Georgia Children’s Book (Gr. 4-8) Award
2018-2019 Nominees

Connecting to Children, Community, and Curriculum
Book Award Selection Committee

Dr. Sara Kajder (Chair), Clinical Assistant Professor, Language & Literacy Education, University of Georgia

Melanie Duncan, Branch Manager/Librarian, Washington Memorial Library - Middle Georgia RLS,, Bibb County

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Julie Stokes, Literacy Coordinator Grades 6-8, Dalton Middle School, Dalton Public Schools

Julie Trejo, Fifth Grade Teacher, Berry College Elementary and Middle School, Mt. Berry

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Anja Tigges (Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl Representative), Media Specialist, DeKalb Early College Academy (DECA), DeKalb County

Adam Crawley and Ji Hong (Graduate Assistants), Doctoral Students, Language & Literacy Education, University of Georgia
Grades 4-5
Summary

Fred Korematsu was born and raised in California. A typical American teen, he liked listening to music and hanging out with friends. But Fred is of Japanese heritage and when Japan attacks Pearl Harbor in 1941, Fred and his family are ordered to move to an internment camp which are converted horse stalls. Fred refuses and is arrested. Today Fred is regarded as a civil rights hero in an often overlooked part of WWII American history.


Lexile (not available)
Connections

The story of Japanese camps in the U.S. is often overlooked due to the discomfort U.S. citizens feel in regards to unfair U.S. practices in war. The story of Fred Korematsu brings to students a clear connection to the gray areas of war, and there is no absolute right or wrong. Teachers can have students compare and contrast the policy and camps in the Japanese camps in the U.S. vs. the Nazi camps in Germany.


Lexile (not available)
Summary

Luke Abbott attends Forest Shade Middle School, a school where no one ever wins anything. But Luke doesn’t mind. He enjoys heading straight home from school to play video games in his room, where he can avoid his older brother Rob and the bad (in Luke’s eyes) decision Rob made. Unfortunately, he ends up stuck on the school robotics team with Missy the Cruel, his arch nemesis and bully since first grade. He also meets Lunchbox Jones, a mysterious student who ends up having more in common with Luke than either ever expected.
Connections

- Investigate the history of video games. What are your favorite video games? Do you prefer playing them alone or do you play online with your friends?

- Does your school have a robotics club? Have you ever built a robot? Investigate the history of robotics.

- Discuss how Luke and the robotics team work together. Are they an effective team? Do they treat each other with respect? Why or why not?


Lexile = 750L
Summary

Albie Bright is a ten year old boy who is named after his parents’ two favorite scientists. After his mom is diagnosed with cancer and dies, Albie questions his dad about whether or not he believes in Heaven. Albie’s dad tells Albie about his belief in Quantum Physics which sends Albie on an adventure to locate his mom in a parallel universe. There are many situations in which Albie finds himself throughout the search, but he ends up getting to a place of acceptance in his new position.


Lexile = 960L
Connections

- Have students research the Large Hadron Collider. Have them choose a way to share the information with their peers such as write a report, create a PowerPoint presentation, create a poster, etc.

- Creative Writing: Have students research Quantum Physics and write a story in which they travel to a parallel universe and meet their other self. Students will describe the means in which they get to this parallel universe and once there, what is it like?

- Have students keep a journal of the different universes Albie visits, and document the events that unfold in each universe. Does Albie remain the same in each one? If not, what are the changes?


Lexile = 960L
Summary

Fern has not had the easiest life. Her mother and brother died in a car crash, and her stepfather is having a hard time finding a job - concerns no eleven-year-old should have to worry about. Fern finds solace in the neighboring woods where she forages for food for her family. But one day construction trucks roll into town and the old growth woods are being prepped for hydraulic fracking (forcing natural gas or oil up through the ground with a high pressure mixture of sand and water). The company will bring much needed jobs for her stepfather, but will it also destroy Fern’s wilderness?


Lexile (not available)
Connections

- The story centers around the new business in town that will start “fracking.” Explore the benefits of fracking and the dangers as well. Are jobs and finding energy resources more important than the potential environment dangers posed by hydraulic fracking? Have a debate.

- Writing exercises: write a letter to your local congressman seeking information about their views of hydraulic fracking.

- What is the geology of Georgia? Examine the uses and conservation of natural resources in our state and how they can impact our environment.


Lexile (not available)
Summary

It’s not that he got left behind on a field trip or anything. He was left alone in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. with no memory of how he got there. Now, this twelve-year-old boy must figure out his own name. Peculiar as amnesia might be, there are other oddities, like why people are following him and want to kidnap him. Oh, and he speaks French, a discovery which turns out to be handy since it’s the language of the mysterious journal in his backpack. Little memories come back, like the fact that he’s been to London and can explain, in detail, the works of famous artists. “Boy, is that ever not normal?”, he thinks to himself. With the help of Camille, a new friend, the pair must figure out the connections between the known and the unknown and how all of this relates to the National Gallery and possible art fraud. Absolutely riveting for a middle grades novel, it also includes QR codes linking the reader to famous paintings mentioned in the mystery.


Lexile = 750L
Connections

- Research other pieces of art that are still unaccounted for since World War II.
- Discover and research other famous art deceptions.
- Get more details about Van Gogh.
- Choose one of the QR coded art pieces and describe it in detail.
- Look up Danish astronomer, Tycho Brahe.
- Visit an art museum, choose a painting, and write the fantastic story of how the museum came to have the artwork.


Lexile = 750L
Summary

Stella Glass’ scientist parents have been drafted by the king of Solace to go on a historic, dangerous voyage to the Uncharted Lands. Stella, who has been ordered by the king to stay behind, secretly boards the airship and stows away. Once on the ship, she meets another stowaway, Cyrus - a glowing boy that can bind light and heat with his hands. Cyrus is an alien from the Uncharted Lands who came to Solace years before on a secret mission but desperately wants to return home. Together, the two must join forces to defeat yet another unknown passenger, the faceless man, who wants to ruin the mission and destroy the ship and its crew. Cyrus tries to do everything he can to protect the mission, the ship, and Stella, but he becomes deathly ill as a result. Stella, who is brave, kind, and clever ends up rescuing Cyrus and her parents from the faceless man, saving the mission and the ship.


Lexile = 830L
Connections

- Using poster board, have students sketch six puzzle pieces on the back, and number each piece.
  - On the front, have students draw an important scene from the book and color it. This should cover the entire poster…no white showing just like a puzzle.
  - Piece #1: Creatively display the book title and author, along with student name.
  - Piece #2: Write a detailed description of the main and secondary characters.
  - Piece #3: Describe the book’s setting, and list the main events in order.
  - Piece #4: Describe the problem of the book.
  - Piece #5: Write about the climax of the book.
  - Piece #6: Describe how the problem(s) in the book is/are solved.

- When students complete their puzzle, have them cut their puzzle apart and place the pieces in a gallon size zip-loc bag. Students can exchange puzzles with their classmates to help review the book. (*This activity was adapted from ReadWriteThink.*)

- Writing: Stella is upset about the fact her parents have been chosen by the king for a historic, dangerous mission to fly to the Uncharted Lands…the unknown, leaving her behind with family. Put yourself in Stella’s place, and write a letter to the king stating your feelings about your parents’ assignment. Give details from the story to back-up your reasons. Do you think Stella is justified in her feelings?


Lexile = 830L
Summary

You can’t help but love someone who would risk missing the bus to get your jacket; who believes – as you do – in ladybug luck; who, like a knight, is fearless at everything and simply makes you braver for knowing him. That’s Guy. That’s Sussy’s best friend. Her dad calls them spaghetti and meatballs because they are always together. One day, the friends convince Sussy’s dad that they need a pet because it’s part of growing up. It’s something to call their own and love. So Matylda with a Y comes into the lives of Guy and Sussy in the form of a leopard gecko. Their summer becomes devoted to caring for their pet and catching live crickets. On an assuming trip to the petstore for Matylda, tragedy strikes. Sussy wakes up in a hospital bed. She is faced with her promise to love the spotted gecko “like I did, enough for us both”. Remembering how Guy loved her, Sussy learns to champion the pet, be brave when she doesn’t want to, and seek joy in things her best friend loved. The path of loss is a difficult one and requires the strength of a warrior, bravery of a knight, fearlessness of Indiana Jones, and luck of a ladybug.


Lexile (not available)
Connections

- Look up superstitions about ladybugs and why they are considered good luck.
- Research information on leopard geckos as they occur in the wild.
- Write a step-by-step informational text on everything you would need to get ready to purchase and care for a leopard gecko as a pet.
- Play the game Monopoly.
- Play a game of Zombie tag.
- Watch clips of Indiana Jones movies and explain the character qualities that Sussy’s mother was trying to instill when she chose the name for her own daughter.
Summary

Daisy has ten weeks to prove her ability to be trained as a service dog for a Colonel who just came home and is suffering from PTSD or she will be sent back to the pound. This is a beautiful story told from Daisy’s point of view that explores the stress of PTSD on the entire family and the ability of a dog to start the healing process for all of them. After reading this book, you will find yourself understanding and appreciating your own dog just a little bit more.


Lexile = 550L
Connections

- Invite students to share stories about their own pets, and have them try to create a story about their pet being excited to see them coming home from school. If they do not have a pet, have them try to write a story from a zoo animal’s perspective when a class comes to visit.

- Local pounds are always in need of volunteers. Take the children to the pound to play with the animals and help feed and bathe them.

- Research the use of dogs as service dogs for soldiers with PTSD. Write letters encouraging local governments and businesses to donate to the training of dogs that could help our soldiers as they return home. Some helpful websites (found in the back of the book) are: Southeastern Guide Dogs: [www.guidedogs.org](http://www.guidedogs.org); Paws for Veterans: [www.pawsforveterans.com](http://www.pawsforveterans.com); and Warrior Canine Connection: [www.warriorcanineconnection.org](http://www.warriorcanineconnection.org)


Lexile = 550L
Summary

Math is Ella Hunter’s mortal enemy. No matter how much she struggles, it just doesn’t make sense. Now the teachers at Victor Waldo Elementary plan to hold the first ever Math Fair, which will count for two math grades!

To make matters worse, she has to share her room for several months with her aunt and an obnoxious dog while their home is renovated. Throw in a dead possum Ella almost steps in which is smelling up the playground, and Ella’s organized life is falling apart faster than she can solve the elementary 2 + 2. If she doesn’t pass math, it’s summer school and math tutoring for sure!


Lexile = 770L
Connections

- Since a dead possum plays a pivotal role in the story, students could visit a local nature preserve or hiking trail and record their observations of nature.

- Students could research the life cycles of various animals, insects, and/or plants to create a mathematical chart breaking down the life cycle into seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years, just as the students at Victor Waldo did for the Math Fair.

- Ella can be obsessive about how her personal items are arranged. Research Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and see how it compares with Ella’s behavior.

- Discuss how Ella and her math team work together. Are they an effective team? Do they treat each other with respect? Why or why not?

- Discuss Ella’s family relationships. Should Ella’s aunt have moved into her room without discussing it with her first? Should her parents have discussed the move with Ella first? Why or why not?
Summary

Have you ever wanted to attend something so badly, but your parents wouldn’t let you? Have you ever had a chance encounter with a celebrity, but did not realize it at the time? Have you ever been a part of achieving a family dream? Seventh grader, Stef Soto, has done all of that and more. Having the usual awkward middle school social issues to navigate, Stef has enough to figure out, but with hard-working, stricter than average, first-generation immigrant parents who own a food truck specializing in tacos, the issues in kind, respectful Stef’s life seem to be multiplied. In this novel, Stef is able to find her voice, re-evaluate her position on the family dream more than once, hone her artistic skills, have a chance meeting with a recording artist, and save the day twice.


Lexile = 780L
Connections

- Other books that deal with fitting into a new culture include *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan, *The Distance Between Us Young Readers Edition: A Memoir* by Reyna Grande, *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* by Bette Bao Lord, and *Dragonwings* by Laurence Yep.

- Ask how your family got here. Research how your family arrived in your hometown, this state, this region, even this country. Write the results of your research so that you may share it with other family members and even future generations.

- Determine a cause around your school (e.g., a shortage of art supplies in the art classroom, more balls on the playground, more books in the first grade classroom) or community (e.g., the needs of a homeless shelter, animal shelter, or another school which has been stricken by a hurricane or other natural disaster) and organize a fundraising event, perhaps a dance complete with posters and refreshments. Donate the proceeds to the cause you have chosen.
Summary

Food, family and community! If you enjoy any of these three topics, you will enjoy reading this book. The young male protagonist, Arturo Zamora, faces many trials during one summer in Miami, Florida. Through the death of a grandmother, the possibility of losing the family business, and new emotions for a female friend of the family, Arturo attempts to handle it all. Cartaya’s characters are humorous and enduring. His use of the Spanish language is authentic, and this book is anything but an epic fail.


Lexile = 750L
Connections

- The characters in this book often refer to Jose Marti, a famous Cuban poet. Research how this poet and other poets’ writings have influenced social movements throughout history. Have readers write their own poems about current social movements and share via social media.

- Arturo’s family come together around food. Do some research and discover the foods and flavors which are central to Cuban traditions. Try your hand at preparing a dish, or use this as an opportunity to connect Cuban foods to those that are at the center of your family’s traditions.

- Gentrification is a theme in the text. Have readers research and discover the impact of gentrification in their local community, county, or state. Generate ideas about how to ensure equity while providing sustainable, environmental friendly growth where gentrification may occur. Present these ideas to local leadership, governing boards, and developers.
Summary

The story of the White Rose movement in Nazi Germany is a lesson in dissent, a tale of courage, honor and principle. Siblings, Hans and Sophie Scholl along with other students from the University of Munich led the underground movement by printing and distributing leaflets to the public sharing the horrible actions being perpetrated by the Nazi Party. The leaflets called for the active opposition of the German citizens, to stand up against the evil regime. Today, Hans and Sophie Scholl are remembered as enduring symbols of the struggle for the freedom of the human spirit.


Lexile = 630L
Connections

- This story is an amazing social movement and demonstrates the importance of them in society, especially those movements that involve children and teenagers. Have students list other prominent children or teens who have led or sparked a movement and what were the results of those movements?

- Contact the Georgia Commission on the Holocaust (www.holocaust.georgia.gov) and see about scheduling a traveling exhibit at your school, or schedule a survivor talk. The USC Shoah Foundation (www.sfi.usc.edu) is also a great resource for testimonials and lesson plans on the Holocaust. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (www.ushmm.org) has online resources about German Resistance of the Nazi regime.

- Compare and contrast the White Rose Movement and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement.


Lexile = 630L
Summary

Alan Gratz’s remarkable weaving together of three teen refugees’ lives and experiences is exciting and eye-opening as each chapter abruptly ends on a cliffhanger leading the reader to the next stage of the journey of a different teen. During three different time periods, teens and their families flee dictatorships, destruction, and everything familiar seeking safety and freedom. The challenges and changes they encounter along the way weave the stories together but leave the reader wondering how they are connected until the end. Gratz opens the reader’s mind and eyes to issues facing America in present times, as well. A must-read for historical fiction admirers.
Connections

- If you liked the suspense and tension of *Refugee*, read other Alan Gratz novels. To experience another novel with different narrators or telling events from different perspectives read *Nine, Ten: A September 11 Story* by Nora Raleigh Baskin and *Echo* by Pam Munoz Ryan. If you would like to explore another life of a refugee, consider reading *The Red Pencil* by Andrea Davis Pickney.

- Write about one event (a birthday party, ball game, walk in the park, spelling test) from different perspectives.

- Research the pathways to become an American citizen. Read the newspaper or watch the news to find out about the current immigrant situation in America. Be sure to consider different points of view.

- Not all refugees are political like the ones in this novel. When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, many people left the area, at least temporarily; some never went back after the cleanup. Volunteer with a refugee organization in your town such as the Red Cross or a church with an immigrant ministry. You may practice speaking English with speakers of other languages, help children with their school work, babysit children while adults take classes or work, or collect and donate materials that people who have left their home with few of their belongings might need.


Lexile = 800L
Summary

Children were important contributors during the civil rights movement! Children made a difference. After reading this moving memoir about Ms. Lowery’s experience in the Selma Voting Rights March, you will never take the right to vote for granted again. She effectively recounts the events that lead to the march and her participation as the youngest marcher from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. This inspiring informational text describes the dangers and consequences of participating in non-violent protests which included being jailed nine times before turning the age of fifteen.


Lexile = 780L
Connections

- Research other children involved in the Civil Rights movement. Create a live museum to retell their stories. Invite them to speak at your school and share their stories. Reach out to local politicians and civic organizations in your community to determine to join the trip to tell their stories first hand. how they can be honored for their service.

- What are the current Human Rights movements currently happening around the world, and how are children involved in those movements? Research these movements and see how your school or community can help their cause. As you learn about other Human Rights movements and the children involved, write a collection of their stories.

- Rewrite the story of the Selma march to Montgomery from another point of view. Research to find out more information about the March and create a narrative as told by a member of the National Guard, a parent, or a Civil Rights leader.

- Organize a civil rights field trip that allows readers to visit the places described in the text. Have readers act as tour guides as they travel. Invite actual march participants


Lexile = 780L
Summary

Ted Gerson, avid video gamer, loses his great Uncle Ted, but inherits the contents from his uncle’s filled-to-the-brim apartment. As they clean out the apartment, Ted and his best friend, Caleb, and new friend, Isabel, discover that there was more to WWII veteran Uncle Ted than they realized. The apartment is set up like an escape room, just like the ones Ted has been solving on his computer at home. To add to the challenge of finding treasure and escaping the room/apartment, bad guys try to thwart their success as well. Readers who enjoy video games, puzzles, and mysteries should read this novel.
Connections

- Other books of historical fiction related to Asian-Americans during WWII include Harry Mazer’s trio *A Boy No More, A Boy at War*, and *Heroes Don’t Run* as well as Laura Atkins’ *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up*. Other titles that involve solving a puzzle include Ellen Raskin’s *The Westing Game* and E. L. Konigsburg’s *The View from Saturday*. Another title for gamers is *Nerdy Dozen* by Jeff Miller.

- Use topics you have studied in your class (history, geography, science, even literature) to design an escape room for your teachers or other classes to attempt.

- Interview a veteran of WWII or someone alive during that era. There are not many such people among us anymore, so it may be challenging to find one. Ask about the sacrifices made on the home front, the attitude toward soldiers, the way the service was organized, prejudices that existed at that time, or anything else you want to find out. Generally, people of this era are willing to share their experiences with just a little encouragement. Remember to record your interview so others may learn from it as well.
Summary

Middle school readers will run through the pages of this book. They will be intrigued by the realistic characters and authentic dialogue. In this first book of a series by Jason Reynolds, Castle Cranshaw, known as Ghost, joins an elite track team for middle school aged kids. His natural ability earns him a spot on the team, but his built up anger and poor choices may just have him back in the bleachers before he can even run his first race. Will Castle overcome the ghosts of his past with the help of his teammates, coach, and friends? As the reader of this memorable story, you will cheer for Castle to beat the odds.


Lexile = 730L
Connections

- While training for races, the team goes through four different workouts. Ask the Physical Education department in the school to have readers participate in the workouts and analyze how the workouts help the runners. In addition, have readers reflect on how participating in the workouts helps readers connect to the text.

- Research the options in your community for families suffering from domestic violence. Determine ways to serve this population in your community. Perhaps your school can organize a “Ghost” 5K run/walk to raise money for a local shelter or organize a food and clothing drive to donate to a local shelter.

- Ghost is often suspended from school due to his behavior. This negatively impacts Ghost’s attitude about school. What restorative justice practices can be placed in schools to help students like Ghost? Generate ideas that can replace suspension. Speak to your local school administration and school boards about the possible implementation of your ideas.
Summary

Not just an exciting underdog sports story that moves at a fast pace, *Undefeated* is a book about Native American life and U.S. policy in the early 20th century. The Carlisle football team faced both undeniable obstacles against privileged schools but terrible racism and systemic government persecution against their tribes.


Lexile = 980L
Connections

- SS4H3: Westward Expansion and its impact on Native Americans.
- SS8H1: Impact of European Exploration on Native Americans.

- *Undefeated* can be used as a literary tie-in with the S.S. standards in grades 4 and 8 as both a read-aloud or book club usage. Teachers can use passages or chapters to highlight how U.S. policy negatively impacts the Native American Nations in severe ways. The book can also be used in ELA classes on theme.


Lexile = 980L
Summary

_Hoodoo_ is set in rural Alabama during the 1930s. The main character, twelve-year-old Hoodoo Hatcher, lives with his maternal Grandmother (Mama Francis) and his Aunt (Aunt Jelly) because both of his parents are dead. Unlike most of his family, Hoodoo does not have the ability to practice folk magic (a.k.a., Hoodoo) like his name might lead the reader to believe. One day, a mysterious man known as the Stranger comes to town, and Hoodoo finds out he’s looking for a boy with the name Hoodoo. Through different events, Hoodoo learns that the whole town is in danger of Stranger’s black magic because of Hoodoo’s dad, and Hoodoo is the only one who can save them. This book has a lot of twists and turns and is full of mystery, suspense, and humor. Middle Grade students who like Gothic novels and scary stories will love this book.
Connections

- Ask students to research what life was like for African-Americans in Alabama during the 1930s. Have them compare it to life today.

- Have students pretend to be a reporter who has been assigned to interview Hoodoo. Students will write five questions to ask Hoodoo during the interview based on what they read in the book.


Lexile = 600L
Summary

We can never go back to who we were before a tragedy and Ethan needs to learn to navigate life as the Ethan he is now. An accident in Boston has disrupted the life of twelve-year-old Ethan and after three attempts at running away, his entire family’s lives are disrupted when his parents move Ethan and older brother, Roddie, to a small coastal town in Georgia to live with their grandfather. It seems everyone has secrets. What happened to Kacey? Why is Grandpa’s bedroom off limits? Who is the mysterious woman in the abandoned house? Travel this journey with Ethan as he tries to learn who he is now in this new life of after…


Lexile = 730L
Connections

- Ethan’s new friend Coralee creates stories of a life she dreams she has. Ask the students to dream of a situation they wish were different in their own lives. Then have them write a narrative describing the new life.

- The unofficial library in the hardware store is highlighted in the story. Take the children to indie and/or used bookstores and explore the differences from big, chain stores. Talk with the owners and find out why they opened their own little bookstore.

- Hurricanes and other natural disasters leave residents with months of rebuilding. Research different agencies that help communities rebuild and make lists (like Ethan did) of ways to help. Students can also write thank you notes to the volunteers and first responders who travel to help families rebuild their homes and their lives after a natural disaster.


Lexile = 730L
Summary

*Karma* is about to start middle school with nothing but nerves. After her best friendship dissolves over a new girl in town and the death of her grandma, Karma discovers 17 hairs on her upper lip. As Karma navigates the difficult world of middle school with bullying and new friendships, the author takes readers on a new view of what it’s like to be an American middle schooler.


Lexile (not available)
Connections

- Dadima teaches Karma about karma in a way that leads her to start keeping track of her “karma points.” What would your list include?

- This is a book that addresses what it means to be a bystander amidst bullying that you witness but don’t stop. Who are the allies in this book? What have you done to step up to advocate for others?

- Write a letter to your teacher or an administrator in your building about the bullying culture in your own school. What can be done to better support students?


Lexile (not available)