**Georgia Children’s Book Award 2014-2015 Nominees:**  
*Connecting to Children and Curriculum*

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<th>2014-2015 Children’s Book Award Committee Members</th>
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<td><em>(in alphabetical order by members’ last names)</em></td>
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<td>1. Sara Blankenship, <em>Media Specialist</em>, South Hall Middle School, Flowery Branch, GA</td>
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<td>2. Becky Busby, <em>GATE Teacher</em>, Frank Long Elementary School, Hinesville, GA</td>
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<td>4. Denise Dávila, <em>Assistant Professor</em>, Language &amp; Literacy Education, University of Georgia</td>
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<td>5. Michelle Doane, <em>Academic Coach</em>, Calhoun Middle School, Calhoun, GA</td>
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<td>7. Caitlyn Garner, <em>Fifth Grade Teacher</em>, Hannan Magnet Academy, Columbus, GA</td>
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<td>8. Diane Griffin, <em>Media Specialist</em>, Tutt Middle School, Augusta, GA</td>
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<td>10. Rochelle Jacobs, <em>Media Specialist</em>, North Clayton Middle School, College Park, GA</td>
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<td>13. Amie Pilla, <em>Access Services Librarian</em>, Decatur Public Library (DeKalb), Decatur, GA</td>
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**Group 1:** Adventures & Mysteries  (Dianne Griffin & Janice Kelly)  
**Group 2:** Animal Tales & Folklore  (Joy Frerichs & Linda Houghton)  
**Group 3:** Biographies & Historical Fiction  (Sara Blankenship & Amie Pilla)  
**Group 4:** Fantasy & Science Fiction  (Becky Busby & Caitlyn Garner)  
**Group 5:** Finding Hope: Realistic Fiction  (Kristi Craven & Rochelle Jacobs)  
**Group 6:** Middle School Angst  (Michelle Doane & Kristi Little)
**Group 1: Adventures & Mysteries**  (Dianne Griffin & Janice Kelly)

**Lincoln's Grave Robbers** by Steve Sheinkin

A true crime thriller -- the first book for teens to tell the nearly unknown tale of the brazen attempt to steal Abraham Lincoln's body!
The action begins in October of 1875, as Secret Service agents raid the Fulton, Illinois, workshop of master counterfeiter Ben Boyd. Soon after Boyd is hauled off to prison, members of his counterfeiting ring gather in the back room of a smoky Chicago saloon to discuss how to spring their ringleader. Their plan: grab Lincoln's body from its Springfield tomb, stash it in the sand dunes near Lake Michigan, and demand, as a ransom, the release of Ben Boyd --and $200,000 in cash. From here, the action alternates between the conspirators, the Secret Service agents on their trail, and the undercover agent moving back and forth between the two groups. Along the way readers get glimpses into the inner workings of counterfeiting, grave robbing, detective work, and the early days of the Secret Service. The plot moves toward a wild climax as robbers and lawmen converge at Lincoln's tomb on election night: November 7, 1876.

Review from goodreads.

**Curriculum Connections**

Research the history of the Pinkerton detective agency and list their involvement in significant historical events. Discover their connection to Abraham Lincoln when he was alive. http://www.legendsofamerica.com/we-pinkertons.html

Create a timeline from when "Big Jim" Kenally first had the idea of stealing Lincoln's coffin until the thieves were apprehended. What are the milestones of the plot as it unfolded?

Discover if there have been other plots to rob the graves of famous people. How do these other plots compare to the Lincoln robbery? http://www.mentalfloss.com/blogs/archives/39723

**Common Core Standards**

RI.6-7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.7.3 – Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text.

W.5.9 – Draw evidence from literary or informational text to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Discussion guide prepared by Scholastic Press.
**Three Times Lucky**

by Sheila Turnage

2013 Newbery Honor Book

**Topics:** Murder Mystery, family relationships, alcoholism, emotional abuse, small communities

Ever since she washed ashore as a baby during a hurricane, Mo LoBeau has made her home in Tupelo Landing, North Carolina, with the Colonel, a café owner with a forgotten past of his own, and Miss Lana, the café's glamorous hostess. Mo hopes to someday find her "upstream mother," but until then, she's happy helping the Colonel and Lana run the Tupelo Café, and going on adventures with her best friend, Dale.

Then a lawman comes to Tupelo Landing to investigate a murder. When it seems like Mo's loved ones might be implicated in the crime, she and Dale decide to use their own detective skills to solve the case. Soon the friends are investigating another murder, a long-ago bank robbery, a kidnapping, and the mystery of the night that Mo washed up on shore.


**Curriculum Connections:**

Connections for Language Arts, Art, and Social Studies, along with Discussion Questions can be found at this link:  

CCGPS: ELACC7RL4  Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama. This novel is an excellent resource to make teaching this standard fun and a lesson plan that can be modified for this can be found at  

**Reviews:**


[http://blogs.sij.com/afuse8production/2012/05/03/review-of-the-day-three-times-lucky-by-sheila-turnage/#](http://blogs.sij.com/afuse8production/2012/05/03/review-of-the-day-three-times-lucky-by-sheila-turnage/#)
Chomp by Carl Hiaasen

Wahoo Cray lives in a zoo. His father is an animal wrangler, so he's grown up with all manner of gators, snakes, parrots, rats, monkeys, snappers, and more in his backyard. The critters he can handle. His father is the unpredictable one. When his dad takes a job with a reality TV show called "Expedition Survival!", Wahoo figures he'll have to do a bit of wrangling himself—to keep his dad from killing Derek Badger, the show's boneheaded star, before the shoot is over. But the job keeps getting more complicated. Derek Badger seems to actually believe his PR and insists on using wild animals for his stunts. And Wahoo's acquired a shadow named Tuna—a girl who's sporting a shiner courtesy of her old man and needs a place to hide out.

They've only been on location in the Everglades for a day before Derek gets bitten by a bat and goes missing in a storm. Search parties head out and promptly get lost themselves. And then Tuna's dad shows up with a gun . . . It's anyone's guess who will actually survive "Expedition Survival". . .

(Review by goodreads)

Curriculum Connections

1. Careers – Ask students to use books in the library or sites on the Internet to identify at least ten different career paths involving wildlife—for example, herpetology, ornithology, zoology, etc. Have them write a brief description of each course of study.

2. Child Abuse – Ask students to find out about the Child Protective Agency in their town or city. Then have them research the laws regarding 1) reporting child abuse cases, 2) investigating incidents, 3) convicting abusers. Debate whether Mickey Cray broke the law by bringing Tuna Gordon along when he suspected that she had been abused.

3. Art – Have students create an advertisement for a national magazine for Mickey Cray's Animal Wrangler business. Design an appropriate logo.

Common Core Standards

RI.6-7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.5.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

Curriculum ideas provided by Random House.
Mountain Dog by Margarita Engle

When his mother is sent to jail in Los Angeles, eleven-year-old Tony goes to live with his forest ranger great-uncle in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, where Tony experiences unconditional love for the first time through his friendship with a rescue dog.

*Kirkus Reviews, June 15, 2013 (Vol. 81, No. 12)*

An absorbing story of an 11-year-old boy from Los Angeles who, when his mother is incarcerated for organizing pit-bull dogfights, moves in with his forest-ranger great-uncle and his chocolate Lab in their remote cabin high in the Sierra Nevadas. Writing in verse with an understated simplicity that quietly packs a punch, Engle compassionately portrays a boy who is struggling to leave his ""pit-bull life"" behind--though ""the sad / mad / abandoned"" memories of visits to his mother in the Valley State Prison for Women make this difficult. Soon after he arrives, Tony's great-uncle Tio takes him on the first of many wilderness tours in which he learns about thru-hikers on the Pacific Coast Trail, trail angels and trail magic. And Gabe, a skilled search-and-rescue dog, plays a big and joyful role in helping Tony feel a part of things: ""Gabe time. Dog time. Dirty, dusty, / rolling around in grass time""; by hiding as a volunteer ""victim,"" Tony helps SAR dogs practice finding a lost hiker and feels useful. Revealing both Tony's and Gabe's points of view in alternating chapters, the author deftly incorporates a fascinating mix of science, nature (cool facts aplenty) and wilderness lore into a highly accessible narrative that makes room for a celebration of language: ""Maybe words / are my strength. / I could turn out to be / a superhero / with secret / syllable powers."" The Ivanovs' black-and-white illustrations nimbly reflect the story's tone. Poignant and memorable. (author's note)

Category: Verse fiction; Ages 8 to 12.
Starred Review © 2013 Kirkus Reviews/VNU eMedia, Inc.
Group 2: Animal Tales & Folklore (Joy Frerichs & Linda Houghton)

THE CHESHIRE CHEESE CAT: A Dickens of a Tale
By Carmen Agra Deedy & Randall Wright, Drawings by Barry Moser

What do a community of mice, a cheese-loving cat, a raven, Charles Dickens, and Queen Victoria have in common? Saving the British Empire! Alley cat Skilley thinks Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese, a popular London inn, will provide the comfort and safety he desires. Little does he know that he will become allies with the resident mice in a battle against a mice-hating maid and an evil tomcat. Through the ensuing mayhem, Charles Dickens searches for inspiration for his latest book and everyone learns the lessons of a great friendship.

EDUCATION CONNECTIONS:

Themes & Topics: Friendship, Bullying, Self-esteem, Bartering, British History, Life in Victorian England, Charles Dickens

Resources:
Meet the authors and illustrator - http://www.clcd.com/features/mai_carmen_randall_barry.php

Standards:
ELACC6RL3: Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves towards a resolution.
ELACC6RL5: Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.
ELACC6RL6: Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

ELACC7RL3: Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how settings shape the characters or plot).
ELACC7RL6: Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
ELACC7RL9: Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means or understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.

ELACC8RL2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
TRUE BLUE SCOUTS OF SUGAR MAN SWAMP

By Kathi Appelt

Sugar Man Swamp is a lush area in Louisiana. Two raccoons man Information Headquarters. In another part of the swamp, ChapBrayburn and his mom sell sugar pies fresh-made daily from sugar cane growing nearby. Sugar Man meanwhile is sleeping deep in the swamp. A group of developers is planning in draining the swamp and turning it into an amusement park. Snakes fill the canebrakes and only settle down to a particular song. Feral pigs are heading to the swamp for a meal. Raccoons, snakes, feral pigs, and alligators-- what more can one want in one book! "Wake up, Sugar Man, and save the day!"

Curriculum connections:

Use of descriptive language can be used as writing prompts

Ecological aspects can be addressed

Anthromorphizing animal in stories
RUMP: THE TRUE STORY OF RUMPELSTILTSKIN

By Liesl Shurtliff

This book, of course, is a variation on an older story. Rump was born without a complete name. His mother died shortly after his birth. Bullied and teased, he seeks his true identity with the help of his friend Red. A few misadventures due to his ability to spin straw into gold make this a nice romp through a fairy tale.

Curriculum connection:

Compare/contrast-- new version to old. Also use various other retellings.

Bullying

Explore characteristics of fairy tales

Allusions to other literature can be made

Village life/ family life
Group 3: Biographies & Historical Fiction (Sara Blankenship & Amie Pilla)

The Lions of Little Rock By Kristin Levine

Marlee and Liz become best friends in a time of segregation and turmoil. Marlee is quiet and reserved. She never talks to anyone, until Liz becomes her new best friend. Liz teaches Marlee to be confident, bonding them in a very special way. Liz has a big secret though; she is colored in a white school. When everyone finds out, the consequences are more than the girls can understand. Liz and Marlee secretly find a way to be friends in spite of all the obstacles and danger they are facing in the world around them.

Watch the book trailer: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-PZnRlqa8c

Education Connections: Segregation, civil rights movement, human rights, overcoming obstacles, new perspectives, accepting differences in others

6th Grade Comparing Texts

ELACC6RL9: Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

ELACC6RI9: Compare and contrast one author’s presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person).

7th Grade- Comparing stories and events

ELACC7RL7: Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium

7th Grade- Using text and multimedia to analyze an event

ELACC7RI7: Compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium’s portrayal of the subject (e.g., how the delivery of a speech affects the impact of the words).

8th Grade Social Studies- Civil Rights

SS8H11 The student will evaluate the role of Georgia in the modern civil rights movement.

a. Describe major developments in civil rights and Georgia’s role during the 1940s and 1950s; include the roles of Herman Talmadge, Benjamin Mays, the 1946 governor’s race and the end of the white primary, Brown v. Board of Education, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the 1956 state flag.
The Boy on the Wooden Box  By: Leon Leyson

Leon Leyson tells his story of growing up during the Holocaust as a Jewish child. This is a beautiful true account from a child’s perspective and journey. Kids will be drawn to the intense situations, the enduring family bonds, and the triumph that came through one of the darkest periods in human history. Follow Leon through his years as the only child worker for Oskar Schindler, where he was spared countless times from Hitler’s armies, lived through the Holocaust, moved to America, and became a successful teacher in a classroom much like your own.

Education Connections: Overcoming obstacles, autobiographies, perspectives, biographies, comparing fiction to non-fiction accounts, sequence of events, evolution of characters

5th Grade Social Studies- World War II and the Holocaust

SS5H6 The student will explain the reasons for America’s involvement in World War II.

a. Describe Germany’s aggression in Europe and Japan’s aggression in Asia.

b. Describe major events in the war in both Europe and the Pacific; include Pearl Harbor, Iwo Jima, D-Day, VE and VJ Days, and the Holocaust.

d. Identify Roosevelt, Stalin, Churchill, Hirohito, Truman, Mussolini, and Hitler.

6th Grade Language Arts- Literary Text- changing characters based on events, autobiographies, perspective

ELACC6RL3: Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves towards a resolution.

ELACC6RI3: Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

7th Grade Language Arts- (Point of View)

ELACC7RL6: Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

ELACC7RI6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.
March: Book One By: John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell

On the morning of President Obama’s inauguration, Congressman John Lewis welcomes a couple of visitors to his office and offers to tell them why the day is so important to him. His true story, beautifully illustrated in graphic novel style, takes us from the sharecropping fields of Alabama, to Lewis’s first encounter with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and all the way to Lewis’s own experiences in peaceful protesting during the lunch counter sit-ins in Nashville, Tennessee.

Education Connections: Overcoming obstacles, autobiographies, perspectives, biographies, comparing fiction to non-fiction accounts, sequence of events, evolution of characters, segregation, civil rights movement, human rights, accepting differences in others

6th Grade Language Arts- Key Ideas and Details

ELACC6RL3: Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

6th Grade Language Arts- Craft and Structure

ELACC6RL6: Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

7th Grade Language Arts- Craft and Structure

L6-8RH5: Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

L6-8RH6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

8th Grade Social Studies- Civil Rights

SS8H11 The student will evaluate the role of Georgia in the modern civil rights movement.

a. Describe major developments in civil rights and Georgia’s role during the 1940s and 1950s; include the roles of Herman Talmadge, Benjamin Mays, the 1946 governor’s race and the end of the white primary, Brown v. Board of Education, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the 1956 state flag.
Navigating Early By: Clare Vanderpool

After his mother’s death, Jack moves from his home in Kansas to a boarding school in Maine. Jack is sure he fits in the least at his new school until he meets Early, a student who skips class whenever he likes, lives in a basement, and is determined not to pursue any normal school activities. Early is obsessed with the number pi and the story he believes the number represents. His obsession takes the two boys on a dangerous quest on the Appalachian Trail, searching for the great bear haunting the mountains and for Early’s brother, who everyone else believes has been dead for years.

Education Connections: Perspectives, biographies, sequence of events, evolution of characters, accepting differences in others

4th Grade Science- Ecosystems

S4L2 Students will identify factors that affect the survival or extinction of organisms such as adaptation, variation of behaviors (hibernation) and external features (camouflage and protection).

5th Grade Language Arts—Craft and Structure

ELACC5RL6: Describe how a narrator’s or speaker’s point of view influences how events are described.

6th Grade Science—Water in Earth’s Processes

S6E3. Students will recognize the significant role of water in earth processes
a. Explain that a large portion of the Earth’s surface is water, consisting of oceans, rivers, lakes, underground water, and ice.

7th Grade Language Arts-Key Ideas and Details

ELACC7RL3: Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how settings shape the characters or plot).

8th Grade Language Arts- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

ELACC8RL9: Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new.
Group 4: Fantasy & Science Fiction  (Becky Busby & Caitlyn Garner)

**Escape from Mr. Lemoncello’s Library** by Chris Grabenstein

Kyle Keeley is the class clown, popular with most kids, (if not the teachers), and an ardent fan of all games: board games, word games, and particularly video games. His hero, Luigi Lemoncello, the most notorious and creative gamemaker in the world, just so happens to be the genius behind the building of the new town library.

Lucky Kyle wins a coveted spot to be one of the first 12 kids in the library for an overnight of fun, food, and lots and lots of games. But when morning comes, the doors remain locked. Kyle and the other winners must solve every clue and every secret puzzle to find the hidden escape route. And the stakes are very high.

In this cross between *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *A Night in the Museum*, Agatha Award winner Chris Grabenstein uses rib-tickling humor to create the perfect tale for his quirky characters. Old fans and new readers will become enthralled with the crafty twists and turns of this ultimate library experience.  –Good Reads Review.

**Curriculum Connections:**

1. Have students take tour of school or local library and create a map. Then have students draw another map of how they would change the library to make it more kid friendly by adding some of the elements from the story.

2. Many interesting topics are mentioned in *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello’s Library*, such as the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915, the Dewey Decimal System, James Audobon, and Johannes Gutenberg. There are also many famous authors mentioned, such as Lewis Carroll, Dr. Seuss, Shel Silverstein, Maya Angelou, Agatha Christie, and Edgar Allan Poe. Choose one of these topics or choose a topic from the book that you want to know more about. Do research using books and websites. Write a report or give a presentation on your topic. [http://www.chrisgrabenstein.com/kids/escape-from-mr-lemoncellos-library-study-guide.php#suggested](http://www.chrisgrabenstein.com/kids/escape-from-mr-lemoncellos-library-study-guide.php#suggested)

3. Have the students pretend to be newscasters and they are going to interview Chris Grabenstein. Have students write reflection questions about the book to determine the author’s purpose and reasoning for actions and events.
Michael Vey: The Prisoner of Cell 25 by Richard Paul Evans

From VOYA, October 2011

Ninth grade can be brutal, especially if you are an undersized boy dealing with Tourette’s syndrome. Add bullies, disingenuous authority figures, a geeky best friend, a loving but financially strapped parent, and you have a relatable protagonist who just happens to have an amazing superpower. Michael Vey can zap people with electricity. With his mother’s help, he has been able to keep his “mutation” a secret until the eventful day when popular cheerleader, Taylor, witnesses him defending himself against three tormentors. This event sets into action a chain of discoveries, deceit, and destruction that brings together an unlikely group of young people who must work together to save themselves and others. Throughout these adventures, the author interweaves a plausible scientific explanation for Michael’s powers: sixteen years ago, seventeen babies were inadvertently given special abilities. Now, evil powerbrokers want to use these young people to cause international mayhem and gain wealth through extortion. Short chapters with intriguing titles, excellent writing, and engaging characters make this action-packed story a compulsively entertaining read. The tale progresses with altering points of view. Michael tells his story in first-person and Taylor’s tale is narrated in third-person. This first book of a planned series has a satisfying conclusion but leaves the reader determined to discover what the next book, Rise of the Electroclan, has in store for our young hero and his friends. Though contemporary and edgy, this book contains no bad language, sex, or gratuitous violence. This is a book Rick Riordan’s fans will want to read.

VOYA, October 2011
The False Prince by Jennifer Nielsen

From Booklist

This first book in a planned trilogy is action-oriented fantasy, but don’t expect magical creatures. Instead, it revolves around political intrigue (à la Megan Whalen Turner’s The Thief, 1996). Sage is a street-savvy orphan, and along with two other boys he is recruited by Conner, a nobleman who wants to remake them in the image of their country’s lost prince, a victim of pirates and presumed dead. The task is urgent, as the rest of the royal family has been murdered and civil war seems imminent. As the boys, chosen for their passing resemblance to Prince Jaron, compete to assume a new identity and the throne, Sage discovers some unpleasant truths about their host, beyond his treasonous plans to pass one of them off as royalty. Sage is a likable hero full of smart-alecky snarkiness. Especially appealing are the friendships he forges: one with his bodyguard and teacher; another with a mute serving girl. Though lacking in subtlety, Nielsen’s plot twists keep coming, and readers will want to see how they play out as Sage’s adventures continue. Grades 4-7.
**Group 5: Finding Hope: Realistic Fiction**  (Kristi Craven & Rochelle Jacobs)

**One for the Murphys** by Lynda Mullaly Hunt

Twelve-year-old Carley Connors can take a lot. Growing up in Las Vegas with her fun-loving mother, she's learned to be tough. But she never expected a betrayal that would land her in a foster care. When she's placed with the Murphys, a lively family with three boys, she's blindsided. Do happy families really exist? Carley knows she could never belong in their world, so she keeps her distance.

It's easy to stay suspicious of Daniel, the brother who is almost her age and is resentful she's there. But Mrs. Murphy makes her feel heard and seen for the first time, and the two younger boys seem determined to work their way into her heart. Before she knows it, Carley is protected the boys from a neighborhood bully and even teaching Daniel how to play basketball. Then just when she's feeling like she could truly be one of the Murphys, news from her mother shakes her world.

Review from Goodreads

Curriculum Connections:

1. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.9** Compare and contrast stories in the same genre (e.g., mysteries and adventure stories) on their approaches to similar themes and topics.

   Compare/contrast One for the Murphys to:
   - Pictures of Hollis Woods By Patricia Reilly Giff
   - The Great Gilly Hopkins By Katherine Paterson
   - The Road to Paris By Nikki Grimes
   - Everything on a Waffle by Polly Horvath

2. Write class-wide letters to the author. Did you agree with her ending? Are there other things you would have changed? What did you like about the book? Which character would you most like to meet for real? Why?

3. In One for the Murphys, Carley develops a special relationship with Julie Murphy. At the end Carley tells Julie that she is her hero. Who is your hero? Write a narrative that tells the story of who the person is to you and how they became your hero.

Curriculum connections taken from [www.lyndamullalyhunt.com](http://www.lyndamullalyhunt.com)
Counting by 7s by Holly Goldberg Sloan

In the tradition of Out of My Mind, Wonder, and Mockingbird, this is an intensely moving middle grade novel about being an outsider, coping with loss, and discovering the true meaning of family.

Willow Chance is a twelve-year-old genius, obsessed with nature and diagnosing medical conditions, who finds it comforting to count by 7s. It has never been easy for her to connect with anyone other than her adoptive parents, but that hasn’t kept her from leading a quietly happy life... until now.

Suddenly Willow’s world is tragically changed when her parents both die in a car crash, leaving her alone in a baffling world. The triumph of this book is that it is not a tragedy. This extraordinarily odd, but extraordinarily endearing, girl manages to push through her grief. Her journey to find a fascinatingly diverse and fully believable surrogate family is a joy and a revelation to read.

Review from Goodreads

Curriculum Connections:

1. The quote on the cover says, "If you're lost, you might need to swim against the tide." What do you think that means, within the context of the story? Tell about a time when you needed to swim against the tide.

2. Would you want to be friends with Willow? Based on her character and the things you know she does and does not like, create an invitation inviting her to your birthday party.

3. Who are the 7 most important people in your life? Write a short character sketch describing each person.

Curriculum Connections provided by www.sweetonbooks.com
Serafina’s Promise by Ann E. Burg

Serafina has a secret dream. She wants to go to school and become a doctor with her best friend, Julie Marie. But in their rural village outside Port-au-Prince, Haiti, many obstacles stand in Serafina’s way—little money, never-ending chores, and Manman’s worries.

More powerful even than all of these are the heavy rains and the shaking earth that test Serafina’s resolve in ways she never dreamed. At once heartbreaking and hopeful, this exquisitely crafted story will leave a lasting impression on your heart.

Review from Goodreads

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1/CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Serafina’s Promise details a culture and way of life vastly different from our own. Students will be able to note explicit descriptions of Serafina’s world (her house, the natural environment, her daily chores, as well as her interior reflections) while being challenged to find deeper meanings: What can we infer from these descriptions? How is Serafina’s world different from our own? Are there any similarities? What conclusions can we draw about human nature?

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

Throughout the novel, as Serafina goes about her daily chores and meets the challenges of her daily existence, an overall theme emerges. What is theme? What details from the story enforce this theme?

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3 Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.3 Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

Serafina’s Promise unfolds as a series of poems. Throughout the novel, Serafina’s voice is consistent and the harshness of her environment does not change. At the same time, Serafina’s interior dialogue reflects a change in attitude. As the plot moves toward resolution, students will be challenged to discover how we know this change occurs. What are some major episodes in Serafina’s life? How do her reactions reflect her transformation?

Group 6: Middle School Angst  (Michelle Doane & Kristi Little)

Eight Keys by Suzanne LaFleur

Elise has loved her life with Aunt Bessie and Uncle Hugh so far, and she's always been best friends with her neighbor, Franklin. But when Elise starts middle school, suddenly everything goes wrong: more family moves into their house, things with Franklin seem off, she can't keep up in school, and her locker partner is a nightmare.

That's when Elise discovers a secret, one that has been waiting for her since she was a little girl. She's never given much thought to the eight locked rooms above her uncle's workshop in the barn; that is, not until she finds a key with her name on it.

Curriculum Connections

Writing
When Elise’s father found out that he was dying, he wrote letters to Elise for her future birthdays up to her twelfth. Have students write a letter to someone for them to read five years from now. It could be to a friend, a family member, or even to their own future selves.

Elise had a hard time of things at the start of the school year. Students can be asked to write about what the start of the current school year was like for them, what the big changes were from the year before, and how they adjusted to these new elements in their lives.

Art
At the end of the book, Elise fills the empty room with pictures and things that represent who she is. Have students do something similar on a smaller scale by each making a collage that says something about who they are. They can include pictures of people who are important to them, pictures or symbols of major events in their pasts, things that represent their hobbies, or anything else they like.

Social Studies
Bullying is a major source to conflict in Eight Keys. Use this as an opportunity to discuss bullying with the class. Possible questions for open discussion include:

• Why might Amanda be targeting Elise and others?
• What does Elise do in response? What could she have done differently? What might have happened if she had acted differently and why did she choose to react as she did instead? Remember that she did try telling a teacher about the problem.
• Elise starts casually insulting Franklin as a school year goes on. Is this bullying? How does it differ from how Amanda treats Elise?

Use this discussion inform students of how to handle bullying they might encounter, including what to do if they see someone else being bullied and how to realize that they may be hurting someone emotionally and how to better handle their problems without hurting others.

Two websites focusing on bullying resources:
http://www.stopbullying.gov/
http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson191.shtml
Ungifted by Gordon Korman

Contemporary, Middle Grades
Publisher: Balzer & Bray. Published 2012, 288 pages.
Lexile: 730L  Fountas & Pinnell: V

The word gifted has never been applied to a kid like Donovan Curtis. It’s usually more like Don’t try this at home. So when the troublemaker pulls a major prank at his middle school, he thinks he’s finally gone too far. But thanks to a mix-up by one of the administrators, instead of getting in trouble, Donovan is sent to the Academy of Scholastic Distinction (ASD), a special program for gifted and talented students.

It wasn’t exactly what Donovan had intended, but there couldn’t be a more perfect hideout for someone like him. That is, if he can manage to fool people whose IQs are above genius level. And that becomes harder and harder as the students and teachers of ASD grow to realize that Donovan may not be good at math or science (or just about anything). But after an ongoing experiment with a live human (sister), an unforgottably dramatic middle-school dance, and the most astonishing come-from-behind robot victory ever, Donovan shows that his gifts might be exactly what the ASD students never knew they needed.

Curriculum connections:

Do you know who your ancestors are? Try researching your ancestry as Donovan did. Do you think Donovan will be a survivor like his ancestor on the Titanic?

Would you want to go to the Academy for Scholastic Distinction? Why or why not?

If you were designing a robot, what would you have it do and why?

What is a hypothesis? How does Chloe come up with her hypotheses?

Why do you think Chloe wants to be “normal”? What do you think it means to be normal?
**Twerp by Mark Goldblatt**

Middle school boys have been waiting for sixth grader, Julian Twerski nicknamed Twerp. Twerp isn’t a bully. He’s just made a big mistake. “I’ve done worse, much worse, and never written a word about it.” So when he returns to school after a weeklong suspension, his English teacher offers him a deal: if he keeps a journal and writes about the terrible incident that got him and his friends suspended, he can get out of writing a report on Shakespeare. Julian jumps at the chance. And so begins his account of life in sixth grade—blowing up homemade fireworks, writing a love letter for his best friend (with disastrous results), and worrying whether he’s still the fastest kid in school. Lurking in the background, though, is the one story he can’t bring himself to tell, the one story his teacher most wants to hear.

*Curriculum Connections*

**Boys Book Club**

In my opinion, this is the kind of novel for which book clubs are made. Gather a group of boys and call it a tribe, clan, or team...something cooler than “club.” Lead a four-to-six week discussion group based on TWERP. Use the chance to place older boys in the role of facilitator. Talk to the school’s adjustment counselor about trying some social experiments during Bully Prevention Month (October).

**Storyboard It**

Divide your class into groups—one per chapter. Have them storyboard the plot as the action takes place. What is the scenery? Time of day? Where would cameras focus? What do the characters look like? What is their body language? Students can then try their hands at directing a live scene and share the video.

**Point of View**

Select a chapter or a scene in the book to recreate from another character’s point of view (i.e. Mr. Selkirk, Lonnie, Danley, Devlin) make a voice recording or two-minute video blog based on his experience.

TWERP offers a lot of opportunities for writing prompts, including:

- **Six-Word Memoirs:** Using only six words, state the theme of one chapter, or even the book.
- **Soundtrack:** If the book was made into a movie, what songs would be on the soundtrack? Choose one song per chapter.
- **Decisions, Decisions:** What is the decision you A) are most proud of, B) regret deeply, or C) you would like to change if you could? Select one and write a blog to respond.
- **Influential Teacher:** Write a thank you note to a teacher who encouraged you.
- **Stream of Consciousness:** Try your hand at writing exactly what you think, see, and feel for fifteen minutes. Generate a bunch of topics (waking up this morning, the first day of school, a sports tryout) and let your students write like crazy.