



**Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Award
2023-2024 Book Talk Scripts
Grades 3-6**



***A Place to Hang the Moon* by Kate Albus**

William, Edmund and Anna find themselves moving from London to the countryside during World War II. Their grandmother has recently died, and the housekeeper is unable to care for them permanently. Seeking a forever home will prove to be quite a challenge. Not many families are looking to house three children during the war. They are placed in several houses, but none seem to be the right fit. They find solace at the library and soon befriend the librarian, Nora. All the elements of great storytelling are present along with heartwarming characters. Kate Albus's debut novel is sure to keep you turning the pages.

Author Website: <https://www.katealbus.com/>

Author Reads an Excerpt: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOF57g8JYSg>

Educators Guide: https://holidayhouse.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/A_Place_to_Hang_the_Moon_Educators_Guide.pdf

***Willodeen* by Katherine Applegate; illustrated by Charles Santoso**

Orphaned Willodeen has never quite fit in with her peers. She loves all animals but is especially drawn to the very unpopular screecher (a smelly creature with tusks, a snout, tails, and quills.) Willodeen is happy by herself until the screechers begin to disappear. Her town (called Perchance) is mostly focused on the disappearance of winged bears that popularly draw tourists to the town. After witnessing the killing of an old screecher, Willodeen is determined to save them and stands up for the animals at a town meeting. This beautiful story about humans and how they relate to the natural world is one for all young environmentalists.

Author Website: <https://katherineapplegate.com/>

Overview by Author: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xp6vgp91b48>

Book Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xp6vgp91b48>

Lesson Plans and Discussion Guide: <https://media.btsb.com/TitleLessonPlans/4272.pdf>

***Across the Desert* by Dusti Bowling**

Imagine that your mom has been in a terrible car accident that has left her dependent on drugs and your only short-term escape is enjoying your favorite live stream of a local pilot flying a small plane across the desert. When you are watching the latest flight of Addie Earhart, the planes crashes. Since you are the only viewer of this horrible incident, you feel compelled to help. This is the situation that 12-year-old Jolene finds herself in while living in Phoenix, Arizona. Jolene makes a series of challenging decisions that show strength and perseverance. This is the story for you if you enjoy adventure stories of friendship and bravery.

Author Website: <https://www.dustibowling.com/>

Author Book Overview: <https://vimeo.com/560880239>

Book Club Guide: https://azlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/libdev_acb_atdbc-guide.pdf

***Rez Dogs* by Joseph Bruchac**

Malian, a Wabanaki girl, learns about rez dogs from her Grampa Roy. She has recently moved in with her grandparents on a Native American reservation during the COVID-19 pandemic quarantine. Malsum, a rez dog, appears outside of Malian's grandparents' house one day and becomes a regular visitor that brings comfort during uncertain times. This story is told in verse and weaves the present with the past as Malian discovers stories of her ancestors. You will be reminded of the isolation felt during quarantining while learning about how Indigenous people lived and some of the unfortunate ways they were treated.

Discussion Guide: http://images.randomhouse.com/teachers_guides/9780593326220.pdf

Author Fan Face-off: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQrema3KMpo&t=22s>

***Cat Ninja* by Matthew Cody; illustrated by Yehudi Mercado**

Do you know what your pets do at night? Claude was a stray cat on the street who was taken in by a little old lady. He later finds out that she is a super ninja who fights crime and he learned his ninja skills from her. Now Claude a.k.a. Cat Ninja, is a house cat that lives with his human Leon and the family pet hamster. The hamster, Mr. Squeaks, was once the pet of Dr. Von Malice an evil genius. While conducting an experiment the doctor accidentally transferred some of her evil brain energy to Mr. Squeaks. Now Mr. Squeaks is seeking world domination! Can Cat Ninja stop Mr. Squeaks and his gang of rodent thugs from hacking into the city's bank? How can Cat Ninja and Mr. Squeaks live in the same house? This is a story that you do not want to miss!

Author Website: <http://www.matthewcody.com/>

Book Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUPu9aRIfI4>

Activity Guide: <https://www.ampkids.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Cat-Ninja-Boredom-Busters.pdf>

***The Girl in White* by Lindsay Currie**

Mallory has recently moved to the town of Eastport and isn't sure she likes it. The town is obsessed with stories of haunted everything, and that's how the town survives, tourists! Mallory's parents own a restaurant and have never been happier. Mallory on the other hand isn't. She has been having realistic nightmares and strange occurrences start happening. The quiet neighbor boy has been watching Mallory and she's not sure why. When Mallory wakes up with sand in her bedroom, she's convinced she's been sleepwalking. Joshua, the neighbor, confirms her suspicions and the adventures begin. Who's haunting Mallory's dreams and why? Can the kids stop her before it's too late?

Author Website: <https://www.lindsaycurrie.com/>

Book Trailer: <https://youtu.be/Sp9W6b1DwKU>

Discussion Guide:

https://www.lindsaycurrie.com/files/ugd/c47227_f78e2c77258e44e6bdb9b75a5575537.pdf

***A Tale as Tall as Jacob: Misadventures with My Brother* by Samantha Edwards**

Samantha is excited when her baby brother Jacob is born. As Jacob grows older, he starts getting into things and getting extremely frustrated when things don't go his way. Jacob becomes known as the "tiny tornado." Then Jacob is finally diagnosed with ADHD, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. This explains why he has lots of energy and is not able to focus on one thing. Samantha loves her brother and is constantly watching out for him to make sure he is safe, but sometimes this is hard for her since she is only a kid. Read this graphic novel to find out how Samantha realizes that family is important no matter what they do.

Author Website: <https://seedwards.wixsite.com/portfolio>

Book Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zr-Ho_GZXDw

Graphic Novel Creator: <https://www.storyboardthat.com/comic-maker>

***A Leopard Diary: My Journey into the Hidden World of a Mother and Her Cubs* by Suzi Eszterhas**

Do you like big cats? Well, you should defiantly read *A Leopard Diary*. Suzi Eszterhas, a skilled wildlife photographer, will take you through the days in the life of a leopard and her two cubs in diary format. Additional facts about leopards give you more information about these elusive large cats. The intimate photographs were taken by the author at a nature reserve in Botswana, Africa. This story will compel you to love leopards as much as Suzi Eszterhas and want to do what you can to protect them and their environment.

Author Website: <https://www.suzieszterhas.com/index>

Animal Diary Lesson Plan: <https://creativeeducator.tech4learning.com/2019/lessons/animal-diaries>

***Music for Tigers* by Michelle Kadarusman**

Louisa – a middle schooler with a passion for playing the violin – travels halfway around the world to spend the summer with her mom's eccentric Australian family. Life at the family's camp nestled deep in the Tasmanian rainforest is definitely interesting! In addition to all the animals and people that are unknown to her, she learns the truth about a secret place called Convict Rock – a sanctuary for Tasmanian tigers which are believed to be extinct. But – the truth is that one tiger remains. Can Louisa lure the tiger from the forest and gain its trust? Can anyone save the Tasmanian tiger? Can Louisa?

Author Book Launch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScYm4qUJy6s>

Facts about the Tasmanian Tiger: <https://australian.museum/learn/australia-over-time/extinct-animals/the-thylacine/>

Original Footage of Last Tasmanian Tiger: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUGkdwoz-Hg>

***Mystery on Magnolia Circle* by Kate Klise; illustrated by Celia Krampien**

Ivy and Teddy are ready for the best summer vacation ever! However, on the first day, Ivy falls down the stairs and breaks her leg! Summer vacation will have to be enjoyed from the couch. As Ivy is looking out the window, she sees suspicious activity and thinks she's witnessed a robbery at her neighbor's and she also thought she saw one of her classmates with the thieves. With Teddy's help can the two friends get to the bottom of crime? Maybe summer isn't doomed to be boring.

Author Website: <https://www.kateklise.com/>

Author Interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5krNoT-kR5U>

***Chester Keene Cracks the Code* by Kekla Magoon**

Chester Keene loves routines, predictability, and observing the world around him. He has dreams of one day being a spy like his dad (who must be a spy because he contacts Chester every now and again with sets of clues). When a scavenger hunt brings him a new friend named Skye, he learns even more is going on with his life and he's not so sure he likes it. This middle grade novel is for those who like a bit of adventure and mystery.

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

Book Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmCEbSOT1Kk>

***The Undercover Book List* by Colleen Nelson**

Jane's father has been sent overseas in the military and her best friend moves away. Before she leaves, her friend Sienna leaves a note in a book in the library in hopes Jane will find a new friend. Someone does find it – Tyler, who has the reputation as the “bad kid.” He decides to answer the note and he and Jane begin to swap notes with secret names, and they read and recommend book titles. As this new secret person reads, he changes a non-reader into a reader and also into a better person. Recommendations for other great books are peppered throughout the story. Dare you to not try to make your own book club after reading this story!

Author Website: <https://www.barbaraoconnor.com>

Book Discussion Guide: https://pajamapress.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/TheUndercoverBookList_TeachingGuide.pdf

Author Book Launch: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-x4LO_i_yE

Author Reads an Excerpt: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MMo5AwIehY>

***Lunch Every Day* by Kathryn Otoshi**

Day after day Jimmy takes the skinny kid's lunch because he is not standing in line for lunch. He even has to go to the principal's office, but he doesn't care. Then one day things change. He is surprised when he gets invited to a birthday party by this same skinny kid. Everyone is going to his birthday party. Should he go? What will the skinny kid's parents say if he does go? Read to find out what happens!

Book Review: <http://mrschureads.blogspot.com/2021/03/lunch-every-day-by-kathryn-otoshi.html>

Discussion Guide: <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-09/mfb-lunch-every-day.pdf>

Read Aloud and Discussion with Author:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWMCw3WgFKw>

Author Activity: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azsSploKljk&t=26s>

***Dare Sisters* by Jess Rinker**

Three sisters are about to embark on a bittersweet adventure to find Blackbeard's treasure. They are all sad because of the recent death of their grandfather. Their parents need to sell all grandpa's antiques and move when the girls discover their grandfather has left clues to find the treasure. Unfortunately, they aren't the only ones searching for it. Can the girls find it in time and save their way of life on the island?

Author Website: <https://jessrinker.com/>

Author Reads an Excerpt: <https://youtu.be/DaVqVQByhbo>

***Not Your All-American Girl* by Wendy Wan-Long Shang and Madelyn Rosenberg**

Lauren sometimes feels like she doesn't fit in at her school. She decides to try out for the school play along with her best friend Tara. She doesn't get the part she wants in the school play because she is told she doesn't have the "all American girl" look since she is part Chinese and Jewish heritage. Lauren is instead given the part of the ensemble even though she has a better singing voice than the leading role which just happens to have been given to her best friend. Lauren starts realizing that people stereotype Asian Americans in everyday comments, in movies and even injustices can happen just because you are of a different racial background. Lauren decides she has had it and is out to make a change.

Author Website: <https://wendyshang.com/>

Author Website: <https://www.squealermusic.com/madclips/wordpress2/>

Book Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIPjOcpuy2Y>

Book Review: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MS4XIzzP-BY>