Over the last several years, the following student teachers participated in a directed study and seminar class. They were: Christina Abma, Braden Dalton, Kristen Dow, Tina Duan, Bret Jesse, Leah McIntyre, Erin Lyons, Brittany Miller, Shane Orr, Sara Ritchie, Alisha Sims, Leesha Tiemstra, Ivy Waite, Steven Woodcock, and Jessica Wright. One of the activities they participated in was to write summaries of a title that advocated the use of literature across the curriculum. Each summary was to include:

- any reasons that this might be useful,
- a summary of one practical example used in the classroom.

The results of their literature searches are found below. Any of these titles would be a good starting point for exploring reasons to integrate literature into your classroom, or finding new and practical ways for doing so.

The next page gives you a contents list of the titles summarized, and their location in our collection, if appropriate.

If you are interested in detailed lessons using literature titles across the curriculum, students and staff from the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge can access these lessons through our Lesson Plan Database:

“Lesson Plans That Integrate Literature Into Different Subject Areas and Grades

“Student Teachers in 2009 and 2014 were asked to create their own lesson plan examples, that they had either used in the classrooms, or planned to do so in the future. These lessons are stored in the Curriculum Laboratory Lesson Plan Database. They can be found by searching the database for “literature integration.” While the lessons are now housed in the Lesson Plan Database, here is a link to a summary of the lessons produced in 2009. If you need assistance using this database, contact Curriculum Laboratory staff. “
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I chose to review the book *Litlinks – Activities for Connected Learning in Elementary Classrooms* by Dena G. Beeghly and Catherine M. Prudhoe. The authors wrote this book to fill a need they saw when they were training pre-service teachers. They wanted to create an activity book with appropriate and meaningful ways to infuse children's literature in pre-k through upper elementary curricula.

There are seven chapters in the book. The first three provide inspiration and set the stage for teaching effectively with children’s literature. The last four chapters provide detailed lesson plans and examples of activities using specific children’s books across the curriculum. Each chapter includes extensive lists of related literature and applications to national standards for the US. In comparing several examples of the standards I felt that the connections would also apply to the Alberta Program of Studies quite closely.

The authors explain the use of literature across the curriculum as a means for engaging a diverse group of students and helping them to ‘see’ them selves in the curriculum. They explain that through literature children are able to safely explore the world beyond and experience events of others. They gain multiple perspectives and a deeper understanding.

Beeghly and Prudhoe explain that the benefits of using a variety of books lie in the opportunities to broaden and personalize the curriculum, provide a choice of materials that match student’s interests and abilities, extend information provided in text, provide
more depth and engagement, and expose multiple perspectives ad up-to-date information on a topic.

Three strategies they describe to integrate children’s literature into the curriculum include one book at a time, thematic unit planning, and the generative curriculum. “One book at a time” uses one high-quality piece of literature to implement related activities in different areas of the curriculum. Thematic unit planning is choosing one topic and finding a variety of suitable literature on that topic to address in different areas of the curriculum. The generative curriculum allows students freedom to research areas of interest within the scope of the topic by providing a variety of reading and research material for them. Each of these strategies are described in greater detail in chapter 3 and examples are provided in the subsequent chapters.

In Chapters 5 and 6, *Books That Bring Out the Artist in Us and Books That Bring Out the Mathematician in Us*, the authors provide us with tips on teaching that area of the curriculum and how to successfully integrate literature into them. Each chapter then includes detailed sample lessons for younger readers and sample lessons for intermediate readers using the one book at a time approach as well as a sample unit for intermediate grades with sample lessons.

In chapters 6 and 7, *Books That Bring Out the Scientist in Us and Books That Bring Out the Social Scientist in Us*, the authors focus on engaging the students and creating a deeper understanding in these subject areas through literature. They discuss the common belief that textbooks do not cover all the material adequately and give suggestions on how to use other texts such as biographies and non-fiction trade books.

Each chapter includes a sample unit for primary grades and a sample unit for intermediate grades. Each unit includes a list of picture books that relate to the topic, a visual web of appropriate literature for each concept, sample lessons, and connections to the National standards.


*Keepers of the Earth* is an exemplary resource to guide the teaching of Native American culture, through the use of stories and legends. Many of the activities are designed for younger children, but some are specifically designed for older children. Teachers have the opportunity to successfully integrate FNMI content into all areas of their teaching, through the use of these stories and their corresponding activities. These active and diverse activities will likely enhance student learning with the ability to reach the needs of all students. There is a great opportunity to connect with the key concepts, identity and citizenship, in the social studies curriculum. Through personal connections with the story, students may further develop their identity and their role within a society. Many subject areas are covered including science, math, social studies, reading, writing, art and more. As the stories and activities fully engage the senses,
emotions, actions and thoughts, children may make personal, meaningful connections and gain a better understanding of their own identity.

Native American culture stresses the importance of relationships and connections. The literature allows an opportunity to explore a number of traditional stories and activities that demonstrate the importance of relationships. This resource is divided into two parts. The first section guides readers on using the resource effectively. It begins with a short story and a short interpretation of the story. There is a detailed description of how to use this resource and how to bring it to life.

The second section includes multiple stories and their corresponding activities, which provides teachers with essential tools to successfully implement FNMI content, across the curriculum. These stories are organized by key topics. Following each story, there is a short discussion with a few questions and then the activities. Throughout the literature, there are six symbols that represent sensory awareness of Earth, understanding of Earth, caring for Earth, caring for people, outdoors and indoors. By simply looking at the symbols, one can tell whether or not the activity would accomplish their specific goal.

One of the stories shares the importance of rain and the problems that may arise from a drought. One of the activities is titled “Rainmaking”, with two Native American stories preceding it. After reading the short stories and discussing them, the hands-on activity begins. There is a short description of the activity, the goals, and the age level, which is then followed by the procedure. In this activity, students make the sounds of a rainstorm with their bodies. After the rainstorm is complete, the teacher reads *Birth of a Raindrop* and has the students construct their own ending to the story. This is an active, engaging and meaningful way to teach students how raindrops form and the sequence of a rainstorm, while also integrating FNMI content.

This is an extremely significant resource for all teachers, especially elementary teachers. It provides numerous stories with various detailed activities. This resource outlines how important personal connections to the curriculum are, in order to make it a meaningful experience for the students. By making the content meaningful and engaging, students have an increased opportunity to personally connect with the material. It provides numerous ways for teachers to implement FNMI content across the curriculum. Through successful integration of FNMI content, all students develop cultural awareness and are able to form connections with others around them.


A teacher knows that look and is subjected to it often – all your students are staring at you, eyes glazed over, with a furrow in their brow, and they are all thinking the same thing ‘I don’t get this’. It is moments like these that teachers wonder what they could do to remove the frustration on both sides. In elementary, teachers go to all different lengths to have their
students understand the concepts being taught than simply remembering the facts. They will sing songs, play games and draw pictures. Picture books are for everyone, Kim Christie explains in her excellent resource *Using Picture Books in Middle School: Grade 6-8*. In previous years, there has been this idea that once you are beyond the ages of five to ten you are considered “too old” for picture books. On the contrary, in recent year’s picture books are becoming increasingly more popular for all ages, including adults. Not only that, picture books can be used across the curriculum in several different ways. In this resource, the author explains and provides examples of how picture books can provide new and exciting ways to teach difficult concepts while still making it an enjoyable and interesting way of learning for students.

To use this book effectively, the author has organized the book into three categories: 1) using picture books to teach a themed unit, 2) using picture books to teach literary elements and 3) using picture books to teach in content areas. The author has then divided each category into subcategories. These subcategories are divided using graphic organizers. One example includes 'main idea and supporting details'; this is found in the thematic unit.

One of the strongest tools in this book is the use of graphic organizers. The author has developed several graphic organizers in each category that can be used to assist in further development of the content, as well as to use as a visual assessment. The advancement of using a graphic organizer alongside picture books is that they can be used cross-curricularly; examples are given on how one might use the graphic organizer in their classroom. The only disadvantage is that the author does not provide corresponding lessons with the examples she has provided. Lastly the author supplies an enormous bibliography on appropriate picture books that can be used across the curriculum and in what ways one might develop this in their classroom.

Christie does an amazing job at illustrating how to use the graphic organizers. First, she breaks down the essential question being asked into smaller, more specific questions. From there she then chooses the books that would correlate nicely with each question. After this point, Christie uses several other graphic organizers to develop deeper thinking on the subject. For example, a sequencing graphic organizer works well with the book *Coming to America* and *The Story of Immigration*. Students are able to create a timeline to understand the history of the unit being taught.

Christie has created a great resource for teachers struggling to teach their students challenging concepts in a way that they will understand. Similar books to look at as well are *Novel Ideas for Young Readers!: Projects & Activities* by Wiesolek Kuta and Zernial, as well as *Novel Approaches for Junior High Language Arts* by Edmonton Public Schools. Picture books are short, quick to the point and can use several different books to teach the same concept, or vice verses, you can teach a number of concepts with one book. The main objective that Christie is trying to convey through this resource is that picture books are for everyone and teachers are able to still create those fun and exciting lessons that allows for simulating discussion and understanding.
Teachers in today's classrooms are faced with pedagogical challenges: student diversity is on the rise; a lack of appropriate classroom resources; a reappearance of the focus on the basics, i.e., language and math skills, which results in less attention paid to science, the arts, etc. These and the many other tasks with which we occupy ourselves only lead us, as educators, to put an emphasis on our time management skills. One way to do this, as proposed in this excellent resource written by Rebecca Olness, is to use literature in other content areas. The author illustrates the importance of literature integration first by defining what is a trade book, or informational text, and what makes it invaluable in the classroom; she then puts forth an argument for the integrated curriculum and its importance; Olness ends her work with detailed analyses of different content areas - the justification for literature integration and detailed examples of it in lesson plans - followed by excellent lists of resources.

To define trade books, one simply defines them as separate from textbooks in their function; textbooks are for instructional purpose, whereas trade books are published for the general public. The reasons why trade books, or informational texts, are assets are manifold. As the author describes, benefits for teachers include: teachers are able to implement different instruction methods using informational texts, e.g., group read-alouds, paired reading; teachers are able to free up more time for other activities because students are reading about other content areas; using informational texts still meets the traditional language arts strands (reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, representing). Because a teacher is able to successfully use trade books, students can only benefit from this. They also prosper because trade books can offer a breadth of information or depth in a specific subject; these books are written at different levels for different students, whereas textbooks are usually written in an academic voice that is higher than the target grade level; informational texts offer an excellent use of vocabulary, concepts, and writing and reading models.

Informational texts are divided into three categories, according to Olness, and these categories will influence one's choices in trade books. Narrative-informational texts are those that use story elements to while conveying information. On the opposite end of the spectrum, expository-informational texts are those that contain no story elements, but rather graphic organizers, reports, etc. The third type is simply a mixed-format text, where elements of narrative- and expository-informational texts are combined. Olness reiterates five essential aspects of trade books that should guide teachers when choosing informational texts for the classroom: the authority of the author, i.e., what makes him or her qualified to write about the topic, or what he or she researched in order to be semi-qualified; the accuracy of the content, i.e., the correctness of information; the appropriateness of the text, i.e., the text is written for an audience and at the level of its readers; the literary artistry, i.e., the quality of the written work; the
appearance of the book, i.e., the attractiveness, the imagery, etc.

Olness argues that through integration, teaching becomes controllable, effective, and vitalized. Using literature in the classroom outside the language arts area achieves language arts program goals and objectives in other content areas - when looking at integration, teachers are only organizing the curriculum differently, not adding to it. Educators are able to efficiently and effectively teach the curriculum - skills, concepts, contexts, etc. - through resource-based teaching and thematic units. It is important to remember, though, that teachers must remember basics such as varying resources, e.g., the amount of narrative- and expository-informational texts; designing lessons that use integrated literature in a meaningful way, concepts should be broad but still aim at instructional goals and objectives, and that those concepts are the same, no matter what accommodations or modifications are made in order to ensure successful differentiation.

Even though the author makes reference to American education councils, Olness’ words are applicable across the border. Her content-area-specific chapters detailing the core subjects, i.e., social studies, science, and mathematics, are structured in the same way: an explanation of the standards and principles guiding the content, how to choose meaningful trade books and integrate them with the specific subject, and detailed lesson plans that integrate literature. The fine arts, i.e., music, theatre, dance, and visual arts, are organized in such a way that literature integration promotes higher-level cognitive processes, honed skills, etc.

To illustrate the ease with which literature can be a meaningful starting point in a lesson, Olness illustrates in an example lesson plan, Teaching About Adding and Subtracting Money (Grades 2-3), the effectiveness literature can have in beginning a lesson. Her lesson objective is simple and is to be carried out over four class periods. This lesson also makes use of another important teaching tool: the manipulative. Each day, students begin the lesson with a different text that demonstrates the lesson of the day. Students discuss the mathematics in each book (the adding and subtracting of money), and learn different ways of totalling money. The teacher demonstrates the different ways of adding money, e.g., adding coins consecutively (ten, twenty, twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven), and the students are then able to model the method using the manipulatives. Literature helps the lesson to be successful - books can be chosen for the patterned text, colourful imagery, word lists, or simply the story - but they are all meaningful in that they achieve their goal in illustrating the daily lesson.

To conclude, Olness’ work here is an excellent starting point for teachers in the search for good, if not better, informational text. The author provides not only ample reasons why literature integration is important and worthwhile, she also provides users of this text with lists of literature specific to the content area as well as resources, both online and manual, for teachers and students, including lesson plans and magazines. The important message in Olness’ functional resource is that teachers have an incredible collection of available means with which they are able to effectively and efficiently
integrate literature and curriculum, all for the benefit of their students.

Summary written by Bret Jesse.

Literature: Bringing Life Learning into the Classroom  
By Bret Jesse

Students come to school often under the impression that they will never use what they learn in the classroom in their lives outside of school. It has been our goal as teachers to find means of bringing real learning into the classroom. One of the tools that is undervalued right now is literature. We think about literature and automatically think of Language Arts class, however literature can easily be used across the curriculum. Through reading of “Literature Lures”, we see that there are many ways to include literature in classes outside of Language Arts. This book is “just the beginning of a journey that will enrich reader’s lives” (Polette, Introduction).

When we think of picture books, we think elementary level reading yet according to Palette they are “speaking directly to young adults” (Palette, xv). Palette proposes that “Picture books with mature themes, absorbing illustrations and playful text can stimulate every critical thinking skill” (Palette, xv). As teachers we need to embrace picture books as a hook or simple tool to engage our students in more abstract and complicated concepts. For example, “Rose Blanche” by Roberto Innocenti is noted in the book on page 13. It is a picture book that tells the tale of a young girl living in a small town during World War II. This picture book deals with a multitude of issues that high school students studying during their WWII unit such as fear, the holocaust, and the safety of civilians. Along with curriculum based learning this picture book also brings light to the hidden curriculum of being a kind-hearted person. This picture book is one of the many examples of appropriate literature for middle and high school students.

The novels in this selection are “high-quality literature and they address challenging topics” (Polette, introduction). Having novels across the curriculum will allow for students “to develop a love of literature” (Polette, Objectives). Having students engaged in a novel instead of a textbook will teach them the same concepts in an engaging and interesting means. For example, “Monkey Island” by Paula Fox is noted in this book as great resource for teaching the topic of homelessness. This could be used in a social class to discuss politics, poverty, and any other topics surrounding the ideas. This gets students out of their regular routines and gets them excited about a story that they can become a part of and discuss with enthusiasm.

Literature is not just a tool for a Language Arts class, it is a tool to be used to engage students in multiple classrooms across the curriculum. With the connections being made in Polette’s book, “Literature Lures”, we find all of the amazing ways that we can integrate literature into our lessons in an exciting and engaging way. Be it through
picture books, novels, or short stories, Polette gives us the resources we need to embrace change and march forward into a new age of reading and enjoying literature in school.

**Language Arts Titles:**


For many teachers, the idea of integrating novels into their unit plans can be a daunting process. Teachers not only have to select appropriate novels that relate to curricular content but they also have to come up with lesson plans and activities to further develop student learning. In order to alleviate some of these efforts, Edmonton Public Schools has come up with an excellent resource called Novel Approaches for Junior High Language Arts. Within this resource, teachers can expect to find an instrumental how-to guide on implementing novel studies in the classroom, complete with a variety of student activities and annotated bibliographies as a means to encouraging higher level thinking.

Novels and novel-based studies, although daunting to some teachers, offer a unique learning experience to students. Due to the length of novels, students are able to submerge themselves in a story. As this happens, students begin the process of building sustained literary environments based on the personal connections they create with the characters, settings and events of a story. As these environments develop, elements of the novel become ingrained in their memory. This provides students with a gateway to critical and creative thinking as they rely on their imaginations and memories to remember information. In this respect, integrating novels can help stimulate higher order thinking through the connections students’ create with the story.

Based on the notion that novels can stimulate student intellect, the Novel Approaches for Junior High Language Arts is divided into three main features; Teacher Resource Pages, Student Activities and Bibliographies & Curriculum Fit. The first section, Teacher Resource Pages, provides teachers with important information about how to implement novel-studies into the classroom. The second section, Student Activities, provides teachers with a wide range of creative activities and templates to satisfy all learning needs. The third section, Bibliographies & Curriculum Fit, provides teachers with an extensive list of annotated bibliographies organized into ten genres. This alleviates any of the guesswork involved in selecting an appropriate novel that for any subject.

Novel Approaches for Junior High Language Arts is filled with great ideas and tools for teachers to use. For example, if teachers are looking for a way to encourage student participation, one activity they can turn to is a Literature Circle. Essentially, a Literature
Circle is a discussion group (facilitated by the teacher) where student can talk, discuss and connect to a story on a personal level based on sample questions and prompts provided to stimulate higher order thinking. As students become discuss the novel, they are encouraged to share additional knowledge or background information relating to the story in order to strengthen their connection with the story. This also provides ample opportunity for cross-curricular instruction. This is just one sample of the variety of activities found throughout the resource that stimulate critical thinking and involvement.

Overall, Novel Approaches for Junior High Language Arts is an extremely helpful resource for teachers who are looking to integrate novels into their programming. Complete with teacher- specific resources, generic student activities and suggested book titles, this resource helps alleviate any preconceived notions and preparation that might steer teachers away from deciding to integrate novels into their teaching.


Introduction

In Lois Thomas Stover’s “Young Adult Literature: The Heart of the Middle School Curriculum,” the author argues that young adult literature, or texts written for and about children ages eleven to eighteen, is suited for curricular integration in the middle grades for numerous reasons (1996). According to Stover, young adult literature shares several common characteristics which make it an ideal starting point for cross curricular, or what Stover calls transdisciplinary, units (1996). The main benefit of integrating you adult literature is that it has the power to make authentic and meaningful connections with middle school students whose lives are dynamic and fluid. A transdisciplinary unit is one way to use this literature that focuses on teaching students how to learn, it increases the validity of the information presented in schools by removing the barriers between subjects, and encourages creativity by requiring students to explore and experience various texts (Stover, p. 14-17).

What is Young Adult Literature & Why Should I Use It?

As previously mentioned, according to Stover, there are multiple common characteristics among young adult literature that make it accessible for students to enjoy in both aesthetic and efferent contexts – young adult literature is frequently the choice of young readers, and is an ideal candidate for a motivational piece of literature in the classroom. Young adult literature usually has one main plot (with few subplots) and takes place over a relatively short time span (Stover, p. 5). Similarly, there is one major setting and a limited number of characters, who speak in language that is realistic in comparison to student’s actual speech (p. 5). These factors allow young adult
literature to focus in on specific themes, issues of character development (identity), and decision making as characters tackle their main conflict (p. 5).

The power of young adult literature to make connections with middle school students lies in its reflection of real life and real issues (Stover, p. 12). Students are able to relate to the characters they are reading about and learn something about themselves as they experience the literature (p.

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<td>4. Body &amp; Self</td>
<td>Change, identity, independence, freedom</td>
<td>Adapting to physical changes, taking care of our bodies, emotional and mental health</td>
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<td>5. Sexual Relationships</td>
<td>Tradition, norms, expression, freedom, oppression</td>
<td>Finding gender roles, developing a personal ideology and value system</td>
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(Adapted from Stover, p. 21-22)

Stover points out that due to student’s easy access into the story, it makes an ideal starting point for exploring and appreciating techniques used by the author and appreciating the piece as a work of art (p. 12). Young adult literature also presents students with an opportunity to engage the text in a meaningful way since they are able to connect emotionally with the text; this will promote the creative extension of the story into other contexts, in other words, students will be engaging their higher level thinking skills as they experience the piece of literature (p. 11-13). The emotional accessibility of young adult literature makes it a vehicle for catharsis as students find insight in the plight of the characters they encounter (Iaquinta & Hipsky, 2006, p. 209). Stover provides a detailed list of areas of concern to middle school students, as well as concepts related to those areas and developmental tasks associated with each. An adapted version of that list follows to illustrate the many different directions that young adult literature allows a unit to go.

How can I use Young Adult Literature Across the Curriculum?

According to Stover, young adult literature is the perfect basis for a transdisciplinary
(cross-curricular) unit (p. 5). Stover further points out that transdisciplinary units are also a way to help students make authentic connections to the information in the content areas specifically, and other areas more generally (p. 14-16). The boundaries between subjects isolate the knowledge that students are presented with, and discourages them from making creative linkages across the content areas, young adult literature, experienced through a transdisciplinary unit, has the power to transform passive learning into an active, exciting process (p. 14-16).

Stover details the steps involved in the process of planning a transdisciplinary unit, as well as providing a comprehensive annotated bibliography organized by subject headings (Appendix B, p. 147-174). The process of creating a transdisciplinary unit, as outlined by Stover, follows:

• Ask yourself: “What topics and concepts are of interest to my students?"
• Consider: “What literary texts relate to the concept and are of interest to students with diverse reading interests and abilities?”
• Think about: “What curricular objectives do I want to accomplish?”
• Find out: “How do the answers from questions two and three allow for the transdisciplinary study of many perspectives?” (p. 24-25)

Stover also explains how to narrow down topic choices and different ways to organize the planning process, including both a graphic organizer and a process chart (p. 26-27).

How can I actually deliver and assess units focused on young adult literature?

The practicality of Stover’s piece is highlighted by her overview of various instructional and assessment strategies (p. 90-121). Stover explains the rationale and methodology behind each of the strategies discussed, including (but not limited to) direct instruction; motivational small group and team activities such as tournaments; round-robin reviews; jigsaw; rating checklists and text sets (p. 90-96). Stover also details how to employ an inquiry approach, how to use multiple texts and how to use reader response in transdisciplinary units centered around young adult literature.

Following the detailed account of the above instructional strategies, Stover includes in her work an easy-to-understand, A-Z list of various assessment tools one could use in transdisciplinary units focused on young adult literature. A condensed version of the list is included below because of its incredible practicality and use to beginning teachers.

• Anagrams, autobiographies, advertisements
• Bumper stickers, billboards, book talks
• Cartoons, choral readings, creative dramatics
• Demonstrations, debates, dances
• Experiments, eulogies, encyclopedia entries
May I see an example please?

Perhaps the greatest part of Stover’s work is that beyond providing numerous general guidelines on how-to use young adult literature, she also dedicates three chapters to specific examples of transdisciplinary units for the middle school level. Chapter four outlines a unit called “Surviving, Living and Disturbing the Universe” (p. 68-86). Stover goes through the rationale behind the unit, goals for the unit (both curricular based and more general), unit activities and transdisciplinary connections (p. 68-86). The most critical part of the unit that Stover includes is the annotated bibliography of various titles related to the unit. Stover presents the titles in categories: physical survival, emotional survival and surviving while daring to disturb the universe (p. 72-76). In a particularly interesting suggestion for an introductory activity for the unit, Stover details how to discuss the vital nature of acute observation to survival in the wild using potatoes (p. 76). The activity requires each student to write a description of their potato that would enable them to find their potato among the masses, and then discuss the various ways that observation plays into daily activities, and eventually how it impacts survival more generally (p. 76-77). The alternative to the potato activity that Stover suggests is to have students brainstorm about the difficulties they faced when they first came to middle school, and how they survived the tumultuous first few weeks (p. 77).

In Conclusion

Young adult literature provides teachers with a way to capture students attention and engage them authentically in classroom activities. The themes covered in young adult literature may be ones that are difficult to discuss, and the barriers between subjects are often difficult to break through. Young adult literature presents solutions to both of the aforementioned issues in classrooms. A thoughtful integration of young adult
literature is a sure way to address issues and topics that are of interest to students while encouraging creative thinking across the subjects, and meeting curricular objectives.

Mathematics Titles:


Incorporating literature into mathematics allows children to create a previously unknown imaginative relation between the two subjects. Whereas mathematics is often restricted to textbook study, literature can create new approaches to mathematical problem solving. In Marilyn Burns’ book “Math and Literature”, we take a look at how this process can be successful.

Burns describes that literature and writing are useful tools in many subject areas, with mathematics being her main subject focus. Writing is a useful tool for children in that it allows them to organize their thoughts, clarify when they are unsure and refine their thinking. It may take time for the student to become comfortable with the idea of putting math into words, but with encouragement, the ability to describe their thinking in writing will come as a payoff to the effort.

For educators, this process is useful with assessments. When students are able to describe their understanding in words, teachers are able to pin-point areas of difficulty or success. By keeping questions open-ended and in multiple-response format, educators are able to view a snapshot of the students’ problem solving capabilities and their ability to step outside the box to solve the questions in a variety of ways. This problem-solving mindset is necessary for other curricular areas and day-to-day solutions. By allowing the students to come up with new problems themselves, they create additional problem-solving skills. This pushes the student from an analysis perspective to one of evaluation, upping the value of the initially proposed question.

Throughout “Math and Literature” Burns gives us ten step-by-step literature-math integration lessons. The book titles and authors for each lesson are included and examples of students’ work and answers are provided as samples. As described in the lesson “17 Kings and 42 Elephants” (p. 14), a story is turned into a math problem for the children to solve: “how can only 17 kings take care of 42 elephants?” This is evidence of a practical way to turn a story into a ‘teach-able moment’. The children discovered numerous solutions to this problem through drawings and descriptions with no lack of creativity. Children from a variety of levels come up with creative solutions while keeping in mind equality, economics and social hierarchy. Once the students have come up with their respective solutions, they are then
asked to share with peers, expanding upon the initial knowledge to discover additional solutions, an essential key step in Burns’ theory.

Overall, the literature integration approach to mathematics, as seen in Burns’ “Math and Literature” seems suitable to students’ cognitive developmental process at an early age. Students are not only discovering the answers, but discovering how they found the answers. This is moving the thinking process from cognitive to metacognitive, allowing students to grasp the concept with ease and apply it to other subject areas.


A group of educators believe that mathematics shares a lot of similarities with language arts. Math and language arts both require students to make connections and predictions, ask questions, think about the text they read, draw conclusions, visualize, summarize, and separate important information from supporting details. Teachers Carole Skalinder and Patti Satz see the connections between the two subjects and, with the help of colleagues Barbara Hiller and Ellen Fogelberg, and fellow teachers Sandra Vitantonio and Lisa Bernstein, share how they integrate math and literacy in their classrooms.

Integrating Literacy and Math: Strategies for K-6 Teachers outlines in seven chapters how talking, reading, and writing helps students understand math. The eighth and final chapter describes different ways to assess students’ understanding. The book contains real-life examples from the classrooms of Skalinder and Satz. Most examples of student work draw from lessons for Grades 2, 3, and 5. However, the authors say that the strategies easily adapt for use in Kindergarten to Grade 6 classrooms, and grade suitability follows each lesson idea.

“Integration” may sound like a complicated concept, but the authors advocate using math trade books to help make it easy. Visually appealing books link stories to mathematical concepts and bring the subject to life. Trade books work well for shared and independent reading, as well as guided reading, which is small-group differentiated instruction. Readers’ theatre presents another possibility, which not only helps students understand the math concepts in the story, but helps them work on fluency, too.

The authors point out that mathematics is a foreign language that students almost entirely learn at school. Read-aloud books offer one way to expose students to new math vocabulary and concepts in something familiar — a story. Read-alouds that contain illustrations also offer students something visual to draw from later when they try to imagine the mathematical ideas. In “What makes for a suitable read-aloud book?” the authors provide suggested criteria on p. 73 for selecting suitable title that consider both math and literacy standards. A list of 13 “Teachers’ Favorite Read-Alouds” appears on p. 168 and readers find a list of 34 additional children’s literature titles on p. 176.

The authors suggest teachers make the read-alouds interactive, and use the example of
*Amanda Bean’s Amazing Dream* (p. 74), which prepares students for a unit on multiplication. Students first work with a partner to think about and record a list of things that come in groups. This pre-reading activity prepares students to listen to the story for things that come in groups. The teacher reads the story aloud for enjoyment, and then students go back through the text and find things that come in groups. Children do not have to reread an entire page of text. They can go straight to where they think they can find the information they need. This teaches students the literacy strategy for skimming and scanning a text for specific information while introducing them to the concept of multiplication.

The authors encourage teachers to incorporate non-fiction texts into their lessons, too. Informational math books make great read-alouds, and work in shared and guided reading, as well as centers. A suggested lesson using *Giraffes* involves looking at the photograph of the giraffe and reading the text about how much food giraffes eat. The class then considers the section called “Do the Math,” which asks students to measure their arm and determine if it is shorter or longer than a giraffe’s tongue (p. 103). The authors find that students often voluntarily choose to read non-fiction outside of math lessons because of the books’ visual appeal, and ability to build on students’ natural curiosity about the world around them. Teachers who integrate math and language arts lessons say that their math lessons proceed much easier. Mathematics possesses its own language and specialized vocabulary. Trade books introduce math vocabulary and concepts in advance of math lessons while promoting literacy reading strategies. Teachers who use math trade books during language arts lessons find themselves pre-teaching mathematical information.

The authors acknowledge that math and language arts are two separate subjects deserving of their own dedicated instructional time, but they point out that integrating subjects, when appropriate, helps students make connections across the curriculum. Integration also shows students that the thinking and learning that they do relates to all subject areas. Teachers also benefit, because integrating subjects helps them better utilize their instructional time.

**Science Titles:**


Picture-Perfect Science Lessons is a book that uses children’s books to complement science lessons. It focuses on grade 3-6 and incorporates literature into science units. It provides all of the necessary information teachers need, including book titles and lesson ideas, to bring literature into the science classroom.
This book outlines many benefits for incorporating literature into science class. One reason being that it gives the "students a context for concepts they are exploring" in class. (Ansberry & Morgan 2005, p. 2) Picture books have great storylines that can help the students to understand and remember a concept better than they would from the textbook, which often presents the information in lists or charts.

One of the many benefits to this book is the information provided in the first few chapters (up to chapter 6). This includes: program information, how to locate the picture books, lesson guide by grade, research into why you should read in science, reading aloud and teaching through inquiry. It also provides an example model of learning through literature as well as the National Education Standards and a chart showing which chapter covers which outcome.

The book then moves into 15 chapters that have example lessons that use picture books to teach the science outcomes. The great thing about this book is that it starts off with one or two picture books that can be used, including a short summary and information about the book. It then lays out the time needed, materials that will be used and a list of student sheets that are included i.e. charts, word cards and quizzes. It goes through steps such as engage, explore, explain, elaborate; evaluate and how to use the picture book to accomplish these objectives.

A practical learning strategy from this book would be the Chemical change café. The class reads a book called “Pancakes, Pancakes”, about a boy who helps make pancakes from scratch. As the students go through the unit they will observe the state of different objects, such as pancakes, to help them learn about physical and chemical changes. A Chemical Change Café can be set up with different cooking stations for the students to mix pancake batter and observe how the batter changes after the pancakes are cooked, by the teacher. This is a great activity that gets the students hands on and involved in their learning.

Overall I feel that this book is an excellent resource for teachers approaching units in science. It adds a fun element to the lessons that will really grab the attention of elementary students. Picture-Perfect Science Lessons is a very user friendly book that incorporates literature into the science classroom in a fun, easy to use way.


The main idea the authors put forth in the book is to use literature in the science portion of the curriculum. This will not only help students have an enjoyable time in science, but also give them a different outlook from the stereotypical science class of reading in textbooks and doing labs.

Each chapter contains different lessons that can be addressed in science class. One thing the authors really tried to do was to provide a picture book that could be used with each lesson as a sort of introduction or maybe even a conclusion. The chapters include interactive activities that students can do in groups and/or as individuals. The materials
needed for the activities are listed as well as the time frame anticipated to complete the activity to allow for effective planning for the teacher using this book. With the activity comes a lot of great questions that can be used to question students on their understanding of the subject or just to pry out of their minds what they are thinking. I really like this book because it seems to understand the importance of not just finding out what the students are grasping from the activity, but what has the activity helped them think about. Many of the chapters also contain a little background information on the topic under study just in case the teacher needs a little 'brush up' on what they are about to teach. After the questions the activities usually outline a time for students to elaborate on the things they have learned and/or opinions they have formed. Then there are sheets that can be photocopied and handed out to the students so that they can showcase what they have learned and be able to not only verbally convey their ideas and opinions, but write them down as well.

One practical teaching idea found in this book is the activity in chapter 12 on "Be a Friend to Trees". This chapter gives the opportunity for students to be introduced to trees (something they may not think about everyday as something vitally important to our survival) in a way that may grasp their attention for the rest of their lives. Materials, time frame, and background information are all listed for the teacher in this chapter. Exploration type questions are then placed to the students, so they can give elaborated answers by doing research outside. They can look at trees and parts of trees that have fallen off the tree onto the ground (ie: leaves, twigs, fruit, bark, etc.) to help them formulate their answers. Then students evaluate what it means to be a friend to trees and why that would be important. To do their research there are sheets at the end of the chapter that can be photocopied.

This book is fantastic because it shows science teachers that there are many different ways to integrate literature into the science curriculum. The questioning is also very effective because it displays to teachers and to students what the students are learning and opinions that they are forming. With higher level questions comes higher level thinking.


Literary summary – No Limits – Developing Scientific Literacy Using Science Fiction

I believe there are many misconceptions regarding science. Some people think science mainly involves equations and calculations, but in reality science is more about the process of inquiry and its unique language. In an increasingly scientific and technological world, it is essential for all students to be able to understand basic concepts of science and develop scientific literacy. The book "No Limits – Developing Scientific Literacy Using Science Fiction" provides many engaging lesson ideas that help students gain better understanding of science by using science fiction literature.

First of all, the book argues the benefits of science fiction in developing scientific literacy. The author follows two main philosophies and they are also the reasons the author decided to use “No

Social studies teachers, as with other subject disciplines, are often faced with the challenge of teaching the content prescribed in the program of studies in ways which not only engage students but do so in deep and powerful ways. In Ava L. McCall's article entitled, “Teaching Powerful Social Studies Ideas Through Literature Circles,” the author aims to advocate for meaningful social studies teaching through the use of literature while simultaneously demonstrating how literature leads to better student engagement and deeper learning. McCall starts her discussion by noting the most important challenge that must be considered when attempting to incorporate literature into the classroom is to ensure powerful social studies concepts remain central to the lesson while simultaneously teaching literacy skills and strategies needed to maneuver the texts (152). She asserts that this problem can be overcome with a thoughtful approach which aims to create a partnership between elements of literacy and these complex social studies concepts. Strategies here include: covering concepts in-depth focusing on depth rather than breadth, ensuring reading and writing are wholly integrated, carefully selecting the literary sources you intend to use, and using literature as part of an overall plan which sees students consider, analyze, and evaluate primary and secondary sources (153). Ultimately, through the use of carefully chosen resources, teachers can ensure their students explore social studies in a way that allows them to question, discuss, and to think critically (153).

The specific method explored and refined by McCall is done through the use of literature circles. These are defined as small, student-led groups in which all students explore the same text before
sharing their findings in a larger class discussion (253). In order to help students build the skills and strategies needed to maximize the learning opportunities of these groups McCall suggests that certain tasks be assigned to specific students. These include: a connector who makes connections between the text and the real world, a questioner who builds a list of questions which are raised after reading the text, a passage master who keeps track of important passages to revisit and explore, a vocabulary enricher that records interesting or puzzling vocabulary, and, finally, an illustrator who illustrates the main ideas of the text in a way they are most comfortable (253). It is through the interplay of these roles that students are able to participate in meaningful and authentic student-led learning which allows them to explore topics in exciting ways, build empathy towards other cultures, critique various trade-book’s credibility via critical thinking, and practice the “skills” components of social studies such as collaboration and communication (153-154). Furthermore the importance of student-led discussion forces students to build deeper understandings of the text’s content in order to contribute to their group rather than simply listening to the teacher lecture (153-154).

After setting up this basic understanding McCall moves to discuss how literature circles work in practice by discussing exercises she has done with preservice teachers. Although much of her discussion centres around specific examples using multiple books to explore social studies topics from different perspectives there are some important points which deserve special attention. First is the incorporation of pre-assessments to activate prior learning and to act as a point of reference to assess student learning after the activity (155). Furthermore the exercise McCall describes shows in detail how literature circles, when exploring different texts that share the same topic, can allow for a rich whole-class discussion. These discussions not only allow for all to participate but highlight the importance of perspective when students construct new knowledge and understandings (153). In the final portion of this description McCall shows how these multiple perspectives and analysis leads to powerful inquiry based questions created by students with which to further explore the selected social studies concepts (158).

Ultimately, for McCall, children’s literature allows students to work on literacy and communication elements which are naturally in a partnership with essential social studies strands. This deeper meaning allows students to address the importance of historical events, question accepted narratives, and think critically (158). Of final importance to McCall is her conclusion that the effective implementation of these strategies relies on skill, practice, careful attention to student progress, and to take questions raised in whole-class discussion into account for further learning opportunities (158).


*Social Studies Through Literature* is an exemplary resource for the early grades. It provides teachers with relevant, hands-on literature that corresponds throughout the curriculum. Students are able to deepen their understanding of social studies and citizenship by relating to the characters and storyline in the books. The literature pieces allow the students to reflect on their own personal experiences and their communities. They also lend themselves to many ‘teachable moments’. By making the material relevant to the children’s lives, literature can help them make necessary connections and strengthen understandings of abstract concepts like community or responsibility.

The Resource is split into 10 components that directly reflect the new social studies
curriculum in Alberta. They include Going to School, People and Places in My Community, Family Roles and Responsibilities, Changes in the Family, Change Over Time, Meeting People’s Needs, City Life, Country Life, Communities Around the World, Canada, A Land of Many Cultures and Our First Nations. Each topic includes two picture books as well as detailed teacher support for each. Also, assessment strategies, curriculum connections (K-12), reproducibles and related titles provide the teacher with essential tools to enrich student learning.

The first section is called **Going to School**. It is targeted for Kindergarten- Grade 1. The focus book is *David Goes to School*, by David Shannon. The section includes a brief synopsis of the book, the curriculum connections, corresponding activities and focusing questions. By not only providing strong literature to actively engage the students in their learning, Von Heyking and McConaghy also provide the teacher with detailed lesson plans and activities to further the students’ learning experience.

One teaching example from **People and Places in My Community** in the Resource is using *Franklin's Neighbourhood*, by Sharon Jennings and introducing basic map skills and geographical concepts of community places, people and jobs. Students are given a map of Franklin’s neighbourhood and introduced to the different areas. The Focusing Questions call upon higher order thinking skills such as comparing, speculating and drawing conclusions. Overall, the lesson allows the teacher to focus on specific learning objectives from the social studies curriculum by integrating literature that is relevant and meaningful to the students’ lives.

I feel that this is an invaluable resource for the K-3 teacher. Not only does it provide 20 detailed lesson plans using picture books, it also has an extensive bibliography with other titles to explore. It offers many great ideas and strategies to maximize learning through the integration of literature into social studies. By using these great titles, teachers can use children’s literature to help students make sense of their experiences and broaden their understanding of the world.


**Summary written by Christine Abma.**

The General Outcomes from the Alberta Program of Studies (for Kindergarten to Grade 3) paint a clear picture that Social Studies lessons should connect with the students on a personal level. Students are to be encouraged to critically think about roles in society and the effects actions have on local and world events.

Researchers Owens and Nowell highlight the following reason for using pictures books in the social studies curriculum:

- When students fail to connect to class content, for whatever reason, they invariably respond with such comments as: ‘I don’t understand this stuff.’,
‘This is boring!’ and ‘What difference does it make?’. Picture storybooks offer students provocative social content and motivate them to think critically about their social world.

- Through picture storybooks, the learning process is made meaningful - students see themselves as a part of history, not history as a part of them. As a result, what students remember is significantly more meaningful than simply the ‘left overs’ of a long and tedious education process.
- It is not the purpose of the elementary school to teach the Social Studies disciplines apart for their relevance to social reality. Social Studies should be taught in ways that will help children build an understanding of the social and physical world in which they live. The use of high quality picture storybooks that contain potent historical-social content is the best way to teach the content of the Social Studies curriculum.

As seen below, Owens and Nowell provide some practical teaching ideas in their article:

**Kindergarten:*** General Learning Outcome (GLO) K.1 - students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of multiple social, physical, cultural and linguistic factors that contribute to an individual’s unique identity.

Picture storybook: "Crow Boy" by Taro Yashima

An elementary student is ridiculed for being different until his teacher explains to the class why he is special. Through this picture storybook, students will learn about uniqueness, differences as objects of ridicule, and peer pressure.

**Grade 1:**

GLO 1.1 - students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how identity and self-esteem are enhanced by their sense of belonging in their world and how active members in a community contribute to the well-being, growth and vitality of their groups and communities. Picture storybook: "Horton Hears a Who!” by Dr. Seuss

Horton saves a community of “Whos” in Who-ville. Through this picture storybook, students will learn about the common good, community participation and contributions to society.

**Grade 2:**

GLO 1.1 - students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how identity and self-esteem are enhanced by their sense of belonging in their world and how active members in a community contribute to the well-being, growth and vitality of their groups and communities. Picture storybook: "Mr. Griggs’ Work" by Cynthia Rylant

Mr. Griggs loves his work in the town post office and considers it an important means to serve the people in his community.
Through this picture storybook, students will learn about optimism vs. pessimism, and public service.

**Grade 3:**

GLO 3.1 - students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how geographic, social, cultural and linguistic factors affect quality of life in communities, specifically in India and Tunisia.

Picture storybook: "The Great Kapok Tree" by Lynne Cherry

Note: The kapok tree, Ceiba pentandra, is a large, deciduous, tropical tree that is native to tropical America, Africa, and the East Indies.

*The heat and humidity in a rain forest tire a man who has come to chop down a kapok tree. When he decides to rest at the base of the tree, the inhabitants of the forest whisper in his ear that he should stop what he is doing and start looking on this world with “new eyes”. Through this picture storybook, students will learn about environmental stewardship, conceptions of progress, and exploitation through the eyes of the animals.*