**BOOKS AND LITERATURE**

**Stories, Songs, Slides, Balloons and Books –**

A dynamic, interactive program suitable for large groups, but emphasizing reading:

Curriculum connections:

* Young author day
* Summer reading kick-off
* Support of independent reading
* Favorite animals: “I Had a Dog and His Name Was Blue” & tall tale of Daniel Boone’s Split Dog told with balloon figure, followed by recommended dog books: *Where the Red Fern Grows; Because of Winn Dixie;* Henry & Mudge series
* Meeting other people and cultures: Call & response song: “We’re All a Family Under One Sky”; African trickster tale: “Anansi and the Pot of Beans”; book talk: *Tí Lola Comes to Visit;*
* Seeing beyond the outside of people: Wisdom tale: “Nasrudin’s Fine Coat”; fiction book talks: *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*; *Esperanza Rising*
* Funny stuff: Tale of the fools of Chelm: “The Moon in the Well.” Books about Alvin Ho, Big Nate, *Gifted*
* Fiction vs non-fiction: The ballad/ legend of John Henry vs the true story of the man revealed in *Nothing But a Man: My Quest to Find the Real John Henry*; *Heart of a Samurai; A Long Walk to Water*
* Fairy tales and fantasy: “The Goose Girl at the Spring” with **goose balloon figure**; Book talk: *A Wrinkle In Time, Samuel Blink and the Forbidden Forest,*
* Song – “The Summer Reading Song”

**What’s So Great About Reading?** – Mainly book talks, with a little storytelling, folk songs, slides. Books take us both outward and inward. They open up a world of adventure by taking us to many real and imagined times and places. And by leading us deep inside the personal experiences of characters (mostly endearing ones) who are struggling to overcome problems and find happiness, they help us understand and accept ourselves. A bibliography can be provided in advance. For any grade, but especially 3-8.

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Possible samples:

1. A book is a world – Reading creates a whole other world where we can immerse ourselves. Fantasy and science fiction genres– possible examples: *A Wrinkle in Time****, Starry River of the Sky,*** *Horns and Wrinkles, a Snicker of Magic, Bone series,* ***Samuel Blink and the Forbidden Forest****, Savvy*

2. Going on an adventure! – The truth is that real life is generally pretty dull. Books take us on exciting adventures without any risk. Fantasy, science fiction and adventure fiction: Possible samples*: Stanley’s Wild Ride*, I Survived series*, A Tale Dark and Grimm, Found, Breadcrumbs ,* ***Heart of a Samurai***

3. Travel to other cultures and countries –Possible samples: song “West Virginia Mine Disaster,” I Love Saturdays and Domingos, Red Riding in the Hood and Other Cuentos, ***Extra Credit, Breadwinner, A Long Walk to Water,*** *Nory Ryan’s Song, Inside Out and Back Again*

*4.* Time Travelling – Possible samples: *Lyddie & Counting On Grace;* ***The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle,*** *Bud, Not Buddy, The Ninth Ward****, The Lions of Little Rock***

5. Meet new friends – There are wonderful characters we wish we knew – funny, brave, loving, and more in all kinds of genres. For example: the flamboyantly affectionate Latina, Tía Lola from Julia Alvarez’s series in her name, the spunky and fearless **Moses LoBeau in *Three Times Lucky*,** The Fourth Stall, **Cesar Chavez**, Bass Reeves, African American US marshall

6. Help us understand other people and ourselves, overcome obstacles – Possible samples: *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle,* ***A Long Way from Chicago****, The Higher Power of Lucky, Becoming Naomi Leon,* ***Esperanza Rising***

7. Books are funny – Everybody loves to laugh! The humor in books is much more varied than TV sitcoms. Examples: **Jewish folktales of the fools of Chelm, *Ungifted****,* Alvin Ho series, Captain Underpants series , Diary of a Wimpy KID series, Big Nate series

8. Give us the chills – Goosebumps series, **Doll Bones, The Graveyard Book**, the Seer of Shadows

**A Multicultural Reading Tour** – To develop intercultural understanding takes more than recognizing some common artifacts and traditions. It takes a deeper encounter through sharing the feelings and experiences of people living in that culture. Recent brain research has shown that through good fiction readers develop empathy for characters that translates into real life attitudes and even actions. Non-fiction can sometimes have this effect as well, in addition to filling in details and background that make up the big picture. This program introduces books depicting many cultures around the world and within our own country, including issues that children face when they come to the US. Informational slides and an occasional song or folktale are also included.

Curriculum connections:

* School-wide multicultural or international day
* Assigned readings and book reviews, including section on cultures represented

**Sample books:**

African and African-American:

* A Long Walk to Water, by Linda Sue Park – This short novel begins as two stories, told in alternating sections, about a fictional girl in Sudan in 2008 and a real boy in Sudan in 1985. The girl, Nya, walks eight hours daily to fetch water from a pond. The boy, Salva, becomes one of the "lost boys" of Sudan, refugees escaping the civil war who search across Africa on foot for their families and for a safe place to stay, enduring tremendous danger and hardship. The stories come together when Salva, a young adult refugee, comes to the US, becomes an engineer and returns to Sudan to build wells for many villages. The book is part of an effort – in which many student groups participate – to raise funds for the wells. Gr 3 & up
* Ninth Ward, by Jewel Parker Rhodes - When Mama Ya-Ya's visions show a powerful hurricane–Katrina–fast approaching, it's up to Lanesha to call upon the hope and strength Mama Ya-Ya has given her to help them both survive the storm. Gr 5 & up
* Donavan’s Word Jar, by Monalisa De Gross - Whenever Donavan finds a new word, he writes it on a slip of paper and puts it in his word jar. But one day he discovers that his jar is full. He can't put any new words in without taking some old words out--and he wants to keep all his words. Donavan doesn't know what to do, until a visit to his grandma provides him with the perfect solution. Gr 2-5
* One Crazy Summer, by Rita Williams-Garcia - Sisters Delphine, Vonetta, and Fem, spend a summer in Oakland, California during the height of the Civil Rights movement as members of a day camp run by the Black Panther Party. During their visit with their mother, who abondonned them seven years ago, they get to learn about her and the the history of racism. Gr 3-8
* The Dark Thirty: Southern Tales of the Supernatural, by Patricia C. McKissack - A collection of ghost stories with African American themes, designed to be told during the Dark Thirty--the half hour before sunset--when ghosts seem all too believable. Gr 4 & up
* Through My Eyes, by Ruby Bridges – Illustrated with period photographs, this touching memoire reveals the innocence and trust of the six year child who, in 1960, took on the momentous challenge of being the first black student to integrate the New Orleans public schools. Gr 2 & up
* Brown Girl Dreaming, by Jacqueline Woodson - In vivid poems the author shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. Touching and powerful, each poem gives a glimpse into a child’s soul as she searches for her place in the world – and joyfully finds her voice through writing. Gr 5 & up

Asian and Asian-American:

* In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson, by Bette Bao Lord. Shirley Temple Wong is a Chinese immigrant to New York, and gets swept up in baseball fever, cheering for the Dodgers. A great read for kids to understand what a new immigrant faces. Gr 3 - 8
* Boys Without Names, by Kashmira Sheth. This books is set in a Mumbai sweatshop, where Gopal works in horrible conditions with his friends. They survive by telling stories and redefine the meaning of family. Extra material on child labor and modern slavery. Gr 3 & up
* Save Me a Seat, by Gita Varadarajan. When a bully is bothering 2 students (a newcomer from India and a kid from the US) they join together agains the bully and end up becoming friends. Great book to talk about empathy. Gr 3 - 7
* Inside Out and Back Again, by Thanhha Lai. Based on the author’s final time in Vietnam while the war there was ending and her struggles to adapt during her first year in the United States. Gr 4 & up
* Listen, Slowly, by Thanhha Lai. The granddaughter of a Vietnamese immigrant returns with her grandmother – reluctantly at first – to visit the country of her cultural roots, discovering new things about both of them in the process. Gr 4 & up
* Amal Unbound, by Aisha Saeed. Set in Pakistan, Amal is crushed when she has to leave school to care for her siblings. There are a lot of hardships she has to overcome, and shows perseverance and persistence to achieve her dreams. Gr 4 & up
* Alvin Ho: Allergic to Girls, School and Other Scary Things, by Lenore Look – Part of a hilarious series for early chapter book readers about a Chinese American boy who is afraid of everything – and his wise, patient father. Gr 2 - 5

Middle Eastern:

* The Breadwinner, by Deborah Ellis. Parvana is a young girl in Afghanistan, on an impossible mission. She has to disguise herself as a boy to earn money and support her family when her father is arrested. Gr 5 & up
* Extra Credit, by Andrew Clements. When Abby has to do extra credit to pass English class, she gets a pen-pal from rural Afghanistan. She and Sadeed explore cultural differences, and learn about their own communities as well. Gr 3 - 7
* Funny in Farsi, by Firoozeh Dumas. Really humorous read about an Iranian family growing up in the US, and their encounters with fast food to late night comedies. Gr 5 & up
* Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind, by Suzanne Fisher Staples - Shabanu, a young nomad of the Cholistan Desert in Pakistan, must submit to the marriage her father arranges for her, or go against centuries of tradition by defying him. Gr 6 & up
* Amina’s Voice, by Hena Khan. a Muslim, Pakistani-American girl wants to fit in. The usual friendship hardships that happen in Middle School, plus a strict father and plenty of cultural traditions help to tell the sweet story. Gr 3 - 7

American Indian

* *In the Footsteps of Crazy Horse*, by Joseph Marshall - Jimmy McClean, a Lakota boy who is ¼ white, embarks on a journey with his grandfather, Nyles High Eagle, and learns about his Lakota heritage through the story of Crazy Horse, the Lakota Sioux hero who took up arms to defend his people against the US government’s attacks and encroachment on native territory. Gr 5 - 8
* *Saltypie: A Choctaw Journey from Darkness Into Light*, by Tim Tingle - Spanning 50 years, *Saltypie* describes the problems encountered by the author’s Choctaw grandmother—from her orphan days at an Indian boarding school to hardships encountered in her new home on the Gulf Coast.
* *Indian Shoes*, by Cynthia Leitich Smith – A series of heart-warming short stories show the strong, loving relationship between Ray and Grandpa Half-moon in Chicago and Oklahoma. Gives an authentic representations of present day Native American life for one Seminole-Cherokee family. For 2-5th graders.
* *Hidden Roots,* by Joseph Bruchac - Eleven year old Sonny lives in upstate New York with an abusive father and loving mother.Through his close friendship with his Uncle Louis and a librarian he comes to learn the dark secret of his Abenaki Indian forbears – how they were forcefully sterilized in the 1930's and 1940’s. Prollific Native American author Bruchac deals sensitively with this shocking example of US discrimination. Gr 5 & up

Latin American

* *Esperanza Rising*, by Pam Munoz Ryan – When their wealthy family falls on hard times, a spoiled rich girl moves to the United States where they become migrant farmworkers. Learning how to survive from her the girl who was once her servant, Esperanza rises to the occasion. Gr 3 & up
* *The Circuit: Stories From the Life of a Migrant Child,* by Francisco Jimenez- The author’s honest and powerful account of his family's journey to the fields of California – and their constant struggle to survive as undocumented migrant farmworkers in a life of constant moving, from strawberry fields to cotton fields, from tent cities to one-room shacks. Gr 4 & up
* *Star In the Forest*, by Laura Resau - After eleven-year-old Zitlally's father is deported to Mexico, she takes refuge in her trailer park's forest of rusted car parts, where she befriends a spunky neighbor and finds a stray dog that she nurses back to health and believes she must keep safe so that her father will return. Gr 3 - 8
* *Pancho Rabbit and Coyote: A Migrant’s Tale*, by Duncan Tonatiuh - In this allegorical picture book, a young rabbit named Pancho sets out to find his father who traveled north two years ago to work in the carrot and lettuce fields, so he could feed his family. He meets a coyote, who offers to help Pancho in exchange for some of Papa’s food, but when the food is gone and the coyote decides he is still hungry . . . for Pancho! Duncan Tonatiuh’s award winning book sillfully brings to light the hardships and struggles of recent Hispanic immigrants. Gr 2 & up
* *Red Ridin’ in the Hood: and Otro Cuentos*, by Patricia Santos Marcantonio - A collection of well-known tales, retold from a modern Hispanic American perspective. Gr 3 - 8
* *Meet Josefina (and other Josefina titles),* by Valerie Tripp - Nine-year-old Josefina, the youngest of four sisters living in New Mexico in 1824, tries to help run the household after her mother dies. Grades 3 - 7

**Time Travelling Through Stories and Songs** – Presenting excerpts from historical fiction paired with traditional folk songs, folk tales, slides and history, Jon brings this genre to life and demonstrates how it takes us inside the minds, hearts and experiences of people throughout history.

Curriculum connection:

* Fiction genres
* Independent reading
* Social studies history

Sample pieces:

• **Life on the Ocean**: *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle,* by Avi; with song: Sea Chanty

*Titanic t*rilogy, by Gordon Korman – song: “It Was Sad When That Great Ship Went Down”

• **Slavery and the Civil War**: *Elijah of Buxton, by Christopher Paul Curtis*; *The River Between Us*, by Richard Peak; with songs: “Follow the Drinking Gourd” & “Harriet Tubman”

*Pink and Say*; with Civil War song

• **The Way West**: The Devil’s *Paintbox*, by Victoria McKernan; with song: “The Santa Fe Trail

• **American Indians:** *Birchbark House*, by Louise Erdrich; with song: ”The Heart of the Appaloosa” about the famous 1,800 mile retreat of the Nez Perce led by Chief Joseph

• **The Industrial Revolution & the Fight for Workers’ Rights:** *Lyddie*, by Katherine Paterson; *Counting on Grace*, by Elizabeth Winthrop; *Uprising: The Story of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire,* by Margaret Paterson Haddix; with songs “Cotton Mill Girls” & “Babies In the Mill”

• **Immigration**: The King of Mulberry Street, by Donna Jo Napoli; *Esperanza Rising*, by Pam Muñoz Ryan; with song: “Deportees”

**The Power and Beauty of Figurative Language –**

Robert Frost defined poetry as “feats of association.” This program not only helps students recognize figurative language but demonstrates its importance.

By bringing the vibrant sensory impact of imagery to the idea, person, feeling or object with which it is compared, figurative language creates a more dynamic, multi-dimensional experience. As well simile and metaphor the program shows how symbolism can add depth to an idea, and parables can help us understand important lessons. Slides of the poetic image are projected on the screen to help students more fully grasp the figurative language. Grades 3-12, with specific song selection geared by grade level.

Curriculum connection – poetry month or any poetry unit

Sample songs & tales

**“Santa Fe Trail”**– *She had a smile like an acre of sunflowers/…and her eyes near set fire to the prairie/ ‘longside of the Santa Fe Trail.*

**“That’s Amore,”** **by Jack Brooks and Harry Warren.–** *When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie, that’s amore! When the stars make you drool like some pasta fazoul, you’re in love!*

**“The Water is Wide”** *The water is wide/ I cannot cross o’er/ and neither have I wings to fly/ Give me a boat/ that can carry two/ and both shall row, my love and I.*

**“Fair and Tender Ladies”** - *“If I had known before I courted/ that would be such a killing thing,/ I’d have locked my heart in box of golden/ and fastened it down with a silver pin.”*

**Somos el barco by Lorre Wyatt** – *Somos el barco/ somos el mar/ yo navego en ti/ tú navegas en mi/ we are the boat/ we are the sea/ I sail in you/ you sail in me.*

**“Life’s Railway to Heaven,”** **by M. E. Abbey**– *Watch the curves that fill the tunnels/ never falter, never fail/* *Keep your hand upon the throttle and your eyes upon the rail.*

**“Turn Your Radio On,” by Albert E. Brumley -** Turn your radio on and listen to the music in the air/ turn your radio on, and glory share/ Turn your lights down low, and listen to the Master’s Radio/ Get in touch with God; turn your radio on.

**Ballad: “The Touch of the Master’s Hand, words by Myra Brooks Welch”**

A battered old violin is about to be auctioned for $3 until a grey haired man tunes it up and plays a beautiful tune, “as sweet as the angels sing.” When the violin sells for $3,000, the people shout in confusion: “What changed its worth?” The reply: “The touch of the Master’s Hand.” The song concludes by drawing a parallel to a sinner touched by the hand of God.

**Folk tale: “Like Meat Loves Salt”**

Before dividing his inheritance a vain old king asks his three daughters how much they love him. The two older ones flatter him with “More than silver or gold,” but the youngest tells him, “Like meat loves salt.” Not understanding her heartfelt words he casts her out of his household.

**Folk tale: “Words That Wound”**

A rabbi teaches a woman about gossiping by telling her to cut open several feather pillows and let the wind scatter the feathers where they will. When he tells her later to gather up the feathers, she answers, ”That’s impossible. They have scattered too far.”

**Folk tale: “The Debate in Sign Language**.” The czar of Russia challenges the Jewish people to a debate in sign language. If they lose, they’ll have to leave Russia. The only one willing to participate is Yankel, the chicken seller. The czar sticks out his hand with fingers spread; Yankel holds up a fist. The Czar sticks out two fingers; Yankel holds up one; The czar pulls some mouldy cheese out of his pocket; Yankel pulls out a hard boiled egg. Stunned, the czar announces,. “Yankel has won the debate. The Jews can stay.”

The czar’s motions were intended as symbolic statements about the Jewish people and religion, but Yankel, a simple man, responded to them literally as physical acts “He reached out to grab me, so I held up my fist. He went to poke me in the eyes; I held up my finger to stop him. I guess he figured he couldn’t push me around, so he took out his lunch, and I took out mine!”

**Songs specifically suited for middle and/ or high school:**

(gr 9-12) – “Rocksalt and Nails,”by Utah Phillips– *If the women were squirrels with high, bushy tails, I’d load up my shotgun with rocksalt and nails.*

(gr 9-12) - “Unwed Fathers,” by John Prine. – *From a teenage lover, to an unwed mother/ kept undercover, like some bad dream,/ While unwed fathers, they can't be bothered/ They run like water, through a mountain stream.*

(gr 9-12) “Rack ‘em up Eddy,” by Si Kahn

*The cloth is as soft as the touch of her hair/ and as green as the grass on the river/ And the click of the balls like the sound on the rails/ of that slow train that took her forever*.

(Gr 5-12) God Bless the Grass, by Malvina Reynolds

*God bless the grass that grows through the cracks/ they pour the concrete over it and try to keep it back/ The concrete gets tired of what it has to do/ It breaks and it buckles, and the grass grows through/ and God bless the grass.*