



**Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Award  
2020-2021 Booktalk Scripts  
Grades 3-6**



***Just Like Rube Goldberg: The Incredible True Story of the Man Behind the Machines* by Sarah Aronson; illustrated by Robert Neubecker**

This intriguing story is about a creative, unique inventor who always challenged himself. Shy young Rube Goldberg sounds like the typical artist, but that's not so! He dreamed of becoming a cartoonist, and yet once he was a huge success he moved on. The inventions he created are outlandishly complicated: Why would you pick the most complicated way to accomplish a simple task? Author Sarah Aronson's message about Rube Goldberg at the end of the story, "Figure out what you want. Work as hard as you can. And most of all have a great time getting there....." is so inspiring! Checkout the wacky cartoonish pictures and comprehensive endnote by the author, and then design your own fun invention.

Author website: <http://www.saraharonson.com/>

"Rube Goldberg: The World of Hilarious Invention!": <https://www.rubegoldberg.com/the-man-behind-the-machine>

Ideas for Creating your Own Inventions: <http://mousetrapcontraptions.com/tips-9.html>

***Finding Langston* by Lesa Cline-Ransome**

Langston wishes he was back in Alabama. The 11-year-old's mother was barely dead and buried before his father moved them to Chicago, where, in 1946, "a man can provide for his family without always scraping and bowing." But to Langston, Chicago is lonely and lacking—no friends, family, or good food - just his dad's bad cooking. Three bullies make life even harder. Then he discovers something that amazes him: a public library, and it's not just for white people like the one back home! This branch library not only welcomes African Americans, it celebrates successful black men and women, especially writers. The library becomes Langston's everything—his space away from his tiny apartment, his refuge from the bullies, the expansion of his world through books. It is also the place where he finds his namesake, Langston Hughes, and begins to find himself.

Author website: <https://www.lesaclineransome.com/>

Book trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BZI812WIBs>

Educational guide: <http://www.africanamericanhomeschoolmoms.com/finding-langston-study-guide/>

***Blended* by Sharon M. Draper**

Isabella's life has drastically changed. First her parents got divorced, now they are both remarrying, and they seem to be fighting more than ever. She feels like her life is split in two between living at her mom's house one week and then living at her dad's the next week.

Isabella's mom is white, and her dad is black. She feels uncomfortable when total strangers ask what her race is. This makes her feel like she doesn't fit in anywhere. Then one of Isabella's classmates' experiences racism at school. She is starting to realize how people judge you without even knowing you. Sometimes life isn't fair.

Author website: <http://sharondraper.com>

Book trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kXz3Q65uIU>

Reading guide on publisher site: <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Blended/Sharon-M-Draper/9781442495005>

### ***Dragons in a Bag* by Zetta Elliott**

Jaxon thought his mom was all he had until Jaxon's mom has to find a way to stay in their apartment and everything that Jaxon knew is questioned. Jaxon is sent to spend the day with a mean old lady his mother calls Ma, who is no one more than a stranger to him. And it gets weirder: on her kitchen table lies a package with stamps from Madagascar all over it... and it moves. Jaxon is intrigued. Dragons, dinosaurs, an invisible man, and more await Jaxon as he discovers who Ma is, where his family comes from and where his grandfather has been. Will Jaxon be able to help Ma and find his way home before his mother comes back to get him?

Author website: <https://www.zettaelliott.com>

Book trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHT5-TJ6BuI>

Dragon craft: <http://www.createinthechaos.com/paper-bag-dragon-puppet>

### ***The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise* by Dan Gemeinhart**

Coyote is a 12-year-old girl who lives and drives around the country on a school bus with her father named Rodeo. They have not gone back home in five years since the death of Coyote's mother and two sisters. Rodeo was so devastated by the loss that he refuses to go home or to have Coyote call him dad. On their journey Coyote meets some interesting people and they end up coming along for the ride. Along the way Coyote finds out that at a park that was in their hometown is going to be torn down. Coyote must get there before the bulldozers in order to retrieve something that was left there by Coyote, her sisters and her mother. She must find a way to trick her dad into driving back home. Will she make it in time? Read to find out.

Author website: <http://dangemeinhart.com>

Book trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOBBXioJG8M>

### ***Best Friends* by Shannon Hale and LeUyen Pham**

Shannon is in 6th grade and is trying to figure out how she can fit in. She has been best friends with Adrienne since they were little but now Adrienne is friends with the most popular girl in school. Just when Shannon thinks they are having fun all together, the other girls think that's for little kids. The rules keep changing and you never know what is cool or not. Shannon is constantly worried about everything she does and is starting to realize it is too much trying to follow what everyone else is doing. If you like stories about friendships, you will love this book!

Author website: <https://www.shannonhale.com>

Book trailer: [https://youtu.be/X9e\\_cBliAw](https://youtu.be/X9e_cBliAw)

Series website: <https://readrealfriends.com>

### ***The Doughnut Fix* by Jessie Janowitz**

Tristan's family has decided to move from New York City to the small town of Petersville. He notices a sign at the local general store advertising chocolate cream doughnuts, but to his dismay he finds out that the delicious treats have not been made for years. Tristan has an idea to bring the famous mind-blowing chocolate cream doughnuts back to Petersville by meeting with the original baker and figuring out a way to get that recipe. Can his doughnuts match the baked goods of the local legendary baker and make Petersville famous once again? This story will leave you hungry for more.

Author interview: <https://youtu.be/A-Zb0R7Ze5w>

Book trailer: [https://youtu.be/ah0LQRAZA\\_o](https://youtu.be/ah0LQRAZA_o)

### ***Because of the Rabbit* by Cynthia Lord**

Living in Maine and having a Game Warden for a father opens up all kinds of possibilities for a daughter who cares about helping wild animals survive. When home schooled 5th grader Emma decides to finally take the step to enroll in public school, she's feeling anxious, especially on the eve before the first day. All at once the phone rings, the caller informs her dad that a rabbit is trapped in the caller's fence. Emma begs to accompany him on the rescue. Before long, they save a small honey colored pet rabbit with a brown nose. What happens to the rabbit, will Emma get to keep it, or does it belong to someone else? Emma starts school the following day, all she really wants is to find a best friend. The only child left to befriend in 5th grade, is an awkward boy named Jack, who is very kind to her, but excessively shares facts. How will she ever fit in to this school?

Author website: <http://www.cynthialord.com/because-of-the-rabbit.html>

Author book trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAuVtS3aO3g>

### ***Not If I Can Help It* by Carolyn Mackler**

Have you ever had a shirt that scratches or a tag that always bothers you? Willa does too! She goes to Occupational Therapy once a week to "work on" her sensory processing disorder. When Willa explains to her O.T. that her Dad is dating her best friend's mom, things get a little stressful for Willa. It's weird for Willa to see her dad and Ruby's mom together. Willa likes being best friends with Ruby, but everything is too weird for her. She is even thinking of moving with her mother to keep something normal. Will Ruby and Willa remain best friends? Can she overcome her feelings and feel like she used to? Life is full of surprises in this touching, fun filled novel.

Author website: <https://www.carolynmackler.com>

Author book trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3ADYHzVhdM>

### ***The Season of Styx Malone* by Kekla Magoon**

Brothers Caleb and Bobby Gene Franklin live in Sutton, Indiana, where nothing much ever happens. Caleb has always wanted to visit the city, but his daddy says “no” - it’s safe in Sutton. With the prospect of another boring summer on their hands, Caleb is elated to meet 16-year-old Styx Malone. He is cool, smooth and knows some ways to earn cash and have fun. Styx is just what Caleb is looking for. Will the boys have the time of their lives this summer or will it be as dull as all the others?

Author website: <https://keklamagoon.com>

Book talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOgXQkyTXKs>

### ***All That Trash: The Story of the 1987 Garbage Barge and Our Problem with Stuff* by Meghan McCarthy**

Meghan McCarthy's trash tale features an individual whose ecological solution for the disposal of trash was so innovative that the United States and Central America couldn't appreciate his ingenious solution! In 1957 Lowell Harrison came up with a plan to rid New York City's almost full landfill. He put the trash on a barge destined for North Carolina. Although the trash was useless in New York's landfill, the garbage could be decomposed, creating methane gas, and finally turned into electrical energy to power homes. McCarthy takes the reader through the hapless voyage of the garbage barge, "Mobro 4000" and the little tugboat, "Break of Dawn" who faithfully pushed the barge from one unwelcoming harbor to another. Read to find out what finally happens to the Garbage Barge, and all that trash, and the best ways YOU can help save the environment.

Author website: <https://www.meghan-mccarthy.com/homepage.htm>

Video of Garbage Barge: [https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/06/booming/new-video-series-re-examines-garbage-barge-fiasco.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/06/booming/new-video-series-re-examines-garbage-barge-fiasco.html?_r=0)

Video on the Garbage Barge Challenge: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cRsBtMhplKk>

### ***Click* by Kayla Miller**

Olive is one of those girls that is friends with everyone. When the school variety show is advertised, Olive doesn't know what she wants to do. Quickly students start forming acts and Olive is left by herself. She is reluctant to ask to join several groups and is feeling a little desperate. An overnight at her aunt's house just might inspire Olive to sign up. See what Olive decides in this debut graphic novel by Kayla Miller.

Author website: <https://www.kayla-miller.com>

Book trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uha7XWPluXI>

### ***Wedgie & Gizmo* by Suzanne Selfors; illustrated by Barbara Fisinger**

Pet owners, you'll soon recognize the personalities of Wedgie the Welsh Corgi and Gizmo the guinea pig. When Gizmo's owner, young Elliot, and his Dad move into the new home of

Wedgie's human owner, young and bratty Jasmine and her little brother Jackson, his privacy disappears. Gizmo gets stuffed into a tutu, one of the many indignities the bright, literate, glasses-wearing rodent suffers through, as he vows to retaliate. Wedgie the corgi however loves the new arrangement of a blended family, especially knowing that he and Wedgie will become great friends. Elliot, just like Gizmo, feels misplaced and misses his old home and friends. Surprises occur that will have you grinning ear to ear. This funny tale provides a wonderful look into the life of pets from their viewpoint.

Author website: <https://www.suzanneelfors.com/copy-of-smells-like-dog-series>

Book trailer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XjcLEqM7IA&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XjcLEqM7IA&feature=emb_title)

***Pass Go and Collect \$200: The Real Story of How Monopoly Was Invented by Tanya Lee Stone; illustrated by Steven Salerno***

Monopoly's success as a board game was born from the ideas and innovations of two individuals: Elizabeth "Lizzie" Magie and Charles Darrow—but they weren't working together. Magie, a feisty woman who cared about social justice, created the Landlord's Game in 1903, hoping to educate the people about unfair practices within the real-estate market. Roughly 30 years later, Darrow played an iteration of Magie's game and saw room for improvement—and an opportunity to make money. He skillfully marketed his updated version of the game, calling it Monopoly. Stone personalizes this story by asking readers to consider instances when they've made changes to a game's original rules.

Author website: <https://tanyastone.com/picturebooks.html>

Author interview: <https://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/stone>

Book trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCew7bAMFr8>

***Front Desk by Kelly Yang***

Mia Tang and her parents have just become the new managers of a little motel in Anaheim, California. It didn't matter to Mr. Yao, the owner that they didn't have much experience in the motel business. Mia's parents had worked different jobs in America since they immigrated from China. Mia and her parents work day and night and Mia becomes friends with the weekly customers and takes over the front desk when she's not in school. When a Chinese immigrant in need comes for help, Mia's parents let him stay in an empty room for the night. Word soon spread and the immigrants appear, all in desperate need. Mia and her parents are risking their jobs and their home if they are caught.

Author website: <https://kellyyang.com/>

Book website: <https://www.frontdeskthebook.com>

Book trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayeYJvRJOY4>

Book trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9bsTVAOWxM>