Using Picture Books in the Middle School Library

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Session Objectives

- Understand why MS students (and their teachers!) need picture books
- Gain strategies for selecting quality picture books for the MS level
- Preview new titles that are MS relevant
- Identify at least 1 book that could work well at your school
Where are We?

- Who has a picture book collection?
- What groups in your school use your picture books?
- When was the last time they were...weedeed?
Picture Books at the MS Level?

● Short on pages, long on meaning (critical thinking!)
● Skill development
● Illustrations extend & enhance the text
● Written for many content areas
● Accessible for all students
“The picture book is a picture puzzle, badly understood by critics and condescended to by far too many as merely a trifle for ‘the kiddies.’”

– Maurice Sendak
Common Skills that Picture Books Address

Plot & Sequence    Inference
Characterization   Theme
Word Choice/Writing Style
Point of View
Strategies for Selecting MS Picture Books

- Blogs/Google “picture books” AND “middle school” AND (year) teachwithpicturebooks.blogspot.com
- Focus on curriculum
  - What will your staff & students actually use?
- Preview before ordering
  - Check the public library & bookstores
- Avoid books with massively long text
Strategies for Collaborating with Teachers

● Know what you have to offer!
● Read alouds: Intro a new unit
● Small group activities to practice developing skills
● Think of colleagues you already work with - or don’t!
● Attend dept mtgs to see what they are struggling with and/or upcoming units - can your picture books help?
● How can they help your school’s literacy goal?
● What I did with my picture books... (see add’l file)
Story Time!

Think: What skills/standards could this book address?
Turn & Talk:

What skills/standards/classes could this book help teach?
Skills/Standards for The Harmonica (2008)

- Nazi Germany & Holocaust
- Point of View
- Plot & Sequence
- Word Choice
- Making Predictions
- Figurative Language
Not Just for English Teachers...

- Art
- Tech Ed
- Social Studies
- Science
- Foreign Language & ESOL
Previewing New Titles

1. You & your group will preview a book.

2. Think about:
   - Literacy skills
   - Types of activities
   - Potential classes
   - Would you purchase?

3. We will share in about 7 minutes.
Top New Titles

The Most Magnificent Thing, by Ashley Spires (2014)

- STEM
- Cause/Effect
- Characterization
- Theme
The girl tinkers and hammers and measures...

while her assistant pounces and growls and chews.

When she is finished, she steps back to admire her work. She walks around one side. Her assistant examines the other side...

It doesn’t look right. Her assistant picks it up and gives it a shake. It doesn’t feel right, either.

They are shocked to discover that the thing isn’t magnificent. Or good. It isn’t even kind-of-sort-of okay. It is all WRONG.

The girl tosses it aside and gives it another go.
- Inference
- Characterization
- Plot
- Funny!
Day Eight

Things are getting very crowded. While watering the plants, I met a crab named Fred. I offered him my fin and he nearly cut it off. Even Mr. Bubbles is afraid of him. Fred says I should stay on my side of the bowl. “Look,” I said, “the whole bowl is my side of the bowl.” He snapped his claw and Mervin fainted.

I gotta get out of here.
Top New Titles

What Do You Do With An Idea?
by Kobi Yamada (2013)

- Personification
- Plot
- Theme
- STEM

Written by Kobi Yamada Illustrated by Mae Besom
I showed it to other people even though I was afraid of what they would say. I was afraid that if people saw it, they would laugh at it. I was afraid they would think it was silly.

And many of them did. They said it was no good. They said it was too weird. They said it was a waste of time and that it would never become anything.
Top New Titles

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind, by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer (2012)

- Science: Wind Energy
- Biography
- Inference
- Sequence
After many weeks, William arranged his pieces in the dirt: a broken bicycle, rusted bottle caps, and plastic pipe, even a small generator that powered a headlight on a bike.

For three days, he bolted, banged, and tinkered while chickens squawked and dogs barked and neighbors shook their heads, saying, "What’s misala doing now?"
Top New Titles

Mi Familia Calaca, by Cynthia Weill (2013)

- World Lang. & ESOL
- Word Choice
- Day of the Dead study
Hi, I'm Anita.
Let me introduce my family!
I'm the daughter.

Hola soy Anita.
Presento mi familia!
Soy la hija.
Reflect:

1. How much attention does your picture book collection need to be a ready resource for your staff?

2. What other supports do you need for this to become a reality for you and your staff?
Thanks!

Feel free to come look at the books...  
Be sure to take a handout!

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