

Illinois Reading Council



Empowering
Lives
Through
Literacy

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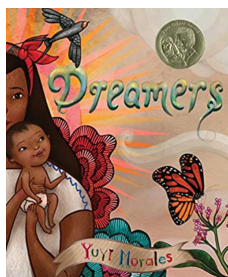
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MARINATE WRITERS IN THE LANGUAGE OF BOOKS

By Maria Walther



*Books became our language.
Books became our home.
Books became our lives.
We learned to read, to speak, to write,
and to make our voices heard.*

~ Yuyi Morales, *Dreamers*, 2018

I was an undergrad at NIU when my professor, Dr. Pamela Farris, took us on a field trip that altered the trajectory of my professional life. We drove off campus and were welcomed into a house. As we made our way down the steps, we entered the magical world of Estelle von Zellen's basement book shop. It was on that day that I bought the first picture book for my classroom library, *The Napping House* by Audrey Wood. Since then, I've had a career-long fascination with children's books. I believe in the power of a well-chosen text and use the language of books in every facet of my teaching, especially when guiding writers.

Early in my career, I went to conferences and soaked up knowledge from writing gurus like Donald Graves, Ralph Fletcher, Katie Wood Ray, and Ruth Culham. Their insights were in sync with what I noticed in my classroom—writers need to be immersed in the language of books. Let's look at two ways that book language supports writers.

Book Language Supports Writers Who Tell Their Own Stories

Students who are writing personal narratives or memoirs benefit from reading stories written with a strong first-person voice like the ones pictured below. As writers are absorbing the language of the story, guide them to notice craft techniques by saying something like, "When you're writing a personal narrative or memoir, the main character is going to be you. Let's read some books that are told from the point of view of the main character and see what we can learn." Then, continue the read-like-a-writer conversation with questions like these:

- Who is telling the story?
- What are the clues?
- How would you describe the main character?
- Which techniques did the author use to help you understand the main character? Did they write about or show any of these: The character's actions? The character's words or dialogue? The character's inner thoughts? The other characters' reactions to the main character?
- How might you add actions, dialogue, or inner thinking to help readers get to know your main character?



Sunrise





Book Language Sparks Inquiry and Supports Writers of Informational Text

When writers are gathering research in order to share facts with their readers, introduce them to mentor authors like Candace Fleming, Steve Jenkins, Jess Keating, April Pulley Sayre, Melissa Stewart, and Don Tate, just to name a few. Writing alongside these informational text experts will give their nonfiction pieces a bit more pizzazz. In their book *5 Kinds of Nonfiction* (Stewart & Correia, 2021, p. 57), the authors suggest the following questions when studying nonfiction writing:

- How did the beginning grab you as a reader?
- Is there anything about how the text is organized that made it easier to read?
- What are the new or important words you learned? How did the author help you understand the meaning of those words?
- How do the nonfiction features help you grasp the information?
- Did the author make you want to learn more about this topic? If yes, how did they do that?

As you mentor your writers, rely on the language of the books. Keep a stack of mentor texts handy so that learners can access them as they are writing or you can refer to them when you're conferring with writers. You will not only be supporting students as writers, but also helping them to better understand the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing.

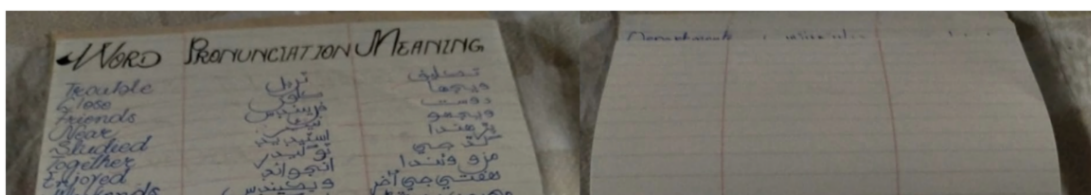
DEVELOPING VOCABULARY IN L2: USING L1 AS POWERFUL TOOL (A STRATEGY)

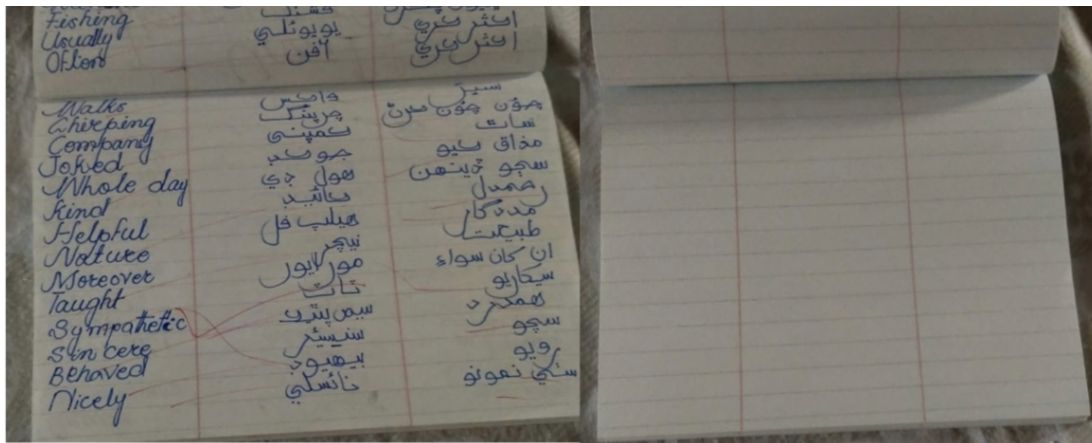
By Nelofar Khamisani

Developing vocabulary is one of the essential parts for English language acquisition (Wright, 2010; Arvizu, 2020). Bilingual students who have language one (L1) power, and can read and write L1 can utilize their prior knowledge to understand the meaning, correct pronunciation, and proper use of language two (L2) words by applying the following strategy.

According to Jim Cummins (1981) argument, "L1 and L2 are interdependent." Jane Mandalios (2012) opposed restricting the use of L1 for learning L2. I agree with both. The strategy Making a Treasure Book is one I applied in my classroom as an ESL teacher in the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan and found a positive change in the progress of students' learning vocabulary. I realized we cannot deny the importance of L1 for learning L2 so, bilingual students should be encouraged to use L1 as their power.

Making a Treasure Book





- Divide a page into three or four columns.
- The first column is for writing new words of L2. (The words students listen or read anywhere during the day and find new for them.)
- The second column is for writing the pronunciation of the new words in L1.
- The third column is for writing the meaning of the word in L1.
- The fourth column is optional (depending on grade level and need of students), and it has many options: writing category (noun/verb...), syntax, plural form, synonym, antonym, and past tense of the original word by using L2.

In this way, if students learn two words daily, then they can learn approximately 400 words by the end of the academic year. If students work on the columns, the number of learning words can be doubled.

Students can work individually; otherwise, a small group or pair activity in the classroom is ideal for the strategy. The activity is divided into two parts. Columns 1 & 2 can be homework, which students can do with the help of parents or individually, or it can be a group activity in the classroom; the teacher can discuss columns 3 & 4 in the classroom.

The strategy works well for grade 4 onward because ELLs in these grades may have a good understanding of L1. A classroom teacher can apply this strategy with a Weekly Spelling List and motivate students to collect all words in a notebook that might be a Treasure Book for each ELL.

References

- Arvizu, M. N. G. (2020). L2 Vocabulary Acquisition through Narratives in an EFL Public Elementary School. *IAFOR Journal of Education*, 8(1), 115-128.
- Cummins, J. (1981). Empirical and theoretical underpinnings of bilingual education. *Journal of education*, 163(1), 16-29.
- Mandalios, J. (2013). Power and pedagogy in ELT: Native-speaker teachers and the case of bilingual dictionaries and L1. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 23(2), 202-225.
- Wright, W. E. (2010). Foundations for Teaching English Language Learners: Research, Theory. *Policy, and Practice*. Philadelphia: Caslon Publishing, 53-59.

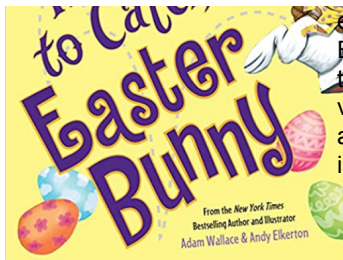
FAMILY LITERACY BOOKSHELF

By Barb Ashton, IRC Family Literacy Committee Chair

April is heading our way with the promise of warmer sunny days. During April we celebrate Easter, National Library Week (www.ala.org/aasl/slm), and National Poetry Month (www.poets.org). April is also Autism Awareness Month, Sexual Assault Month, Humor Month, and Opening Day of your favorite baseball team.

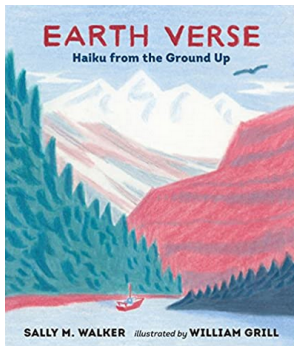


Easter comes late this year. To celebrate this springtime holiday, **How to Catch the Easter Bunny** by Adam Wallace is a cute story told in rhyming text. The mythical Easter Bunny needs to deliver the Easter

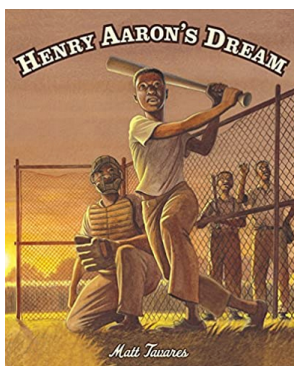


eggs before dawn. Setting out on his journey with a basket of goodies, the Easter Bunny soon encounters a trap set by the children. Able to escape the first trap, the Easter Bunny continues his journey while encountering various other traps. Within the rhyming text are many interesting facts about rabbits and Easter traditions. The cute cartoon and brightly colorful illustrations enhance the story and the anticipation of celebrating Easter.

This is a story to read aloud to your preschool – kindergarten students. *How to Catch the Easter Bunny* can be viewed on YouTube.

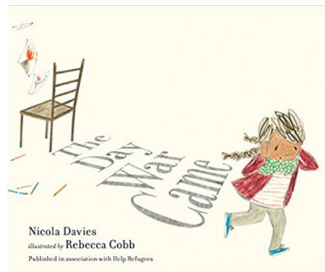


During April we celebrate various types and forms of poetry. We also celebrate Earth Day. ***Earth Verse: Haiku from the Ground Up*** by Sally M. Walker, an Illinois Reads Author, is a one-of-a-kind book that combines both poetry and earth science. Each of the poems gives scientific information about earthquakes, volcanoes, rocks, etc. The illustrations that accompany each poem can give students a different perspective of the world around them. In the corner of each page is a small icon that refers the reader to the back of the book for additional scientific information. *Earth Verse: Haiku from the Ground Up* is a book that can relate to your curriculum and is a nice way to introduce earth science or poetry to your late primary and middle grade students.



Henry Aaron's Dream by Matt Tavares is the biographical story of Henry Aaron's perseverance and determination to become a major leaguer. As a young boy Henry didn't have a perfect batting technique but he could hit the ball better than any of his pals. In 1947 things changed when Jackie Robinson was signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers to play Major League Baseball. Having a role model in Jackie, Henry becomes more determined to become an MLB player. In 1951 Henry signed a semi pro contract whereby he played only on Sundays to keep his promise to his mother that he would not quit high school. MLB scouts came to see him play but his auditions went poorly due to his small stature and strange batting grip. However, one of the scouts from the Braves helped Henry change his batting grip. As a result his hitting improved dramatically. The Braves eventually offered Henry a minor league contract. While working his way

up through the minors, Henry endured verbal abuse, racial slurs, discrimination, and physical assaults. Through practice, determination, and refusal to respond to racist comments, Henry achieved his dream when the Milwaukee (later Atlanta) Braves signed him to an MLB contract. Henry's records as a professional ballplayer were impressive, including hitting more homeruns than any other player, including Babe Ruth. *Henry Aaron's Dream* is a great book for Black History Month, baseball fans, biographies, and overcoming adversity. It also lends itself to many other classroom activities. A Discussion Guide can be found at www.candlewick.com. You can also see *Henry Aaron's Dream* on YouTube.



In recent weeks we have seen on TV, social media, in newspapers, and magazines the result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. We have seen many Ukrainians, especially the elderly, women and children of all ages, fleeing their country. We've also learned of the many Ukrainians who have lost their lives as a result of this invasion. A book that addresses this injustice is ***The Day War Came*** by Nicola Davies. It tells the story of a little girl enjoying breakfast with her family and then heading off to school with her mother. While at school she learns about volcanoes and does a drawing of a bird and then suddenly bombs begin to fall and explode. Everything changes and she has no understanding of why this

is happening. Gathering her things she runs home only to discover that everything has been destroyed. Frightened, scared, lonely, and hungry, she joins other children and adults running to seek shelter. She eventually comes upon a refugee camp and finds a small corner with a blanket. One day, while looking for her family without any success thus far, the little girl comes upon a school. She goes inside but is told there isn't any room, as there are no more chairs for her to sit on. The next day a little boy from the school comes to her refugee camp and finds her while holding a chair so she can come to the school, providing a glimmer of hope. *The Day War Came* is a good book that introduces children to the trauma of war and how it affects them, as well as understanding and hope. This is a book that can be read at all grade levels and provides many opportunities for discussion and writing. This is also a book that can be shared with parents. *The Day War Came* is on YouTube. There is also a Discussion Guide at www.candlewick.com. An additional resource (Google search the following title) to assist you for teaching about Ukraine is: *7 Sites and Sources for Teaching About Ukraine* by Eric Ofgang.

Looking Ahead

April 1: April Fool's Day – Find a funny joke and share it with someone today

April 2: International Children's Book Day – Marks the birthday of Hans Christian Andersen. It is a great day to read *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *The Ugly Duckling* or any fairy tale

April 2: Beginning of Ramadan

April 3-9: National Library Week – The Theme is Connect With Your Library

April 4: School Librarian Day – Be sure to thank your school librarian

April 9-16: Money Smart Week – Visit www.moneysmartweek.org for financial literacy ideas

April 17: Easter – Read a *Peter Rabbit* book

April 22: Earth Day

April 29: Arbor Day – It is the 150th Anniversary of the first planting of a tree. Go to www.arborday.org for activities. The Morton Arboretum in Lisle is also celebrating 100 Years. Go to www.mortonarb.org for further details.

April 30: Dia Children's Book Day – Go to <http://dia.ala.org> or www.patmora.com for more information

LITERACY LINKS

By Sheila Ruh, IRC Educational Media Committee Chair

Take a moment to review some of the Literacy Links provided by the IRC Educational Media Committee to help Illinois educators in today's classrooms.

Reading Passage Resources

[Youngzine](#)

This free resource is a one-of-a-kind website where children can learn about current news and events shaping their world in a simple, engaging and interactive manner. Young people can also contribute their own information to the Youngzine community.

Video Resources

[Vooks](#)

Vooks brings children's books to life with animated illustrations, read-a-long text and a narrated story. Teachers are able to get a one year subscription for free.

Interactive Resources

[Time Toast](#)

This interactive website allows students to create timelines in both horizontal and list modes. Create groups to work collaboratively as well. There are a variety of timelines to explore that are organized by subject which makes searching easy.

UPCOMING PD EVENTS

By the Illinois Reading Council

Don't forget to take advantage of some upcoming PD opportunities planned throughout Illinois.

- **April 6, 2022: IRC Webinar** on Visual Literacies: A Vehicle for Deepening Comprehension, Prompting Empowerment, & Cultivating Joy with Clare Donovan-Scane from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.
- **April 7, 2022: National Road Reading Council** will host Literature and Art Paint Night at 6:00 pm at the Effingham Public Library, 200 N. 3rd Street, Effingham, Illinois.
- **April 7, 2022: Prairie Area Reading Council** will host 5 Kinds of Non Fiction with Melissa Stewart from 6:30 to 7:30 pm via Zoom.
- **April 12, 2022: MID-State Reading Council** will host the last session of The Well-Balanced Teacher Book Study for registered participants at 4:30 pm at Gill Street Bar & Grill, 3002 Gill Street, Bloomington, Illinois.
- **April 20, 2022: Central Illinois Reading Council** will host the monthly CIRC Book Chats on alternating professional books and literature topics from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via Zoom.
- **April 23, 2022: Chicago Area Reading Association (CARA)** will host Strengthening the Core: Fluency, Vocabulary, Language with Tim Rasinski from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm at Roosevelt University - Schaumburg Campus, 1400 N Roosevelt Blvd, Schaumburg, Illinois..
- **April 26, 2022: National Road Reading Council** will host a Professional Book Talk at 6:00 pm at the Tuscan Hills Winery, 2200 Historic Hills Drive, Effingham, Illinois.
- **April 28, 2022: Starved Rock Reading Council** will host the Young Authors Celebration at 9:00 am at the Grand Bear Lodge, 2643 IL Route 178, Utica, Illinois.
- **April 30, 2022: Fox Valley Reading Council** will host Workshopping the Big Kids: Increasing Equity, Opportunity, and Comprehension with Diverse Texts for Grades 6 to 12 with Cindi Koudelka from 9:00 to 11:00 am at Geneva Public Library, 227 S 7th St, Geneva, Illinois.
- **May 1, 2022: IRC** is accepting [Literacy Support Grant](#) applications.
- **May 1, 2022 IRC** is accepting [International Grant](#) applications.

To view the full **IRC Events Calendar**, please visit the [IRC Website](#).

QUICK LINKS

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[Full IRC Events Calendar](#)

[Latest on the IRC Conference](#)

Available IRC Awards and Grants

Bring IRC PD to your School District

Learn more about the Illinois Reads Program

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See what's also happening on our social media sites:



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