

**The Chickadee Award
2025-2026**



**A Maine Children's Choice
Picture Book Project**

**Funded by MASL
Maine Association of School Libraries**

The Chickadee Award Committee would like to acknowledge with thanks the support received from the Maine Association of School Libraries.

The contents of this booklet and the Chickadee logo are copyrighted. Permission is given to make any number of copies of the booklet or logo for use in and promotion of any Chickadee Award programs or activities.

Table of Contents

The Chickadee Award	4
The Chickadee Award Committee	5
How to Participate	7
2025-2026 Award Nominees	8
Connections	9
Sample Press Releases	11
Ánh's New Word: A Story About Learning a New Language	12
Claudette Colvin: I Want Freedom Now!	14
Clever Crow	18
José Feeds the World: How a Famous Chef Feeds Millions of People in Need Around the World	21
Lights Out: A Movement to Help Migrating Birds	25
Luigi: The Spider Who Wanted to be a Kitten	27
Mavis the Bravest	28
Prunella	31
Tricky Chopsticks	34
The Yellow Bus	38
Chickadee Logos	41
Chickadee Bookmarks	42

**The Chickadee Award:
A Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project**

Welcome to the Chickadee Award. This program is for children in kindergarten through fourth grade throughout the state of Maine. A committee of librarians, teachers and early literacy professionals selected this year's titles. All books were published in 2024.

We are now in our twenty-first year of the Chickadee Award, named after Maine's state bird. It is modeled after other successful state children's choice picture book awards and is intended to complement the Maine Student Book Award program that involves children in grades four through eight.

This past year, 24,114 Maine children voted and over 150 schools and libraries participated in the 2025 award. The winning book was *The Three Little Guinea Pigs* by Erica S. Perl and Amy Young. Our goal is for children to develop an appreciation for outstanding writing and illustration in current children's picture books through participation in the program. We hope they will become discriminating readers by voting for their favorite book. This guide contains information on how to participate in the program as well as suggested activities for each of the books. Please be sure to visit our website at <https://sites.google.com/site/thechickadeeaward> for more information.

The Chickadee Award Committee

Kelley Drisko has provided library services at Gilbert School in Augusta for over 25 years. She has a teaching certificate in language arts and social studies, and taught high school English for many years.

Brandon Dyer is a Children's Librarian at Auburn Public Library. He received his degree in Library Science from Rutgers University in Brunswick, New Jersey. He loves reading picture books to youth and connecting with families.

Teresa Holyoke once taught in a two-room schoolhouse, and now works at the largest elementary school in the state. She has taught at every grade level K-8 except grade two. She was a classroom teacher for 23 years before earning her MLIS from Florida State University, and becoming the librarian at Brewer Community School.

Claire Malina (she/her) is the Youth Services Librarian at the Blue Hill Public Library. She received her degree in French Literature from the University of Vermont. She loves working with children and helping them have access to books and information!

Debbie Meservey received her MLIS from the University of South Carolina in 1997 and her CAS in Literacy from USM in 2011. She was the first librarian of the Liberty (Maine) Public Library. She has retired from the K-4 library at Camden-Rockport Elementary School, where she worked since 1993, and is now the librarian for the students of Appleton Village School.

Mary Moreno started as a biologist, with a BA from Colby College and an MS from University of Maine. Then she changed her mind and decided to become a librarian, getting an MLIS from UWM. Mary has worked at Baxter Memorial Library, Village Elementary School and is currently the librarian at Yarmouth Elementary School.

Gina Moulton has been working as the Library Ed Tech for the past twenty years at Minot Consolidated School. She has a BS in Early Childhood Education. She enjoys sharing her love of books with her students!

Michelle Reesman is an Elementary Assistant Principal at Old Town Elementary School after having been a K-5 Library Information Specialist and classroom teacher. She holds a BS in Elementary Education and a MS in Literacy, both from the University of Maine, a Masters of Library and Information Science from the University of North Texas, and a certificate for Assistant Administration from University of Southern Maine.

Abigail Thompson is the PreK through Grade 12 School Librarian at the Rangeley Lakes Regional School in beautiful Rangeley, Maine. Previous to arriving in Rangeley, Abigail worked in academic special collections in Boston, MA. She holds a BA in English Literature from Muhlenberg College and her MLIS from Simmons College.

Lynn Young is a retired librarian from the Mabel I. Wilson School in Cumberland. She has a BS in Child Development, having taught elementary grades in Maine and Vermont. She previously worked as a Training Specialist for L.L. Bean.

How to Participate

All Maine schools, home-school groups, and libraries are invited to participate in The Chickadee Award: A Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project. Contact the chair of the committee listed below for more information.

You may download the Curriculum guide from our website (<https://sites.google.com/site/thechickadeeaward>). We encourage you to make more copies for your own use or that of your school or library. This booklet includes activity suggestions, and curriculum connections.

IMPORTANT: All Chickadee vote totals from each school, home-schooling group/family, or library will be submitted electronically. To submit the votes for your organization, please visit the Chickadee Awards website between March 1 and April 1, 2026.

If you have any questions about the electronic process or encounter any difficulty submitting your vote totals electronically, please contact:

Michelle Reesman, Committee Chair
michelle.reesman@rsu34.org

Please contact the chairperson above if you would like to nominate a picture book (published in 2025) to be reviewed for the 2026-2027 list.

**The Chickadee Award:
A Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project**

Book List for 2025-2026 (All books published in 2024)

Bui, H. & Luu, B. (2024). *Ánh's New Word*.

Butterworth, C. & Gill, O. L. (2024). *Clever Crow*.

Chen, S. & Liem, F. (2024). *Tricky Chopsticks*.

Colvin, C., Hoose, P., & Jackson, B. (2024). *Claudette Colvin: I Want Freedom Now!*

Ferry, B. & Keane, C. (2024). *Prunella*.

Fraser, L. & Warburton, S. (2024). *Mavis the Bravest*.

Knudson, M. & Hawkes, K. (2024). *Luigi: The Spider Who Wanted to be a Kitten*.

Long, L. (2024). *The Yellow Bus*.

Stremer, J. & Pang, B. (2024). *Lights Out: A Movement to Help Migrating Birds*.

Unger, D. & Miguéns, M. Á. (2024). *José Feeds the World: How a Famous Chef Feeds Millions of People in Need Around the World*.

Connections

A major aim of the The Chickadee Award: Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project is to foster connections between schools and public libraries. We recognize there is a strong desire for schools and libraries to work together for the benefit of all children. Just as both groups encourage children to experience the joys of reading, and both promote the Maine Student Book Award, a similar shared purpose can be found through the Chickadee Award.

In public libraries, announcements and displays can help inform children and their parents of this exciting opportunity. Chickadee activities and classroom visits to public libraries will provide further connections and excitement, as well as encourage more children to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities available to them in public libraries.

We are pleased to have home-school groups participate in The Chickadee Award: Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project in past years, and hope to see more home-schooled children involved. The public library plays a part in bringing homeschoolers and Chickadee books together.

Within schools we anticipate numerous connections among staff members. Classroom teachers, art teachers, music teachers and librarians will easily find ways and reasons to work together to promote the Chickadee program. In our choice of books and in our activity suggestions, we consciously try to make connections to language arts, art, music, physical education, math, social studies and science. Some schools prefer to have classroom teachers introduce the books to children, with librarians and other teachers providing supporting activities. In other schools, librarians read all the books to children with the classroom teachers taking a supporting role and, in a few schools, the art teacher may take the lead with one book, the music teacher with another. There are many possible ways to integrate these ten books into your program, and we hope you will find the one that works best for you.

The Chickadee Committee recognizes that not all of the selections will be appropriate for all students in all grades. It is not the intent of the Chickadee Committee that every book is accessible to all participants. We aim for books that are accessible to as many children in the grade span as possible. Participating teachers, librarians and parents should know that children are not required to read all 10 of the books to vote. We recommend that children read enough books that they feel they are making an informed choice.

Our Curriculum guide suggests activities that cross all content areas and support a variety of learning styles and interests in meaningful and memorable ways. There are arts and craft suggestions, as well as some that involve science, math, writing, listening, making music, or

moving. We encourage you to use the books and this activity booklet to connect with children's interests and strengths in every way you can.

We encourage librarians and teachers to use The Chickadee Award: A Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project as a way to introduce children to quality literature. Inviting local authors or illustrators to schools and libraries can further deepen this connection. Such visits offer children a model for how their own attempts at writing and illustration might blossom into real works of literature. To spread the word, we would also appreciate hearing about how you use the Chickadee Award activities in your own schools by emailing us, posting on our Facebook page, or commenting on our TikTok account.

Numerous professional reference materials highlight the importance of children linking what they read with what they already know. All ten books on this year's Chickadee Award list can be used to reinforce the important skills of making connections with other books, with children's lives, and with real life in the broader context of the world. We hope children will hear and read and use these ten books many times and in many ways throughout the coming months. We have incorporated ideas that address many Common Core State Standards across grades into the curriculum pages to support teaching and learning in the areas of literacy, speaking and listening.

Many schools participating in The Chickadee Award: A Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project choose to simulate the U.S. voting experience for their K through 4 children. This helps generate excitement about the Chickadee voting process and encourages children to feel that their votes are important. Some schools even borrow their town's official ballot box for this special event.

We were delighted with the number of Maine children who participated in the last several years of The Chickadee Award: A Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project. We hope even more children will make the connection with this exciting project in its twentieth year.

Sample Press Releases

Please help spread the word! Feel free to use one of the following samples, or create one of your own to let people in your area know about The Chickadee Award: A Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project.

Press Release Sample 1:

All Maine schools, home-school groups and libraries are invited to participate in The Chickadee Award: A Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project. Participating children in grades K-4 are the ones who will choose the award winner by voting for their favorite from among ten selected books published in 2023 and chosen by a committee of teachers, librarians and early literacy professionals. During the twentieth year of the program, over 24,000 Maine children voted to choose The Three Little Guinea Pigs by Erica S. Perl and Amy Young as the winner of the Chickadee Award.

In this process children and adults will develop and share an appreciation for excellence in writing and illustration that will stay with them forever. This statewide project encourages connections between public libraries and schools and helps foster literary dialogue among adults and children. In addition to selecting the ten books for review, the committee has compiled a booklet of information, suggestions and activities to make it easy for any interested school, home school group, or public library to participate.

The Chickadee Award Project is funded by the Maine Association of School Libraries. For more information, visit the chickadee website at <https://sites.google.com/site/thechickadeeaward>.

Press Release Sample 2:

Kindergarten through grade 4 school children will have a chance to become fully involved with ten selected picture books this school year through The Chickadee Award: A Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project. Children will have a variety of opportunities to become involved with each story, to explore its meaning and share their ideas with others. All children who participate in the program will vote for their favorite book prior to April 1, 2026.

The ten picture books were selected for their outstanding story in text and illustrations by a panel of teachers, librarians, and early literacy professionals. The panel then created a guide for each book, including biographical summaries about the author and illustrator, a list of companion books, and a variety of activities for readers to enjoy that connect with the story or subject.

The Maine Association of School Libraries has offered generous support, enabling the program to expand throughout the state each year. Over 24,000 children voted last year, and chose The Three Little Guinea Pigs by Erica S. Perl and Amy Young as the winner of the Chickadee Award.

Maine children have enjoyed the Maine Student Book Award program focusing on grades 4 through 8 and the Lupine Award has brought interest and recognition to Maine authors. The Chickadee Award: A Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project allows Kindergarten to 4th grade readers to become involved in a statewide program to stimulate their reading skills.

For more information, visit the chickadee website at <https://sites.google.com/site/thechickadeeaward/>.

Press Release Sample 3:

The Chickadee Award: A Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project is a picture book award program for children in kindergarten through fourth grade. This award is in its twenty first year, and is given annually to one of ten picture books nominated by a committee of teachers, librarians, and early literacy professionals, with the winner chosen by Maine school children. The purpose of this award is to encourage children to develop an appreciation for excellence in writing and illustration that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. The evaluation process leading up to voting will help children understand and interpret books and help them to express and support their judgment about text and pictures with convincing evidence. It is hoped that this Maine Children's Choice Picture Book Project will be incorporated into the curriculum and supported by both school and public libraries. The Maine Association of School Libraries is providing financial support for this project.

For more information, visit the chickadee website at <https://sites.google.com/site/thechickadeeaward/>.

Anh's New Word: A Story About Learning a New Language

by Hanh Bui; illustrated by Bao Luu

From the Publisher: A child living in a Vietnamese refugee camp learns their first word in English with a little help from their teacher and grandmother in this heart-warming picture book based on the author's childhood.

Many things are different for Anh now that they've left Vietnam with their family. The weather is colder and they live in a communal barracks at a refugee camp while they wait for their new life in America to start. Anh finds comfort in their warm-hearted teacher, Miss Mary Ellen, but has trouble with the foreign sounds of learning to speak English in class.

All Anh wants is to be able to say "thank you" out loud to Miss Mary Ellen, but will the words ever stop getting stuck between their head and their voice? With a little inspiration from their grandmother—as well as the chance discovery of an adorable animal—Anh will try to gather the courage to finally say their first word in a new language.

Exquisitely illustrated by Bao Luu, *Anh's New Word* by Hanh Bui is a hopeful story of finding your voice, inspired by true events from the author's childhood.

Ideas to consider:

- Before reading the story, ask students to think of and share *good* reasons why a family might move to a new place. Give students a brief opportunity to tell what it was like to move to a new home, town, state or school.

Then explain to the students that sometimes families have to move for *difficult* reasons - maybe the place they were living is not safe for them anymore, and they have to make a new start in a completely different place. Explain that when people or families have to leave their country because it's not a safe place for them or their family, and find a new country to live in, those people are called refugees. Tell students that Anh's family came to the United States because Vietnam was not a safe place for their family anymore. The book does not go into any detail about the whys of that, and especially for younger readers, more details are not necessary in order for them to be able to empathize with Anh and her anxiety about learning a new language. Older students may want to hear more about the Vietnam War and how the end of that war caused many Vietnamese to leave their country and find new countries in which to live.

An excellent short and simple read-aloud book for students prior to reading *Anh's New Word* is the book *What is a Refugee?* By Elise Gravel.

- After the story, ask students to share ways they could help a student who is new to feel safe and welcome.
- An excellent book to share after reading *Anh's New Word*, or as a follow-up story at a later time is *I'm New Here* by Anne Sibley O'Brien.

Biographical Sketch of Hahn Bui: Inspired by her first teacher at the refugee camp, Hanh Bui pursued a master's degree in Early Childhood Education and taught second grade before becoming a full-time mother to three children. She also served as a Development Officer for Senhoa Foundation in support of women and children who survived human trafficking in Cambodia, and has served on boards supporting children and parents in building community. Hanh's commitment to celebrating her heritage includes giving presentations in school visits about her refugee experience to children studying immigration as part of their school curriculum. She serves as co-chair of the Equity and Inclusion Team for the Mid-Atlantic region of SCBWI, and has been featured in Highlights For Children magazine, Next Avenue and Forbes.

Biographical Sketch of Bao Luu: Bao Luu dreamed of becoming an artist as a child, and today his work as an illustrator focuses on bright, playful colors and unique textures. Bao Luu was born and raised in Vietnam and currently lives near Houston, Texas.

Companion Books:

What is a Refugee, written and illustrated by Elise Gravel

I'm New Here and Someone New by Anne Sibley O'Brien

I Am Both: A Vietnamese Refugee Story by Karisa Greene

Where Wildflowers Grow by Ha Dinh, illustrated by Bao Luu

Adrift at Sea: A Vietnamese Boy's Story of Survival by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch, illustrated by Juan Ho Brian Deines.

Books written by Hahn Bui:

The Yellow Áo Dài

Books illustrated by Bao Luu:

Simple Thanks by Deborah Wiles

Look Inside Wild Weather by Emily Bone


The Secret Life of Shadows by Johnny DePalma

Look Inside Seas and Oceans by Megan Cullis

Where Wildflowers Grow by Ha Dinh

Where Thuong Keeps Love by Thu Buu

Websites/Videos:

 [What is a refugee? \(or a displaced person\)](#) by Save the Children Australia

Claudette Colvin: I Want Freedom Now

by Claudette Colvin & Phillip Hoose; illustrated by Bea Jackson

From the Publisher:

Claudette Colvin: I Want Freedom Now! is a compelling picture book that brings to life the courageous story of Claudette Colvin, a pivotal figure in the American civil rights movement. Authored by Claudette Colvin and Phillip Hoose, with illustrations by Bea Jackson, this book is published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR) and was released on November 12, 2024.

In this narrative, readers follow young Claudette as she refuses to relinquish her bus seat to a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama—an act of defiance that occurred nine months prior to Rosa Parks’ more widely recognized protest. This brave decision not only altered Claudette’s life but also significantly impacted the trajectory of American history.

Before Reading Discussion Points

1. Looking at the Cover & Title: What do you think this book will be about? Who do you think Claudette Colvin is?
2. Understanding Fairness: Have you ever been in a situation that felt unfair? How did it make you feel?
3. Segregation (Explained Simply): A long time ago, Black people and white people were not allowed to sit together in certain places, like buses. Do you think that was fair? Why or why not?
4. Bravery: What does it mean to be brave? Can kids be brave and stand up for what’s right?
5. Predictions: What do you think Claudette might do in this story?

During Reading Discussion Points

1. Claudette’s Decision: How do you think Claudette felt when she refused to move on the bus?
2. Fear and Consequences: What do you think Claudette was thinking when people got mad at her? Have you ever had to do something scary but important?

3. Comparing to Today: Do you think kids today would have to fight for the same things Claudette did? Why or why not?

4. Why Rules Matter: Some rules help keep people safe, but some rules are unfair. How can we tell the difference?

5. Who Helps Us Be Brave?: Claudette had some people who supported her. Who in your life helps you be brave and stand up for what's right?

After Reading Discussion Points

1. Claudette's Impact: How did Claudette help change the world?

2. Feelings About the Story: How did this book make you feel? What part stood out the most to you?

3. Fairness Today: Do you think there are still unfair things in the world today? What can we do to help?

4. Being Brave Like Claudette: If you see something unfair, what can you do to help?

5. What Would You Say to Claudette?: If you could meet Claudette Colvin, what would you want to tell her?

Ideas to Consider:

1. Role-Playing & Reader's Theater (Grades 2-4). Use your judgement here. Do your students have enough background for this activity? Also, some students may feel deeply uncomfortable acting out this story.

- Objective: Help students understand Claudette Colvin's bravery.

- Activity: Assign different students roles (Claudette, bus driver, passengers, Rosa Parks, etc.) and act out key moments from the book. Discuss how each person might have felt.

2. Timeline of Events (Grades 3-4)

- Objective: Build chronological thinking skills.

- Activity: Have students create a timeline of Claudette Colvin's life and key Civil Rights events. They can illustrate or write captions for each moment.

3. "What Would You Do?" Discussion (Grades K-4)

- Objective: Encourage empathy and critical thinking.

- Activity: Present different scenarios related to fairness and injustice (e.g., "What if you weren't allowed to sit with your friends?"). Let students share their thoughts and relate them to

Claudette's story.

4. Art: Protest Posters (Grades 1-4)

- Objective: Connect the Civil Rights Movement to self-expression.
- Activity: Students design protest posters with messages of equality, inspired by signs used in the 1950s and 1960s.

5. Bus Map Sorting Game (Grades K-2)

- Objective: Help younger students understand segregation visually.
- Activity: Provide a bus outline and different passenger cutouts. Have students sort where people were "supposed" to sit under segregation laws versus how it should be today.

6. Freedom Acrostic Poem (Grades 2-4)

- Objective: Encourage creativity and deeper thinking.
- Activity: Have students write an acrostic poem using the word FREEDOM, relating it to what they learned about Claudette Colvin.

7. Letter to a Hero (Grades 3-4)

- Objective: Develop writing skills and personal connections to history.
- Activity: Students write letters to Claudette Colvin (or another Civil Rights leader) thanking them for their bravery and sharing what they learned.

Biographical Sketch of Claudette Colvin and Phillip Hoose:

Claudette Colvin, born in 1939, is an African American woman who, as a teenager in Montgomery, Alabama, took a stand against racial segregation by refusing to give up her bus seat to a white passenger. Her act of defiance and subsequent involvement in the landmark court case *Browder v. Gayle* contributed to the desegregation of public transportation in Montgomery.

Phillip Hoose is an acclaimed author known for his works on social justice and history. His previous book, *Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice*, received the National Book Award for Young People's Literature and a Newbery Honor. Hoose's dedication to highlighting lesser-known figures in history has brought significant attention to Colvin's story.

Biographical Sketch of Bea Jackson:

Bea Jackson is a renowned illustrator and character artist whose work has graced numerous children's books, magazines, and articles. She is best known for her illustrations in *Parker Looks Up*, a New York Times bestseller and NAACP Award nominee, as well as *Parker Shines On* and *Our Beautiful Colors*. Jackson's vibrant and emotive artwork brings depth and accessibility to historical narratives for young readers.

Companion Books:

Rosa by Nikki Giovanni

Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins by Carole Boston Weatherford

Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down by Andrea Davis Pinkney

Books Written by Claudette Colvin:

Claudette Colvin: I Want Freedom Now!

Books Written by Phillip Hoose:

Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice

The Race to Save the Lord God Bird

We Were There, Too!: Young People in U.S. History

Books Illustrated by Bea Jackson:

Parker Looks Up by Parker Curry and Jessica Curry

Parker Shines On by Parker Curry and Jessica Curry

Hair Like Mine by LaTashia M. Perry

Websites:

Phillip Hoose's Official Website: <https://philliphoose.com>

Bea Jackson's Portfolio: <https://www.beagifted.com>

Macmillan Publishers' Page for Claudette Colvin: I Want Freedom Now!:
<https://us.macmillan.com/books/9781250366016/claudetecolviniwantfreedomnow/>

Before there was Rosa Parks, there was Claudette Colvin:
<https://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2024/03/08/claudette-colvin-international-womens-day-orig-vf.cnn>

Claudette Colvin: Do You Know Her Story?
<https://youtu.be/zVYevGDw5Go?si=RwM8cSVgntdLLj00>

Clever Crow

by Chris Butterworth; illustrated by Olivia Lomench Gill

From the Publisher (Candlewick Press):

For young bird-watchers and natural-world enthusiasts, this is a beautiful, eye-opening picture book about the familiar but ever-surprising crow.

Crows may not have flashy feathers, beautiful songs, or fancy flying skills, but if a crow looks at you with its small, round eye, you can be sure that it's thinking, as these birds have very big brains. Did you know that crows will use a stick to poke into a crevice to tease out tasty bugs? Or that they like to play like kids by tumbling down a snowy roof? Or that they remember where they hide their food—but sometimes only pretend to bury a treat to fool other birds? Original and accessible, with Chris Butterworth's welcoming text and gorgeous, expressive artwork from Olivia Lomench Gill, *Clever Crow* is sure to generate newfound respect for these unassuming creatures that young readers come across every day.

Publishers Weekly:

"Wherever you are right now," Butterworth opens in this engaging look at corvids, "there's sure to be a crow or two nearby." In the first of many beautifully drafted spreads whose layers of textural variation complement their muted palette, Gill crams humankind's built environments into a single space. Since crows live "across the world," the Eiffel Tower rubs shoulders with domed edifices, and pyramids loom in the distance. Following a series of spreads that list things crows don't do ("Crows are not fancy fliers"), the conversation shifts to what distinguishes these remarkable birds ("If a crow looks at you with its small, round eye, you can be sure it's thinking"). Noting that crows use tools, can trick other birds when stashing food, and know how to play, this assemblage of corvid portraits form a stately, intelligent survey of crow types. Ages 3–7.

Kirkus Review:

An admiring tribute to the habits and smarts of the corvid clan. Gill's standout mixed-media illustrations feature individual and group portraits of numerous crows and crow cousins, stylishly rendered in fine, exact detail. These visuals, along with a gallery of eggs, will draw the eye first, but young audiences will find Butterworth's rapturous observations, delivered in multiple sizes of type, likewise worth lingering over. "If a crow looks at you with its small, round eye, you can be sure it's thinking," she writes. "Crows are clever birds. Very clever birds." If she sells them rather short by characterizing them as "not...graceful to look at or lovely to listen to," she does suggest that, considering their canny problem-solving and tool-using skills, they're as intelligent as monkeys and apes. She urges readers to find out for themselves just how bright they are; given that they live all around the world in many habitats, they're particularly easy to find and study. (And, she notes, the crow family contains more than 100 different kinds of birds.) "Crows are

smart, clever, crafty, and playful,” she closes, “just like you!” Brief but as lively and appealing as its subject. (index) (Informational picture book . 6-8)

Program Ideas to consider:

- Corvid Egg - Show the endpapers to the students before or after reading the book. Show the detailed work Olivia put into drawing, painting, and labeling all the corvid eggs. See if the class knows some other corvid birds. For a hands-on activity, have students draw a nest with how many eggs they want and let them design their eggs (let their imagination run wild). If you're going to do a collaborative activity, have the librarian make a nest on a bulletin board or poster, and have every student add their egg to the school library nest.
- Scarecrows - Split the students into two groups, one group will start making the upper body of the scarecrow. In contrast, the other group makes crows (after a certain amount of time, the groups switch, and the other group can complete the bottom half of the scarecrow). Another activity is to place a scarecrow in a school garden and have the class participate in a birdwatching activity.
- Invite different types of ornithologists (Bird Scientists) or local birdwatchers to the library:
 - Avian Ecologist - The study and interaction between birds and their environment
 - Behavioral Ornithologist - Specializes in the study of bird behavior, including breeding behavior, social interactions, and communication among birds.
 - Migration Biologist - Studies bird migration patterns, routes, and factors influencing migration
 - Conservation Ornithologist - Focuses on the conservation of bird species and their habitats. They focus on projects aimed at preserving endangered or threatened species.
- Look at other nonmigrant birds that live in the state of Maine.

Biographical Sketch of Chris Butterworth: Chris Butterworth grew up in England between the towns of Cornish and Devonshire. She spent hours poking around rock pools and lifting stones to see if there was anything underneath. This is where they got their passion for learning about random subjects and enjoying writing about them.

Biographical Sketch of Olivia Lomenech Gill: Olivia Lomenech Gill is a professional artist and illustrator who got her Master's Degree in Printmaking from Camberwell College of Art in London, England. She worked in theater for several years before moving to fine art work in children's literature.

Companion Books:

Crick, Crack, Crow by Janet Lord

Crows by Margaret Peot

We Are Starlings by Robert Furrow

What's Inside A Bird's Nest? by Rachel Ignatofsky

The Bird Book by Steven Jenkins

Books Written by Chris Butterworth:

Sea Horse: The Shyest Fish in the Sea (2005)

How Did That Get in My Lunchbox? The Story of Food (2011)

See What a Seal Can See (2013)

Where Did My Clothes Come From (2015)

How Does My Home Work (2017)

The Things That I Love About Trees (2018)

Books Illustrated by Olivia Lomenech Gill:

Where My Wellies Take Me (2012) by Michael Morpurgo

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them (2017) by J. K. Rowling

Muck & Magic (2019) by Michael Morpurgo

Medusa (2021) by Jessie Burton

Websites:

Guide to when you discover an injured bird - <https://avianhaven.org/found-injured-bird/>

Songs and Calls of other corvids - <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/american-crow>

Ways human can save and protect bird habitats in an eco-friendly way -

<https://abcbirds.org/get-involved/bird-friendly-life/>

José Feeds the World: How a Famous Chef Feeds Millions of People in Need Around the World

by David Unger; illustrated by Marta Álvarez Miguéns

From the Publisher: The true story of José Andrés, an award-winning chef, food activist, and founder of World Central Kitchen, a disaster-relief organization that uses the power of food to nourish communities after catastrophe strikes.

When a terrible earthquake hit Haiti in 2010, chef José Andrés knew he needed to help. Within a few hours of the disaster, he had gathered friends, they flew to the island, and they began cooking rice and beans for the hungry locals. This trip changed the life of the successful chef and led him to found World Central Kitchen, a disaster-relief organization that has fed more than 200 million people affected by natural disasters, the COVID pandemic, and war.

This beautifully illustrated book tells the story of a passionate chef who uses the power of food to nurture people in need, one plate at a time.

Ideas to consider:

- Before reading, discuss what a natural disaster is and have students talk about the challenges that people face during and after one occurs. Have them list who they think the helpers are in these situations. Did they think of chefs? Introduce José Andres and the concept of World Central Kitchen. Then read and discuss the story.
- Organize a food drive to help fight hunger in your community.
- Partner with a local food pantry or soup kitchen to provide volunteer opportunities for your students who wish to contribute.
- Brainstorm ideas of other needs that might occur after a natural disaster, and ways to address those needs. (Clothing drives, diapers, water, blood drives, animal rescue, etc.)
- Bring in (or go visit) a chef that cooks for large groups to talk about the challenges of cooking for so many people at once. Your school lunch program might also be an easy connection for this.

Biographical Sketch of David Unger: Guatemalan-born David Unger is an award-winning translator and author. His short stories have appeared in several anthologies and literary journals in the United States and abroad. He has translated thirteen books, among them works by Teresa Cárdenas, Rigoberta Menchú, Ana Maria Machado, Silvia Molina Elena Garro, Bárbara Jacobs and Nicanor Parra's. He teaches Translation at City College of New York's graduate M.A. Program and is the U.S. rep of the Guadalajara International Book Fair. He lives in Brooklyn.

Biographical Sketch of Marta Álvarez Miguéns: Marta Álvarez is an author and children's book illustrator living in A Coruña, Spain.

She graduated in Psychology from the University of Santiago de Compostela in 2001, however her real passion was always drawing doodles in the margins of the notebooks.

Marta debuted in 2002 writing and illustrating her first picture book "¡Cómo está o galiñeiro!" published by Xerais. Since then, she has worked for several Spanish and international publishing houses.

In 2007 her artwork was selected and exhibited at the Bratislava Biennial of Illustration (BIB). She illustrated "Shark Lady: The True Story of How Eugenie Clark Became the Ocean's Most Fearless Scientist", which was named one of the Best Children's Books of 2017 by Parents Magazine, and won the Blue Spruce Award in 2018. She also painted the funny and charming illustrations of "What is Poo?", which won the Silver Award at the Junior Design Awards 2017.

Marta Álvarez is a member of the Galician Illustrators Association (AGPI).

Companion Books:

Feeding Dangerously: On the Ground with José Andrés and the World Central Kitchen (Graphic novel) by José Andrés and Steve Orlando

A Plate of Hope: The Inspiring Story of Chef José Andrés and World Central Kitchen by Erin Frankel

Food for Hope: How John Van Hengel Invented Food Banks for the Hungry by Jeff Gottesfeld

What to Bring by Lorna Schultz Nicholson

The Coquíes Still Sing: A Story of Home, Hope, and Rebuilding by Karina Nicole González

Rice From Heaven: The Secret Mission to Feed North Koreans by Tina Cho

Books written by David Unger:

Moley Mole/Topo Pecoso 2021

Sleeping With the Light On 2020

La Casita 2012

Books illustrated by Marta Álvarez Miguéns :

One Turtle's Last Straw by Elisa Boxer (Chickadee Winner!)

Emily's Idea by Christine Evans

A Tiger Called Tomás by Charlotte Zolotow

The Girl Who Heard the Music by Marni Fogelson

Dinosaur Lady by Linda Skeers

Shark Lady by Jess Keating (Chickadee Winner!)

Websites/Videos:

We Feed People documentary <https://films.nationalgeographic.com/we-feed-people>

About World Central Kitchen <https://youtu.be/tUOotFAdA2k?si=6wasqzgWr609geWa>

World central kitchen website <https://wck.org/>

Book preview https://youtu.be/Bi71K0toU60?si=e15U_-P4EjDZJMBg

Time Magazine

<https://time.com/collection/apart-not-alone/5809169/jose-andres-coronavirus-food/>

60 Minutes [60 minutes interview](#)

Lights Out: A Movement to Help Migrating Birds

by Jessica Stremer; illustrated by Bonnie Pang

From the Publisher: When the seasons change and it's time for a flock of sparrows to move on, a map made of stars guides their way. But when they reach the city, light pollution masks the map and confuses the birds. One sparrow becomes separated from the flock. A girl rescues the lost sparrow and decides to take action so this doesn't happen again.

She rallies a group of friends, and together they encourage people all over the city to help the sparrows by turning off their lights at night. But will the city be ready by the time the flock returns? Based on the real-life Lights Out movement, this inspirational picture book shows how even the smallest of actions, like flipping a switch, can make a big difference in helping migrating birds.

Ideas to Consider:

- Talk about the birds you see in your backyard, find out where they winter and how far they travel to get to your home.
- Go out in your yard after dark and see what lights you have on your property that might hide the stars. Then go around your neighborhood with your parents and see where the problem areas are.
- Check the night sky on a night of the full moon as opposed to a crescent moon and see the difference in the number of stars you can see.
- Write letters to your town to make the light pollution problem something that everyone could be involved in.

Biographical Sketch of Jessica Stremer: Jessica Stremer is an award-winning children's author who combines her love of science and writing to create books that inspire kids to explore and think critically about the world around them. If Jessica could have one superpower, it would be the ability to fly like a bird – even though she has a fear of heights. She combines her love of science and writing to create books that inspire kids to explore the world around them and beyond.

Biographical Sketch of Bonnie Pang: Bonnie Pang obtained a master's degree in fine arts at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. Bonnie used to dream about becoming an archaeologist, artist, or flying unicorn. Born and raised in Hong Kong, Bonnie has been drawing ever since she learned to wield a crayon. She loves making others happy and spreading positive messages through art. Her work is textured, colorful, and cozy like her family. She is also a regular donor to environment related NGOs. She recycles whenever possible, and always tries to live a greener lifestyle.

Companion Books:

Save the Sky by Bethany Stahl

What If Night by Paul Bogard

There Once Was a Sky Full of Stars by Bob Crelin

Birdsong by Julie Flett

In the Sky at Nighttime by Laura Deal

Dark on Light by Dianne White

The End of Night: Searching for Natural Darkness in an Age of Artificial Light by Paul Bogard

Books Written by Jessica Stremer:

Fire Escape: How Animals and Plants Survive Wildfires

Great Carrier Reef

Trapped in the Tar Pit

Wonderfully Wild

Plight of the Pelican: How Science Saved a Species

Books Illustrated by Bonnie Pang:

Yao Bai and the Egg Pirates

Little Dumplings - A Tasty Tale of Discovery, Diversity, and Dumplings

Underground

Every Day, Chemistry

Websites:

Jane Alexander: Lights out for birds

<https://youtu.be/cl12Un8CtX8?si=uEK6qlkZ-OvtPDQx>

9 Awesome Facts About Bird Migration

<https://www.audubon.org/news/9-awesome-facts-about-bird-migration>

Song Sparrow <https://ebird.org/species/sonspa>

Light Pollution Effects on Wildlife

https://darksky.org/?s=light+pollution+effects+on+wildlife&post_type=post%2Cpage

Lights Out <https://www.audubon.org/our-work/cities-and-towns/lights-out>

Bird Friendly Buildings

<https://www.audubon.org/our-work/cities-and-towns/bird-friendly-buildings>

Merlin live data feed for Maine <https://dashboard.birdcast.info/region/US-ME>

Luigi: The Spider Who Wanted to Be a Kitten

by Michelle Knudsen; illustrated by Kevin Hawkes

From the Publisher: From the New York Times best-selling creators of *Library Lion* comes a warm (and delightfully fuzzy) storybook about learning to be – and be loved for -- exactly who you are.

On a street of old houses, a big hairy spider is searching for a home with dark corners to hide in. But when he wakes up, he finds a hand reaching for him and a lady proclaiming that she has always wanted a kitten -- and will name him Luigi! At first, a somewhat puzzled Luigi, used to being left alone to creep and dangle and spin webs, resists her kind advances. But soon, tasty breakfasts and getting tucked into bed (no one's ever wished him good night before) have him thinking that kittens surely live magical lives. I will be a kitten! he decides. But long long can he keep up his facade, and what might be at stake in pretending to be someone you're not? The award-winning duo behind *Library Lion* delivers another classic in the making, marked by humor and depth, endearing characters, and the assurance that the right people will accept and adore us, unconditionally, just as we are.

Ideas to Consider:

- Before the story, start with a discussion about spiders. Ask who is afraid of them and why. Ask who likes them and why.
- After the story, ask your students if they would be afraid of Luigi - why or why not?
- Discussion: This story is about pretending to be someone/something you are not so that you can make somebody else happy. We find out that the lady is pretending also because she doesn't want to hurt Luigi's feelings. Talk about being proud of who you are and why you should be.

Biographical Sketch of Michelle Knudsen: Michelle Knudsen is the *New York Times* best-selling author of more than fifty books for young readers of all ages, including the award-winning picture book *Library Lion* (one of Time magazine's 100 Best Children's Books of All Time). Her novels include *The Dragon of Trelian* (VOYA Top Shelf Fiction for Middle School Readers) and *Evil Librarian* (YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults; Sid Fleischman Humor Award). Next up is the middle grade fantasy novel *INTO THE WILD MAGIC*, coming in August 2025. Michelle also sometimes writes speculative short fiction for older readers. She lives in Brooklyn, New York, with three humans, two cats, and one snake.

Biographical Sketch of Kevin Hawkes: Kevin Hawkes is an author/illustrator of over 50 acclaimed picture and chapter books including the New York Times best seller *Library Lion*,

Have a Look Says Book, *Chicken Cheeks*, *The Librarian Who Measured the Earth*, and *Weslandia*. His vibrant colors, unusual perspectives, and dry sense of humor are hallmarks of his work.

Companion Books:

Frank the Seven-legged Spider by Michael Razi

Sophie's Masterpiece: a Spider's Tale by Eileen Spinelli

Awake by Mags DeRoma

Red Spider Hero by John Miller

Other Books Written by Michelle Knudsen:

Argus

Big Mean Mike

Marilyn's Monster

Library Lion

Other Books Illustrated by Kevin Hawkes (partial list):

The Wicked Big Toddlah by Kevin Hawkes

Library Lion by Michelle Knudson

Chicken Cheeks by Michael Ian Black

There's a Dinosaur on the 13th Floor by Wade Bradford

Weslandia by Paul Fleischman

Velma Gratch & the Way Cool Butterfly by Alan Madison

Websites:

Michelle Knudsen: <https://www.michelleknudsen.com>

Kevin Hawkes: <https://www.kevinhawkes.com>

Drawing with your kids - Kevin Hawkes teaches us how to draw a spider:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1YAUqgHKmY>

Author & Illustrator discuss the book: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=re5zpXXDXfw>

Mavis the Bravest

by Lu Fraser; illustrated by Sarah Warburton

From the Publisher: This is a laugh out loud story about a bonnet wearing, would-rather-be-knitting chicken who embarks on a high stakes chase to save her friend, Sandra the sheep.

Mavis is not like her adventurous friend Marge. Mavis is a chicken who finds EVERYTHING scary (night-time and daytime and anything hairy!). So when the slumbering peace of their cozy barn is disturbed by someone trying to steal their friend Sandra the sheep, will Mavis be able to find her bright spark of braveness and save Sandra?

With a tractor, a lasso, and a lot of *hen*-durance, Mavis might just have what it takes to be the hero the barn needs.

Ideas to Consider:

- Talk about the message on the cover of the book: “There’s a bright spark of braveness inside us all!” What are different ways of being brave? Make a list of instances that might require courage.
- Mavis finds her “spark of braveness” when she looks deep inside herself. Discuss different ways of discovering our own abilities (e.g. verbal encouragement from an outside source, etc.).
- Have you ever faced a fear? What did it feel like to overcome the fear? Talk about what it felt like to conquer something that felt scary.
- Mavis is an avid knitter and uses her knitting skills, along with her courage, to save the sheep. Show students how to finger knit and create their own finger knit bracelets.

Biographical Sketch of Lu Fraser: Lu Fraser is a hugely exciting voice in children's picture books. She is based in Hampshire, where she lives with her husband and daughter, and writes in a shed in the garden. *The Littlest Yak*, illustrated by Kate Hindley, was her first book for children and went on to secure multiple foreign editions and to win the Oscar's Book Prize and the Sainsbury's Children's Book Award. It was followed by two further adventures for Gertie: *The Littlest Yak: The New Arrival* and *The Littlest Yak: Home is Where the Herd Is*. Lu is also the author of *One Camel Called Doug*, *Mavis the Bravest* and *Basil Dreams Big*, all illustrated by Sarah Warburton.

Biographical Sketch of Sarah Warburton: Sarah Warburton is an illustrator who has collaborated with authors on a number of popular titles, including Caryl Hart's PRINCESS and THE INVINCIBLES series (Nosy Crow), Katharine Holabird's TWINKLE series (Hodder) and the RUMBLEWICK series (Orchard) written by Hiawyn Oram. Sarah also illustrated PETER PAN, retold by Caryl Hart (Nosy Crow).

Sarah has also teamed up with Lu Fraser and Simon & Schuster for ONE CAMEL CALLED DOUG, MAVIS THE BRAVEST- which was voted the best classroom read-aloud in the Books For Topics Books of the Year Award 2023, in the EYFS category- and coming soon, BASIL DREAMS BIG.

Companion Books on Bravery:

This Way, Charlie by Caron Levis

If I Never Forever Endeavor by Holly Meade

Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad by Ellen Levine

Jabari Jumps by Gaia Cornwall

Companion Books on Knitting and Yarn:

Extra Yarn by Mac Barnett, illustrated by Jon Klassen

Kids Knitting: Projects for Kids of All Ages by Melanie Falick

Creative Kids Complete Photo Guide to Knitting by Mary Scott Huff

Other Books Written by Lu Fraser:

Basil Dreams Big

Ava and the Acorn

The Littlest Yak Series

The Viking Who Liked Icing

The Witchling's Wish

One Camel Called Doug

Complete list available at <https://www.lufraser.com/>

Other Books Illustrated by Sarah Warburton:

Penguin Huddle by Ross Montgomery and Sarah Warburton

Dinosaurs in the Supermarket by Timothy Knapman and Sarah Warburton

Mabel & Me - Best of Friends by Mark Sperring and Sarah Warburton

Daddy Lion's Tea Party by Mark Sperring and Sarah Warburton

Complete list available at <https://theagency.co.uk/the-clients/sarah-warburton/>

Websites:

Lu Fraser's website: <https://www.lufraser.com/>

Sarah Warburton's website: <https://theagency.co.uk/the-clients/sarah-warburton/>

Mavis the Bravest read aloud: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgSLe5-pwzw>

Prunella

by Beth Ferry; illustrated by Claire Keane

From the Publisher: From *New York Times* bestselling author Beth Ferry comes a fantastical and unforgettable picture book about an unusual girl whose purple thumb helps her cultivate a truly macabre garden.

When Prunella is born with a purple thumb instead of a green one like her parents, everyone's stumped. What could it mean? Before long, they find out. Prunella prefers corpse flowers to carnations, fungi to ferns, and poison ivy to petunias. The stickier and scarier the plant, the more Prunella loves it.

And if her poisonous and noxious garden keeps the other neighborhood kids away, it's probably for the best. But then one day, a curious weed of a different sort pops up...

Should prickly Prunella uproot this tentative new friendship or allow it to flower?

Ideas to Consider

Author's Message: Celebrating Uniqueness

Talk about how Prunella's purple thumb makes her different—not just in appearance, but in interests and preferences. How does her unusual garden reflect her personality? What message does the story send about embracing what makes you different?

Author's Message: Friendship and Openness

What happens when a “curious weed” pops up? What might this represent? How does Prunella change when someone takes interest in her garden and in her?

Vocabulary: Playing with the "Macabre"

Define “macabre” and ask, what makes Prunella's garden “macabre”? Discuss how the book uses spooky plants in a fun, imaginative way. What's the difference between scary and silly-scary?

Extension/Activity Ideas

The Language of Flowers

Humans have given flowers different meanings for thousands of years. Look up the history of the language of flowers, (one potential resource is the *Old Farmer's Almanac*:

<https://www.almanac.com/flower-meanings-language-flowers>) and check out some of the

meanings behind your favorite blooms. Ask the following questions, then draw your garden. Or, gather seed and garden catalogs and collage a garden.

- Compare “traditional” garden plants to Prunella’s garden. What does each type of plant say about the person who grows it?
- Why do you think the author chose plants like corpse flowers, fungi, and poison ivy?
- If you were to make a garden with meaning, what would you plant?

Friendship Seed Writing Prompt

Ask students to imagine a strange plant growing in their yard that turns out to be the start of a new friendship. What would the plant look like? What kind of friend would grow from it? Let them write or illustrate their response.

Biographical Sketch of Beth Ferry: Beth Ferry is the author of numerous picture books for children including *Roar for Reading*, *Prunella*, and the New York Times bestseller *Stick and Stone*. She is an avid reader who believes that any day spent with a book is a perfect day. Beth lives with her family by the beach in New Jersey where she finds inspiration in the salty air. In addition to writing picture books, Beth also writes chapter books and graphic novels. She’s the author of the middle grade book *Growing Home*. You can learn more at BethFerry.com.

Biographical Sketch of Claire Keane: Claire Keane studied graphic design at École Supérieure d’Arts Graphiques in Paris, France, where she lived for eight years, until she moved to Los Angeles to work at Walt Disney Animation Studios. During her ten-year tenure there, she designed for *Tangled*, *Frozen*, *Enchanted*, and other films. In 2013, she left to dedicate her time to creating her own stories and to work on various book and animation collaborations at her studio in Venice Beach, California. Now, she is the author and illustrator of many books for kids, including *Once Upon a Cloud*, *Love Is*, *Why?*, and *Prunella*.

Companion Books on Friendship

Stick and Stone by Beth Ferry

I Walk with Vanessa by Kerascoet

Be A Friend by Salina Yoon

If You Plant A Seed by Kadir Nelson

Words to Make A Friend by Donna Jo Napoli

How to Grow A Friend by Sara Gillingham

Companion Books on Being Yourself/Being Unique

I Like Me by Nancy Carlson

The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade by Justin Roberts

Just Ask by Sonia Sotomayor
The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson
Stand Tall Molly Lou Mellon by Patty Lovell

Companion Books on Unique Gardens

Linh's Rooftop Garden by JaNay Brown-Wood
Our Wild Garden by Daniel Seaton
The Extraordinary Gardener by Sam Boughton
Jayden's Impossible Garden by Mangal Melina
What the Garden Tells Me by Monica Mikai
Have You Ever Seen A Flower by Shawn Harris

Other Books Written by Beth Ferry:

Roar for Reading
Stick & Stone
Land Shark (Chickadee Winner!)
Fox & Rabbit
Complete list available at <https://www.bethferry.com/books>

Other Books Illustrated by Claire Keane:

Love Is by Diane Adams
Little Wonder by Claire Keane
Make Way by Angela Burke Kunkel
I Want 100 Dogs by Stacy McAnulty
Not Yet! By Kelly DiPucchio
Complete list available at <https://www.claireonacloud.com/>

Websites:

Beth Ferry website: <https://www.bethferry.com/books>
Claire Keane website: <https://www.claireonacloud.com/>
Language of Flowers: <https://www.almanac.com/flower-meanings-language-flowers>

Tricky Chopsticks

by Sylvia Chen; illustrated by Fanny Liem

From the Publisher: A young Chinese American girl uses creative STEAM-powered problem-solving to master chopsticks so she can pick up her dumplings and eat them, too, in this charming and laugh-out-loud picture book perfect for fans of the Amy Wu series.

Jenny Chow struggles with chopsticks—aiya, those slippery, oh-so-tricky chopsticks! But cousin Victor’s birthday party is just around the corner, along with her family’s annual chopsticks challenge. Jenny doesn’t want to be the only Chow who never learns how to use the utensils. She’ll do whatever it takes to prove she can hold her own in her family’s long-held tradition—no matter how many experiments she wobbles and fumbles through. Information about the book from the publisher.

Ideas to Consider:

Before Reading (Pre-Reading Discussion)

1. Introduction to Chopsticks:

- **Question:** Have you ever used chopsticks before? What are they used for?
Activity: Show a picture of chopsticks. Ask students to share what they know about them and if they’ve ever seen someone use them to eat.

2. Story Predictions:

- **Question:** What do you think the title "Tricky Chopsticks" means? Why do you think chopsticks might be tricky?
- **Activity:** Look at the cover and ask students to make predictions about the book. Who do they think the main character might be, and what challenges could they face?

3. Vocabulary Introduction:

- This story has an abundance of onomatopoeia. The Tricky Chopsticks website has a pronunciation guide for the specific words used in this book.
- **Activity:** If students are new to the concept of onomatopoeia try using a whole-class visual activity. Provide students with several picture cards showing things like a balloon about to be popped or a bee collecting nectar from a flower. For each picture card, ask students to share what sounds they imagine are linked to each picture.

- **Activity:** Discuss what makes something tricky or difficult and give examples (e.g., learning to ride a bike, tying shoelaces, etc.).

During Reading (While Reading Discussion)

1. Character's Struggles:

- **Question:** How is the main character feeling when they try to use the chopsticks? Why is it hard for them?
- **Activity:** Pause at different moments when the character is struggling and ask students to share how they think the character might feel. Why do they think the character is having trouble?

2. Problem-Solving:

- **Question:** What is the character trying to do with the chopsticks? How do they attempt to solve the problem?
Activity: Discuss the different strategies the character tries. What do students think about trying new things or learning something difficult?

3. Humor and Language:

- **Question:** What are some funny things that happen when the character tries using the chopsticks? How do they make you feel?
- **Activity:** Ask students to pick a funny moment in the story and explain why they think it's funny.

After Reading (Post-Reading Discussion)

1. Perseverance and Trying Again:

- **Question:** How does the main character feel at the end of the story? Do they succeed with the chopsticks? What lesson do they learn?
- **Activity:** Talk about the importance of not giving up when something is difficult. Can students think of a time when they tried something new and kept going even though it was tricky?

2. Connections to Real Life:

- **Question:** Have you ever tried something new that was tricky at first? How did you feel? What helped you keep going?

- **Activity:** Share examples from their own lives. Could be about learning to ride a bike, learning to read, or trying a new food.

3. How Would You Solve the Problem?

- **Question:** If you were the character in this book, how would you try to solve the chopstick problem? What could you do differently?
- **Activity:** Let students brainstorm different ways to approach the challenge of using chopsticks. Would they try something creative or different?

4. Visual Storytelling and Illustrations:

- **Question:** What do you think of the pictures in the book? How do the illustrations help tell the story or show the character's feelings?
- **Activity:** Look at a few pages with the students and talk about how the illustrations show the character's emotions and the story's mood. How do the pictures make the story more fun?

5. Writing Extension:

Activity: Ask students to write or draw about a time when they tried something tricky and how they overcame it. What helped them succeed? What did they learn from the experience?

Biographical Sketch of Sylvia Chen: Born and raised in Queens, New York, Sylvia Chen has also lived and worked in Boston, San Francisco, Seattle, Paris, and Tokyo. She is an Asian American children's book author and is the creator of #PBStudyBuddy, which features amazing picture books on social media for fellow creators, teachers, and librarians. Sylvia loves crafting picture books that spark kids' interest in STEAM and creative thinking

Biographical Sketch of Fanny Liem: Born and raised in Indonesia, Fanny has always loved to draw. Her passion for storytelling and illustration started with her introduction to picture books, which were often gifts from her uncle. She is a self-taught artist. Fanny designed newspaper layouts before she decided to make her hobby a career, and she is now following her dream as a full-time children's book illustrator.

Companion Books Problem Solving:

Big Truck, Little Island by Chris Van Dusen

Builder Brothers: Big Plans by Drew Scott

Day for Sandcastles by Jon Arno Lawson

Fairy Science by Ashley Spires
Jabari Tries by Gaia Cornwell

Companion Books Asian Cuisine:

Amy Wu and the Perfect Bao by Kat Zhang
Awe-Samosas by Marzieh Abbas
Clever Sticks by Bernard Ashley
Everyone Loves Lunchtime but Zia by Jenny Liao
Maggie's Chopsticks by Alan Woo

Other Books Written by Sylvia Chen:

Tricky Chopsticks is Sylvia Chen's first published story.

Other Books Illustrated by Fanny Liem:

All Food is Good Food by Molli Jackson Ehlert
Always with You, Always with Me by Kelley Rowland
Ballet Brown by Bellen Woodard
More than Peach by Bellen Woodard
Use Your Voice Alice Paul Tapper

Websites:

Fanny Liem website.

<https://www.fannywen.com/>

Kid friendly DIY projects.

<https://parents.highlights.com/31-arts-and-crafts-kids-to-make-home>

Problem solving activities for kids of all ages.

<https://www.splashlearn.com/blog/problem-solving-activities-for-kids/>

Sylvia Chen's website

<https://www.sylviaichen.com/>

The official Tricky Chopsticks website includes pronunciation guides for words written in Chinese, instructions for making your own chopsticks and many other fun activities for kids.

<https://www.trickychopsticks.com/home>

Tricky Chopsticks read aloud

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6oPzuI4bP4>

Websites that show different methods of how to use chopsticks.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUFdVWS3UJY>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFRzzSF_6gk

The Yellow Bus **by Loren Long**

From the Publisher: From #1 *New York Times* bestselling and beloved creator Loren Long, *The Yellow Bus* is a tender and hopeful new classic about finding happiness and embracing change.

There is a bright yellow bus who spends her days driving. She loves carrying children from one important place to another. Every morning they climb in . . . *Pitter-patter, pitter-patter, giggle, giggle-patter*. And they fill her with joy.

As time passes, things change. The Yellow Bus gets a new driver, a new route, and new passengers, young and old. Until one day the driving stops for good, and the Yellow Bus is left on her own. And yet, no matter where she is, the Yellow Bus still finds joy and discovery in the world around her.

With stirring black-and-white artwork and powerful pops of color, *The Yellow Bus* is a poignant reflection on the many new beginnings life has to offer.

"A must-purchase, this book will leave readers looking at objects around them differently long after its covers are closed." — *School Library Journal*, **starred review**

Ideas to consider:

- Before reading:
 - Just looking at the cover, what do students predict that the story will be about?
 - Most students have been on a yellow school bus. Have any students been on another kind of bus (city bus, shuttle bus, coach bus, etc.)?
 - What is the best thing about riding the bus? Students might comment on time with friends, helping the environment by carpooling, convenience, and other ideas. Encourage creativity!
- During reading:
 - What do students notice about the illustrations, particularly the use of color? What do you think the limited color palette means? How does it affect the story?
 - How do students feel about the changing uses of the bus? Is anyone surprised by the direction this story is going?
- After reading:
 - Were class predictions correct?
 - This book is fiction, and of course a bus can't really feel joy. What message do you think the author/illustrator wants readers to take away from this book?
 - Was this a sad story or a happy story, or something in between or both?

- Extension Ideas
 - What is empathy? How do we use empathy to connect to the bus in the story? As a class list plot points and what feelings were associated with them.
 - Have students ever heard the expression “have an attitude of gratitude?” What does that mean? How does the bus handle all the changes that happen to it during the story? Turn and share about how we can look for things that are going well in our lives. With older students, you can have them write about one thing that is going well. Have students focus on small things - a sharp pencil to use, a good school lunch on the menu that day, an act of kindness, snuggles with a pet, a book they are enjoying. Together we can find all kinds of ways to bring joy into our daily lives.
 - Have students ever dreaded a change in their life, only to have it turn out to be just as good or better? It could be something big like a move or a different sport, or it could be something little like trying a new breakfast cereal. Students can write or draw their response, or share with a partner.
 - A lot of our ability to feel gratitude and find joy comes down to being present in the moment. Here’s a quick and simple mindfulness activity for lower elementary students: **“5-4-3-2-1 Senses Check”**
 1. Ask students to sit comfortably and take a deep breath.
 2. Guide them to notice:
 - 5 things they can see around them
 - 4 things they can touch or feel
 - 3 things they can hear
 - 2 things they can smell
 - 1 thing they can taste (or imagine tasting something they like)
 3. Encourage them to take slow, deep breaths throughout.

Biographical Sketch of Loren Long: Loren Long, a lifelong Midwesterner, grew up loving to draw and paint. His instantly recognizable and nostalgic style is grounded in American Regionalism, an art movement from the 1930s. After earning a BA from University of Kentucky and attending the American Academy of Art in Chicago, Loren began freelancing in editorial illustration, and his work appeared in such outlets as *Time Magazine*, *Forbes*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Readers Digest*, and *Sports Illustrated*. In 2003, Loren illustrated his first picture book, *I Dream of Trains* by Angela Johnson. He fell in love with visual storytelling for children, and he’s been making picture books ever since.

Companion Books:

Last Stop on Market Street by Matt de la Peña

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus by Mo Willems

The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson

Evelyn Del Rey is Moving Away by Meg Medina

Other Books Written/Illustrated by Loren Long:

The Otis Series

Never Forget Eleanor by Jason June

Change Sings by Amanda Gorman

Someone Builds the Dream by Lisa Wheeler (Chickadee nominee!)

There's a Hole in the Log on the Bottom of the Lake

Of Thee I Sing by Barack Obama

Home by Matt de la Peña

Love by Matt de la Peña

Websites:

Loren Long's website (where you can find a complete list of books): <https://lorenlong.com/>

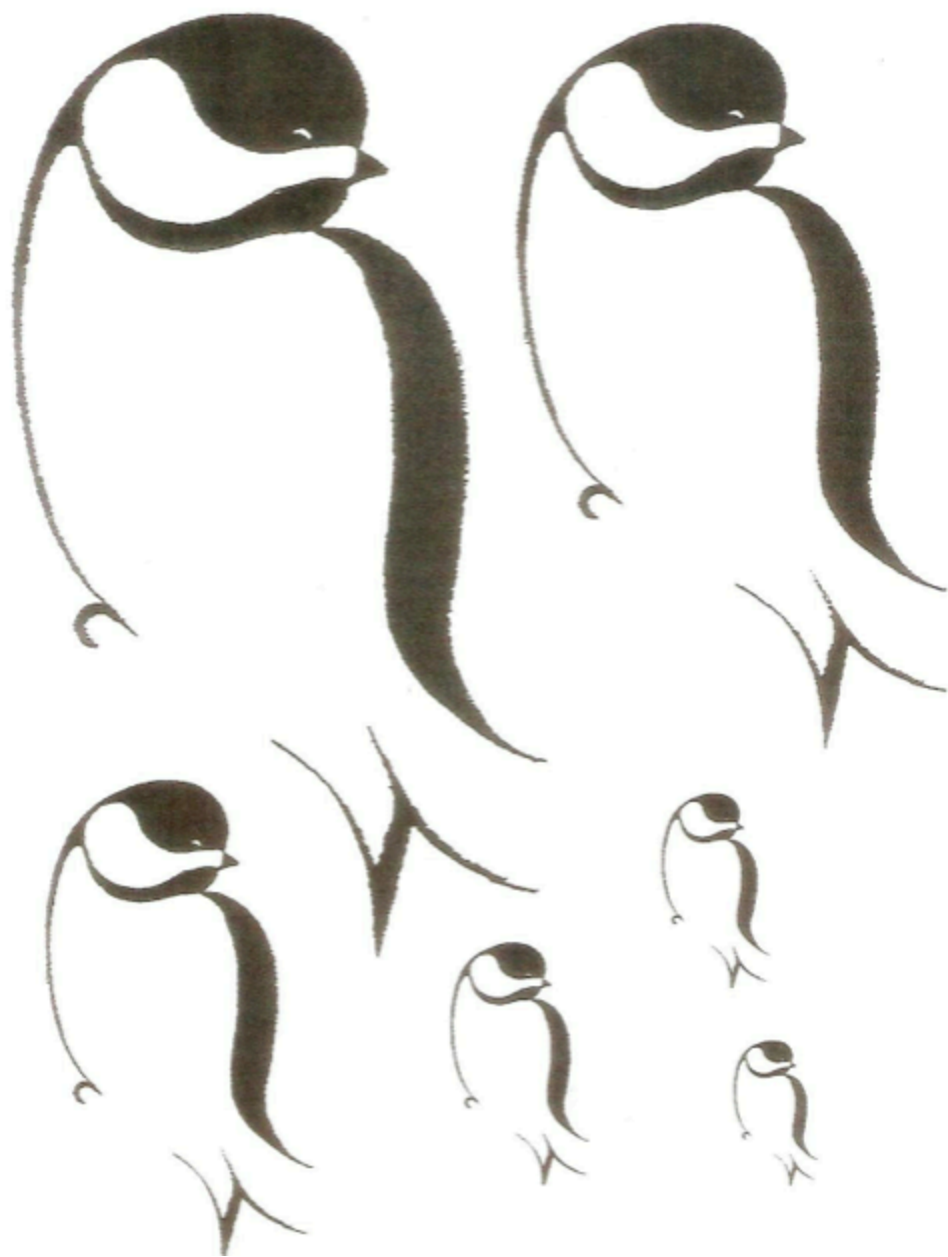
The making of The Yellow Bus (YouTube):

 The Making of THE YELLOW BUS by Loren Long

Loren Long reads The Yellow Bus aloud (YouTube):

 #BNStorytime: Loren Long reads The Yellow Bus

GoNoodle has a variety of mindfulness videos for students: <https://www.gonoodle.com/>



I Voted
for the



Chickadee
Award

I Voted
for the



Chickadee
Award

I Voted
for the



Chickadee
Award

I Voted
for the



Chickadee
Award

I Voted
for the



Chickadee
Award

Courtesy of Shelley Chadwick