

CORE FOCUS

PUTTING COMMON CORE INTO ACTION

GRADES
K-5

This monthly column by author and school librarian Toni Buzzeo presents three high-profile children's books for each of three grade bands (K-1, 2-3, 4-5) along with activities to use in the library that target specific Common Core reading, writing, listening, and speaking standards. Lexile level and text complexity are taken into consideration in selecting the titles. In addition, all questions are written in language appropriate to the developmental level of children in each grade band.

Grades K-1

The Most Magnificent Thing by Ashley Spires

Kirkus starred review

Lexile: 380 Adult directed

Note: This title is too new to have earned awards or found its place on best books lists, but I am sure that it will.

Reading

After reading *The Most Magnificent Thing* aloud, return to the story and ask

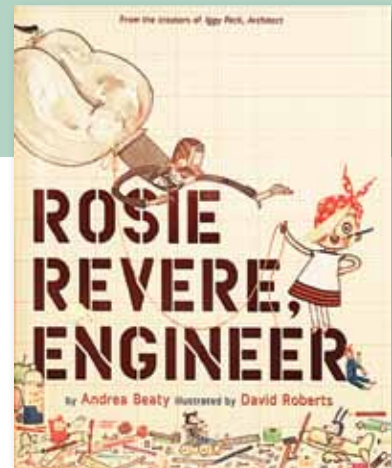
students a series of questions focusing on key details.

- Who is the main character in the story?
- Is there another character? Is that character human?
- What is each of these two characters like? How do you know? Offer specific examples from the text of the book.
- What begins the story's action?
- What does the main character do at the beginning? What does her dog do?
- What problem develops?
- How does she handle the problem each time?
- How does the main character finally succeed?
- Grade 1: What do you think the author's message is? What details in the story communicate this message to you?

Standards: RL.K.2 and RL.1.2

Writing/Speaking and Listening

After reading *The Most Magnificent Thing* aloud, discuss the main



character's process for designing and building her "thing."

- What step was missing in her process?
- What did she forget to do first?
- How would planning and designing have helped her to succeed more quickly?

Then launch a three-part experiential, writing, and speaking activity.

Begin by supplying students with a large collection of small parts. Possibilities include interlocking blocks, washers, nuts, springs, cans, small plastic boxes, and other assorted bits. Invite students in small groups to consider what they might make from such a collection. Give them time to discuss what they envision before developing a plan for execution. If time allows, give students tools and fasteners and the opportunity to build.

Collaborate with the classroom teacher to have students write a short narrative about building their proposed creations (real or imaginary). Remind them to use descriptive details about the parts and the process, as well as an orderly sequence of events.

Finally, ask each group to present their process, design, and construction details to the class, accompanied by a series of drawings. *Note:* These drawings may take the place of the written narrative for kindergartners who are still emergent writers.

Standards: W.K.3 and W.1.3; SL.K.5 and SL.1.5

Grades 2–3

Rosie Revere, Engineer by Andrea Beaty
2014 Amelia Bloomer Project List
2013 Parents' Choice Award—Gold
Lexile: NA

Reading

Read *Rosie Revere, Engineer* aloud, asking students to pay close attention to how the story is structured. After a general discussion of the story, ask:

- How does the story begin, and how does it end?
- Why does author Andrea Beaty begin and end in the classroom setting?
- Why does the story move from the classroom to Rosie's individual experiences outside of school?
- What is the setting and major event for each scene in the book?
- How do these scenes build on earlier scenes to help you to understand the story as a whole and the author's message?

Standards: RL.2.7 and RL.3.7

After reading *Rosie Revere, Engineer* aloud, invite students to revisit the book for the purpose of close consideration of the illustrations. Ask:

- How do the graph paper fly leaves and title page help you to understand the plot?
- In what way is Rosie's hairstyle distinctive, and how does it help you to understand what she is like compared to her classmates?
- How does illustrator David Roberts's style of illustration emphasize aspects of Rosie's character?
- How does the illustration of Rosie's attic represent her values and interests?

Read the Historical Note on the final page of the book and share the original Westinghouse poster of Rosie the Riveter (<http://tinyurl.com/lDog2rv>). Ask: How does illustrator David Roberts capture the history behind the book in his illustrations of Aunt Rose?

Standards: RL.2.7 and RL.3.7

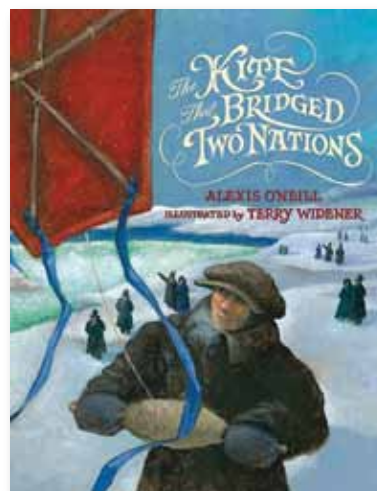
After reading *Rosie Revere, Engineer* aloud, introduce students to another book by Andrea Beaty: *Iggy Peck, Architect*. Invite them to listen for similarities and differences in the themes, settings, and plots of the stories. Ask:

- In what ways are Rosie and Iggy alike, and in what ways are they different?
- Are any of the settings of the two books the same? Are there differences? Why?
- Consider the major events of each story. How are they similar, and how do they differ?
- Identify the theme of each book. Do they share similarities?

Standard: RL.3.9

Grades 4–5

The Kite That Bridged Two Nations: Homan Walsh and the First Niagara Suspension Bridge by Alexis O'Neill
2014 SCBWI Crystal Kite Award
2014 Bank Street Best Books of the Year
Lexile: 740



Reading/Speaking and Listening

After reading *The Kite That Bridged Two Nations* aloud, ask students what they know about the main character, Homan Walsh. Ask them to give examples of his character traits, pointing to or quoting specific evidence from the text that supports their claims. Ask them whether the text explicitly describes these traits or whether they must infer them.

Discuss Homan's relationship with his father. Ask students to explain their answers by referring to or quoting specific examples from the text:

- What was Homan's father like?
- How did he feel about Homan's passion for kite flying?
- Does his father's opinion change by the end of the story?

For each response, ask students to identify whether the text explicitly answers the question or whether they must infer.

Standards: RL.4.1 and RL.5.1; SL.4.1 and SL.5.1

Reading/Writing

Read *The Kite That Bridged Two Nations* aloud, noting that the story is told in first-person narrative. As author Alexis O'Neill explains in her extensive Author's Note (be sure to share this note aloud), she chose to tell the story



in Homan Walsh's voice because she "wanted to express emotions that are not obvious in straight narrative accounts of this event."

Read one of several articles available online about the kite contest that Homan Walsh participated in:

- "The Kite That Bridged a River" by M. Robinson (<http://tinyurl.com/prl948s>)
- "Homan J. Walsh and the Kite That Helped Build a Bridge" (<http://tinyurl.com/pvozcsq>)
- "Homan Walsh—Bridging the Niagara River Gorge with a Kite" (<http://tinyurl.com/puo9zgw>)

Then invite students to compare O'Neill's first-person narrative with the third-person article. Ask:

- *What are the differences between O'Neill's first-person story and the third-person article?*
- *How does the point of view from which each is written influence how the events of the story are described?*

Finally, as a whole group or individually, challenge students to begin with the text in *The Kite That Bridged Two Nations* and retell the story entirely from a third-person point of view, eliminating

any perspective that would be unavailable if the narrator were not Homan Walsh himself. Discuss the differences between this narration and that of O'Neill.

**Standards: RL.4.6 and RL.5.6;
W.4.3.a and W.5.3.a**

Writing

Follow the reading and discussion of *The Kite That Bridged Two Nations*, including the extensive historical note, with a research and writing project. While some of the details of the story are fictionalized, including all of the dialogue, the backbone of the story is historically accurate. Invite students in small groups to read other books about bridge building. Have them select a bridge and then extend their learning by accessing journal articles (using online databases such as Primary Search and Searchasaurus) and other online information about their chosen bridge and its construction.

Some potential titles written for intermediate-grade students include

- *Bridges* by Seymour Simon
- *Bridges Are to Cross* by Philemon Sturges
- *The Brooklyn Bridge* by Elaine Pascoe

- *Brooklyn Bridge* by Sarah Tieck
- *The Brooklyn Bridge: The Story of the World's Most Famous Bridge and the Remarkable Family That Built It* by Elizabeth Mann
- *Built to Last: Building America's Amazing Bridges, Dams, Tunnels, and Skyscrapers* by George Sullivan
- *Cross a Bridge* by Ryan Ann Hunter
- *The Golden Gate Bridge* by Jeffrey Zuehlke
- *The World's Most Amazing Bridges* by Michael Hurley

Standards: W.4.7 and W.5.7

Toni Buzzeo, MA, MLIS, is both an author and a career school librarian. Her credits include the 2013 Caldecott Honor book *One Cool Friend*, among twenty picture books, which also include *But I Read It on the Internet!* (UpstartBooks, 2013) and *My Bibi Always Remembers* (Hyperion, 2014). She has also authored many professional books and articles. Visit www.tonibuzzeo.com or e-mail tonibuzzeo@tonibuzzeo.com.