

# *Becoming Naomi León*

by Pam Muñoz Ryan

## Annotation

For fifth-grader Naomi Soledad León Outlaw, living with her Gram and younger brother is peaceful enough in Avocado Acres Trailer Rancho in Lemon Tree, California. Life for Naomi does have its stresses like having her clothes sewn by Gram and, more importantly, her frustration at not being able to speak up for herself. The peaceful, secure life is threatened, however, when Naomi's mom shows up after a seven year absence. A chain of events follows that forces Naomi to discover who she really is and to understand the importance of family love and loyalty.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.pammunozryan.com>

## Realia

Item: Bar of white soap and a paper clip

Statement: What can you do with a bar of white soap and a paperclip? Find out how it helps Naomi find her father and better understand herself in *Becoming Naomi León*.

## Food

Tapioca pudding, Ice cream sandwiches, Tortillas, Sugar cane, Pork chops, Fried grasshoppers

## Challenging Words

abomination	(p. 24 PB)	mulled	(p. 5 PB)
ambience	(p. 57 PB)	mutism	(p. 23 PB)
apparition	(p. 17 PB)	pell-mell	(p. 163 PB)
caterwaul	(p. 107 PB)	predisposition	(p. 11 PB)
chaffed	(p. 220 PB)	raspy	(p. 218 PB)
conviction	(p. 33 PB)	revel	(p. 217 PB)
countrified	(p. 4 PB)	tainted	(p. 192 PB)
gnarled	(p. 88 PB)	whirling dervish	(p. 29 PB)
iota	(p. 6 PB)	whorl	(p. 192 PB)
louvered	(p. 24 PB)		

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- "I was a shaking leaf but my instincts moved my body right between Owen and Skyla." (p. 117 PB)

### Similes

- "For heaven's sake, Naomi," said Gram. "It looks like a fox got into the henhouse." (p. 16 PB)
- "There we were, minding our lives, with the same obedience as a clock ticking." (p. 3 PB)
- "Naomi, she was always as temperamental as a bead of water on a hot skillet." (p. 38 PB)
- "My insides wobbled as if I was standing on a three-story roof looking down." (p. 39 PB)

- “Owen pulled himself so far into his hooded sweatshirt, he looked like a swaddled cocoon.” (p. 116 PB)
- “Skyla swooped like a hawk diving for a morsel of meat and grabbed my arm, digging her nails into my skin.” (p. 122 PB)

### Idioms and Expressions

- “Clean that up lickety-split and I’ll get the door.” (p. 16 PB)
- “It had been a double month of Sundays since Gram, Owen, and I were knitted together snug as a new mitten. I can point a stick, though, at the exact evening we started to unravel, at the precise moment when I felt like that dog in an old Saturday morning cartoon.” (p. 1 PB)
- “Any more nettles in your cap?” asked Gram, taking my hand.” (p. 82 PB)
- “You are just like me, remember? Two peas in a pod.” (p. 121 PB)
- “Skyla, I’d go to the end of the earth to protect that child.” (p. 126 PB)
- “We’re going to weather this. Let’s just plant plenty of sunshine in our brains.” (p. 44 PB)
- “Every question that came to my mind seemed to put me into a deeper stew of confusion.” (p. 206 PB)

### Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Discuss the personality characteristics of Naomi and Owen. Have students explain why a student in the class might speak in a low voice or put scotch tape on his/her shirt.

#### Fine Arts:

- Have students carve an animal from a bar of soap using the directions in the back of the book.
- Expand the students understanding of sculptors’ work by showing examples and/or researching the various materials that are used.
- Have students conduct a research project on the folk art of Mexico.

#### Foreign Languages:

- Have a small group of students make a list of the Spanish phrases in the book. Direct another small group to create a bulletin board that features these phrases.
- Have the library media specialist create a display in the library that features foreign language phrases and books.

#### Language Arts:

- Discuss the titles of the chapters, focusing on the accuracy of these terms and why they seem to “fit” or not. Expand the activity by having students research other collective nouns.
- Have small groups recreate the lists that Naomi made after returning from Mexico, based on their understanding of the character and the situation. Compare the lists and discuss the choices.

#### Mathematics

- Have students calculate how many miles Naomi traveled in Baby Beluga.

#### Social Studies/Geography:

- Hang a world map and have students follow Naomi’s journey on the map as they read the story.
- Have students research the language or country in which their name originated.
- Create a bulletin board that lists all the cultures represented in the class. Have each student or small group research their country’s holidays, including compiling a list of traditional items which the family makes for each holiday.
- Assign students the task of developing a family tree.

# *The Boy Who Spoke Dog*

by Clay Morgan

## Annotation

Jack, a young apprentice sailor, washes up on a mysterious island that is populated by two groups of dogs and a herd of sheep. Jack finds that years after the people have deserted the island, one group of dogs, the honorable shepherds, continue to herd the sheep and protect them from the other wild forest-dwelling dogs or fangos. Jack and the young Border collie, Moxie, alternately tell this heart-warming story, giving insights into both the human and canine worlds. Engaging characters and fast-paced action bring this novel, which is based on a New Zealand Maori legend, to life for today's readers.

## Realia

Item: Rusted metal box with lid

Statement: Sage, a wise, old sheep dog, leads Jack to a rusted metal box containing items that will help Jack survive on the island. Find out what these objects are and how Jack becomes *The Boy Who Spoke Dog*.

## Food

Carrots, Radishes, Onions, and Potato stew

## Challenging Words

canopy	(p. 37 PB)	keeled	(p. 13 PB)
dingo	(p. 37 PB)	lanolin	(p. 3 PB)
ewe	(p. 6 PB)	lolling	(p. 38 PB)
flank	(p. 97 PB)	paring	(p. 9 PB)
gaunt	(p. 38 PB)	ravine	(p. 34 PB)
gimbals	(p. 9 PB)	riggings	(p. 13 PB)
gunwale	(p. 16 PB)	sapling	(p. 98 PB)
heelers	(p. 7 PB)	scurfy	(p. 38 PB)
jackal	(p. 37 PB)	teetered	(p. 5 PB)
		vigilance	(p. 5 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Similies

- "Cookie was like a book full of stories and a story in himself." (p. 10 PB)
- "The fangos were so doglike, yet so dangerous and wild. The forest was like a night, and the fangos lived in it as nightmares." (p. 28 PB)

### Idioms and Expressions

- "For a long minute, the wild dogs' leader took in Jack's stock and measure." (p. 106 PB)
- "Fear is contagious, as many have said, but Moxie was learning that courage is shared, too." (p. 144 PB)
- "Life's a challenge, Jack." (p. 164 PB)

## **Curriculum Connections**

### Language Arts:

- Using a Venn diagram or other graphic organizer, have students compare and contrast the two groups of dogs, listing characteristics of each group – how they are different and how they are alike.

### Fine Arts:

- Assign small groups to research the Maori tribe, using art books and Internet sites. Have students draw examples of tattoos, carvings, and other art work created by the Maoris.

### Social Studies:

- Have students locate New Zealand on a world map and then research the country. Students may answer questions such as the following: 1) What country is it near? 2) What continent is it on? 3) What are the most important industries? 4) What are the national holidays and other important customs of the country?

# *Chasing The Falconers*

by Gordon Korman

## Annotation

Aiden and Meg Falconer are on a quest to prove their parents' innocence. In this fast-paced story, Aiden and Meg travel across the United States in search of Frank Lindenauer, a man who also worked for the CIA and who may be able to help them. The two children evade the police with the help of Miguel, another escapee from the Sunnysdale Farm. Miguel saves Aiden and Meg from danger more than once during the journey. In this first novel of Gorman's *On the Run* series, *Chasing the Falconers* delivers a quick, high-action cliff-hanger that will prompt readers to seek other books in the series.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.gordonkorman.com>

## Realia

Item: Toy cows, miniature mountain bikes, photographs, bottle caps, cigar box, penny, toy soldiers, amethyst crystals, maps, or motel key

Statement: Aiden and Meg Falconer must prove their parents' innocence or the couple will be facing life in prison, but first, they must find a way to escape the juvenile detention center where they have been placed. Find out who is chasing the Falconers and how they use their wits to make it across the country, facing many challenges along the way.

## Food

Submarine sandwiches, Peaches, Snickers bar, Pizza, and Saltine crackers

## Challenging Words

amnesia	(p. 98 PB)	piranhas	(p. 64 PB)
belligerently	(p. 69 PB)	proffered	(p. 43 PB)
claustrophobic	(p.133 PB)	ramshackle	(p. 48 PB)
derisive	(p. 76 PB)	similarities	(p. 114 PB)
excavation	(p. 96 PB)	suffocating	(p. 65 PB)
festooned	(p. 75 PB)	tarpaulins	(p. 73 PB)
frenzied	(p. 124 PB)	thoroughfare	(p. 53 PB)
glowered	(p. 103 PB)	tormenting	(p.117 PB)
intimidation	(p. 112 PB)	unceremoniously	(p. 43 PB)
jaundiced	(p. 57 PB)	vividly	(p. 42 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- "Thirty-six hours of steady rain had converted the slope into a black diamond ski hill coated with muck instead of snow." (p. 125 PB)
- "Miguel had a complaint, 'Compared to my brother's setup, this dinky screen is a postage stamp.'" (p. 91 PB)

## Similes

- “He was on the boy like a flying squirrel, almost screaming with rage.” (p. 16 PB)
- “The sensation that overtook Aiden was like walking from semiconsciousness into terrifying reality.” (p. 21 PB)
- “Through a small window they could see the white sheet jerking around like a spastic ghost as the dog struggled to free itself.” (p. 120 PB)
- Other similes: pages 38, 56, 61, 62, 63, 81, 83, 94, 121, 141, 142, 144, 146, and 149

## Idioms and Expressions

- “Aiden voiced the concern that had been eating him up inside since they’d first turned their backs on the burning wreckage of Sunnydale.” (p. 40 PB)
- “Aiden knew he had to reach her – really reach her – and right now. ‘There’s nothing I wouldn’t give for the four of us to be together as a family again. But to say that Mom and Dad are where they are because of us – you’ll drive yourself crazy thinking that way.’” (p. 41 PB)
- “This called for someone who could think on her feet and fly by the seat of her pants.” (p. 58 PB)
- Other idioms and expressions: 83, 90, 97, 98, 115, 116, and 153

## Curriculum Connections

### Character Education:

- Have students discuss and/or debate how circumstances can cause people to change their normal behavior.
- Have students discuss how they would handle the same situation that Aiden and Meg faced in the story.

### Fine Arts:

- Have students photograph a variety of subjects, practicing good layout, lighting, and camera angle techniques.
- Have students work in teams to record a “news show.” A news anchor will interview each character from the story. The camera crew will videotape the program for viewing by the entire class.

### Language Arts:

- Have students contrast Miguel’s choice of vocabulary and use of slang versus the way Aiden and Meg speak. Have the students list all the slang words that Miguel uses.

### Mathematics:

- Have students calculate how many miles that Aiden and Meg covered before they met up with Miguel. Then have students add the number of miles the three characters traveled together, using a map or Mapquest to calculate the distance.

### Science:

- Introduce the scientific concept that Aiden used when he siphoned the gasoline. Using water, show the students how the concept works. Follow-up activities can include audiovisual presentations and student research.

### Social Studies/Geography:

- Have students use a United States map to trace Aiden and Meg’s journey from Sunnydale (Nebraska) to Colchester, Vermont.
- Have students report on the different geographic areas found in the book – Nebraska, Illinois, New Jersey and Vermont. What is each state famous for, what types of crops are grown, etc.

# *Cryptid Hunters*

by Roland Smith

## Annotation

When 13-year-old twins Grace and Marty are sent to live with their Uncle Wolfe, they find that their anthropologist uncle is obsessed with finding cryptids, mysterious creatures believed to be long extinct. After parachuting from an airplane into the Congolese jungle, Marty and Grace quickly show their courage and ingenuity as they survive the wilderness and elude capture by evil Noah Blackwood's men. The creative plot and fast-paced action make this a good choice for adventure fans.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.rolandsmith.com>

## Realia

Item: Stuffed toy monkey

Statement: Grace O'Hara always carries an old worn stuffed toy monkey. Why would a beautiful and intelligent twelve year old still carry a baby's toy? Read *Cryptid Hunters* to see if this odd toy helps solve Grace's true identity!

## Food

Cheese biscuits, Soufflé, Bananas, Eggs with cheddar and *Tabasco*, Freeze-dried food, Energy bars, Beef Stroganoff

## Challenging Words

anthropologist	(p. 68 PB)	pantomime	(p. 278 PB)
distraught	(p. 12 PB)	paraphernalia	(p. 40 PB)
dormitory	(p. 2 PB)	parchment	(p. 49 PB)
executor	(p. 19 PB)	preening	(p. 285 PB)
exhilarating	(p. 201 PB)	promontory	(p. 35 PB)
exterminator	(p. 13 PB)	resilient	(p. 159 PB)
grueling	(p. 272 PB)	sanctum	(p. 2 PB)
horrendous	(p. 96 PB)	stylus	(p. 46 PB)
hypothermia	(p. 97 PB)	succumbing	(p. 257 PB)
implausible	(p. 51 PB)	unorthodox	(p. 81 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- "I'm not going to leave him out there for Blackwood's jackals to devour." (p. 68 PB)

### Similes

- "He and Grace dug a five-foot-deep pit in the backyard, covered the opening with brush, and caught their mother, who became as angry as a bear." (p. 9 PB)
- "It feels as if you're floating above the ocean here." (p. 38 PB)
- "The water was as smooth as glass." (p. 105 PB)

- “The lake below looked like a pot of soup stock awaiting its main ingredients: two humans with a dash of chimp and a pinch of poodle dropped in for flavor.” (p. 145 PB)
- “Masalito is like the wind coming up off the river. He cannot be caught or seen.” (p. 181 PB)
- “Through half-closed eyes she watched Butch walk over to his shelter and crawl into it like a bear returning to its den.” (p. 274 PB)
- “We all have that Wolfe blood running in our veins, drawing us to risk like a moth to a flame.” (p. 323 PB)
- “But the eggs have confined him to a single room like a brooding hen.” (p. 347 PB)
- “She devoured each day like a hungry wolf.” (p. 347 PB)

### Idioms and Expressions

- “The rumor is we’re going there to find a dinosaur and help a friend of yours out of a jam with Noah Blackwood.” (p. 85 PB)
- “How could she pass up an opportunity to search for a living dinosaur, for crying out loud?” (p. 95 PB)
- “One of the things he learned was that his uncle operated on a shoestring budget.” (p. 115 PB)
- “But they were a tight-lipped bunch with a very different look...” (p. 118 PB)
- “She had an uncanny ability to pick the path of least resistance, even when that path looked like the least likely to take.” (p. 219 PB)

### Curriculum Connections

#### Language Arts/Writing:

- Have students design a comic book based on this novel, stressing main ideas and supporting details.
- Collect magazines and newspapers that students will use to create a collage that represents this story. Explain to students that a picture representing the main focus idea will be placed in the center of the page with pictures of supporting details pasted around it. A summary of the main idea and supporting details should be written on the back of the collage.
- Have students choose one character that reminds them of themselves and write a complete paragraph explaining the similarities and differences.
- Have students complete the following journaling activities: After reading the specified chapter, have the students write about:
  - A camping trip or vacation (Chapter 1);
  - Conversations they have overheard (Chapter 5);
  - Family nicknames (Chapter 7);
  - Personal fears and how they overcame them (Chapter 9);
  - An emotion that they felt while reading the book and why they felt this way (Chapter 14);
  - The most exotic food that they have ever eaten (Chapter 22);
  - A dream they once had that seemed real (Chapter 23); and
  - A time they had to say they were sorry and ask for forgiveness (Chapter 28).
- Copy the Anticipation Adventure below and have students complete it before reading the story. BEFORE reading *Cryptid Hunters*, take a guess and record your answers below.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Marty is older than Grace.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Wolfe is the “antagonist/bad guy” of the novel.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ The GIZMO transports Marty and Grace into the Amazon.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Dr. Beasel is cruel to the children.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Crytozoology is a real science.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ The gray parrot holds a life-changing secret.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Blackwood is an idiot.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ The molimo can be heard from 20 miles away.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ The bonobo helps Grace overcome her fears.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ The Frankenstein monkey is scary and dangerous.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Grace is a genius.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The boarding school was a good place for Marty.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Laurel helps Grace overcome her fears.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Wolfe and the children travel to the Amazon in search of the giant squid.

During the reading of *Cryptid Hunters*, record whether your guess was correct. After reading the book, create two more statements that should have been on this list to interest future readers.

Science:

- Discuss various science careers, including nature detective. Have students use the Internet and/or animal encyclopedias to learn to identify animal tracks. Have students pose various scenarios for each other to figure out what kind of animals passed by a location and, perhaps, figure out what the animals were up to!

Social Studies/Geography:

- Assign a small group of students to locate the following places on a world map, using push pins or post-it tabs: Switzerland, Mt. Everest, Montana, Amazon, Seattle, and Brazil.
- Have students research the Amazon, answering the following questions: 1) Where is it located? 2) What is the primary form of income, exports, imports? 3) How would life be different for you if you lived there? 4) Do students in the Amazon attend schools similar to yours? 5) How would it be different? 6) What are the favorite sports in the Amazon? 7) What do most students wear?
- Explain to students that they will select a breed of dogs to research, including the “teacup” variety. To complete the assignment, the students will produce a PowerPoint presentation.
- Organize the students into small groups to research one of the following: communication technology, Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, phobias, Congo poachers, prosthetics, malaria, or pygmy tribes.

Other websites of interest:

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

# Double Dutch

by Sharon Draper

## Annotation

Eighth-graders and friends Delia, Yolanda, and Randy each have secrets that they keep from others. Delia must come to terms with her reading problems and Randy must find out what happened to his dad. In the meanwhile, Yolanda's outgoing personality and creative imagination offer her ways to deal with her difficult situations. Interwoven into the personal lives of the characters is their determined commitment to Double Dutch competitions that, eventually, lead to the world championships. Diehard jump-rope fans will enjoy the jump-by-jump descriptions of the championship events.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.sharondraper.com>

## Realia

Item: Jump ropes

Statement: Delia was glad she had Double Dutch on Saturday. It took her mind off the threats of tests, twins, and worries about reading and homework. Find out how Delia's reading problems affect the lives of her friends in *Double Dutch*.

## Food

Bologna sandwiches, Chips, Pizza

## Challenging Words

accusations	(p. 28 PB)	intricate	(p. 41 PB)
assurance	(p. 50 PB)	menacing	(p. 3 PB)
compulsory	(p. 32 PB)	morosely	(p. 66 PB)
exultation	(p. 42 PB)	overwhelmed	(p. 21 PB)
fretful	(p. 28 PB)	polynomials	(p. 49 PB)
furiously	(p. 7 PB)	proficiency	(p. 8 PB)
gruesome	(p. 57 PB)	sauntered	(p. 33 PB)
hallucinations	(p. 36 PB)	trudged	(p. 76 PB)
incomprehensible	(p. 10 PB)	unflinching	(p. 10 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- "He coulda picked up the first card with hearts and flowers he saw and you woulda loved it! Your brain is noodle soup when it comes to boys." (p. 24 PB)

### Similes

- "It was rumbling down the road like a runaway truck, and she was standing, helpless, directly in its path." (p. 30 PB)
- "The tension in the small gym sizzled like dangling electric lines – hot and fiery." (p. 40 PB)
- "I'm dumb as a rock," Delia said to the floor." (p. 66 PB)

- “He thought about real fear and how it was slipping like smoke under his door, into his space, and throughout his body.” (p. 95 PB)

### Idioms and Expressions

- “It’s the thought that counts!” Yolanda insisted. ‘Read the card! It must have taken him a long time to find a card that said just what I wanted to hear!’” (p. 23 PB)

### Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Discuss examples of responsibility in the novel. Point out Randy’s situation living alone and how the group of friends show responsibility and caring for one another. (Responsibility and Caring)
- Discuss the fact that the Tolliver twins were new to the school. Have students find examples in the novel of how the Tollivers were treated fairly and/or unfairly by students and teachers. (Fairness)

#### Language Arts:

- Have students create a RAFT assignment based on the novel.  
R: Role  
A: Audience  
F: Format  
T: Topic

#### Examples of RAFTS based on Double Dutch:

R: Randy

Audience: His father

Format: Letter

Topic: Where are you?

R: Tolliver Twins

Audience: Teachers and students at the school

Format: Letter to the editor of the school newspaper.

Topic: How the twins feel about how they have been received and treated at the school, before and after their television appearance.

Students may create their own RAFTS based on characters and events from the novel.

- Discuss the theme of secrets in the novel. Have students create a Problem- Solution chart about their secrets.

The chart should look like the following and include page numbers for evidence from the book.

Character	Problem/Secret	Solution

#### Social Studies/Geography:

- Research the history of competitive Double Dutch. Use the following website:  
<http://www.nationaldoubledutchleague.com/>

Have students answer the following questions about Double Dutch:

Where and how did Double Dutch jump roping originate?

Is it more popular in certain regions of the country than others?

What age groups participate competitively?

How could a local Double Dutch team be organized?

Physical Education:

- Demonstrate jump roping for fitness and fun. Have students who know how to Double Dutch demonstrate for the class. Use the Website <http://www.nationaldoubledutchleague.com/> to see if there is a local team that could perform demonstrations of competitive level jumping.

More lesson plan ideas and information on Double Dutch and Sharon Draper can be found at:

<http://sharondraper.com/lessonsdetail.asp?lesson=7>

# Flush

by Carl Hiaasen

## Annotation

Noah Underwood knows that life is going to be really difficult when he has to spend Father's Day visiting his dad in jail—the consequence of sinking a gambling ship that is illegally dumping sewage directly into the ocean. Noah and his sister Abby believe in his father's cause and creatively concoct a plan to prove the illegal dumping is occurring. With the help of quirky characters and lots of humor, Noah and Abby conspire to help their parents and the environment.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.carlhiaasen.com>

## Realia

Item: Letters, Flashlight, *Lemony Snicket* book, Bug spray, Food dye, Chess book, Chess board and pieces, Two quarters, Penny, and Grip tape

Statement: "Shelly levered herself upright. 'This idea of yours is so whacked,' she said, 'It just might work. Does that mean you'll help us? And all I gotta do is flush?' she asked. 'That's it? That's all you've got to do,' I said. 'Flush, and flush often.'" Read *Flush* to find out more about this fantastic plan!

## Food

Ham and cheese sandwiches, Milk, Cookies, Eggs, Pancakes, Orange juice, *Gatorade*, Fruit punch juice box, and Bottled water

## Challenging Words

absurdity	(p. 98 HB)	embezzlement	(p. 259 HB)
anomaly	(p. 102 HB)	felony	(p. 99 HB)
arson	(p. 251 HB)	Gizmo	(p. 111 HB)
bogus	(p. 91 HB)	humongous	(p. 92 HB)
cinder	(p. 252 HB)	incriminating	(p. 85 HB)
consignment	(p. 31 HB)	martyr	(p. 22 HB)
contrail	(p. 156 HB)	mopey	(p. 35 HB)
cringing	(p. 54 HB)	skeptical	(p. 91 HB)
deluded	(p. 63 HB)	skiff	(p. 9 HB)
		vat	(p. 56 HB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- "My sister was a biter. Not that she was a mean little kid; she just liked to chew. My dad called her a pit bull in diapers." (p. 59 HB)

### Similes

- "I've always liked watching the sky drop down like a foamy purple curtain when a summer storm rumbles across Florida Bay." (p. 27 HB)

- “Abbey went inside first and I followed, half expecting to be ambushed. My father says Mom has eyes like a hawk and ears like a panther. The odds of sneaking by her twice in one night without getting nabbed were slim.” (p. 60 HB)
- “The pain was ridiculous. At first everything went bright, like a starburst, and then suddenly it was as black as a tunnel. My skull was ringing like a gong.” (p. 80 HB)
- “Rust. The old tank was rusting away. I reached underneath and found a patch of pitted metal that crumbled like stale crackers.” (p. 81 HB)
- “He reached down and scooped up a baby blue crab, which he cupped in his hands. When he bent down to inspect it, the crab promptly fastened its miniature claws to his nose and hung there, like a weird painted ornament.” (p. 105 HB)
- “His slick bald dome glowed pink in the pale light, and his smile was as crooked as his nose.” (p. 124 HB)
- “Her face was smeared with so much zinc oxide that it looked like she’d fallen nose-first into a frosted cake.” (p. 137 HB)
- “Grandpa Bobby said he’d planned to keep his visit a secret – until he saw me and Abbey escape in the blue dinghy. ‘The engine on that thing sounded like a bucket of nails in a blender.’” (pp. 212 – 213 HB)
- Other similes: pages 19, 31, 38, 41, 44, 45, 59, 61, 70, 82, 93, 104, 198, 121

### Idioms and Expressions

- “‘Noah!’ Mom scolded, and instantly my sister started bawling again. Abbey can cry at the drop of a hat.” (p. 76 HB)
- “She said, ‘Don’t worry, I’m still gonna keep my promise. I’m gonna help you clear your daddy’s name.’ ‘But why?’ ‘Maybe ‘cause it’s the right thing to do. Or maybe ‘cause now I’ve got a dog in this fight.’” (p. 89 HB)
- Other idioms and expressions: pages: 9, 22, 32, 44, 47, 115, 121, 169

### Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Have the students discuss the best way to handle bullies and name calling. Appoint a reporter for the class or small groups to record the students’ suggestions.

#### Fine Arts:

- Brainstorm with students ways to use the color fuchsia in their artwork.
- Work with the library media specialist to have the students research the animals found in the Florida Keys. Then have students paint pictures of the different creatures, using a combination of media.
- Have students listen to preselected Jimmy Buffett music and record the lyrics to his songs. Have small groups of students discuss the lyrics and the compositions.

#### Foreign Languages:

- Have students research the different languages spoken in Colombia and other parts of South America. Student partners can create a database of the countries and the languages found in each one.

#### Language Arts:

- Bring several different newspapers to class and have the students read and review the styles of the articles found in each one. Using a particular writing style, have students write newspaper articles interviewing each other as “Noah.”
- Record and show students different interviewing styles used on television news shows (e.g., 60 Minutes, Today, 20/20). Divide the class into small groups and have them produce a television newscast interviewing each other as “Noah’s dad.”

Mathematics:

- Have students estimate how much food coloring the characters in the novel flushed out of the casino boat.

Science:

- Discuss research qualitative data collection methodologies. Explain to students that they will be reading research studies on pollution in the Florida Keys. Have each student report to the class on the study read, identifying the data collection method used in the study and the report findings. A chart with data collection methods identified and report findings summarized could be maintained as a class project.
- Explain to the students the environmental effects on different species of animals and follow up this discussion with students conducting a research project on the loggerhead turtle.

Social Studies/Geography:

- Provide students with a map of the Florida Keys and South America and have students calculate the distance between the Florida Keys and Colombia. Also have students identify the islands and countries located adjacent to these areas.

# *Gilda Joyce: Psychic Investigator*

by Jennifer Allison

## Annotation

Thirteen-year-old Gilda Joyce lives with her widowed mother in Michigan. Over the summer holiday, Gilda wants an adventure away from her home and mom. She writes to distant relatives in California and asks to spend the summer with them. Once there, she meets Juliet, a cousin near her age, who has been seeing the ghost of her aunt. The adventure unfolds through the narratives of both Gilda, as the psychic investigator, and the young Juliet. Gilda's wacky personality keeps this spooky, suspenseful mystery moving to a satisfying ending. (For mature readers)

## Author on the Internet

[http://www.gildajoyce.com/gilda\\_joyce\\_author.html](http://www.gildajoyce.com/gilda_joyce_author.html)

## Realia

Item: Flashlight

Statement: "They entered a small circular room and waved their flashlights around. When their eyes had adjusted to the dim light, both girls screamed." Find out why this happened in *Gilda Joyce: Psychic Detective*.

## Food

Quesadilla, Hot tamales, Celery and hard boiled eggs, Spring rolls

## Challenging Words

abhorred	(p. 30 HB)	futile	(p. 134 HB)
aloof	(p. 83 HB)	illustrious	(p. 3 HB)
ambivalence	(p. 203 HB)	impishly	(p. 137 HB)
arbitrary	(p. 6 HB)	jovial	(p. 192 HB)
austere	(p. 40 HB)	lurid	(p. 14 HB)
blithely	(p. 210 HB)	opulent	(p. 76 HB)
chided	(p. 99 HB)	perfunctory	(p. 102 HB)
diminutive	(p. 87 HB)	perused	(p. 5 HB)
disdain	(p. 185 HB)	ponderous	(p. 3 HB)
fortuitous	(p. 6 HB)	reverie	(p. 26 HB)

## Figurative Language

### Similes

- "All along the sidewalk there were stately palm trees and squat trees shaped like umbrellas. Large, bright red flowers hung from their branches like Christmas-tree ornaments." (p. 74-75 HB)
- "She had just noticed something rising from behind the house – a pointed tower shaped like a witch's hat."
- Other similes: pages 174, 189, 211

### Idioms and Expressions

- "Boy, my feet are killing me tonight." (p. 11 HB)

- “Just pick a direction, work hard, don’t lose sight of your goal – get good grades, of course – and the world’s your oyster.” (p. 193 HB)

## **Curriculum Connections**

### Character Education:

- Use this book to prompt a discussion on grief – the death of Gilda’s father from cancer and the death of Melanie from suicide. Examine how each character deals with their personal grief and begins the healing process.
- Discuss the quote from page 254, “Gilda took a deep breath and decided to face this situation the way she normally faced frightening situations: by pretending to be brave.”

### Fine Arts:

- Have students create their own self portraits using paint or other medium. Encourage students to focus on a single part of their face and do a study of it.
- Allow students to create their own self portraits over a specified period of time when they are in various moods and have them write down their mood/feelings (angry, happy, anxious, etc.). As a class, compare the self portraits done from one mood to the next.

### Language Arts:

- Have students write an alternate ending to this story.
- Ask students to write an essay about their favorite memory.
- Provide other short mystery and ghost stories for students to read in class.
- Have students create their own character in disguise or use Gilda’s “Fiona Sparks” to write their version of “The Ghost in the Tower.”

### Interdisciplinary:

- Have students plan a trip to San Francisco, California. Assign students to work in groups with a specific budget to plan a week’s visit including flights, hotels, and tourist destinations, including Chinatown and the Golden Gate Bridge.

# *Lily's Ghosts*

by Laura Ruby

## Annotation

Thirteen-year-old Lily and her mom move to her great-uncle's summer home in Cape May, New Jersey. Immediately, Lily is drawn into an adventure involving a new friend, a fake medium, and ghosts of all ages and shapes. Lily quickly learns that the drafty old Victorian house is haunted when mysterious events occur and objects appear and reappear in different rooms, including her mother's old Kewpie doll. As the tension builds, Lily is determined to uncover the truth about her family's tragic secrets and finally rid the house of the unwanted ghosts. (For mature readers)

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.lauraruby.com>

## Realia

Item: Kewpie doll, Old newspapers, Treasure chest

Statement: Her mother's old Kewpie doll seems to follow Lily around the house. Find out why Uncle Max knows the doll is so important in *Lily's Ghosts*.

## Food

Lemonade, Ham and bread balls, Strawberry jam, Souvlaki

## Challenging Words

aggrieved	(p. 79 PB)	morphing	(p. 7 PB)
anonymous	(p. 30 PB)	numismatics	(p. 197 PB)
atoms	(p. 1 PB)	paranoid	(p. 63 PB)
diaphanous	(p. 37 PB)	parlor	(p. 4 PB)
drone	(p. 25 PB)	perturbed	(p. 91 PB)
festooned	(p. 46 PB)	placards	(p. 108 PB)
fluorescent	(p. 173 PB)	privateer	(p. 92 PB)
hyperventilating	(p. 115 PB)	rupee	(p. 197 PB)
microfilm	(p. 95 PB)	voluminous	(p. 7 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Similes

- "The eyes would green up the dark, twirl like pinwheels in the sockets." (p. 5 PB)
- "Lily took in the china cabinet with its bellyful of crystal, the chandelier that glittered like a small universe over the table." (p. 5 PB)
- "The house – shiny and drapery and mossy with doilies – looked so huge and imposing that for the first week Lily felt like a hamster scratching around in it." (p. 15 PB)
- "Madame Durriken, whose real name was Maple Ann Spatz, was uncommonly tall and gaunt with diaphanous gray hair like dandelion fluff." (p. 37 PB)
- "She looked like a badly drawn stick figure in a gray fur hat." (p. 113 PB)
- "The piggy eyes looked like chips dropped in pancake batter." (p. 118 PB)

- “Her stomach felt like a living thing, like a crab scuttling around, pinching her from the inside.” (p. 171 PB)
- “She found that if she let her eyes lose focus, the flames looked like tiny writhing people with streaming yellow hair and hearts of blue.” (p. 171 PB)

### **Metaphors**

- “Pinkish lips flashed a thin zipper of teeth, like the wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood.*” (p. 3 PB)

### **Curriculum Connections**

#### Fine Arts:

- Remind students that Lily’s mother made jewelry to sell in her shop and that jewelry making is very popular. Have students make simple bracelets with beads and string as an art project or gift for a special friend, relative or themselves.

#### Language Arts:

- Discuss the book that Lily had to read for her home studies, *The Old Man and the Sea.* Have students go to the library media center to locate information about the book using print and Internet resources.

#### Social Studies/Geography:

- Review the time period of the pirate Captain Kidd. Divide the class into small groups to research more information about the pirate. For instance, where did he sail, what was the name of his pirate ship, and was he ever caught and tried for piracy?

# *May Bird and the Ever After*

by Jodi Lynn Anderson

## Annotation

When May Bird crawls out of the lake, she finds herself in the fantastic dark Ever After world from which she must quickly escape. This world is populated with strange ethereal creatures and filled with danger for both May Bird and Somber Kitty. The dangers are frightening, but May meets unusual friends who guide her along the way, helping her outwit her enemies and find an escape route from the Ever After.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.harpercollinschildrens.com/HarperChildrens/Teachers/AuthorsAndIllustrators/ContributorDetail.aspx?Cid=22853>

## Realia

Item: Pumpkin (carved face) – white, not orange, or pale yellow if possible

Statement: How does a “house spirit” suffer an asthma attack? Find out how un-scary some ghosts can be in *May Bird and the Ever After*.

## Food

Honey, Cheese, Loaf of bread, Water bottle, Soul cakes (rice cakes will work nicely), Skeleton crackers, Pomegranates, Decorated cupcakes

## Challenging Words

disorienting	(p. 89 HB)	melancholy	(p. 213 HB)
eccentric	(p. 10 HB)	plaintive	(p. 312 HB)
ectoplasm	(p. 137 HB)	rifling	(p. 225 HB)
encountered	(p. 151 HB)	scythe	(p. 114 HB)
exorcising	(p. 137 HB)	shenanigans	(p. 1 prologue HB)
flabbergasted	(p. 167 HB)	splintering	(p. 67 HB)
fray	(p. 55 HB)	wretched	(p. 181 HB)
knell	(p. 73 HB)	vigil	(p. 245 HB)

## Figurative Language

### Similes

- “Instead of being pulled into the usual pigtails, her hair was down and combed across her back, shimmery as mountain water.” (p. 14 HB)
- “And then a set of cold white hands were around her arm, sending zaps like electricity running up and down her body.” (p. 67-68 HB)
- “Just then, ahead of them, the darkness began to open up, one section at a time, like puzzle pieces of light being put together.” (p. 113 HB)
- “His blue eyes were as clear and untroubled as a calm Caribbean Sea.” (p. 172 HB)

### Idioms and Expressions

- “Oh, dear, you really take the cake, don’t you.” (p. 92 HB)

- “In the square you could have heard a pin drop.” (p. 127 HB)
- “You’re selling yourself short.” (p. 145 HB)
- “Ah, knaves are a dime a dozen.” (p. 197 HB)

## Curriculum Connections

### Character Education:

- Discuss John the Jibber’s issues with trustworthiness in life and in Ever After. Students can share contemporary examples of moments when they or others have acted in an untrustworthy manner and how the situation could have turned out differently.
- List the actions by characters that demonstrate caring, then share one caring event each student has done or will do today. (Examples: May covering Pumpkin with the comfort blanket or Pumpkin sets out food for May near the Dead Sea, etc.)

### Fine Arts:

- Explain who William Shakespeare is and his reputation as a playwright so that students understand Pumpkin’s reference for wanting to be in Shakespeare’s song and dance revue.
- Parody today’s radio hits – have students change a few words in chosen stanzas to reflect the point of view of the imaginary spirit world.

### Language Arts:

- Share a favorite ghost story with the class. Have students write a “live one” story that would scare Pumpkin!
- Have students create a product for Ever After and write a commercial advertisement for the product. Examples from the story include the Crook-Be-Gone or Soul Cakes.

### Mathematics:

- Describe the theory behind wormholes from John the Jibber’s explanation that wormholes make it easy to keep a big city in a small space.

### Science/Health:

- Display photographs of the Milky Way galaxy. Discuss Arista’s explanation of the rotation of Ever After and how the stars here seem to move much more quickly than the stars on Earth.

### Social Studies/Geography:

- Locate the four portals to the Ever After on a map of the Earth from what Arista tells May. Research folklore or reports of missing persons specific to those areas.

# Overboard

by Elizabeth Fama

## Annotation

Fourteen-year-old Emily must fight for her survival when the ferry overturns in the waters off the coast of Sumatra. While in the dark, frightening waters, Emily meets a young Indonesian boy and, throughout the ordeal, draws courage from him and his quiet, but firm Islamic faith. Since moving to Sumatra with her parents, who work as doctors for World Physicians for Children, Emily has disapproved of the primitive conditions and the move away from her friends. Now facing hunger, fatigue, and fear, Emily must dig deep within herself to find the strength to save herself and young Isman.

## Author on the Internet

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

## Realia

Item: Life vest

Statement: Isman got a life vest, but Emily did not. Find out why when you read *Overboard*.

## Food

Peanut butter and honey sandwiches, Chocolate candy bar, Tomato

## Challenging Words

achingly	(p. 38 PB)	lethargy	(p. 115 PB)
buoy	(p. 138 PB)	overexposed	(p. 156 PB)
charitable	(p. 107 PB)	penitent	(p. 111 PB)
contiguous	(p. 50 PB)	perimeter	(p. 141 PB)
debris	(p. 120 PB)	plummeted	(p. 136 PB)
equilibrium	(p. 61 PB)	residue	(p. 132 PB)
haphazard	(p. 13 PB)	thrashing	(p. 68 PB)
impassively	(p. 145 PB)	uncontrollably	(p. 135 PB)
insurmountable	(p. 120 PB)	vibrato	(p. 56 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Similes

- “Yaso opened his eyes, so she tried to raise the head of the cot a notch or two, but the mechanism was stuck. She yanked it hard, and it slid into place with a jolt. ‘You’re very strong,’ Yaso said in his own language. ‘Strong like a bull.’ Sje wrinkled her nose at him and made a snorting noise. Yaso laughed and tried to snort like a bull himself.” (p. 5 PB)
- “It was hardly a “boat,” this ferry. Before she boarded, Emily saw it approach from the horizon. It was leaning to one side, like a bloated, sick whale slowly beaching itself at the dock.” (p. 24 PB)
- “The more she looked, the more it seemed as if there were actually no areas of empty space around the stars; there were so many stars behind, next to, and in front of the others that they were contiguous. It was like a pointillist painting, covered so perfectly with dots of color that none of the canvas showed. But in this living painting of the night sky over Indonesia, the dots were all one color—the color of brilliant, distant suns.” (p. 50 PB)

- Other similes: pages 60, 72, 75, 111, 119, 120, and 141

### **Idioms and Expressions**

- “You Americans are great. I just love you guys. Look at what a strong swimmer you are, and you’re just a kid. It’s that pioneer pluck...it’s in your blood.” (p. 41 PB)
- “She was suddenly overcome by lethargy. Here was the daylight she had been living for, and what had it given her? A dead body, a tiny, uninhabited island, and no boats in sight. Would they simply become stranded on an island after all this, to die of dehydration within hours? ‘From the frying pan into the fire,’ Emily said to herself in English.” (p. 115 PB)

### **Curriculum Connections**

#### Character Education:

- Discuss with students the ethical dilemmas faced by Emily and other survivors in the story such as the distribution of the life jackets and the inclusion of people on the life raft. Have students explain how they think they would react in a similar situation.
- Have students make a list of the character traits Emily’s parents show in their work at the hospital. Have them make a list of the character traits that Emily shows during her ordeal. Then have them compare the two lists and see what traits they have in common.
- Have students look at the character of Isman and compare his character traits with Emily’s. Are they similar or are they different?

#### Fine Arts:

- Read on page 50 how Emily compares the night sky to a pointillist painting. Have the students find out what a pointillist painting is and produce their own painting of a scene in nature.
- Explain to students the characteristics of fabrics that were mentioned in the story – denim, cotton, and spandex. Have students create posters for each type of fabric from magazine pictures and/or create a collage using one type of fabric.

#### Foreign Languages:

- Instruct students to locate the Bahasa Indonesia words used in the text. Then have students create a dictionary using these words with the English, Spanish, French, and Japanese translations.

#### Language Arts:

- Brainstorm with students a list of adjectives that could be used to describe the frightening night that Emily spent in the water. Then have students write several descriptive paragraphs using the list of words.

#### Mathematics

- Have students use a world map to calculate the following distances: miles that Emily and her family traveled to move to Sumatra and miles Emily swam after the ferry overturned.

#### Science

- Divide class into small groups and have them research the effects of stressful conditions such as dehydration, immersion in salt water, and hunger on the human body. Then have them discuss how these effects were illustrated in the story as Emily and Isman tried to survive in the ocean.
- Assign to small groups a disease or health issue (e.g., mosquitoes, water pollution) commonly found in countries such as Sumatra. Have groups report to class on their findings, using a skit or mediated oral report format.

#### Social Studies/Geography:

- Have students use atlases, almanacs, gazetteers, and specialized encyclopedias to research Sumatra with emphasis on its political, economic, and health issues.
- Have students construct a graphic organizer comparing and contrasting the health systems of the United States and Sumatra within the political context of each country.

# *Peter and the Starcatchers*

by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson

## Annotation

In this delightful prequel to J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, Peter, one of a group of orphan boys, begins his journey aboard the *Neverland*. Once on the ship, he meets Molly, a Starcatcher's apprentice, and vows to help her protect the starstuff that is locked in a mysterious trunk down in the ship's hold. Dastardly pirates, a flying crocodile, biting mermaids, magical starstuff, and fast-paced action all blend to make this an exciting adventure, fantasy read.

## Author on the Internet

<http://davebarry.com>

<http://www.ridleypearson.com/kids/index.htm>

## Realia

Item: Stuffed crocodile

Statement: Why should you be afraid of this animal's grim grin? Sacrifice some time for *Peter and the Starcatchers* and you'll know why that smile's so scary!

## Food

Sailor's stew, Punch, Bread, Licorice or other foods that look like rope, Water

## Challenging Words

apparition	(p. 102 PB)	malignant	(p. 49 PB)
ascending	(p. 59 PB)	mutiny	(p. 398 PB)
chortling	(p. 258 PB)	ominous	(p. 246 PB)
contempt	(p. 48 PB)	prow	(p. 101 PB)
dank	(p. 53 PB)	relentless	(p. 205 PB)
decrepit	(p. 15 PB)	riffraff	(p. 28 PB)
feint	(p. 436 PB)	ruse	(p. 185 PB)
gangway	(p. 18 PB)	scow	(p. 25 PB)
languidly	(p. 59 PB)	smirking	(p. 41 PB)
luminescent	(p. 144 PB)	vermin	(p. 34 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Metaphors

- "He looked out, squinting, and saw a dark shape looming by the wharf. It looked to Peter like a monster, with tall spines coming out of its back. Peter did not like the idea of walking into the belly of that monster." (p. 2 PB)
- "Slank nodded back at the huge man, then drew back his leg and kicked the would-be escapee hard in the ribs. . . . Slank glared around the deck. 'Anybody else having thoughts of leaving?'... 'I thought not,' said Slank. 'Now, get this bag of lice out of my sight.'" (p. 23 PB)
- "As Smee, grumbling, started down the mountainside, Stache turned his gaze back toward the clearing, and spoke softly to himself. 'And if it comes to cutting,' he said, 'they'll learn that spears is no match for pirate steel.'" (p. 278-279 PB)

- “‘I’m not opening it so you can amuse yourself,’ snapped Slank. ‘I’m opening it so we can get this boat flying again, and get back to the ship without being swamped by them she-devils. You’re not to touch the contents, you understand?’ ‘Yes,’ said Little Richard, a hurt puppy again.” (p. 371-372 PB)

### Similes

- “‘What’s the delay down there?’ Black Stache thundered. On the main deck, several men were tying a fat crewman’s ankles to his wrists behind his back, so he looked like a rocking horse.” (p. 47 PB)
- “‘Come in,’ growled Black Stache. Smee entered and gagged; the cabin smelled like a dead cow. This was because there were, in fact, several pieces of dead cow on Black Stache’s bunk, as well as the half-eaten carcass of a turkey.” (p. 82 PB)
- “A shifty fog had settled in the wake of the storm. The *Jolly Roger* cut in and out of it, like ducking behind a curtain.” (p. 226 PB)
- “‘You thought?’ interrupted Stache. ‘You thought?’ . . . ‘YOU DON’T THINK!’ thundered Stache, causing Smee and the others to jump like a gaggle of puppets all attached to the same string.” (p. 337 PB)
- “From the beach, the scene on the rock looked unearthly: the Starcatchers, five men and three women, were clad head-to-toe in shiny gold-colored clothing, including gloves, boots, and helmets whose face masks had only the smallest of eye slits. They shone like human chandeliers, their gleaming costumes reflecting both the moon – now low in the sky, but still bright – and the brilliant light radiating from the golden starstuff box.” (p. 417 PB)
- “*If I can feint him . . . If I can change directions quickly enough*. ‘COME ON, BOY!’ bellowed Stache. ‘STOP FLITTING ABOUT LIKE A MOSQUITO! COME FIGHT ME LIKE A MAN!’” (p. 436 PB)
- Other similes: pages 2, 22, 23, 24, 31, 57, 80, 205, 255, 308

### Idioms and Expressions

- “‘Don’t you see?’ said Black Stache. ‘It’s a carrot for the men. They know we’re carrying just enough water for a few days. So they know we have to catch the *Wasp* in that time, or they die of thirst.’” (p. 49-50 PB)
- “‘Smee,’ he said, ‘where the devil is my cabin boy?’ This place is a mess.’ ‘You had him walk the plank, Cap’n,’ said Smee.” (p. 83 PB)
- “From the corner of his mouth, Smee said, ‘They’s tied up to us now, Cap’n.’ *Like a fly in a spiderweb*.” (p. 193 PB)

### Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Discuss the qualities of an “English gentleman” and compare/contrast the characteristics of Black Stache and his crew. Then have students create a list of qualities for a new breed of noble American (men and women).

#### Fine Arts:

- Expose students to music of the sea from movies, plays, radio, etc. Compose a sailor’s song for a crew with lyrics that describe the life of a sailor or pirate. Then have students build a model ship and fly the flag of their choice.

#### Foreign Languages:

- Observe that Fighting Prawn is fluent in Mollusk, English, and French (p. 280). Trace shipping routes to determine which languages were necessary to be successful in the shipping trade then and now.

#### Language Arts:

- Have students create an entry in a “captain’s log” for Black Stache, Captain Pembridge, or Captain Scott. Have students share their entries and describe the character’s personality traits that they were trying to convey in the entry.

#### Science

- Note that Molly is learning Porpoise language. Have students investigate studies done to increase communications between humans and porpoises/dolphins. Find recordings of dolphin communication sounds and play in class.

#### Social Studies/Geography:

- Have students research how sailors technically navigated the oceans and also have students investigate the reasons (e.g., political, economical) why explorers sought to journey to new lands.

# *Quake!*

## *Disaster in San Francisco, 1906*

by Gail Langer Karwoski

### **Annotation**

In 1906, daily life was difficult in San Francisco for thirteen-year-old Jacob Kaufman and his family. Then the disastrous earthquake destroyed the city. Alone and frightened, Jacob, with his stray dog Quake, wander around the city looking for his family. During his ordeal, Jacob is befriended by a young Chinese boy, San, and an Irish family, the Flanagans. Although Jacob and the San Franciscans must endure many hardships, they learn the true meaning of friendship, generosity, and courage.

### **Author on the Internet**

<http://www.gailkarwoski.com>

### **Realia**

Item: Blanket, Old newspaper, Tent

Statement: It took less than a minute for Jacob's life to change forever. Read *Quake! Disaster in San Francisco, 1906* to find out how Jason survives the worst earthquake ever recorded in the United States.

### **Food**

Latkes, Noodles and broth, Jelly beans, and Marshmallows

### **Challenging Words**

bar mitzvah	(p. 4 PB)	kosher	(p. 75 PB)
blanketed	(p. 1 PB)	nuggets	(p. 39 PB)
brogue	(p. 54 PB)	peddler	(p. 4 PB)
bubonic plague	(p. 108 PB)	porcelain	(p. 50 PB)
calamity	(p. 33 PB)	produce	(p. 18 PB)
cobblestones	(p. 3 PB)	refugee	(p. 80 PB)
conscripted	(p. 62 PB)	repast	(p. 58 PB)
handbill	(p. 10 PB)	ringlets	(p. 13 PB)
jig	(p. 62 PB)	skittish	(p. 22 PB)
Kaddish	(p. 40 PB)	temblor	(p. 33 PB)

### **Figurative Language**

#### **Similes**

- “Across the building’s entranceway, a row of tall columns stood as straight as soldiers, and more columns guarded its second and third stories.” (p. 9 PB)
- “Frightened, the animal quivered all over like an egg in a pot of boiling water.” (p.16 PB)
- “As he opened the door, the dog squirmed like a worm on a hook.” (p. 22 PB)

- “The man whistled. ‘Holy Moses! I guess the street just opened up and swallowed it.’ The speaker turned to the others and used his hands to demonstrate. ‘Like a great big jaw – the ground must’ve opened wide and then clamped shut – squeezin’ the life right outta this animal!’” (p. 28 PB)
- “A grin spread across the man’s square face. Holding out an arm as thick as a tree branch, he shook hands with both boys.” (p. 94 PB)
- Other similes: pages 36, 114, and 126

### **Idioms and Expressions**

- “‘Good thing you had that dog with you,’ the man said. ‘I kept hollering, but I couldn’t get your attention. I believe you would’ve been a goner if you’d stayed in the street.’” (p. 32 PB)
- “‘That’s what my father thinks, too,’ Jacob said. “He says I should thank my lucky stars that I live in America, where every child gets a free education.’” (p. 59 PB)
- “‘Thank God we live in America!’ one of them said. ‘When the chips are down, folks’ll help each other out.’” (p. 83 PB)
- “‘Now where’d those long faces come from?’ the woman asked as she stroked Quake. “Cat snatched yer tongues all of a sudden?’” (p. 93 PB)

### **Curriculum Connections**

#### Language Arts:

- Divide class into small groups and, using a graphic organizer, have students compare and contrast Jason and San and their cultures. Students should list characteristics of each culture and then identify the similarities and differences.

#### Social Studies:

- Have students locate San Francisco on the United States map, identifying the state in which it is located. Students may then trace the fault line of the 1906 earthquake.
- Discuss with the class the Great San Francisco Earthquake and have them use resources such as the World Almanac to locate statistics about the earthquake.
- Review United States history in the early 1900’s. Discuss the political, social, and economic situation of groups of immigrants to this country, including the Irish and Chinese.

#### Science:

- Have students research the causes of earthquakes and the geographic areas most affected by them. The research can include the types of equipment used to monitor/predict earthquakes, as well as the economic, social, and political impact of earthquakes around the world.

# *The Return of Gabriel*

by John Armistead

## Annotation

In the summer of 1964, thirteen-year-old Cooper's quiet world dramatically shifts when freedom workers come to his small Mississippi town to register African-American citizens to vote. The events that follow threaten Cooper's friendship with his African-American neighbor, Jubal. As the racial tensions rise, the lives of other citizens are endangered in the segregated southern town. Cooper realizes that he must place himself in danger to save his friends and their families from further violence. As this compelling story evolves, Cooper and Jubal struggle to remain loyal to each other and prove that their friendship can survive despite increasing political pressures.

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.johnarmistead.com>

## Realia

Item: Movie theatre tickets

Statement: In 1964, life in a small Mississippi town could be difficult for some of its citizens. Read *The Return of Gabriel* to find out what problems Alvina, Esther, Johnny, and others encounter when they try to enter the front door of the movie theatre.

## Food

Biscuits and gravy, Turnip greens, Birthday cake, Catfish, Tomatoes, *Jello* salad

## Challenging Words

absentia	(p.142 PB)	initiation	(p. 9 PB)
bluff	(p. 5 PB)	insistent	(p. 6 PB)
camouflage	(p.15 PB)	kudzu	(p. 55 PB)
congregation	(p. 58 PB)	machete	(p. 4 PB)
dilapidated	(p. 23 PB)	oppressed	(p.109 PB)
exasperated	(p. 75 PB)	sauntered	(p. 72 PB)
furrowed	(p. 79 PB)	sharecropper	(p. 23 PB)
hypocrite	(p. 54 PB)	skeptical	(p. 98 PB)
incinerated	(p. 84 PB)	skepticism	(p.13 PB)
indignant	(p. 70 PB)	vengeance	(p.185 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Similes

- "Alvina, I should mention, was small and wiry and never moved like a normal person, but was more like a wasp, flitting here and there, zipping around." (p. 35 PB)
- "And the more excited he got, the more he sweated. Sweat flicked off his head like he was a prizefighter, and he kept mopping his face with a small towel." (p. 57 PB)
- "Gathering bottles with Jubal on Oak Grove Road flashed across my mind like a streak of lightning." (p. 206 PB)

- “It was only a couple of minutes, but it seemed like an eternity before I reached the creek.” (p. 207 PB)

### Idioms and Expressions

- “The Scorpions would be ‘One for all, and all for one.’ That was our motto, and if somebody attacked one of us, all the rest would rush to his defense.” (p. 4 PB)
- “‘And something else,’ said Jubal. ‘We missed a golden opportunity today.’” (p. 70 PB)
- “‘And my answer is still sweet sixteen and never been kissed.’” (p. 131 PB)

### Curriculum Connections

#### Character Education:

- Discuss the issues raised in the novel concerning citizenship. Many people in The Return of Gabriel, as in the real Civil Rights Movement, chose to break the law in order to end racial discrimination. Discuss with students examples from the novel and the ethical issues regarding citizenship that were involved.

#### Language Arts:

- Discuss narrative point of view with the class. Remind students that The Return of Gabriel is an example of first person narration and is told from Cooper’s point of view. Have students choose one chapter to rewrite from the point of view of another character. (Example: Rewrite chapter 22, which describes the incident at the movie theatre, from Alvina’s point of view.)

#### Social Studies/Geography:

- Have students work in small groups to compile a list of the real events from the 1960’s that are mentioned in the novel. Assign one event to each small group to research. After completing the research, have students compare/contrast the description of the events in the fictional account with the actual events. Have students report their findings to the class.
- Use the following websites or others to research the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi, the setting of the novel.  
<http://www.civilrightsmuseum.org/>  
<http://www.lib.usm.edu/~spcol/crda/>  
 Have students use the results of their research to create a timeline of the major events of the Civil Rights movement in Mississippi, highlighting the events that are mentioned in the novel on the timelines.

# *The Revealers*

by Doug Wilhelm

## Annotation

Three seventh-grade outcasts are tired of being bullied and harassed by other Parkland Middle School classmates. After tiring of only planning survival strategies, Russell, Elliot, and Catalina research solutions for their dilemma, finally publishing Catalina's real life story on the school's intranet. As the three friends expand *The Revealer*, the email forum, and expose the bullies, the attacks subside until access to the network is closed. Again the clever three-some find another scientific solution to handle the problem. (For mature readers)

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.the-revealers.com/meet-doug.html>

## Realia

Item: Copy of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Sock with toe filled with marbles, Empty root beer bottle, examples of folded notes that students exchange

Statement: Russell Trainor learns that students who isolate themselves for whatever reason may become the targets of bullies. Read *The Revealers* to find out why.

## Food

Root Beer, Pineapples, Bananas

## Challenging Words

coincidence	(p. 138 PB)	natural habitat	(p. 50 PB)
dawdle	(p. 4 PB)	obsessed	(p. 18 PB)
distribution list	(p. 77 PB)	outsmarted	(p. 165 PB)
feisty	(p. 94 PB)	pathetic	(p. 104 PB)
fixate	(p. 43 PB)	predators	(p. 9 PB)
harassment	(p. 194 PB)	prolific	(p. 82 PB)
hypothesis	(p. 194 PB)	tough-guy	(p. 144 PB)

## Figurative Language

### Similes

- “But why attach yourself to the same people every day, with everybody gabbling like a bunch of baby ducks?” (p. 5 PB)
- “My backpack felt like a sack of bricks.” (p. 10 PB)
- “He looks like a little bird with a big bobbing head, scooting across the playground before he's spotted.” (p. 18 PB)
- “She had bulging eyes, with heavy eyelids like curtains lowered halfway.” (p. 124 PB)

### Idioms and Expressions

- “If you were going somewhere and Richie Tucker was hanging around and he tried to catch your eye, you just didn't look at him.” (p. 5 PB)
- “All of a sudden he had this power over me. He was kind of lording it over me, too—and that, frankly, was what got to me.” (p. 16 PB)

## **Curriculum Connections**

### Character Education:

- Have students make a list of things other students have done that made them uncomfortable. Then have students brainstorm solutions for handling these sometimes difficult situations.

### Language Arts:

- Have students write their own personal story, as Catalina did in the novel.

### Mathematics:

- Have students read the section on the science project, and make a graph of the results of the surveys. (p. 194 PB)

### Science:

- Have students develop their own hypothesis for a problem at school and develop a scientific investigation of the problem.

### Social Studies/Geography:

- Have a discussion similar to the one in the book about Anne Frank and isolation. (pp. 82-88 PB)

# *Truesight*

by David Stahler, Jr.

## Annotation

In this thought-provoking, science fiction tale, everyone living in Harmony Station is genetically engineered to be blind. On this distant planet in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, sight is considered “a deception, a distraction” and social good is valued over individualism. Almost thirteen-year-old Jacob has always been an obedient child, but after he unexpectedly regains his sight, he begins to question the values of his community. Jacob struggles to make sense of the colorful, new, and less innocent world that he discovers as a sighted young man and, in the end, must face difficult, life changing decisions. (For mature readers)

## Author on the Internet

<http://www.davidstahlerjr.com>

## Realia

Item: Metal cylinder, Can of pears, Music box, Gold or silver pin

Statement: When Jacob regains his sight, life abruptly changes for him. He begins to understand or “see” aspects of the world that he did not have access to when he did not have his sight. Find out what those changes are by reading *Truesight* by David Stahler.

## Food

Turnips, Pears, Bacon, Eggs

## Challenging Words

accentuate	(p. 97 PB)	incapacitated	(p. 138 PB)
adornment	(p. 3 PB)	metronome	(p. 100 PB)
angst	(p. 172 PB)	orbital	(p. 5 PB)
anodyne	(p. 146 PB)	recapitulation	(p. 36 PB)
antiquity	(p. 4 PB)	staccato	(p. 99 PB)
bunker	(p. 10 PB)	traipsing	(p. 34 PB)
demigod	(p. 10 PB)	zenith	(p. 16 PB)
hydraulics	(p. 92 PB)		

## Figurative Language

### Similes

- “He wanted to linger and listen to the clicking jets of water, ticking like his mother’s metronome against the rush of tiny waterfalls and gurgling rivulets.” (p. 100 PB)
- “She had hardly spoken since waking him with the news the previous night, and when she did speak, her voice sounded distant, so husky and strained that she seemed like a stranger to him.” (p. 116 PB)

### Idioms and Expressions

- “They were night and day, these two people who had given him life.” (p. 143 PB)
- “Easier is not always better, Jacob.” (p. 214 PB)
- “Remember, Jacob,’ the high councilor said, ‘justice is blind.” (p. 217 PB)

## **Curriculum Connections**

### Character Education:

- Explain to students that they will write an essay on what they would choose as their specialization if they lived in a futuristic society like Truesight.

### Fine Arts:

- Play Chopin's Nocturne in E-flat major for the students and have a discussion on the composer and the music.

### Science

- Have students describe an imaginary life on another planet. What do they think life would be like with two moons and how would that effect the plants and animals?