

Lesson Ideas and Discussion topics for the 2011-2012 Sunshine State Young Reader's Award Books

These ideas were submitted by St. Johns County teachers who participated in the 2011 summer SSYRA PLC. For information please contact Kristen Badger, the PLC facilitator, at badgerk@stjohns.k12.fl.us

Alvin Ho

-There are a couple of school tube/you tubes that would be good to use as an introduction. There's even a youtube on how to make dragon's beard candy if you're so inclined!

-It would be fun to bring in chopsticks to eat at lunch and/or to sample wasabi with caution! You could serve Italian ice for dessert!

-Have students discuss their fears and write a journal entry about different ways they could overcome their fears.

-Create a new end to the book. Start with a new chapter 17. Alvin becomes part of Pinky's "gang" of friends. Does he continue to be afraid of the things he has been afraid of in the past? Does he become afraid of new things? What about his relationship with "Flea"?

***Discussion Questions**

1. Why do you think Alvin is afraid of school?
2. Alvin made a list of "Ways to be a Gentleman". Why did his father tell him he needed to be a gentleman?
3. How does Alvin try to make friends with Pinky? Is this how you should really become a friend to someone?
4. Why do you think Alvin decided he didn't want to be friends with Pinky? Would you be friends with him? Why or why not?
5. Why is Alvin unsure of his friendship with Flea?
6. Alvin eventually becomes friends with Flea. Why do you think he was finally able to become her friend and not be afraid of girls anymore?
7. What did you think of the chicken pox epidemic? Could that happen at our school?
8. Why is Alvin uncomfortable around the psychotherapist?
9. Why is his relationship with his father so important?
10. What would put in your PDK? Explain.

-Make a glossary of the important things in your life or create your own PDK. Be sure to include a list of what is in there and what it is used to help you survive and why.

-A lot of famous people are mentioned in this story. Research one and create a display, create a technology based presentation, or write a report to share what you learn. (Choose from Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms, Carl Yastrzemski, Daisuke Matsuzaka, Frida Kahlo, Hank Aaron, Henry David Thoreau, Louisa May Alcott, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Paul Gauguin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Tenzing Norgay, Vincent van Gogh, and William Shakespeare.)

Alvin Ho

- Identify text features - the book has illustrations, a dedication, author acknowledgements, reading level, grade level recommendations, excerpt from another book by the author, and a glossary by Alvin Ho

-Lesson on responsibility and ownership (chapter 10) - engage students in discussion about something they did in which they regret, what could they do differently next time, what did they learn from the experience - good way to promote writing and coping strategies

-Intro. to unit on China - use book as read aloud; create a vocabulary list using some of the words in the book (gunggung, kimchi, etc.); research successful people from China

-Create a comic strip of Firecracker Man! Create your strip with pencil and paper or with an online comic creator such as:

<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/>

<http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/comic/>

HYPERLINK

"http://www.professorgarfield.org/pgf_comics_lab.htm"http://www.professorgarfield.org/pgf_comics_lab.htm

-It does bring out good discussion on how to handle problems and uncomfortable situations. Its length and vocabulary lends itself to good read for 3rd graders or struggling 4-5 graders.

-The Chinese names/words for grandparents that are used in the book are pohpoh, gunggung, and yehyeh. Brainstorming American names for grandparents would be appropriate.

-Alvin Ho is a middle child, and it would be interesting to see which of our students is a middle child and their feelings about being in this "position".

-One activity that you could use with this book would be for your students to create a glossary similar to the one at the back of the book. This would be composed of words that were important to the students so each would be different. Another activity would be for different students to attempt to see how long they could last in class without speaking. I'm not sure I've ever had a student that never spoke! It might be a fun activity as well as creating some peace in the room.

-Writing- Make a list, "Top 10 Things About My Dad" start with number 10, then work way to best thing. Compare to Alvin's list(generate as a class based on the things he mentioned within the story)

-Make a list of all the things Alvin is afraid of. Create own list of things you fear. Make a PDK list of your own. What would you put in it to face, "first day of school" or "a camping trip" or " a weekend at an amusement park" or " a day at the beach" etc.

Alvin Ho

-Discuss rules of etiquette. Alvin's father is always telling him to be a gentleman. What does that mean by today's standards? Share a list of unusual rules of good manners from 100 years or so ago. (I have a book my grandmother gave me, written in 1904 entitled, "Good Manners for all Occasions". It has some amusing rules to follow! I am sure those manner lists can be googled).

-Word Work- Provide students with a list of unusual words and have them create fun meanings to the words based on their suffixes and prefixes. Then look up the actual meanings and illustrate.

Ex: Alvin surmised that a psychotherapist is a very smart crazy person that you should stay away from for your own good. (psycho means crazy and therapist is a smart person). There are fun word lists that can be found on the internet. Or, have them create own words by combining two known words, invent a fun meaning EX: doughology is the study of making doughnuts or some such silliness. The kids will think of great ones!

-There are some great examples of similes throughout the book, and it would be beneficial to record them as they are discovered. There's also some great examples of onomatopoeia that could be identified.

-It would be cool to have your coach or a baseball player come in to demonstrate a knuckleball, changeup, two-seam fastball, four-seam fastball, and a forkball. They could also choose up sides - Redcoats and Minutemen, and act out Patriots' Day.

-Vocabulary - (I use dictionary.com with my class constantly plus "Alvin's Woeful Glossary" is helpful and comical) - psychotherapist, kimchi, wasabi, mayhem, meteorite, uppercut, feng shui, epidemic, quarantine, propulsion, throttle, crimson, oozing, chaos, revolution, tonsillitis, appendicitis, origami, contagious, chicken pox, edamame, pomegranate, confidence, quadruple, unsavory, acrophobia, vaccination

-Talk about fears that the kids have had when they were younger that they aren't afraid of anymore.

-Character Counts ("How to be a gentleman")

-Have students create a "Personal Disaster Kit" for third grade (or whatever grade they are in).

-I think writing about their favorite one-on-one experience with parent would be a great prompt.

-Collect some clothes from your parents or other family members, and come up with your own superhero costume, like Alvin did.

-Have a bad food picnic! Get together with friends to try some foods you've always been afraid to eat, but never really tried. Brussel sprouts, lima beans, liver . . . are they really all that bad? For dessert, try a plate of gummi worms or spiders. Sometimes things aren't so scary if they're made of candy!

Alvin Ho

Discussion questions

1. Alvin likes to pretend he is the superhero Firecracker Man. If you could make up a superhero character, who would you be? What would your costume look like?
 2. Are you afraid of some things? What would you put in your PDK - Personal Disaster Kit - to help you survive the things that scare you?
 3. Alvin takes his father's Johnny Astro toy to school without asking, because he hopes it will make him more popular. Does his plan work?
 4. At first Alvin is excited when it seems like Pinky wants him to join his gang. But then he discovers there's some problems with joining a gang. What are they? Would you join the gang?
 5. Flea made a book called *The Book of Alvin*. Why did she make it, and what did she put in her book?
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Out of My Mind

-Disabilities: discuss some of the disabilities that were mentioned in the story and help students understand what they are, but also discuss how they are still kids just like them, but they have to do things a little different

<http://www.cdc.gov/az/a.html> (disabilities website)

Vocabulary: there were a lot of great words in this story-the students could create a vocabulary book of some of the words in the story. They could also create a vocabulary book of words that they learn throughout the year that they would want to include in their own vocabulary.

-Perseverance: discussion and activity on never giving up. They could share a time when they wanted to give up, but kept trying and succeeded in what they were doing.

Caring/Compassion: Character Counts lesson on being caring and compassionate of others and their feelings. Create a comic strip showing what a caring and compassionate person is like. (Students could use comic strips online, kid pix, or on paper)

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Additional Ideas/Activities/Discussions

<http://sharondraper.com/bookdetail.asp?id=35>

-CC Lesson "Making Judgements"

- Make posters for "Disabilities Awareness Month"

Out of My Mind

- Research famous people who overcame disabilities. Provide students with a list to choose from.
- Invite a guest speaker in who works with students with disabilities.
- Post a favorite quote from the story, then provide a response activity. Example: ".....words were like sweet, liquid gifts, and I drank them like lemonade." Have students list their favorite words (those which are fun to say, have fun meanings, etc) Encourage students to keep an ongoing log of words/phrases from stories as they continue to read throughout the year.
- Give each student 50 mini cards (can make by cutting index cards into fourths). Have students write 50 words they feel are important in communicating ideas with others. Set a specific time during the day for a social experiment. Either pose discussion questions for groups or teacher leads a discussion. However, students are not allowed to verbally talk, they can only respond by using the word cards on their desk. †Journal about the experience.
- A Reading Group Guide to Out of My Mind:
 - *The novel opens with a powerful discussion of the power of words and language. How does this help capture the reader's attention?
 - *What predictions can the reader make about the narrator of the story? *What inferences can be made about the thought processes of the narrator's mind?
 - *In a world that does not work for her, what seems to cause the biggest frustrations for Melody?
 - *Describe Melody's parents. How do they learn to communicate with Melody and help her to overcome everyday problems? Why are those efforts sometimes a complete failure?
 - *How does Melody feel about school? How does she fit in with her classmates and what makes her different from the rest of the children in H-5? What would be Melody's ideal school situation?
 - *Discuss Melody's teachers since she began going to school. What does this say about her school system, or about attitudes at her school about teaching children with special needs?
 - *Describe Mrs. V. What role does she play in Melody's development? Why is she a necessary addition to Melody's life? ,
 - *What is significant about the story of Ollie the fish? How does Ollie's life mirror Melody's? Describe Melody's feelings when she is unable to tell her mother what really happened. ,
 - *Describe how the introduction of Penny as a character changes the family dynamics. Analyze Melody's complicated feelings about her little sister.
 - *How does the inclusion program change Melody's school experiences? Describe both positive and negative results of the program. Describe Melody's deep, unrealized need for a friend.
 - *What does Melody learn about friendship during the trip to the aquarium? Make a comparison between Ollie's life, the life of the fish in the aquarium, and Melody's life.
 - *How does Melody's computer change her life, her outlook on life, and her potential? Why does she name it Elvira?,

Out of My Mind

- *Why does Melody decide to enter the quiz team competition? What obstacles must she face and overcome just to get on the team? ,
- *What does Melody learn about friendship and the relationships of children working together as she practices and competes with the quiz team? What does she learn about herself? ,
- *What is ironic about the events at the restaurant after the competition? How does this scene foreshadow the events that led up to the airport fiasco? ,
- *Describe Melody's feelings before the trip to the airport, while she is there, and after she gets home. How would you have coped with the same situation? ,
- * Describe Melody's extreme range of emotions as she tries to tell her mother that Penny is behind the car. How did the scene make you feel?
- * Discuss the scene in which Melody confronts the kids on the quiz team. What is satisfying about how she handles the situation? What else might Melody have done?
- *Why is the first page repeated at the end of the book? How has Melody changed, both personally and socially, from the beginning of the book to the end? ,
- *How would this story have been different if it had been written from a third-person point of view; from the point of view of her parents, for example, or simply from the viewpoint of an outside observer? ,Ä®,Ä®20. Explain the title of the novel. Give several possible interpretations.,

-Put yourself in Melody's chair. Write a paper that tells what it would be like to be Melody for one day. Write about your feelings and frustrations.

-Investigate the problems of children with cerebral palsy, especially those that are of school age. How does it affect the child socially, academically, and personally? ,

-Investigate the possible causes of cerebral palsy, and what preventative measures, if any, can be taken by the mother. ,

- Research current laws for inclusion of children with disabilities into classrooms. What effect, if any, do such things have on a school community? ,

- Research current treatment options or communication devices for young people like Melody. ,

- Write a letter to one of the characters in the book explaining your feelings about the events in the story. What advice would you give Melody, Rose, Mr. D, or Mrs. V?

-Describe the relationship between the able-bodied children and Melody. Would you describe it as a true friendship? When situations become monumental and overwhelming to young people, what is likely to happen? Explain.,

-Imagine it is the last day of fifth grade. Write a letter or create a conversation between one of the following pairs of characters:

Rose and Melody

Melody and Mrs. V

Melody and Catherine

Mr. D and Melody

Melody and Claire

Out of My Mind

-Trace the story of one of the following characters. Imagine you are a reporter doing a story on one of their lives. Write everything you know, as well as whatever you can infer about the character in order to write your magazine article.

Claire

Mrs. V

Mr. Dimming

Rose

Penny

-You are a reporter at one of the following scenes. Write the story for your newspaper.

Student with Disabilities makes Quiz Team

Child Struck by Family Car

Big Storm Grounds Air Traffic

Local Quiz Team Wins Big

-Research Stephen Hawking. -Prepare a biography about him in either paragraph form, or using Power Point. -In addition, you must write a 1-2 paragraph essay about how Melanie's study of him helped her reach her goals.

-Talk about differences and that all people have are unique and have something to offer.

-Look behind the front cover.

-How to overcome adversity, even when it seems that there is no end.

-Discuss etiquette around special needs individuals-not stare or talk behind their backs

1-Partner students and have them lists ways that they are different from each other. Explaining that we are all different, and each has qualities that make them special and unique.

-Have students create an invention that could make Melody's life easier.

- Character Counts lesson: how should you act when you see someone that is different or has a disability?

-This quote really made me stop and think, "We all have disabilities.

What's yours?" -A different way to think about that is "We all have gifts. What's yours?" Melody certainly had many, and that's what makes her extra special.

-Write about why Melody's name fits her to a tee.

-Listen to classical vs jazz vs country music. -Write about how each one makes them feel.

-Exchange "fist bumps" when you come to that page.

-Is there really such a thing as a Medi-Talker?

-Research and report on Stephen Hawkins.

Out of My Mind

-Brainstorm and list all of the words they can think of that end in 'ology'.

-Share Sharon Draper's biography. -She was named the U.S. Teacher of the Year in 1997. -Her special role model was her 5th grade teacher. -She has a golden retriever. -Write about how she used those real life experiences in this novel.

-Discuss how they would treat a classmate like Melody. -How would they react to Molly and Claire's cruelty?

-Why is there a fish out of water on the cover? -Do you think that's how Melody felt?

-Compare Rose and Claire using a Venn diagram.

-Vocabulary - petulant, heptagon, evasive, seizure, lead poisoning, sedative, burden, autistic, Down syndrome, mannequin, ALS, catapult, paparazzi, pediculosis, pumice, bullistic, indignation, trivia, entomology, matinee, resilient, dignity, oxymoron

-great CC lessons about acceptance, tolerance, and understanding others, as well as study habits, fairness..

-Research adaptive technology, find out what is currently on the market that allows children like Melody to be able to express herself. What other functions might be available today to allow students to fit into a class.

-Additional Ideas/Activities/Discussions

<http://sharondraper.com/bookdetail.asp?id=35>

Dragon's Egg

- Have children write a story about a "magical pet" that they would like to own.
- I found this idea online- Give everyone a hard-boiled egg and let them design an egg for their own dragon!
- Have students write about the fantasy and realism parts in the story.
- Write their own fantasy about an unknown creature they have discovered.
- Have students compare dragons to other wildlife, especially endangered, and how actions of humans impact them.
- To help the students relate to what Mella had to go through you could give the students an unboiled egg and ask them to take care of it for a day (place it in a plastic baggie or wrap in plastic wrap in case it breaks to avoid a mess). Students can learn how hard it was for Mella to make sure the egg was cared for and not broken.
- Students could also make a paper mache egg and decorate it. They could write about what their dragon would look like when the egg hatched.
- Write the word HONOR on the board. What does being honorable mean to you? Discuss or respond in journal. Provide students with real life situations, in which a difficult decision needs to be made. (perhaps on index cards, one per group) have them discuss honorable solutions to the problem(s).
- Dragons as pets? Have students write an expository paper explaining why they would or would not make awesome pets. Illustrate their pet dragon! Display.
- Mini unit on Medieval times. Cover class systems, knighthood, code of chivalry, etc. Have students copy the ancient symbol that was found in the dragon cave. Write what it means. Provide students with a few other (made up) symbols and have them create a meaning for it and describe when it was used. Have them create their own symbol and describe its meaning and when it was used.
- Have the students craft a scenario (similar to Roger going back to save Gwyn) demonstrating a dilemma and have a partner write how they would respond using one or more of the Pillars of Character.
- Discuss Mella's role as a dragonkeeper and then come up with a fantasy job and related responsibilities.
- Explain Gran's advice - "Tears mend nothing. Work mends all."
- Mella couldn't write. Pretend you are Mella and write a note to Da and Mama explaining why your departure.
- Mella had a keen sense of smell. How could that be her best friend or her worst enemy?

Dragon's Egg

-How are our 6 Pillars of Character similar to Roger's rules of honor?

-Compare a true dragon's tooth to a Tyrannosaurus Rex.

-Hatch duck eggs in a chick-u-bator (approx. \$25.00), and observe how the ducklings imprint with humans. Compare that to the dragon chick and Mella.

Write a new ending to the story. Begin where Roger left with the King's Army, but Mella chose to stay behind, to become the keeper of the golden dragon. Have Alain come back into the story, but this time he will try to capture Mella for ransom, as she has become so important to the dragons. Include Roger in the story, as well.

-Different cultures have different beliefs regarding dragons. For instance, in China, the dragon is revered, while in England, dragons are considered dangerous and evil. Create a report, a posterboard, or a Power Point Presentation, discussing the role of dragons in at least 4 different cultures.

-Make dragontooth necklaces as a reward upon completion of the novel. Get leather laces and string a Styrofoam shaped tooth on it! Please let me know if anyone comes up with a more creative/inexpensive dragon tooth!

-Vocabulary - cauldron, tankard, charlatan, conjuror, gelding, venison, churlish, uncanny, bridle, itinerant, slovenliness, skinflint, lament, bard, quelling, chasm, tumultuous, rogue, fastidiously, blasphemous, vengeance, conflagration, malice, pallor, eloquent

The Magic Half

-Have students analyze and discuss word choice and sentence structure and how to set a mood with descriptions.

-How Miri and Molly deal with conflict could be a starting point for discussions of problem solving.

-Have an open discussion regarding time travel. What would the "ripple effect" be if someone actually went back in time and changed things? Brainstorm examples of theories if certain events never happened....

- If you could go back in time to sit down and talk with someone, who would it be? Why? List 15 questions you'd like to ask that person. (Remember the WH words)

-Twins research. Identical vs fraternal. Unique qualities of twins. Famous twins?

- Round Robin activity- list things that come in pairs.

-Journal - Describe a time where you felt "left out". Include how it made you feel. How did you handle the situation?

-Predict how the story would have been different if Molly and Miri were not able to return to Miri's time?

-Have students write a story about going back in time and have them decide on a time period and a person that they would want to meet.

-Character Counts- Bullying and getting along with everyone

-Have students work on a community project where they research their own neighborhood or city.

-Study of History: after the depression

-Research information on Twins

-Using a double bubble thinking map/Venn diagram to compare the Depression and today would be a good activity. Make sure to include lightning bugs in the middle! It would also be fun to include changes in vocabulary - problem and bummer.

-Research you own family history online, there are many sites now for example; ancestry.com

-Have the students go back at least 70 years with their research and compile a family tree.

-Create a timeline for members of your family, using the research, include any interesting or important national events that align.

The Magic Half

-Choose a famous person from history. List 15 questions you'd like to ask that person. Be sure the questions are things that the average person wouldn't already know. **Get your questions pre-approved by your teacher.** Then, research your person, finding the answer to as many of your questions as you can. You may present this in Power Point, if you'd like.

-Research your own family history. Create a family tree that goes back as far as you can. (It must be at least 70 years) There are many free sites available. Have your parent help you find a suitable site. Here are two that I found:

<http://www.geni.com/>

<http://www.familyecho.com/>

-Re-write the end of the story. Pick up where Molly's cousin Sissy comes home, finding the girls before they time travel back to the present. Include information about what happened with Horst, Sissy, the aunt, and Molly's Grandma.

-On page 187 Molly says, "Bullies are always the biggest cowards." Write about why she said that, and if they agree or disagree citing specific, personal experiences.

-On page 186, it says Molly "scrabbled" down the ladder. I think that it should be scrambled. If so, kids always like hunting for THE mistake! If not, someone please let me know!

-Vocabulary - mayhem, guise, menace, geothermal, syllabus, decagon, monocle, queasy, loafer, indignant, ballistic, hoist, confidential, hitchhiking, exquisite, catatonic, oxidation, incredulous, and quesadilla

-We could also do interviews of sets of twins in our school.

-Have students make predictions throughout the story.

-Same house 70 years earlier/later--what things were different? the same?

-What were some changes that Molly will face at the end of the book?
Is there really such thing as magic?

-What genre would this book be?

-Predictions after different sections of the book
(I certainly changed my predictions from the beginning!)

-Dealing with bullies

-Discuss foreshadowing.

-Have students conduct interviews with older family members about what it was like when they were kids.

-Have students share photos of parents and grandparents when they were kids,

The Magic Half

-Look at old photos of current cities, neighborhoods, homes and compare them to the past

-Bullies are an important theme from the mild bullying of Miri's brothers to the evil abuse by Horst.

-New inventions that didn't exist at all in the past, like the cd player, could be explored.

-Discuss the Great Depression and World War II.

The Secret of Zoom

-Survey favorite subjects kids have in school - graph the results. Can use technology component and create color coded charts/graphs or use cut outs in the shape of planes to create a visual, fun, graph to display.

-Inventions /mini themed unit. Research how some things were invented "accidentally" like velcro, frisbees and chocolate chip cookies (all done by accident!) There are many more!

-The book is great for reinforcing details in writing. Lynne Jonell, the author, uses vivid details and imagery.

-Fun book to read and would work well with Reading menus, drawing conclusions, and making predictions.

-Good platform for discussions on character and 7 Habits.

-Have students try to sing in perfect pitch and discuss the concept of pitch.

-Have students create an invention using music.

-Have students research different scientists and how they changed the world.

-Have students create and write a story about a mad scientist.

-Check out the literature unit that is available on edHelper - includes a word wall.

-Brainstorm all of the different fields of science.

-Introduce the novel by showing the school tube book trailer.

-Figure out the pattern for the Fibonacci Number Sequence.

-Discover the relationship of pitch and vibration by doing the Pitch of Sound Experiment with bottles and/or straws.

-Read Bartholomew and the Oobleck by Dr. Seuss, and make oobleck. Compare and contrast the properties of oobleck with zoom, which stays liquid as long as it's not exposed to air.

-Take the online color blind test.

-Research Danny's condition - hydrocephalus.

-Research to find out if a Harrier is a real bird.

-There's actually a youtube of President Obama buying this novel for his girls!

The Secret of Zoom

-Vocabulary - claustrophobic, integers, gargoyle, sonata, gutter, sciatica, shirking, caliper, trapezoid, balustrade, incredulous, acoustics, ominous, geologist, physicist, benefactor, placid, cairn, rivulet, ravenous, catalyst, intonation, calcify

Give teams a box full of odds n ends, (I picked up a bunch of things I dont even know what they are for from garage sales- mostly kitchen/tool gadgets) have them pick an item or two and create a new use for it. Illustrate object, then write detailed description of how it works, why people need it and a catchy name for it!

Brain research activities. Have students take simple test to determine if they are left or right brained. Compare the characters in the book :Taft who loved math and Christina who loved music- left or tight brained? Point out how they each have their own strengths, like each of us. How working together, using our strengths together, we can work together to accomplish great things!

I loved the connections to math and music, you could do a more in-depth study of harmonics. A unit of study on how chords are formed and then resolved, the difference between major

and minor chord progressions and how they sound, with the minor key being more dissonant. The intervals

between the notes that make up the chords.

You could include a study of rocks, there are many rocks that have unique qualities, for example there are

many rocks that are fluorescent in UV light.

-For an activity, I would have students invent their own imaginary material, describe its properties related to a science unit on properties of matter and how their new material would impact the world.

-When I first picked up the book and looked at the cover, I thought it would be another goofy story- first impressions are important! That being said, **create a new cover for the book!** Be sure to make the front cover and the back cover. The back cover should contain your own quick version of the story. Remember that you need to give bits and pieces of the story to make someone want to read it, but not give the whole story away!

-Create a poster to advertise the book. Make people want to read it!

Nathaniel Fludd: Beastologist- Flight of the Phoenix

- Research the history of the myths of the various mythical creatures (gremlins, phoenix, menataurs, satrys, dragons, trolls, ogres, griffin, etc) Students share.
- Great opportunity of mapping skills lessons. Compare ancient world maps with modern maps. Share all the different types of maps (topography, political, statistical, oceangraphic, etc)
- Students can create own map of imaginary place- include all the elements of a real map(compass rose, scale, key, lines of latitude/longitude, etc)
- CC lesson on self worth- "What Am I good at?" Have each student write each child in the class's name on paper- next to the name, write 1 thing they are good at. Collect. Teacher can type up all the things their peers said about them, laminate, give to them for keepsake. Good to pull out to read when feeling down. (Story about this activity in one of those Chicken Soup books)
- Students could pick an extinct animal and find out why/how it became extinct. They could share their findings with the class.
- Students can make up a mythical character and write a story about it. They can also draw a picture of it.
- Explain to students that in an adventure story, characters face many small problems on their way to solving the big problem of the story. Sometimes the solutions work and sometimes they don't. Make a chart that lists small problems Nate has along the way to solving his big problem of helping the phoenix and saving Aunt Phil from the Bedouins.
- Choose a scene from the book and draw it the way you see it in your imagination.
- Pretend you are a mythical or extinct creature from the book. Without using words, pretend you are the creature. See if your partner or group can guess who you are.
- Look up endangered animals in your state. Choose one species and find out why it is endangered.
- Have students create a beast and have students write a report to discuss the details of their beast (features, locations, etc)
- Have students create a map and mark the different locations of the beasts in the books or come up with their own.
- Make a compass rose (something third grade already does)
- Research mythical creatures for different cultures or research different countries and find some that already exist (ex. Bigfoot or the lochness monster).

Nathaniel Fludd: Beastologist- Flight of the Phoenix

-Have students design their own idea for the gremlin, phoenix or other creatures in the book.

-Another fabulous web site is www.eol.org Encyclopedia of Life. A cute site (BTW it has ads) is www.switcheroozoo.com lets the kids make new animals and has loads of learning activities.

-For writing, have students assume the role of one of the other characters and write from their perspective. This would work well with the character Greasle or even her brother that gets thrown from the plane.

-Write about or discuss a time you've been homesick.

-Track Aunt Phil's route to Arabia as described on page 32.

-Research to find out if it's true that camels can go for 5 whole days without water in the heat of the summer, 50 days in the winter.

-What is the significance of the sketch of the feather above each chapter? Drawing is very therapeutic for Nate. Write about how you deal with stress/uncomfortable situations.

-Grammatically correct some of Greasle's quotes.

-There are connecting hints about the explorations/adventures of Nate's parents on pages 24 and 66. What are they, and why don't you think that Nate made the connection? Do you think that Aunt Phil will confront Miss Lumpkin in the sequel? According to Cornelius, "A Beastologist studies only the most rare and exotic beasts". Research a rare and exotic beast and put together a presentation that you will use to teach the class about this beast. Visit the following website to find a list of 18 exotic animals. There are many more available at this website through various links.

<http://webecoist.com/2008/08/24/strangest-endangered-species-and-animals/>

-The students could make a compass either for this book or for *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*. I have compasses in the classroom and we could compare accuracy of our hand-made ones. Parents could set up a low tech version of a geocache course using measurements instead of GPS coordinates.

-Author's blog: <http://rlafevers.blogspot.com/>

-Do you know someone who has cared more about a "tidy sum" than an individual? Have you ever cared more about a "tidy sum" than a person's feelings?

-Do you think that Aunt Phil considered Greasle a "pest" or a worthy beast at the end of the story? Why was her name appropriate? Would you like a pet gremlin/jinni? Will she be included in the sequel?

Nathaniel Fludd: Beastologist- Flight of the Phoenix

-On page 54/last paragraph, it says, "Nate gawped at her." What does that verb mean?

▬ - phoenix, myth, nomads, conversationalist, congeal, water closet, drawers (not dresser!), exasperation, bureau, territorial, hospitality, ruck sack, mite, fuselage, monotony, debris, dolt, sheik, cartographer, baleful, oasis, lustrous

-Use Google Earth to show places mentioned in the book
compare factual and fictional elements in a story compare this book with former SSYRA book, Cryptid Hunter

-Have children research and pick one of these; Gremlins, Dodos, Phoenix, basilisks, griffins, and manicores and do a presentation. Wordle and/or Prezi could be used.

-Research the mythical animals listed, choose one and make a model.

-Create your own beast, give it a history, diet, habits etc.

-Research little known actual animals, report to class.

-Study mythology from different parts of the world, see what is similar to different cultures and how are they different.

N.E.R.D.S

-Lots of opportunities to discuss bullying, and some interesting statements worth taking the time to discuss - "The world's not saved by touchdowns, it's saved by ideas.", "What popular kids have to offer the world is so tiny." I have a poster in my classroom that I refer to occasionally - "What is right is not always popular. What is popular is not always right."

-Discuss acronyms. Provide a list of common ones and see if the kids can tell what they stand for (EX: SCUBA is Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus OR FCAT is FEMA is Federal Emergency Management Act/I think =)

-Brainstorm an acronym to use that represents themselves or the class. Design posters to display around the room. Build that community feeling!

- Introduce using latitude and longitude coordinates on a map.(on the heading of each chapter)

- Create an alter ego personality (as a spy character) Detail their own special talents. Draw a self-portrait with the details written about their spy role.

- Character counts lessons on being bullied or acting like a bully. Get the guidance counselor involved for a mini lesson.

-Map skills- Long. and Lat.

- Students can reflect on bullying and discuss when they have been mean or a time when someone was mean to them.

- Write a sequel to the NERDS adventure

- Lots of fun vocabulary practice

- Research Pangea Theory

-Map their adventures on both a globe and a flat map, as an extension discuss the difference in time zones.

-Design a type of transportation that the NERDS could use to replace their "school bus". Explain how it will be fueled and operates.

-Decide what "modifications" would be made to you if you had been accepted into NERDS. Remember it focuses on what appears to be a weakness. Illustrate your modifications in action.

-This novel has strong vocabulary, so teachers can work on word webs and word splashes to enhance students' vocabulary.

-Teachers can also introduce longitude and latitude with the beginning of each chapter.

N.E.R.D.S

-It would be interesting to track all of the global settings that are mentioned in this book - Greenland, Iceland, Newfoundland, Yucatan, Hawaiian Islands, Arlington, Virginia, Juneau, Galapagos, Australia, North Slope of Alaska, Akron, Jamestown, Tallahassee, Poughkeepsie, Sahara Desert, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Kansas City, Jersey City, Kissimmee, Tulsa, Cairo, Egypt, Milwaukee, Sahara Desert

-Vocabulary - schematics, melee, podiatrist, bicuspid, reminiscing, preeminent, ostracize, ridicule, discern, stealth, sarcophagus, surveillance, guffaw, hologram, nunchakus, assassin, minion, henchman, goon, delinquent, espionage, clandestine, mariachi, diabolical, formidable, symmetry, apprehensive, plummet, degenerate, prototype, incorrigible, hyperventilation, evasive, maneuvers

Bobby vs. Girls (Accidentally)

-This is a wonderful book about learning to understand each other, and, ultimately, being kind and brave. In our room, we nominate and vote for recipients of the six Pillars of Character awards.

-Poll your students to see if there are any birthday twins. I think that there's a Marilyn Burns activity about the probability of there being birthday twins amongst a certain # of people.

-Write about what helped you get through the loss of a family member, friend, or a pet.

-Write about a time you said the two hardest words in the English language - "I'm sorry."

-Have them bring in their favorite rock(s) to share. Identify them.

-Problem Solving and Conflict resolution skills/discussions

-Incorporating animal concepts or research of favorite animals/how to take care of a pet.

-Responsibility: caring for others/friendships

-Experiment with static cling!

-Share "frenemy" experiences.

-Discuss friendship and its qualities

-Writing: How would you feel following in the footsteps of "famous" parent?

-Write and deliver a really dynamic ending to Bobby's speech for student council representative.

-Have students elect their own classroom rep.

-Have students practice writing their own speech and present to the class.

-Bobby REALLY wanted a dog, but he couldn't have one. Write about something you REALLY want but can't have.

-Have a student and/or the school nurse come in and talk about asthma - what triggers an attack and how to treat it.

-Vocabulary - hybrid, nebulizer, asthma, Ichthyology, phenomenal, immigrant, intrigued, koi, indubitably, unopposed, topiary, infuriating, palate, disqualified, perceptive, naturalist, nomination, distinguished, versus

Bobby vs. Girls (Accidentally)

-The illustrator of this book has a great website with many activities
www.dantat.com/BOBBY/BobbyVSGirls/welcome.html

-Friendship theme for CC lessons

-Write/share your most embarrassing moments- compare those with Bobby's. Discuss

-Writing: Have students write a poem about their favorite pet (or one that they would want if they didn't have one) and illustrate a picture.

-Discussion: Have students share what pet they would choose if they could have any pet they wanted.

-Character Counts: showing respect to others/friendship

-Vocabulary: discuss and create a vocabulary book, Prezi, PowerPoint of the different words used in the story.

-Online

<http://www.dantat.com/BOBBY/BobbyVSGirls/welcome.html>

I enjoyed this site because there were some unique things for the kids to see. There are fish trick videos. They show how many different illustrations they tried before they chose the cover of the book. They introduce the author and the illustrator.

-HYPERLINK "<http://www.k12reader.com/bobby-vs-girls-accidentally>"
<http://www.k12reader.com/bobby-vs-girls-accidentally/>

-Discussion about losing a pet. Read story aloud, "The Tenth Best Thing About Barney"

-Research unusual fish- complete AIMS activity , "Do Fish Need to Drink Water?"

-Conduct survey on students' pets. Choose a pet that they don't own, generate two-column notes on pros/cons of that pet.

-Choose a wild animal that you'd love to have as a pet(elephant, lion, alligator, etc) and write about how/why that pet would be the most amazing pet ever! Illustrate. (Perhaps put a funny spin on what you could do with your pet; EX: My pet lion would guarantee me a place at the front of the line when the ice cream truck comes to our neighborhood!

-Bobby never really wrote his campaign speech, and we didn't get a good look at his campaign poster. Help him get elected! Write the speech that he should have written, and make the campaign poster that he should have made.

Bobby vs. Girls (Accidentally)

-Research how animal trainers are able to train animals to do their bidding. Bobby was able to train his fish, what other odd animals have been trained to perform? Think about an animal that you would really love to have as your pet. Research this animal. Now, write an essay to your parents, persuading them to allow you to buy this pet. Be sure that you use the information from your research to help you persuade them.

-Discuss communication skills with the students, how is it that Bobby and Holly develop a wall between them?

-Discuss if we should have a student council at our school, what value would it add to the classroom? Would it improve students understanding of how our government works?

-Have the children brainstorm about stereotypes and how we can overcome our misconceptions. Teaching Tolerance has appropriate lesson plans including some on gender bias. <http://www.tolerance.org/publication/gender-doesnt-limit-you>

There is a web site specifically for the book

<http://www.dantat.com/BOBBY/BobbyVSGirls/welcome.html> ,

the author has a blog <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bobby-Vs-Girls-Accidentally/130038351436>

there is a Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bobby-Vs-Girls-Accidentally/130038351436>

Captain Nobody

-A craft that is interactive is to create our own superheroes, but with a twist. Start out with a piece of paper and each kid draws the head and neck of a superhero. The paper is then folded so only the neck is showing and passed to a neighbor, who draws the body and arms. A third pass and they draw the legs and feet. The resulting pictures are really fun and the kids get a good laugh out of it.

-For an activity, I would have the children brainstorm on how to safely get noticed by others. This was so important to Newt. Brainstorm why.

-Each student can also invent his or her alter ego superhero, describe the characteristics of a hero, create a poster of what his/her hero looks like, and author comic strip. The story is a great character lesson for doing the "right thing" even if nobody knows you're doing it.

-A writing activity describing a unusual or uncomfortable situation and how to respond with good character could be turned into a script and videoed.

-Obviously, kids could design their own superhero character. Illustrate and label all the super gear or parts of costume. Write a detailed description of the character, his/her powers, cool name, etc

- Discussion or journal topic: HERO! Who is your hero? Why?

- Create newspaper headline and article that explains something heroic you did. Can be a real event or make one up. Add a B & W picture as if a real newspaper article.

- Topic: What are you afraid of? Research different fears or phobias. (alektrophobia - fear of chickens or bibliophobia - fear of books or epistemophobia - fear of knowledge) Have the kids pick one, write what it means and create a funny illustration about it. I found an ABC order list at <http://phobias.com>

-Debate activity- Do you think High School Sports are too rough or dangerous? Why or why not?

-Create your own superhero

-Create a superhero comic

-Writing: Who is your inner other?

-A great activity would be for them to decorate what their inner hero would look like and write a report on what their super hero powers would be! It can be anything fun and crazy like flying or something simple like being a great listener or a caring friend!

-What would your Halloween costume look like?

-You can enjoy some Spiderman fruit snacks (gluten free)!

Captain Nobody

-As a twist, have students try to see the inner other in other students, often friends see strengths that we overlook.
There is an iPad app that allows students to create comic strips using templates, it would be fun to have them create their own story using their inner other.

-Class discussion on student perceptions of their abilities vs. birth order, are they the first born overachiever or the overlooked middle child, the youngest?

-Activity- Have children make and name a Superhero and what their awesome power is.

-In response to JJ's reaction to the "massacres of grammar and spelling"! Have students begin recording our own list throughout the year.

-Write about their own personal hero or inner other.

-There is an unabridged audio CD of this book available on Amazon.

-The author, Dean Pitchford, uses matching scenes in the prologue to the end of the story to show how things have changed through the course of the story. I think that this is called "ironic echo".

-Vocabulary - commendable, tailgate, bittersweet, inherit, masquerading, insignificant, vibe, conviction, console, optimistic, surveillance, assailant, ferret, irked, inevitable, vulnerable, condemned, posse, concussion, paparazzi

Dying to Meet You

-A very punny ghost/love story that is told in letters appropriate for grades 4-6/ages 9-12. Recommended as a read together initially, so that students can visually become familiar with letter writer's font/style. Love the names of the characters and the kid friendly illustrations! I wonder if it's a typo, and if the students would even notice, that Inatius B. Grumply is spelled "Ignatious" on the back. Only one questionable line - "pompous old fart".

-vocabulary - ignatius, macabre, mayhem, cupola, paranormal, shenanigans, stultifying, illiterate, imbecile, abysmal, preposterous, incorrigible, insufferable, cynical, pompous, conciliatorily, ghastly, feral, convert it to euros, beseechingly, relentless, etc..

-Loved the names and think this would be great to read aloud while using the overhead, so that students can see the names and hear how they sound. I never even caught on to the ghost's name until I watched this video and heard the author and illustrator talking about it on a video on this website: <http://kids-bookclub.wikispaces.com/Dying+to+Meet+You+43+Old+Cemetery+Road+>

-Writing: Discuss, teach mini lessons, and practice writing the different styles of writing from the story (letters and newspaper articles)

-Creative Writing Activity: using some of the creative writing techniques that the author did (names throughout the story) in the student's own narrative stories.

- Character Counts: Have a Trustworthy class discussion (why it is important to do what you say you are going to do). <http://kateandsarahklise.com/>

-Our students have had a lot of trouble reading nonfiction text lately and that is largely do to how the text is formatted (words all over the page, many articles, details everywhere, etc.) While this book is not nonfiction (obviously) the elements can help the students learn how to better read nonfiction writing such as newspapers, letters, and so on.

-Have students think of other character names that the author could use in future stories. The names should go with the character's occupation or traits.

-Discuss the importance of reading all of the text, even the inserted newspaper articles. Point out how the price of the house changes as the story goes on. Ask why they think this is.

-Show the students how to read a newspaper: reading all of the information on the page, paying special attention to the headlines.

-Review letter writing techniques.

-Discuss how to write an email.

-Have pairs or small groups write a story together using letters to each other.

Dying to Meet You

-Discuss the variety of ways people communicate : letters (both friendly and business format) email, texting, conversations. Then compare with how people of long ago communicated: letters, telegraph, telegrams, fireside stories.

-Discuss/list all the names used in the story and discuss how they were a "play on words". Paige Turner worked in a publishing company, Anita Sale worked in real estate. etc... Design own nametags for their desks. Show students a variety of novelty license plates. Have them decode what they are saying. (EX: SONG MKR is Song Maker or DIY GUY is Do It Yourself Guy or ILUVU is I Love You)

-Have kids design own plate for their desk. The catch - they can only use 7 characters. I had a kid once use, DBL TRBL because she was a twin!

-Predict what the sequel will be about- write the first few correspondences as they think it would go. Then read the sequel as a class....

-Exchanging letters is an interesting way to keep 3rd-5th readers engaged. I think I would randomly form character teams to read the letters aloud with homemade props:

Team I. B. Grumple

Team Anita Sale

Team E. Gadds

Team Paige Turner

Team Les Hope

Team Diane Hope

Team Seymour Hope

Team Frank N. Beans

Team Olive C. Spence

Team The Ghastly Times

-Such great character names! I worry a little bit that parents are MIA in some of these books, but families have all kinds of configurations these days. Wonderful illustrations throughout.

-Have students explain what they think the author is telling us about each character by their names

-Create a "weird" name for yourself that reflects your personality. Explain why you chose that name.

-I like the idea of writing letters and newspaper articles to practice different types of genres

-This book is a great way to introduce letter writing and its purposes.

-Discuss puns/give examples of puns.

-List the puns used for character names in this book.

-Discuss families: Is every family like your family? What makes your family special? What makes your family kooky?

Dying to Meet You

-Have a letter writing activity. Teacher and students only communicate with each other using letters.

-Create an edition of the "Ghastly Times" newspaper (possibly in small groups?) to practice the various genres of writing presented in the story. There is a newspaper on page 24-25, 77-78, and 119-120 of the story as an example. This can be done on 11 x 18 white paper, so the "newspaper" will be 4 pages long if folded in half (or a front and back if preferred). It should include things relevant to Ghastly. Encourage students to use the play on words & names. Some ideas for what the newspaper should contain (adjust for grade level- I teach 5th, so it's a bit more in-depth for me):
A feature front page article, possibly about the haunted house or sale of the house
a minimum of 2 letters to the editor (to practice letter writing)

3. advertisements from local businesses (there are examples all over the story - Anita's realty company, Proper Realty, Paige Turner Books, The library, etc...)an "entertainment" section -maybe a crossword puzzle related to Ghastly, a crossword puzzle using vocab from the story, or a horoscope section geared for the people in town an interview with a character in the story - either Olive, Seymour, or Ignatius

-Vocabulary

- Perilous (p. 26): full of danger or risk
- Hapless (p. 27): unfortunate
- Hovel (p. 31): an unpleasant dwelling place
- Grievous (p. 37): very serious
- Communiqués (p. 44) : an official report
- Cupola (p. 45): a small dome
- Macabre (p. 55): disturbing or horrifying because of associations with death
- Ignorance (p. 59): lack of knowledge or information
- Illiterate (p. 59): a person who is unable to read or write
- Abysmal (p. 59): extremely bad; deep
- Paprikash (p. 76): a Hungarian dish
- Intolerable (p. 79): unable to be endured
- Tantalizing (p. 79): to excite the senses
- Incurable (p. 81): not able to be corrected
- Reprimand (p. 81): to rebuke or disapprove
- Dame (p. 121): a woman

-Be sure to use a document camera to display the illustrations.

-A 18-page study guide for Dying to Meet You, perfect for lesson planning and handouts or projection on your SmartBoard is now available!

How Oliver Olsen Changed the World

-Read this story before introducing a Solar System unit. Learn about some of the planets and items they talk about in the story.

-Since fifth grade is now responsible for knowledge of the Solar System based on the new standards, this would be a great tie-in to learning about the Solar System.

-The kids could make a diorama, just like they did in the book.

- Researching different animals/ unique animals
- Have students make a diorama with the planets.

- Have students research why Pluto is no longer a planet. Have them do the research before it is revealed in the book.

-Have the students look up the criteria for something to be considered a planet. Have a class discussion/ debate on what they think.

- Listen to the music Jupiter by Gustav Holst

-Have students write a journal entry on what they would do to change the world.

- Responsibility- Discuss why Oliver did not like his parents doing their homework. Discuss why it is important for students to do their own homework.

-Discuss these character counts elements:

-Working with others

Responsibility: Not having parents do your project/homework

-Friendship

-Writing: Teach and practice persuasive writing-Prompt: To try and persuade a mom, dad, or teacher to let the students do something they really want to do.

-<http://www.claudiamillsauthor.com/>

-Each year we have a Universe Project where each child selects a topic, does research, creates a 3-D model, and makes a two-minute presentation. I could use this book as a stepping off point to go over individual student responsibilities (versus parent involvement) for the project.

-Have students record and share a BIG idea that could change the world. Would it be reasonable/unreasonable to think that their idea could become a law?

-Distribute rice cakes, and challenge students to cut a hole in the middle to represent a ring that could fit around a styrofoam ball representing Saturn.

-Write about what Oliver feels like he has in common with Pluto.

How Oliver Olsen Changed the World

-Brainstorm things that you've ALWAYS done before that need to change.

-Listen to a piece of music about Jupiter by Gustav Holst.

-Have a mini debate about why or why not Pluto should remain a planet. Vote afterwards.

-Write about why Crystal changed her mind about Pluto at the end of the book. Would you like to have a friend like Crystal?

-Explore and create constellations on black construction paper with silver stars or white chalk.

I-identify our current state senators and invite them to come and speak to your class/grade level. Have them submit their ideas for changing our world ahead of time. Snail mail ideas and hope for a response. Brainstorm changes that could improve your school, and share with your principal.

Write a letter to one of our local Congressmen, suggesting your "World Changing Idea", like the kids in the story wrote. Be sure to Include your reasons why it would make such a difference to the world.

-Create a Prezzi on the planets.

-Discuss the moral-We shouldn't keep on doing something just because we have always done it that way!!!

-As an activity you could ask your kids to write their idea on how they can change the world.

-If you read this book a long with a Space study, instead of a sleep-over, you could have a "space camp day" and have activities / stations for the kids to do relating to Space, ending your unit with a lot of fun and great memories for the kids.

Extra Credit

-Flag Collage: Create a collage on poster board or similar, with flags from 10 different countries. Include descriptions of what the designs & colors on each flag symbolizes. One of the ten flags should be the U.S. Flag. (This project can also be done In Power Point or Prezi if desired).

-Geography (Afghanistan)-Map skills: finding the two different locations and calculating about how many miles away they were from one another (using the map scale). Using an Atlas and Encyclopedia to study/find out about the land that they discussed in the story (students could create a Venn diagram)

-Have students write pen pal letters to other countries/ states and display the new information on a poster board.

-Look up info on Afghanistan.

-Do a report on famous mountain climbers.

-Research meanings for different flags.

-Discuss the cultural differences and why Americans are hated in certain countries.

-I already planned to do an activity about friends - what makes someone a friend, what are qualities that you look for in a friend... I still plan on doing this, but now I may also match up a boy and a girl and have them complete a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting their likes and dislikes.

-It would benefit my class to hear/read about actually WORKING to get good grades.

-I have also been rethinking "extra credit"... kids DO seem to want extra credit, and I plan on finding a way to build it in to my assignment plans so it actually helps them learn what I want them to know! Maybe that's what it should have been all along, but I've always thought of extra credit as totally different lessons from the norm.

-lesson on appreciation -- appreciating what is right in front of us... looking at things in different ways... finding the good in things and people!

-Teachers can introduce "second chances" to students. Did she deserve to have another chance? Do kids always get a second chance or not?

-Talk about the significance of the small rock Sadeed sends to Abby from Afghanistan, and the dirt Abby sends from to Afghanistan. Start a pen pal in another county, state, or country if you can, Ask students what they would send to them to represent their hometown

Extra Credit

- Have your students make a list of other books they have enjoyed that celebrate friendship, and share these lists with the class. This can also be a transition into Bobby vs. Girls.
- Different cultures - study some of the customs and traditions from Afghanistan and compare them to our culture and traditions.
- What would it be like to be a character in *Extra Credit*? Ask your students to imagine if they had the power to jump into this book. Would they be a friend of Abby, Sadeed, or someone else? Why?
- Continue the story in *Extra Credit* after the book ends. Have your students write about what they think happens to Abby and Sadeed. Do Abby and Sadeed get back in touch again? Do they ever meet? What does the future hold for Abby and Sadeed? Compare and contrast everyone's thoughts
- Research one of the three countries that Abby had to choose from for her project: Jakarta, Indonesia; Kabul, Afghanistan; or Beijing, China. Put together a project to share with the class that teaches about that country.
- Think about what it is that you love to do- like Abby loved climbing! Find another country that is either known as a super place to do that activity, or choose one that you think would be a super place to do that activity. Research that country, and put together a project to teach the class about that country, including telling exactly where you'd go to do your activity, and what you'd do while you were there.
- Doing well in school and Believing in yourself-talking about how you can accomplish things even if you don't feel you are the best at something. Have students do a writing activity about 1 thing they would like to improve in as well as share one thing that they feel they are really good at. (Like the character-good a rock climbing, but not as great at writing)
- Have students create a Venn diagram of the difference and similarities between Abby's life and Sadeed's life. Discuss the difficulties that both children face and how the difficulties are similar and different.
- Discuss role of girls getting an education in Afghanistan
- Discuss hatred of America by many of the people living in Afghanistan.
- Discuss having to live with the threat of terrorists.
- Discuss how Abby and Sadeed made a connection even though their lives were so different.

Extra Credit

- Discuss the differences between the farmland in Illinois and the mountains of Afghanistan.
- Discuss the importance of the flag.
- It could be used as a discussion starter in classrooms involving current events, different cultures, letter writing, and so much more. Prejudice, ignorance, sexism, and lack of education are all topics that are tackled in a non-preachy way
- Have your students make a list of other books they have enjoyed that celebrate friendship, and share these lists with the class.
- What would it be like to be a character in *Extra Credit*? Ask your students to imagine if they had the power to jump into this book. Would they be a friend of Abby, Sadeed, or someone else? Why?
- Read Arnold Lobel's story *Frog and Toad Are Friends* with your students. After reading the story, ask you students why they think Clements chose this book to highlight in *Extra Credit*. Who in your class can identify more with Frog? And who is more like Toad?
- Create a list of obscure countries around the world. Have students research and report on that country. Trick is to find some most people never heard of.
- Write about/discuss whether you prefer the middle school or junior high concept and why.
- What does Hassan mean on page 142 when he asks, "Why dangle red meat in front of an angry bear?"
- Would Afghan's national sport, Buzkashi, be allowed in the U.S.?
- Recruit a Boy Scout and/or his leader to demonstrate knot tying.
- Show the different globes and/or maps - political, historical, and raised-relief.
- Survey the class to see if anyone can name and locate all 50 states and their capitals.
- Share stamp collections.
- Practice writing salaam/hello in Arabic script.
- Vocabulary** - avalanche, courteous, deja vu, partition, kebab, gangplank, conceited, prattled, impish, conservative, boast, discreet
- Discussion about why extra credit assignments are good/bad.

Extra Credit

-Hold a class debate, "Do you think extra credit assignments are honorable?" Pro: chance to improve grades Con: Why not do the originally assigned work correct the first time around like everyone else? Create teams, hold official debate in class.

-Pen pal activity with students in different grade level within your own school OR with the same grade level, but different part of the district (they'd get more, immediate feedback vs sending to another country)

-Project--from the description of Abby's tree house on page 68, draw what you think her tree house looks like.

-Do lessons on letter writing techniques.

-During our end-of-year reading celebration, a guest reader read the first few chapters aloud. Because of the changing climate in Afghanistan and the 10-year history there, I would prepare some background information (video, PowerPoint, Prezi, online stories) and interject bits before, during, and after reading.

BBC News The brave children of Afghanistan

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/1769008.stm

Scholastic News: Slide Show

[http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/afghanistan_kids/life/index.asp?](http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/afghanistan_kids/life/index.asp?article=slideshow)

article=slideshow Scholastic News: School

[http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/afghanistan_kids/life/index.asp?](http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/afghanistan_kids/life/index.asp?article=school)

article=school

Time for Kids

<http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/kids/news/white/0,28343,175880,00.html>

CBS News Marines Help Afghan Kids go to School

http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503543_162-20019239-503543.html

Google Earth

Preset links to various locales in Afghanistan (urban, rural).

Publishers guide http://books.simonandschuster.com/Extra-Credit/Andrew-Clements/9781416949312/reading_group_guide

Additional Ideas/Discussions/Activities:

http://books.simonandschuster.com/ExtraCredit/AndrewClements/9781416949312/reading_group_guide

<http://www.andrewclements.com/index.html>

The 100-Year-Old Secret

-My idea for an activity would be to talk about "photographic memory", what it means, and what the advantages be and would there be any disadvantages. I also loved Vance's idea of serving biscuits (cookies).

-This would be a great story to work with making predictions.

- List the "English" words mentioned in the story with our English words that we use and see some of the differences-learn more about England's (London's) customs and traditions and compare/contrast them to ours.

-Geography-finding where London is and how far away from Florida it is.

-Character Counts (leading their mom to think they were going somewhere for a different reason than they were, going into the room while the artist was painting a picture of "The girl in the purple hat", and sneaking into someone else's dorm room).

-Have students and their family create a family tree.

Study Guide:

<http://www.ilfonline.org/clientuploads/YHBA/1011%20YHBA%20Resources/100YearOldSecret.pdf>

-Take a metal detector out to the playground, and see what treasures you can discover!

-Write about why or why not you would like to attend an international school where the students come from every continent except Antarctica.

-How would having a photographic memory be useful to you?

-Find a recipe for disappearing ink, and compose/deliver secret messages.

-Have your Media Specialist come in and talk about microfilm.

-How did Xander's baby picture give him a very important clue?

-Vocabulary - vandalism, deduction, illustrious, ominous, corridor, steely, agoraphobia, eccentric, perfectionist, nave, orinthology, alto, eavesdrop, sulky, aptitude, scrimmage, improbable

Notebooks would tie in well to The Mystery Cube interactive activity from www.ReadWriteThink.org

-Xena and Xanda have the unsolved casebook of Sherlock Holmes. Help them solve another mystery of your choosing from the book. Make sure to establish a plot, point of view, setting and conflict, and relate the events of the story with an ending that resolves the mystery.

The 100-Year-Old Secret

-Answer the 10 comprehension questions that are available on the website if you scroll down.

-Researching to compare and contrast London and Jacksonville could be interesting.

-It would be fun to have students write with 'vanishing ink' -- my son acted like I should already know the trick, and preceeded to let me in on the lemon juice secret!

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon

- Study plate tectonics.
- Study learning Mahjong.
- Use to teach figurative language. Some examples of personification are: pg 20 "drawers dance ajig," pg 20 "walls groan," pg 61 "fire is "joining its brothers." Some examples of similes are: pg 20 "wooden floors...like waves," pg 20 "shakes like Sawyer."
- Use this book to teach about Chinese immigration to the United States.
- Before or after reading the book students could research famous earthquakes.
- Disaster Management- maybe compare the process that goes into making a city a great place to live, work, play, and safety (Current Events-Oil Spill, Haiti, etc.)
- While reading the book students could journal about the following things/ phrases: pg 37- "You can't judge a book by its cover" ; pg 39 (Have students journal about what they mean by these phrases) "trouble brings out the best in people" and "trouble brings out the worst in some people" ;pg 63 If your house was on fire what would you save?
- Discuss folktales and read folktales from other cultures such as Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears and folktales by Demi such as The Empty Pot.
- Read versions of Cinderella from different places and discuss how the story is the same and different in various cultures.
- China (Just watched the interview Ed Roper did with Grace Lin on the morning show and found out she is also the illustrator!)
<http://www.gracelin.com/content.php?page=wherethemountainmeetsthemoon>
- Use Google Earth or 360 Cities to 'visit' these places!
- Research and create your own compass. Make time for demonstrations.
- Fold construction paper in half, and illustrate the Village of Fruitless Mountain on one side and the Village of Fruitful Mountain on the other.
- Describe how Minli outsmarts the monkeys. Illustrate the monkeys attached to the fishnet around the pot of rice.
- Describe and/or illustrate how the twins, A-Fu and Da-Fu, outsmarted the Great Green Tiger.
- What do these quotes mean - "You can only lose what you cling to." and "If you make happy those that are near, those that are far will come."

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon

-Why does Minli feel a tightness in her throat when she thinks of her home in contrast to the Buffalo Boy's home? What does Buffalo Boy have that she doesn't have? What does she have that he doesn't have?

-Record their favorite similes and metaphors that are present throughout the story.

-Vocabulary - benefactor, kowtow, wry, reverence, indignant, drought, famine, magistrate, conceited, typhoon, prosperous, decipher, turbulent, renounced, exile, pagoda, malevolence, malicious, chagrined, impetuously

-I would have the children storyboard as we went along with one path for Minli's story and another for the tales that accompanied the chapters.

-Another activity for the children would involve analyzing the illustrations (both full page and chapter headings) and then creating additional ones. The children's work on both these activities would be posted on the wall outside of our classroom as we progressed through the story.

-Grace Lin's prose could provide models of author's craft for us to use in writing centers. A good little video to start a lesson on craft is on Scholastic.

<http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/media.jsp?id=621> The site also has a blog posting that is interesting http://blogs.scholastic.com/3_5/2009/04/teaching-in-context.html

-I started making a Prezi on **Where the Mountain Meets the Moon** earlier this summer and that's when I realized the depth of the novel. I'm not sure if this link works

<http://prezi.com/yb7frlcm5ne5/copy-of-where-the-mountain-meets-the-moon/> I didn't get far before I paused. BTW, an amazing example of Prezi is

<http://prezi.com/nsu8izuq8jxs/mathematweets/> This has nothing to do with Sunshine State books, but I admire this presentation style.

-*Readable by 5th graders.

- At the end of the book, the author, Grace Lin, explained that when she was younger, she had disregarded her Asian heritage. Maybe you know about your heritage, and maybe you don't. *Research a country that is part of your origin and put together a PowerPoint Presentation on this country. Be sure to include some traditions from this country that you learned from your study.

-Create a folktale book that includes at least 5 folktales and an illustration that goes with each. Don't forget to tell the country of its origin.

-Be sure that you are merely paraphrasing the folktale, not plagiarizing!

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon

-This could also be done in PowerPoint.

-Check out these websites for some ideas:

<http://www.unc.edu/~rwilkers/title.htm>

<http://www.topics-mag.com/folk-tales/page.htm>

<http://www.eslstation.net/theREALWF/Folktale%20Links.htm>

-I thought this was a great book for 4th and 5th graders. I would work as a read aloud for third graders.

- use the story to discuss folk tales/ legends and how the shape cultures

- Have students write their own legend or write about a legend from their own culture

- Draw a map of the different travels they go on and include illustrations of the different things they saw along the way

- Have students write about their favorite part and why

- Have students discuss how the characters were different from beg. to end of story.

-Compare and contrast eastern and western art, kids may enjoy attempting to mimic the style of oriental art using sumi brushes and ink. The intricate illustrations can serve as a beginning point.

-Students could create book plates for each of the different stories presented in the book. They should pay particular attention to the background and borders of their illustrations.

-Compare and contrast the difference between the perception of dragons in eastern and western lore.

-Have the kids write their own fable in an oriental style to explain a natural event such as an earthquake or tornado.

- It is also a great way to introduce legends.

-Within the stories, the teacher can focus on inferencing and drawing conclusions using the legends to review science concepts like the moon and its patterns.

-Have students identify one of the villages or settings from the book and pretend they are realtors attempting to sell the property to others. What are the highlights of this particular place? What type of person would be happiest here? If there are negatives, how can they be turned into positives? Begin by showing examples of brochures realtors might use to advertise a property, particularly a vacation property. A short mini-lesson on media and advertising techniques might also be given. Then, working in small groups, have students create a presentation or brochure to “advertise” their property.

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon

-Dragons are found throughout many different types of literature and depicted in the artwork of many cultures. Have students work together to research and identify some examples. They should be sure to include historical depictions as well as present-day versions in cartoons or other books. Then, have them create their own dragon. They should be able to identify how their dragon is similar and different from the dragons they researched. They may want to compare their dragons to Dragon in *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*.

-Use with upper grade level students 4-6

-Excellent read aloud even though a bit long

-Use with an extension activity on China

-Use to guide children on making good choices and the consequences (good or bad)

Umbrella Summer

-Family Project: Letters to Our Children

Annie's mom and dad loved Annie very much, but their grief kept them from being able to show it. In these days of busy, happy lives and full schedules, kids still need to get letters from their families. This activity will help you invite the parents of your students to write letters to them. In hard times, they will have their words.

This year-long activity will enable your students to preserve their parents' compliments and grow from their character-building wisdom. Buy one simple, attractive, lined book. Glue the form on the right inside the front cover. Be sure to sign it. Give it to one child at a time to take home to his/her family. When it comes back, share it aloud with the class. Then, pass it to another family. You will soon see parenting skills growing and children glowing. Hopefully, you, too, will be reminded in a fresh new way what a blessing each child really is.

Letters to Our Children

Dear Parents:

This year you will be writing a book for your children! It will be made entirely of letters from the parents of young persons in my class. We will send this book home with a different student each time it is returned by another. Some of the exciting things you might like to include are:

Telling your child how special he or she is to you

Describing the BEST things (physically, mentally, socially, and creatively) about your child

Remembering a favorite experience you had together

Telling the funniest experience you had with your child

Explaining what you believe are important things for your child to remember as he or she grows up

Predicting what you believe your child will become when he or she is grown

I look forward to reading your letters and learning more about your child through them. Remember, YOU are your child's first and most important teacher!

-The poem "Band-aids" from Shel Silverstein's book Where The Sidewalk Ends would be fun to read.

While reading the students could determine the number of wasted bandaids.

There are also a lot of hyperboles (pgs. 5, 8, 14, 37, etc.) that the students could identify and illustrate.

-It might be a little morbid, but they could research and report on some of the illnesses/conditions/diseases mentioned in the book - laryngitis, E. coli, parasites, gangrene, acid reflux, lyme disease, malaria, asbestos poisoning, tuberculosis, athlete's foot, food poisoning, Ebola (?), rheumatoid arthritis, migraine headache, concussion, mono, jaundice, cholera, leukemia, anemia, tetanus, lactose intolerance, diabetes, bronchitis

-It would be fun to design an obstacle course, and time each other while taking the challenge

Umbrella Summer

-Vocabulary - exasperated, badger, taxidermy, molecule, carbon monoxide, despondent, philosophy, aardvark, quizzical, guffaw, peaked, lethargic, indestructible, paranormal, poltergeist, paranoid, cautious, waterborne, obituary, antibiotic, plus any of the illnesses mentioned above

-Have students create a new game and write out the directions on how to play.

-Have the class keep a word/vocabulary board visible in the classroom that students could add new words to.

-Dictionary lessons-look up new words while practicing using dictionary skills.

- Read Charlotte's Web as a class.

-How to make an umbrella bookmark: <http://www.lisagraff.com/abouttemplate2.html>

-Introduce the story to students-the author shares why she wrote the book and shares a short part of the book http://www.teachingbooks.net/book_reading.cgi?id=4698&a=1

-Character Counts - Grief, Friendship, Empathy

- class discussion on how Annie's personality has changed since losing her brother (this needs to be very sensitive if students in the class have lost a close loved one). Explain how each of the people in Annie's life are handling the grief process differently.

-have students photograph something they are passionate about, (like Nathan Finch's fish) to give to someone special, mom, dad, sibling etc.

- explore some of the terrific vocabulary that is present, talk about Dr. Young's word wall, create an ongoing word wall for all the Sunshine State books

-I think this is also a great book to use to help with guidance/ behaviors in the classroom. It would be neat to be able to incorporate the idea of "closing your umbrella" in the classroom. Many times students do not know how to handle difficult situations and put up a guard. To teach them it is okay to "close your umbrella" to some of the things that bother them, and to allow the sun to shine again.

-I absolutely love the idea that Dr. Young uses at his house to have an ongoing word wall of silly or meaningful words. Just as the girls do in the story, choose words the students may not be able to use context clues with, just so they can try and figure out and predict what the words mean. Have the students "play with the words" just as they do in the story- making vocabulary fun.

-Instead of Gummy Rummy, teach students the game Rummikub (like a combination of rummy, dominoes, mah-jongg and chess).

-Have students draw a symbolic umbrella- journal underneath it some things that they worry about. Discuss coping mechanisms with the class. Set goals for one of the items on their list.

Umbrella Summer

-Invite the guidance counselor in to the class to do a lesson on dealing with loss (loss of a pet, family member, friend, etc) Not necessarily due to death, but just a loss in general.

-Create an acrostic poem using UMBRELLA and retell the story in own words. Add illustration.

-Friendships- discuss how friends can be found where you least expect it! An example to share is the elderly neighbor who has many interesting life experiences to share. Ask- do you see yourself as a friend of Annie's? Why or why not?

-Which character in the story can you associate with the most? (Who's most like you? Why?)

-Book comparison to last year's SSS "The Thing About Georgie" How are the characters alike? Different?

-Great for use on discussions about Author's craft.

-Annie spent a lot of time reading medical books, finding illnesses that she may have. Create an ABC book of strange diseases. For each lettered illness, name the disease, the symptoms, and the prognosis. Add illustrations as you think appropriate!

-Have students get in small groups and do a report on the different diseases that she thinks she has in the book.

-Have students complete a journal entry pretending they have a friend who has lost someone close to them and have them come up with some ways that they can help their friend cope.

-Vocabulary- Have students create their own version of Dr. Young's word wall in their journal. Share a few of their new words every few days and have a class word wall. A center activity could be based on the new words and have the students use them.

-story structure such as characters, problem, and solution.

-I think a great discussion could occur about being cautious vs over-cautious; the importance of communication with our parents is another lesson for both kids and adults; and even writing about the death of a pet.

-discuss the various similes used in the book and have students create/ incorporate similes in their own writing.

-affective lesson on fears, "What is your umbrella?"

-affective lesson on death and coping with a loss.

Umbrella Summer

-Discuss that everyone handles with grief in different ways.

-Questions:

Have you ever been afraid?

What do you do when you're afraid? Hide?

Were you afraid of African sleeping sickness?

Did diseases ever scare you?

Were you afraid to ride your bike?

Did you stop riding your bicycle?

-Discuss the grieving process.

-Tips for Teaching: Talking About Loss With Children

Don't be afraid to talk about death or loss. Children do not benefit from "not thinking about it" or "putting it out of their minds." Share important facts about the event and try to get a sense of what the children think about it and about death in general. Share some of your own feelings and thoughts. Sometimes children act as if they have not heard anything you have said, but they have. Remember that in the midst of distressing experiences, children are not very capable of processing complex or abstract information. Be prepared to repeat the same information again and again. Invite children to talk about feelings they have regarding the event or death. Then you can let them take the lead as to when, how long, and how much this is discussed. If you sense that one or more of the children are becoming over-focused on these issues, redirect the discussion in a way that will not disrupt the class or impact the affected child.

During these initial conversations, try to understand what the children think about divorce or death. Do they have a view of afterlife? Do they place blame for divorce on one party or another? The more you understand about how the children think about death or divorce, the easier it will be for you to talk about it in a meaningful way. If children sense that you are upset by the loss, they may not bring the topic up even when they want to. Be a good role model, showing children how to express emotions in a healthy and nondisruptive fashion. It can be very helpful for children to know that you have been affected by the event and that you are willing to talk about how you feel.

Help the children understand how devastated their classmate feels. Explain that this child may be more tired than usual, more irritable, and less interested in playing. Advise them that their classmate may want to talk about the loss and encourage them to listen

Tell the children that this is a completely out-of-bounds topic for teasing. You can teach the children to respect the grieving process and avoid the emotional tender spots for a child. Also help children understand that this will be a long process and a major challenge for their classmate.

