

CORE FOCUS

PUTTING COMMON CORE INTO ACTION

GRADES
K-5

This monthly column presents three award-winning children's books, one 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 standards in reading, writing, and speaking. 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 the child in each grade band.

Grades K-1

The Dark by Lemony Snicket
2013 New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Book
2014 Charlotte Zolotow Award
2014 ALA Children's Notable
Lexile: 660 Adult-directed

Reading

Engage students in a discussion of **characters** in *The Dark*. Ask, *Who is the main character?* Students should readily agree that Laszlo is the main character.

Then ask, *Are there any other characters?* This question will generate interesting discussion as more sophisticated

students identify "the dark" as the second character, while less sophisticated readers remain uncertain.

Leave the character conversation unresolved as you introduce the question, *What is the setting of this story?* All readers should understand that Laszlo's house is the **setting**, including various locations such as his bedroom, the bathroom, and the basement. Ask, *What role does "the dark" play in the setting?*

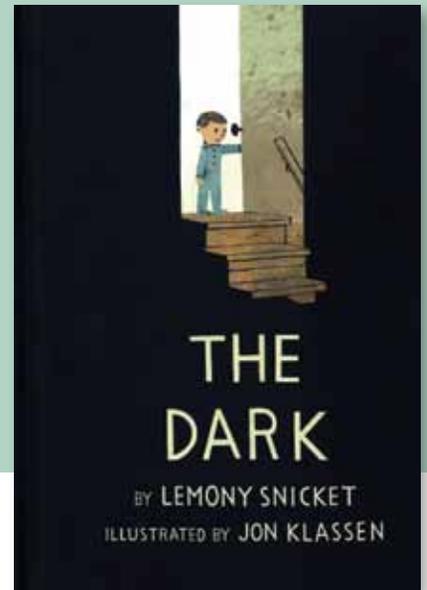
Finally, ask students, *What are the major events of the story?* Explain that the major events make up the **plot** of the story. Encourage students to add key details to the list of events when possible. Ensure that they correctly identify Laszlo's problem and its resolution.

Standards: RL.K.3 and RL.1.3

Writing

After reading *The Dark* aloud, ask students to answer the following questions:

- *Can you remember a time when you were afraid of the dark?*
- *Where was the dark that you were afraid of?*



- *What helped, or would have helped, you to feel unafraid?*

After students have had an opportunity to share their recollections, ask them to write one or more sentences about their experience on manuscript paper with an accompanying drawing.

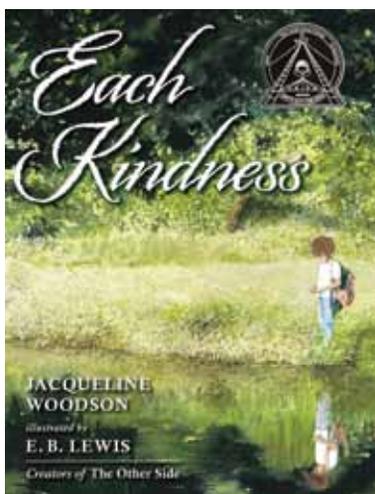
Standards: W.K.8 and W.1.8

Grades 2-3

Each Kindness by Jacqueline Woodson
2013 Charlotte Zolotow Award
2013 Jane Addams Children's Book Award
2013 Coretta Scott King Honor Award
Lexile: 640 Adult-directed

Reading

Invite students to discuss how Chloe responds to the arrival of a new classmate who sits next to her in class and attempts to befriend her. Discuss how Maya, as the new girl, behaves from the first day through her last day. Ask students to answer the following questions about each girl and to offer specific examples from the text to support their responses:



- Why does she behave the way she does? What motivates her?
- What kind of person do you think she is? What are her character traits?
- How does she feel about the actions of the other girl?

Then ask students how the behavior of each girl contributes to the way the story unfolds. Ask, *If Chloe or Maya had behaved differently, might the events of the story have been different? In what ways?*

Standards: RL.2.3 and RL.3.3

Speaking & Listening

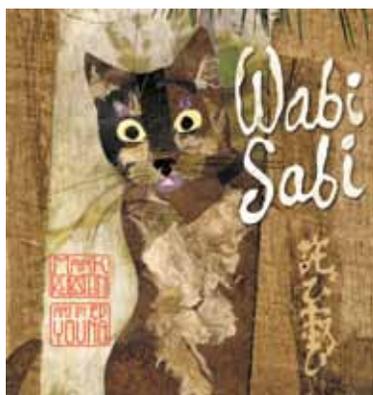
Read the first three questions and responses from an interview with author Jacqueline Woodson about *Each Kindness* (<http://tinyurl.com/8fjwy9y>). Ask students the following questions:

- What personal experience first started Jacqueline Woodson thinking about kindness and cruelty among children?
- Does Jacqueline Woodson think she is more like Chloe or more like Maya? Explain.
- Why did Jacqueline Woodson choose to end the book with Maya moving away, leaving Chloe unable to undo the unkindness she's engaged in?

Then solicit questions from the students that they might like to ask

Jacqueline Woodson if they were interviewing her. If you feel that students have generated quality questions that have not been answered in the interview, consider posting a note to Woodson using the contact form on her website (<http://tinyurl.com/k4nue3k>). Note: Keep in mind that authors are not always able to reply in a timely fashion.

Standards: SL.2.3 and SL.3.3



Grades 4–5

Wabi Sabi by Mark Reibstein
2009 Asian Pacific American Award for Literature
2008 New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Book
2008 New York Times Notable Children's Book
Lexile: 780 Adult-directed

Reading

Wabi Sabi is an amalgam of narrative storytelling and haiku. Before reading the book aloud, discuss the meaning of the term “wabi sabi” as introduced on the title spread and in the endnote entitled “The History of Wabi Sabi.” Next discuss the poetic form of haiku as explained in the endnote entitled “Haiku and Haibun.”

After reading the book aloud (if time allows, two readings may be necessary for best understanding), ask students to explain the overall structure of the book. Discuss the role of the three types of text: the narrative text, the

accompanying English-language haiku, and the Japanese-character haiku (translated into English at the end of the book) on each spread. Ask the following:

- How does each element contribute to your understanding of the story?
- How does each element contribute to your understanding of the term “wabi sabi”?

Standards: RL.4.5 and RL.5.5

Writing

After reading the book aloud, review the concept of “wabi sabi.” Introduce the video *Mark Reibstein: Wabi Sabi* (accessible at <http://tinyurl.com/lrt4yq6>). Encourage students to discuss how listening to author Mark Reibstein and illustrator Ed Young describe their experiences in creating the book has contributed to the students' understanding of the term “wabi sabi.”

Finally, challenge your students to write a short opinion piece about what they think “wabi sabi” is, stating their opinions clearly and offering details and examples from the text and/or video to support their claims. Encourage them to quote directly from the text, to present the quotes in a logical order, to use linking words or phrases, and to provide a logical concluding statement.

Standards: W.4.1 and W.5.1



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.