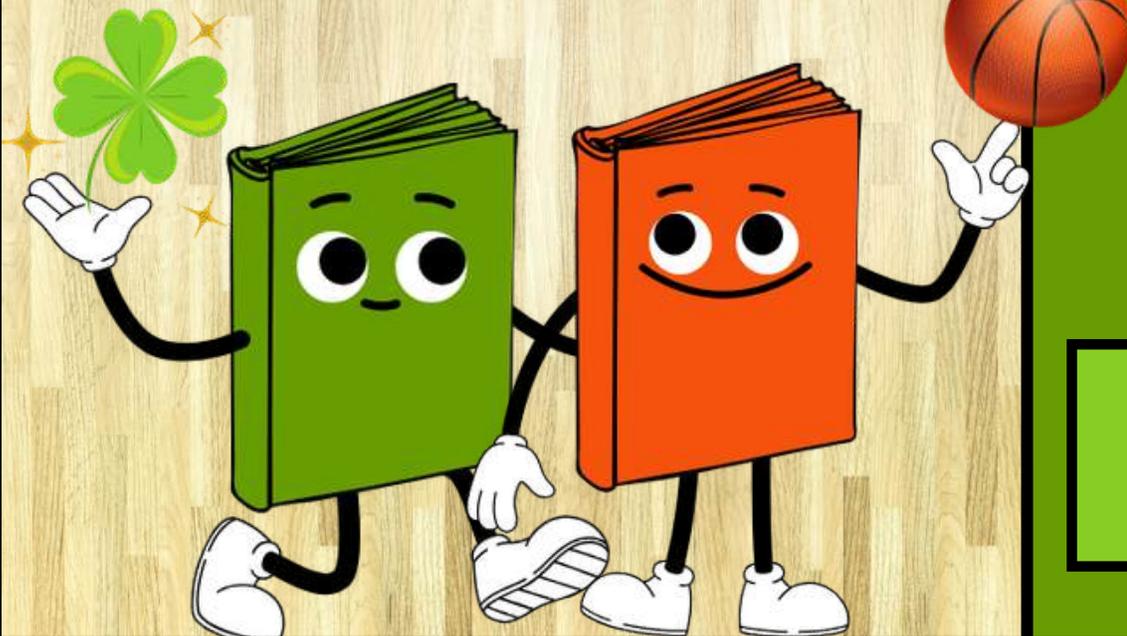
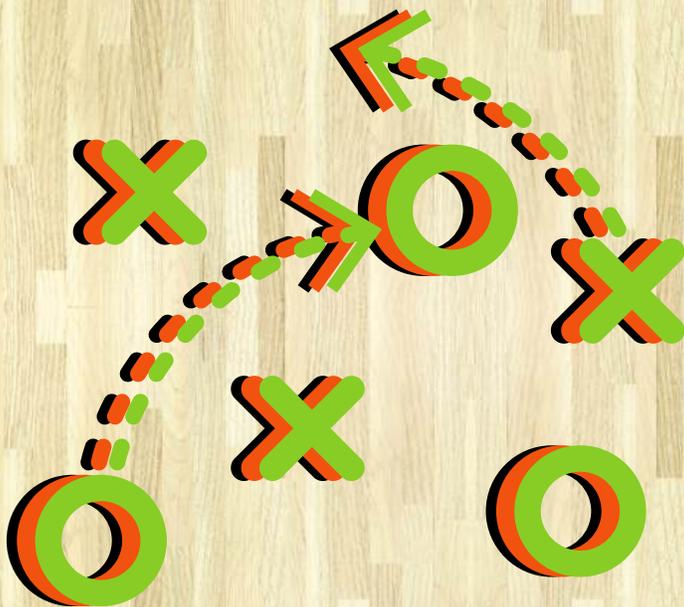


Word Nerd
Collaborative

ELA ENGAGEMENT GAME PLAN



F

C

R

A

M

2026



PASSION, POSSIBILITY & THE PLAY OF TEACHING

Dear Teacher Friend,

Whether you're into basketball or not, it's hard to miss the buzz—brackets getting built, underdog stories unfolding, teams giving it everything they've got. And honestly? It feels a lot like teaching.

We show up every day with a game plan. We build strategies around what we think will work. And then a kid raises their hand and tosses us a question we weren't expecting. Or a lesson that usually crushes it falls flat. Or that one quiet student writes a poem that leaves the whole room in stunned silence.

There's no "perfect bracket" in teaching. But there are incredible wins we never saw coming. This month, I hope you lean into that.

Let go of perfection and lean into possibility.

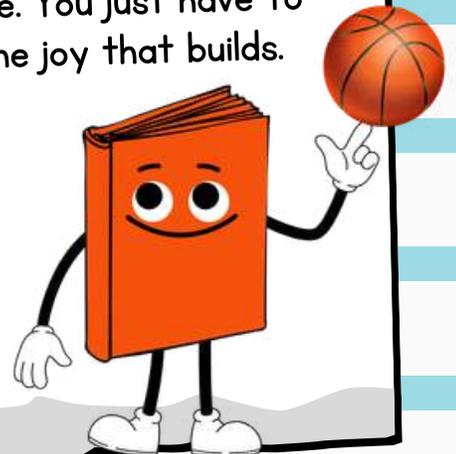
Try something new, not because it's trendy, but because you're curious. Revisit something old, not because it's easy, but because it works. Celebrate the things you love—your favorite book to teach, your go-to game, that one grammar lesson that gets weirdly loud in the best way. And don't forget—passion is contagious.

Whether it's a team, a book, a cause, or a content area... when you show up with joy, your students feel it. They may not always say it (middle schoolers, am I right?), but they feel it.

You don't have to be a top seed to make a difference. You just have to show up with heart. Here's to the plays that pivot. The joy that builds. The community we create when we lean in together.

Let's keep showing up for the game,

— AMANDA



LET GO OF
perfection



AND LEAN INTO
possibility

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EDITABLE
CANVA FILE



OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT



April Planning Session (March 15th)

LINK: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82003624150> (2pm CST)

Lunch Bunch Zoom (March 27th)

LINK: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84702864396>

Word Nerd Collaborative Private Facebook Group

LINK: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/427913560232081>



March 2026

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wednes.	Thurs.	Friday	Satur.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 April Planning Session	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27 Author Lunch Bunch	28
29	30	31				

Notes:





FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAYS

Friday, March 6th



All is Nat Lost
by Maria Scrivan

Realistic Fiction

Graphic Novel

Friday, March 13th



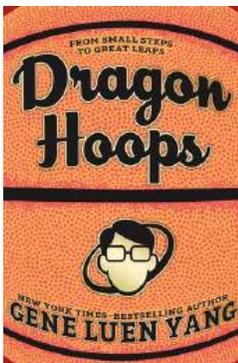
The Book of Rosins
by Tracy Helixon

Magical Realism/
Historical Fiction

Prose

** INCLUDES AUTHOR INTERVIEW

Friday, March 20th



Dragon Hoops
by Gene Luen Yang

Memoir/Narrative
NonFiction

Graphic Novel

Friday, March 27th

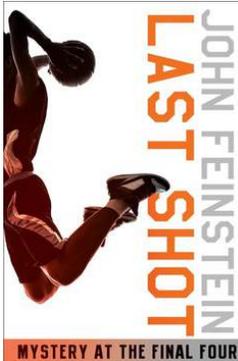


Breakout
by Christina
Wyman

Realistic Fiction

Graphic Novel

BONUS BOOK



The Last Shot
by John Feinstein

Realistic Fiction/
Sports Mystery

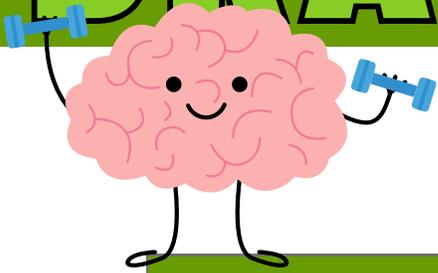
Prose

Lunch Bunch Attendees

Friday, March 27th!
11:15-11:45 am CST

Christina Wyman
& Maria Scrivan

BRAIN BREAKS



Help your students reset their brains and moods with a little break. Try a fun trivia game! Totally optional, but you can use the LEADERBOARD on page 24 to keep track of student teams and scores throughout the month.

Women's Day Trivia



St. Patrick's Day Trivia



Green Trivia



March Madness Trivia



Did you know?

“Brain breaks benefit not only students but teachers, too. They help improve the pacing of your lesson while keeping you and your students refreshed, focused, and engaged.”

-- [Reading Rockets Website](#)



Writing

Prompts

Week 1

Monday
M- Mini Mystery

Tuesday
A - Athlete Argument

Wednesday
R - Rewrite the Ending

Thursday
C - Comic Creation

Friday
H - Haiku for Spring

Week 2

Monday
Letter on a Plane

Tuesday
Who are the BAD GUYS?

Wednesday
Pick a Color, Any Color

Thursday
Ice Cream for Sale!

Friday
Free Write Friday

Week 3

Monday
Lucky YOU!

Tuesday
The End of the Line

Wednesday
Hiya Tall Guy!

Thursday
Social Media Sequence

Friday
Free Write Friday



You can project the prompt using these SLIDES!

Week 4

Monday
Egg-cellent Prank

Tuesday
Similar Simile

Wednesday
I thought I Saw...

Thursday
Travel Time!

Friday
Free Write Friday



LESSONS



March 2026

1 IRISH STRONG WILLIAM UNIT STUDY

This lesson contains comprehension and extension activities for the Irish Strong William, a historical fiction short story written by Amanda Zieba. This all-in-one unit study contains vocabulary word work, a variety of comprehension questions and post-reading extension activities. Story text and a read aloud video are also included! If you want to lean into the Irish vibes of the month, this is a perfect way to do it educationally!

STANDARDS: CCSS ELA RL.6.1, RL.6.4, RL.6.10 W.6.4, L.6.3, L.6.4 L.6.5

2 PICK A COLOR PICK A BOOK

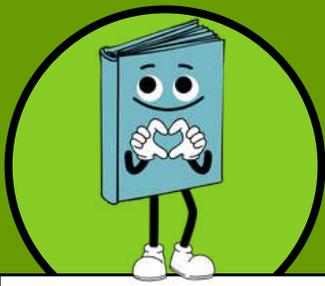
A library lesson designed in the spirit and style of swipe-able Instagram posts, use the following slides to help recommend great books to your students! All they need to do is pick a color to reveal a reading recommendation tailored to their interests and preferences. Find the slides here and several implementations ideas below. Sheets to record student choices can be found on following pages.

STANDARDS: RL.7.10 BY THE END OF THE YEAR, READ AND COMPREHEND LITERATURE, INCLUDING STORIES, DRAMAS, AND POEMS, IN THE GRADES 6–8 TEXT COMPLEXITY BAND PROFICIENTLY, WITH SCAFFOLDING AS NEEDED AT THE HIGH END OF THE RANGE.

3 LEARN TO ANNOTATE WITH MINI BIOS ABOUT FAMOUS WOMEN

Learn a bit about the nonfiction sub genre of biographies and a few famous women all while you practice the skill of text annotation. A writing extension activity is also available! Tap in to Women's History Month with this all inclusive lesson!

STANDARDS: RI.6.1, RI.6.2, RI.6.3, RI.6.4, RI.6.6, W.6.2, W.6.4, W.6.7, SL.6.1, SL.6.2, L.6.4, L.6.6



March 2026

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1 **WOULD YOU RATHER – BODY EDITION**

Looking for a high-energy, classroom-safe brain break that also supports persuasive writing skills? This BODY Edition of Would You Rather is packed with fun, debate-worthy questions your students will love. No prep. Just press play and let students think, move, and argue (politely!). And don't worry... these body questions are totally classroom appropriate and will not put you in an embarrassing situation!

2 **CURATED READING LISTS**

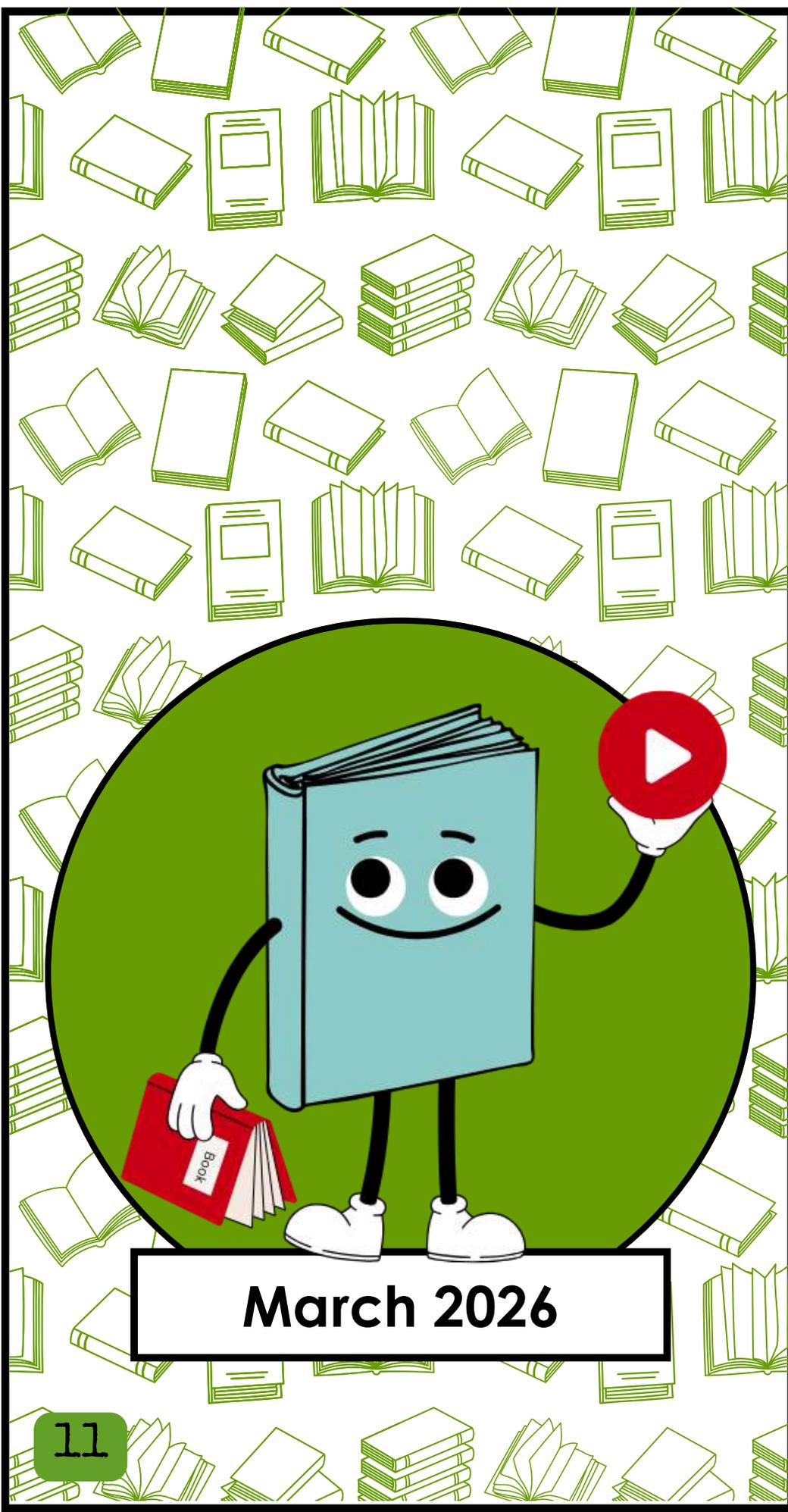
The books in this thematic list highlight two timely topics: sports and making the team. So if you've got sports fans in your classroom, I've got books I know they will love! 😊

3 **SEASONAL COLORING SHEETS**

Sometimes we just need a break. Use these spring themed coloring sheets to give your students five minutes of mindful meditation and calm. Students can spend time coloring while listening to a First Chapter Friday read aloud video or instrumental music video.

4 **BALL-OON BRAIN BREAK**

Got some stir-crazy students? I get it. Gamify their learning and give them a chance to move a bit with this fun ball/balloon brain break – perfect for middle schoolers. This activity is currently set up for ELA content, but could easily be adapted to any curriculum/content area.



FRIDAY SELECTIONS

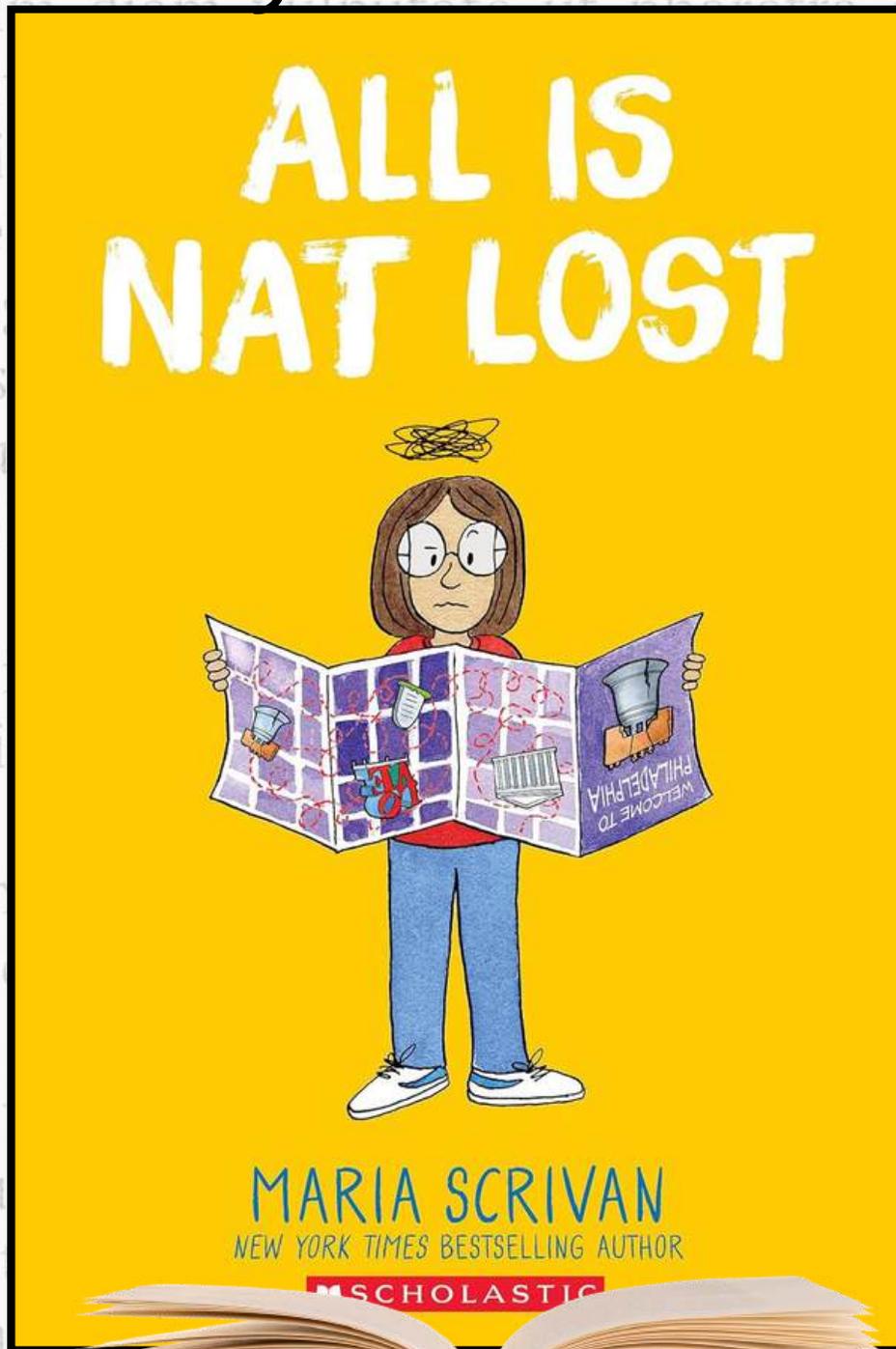
CHAPTER



March 2026

ALL IS NAT LOST

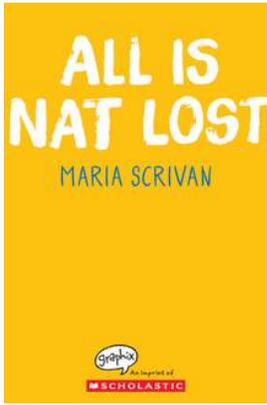
by Maria Scrivan



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

Name _____

Date _____



All is Nat Lost

by Maria Scrivan



Read Aloud Video

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

What's It About?

Nat's class trip is a bigger adventure than she imagined! Nat is on an overnight class trip to Philadelphia, which is her first time in a big city without her parents. And it's a big deal because Nat's mom and dad are finally giving her the independence she's been longing for. But the trip is off to a bad start -- with one disaster after another -- and if things keep up, Nat's on track to lose her newfound freedom for good! Can she turn things around in time, or will her first chance with liberty be her last?

SCHOOL TRIP

Hi, I'm Natalie! My class is learning about America's Independence, so Midway Middle School is taking a trip to Philadelphia!



Who Wrote It?

Where do you get your ideas? - I don't know but they're out there somewhere. I find a lot of them when I'm running or hiking in the woods, and also when I'm riding my bike.

What do you like to do besides writing and drawing? I love traveling, cycling, running, hiking, yoga, reading, painting, petting every dog I meet, spending time with friends and family, gardening, looking for frogs in the nearby pond, and collecting books and art supplies.

Do you have any advice for aspiring writers and artists? - Write a lot, read a lot and draw a lot. And most importantly, have fun.

What would you like to do if you weren't a cartoonist? I can't think of anything else I'd like to do, and I've tried a lot of other things. I was an animator, an art director, a graphic designer, a lifeguard, a fitness instructor, an art teacher and a camp counselor. None of those things seemed to fit.



Photo credit: Kyle Norton

Where do you live? I currently live in Connecticut, very close to New York City. There are all kinds of trails nearby to go hiking, running and idea hunting, and plenty of beautiful roads to cycling on. My backyard has a resident groundhog, a family of deer, and many frogs, voles, and birds.

AR Reading Level: N/A

Lexile Level: 320L

I want to read this book: YES / NO

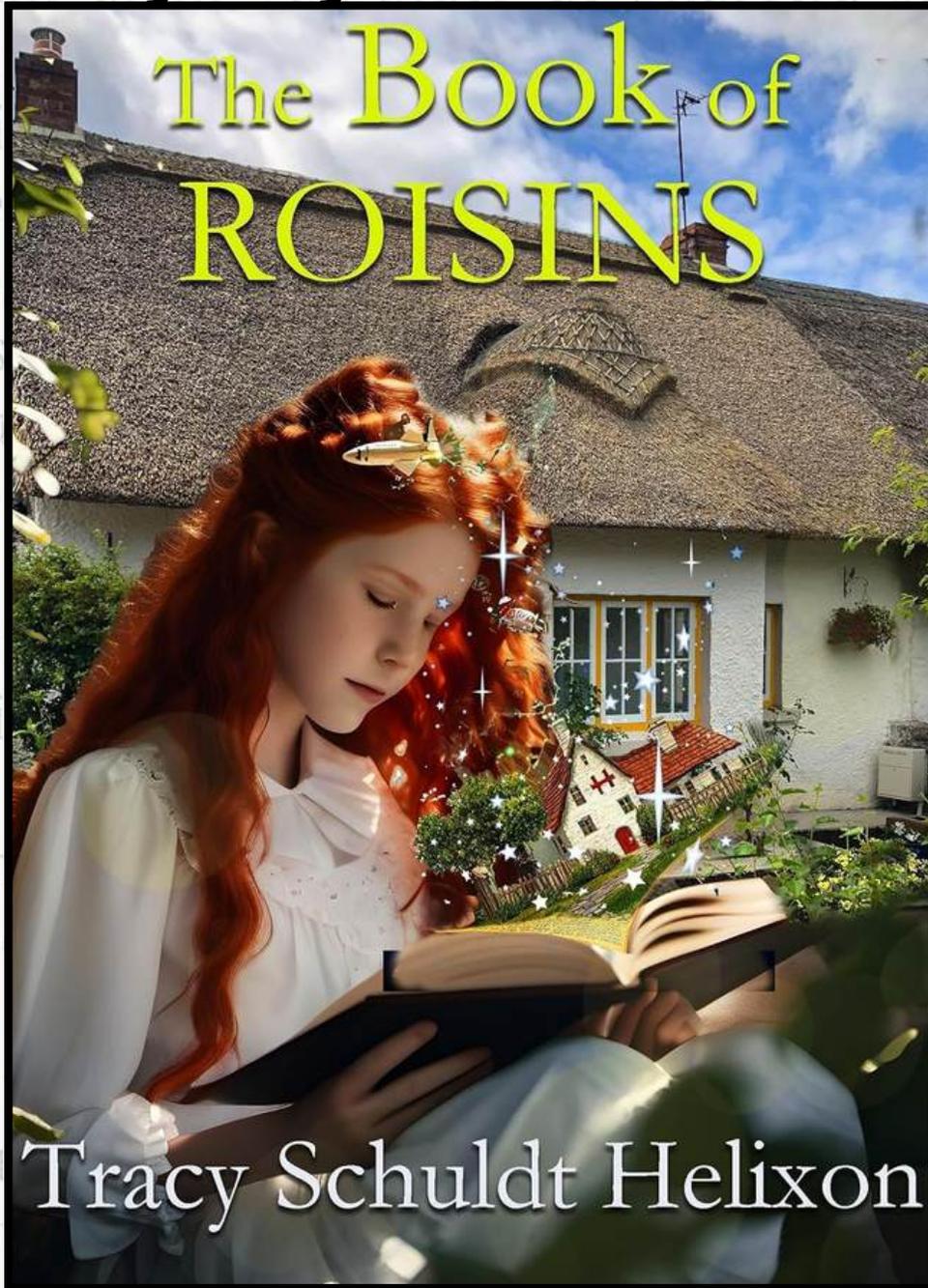
☆☆ WHAT I THINK ☆☆



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

THE BOOK OF ROISONS

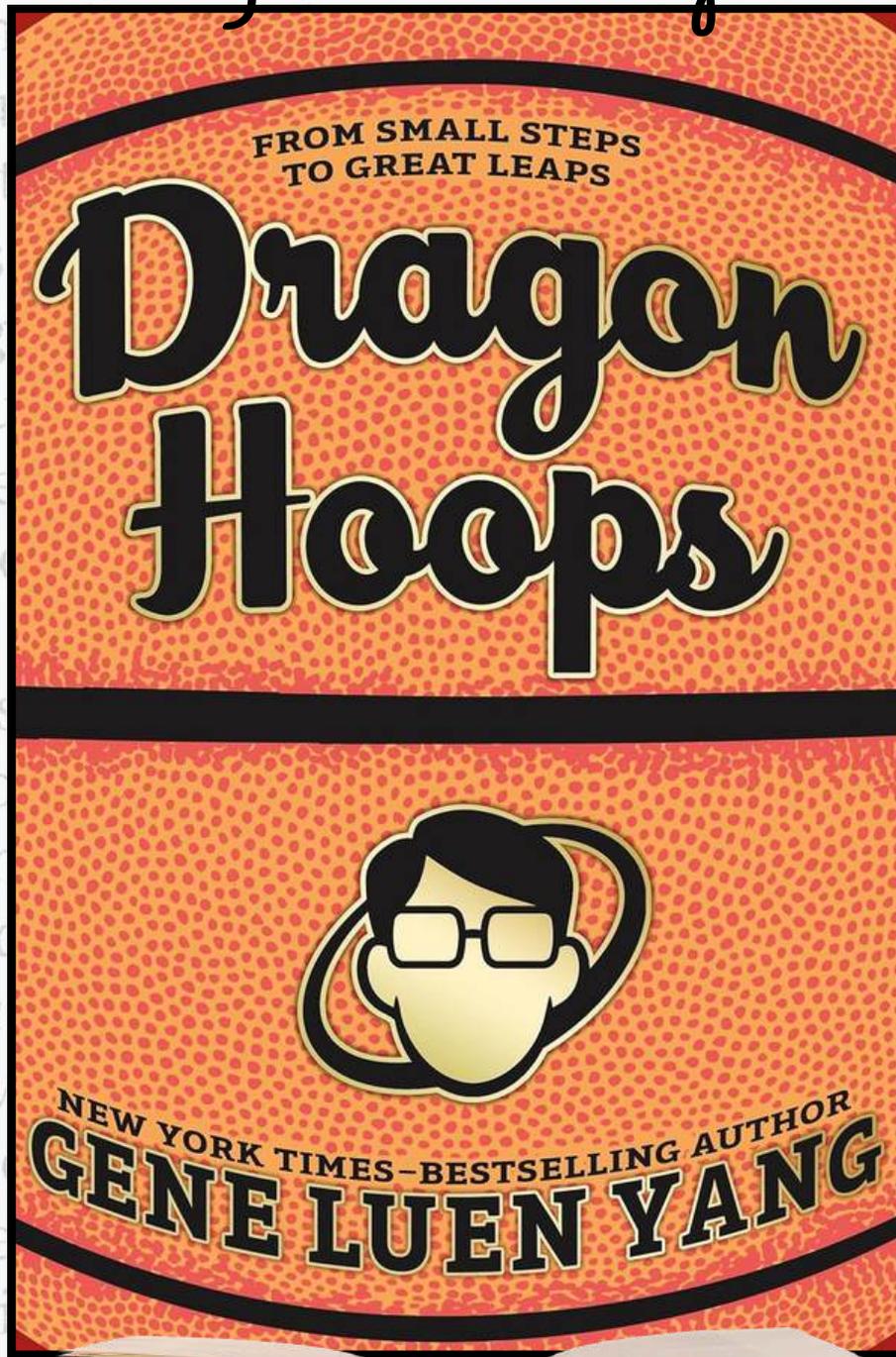
by Tracy Schuldt Helixon



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

DRAGON HOOPS

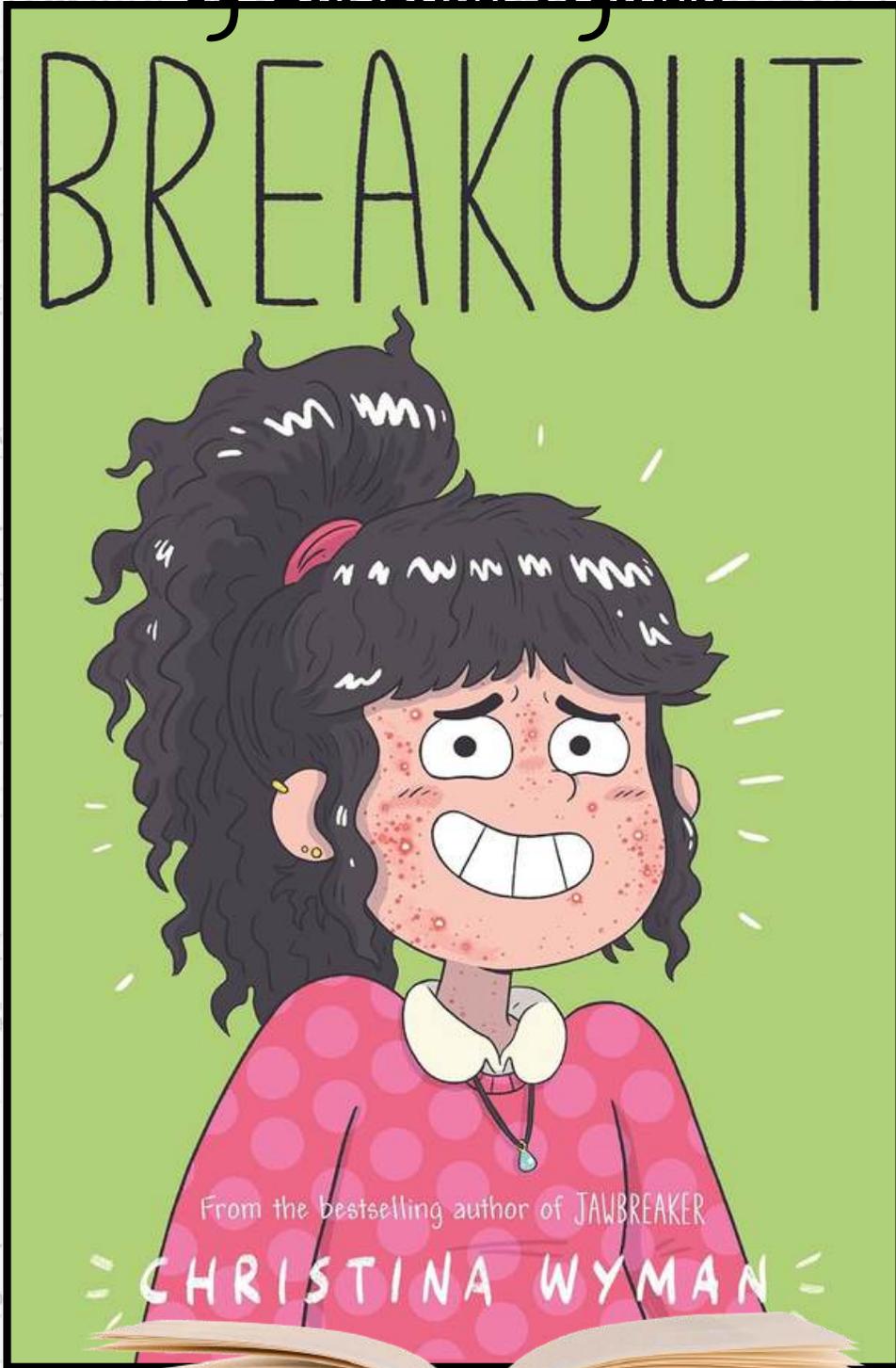
by Gene Luen Yang



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

BREAKOUT

by Christina Wyman



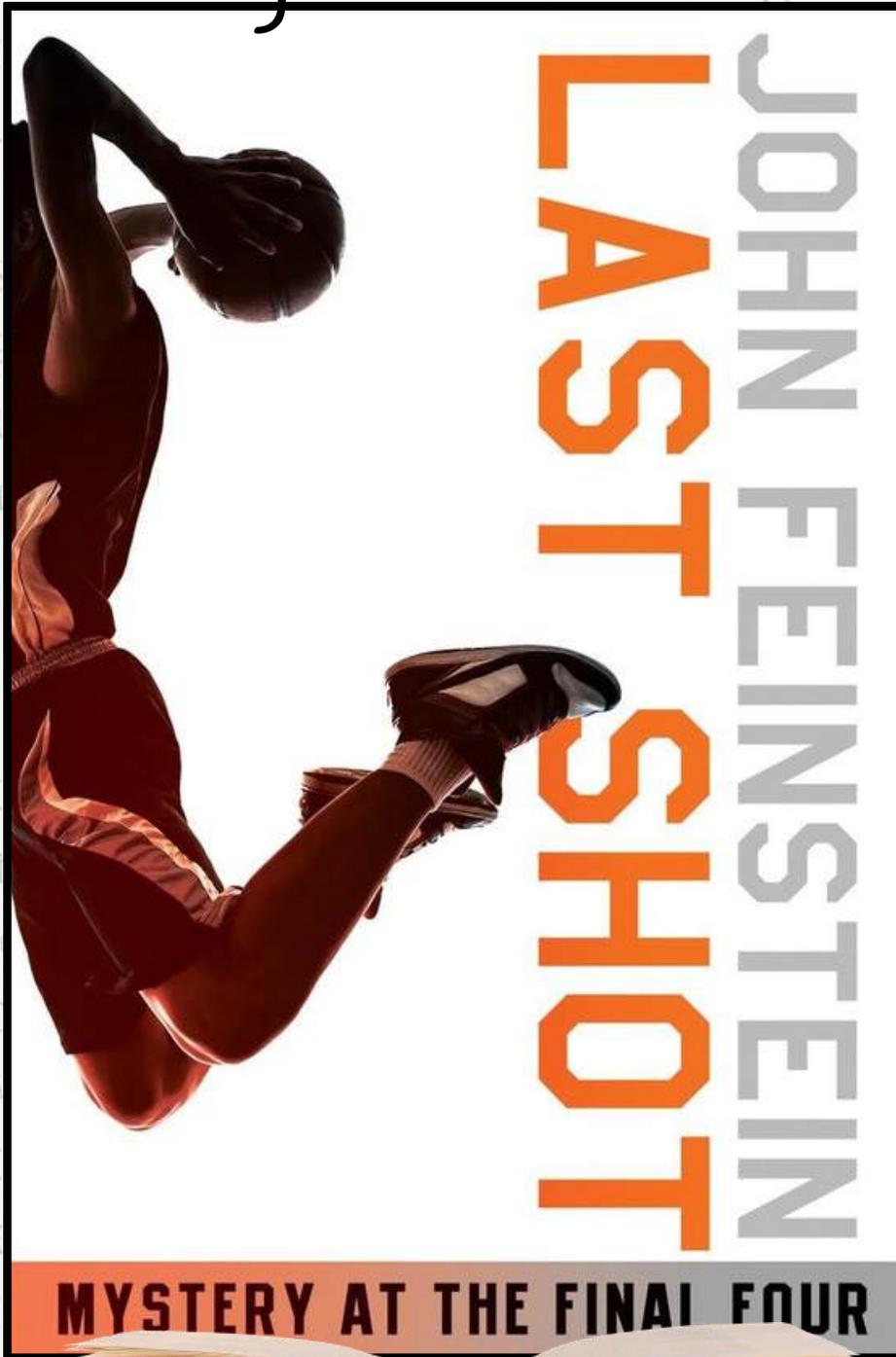
FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

FCF Sheet
for this Book
COMING SOON!!

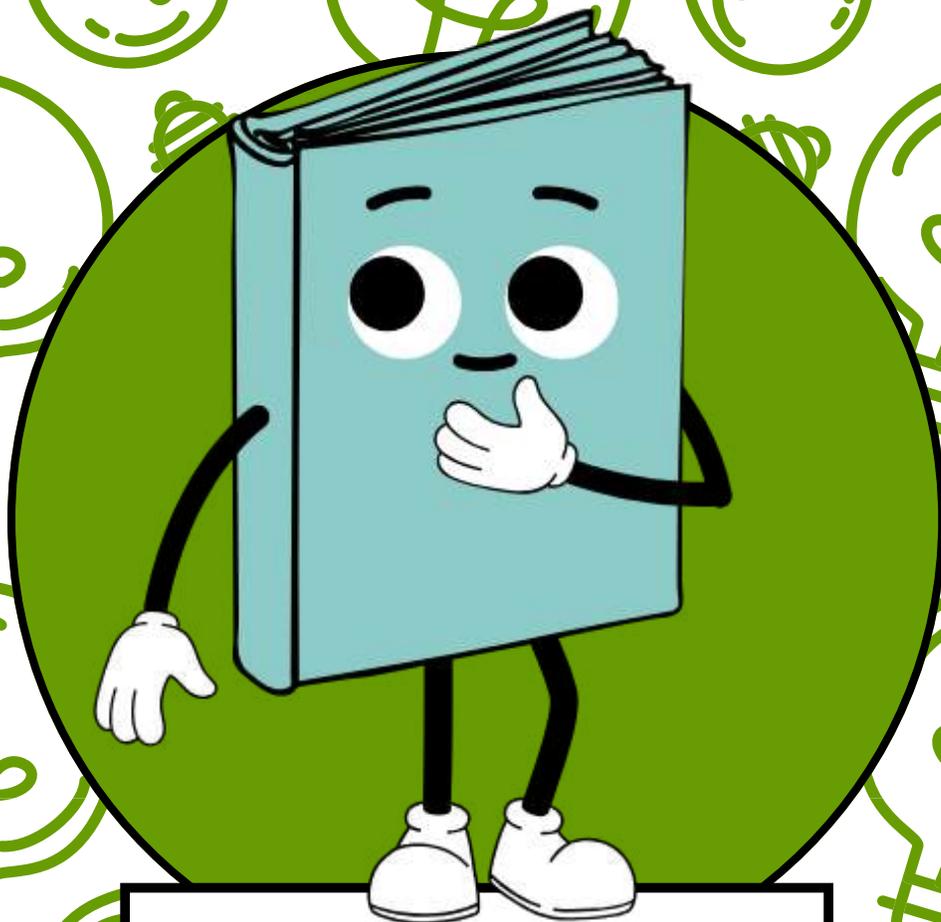


LAST SHOT

by John Feinstein



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY



March 2026

BRAIN BREAKS

LINKS + ANSWER SHEETS/KEYS

How to do **TRIVIA**

FOR EACH BRAIN BREAK YOU WILL FIND:

1. Link to the YouTube video version (all around 8-11 minutes)
2. Student answer sheets
3. Modified student answer sheets for students of different ages/abilities
4. Printable question and answer sheets (to use with or without the video)
5. Answer key
6. List of additional considerations, applications and implementation ideas
7. ALL SORTS OF FUN!! :)

DIRECTIONS

1. Play the video showcasing 20-30 themed trivia questions.
2. Using the the provided printable worksheets, or scratch paper, have students record their guesses.
3. During the answer portion of the slideshow/video pause to allow students to share out or discuss their ideas/guesses with the whole class, in small groups or in partnerships.
 - a. This step is optional, but I find that if you want to get your students talking, it works great. If you need a few minutes of silence... you can ban conversation and it works just fine that way too!
4. Reveal final answers.
5. Total up scores
6. Record scores on the leaderboard (page 22)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/IDEAS

1. This activity can be used as a brain break, ice breaker or fun game.
2. In my classes we keep our teams the same for an entire quarter. We have a "leader board" where we keep a running score for all of our brain break games. This is great for team building or creating comradery in a classroom learning environment. :)
3. You can assign this to individuals (ie: in Google Classroom) to do on their own, or complete the challenge as a whole class activity using a screen and projector.
4. This activity can work well in person or via distanced learning.
5. Because the videos are on YouTube, this is an activity that students can easily try/repeat at home with family members. :)
6. Consider letting a classroom helper or leader be the "game show host" and call on classmates to share their ideas and reveal the answers.

Tired of the same old Brain Breaks? I've got you covered.



March Brain Break LEADERBOARD

In each square record either the # of points a team earned, or their place (1st, 2nd, etc.) The method you choose will determine whether the winner will be the team with the highest or lowest score.

TEAM #1

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total

TEAM #2

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total

TEAM #3

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total

TEAM #4

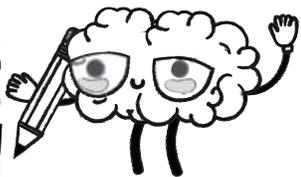
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total

TEAM #5

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total

TEAM #6

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total



Trivia Game Video Link

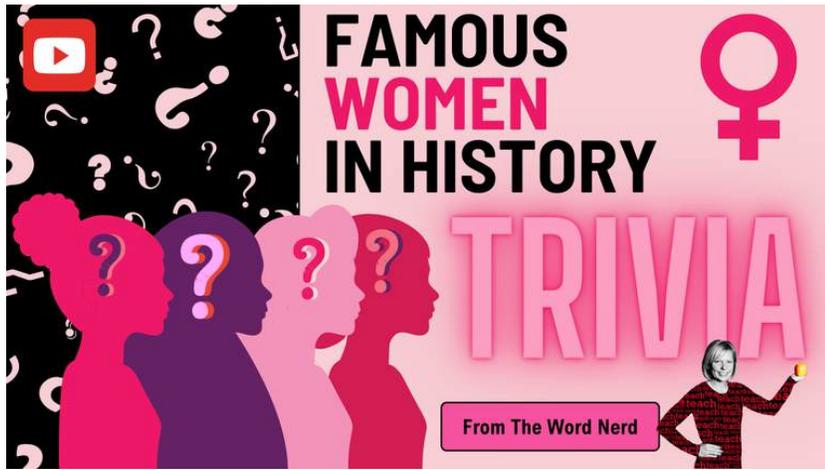
Use the below links to access the video for this activity.
Click the title, image or link to get to the video!

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY TRIVIA VIDEO



This link will take you to the YouTube Video of
International Women's Day Trivia questions:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXtOu3fXmdM>





International Women's Day Trivia Answer Sheet

Directions:
Write your answers on the lines below.

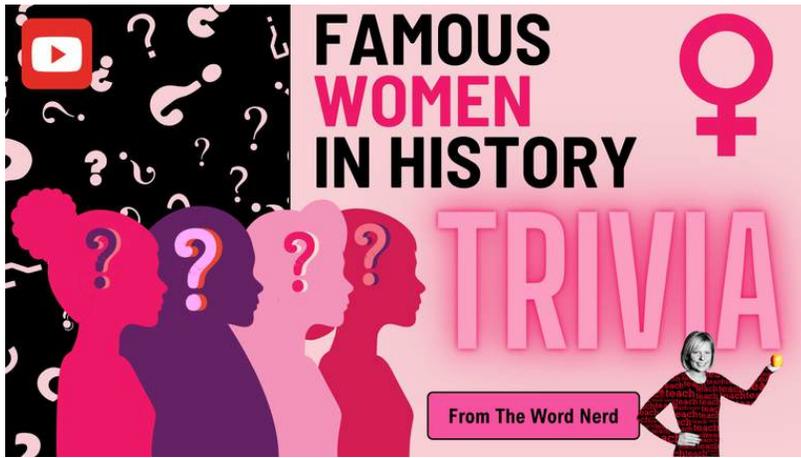
Trivia Video -->



Name/Team Name: _____

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 13. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 14. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 15. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 16. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 17. _____ |
| 8. _____ | 18. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 19. _____ |
| 10. _____ | 20. _____ |

How did you do? Are you an International Women's Day Trivia ROCKSTAR?!?!



International Women's Day Trivia Answer Sheet

Directions:
Circle your answer for each question below.

Trivia Video



Name/Team Name: _____

1. A B C D

11. A B C D

2. A B C D

12. A B C D

3. A B C D

13. A B C D

4. A B C D

14. A B C D

5. A B C D

15. A B C D

6. A B C D

16. A B C D

7. A B C D

17. A B C D

8. A B C D

18. A B C D

9. A B C D

19. A B C D

10. A B C D

20. A B C D

Score:

____/20



International Women's Day Trivia

Trivia
Video

Name: _____

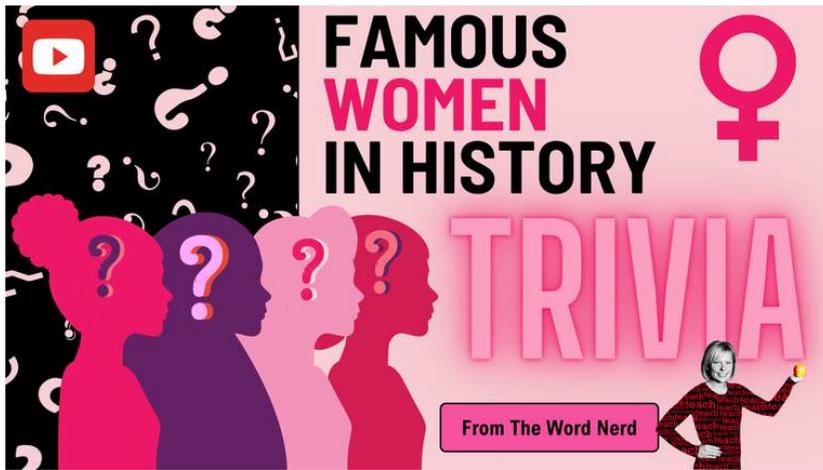
- 1** This notable woman was a Polish researcher who conducted groundbreaking research. She is most famous for her work with radioactivity.
 - a) Ruby Bridges
 - b) Marie Curie
 - c) Shirley Temple
 - d) Bessie Coleman
- 2** This notable woman was a seamstress. She refused to give up her bus seat to a white man. Her arrest led to the Montgomery bus boycott.
 - a) Malala Yousafzai
 - b) Rosa Parks
 - c) Julia Child
 - d) Sally Ride
- 3** This notable female athlete helped women earn equal pay in her sport of tennis.
 - a) Billie Jean King
 - b) Kamala Harris
 - c) Serena Williams
 - d) Florence Nightingale
- 4** This notable woman is an education advocate for girls in her country, Pakistan. She is the youngest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.
 - a) Malala Yousafzai
 - b) Octavia Butler
 - c) Taylor Swift
 - d) Sacagawea
- 5** This notable woman was the first pilot of African American and Native American descent. Her legacy was to encourage women and African Americans to pursue their dreams.
 - a) Oprah Winfrey
 - b) Amelia Earhart
 - c) Eleanor Roosevelt
 - d) Bessie Coleman
- 6** This notable woman is the founder of a non-profit organization called the Imagination Library that gives books to children across the nation. She is also a famous singer and songwriter.
 - a) Friday Kahlo
 - b) Sally Ride
 - c) Dolly Parton
 - d) Maya Angelous
- 7** This notable woman was a part of the Shoshone tribe. She helped the Lewis and Clark expedition from 1804-1806.
 - a) Maya Lin
 - b) Rosa Parks
 - c) Sacagawea
 - d) JK Rowling
- 8** This notable woman was one of the most visible leaders for the women's suffrage movement. She championed for women's rights of voting, equal pay for equal work, and abolition.
 - a) Susan B Anthony
 - b) Betsy Ross
 - c) Grace Hopper
 - d) Simone Biles
- 9** This notable woman is not only the most decorated US gymnast of all time, she is also a champion of mental health for athletes.
 - a) Ada Lovelace
 - b) Simone Biles
 - c) Margaret Sanger
 - d) Michelle Obama
- 10** This notable woman is a political leader in Burma and is a major reason that partial democracy exists in Burma. She has been the secretary for the National League for Democracy since its beginning.
 - a) Amy Tan
 - b) Aung San Suu Kyi
 - c) Angelina Jolie
 - d) Hillary Clinton



International Women's Day Trivia

Trivia Video

- 11** This notable woman was the first celebrity chef. She taught people how to experiment with new ingredients while also having fun and being relaxed in the kitchen.
 - a) Maya Lin
 - b) Eleanor Roosevelt
 - c) Julia Child
 - d) Rachel Ray
- 12** This notable woman is the first in American history to earn the rank of US Army 4 Star General.
 - a) Sonia Sotomayor
 - b) Reese Witherspoon
 - c) Ann E. Dunwoody
 - d) Sojourner Truth
- 13** This notable woman served as a mission specialist aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour in 1992 and became the first African American woman to travel into space.
 - a) Mae Jemison
 - b) Jennifer Aniston
 - c) Althea Gibson
 - d) Amelia Earhart
- 14** This notable woman is an award winning actress, a film maker and a generous humanitarian. As a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador she went on 40+ field missions, meeting with refugees in more than 30 countries
 - a) Judy Garland
 - b) Angelina Jolie
 - c) Julie Andrews
 - d) Lucille Ball
- 15** This notable woman was the first female to serve on the United States Supreme Court. She was appointed to the position by President Ronald Regan in 1981.
 - a) Tina Turner
 - b) Lucille Ball
 - c) Sandra Day O'Connor
 - d) Sonia Sotomayor
- 16** This notable Royal used her position to advocate for the homeless, people with disabilities and those afflicted by AIDS/HIV.
 - a) Ruth Bader Ginsburg
 - b) Queen Latifah
 - c) Judy Blume
 - d) Princess Diana
- 17** This notable woman is considered to be the world's most knowledgeable expert on chimpanzees. She spent two years living amongst a troop of chimpanzees in the wild.
 - a) Jane Goodall
 - b) Temple Grandin
 - c) JoJo Siwa
 - d) Sally Ride
- 18** This notable woman was a pioneer in computer programming who worked for the American Navy. The term "debugging" was invented after she removed an actual moth from a computer system in the 1940s!
 - a) Grace Hopper
 - b) Susan B Anthony
 - c) Julia Child
 - d) Katherine Johnson
- 19** This notable woman hosted an influential television talk show for 25 years. She is also a media executive and generous philanthropist.
 - a) Helen Keller
 - b) Oprah Winfrey
 - c) Juliette Gordon Law
 - d) Rosa Parks
- 20** This notable woman was the first Asian American woman elected to the US Congress. One of her most important works was Title IV, a bill that ensured equal opportunities for boys and girls in both education and athletics.
 - a) Harriet Beecher Stowe
 - b) Ruby Bridges
 - c) Shirley Temple
 - d) Patsy Mink



International Women's Day Trivia Answer Sheet

Directions:

If you'd like to check
student answers without the
video, here is the answer key.

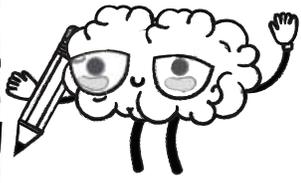
ANSWER KEY

1. B) Marie Curie
2. B) Rosa Parks
3. A) Billie Jean King
4. A) Malala Yousafzai
5. D) Bessie Coleman
6. C) Dolly Parton
7. C) Sacagawea
8. B) Susan Anthony
9. B) Simone Biles
10. B) Aung San Suu Kyi
11. C) Julia Child
12. C) Ann E. Dunwoody
13. A) Mae Jemison
14. B) Angelina Jolie
15. C) Sandra Day O'Connor
16. B) Princess Diana
17. A) Jane Goodall
18. A) Grace Hopper
19. B) Oprah Winfrey
20. D) Patsy Mink

Trivia Video



Thanks for playing!



Trivia Game Video Link

Use the below links to access the video for this activity.
Click the title, image or link to get to the video!

ST. PATRICK'S DAY TRIVIA VIDEO



This link will take you to the YouTube Video of St. Patrick's Day Trivia questions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F46JbJd1aTU>





St. Patrick's Day Trivia Answer Sheet

Directions: Write your answers on the lines below.

Trivia video:



Name/Team Name: _____

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 13. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 14. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 15. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 16. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 17. _____ |
| 8. _____ | 18. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 19. _____ |
| 10. _____ | 20. _____ |

How did you do? Are you a St. Patrick's Day Trivia ROCKSTAR?!?!

Are you a St. Patrick's Day Trivia Rockstar? Take this Trivia quiz and see!



Trivia
Video

St. Patrick's Day Trivia



1 What are the odds of finding a 4 leaf clover?

- A) 1 in 1,000 B) 1 in 10,000 C) 1 in 100,000 D) 1 in 1,000,000

2 The original Irish folktale name for leprechauns is "lobaircin". What does this word mean?

- A) little lucky man B) man with the small feet
C) small bodied fellow D) red headed lad

3 What is a 6 letter synonym for shamrock?

— — — — —

4 True or False: The 1st St. Patrick's Day parade took place in America, not Ireland.

- A) True B) False

5 Which of these facts about St. Patrick is TRUE?

- A) At age 16, he was kidnapped and forced to be a slave. B) He was born in Britain, not Ireland.
C) Before being a missionary, he was a shepherd. D) All of these things are true!

6 In what year did Chicago begin turning it's river green for St. Patrick's Day?

- A) 1951 B) 1962 C) 1973 D) 1984

7 Who is responsible for the task of dyeing the river (in Chicago) green?

- A) fire fighters union B) mayor C) plumbers union D) city council

8 True or False: Ireland, the home of St. Patrick's Day, is an island.

- A) True B) False

9 How does McDonald's celebrate St. Patrick's Day?

- A) cabbage salads B) Shamrock Shakes C) corned beef burgers D) Irish fries

10 True or False: The main color for St. Patrick's Day was originally blue, not green.

- A) True B) False





11 What does the phrase, "Erin go Bragh", a saying commonly heard on St. Patrick's Day mean?

- A) Ireland forever!
- B) Let's feast!
- C) Freedom for the Irish!
- D) May the luck be with you!

12 Which color is NOT found on the Irish flag?

- A) Green
- B) Blue
- C) Orange
- D) White

13 What was St. Patrick's name when he was born? (He later changed it to Patrick.)

- A) Declan
- B) Connor
- C) Finnigan
- D) Maewyn

14 What is the scientific name for a shamrock?

- A) Trifolium Dubium
- B) Tricloroplastia
- C) Trifoliage Verde
- D) Shamleaf

15 True or False: In Irish folktales, there are both male and female leprechauns.

- A) True
- B) False

16 What percentage of Americans claim Irish heritage?

- A) 5%
- B) 9%
- C) 14%
- D) 26%

17 How many US presidents claim Irish heritage?

- A) 3
- B) 13
- C) 23
- D) 33

18 These 2 iconic structures turn themselves green on St. Patrick's Day. (To earn points for this question, write down their names OR locations.)

1) _____

2) _____



19 According to myth and legend, when is the best time is to sneak up on a leprechaun?

- A) While he is mending his shoes
- B) While he is sleeping
- C) While he is baking cookies
- D) It's impossible.

20 Which US state is home to the largest percentage of Irish Americans?

- A) New Hampshire
- B) Massachusetts
- C) Pennsylvania
- D) Connecticut





St. Patrick's Day Trivia Answer Sheet

Directions:
Circle your answer for each question below.

Trivia Video



Name/Team Name: _____

1. A B C D
2. A B C D
3. _ _ _ _ _
4. True or False
5. A B C D
6. A B C D
7. A B C D
8. True or False
9. A B C D
10. True or False
11. A B C D
12. A B C D
13. A B C D
14. A B C D
15. True or False
16. 9% or 19% or 29%
17. 7 or 12 or 18 or 23
18. Circle 2: London Dublin Sydney Tokyo
19. When he is counting his gold OR when he is mending shoes
20. A B C D

Score:

____/20



St. Patrick's Day Trivia Answer Key

Directions:
If you'd like to check student answers without the video, here is the answer key.

ANSWER KEY

1. B) 1 in 10,000
2. C) small bodied fellow
3. CLOVER
4. True
5. D) All of the above
6. B) 1962
7. C) Plumbers Union
8. True
9. B) Shamrock Shakes
10. True
11. A) Ireland Forever!
12. B) Blue
13. D) Maewyn
14. A) Trifolium Dubium
15. False
16. B) 9%
17. C) 23
18. London Eye (London, England) Sydney Opera House (Sydney, Australia)
19. While he mends his shoes
20. A) New Hampshire

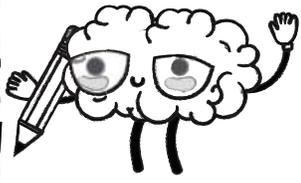
Thanks for playing!
Check out more Brain Breaks
on YouTube!

www.wordnerdcollaborative.com



Trivia
Video





Trivia Game Video Link

Use the below links to access the video for this activity.
Click the title, image or link to get to the video!

GREEN TRIVIA BRAIN BREAK GAME



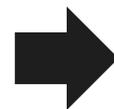
This link will take you to the YouTube Video of Green Trivia questions: <https://youtu.be/32Xeui0xLG4>





Green Trivia Answer Sheet

Trivia
Video



Directions:
Write your answers on
the lines below.

Name/Team Name: _____

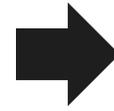
- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 13. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 14. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 15. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 16. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 17. _____ |
| 8. _____ | 18. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 19. _____ |
| 10. _____ | 20. _____ |

How did you do?
Are you a GREEN TRIVIA ROCKSTAR?!?!



Green Trivia Answer Sheet

Trivia
Video



Directions:
Circle your answer for
each question below.

Name/Team Name: _____

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1: Mike Wazowski or James Sullivan | 11. 6 or 4 |
| 2: \$4.85 or \$14.75 | 12: Hulk or Hank |
| 3: Emerald or Sapphire | 13: Greenies or Green Berets |
| 4: True or False | 14: Kale carrots limes plums
lemons spinach oranges |
| 5: A B C D | 15: Snake or Frog |
| 6: Rachel or Monica | 16: Chicago, Illinois
or Boston, Massachusetts |
| 7: Green Peas and Beans
or Green Eggs and Ham | 17: 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 8: Sara or Anne | 18: True or False |
| 9: Green Bay or Green Lake | 19: Joker the Giant
or Jolly Green Giant |
| 10: Blue and Yellow
or Blue and Red | 20: Guatemala or Greenland |

How did you do?
Are you a GREEN TRIVIA ROCKSTAR?!?!

Score: ____ / 20



Green Trivia Brain Break Game

Name: _____

Trivia
Video



1 What is the name of this funny green character in the movie **MONSTERS INC?**

- a) Mike b) Randall
- c) James d) Boo



2 Add up the Green Stickers. What is the total price?



3 What is the name of this green precious gemstone that is also the birthstone for the month of May.

- a) quartz
- b) sapphire
- c) emerald
- d) green diamond



4 True or False: Pool tables are green because the game was once played outside on grass.

- a) True
- b) False

5 Studies show the color Green helps people increase their...

- A: wealth
- B: creativity
- C: sleep
- D: kindness

6 The character in the show "Friends" who works at the coffee shop is named: _____ Green.

_____ Green

7 In a classic Dr. Seuss book, Sam I Am wants the narrator to eat What? (4 words_

8 What is the first name of the main character in this famous story? (4 letter name)

- a) Sara
- b) Anne
- c) Jill
- d) Lora



9 The NFL team the PACKERS are located in which Wisconsin City?

- a) Eau Claire
- b) Green Lake
- c) Green Bay
- d) Milwaukee



10 what two colors do you mix to make green?

_____ + _____
= GREEN

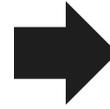




Green Trivia Brain Break Game

Name: _____

Trivia
Video



11 How many GREEN buttons are pictured?



12 What is the name of the super strong and green Marvel character? (aka: Bruce Banner, 4 letter name)

- a) Hank
- b) Stan
- c) Hulk
- d) Dane

13 What is the nickname of the special forces branch of the United States Army?

- a) Green Berets
- b) Green Sleeves
- c) Green Boots
- d) Green Beans

14 Name three foods that are naturally the color green.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____



15 The Muppet Puppet Kermit is what kind of an animal?

- a) snake
- b) frog
- c) salamander
- d) lizard

16 What US city dyes their river green on St. Patrick's Day each year?

- a) Chicago
- b) St. Louis
- c) Cincinnati
- d) San Francisco



17 What level is a green belt in Karate? (Pick a level 1-7)

Level __



18 True or False: Night vision goggles use the color green because the human eye is most sensitive to this color.

- a) True
- b) False

19 What is the name of the big green man who is the mascot for a well known vegetable company?

- a) Joker the Giant
- b) Gigantus
- c) Jolly Green Giant
- d) Green Machine Man

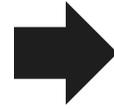
20 This country is the most sparsely populated country in the entire world and only has 16 towns.

The name of this country is...



Green Trivia Answer Key

Trivia Video

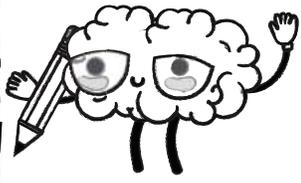


Directions:
If you'd like to check student answers without the video, here is the answer key.

ANSWER KEY

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Mike Wazowski | 11. 4 |
| 2. \$14.75 | 12. Hulk |
| 3. Emerald | 13. Green Berets |
| 4. True | 14. Kale, limes, spinach, lettuce, grapes, apples, kiwis, cucumbers, and more... |
| 5. B) Creativity | 15. Frog |
| 6. Rachel | 16. Chicago, Illinois |
| 7. Green Eggs and Ham | 17. 4 |
| 8. Anne | 18. True |
| 9. Green Bay Packers | 19. Vegetables |
| 10. Blue and Yellow | 20. Greenland |

Thanks for playing!
Check out more Brain Breaks on YouTube!



Trivia Game Video Link

Use the below links to access the video for this activity.
Click the title, image or link to get to the video!

TOURNAMENT TRIVIA VIDEO



This link will take you to the YouTube Video of
Tournament Trivia questions:

<https://youtu.be/F6cIf65R9xc>





Tournament Trivia Answer Sheet

Directions:
Write your answers on
the lines below.

Trivia Video



Name/Team Name: _____

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 13. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 14. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 15. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 16. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 17. _____ |
| 8. _____ | 18. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 19. _____ |
| 10. _____ | 20. _____ |

How did you do? Are you a
Tournament Trivia ROCKSTAR?!?!



Tournament Trivia Answer Sheet

Directions:
Circle your answer for
each question below.

Name/Team Name: _____ Trivia Video



1: A B C D

11: A B C D

2: A B C D

12: A B C D

3: A B C D

13: A B C D

4: A B C D

14: A B C D

5: A B C D

15: A B C D

6: A B C D

16: A B C D

7: A B C D

17: A B C D

8: True or False

18: A B C D

9: A B C D

19: A B C D

10: A B C D

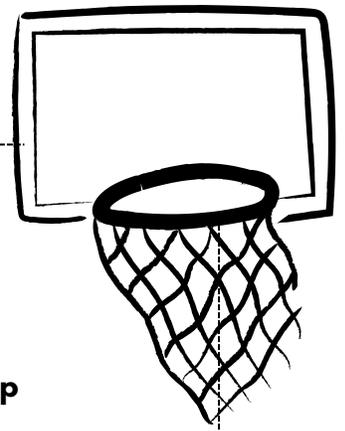
20: A B C D

Score: ____/20



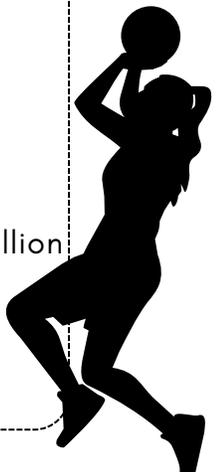
Trivia
Video

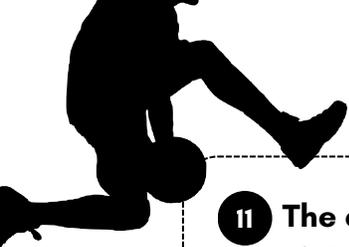
Tournament Trivia



Are you a March Madness Trivia MVP?
Take this Trivia quiz and see!

- 1 What team won the 1st NCAA men's Basketball Championship Tournament?**
a) Duke b) Villanova c) Oregon d) Oklahoma State
- 2 Which sportscaster was the first to call the NCAA tournament March Madness?**
a) Brent Musberger b) Greg Gumble c) Jim Nantz d) Ricky Waters
- 3 What is the fewest number of points scored by a team in a March Madness Tournament championship game?**
a) 20 b) 27 c) 32 d) 41
- 4 Which University won both Men's and Women's NCAA Tourney in the same year?**
a) Kansas Jayhawks b) UNC Tarheels
c) Duke Blue Devils d) UConn Huskies
- 5 It is tradition for the winning team to cut off a part of the basketball net to take home as a souvenir. Starting in 1986, what else does the winning team take home?**
a) Free concessions stand food b) The basketball court floor
c) The Jumbo Scoreboard d) The losing Team's Jerseys
- 6 Who won March Madness as both a player and a coach?**
a) Joe b. Hall b) Bobby Knight c) Dean Smith d) All of the above
- 7 What is the March Madness Anthem?**
a) Don't Stop Believing b) One Shining Moment
c) The Final Countdown d) We are the champions
- 8 True or False: There is a team that has made it into the Ncaa tournament every single year since it started.**
a) True b) False
- 9 What are the odds of filling out a perfect March Madness Bracket?**
a) 1 in 92 billion b) 1 in 92 trillion c) 1 in 92 quadrillion d) 1 in 92 Quintillion
- 10 How many teams participated in the 1st NCAA Championship basketball tournament?**
a) 8 b) 12 c) 16 d) 20





11 The day the teams are picked for the tournament is called:

- a) Super Saturday
- b) Selection Sunday
- c) Special Saturday
- d) Sensational Sunday

12 Which team has won the most Men's March Madness titles?

- a) Kansas University
- b) Duke University
- c) University of North Carolina
- d) University of Kentucky

13 Which school colors are the luckiest and have produced the most champions?

- a) white and blue
- b) red and white
- c) red and black
- d) gold and blue

14 How many players have won both March Madness and a NBA Final?

- a) 11
- b) 17
- c) 31
- d) 33

15 Which player has scored the most points in a single March Madness game?

- a) Christian Laettner, Duke
- b) Austin Carr, Notre Dame
- c) Elvin Haynes, University of Houston
- d) Oskar Robertson, Cincinnati

16 What is the lowest seed to ever win the Men's March Madness Tournament?

- a) 6th
- b) 8th
- c) 10th
- d) 12th

17 How many years after the Men's NCAA Tournament started did it take before a women's tournament began?

- a) 17 years
- b) 32 years
- c) 43 years
- d) 50 years

18 What is the highest combined total of points in a March Madness game ?

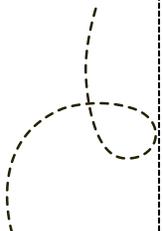
- a) 203
- b) 226
- c) 249
- d) 264

19 In it's 80 year history, How many schools have won March Madness?

- a) 72
- b) 60
- c) 41
- d) 35

20 Which team was the first to earn 20 Final Four appearances?

- a) University of North Carolina
- b) Duke University
- c) UCLA (University of California Los Angeles)
- d) University of Kentucky





Tournament Trivia Answer Sheet

Directions:

If you'd like to check student answers without the video, here is the answer key.

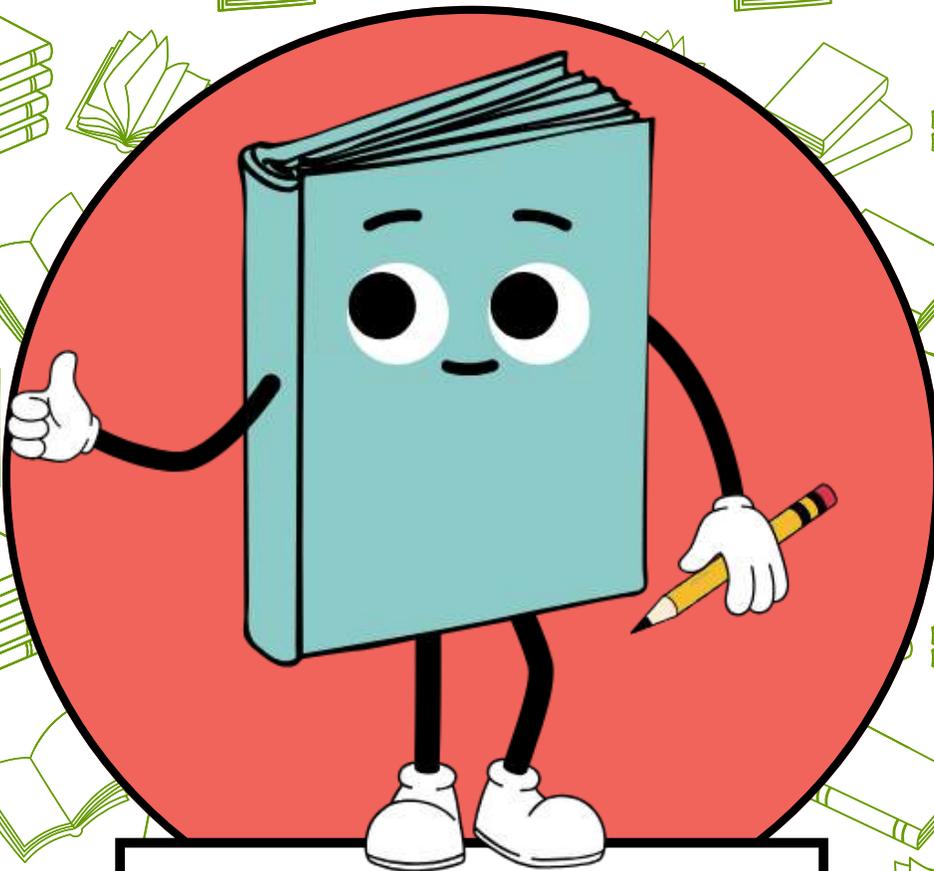
ANSWER KEY

1. C) Oregon
2. A) Brent Musberger
3. A) 20
4. D) UConn
5. B) The basketball court floor
6. D) All of the Above
7. B) One Shining Moment
8. True
9. D) 1 in 92 Quintillion
10. A) 8
11. B) Selection Sunday
12. D) Kentucky
13. A) White and Blue
14. C) 31
15. B) Austin Carr, Notre Dame
16. B) 8th Seed
17. C) 43 years
18. D) 264 points
19. D) 35
20. A) University of North Carolina

Trivia Video



Thanks for playing!
Check out more Brain Breaks on YouTube!



March 2026

WRITING PROMPTS



MARCH WRITING CHALLENGE!



- **M – Mini Mystery Story**

- Have students write a short mystery story with a twist ending. Challenge them to get from beginning to end in just one page! Bonus points if they include red herrings!

- **A – Argumentative Writing About an Athlete**

- March Madness is here! Students choose a basketball player (or any athlete) and argue why they are the GOAT (Greatest Of All Time).



- **R – Rewrite the Ending**

- Students take a well-known fairy tale, myth, or book scene and rewrite the ending in a surprising way.
- Level this prompt up by learning about and reading Irish Folktales first! You can find several [here](#).

- **C – Comic Creation**

- March is Women’s History Month. Write a short story in the form of a comic strip that features a famous woman or in which a female character is the hero.

- **H – Haiku for Spring**

- March 20th is the first day of spring! Have students write a nature-inspired haiku to celebrate the season. Not familiar with this poetry format? Learn about Haikus [here](#).

MARCH WRITING CHALLENGE!



There are lots of ways you can use these 5 challenge prompts.

- Mix them in as regular daily prompts (slides and printables are below with the rest of the month's prompts).
- Focus on one prompt each week, giving students multiple days to craft their responses.
- Allow students to choose 1 or 2 from the list to work on.

After Writing...

- Have students submit their favorite of their completed writing pieces to you via Google docs, remove their names and share them with students. Then, allow students to read and offer blind feedback to one another. (Via Google doc comments, post it notes, comments on the back of the printed paper, etc. Then, vote and award prizes to the favorite pieces. (Ideas for awards are listed below... but there are dozens of clever awards you could give!)
 - M - Most Mysterious
 - A - Arguably the best Athlete Argument
 - R - Revision Rockstar
 - C - Comic Champion
 - H - Happiest Haiku

HAVE FUN AND HAPPY WRITING!





HOW TO USE THE WRITING PROMPTS

How do we get better at any skill? We practice. If you want to be a better free-throw shooter, you get on the line and shoot free throws. If you want to be a faster swimmer, you get in the pool. The same is true for writing. The more we do it, the better we get.

In my classroom, this looks like ten minutes of writing every day. We start at five minutes a day the first week and build up, adding a minute a week, until we reach ten. The prompts in this resource will help you make that practice fun and engaging and also purposeful. The prompts will cover a variety of high interest topics, purposes and forms including fiction, nonfiction, and reflections, with an emphasis on building stamina, idea generation, and enjoyment. When applicable, I call out the genre focus and/or specific skill being practiced. Also, below you can see a list of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that are routinely addressed and covered by doing these daily writing prompts.

- **Writing CCSS: W 6-8.2, W 6-8.3, W 6-8.4, W 6-8.5, W 6-8.9, W 6-8.10**

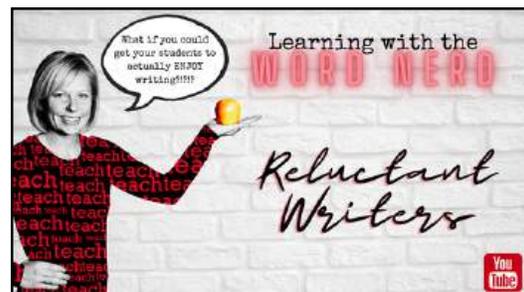
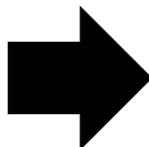
If you want, keep these “curriculum and standard” pieces of information to yourself, go for it! There is no need to let the kids know we have a secret plan to trick them into being better writers and hating it a little bit less each day!

You can either print the following prompt pages for students to directly write on (and then keep in a folder/binder) or project the prompt (via these [SLIDES](#)) onto a whiteboard/screen and have students do their writing in a dedicated notebook. Whatever works best for you... go for it!

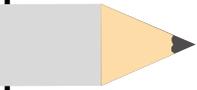
My hope is that the daily practice becomes something that students look forward to rather than dread. I hope that as students see the words and ideas pile up, their confidence grows. I hope that by having this resource of high-quality, ready to go prompts, your life will be made just little bit easier!

Happy Writing!

P.S. For more ideas on how to get reluctant writers going, watch [this video](#).



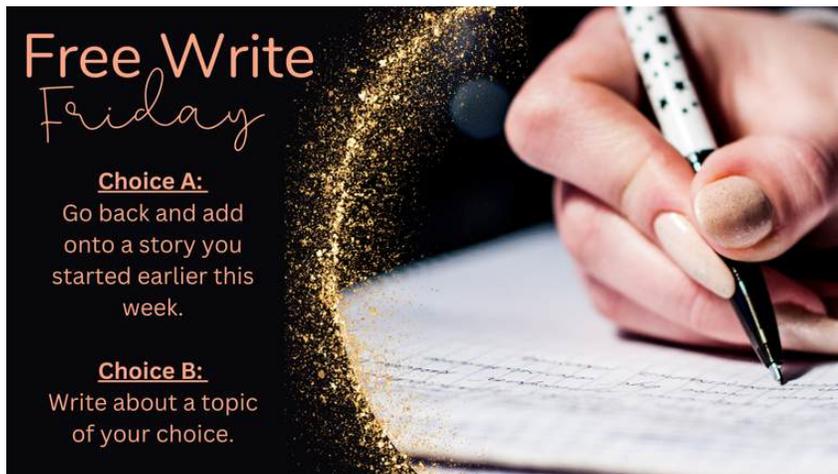
(https://youtu.be/l7UWA-pw04Q?sub_confirmation=1)




MULTI-USE FORMS

The following pages will be used multiple times throughout the resources, but are included just once to save space.

- Free Write Fridays
- Gem and Opportunity Feedback Sheets
- Writing Rubric Sheets



Free Write Friday

Choice A:
Go back and add onto a story you started earlier this week.

Choice B:
Write about a topic of your choice.



GEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

My Name: _____
Name of classmate I am reviewing: _____
Date: _____

Title of Piece/Date Written: _____

 GEMS LIST SEVERAL THINGS THE WRITER DOES WELL.	 OPPORTUNITIES LIST OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE WRITER TO IMPROVE.
_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

FINAL COMMENTS
WRITE ANY FINAL COMMENTS OR FEEDBACK HERE.

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10



GEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES



My Name:

Name of classmate I am reviewing:

Date:

Title of Piece/Date Written



GEMS

LIST SEVERAL THINGS THE WRITERS DOES WELL

- .
- .
- .
- .
- .
- .
- .

OPPORTUNITIES



LIST OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE WRITER TO IMPROVE

- .
- .
- .
- .
- .
- .
- .

FINAL COMMENTS

WRITE ANY FINAL COMMENTS OR FEEDBACK HERE:



My Name:

Name of classmate I am reviewing:

Date:

My Name:

Name of classmate I am reviewing:

Date:

Title of Piece/Date Written

Title of Piece/Date Written

 **GEMS**

LIST SEVERAL THINGS THE WRITERS DOES WELL

-
-
-
-
-
-

 **OPPORTUNITIES**

LIST OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE WRITER TO IMPROVE

-
-
-
-
-
-

FINAL COMMENTS

WRITE ANY FINAL COMMENTS OR FEEDBACK HERE:

 **GEMS**

LIST SEVERAL THINGS THE WRITERS DOES WELL

-
-
-
-
-
-

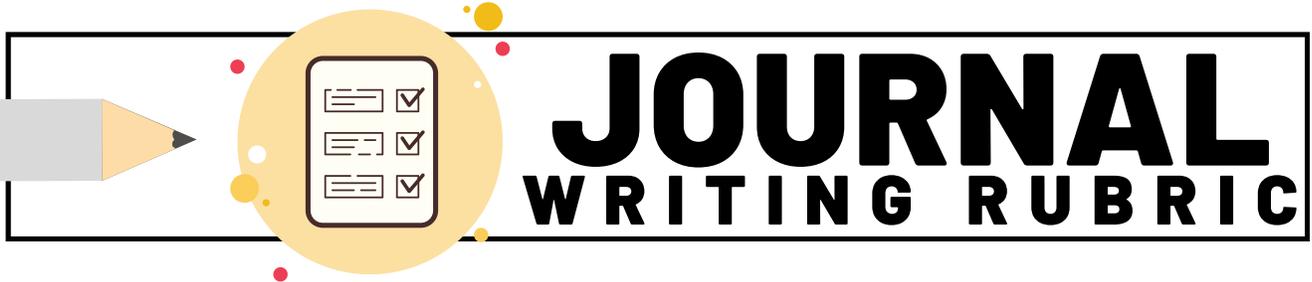
 **OPPORTUNITIES**

LIST OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE WRITER TO IMPROVE

-
-
-
-
-
-

FINAL COMMENTS

WRITE ANY FINAL COMMENTS OR FEEDBACK HERE:



The header features a pencil on the left pointing towards a central yellow circle containing a checklist icon. To the right, the words 'JOURNAL' and 'WRITING RUBRIC' are written in large, bold, black capital letters within a black rectangular border.

JOURNAL WRITING RUBRIC

Use this rubric to first communicate your writing expectations to students and then to evaluate the writing products they create. Students and/or peers can also use this rubric to self/peer score/evaluate the pieces of writing.

The rubric can be found at the bottom of each prompt for easy access for both you and your students. There is also a page with 3 rubrics to print and cut for use with this or other writing tasks.

I assign 2 points if the task was completed and done well, 1 if the task was attempted but not mastered, and 0 if the task was not attempted at all.

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10

Again, the Writing CCSS routinely covered and practiced with these prompts include:

W 6-8.2, W 6-8.3, W 6-8.4, W 6-8.5, W 6-8.9, W 6-8.10

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10

Comments:

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10

Comments:

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10

Comments:

WRITING PROMPTS

March 2-6

Monday

M - Mini Mystery

Style/Skills:
Genre: Mystery
Plotting (Beginning,
Middle, End)

Tuesday

A - Athlete Argument

Style/Skills:
Argumentative
Writing

Wednesday

R - Rewrite the
Ending

Style/Skills:
Genre: Folktale
Creative Writing
Plotting (End)

Thursday

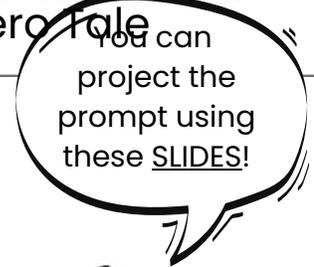
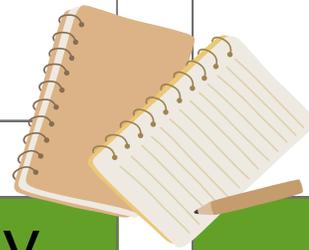
C - Comic Creation

Style/Skills:
Format: Graphic
Novel/Comic
Dialogue
Genre: Nonfiction or
Superhero Tale

Friday

H - Haiku for Spring

Style/Skills:
Format: Poetry
(Haiku)
Syllable counting



WRITING PROMPTS

March 9-13

Monday

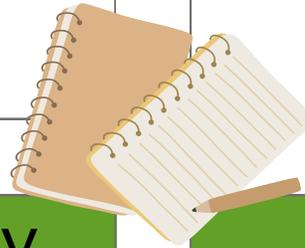
Letter on a Plane

Style/Skills:
Prediction
Creative Writing

Tuesday

Who are the BAD GUYS?

Style/Skills:
Prediction
Creative Writing
Continue the Story



Wednesday

Pick a Color Any Color

Style/Skills:
Description Writing
Tension

Thursday

Ice Cream for Sale!

Style/Skills:
Descriptive Writing
Word Play
Advertising

You can project the prompt using these [SLIDES!](#)

Friday

Free Write Friday

Write whatever you'd like... including continuing a past prompt. :)



WRITING PROMPTS

March 16-20

Monday

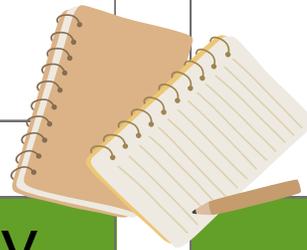
Lucky YOU!

Style/Skills:
Self Reflection

Tuesday

The End of the Line

Style/Skills:
Creative Writing



Wednesday

Hiya Tall Guy!

Style/Skills:
Descriptive Writing
Word Choice

Thursday

Social Media Sequence

Style/Skills:
Format: Social Media
Post
Sequencing/Event
Retelling

You can
project the
prompt using
these SLIDES!

Friday

Free Write Friday

Write whatever you'd
like... including
continuing a past
prompt. :)



WRITING PROMPTS

March 23-27

Monday

Egg-cellent Prank

Style/Skills:

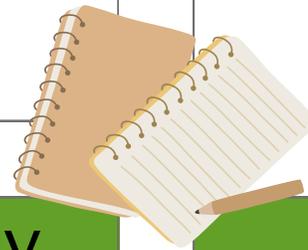
Prediction
Creative Writing
Humor

Tuesday

Similar Simile

Style/Skills:

Figurative Language -
Simile
Setting Description



Wednesday

I thought I saw...

Style/Skills:

Creative Writing
Continue the Story
Genre: Science Fiction

Thursday

Travel Time!

Style/Skills:

Descriptive Writing
Careers in Writing
NonFiction Writing

Friday

Free Write Friday

Write whatever you'd like... including continuing a past prompt. :)



Monday (the 30th)

Travel Time!

Style/Skills:

Descriptive Writing
Careers in Writing
NonFiction Writing

NAME: _____

WRITING PROMPTS
FROM THE WORD NERD

**Your job:
Travel Brochure Writer**

You have been hired to write the description that accompanies this picture in a travel brochure. The location is the Blue Ridge Mountains, in Asheville, North Carolina.



To learn about this location before you write, visit this website:
<https://blueridgemountainstravelguide.com/blue-ridge-mountains-of-north-carolina/>

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 15 horizontal lines.

Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			

Total Points = ___/10

Teacher Comments:

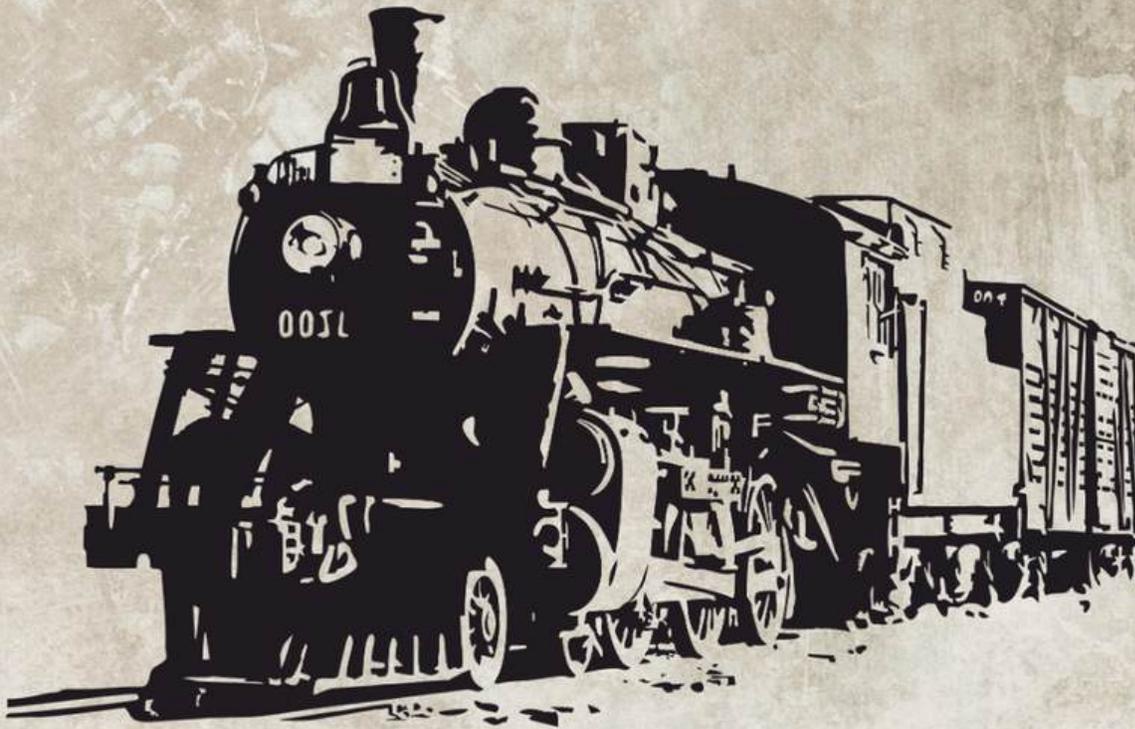


LESSONS

"These stories are wonderful, believable and historically consistent...
They brought a tear, goosebumps and the chills."
- C. Warren Moses, Children's Aid Society CEO and Archivist

Orphan Train Riders

historical fiction
3 stories



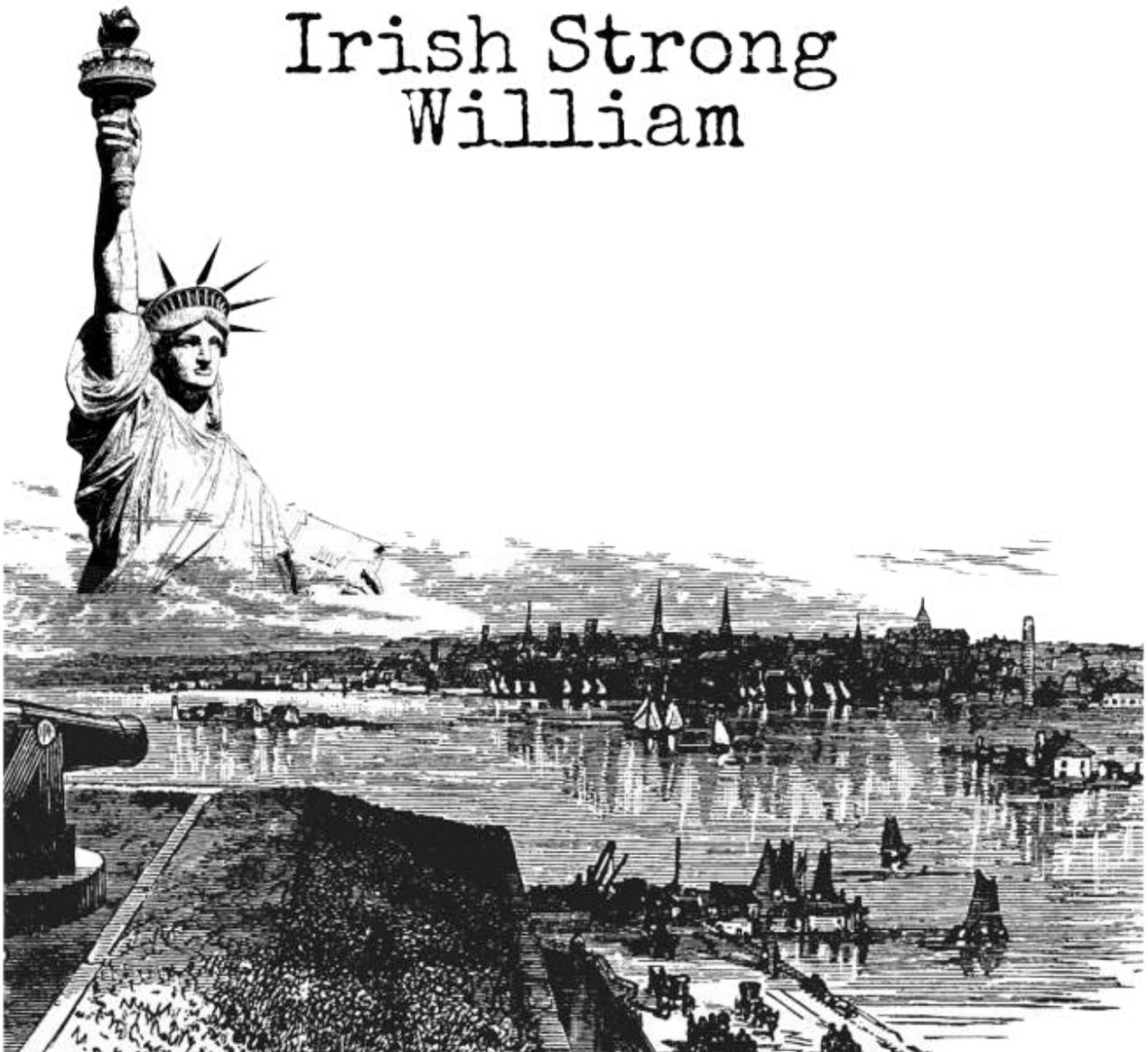
Amanda Zieba

ORPHAN TRAIN RIDERS:
IRISH STRONG WILLIAM
UNIT STUDY



Listen In!

Irish Strong William



Irish Strong William

Listen to the story here: <https://youtu.be/QVq5HeTGmL4>



Irish Strong William

“There’s nothing left for us to love in Ireland. Ireland killed everything we loved... your mother, your sister and all of our potatoes. America, that’s where we’ll be going. They will have food in America. I will get a good job building railroads in America. Everything will be better in America,” Da declared.

AMERICA. AMERICA. AMERICA.

William had been hearing about America for the past uncountable number of days as their ship crossed the ocean. He didn’t much care where the ship stopped, as long as it stopped. He’d had enough of this smelly, rocking, ship full of sick people.

AMERICA, AMERICA, AMERICA.

His father wasn’t the only one talking about America. His new friend, Shane, who was traveling alone talked about it constantly.

“There are big buildings in America. Anyone can earn lots of money in America. The richest people in the world live in America,” Shane would ramble on.

AMERICA. AMERICA. AMERICA.

William was glad his little brother Hugh couldn't talk yet, but he wouldn't be surprised if his first word was "America."

It was obvious to William that everyone on the boat really wanted to get to America. What wasn't obvious to him was why America would want them... a boat full of starving and tired Irishmen.

When they finally landed, they stood in long lines, took showers, and then waited to be examined by doctors. Throughout the entire process Shane chattered away about America.

"Do you know they call entering America 'walking through the Golden Door'? I wonder if there is lots of gold in America. Maybe I can find some and send it back to my family in Ireland. One day we'll have enough, and they'll be able to join us here. Then all of us will live together again. America, that's where everything is going to change!"

At last, it was their turn to be examined. Shane went first, then William, then baby Hugh and finally Da.

"Sir I'm sorry, but you'll have to step out of line," the doctor said firmly to William's father.

"What's wrong?" Da asked, alarm creeping into his voice.

"Only healthy people are allowed to be let into America. You are sick. You have tuberculosis. I can see the beginning stages in your throat. It is not uncommon for people sharing small spaces, like the boat you have been traveling on, to contract the disease. I am sorry, but you will not be allowed into the country."

"What... what am I supposed to do?" Da asked in shock.

"You can go back to where you came from," the doctor answered coldly.

"But what about my boys?" Da asked in panic.

“They are healthy. They can continue on into America. Now please, move aside. I have more immigrants to examine.”

Da walked numbly to the side of the room, motioning William and Hugh into his arms. Shane also walked over.

“Boys, I... I don't know what to do. I wish your mother were here,” Da whispered hugging them close. The three of them stood silently, hugging fiercely until Da spoke again suddenly. “Shane. You are traveling alone. Do you want some company?”

“I... I ...” the boy stammered, unsure of what to say.

“Would you take William? I will give you our travel money,” Da said pressing a wad of bills into his hand. “You are old enough to find good work.

Together you two can make it.”

Shane looked at him in shock, but finally answered. “Yes. I can take him.”

“Da, no! I don't want to leave you!” William cried as he realized what was happening.

“Listen William,” Da said sternly. “There is nothing for you in Ireland. If you come back, you will surely starve. I am sick. I cannot help you anymore. I will take baby Hugh and travel back to your grandmother's. She will take care of him.”

“Please Da, don't leave me,” William begged.

“I don't want to hear another word. Except this: Trust...” Da began waiting for William to complete the family motto.

“In God,” William said softly.

“Honor,” Da continued.

“Your family.”

“Irish...”

“Strong,” William finished looking into his Da's shining green eyes.

Nothing else needed to be said. William's father gave him one more tight hug, stood holding Hugh with one arm, turned, and walked out the door. Shane took hold of William's hand and marched him in the opposite direction... to America.

A decorative graphic for Chapter 2, featuring a large white number '2' inside a black, irregular, brush-stroke-like shape. The word 'Chapter' is written in a small, white, sans-serif font to the left of the number.

“Stay here. I’ll be back,” Shane demanded shooing William into the back of a crate. The crate was nestled behind a heap of trash in the back of an alley. It was where they would be sleeping tonight. Shane had never left William alone before and the whole situation was making William feel nervous.

“But where are you going?” William asked.

“Don’t worry about where I am going. Just stay in that box and don’t get out until I come back!” Shane yelled at him as he walked away.

That had been hours ago, when it had just begun to get dark. Now it was pitch black and Shane was not back. William huddled in the back of the crate and shivered in the cool night air. The sounds of the noisy city surrounded him and kept him from falling asleep.

He was scared and alone. He was about to cry when he remembered the last thing his father had said to him. Trust in God. Honor Your Family. Irish Strong. He was repeating that mantra when he heard footsteps coming his direction. Closer, closer, closer. Suddenly something grabbed his foot and he cried out.

“Shhh! It’s just me. Move over and make some room for me.”

“Shane?”

“Yeah Shane. Who else would it be? Now go to sleep!”

“Shane, I’m hungry,” William quietly whined.

“I can give you a knuckle sandwich or you can go to sleep!” Shane responded gruffly.

William tucked himself down into the crate wondering when Shane had gotten so mean. He was always nice on the boat, making up games to keep him occupied. He agreed to help William when his

Da had gotten sick. He comforted William and until this point had taken good care of him. But

something seemed different tonight. Now that Shane was back though, William wasn't so scared, and it was a bit warmer with two of them tucked into the box. He was finally able to fall asleep.

In the morning William awoke with a sore neck and an empty belly. His stomach grumbled loudly so he nudged Shane awake and picked up where last night's conversation left off.

“Shane, I'm hungry.”

“Well, whatdya want me to do about it?”

Shane answered grinchily.

“Let's use some of my Da's money to buy breakfast.”

“We can't... It's all gone,” Shane said softly, his voice changing from mean to ashamed.

“Gone! We spent it all already?” William asked confused.

“No, I lost it gambling last night,” Shane said so softly it almost came out as a whisper.

“Shane, my Da trusted you!” William yelled. “I know. I screwed up okay! But we've been wandering the streets for three days with no place to stay and no work together. I thought if I won a little more money we could pay to stay at a boarding house, and I could leave you there while I worked. But I... I lost.”

“So now what do we do?”

“I dunno.”

“Shane? I'm still hungry.”

“I know kid. Me too.”

They crawled out of the box, dusted themselves off and walked together out of the alley. Even though it was early, the streets were already busy with vendors getting their carts ready for the day's customers. The delicious smell of the food being sold made the boys' mouths water.

“Hey, I have an idea,” Shane said pulling William off to the side of the street. “Here's my plan.” he said whispering into William's ear.

“Are you sure?” William asked after hearing the plan.

“Are you hungry or not?”

William was still angry at Shane for losing his Da’s money and he didn’t really trust that this was a good plan. But he didn’t know what else to do.

“Yes,” William finally agreed, ready to do almost anything to get some food.

“Alright then, get going,” Shane said shoving him forward.

William stumbled into the street and walked nervously over to a pastry cart. When he got near the front of the cart, he pretended to trip and threw himself in front of the vendor’s feet. He was so nervous and overwhelmed that the tears came easily.

As he made a fuss, the cart vendor bent to help him up and check for injuries. Then Shane snuck up to the back of the cart and snatched two pastries. Within moments the vendor had William back up on his feet and was on his way.

“That was brilliant!” Shane praised when they met up again a few blocks down the road. “Let’s do it again.”

The boys greedily gulped down their stolen breakfast as they walked and searched for the next victim of their plan. A few minutes later Shane pointed to a milk cart and William nodded. William repeated the same routine, but this time it didn’t work out as well. When the vendor turned to look at William, he saw Shane out of the corner of his eye.

“Stop! Thief!” the vendor yelled.

Shane turned and ran... straight into the belly of a cop. Shane bounced off the man and turned to run the other direction, but the policeman was too quick and too strong. He stretched an arm out and grabbed Shane by the collar. He marched Shane over to the vendor, made him hand back the milk and apologize. Then the officer began walking down the street... Shane’s collar still firmly gripped in his big muscular hand.

William stood stunned for a moment, but then ran off after Shane and the policeman. He was breathing hard when he finally caught up with them.

“Please sir,” William pleaded “Where are you taking him? Are you taking him to jail?”

The policeman stopped, walked Shane over to an alley and sat him down on pile of boxes, a pile not all that different from the one they had slept in last night. The policeman lifted William up to sit next to him. The three of them sat for a moment staring at each other.

“Alright, tell me your story lads.” the cop barked. William and Shane were surprised to hear his Irish accent. Somehow it made him a bit more trustworthy. It was Shane who spoke first, figuring he’d better do his best to get them out of the mess he created.

“Well, officer, we just got to America three days ago. I came by myself, see, because I’m trying to earn some money for my family. William’s family starved, except his Da and baby brother. But when we got here, his Da was sick, and so he asked me to take him. We don’t know anyone here and we didn’t have anywhere to stay. I thought maybe if I made a little money we could get a place. But no one’s about

to hire me, even if I am 15 and strong, when I have to drag this little ‘un around. So...”

“Yes,” the policeman said, motioning for him to continue the story.

“So, I tried to win us some money... gamblin’. And it didn’t work out so well. We were hungry, so we tried to steal some breakfast. We’re real sorry and we know right from wrong! We just didn’t know what else to do.” Shane finished and then looked down into his lap.

“I see,” the policeman said. “Well, let me tell you my story. My name is Officer Sullivan. When I was 15 I also came to this country from Ireland. New York is and was a hard place, especially for an Irishman. But, with some honest hard work and some friends, I was able to get a good job. Now I have a family and a place of my own.” “Irish strong,” William said softly.

“Say again?” Officer Sullivan asked.

“It’s something my Da always says, Irish strong... that’s what you were,” William explained.

“You’re right. And when I saw your red headed freckle face,” he said pointing to Shane, “I knew where you were from. And you little one, your dark green eyes are a dead giveaway. So, how about I be your friend in New York? Let me take you to a place that helps kids like you. Will you come with me there?”

“Do they have food?” asked Shane.

“Yes, food and much more. They have showers, clean clothes, and beds to sleep in,” Officer Sullivan said. “This’ll do you more good than a night in jail. Remember to thank me tonight in your prayers. I might have just saved your lives.”

“Yes,” Shane answered quickly for the both of them. “Yes, we’ll go.”

Officer Sullivan walked them to a large building and left them with the farewell “Irish strong.”

3 Chapter

Even though Shane and William had been up for quite a while, it was still very early. William sat on top of his leather suitcase they had retrieved from the alley and stared up at the door. He was not sure if he wanted to see what was on the other side.

His bare feet were caked in dirt and his shaggy sandy hair didn’t lay quite flat. The smell of food was promising, but the sound of adult voices on the other side of the wooden door had him feeling uneasy. William still didn’t much like adults. Even though the last one who had brought them here had been nice, he still left. Adults, they always seemed to be leaving him.

He thought about leaving. Maybe Officer Sullivan was wrong. Maybe these were not nice people who would help them. As he shifted his legs to stand up, a well-

dressed man opened the door and looked out. He didn't say anything but nodded and motioned the boys to enter.

William looked at Shane, still willing to follow his lead, even after all the trouble he had gotten them into. Shane shrugged.

"We don't have anywhere else to go. It's probably better than sleeping in a box," Shane explained and then walked through the doorway. William looked carefully at the man standing at the door once more before making up his mind and following Shane inside.

Once the man had closed the door, he took the lead and walked them through a series of hallways until they arrived at a dining room of sorts. William was surprised to see it was filled with children of all ages. There were kids his age, babies, some about the same age as Hugh and some older than even Shane. The three of them walked to a table, sat down and were served a steaming plate of eggs and oatmeal.

After a few bites, the man welcomed the boys

to the Children's Aid Society, introduced himself as Mr. McCully and then asked them how they came to be here. Shane, the guilty party, wasn't really excited to tell the tale, but William had no problem offering up all of the details.

A decorative graphic for the chapter title. It features a large, stylized number '4' in the center, with the word 'Chapter' written in a smaller font below it. The entire graphic is set against a dark, textured background that resembles a leaf or a piece of fabric.

Mr. McCully listened carefully, occasionally stroking his enormous bushy beard as William told their story. When William was finished, he let out a heavy sigh. Just thinking about all that had happened made him feel tired.

“Did Officer Sullivan tell you what we do here?” Mr. McCully asked.

“He told us you help kids,” William said.

“He’s right. We do,” Mr. McCully confirmed and both boys relaxed a little. “We help lots of kids and we help them in lots of different ways. Some kids we send to school. We give some kids a cheap place to stay while they work in the city. But I have different plans for you two. Shane, I think that you would be a great addition to a farm family, especially since you already probably know some farming skills

from potato farming in Ireland. We would like to teach you how to grow some of our American crops like corn and wheat and also how to take care of animals like cows, horses, pigs and chickens. You can learn all of this out at our Farm School. It would be very helpful for you to know these things and it might not be such a shock from city life if you spend some time there first. It also seems like you could use some help getting rid of some bad habits like gambling and stealing... we can help you with that too. Then, once you learn what you need to know, we’ll send you on a train to a family who will love and care for you.”

“I guess that sounds like an alright plan,” Shane agreed.

“What about me? Can I go learn how to be an American farmer too?” William asked.

“I’m afraid not. The Brace Memorial Farm school is only for older boys. You are much too young. But don’t worry, some family will want you just the way you are,” Mr. McCully spoke

kindly. William and

Shane looked at each other nervously.

“You mean you’re going to split us up?”

William cried horrified and scrambled to clutch Shane’s arm tightly.

“Please sir, I promised his Da I’d look after him.

Can’t you make an exception? I promise to look after him real good,” Shane begged.

“No. I’m sorry lad. There is a train headed to Indiana in a few hours, and William, you will be on it. Shane, you will leave for the farm tomorrow.

Finish your breakfast now and I promise to find you before you each leave,” Mr. McCully said firmly.

William leaned into Shane and began to

quietly cry. Shane sat in shocked silence, too upset to even finish his breakfast. They sat this way for a long time. Finally, Mr. McCully came back over and told Shane to say goodbye to William and then follow the older boys out of the dining room.

Shane turned to William and said the only

words that he knew that might give him courage and hope: Trust in God. Honor your family. Irish strong. Then, with one last sad look, he left.

“Those are some nice words lad. Have you heard them before?” Mr. McCully asked gently.

William only nodded. “You know, I’ve been thinking about you since I left your breakfast table. Here’s what I know about you William. You are from Ireland. You came here on a big boat and when you got here your father, a strong Irishman was denied entry because he was sick. So, he told Shane, to take care of you. Is Shane also Irish?” William nodded yes. “I see,” Mr. McCully continued. “And then when you got in trouble on the street, Officer Sullivan brought you to me. Did you know that he is an Irishman?”

“Yes,” William said. “He told me to stay Irish strong, just like my Da.”

“And do you also know that I was born in Ireland?” Mr. McCully asked, his big bushy eyebrows arching up.

“You were?!” William asked excitedly.

“I was. Now, it seems to me that since you left your Da, you have been passed into the hands of one good Irishman to the next. And I have no reason to believe why it should not continue. I have made arrangements and I will be joining you on this afternoon’s train. I will do my best to deposit you into a loving, and if possible, Irish family.”

“Really? You’d do that for me?” William asked skeptically. He still wasn’t entirely trustworthy of adults, but between Officer Sullivan and Mr. McCully, he might be ready to change his mind.

“I would. Now let’s go get clean and dressed. We don’t have much time before we depart for the train station.”

A few hours later William was standing under the awning of the Children’s Aid Society clean and smartly dressed. He watched the other children fidget nervously as they looked out to the muddy streets as rain poured down. Rain or shine the train

left at noon, so they walked as quickly as they could to the station. The group was led by Mr. McCully who had the only umbrella of the group. What had started out as a hopeful event for William, now felt like a big wet mess. Something bad was always happening, even after someone promised something good.

At the train station tickets were bought, feet squeaked noisily in wet shoes and 25 children boarded the train. The rain fell in thick sheets, washing over the train, making it impossible for the children inside to see out the windows as they left New York City. They sat, huddled and shivering, in wet clothes.

William leaned against the window and began to cry, his tears mimicking the raindrops that slid down the windowpane. He hoped that Mr. McCully was right, that someone wonderful would be waiting for him in Indiana, maybe even an Irish family. He tried to think positive, but it had been a long miserable day, and he had a hard time believing it was going to get any better.

A decorative graphic for the chapter title. It features a large, bold number '5' in the center, with the word 'Chapter' written in a smaller font below it. The entire graphic is set against a dark, textured, circular background that resembles a splatter or a cloud.

When it was time to go to sleep, they pulled off their still damp clothes and slid between the covers of their Pullman car beds in their under clothes. Their outfits were hung to dry so they would be wearable in the morning.

“I bet Mr. McCully is sad now that he paraded us through the streets to the train stations in our new uniforms,” William overheard another child whisper.

One look over at Mr. McCully and William decided sleep was a much better option than talking nasty about the man in charge, especially since he had been nothing but nice to William. He closed his eyes tight and tried to forget all of the events of the day.

He dreamed of a ship rocking and tossing in the waves. A great storm was crashing down on the ship. In the dream William, his Da and his brother Hugh were up on the main deck. They were trying to stand despite the rain and wind. Suddenly lightning flashed and William fell to the deck. He looked up in time to see his father and Hugh being pitched overboard.

“Nooooo!” he yelled and awoke, sitting straight up in his seat. He started crying, looking around the train car for a familiar face. His heart was racing and tears were streaming down his face.

“No, no, no,” he cried into his hands. “They’re gone.” He felt a gentle hand on his shoulder and then the warmth of someone sitting next to him.

“Shh, it’s alright,” a man’s voice soothed. It almost sounded like his father.

“Everyone leaves me!” William cried. “First my Mum and sister, then Da and Hugh and now Shane is gone too! I will always be alone!”

“Now that’s not true,” the man, who William

now recognized as Mr. McCully, soothed. “In a few hours we will be pulling into Indiana where many wonderful people are waiting to add you and the rest of these children into their families. Come now William, Irish strong.”

William sniffed and rubbed the back of his hand across his fair face, wiping away the tears. He half listened as Mr. McCully continued to talk about Indiana and what his new life would be like. At some point he must have fallen back asleep because the next thing he remembered was a child’s voice shouting,

“We’re here!”



The first thing William noticed about Indiana was that it was not raining. He didn’t have time to

see much else because the inside of the train car was a flurry of activity. Children were feverishly putting on their clothes, which had thankfully dried in the night while they slept. Chaperones were tidying hair and giving instructions.

After many wild minutes, the group exited the train car and walked down the city street to a large building with colorful signs. William heard another child say that it was an opera house where movies were shown. William had never heard of such a thing and was eager to see what was inside.

He hustled in through the doorway, but then stopped cold when he saw the crowd of people. Mr. McCully stepped up next to him, took his hand and walked him in the rest of the way. He stood William next to other children his age. He saw that everyone looked a little nervous and for some reason, that made him feel a little better.

He looked out into the crowd, remembering that Mr. McCully said that he would do his best to put him with an Irish family. He tried to find a group of people with red hair or lots of freckles like

Shane. He tried to find a tall man with thick dark hair like his Da. He listened for a voice that sounded like his Mum. But there were so many people and nothing stuck out. He didn't get to pick them out anyway... it was the other way around.

He did his best to stand still as Mr. McCully talked to the people telling them how the process worked.

“If you find a child you'd like to adopt, please bring them to me and we can start on the necessary paperwork. Remember, if you are choosing to take home a child you are agreeing to care for him or her as you would your own children, making them truly a part of your family. This includes sending them to school and taking them to church. Now, before we begin... are there any Irish families present?”

William searched the crowd again, his eyes sweeping the crowd, looking for a hand up. But he saw none.

“Sorry lad, I tried,” Mr. McCully said as he patted him on the shoulder and then stepped off the stage.

There was a general rush to the front of the movie theater, everyone anxious to have the first pick. Mr. McCully stopped the herd from crushing the children and made them get into an orderly line. Then he went to the back and waited. Several couples quickly chose babies or very young toddlers and then went to meet Mr. McCully.

Couples passed through the line, talking to children, asking them questions and occasionally even feeling their muscles. William remembered Mr. McCully saying this was farm country and he supposed the people were looking for strong and healthy children. There were very few children left on the stage, but no one stopped to talk to William.

He was confused.

7

Chapter

“No one wants you,” the boy next to him leaned over to say in a nasty whisper. “Because you are Irish. Mr. McCully was trying to help you but really he marked you damaged goods. These people here don’t like the Irish.”

“What do you mean?” William asked.

“Well, you all came to America when your potatoes died right?” the boy asked and William nodded. “So, you came here, to America, poor and starving. How are you supposed to make their country better? They think you made it worse. They wish you would just go back where you came from.”

“How do you know this?” William challenged.

“My father used to talk about it all the time.

Irishmen stole his job as a canal builder. My father hates the Irish. And so do I,” the boy explained. He faced forward and refused to say another word to William.

“May the cat eat you and the devil eat the cat!” William cursed at the boy.

William felt his face redden and his eyes fill with tears. How could Mr. McCully and Officer Sullivan not tell him this? How could they put him up here like a fool hoping someone would take him? After what felt like hours, William was the only one left on stage and there was no one left in the auditorium looking for children. At some point he had sat down while Mr. McCully finished paperwork with all of the adopting couples. Finally he was finished and walked over to William. He sat down next to him on the stage with a heavy sigh.

“My Da always said a good run is better than a bad stand,” William said bravely to the older man.

“I would agree, but my Da always said a good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor’s book. What do you say we get outta here and

get some dinner on our way back to New York? I know a great pub a few hours from here.” Mr. McCully said.

“Sure,” William agreed sadly.

Together they left the opera house and walked down the street to the train station. They boarded and ate bologna sandwiches on their laps to hold them over until dinner and said very little. It was almost night fall when they pulled into Norfolk Station. William sleepily followed Mr. McCully as they walked through the town. It was quite a walk. As they neared the end of one street, William could hear lively music coming from one of the buildings. As they walked into this building his spirits immediately lifted.

It was as if he had stepped across the ocean and back into Ireland. Happy faces and clothing he recognized surrounded him on all sides. Rowdy music and Gaelic dialect flooded into his ears. And deliciously familiar smells of potatoes and bread greeted him welcomingly. Mr. McCully smiled

broadly as he showed William to a booth seat. He chatted fondly with the serving girl who brought them bread and something to drink.

“Cheers,” she said after promising their dinner would be out shortly.

“What is this place?” William asked Mr. McCully.

“We are in Norfolk, Massachusetts and this is Brandon’s Pub,” he answered plainly.

“All of these people look Irish,” William pointed out.

“Aye, and they are,” Mr. McCully affirmed.

“But I thought that boy said no one like us Irishmen. Why are they all here?”

“Well, just because someone says something harsh doesn’t mean we back down and go home! Where’s the Irish strong in that? No... everyone in here has heard their fair share of mean things, but the way they got through it was sticking together.

They've made a nice place for Irish people here in Norfolk."

William sat and thought about this while he ate his dinner. He watched the men drinking and talking. He watched the workers serving food. He watched a few people dance to the music.

Everywhere he looked there was something to bring a smile to his face. He suddenly wished that he could live here.

"Who ya got here McCully?" a friendly redheaded woman asked.

"This here is William. He comes from our fair Ireland. He's been riding the train with me. Today we've been to Indiana. Just on our way back to New York now."

"Ah, I see. Well, that's beyond the pale," she commented sadly.

"Why's that?" asked William. "Well, I'm needing a dish boy that's what. My Robbie's just gone off fighting in the civil war and I don't have enough help in this place! See over there?" she asked pointing. "That's Dana. She's a fine dishwasher, but

no good at dish collecting. And that over there is my husband, Brandon. The only thing he's good for is pouring drinks. My other son Collin is always playing the bagpipes in that noisy band and I'm busy cooking! Plus, I have an empty bed to fill too. I wonder where I'd find a good strong Irish lad to help me," she trailed off pretending to think about her problem.

"Oh! I could help!" William nearly shouted.

"Away with the fairies! You're crazy! Do you think you'd want to stay here? With me and this rowdy bunch?" she teased him.

"Oh yes ma'am. I'm a hard worker and I know I could help."

"My darling, we'd love to have ya. My name is Bridget little love. I'm plenty busy now but wait around a bit and you and me and Mr. McCully over there, we can set things right," Bridget said rushing back to the kitchen, winking at Mr. McCully.

"Does she mean it? Can I really stay here?" William asked.

“I promised I’d do my part and deliver you into the hands of an Irishman. Is an Irishwoman good enough?” Mr. McCully asked seriously.

“Yes sir!” William cheered. “Thank you for helping me. I will do just as my Da said... Trust in God. Honor this family and my old one, and always be Irish strong.”

Mr. McCully patted him gently on the head and turned to look at the stage where the musicians were standing. Just then the band stopped for a break and one of the members walked straight over to their table.

“Evening Mr. McCully,” the fiddle player said shaking Mr. McCully’s hand. “Who’s this?” he asked looking at William.

“Well, hello there Garrett! This is William, he was a train rider, but I think I’ve found him a home here in Norfolk,” Mr. McCully cheerfully explained.

“Is that so?” Garrett asked.

“Yes! I’m going to help Bridget with the dishes!” William piped into the conversation excitedly.

“Well long life to you lad. Did you know, I was once a rider on the orphan train?” Garrett asked him.

“You were?” William asked, amazed.

“Yes, now scoot over and I’ll tell you all about how Mr. McCully plucked me from the streets of New York and found me a home here in Norfolk.

Afterward

August 1864

Dear William,

It hardly seems possible that we've been in America just four months. It's different than I imagined it would be, but better in some ways too. Mr. McCully came to see me out at the Farm School when he got back from riding the train with you and gave me this address. I hope this letter gets to you.

Life at the Farm School was a lot of work, but there was always plenty of food and I made some good friends too. Even though most of us ended up being adopted in different towns and states, we have plans to meet up and visit when we turn 18.

I'm living in Wisconsin now, on a dairy farm. Good thing I learned how to milk a cow before I got here! My new family is very nice, and I especially like having brothers again. I am working hard to earn money of my own to send back to my family in Ireland. It's a long shot, but I still hope that they too will come to America.

Please write and tell me of your new life!

Irish Strong!

Shane

Orphan Train Riders: Irish Strong William

1. On a piece of paper write the word and its definition. .

immigrant

mantra

clutch

pastry

vendor

victim

denied

sooth

curse

auditorium

2. Then create flashcards using a thesaurus, with the vocabulary word on the front side and a synonym for the word on the back side

3. Alphabetize your flashcards

4. Sort your flashcards into three piles, noun, verbs and adjectives.

5. Select two words and write a sentence that includes both.

True or False

Write T if a statement is TRUE and F if a statement is False.

1. ____ At Ellis Island, everyone was let into America, no matter what.
2. ____ It was very difficult for immigrants to make a good living in America.
3. ____ William had to leave everyone in his family behind as he entered America.

Multiple Choice

Write A, B,C or D in the answer space to indicate your choice for the best answer.

1. ____ William was adopted in the state of...?
 - a. New York
 - b. Skibereen, Ireland
 - c. Indiana
 - d. Massachusetts
2. ____ Why was William's dad not allowed to come into America?
 - a. He was Irish.
 - b. He had tuberculosis.
 - c. He had small pox.
 - d. He had yellow fever.
3. ____ How did William and Shane get breakfast once they ran out of money?
 - a. They begged a vendor for some milk and a croissant.
 - b. They didn't eat until they got to the Children's Aid Society.
 - c. They stole from a pastry cart.
 - d. They didn't eat breakfast; they went hungry.

Journal Questions

Think about your answer to each question and then write out your thoughts in complete sentences.

1. Leaving home can be scary. William had to travel very far away from his home. Tell about a time when you were far away from home and how you felt.
2. Both Da and Shane believed that everything would be better in America. Why do you think they kept talking and talking about America. Did that help in anyway?
3. The children traveling on the orphan train were often bored on the very long ride from New York to their new homes. Without technology, how would you have entertained yourself on the train ride?
4. If you were William and given the choice, would you go back to Ireland with your father, or into America with Shane? Explain your choice with at least two reasons.
5. Even though Shane made some bad choices, William continued to trust and follow him. Why do you think William continued to believe in Shane?
6. Do you think Mr. McCully was helping or hurting William when he asked the crowd about Irish families in Indiana? Explain your thought process.
7. William used a motto or a mantra to help him stay brave in tough times. What do you do to keep hope alive and stay strong when you feel alone or scared?
8. Do you think Shane was a good friend to William? Why or why not? Tell about a time when you were a good friend to someone.
9. Would William have had a better life if he had just stayed in Ireland? Use details from the story to support your answer.
10. Do you think Mr. McCully would have helped Shane and William if they were not Irish? Explain your answer with at least two reasons.

Orphan Train Riders: Irish Strong William

COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Map Work

Using a map and the mileage scale measure the distance William traveled to get to his new home in Norfolk, Massachusetts.

Distance #1: Dublin, Ireland to New York City = _____ miles

Distance #2: New York City to Indianapolis, IN = _____ miles

Distance #3: Indianapolis, IN to Norfolk, MA = _____ miles

_____ + _____ + _____ = _____ Total Miles

Fact or Opinion

Write F if the statement is a FACT and O if the statement is an OPINION.

1. _____ William stayed Irish Strong.
2. _____ Shane was a criminal.
3. _____ Officer Sullivan did the right thing by taking the boys to the Children's Aid Society.

Questions and Answers

Answer in complete sentences.

1. Who was traveling alone to America?
2. Where did Da and Hugh go instead of America?
3. When did Shane begin to be mean to William?
4. Why were Shane and William split up once they got to the Children's Aid Society?
5. How did Da expect to make a living in America?

Orphan Train Riders: Irish Strong William

Figurative Language

In every language there are figurative phrases that mean something completely different than what they literally say. For example, if we say, "It's raining cats and dogs!" there aren't really cats and dogs falling from the sky. We just mean that it is raining really, really hard.

In this story there are several Irish phrases that use figurative language. Read each phrase and try to decide what it really means. Use context clues from the story to help you.

1. May the cat eat you and the devil eat the cat.

2. A good run is better than a bad stand.

3. A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor's book.

4. Away with the fairies!

Sequence of Events

Put the Irishmen and Irishwomen in order according to when they helped William in the story. Number 1 to 5.

_____ Officer Sullivan

_____ Da

_____ Mr. McCully

_____ Bridget

_____ Shane

Orphan Train Riders: Irish Strong William

Creative Writing

Pretend you are William and write a letter response to Shane telling him about your new life in Norfolk. Remember to appropriately date your letter and use correct friendly letter format.

Poster

Create a poster advertising the benefits of the Children's Aid Society. Why would a kid want to go to this organization for help? How can they help children in need?

Drawing

Re-read the part of chapter 2 when the policeman makes Shane return the stolen milk to the vendor. Then draw a picture of this scene including the policeman, Shane, the milk vendor and William. Put special emphasis into how each character is feeling and show that emotion on the faces in your drawing.

Creative Arts

Create a menu for Brandon's Pub. List food items and prices for appetizers, entrees, drinks and dessert. use fun lettering, pictures of food and be creative. To go above and beyond, research favorite Irish dishes and include them in your menu. When you are finished, let your family order items and then make them together.

A N S W E R K E Y

True and False

1. F 2. T 3. T

Multiple Choice

1. D 2. B 3. C

Fill in the Blank/Short Answer

1. cow 2. beds 3. churches

Fact or Opinion

1. O 2. F 3. O

Complete sentence answers.

1. Shane 2. Back to Ireland, to William's grandmother's house 3. After he lost William's father's money 4. Shane was going to farm school and William was traveling on the orphan train right away 5. He was going to make money being a canal builder.

Figurative Phrases

1. May the cat eat you and the devil eat the cat: a curse meaning "forget you!"
2. A good run is better than a bad stand: it is better to try than to do nothing.
3. A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor's book: try to stay positive and things will be better in the morning.
4. Away with the fairies: That's crazy!

Sequencing

- 3 - Officer Sullivan
- 1 - Da
- 4 - Mr. McCully
- 5 - Bridget
- 2 - Shane

BIOGRAPHIES

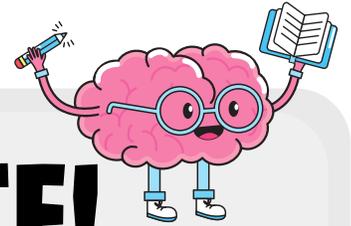
of Famous Women

A biography is a written account of someone's life, usually written by another person. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of their life story from birth until death including their achievements, challenges and impact on the world around them. They can be written about anyone, from historical figures and celebrities to ordinary people who have made a significant contribution to their field. This collection of short biographies are written about famous women.



Key conventions include:

- **Third person point of view:** written about the subject by someone else using the pronouns 'he', 'she', 'they' etc.
- **Factual information:** favours facts and true anecdotes that are accurate and well-researched from reliable sources
- **Chronological order:** mostly follows events or life stages in the order in which they occurred
- **Narrative style:** might use techniques such as descriptive language, figurative language or emotive language to bring the story to life
- **Broader context:** providing background information on the historical, cultural, or social influences at the time to account for events or decisions the person made.
- **Quotes or anecdotes:** inclusions from people who knew the subject of the biography
- **Photographs:** engaging images to help the reader visualise the subject's life



LEARN TO ANNOTATE!

Annotating is a fancy word that means taking what you are thinking about while you are reading and putting it down on the page. You don't want this to take too long and pull you out of the flow, so jot down these symbols or a quick note and then keep reading!

Annotation Symbols



Emojis - Note how do you feel while reading with an emoji. Also note, how does the character feel?



Hearts and Stars - mark your favorite or important parts with a heart or star, so you can easily find these sections again.



Exclamation points - if you find a part that shocks or surprises you, mark it with a !! Or a short phrase like WOW or HOLY COW!



Questions - when you have a question, write down a ?? or write out your full question.



Connections - note when you connect to the text or when it connects with another story or the real world

Underlining and circling important text/words are still more ways you can annotate.

Mark up the text so that when you come back to it, you can jog your memory to remember what you've already read without having to reread the entire text.

If you aren't thinking about anything while you are reading, that's your clue to STOP, go back and read again. Think of it like seeing the words play out like a movie in your brain. If you aren't seeing anything in your head, that's your sign to find a place free of distractions and try reading again.



MAE Jemison

Annotation Symbols

				
Emojis - Note how do you feel while reading with an emoji. Also note, now does the character feel?	Hearts and Stars - mark your favorite or important parts with a heart or star, so you can easily find these sections again.	Exclamation points - If you find a part that shocks or surprises you, mark it with a !! Or a short phrase like WOW or HOLY COW!	Questions - when you have a question, write down a ?? or write out your full question.	Connections - note when you connect to the text or when it connects with another story or the real world

**ANNOTATE
TEXT
HERE**



BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Mae Jemison is a scientist, doctor, and astronaut who made history as the first Black woman to travel to space. She was born on October 17, 1956, in Decatur, Alabama, and grew up loving science and space. Before becoming an astronaut, she worked as a doctor and even helped people in Africa as a medical officer. In 1992, she flew aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour, orbiting Earth for nearly eight days. Mae is also an engineer, a teacher, and a big supporter of STEM education, encouraging young people—especially girls and students of color—to follow their dreams in science and technology. Plus, she’s a big Star Trek fan and even appeared in an episode of the show!



PRINCESS Diana

Annotation Symbols

				
Emojis - Note how do you feel while reading with an emoji. Also note, how does the character feel?	Hearts and Stars - mark your favorite or important parts with a heart or star, so you can easily find these sections again.	Exclamation points - If you find a part that shocks or surprises you, mark it with a !! Or a short phrase like WOW or HOLY COW!	Questions - when you have a question, write down a ?? or write out your full question.	Connections - note when you connect to the text or when it connects with another story or the real world

**ANNOTATE
TEXT
HERE**



BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Princess Diana was a beloved royal known for her kindness, charity work, and style. She was born on July 1, 1961, in England and married Prince Charles, making her the Princess of Wales. People around the world admired her for helping others, especially children, people with AIDS, and those affected by landmines. Even though she was part of the royal family, she was known for being down-to-earth and caring. She was also a devoted mother to her two sons, Prince William and Prince Harry, wanting them to have a normal childhood despite their royal status. Diana was one of the most photographed people in the world, and her fashion choices often made headlines. Sadly, she died in a car crash in 1997, but her legacy of kindness and compassion still inspires people today.



MALALA Yousafzai

Annotation Symbols

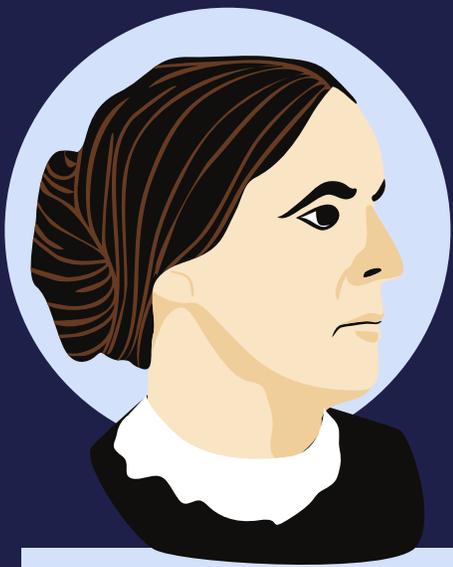
				
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**ANNOTATE
TEXT
HERE**



BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Malala Yousafzai is a brave activist who fights for girls' education around the world. She was born on July 12, 1997, in Pakistan, where she loved going to school. When the Taliban took control of her town and tried to stop girls from learning, Malala spoke out, even writing about it for the BBC. In 2012, she was shot by the Taliban for standing up for education but survived and kept fighting for what she believes in. She later moved to England and continued her activism, founding the Malala Fund to help girls go to school. In 2014, she became the youngest person to win the Nobel Peace Prize at just 17 years old. Malala also graduated from Oxford University, proving that education can change lives. Today, she continues to inspire people everywhere to stand up for their rights and make the world a better place.



SUSAN Anthony

Annotation Symbols

				
Emojis - Note how do you feel while reading with an emoji. Also note, now does the character feel?	Hearts and Stars - mark your favorite or important parts with a heart or star, so you can easily find these sections again.	Exclamation points - if you find a part that shocks or surprises you, mark it with a !! Or a short phrase like WOW or HOLY COW!	Questions - when you have a question, write down a ?? or write out your full question.	Connections - note when you connect to the text or when it connects with another story or the real world

**ANNOTATE
TEXT
HERE**



BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Susan B. Anthony was a leader in the fight for women's rights in the United States. She was born on February 15, 1820, in Massachusetts and grew up believing that men and women should be treated equally. She fought hard for women to have the right to vote, giving speeches and helping to organize the women's suffrage movement. In 1872, she was even arrested for voting illegally in an election to prove her point. She also worked to end slavery and believed in equal rights for all people. Along with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, she helped publish a newspaper called *The Revolution* to spread ideas about women's rights. Although she died in 1906, 14 years before women won the right to vote, her work helped make it possible. Today, she is honored on the U.S. dollar coin and remembered as a pioneer for equality.

EXTEND Your Learning



Ask students to research and write mini-bios of other famous women. (You can use the International Women's History Month Trivia to jumpstart your brainstorming process, or use the list below that I've curated for you.)

With the final products, students can create trivia questions for their classmates or annotate one another's pieces with their own questions, thoughts, emotions and connections.

25 Influential Women (of the last 100 years)

Politics & Leadership

1. Eleanor Roosevelt – Former First Lady, human rights activist, and key figure in the United Nations.
2. Margaret Thatcher – First female Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.
3. Angela Merkel – First female Chancellor of Germany, leading Europe's largest economy.
4. Hillary Clinton – Former U.S. Secretary of State and first woman to win a major party's presidential nomination in the U.S.
5. Kamala Harris – First female, first Black, and first South Asian Vice President of the United States.

Activism & Human Rights

1. Rosa Parks – Civil rights activist who refused to give up her bus seat, sparking the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
2. Malala Yousafzai – Education activist and youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner.
3. Gloria Steinem – Feminist leader and journalist who shaped the modern women's rights movement.
4. Mother Teresa – Catholic nun and humanitarian known for helping the poor in India.
5. Greta Thunberg – Environmental activist who inspired a global movement to fight climate change.

Science & Technology

1. Marie Curie – Pioneering physicist and chemist who won two Nobel Prizes (though she died just over 100 years ago, her influence lasted well beyond).
2. Rosalind Franklin – Scientist whose work led to the discovery of DNA's structure.
3. Jane Goodall – Primatologist and conservationist known for her work with chimpanzees.
4. Katherine Johnson – NASA mathematician whose calculations helped send astronauts to space.
5. Mae Jemison – First Black woman in space and advocate for STEM education.

Arts & Literature

1. Maya Angelou – Poet, author, and civil rights activist.
2. Toni Morrison – Nobel Prize-winning author known for *Beloved* and other powerful works.
3. Frida Kahlo – Iconic Mexican artist known for her surreal and deeply personal paintings.
4. J.K. Rowling – Author of *Harry Potter*, one of the most successful book series of all time.
5. Oprah Winfrey – Media mogul and talk show host who has influenced millions.

Sports & Entertainment

1. Serena Williams – One of the greatest tennis players of all time.
2. Simone Biles – Olympic gymnast and advocate for mental health.
3. Billie Jean King – Tennis champion and advocate for gender equality in sports.
4. Beyoncé – Award-winning musician, entrepreneur, and advocate for social justice.
5. Diana, Princess of Wales – Known for her humanitarian work and lasting global influence.

Pick a Color Pick a Book

ermentum et sollicit-
porta nibh venena-
es neque sodales ut

Dolor sit amet con-
morbi tristique. S
Eu tincidunt torto

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A Resource Created by
The Word Nerd



Pick a Color Pick a Book

In the spirit and style of swipecard Instagram posts, use the following slides to help recommend great books to your students! All they need to do is pick a color to reveal a reading recommendation tailored to their interests and preferences. Find the slides here and several implementation ideas below. Sheets to record student choices can be found on following pages.

Slides Link:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAF8mBzwMIA/C6rOPDVamJhPS8KcJtKBCg/edit?utm_content=DAF8mBzwMIA&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton

Implementation Ideas

1. Show one set of [slides](#) each week. After students make their selection, have them listen to the first chapter of their chosen color/book. If they like it, encourage them to continue reading!
2. Print the [slides](#) and create an interactive bulletin board by placing the color block sheet over the top of the reading recommendation page. Students can lift the top page to reveal their chosen title. Students can use QR codes to take them directly to the book's first chapter read aloud.
3. Go through the entire slide show and ask students to record their color/book choices (sheet on page 111). Then use their recorded titles as a browsing/shopping list next time you go to the library.
4. Head to the [slides](#), click FILE- MAKE A COPY and adapt the slides to titles/categories you know your students will like.
5. Head to the [slides](#), click FILE- MAKE A COPY and then share with students. Next allow them to make their own set of swipecard reading recommendations. Share within class or another class, post them in the hallway or in the library.
6. ??? - I'm sure your creative teacher brain can see other implementation ideas! If you come up with something great your students love, please let me know! :)
(wordnerd@amandazieba.com)

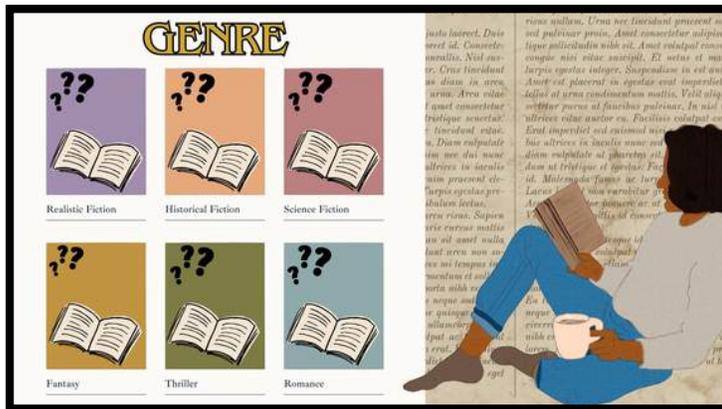
A Resource Created by The Word Nerd



Pick a Color Pick a Book

Slide Samples

Slides Link: https://www.canva.com/design/DAF8mBzwMIA/C6rOPDVamJhPS8KcJtKBCg/edit?utm_content=DAF8mBzwMIA&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton



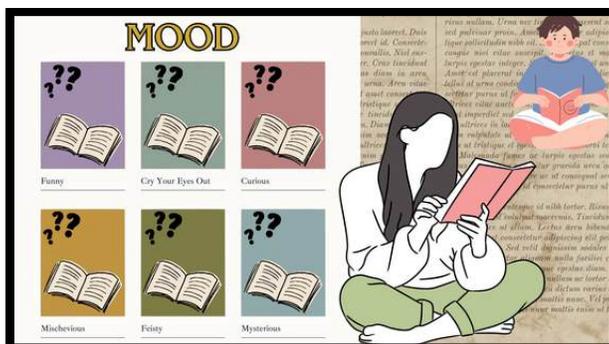
Students pick a color...

Then swipe...



To reveal the choices!

Each book cover is linked to that book's First Chapter Friday read aloud video. The QR codes take you to those videos as well.



Slide Category List:

- Genre
- Mood
- Novel in Verse
- Historical Fiction
- Books with Animals
- "I don't even like to read"
- Creepy Books
- Nonfiction
- Graphic Novels
- Sports
- Foreign Country Settings
- If you liked, then you'll love #1
- If you liked, then you'll love #2
- Blank Slides



Pick a Color Pick a Book

Directions: Use this sheet to record your colors and choices. Then take your "browsing/shopping" list to the library and find your chosen titles!
Happy reading! :)

Genre

Color: _____ Book: _____

Mood

Color: _____ Book: _____

Novel in Verse

Color: _____ Book: _____

Historical Fiction

Color: _____ Book: _____

Books with Animals

Color: _____ Book: _____

I don't even like to read...

Color: _____ Book: _____

Creepy Books

Color: _____ Book: _____

Nonfiction

Color: _____ Book: _____

Graphic Novels

Color: _____ Book: _____

Sports

Color: _____ Book: _____

Foreign Country Settings

Color: _____ Book: _____

If You Liked, You'll Love #1

Color: _____ Book: _____

If You Liked, You'll Love #2

Color: _____ Book: _____

*... in motis nunc
... nec ultrices.
... viverra nam lib
... id interdum vel
... urna duis conval
... m est ultricies in
... s at. Quisque e
... ncus mattis rho
... ae nunc sed velit
... que habitant mo
... n neque volutpa
... i pellentesque nec
... iquam id. Mass
... ementum. Dapib
... is dolor purus n
... pus egestas sed s
... agna ac placerat
... get dolor morbi n
... eugiat sed. Nibh
... mperdiet dui acc
... donec ultrices ti
... te mi sit amet. U
... Neque gravida i
... Tortor consequat
... lunt arcu non so
... neque egestas c
... bus vitae aliquet
... t etiam. Neque
... tum non consecte
... tristique. Quis in
... n et. Vel pharetr
... est ullamcorper*



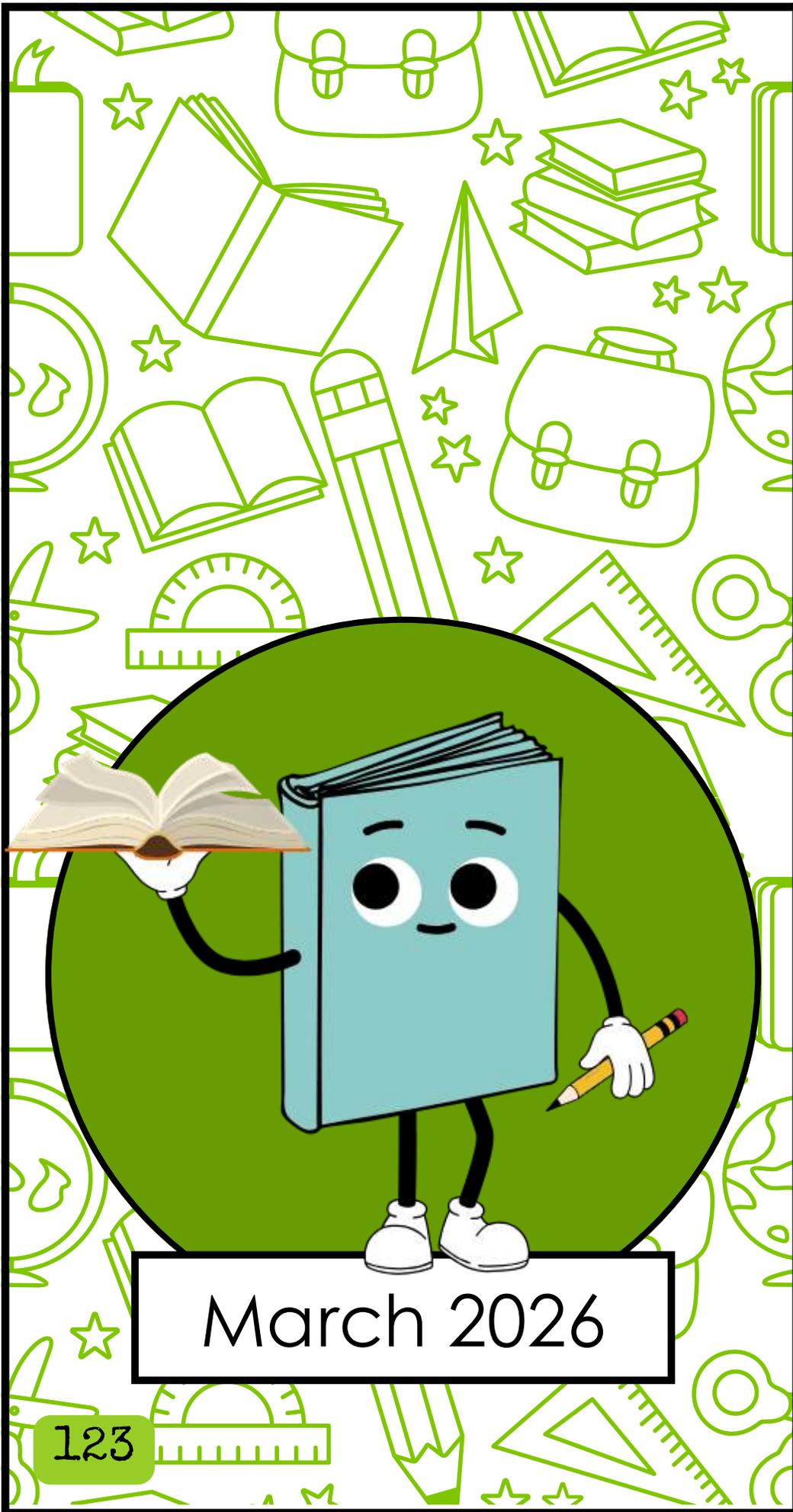
Pick a Color Pick a Book



Visit my full YouTube Channel here:
[https://www.youtube.com/@AmandaZieba
theWordNerd](https://www.youtube.com/@AmandaZiebaTheWordNerd)

To get a Google Doc listing 150+ (and counting!) First Chapter Friday Read Aloud video links (+genre, format, book purchasing links, companion material links, etc.) click here: www.amandazieba.com/teachersignup

Feel free to email me questions any time at:
wordnerd@amandazieba.com



March 2026

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
BECAUSE YOU DESERVE THEM!

TAKEAWAYS

Even silly prompts (“Would you rather have pizza every day or ice cream every day?”) still help students practice the serious structure of argumentative writing—without the intimidation of “real” essay topics. This lowers the stakes while reinforcing core skills.

WE WANT STUDENTS TO BE ABLE TO:

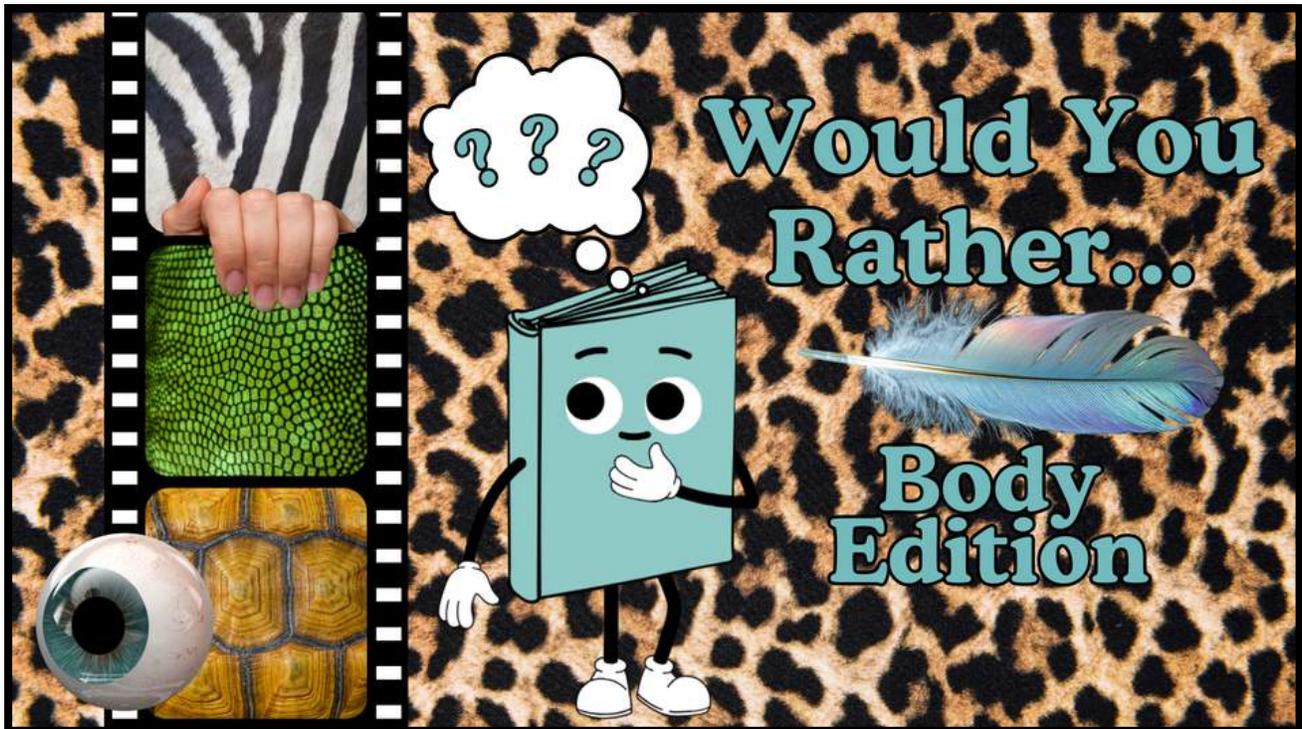
- Choosing a side → Making a clear claim.
- Backing it up → Giving 2-3 strong reasons with evidence or examples.
- Using transitions → Showing relationships between ideas.
- Acknowledging the other side → Strengthening their argument.
- Concluding clearly → Wrapping up their reasoning in a persuasive way.



**SPARK STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT -
START WITH THE VIDEO!**



Video Link



STANDARDS IN ACTION

W.6.1 – Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

- Students should learn to:
 - Make a claim → choose one option in their “Would You Rather?”
 - Give reasons → explain why they chose it.
 - Use evidence/examples → support their reasoning with logic, facts, or even life experience.
 - Acknowledge the other side → briefly explain why someone might choose differently, and why their choice is stronger.

W.6.1a – Introduce claims clearly, organize reasons and evidence.

- Skill Focus: Write an introductory sentence that states their choice.
- Ex: “I would rather be a ballerina than a weightlifter because it fits my personality and challenges me in new ways.”

W.6.1b – Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

- Skill Focus: Develop 2–3 strong reasons with examples or explanations.
- Ex: “Dancing allows me to express myself creatively, and it’s also excellent exercise.”

W.6.1c – Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify relationships among claims, reasons, and evidence.

- Skill Focus: Use transition words like for example, in addition, because, however, and therefore to guide readers.

W.6.1d – Establish and maintain a formal style.

- Skill Focus: Write in a clear, academic voice (not “texting language”), even if the topic is silly.
- Ex: “I’d choose...” instead of “Because it’s cool.”

W.6.1e – Provide a concluding statement or section.

- Skill Focus: Wrap up by restating the claim and leaving a final thought.
- Ex: “For these reasons, being a ballerina would be a better fit for me than being a weightlifter.”



BUILD YOUR CASE

You've made your choice... now it's time to convince someone else to agree with you! Use this organizer to help plan and write your persuasive paragraph. Strong persuasive writers make a claim, give clear reasons, support their ideas, and wrap it all up like a pro!

FOLLOW THESE STEPS!

✓ **Step 1: Make Your Claim**

Write a strong opening sentence that clearly states your answer to the Would You Rather question.

Example: I would rather live in a treehouse than on a boat because I love nature and dislike water.

✓ **Step 2: Give Your Reasons**

List 2-3 strong reasons why you chose your answer. Add examples or explanations for each one.

✓ **Step 3: Use Transitions**

Use words like because, for example, in addition, also, however, even though to connect your ideas and make your writing flow.

✓ **Step 4: Think About the Other Side**

Can you think of why someone might choose the other option? Briefly explain why your choice is still the better one.

Example: Some people might say... But I think...

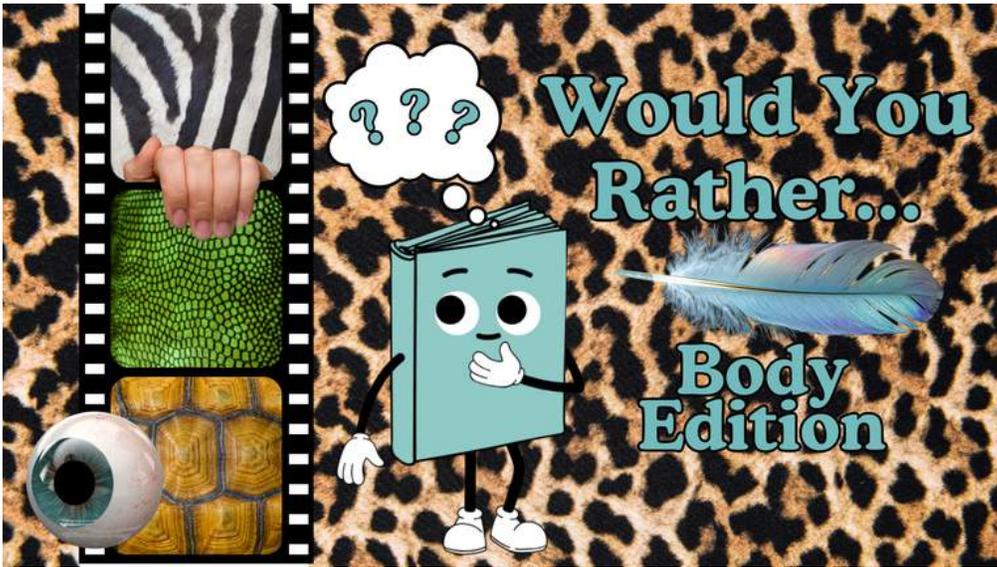
✓ **Step 5: Wrap It Up**

Write a conclusion sentence that restates your choice and leaves the reader convinced.

Example: That's why I would definitely rather live in a treehouse!

WOULD YOU RATHER?

Name: _____



VIDEO



Video Link

Directions: As you watch the video, circle your preferred choice and then follow the physical cue on screen!

1. Would you rather cough bubbles or burp confetti?
2. Would you rather be covered in feathers or scales?
3. Would you rather be super strong or super fast?
4. Would you rather have a tail like a monkey or ears like a bunny?
5. Would you rather have eyes in the back of your head or taste food with your finger?
6. Would you rather have leopard print or zebra print skin?
7. Would you rather have wings or gills?
8. Would you rather have Go-Go Gadget Arms or wheels for feet?
9. Would you rather stub your toe or bite your tongue?
10. Would you rather be able to dunk a basketball or do the splits?

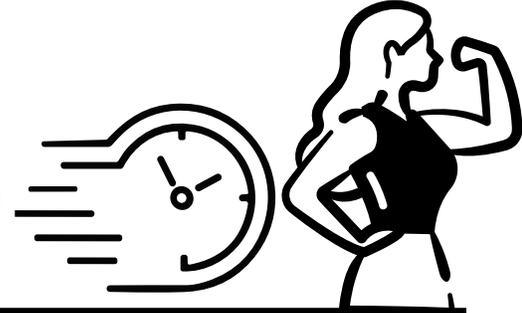
Respond: Which would you rather match up do you have the strongest feelings about? Why?

Name: _____

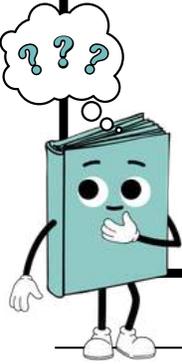
Date: _____

BODY EDITION

Would You Rather... be super strong or super fast?



Use this space to brain-dump ideas, list reasons, or otherwise plan your response.



Large empty rectangular box for writing a response.

▼ Rubric

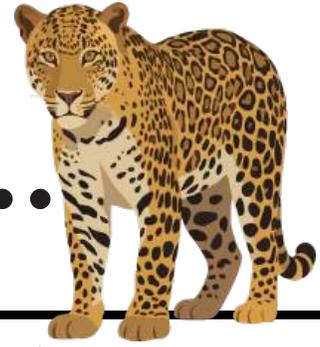
Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			
Total Points = ___/10			

Comments:

Name: _____

Date: _____

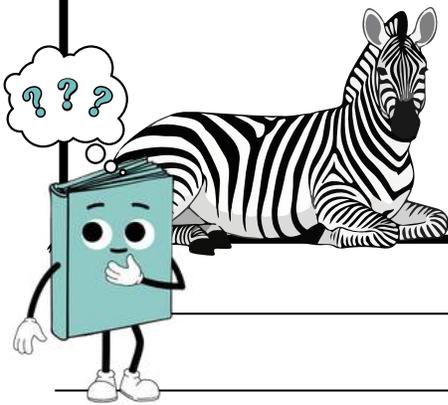
BODY EDITION



Would You Rather...

have leopard print or zebra print skin?

Use this space to brain-dump ideas, list reasons, or otherwise plan your response.



Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple horizontal lines for writing.

▼ Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			
Total Points = ___/10			

Comments:

Name: _____

Date: _____

BODY EDITION

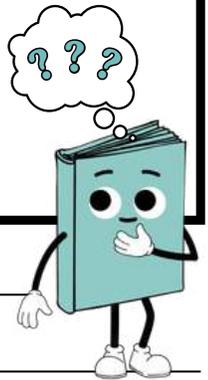
Would You Rather...

be able to dunk a basketball or do the splits?



Use this space to brain-dump ideas, list reasons, or otherwise plan your response.

Large empty rectangular box for writing a response.



Series of horizontal lines for writing a response.

▼ Rubric

Task	0	1	2
Follows the prompt and stays on topic			
Uses correct grammar/capitalization/punctuation			
Thoughts are clearly presented and easy to follow			
Length is appropriate			
Format is correct (letter, fiction story, news article, diary entry, etc.)			
Total Points = ___/10			

Comments:

COMING SOON

Check back to my store, channel or the membership each month for more Would You Rather Brain Breaks!

TOPIC LINE UP:

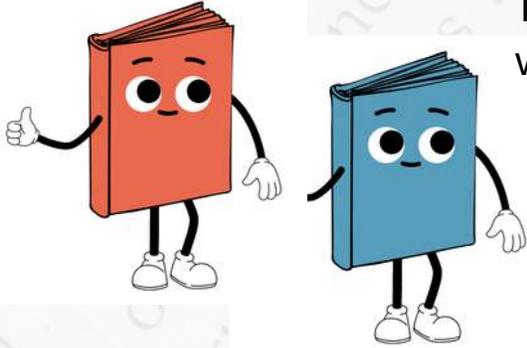
- August: Back to School
- September: Sci-Fi and Fantasy
- October: Scary Edition
- November: Sports Edition
- December: Winter Edition
- January: Gross Stuff!
- February: Fun Stuff!
- March: Body Adaptations
- April: Around the World
- May: 100 of ...
- June: Summer Edition



**EACH WOULD YOU RATHER SET
WOULD INCLUDES AN INTERACTIVE
VIDEO AND PRINTABLE WRITING
WORKSHEETS**

MAKING THE TEAM

The books on this list feature characters who are working hard to join or find their place on a team.



Change the Game
by Colin Kaepernick

Duel
by Jessixa Bagley

**Free Throws, Friendship
and Other Things We Fouled Up**
by Jenn Bishop

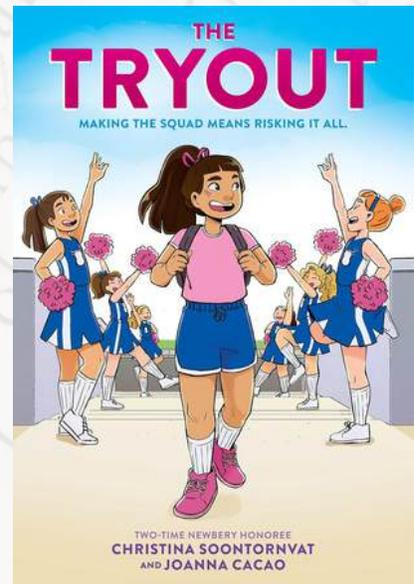
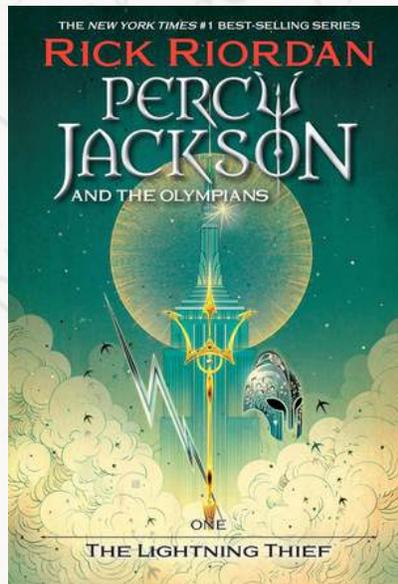
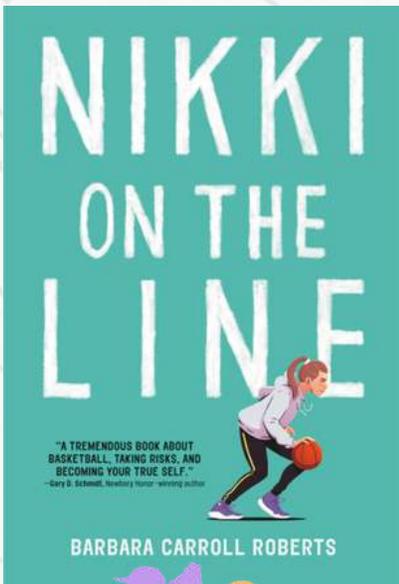
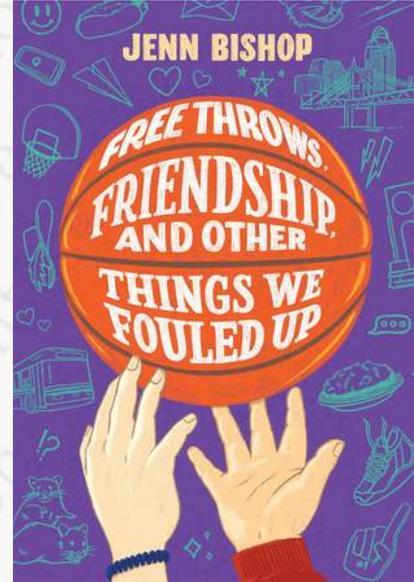
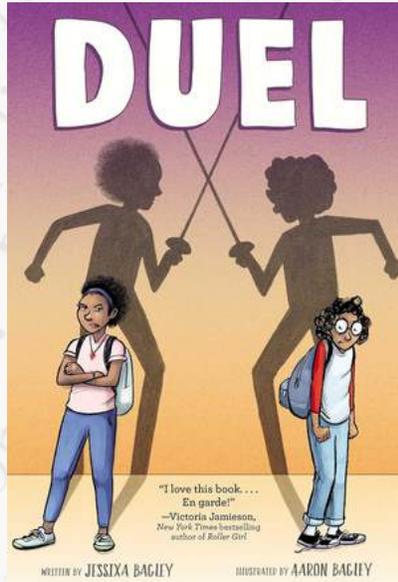
Nikki on the Line
by Barbara Carol Roberts

**Percy Jackson and
the Lightning Thief**
by Rick Riordan

The Try Out
by Christina Soontornvat



BOOKS ABOUT: MAKING THE TEAM



WNC BOOK LIST

SPORTS

While each of these books is about sports, they aren't all fun and games! You'll find some serious topics and mysteries, some facts and histories mixed in with the athletic competition.



Becoming Muhammad Ali

by James Patterson and Kwame Alexander (Boxing)

Change the Game by Colin Kaepernick (Football)

Chirp by Kate Messner (Gymnastics)

Chunky by Yehudi Mercado (Many sports)

The Crossover by Kwame Alexander (Basketball)

Dragon Hoops by Gene Luen Yang (Basketball)

Duel by Jessixa Bagley (Fencing)

Free Throws, Friendship and Other Things We Fouled Up

by Jenn Bishop (Basketball)

Hoop Kings/Queens by Charles Ray Smith, Jr. (Basketball)

Kareem Between by Shifa Safadi (Football)

The Last Shot by John Feinstein (Basketball)

Legacy and the Queen by Kobe Bryant and Annie Matthew (Tennis)

Nikki on the Line by Barabara Carol Roberts (Basketball)

The Running Dream by Wendelin Van Draanen (Track and Field)

Stealing Home by J. Torres (Baseball)

Swim Team by Jonnie Christmas (Swimming)

The Tryout by Christina Soontornvat (Cheerleading)

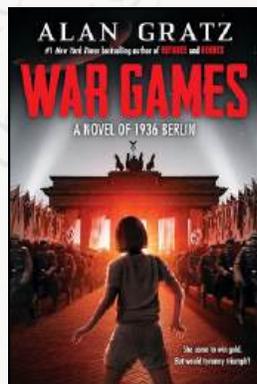
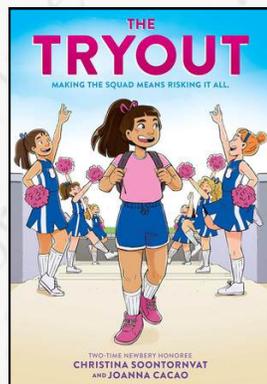
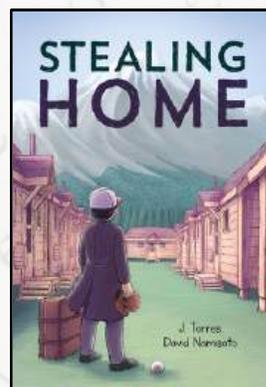
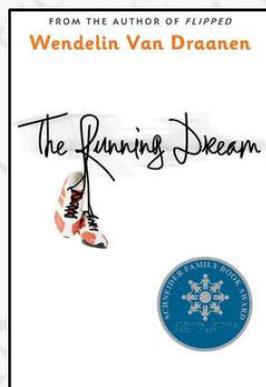
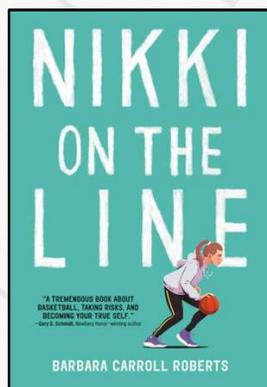
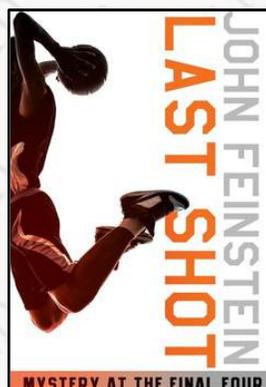
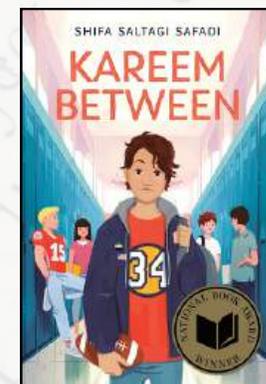
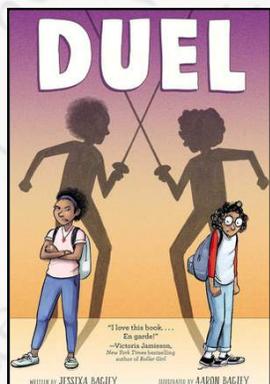
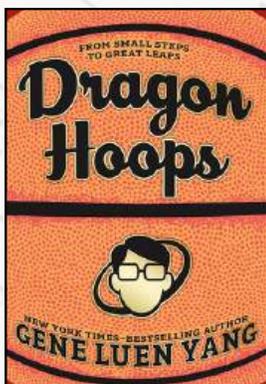
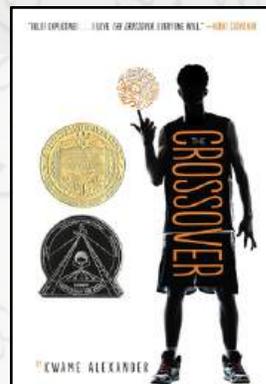
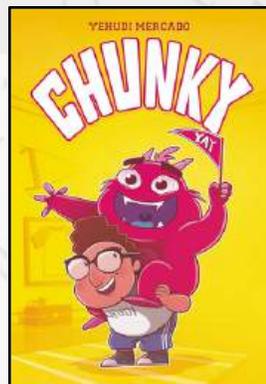
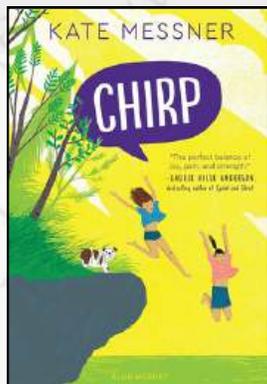
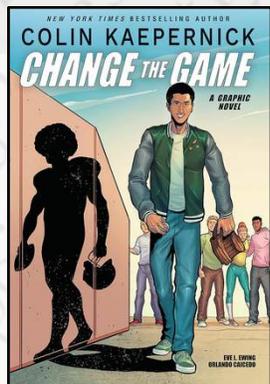
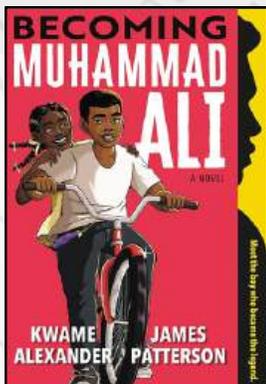
Vanishing Act by John Feinstein (Tennis)

War Games by Alan Gratz (Gymnastics)



WNC BOOK LISTS * TOPIC CURATED TITLE SUGGESTIONS

S P O R T S



WNC BOOK LISTS * TOPIC CURATED TITLE SUGGESTIONS

Basketball Book FCF Playlist

Are you in a hoops kind of mood and want to read a basketball book? Want to make the most of the March Madness hype? Still can't get enough basketball even though you've watched so many games your eyeballs are ready to fall out? Or maybe your bracket is busted and you need a good distraction.

No matter what your reason, you've come to the right spot. This playlist is a collection of middle grade books about basketball. There's a huge variety including realistic fiction, memoir, books in prose, novels in verse and also graphic novels. So many choices. So many books perfect for this most wonderful time of the year... MARCH MADNESS! Happy reading and good luck to you and the team you are cheering on!



[Here is a link to the playlist!](#)





Welcome to:

SPRING

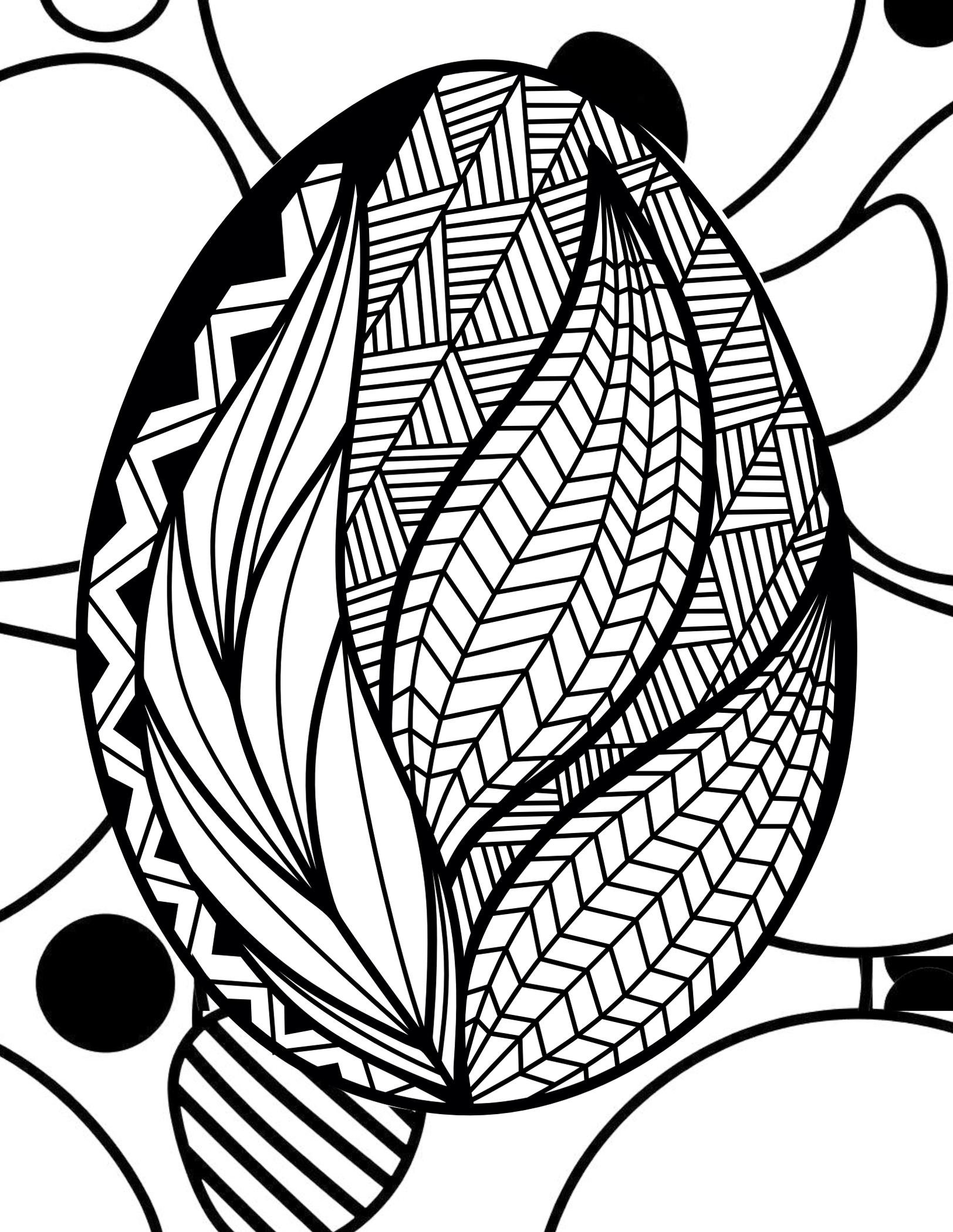




TAKE TIME

TRANSFORMATIONS



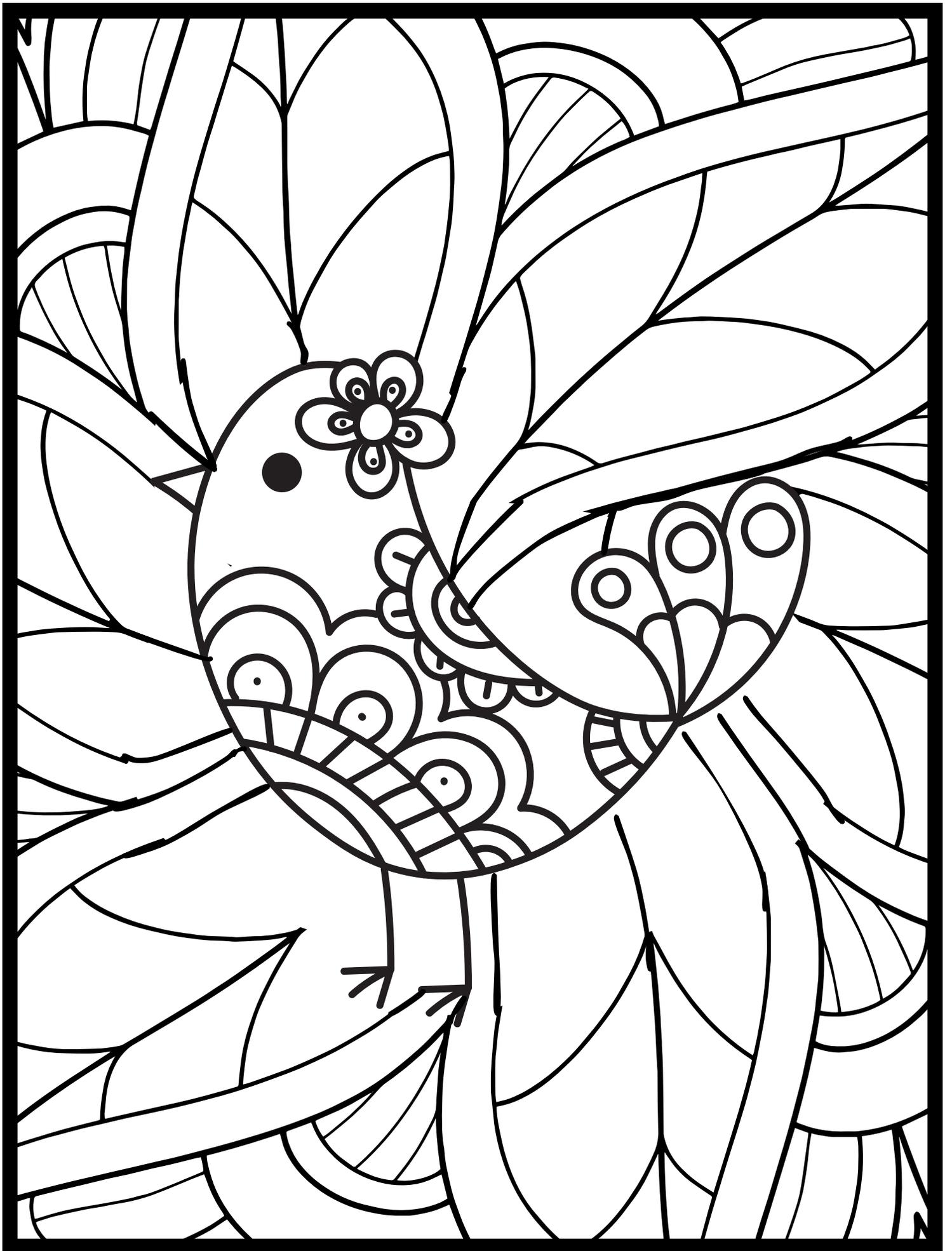




**KEEP YOUR
eyes**



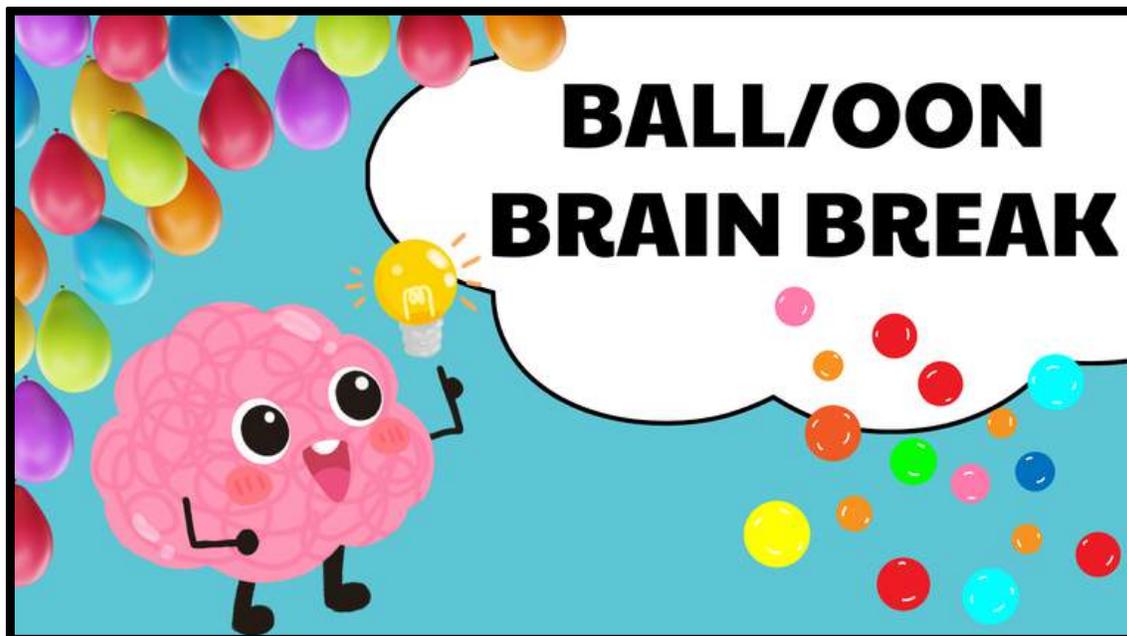
**ON THE
PRIZE.**



Stand

TALL





Got some stir-crazy students? I get it. Gamify their learning and give them a chance to move a bit with this fun ball/balloon brain break - perfect for middle schoolers.

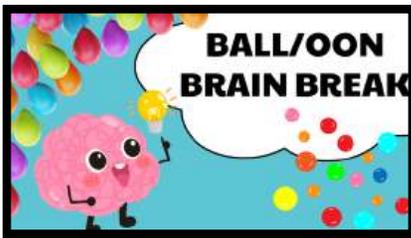
Here's how I use this in class:

1. Divide into Teams/small groups
2. Set a timer and have one student collect as many balls - while simultaneously keeping a balloon afloat - as they can in that amount of time.
3. Use the balls they collected to extend this fun/physically active activity into an educational moment. (Examples include: story elements, genres, parts of speech, story formats.)

This resource includes:

4. Activity directions (and video example of how to play)
5. Slides for 5 variations of educational extensions (story elements, genres, parts of speech, story formats) that includes a 30 second timer
6. Blank slide for you to create/add your own variation
7. Links to purchase balloons, balls, and collection buckets

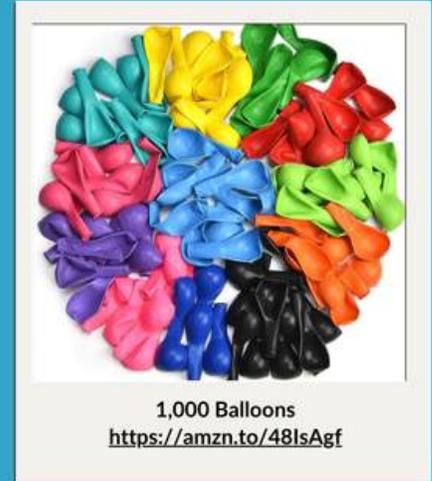
This activity is currently set up for ELA content, but could easily be adapted to any curriculum/content area.



Ball-oon Brain Break

Need Materials?

Quick Links to Purchase



How to Use This Brain Break

1

Divide into Teams/Small Groups

Groups sized 2-5 are ideal.



2

Set a Tim& Play

Set a timer (recommended 30-60 seconds)

Individual collects as many balls as possible, while simultaneously keeping a balloon in the air.

Visit this [IG post](https://www.instagram.com/p/CyEIkQPNgAG/) to see the game in action.

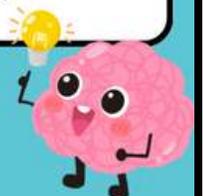
(<https://www.instagram.com/p/CyEIkQPNgAG/>)

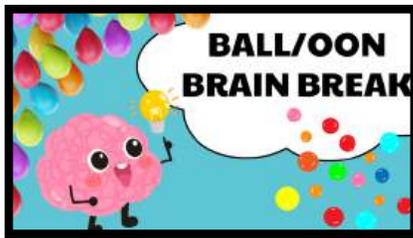
3

Extend with Education

Connect each ball color to a designated task/skill and ask students to complete the activity.

See next slides for options/ideas. (Click FILE-MAKE A COPY to edit these slides with your own variations.)





Ball-oon Brain Break

Click [here](https://www.canva.com/design/DAF42kKqWMM/ZjengqothUX-QHjMY0gM6Q/edit?utm_content=DAF42kKqWMM&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton) to access the slides for this fun and educational brain break!
(Link: https://www.canva.com/design/DAF42kKqWMM/ZjengqothUX-QHjMY0gM6Q/edit?utm_content=DAF42kKqWMM&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton)

Extend with Education
Parts of Speech
Directions: List a word that matches each color's part of speech!

- Yellow - Noun (Person, Place or Thing)
- Orange - Verb (Action Word)
- Purple - Adjective (Word that describes a Noun)
- Green - Adverb (Word that describes/ modifies a verb)
- Blue - Conjunction (A word that joins other words or phrases)
- Pink - Interjection (An exclamation expressing and extreme emotion)

Extend with Education
Story Format
Directions: Identify a key characteristic/aspect of each story format. Bonus point if you can also list a book or movie example!

- Yellow - Prose
- Orange - Poetry/ Novel in Verse
- Purple - Graphic Novel
- Green - Narrative Nonfiction
- Blue - Epistolary
- Pink - Wild Card! (Tell us your favorite Story Format)

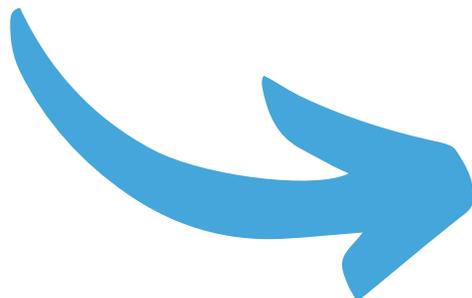
Extend with Education
Story Elements
Directions: Identify the following story elements for your whole class novel, lit circle selection or independent reading book. Bonus, answer the questions listed for each color.

- Yellow - Character (Who is the protagonist? Who is the antagonist?)
- Orange - Setting (Where is the story happening? Where is the story happening?)
- Purple - Conflict (What is the problem? What kind of conflict is it? (Character vs.))
- Green - Point of View (Who is telling the story? Is it done in 1st, 2nd or 3rd POV?)
- Blue - Theme (What lesson did the characters learn? What is the meaningful message?)
- Pink - Climax (What is the most exciting event of the book?)

Extend with Education
Genre
Directions: Identify a key characteristic/aspect of each genre. Bonus point if you can also list a book or movie example!

- Yellow - Realistic Fiction
- Orange - Historical Fiction
- Purple - Science Fiction
- Green - Nonfiction
- Blue - Fantasy
- Pink - Wild Card! (Tell us your favorite Genre!)

Visit this [IG post](https://www.instagram.com/p/CyEIKQPNgAG/) to see the game in action.
(<https://www.instagram.com/p/CyEIKQPNgAG/>)



“I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life.
And that is why I succeed.” – Michael Jordan

Dear Teacher Friend,

Whether you filled out a bracket this month or just tuned in for the buzzer-beaters, one thing is true: March always brings surprises.

That lesson you thought would bomb but totally worked?

The reluctant reader who actually asked for another book?

That class discussion that went off-script in the most beautiful way?

These are the wins you don’t always see coming—but they’re real. And they matter.

Maybe you didn’t follow your game plan perfectly. Maybe you made some mid-month changes to your game plan, subbed in a new strategy, or called a timeout when things felt chaotic. GOOD. That’s what great teachers do. You adjust. You try again. You keep playing the long game.

And if March reminded us of anything, it’s that passion and progress don’t always look flashy—but they’re powerful. Every time you showed up with energy, joy, or just a solid dose of determination... your students felt it.

As we head into a new month, I hope you carry those unexpected wins with you.

Write them down. Talk about them with a colleague. Let them fuel you when April starts testing your patience (and maybe your tech setup too).

I know this work is hard. But it’s also filled with magic moments—big and small. You just have to stay in the game long enough to see them.

You’re doing amazing. I’ll see you next month.

 , AMANDA