

EMPOWERING LIVES THROUGH LITERACY

TEACHERS IN THE TRENCHES: FLIPPING OUT OVER FLIPGRID

By Alaina Weatherford

Up until four months ago, I had never heard of Flipgrid. What is Flipgrid? It is a web-based video platform where students can record and share videos. I was working with my 10-year-old son, and one of his remote learning assignments was to record a video on Flipgrid about Jerry Spinelli's *Wringer*. I instantly started stressing because I had never used the website. He said, "Don't worry, Mom. I got this!" I proceeded to watch him open the computer, access the Flipgrid page of his teacher, and create an awesome video to share with his classmates. We had a great time adding stickers, taking selfies, and watching his classmates' videos. I was in awe at how easily my son navigated the website. I was also a little ashamed that as a teacher, I had never used it with my own classes. I decided to remedy that.

I created my own free account (Flipgrid is free for educators) and recorded a book talk for my third and fourth grade readers about a book I had recently finished. I was able to put a link directly to our class Flipgrid page from our Google Classroom and made an optional assignment for the students to create their own book talk videos. What happened next blew my mind!

I had one very apathetic student in my class. She was a good kid who did her work and never misbehaved, but she never seemed excited about school or learning in general. I often wondered what I could do to ignite that love of learning inside her. Little did I know, she was really an actress who simply needed to be given the option of making her own videos!

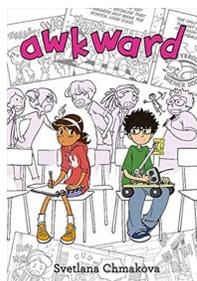
Using Flipgrid, I saw this student come alive! I had no idea how much personality she had. First, she made her own book talk videos. Then, she started commenting on all the videos her friends had made. Next, she started taking picture books from her house and reading them aloud for all her classmates to enjoy. When the school year had ended, she had made over 30 videos on Flipgrid. I could not believe it! Not only was this student finally excited, but she was also reading every day because she was video recording it for her friends.

I will continue utilizing Flipgrid this year and highly recommend it for remote learning. Teachers can use it for student introductions and icebreaker activities. Math students can share how they solved their problems. Worried about teaching music remotely? Have your music students record themselves singing or playing their instrument. The possibilities are endless!

FAMILY LITERACY BOOKSHELF

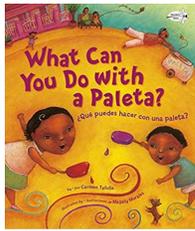
By Barb Ashton, IRC Family Literacy Committee Chair

Although our summer has been somewhat different we still had warm and pleasant days. The coolness and colorful season of autumn is fast approaching. The store shelves are getting bare of school supplies and being replaced by autumn décor, a sure sign that September is almost here.



Awkward by Svetlana Chmakova is a delightful graphic novel that captures and navigates the dynamics of being a middle grade student. This is the story of Peppi (Penelope Torres) who accidentally bumps into Jamie (a nice boy who happens to be the school NERD). Although Peppi feels terrible about the incident, she spends weeks trying to figure out how to apologize and thus avoids Jamie as much as possible. In the meantime, Peppi joins the art club and Jamie is a member of the science club. Both clubs become rivals and are suspended from participating in the all school fair. Upset over the suspension, Peppi and Jamie come up with an idea and plan for their respective clubs to work together on a project to regain their admittance to the all school fair. Does it work? You'll have to read *Awkward* to find out if Peppi ever apologizes to Jamie and if the plan works. *Awkward* is a story of friendship and a book all

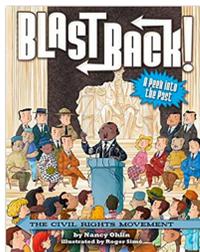
middle school students can relate to.



In honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, ***What Can You Do With a Paleta?*** by Carmen Tafolla is a colorful tale about a Hispanic girl who is proud of her barrio (village, town) and anxiously awaits the Paleta Man and his cart. Upon his arrival she describes all the various paleta (popsicle) flavors to choose and some fun things to do with a paleta, such as “paint your tongue purple and scare your brother.” Another feature of the book is the colorful illustrations, along with the introduction of some basic Spanish vocabulary. This book also relates our concept of the ice cream truck in America to the Hispanic culture. At the end of the book, the author gives a short background history of what a paleta is. *What Can You Do With a Paleta?* is a nice read aloud for parents, teachers, and librarians, and can be viewed on YouTube as well.



In light of all that has happened in regards to police violence and racism, a terrific book to share with your students and families is ***Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice*** by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard. The book follows two families – one black, one white – as they discuss and explain the shooting of an unarmed black man in their community. The parents try to explain the history of racism, slavery, and the unfair treatment of others because of skin color or their names. Both families share with Emma and Josh their ideas about how they can make things better in the future. When a new student from the Middle East arrives at their school the other students refuse to talk or associate with him. Josh and Emma are friends at school and following their discussion with their parents both children reach out to the Muslim boy, Omar. *Something Happened In Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice* is a great tool for parents, educators, and librarians. The back of the book contains a wealth of resources to start the conversation on social injustice. There's child friendly vocabulary and definitions, along with questions and dialogue. This book is beautifully illustrated and the text will hopefully encourage children to become more aware of the feelings of others and the impact they have on interacting with all classmates and people. *Something Happened In Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice* can also be viewed on YouTube.



The Civil Rights Movement (Blast Back!) by Nancy Ohlin is one in a new series of books for younger children. This nonfiction book makes the reader feel as if they traveled back to the Civil Rights era in American History. It covers everything from the Jim Crow period through various protests and the signing of the Civil Rights Act. There are also little known facts added as well as some humorous illustrations to enhance the content. *The Civil Rights Movement (Blast Back!)* makes a nice introduction of the topic for younger children, special needs, and ESL students.

September Reminders

September – Library Card Sign Up Month

September 8 – International Literacy Day

September 11 – Patriots Day

September 13 – Grandparents Day – Send a card, text message, or call to your grandparents

September 17 – Constitution Day

September 19 – Talk Like a Pirate Day

September 26 – Johnny Appleseed Day

LITERACY LINKS

By the IRC Educational Media Committee

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. Past links are also available on the [IRC Website](#).

Reading Passage Resources

[Actively Learn](#)

This online reading passage resource allows the teacher to embed questions, notes and media into reading passages to make reading an interactive activity. This resource works with Google Classroom and is a good tool for formative assessment and checking for comprehension throughout reading passages.

Comprehensive Resources

[SAS Curriculum Pathways](#)

This is a free online resource that provides interactive lessons, videos, audio tutorials, and apps for literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and Spanish. Resources can be searched by state standard, a keyword, a subject category, or a level. This is a great resource to use for differentiating instruction for your students.

Video Resources

[Storyline Online](#)

This award winning resource streams videos featuring celebrated actors reading children's books alongside creatively produced illustrations. Readers include Viola Davis, Chris Pine, Lily Tomlin, Kevin Costner, Annette Bening, James Earl Jones, Betty White and dozens more. This is a great resource to use with students to improve reading skills and get them excited about reading.

UPCOMING PD EVENTS

By the Illinois Reading Council

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

- **September 2, 2020: IRC Webinar** on Word Study that Works: Effective, Engaging, and Joyful Approaches to Phonics and Vocabulary Instruction planned with Tim Rasinski.
- **September 2, 2020: Illinois Valley Reading Council** will host a special showing of the IRC Webinar featuring Tim Rasinski from 6:30 to 8:00 pm at Morton Cinemas, 2115 South Main Street, Morton, Illinois.
- **September 2, 2020: Fox Valley Reading Council** will host a Wired Webinar Discussion following the Tim Rasinski webinar from 8:00 to 9:00 pm via a virtual platform.
- **September 8, 2020: International Literacy Day** is being celebrated by IRC.
- **September 12, 2020: Fox Valley Reading Council** will host a Fall Book Talk from 9:00 am to noon via a virtual platform.
- **September 12, 2020: Illinois Title I Association (ITA)** will host a Round Table Discussion for the 2nd in the Series: Sharing the Burden at 9:00 am via Zoom.
- **September 15, 2020: Will County Reading Council** will host Open Mic Book Share from 7:00 to 8:00 pm via a virtual platform.
- **September 16, 2020: West Suburban Reading Council** will host Engaging Students and Teachers with Pear Deck for Remote Learning with Chris Sorrell from 7:00 to 9:00 pm via Zoom.
- **September 17, 2020: Chicago Area Reading Association (CARA)** will host Celebrating the Global Read Aloud from 4:45 to 6:15 pm via Zoom.
- **September 24, 2020: Northern Illinois Reading Council** will host the Literacy Learning in Uncertain Times from 6:00 to 8:00 pm via Google Meets.
- **October 1, 2020: Prairie Area Reading Council** will host Literacy as a Tool for Healing from Trauma from 6:15 to 7:30 pm via Zoom.
- **October 7, 2020: IRC Webinar** on History's Beating Heart: Tools for Making Historical Figures Come to Life with Kate Hannigan.
- **October 7, 2020: Fox Valley Reading Council** will host a Wired Webinar Discussion following the Kate Hannigan webinar from 8:00 to 9:00 pm via a virtual platform.
- **October 7, 2020: East Central-EIU Reading Council** will host a special showing of the IRC Webinar featuring Kate Hannigan from 6:30 to 8:00 pm at Eastern Illinois University, Buzzard Auditorium, 1920 9th Street, Charleston, Illinois.
- **October 10, 2020: Illinois Title I Association (ITA)** will host SEL: Trauma Informed at 9:00 am via Zoom.
- **October 15, 2020: IRC** is accepting registrations for the Fall 2020 IRC Book Clubs for *Teaching Writing* by Lucy Calkins and/or *180 Days* by Kelly Gallagher and Penny Kittle.

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

QUICK LINKS

[Visit the IRC Website](#)

[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](#)

Questions? Please feel free to reach out to the Illinois Reading Council by email at irc@illinoisreadingcouncil.org or by phone at 309-454-1341.

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

