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See Me Shine: Developing Character Through Books for Children Ages 3-6

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Recommended Citation

Oakley, Shelley; Schwedt, Rachel; and DeLong, Janice, "See Me Shine: Developing Character Through Books for Children Ages 3-6" (2017). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 109.

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See Me Shine

Developing Character Through Books

Volume 1

Ages 3 to 6

By

Janice DeLong

Shelley Oakley

Rachel Schwedt

Introduction

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Introduction

Selecting books for preschoolers and beginning readers that engage such a young audience, yet teach values that parents and educators desire, is an elusive task. In *See Me Shine: Developing Character through Books* you will find just such titles. Whether your role is that of parent, grandparent, guardian, counselor, or educator, we believe that you will find this resource one that you will return to often. We have chosen titles that may result in wrinkles of concentration in the little brow, questions for the adult reader, or giggles of amusement bubbling up from young readers and readers-to-be.

Our book, although originally inspired by the Six Pillars of Character (see www.JosephsonInstitute.org), has become our unique creation. With a nod of appreciation to the Institute, and the enormous contribution it makes to character education, we, the authors, salute the importance of the six pillars, and add four of our own. Our chapter titles speak for themselves—Caring, Citizenship, Cooperation, Courage, Fairness, Inspiration, Knowledge, Respect, Responsibility, and Trustworthiness.

The format of *See me Shine* includes a description of each title, a critique, any awards won by the book, a listing of subjects that relate to the classroom or to daily living, and the character themes that are demonstrated in the text. Most titles will, necessarily, be read aloud by an adult while some have simple or repeated vocabulary that beginning readers will enjoy tackling for themselves.

As the title indicates, we believe that as children hear stories of courage, caring, responsibility and the other traits, they will want to rise to similar difficult occasions in their lives with bright hope and strong character. As adults, we have enjoyed these books for the youngest, and we believe that other grown-up readers will as well—an important quality for those who may find themselves back within the covers of the same volumes again and again.

We wish you joy in the journey,
Janice, Shelley, and Rachel

Chapter 1 - Caring

Brett, Jan (author and illustrator), *Gingerbread Baby*. G.P. Putnam's Sons/Penguin Young Readers Group, 2003. ISBN: 0399234446

Description:

Internationally enjoyed, this cumulative tale has a unique hero in Brett's retelling. When Matti's mother lights the wood stove and takes down the recipe book, Matti cannot wait to have a taste of the yummy treat. It is the boy's impatience that gives readers the story. Along with baking time, the cookbook also warns, "do not peek" until the time is up, but Matti opens the oven door and out jumps a gingerbread baby. The saucy little fellow leads Matti's parents, the villagers, and several curious animals on a lively chase. However, Matti has a plan of his own and all ends with creativity, caring, and a child hero.

Critique:

Brett delights her audience, young and old, with a heart-warming story and illustrations so beautiful that readers may consider booking passage to the setting, Switzerland. As always, Brett has decorated borders with significant scenes that foreshadow action. She has also chosen in this volume, to include a multitude of small drawings reflecting the Swiss culture. Adult reader and young listener will have much to talk about as they share these delicious pages. This tale is also available in a somewhat abbreviated version in board book format for the youngest audience. Barnes & Noble offers an online interview with Brett making her own cookies and explaining why she has chosen a non-traditional ending to her story.

Awards: Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year

Related Subjects: Cooking, Folktales, Food, Switzerland

Character Themes: Caring, Creativity, Humor

Buehner, Caralyn, *I Want to Say I Love You*. Illustrated by Jacqueline Rogers. Scholastic Inc., 2001. ISBN: 0439475813

Description:

In brief and beautiful prose, a mother reassures her son of her love for him. Beginning in the morning with his "porcupine-ish hair" and moving through the child's busy day, she ends with the snuggly reading time at bedtime, reminding him each step of the way of her love. During read aloud times, the repeated affirmation of, "I love you." will soon become a welcome declaration by the child listener as he or she supplies the much-valued expression of affection.

Critique:

With simple text and large, bright illustrations, this picture book is a delight for both parent and child. The darker skinned mother and child offer identification for the non-Anglo family. Rogers' cut paper and acrylic art is the perfect accompaniment to hold the attention of the preschool and primary school audience. This picture book begs to be read aloud within the family.

Related Subjects: Diversity, Family, Mother-son relationships

Character Themes: Caring, Family love

Ernst, Lisa Campbell (author and illustrator), *Sylvia Jean: Scout Supreme*. Dutton Children's Books, 2010. ISBN: 9780525478737.

Description:

When Sylvia Jean learns that the next badge her Pig Scout Troop will be working on is the Good Deed Badge, she has the perfect plan. Her neighbor Mrs. VanHooven is laid up with a twisted ankle and Sylvia Jean knows just the way to cheer her up. When her over-enthusiasm turns things upside down, the doctor bans the little pig from her neighbor's house. Not to be denied, Sylvia Jean cleverly creates a whole new strategy to accomplish her goal. To execute the plan, however, the little pig must fool her neighbor and Sylvia wonders if by using trickery, she has forfeited the right to claim the coveted badge.

Critique:

The author has infused this picture book with energy and humor. Sylvia Jean is a delightful character, full of spunk and good intentions. When one plan fails, she cleverly substitutes another. This book would be an excellent read aloud providing much to initiate discussion as well as being a fun story. The expressive illustrations are done in warm pastels with cameos on each page expanding the story line. Young children will relate to having big ideas but not always having the experience and wisdom to know how to execute them well. Those who are scouts should appreciate the scouting references.

Related Subjects: Animals, Neighbors, Pigs, Scouting,

Character Themes: Ambition, Audacity, **Caring**, Cleverness, Creativity, Determination, Humor, Initiative, Neighborliness, Spunk

Fox, Mem, *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge*. Illustrated by Julie Vivas. Kane/Miller Book Publishers, 1985. ISBN: 0916291049

Description:

Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge lives next door to a nursing home and has made friends with its residents. His favorite person is Miss Nancy Alison Delacourt Cooper, since she has four names just as he does. When he hears that Miss Nancy has lost her memory, Wilfred Gordon goes to each of his elderly friends with his query, "What's a memory?" Each person gives the child his or her account of the abstract term. Soon, Wilfred Gordon is seeking out his own concrete version of their descriptions. As Wilfred surprises Miss Nancy with each gift, she does indeed find her unique memories. The author's delightful dialogue with its subtle humor like, "long ago last summer" and the child's sense of values make this volume as much of a treasure as the trove Wilfred Gordon shares with Miss Nancy. Julie Vivas' illustrations capture the aged characters with affectionate humor.

Critique:

The plot of this memorable picture book is driven by the sharing of life and communication across generations. Wilfred Gordon is obviously allowed the freedom by his parents to spend time with the elderly residents of a retirement home. The occupants of the home are cheered by the little boy's presence, and they take joy in sharing their observations with him. In an age when there is much made of generation gaps, this title offers a refreshing glimpse at how lives may be enriched when the gap is bridged by the innocence of a child. This title will be enjoyed by readers from preschool to the golden years.

Awards: ALA Notable Children's Book Award, Public Television Storytime Book

Related Subjects: Cross-generational relationships, Friendship, Neighbors, Sharing

Character Themes: Acceptance, **Caring**, Creativity, Empathy, Generosity, Resourcefulness

Freeman, Don (author and illustrator), *Corduroy*. Viking Press, 1968. ISBN: 9780670241330

Description:

Corduroy, a bear that lives in the toy section of a large department store, longs to be purchased and given a permanent home. When Lisa comes shopping with her mother she spies Corduroy sitting on the shelf next to a beautiful doll. Because he is missing a button on his overalls Lisa's mother refuses to buy him. Convinced that no one will take him home the way he is, Corduroy waits until closing time and searches throughout the store for his missing button. Found by a security guard, Corduroy is returned to his shelf. Much to his surprise, when Corduroy awakens the next day, Lisa's smiling face is there to greet him. Taking him home, the little girl sews on the missing button and gives the little bear all the affection he desires.

Critique:

Freeman's story conveys the concept that something or someone who has flaws is still worthy of love and affection. Corduroy's attempts at searching for his lost button, though unsuccessful, show inquisitiveness and initiative. Reprinted many times since its first publication, Corduroy still is a hit with children and their parents. This is also an excellent story for children who believe that their stuffed animals can think and feel. Children who love Corduroy may also enjoy *A Pocket for Corduroy* and *Beady Bear* by the same author.

Awards: ABA Indies Choice Book Award Nominee

Related Subjects: African-Americans, Bears, Friendship, Stuffed animals, Teddy bears, Toys

Character Themes: **Caring**, Friendship, Initiative, Patience, Self-acceptance

Hayes, Geoffrey (author and illustrator), *Patrick in a Teddy Bear's Picnic and Other Stories*. A Toon Book/ Candlewick Press, 2010. ISBN: 9781935179092

Description:

Patrick and his mom are leaving on a picnic as his dad heads off to work. Patrick wants to be sure that the picnic basket has everything that he wants, such as toys and cookies. While on the excursion, adventures find the little bear, but following his mother's wise advice, he survives each one with aplomb. After the picnic tale, other stories include a quest for Patrick's mother in which he encounters a bully that caused mayhem in the picnic story. However, this conflict ends a bit differently. The collection concludes with Patrick resisting taking a nap—a scenario familiar to many in the younger audience. This is a Level 2 Easy-To-Read graphic novel for emerging readers.

Critique:

Endearing illustrations are as significant in this Patrick novel as is the text. Although Patrick is a bear, his enthusiasm for life, his fear of a bully, his sense of playfulness is right on target for the intended reading audience. Facial expressions from both Patrick and his snuggly mom match the dialogue, perfectly. Hayes concludes the book with Tips for Parents and Teachers and an explanation of reading difficulty and the three recommended reading levels of this highly recommended series for young readers.

Related Subjects: Bullies, Family love, Mother-son relationships, Picnics, Sharing

Character Themes: **Caring**, Courage

Hobbie, Holly (author and illustrator), *Toot & Puddle: You Are My Sunshine*. Little, Brown and Company, 1999. ISBN: 0316365629

Description:

When Toot, the piggy, awakens one day feeling blue, Puddle tries to brighten his friend's day with encouraging words and a five-berry cobbler. Toot loves the cobbler, but still he mopes. Even when their friend Tulip, the parrot, joins Toot and Puddle in a daring shooting of the rapids, Toot has fun, but he again wears a long face as soon as the adventure is over. Perhaps a party with their friends Ginny, Otto, and Phil would be just the thing, Puddle thinks, but again, Toot just cannot stay happy. It is the force of nature that finally reaches the little piggy heart and restores smiles to the faces of Toot, Puddle, and Tulip.

Critique:

This addition to the Toot and Puddle series reflects constancy--the endearing and enduring act of friendship. No trouble is too great, no idea too audacious for Puddle and Tulip as they try creative solutions to cheer their friend. No impatience is evident as pig and parrot attempt to lift their pal out of the doldrums. The lesson that love is patient and love is kind is spoken softly to adults as well as children in both action and expression. Gentle water colors in full page illustrations with sparse text provide a feast for the eyes and balm for the soul.

Related Subjects: Animals, Friendship, Pigs

Character Themes: Caring, Determination, Encouragement, Initiative, Kindness, Love, Patience, Understanding,

Johnson, Angela, *When I Am Old with You*. Illustrated by David Soman. Orchard Books, 1990. ISBN: 0531058840

Description:

Anyone who has spent quality time with a grandparent will identify with this winsome picture book in which an African-American child dreams of the things he will do with his grandfather when he grows old with him. Interestingly they are the same things that he does with his grandfather now. Images of sitting in dual rocking chairs telling stories, going fishing, roasting corn over a big fire, and taking long walks are beautifully represented by Soman's watercolors.

Critique:

These pictures of a loving and nurturing relationship between grandfather and grandchild can be universally appreciated by both children and adults. The artist's pictures convey all the warmth described by the author without becoming saccharine. Whether or not it was intentional on the part of the artist, readers alternately identify the child as a girl or a boy. Although an adult reader will see the truth that the grandfather will age as quickly as the boy, it is easy to sympathize with the child's desire for this special relationship to continue and to grow.

Awards: ALSC Notable Children's Book, CBC/NCSS Notable Children's Trade Book in Social Studies, Coretta Scott King Honor Award

Related Subjects: African-Americans, Cross-generational relationships, Family relationships, Grandparents

Character Themes: Caring, Family love, Friendship