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LIBR 260A-01

Professor Penny Peck

April 10, 2013

**Assignment #3: Booktalks and Book Discussion Group, Genre: Mystery**

***Booktalk for Three Times Lucky***

Turnage, Sheila. (2012). *Three times lucky*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers. 256 pages. $16.99. Hardcover. ISBN-13: 978-0803736702.

Trouble arrived in the tiny farm town of Tupelo Landing, North Carolina (population 148) when one of the town residents, Mr. Jesse, was mysteriously found dead. The cozy summertime affairs of small town life are disrupted when outsider Detective Starr starts poking around, asking questions, and discovers that Jesse’s death was no accident. It was murder! Spunky, rising sixth grader, Moses LoBeau (Mo for short) and her best friend Dale Earnhardt Johnson III form the Desperado Detective Agency in attempt to clear Dale’s name as a suspect in Jesse’s murder and to find the real killer. As they dig deeper for answers, Mo continues on her own personal search for her “Upstream Mother”, who abandoned her as a baby 11 years ago during a devastating hurricane. Mo and Dale, hot on the trail of multiple clues, don’t realize the danger the ones they love most are in until Mo’s adoptive parents, the amnesic Colonel and the fabulous Miss Lana, go missing. Will Mo and Dale be able to find Jesse’s murderer in time before it is too late for the Colonel and Miss Lana?

***Book Discussion Group for Three Times Lucky***

A book discussion group, ideally for children ranging from the 4th-6th grades, is planned for Sheila Turnage’s debut novel, *Three Times Lucky.* This mystery novel features a unique cast of characters set in the backdrop of the fictional town of Tupelo Landing, North Carolina. Turnage, a North Carolina native, has perfectly captured the voices and realities of small town life in *Three Times Lucky*. Though the story centers on the main mystery, that of the murder of Mr. Jesse, there are many other mysterious plot lines that weave and intersect that make the reader want to continue with the story. Ultimately, while the some of the mysteries presented in the story are resolved in the ending the main message of the story is about how families can be made up of people who love each other as much as they can be made up those we are related to by blood. There are some mature themes presented in the book such as murder, alcoholism, domestic abuse, and child abandonment, so this book would probably be more appropriate for 5th and 6th grade students and it is generally accepted that this book is appropriate for the middle grades (Goodreads, 2013d). Despite the presence of these heavy topics, the unique voice of the protagonist, Mo and the many humorous stories and situations of the book do make it generally light-hearted and enjoyable. The presence of these heavy topics can also serve as a good starting point for a discussion about such issues. A maximum of 20 children will be allowed for the group, with registration required beforehand. Two librarians would ideally be in charge of the discussion groups (will vary depending on actual number of attendees) and volunteers or library support staff would help with setting up and assisting with activities.

Publicity for the book discussion group would happen in multiple ways. The event would be added to the children’s page of the library website, and the date of the event would be added to the library calendar (these are available electronically via the library website and in printed format available in each library). In envisioning how I would run this program, I had in mind the resources available at the public library I currently work at, the Berkeley Public Library. We recently installed television monitors that serve as electronic bulletin boards on each floor of our main library and in each of our branches. Running announcements presented in a bold graphical nature change every few minutes throughout the day. A catchy visual presentation would be created to be added to the announcements for these digital bulletin boards. A printed display and flyers would also be available specifically in the children’s department. Librarians and other support staff assisting patrons would also specifically refer to children falling into the targeted age groups during readers’ advisory interactions, during check-out, or other such interactions when directly speaking with children who could be interested in the program. Lastly, outreach to nearby elementary schools, especially schools with which there are already established relationships with teachers and principals would be targeted. A short presentation could be given to students by a librarian directly. This would include the book talk written for the book, information on how to obtain a copy of the book, date and time of the book discussion, and contact information of the library. Flyers would be handed out to students as well to bring home to parents.

The format of the program will be as follows: 1) introductions and ice breaker activity, 2) book discussion, 3) book related activities, and 4) refreshments and closing.

*1) Introductions and Ice Breaker*

As children enter the book discussion they will be directed to a sign-in area. The sign-in area will have a sign-in sheet for them to write down their name, grade, and school. The sign-in area will also have piles of name tag stickers for each participant to fill out, and stacks of printed half-sheets with the questions that will lead the later book discussion portion. Nametags will not be pre-printed in case there are no-shows or last minute additions and to save time on pre-printing and on resources. Chairs will be pre-arranged in a circle in the center of the room, children will be able to sit wherever they are comfortable.

The ice-breaker will be an adaptation of “the name game” (Activity Village, 2012). Name of characters from *Three Times Lucky* will be pre-printed on post-it notes (examples: Mo, Dale, Mr. Jesse, the Colonel, Miss Lana, Miss Lacy Thornton, Anna Celeste, Mr. Li, Mayor Little, Detective Starr, Azalea Woman, Miss Retzyl, Lavender, Miss Rose, Skeeter McMillian, Deputy Marla, Upstream Mother, Thes Thompson, Robert Slate, Mr. Macon). Then each participant will be given a different post-it note. They will not be allowed to see what is printed on it, and they must stick it on their forehead, so the rest of the discussion group will be able to read it. Everyone will be allowed to move around the room and ask each discussion member one question about their character. After everyone has had the chance to ask each other one question, everyone will sit back in the discussion circle. We will then go around the room and have each person say aloud what they think their post-it character is, and then they can remove the post-it and reveal their character. This will be a good ice breaker to get everyone to talk to each other and to think about some of the many different characters from *Three Times Lucky* in a fun and relaxed environment. This portion of the program will ideally take 30-35 minutes, depending on the number of book discussion participants.

*2) Book Discussion*

If a larger crowd is present for the book discussion (20 participants) then the group will be broken down into two smaller groups of 10 children each. If a smaller crowd is present (15 participants or less), the group will not be broken down. Each group will get an inflatable beach ball. The librarian will read the discussion question aloud first. Then she will toss the beach ball to a member of the group. They have the choice of answering the question or passing. After they share their thoughts, they toss the beach ball to another member of the group until each person has gotten the ball once. Any subsequent discussion on the question is free to happen after each person has gotten a chance to share their initial response to the discussion question. After no one has anything left to discuss, or after 15 minutes of discussion, the librarian group leader will proceed to read the next discussion question. After all of the printed discussion questions are posed and talked about, a chance for book discussion participants to share any other non-discussed topics or to ask any questions will be provided.

Discussion Questions:

1. The story takes place in the fictional town of Tupelo Landing, North Carolina. The population of the town is only 148 residents. In the story, what are some of the benefits of living in such a small town? What are some of the downsides? How would you compare your own experience of growing up in an urban city to Mo and Dale’s experiences?
2. Why does Mo keep notebooks looking for the clues of her life? Why does she continue to send out letters in search of her “Upstream Mother”?
3. Describe some of the different types of families present in the story. What do you think makes up a family? Do you know anyone with a unique family structure?
4. Dale’s father, Mr. Macon, is portrayed as an alcoholic and is physically abusive to his family. What is the impact of Mr. Macon’s actions on his family? What would you do if Dale was your friend?
5. “**Foreshadowing** gives readers clues about what might happen later in a story. Foreshadowing also ‘sets up’ future events so you’re prepared for them and they make sense” (Education.com, 2013). Can you think of any specific examples from the story that helped to foreshadow who was responsible for Mr. Jesse’s murder? Did foreshadowing help you understand the story and the ending better? Why or why not?
6. Part of a reading a mystery is finding out “whodunit” at the end. We find out many of the answers to the different mysteries presented in the book, but not all of time. For example Mo never finds out who her Upstream Mother is. Do all mysteries have to reveal answers at the end? Why or why not? Were you satisfied with ending of the book or did you want to know more? How would you re-write the ending?

Additional questions:

1. Why do you think Mr. Jesse donated money to the Church anonymously?
2. Why does Dale always wear a black t-shirt?
3. Mo and Anna Celeste (Attila) have never gotten along since they were small children. Do you think this rivalry is good or bad? Do you think they could ever get over their differences to become friends?
4. What do you think Dale means when he says to Mo, “You think you’re the only person that ever got thrown away?” (page 244)?
5. What do you think Miss Lana changed the family last name?
6. Why do you think Miss Lana is always changing her appearance with wigs and costumes? Why does she decorate and give the Café different themes?

*3) Book Related Activities*

There will be four activities that will be related to the book in different table stations set up around the room. At each activity area there will be an introduction to the activity, a set of instructions, and any related materials needed for the activity. Volunteers and library staff will be positioned at each of these stations to help out with the different activities. Each activity will be given a brief introduction, but in-depth instructions will be given at each activity station. General guidelines for activities: 1) No more than 5 children at each activity, 2) Keep your work area neat so the next kid can enjoy the activity after you are done, 3) Be safe, 4) Ask for help from an adult if you need it.

1. *Message in a Bottle*
2. *Instructions*: Write your own message in a bottle! Mo writes letters and places them in bottles as part of her search for her Upstream Mother, but you will be writing a note or letter to kids in another state (or country).
   1. Take a piece of paper, and write a message about what life is like for you or an inspirational message. Need ideas? You can write about your family, your favorite foods, your favorite books, or your favorite hobbies. Feel free to get creative! Draw a picture or decorate your letter with the provided art supplies.
   2. Once you are done, roll up your paper and place it in an empty water bottle. Screw on the cap and place it in the box marked, “Completed Bottles.”
   3. Since we do not want to litter or pollute our oceans and waterways we will be mailing everyone’s bottles to an elementary school or public library in one of our city’s sister cities.
3. *Preparation and Materials:* We will need to collect empty water and drink bottles- we can check our library recycling bins for free resources and e-mail coworkers to bring in their used bottles at least a month in advance. Bottles can be soaked in hot soapy water to remove any labels. Contact a public library or elementary school in a sister city of the city of Berkeley (most of these are outside of the country but there are some Native American tribes within the United States that would be suitable) to get pre-approval from a children’s librarian or teacher. Place all bottles in a box afterwards and postmark box to be sent with the library’s outgoing mail. Simple art supplies like markers, colored pencils, glue, glitter, and crayons need to be provided for letter writers.
4. *Balloon Race Cars (adapted from PBS Kids, 2012)*
5. *Instructions:* Lavender loves cars more than anything and Mo and Dale help to make his racing dreams a reality. Make your own working race car out of recycled and everyday items! See if your creation has what it takes to win the race!
   1. There are 5 different parts that will make up your race car: 1) Jet (used to propel and move your car), 2) Body, 3) Axels (what the wheels of your car will connect to), 4) Wheels, 5) Connector (for attaching wheels to an axle). Follow the directions to make each part of your race car and on how to put them all together to make your finished car:
      1. First make the jet. Put the long end of a flexible straw into a balloon. Attach the straw and balloon can escape, use the duct tape provided to secure the balloon to the straw.
      2. Select what you would like to use for the body of your race car from the provided materials: toilet paper tubes, plastic water bottles, empty juice box, or disposable cup. Get creative! Decorate your car in a unique way to make it stand out from everyone else’s cars.
      3. Insert straws into the holes that are pre-punched in the body of your cars. Slide the straw through the two holes, adjust it so the axle goes straight across. Slide a wooden skewer through each straw.
      4. Wedge a square of sponge (or a chunk of Play-Doh) into a bottle cap to make the wheels of your race car. Push each completed wheel onto the ends of the wooden skewers. Make sure your center the wheels so they will not be wobbly and spin evenly. Do this for all 4 wheels.
      5. Place the jet you made in the first step into your completed race car. Push the jet into place so that the straw’s balloon end pokes out the tape and the open end pokes out the back. Make sure the straw at the back is as parallel to the floor or tabletop as possible, so your car can move as fast as possible.
      6. To power the jet, blow up the balloon by blowing through the straw. Put your finger over the end of the straw to stop air from escaping. When you are ready to set your car off, set it down, and release your finger from the straw!
   2. At the end of the program we will have a mini-NASCAR race. Test out your cars to see what makes them go the furthest.
6. *Preparation and Materials*: This activity will require lots of materials for children to make their own cars. Luckily, most of the items are inexpensive or can be salvaged from the recycling bin and from co-workers. Supplies that will need to be purchased are plastic straws, balloons, wooden barbeque skewers, sponges or clay such as Play-Doh. Most of these items can easily be purchased from a dollar or craft store. Normally this activity requires lots of cutting and punching of holes, especially for the bodies of the cars. To avoid children getting injured with sharp scissors and other tools necessary to make these holes and to save on time, staff can pre-punch holes and cut out sections for the bodies of cars. A handheld hole-puncher can be used for holes to place the straw axels in, and scissors and x-acto knives can be used to cut out sections of the car bodies to place the balloon straw jets.
7. *Design a Book Cover*
8. *Instructions*: A book cover can convey different meanings to those who have and haven’t read a book. In this activity you will use your imagination, creativity, and knowledge of the story to create an alternate cover for *Three Times Lucky*.
   1. Your book cover should have clear and readable type, include the title of the book and the name of the author, Sheila Turnage.
   2. Colors can create different moods: bright colors can convey happiness and dull colors can convey sadness. What color scheme will you choose to convey your message?
   3. Look at the covers of different books that are set up on the table as inspiration for your own book.
   4. Get creative! Choose from an assortment of different colored papers and art supplies to create your alternate book cover.
   5. Have fun! Your imagination is the limit of this activity and there is no “wrong” or “right” to present your unique cover. Need ideas? Pick a favorite scene, location, or character from the book to put on your book cover.
9. *Preparation and Materials:* Different colored sheets of construction paper and art supplies will be provided to children. Colored pencils, markers, crayons, scissors, glue, and glitter will all be needed. In order to give children ideas for their own book covers, pull examples from the bookshelves to display on the table where children will be working.
10. *Mystery Exploration Computer Area*
    1. *Instructions*: On each of the laptops and iPads you will find a website (<http://bookdiscussiongroup.weebly.com/>) that has been created for this unit of our book discussion group. Many of these links are to interactive games where you get the chance to be a detective, look for clues, and solve mysteries. Please make sure to wear the provided headphones when you are on a website that has sound. Please do not visit websites other than those provided on the website. A 30 minute time limit will be placed on these laptops and iPads, but you are free to explore as many of the websites as you like during that time. Have fun!
    2. *Preparation and Materials:* Laptops, iPads, and headphones for each will need to be reserved during use for this session. Laptops and iPads are currently not in high demand at the library, so their reservation shouldn’t be a problem. The use of these portable computers and tablets will help with easy set-up (instead of having to drag in large and bulky desktop computers.) A website with the links will have to be prepared and created beforehand, and the content on the sites needs to be tested and checked prior to the program to make sure content is appropriate for children. I have created a sample of what such a website would look like (<http://bookdiscussiongroup.weebly.com/>) using the free website creator, Weebly, along with 8 links (obtained from Cheek, 2007; Indianapolis Public Library, 2013; Learn4Good, 2013) of mystery material that I feel would be appropriate and fun for children. This activity will be the easiest to set-up and clean-up, and also the most cost effective as nothing needs to be purchased for the activity. If reusing the site in the future, links will need to be tested to make sure content remains up to date.

*4) Closing Activity and Refreshments*

To bring the discussion group back together from the individual activities, a group activity will be held and refreshments will be served. Food is a big part of the book as much of the story revolves around the Café that Mo’s adoptive parents own. Triangles of Miss Lana’s chicken salad sandwiches and Mo’s favorite tomato sandwiches will be served. To save money on the costs of premade food, all food will be prepared by librarians in the library staff kitchen the day of the event. The recipe for Mo’s tomato sandwich comes from the book (page 236), “fat homegrown tomatoes, double mayo, salt and pepper” and recipe for chicken salad will be from an online food site (About.com, 2013). Bottles of lemonade and sweet tea will be purchased to serve with the sandwiches. Total estimated costs of food, drink, plates, cups, and napkins will be $40. The closing group activity will be a mini-NASCAR race of all of the constructed balloon race cars. There will be multiple qualifying races held, with 5 cars racing against each other at a time. The winner of each race will go on to the final round. After all of the qualifying races are done, the final race made up of the winners will be held. The car that can go the furthest wins. The winner gets to choose between a gift certificate to the Friends of the Library bookstore or a paperback book (leftovers from the summer reading game). All of the participants get to bring home their race car creations and their book covers. Photographs will be taken to be placed on the library website and to promote future book discussion group events. Thank participants for coming to the event, remind them of the book for the next book discussion, and encourage them to check out the related book display area. The book display will provide several other mystery novels that book discussion participants can take and check out as they leave the program.

***Booktalks for Other Mystery Books***

Dowd, Siobhan. (2007). *The London Eye mystery*. New York, NY: David Fickling Books. 323 pages. $15.99. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-0375849763.

No one can disappear into thin air. Can they? Ted’s cousin Salim and his Aunt Glo are visiting his family in London before their big move across the pond to New York City. Ted is a bit of an oddball who loves predicting the weather, can remember facts, and describes his brain as running on a “different operating system.” Ted and his older sister Kat are on break from school and are stuck with the responsibility of entertaining Salim as the grown-ups catch up. While in line for tickets to the famous London Eye, they are approached by a stranger offering them an unwanted ticket, and they give it to Salim because he is their guest. They saw Salim board a capsule of the London Eye, but when the doors open again exactly 30 minutes later Salim is nowhere to be found. As hours and days pass, and Salim still remains missing, Kat feels guilty that Salim got lost on her watch. She enlists Ted to help her search for Salim which leads them on a journey following clues across London. Did Salim vanish into thin air, was he kidnapped or did he run away? Ultimately, Ted’s unique mind holds the key to understanding and solving this mystery.

Messner, Kate. (2012). *Capture the flag*. New York, NY: Scholastic Press. 231 pages. $16.99. Hardcover. ISBN-10: 0545395399, ISBN-13: 978-0545395397.

A national treasure has been stolen, and it is up to three kids to find it! Anna, José, and Henry have never met each other before, but they quickly become acquainted after they get stuck in a Washington D.C. airport after a massive snowstorm. During their time together, it is revealed that the famous flag that inspired the “Star-Spangled Banner” has been stolen from the Smithsonian Museum and may be located in the very same airport they are stuck in. When the children find out they are all related to members of the Silver Jaguar Society, a secret organization made up of descendants of famous historical figures who seek to protect important historical artifacts, they realize it is up to them to help find the flag and the thieves. As they investigate suspects in the airport, another one of their new airport friends Sinan and his family’s orchestra Sounds for a Little Planet, become implicated in the crime. Will Anna, Jose and Henry be able to race against time to find the stolen flag and bring the real thieves to justice?

Stead, Rebecca. (2012). *Liar & Spy*. New York, NY: Wendy Lamb Books. 192 pages. $15.99. Hardcover. ISBN-13: 978-0385737432, ISBN-10: 0385737432.

It all started with a note printed on sheet of loose-leaf paper with the message, “Spy Club Meeting- TODAY!” found near the garbage cans in Georges’ Brooklyn apartment building. Things had not be going well for 13-year old Georges (the s is silent) at school or at home. At school, he is constantly teased by bullies over his unusual name and only has one sort-of friend. At home, Georges is in the midst of moving from his childhood home to a smaller apartment because his father lost his job, and he rarely gets to see his mother who takes as many extra shifts she can at the hospital where she is a nurse. Georges’ father’s response to the note sets off a chain of events that leads Georges to making friends with a strange boy who lives in his new apartment building named Safer. Safer begins Georges on a strict regime of everything spy to teach him to notice the details of his surroundings. As their training progresses, Safer reveals to Georges his suspicions of one of their neighbor’s, Mr. X, who is always wearing black and is often seen leaving his apartment with two big suitcases. As they delve deeper into Mr. X’s life, Georges’ spy training leads him to uncover the answers to mysteries he hadn’t originally considered.

Raskin, Ellen. (2003). *The Westing game.* New York, NY: Dutton Children’s Books. 182 pages. $16.99. Hardcover. ISBN-10: 0525471375. (Original work published 1978).

What would you do for 200 million dollars? Would you play a game for it? Sixteen seemingly unrelated residents of Sunset Towers are called to the mysteriously empty mansion of eccentric millionaire Samuel W. Westing to hear his last will and testament. They are told that they are all the potential heirs to the Westing paper fortune, if they can figure out who of the group is responsible for his death. Unlikely pairs are formed and sets of clues are given to each. There are many twists and turns presented throughout the story. As the game progresses, hidden secrets are revealed, and suspicions between neighbors and families rise. How are the lives of all of these very different people connected, and how will they lead to the murderer? The “game” takes a dangerous tone when the players become snowbound in Sunset Towers and a bomber starts to sabotage them. This book is one of my all-time favorites. The mystery will have you on your toes trying figure out which of the sixteen residents is the murderer and which one of them will have what it takes to figure out the mystery before the deadline.

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