

# *Al Capone Does My Shirts*

by Gennifer Choldenko

## Annotation

In 1935 twelve-year-old Moose and his younger, autistic sister, Natalie, move to Alcatraz Island where their father begins work as a prison guard. When Natalie is rejected by the special school in San Francisco, Moose must take care of her and reluctantly gives up playing baseball. Meanwhile, Moose meets the troublesome, but irresistible, warden's daughter, Piper, who has a talent for landing him into embarrassing situations. Also woven throughout the story are many references to the prison's famous inmate, mob boss Al Capone. Through this engaging, coming-of-age story, readers get a glimpse of what life was like on the infamous Alcatraz Island.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.choldenko.com/>

## Realia

**Item:** A button-up shirt, with a pocket, on a hanger – In the pocket, place a torn scrap of brown paper with the word “done” scribbled hastily in pencil and underlined twice.

**Statement:** (Have scrap of paper sticking out of the pocket.) “Done.” What could this message mean? It could mean almost anything. But when Moose Flannagan, the owner of the shirt, finds this message in his pocket, he knows it has a special meaning because “*Al Capone Does My Shirts*”.

## Food

Lemon Cake; Bologna, Cheese, and Mayonnaise Sandwiches; Hot Tea

## Challenging Words

admirable	(p. 204 HB)	miraculously	(p. 94 HB)
affliction	(p. 8 HB)	natter	(p. 81 HB)
behaviorist	(p. 154 HB)	notorious	(p. 112 HB)
conniving	(p. 39 HB)	predictable	(p. 145 HB)
contraption	(p. 54 HB)	preposterous	(p. 112 HB)
deficiencies	(p. 156 HB)	psychiatrist	(p. 24 HB)
embezzler	(p. 3 HB)	similarity	(p. 71 HB)
humiliation	(p. 134 HB)		

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- “The next morning seems just like normal, with Natalie watching the sun rise and then asking for lemon cake. And my mom telling her she’s a silly sweet pea and she can’t have it.” (p. 71 HB)

### Similes

- “I think about going in my room now, but it smells like the inside of an old lunch bag in there. My bed’s a squeaky old army cot. When I sit down, it sounds like dozens of mice are dying an ugly death.” (p. 5 HB)

- “We both look at Natalie. Her hair is like mine—brown and blonde all mixed up like birdseed. Different eyes, though. Mine are brown. Hers are green like the marbles nobody likes to trade away.” (p. 11 HB)
- “The teacher turns around. She’s got black, black hair and a tight white little face, as if her skin’s a size too small.” (p. 42 HB)
- “We’re tossing the ball back and forth in a hard fast rhythm that feels great. My arm is purring. The ball, my glove, my arm are all working together like greased motor parts.” (p. 57 HB)
- “The warden looks like someone has poked a pick in his side. . . . He steadies himself on the bookshelf and then his eyes go cold and hard like something sealed in ice.” (p. 113 HB)
- Other similes: pages 16, 17, 31, 40, 41, 43, 51, 55, 56, 57, 67, 73, 108, 109, 116, 143, 145, 149, 155, 166, 170, 183, 191, 197, and 205 HB

### Idioms and Expressions

- “Mr. Trixie nods. ‘Make a beeline there, Theresa. You know the rules.’” (p. 16 HB)
- “‘Number four: Do not speak to any outsiders about what goes on here. Don’t go shooting your mouth off about Al Capone.’” (p. 39 HB)
- “Your daughter hasn’t done boo. Far as I can tell, she’s a bald-faced liar, I want to yell.” (p. 40 HB)
- “The girl’s turn goes lickety-split and so does the next guy’s.” (p. 45 HB)
- “The cabin is empty except for two guards and a scrawny little man in a suit. The scrawny man is handcuffed to one of the guards. The hair on the back of my neck stands up.” (p. 73 HB)
- “‘My mom teaches piano. I got to go back to watch my sister.’ I leave out the part about my sister being older than me and nutty as a fruitcake.” (p. 87 HB)
- “‘You can have her, Moose,’ he tells me while we’re warming up for our lunch game. ‘She’s more trouble than she’s worth.’” (p. 159 HB)
- Other idioms and expressions: pages 203, 208, and 210 HB

### Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Have students compare Moose’s character traits with Piper’s character traits.
- Initiate a discussion on how Natalie was treated by her family and others. Discuss whether or not attitudes toward children with autism are different today.

#### Language Arts:

- Use the author’s notes at the end of the book as a model to guide a discussion about research, citing sources, and writing a research paper. Have students choose a topic related to the story to research and include proper citations of their sources.

#### Social Studies/Geography:

- Have students research the history of Alcatraz, specifically, or the American prison system in general.
- Discuss the era when Al Capone was alive and the social conditions that might have influenced the public’s view of him.
- Locate San Francisco and Alcatraz Island on the map. Have students identify the reasons for the location of the prison.

# Chasing Vermeer

by Blue Balliett

## Annotation

Fans of Konigsburg's *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (1967) will enjoy this debut novel about two precocious classmates determined to solve a mystery about a missing Vermeer painting. The brainy twelve-year-olds, Petra and Calder, attend the University of Chicago Laboratory School where their teacher's unusual methods make learning an adventure. Their friendship flourishes as they join the quest to locate the masterpiece before it is too late. Puzzles, pentominos, codes, and patterns lend their unique clues to this intriguing, fast-paced mystery.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.kidsreads.com/authors/au-balliett-blue.asp>

## Realia

**Item:** A copy of Vermeer's *Lady Writing a Letter*. (Pictures of the painting are available on the Internet.)

**Statement:** Have you ever had to solve a mystery in order to help a friend or family member? When the famous painting *Lady Writing a Letter* is stolen, sixth graders Calder and Petra suspect some people very close to them are involved. Follow the clever clues with them in *Chasing Vermeer*.

## Food

Blue M & M's, Tea, Chocolate Cake

## Challenging Words

attributions	(p. 204 PB)	incalculable	(p. 100 PB)
baba ghanoush	(p. 20 PB)	labyrinth	(p. 14 PB)
capering	(p. 42 PB)	lute	(p. 81 PB)
coincidence	(p. 3 PB)	pentominoes	(p. 13 PB)
collaborating	(p. 198 PB)	premises	(p. 44 PB)
credulity	(p. 44 PB)	pretentious	(p. 2 PB)
discriminating	(p. 1 PB)	propelled	(p. 192 PB)
disoriented	(p. 43 PB)	rational	(p. 200 PB)
exceptionally	(p. 11 PB)	symmetry	(p. 74 PB)
exhilarating	(p. 49 PB)	warping	(p. 90 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- "Petra's household was a tornado where life swirled in noisy circles." (p. 19 HB)

### Similes

- "She wished she wasn't shy, that she wasn't shaped like a lima bean, and that her left ear didn't stick out farther than her right." (p. 19 HB)
- "A raspberry twig was standing upright over one of his ears. He looked like a lopsided bee." (p. 26 HB)

- “This was a calm, deliberate world, a world where dreams were real and each syllable held the light like a pearl. It was a writer’s world – and Petra was inside it.” (p. 49 HB)
- “Trying to chat with Mrs. Sharpe was not easy. It was kind of like playing with a dangerous animal.” (p. 119 HB)
- “She felt the darkness clamping down on them, and heard a noise like the ocean in her ears.” (p. 217 HB)

### Idioms and Expressions

- “After they ate bag lunches next to the bronze lions on the steps of the museum, they fanned out in the European wing.” (p. 28 HB)
- “Holy smokes, Petra!” (p. 93 HB)
- “Or that he or she will crack under the strain of it all,’ she said, her voice sounding tired.” (p. 105 HB)

### Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Have students locate passages in *Chasing Vermeer* that show how the friendship of Petra and Calder develops while they work on solving the mystery. Have students identify the scenes and/or actions of the two characters in which they learn to trust one another.

#### Fine Arts:

- Have students solve the mystery contained in the *Chasing Vermeer* illustrations. The preface in the book contains more information and the solution can be found on the publisher’s website at: <http://www.scholastic.com/titles/chasingvermeer/>.
- Have students examine and create pentomino art. Examples are located on <http://web1.sheltonschoools.org/mtv/>. Click on the “Activities” link and then “Pentomino Art.”
- Organize students into groups to research the life and view the works of Johannes Vermeer on <http://essentialvermeer.20m.com/>.

#### Language Arts:

- Have students take on the role of Calder, Petra, Ms. Hussey, Mr. Watch, or Mrs. Sharpe and write a letter to the thief while the painting is still missing.
- Assign Ms. Hussey’s lesson on what makes an object a piece of art. Have students choose an object that they think is a piece of art. They then write a description of the object without stating what the object is. Classmates try to guess what the object is from reading the descriptions.

#### Mathematics

- Have students learn how to make pentominoes and play pentominoes games at <http://www.cimt.plymouth.ac.uk/>.
- Review with the students how Calder and Tommy used a pentomino code in their letters. Have students work in pairs to create unique codes and write letters using their codes.

# *Escaping the Giant Wave*

by Peg Kehret

## Annotation

The family spent three weeks planning their dream vacation to Oregon. Thirteen-year-old Kyle's dad was receiving the Salesman of the Year award and, as an added bonus, this would be Kyle's first time flying. The family's plans soon unravel after they arrive in the small Oregon beach town and progressively worsen when an earthquake and tsunamis hit the area. Kyle's fast thinking helps save his younger sister Bee Bee and himself during this traumatic time. A bibliography of books, Internet sites, a videorecording, and pamphlets are also included.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.pegkehret.com/>

## Realia

**Item:** Warning Sign

**Statement:** Kyle reads a warning sign on the beach, but does he pay attention to what the sign says? Read *Escaping the Giant Wave* to see if Kyle remembers and heeds the warning.

## Food

Pineapple, Tomato, and Extra Cheese Pizza; Vanilla Milk Shakes; Baby Carrots with Ranch Dressing; Dill Pickle Sandwich; Warm 7-Up

## Challenging Words

acrid	(p. 61 HB)	modem	(p. 136 HB)
baffled	(p. 6 HB)	mutual fund	(p. 8 HB)
capsize	(p. 81 HB)	nonchalant	(p. 17 HB)
challenge	(p. 2 HB)	premises	(p. 64 HB)
compromise	(p. 4 HB)	quartet	(p. 82 HB)
devious	(p. 4 HB)	remorse	(p. 124 HB)
frugality	(p. 13 HB)	skeptical	(p. 147 HB)
inhale	(p. 60 HB)	tsunami	(p. 30 HB)
inland	(p. 116 HB)	undergrowth	(p. 105 HB)
megaphone	(p. 143 HB)	vantage	(p. 101 HB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- "The sun was a red basketball as it slid toward the horizon." (p. 93 HB)

### Similes

- "Relief and anger mixed in my mind like the colors of paint swirling together. 'You're in big trouble' I said." (p. 44 HB)
- "The carpet looked as if someone had set dozens of tiny fires in a random pattern across the floor. Sparks flew up, then drifted down again, like flocks of fireflies." (p. 65 HB)

- “I heard sirens now, rising and falling like a pack of howling wolves. Fire trucks must be on the way.” (p. 66 HB)
- “I looked. Yellow flames shot out of every window on the third floor. As we looked up at our room, the roof collapsed with a loud rumble like a dozen dump trucks all unloading at the same time.” (p. 67 HB)
- Other similes: pages 43, 47, 48, 56, 93 and 100 HB

### Idioms & Expressions

- “Learn to pop a wheelie on my scooter” (p.2 HB)
- “My mind went in circles like Alexander the Greatest when he chases his tail.” (p. 73 HB)
- “Oh lawsy, that’s a good one’ the woman said.” (p. 78 HB)
- “Better safe than sorry, that’s my motto.” (p. 80 HB)
- “Pansy began to tremble, shaking as if she were scared silly.” (p.100 HB)

### Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Have each student create a list of four school year goals, seal the goals in an envelope and give to you. At the end of the school year, have each student open his/her envelope, read the goals and determine if they accomplished those goals.
- Discuss bullying and what each student can do about a school bully.
- Role play with the class by having selected students pretend they are in charge of a group when a disaster such as a tsunami hits your area. What leadership qualities do the students think they would need to lead a group to safety?

#### Fine Arts:

- Pair students with a partner to create “nature” collages using articles found outside such as grass, sticks, feathers, etc.

#### Language Arts:

- Have students write a short, but very descriptive, report about their summer vacations.

#### Mathematics

- Organize the class into groups. Have each group chose a stock and read the stock market section of the newspaper to watch Target or Wal-Mart, etc. stock for a month. After graphing the stock fluctuations, have students report on whether the stock value changed significantly in one month.
- Have students research Internet sites on the tsunami and write down 5 numerical facts about a tsunami wave.

#### Science

- Assign a one page report on the tsunami. Have students describe what causes a tsunami and how destructive one can be when it hits land. What parts of the world are hit by tsunamis?
- Have students look up “earthquake” in an encyclopedia and identify the signs of an earthquake and describe the Richter scale.

#### Social Studies/Geography:

- Assign students several geography tasks such as:
  - Looking at a map of the United States – how far is Oregon from Kansas?
  - Deciding if Fisher Beach is a real or fictitious town in Oregon?

# Granny Torrelli Makes Soup

by Sharon Creech

## Annotation

Everyone should have an Italian grandmother like Granny Torrelli! She not only teaches twelve-year-old Rosie how to make soup, but she also teaches her about friendship and life. When Rosie and her best friend Bailey's friendship needs mending, Granny Torrelli has the perfect recipe. She shares stories that help Rosie understand the ever-changing demands of friendship. These nourishing bits of wisdom are sprinkled throughout this skillfully written, humorous story that is filled with sage advice and spiced with Italian words.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.sharoncreech.com/index.html>

## Realia

**Item:** Soup pot and stirring spoon

**Statement:** Rosie and Bailey are best friends. They have been best friends their whole lives. But something happens to make Rosie so angry at Bailey that she says she hates him. However, Rosie remembers what's important about love, life, and friendship when *Granny Torrelli Makes Soup*.

## Food

Chicken Soup; Oranges; Italian Bread; Pasta, Sauce and Meatballs

## Challenging Words

agitated	(p. 124 PB)
cavatelli	(p. 114 PB)
ghastly	(p. 55 PB)
knead	(p. 113 PB)
ladle	(p. 39 PB)
mangling	(p. 90 PB)
oregano	(p. 119 PB)
rummaging	(p. 15 PB)
throttle	(p. 91 PB)
zinnias	(p. 138 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- "I think about that Janine girl, that new girl up the street, that too-friendly new girl, and just like that, my heart switches from warm to cold. I am ice girl, ice queen." (p. 84 PB)
- "My ice queen has turned into a tiger, rumbling in me, wanting to pounce on that Bailey boy." (p. 91 PB)
- "My first impulse is to say, No, Bailey, I am staying with you here forever, but something stops me, some little sly fox who has replaced my tiger." (p. 127 PB)

- “I walk Bailey to the door and remind him that tomorrow is the pasta party. My tiger and fox and ice queen must be asleep, because I hear myself say, Maybe we should invite Janine?” (p. 137 PB)
- Other metaphors: pages 89, 92, 96, 100, 101, 103, 111, 131 PB

### Similes

- “We zip around the kitchen, dash out the door with our zuppa and bread and oranges, and we slip across the lawn and up the steps and knock on the door, and suddenly my heart is thumping like a little frog in my chest because what if Bailey slams the door again, and what if Bailey is still mad, and what if Bailey doesn’t want our zuppa and bread and oranges?” (p. 71 PB)
- “I am too busy strangling the dough to answer. I am thinking how that Janine girl made me introduce her to Bailey, and how she swooned all over him, wasting her smiles and tossing her head at someone who couldn’t even see her. And when she figured that out, she cooed and patted him, like he was a little dove, and Bailey smiled his big smile at her, and I wanted to throttle them both.” (p. 91 PB)
- “I am trying to picture it. There is a little play going on in my head. There is Pardo swooning over Violetta, and Granny Torrelli monster-cutting Violetta’s hair, and Violetta ending up looking like a movie star, and then Marco moving in and swooning over my Granny Torrelli, and Pardo hating Marco.” (p. 120 PB)
- Other similes: pages 105 and 119 PB

### Idioms and Expressions

- “Bailey is nodding. I get it, he says. The shoe is on the other foot now, right?”
- “‘Yes, how you say? Bull’s eye? You hit a bull’s eye, Bailey boy. At first, I do not get it, though,’ Granny Torrelli says. ‘At first, I think, Why is my life such a mess? Why did that Violetta have to come and steal Pardo’s heart, and how did this Marco boy have to come and be such a nuisance?’” (p. 120 PB)

### Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Have students list the character traits demonstrated by Rosie and Bailey in their relationship as friends.
- Initiate a discussion about the way Rosie and Bailey worked out their conflict.

#### Foreign Languages:

- Have students list the Italian words and phrases in the story and identify the Latin root words from which the Italian words and phrases are derived.
- Expand this activity by having the students compile a list of English words derived from those Latin root words.

#### Language Arts:

- Have students write a script for a cooking show featuring a favorite chicken soup recipe with accompanying dishes.
- Read several poems that describe people. Have students write a poem that describes one of the characters in the story.

#### Mathematics

- Have students locate a chicken soup recipe in a cookbook or from a family member. Have students double the recipe; triple the recipe; half the recipe; etc.

# Gregor the Overlander

by Suzanne Collins

## Annotation

Gregor and his two-year-old sister Boots fall down an air vent in their New York apartment laundry room and into the Underland, a fantastic subterranean world inhabited by translucent-skinned humans, giant talking cockroaches, spiders, and rats. Fast-paced action ensues as the unlikely warrior hero Gregor fulfills the prophecy to save the humans and his father from the warlike rats. This engrossing adventure will have fantasy fans quickly turning the pages and looking forward to the next Gregor challenge.

## Realia

Item: Flashlight

Statement: Why were the batteries and flashlights so important to Gregor and the Underlanders? Find the answer to this question in *Gregor the Overlander*.

## Food

Mushrooms, Rice, Grilled Fish, Bread, Herbal Hot Tea, Can of Root Beer Soda

## Challenging Words

annihilation	(p. 66 PB)	plausible	(p. 135 PB)
ascent	(p. 50 PB)	plummeting	(p. 14 PB)
assent	(p. 109 PB)	prophecies	(p. 107 PB)
crevice	(p. 17 PB)	proximity	(p. 37 PB)
demeanor	(p. 131 PB)	prudence	(p. 131 PB)
echolocation	(p. 38 PB)	rancid	(p. 286 PB)
gnarled	(p. 69 PB)	repulsed	(p. 163 PB)
lucid	(p. 4 PB)	swath	(p. 142 PB)
mesmerizing	(p. 160 PB)	terse	(p. 33 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- “Gregor’s knees turned to jelly and he sunk slowly to the sand.” (p. 81 PB)
- “‘What sort of light am I supposed to bring back?’ asked Gregor. ‘Is there a sacred torch or something?’ ‘That is a metaphor. By ‘light,’ Sandwich means ‘life.’ If the rats can truly extinguish our light, they extinguish our life as well,’ said Vikus.” (p. 135 PB)
- “‘We thought you lost,’ said Mareth, who was bleeding freely from his thigh, ‘not lost in direction,’ said Luxa. ‘Lost forever.’ Gregor realized she meant dead.” (p. 177 PB)

### Similes

- “‘Hi!’ said Boots, waving at the Underlanders and look completely delighted. ‘Hi! Hi, you!’ The Underlanders’ reserve melted like butter in a skillet.” (p. 51 PB)
- “Regalia was even more impressive from above. On the ground, he couldn’t see that the streets, which were paved in various shades of stone, were laid out in a complex geometric pattern so that the city looked like a giant mosaic.” (p. 62 PB)

- “He ripped his face off the sticky ropes, and it felt like someone had yanked strips of adhesive tape off his skin.” (p. 171 PB)
- “The spider leaned down and snapped a thread with its jaws. Gregor and Boots shot up fifty feet in the air and yo-yoed up and down like they were on a big rubber band.” (p. 173 PB)
- “The laughter swept through Gregor like waves of sunshine. It was him. It really was his Dad!” (p. 279 PB)
- Other similes: pp. 6, 8, 55, 64, 73, 79, 106, 120, 126, 286

### Idioms and Expressions

- “‘I mean, I think they were going to eat me until I mentioned your name.’ Vikus brightened a little. ‘Truly? Well, that is something. Where there is life there is hope.’  
‘That’s so weird. That’s what my grandma always says!’ said Gregor.” (p. 181)
- “‘Run, boy. Run like the river. Fly you high, Gregor the Overlander!’ said Ripred as he took off down the road. ‘Fly you high, Ripred! Fly you high!’ shouted Gregor as Ares and Aurora sped over the rat’s head.” (p. 269 PB)
- “The last words of the prophecy came back to him again. THE LAST WHO WILL DIE MUST DECIDE WHERE HE STANDS. THE FATE OF THE EIGHT IS CONTAINED IN HIS HANDS. SO BID HIM TAKE CARE, BID HIM LOOK WHERE HE LEAPS, AS LIFE MAY BE DEATH AND DEATH LIFE AGAIN REAPS.  
So it was about Henry as well as Gregor. Henry had decided to stand with the rats. . . . He had not taken care where he’d leaped, had not looked at all because he was so caught up in helping the rats.” (p. 270 PB)
- “‘Perhaps we shall see you here again someday,’ said Luxa.  
‘Oh, I don’t know. My Mom’s probably going to ground me for the rest of my life just to keep me safe,’ said Gregor.  
‘What means this, ground you?’ asked Luxa.  
‘Never let me leave the apartment,’ said Gregor.” (p. 303)

### Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Initiate a discussion with the class on the role of older siblings. Expand the discussion by listing the possible responsibilities (*i.e., babysitting, cooking*) and by noting the consequences of these on the older child. Conclude the discussion by having the students’ blend these responsibilities into the overall needs of the family.
- Have students compare and contrast the feelings and family/sibling responsibilities of Gregor, Kyle (*Escaping the Giant Wave*), and Moose (*Al Capone Does My Shirts*).

#### Fine Arts:

- Discuss with students different types of fabrics or textiles, placing particular emphasis on strength, softness, and absorbency. Extend the discussion by comparing today’s textiles with historical products. Visit textile museum collections such as: <http://www.textilemuseum.ca/> (Textile Museum of Canada) or <http://www.metmuseum.org/home.asp> (textile collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York). Discussion could be followed with a creative weaving project.

#### Language Arts:

- Have students study the sentence structure of the cockroaches. Then have the students create short skits using this syntax structure or another one created by the students. Extend the activity by discussing why the students think the author used this dialogue technique in the story.

### Mathematics

- Have students calculate the size of the rodents, spiders, and bats in the story using descriptive passages from the text. Have students draw a chart to scale to illustrate the differences in size of the real animals.

### Science

- Organize class into small groups to research spiders, insects, and bats. Have groups prepare mediated oral reports, focusing on habitat, food, life cycle, etc.
- Divide class into groups of 5 students. Have each group research the five senses. For the final report, the groups should create an imaginary world in which one or more of the senses would be particularly important as they were in the Underlander world.

### Social Studies/Geography:

- Have students work in small groups to create a diorama and/or map of Underlander. Have students substantiate their designs by referring to descriptive passages in the book.
- Have one of the groups (from activity above) also create a map and transfer it onto a large bulletin board in the library media center.

# *Halfway to the Sky*

by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

## Annotation

Gutsy, twelve-year-old Dani, short for Katahdin, hopes to escape dealing with her parents' divorce and the death of her 13-year-old brother by running away from home to hike the Appalachian Trail. She is retracing her family's history: her parents met and married on the trail and then named her after Mount Katahdin, the trail's end. Dani is furious when her mother finds her, but the two continue the journey together, develop a deeper relationship, and begin the healing process. This believable, engaging, and realistic story unfolds against the rugged backdrop of the Appalachian Mountains.

## Author on the Internet

<http://kimberlybrubakerbradley.com/>

## Realia

**Item:** Hiking Backpack

**Statement:** Can everything you need for a year fit into this one backpack? Dani knows it will have to since it is all she will be able to take with her when she runs away from home to hike the Appalachian Trail. Find out how far she makes it in *Halfway to the Sky*.

## Food

Gorp, Raisins, Noodles, Soup Mixes, Hot Dogs, Hot Chocolate, S'mores, Tea, *Snickers* Bars, Pizza

## Challenging Words

approach	(p. 17 PB)	moleskin	(p. 52 PB)
depot	(p. 3 PB)	pneumonia	(p. 140 PB)
exasperated	(p. 114 PB)	remission	(p. 106 PB)
furrowed	(p. 115 PB)	renderings	(p. 114 PB)
genetic	(p. 69 PB)	sabbaticals	(p. 79 PB)
hemlock	(p. 35 PB)	summit	(p. 6 PB)
impractical	(p. 21 PB)	sympathetic	(p. 114 PB)
jig	(p. 103 PB)	topographic	(p. 33 PB)
ligament	(p. 112 PB)	trudged	(p. 15 PB)
logistics	(p. 54 PB)	uncomplicated	(p. 38 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- "Sometimes I thought her eyes were steel marbles, the way she could glare." (p. 31 HB)

### Similes

- "I drank some cold water, stirred more water into a packet of instant oatmeal, and made myself eat it even though it tasted like sweet, gritty glue." (p. 7 HB)
- "He walked bouncily, like he had springs on his feet." (p. 15 HB)
- "Here is the thing about missing Springer. It comes to me all of a sudden, out of nowhere, like a gust of wind that nearly knocks me down." (p. 17 HB)

- “After a bit I heard man-made noises and jumped like a startled deer.” (p. 18 HB)
- “She opened a little plastic box of strawberries. They shone like red jewels.” (p. 108 HB)
- Other similes: pages 22, 65, 73, 97, and 103 HB

### Idioms and Expressions

- “She said, ‘My great-aunt Fanny. Don’t tell me lies.’” (p. 19 HB)
- “‘A watched pot never boils,’ I said, then bit my tongue.” (p. 33 HB)
- “I fell asleep in a heartbeat.” (p. 39 HB)

## Curriculum Connections

### Character Education:

- Discuss Katahdin’s need to hike the Appalachian Trail, the dangers involved in some of her decisions, her discoveries along the way, and the peace she finally finds at the end of the story.
- Discuss the idea of “Trail Magic” as mentioned on page 86. What does Vivi mean when she says that “it’s a community of strangers?”
- Ask students about the themes of death, injury, and illness that occur throughout the story. How are the characters affected and changed by these issues? And how do they each cope?

### Interdisciplinary:

- Hold a walkathon for a Muscular Dystrophy charity.

### Language Arts:

- Give students the following writing prompts for an essay:
  - What does it mean to “hike your own hike?”
  - How does the Appalachian Trail help Katahdin?
- Have students write a new ending for the story that tells about Katahdin’s adventures if she had stayed on the Appalachian Trail.

### Mathematics

- Using a map of the Appalachian Trail, have students calculate the distances between important stops and shelters. Then have the students figure out the rest of Katahdin’s journey had she completed the trail.
- Have students make a list of items they would take on a long hike. Weigh each item. Find the total weight. Try carrying that much weight in a backpack. Could you walk all day with that? What could you leave behind to lighten the load?

### Physical Education:

- Train with Katahdin. Have students keep track of how much they walk each day. Increase the distance walked with hikes at school.

### Science

- Have students research Duchenne’s Muscular Dystrophy.
- Organize students into small groups to research the types of weather, terrain, and plant life that can be seen at various points and in the various states throughout the Appalachian Trail. Each group’s findings can be added to a wall mounted classroom project on the Appalachian Trail and can be used to assist in figuring out Katahdin’s needs for the rest of her journey.
- Take students on a field trip to a nature trail (or the Appalachian Trail if possible) for their own hiking experience. The students can plan, prepare, and record their experiences like Katahdin.

Social Studies/Geography:

- Have students work in pairs to research the history of the Appalachian Trail and report their findings in either a written and/or oral report.
- Have students locate the places Katahdin visits along the Appalachian Trail on a map and work together to plan the rest of her journey.

# *Heir Apparent*

by Vivian Vande Velde

## Annotation

A feisty 14-year-old heroine uses her father's birthday gift certificate to play the total-immersion game called *Heir Apparent*. The Citizens to Protect Our Children set up a picket line to protest the gaming center and eventually damage it, leaving Giannine in jeopardy of permanent brain damage while playing in the virtual reality game. She must battle her way through barbarian attacks, peasant uprisings, and a giant dragon with the help of ghosts, witches, wizards, and magical tools. Fantasy and gaming fans alike will delight in this action-packed adventure.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.vivianvandelde.com/>

## Realia

**Item:** Pewter Ring with Celtic Knot Insignia

**Statement:** "You're saying that when I give the ring to someone that person has to accept it, and that he or she *has* to do whatever I command?" Read *Heir Apparent* to find out the importance of the ring and what happens next.

## Food

Roast Pig with Apples, Fresh Fruit

## Challenging Words

culprit	(p. 225 PB)	permutations	(p. 38 PB)
disembark	(p. 6 PB)	pikes	(p. 298 PB)
dithering	(p. 81 PB)	poaching	(p. 63 PB)
gullible	(p. 30 PB)	pun	(p. 145 PB)
inane	(p. 142 PB)	rations	(p. 132 PB)
insinuate	(p. 26 PB)	scabbard	(p. 133 PB)
irrelevant	(p. 134 PB)	singe	(p. 303 PB)
nuances	(p. 15 PB)	snippets	(p. 14 PB)
omen	(p. 11 PB)	threshold	(p. 162 PB)
ominous	(p. 10 PB)	voluminous	(p. 140 PB)
		wafting	(p. 7 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- "The receptionist nodded. I could see her set herself on automatic pilot." (p. 8 PB)

### Similes

- "The screen went dark with an ominous thud like a dungeon door slamming." (p. 10 PB)
- "He was watching me through the fringe of hair that hung down in his eyes, looking like a headlight-startled rabbit." (p. 36 PB)

- “And with that he stuck a knife into me. It didn’t hurt. I felt fizzy, like an ice cube in a glass of ginger ale, all covered with carbonated bubbles.” (p. 46 PB)
- “I heard the dragon several times during the night, moving about, snoring occasionally, once singing – I think it was singing – in its dragon language. To me it sounded like a recording of a cough, played backward at slow speed.” (p. 282 PB)
- Other similes: pages 32, 58, 94, 135, 268, 279, 291, 302, 306 PB

### Idioms and Expressions

- “That distant, half-buried part of me that was my true self surfaced long enough to bark, Ha! Fat chance.” (p. 14 PB)

### Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Review with the students that in the beginning of the book Janine is angry with her parents. Use the last line of the book as a writing prompt: “and I waited for my father.” Have the students write the last paragraph of the story describing Janine’s meeting with her dad.

#### Language Arts:

- Discuss censorship with the students and have them explain how it is the cause of the problem in the story. Organize the class into small groups and have them research banned books. Obtain a list from the following site:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/bannedbooksweek/bbwlinks/100mostfrequently.htm>.

Have the students locate the ones in your school library and create a banned books display.

#### Social Studies/Geography:

- Teach the students about the medieval period. Have students list the cultural differences Janine encounters and must adapt to as they read the book.
- Have students research the heirs of the British throne and create a family tree. How many were murdered in disputes for the crown?

[http://www.explore-biography.com/political\\_figures/S/Succession\\_to\\_the\\_British\\_Throne.html](http://www.explore-biography.com/political_figures/S/Succession_to_the_British_Throne.html)

<http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/H/history/i-m/monarchtree.html>

# *How to Disappear Completely and Never Be Found*

by Sara Nickerson

## Annotation

Twelve-year-old Margaret can barely remember her father who mysteriously drowned. She is an outcast at school and eats her lunch in a bathroom stall. In the meanwhile, her mother suddenly decides to drive to an island and place a For Sale sign in front of a dilapidated mansion. Margaret and Boyd, the talented and lonely boy-next-door, set out to solve the multiple mysteries. Comic book lovers and mystery readers will delight in the merging of these two genres.

## Author on the Internet

[http://www.egmont.co.uk/authorsandillustrators.asp?authorid=7593&Author=Sara\\_Nickerson](http://www.egmont.co.uk/authorsandillustrators.asp?authorid=7593&Author=Sara_Nickerson)

## Realia

**Item:** Stuffed Chihuahua

**Statement:** Are **you** doomed to be attacked by a pack of wild Chihuahuas? Read *How to Disappear Completely and Never be Found* and pay attention to Margaret's oral report on animal attacks!

## Food

Cherry-filled Doughnuts, Frozen Burritos, French Fries, Cornflakes

## Challenging Words

allotted	(p. 104 HB)	initiative	(p. 103 HB)
clockwork	(p. 8 HB)	pedestrian	(p. 83 HB)
conventional	(p. 119 HB)	pendulum	(p. 91 HB)
exhalation	(p. 4 HB)	predictable	(p. 5 HB)
flustered	(p. 113 HB)	stragglers	(p. 86 HB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- "Lizzie once picked up a bag of frozen peas and mumbled something about 'more green things,' but they've been sitting frozen for nearly a year now. Every time I open the freezer door and see their blank round heads staring back at me, I feel a little sad." (p. 8 HB)
- "I thought of Sophie's puzzle. My family was the genuine HARDEST JIGSAW EVER MADE." (p. 13 HB)
- "'Sophie, look,' I said. 'I think Mom's in the house.' But even as I said it, Lizzie's voice came shooting across the field – a silver bullet, a blazing cannonball, a flaming arrow." (p. 27 HB)
- "'You didn't let me finish. I was going to say – your life will never change until you take the first step.'  
The first step.  
Tina Louise was right. I turned away from the ferry dock and the friendly workers and the best fries in the state of Washington and I took the first step." (p. 107 HB)

- “Sophie’s giant alarm clock was ticking in my head, ready to alert the whole world, but I managed to keep my voice calm and steady. ‘A betrayal to who?’” (p. 196 HB)
- “In the dark dusty tomb of a bookshelf I lay perfectly still, knowing that a cough or a sneeze or even a loud breath might give me away.” (p. 198 HB)

### Similes

- “I watched Sophie, too – her cheeks bulging like hard, round apples.” (p. 2 HB)
- “It was the middle of March, only one week away from the first day of spring, and the air smelled like damp earth and flowers.” (p. 2 HB)
- “Sophie’s eyes were just one color – deep, rich brown, like a small, wild, woody creature.” (p. 13 HB)
- “Boyd had never seen any sort of vehicle pull into the drive before. He watched the Threes scatter like crabs, back to the safety of the bushes where their bikes were stashed.” (p. 18 – 19 HB)
- “I think my mother used up her life’s worth of allotted energy in just a couple of years. She was like a wind-up toy that simply wound down and had no one around to crank her back up.” (p. 104 HB)
- “The paddle sliced through the water like a steel blade, putting at least twenty feet of water between us in seconds.” (p. 246 HB)

### Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Use this book as an example of forgiveness – there are several instances in the book: Boyd forgives Margaret for her callousness; Sophie forgives Margaret for opening the letter without her; Margaret must forgive her mother for not sharing information about her father and uncle. Encourage students to let go of a grudge through a class discussion.

#### Fine Arts:

- Discuss with class why Ratt creates his comics. Include in the discussion such topics as self-expression, grief therapy, asking forgiveness, etc.
- Display other graphic novels and discuss elements of style that students like/dislike. Ask students why they think Ratt would choose to illustrate his comics in the style shown as opposed to a style similar to *Garfield* by Jim Davis? (Use any popular comic strips for comparison.)

#### Language Arts:

- Relate students’ knowledge of music use in movies to set the mood and foreshadow events to come to Ratt’s placement of a comic book on Boyd’s doorstep. Expand with further class discussion.
- Assign a short essay in which students explain if any one event (Fate, according to Tina Louise) has been a turning point in their life.
- Discuss character development with the students. Review last year’s SSYRA title, *Stand Tall* with class. Then have students compare Ratt in *How to Disappear Completely and Never be Found* by Nickerson to “the junkyard king” from *Stand Tall* by Bauer.
- Visit a local junkyard and have students point out items that could be salvaged or made useful again.
- Invite a local donation organization worker (*Salvation Army, Goodwill, etc.*) to discuss the benefits to recipients of items that others discard.
- Discuss how Ratt might benefit from [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) for his art or his refurbished items.

#### Physical Education:

- Discuss emergency action plans already in place for school events (*i.e.*, fire, tornado, etc.) and create action plans for events similar to the book plot. What would you do if a student is unconscious, involved in a swimming accident, etc.
- Invite a local lifeguard or rescue worker to discuss water safety, hypothermia, etc. with the class.

#### Science

- Compare description of the boat accident (p.247) with experiments for inertia. This discussion can also be used to discuss automobile or bicycle safety.
- Adopt a class pet rat. Study care and feeding, health and habits, history and mythology, etc.
- Have students research “a topic in nature that interests” them as Margaret and her classmates did (p. 52) or have them study animal attacks/animal defenses.

# Never Mind!

by Avi

## Annotation

Seventh grade twins, Meg and Edward, are very different and cannot get along. Meg is tall, smart, pretty and attends an elite school. Edward is a short, creative free spirit who attends an “alternative” middle school. The twins take turns telling this engaging story of Meg’s struggle with low self-esteem and her desire to be accepted into the High Achiever’s Club. Edward, in the meanwhile, cannot resist meddling in Meg’s plans and fabricates a story of monstrous proportions that leads to a makeshift band and cleverly funny scenes. Believable conversations, understanding parents, and hilarious moments move this story along to its ear-splitting ending.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.avi-writer.com/>

## Realia

**Item:** Monopoly game pieces, microphone, a trophy

**Statement:** What does playing *Monopoly* have to do with getting to know someone? Read *Never Mind!* for the answer.

## Food

French Toast, Biscotti, *Lorna Doones*, Diet Sprite, Tea, Milk

## Challenging Words

articulate	(p. 23 HB)	elegance	(p. 164 HB)
cliché	(p. 41 HB)	gullibility	(p. 40 HB)
cliques	(p. 13 HB)	leverage	(p. 13 HB)
coincidentally	(p. 5 HB)	propelling	(p. 49 HB)
conjured	(p. 29 HB)	quadrilateral	(p. 31 HB)
dismissive	(p. 24 HB)	self-deprecating	(p. 27 HB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- “She is twelve noon. I’m midnight. We are that different.” (p. 3 HB)
- “I tried it in my head again a few times, wanting to make sure I got it straight. Except, of course, it wasn’t straight at all. It was a double-twisted pretzel.” (p. 111 HB)

### Similes

- “It sounded like a donkey braying.” (p. 43 HB)
- “I was hot and uncomfortable. Seemed like the whole city was packed in our subway car – like five pounds of cold spaghetti in a one-pound bowl.” (p. 45 HB)
- “Tell the truth, he looked like a reject peach in the bruised fruit section of the supermarket.” (p. 59 HB)
- “The two of them hung together like a living yin and yang sign.” (p. 60 HB)

- “Hi,’ I said, feeling like I was bungee diving without the bungee.” (p. 106 HB)
- “He was twitching behind a drum set like some fairy tale troll under a bridge.” (p. 177 HB)
- Other similes: pages 59, 122, 146, 149, 172, 179, 180, and 183 HB

### **Idioms and Expressions**

- “It lived, it ate, it went belly-up.” (p. 1 HB)
- “The twins are like night and day,’ she tells people – apologizing, in a way.” (p. 5 HB)
- “If she did, she would be lording it over me for the rest of my natural life – and beyond.” (p. 10 HB)
- “Is there, in life, worse torture than a heart-to-heart with your father while he is wearing a lacy apron and rubber gloves and the refrigerator is attacking you from behind?” (p. 12 HB)
- “They were giving me a wide berth and a lot of slack.” (p. 145 HB)

### **Curriculum Connections**

#### Fine Arts:

- Assign a research study concerning the history and ensuing cultural changes of the rock & roll phenomena.

#### Home Economics (Family Living)

- Have students calculate the change in measurements of various types of food needed to serve at a party for 10 people, 50 people, 100 people, etc.

#### Mathematics

- Organize students into teams and have them use estimates and formulas to determine the number of students that would fit in an area of varying sizes. Change dimensions and size of students (kindergarteners versus 12<sup>th</sup> graders) to produce various scenarios.

#### Science

- Have students choose a “twin” for a research project on the various aspects of twins (*i.e.*, genetics, occurrences in the population, etc.).

# Once Upon a Marigold

by Jean Ferris

## Annotation

This quirky fantasy is filled with lighthearted fun and likeable characters from Edric the Troll to the doting father, King Swithbert. Taking center stage, however, are the lovely princess Marigold and strong-willed, clever, young Chris. Meanwhile, the evil mother, Queen Olympia, supplies the plot twists by planning to murder Marigold and the king in order to become the sole ruler of the country. This fast-paced story, filled with romance and comedic subplots, moves quickly to a satisfying conclusion.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.jeanferris.com/>

## Realia

**Item:** Colored Rock Crystals

**Statement:** "It's a big cave with lots of rooms, and in each room the walls and ceilings are studded with a different kind of crystal." Edric the Troll introduces Christian to the cave in *Once Upon a Marigold*.

## Food

Strawberries, Artichokes, Spinach Salad, Cherries Jubilee

## Challenging Words

anonymous	(p. 102 PB)	indignantly	(p. 17 PB)
assortment	(p. 23 PB)	indulgently	(p. 131 PB)
atone	(p. 92 PB)	ignited	(p. 216 PB)
bulwark	(p. 52 PB)	jerkin	(p. 4 PB)
collapsible	(p. 4 PB)	lacerating	(p. 33 PB)
consequences	(p. 136 PB)	menace	(p. 15 PB)
contraption	(p. 23 PB)	prevaricate	(p. 214 PB)
correspondence	(p. 102 PB)	promontory	(p. 23 PB)
fraught	(p. 122 PB)	tradition	(p. 9 PB)
haphazardly	(p. 6 PB)	wheeled	(p. 218 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- "The ball rolled away from the dogs and came to rest against Christian's basket of tools. When the barking floor mops came running after it, Christian couldn't help reaching out to pet them from where he knelt next to the wall."

### Similes

- "In the large yellow-crystal room that Ed used for his main parlor, he built up the fire, stumbling repeatedly over Bub, who was laid out in front of it like a hearth rug, breathing deeply in relief at being safe at home." (p. 10 PB)

- “When he finally made it to his sleeping place in the straw of the stable loft, he was so exhausted, physically and emotionally, that he was out like a log, as Ed would have said.” (p. 94 PB)
- “A great shower of sparks exploded outward like fireworks as Christian headed back to the kitchen.” (p. 98 PB)
- “‘You know,’ she said, settling down cross-legged on the flagstones, her skirts poufed out around her so that, to Christian, she looked like a flower growing in a fancy pot, ‘I’ve thought about that a lot – because ruling means having power, and when you have it, you have to use it wisely.’” (p. 135 PB)

### Idioms and Expressions

- “‘Imperious little son of a gun, acting like some big cheese in a small pond, expecting me to pick up after him like I was his servant.’” (p. 12 PB)
- “‘Ideas? What kind of ideas can a little kid have?’ Ed asked. ‘For pete’s sake.’” (p. 17 PB)
- “‘Bull by the horns,’ Christian said.” (p. 76 PB)
- “‘Well, blow me over with a feather!’ Ed thought.” (p. 102 PB)
- “‘If he’d made even a slight move in the wrong direction, many pounds of metallic figures would have fallen over in a cataract of noise that would have sealed his fate in an instant.’” (p. 120 PB)
- “‘Right. Marigold. So, what do you think about sweetening the pot a little?’” (p. 127 PB)

### Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Arrange class into small groups and have each one adopt a cause like Edric the Troll. Have groups write persuasive letters or send e-mails to effect change for the better.
- Have students write essays describing what it would be like to be able to read another person’s thoughts. Have them discuss the ethical issues involved.

#### Fine Arts:

- Refer students to Christian’s golden phoenix pendant that proved he was royalty. Have students design their own pendant.

#### Language Arts:

- Assign teams of students a Greek myth to study and report on like Marigold and Christian did in the story.
- Hold a brief, fun session on having the students guess each others middle names when they only know the first letter.

#### Mathematics

- Place a large piece of graph paper on the bulletin board and then have students survey several grade levels to determine how much money the tooth fairy left each student. Have students graph the results.
- Have students study local maps to determine where they live. Assign each student a partner. Based on the local map, have students figure out how far a carrier pigeon would have to fly to deliver p-mail between the partners.

#### Science

- Teach students to use a telescope to view something in the distance. Have them record their findings.

- Have students study crystals under a microscope and research the different types of gem stones and where they are found.
- Instruct students to invent something from found objects. Have students display their inventions in the library media center.

Social Studies/Geography:

- Discuss historical housing and the reasons for these dwellings. Organize the class into collaborative groups and have them research castles. Each group will then design their own castle complete with a coat of arms.

# One True Friend

by Joyce Hansen

## Annotation

Best buddies Doris and Amir return to their readers in this heartwarming novel. They tell their story through letters that reveal their solid friendship and realistic troubles. Amir and his siblings are separated after his parents die from AIDS. As the oldest, he feels compelled to search for and, hopefully, reunite his family. After living in several foster homes, he finally lands in a good home with his youngest brother. In the end, just like in real life, both Doris and Amir are faced with making difficult decisions.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.joycehansen.com/>

## Realia

**Item:** Letter in an envelope.

**Statement:** Have you ever had a pen pal? Doris and Amir have been pen pals since Amir left Doris's neighborhood. Even though they are separated by many miles, see how their friendship and letters help both of them make it through a very tough summer.

## Food

Pound Cake

## Challenging Words

bellowing	(p. 111 PB)	humiliated	(p. 78 PB)
deadline	(p. 59 PB)	imaginary	(p. 75 PB)
determined	(p. 8 PB)	intensely	(p. 72 PB)
elongated	(p. 72 PB)	ridiculous	(p. 75 PB)
excitement	(p. 115 PB)		

## Figurative Language

### Similes

- "Someone exploded a firecracker that made Miss Nichol's wig pop off her head like the lid on a steaming pot." (p. 35 HB)
- "He took out his sketchpad, sat down on the bed, and recalled the deep blue-gray water of the lake and the fat white clouds floating like sailboats across the sky." (p. 47 HB)
- "'You play basketball?' he asked Shawn and David. They lit up like little lamps." (p. 121 HB)
- "I was felling like I was split in two." (p. 142 HB)

### Idioms and Expressions

- "'Alvin, please. Why can't you just say a needle in a haystack?'" (p. 8 HB)

## Curriculum Connections

### Character Education:

- Introduce the character trait of trustworthiness to students. Discuss Doris's dilemma when she finds out Charlene is smoking pot. Doris knows that telling someone will help her friend stop a dangerous behavior, but she's afraid telling will be a betrayal of her friendship. Have students think about this situation and write a journal entry about whether or not they think telling Charlene's secret makes Doris untrustworthy? Discuss conclusions with the class.

### Language Arts:

- Have students work in pairs to extend the novel. One student takes on the role of Amir and the other the role of Doris. They then write letters to each other beyond the summer following the style depicted in the book.

### Fine Arts:

- Give students a choice for this assignment. Discuss the fact that Amir is a talented artist who can draw people and scenes from life. Ask the students what they consider their artistic talents to be. If they are comfortable with their drawing skills, they may draw scenes from their family life or of their friends the way Amir draws throughout the story. If they do not draw, they can use photographs and pictures from magazines to make a collage about their family and friends.

# Sahara Special

by Esmé Raji Codell

## Annotation

Fifth grader Sahara Jones leaves a special needs class to join a mainstream classroom filled with difficult students that is taught by a nontraditional teacher, Madame Pointy. Shy Sahara yearns to be a writer and slowly begins to blossom under the gentle prodding of her teacher. To add to the realism of the urban setting, mild language is used but rebuked by the teacher during a few of the classroom conversations. Throughout this heartwarming story, Sahara and her fellow students' lives are transformed through a love of story and words.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.planetesme.com/faqsahara1.html>

## Realia

**Item:** Journal

**Statement:** Miss Pointy passes out thick composition books with black-and white marbled covers. Peek into them to discover the conversations between Miss Pointy and her students in *Sahara Special*.

## Food

Sweet Corn, Hot Dogs, Pancakes, Toast

## Challenging Words

accountability	(p. 70 PB)	cynics	(p. 44 PB)
alliances	(p. 65 PB)	evidence	(p. 4 PB)
architecture	(p. 78 PB)	mandated	(p. 49 PB)
assignment	(p. 3 PB)	persuaded	(p. 63 PB)
bureaucrat	(p. 44 PB)	repercussions	(p. 11 PB)
cantering	(p. 120 PB)	retention	(p. 11 PB)
consideration	(p. 42 PB)	thespian	(p. 46 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- “I felt my finger tweaking at one of the star’s points, only it wasn’t my finger, it was a robot’s finger, programmed to do some other, bad girl’s bidding.” (p. 87 PB)

### Similes

- “During journal time, I stare at her words, moving each piece of advice in my mind like a hand explores a stone in a collection of stones.” (p. 86 PB)
- “I tried to feel my legs. They felt like two Popsicle sticks with all the Popsicle melted off.” (p. 155 PB)
- “It shook in the waves of heat like a great orange fist.” (p. 159 PB)
- “I closed my eyes and held out the piece of paper, let it flutter in my open palms. When I opened my eyes, I saw it flapping in the sky like a bird, flying away.” (p. 169 PB)

- “I wrote about friends and tattletales, bravery and fear, but for the first time, it didn’t all have to be straight true, I could write about all the exciting things I wished were true. The words moved like wheels across the paper.” (p. 171 PB)

### Idioms and Expressions

- “All that glitters is not gold, says Aesop, but if it was gold glitter, that was good enough for me.” (p. 87 PB)
- “Luz’s collection isn’t the only sticky thing in this room. Someone has sticky fingers.” (p. 89 PB)
- “Why don’t you keep your eyes peeled?” (p. 149 HB)
- “‘I think I have told you enough stories to choke a horse,’ Miss Pointy said, surprising us the next afternoon.” (p. 150 PB)
- “I ran through lots of names in my mind for a few days. . . It made my head spin.” (p. 158 PB)

### Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Invite the Guidance Counselor to visit the class to facilitate a thoughtful discussion on student-suggested topics.
- Have students imagine that Sahara is in the class. Lead a discussion on what they could do to make her feel accepted.

#### Fine Arts:

- Distribute enough paper to each student for each letter of their first name. Request that students use a separate sheet of paper for each letter and to creatively make each letter different.
- Have students create stickers that represent a hobby or special activity they enjoy. Make a class collage with each student using his or her own special sticker.

#### Foreign Languages:

- Have students research the language/country in which their last name originated. Place a large map of the world on the bulletin board in the library media center so that students can locate and mark each country represented.

#### Language Arts:

- Review a list of adjectives and other descriptive words/phrases with the students. Have them describe in detail one of their favorite stickers.

#### Mathematics

- Read aloud chapter eleven and have the students silently count how many apples are in the story Miss Pointy tells. Record the students’ answers.

#### Science

- Have students make a leaf identification book like Sahara and the other students. Schedule students into the library media center to research the leaves they find. Have students make a chart of the different types of leaves.

#### Social Studies/Geography:

- Use your classroom computer to visit the Sahara desert collecting pictures and information about this and other deserts around the world.

# *The Unseen*

by Zilpha Keatley Snyder

## Annotation

Twelve-year-old Xandra feels out of place in her family of accomplished siblings and remote, business oriented parents. She finds refuge in befriendng a succession of injured or homeless animals in the family basement. After rescuing a white egret in the nearby forest, she finds herself with a single feather after the bird mysteriously disappears. Xandra believes that the feather is magical and shows it to Belinda, a girl at school, who explains that the feather is a key to an unseen world. Follow the events in this fantasy to learn how Xandra eventually makes the connection between her anger and her experiences in an alternate world.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.zksnyder.com/>

## Realia

**Item:** White feather, Small Bag of Old Clothes, Stuffed Animals, Golf Ball

**Statement:** How could a small white feather cause happiness and then fear? Read *The Unseen* to find out.

## Food

Candy Bars (especially *Snickers*)

## Challenging Words

altercation	(p. 150 PB)	filament	(p. 17 PB)
caustic	(p. 128 PB)	inclination	(p. 12 PB)
chimeras	(p. 84 PB)	intrigued	(p. 78 PB)
commune	(p. 75 PB)	ravenous	(p. 53 PB)
decrepit	(p. 24 PB)	reverberate	(p. 189 PB)
conceited	(p. 21 PB)	rickety	(p. 76 PB)
determination	(p. 52 PB)	saturated	(p. 4 PB)
dimension	(p. 17 PB)	shimmering	(p. 40 PB)
entities	(p. 1 PB)	sinister	(p. 101 PB)
evicted	(p. 7 PB)	solemnly	(p. 40 PB)
feral	(p. 28 PB)	temperament	(p. 20 PB)
fiendishly	(p. 56 PB)	wince	(p. 191 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- "I guess it's for sure, then. There is no other way to explain it.' 'To explain what?' Xandra asked? 'The feather.' Belinda pointed to where Xandra was still holding the feather in one hand and covering it with the other. . . . 'Some people call them Keys.' . . . 'Keys?' she asked. . . . Belinda paused again before she whispered, 'To another place. Well, not to another place, actually, but to where you can see things that most people can't see.'" (p. 16 PB)

- “Xandra jumped to her feet. ‘Oh, Belinda,’ she said, and for just a moment Belinda’s face echoed her happy surprise, before it closed into a tight, suspicious mask. ‘What are you doing here,’ she whispered.” (p. 189 PB)

### Similes

- “It was a big bird, its body larger than a pigeon’s, but completely, purely white. Its wings, fanned out on the gray earth, gleamed like sunlit snow – except where an ugly smear of red ran along the edge of the right wing and trickled down onto the grass.” (p. 3 PB)
- “And then the vague bulges were forming into recognizable shapes. Some of them now seemed to resemble vaguely human forms, hunchbacked and heavy-headed, while others were only surging bulges that oozed along the floor like enormous ugly worms.” (p. 48 PB)
- “Under the dull, heavy sky the service station looked as lonely and forsaken as a scene from a science fiction movie about a world where everyone had died many years before.” (p. 187 PB)

### Idioms and Expressions

- “But instead she found herself playing it straight, saying, ‘About Alexandra Hobson? Yes, my real name is Alexandra but I call myself Xandra and I am part of the Hobson family.’”

## Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Invite the school counselor to discuss issues of anger management and self-esteem that were problems for Xandra.

#### Fine Arts:

- Have students research the art (and artists) that might find a place on Belinda’s and Xandra’s bedroom walls. Produce paintings of the same type. Ideas may be found on pgs. 23, 77, and 170.)

#### Language Arts:

- Discuss and explain various literary phrases found in *The Unseen* such as the following: first and foremost (p. 53), steeling herself (p.53), caught red-handed (p. 56), safe and sound (p. 60), tongue-tied (p.72), and gaga (p. 82).

#### Science

- Organize class into small groups to research and report on various animals Xandra helped or on other animals she might find in the forest.

#### Social Studies/Geography:

- Divide class into two teams. Have them debate the pros and cons of commune life after gathering information about them.

# *When My Name Was Keoko*

by Linda Sue Park

## Annotation

1940-1945 is a turbulent time in Japanese-occupied Korea. A brother and sister alternate telling Newbery Medalist Park's thoughtful and well-researched story. During this time, the Japanese government forbids the Japanese language spoken, forces families to change their names, and removes their national symbols. Throughout the historical fiction novel, the reader gains insights into the behind the scenes intrigue surrounding the resistance movement and the inner strength needed for these families to fight the war on their own turf.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.lspark.com/>

## Realia

**Item:** Korean flag, yellow rubber ball, pressed Rose-of-Sharon blossom, diary

**Statement:** Why was the Korean flag banned? What is the importance of the Rose-of-Sharon tree? Read *When My Name Was Keoko* to find out all the answers.

## Food

Popcorn (unpopped kernels), Rice with Red Beans, Kimchee

## Challenging Words

commandeering	(p. 75 HB)	heeding	(p. 38 HB)
commotion	(p. 76 HB)	independence	(p. 40 HB)
congratulates	(p. 121 HB)	intricate	(p. 42 HB)
definitely	(p. 66 HB)	kilometers	(p. 128 HB)
disrespectful	(p. 45 HB)	megaphone	(p. 74 HB)
extraordinary	(p. 140 HB)	resistance	(p. 71 HB)
flickering	(p. 50 HB)	solemn	(p. 9 HB)
graciously	(p. 5 HB)	supposed	(p. 2 HB)

## Figurative Language

### Similes

- "Sun-hee nods so hard her head is like a bouncing ball." (p. 14 HB)
- "The noise – how it was so small at first, like a fly buzzing." (p. 52 HB)
- "It was like being frozen – not outside, since my body still moved and did the things I needed it to do. But inside, everything – my mind, my feelings – was like ice." (p. 87 HB)
- "A terrible thought came to me. I tried to push it away, but that only seemed to make it hiss louder in my mind, like a snake coiling and baring its fangs until I could think of nothing else." (p. 98 HB)
- "There are only a few of them, but their voices are like the rotten spot on an apple. If they are not stopped, the rot will spread." (p. 117 HB)

## Idioms and Expressions

- “Then louder and louder, so loud you couldn’t hear yourself think.” (p. 52 HB)
- “I do not remember what illness he had, but it does not matter. He died of a broken heart.” (p. 104 HB)

## Curriculum Connections

### Foreign Languages:

- Refer students to the author’s list of Korean forms of address at the beginning of the book. Have students make a list of various English words for grandmother. Use an online translator or foreign language dictionaries to find the various ways to say grandmother in other languages.

### Language Arts:

- Have the students use the words on page 106 as a writing prompt. What does Keoko mean when she says “killing a man will make his thoughts rise again in the minds of others?” Have students describe the ways Uncle planted thoughts in the minds of others.

### Social Studies/Geography:

- Discuss the background of World War II in Korea. Then have students brainstorm a list of countries that were occupied during World War II. <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/List-of-countries-involved-in-World-War-II>
- Assign a small group of students to each of the countries. Research and present to the rest of the class including the following topics: rules imposed by occupying forces; resistance groups formed; what resistance groups accomplished; and what your reaction would be to occupation.

# *The Young Man and the Sea*

by Rodman Philbrick

## Annotation

In this takeoff of the *Old Man and the Sea*, twelve-year-old Skiff deals with the death of his mother, a grieving father, and a sabotaging bully. With his father reduced to a grieving drunk and thousands of dollars needed to repair their boat, Skiff looks for ways to make money. After Tyler, the rich bully, sabotages his lobster pots, Skiff decides to fish out in the ocean for the huge bluefin tuna in his small 10-foot plywood boat. This leads to a heart-pounding adventure featuring Skiff's courage and endurance.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.rodmanphilbrick.com/>

## Realia

**Item:** Oars

**Statement:** When Samuel is bringing his catch back to shore, why does he have to use these instead of the motor on his boat? Read *The Young Man and the Sea* to find out.

## Food

Tuna Fish, Lobster, Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich

## Challenging Words

barb	(p. 155 PB)	grapple	(p. 97 PB)
bilge	(p. 18 PB)	jetty	(p. 83 PB)
caulking	(p. 50 PB)	keel	(p. 31 PB)
chittering	(p. 9 PB)	skiff	(p. 135 PB)
chum	(p. 135 PB)	stern	(p. 143 PB)
filched	(p. 114 PB)	winch	(p. 12 PB)
gandering	(p. 45 PB)	vise	(p. 92 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Similes

- "Moving water sounds sleepy, like a tired person going "shush," and before you know it I'm flat-out fast asleep." (p. 26 HB)
- "Shadows of boats is more like it. Looming things that move with the current, swinging all together like a flock of ducks set down on a pond, beaks to the wind." (p. 82 HB)
- "The thing that makes me maddest of all, that makes me feel like I swallowed a frog, is how right he is. My word against his." (p. 86 HB)
- "Passed out with his mouth open, like a little bird waiting for the next meal." (p. 90 HB)
- "Keep hold of it while I ever so quiet stand up and turn around and face the front. Quiet now. Quiet as a mouse." (p. 152 HB)

- “When that happens the outboard makes a funny sound, like an old cat trying to cough up a fur ball. Don’t sound good, that’s for sure, and it makes me worry about a wave coming over the stern.” (p. 174 HB)

### **Idioms and Expressions**

- “In the end he’s asleep before the show gets over. I already know what happens, so I turn off the TV and go, “Sleep tight and don’t let the bedbugs bite.”” (p. 41 HB)

### **Curriculum Connections**

#### Character Education:

- Discuss statements that people might say that would make students cry (as in the comments Tyler made to Samuel). Is it wrong or immature to cry?
- Ask students to tell about things they have done, or know that others have done, that required determination and bravery.

#### Fine Arts:

- Have students make prints from fish, using paint to coat the scales and pressing paper onto the fish.

#### Language Arts:

- Ask students to write a newspaper article describing a time when they, or someone they know, succeeded in a difficult task.
- Have students research why Samuel’s adventure was called a “Nantucket Sleigh Ride.”

#### Mathematics

- Ask the students to calculate how much Mr. Nagahachi would pay for a fat 900-pound tuna, and how much he would pay for a skinny 900-pounder. What would the difference in pay be? (p. 105 HB)
- Divide the class into teams and have them measure the length of Samuel’s boat (36 feet) in a hallway or on the playground. How many yards long was the boat? How many inches? How does the length compare to a car? How does it compare to a school bus?

#### Science

- Assign a research project on the game fish caught off the coast of Florida. What is a typical weight of each variety? Make a table or graph showing this information.

#### Social Studies/Geography:

- Have students use a map of the New England states to locate Portland, Maine; Boston; and Nantucket. Then have them find interesting facts about each location and report to the class.
- Discuss local geographic conditions and how this impacts economic conditions in those parts of the United States. Introduce students to northern conditions for fishing and lobstering by watching a videorecording on this topic in Maine.