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Read, Wonder, and Learn! Favorite Authors & Illustrators Share Resources for Learning Anywhere – Spring 2020

Hello, friends! I'm Kate Messner, a former classroom teacher, forever-educator, and the author of [more than three dozen books for kids](#). These include picture books like [Over and Under the Snow](#), [The Brilliant Deep](#), and [The Next President](#); the [Fergus and Zeke](#) easy reader series; the [Ranger in Time](#) historical chapter book adventures; nonfiction like [Tracking Pythons](#) and [Solve This: Forensics](#); and novels like [All the Answers](#), [Breakout](#), and [Chirp](#). I'm happy that you found your way here!

This is a library of resources for kids, families, teachers, and librarians to make sure that reading & learning can happen anywhere this spring. Some of you may be out of school as communities try to prevent the spread of a virus known as COVID-19. Here's a [great page from NPR that explains what that's all about, in a kid-friendly comic](#). National Ambassador for Young People's Literature Jason Reynolds shares "[How to Fight the New Bad Guy in Town](#)," a [PSA for kids, on the StorySeeds podcast here](#). And [this excellent & important post from author Laurie Halse Anderson does a great job explaining why we're seeing closings \(and why that's important in some cases\) for older readers](#).

Below, you'll find a growing collection of resources that include everything from first-chapter and picture book read-alouds (shared with permission from publishers!) to drawing and writing mini-lessons. Be sure to check back often, as new resources will be added every day.

Wash your hands, stay healthy, and enjoy these resources as we take care of one another this spring!

Author Kate Messner shares a read-aloud of THE BRILLIANT DEEP: REBUILDING THE WORLD'S CORAL REEFS. After the read-aloud, [check out the Coral Restoration Foundation website](#). Learn more about [the threats coral reefs are facing from NASA's Climate Kids page](#), and [check out this page about how kids can help our oceans](#). Challenge: Make a poster or drawing to teach people about how we can all help coral and other sea creatures!

[Tracey Baptiste](#), the author of *The Jumbies* series, shares a mini-lesson on comparative mythology. She talks through how creatures from different mythologies have traits in common and encourages kids to find those similarities in the mythologies they come across. She's also sharing some reading resources such as *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths*, *The Element Encyclopedia of Mythical Creatures*, and [her own Jumbies Field Guide available at her website](#).

Author [Debbi Michiko Florence](#) shares a read-aloud excerpt of her chapter book JASMINE TOGUCHI FLAMINGO KEEPER, along with a writing prompt (and a peek at a real daruma doll)!

Author [Megan Frazer Blakemore](#) guides students through a maker activity with a class pet theme!

Author-illustrator [Jarrett Lerner](#) shares tips and techniques to help you draw ANYTHING and EVERYTHING!

Author [Jason Reynolds](#) shares a read-aloud from his MG novel, GHOST. In this chapter, the main character talks about world records, so after the read-aloud, [check out this page from the Guinness Book of World Records, with some records you can try to break at home!](#)

Author Kate Messner shares a read-aloud excerpt from TRACKING PYTHONS: THE QUEST TO CATCH AN INVASIVE PREDATOR AND SAVE AN ECOSYSTEM. After the read-aloud, you can learn more about invasive species from [National Geographic](#) and the [National Wildlife Foundation](#). Also check out [this article from New York State Conservationist Kids!](#)

Author & illustrator [Grace Lin](#) teaches viewers how to draw a Chinese Dragon and shares some tidbits about Chinese culture!

Author [Carole Lindstrom](#) shares a read-aloud of WE ARE WATER PROTECTORS.

Author [Jo Knowles](#) reads from the first chapter of her MG novel WHERE THE HEART IS and offers students a fun writing exercise! For more about Jo and her books, or for teachers/book group guides that go along with her books, [visit her website.](#)

Author [Chris Tebbetts](#) shares a read-aloud of the first chapters of STRANDED. Writing challenge: Choose a wilderness setting of your own – the Arctic, the desert, the rainforest – and imagine you're stranded there. How will you survive? Write an imaginary journal documenting your adventure. [Check out these wilderness survival skills from *Outdoor Life* for ideas!](#)

Author [Nikki Grimes](#) shares poetry selections from WORDS WITH WINGS. Writing challenge: Try writing your own poem today, in the style of one of Nikki's read-alouds!

Author [Ann Braden](#) shares a read-aloud excerpt from THE BENEFITS OF BEING AN OCTOPUS. Note: the octopus is a pretty amazing creature, so after the read-aloud, [read up on them at this page from National Geographic Kids!](#)

Author Kate Messner shares a read-aloud of UP IN THE GARDEN AND DOWN IN THE DIRT, illustrated by Christopher Silas Neal. After the read-aloud, [read more about helpful insects here](#) and [check out these garden activities from KidsGarden!](#)

Author [Sarah Albee](#) shares a STEM mystery, “Did the Doctor Do It?” as part of her series exploring the science and intrigue of poison throughout history. [Check out more of Sarah’s Poison videos here.](#)

Middle grade and Young adult author, [Paula Chase](#) offers a mini-writing exercise to help students build stories around their unique traits.

Author [Nancy Castaldo](#) reads some of BACK FROM THE BRINK with tips how we can all use our voices through our writing to make a difference. [Here’s the link to the reader’s guide for more activities.](#)

Author [Debbi Michiko Florence](#) shares an early read-aloud excerpt of her upcoming MG novel KEEP IT TOGETHER KEIKO CARTER, along with a writing prompt!

Author & illustrator [Grace Lin](#) shares the first story from her early reader, “Ling and Ting: Not Exactly the Same!”

Author Kate Messner shares a read-aloud excerpt from RANGER IN TIME: RESCUE ON THE OREGON TRAIL. Writing challenge: Choose your favorite event in history and imagine how a search and rescue dog might be able to help out. Then do some research about your historical event, and write your own story about Ranger’s adventures there!

[Christina Soontornvat](#) shares how she came up with the idea for her new middle grade fantasy novel, A WISH IN THE DARK. Writing challenge: Use Christina’s model to brainstorm your own list of ideas for stories that might be inspired by a classic tale! And check out [more videos from Christina here!](#)

Author Elly Swartz shares tips on how to use the emotion in your life to create authentic characters! Writing challenge: Take a few minutes to journal about a day when you felt an especially strong emotion – joy or fear or excitement! How might you use those emotions in a fictional story?

Author Kate Messner shares a read-aloud excerpt from CHIRP, a mystery for kids that’s set on a cricket farm! After the read aloud, you can [learn more about entomophagy \(eating insects as food!\) from CBS Kids](#), and [check out a real cricket farm’s website!](#)

Author [Lisa Schroeder](#) shares a read-aloud excerpt from her MG novel MY SECRET GUIDE TO PARIS, along with a writing exercise!

Author Janet Fox shares a read-aloud of the first chapter of her MG novel THE ARTIFACT HUNTERS. Writing challenge: Try writing a short scene of your own in which something unexpected happens!

Author & illustrator [Jess Keating](#) shares some thoughts on where ideas for stories come from! (This is part of a series Jess shares on writing & you can find more on her YouTube channel.)

Author [Chris Tebbetts](#) shares a read-aloud of the first chapters of MIDDLE SCHOOL, THE WORST YEARS OF MY LIFE, co-written with James Paterson.

Poet [Charles Waters](#) shares poetry from DICTIONARY FOR A BETTER WORLD (by Charles Waters and Irene Latham)

Author [Abby Cooper](#) reads the first chapter of her middle grade novel, FRIEND OR FICTION.

Author [Lynn Plourde](#) shares some tips on starting an observation notebook!

Additional Resources:

Want to see even more author & illustrator videos? [Check out the Authors Everywhere YouTube channel](#), created by [Susan Tan](#)!

Check out [STEM Tuesday](#) from [The Mixed of Files of MG Authors](#) blog for weekly book lists, interviews, and activities.

Want to try writing some poetry today? [Joyce Sidman shares an amazing collection of ideas to get you started.](#)

Here's [another poetry lesson from Kathryn Apel – writing a didactic cinquain!](#)

If you're stuck at home, it's a great time to start a writer's notebook! Author & Poet Amy Ludwig VanDerwater has a whole collection of posts from different writers, called ["Sharing Our Notebooks."](#) [Check it out -so many ideas here!](#)

Author Madelyn Rosenberg shares a collection of writing prompts [here](#).

[Here's a collection of video mini-lessons from nonfiction author Melissa Stewart](#) – great for teaching informational writing, including research, text features, text structure, rich language, voice, and revision.

Author & poet [Laura Shovan shares a collection of poetry mini-lessons on her website!](#)