

Betwist and BeTWEEN/ Once Upon a Time
Presented by Susan Steider and Vicki Wood
Presented for the 2017 RAN Workshop on November 3, 2017

The Poet's Dog, MacLachlan, Patricia.
ISBN: 9780062292629

A dog with unusual communication talents loses his poet owner before rescuing two children trapped in a snowstorm and leading them to the poet's cabin, where the children explore the memories that the poet has left behind.

Why you should read this book aloud: Sometimes it's nice to read a book you can finish in one sitting. Although short, and seemingly simple, this book touches on themes older children are contemplating, like loss, and love, and how we create families. This book is full of rich language, and leaves plenty of space for reflection and discussion.

Wishtree, Applegate, Katherine
ISBN: 9781250043221

A red oak tree and a crow help their human neighbors work out their differences.

Why you should read this book aloud: Another seemingly simple story, with a profound conflict at its center: hate and prejudice. Red, a two hundred-year-old oak tree stands at the center of its neighborhood, serving as a witness and a haven for the human and animal inhabitants of the block. A young Muslim girl and her family become the targets of hate, and Red calls the animal allies into action. Infused with magic, wisecracking, and warmth, the message of inclusiveness and care for the natural world, and each other, is needed now more than ever.

Me and Marvin Gardens, King, A. S.
ISBN: 9780545870740

Obe Devlin spends a lot of his time cleaning up the creek that runs through what little is left of his family's once extensive farmland, and worrying about what the developers are doing nearby, and the pollution it is causing--but one day he finds a strange creature by his creek that eats plastic, and soon the animal he calls Marvin Gardens becomes his personal secret, which he believes needs to be protected from pretty much everybody.

Why you should read this book aloud: Obe's voice is clearly that of an individual, an awkward boy coming of age who cares about his family's land, and the environment. He's funny, and brave, and utterly realistic. His predicament (coming upon a never-before encountered creature) is a springboard for discussion, as is his lack of friends, and the bigger issues around development, pollution and caring for the environment. And the chapter heading are a riot—

House Seeds and My Liver, and Nosebleeds and Mosquitos. Interspersed in the book are chapters with the heading “100 Years Ago” in which Obe ties in his great-grandfather’s failings, which led to the dissolution of the family farm. with other historical events--large and small.

Garvey's choice, Grimes, Nikki.
ISBN: 9781629797403

Garvey's father has always wanted Garvey to be athletic, but Garvey is interested in astronomy, science fiction, reading--anything but sports. Feeling like a failure, he comforts himself with food. Garvey is kind, funny, smart, a loyal friend, and he is also overweight, teased by bullies, and lonely. When his only friend encourages him to join the school chorus, Garvey's life changes.

Why you should read this book aloud: Read this one aloud for the beauty of the poetry, the quick concise way each stanza tells a bigger story. Look forward to a discussion about parent’s hopes and dreams for their children, and how children can carve out their own futures. Talk about “the language of music, and poetry”...what does this mean? Finally, read this because white youth need books about children of color that aren’t about inner city problems, poverty, or gang violence.

Title: Beautiful Blue World, LaFleur, Suzanne M.
ISBN: 9780307980328

Sofarende is at war and the army is paying families well to recruit children, so if twelve-year-old Mathilde or her best friend Megs is chosen, they hope to help their families but fear they will be separated forever.

Why you should read this book aloud: Developmentally, children in late elementary and middle school age are confronting questions of morality, issues of good and evil, and the often gray areas that exist when facing ethical dilemmas. Sometimes these issues are more accessible when presented in a fictional framework- hence the popularity of dystopian fiction for teens. In this story a young girl is a brave, but very human protagonist. Children are given responsibility, and boys and girls are treated as equals. There is a powerful friendship between the two girls that is based on love, and mutual respect. Mathilde learns that even the enemy is human, that it is war that destroys our humanity, not the soldiers. Sequel: *Threads of Blue*

Raymie Nightingale, DiCamillo, Kate
ISBN: 9780763681173

Hoping that if she wins a local beauty pageant her father will come home, Raymie practices twirling a baton and performing good deeds as she is drawn into an unlikely friendship with a drama queen and a saboteur.

Why you should read this book aloud: DiCamillo has a knack for creating stories with simple plots, and complex characters. She is sweet, but never saccharine, and oh so funny. Although Raymie is at the center of the story, the third person narrator allow the other two characters to become fully realized and highlights their growing trust and friendship. There's plenty of adventure to keep the pages turning, and a sense that no matter how much sadness, confusion and disappointment life throws our way, people get through it by banding together.

Knucklehead : Tall Tales & Mostly True Stories about Growing Up Scieszka, Scieszka, Jon.

ISBN: 9780670011063

How did Jon Scieszka get so funny? He grew up as one of six brothers with Catholic school, lots of comic books, lazy summers at the lake with time to kill, babysitting misadventures, TV shows, and jokes told at family dinner.

Why you should read this book aloud: Scieszka is one of the funniest authors writing for children, and this illustrated autobiography shows how he got that way. Perfect for reluctant readers, and his target audience- boys- this book is full of mischief, potty humor and truly edge-of-your-seat hijinks—it's all sure to end badly. Growing up in the late fifties, early sixties, Scieszka's childhood would be practically unimaginable today—which is why this book would be an excellent jumping off point for parents, and grandparents to talk about their own childhoods and how childhood has changed in the last 50 years. Also, it may lead kids to want to read his Guys Read collections.

Moo, Creech, Sharon

ISBN: 9780062415257

When Reena, her little brother, Luke, and their parents first move to Maine, Reena doesn't know what to expect. She's ready for beaches, blueberries, and all the lobster she can eat. Instead, her parents "volunteer" Reena and Luke to work for an eccentric neighbor named Mrs. Falala, who has a pig named Paulie, a cat named China, a snake named Edna--and that stubborn cow, Zora.

Why you should read this book aloud: It's hard to find "realistic fiction" without a problem or a conflict at its core. This book is about growing up and growing different. Reena articulates, through poetry and prose, how rural life differs from the city existence she's always known. Her little brother Luke provides comic relief and a "boy perspective, making this a wonderful read aloud for boys and girls. As with so many of Creech's book—*Love That Dog* and *Hate That Cat*, the human-animal bond is central to the family's adjustment to a new life.

In the Shadow of Liberty: The Hidden History of Slavery, Four Presidents, and Five Black Lives, Davis, Kenneth C.
ISBN: 9781627793117

Through the powerful stories of five enslaved people who were "owned" by four of our greatest presidents, this book helps set the record straight about the role slavery played in the founding of America. From Billy Lee, valet to George Washington, to Alfred Jackson, faithful servant of Andrew Jackson, these dramatic narratives explore our country's great tragedy--that a nation "conceived in liberty" was also born in shackles.

Why you should read this book aloud: There's no better way to teach history than through the individual stories of those who lived it. The stories of these five slaves, including one owned by Martha Washington highlights the contradiction of the Founding Fathers-- Presidents Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Jackson—who fought for and espoused liberty and equality, but owned slaves. The timelines, photos and reproduced documents break up the text but the individuals' stories, some parts told in their own words, is what makes this book so compelling.

In a forward, the author suggests that readers use this book to put into context current racial tensions; to better understand the historical roots of racism in America.

Other Books I've had Good Luck with as Read Alouds:

Winter Thunder by Marie Sandoz

In a blinding blizzard a schoolbus overturns and a young teacher, her seven pupils, and the driver--a mere boy--are stranded in the open country, miles and miles from the nearest ranchhouse.

The Odyssey: Retold by Gillian Cross and Illustrated by Neil Packer

A bold re-envisioning of The Odyssey, told with simplicity and style -- perfect for fans of graphic retellings and mythology enthusiasts alike.

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie

Budding cartoonist Junior leaves his troubled school on the Spokane Indian Reservation to attend an all-white farm town school where the only other Indian is the school mascot.

Howl's Moving Castle by Diana Wynne Jones

Sophie thinks of herself as plain and boring, especially compared to her vivacious younger sister Lettie. Sophie expects to spend the rest of her life quietly making hats in the back room of her family's shop, but as her country prepares for war, she is forced to set out on an extraordinary adventure!

The Jacket by Andrew Clements

An incident at school forces sixth grader Phil Morelli, a white boy, to become aware of racial discrimination and segregation, and to seriously consider if he himself is prejudiced.