



Community Investments

Grantee Name: ROBYN CARTER

FINAL REPORT

Q. Grant Category:

R. Writerscorps Teaching Artist in Residency (WCTAIR)

Q. Grant Number:

R. 19WCTAIR01

Q. Program Officer:

R. Tina Wiley

Q. Grant Award Amount:

R. \$52000

Supervisor's District

Q. Supervisor's District Number:

R. 3

Supplier ID Number (formerly known as a 'Vendor Number')

Q. Enter the Supplier ID Number:

R. 0000012053

Interim or Final Report

Q. Interim/Final

R. Final Report

WCTAIR Final Report

WCTAIR Final Report-Class Information

Q. Course/Project Name:

R. WritersCorps Teaching Artist in Residence Grant

Q. Type of Class (language arts, ELL):
R. language arts

Q. School/Community Site:
R. Redding Elementary

Q. Age of Students:
R. - Children (5-12)

Q. Grade Level Taught:
R. 3-5

Q. Grade Level Taught:
R. 4

Q. Classroom Teacher/Site Collaborator Name:
R. Bridget Slevin

Q. Day of the week and time class offered:
R. Mon-Thurs 11:30am-12:30pm

Q. Day of the week and time class offered:
R. Fridays 3pm-4pm

Quantitative Information

Q. Number of artworks created
R. 61

Q. Number of workshops
R. 203

Q. Number of materials translated into languages other than English
R. 11

Q. Number of artists
R. 1

Q. Number of artists compensated

R. 1

Q. Number of public activities/performances/readings

R. 1

Q. Number of attendees

R. 18

Q. Number of students

R. 28

Q. Number of free events

R. 1

Q. Number of students demonstrating learning

R. 28

Q. Number of exhibitions curated/presented

R. 1

Q. Number of classes

R. 2

Q. Number of people supported (artists, staff, contractors and/or consultants)

R. 1

Narrative Questions

Q. What changed in your personal development, community or organization because of this project? (1,000 characters):

R. The project furthered an evolution of my teaching and writing that began in previous grant cycles. This year, for the first time, I explored professional development opportunities outside my comfort zone. My published writing is fiction, the genre in which I feel safest, but the focus of my work with students is on comics, graphic novels, and graphic memoir. Though I've written comics for my students before, I always illustrated them with student artwork and produced them primarily as learning tools. I hadn't explored adapting any of my fiction to the medium my students favor until this year when I took a graphic memoir writing course and created graphic adaptations of some of my own writing. I don't consider myself a visual artist, but I tried my hand at

drawing for the first time as an adult and tweaked the art workshops I attended for my WritersCorps students, illustrating my own work alongside the kids during Zoom lessons.

The chance to be a beginner—to try something for the first time—was eye-opening to both my teacher and artist selves. When the pandemic pushed workshops online, my students and I learned to use digital illustration tools together. With the tech I use in my physical classroom, I'm always at least a step ahead of the kids, but this time, a few of them outpaced me! Learning something new forced me to reevaluate some of my old approaches, highlighting spots where my lessons could use refinement, where a differentiated set of steps or options would make sense. For example, this year, I took another look at the sentence stems and word banks that scaffold my lessons through the eyes of a beginner and saw how the many choices I offered could overwhelm a new writer, especially in a digital environment with multiple resources to click. When it comes to word banks, a handful of words on a single page is far more effective than a sea of dozens. Sentence stems, for some students, can paralyze; in the face of all that white space, they cling to abstract, be verb + adjective constructions. This year, I experimented with sentence frames—boxes with reminders to write with action verbs and suggestions for prepositions—which steered students toward more vivid, concrete descriptions.

Q. Highlight three (3) successful outcomes of this project. (1,000 characters):

R.

1. Despite challenges, the shift to remote learning precipitated some surprising successes. The Zoom chat feature became a mechanism for engagement among students who had been reluctant to participate in discussions in the physical classrooms. The shyest students there became the most vocal in Zoom discussions.
2. I consider it a sign of success that three third-graders from my WritersCorps workshops have chosen to attend my SFUSD summer class online just for fun, even though they hadn't been previously enrolled.
3. When I showed my class Hubble Space Telescope photos as part of a writing exercise on describing color and shape, the lesson took off in an unexpected direction. Fascinated with the images, the class became curious about the science behind them. What I'd planned as a quick warm-up became a weeks-long, whole-class project that culminated in a 39-page science and poetry comic, [*Our Nebulae Neighbors*](#).

Q. Describe any challenges implementing this project. Be sure to describe any challenges related to COVID-19. (1,000 characters):

R. The shift to remote learning in March was by far the biggest challenge I faced this year. The move exacerbated the digital divide and the challenges that come with teaching students who struggle with multiple sources of trauma. Simply maintaining contact with students was difficult. Many were attending Zoom lessons on a parent's cell phone in crowded living spaces, that made it hard to focus on learning. Writing even a couple of words on a cell phone is difficult, so my writing workshops came to a standstill for the most part until every student was able to access a district-supplied Chromebook. Tech access alone, though, did not eliminate barriers to writing. Education became less of a priority for families overwhelmed by survival mode. Kids who had been eager to contribute to discussions in our physical classroom withdrew online; shy kids got shyer. They experienced the technology as alienating more often than as a source of connection. Attendance hovered around fifty percent.

In the early weeks of quarantine, the search for affordable food became a full-time job for many. Though the district eventually relaxed rules around free school meal pick-up, initially, parents were required to bring children to meal distribution sites to "prove" the food was for students and not anyone over 18. The daily trips would eat up hours of time, leaving families too exhausted to respond to my efforts to reach out and students too distracted to log onto class meetings without adult encouragement. Students who did show up were reluctant to participate in discussions or writing activities. Class discussions on Zoom were difficult. I was worried everyone would talk at once, forgetting about the mute button, but the opposite happened.

Q. List and briefly describe your interaction with the library from January 2020 through March 2020. Include the date, 1 sentence description of activity, number of students that attended. Ex: November 1 at Excelsior Branch. Dia de Los Muertos/Anccestor reading and research for the site project. 15 students attended.

R. I took my students on a field trip to the library at the beginning of the school year in 2019. I did not have contact with the library between January and March 2020. In June, I was in contact with staff at SFPL Main re: rescheduling the exhibit of my students' comics in the display cases on the Children's Floor.

Q. Describe your student publication(s) this year. How do you think these influenced your students and their communities? (1,000 characters):

R. My students published 61 comic books or graphic poems, each written by an individual or small group. The works appear together in our site publication, a 292-page anthology, [The Part You Don't Know About](#). Digital versions of each work were also published on our class website, [Room2Ruminations](#).

Publishing their work for an authentic audience was a big motivator for my students and a source of pride for their families. Knowing that they were creating for classmates and the school community fostered student investment in the work and commitment to quality and clarity. In revision workshops, we would often talk about how a reader outside our class might perceive a sentence or passage, and students would rework the piece with real readers in mind. Publication meant they were not just doing an assignment for a teacher, but making real contributions to conversations they cared about.

Q. How did you adapt to remote instruction? What are your biggest takeaways from the experience? (1,000 characters):

R. My biggest takeaways from the shift to remote instruction: less is more, and flexibility is as important as routine. My initial attempts to recreate “virtual” versions of everything I did in person with students quickly became overwhelming (for students and teacher). I eventually learned to rebuild curriculum around images, decluttering learning materials and cherry-picking the most visually-engaging elements of a lesson to highlight in Zoom screen shares. For example, pre-pandemic, I’d been doing a novel study with my class where I’d read chapters aloud then use them as mentor texts to introduce specific writing or revision strategies. Though engaging in person, the text-only novel could not keep students’ interest on-screen, so I switched to a graphic novel, which worked much better. The images held students’ interest, helped scaffold understanding, and proved especially motivating since the medium is the one students prefer.

Q. Are there any professional development, artistic development, or cohort team-building opportunities you would like to see offered in the future? (1,000 characters):

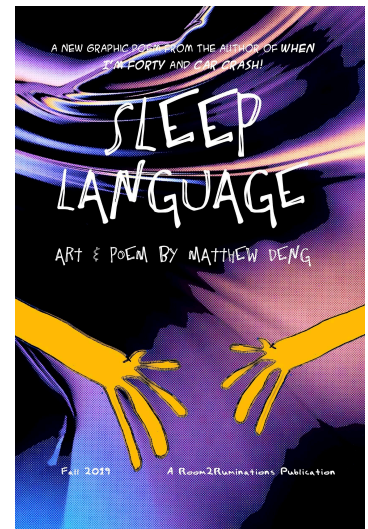
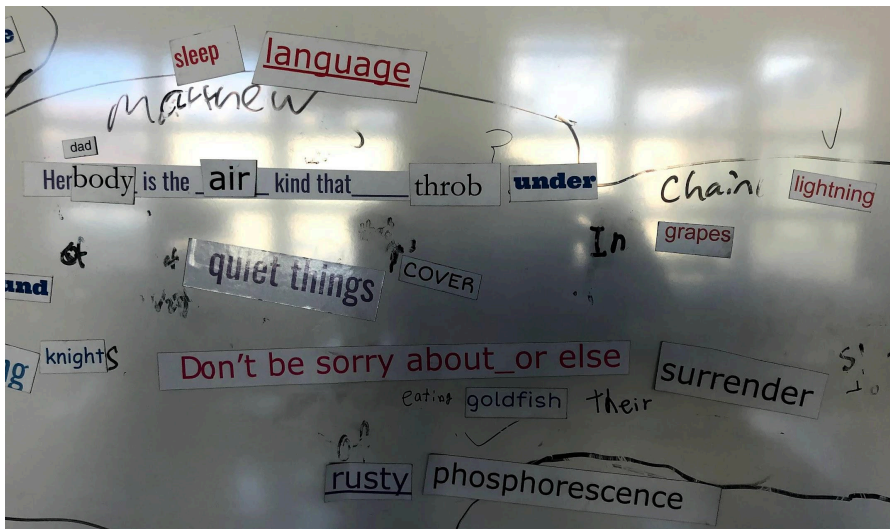
R. The most valuable opportunities for me this year (as well as in previous grant cycles) have been lesson shares and other “how-to” workshops that provide concrete approaches, adaptations, and adjustments I can make to my lessons, for example, the shadow puppet-making workshop I attended during the EVERY DAY, EVERY WAY: Arts-Focused Youth Programming Conference in the fall. More lesson shares and workshops around practical applications would be great! Also valuable have been the writing group meetings the TAs have been holding informally on Zoom since the pandemic started. We meet once a week to check in, write together and share our work. The meetings help carve out time to devote to my own writing, and as a supportive space outside the cohort meetings, they also build community among the TAs. I’d love to see them continue.

V. Project Documentation

- 1) Please send at least **two digital images documenting your project**. By sending an image, you are granting the Arts Commission permission to use it in future SFAC reporting, archival and promotional information.

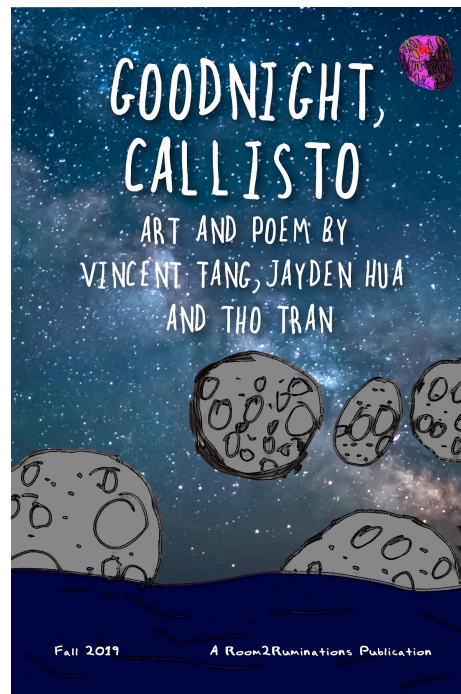
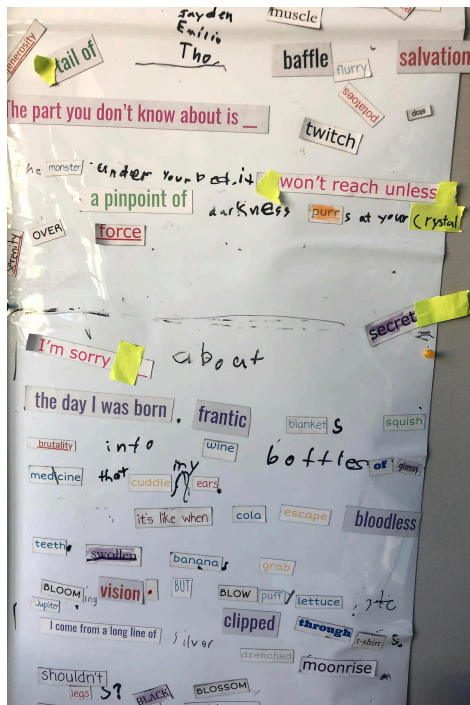
Please briefly describe the attached photo documentation. For images, please include any photo credits if necessary.

Sleep Language



Left: A draft of *Sleep Language* by a fifth-grade writer. Left: the piece published as a digital comic. To read the comic, click the cover image.

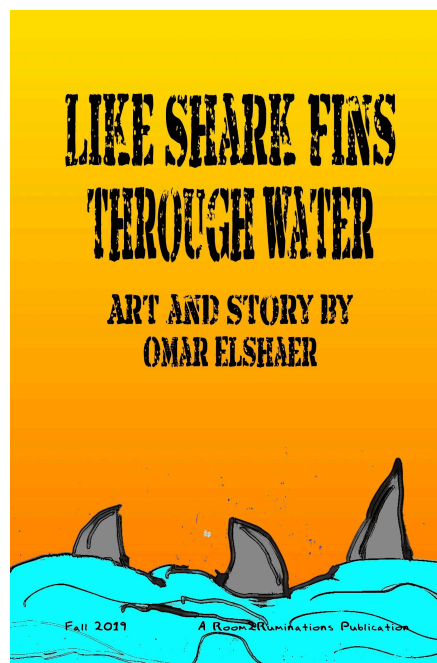
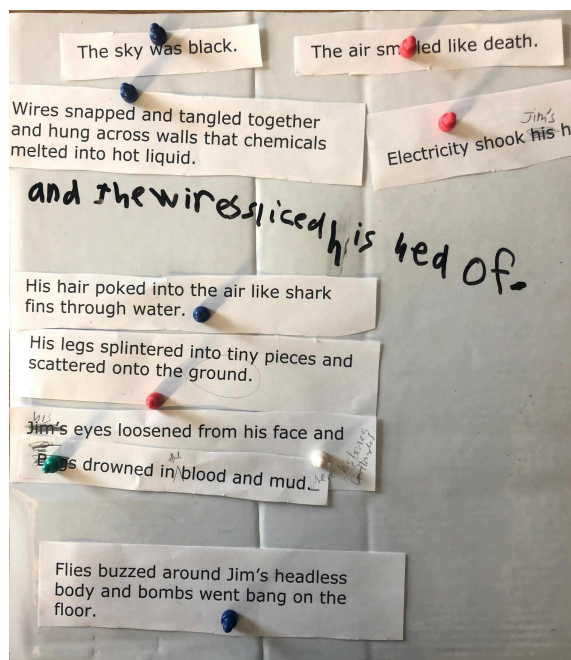
Goodnight, Callisto



Left: A draft of *Goodnight, Callisto* by three third-grade writers.

Right: the poem published as a digital comic. To read, click the cover image.

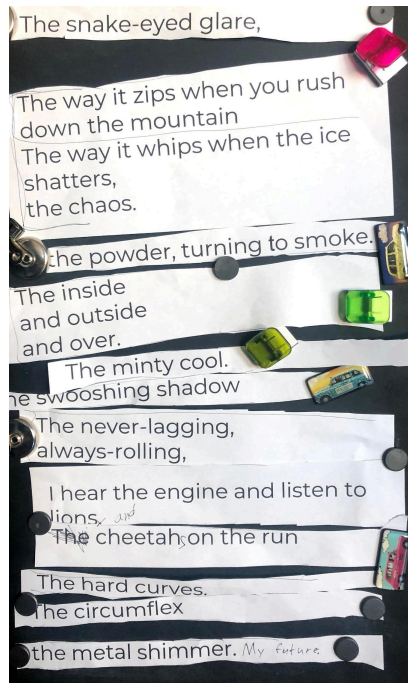
Like Shark Fins through Water



Left: A cut-up draft of *Like Shark Fins through Water* by a third-grade writer.

Right: the story published as a digital comic. To read, click the cover image.

The Snake-eyed Glare



Left: A cut-up draft of *The Snake-eyed Glare* by three third-grade writers.

Right: the poem published as a digital comic. To read, click the cover image.

- 2) Please include [link to video documenting your work with youth at your site](#). By sending the link, you are granting the Arts Commission permission to use it in future SFAC reporting, archival and promotional information.

Please briefly describe the attached video documentation.

This short documentary gives viewers a glimpse into Robyn Carter's comic-writing workshops at Redding Elementary.