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**Contemporary Realistic Fiction Picture/ Chapter Books**

Title: *And Tango Makes Three*

Citation: Richardson, J. & Parnell, P. *And Tango Makes Three*. Illus by H. Cole. 2005. N.P. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: When two penguins at the zoo want to have a family together, they realize they can’t have a baby, because they are both males. But with the support of the zoo keeper the two male penguins were able to have a family too.

Themes Presented: Family, Love, Same-gender relationship, Animals, Determination

Personal Response: This was a very loving story about a family of penguins that is not labeled as “traditional.” When Roy and Solo cuddle and share a nest like the other penguins, they realize one thing they can’t do: have a baby. They even try to sit on a rock that seems like an egg to them so they can try to have a family too. The zoo keeper sees this and wants to make them happy, so he gives them a real egg that needs to be cared for. Roy and Solo love the egg from the very beginning and take perfect care of it until it finally hatches into their very own baby girl. I also found out that it is based on a true story, which makes it even more touching. I know this book cause a lot of controversy and I can understand why. Parents do not want to have to explain to their children about two people of the same gender loving each other. However, this book is just heart-warming and full of love. Just because they are different doesn’t mean they can’t have a family too, and love each other just like everyone else; that is the message of the story. The authors put a powerful message into an adorably illustrated book.

Title: *Annie and the Wild Animals*

Citation: Brett, J. *Annie and the Wild Animals*. 1985. N.P. Houghton Mifflin Company

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: When Annie’s pet cat runs away, she wants some new friends and decides to leave some food out, but the animals that eat her food are not suitable to be house pets.

Themes Presented: Friendship, Hope, Love, Animals, Lonely

Personal Response: I loved this book when I was a child and I still love it today. Annie’s lovable cat, Taffy, is acting funny and then she suddenly runs away. I was so sad for Annie, because I know I would be devastating if I found out my pet ran away. Annie is lonely and wants a new friend, so she decides to leave corn muffins outside to attract new pets. However, her plan goes awry when she attracts wild animals like, a moose, a bear, and a wildcat. The animals were hungry and wanted more food, but Annie did not have any more muffins to give them. She loses hope again and wishes she had Taffy back. I was so excited at the end of the book when Taffy finally returns; Annie is so happy. However, Taffy returns with kittens, and Annie knows she will not be lonely anymore. I was so happy to see that Taffy returned and had kittens; it was such a cute ending. The message in this book is to tell readers not to give up hope and that things will always get better. Annie thought she would be lonely forever and got really upset when she felt like nothing good could happen to her. Then when spring came, things turned around for Annie, and she was happy again. Even when things get bad, you have to remind yourself that the next day will only get better; do not give up!

Title: *Bedtime!*

Citation: Anderson, C. *Bedtime!* Illus by S. Salerno. 2005. N.P. Philomel Books

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is a book about a girl who is so caught up in playing that she does not let listen to her mom when she says, “Bedtime!” So her mother decides to get their dog ready for bedtime instead.

Themes Presented: Dogs, procrastination, routine, stubbornness

Personal Response: This books’ message is to not get so caught up in playing instead of doing something you are supposed to be doing; in other words do not be stubborn when someone wants you to do something. The girl in the book is so obsessed with building a tower, that she ignores her mother when she tells her to get ready for bed. Therefore, the mother is just as stubborn and decides to get the dog ready for bed by giving him a bath, and brushing his teeth. Then when the dog gets his hair combed and gets the little girls’ favorite bow in his hair, the girl starts to get upset that her hair isn’t being combed and she doesn’t have her favorite bow in her hair. The stops playing and really gets concerned when the dog puts on her princess pajamas and gets her daddy’s good-night kiss. She quickly gets ready for bed because she doesn’t want to miss her favorite story too. I liked this book because I know exactly how the girl feels. I hate it when I am right in the middle of something and my mom asks me to a chore. I am so consumed with my project, that I do not want be interrupted. I also liked how the mother played the trick on her daughter to make her realize how much the girl would really miss her night-time routine if she didn’t have that luxury anymore.

Title: *Bridge to Terabithia*

Citation: Paterson, K. *Bridge to Terabithia*. Illus by D.Diamond. pp 1-128. The Trumpet Club

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Intermediate

Summary: This is a story about a boy who is lost and doesn’t really have any friends or love in his life. When he meets the new girl next door, Leslie, they discover an imaginary land where he finds himself and beholds a friendship that he will never forget.

Themes Presented: Greif, Friendship, Family, Imagination, Childhood, Conformity, Individuality, Gender Roles, Bullying

Personal Response: This book had heartwarming events and heartbreaking moments. I do not think I cried more in a book than when I read about the death of Leslie; and I even knew what was going to happen before I read the book. It was sad when the author foreshadowed Leslie’s death when she stated she didn’t really believe in God, and Mary Belle asks, “But Leslie…What if you *die*? What’s going to happen to you if you *die*?” It was devastating when Jess didn’t believe her death at first and he kept expecting to see her, “If he got up now and went down to the old Perkins Place and knocked on the door, Leslie would come to open it…” I was just happy that he had the dog with him for a little while to keep him company, before the parents took the dog with them when they moved away. Although the book had some sad parts it had some positive events in it too. For example, Jess was able to be himself and not be afraid to draw and paint, even though his father thought it was a “sissy” and girly activity to do. Because of Leslie he discovers his true identity and even after her death he is able to be strong enough to stay true to himself and never forget about the friendship and love that Leslie gave him. I was always really happy when Jess was able to back to Terabithia after her death and invite Mary Belle to become the new queen. It was also nice to think that someday their younger sister Joyce Ann might become apart magical and freeing Terbithia too. I was also very happy when the father and mother were finally able to show Jess some love and comfort after the death of Leslie. Although it was sad that it took the death of someone to be able to show someone you love them. I enjoyed this book, but was very upset and devastated when Leslie died, as anyone would be. The message in this story is to be true to who you are, no matter what someone tells you what you are *supposed* to do or how you are *supposed* to act.

Title: *Cherry and Olive*

Citation: Lacombe, B. *Cherry and Olive*. 2007. N.P. Walker and Company

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is a story about a girl named Cherry who does not have any friends. One day finds a puppy at her father’s shelter and names her new friend Olive. With Olives’ friendship, Cherry discovers courage and happiness in this lovable book.

Themes Presented: Bullying, Friendship, Dogs, Loneliness

Personal Response: I enjoyed this book because Cherry is able to transcend the bullies that tease her through an adorable friendship with Olive (a stray Sharpay). Cherry is very quiet at the beginning of the book and tries to stay invisible so people won’t call her, “plump,” like a cherry. When she finds friendship with Olive she finds the courage to stand up to the bullies, when they tease Olive for being wrinkly. I also like the twist at the end of the book. Usually Cherry would be able to keep Olive at the end of the book, but instead Olive’s owners find her and take her home. However, Olive’s owner is the boy that Cherry has a crush on at school. He tells Cherry she can come over anytime to see Olive, leading to another true friendship for Cherry. I really like the message this book portrays and how the ending was not predictable.

Title: *daddy hugs 1-2-3*

Citation: Katz, K. *daddy hugs 1-2-3*. 2005. N.P. Margaret K. McElderly Books.

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten

Summary: This is book is about how much a daddy can love his child, and the reader can count the ways.

Themes Presented: Father- Child, Family, Love, Counting

Personal Response: This book was easy to read and simple, but it had a very cute message: family can love you in so many different ways. In this book it counts the many different hugs a daddy can give his child. Ranging from “one, ‘I’m so glad you’re my baby!’ hug,” to, “ten, ‘I love you, I love you, I love you….’good night hugs.” I also liked how the reader can count the ways the daddy loves his child. This is great for young readers who are learning to count. The drawings were really cute and colorful, which definitely adds to its appeal. My favorite type of hug in the book was the, “eight, dancing on Daddy’s feet cha-cha hugs,” because I used to dance on my father’s toes when I was little. The different types of hugs were really cute and creative. A young reader would really enjoy this book.

Title: *Good Boy, Fergus!*

Citation: Shannon, D. *Good Boy, Fergus!* 2006. N.P. The Blue Sky Press

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten

Summary: This is a story about a Westie named Fergus, who always does things wrong but he will always be a good boy

Themes Presented: Dogs, Love, Disobedience, Humor

Personal Response: I personally loved this book, because I have a Westie too and she does the same things that Fergus does. She doesn’t always come when she is called, she walks horribly on a leash, and she finds trouble. But like Fergus, no matter what bad things she does, we will always love her and she will always be a good girl. That is the message in the story as well: no matter what somebody does, even if it is bad, hopefully, they will always be loved in spite of all the bad traits. This book has a lot of humorous drawing and text. For example my favorite spread is when they have a picture of Fergus doing all these tricks but he is doing the tricks to the wrong commands. When he is told to sit, he lays down and when he is told to roll over he sits. There is another page where Fergus is begging at the table and the owner starts out by not giving in to his stare, but on the final picture of that page, its shows the owner giving Fergus a meatball: owners always give in to the begging it seems; I know I do! This is a really cute and humorous book that every dog-lover will enjoy.

Title: *Hardworking Puppies*

Citation: Reiser, L. *Hardworking Puppies*. 2006. N.P. Harcourt, Inc.

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten & Primary

Summary: This book is a story about ten puppies that want jobs. By using math skills the dogs get jobs one by one until they all have admirable occupations.

Themes Presented: Dogs, Dog Occupations, Math

Personal Response: I loved this book for many reasons. One reason is because I am a HUGE dog-lover and enjoyed the dogs story’s of each puppy getting a job. Another reason is because it is a great way to inform children of the many admirable jobs that dogs can have, such as a junior water-rescue puppy and a guide puppy in training. At the end of the book the author included notes about what each of these dog occupations en-*tail*. This book also includes basic math skills. When each puppy gets a job they subtract one puppy from the ten hardworking puppies. That is a great way to have the children interact with the book and count down with the reader as each of the puppies get jobs. Adorable illustrations, too!

Title: *It’s Back to School We Go! First Day Stories From Around the World*

Citation: Jackson, E. *It’s Back to School We Go! First Day Stories From Around the World*. Illus by J.D.Ellis. 2003. pp 1-32. The Millbrook Press, Inc.

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This book tells eleven short stories from children all over the world about their experiences on the first day of school. It also gives the reader facts about the typical life of a child in that country.

Themes Presented: first day of school, children, multicultural, learning, short stories, facts

Personal Response: This is a great book to share with kids during their first week of school or with a multicultural lesson. It shows children that they can have similar days like other children in the world and that everyone learns, but some people learn in different ways depending on where they live. I also love the facts that are included about the typical day or school day for a child living in a certain country. The illustrations are also very well done and colorful to attract children to the book. It is such an inviting, interesting, and informative book to read!

Title: *In Our Mothers’ House*

Citation: Polacco, P. *In Our Mothers’ House*. 2009. N.P. Philomel Books

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This book is about the love that one family has for each other even though they are not the “traditional” family. It takes place in the home of two mothers with their three adopted children. Although they receive grief from a neighbor, they are able to stay true to who they are and are all the better for it.

Themes Presented: Family, Love, Same-gender relationship, Adoption, Multicultural

Personal Response: I really enjoyed this book because it takes the reader into the loving home of a same-gender couple who decide to adopt children. They adopt an African American, a Caucasian, and an Asian baby. I loved how they brought a myriad of cultures into the book. The pictures were so warm and welcoming that I felt like I was a part of their happy family too. They showed them cooking to gather and playing games, they never cared once that they were not the “traditional” family. However one of the neighbors would always glare at them and would not let her children come near them; she acted like they had a disease. I was horrified when she came to the neighborhood block party and yelled at the two women, “I don’t appreciate who you two are!” I could not believe she not only said that in front of the other neighbors, but she said it in front of their children too. The children were confused as to why she was yelling at their mothers’. They had to explain to them that some people are just afraid of what they do not understand. I loved it when the other neighbors came to their aid and hugged them and told them everything would be okay. I also love that they showed the children, who we met at the beginning as adopted babies, at the end of the story getting married and having their own babies. When their mothers’ died they never forgot how brave and wonderful they were. The powerful message in this book would be to stay strong for who you are, and do not let anyone judge you for it. I really enjoyed this powerful and welcoming book.

Title: *Marley and the Runaway Pumpkin*

Citation: Hill, S. *Marley and the Runaway Pumpkin*. Illus by L. Halverson. 2010. N.P. HarperCollins Publishers.

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: The family is growing a pumpkin so it can when a blue ribbon prize at the fair, but with Marley their clumsy dog around their pumpkin has an accident.

Themes Presented: Family, Dogs, Love, Try to make the best out of a situation, Life has a way working out differently than you originally thought

Personal Response: This was a cute story with an important message: Make the best out of a bad situation. The family has been growing a pumpkin for months so it can win a blue-ribbon at the fair. They try to be extra-carful with it when loading it in the truck. However, their clumsy dog, Marley, bumps into it by mistake and the pumpkin rolls out of the truck, down the street, and smashes into a tree. The family is very upset because they wanted to win the contest really bad, but the mother says the expression, “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade,” in other words make the most of everything. Therefore the family makes their smashed pumpkin into a lot of pumpkin pies., and they share them with Marley. I loved how although Marley made ruined their plans, they still loved him and didn’t get mad at him. I also loved how at the end they entered their pumpkin pie into the contest at the fair, and won a blue ribbon for it. Another message in this book is sometimes life has a way of working out, but not in the way you though originally. For example, although they didn’t win a blue ribbon for the largest pumpkin, they did win a blue ribbon for the best pumpkin pie. This was a cute book with some great morals.

Title: *McDuff’s Wild Romp*

Citation: Wells, R. *McDuff’s Wild Romp*. Illus by S. Jeffers. 2005. N.P. Hyperion Books for Children

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten and Primary

Summary: McDuff, the dog, goes to Aunt Frieda’s house where Purlina, the cat lives. When a scrumptious Turkey Tidbit falls on the ground there is a wild romp indeed.

Themes Presented: Dogs, Cats, Fighting

Personal Response: I thought this book was really cute, but it did not have much of a message. The only one I could think of would be to not fight over something trivial because something bad could happen as a result. In this case, the dog and the cat, fight over a Turkey Tidbit and they chase after each other and wreck Aunt Frieda’s living room. The whole family has to help clean it up and McDuff’s owners are embarrassed because of his behavior. This is a typical book where the dog and cat do not get along, and in this book the cat is made out to be the bad guy. I liked the ending because another Turkey Tidbit falls on the ground and the baby screams, “Again!” It leads the reader to believe that another romp will occur.

Title: *My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother*

Citation: Polacco, P. *My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother*. 1994. N.P. Simon & Schuster Books For Young Readers

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is a story loosely based off of true events about the author and how her rotten redheaded older brother can do anything better than she can.

Themes Presented: Family, Siblings, Sibling Rivalry, Love

Personal Response: This story touched me in a personal way because, like the author, I too have a redhead older brother, even though he is not as rotten anymore. When I saw this book at the library, I had to get it; I laughed so hard. I even took a picture of the cover and sent it to him; he got a kick out of it too. Growing up with two older brothers was at times exasperating and difficult. But my oldest brother (the redhead) always knew how to push my buttons and get under my skin. Two lines that I loved from this book was, “Then he smiled that smile that only a rotten redheaded older brother could smile,” and “Then he laughed that rotten redhead older brother laugh.” I loved those lines because my brother had a very distinctive evil smile when he did something mean to me and he had a certain laugh that he used when he would torment and harass me. I also loved the message in the book, that even though siblings will fight, they will always be a brother/ sister and they will always love each other. For example, in the book, the sister fell off if a merry-go-round and her brother carried her all the way home so she could get stitches. After all of the rivalries the two siblings have, in this book, the brother was there for her when she needed him. I teared up when the sister says, “Thanks, Richie,” and he replies, “What’s a big brother for, anyway.” Even after all of the fights my brother and I used to have, I knew then, and I know now, that he will always have my back, no matter what.

Title: *No, David!*

Citation: Shannon, D. *No, David!* 1998. N.P. Scholastic

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten

Summary: In this book, the little boy David is told “No!” to everything, because he is *always* getting into trouble.

Themes Presented: Family, Love, Trouble, Humor

Personal Response: I thought this book was really humorous and had cute ending. The author wrote this book when he was a child, because his mother was always telling him, “No!” Most of the text in this book consists of, “No, David!...NO!” Along with those words is a picture of David doing something bad, like drawing on the walls, making a mess in the bath tub, playing with food, and an up close picture of David picking his nose. However, at the end of the book, the mother calls David over and says, “Yes, David. I love you.” I didn’t expect such a sweet ending from this book, but I was pleasantly surprised. The message was clear in this book, although the words were scarce: No matter what you do, good or bad, your family will always love you. This was a very unique and funny book; I truly enjoyed it.

Title: *One Hundred is a Family*

Citation: Ryan, P.M. *One Hundred is a Family*. Illus by B. Huang. 1996. N.P. Hyperion Paperbacks for Children.

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This book not only counts from one to ten, and then by tens to one hundred, but it shows all the different kinds of families there are and how they unite together.

Themes Presented: Family, Counting, Love, Multicultural, Rhyming, Communities, and Repetition

Personal Response: I really enjoyed this book because it showed the reader that the definition of family is not only your immediate family, but your community and even your universe, too. The message in this book is that we are all intertwined and united and we should love and help each other to make the universe a better place for everyone. I also liked this book because the count by different numbers. For example at the beginning of the book they count by ones to get to ten and then they count by tens, to get to one hundred. I also liked how this book has different culture in it, for example they show a Chinese family celebrating their traditions (the Chinese New Year) and they showed an Italian family passing bread around the table. My favorite part about this book was how the author expressed all of the different kinds of ways one can be a part of a family. For example she writes, “sixty is a family sharing a neighborhood street…seventy is a family fixing a place to meet.” The author is saying you can be a part of your neighborhood family or an entire community. They also have a picture of a whole school picture, because your school can be your family too. At the end, it comes full circle and says, “One hundred is a family caring for the fragile universe…and making life better for everyONE on earth.” Everyone in the universe is your family and to make it better for every person, we need to work together and help each other out.

Title: *Standing on My Own Two Feet: A Child’s Affirmation of Love in the Midst of Divorce*

Citation: Schmitz,T. *Standing on My Own Two Feet: A Child’s Affirmation of Love in the Midst of Divorce*. 2008. N.P. The Penguin Group

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten & Primary

Summary: This is a book about a young boy whose parents are divorced. He talks about how is life has changed but he will always know that both of his parents love him.

Themes Presented: Divorce, Love, Family

Personal Response: I thought this book was great to read especially in today’s society. A lot of children have to go through their parents’ divorce and this book shows them that they are not the only ones that have to go through that. It also explains that no matter what happens between your parents, a child should always know that it is not because of *them* that their parents are splitting up. It also lets children of divorced parents know that they will always be loved by their parents, even though they do not live together, as a family, anymore.

Title: *The Hello, Goodbye Window*

Citation: Juster, N. *The Hello, Goodbye Window*. Illus by C. Raschka. 2005. N.P. Hyperion Books for Children.

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is a book about a little girl who visits with her grandparents and loves to look out their kitchen window where love and magic happens.

Themes Presented: Family, Grandparents, Inter-racial marriage, Imagination, Love

Personal Response: I enjoyed reading because it is about family and the love the little girl has with her grandparents. The idea of the Hello, Goodbye is a really cool and unique concept. Because you have to pass by the window before you get inside the house the girl says hi to her grandparents before she even gets inside, “So I get a lot of extra fun and hellos before I even get inside.” I also love that the window is in the kitchen and the girl states that her grandparents spend most of their time in the kitchen. My family is the same way; we always spend a lot of time in our kitchen and has many happy memories. I love the fact that the little girl has an imagination and pretend that certain people and animals pass by the window to say hi, like the T-Rex, the pizza delivery man, and the Queen of England. This is such a wonderful story of a little girl who loves to spend time with her grandparents and shares all the happy moments she has with them. It makes the reader think about the happy times they may have had with their family; I certainly did.

Title: *The Stray Dog*

Citation: Sassa, R. *The Stray Dog.* 2001. N.P. Scholastic Inc.

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is a story about a family who finds a stray dog and then they rescue it from the dog catcher.

Themes Presented: Dogs, Stray, Family, Love, Friendship, true story

Personal Response: This is a heartfelt book for any dog lover. The family finds this adorably drawn stray dog and they make friends with it, when the children ask if they can keep, the dog they named Willy, the father says no, he has a home and a family to find. The boy then replies, “What if he doesn’t have a home?” When the family thinks about this statement all week, I really felt their worry and sadness. I was so happy to read they went back to the park, and when they see Willy they are so excited, until they realize he is being chased by a dog catcher! When Willy is caught the boy takes of his belt and the girl takes off her ribbon and tells the dog catcher that he is their dog and they have his collar to prove it. I thought that was so smart of the children to think of that and how sweet and courageous they were to stand up to the dog catcher and claim Willy. I almost cried tears of joy on the last page when Willy is all curled up in his bed and finally has love, warmth, and family. I also loved how this was a true story, and how a sweet stray dog like Willy found a loving family. It gives me hope for the other stray dogs around the country.

Title: *The Wednesday Surprise*

Citation: Bunting, E. *The Wednesday Surprise*. Illus by D. Carrick. 1989. N.P. The Trumpet Club

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: As a girls’ fathers’ birthday approaches, the girl and her grandmother plan a secret birthday gift surprise. Every Wednesday the girl and the grandmother get together and read books. However, it is not the grandmother teaching the girl to read, it is the girl teaching her grandmother to read.

Themes Presented: Reading, Older aged learning, Family

Personal Response: I enjoyed that this book was based on a plot that many children do not think about a lot: older people learning to read. It is easy to assume that older people can read, however, in some cases they do not always know how to yet. I enjoyed the fact the grandmother was not embarrassed to have her young granddaughter be the one to teach her how to read. It shows how important and nonjudgmental a family can be and that learning can happen at any age. It took this book for me to realize that it is not only children learning important skills, but people of all ages are learning important aspects of life too. At the beginning of the book, I just assumed that the girl was going to read all these books to her father, and show him how well she learned to read. Therefore, when it was the grandmother who sat down to read the books to her son, to show him how she learned to read, I was truly surprised. It did not occur to me that the grandmother did not know how to read. Therefore, it is important for children to realize that people of any age can still be learning skills too, and that they should never be judgmental towards them, because there was a time that they did not know how to read either.

Title: *Sing to the Stars*

Citation: Barrett, M.B. *Sing to the Stars.* Illus by S. Speidel. 1994. N.P. Little, Brown and Company

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is a book about a boy that is too scared to play his violin in front of people. But Mr. Washington, who is blind, encourages him to play at the concert in the park. Ephram, the boy, finds out that Mr. Washington used to be a famous pianist, but after he lost his sight he stopped playing. Therefore Ephram and Mr. Washington both encourage each other to overcome their fears to bring beautiful music to the world.

Themes Presented: Music, Blindness, African American, Jazz, Confidence, Overcoming fears

Personal Response: I loved the story in this book. Mr. Washington, can always hear when Ephram is walking down the street because he has, “…the song of life in your step.” Because Mr. Washington sees life through the sounds, the text really emphasizes the noise of everyday life. For example, when Ephram goes home to his grandmother kitchen the author writes, “Pots and pans clank and clatter through thin walls. Televisions blare. A baby squalls.” The message in this story is that if you have a love for something, you should share it with others; you should have confidence in yourself and the things you love to do. I also loved how Ephram and Mr. Washington helped each other overcome their fears of playing their music in public. This was a very heartwarming story about overcoming your fears and having confidence in yourself, no matter what.

Title: *Sister Anne’s Hands*

Citation: Lorbiecki, M. *Sister Anne’s Hands*. Illus by K.W.Popp. 1998. N.P. Puffin Books

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: When 7-year-old Anna meets her new teacher, it’s the first time she has ever met an African American. Sister Anne is wonderful and loving teacher, but because it is during the Civil Rights Movement, she still faces racist remarks. However, that doesn’t stop her from teaching her students a valuable lesson.

Themes Presented: African American, Civil Rights, Racism, Love, Learning, Racial differences

Personal Response: This book was really powerful and held an important message: Event though people look different, which might be fearful at first, we should learn to get to know them first, and learn to love the similarities we share. During the 1960’s racism was extremely prevalent and unfortunately it still is today. This book’s undying message still needs to be heard and shared with others. At the beginning of the story, I thought it was wonderful that the children were learning to love Sister Anne for who she was not what she looked like. And then it crushed me when the boy through the paper airplane at her with the horrible text: “Roses are red…violets are blue… don’t let Sister Anne get any black on you.” I was horrified that a boy would write something like that, but I had to remember it was most likely due to the influence of his parents. I loved it when Sister Anne didn’t let that hateful message stop her from teaching the children a valuable lesson about the unnecessary hatred in the world. She continued to teach the class and take them on authentic field-trips and have valuable activities, like planting a garden and giving back to the community. I also loved how Anna, the little girl, drew pictures of different colored hands forming a shape of a heart. It showed that no matter what color you are, we should all love each other. This was a very important book with a powerful message.

Title: *Vinegar Pancakes and Vanishing Cream*

Citation: Pryor, B. *Vinegar Pancakes and Vanishing Cream*. Illus by G. Owens. 1987. p. 1-118. Morrow Junior Books

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Intermediate

Summary: Martin Snodgrass is the middle child within a family of “winners.” Throughout the book he tries to do something remarkable to live up to the Snodgrass name, and in the process discovers his identity and what makes him special.

Themes Presented: Family, Middle child, Sibling Rivalry, Love, Friendship, Self-discovery, Jealousy

Personal Response: I enjoyed reading this chapter book because it revolves around a loving family that has the normal family issues. Martin Snodgrass, however feels out of place in his family, and tries to be more like them. His Dad is a well-known doctor, his mother is the mayor, his older brother is amazing at sports, his sister is really smart, and his younger brother is the cutest thing ever; and they have all had their picture in the paper. Martin wants to do something special to live up the Snodgrass name and get into the newspaper, too. For example, he tries to get his friends cat stuck in a tree so he can go up and rescue it, but he realizes he’s not that good at climbing trees, and the cat runs away before he can rescue it. I felt bad for him because he always felt so different, for example he was the only one is his family to have freckles, and wanted to remove them, so he tried his mom’s “vanishing cream,” but that didn’t quite work. At the end of the book, he befriends the lonely man next door and he helps Martin start his own garden. Martin discovers that he loves to garden and is *good* at it. He enters it in a contest and wins first prize for his pumpkin. My favorite part was when Martin discovers that he is just as special as everyone else in his family and his mother says, “ ‘…Martin Snodgrass, you are one of the nicest people I know.’ A person doesn’t have to have his picture in the paper to really good inside.” This was a very cute and relatable book about discovering your true identity.

Title: *Walk Two Moons*

Citation: Creech, S. *Walk Two Moons*. 1994. pp. 1-280. Scholastic Inc.

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Intermediate

Summary: This is a book about a young girls’ grief about the absence and eventual death of her mother. Throughout the book she begins to come to terms with her grief, while discovering her identity and a sense of hope.

Themes Presented: Grief, Self Discovery, Hope, Young Adult, Loss, Love, Friendship

Personal Response: I really enjoyed reading this book because I felt like I was with Salamanca in her journey of discovery, loss, hope, love, and friendship. She goes through so much in this book and I was so happy that although she lost a lot by the end of the book she gained a lot too. I was devastated when I found out her mother died, and was never coming home. I felt so bad for Sal because she knew she was never going to see her mother again. I was glad however, that she was able to have closure with her mother’s disappearance and find some hope after all she had been through. I also enjoyed her friendship with Phoebe. She had so many parallels with Phoebe, for example her mother disappears and Sal sees a version of herself in Phoebe. However, at the end of the book Sal does admit that she is jealous of Phoebe because unlike her mother, Phoebe’s mother returned home, “I am still jealous that Phoebe’s mother came back, and mine did not. I miss my mother” (pg.279). I felt so bad for Sal in that sentence and felt her sorrow. I also love one of the major themes in the book, “Don’t judge a man until you’ve walked two moons in his moccasins.” This is such a great message for any reader, because of the truth behind it. One cannot judge someone without considering their viewpoint or what they have been through. Therefore I really liked at the end of the book when Sal realizes why her grandparents took her on the long trip that her mother went on before she died. She says, “They were giving me a chance to walk in my mother’s moccasins-to see what she had seen and feel what she might have felt on her last trip. That brought some tears to my eyes. What a fabulously written book about a young girl dealing with grief, and finding some hope along the way.

Title: *When Lightning Comes in a Jar*

Citation: Polacco, P. *When Lightning Comes in a Jar*. 2002. N.P. Philomel Books

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: Trisha can’t wait for her annual family reunion and her Gramma is going to teach them how to “catch lightening in a jar,” a tradition that Trisha will share with her family for generations to come.

Themes Presented: Family, Love, Reunions, Traditions

Personal Response: This was a very heart-warming and touching story that takes place at a family reunion. This is inspired by the authors’ real-life family reunions and how they have the same traditions every year. I liked this book because the author uses such detail and love that you feel like you either feel like you are a part of her family, or you are thinking about your own family. I loved how she emphasized her family’s traditions that they have at their family reunions for example, they always have Jell-O and meatloaf, play baseball and croquet, and share stories and memories. I liked the page where they were looking at the photo albums, because the photos in the book were real photos from the author’s family; I thought that was unique. My favorite part about the book was at the end when the author says how she has kept those same traditions throughout the years and hopes they carry on for her future generations. It was really sad when she wrote, “My father, my grandmother, my aunts, and my uncles are no longer here. So now it is we who must tell their stories and bring them back for fleeting moments.” It made me think of my family and how our lives keep going even after those we love are no longer with us. But the message of this story is how important it is for us to pass on traditions and keep the memories of those who are gone, alive for years to come. This was a very loving and poignant story about the importance of family and traditions.

Title: *Widget & the Puppy*

Citation: Rossiter-McFarland, Lyn. *Widget & the Puppy*. Illus by J. McFarland. 2004. N.P. Farrar Straus Giroux

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten

Summary: Widget, the dog, lives with Mrs. Diggs and six cats (“the girls”). One day a lost puppy visits and while Mrs. Diggs goes to find his owner, Widget has to puppy-sit.

Themes Presented: Dogs, Cats, Friendship

Personal Response: I really loved this book because the drawings of the puppies were so cute. I also liked the story because Widget, who lives with six cats, became friends with the puppy at the end of the story. At the beginning he was just watching the puppy get into trouble, but when he helped the puppy get out of a woodchuck hole, he started to play with the puppy and have fun with him. The message in this story is give people a chance; you might end up really liking them. The puppy was a hassle at the beginning and Widget did not know what to do with him, but once they started playing together they didn’t stop until the owner of the lost puppy, took the puppy home. This was a really cute and happy story about two dogs becoming friends as the judgmental “girls” (the cats) watched them.

**Historical Fiction Picture Books & Chapter Books**

Title: *A Good Night for Freedom*

Citation: Marrow, B.O. *A Good Night for Freedom*. Illus by L.Jenkins. 2004. N.P. Scholastic

Genre: Historical Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This was a book about a little girl, Hallie, who has to decide whether or not to tell the truth about the hiding place of two runaway slave girls.

Themes Presented: History, Slavery, Morality

Personal Response: For a children’s book, this had a very powerful and deep message: Sometimes it is important to lie about something if it puts someone else life in danger. This book is all about a person’s moral code and what they would do if they were in this situation. Hallie discovers that the Coffin’s are hiding two runaway slave girls, and when the slave catcher come looking for them, Hallie doesn’t know whether to tell the truth or not. She ask her father what he would do and all he says is that he doesn’t like slavery or the law to report runaways, but he certainly doesn’t want to make any trouble. But when the slave catcher knock on the Coffin’s door demanding to come in and look around, Hallie screams, “I saw them!” When I read that, I was so upset and disappointed in Hallie, but then she yells that she saw them running north, when they a really inside the Coffin’s house. I was so happy when Hallie decided o lie to the slave catchers; however, some children might not understand why in this case it was good that she lied. There really is no right answer, except that everyone has their own moral code and it is up to the individual person to decide when it is right to lie and when it is right not to. This was a very intriguing and powerful book that really makes the reader think, “What would I do in that situation?”

Title: *Esperanza Rising*

Citation: Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *Esperanza Rising*. New York: Scholastic, 2000.

Genre: Historical fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Intermediate

Summary: This book takes the reader on the journey of maturation and of the rebirth of Esperanza Ortega. When tragedy strikes and her father is killed by bandits she goes from riches to rags. Esperanza and her mother decide to stay together and leave for America and start a new life. Esperanza has difficulty adjusting to this new lifestyle and tends to look down upon the poor, although her mother tries to make her understand that she is poor now too. As Esperanza grows she encounters verbal bullying, worker strikes, her mother’s sudden illness, and difficult household chores. With the help of her new family and her own determination, Esperanza is able to transcend her own personal hardships to find happiness and peace anywhere.

Themes Presented: Multicultural history, American History, change/rebirth, family

Personal Response: I really enjoyed reading this book and was surprised by how much I liked reading it. I first thought this was going to be another typical boring school book; however it was not boring at all. I found myself standing in Esperanza’s shoes as she traveled through her bumpy journey to a happy new start. The sadness she encountered only made her stronger as a person and I really felt the different emotions Esperanza experienced throughout the book, too. I am really close with my family and I was so distraught when her mother got ill and she could not see her for many weeks. I would miss my mom so much and do not know how I would have gotten through it like Esperanza. When her mother finally healed and her grandmother was able to join them in America, I cried like a baby; I felt the joy their family felt. I love happy endings and this book, although it had many sad parts, ended with a new hope and happiness that Esperanza will have for the rest of her life.

Title: *Fartsie*

Citation: Krull, K. & Brewer, P. *Fartsie*. Illus by B. Kulikov. 2008. N.P. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

Genre: Historical Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is a hysterical book based off of a true story about a man who puts on a show by farting to the tune of songs.

Themes Presented: Base on a true story, Humor, Rhyming, Performer

Personal Response: This book had me laughing out loud! The book flowed with humor and happiness. I also loved how this book was based on a true story; who knew! This book is about a French boy who discovers he has a talent for farting. When he grows up and has a family of his own he decides to perform for others so he can make some extra money. There are so many hysterical lines, but this is one of my favorites, “He was honing his skill in the art of fart.” I have never heard of somebody being able to fart songs. He also called himself “Joe the Fartiste.” I thought it was really funny that he actually had a hole in the back of his pants to let the air come out, which, surprisingly thy mentioned, “lacked smell.” He made almost 20,000 Francs a night! The message in this book is to take pride in your talents, *whatever* they are. This was an extremely comical book and I loved every bit of it.

Title: *The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg*

Citation: Philbrick, R. *The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg*. 2010. pp.7-217. Scholastic Inc.

Genre: Historical Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Intermediate

Summary: This is book takes place during the Civil War and is narrated by the young and witty Homer P. Figg. After his brother is illegally enlisted into the war, Homer decides it is up to him to finds him and save him. Traveling to find his brother becomes troublesome when he meets several interesting characters along the way.

Themes Presented: Civil War, Family, Siblings, Humor, First-person narration, History, Slavery, Adventure, Love, Don’t give up

Personal Response: I enjoyed this book because it teaches young readers about history (The Civil War era in particular) in a humorous and intriguing way. Because it is told from the voice of Homer P. Figg, the reader gets to enjoy his tall tales, humor, and wit throughout the story. Young readers may find it easier to relate to because it is told from a young mind’s perspective. However, Homer has a lot of depth to his charcter. He may exaggerate stories and be silly, but he has incredible motivated and loving. When he finds out his brother was illegally enlisted into the army, he stops at nothing to find him and save him. He gets captured by slave catchers, has his money stolen by two con artists, joins a traveling “medicine show,” and gets thrown into the middle of the Battle of Gettysburg. Even when he is taken in by a powerful Quaker who offers him a new home with plentiful amounts of food, he still doesn’t give up hope for saving his brother. I love it when Homer states, “Please, Dear Lord, please let him be okay, wherever he is, and tell him Homer is coming,” that statement tells the reader how motivated he really is. His brother was always there for him when they were children, so Homer is determined to do the same for him. When he finally does find his brother, at Gettysburg, his brother says that he likes being a soldier and told Homer to save himself. As the Battle of Gettysburg rages on Homer follows his brother into the heat of battle for one purpose: to save his brother from being killed. Therefore I was shocked when Homer used his last resort and actually shot at his brother’s leg! He missed but instead it hit a rock and the rock shot into his brothers leg. His brother survives but at the end of the story, after many years have passed, Homer says that his brother lost his leg because of infection. It was kind of humorous when Homer’s brother always says, “Remember when we were boys? Remember how you saved my life trying to kill me?” But then the brother adds nicely, “Don’t worry, little brother…Wasn’t you that took my leg, it was the war.” Overall this book was a entertaining and educational book. At the end the authors even included definitions and slang words that were used in the book. This book was very fun but had a serious and powerful message: Don’t ever give up. If Homer had given up trying to find his brother, his brother would have died, and Homer never would have forgiven himself. The motivation of love and brotherhood led Homer to a happy-ending and a promising future.

Title: *Up the Learning Tree*

Citation: Vaughn, M. *Up the Learning Tree.* Illus by D. Blanks. 2003. N.P. Lee and Low Books Inc.

Genre: Historical Fiction

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: A boy in slavery is not allowed to learn to read. As he follows his master to school he listens to the teacher while hiding in a tree and he secretly learns to read, to someday help him escape slavery.

Themes Presented: Slavery, learning, teaching, determination

Personal Response: This book really lets the reader realize how important and privileged some of us are to be able to learn to read and go to school. The boy’s father told him that all slaves should learn to read because it could help them escape freedom. In response the boy thinks, “There must be something powerful in books.” I love the boy’s determination to learn to read and it reminds children how privileged they are to be able to be free and go to school, because for some it was not always possible. I also enjoyed how to the teacher realized how badly the boy wanted to read and helped him despite the fact she could get caught and punished. Unfortunately she was caught and was forced to leave but the boy continued to learn and to enjoy the magic that is learning to read.

**Modern Fantasy Picture Books & Chapter Books**

Title: *A New Barker in the House*

Citation: DePaola, T. *A New Barker in the House*. 2002. N.P. G.P. Putnam’s Sons.

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten and Primary

Summary: When the Barker family adopts a Spanish child, the brother and sister have to get used to their new brother’s culture and learn to love him for it.

Themes Presented: Family, Adoption, Multicultural, Spanish vocabulary, Siblings, Dogs, Individuality

Personal Response: I liked this book for many reasons. One reason is because it is about adopting a new child, Marcos, who is Spanish. Morgie and Moffie, the brother and sister, have to get used to the fact that he speaks a different language and that he has a mind of his own. They play with him, but they want him to do all of the things that they want to do. They do not realize that Marcos might want to play something else and do something that he wants to do. At the end of the book they play with things that he wants to play with, and while they are playing he teaches them some of the words for the toys in Spanish. That is another reason I really liked this book, because it has Spanish vocabulary throughout the book and a little vocabulary list at the beginning of the book so young readers can learn some Spanish words too. It was very sweet at the end of the book when Marcos points at Morgie and Moffie and says, “*Hermana*-sister. *Hermano*-brother.” Then they pointed at him and said, “*Hermano*-brother!” And then they all said, “*Familia*-Family.” The message in this story is to love everyone for who they are. Another message is for people to realize that even though someone doesn’t speak the native language or your language, it doesn’t mean they are stupid and don’t have a mind of their own. It is up to us to find out who they are, despite our differences, because we are all people and have feelings too. This was a very significant and heart-warming story about a different kind of family and how they love each other no matter what!

Title: *AGAIN!*

Citation: Prater, J. *AGAIN!* 2000. N.P. Barron’s Educational Series

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten

Summary: Baby Bear wants to play with his Grandbear, but every activity they do together, Baby Bear wants to do again and AGAIN!

Themes Presented: Family, Love, Patience

Personal Response: I loved this book; it was so adorable! The illustrations are so cute and seem to come to life. I also really enjoy how loving they are to each other. Although Grandbear wants to play with Baby Bear, he gets tired of doing the same activity over and over again. For example, they build a tower of blocks, and then Baby Bear knocks it over, and says, “AGAIN!” So they build the blocks higher and Baby Bear knocks them over again. They build the tower with all of their blocks and *again* Baby Bear knocks it over. When Grandbear has lost a little of his patience he says, “No, let’s do something else,” and they move on to the next activity where the same events happen again. I loved the ending when Granbear wants to take a nap and Baby Bear kisses him and hugs him. Then Grandbear says, “Again.” They cuddle again and again until they both fall asleep in the comfy hammock. The message in this book would be, to be patient with children because the love they give you in return is all worth it.

Title: *Barnyard Slam*

Citation: Regan, D.C. *Barnyard SLAM.* Illus. by P. Meisel. 2009. N.P. Holiday House

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: The hostess, Yo Mama Goose, is holding a poetry slam contest in the barn. All of the animals take turns reciting the poems they made, while *horsing* around.

Themes Presented: Animals, Slam Poetry

Personal Response: I loved how the author gave each of the animals really clever and creative names. For example, the horse’s name is Charley Horse, or the Goose’s name, Yo Mama Goose, like Mother Goose. This book is filled with famous animal expressions/ idioms to make the book fun for all ages. It also introduces children to slam poetry. A fun activity after reading this book to the class is to have them each write their own slam poetry after showing them some more examples of this unique kind of writing. This is a modern and fun book that will have the children laughing out loud.

Title: *Bounce*

Citation: Cronin, D. and S. Manchin. *Bounce*. 2007. N.P. Antheneum Books for Young Readers

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten and Primary

Summary: This is a book about a dog that enjoys bouncing in different ways, and shows readers how much fun it can be too.

Themes Presented: Dogs, Bouncing, Young Readers, Animals

Personal Response: I liked this book because it is fun book that has rhyming words bouncing to a beat. It was cute to read about how many different and fun ways the dog would bounce. He meets a lot of animals along the way, like hippos, frog and rabbits that enjoy bouncing too. It kind of reminds me of Tigger from Winnie the Pooh, because he loves to bounce like the dog in the book does. This is definitely a book for young readers, but older children can still enjoy it too. My favorite part of the book is at the end, when the dog has some falls and tumbles, but he says, “…it’s better to have bounced and bumped…than never to have bounced at all!”

Title: *Burger Boy*

Citation: Durant, A. *Burger Boy*. Illus by M. Matsuoka. 2006. pp 6-29

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is a book about a boy who never ate his vegetables and only ate burgers. His mother tells him that he will turn into a burger if he eats too many burgers, and then he did.

Themes Presented: Picky eaters, Listen to your mother, food, health

Personal Response: This book was so different and unique. The fact that he actually turns into a burger is hysterical. I know, as a child, my mother always told me not to eat too much of one type of food. I always loved strawberries, and my mother would joke around and say, “One day you are going to turn into a strawberry!” Well when Benny’s mother says that he will turn into a hamburger, because he never eats his vegetables and only wants to eat burgers, he actually turns into burger. After being chased by hungry dogs, angry cows, ravenous children, and the owner of Bigga Burger’s restaurant, realizes that he made a big mistake only eating unhealthy burgers. His mother finds him and feeds him vegetables until he is cured and is a boy again. This book was so creative and out-of-this world; I never would have thought about this story plot. I also enjoyed the end because after he eats vegetables, he can’t eat enough of them, and his mother says, “If all you eat is vegetables, one day you’ll turn into one!” And the last picture is him as a carrot. This book teaches the reader to eat healthy but not eat too much of one thing, and to have a balanced diet. What a unique way to tell the reader a valuable health tip!

Title: *By Geezers and Galoshes!*

Citation: Arro, L. & Kruusval, C. *By Geezers and Galoshes!* 2001. N.P. R&S Books

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is a book about a boy on an adventure with his grandfather and great uncle on a sail boat that grew…by adding water.

Themes Presented: Family, Sailing

Personal Response: This book was cute at the beginning because the Granstrom Brothers have to watch their grandnephew and have to find stuff to do with him. So they put together the boy’s toy boat, and the Granstrom brothers really get into it and don’t even notice when the boy goes to sleep. After they finish the boat, the note inside the box says, “For full size, please place model in water.” They do not really know what that meant but they put it in the water anyway and went to sleep. When they wake up, the model ship is full sized in the water, and the boy and the Grandstrom brothers go on adventures in the ocean. This book really did not have a message. It is mainly about having fun adventures with your family. It got a little boring in the middle, in my opinion. But the ending was cute when they said they would try towel drying it to shrink it to a model size again.

Title: *Cornelius P. Mud, Are You Ready for Baby?*

Citation: Saltzberg, B. *Cornelius P. Mud, Are You Ready for Baby?* 2009. N.P. Candlewick Press

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten

Summary: This is a book about a young pig who doesn’t really like having a baby brother, because he can’t do *anything*…until he finds something he can do…be a little brother.

Themes Presented: Family, Siblings, New Baby, Love

Personal Response: I liked this book because a lot of children go through the same feelings and reactions that Cornelius goes through; dealing with the birth of a new brother/ sister. The message is that it is a happy event when someone has new younger sibling, the older child just has to make the most out of what the younger sibling can do. Another message in the book is that no matter what, parents will always love all their children the same. Although the younger sibling is getting more attention, it is not because the parents do not love the older child less; it just means the baby needs more care and attention, because he/she cannot do much by themselves at that age. This book has repetition in it because on many of the pages Cornelius is asking if his brother can do an activity and the parents reply, “No, not yet!” At the end of the book Cornelius finally finds something the baby can do, “He can be my little brother!” The ending is very sweet, and I love how other children can relate to Cornelius’s feelings.

Title: *Diary of a Spider*

Citation: Cronin, D. *Diary of a Spider*. Illus by H. Bliss. 2005. N.P. HarperCollins Publishers

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This book takes the reader through a spider’s everyday life. From going to gym class to listing the things that scare him (like vacuums and big feet), this book is sure to please readers with the authors creative ideas and then cleverly relating them to a child’s everyday life, through the eyes of a spider.

Themes Presented: Spiders, Insects, Diary Entries, Everyday Life

Personal Response: I enjoyed how this book gives children a chance to see an imaginative perspective of something else’s life. It’s incredibly creative to read and to look through the pages of this book and see how the author made a human-like item or activity into something a spider’s life would include. It also can introduce children to journal/ diary entries and how to write them. At the end of the book the spider also sends an underlying message to children, that they should not judge someone or something based on what somebody or something else like them did. Children should get to know someone or something before judging that person/ thing. This book was really creative, imaginative, and unique, and I think anyone who reads it will enjoy it.

Title: *Dogs*

Citation: Gravett, E. *Dogs.* 2010. N.P. Simon and Schuster Books

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten and Primary

Summary: This is an adorably illustrated book that is told from the point of view of a cat. The cat explains what she loves about dogs, and about one attribute that the cat loves most of all about dogs.

Themes Presented: Dogs, Opposites, rhyming

Personal Response: This book was a fun to read, especially if you are a dog lover (Like me). I loved the pictures on every page and the rhyming words that made the book flow. I also liked how on every spread there is a characteristic about a type of dog and then on the next page there is a dog with the opposite attribute. For example, the narrator says she loves dogs that are big (a Great Dane) and a dogs that are small (a Chihuahua); dogs that are hairy (a Sheep Dog) and dogs that are bald (a Chinese Crested). It was fun to see a lot of different dogs. I loved the twist at the end of the book. The reader discovers that the narrator, (who loves all dogs) is a cat that says, “I love all dogs…except the ones that chase me.” It was a very cute book, with a unique twist.

Title: *Fanny’s Dream*

Citation: Buehner, C. *Fanny’s Dream*. Illus by M. Buehner. 1996. N.P. Dial

Genre: Modern Fantasy/ Traditional Literature

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is a book about a woman who always dreamed of marrying the mayor son, but her life doesn’t go as she planned, but can she still find happiness?

Themes Presented: Family, Cinderella interpretation, Love, Dreams, Fairy Tale

Personal Response: This was a new take on the Cinderella story, that is more realistic than others I have read. Fanny grows up wanting to become a princess (or at least marry the mayors son). So she waits for years for her fairy godmother to come and make her pretty so her dreams can come true. However, the fairy godmother doesn’t come and a farmer asks her to marry him. She says yes and he treats her with such kindness. I thought it was adorable that he always pampered her to treat her like a princess, because he knew she gave up her dreams to be with him. They have twin boys and they are a happy and normal family. Then the fairy godmother comes years later and gives Fanny her chance to have all of her dreams come true. Fanny declines and says that her dreams already came true. I love this story because she realizes that happiness doesn’t always mean being rich and pretty. One can be happy with a simple life and be happy with their normal loving family. This sends a great message to everyone, especially children.

Title: *Holes*

Citation: Sacher, L. *Holes*. 1998. pp. 1-233. Bloomsbury

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Intermediate

Summary: This is a book about a boy, Stanley Yelnats (Stanley spelled backwards) who has bad luck because of an old family curse. When he gets sent to a juvenile detention camp he has to dig holes in the desert. But they find out later that they are not digging holes not for punishment, but because they warden is looking for treasure.

Themes Presented: Friendship, Fate, Memories, Cruelty, Treasure hunting, Divine Power, Determination

Personal Response: I loved this book for a myriad of reasons. First off, I just love the whole plot of the story. The boys are out there, digging holes in the hot desert, which have to be certain dimensions, and they think it is to build character. When Stanley finds out they are digging for treasure, everything changes. I also enjoyed reading about the sub-plot that is on every other chapter or so. It is about the history of Camp Green Lake (where the detention camp is) and about Kissin’ Kat Barlow. Turns out that where they are digging, used to be a huge lake surrounded by lush greenery and a happy village. Kate Barlow falls in love with an African American, Sam, and when the village find out they kissed, they want to kill Sam. When Kate and Sam try to escape, Sam is killed and Kate becomes an outlaw. She becomes Kissin’ Kate Barlow because she kisses the men she kills. She happens to rob one of Stanley’s ancestors and buries the treasure; she dies before anyone can find it. I liked her character, because she was a strong woman for her time and I felt bad that the love of her life was killed. I thought it was intriguing, that when Sam died the lake dried up and it has not rained there since. I loved the part when Stanly makes a life-long friend there, Zero. When Zero escapes, Stanley runs away to find him and they travel up a huge mountain to find “God’s Thumb.” I thought this part was so cool because it is the only verdant and lush place for hundreds of miles. When they reach the top they eat onions which keep the deadly “yellow-spotted lizards” from biting you. They decide to climb back down and find the treasure themselves. I love it when they find the treasure but it is covered in yellow-spotted lizards. Because they have eaten the onions they are immune to them and can reach the treasure while the cruel warden looks on helplessly. She tries to claim it as hers, but when they open the lid, Stanley Yelnats name is in there (Because Barlow robbed his ancestor years ago) and Stanley shares the money with Zero and they become rich. The curse was lifted off the Yelnats’ and Stanley discovered his power and determination and made a life-long friend. The message in this book is to never give up and believe in yourself; you might just have a happy-ending. I also loved the creativity in this book and how unique it was compared to other books.

Title: *It’s a Book*

Citation: Smith, L. *It’s a Book*. 2010. N.P. Roaring Book Press

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten and Primary

Summary: This is a book about a donkey how likes to use technology and a gorilla who likes to read books. At the end of the story the donkey ends up liking books better than his electronics, and reminds children that technology isn’t everything.

Themes Presented: technology, books

Personal Response: I liked how this book was more modern and sent children a message about our technological society. It tells the audience that books are slowly being forgotten and that electronics is taking over our world. I think it is incredibly important for children to keep reading books, which is and should always be a fun activity. Texting and playing computer games should not be consume a child’s life like it does so many children around the world. I think we need to remind children that books are fun to read and that technology isn’t everything. Reading books in print is still cool and fun to do!

Title: *Maybe A Bear Ate It!*

Citation: Harris, R.H. *Maybe A Bear Ate It!* Illus by M. Emberley. 2008. N.P. Orchard Books

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten and Primary

Summary: The main character in this book loses his favorite book and he can’t find it *anywhere*. Then his imagination gets the better of him and he thinks of all the different things that could have happened to his book.

Themes Presented: Books, Imagination, Humor, Animals, Repetition

Personal Response: I thought this book was really cute because I love how the main character uses his imagination to figure out what happened to his favorite book. I can relate to this character because I certainly know what it feels like when you lose something important to you and you keep thinking of all the possible places it could be. However in t his book, the main character thinks that his book might have been taken away from various animals. For example he thinks, “Maybe a bear ate it…!Maybe a shark swallowed it!...Maybe a bat flew up in the sky with it!” Then when he is finished thinking of all the crazy things that happened to it, he starts to look for it again. And, of course, he finds it under his bed where he should have looked first. I certainly know how that feels too. I also liked how this book had a lot of repetition in it, which makes it easier for young readers to read it too. For example he says, “Maybe a…” over and over again but with different animals. The message in this book is to stay calm and retrace your steps when looking for lost items…don’t let your imagination run away with you.”

Title: *McDuff’s Christmas*

Citation: Wells, R. *McDuff’s Christmas*. Illus by S. Jeffers. 2001. N.P. Hyperion Books for Children

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten and Primary

Summary: Fred, Lucy, the baby, and McDuff stay up all night waiting for Santa, but eventually they fall asleep…except McDuff. He keeps hearing noises in the garage…I wonder who it could be?

Themes Presented: Dogs, Holidays (Christmas), Family, Friends

Personal Response: This was a cute holiday book when McDuff and his family stay up waiting for Santa. McDuff hears noises in the garage and when he goes to investigate, he finds Santa and his reindeer stuck! After the family helps Santa get out of the garage they feed him some food before he finishes his busy day. I thought it was cute when Santa says, “It’s almost Christmas morning…Forgive me if I eat and run.” Then, when they wake up on Christmas morning, they all find gifts from Santa. McDuff’s gift was my favorite, it was a new friend: a kitten. I love the last picture when McDuf is cuddled next to the new kitten and they sleep until Christmas afternoon. The message in this book would be sometimes you should trust your instincts. McDuff is insistent that he keeps hearing noises and when he finally discovers what is making the noise, he finds Santa. If he hadn’t found Santa, many children all over the world would not have gotten their gifts. This was a very cute make-believe story about the Christmas holidays.

Title: *Mind Your Manners, B.B. Wolf*

Citation: Sierra, J. *Mind Your Manners, B.B. Wolf*. Illus by J. Seibold. 2007. N.P. Alfred A. Knopf.

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: When B.B.Wolf is invited to a tea at the library, he uses as a chance to redeem himself and learn some manners.

Themes Presented: Storybook characters, Manners, Don’t judge a book by its cover, Rhymes

Personal Response: I thought this book was really cute and unique. I loved how they had many of the recognizable storybook characters in the story; it was fun to pick them all out. I really liked how B.B. Wolf (Big Bad Wolf) was willing to change his flaws and learn some manners so he could go to the tea and make some friends. He learned to, “sip your tea, don’t slurp” and, “If you burp, say ‘excuse me.’” I thought it was cute that he made a rhyming song out of those manners so he could remember them. But when he gets to the tea and has to burp he forgets what to say and has to look it up. He then says, “Excuse me,” *before* he burps instead of after and the librarian remarks, “What good *manners* you have! Most people don’t say ‘Excuse me’ until *after* they burp.” After that he feels more confident about himself and socializes with the other guests. When he refuses to eat a Ginger Bread man (cookie) the librarian says, “You are so kind and sensitive. Storybooks don’t do you justice.” Therefore the message in this book is to not judge someone because of their stereotype because they might not be like that at all. It also shows that if someone truly cares enough to change, it just might be possible to do. The drawings were really fun and colorful too.

Title: *Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle*

Citation: MacDonald, B. *Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle*. Illus by H. Knight. 1947. pp.

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Intermediate

Summary: This is a book about Ms. Piggle-Wiggle, an older lady who loves children and spending time with them. However she also is all-knowing when it comes to curing children’s bad habits.

Themes Presented: Magic, Children, Bad habits, Cures, Humor

Personal Response: This was one of my favorite books growing up because it was so unique and magical. Ms. Piggle-Wiggle reminds me of Mary Poppins, because of her love for children and her whimsical/ magical attributes. Ms. Piggle-Wiggle lives in an upside down house, that is always full of children playing. Ms. Piggle-Wiggle also knows how to cure children’s bad habits, and parents always call her for advice. This book is filled with humor and hits close to home with readers who have the same bad-habits as the children in the stories. Her cures are named after the bad habits that they correct, for example, “The Won’t-Pick-Up-Toys-Cure,” “The Answer-Backer Cure,” and to the most memorable one to me is, “The Radish Cure,” which cures a girl who never wants to take a bath. Ms. Piggle-Wiggle tells the mother to let the girl get filthy dirty until there are layers and layers of dirt on her, and then put radish seeds in her hair. When she goes out into the rain the radishes grow on her head and the girl is so grossed out that she swears to always take her daily bath. At the end of ever story the reader is sent a message that relates to the bad habit, for example, don’t be selfish, don’t quarrel, pick up your toys, etc. This is a book that everyone will love!

Title: *Officer Buckle and Gloria*

Citation: Rathmann, P. *Officer Buckle and Gloria.* 1995. N.P. Scholastic Inc.

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: In this book Officer Buckle tries everything to get the kids at school to pay attention to his safety tips. When he gets Gloria, a dog, to come along and show the kids to pay attention, Gloria acts out the safety tips behind him, without Officer Buckle knowing about it.

Themes Presented: Policeman, Dogs, Safety, Friendship

Personal Response: I thought this book was very cute and clever. I thought it was very humorous when Gloria was acting out the different accidents that went along with Officer Buckle’s safety tips. For example, Officer Buckle tells them not to stand on swivel chairs, and Gloria is behind him pretending to fall out of the chair and show the kids what would happen. Meanwhile Officer Buckle has no idea Gloria is doing this and thinks the kids are laughing and finally paying attention to him. When he finds out the kids seem to just like Gloria and her acrobatics, he decides he doesn’t want to do it anymore. It was really sad when Gloria is there all by herself trying to teach the kids and chaos erupts. I was really happy when the kids wrote to Officer Buckle to tell him how much they missed him. I also loved the line at the end of book when Officer Buckle states, “Safety Tip # 101…Always stick with your buddy,” meaning him and Gloria.

Title: *Out Came the Sun: A Day in Nursery Rhymes*

Citation: Collins, H. *Out Came the Sun: A Day in Nursery Rhymes.* 2007.pp 6-91. Kids Can Press

Genre: Modern Fantasy/ Traditional Literature

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten and Primary

Summary: This is an anthology some of the most popular and fun nursery rhymes. The nursery rhymes are combined together to tell a story of some cute and cuddly animals fun and exciting day.

Themes Presented: Nursery Rhymes, Animals, Anthology

Personal Response: I thought this book was cute and was wonderfully illustrated. The adorable animals look like stuffed animals that come to life while you read the different nursery rhymes. The bright and fun colors really attracted me to this book. I also think it is a fun way for the reader to read many of the popular nursery rhymes all in one book. Many of the rhymes were very familiar to me, while others I have never heard before. It was a lot of fun to see the pictures go along with the rhymes, allowing the reader to see their favorite nursery rhymes come to life. There is also an index at the end of the book, so the reader can easily look up the nursery rhyme they want to hear without having to look through all of the pages to find it. I also loved the very last page, where all of the animals are fast asleep in their beds. With no words on the page and just a picture of them sleeping, it really concluded the book and the end of their adventurous day well.

Title: *Splat the Cat*

Citation: Scotton, R. *Splat the Cat*. 2008. N.P. Harper Collins Publishers

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: Splat the cat does not want to go to cat school so he brings his pet mouse as a friend. When the other cats see the mouse they chase it until the mouse is able to get them something they want.

Themes Presented: Cats, First Day of School, Friends, Don’t follow the crowd/ be your own person

Personal Response: The message in this book is to be your own person, and don’t always follow the crowd. For example in the book, Splat has a pet mouse but when the teacher tells the class that they are supposed to chase mice, Splat asks her, “Why?” I thought it was interesting that she couldn’t answer his question; she didn’t know the answer. She just says, “Because.” So when the pet mouse comes out of his hiding place, in Splat’s lunchbox (which was humorously ironic), all of the cats start chasing the mouse. The teacher tells them to stop do they can drink milk, but the milk closet is locked. Splat tells the mouse to crawl in and unlock the door. When the mouse does that everyone is happy and the teacher writes on the board, “Cats DON’T chase mice.” I also was happy when Splat made more friends because at the end of the book he wakes up on his second day of school and, “…his tail wiggled wildly with…excitement.” At the beginning of the book, he wakes up on his first day of school and, “…his tail wiggled wildly with worry,” because he didn’t have any friends. I like how the story comes full circle with a happy ending. I think everyone can relate to being nervous and worried about the first day of school, but usually the second day is better.

Title: *The Berenstain Bears and Baby Makes Five*

Citation: Berenstain, S. & J. *The Berenstain Bears and Baby Makes Five*. 2000. N.P. Random House.

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This story revolves around Sister Bear learning to accept having a new baby sister in the family.

Themes Presented: Family, Babies, New siblings, Acceptance

Personal Response: I really enjoyed this book because I have grown up with the Berenstain Bear family and loved reading about a new member of the family. Their books are so colorful and cheerful and they also have a pointed message. In this book, Sister Bear does not like all of the attention her new baby sister is getting and misses being the youngest member of the family. I thought it was so sad when she drew a picture of her family and it did not include the new sister. When Mama Bear saw this she knew there was a problem, so she decided to remember Sister that she was a baby once too and that babies require a lot of attention. She did this by showing family videos of Sister as a baby. Sister realizes that her sister is important too, and draws another picture of her family *with* her new sister in it. I really liked the line at the beginning of the book that really sums up what the book is all about, “When a brand-new cub makes its big entrance, it often takes a while to get complete acceptance.”

Title: *The Cottage at the End of the Lane*

Citation: Mills, E. *The Cottage at the End of the Lane*. 1994. N.P. Crown Publishers, Inc.

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten and Primary

Summary: This is a book about a little wooden doll called Peggy trying to find a home of her very own.

Themes Presented: Friendship, Family, Fold-out pictures, Dolls, Animals, Love, Homelessness, Sharing, Loneliness

Personal Response: Growing up this was my favorite book, and still one of my favorite picture books. This is an adorably illustrated book with some unique fold-out dollhouse pages. The book starts out with a lonely wooden doll named Peggy who has no home and lives in the woods. One day she decides she is going to find a place to live and sets off down the road. The first house she stops at she asks if they have room for her. The man says, “…well… you can see for yourself.” This is when the reader encounters its first fold out page which allows you to see every room of the house. I always loved to look inside and count how many people were in the house. In this house the rooms are packed with people; they clearly have no room for Peggy. The tell her to go the manor, where there is plenty of room. When she gets there however a mean woman answers and tells her they have no room and to go away. When you look inside this house they clearly have *plenty* of room, the woman just doesn’t want to share with her. As Peggy walks down the road she sees a cottage at the end of the lane. Turns out the house was empty, and Peggy investigates all of the rooms, she said, “Plum Tree Cottage was just right.” Then there is a knocking on the door; it is a little rabbit whose burrow is full of water and asks if he can come inside. I love how although people were mean to her and didn’t invite, she wasn’t bitter and let Rabbit live with her, because there was plenty of room. I loved the fold-out of this house because all of the rooms look so cozy and warm; you almost want to live there with them. My favorite line is at the end, “And they both lived happily ever after, in their very own cottage at the end of the lane. This book is so cute but has a very important message too: just because someone treats you poorly, it doesn’t mean that you have the right to turn around and treat someone else poorly. I love this book!

Title: *The Family Book*

Citation: Parr, T. *The Family Book*. 2003. N.P. Little Brown & Company

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten and Primary

Summary: This is a fun and colorful book about all kinds of different families.

Themes Presented: Family, Diversity

Personal Response: I really liked this book because it so unique and cheerful. This book also had a very powerful message: No matter how different your family is they are special no matter what. I liked how this book addressed controversial issues without making a big deal out of it. For example they addressed families that have two moms and two dads and they addressed families that are different colors (races). I loved all of the pictures that went along with the text because they were very childlike and colorful. For the majority of the pages the author emphasizes the different types of families, but I liked it when he mentioned some similarities between families too. For example he wrote, “All families are sad when they lose someone they love,” and “All families like to celebrate special days together!” I know that when I read this book I realized how much families can be similar as well as being very different. My very favorite line in the book is the very last page, “There are lots of different ways to be a family. Your family is special no matter what kind it is,” which is very true, in my opinion.

Title: *The First Bear in Africa*

Citation: Ichikawa, S. *The First Bear in Africa.* 1998. N.P. Philomel Books

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: A boy living with his family in the savanna in Africa is visited by some American tourists. The little girl leaves her stuffed bear behind by accident and Meto, the main character, races to give the girl her bear back before she leaves.

Themes Presented: Africa, Animals, Multicultural, Generosity, Foreign Language

Personal Response: I thought this book was a cute story about the very first bear in Africa. Although it is just a stuffed bear, it is interesting to read about how strange this popular toy is so strange to the people of the savanna. It teaches the reader how different cultures are and how something that is normal for us, may be incredibly bizarre to someone living in another country. I also loved how they included some Swahili words, like giraffe and lion, in the text and at the end of the book. It is always interesting to learn new words from a different and unique language. I also liked how the main character, Meto, is so truthful and generous that he does everything in his power to get this small little toy back to its owner. He knew how important it probably was to the little girl and he made sure he returned it to her, rather than keep it for himself. Having the different African animals help him along the way was unique too. He had the elephant, with his big ears, help him hear the girl, and he had the giraffe, with his long neck, help him see where the girl and her family where; they wanted to find out what the creature was (the stuffed bear). At the end of the book, it was cute that all of the animals were gossiping and spreading the news about the very first bear in Africa.

Title: *The Gulps*

Citation: Wells, R. *The Gulps*. Illus by M. Brown. 2007. N.P. Little Brown and Company.

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: The Gulps eat horribly and never exercise, expect the youngest daughter, Dawn. When they go on a family vacation and their RV can’t get up the hill because they weigh too much, they are forced to find a way to lose weight and obtain healthy habits.

Themes Presented: Obesity, Family, Healthy habits, Animals

Personal Response: I liked this story a lot because it has a very modern and pointed message for the readers: being healthy can solve a lot of problems. In today’s society obesity is a HUGE problem, and this book informs young readers about how important it is to obtain healthy habits. At the beginning of the story all the family thinks about is fried food and food from the “Belly-Up Burger.” The use of exaggeration when the Gulps’ van can’t get up the hill is a humorous way for the reader to realize something needs to be done about their weight problem. They end up having to stay at a farm and eat the farmer’s food and help them work in the field. I thought it was really funny when the farmer served them fresh food, such as green vegetables, from their garden, “ The Gulps watched nervously. None of it was take-out. None of it was frozen, or came in a can. ‘What is it?’ whispered Brother. ‘It’s *green*,’ whispered Sister.” When they go and work on the farm none of them have any energy to do anything! So the younger daughter, Dawn, who does eat healthy, tells them they need to start eating healthy and exercise so they can get home in their van. They begin to LOVE vegetables and exercise, and eventually they all lose weight. When they get the van rolling again, they go right past the fast-food places and go to “Salad Circus” instead. This is a funny and humorous way to teach young readers about a serious problem in America. I liked how a picture book brought attention to a major modern-day issue: obesity.

Title: *The Paper Bag Princess*

Citation: Munsch, R. *The Paper Bag Princess*. Illus by M. Martchenko. 1980. N.P. Annick Press

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: When a dragon burns the princesses castle and her clothes and kidnaps her prince, she takes it upon herself to do the “rescuing”. By tricking the dragon, she is able to rescue the prince…but is he worth it?

Themes Presented: Reversed gender (reversed rescue), Dragons, Princesses/ Princes, Shallowness, Feminism, Repetition

Personal Response: I really liked this book not only because of the fun pictures, but because of its important message: Don’t judge a book by its cover. When the princess has to rescue her prince from the dragon all she has to wear is a paper bag. When she finds the dragon he refuses to let the prince go, so the princess has to use her intelligence. She outsmarts the dragon by pure flattery. She asks him over and over again, “Is it true you can…[(fly around the world…burn down ten forests)]” When he demonstrates each one she praises him. He eats her flattery up and does everything in excess and when he finishes, he is so tired and out of “fire” breath he collapses. This way she is able to get to her prince. However when she does, he thinks she looks dirty and unfit to be a princess and tells her to come back when she is more presentable. I loved it when she says, “…you are a bum,” and skips away without saving him and has her dignity intact. I really liked how she shoved it right back in his face. Therefore although the prince looked handsome he was really shallow and mean. I was happy the princess stayed true to who she was and realized he was, “…a bum,” before it was too late.

Title: *The Rainbow Fish*

Citation: Pfister, M. *The Rainbow Fish*. Translated by J.A.James. 1992. N.P. North-South Books

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: The Rainbow Fish was the most beautiful fish in the entire ocean with his shimmering scales. When one fish asks him for a scale, the Rainbow Fish refuses and no one will be his friend anymore. As the Rainbow Fish discovers the joy of sharing, he will also discover happiness and friendships.

Themes Presented: Fish, Friendship, Sharing possessions

Personal Response: I remember my teachers reading me this book in school and important the underlying message is in the book. The message ultimately tells children that, sharing possessions can be difficult, but sharing and having friends, can bring so much more happiness to a child, than being selfish and lonely. I also love the shimmery foil scales of the Rainbow Fish in the illustrations. It immediately brings appeal to the children looking at the beautiful pictures. I loved reading this book and the underlying message it sends to children. I can’t wait to share it with my future students.

Title: *The Taming of Lola: A Shrew Story*

Citation: Weiss, E. *The Taming of Lola: A Shrew Story*. Illus by J. Smath. 2010. N.P. Abrams Books for Young Readers

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is a story about a girl who is famous for her temper. However, when her cousin, Lester, visits, she realizes he has a temper just as bad as she does, and Lola gets a taste of her own medicine.

Themes Presented: Animals, Stubbornness, Spoiled, Tempers, Sharing

Personal Response: I loved the illustrations in this book; it made the story come to life. I also liked the message it gave the reader: Sometimes being selfish and throwing temper tantrums isn’t as much fun, as it is to simply share and be nice to others. I love it when Lola who is a spoiled brat at the beginning of the story, gets a taste of her own medicine, when her just as spoiled cousin, Lester visits. I love it when they yell at each other so much, that they pass out and have a sore throat; was the yelling really worth it? I also like it when the family goes on a picnic without Lola and Lester because they were too busy yelling at each other; no one missed their company because they are always so selfish and angry. At the end of the story they realize that by simply sharing and getting along, they can have more fun playing, and spending time with their family. I also thought it was cute that they had food names like, “*Flea*nut butter” and “Ham*bug*er,” because of them being moles. This was an adorably illustrated book with a very important and valuable message.

Title: *The Three Pigs*

Citation: Weisner, D. *The Three Pigs*. 2001. N.P. Clarion Books

Genre: Modern Fantasy/ Traditional Literature

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This book is a rendition of the three little pigs that goes way beyond the pages of the book (literally!)

Themes Presented: Folktale rendition, Creativity, Friendship

Personal Response: This book was so unique and creative to read. First off, when the wolf comes to the pigs’ house to blow the house down, he by accident blows them out of the book. The pigs land on these blank white pages without any text and fly around on a paper airplane until they crash into another book. They continue to go from book to book, including a nursery rhyme and a dragon tale, and along the way the pickup friends from other stories. One of the coolest things about the drawing in this book as that when the pigs go from book to book their appearance changes to the next books drawings. For example when they go into the dragon story, which is in all tan colors, the pigs go from lifelike colors to the tan drawings that are in that story. It’s so clever! The author also had the dragon crash into some of the text and the text falls apart and there are letters everywhere. At the end of the story the pigs return to their own story but have their new friends with them. They scare off the wolf and the all live happily ever after. This was such a creative and adorable book; I loved it!

Title: *Tuck Everlasting*

Citation: Babbitt, N. *Tuck Everlasting*. 1975. Pp.1-144. Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Intermediate

Summary: This is a story about a family, who mistakenly drank from a “magic” water spring, which results in their eternal life.

Themes Presented: Family, Magic, Eternal life, Morality

Personal Response: This book was really interesting and got me thinking about the fact that eternal life isn’t what it is cracked up to be. The Tuck’s drank from a spring and had no idea that it was the spring to eternal life. Everyone around them was growing older and they just stayed the same age. I felt really bad for the older brother who will always be at the age of 22. He had a wife and kids and when the wife got into her forties, she left him because she thought he was possessed by the devil due to the fact that he was not aging. The way the father described his situation to Winnie was sad but definitely gets the reader thinking. He said that the world/ life was like a wheel; it was always spinning. The Tucks were thrown off of that wheel and are stuck in a never changing, never growing world; like limbo. People are meant to grow and die so new life can take its place. He thought of his eternal life as a curse. That is why when Jesse wanted Winnie to drink from the spring when she turned 17, so they could be together forever, she decided not to. At the end when they see her grave and discover she didn’t drink the water, the father Tuck was happy because she lived a normal happy life. The author was clearly trying to tell readers that sometimes things are not always greener on the other side, in a sense. So many people wish they had eternal life so they would never die. But she is trying to tell people that death is a natural occurrence and that living forever would be a curse, not a blessing, contrary to what many people believe.

Title: *Where the Wild Things Are*

Citation: Sendak, M. *Where the Wild Things Are.* 1963. N.P. Harper

Genre: Modern Fantasy

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This book explores the imagination/ dreams of a young boy entering into a new world, “where the wild things are.”

Themes Presented: Imagination, Dreams, Monsters

Personal Response: I enjoyed reading this book because it has a lot of different levels to it, rather than just a picture book. First off, it takes place within a child’s imagination/ dream. Children have such huge imaginations, and I think it is great for children to read a book about that and to encourage their imaginations. I also think that it is interesting that the reader takes it upon themselves to judge if the wild things are nice and friendly, or scary and mean. They seem nice when they name to boy king of all wild things, but when he leaves they growl and say they, “…want to eat you up.” I don’t know how a child would perceive that language. I also enjoyed the page setup when the boy enters more into his dream. The picture at the beginning of the book is a small frame, but once the boy starts to dream, the picture frame gets bigger and bigger, until it fills the entire page, when he is with the wild things. Overall, I think it is a very unique and enjoyable book.

**Traditional Literature Picture Books**

Title: *Fanny’s Dream*

Citation: Buehner, C. *Fanny’s Dream*. Illus by M. Buehner. 1996. N.P. Dial

Genre: Modern Fantasy/ Traditional Literature

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is a book about a woman who always dreamed of marrying the mayor son, but her life doesn’t go as she planned, but can she still find happiness?

Themes Presented: Family, Cinderella interpretation, Love, Dreams, Fairy Tale

Personal Response: This was a new take on the Cinderella story, that is more realistic than others I have read. Fanny grows up wanting to become a princess (or at least marry the mayors son). So she waits for years for her fairy godmother to come and make her pretty so her dreams can come true. However, the fairy godmother doesn’t come and a farmer asks her to marry him. She says yes and he treats her with such kindness. I thought it was adorable that he always pampered her to treat her like a princess, because he knew she gave up her dreams to be with him. They have twin boys and they are a happy and normal family. Then the fairy godmother comes years later and gives Fanny her chance to have all of her dreams come true. Fanny declines and says that her dreams already came true. I love this story because she realizes that happiness doesn’t always mean being rich and pretty. One can be happy with a simple life and be happy with their normal loving family. This sends a great message to everyone, especially children.

Title: *Martina the Beautiful Cockroach: A Cuban Folktale*

Citation: Deedy, C.A. *Martina the Beautiful Cockroach: A Cuban Folktale*. 2007. N.P. Peachtree Publishers

Genre: Traditional Literature

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This book is a Cuban folktale about a beautiful cockroach trying to find the *right* suitor, through a method her Cuban grandmother tells her about.

Themes Presented: Insects, Animals, Love, Folktale, Multicultural, Spanish words

Personal Response: I loved this book because it was wonderfully illustrated and I loved the message it gave the reader. Martina’s grandmother tells her of an old Cuban method to find the right husband. By spilling coffee on your suitor’s foot, you will discover how he will treat you and what his true nature really is. I thought this idea was so clever; I might try it in the future. It shows the reader that someone may not always be who he says he is or what he looks like on the outside. The method and logic behind it is very logical and insightful. I also love the twist at the end when the mouse turns around and spills coffee on her foot. When she asks how he knew about the trick, he replies, “I have a Cuban grandmother too.” I love the clever and happy ending. I also love that there are Spanish words in the text so the reader can really immerse themselves in the Cuban culture and learn a little something too.

Title: *The Classic Hans Christian Andersen Fairy Tales*

Citation: Andersen, H.C. *The Classic Hans Christian Andersen Fairy Tales*. Retold by S. Black. 1990. pp 11-55. Courage Books

Genre: Traditional Literature

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Intermediate

Summary: This is a compilation of nine classic fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen.

Themes Presented: Fairy tales, Morals, Multicultural

Personal Response: I always enjoyed reading the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen. Although many of his stories are very sad, he makes sure to have a moral/ lesson to learn at the end. For example the story “The Fir Tree,” all the tree wants is to be tall and old and become a Christmas tree. However, when he does get chopped down and turned into a Christmas tree, like he wished for, he gets thrown out the next day and turns into fire wood. He says at the end before he gets thrown into the fire, “If only I had been happy when I lived in the forest…Now it is too late.” It tells children that sometimes, what you wish for, may not turn out the way you though it would; “The grass isn’t always greener on the other side.” He is also trying to tell children that you should be happy with where you are and what you are, because you never what the next day may bring. I also enjoyed reading the original version of “The Little Mermaid.” I had no ideas that the prince did not marry Ariel at the end of the book, like the Disney movie did. Instead he marries someone else and Ariel dies and has to do good deeds in order for her to be able to go to heaven. She is her own heroine in this version and I think Andersen was trying to tell children that again, to be careful what you wish for. But he was also telling children that you can still try to amend the bad choices you mad in the past by doing good deeds. Hans Christian Andersen was an innovator and was a wonderful teacher through his tales, and his stories will live on for eternity.

Title: *The Three Pigs*

Citation: Weisner, D. *The Three Pigs*. 2001. N.P. Clarion Books

Genre: Modern Fantasy/ Traditional Literature

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This book is a rendition of the three little pigs that goes way beyond the pages of the book (literally!)

Themes Presented: Folktale rendition, Creativity, Friendship

Personal Response: This book was so unique and creative to read. First off, when the wolf comes to the pigs’ house to blow the house down, he by accident blows them out of the book. The pigs land on these blank white pages without any text and fly around on a paper airplane until they crash into another book. They continue to go from book to book, including a nursery rhyme and a dragon tale, and along the way the pickup friends from other stories. One of the coolest things about the drawing in this book as that when the pigs go from book to book their appearance changes to the next books drawings. For example when they go into the dragon story, which is in all tan colors, the pigs go from lifelike colors to the tan drawings that are in that story. It’s so clever! The author also had the dragon crash into some of the text and the text falls apart and there are letters everywhere. At the end of the story the pigs return to their own story but have their new friends with them. They scare off the wolf and the all live happily ever after. This was such a creative and adorable book; I loved it!

**Biography/ Autobiography Picture Books and Chapter Books**

Title: *Take the Lead, George Washington*

Citation: St. George, J. *Take the Lead, George Washington*. Illus by D. Powers. N.P. 2005. Scholastic

Genre: Autobiography/ Biography

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Intermediate

Summary: This book is about the early years of George Washington and his first job as a surveyor.

Themes Presented: Presidents, Determination, Goals, Biography

Personal Response: This book was different because it did not really discuss the years that George Washington was president. In fact, the book doesn’t even mention that he is going to become president until the very last pages where they give a brief biography of his life. I suppose most people already know that he is going to become the president, but little children who will be reading this book might not, and I feel as though it should be mentioned within the story. On the other hand, however, many books have been written about his presidency so it was interesting to read about the time in his life before he became famous. For example, I had no idea he was excellent at arithmetic and that his first job was to survey Lord Fairfax’s land in Virginia. I also did not know that he came from such a large family, therefore he was always anxious to get out of the house and explore. I also liked that throughout the book all George wants to be is like his older brother, but at the end of the book he realizes his full potential and wants to be *more* than what his older brother is. This is truly a book about a man’s determination and the message is to never give up on your dreams, because you could be somebody great too.

Title: *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers*

Citation: Gerstein, M. *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers.* 2003. N.P. Roaring Book Press

Genre: Biography/ Autobiography

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This book is a true story about Philippe Petit, the man who walked on a tight rope between the twin towers in New York City

Themes Presented: Twin Towers, tight rope, courage, individuality, true story

Personal Response: This was a really amazing book to read because the pictures where so well drawn and the text was so descriptive, that I felt like I was walking on a tight rope. I have a slight fear of heights, and when I opened the huge spread of the aerial view of Philippe walking on the tight rope, I started to feel dizzy and anxious. The pictures are drawn to create that effect for the reader and the illustrator certainly accomplished his mission. I also enjoy that this is true story and children can learn about this unique event. It also brings attention to the twin towers, and how, although they are gone now, this memory still lives. It was really sad to see the picture where the towers no longer stand, but this unique and exciting event can still be remembered.

Title: *The Young Hans Christian Andersen*

Citation: Hesse, K. *The Young Hans Christian Andersen*. Illus by E. Blegvad. 2005. pp. 9-39. Scholastic Press

Genre: Biography/ Autobiography

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary and Intermediate

Summary: This is a brief biography about the early years of Hans Christian Andersen.

Themes Presented: Biography, Early years, Famous author

Personal Response: This book was a very brief biography of the young life of Hans Christian Andersen. The chapters are almost like short stories about how he hopes to one day become famous. The message of this book is to never give up on your dreams. He went through many struggles in his life like his father dying when he was eleven. He had a good relationship with his father and he always believed in Hans’s talents, so his death was very hard on him. I liked the book, but it wasn’t the best biography. It does not even mention that he is going to become a great writer until the afterword in the end of the book. The afterword was probably more informative and useful than the actual chapters in the book. I liked the pictures that went along with the chapter stories; they were colorful and drew the eye to the page. Overall the book gave some good information but it would not be my first choice to use as a biography for this outstanding writer.

**Informational Picture Books**

Title: *If you were a Homonym or a Homophone*

Citation: Loewen, N. *If you were a Homonym or a Homophone*. Illus by S. Gray. 2007. pp. 3-24. Picture Window Books

Genre: Informational

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This book is a colorful and informational way to learn the difference between homonyms and homophones.

Themes Presented: Homonyms, Homophones, Grammar rules

Personal Response: I really enjoyed this book because learning about grammar can be boring, but this book made it fun. The colorfully drawn pages are intriguing to the eye and it keeps the reader reading. I for one have always had trouble differentiating between homonyms and homophones, and this book actually helped remind me of them. They give several helpful definitions of each and many examples throughout the book. For example, “If you were a homonym…you could **bark** at the **bark**, while **coast** along the **coast**.” They also made the homonyms and the homophones in bright colors so they could easily be identified. At the end the end of the book, they even give you a fun activity you could do with children to help them practice their homonyms and homophones. They also give you helpful advice on how to remember them, for example to remember what a homophone is they say, “What do you do on the **phone**? You talk and **listen**. Homophones are words that **sound** alike.” This was a very creative and informative book; for all ages.

Title: *Look Inside the Earth*

Citation: Ingoglia, G. *Look Inside the Earth*. Illus by N. Costa. 1989. N.P. Grosset & Dunlap, Inc.

Genre: Informational

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is an informational text that contains innovative die-cut holes to peek through the pages and learn all there is to know about the planet Earth.

Themes Presented: Earth, History, Science, Space, Multicultural, Save the Earth

Personal Response: This book is so unique and interactive for children to learn about the Earth. I enjoyed it because the pictures are so colorful and the cut-outs make it intriguing to the eye. The book starts by telling the reader a little about how the Earth began. They even relate the earth to a piece of fruit: they both have an outer layer (the skin on fruit or the crust on the Earth) and they both have an inner core (the seed in the fruit and the hot ball of metal in the Earth). I thought it was great to relate the Earth to something that children see every day. They also mention that the Earth is a part of the solar system and how it orbits the sun like the other planets. I thought it was also goo to mention that the Earth’s climate/ landscape is different, depending on where you live. For example they say, “Some parts of the world are very cold and covered with thick layers of ice called **glaciers**. Some places are hot and dry and are covered with miles of sand. These places are called **deserts**.” On the last spread they mention how the people of the world need to take care of it and do tasks like, recycling, to help the Earth survive. They mention that some people do not care about throwing trash on the ground and others do. As the final word they ask the reader, “Which kind of person will you be?” This is a very pointed question but it gets the reader thinking about a very important topic.

Title: *Looking at Italy*

Citation: Powell, J. *Looking at Italy*. 2007. pp. 1-32. Gareth Stevens Publishing

Genre: Informational

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This book is about the various aspects of Italy, including information about its people, food, landscape, etc.

Themes Presented: Europe, Italy, Geography, Multicultural

Personal Response: This is a great informational book about Italy to be read by children. It gives children all the information they need about the country without having to use an encyclopedia. Not only is it informative, but it is interesting as well. Part of what makes the book interesting is the use of colorful photography of the country and its people; It really gives the reader a sense of Italian life and culture. There are also interesting facts on every page, for example, “Did You Know?...Italians call Italy *bel paese*, which means ‘beautiful country.’” I really enjoyed learning about Italy by reading this book.

Title: *The Voyage of Columbus: In His Own Words*

Citation: Strong, S. *The Voyage of Columbus: In His Own Words*. Illus by M. Welpy & designed by J.Z. Haber. 1991. N.P. Sears, Roebuck and Co.

Genre: Informational

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary & Intermediate

Summary: This is a pop-book about the journals entries of Christopher Columbus on his voyage to America.

Themes Presented: Christopher Columbus, Pop-up book, Adventure, Journals, History, The Americas

Personal Response: Reading an informational book about history can be boring sometimes, however because this book was a pop-up book it made it interactive and more exciting to read. This book takes direct excerpts from Christopher Columbus’s legendary *Journal*, which I thought was really interesting to hear what Christopher Columbus was thinking about on his journey to America, in his own words. From an informative page about life on a ship to going ashore and meeting the Indians, this book is full of information. Columbus writes about how much he liked the Native Americans and says, “When I left to go, the people, men, women, and children,, cried out to me not to go, but remain with them. A better race they cannot be.” The last page was really cool because it has a pop-up of the world with two ships showing his path from Spain to the Americas and then his return voyage to Spain. This is a very creative and interactive book for children to enjoy, while learning about Columbus’s journey to the Americas.

Title: *What to Expect When the New Baby Comes Home*

Citation: Murkoff, H. *What to Expect When the New Baby Comes Home*. Illus by L. Rader. 2001. N.P. HaperFestival

Genre: Informational

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is an informational book for children that tell them what to expect when they get a new baby brother or baby sister.

Themes Presented: Family, Babies, New siblings

Personal Response: Getting a new baby brother or sister can be difficult for what was once an only child. Therefore this book was made to be read by children and tell them about what they should expect from their new sibling. With the help of an adorably drawn Angus the Answer Dog, children will be ready for the baby to come home. The author discusses topics from what babies look like and what they eat to asking questions like, “Why can’t new babies do anything by themselves?” and “Why do new babies get so many presents?” The answers to these questions are important for children to understand and come to terms with so they will love their new sibling and be resentful towards him/ her. Angus also gives the reader some interesting facts, for example, “New babies cry a lot, but they don’t have tears until they are about a month old,” I didn’t know that! With fun and colorful pictures and diagrams, children will be ready for their new sibling and be ready to love them, too.

**Poetry Picture Books**

Title: *Everywhere Babies*

Citation: Meyers, S. *Everywhere Babies*. Illus by M. Frazee. 2001. N.P. Harcourt, Inc.

Genre: Poetry

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten and Primary

Summary: This is a book about how babies everywhere may look different, but they do the same things and are all loved, “… just as they are.”

Themes Presented: Babies, Family, Love, Everyday life, Rhyming words

Personal Response: I liked this book because of the cute pictures that go along with a factual and lovable story. The words in the book rhyme which make the text flow. It is also repetitious because every spread starts with, “Every day, everywhere, babies… (are fed, are carried, like toys, play games, etc.)” All the pictures show a baby that is loved and cherished by their family. The message in this book is although babies might look different or have different families, they all do similar activities, and are all loved for who they are. This was a very cute book with a heartfelt message about the daily lives of babies everywhere and the love their families have for them.

Title: *Good Books, Good Times!*

Citation: Hopkins, L.B. *Good Books, Good Times!* Illus. by: H. Stevenson.1990. 32p. Trumpet.

Genre: Poetry

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: A collection of poems about the joy of reading books. A lot of the poems were about how involved a reader can get in a book and how their imagination can soar.

Themes Presented: reading, imagination, books

Personal Response: I really enjoyed some of the poems in this book. One reason is because it lets the reader realize how much fun it can be to read a good book. It’s personal to me because I know how it feels to get completely absorbed in a book and get lost in it’s pages. Every child should get to experience their own imagination soar through books, and these poems brings that fact to life.

Title: *Mirror Mirror: A Book of Reversible Verse*

Citation: Singer, *Mirror Mirror: A Book of Reversible Verse*. Illus by J. Masse. N.P. 2010. Dutton Juvenile.

Genre: Poetry

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This book is a compilation of unique poems that are reversed so the reader gets two different perspectives from the same exact text.

Themes Presented: Fairy tales, rhyming words, reverse verse, different perspectives

Personal Response: This book of poetry was one I have never seen before. It was so unique because of the reverse verse poetry that is used. All of the poems are about different fairy tales, like Sleeping Beauty and Little Red Riding Hood. Then on one page, there are two poems side by side, but the poems are exactly the same just reversed. For example in the Little Red Riding Hood poem, On the Little Red side, it reads, "In my hood / skipping through the wood / carrying a basket / picking berries to eat - / juicy and sweet / what a treat! / But a girl / mustn't dawdle. / After all, Grandma's waiting." Then the other poem is from the point-of-view of the wolf and he replies, "After all, Grandma's waiting, / mustn't dawdle . . . / But a girl! / What a treat - / juicy and sweet, / picking berries to eat, / carrying a basket, / skipping through the wood / in my `hood." Therefore it is the same text just reversed and it allows the reader to see how differet a text can be interpreted by two different perspectives. I really enjoyed this book because it gets the reader thinking; it’s almost like solving a puzzle.

Title: *My Mama Had a Dancing Heart*

Citation: Gray, L.M. *My Mama Had a Dancing Heart*. Illus by R. Colon. 1995. N.P. Orchard Books

Genre: Poetry

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is a beautiful poem with vivid detail about a mother and daughter who shared their love of dance to welcome each new season.

Themes Presented: Family, Love, Poetry, Seasons, Memories, Traditions

Personal Response: I really enjoyed reading this poem because it is about a relationship between a mother and a daughter. This poem personally touched me because my mom is my best friends and when they mention all of the fun they had together it made me think of all of the ways my mom used to and still do spend time together. I liked the line, “…we’d cut snowflakes paper-white delicate and sip cocoa with marshmallows floating.” That reminded me of when my mom and I love to sit in our sun room and sip hot cocoa in the winter and watch a good movie or read a good book. The message in this poem is how strong the bond of love can be between a mother and a daughter. My very favorite line is, “My mama had a dancing heart and she shared that heart with me.” I hope to have that kind of bond and love with my future children like I have with my mom. I also enjoyed how they touched on all of the seasons and how the mother and daughter would celebrate each time of year. This was a very loving and beautiful poem.

Title: *Olly and Me*

Citation: Hughes, S. *Olly and Me.* 2004. N.P. Candlewick Press

Genre: Poetry

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten and Primary

Summary: This is a loving book of poetry and anecdotes about a young girl, Katie, and her little brother, Olly, who likes to join in with her activities.

Themes Presented: Family, Siblings

Personal Response: I really liked some of the poems in this book because a lot of families can relate to the activities that they write about. For example, one poem is called *Car Ride*, and Olly and Katie are waiting forever to get to their destination. She writes, “…I still look at the huge billboards…rushing past. And I wish and I wish we were there. Then at last, we stop!...We’re there, in the bright air!” I remember when my family and I would go on long car rides, and I could not wait to get to our destination fast enough. There is also a poem titled, *Fireworks*, and it is about when Katie and her family went to see the fireworks and she describes them beautifully. She writes, “Exploding in stars, impossibly high; …Pinwheels whiz around and around…As I stop my ears and gasp and gaze; At a lake on fire and a sky ablaze.” The picture that went with the poem is a gorgeous firework display; you feel as though you are there watching the fireworks with them. There is also a cute anecdote about the time Katie is at ballet lessons and Olly joins in with her and her friends and does ballet with them; it is very cute. I really like the message in this book about how important it is to spend time with your family and the ones you love, even if it is with your little brother.

Title: *The Kingfisher Book of Family Poems*

Citation: Hollyer, B. *The Kingfisher Book of Family Poems*. Illus by H. Swain. 2003. p.12-208. Kingfisher.

Genre: Poetry

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Primary

Summary: This is a book of poems about family. It consists of poems about siblings, mothers, fathers, stepmothers, grandparents, etc. Many of the poems are humorous and lively while others may deal with sadness, like the loss of a family member.

Themes Presented: Family, Different family relationships/ events, Humor, Sadness, etc.

Personal Response: I loved this book of humorous and loving poems about family. This book is broken up into different sections focusing on different family members. For example some sections focus on, families as a whole, fathers, mothers, siblings, grandparents, and even pets. Many of these poems are so unique and creative; they were a lot of fun to read. One of my favorite poems was one told from the point of view of an adoptive child, “For of all the babies born/ In the whole wide world/ My Mum and Dad chose me.” I also really liked the poem told from the point of view of a child whose parents disagree a lot but they do agree on one thing, “She reads the paper/while he turns on the TV/ she likes the mountains/ he craves the sea…In just about everything/ they disagree/ but they love one another/and they both love me.” The message of this book is no matter who is on your family or what occurrences happen, they are still your family, and love each other for it.

Title: *You Read to Me, I’ll Read to You: Very Short Stories to Read Together*

Citation: Hoberman, M.A. *You Read to Me, I’ll Read to You: Very Short Stories to Read Together*. Illus by M. Emberley. 2001. N.P.

Genre: Poetry

Chapter Book Picture Book

Age Level: Kindergarten and Primary

Summary: This is a fun book of short stories/ poems where children can take turns reading aloud together. This book can interest many children with stories about cats, dogs, and children just like them, while having fun reading *together*.

Themes Presented: Reading, Short Stories, Reading together, Poetry

Personal Response: I think it is so important for children to read aloud. It can help them sound out words and feel more confident about their fluency and speaking in front of other people. It is really easy for children to take turns reading in this book because the sentences are different colors so a child can pick a color and when that color of sentence comes up, they know it is their turn. It is also important for children to read together and have fun while doing it. Taking turns is important for children to practice for the future. It also helps them stay on task because they do not want to miss their sentence. This is a really fun and unique way of reading aloud and together.