

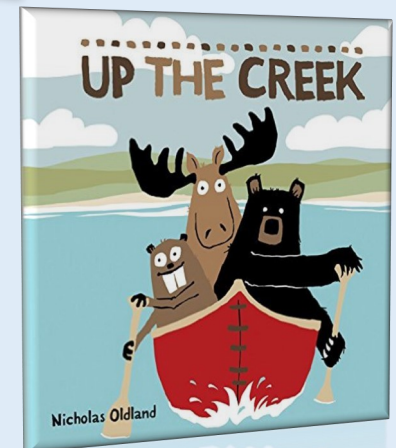
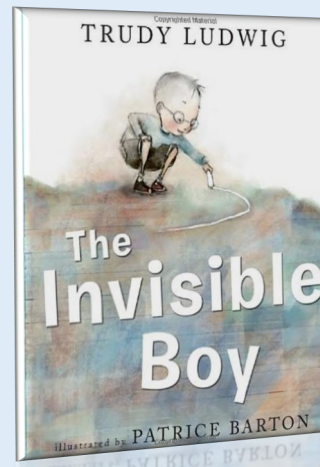
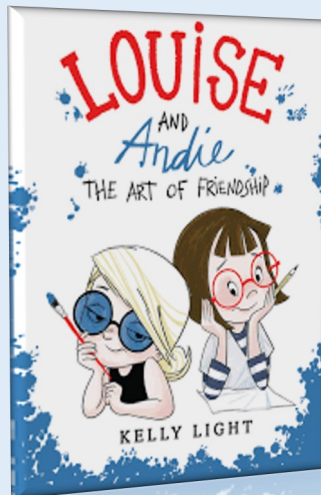
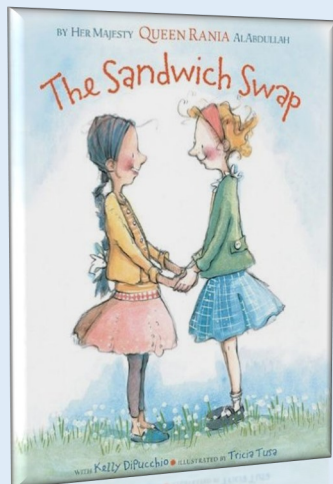
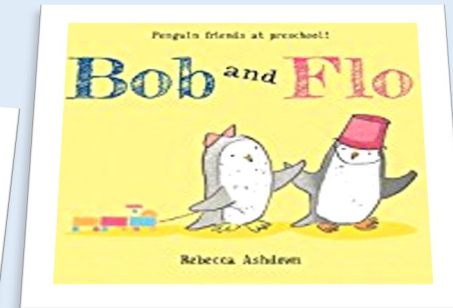
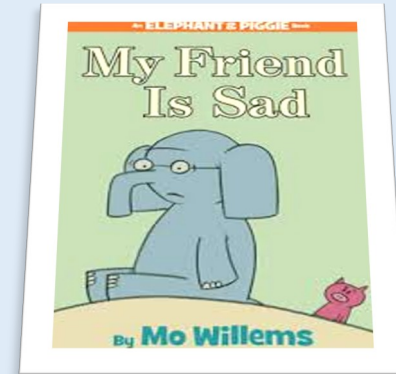


Inferring themes: Books about friendship to discuss, share ideas, and grow as individuals

B.C.'s Core Competencies

Joan Pearce & Carol Walters

SD 71 Comox Valley



Book

Summary

Core Competency



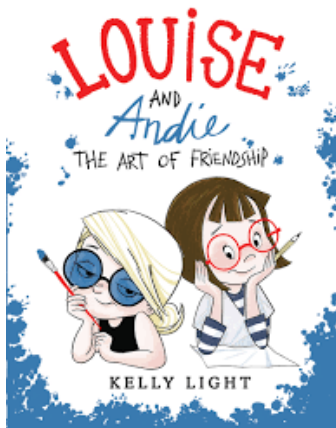
By having rich conversations that encourage students to **infer themes**, many of the core competencies addressed in these titles can be internalized and understood more deeply by students. Although certain core competencies are listed here for each book, conversation will ultimately direct these connections. Analyze the competency needs of your students and choose a few books that fit student needs.



Written by Lana Button Illustrated by Tania Howells

In this simple but substantial picture book by Lana Button, shy, quiet Willow silently wishes she could find a way to say no to her bossy classmate Kristabelle's demands, but the words never seem to come when she needs them. That is, until Kristabelle starts using the powerful threat of un-inviting children from her fantastic birthday party to keep them in line, and Willow decides she's finally had enough. Surprising everyone, even herself, Willow steps up and bravely does something shocking, and it changes the entire dynamic of the classroom.

- Personal Awareness and Responsibility
- Social Awareness and Responsibility
- Positive Personal Identity
- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Creative Thinking



KELLY LIGHT


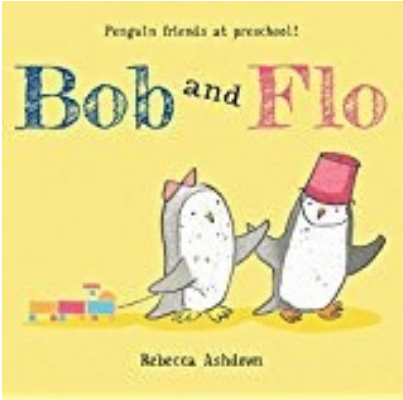
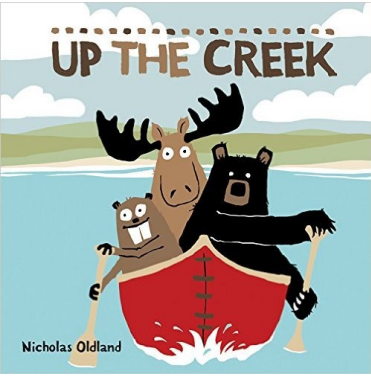
In this stunning companion to the acclaimed *Louise Loves Art*, Louise has a new neighbor, the creative and offbeat Andie—but can they overcome their differences and be friends?

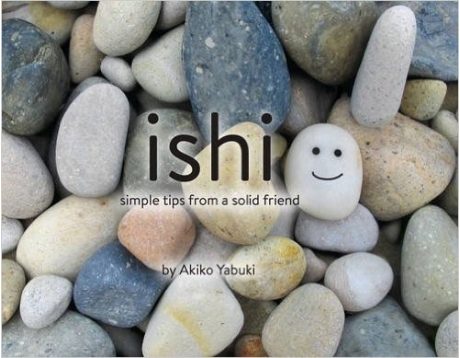
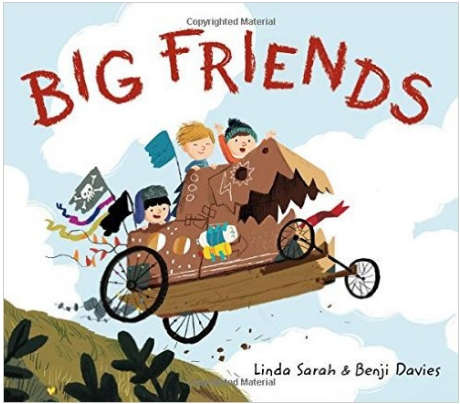
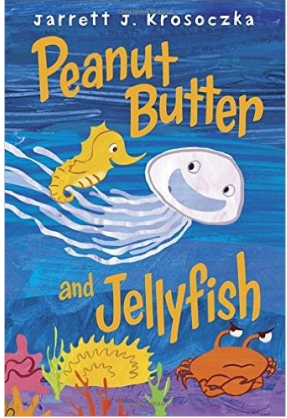
Louise loves art more than anything. Imagine her delight when a new neighbor, Andie, moves in . . . and she loves art too! It's the best day ever.


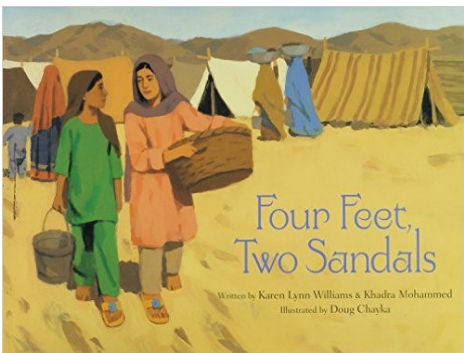
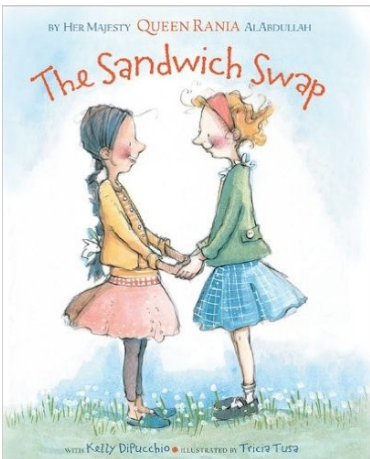
But liking the same thing doesn't always mean you agree on it. Can they overcome their creative differences?


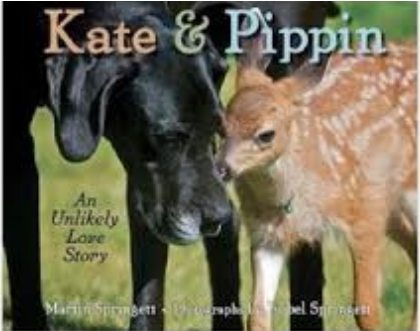
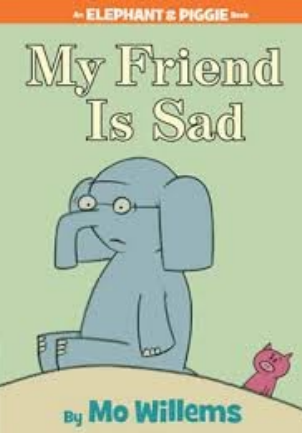
Sometimes friendship, like art, can require collaboration.

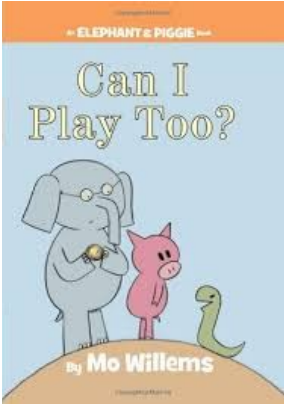
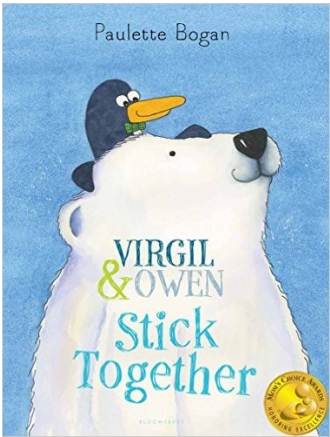
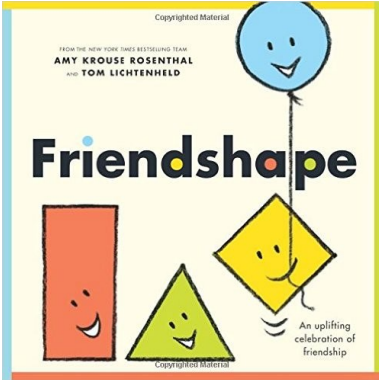
- Creative Thinking
- Social Responsibility
- Positive Personal Identity
- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Personal Awareness and Responsibility

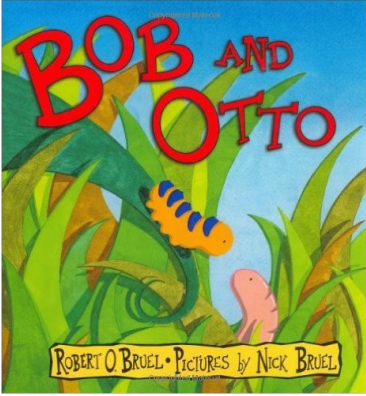
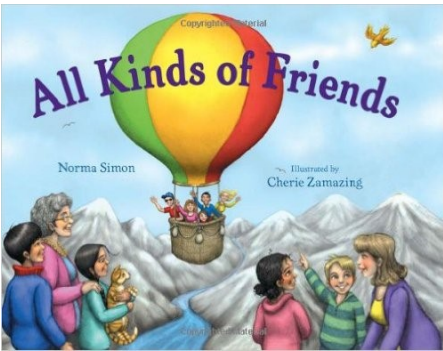
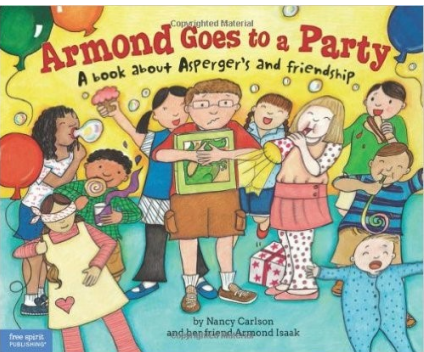
Book	Summary	Core Competency
	<p>What happens when blue cat wants to be like red and red wants to be like blue? Can they be happy within their own fur?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Personal Identity • Personal Awareness • Creative Thinking
	<p>Flo's bucket is missing. When she finds it, she finds Bob. Bob is a creative thinker who uses Flo's bucket in a variety of clever ways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Thinking
	<p>Bear, moose and beaver are the best of friends, but when the three go canoeing together, it doesn't take long for them to start quarreling with one another. Who should get to steer the canoe? How should they get across a beaver dam that blocks their way? And what's the proper course for maneuvering through the white-water rapids they suddenly find themselves in? The consequences of their actions become truly perilous. It takes a long, uncomfortable night spent stranded on a rock to remind the bear, the moose and the beaver what they often forget: everything turns out better when they work together as a team.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Communication

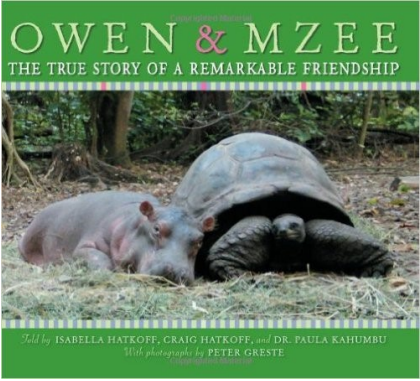


Book	Summary	Core Competency
	<p>An award-winning, shareable, cozy hug of a picture book featuring Ishi, an optimistic little rock who reminds readers to choose and share happiness!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Critical Thinking
	<p>Birt and Etho are best friends. Together they play outside in big cardboard boxes. Sometimes they're kings, soldiers, astronauts. Sometimes they're pirates sailing wild seas and skies. But always, always they're Big friends. Then one day a new boy arrives, and he wants to join them. Can two become three?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Critical Thinking • Creative Thinking
	<p>Peanut Butter and Jellyfish are best of friends and swim up, down, around, and through their ocean home. Crabby is their neighbor. He is not their best friend. But when Crabby gets in trouble, will Peanut Butter and Jellyfish come to the rescue? You bet they will!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication

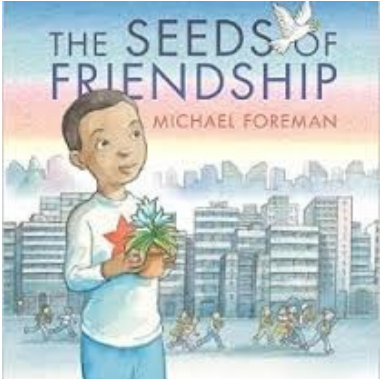
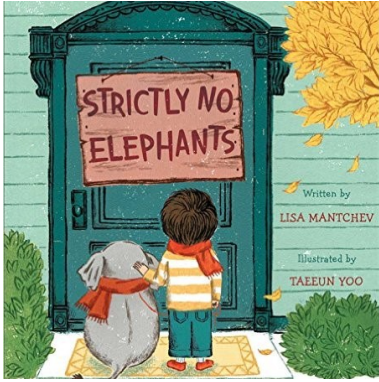
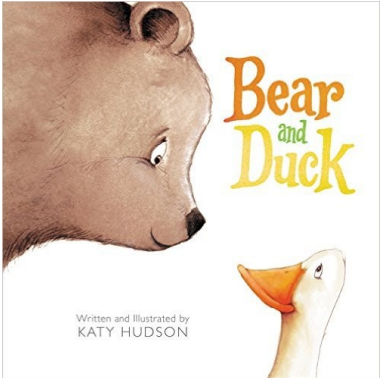
Book	Summary	Core Competency
	<p><i>Glee</i> actress Jane Lynch takes a look at bullying head-on in her first picture book.</p> <p>Marlene is the self-appointed queen of the playground, the sidewalk, and the school. She is small but mighty . . . intimidating! Known for her cruel ways, the little Queen of Mean has kids cowering in fear—until big Freddy stands up to her and says what everyone has been too fearful to say.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity
	<p>When relief workers bring used clothing to a refugee camp in Pakistan, ten-year-old Lina is thrilled when she finds a sandal that fits her foot perfectly - until she sees that another girl has the matching shoe. But soon Lina and Feroza meet and decide that it is better to share the sandals than for each to wear only one. The girls discover the true meaning of friendship and sacrifice. "Four Feet, Two Sandals" honors the experiences of refugee children around the world, whose daily existence is marked by uncertainty and fear.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication • Critical Thinking • Creative Thinking
	<p>Lily and Salma are best friends. They like doing all the same things, and they always eat lunch together. Lily eats peanut butter and Salma eats hummus-but what's that between friends? It turns out, a lot. Before they know it, a food fight breaks out. Can Lily and Salma put aside their differences? Or will a sandwich come between them?</p> <p>P.S. I LOVE the lead sentence in this book ~ "It all began with a peanut butter and jelly sandwich ..." And guess what the ending is? ..." And that's how it all began with a peanut butter and jelly sandwich ... and ended with a hummus and pita sandwich."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Personal and Cultural Identity • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Communication • Critical Thinking • Creative Thinking

Book	Summary	Core Competency
	<p>Friends might bite, so who wants them. There are lots of other things to keep oneself busy in life. But when a potential friend is spotted, Scaredy Squirrel is armed with a name tag, mittens, a mirror and a lemon. He's prepared to make The Perfect First Impression. But just when every detail is under control, Scaredy's Action Plan takes a surprising turn. Will he survive this ordeal? Will he find his kindred spirit? Will he discover the true meaning of friendship?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Awareness • Positive Personal Identity • Critical Thinking • Creative Thinking
	<p>Pippin, an abandoned fawn, is introduced to Kate, the Great Dane. The two form a remarkable and unlikely friendship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication
	<p>Gerald is careful. Piggie is not. Piggie cannot help smiling. Gerald can. Gerald and Piggie are best friends.</p> <p>In <i>My Friend is Sad</i>, elephant Gerald is down in the dumps. Piggie is determined to cheer him up by dressing as a cowboy, a clown, and even a robot! But what does it take to make a sad elephant happy? The answer will make even pessimistic elephants smile</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Personal Identity • Communication

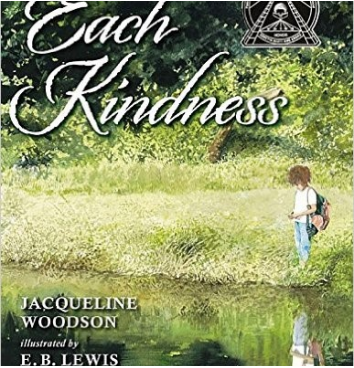
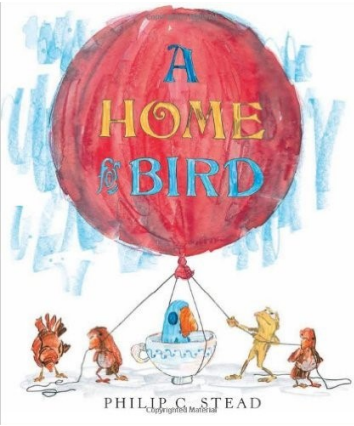
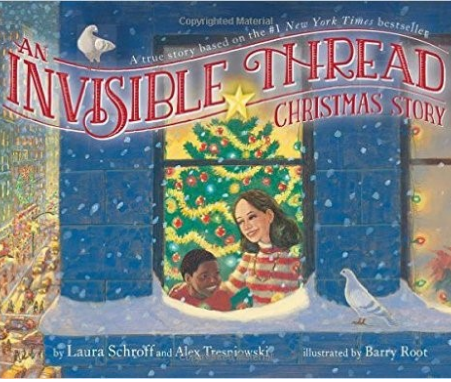
Book	Summary	Core Competency
	<p>Gerald is careful. Piggie is not. Piggie cannot help smiling. Gerald can. Gerald and Piggie are best friends.</p> <p>In <i>Can I Play Too?</i> Gerald and Piggie meet a new snake friend who wants to join in a game of catch. But don't you need arms to catch?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication • Creative Thinking
	<p>Owen and Virgil both love going to school... just in different ways. Eager Virgil likes to learn as much as he can, as quickly as possible. Owen likes to savor each moment as he counts and writes and tells stories. So when Virgil rushes Owen a bit too much one day, their friendship is suddenly on thin ice. Can Virgil exercise some patience and appreciate his friend's point of view?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness • Positive Personal Identity • Communication
	<p>Friends shape who we are. They make us laugh. They fill us with fun. They stand by us during life's up and downs. And even when we disagree with our friends, if they're tried-and-true, they don't stay bent out of shape for long. That's the beauty of a good buddy. This joyous book rejoices in the simple beauties of friendship, and reminds readers of all ages that it's good to have a group of pals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness • Positive Personal Identity • Creative Thinking



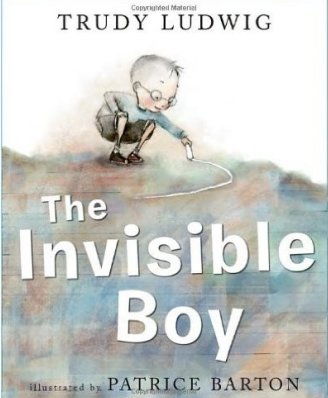
Book	Summary	Core Competency
	<p>Bob and Otto do best-friend kinds of things together--eating leaves, digging, playing--until the day Bob decides to climb a tree, simply because . . . he has to. When the two meet again, Otto is still the same dirt-loving earthworm, but Bob has done the unthinkable: grown wings. Friendship overcomes all else in this sweet and funny story, because no matter what happens, ". . . friends are important."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness • Positive Personal Identity • Communication
	<p>"Wherever you live, whoever you are, friends are important, all kinds of friends." In the spirit of her classic book, All Kinds of Families, Norma Simon leads us through a celebration of friendship--school friends, family friends, grownup friends, even pet friends!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness • Positive Personal Identity
	<p>Armond doesn't want to go to Felicia's birthday party. Parties are noisy, disorganized and smelly - all things are hard for a kid with Asperger's. Worst of all is socializing with other kids. But with the support of Felicia and her mom, good friends who know how to help him, he not only gets through the party, but also has fun. When his mom picks him up, Armond admits the party was not easy, but he feels good that he faced the challenge - and that he's a good friend. A great book for anyone to learn about coping with autism or Asperger's.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication

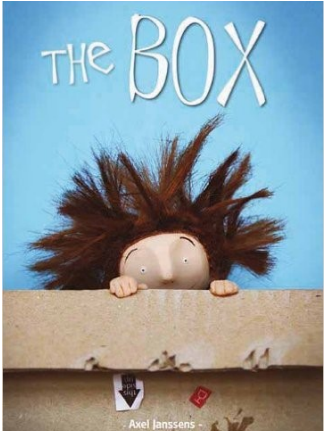
Book	Summary	Core Competency
	<p>The inspiring true story of two great friends, a baby hippo named Owen and a 130-yr-old giant tortoise named Mzee (Mm-ZAY). When Owen was stranded after the Dec 2004 tsunami, villagers in Kenya worked tirelessly to rescue him. Then, to everyone's amazement, the orphan hippo and the elderly tortoise adopted each other. Now they are inseparable, swimming, eating, and playing together. Adorable photos e-mailed from friend to friend quickly made them worldwide celebrities. Here is a joyous reminder that in times of trouble, friendship is stronger than the differences that too often pull us apart.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication • Creative Thinking
	<p>This is an early emergent series in which a simple, I can... sentence framework is repeated. Illustrations will prompt conversation around these core competency topics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication
	<p>Hardly anyone notice young Sally McCabe. She was the smallest girl in the smallest grade. But young Sally was very busy noticing everything. She quietly gathered just enough information to take a bold stand. And when she takes a chance and stands up to the bullies, she finds that one small girl can make a big difference.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication • Creative Thinking

Book	Summary	Core Competency
	<p>Adam feels alone in the strange new city. He misses his old friends and the colors of his faraway home. It's fun to build snow animals with children in his new neighborhood, but Adam's concrete surroundings still make him wish for something more. So when a teacher gives him a few seeds, it plants an idea in him—an idea that could transform his gray world forever.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication • Creative Thinking
	<p>When the local Pet Club won't admit a boy's tiny pet elephant, he finds a solution—one that involves all kinds of unusual animals in this sweet and adorable picture book.</p> <p>Today is Pet Club day. There will be cats and dogs and fish, but <i>strictly no elephants</i> are allowed. The Pet Club doesn't understand that pets come in all shapes and sizes, just like friends. Now it is time for a boy and his tiny pet elephant to show them what it means to be a true friend.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication • Creative Thinking
	<p>Bear is sick and tired of being a bear. Who wants to sleep all winter? His fur feels so hot in the summer. And the bees . . . there are just too many angry bees! Bear is done being a bear. But when he sees a line of happy yellow ducklings, he has a thought. What if he could be a duck?</p> <p>With a few duck lessons from Duck, Bear learns that being a duck is fun; but as it turns out, Bear realizes he makes a really good bear . . . and he makes a really good friend along the way.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness • Positive Personal Identity • Communication • Creative Thinking

Book	Summary	Core Competency
	<p>Katie and Jennifer are best friends. But when Jennifer chooses to play with Roy instead, Katie is faced with new emotions and must decide how to proceed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication
	<p>During Hurricane Katrina, evacuating New Orleans residents were forced to leave their pets behind. Bobbi the dog was initially chained to keep her safe, but after her owners failed to return, she had to break free. For months, Bobbi wandered the city's ravaged streets—dragging her chain behind her—followed by her feline companion, Bob Cat. This is the true story of these companions, their hardships and their search for a new home.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication
	<p>Being the new kid in school is hard enough, but what about when nobody can pronounce your name? Having just moved from Korea, Unhei is anxious that American kids will like her. So instead of introducing herself on the first day of school, she tells the class that she will choose a name by the following week. Her new classmates are fascinated by this no-name girl and decide to help out by filling a glass jar with names for her to pick from. But while Unhei practices being a Suzy, Laura, or Amanda, one of her classmates comes to her neighborhood and discovers her real name and its special meaning. On the day of her name choosing, the name jar has mysteriously disappeared. Encouraged by her new friends, Unhei chooses her own Korean name and helps everyone pronounce it—<i>Yoon-Hee</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication • Creative Thinking

Book	Summary	Core Competency
	<p>Chloe and her friends won't play with the new girl, Maya. Every time Maya tries to join Chloe and her friends, they reject her. Eventually Maya stops coming to school. When Chloe's teacher gives a lesson about how even small acts of kindness can change the world, Chloe is stung by the lost opportunity for friendship, and thinks about how much better it could have been if she'd shown a little kindness toward Maya.</p> <p>After reading this book, ask, "What does this book inspire you to do?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication • Creative Thinking
	<p>While out foraging for interesting things, Vernon the toad finds a new friend - a small blue bird who is curiously silent. Vernon shows Bird the river and the forest and some of his other favorite things, but Bird says nothing. Vernon introduces Bird to his friends, Skunk and Porcupine, but Bird still says nothing.</p> <p>"Bird is shy," says Vernon, "but also a very good listener."</p> <p>Vernon worries that Bird is silent because he misses his home, so the two set off on a journey to help find a home for Bird.</p> <p>This is a tender tale of a thoughtful friend who is determined to help his quiet companion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Awareness and Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication • Critical Thinking • Creative Thinking
	<p><i>New York Times</i> bestselling author Laura Schroff tells the remarkable story of her lifelong friendship with a boy named Maurice who she met on the street while he was asking for change.</p> <p>Laura retells the first Christmas that she and Maurice spent together. She shares how Maurice gave her a small white bear and, as she later learns, the only thing he had that he could truly call his own—to show her how grateful he was for their friendship. This heartwarming tale captures the true meaning of the holidays.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication

Book	Summary	Core Competency
 <p>Written by Lana Button Illustrated by Tania Howells</p>	<p>When Willow speaks, her words slip out as soft and shy as a secret. At school, her barely audible whisper causes her no end of troubles. But Willow is as resourceful as she is quiet, and she fashions a magic microphone from items she finds in the recycling bin.</p> <p>But Willow's clever invention is only a temporary solution. How will this quiet little girl make herself heard?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication • Creative Thinking
 <p>Written by Lana Button Illustrated by Tania Howells</p>	<p>Sometimes Willow smiled without even trying. But sometimes when she wished she could and knew she should, her smile slipped straight off her face. So when her teacher tells the class that Picture Day is coming, shy Willow starts to worry. What if she isn't able to smile for the camera? How can she have her picture taken without smiling? But then on Picture Day, Willow gets the opportunity to watch the other children being photographed. She sees that all of her friends' expressions are unique, and perfect in their own way. And by the time it's her turn, she's realized that she doesn't need to worry about smiling for her picture. She just needs to be herself.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Awareness and Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication • Critical Thinking
 <p>TRUDY LUDWIG</p> <p>The Invisible Boy</p> <p>Illustrated by PATRICE BARTON</p>	<p>Meet Brian, the invisible boy. Nobody ever seems to notice him or think to include him in their group, game, or birthday party . . . until, that is, a new kid comes to class.</p> <p>When Justin, the new boy, arrives, Brian is the first to make him feel welcome. And when Brian and Justin team up to work on a class project together, Brian finds a way to shine.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication

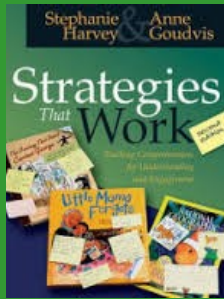
Book	Summary	Core Competency
	<p>Leopold's new bike makes him the envy of every kid in town-almost every kid. While Leopold is busy showing off his bright red bike, with its loud bell and thunderbolt decal, imaginative and kind-hearted Kobe plays in a box and pays no attention to the new bike. Leopold gets angry when he runs into Kobe's box while riding his bike, but he soon learns that the box can take the kids places that Leopold's bike never could ~ jungles, race tracks, and the sky! By the end of playtime, Leopold learns the value of imagination, friendship, and a lesson about life's simple things.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility • Social Responsibility • Positive Personal Identity • Communication • Creative Thinking

“Reading and Writing float on a sea of talk.”

James Britton

Joan Pearce and Carol Walters SD 71 Comox Valley

Profile	Description	Facets
3	<p>I can interact with others and the environment respectfully and thoughtfully.</p> <p>I contribute to group activities that make my classroom, school, community, or natural world a better place. I can identify small things I can do that could make a difference. I can consider others' views and express a different opinion in a peaceful way. I can identify problems and compare potential problem-solving strategies. I can demonstrate respectful and inclusive behaviour, including online. I can explain why something is unfair. I can identify when others need support and provide it. I can build and sustain relationships. I show care for elders.</p>	<p>Solving problems in peaceful ways, Contributing to community and caring for the environment</p>



In *Strategies That Work*, by Stephanie Harvey & Anne Goudvis, chapter 9 contains lots of ideas to explicitly teach students how to *infer*.

Copied within these next few pages are sections from this professional resource.

Strategies That Work

Sometimes we reread books, particularly if they are exceptionally good. Certain books become what Lucy Calkins calls “touchstone books” (Calkins 2004), those books that we come back to again and again because we love them and because they are so effective at teaching something in particular. *Tight Times* has become a touchstone book for us when teaching inferring. We have to “read between the lines” throughout the book to infer meaning and make sense of it.

As we begin rereading it, we open to the first page where the boy asks the mom, who is very busy getting dressed for work in the morning, if he can please have a dog. The mom is short with him and says, “No, not now, not again,” and tells him not to bother her when she’s busy. As we model the inferring formula, we share with the kids how we use the equation to construct meaning. We know from personal experience that it is hard to give our children much time in the morning when we are rushing to work, and we also can tell from the mom’s tone and words that she is losing patience with him. So we explain how we activate our background knowledge about times when we are rushing off to work and merge it with clues in the text that show how short the mom is with the boy. From our background knowledge and these text clues, we infer that this is not the first time the boy has asked for a dog (BK+TC=I). As a matter of fact, it is probably the umpteenth time!

As we move through the book, we come to a variety of spots where we can share how the inferring formula helps us to understand. On one page, the father comes home from work in the middle of the day and finds the little boy playing by himself in the hallway as the babysitter watches TV in the living room. The dad looks mad, has a word with the babysitter, and she leaves. We ask kids to turn and talk about why the dad looked mad. Most of them can infer that the babysitter should have been watching the little boy instead of the TV. They take their background knowledge of babysitters and what they should be doing and merge it with the clues in the text—that the babysitter was watching TV in another room instead of watching the boy. They infer that is the reason the father was mad. To hold this thinking we can co-construct an anchor chart as follows adding to it as we continue reading.

1 Background Knowledge	2 Text Clues	3 Inference
Moms can get cranky when they are rushing to work in the morning	She says no when he asks for a dog	He has probably asked for a dog over and over
Babysitters should be watching kids	She is watching TV and the dad looks mad	The dad is mad because she is not doing her job

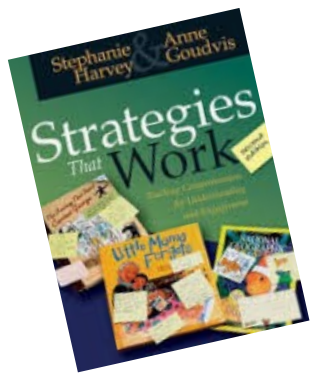
This little formula BK+TC=I seems to help kids to remember to think about what they know and merge it with text clues to draw a conclusion and make an inference. When they do this, they are more likely to make a reasonable inference.

The charts within this kit (Evidence + My Thinking = An Inference) are based on this information.

Recognizing Plot and Inferring Themes

Purpose: Differentiating between plot and theme, and inferring the big ideas or themes
Resource: *Teammates*, by Peter Golenbock
Responses: Class discussion; chart of themes; theme boards

Literature, both fiction and nonfiction, is rife with themes. Books and articles rarely promote just one main idea but rather several themes for readers to ponder and infer. When we talk to students about themes, we help them discern the difference between theme and plot. We explain



that the plot is simply what happens in the narrative. The themes represent the bigger ideas of the story. The plot carries those ideas along. To demonstrate plot, we choose a simple narrative that everyone is likely to be familiar with. We might recount the plot of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* by summarizing the events of the story as follows. A girl named Goldilocks was wandering through the forest and entered an unfamiliar, empty house. She tasted porridge that didn't belong to her, broke a chair, and slept in a bed that wasn't hers. She was caught when the bears returned, and she ran out of the house scared to death.

We explain to our students that themes are the underlying ideas, morals, and lessons that give the story its texture, depth, and meaning. The themes are rarely explicitly stated in the story. We infer themes. Themes often make us feel angry, sad, guilty, joyful, frightened. We tell kids that we are likely to feel themes in our gut. To help students more clearly understand the difference, we might ask, "What are the bigger ideas in *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*?" Kids tend to identify taking things that don't belong to you, selfishness, thoughtlessness, and so on. They have experienced these notions and they understand them.

A nonfiction picture book we have used to demonstrate inferring themes is Peter Golenbock's *Teammates*. It is the moving story of Jackie Robinson's courageous breakthrough into the all-white major leagues. It goes beyond the history and describes the personal relationship between Jackie and his white teammate Pee Wee Reese. Pee Wee was the only player on the Brooklyn Dodgers team that supported Jackie's quest.

To continue their study of inferring, Steph demonstrated a think-aloud with *Teammates* to the fifth graders in Jennifer Jones's class the day after taking them through the Goldilocks exercise. After describing the difficult, segregated life of players in the Negro leagues, Golenbock writes that life was much better for players in the major leagues. They were paid well, and many were famous all over the world. Steph coded her sticky note 1 for inference while noting that this kind of racial inequality might breed anger. She suggested that both racial inequality and anger might be themes in the story even though the writer hadn't written those very words. So Steph created an anchor chart headed Evidence from the Text/Themes. Under Evidence from the Text, she wrote *Words, Actions, Pictures* and explained that we can infer themes from the words in the text, the actions of characters, and the pictures and illustrations. All of these provide evidence that support the bigger ideas and themes we infer in a narrative.

When Curtis heard that Branch Rickey, the manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, was looking for a man who "would have to possess the self-control not to fight back when opposing players tried to intimidate or hurt him," he suggested that self-control might be a theme. Steph concurred and added it to the chart and pointed out that Curtis was using evidence from the text. (See examples of two-column forms for kids' themes and evidence in the assessment section of this chapter.) When Steph finished reading the story, she facilitated a discussion about the bigger ideas in the narrative based on text evidence.

"Jackie was alone without a single friend. No one would sit near him or talk to him," Chantal mentioned.

"Good noticing, Chantal. Why didn't he get mad about that?" Steph asked.

"Because he had a lot of self-control. The manager wanted a man who wouldn't fight back, no matter how mad he got and Jackie never did."

"Chantal, that is exactly how we use evidence to infer a theme. Let's put your thinking up on the chart," Steph suggested. So she wrote *self-control* in the Theme column and then *Jackie never fought back* in the Evidence column.

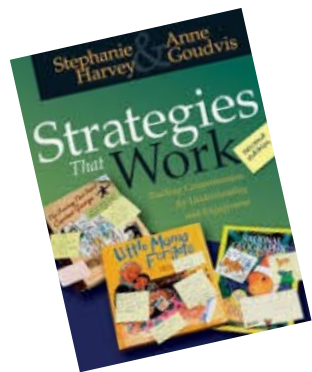
"So, what might be another theme?" Steph asked.

"I know how he felt. When I moved here I didn't have one single friend. I felt really lonely," Rogers said. So Steph added *loneliness* to the theme chart and cited Rogers's evidence.

"But Pee Wee was his friend," Jaquon added.

"So, is friendship a theme?" Steph asked.





Strategies That Work

“Sort of, but most of the team would not be his friend because he was black,” Jaquon continued.

“That’s racist,” Curtis added.

“It sure is racist, Curtis. Are racism and friendship both themes in *Teammates*?” Steph asked.

The kids nodded, and Steph added both of those themes to the chart along with the evidence for them. And so the discussion went for nearly forty-five minutes, culminating in a long list of themes and evidence for them. Some of the themes that surfaced included racial inequality, segregation, anger, taking a stand, bravery, and more.

Steph reiterated that all of these themes represented the bigger ideas in the story and that most of them evoked strong feelings. We have noticed that kids are more likely to remember important themes when they derive the ideas themselves and feel them deeply. It is our role to help draw students out through engaging discussions about the bigger ideas in the story. Often, the kids used their prior knowledge to infer themes and better understand the narrative, as Rogers did when he mentioned being the new kid on the block. As students talk about the bigger ideas, it is our responsibility to help them label the ideas, articulate the themes, and cite text evidence. Inferring after all is about taking what we know, our background knowledge, and combining it with clues or evidence in the text to draw a conclusion, or in this case, surface a theme.

On the following day, Steph handed out a think sheet that matched the chart, with the headings Evidence in the Text/Themes. The kids went back and reread and reconsidered *Teammates*. They cited evidence from the text and recorded themes they discovered during the first read as well as themes that surfaced on their second reading and reviewing of the text. (See some of their think sheets in the assessment section of this chapter.)

Theme Boards: Hey, What’s the Big Idea?

Jennifer continued to work on surfacing themes throughout the year. She reported that her students became quite adept at inferring themes as well as labeling them. They even began to notice when certain themes appeared over and over. To reinforce theme identification and the connections between themes in one text and those in another, Jennifer established a theme board headed *Hey, What’s the Big Idea?* Each time the class read a book, they developed a theme list and added the list to the theme board. Themes identified from Sherry Garland’s *The Lotus Seed* included

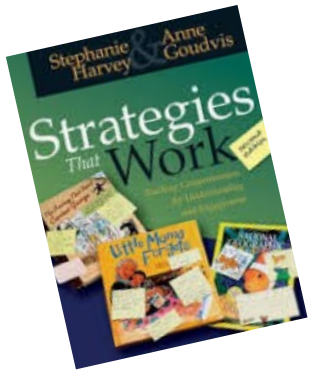
keeping traditions alive
sadness

cooperation
courage

sharing traditions
loneliness

internal pain

It didn’t take kids long to notice the overlapping themes in certain books, such as *Teammates* and *The Lotus Seed*. This was a great literary lesson. Experienced readers know that the same themes are likely to appear over and over in literature. Why not begin to teach this in elementary school?



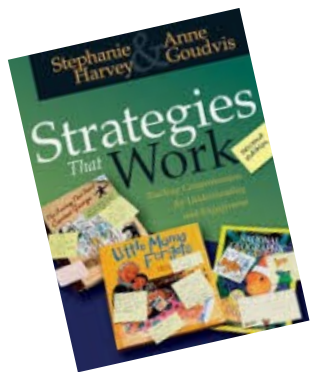
Two-column think sheets on inferring themes using text evidence from the lesson "Recognizing Plot and Inferring Themes" with *Teammates*

Evidence from the text (words, pictures, ideas)	Themes
Pee Wee looked into his teammate's boldly paired eyes.	pariahs
He had done nothing to be taunted. He just wanted to be equal.	equality
Pee Wee smiled at Jackie and he smiled back.	kindness
Pee Wee put his arm around Jackie's shoulders.	friendship
The crowd gasped when Pee Wee put his arm around Jackie's.	astonishment

Figure 9.11 Josh's think sheet about *Teammates*, by Peter Golenbock, shows a good understanding of using evidence to infer themes. In each case, he used the pictures, the words, and/or ideas as evidence for themes.

Figure 9.12 Luke also was able to use text evidence to surface themes. Although he has a good understanding of the story and some terrific ideas, we would confer with him regarding his organizational style. One of the purposes of a graphic organizer is to organize thinking, and his is a bit all over the page. He does draw arrows, but if he were to reread for information, he might struggle finding which piece of evidence relates to a given theme.

Evidence from the Text (Words, Pictures, Ideas)	Themes
• Couldn't drink from some water fountains	• Fairness/unfairness
• Didn't challenge segregation	• Segregation
• Branch R. believed seg. was unfair and water to give everyone the same chance	• Fear
• Brave by joining all white team	• Apathy
• Talking abuse	• Resists to change
• Not fighting back	• Equal opportunity
• Friendship with Pee Wee	• Violence
• Sitting alone	• Brave
• Kicking him	• Self control
• People threatening him would make no sense	• Friendship
	• Loneliness
	• Pain on the outside
	• Pain on the inside
	• Anger
	• Hate
	• Race war



An independent think sheet on inferring themes with text evidence from the lesson "Recognizing Plot and Inferring Themes"

Evidence from the Text (Words, pictures and ideas)	Theme
When Papa Left To Join The Underground Marina, Mama And I Cried, Too.	Mama This Shows Me That They Want Miss Him And Are Scared That They Want See Him Again.
I Give Marina A Raising Glance	This Tells Me That She Tries To Tell Her That She Needs To Stop Thinking Negative
The Cat Will Be Head On The Little One It Is Getting Men To Dangerous To Stay Any Longer	Mama Wonders What Was Ever Best For Her Kids. She Is Very Caring
I Was The Best Time Nigun In A Row	Although The Whole Family Is Scared The Mama I Standing Strong For Her Husband And Her Family
Mama Tell Me Over: "It's All Right, Victor. There Is No Harm Done."	Mama - Strong, Has Faith, What Give Up On Trying Her Husband Or Keeping Her Kids Safe.

Figure 9.13 Maria tried using the form in her own independent reading of the book *Gleam and Glow*. She has some great ideas and shows deep thinking and understanding. However, she hasn't shaped her thinking into a big idea, but rather uses a long explanation to demonstrate her thoughts. We would help her synthesize the ideas in her theme column into a bigger idea as Luke and Josh did.



Defermined



Reflective



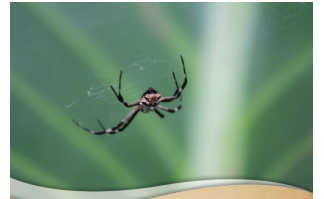
collaborative



Resourceful



Compassionate



Creative



I coloured this square _____. This colour means that it's a strength for me.



I coloured this square _____. This colour means that it's something I'll work on.

While working with Inuit artifacts and choosing a focus for my own inquiry project, I would like to let you know that I was

_____. I know this because I _____

_____.

In the future I think I could work on _____. I feel this way because _____

_____.

