes the rain (Let’s-read-and-find-out science: stage 2).
New York: Scholastic.



Author and Book Background

Franklyn Branley has written over 150 books for children and he is co-founder of the *Let’s-Read-and-Find-Out Science* series and has written many of the series most popular titles.

This book is an informational book on the complete water cycle, starting with rain from the clouds to groundwater, to water vapor and condensing to form clouds again. The illustrations are done by James Graham Hale and guide the reader in their understanding of the concepts.

Intended Grade Level and Suggested Activities

I would read this book to **2nd graders** as an introduction to a “*weather*” science unit. Before reading this book, I would have students “*brainstorm*” ideas on where rain comes from. After reading the book, we would do some vocabulary activities to aid in comprehension of this book and subject matter. The students would begin by writing and illustrating the new vocabulary words in their notebooks: water vapor, gas, evaporation, liquid, condensation, cloud, freeze, hail, and sleet. We would then write the vocabulary words on index cards and spread around the room taped to the wall. The students would then be instructed to pick a word of their choice and go stand under that word. The teacher will then draw a vocabulary word out of hat and read the definition. The students standing under that corresponding word sit down. The teacher continues until only one word is left. The student(s) that remain standing under that word are the winner(s) of that round. (<http://www.lessonplanspage.com/LAVocabulary6SquareGameIdea15.htm>). The second round, the teacher can say a fill-in-the-blank sentence and the students would need to figure out which vocabulary word fit in the blank. The student(s) standing at that word would sit down as like the first round.

In writer’s workshop, I would have the students write a story about what they like to do on “*rainy days*.”

Poetry

Young, Judy. (2005). R is for rhyme: a poetry alphabet. Chelsea, MI: Sleeping Bear Press.



Author (http://www.sleepingbearpress.com/authors_illustrators/judy_young.htm) and **Book Background**

Judy Young says she remembers her grandmother sharing poems with her when she was about 10 years old and she has loved poetry ever since. She is also the author of S is for Show Me: A Missouri Alphabet. Her poetry has won many awards and has been widely published in journals and magazines. In addition to being an author, Mrs. Young is a speech and language pathologist and works with elementary school kids with their use of language. She also conducts writing workshops and teaches poetry writing.

This book is a beautiful collection of poetry and their related terms and techniques and I learned SO much about poetry as an adult reading this book! Each letter of the alphabet describes a type of poetry and gives an example. For example....

H is for Haiku

*pearly triangles
flash in the hot noonday sun
a crocodile yawns*

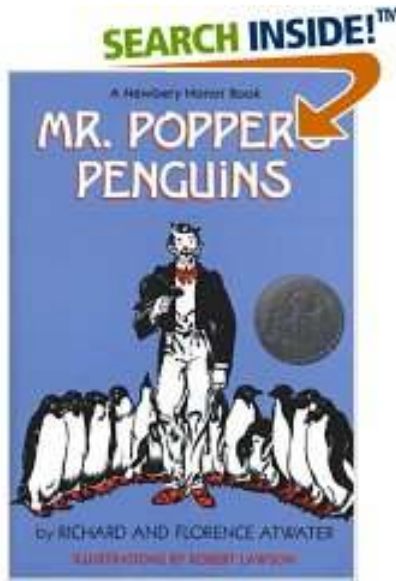
The description of Haiku is summarized next to the poem. “*Haiku (HI-koo) is a Japanese poetry form that consists of three lines...*” This book is also beautifully illustrated by Victor Juhasz.

Intended Grade Level and Suggested Activities

I would use this book with **3rd graders** as an introduction to our poetry unit. We would then select a type of poetry (e.g. Haiku or acrostic) and brainstorm a poem collectively and then individually during writer’s workshop. I would also use the teacher guide as found on the following website for additional ideas: <http://www.gale.com/pdf/TeachersGuides/PoetryGuide.pdf>. I would follow up this book with reading some poems from Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein. I would also make copies of the poems and have the CD of the poem read and sung by Shel Silverstein available at a listening center during reader’s workshop.

Read-Aloud Chapter Book

Atwater, Richard and Florence. (1938). Mr. Popper’s penguins. New York: Little, Brown and Company.



Author and Book Background

This book was written by Richard and Florence Atwater as a collaborative effort. Mrs. Atwater took over the manuscript started by her husband, who became ill and had to stop writing. Mr. Popper’s Penguins was named a Newberry Honor Book in 1939. The story is about Mr. Popper, a painter, who dreams of visiting the South Pole. In response to a fan letter, Admiral Drake sends Mr. Popper a penguin...soon they have 12 penguins, which need lots of food. Mr. Popper comes up with an ingenious way to support his troop of penguins and the story will make you laugh out loud. Fun book!

Intended Grade Level and Suggested Activities

I would read this book aloud to **1st or 2nd graders**. This book is actually a Level Q reading level (Fountas and Pinnell) for 4th graders; however, the story lends itself perfectly to read aloud to the younger grades. It is fun, engaging and entertaining. Because it was written in the 30’s, there are LOTS of opportunities for discussions and comparisons between life in the 30’s compared to now. (e.g. What is an “icebox?” or How much \$10 was worth then compared to now...when Mr. Popper paid the service man \$10 to convert the icebox to a living area for “Captain Cook.”). When I was done reading aloud Mr. Popper’s Penguins, I would read aloud the picture book, 365 Penguins by Jean-Luc Fromental. The students would then create Venn diagrams comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences between the two books.