

**CYRM RESOURCE GUIDE
MIDDLE SCHOOL/JUNIOR HIGH
(GRADES 6-8) 2014-2015**

Bluefish

By Pat Schmatz
Candlewick, 2011

Chained

By Lynne Kelly
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2012

The False Prince

By Jennifer Nielsen
Scholastic, 2012

BLUEFISH BY PAT SCHMATZ

SYNOPSIS

New home, new school, new friends, and missing his best friend Rosco, his hound dog, Travis begins his new life. He lives in the country with his recovering alcoholic grandpa, who means well but does not provide Travis with the support he needs. The problem is Travis dislikes school and has a history of cutting, and this year is no different. He cuts class on the first day, and his grandpa has to take off work to go look for Travis. Like school, Travis doesn't seem to like his grandpa, who has his own secret--he killed Travis' dog and feels guilty. Travis has a lot of resentment toward his grandpa and the reasons his resentment are slowly revealed.

Travis meets two people who have a huge impact on his life, Velveeta, who he finds unexpectedly kind with a vibrant, caring personality. Velveeta has suffered the loss of a close friend who introduced her to books and provided her with a way and place to escape her hardships. The second person is a teacher, Mr. McQueen, who is one of those teachers who will not let students off-the-hook with a "Pass" answer. Mr. McQueen quickly discovers Travis' secret, Travis has a learning disability and cannot read, and sets out to help Travis.

Bluefish is a story of family, friendship, forgiveness, making connections, and finding your place.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Before settling in rural Wisconsin, Pat Schmatz lived in various parts of the United States, including California, where she attended UC Berkeley. She enjoys the outdoors and her interests include traveling, running, skiing, and swimming. In addition to writing, Pat provides services to the Minnesota Legal Aid Society. Schmatz is also the author of *Mousetraps*, and *Mrs. Estronsky and the U.F.O.*

For more information, visit her website at <http://www.patschmatz.com/>.

HOOKS

- Are you comfortable with how well you read?

Middle School/Junior High

- Have you ever had a friend in middle school who couldn't read well? What did you think and how did you act?
- Have you ever had a beloved pet die? How did you deal with the loss?
- Have you or a friend ever had to deal with a serious family issue (such as depression or alcoholism)? If yes, how did you seek support? What adults or peers can help in a situation like this?
- Has a teacher ever understood you and helped you through a difficult time in your life?
- Are you close with your grandparents? What do you do together? How much do you really know about their life or their thoughts and feelings?

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Carousel Activity for Book Themes: Prior to reading the story, use chart paper or butcher paper to create 4 to 5 charts around the room. Each piece of paper should have one of the following headings: **Reading, Disabilities, Friendship, Bullying, and Swamps**. Divide students up and have them list whatever comes to mind under each heading. Set a time limit and have students rotate around room to each poster. After all students have had an opportunity to record ideas, discuss each list and why choices were made. Have students make predictions to what they think the novel will be about.

Tea Party Activity: Prior to reading the story, select various quotes from the first chapter and distribute to students. Have students read their quotes to each other. When it seems like most students have read their quotes to most of the other students, have students make predictions about the novel.

CONNECTIONS

Bullying/Friendship

Jacobsen, Jennifer Richard. *Small as an Elephant*. Candlewick Press. 2013.

Palacio, R.J. *Wonder*. Random House Children's Books. 2012.

Polacco, Patricia. *Bully*. Penguin Group Inc. 2012.

Spinelli, Jerry. *Stargirl*. Random House Children's Books. 2004.

Stead, Rebecca. *Liar and Spy*. Random House Children's Books. 2013.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Each Kindness*. Penguin Group Inc. 2012.

WRITING PROMPTS

- Which character do you connect with the most and why? Provide examples of the characters' activities or actions from the book to support your choice.
- What impact does the setting of the story have on the characters and how they react to specific situations?
- How important is reading to success in school? Ask students to write an opinion essay either supporting or refuting the proposition that being a good reader is the foundation of school success.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Poetry: Ask students to write a Bio Poem for one of the main characters. Introduce the poem structure. Then select the character to write about. Next revisit the text to gather details to be included in the poem.

Format for the poem:

Line 1 – Character's name

Line 2 - Another name for character
(teenager, friend, mother, etc.)

Line 3 – Four words describing character.

Line 4 – Lover of.....

Line 5 – Who believed...

Line 6 – Who wanted....

Line 7 – Who used...

Line 8 – Who gave....

Line 9 – Who said....

Line 10 – Last name or another word describing character.

Drawing: Have students create a character sketch for each character, either by drawing the characters or using magazine pictures or photographs. Students may cut words or write quotes from the book to support the character traits for each main character. These words can be glued next to picture or written in speech or "thinking" bubbles above heads of the characters to show what they are thinking.

Dioramas: Ask students to choose a scene from the story to recreate by making a diorama. Then, ask students to present their diorama to the class, describing the significance of setting to the story.

Middle School/Junior High

Scarf Design: Ask students to design a scarf for Velveeta. Prior to designing the scarf, make sure they gather data from the book, including memorable quotes by Velveeta or other passages from the book supporting their design.

For more activities, visit:

http://www.candlewick.com/book_files/0763653349.btg.1.pdf

**QUOTES FOR TEA PARTY PRE-READING ACTIVITY
(MAKE TWO SETS DEPENDING ON HOW MANY
STUDENTS).**

“Something hit the locker next to his head and sent a jolt through him.”

“The hall was full of kids talking...”

“It landed with a thud. Heavy. Dense.”

“He slogged through a couple of hours of first-day science and math, the air pressing in hotter and heavier, the walls closing around him.”

“The ceiling looked lower, the walls closer, than in the other rooms.”

“Travis backed out, dropped his pencil and notebook in his locker, and headed for the double doors and the rays of sunlight.”

“The fourth time, he got smart and hid in a culvert, so they didn’t find him...”

“Until now. Rosco was gone, so why not?”

“A car vroomed by, and a crow hollered from the other side of the road.”

“...his arms swinging, his body relieved...”

“He knew it was Grandpa without turning around. Not just the familiar sound of the engine...”

“...the feel of it, the slowing down of it, the ready-to-pounce of it.”

“He looked out at the fresh-cut hay on his right. The hay lay in clumps, ready to be baled. Soft.”

“...he didn't want to give Grandpa that much. He turned away as it blew out of him, breaking the silence.”

“And because Travis didn't know anyone like that, he followed Grandpa across the road and got in.”

“Everything's the same, exactly the same, except for how much you're not here.”

“But that beats my creepy brother's wide-alive air any day.”

“The madre was going to give me some money for school supplies, but guess what, she forgot.”

“Nobody knows I'm here.”

“So who's doing homework? Not me.”

CHAINED

BY LYNNE KELLY

SYNOPSIS

After ten-year-old Hastin's family borrows money to pay for his sister's hospital bill, he leaves his village in northern India to take a job as an elephant keeper and work off the debt. He thinks it will be an adventure, but he isn't prepared for the cruel circus owner. The crowds that come to the circus see a lively animal that plays soccer and balances on milk bottles, but Hastin sees Nandita, a sweet elephant and his best friend, who is chained when she's not performing and hurt with a hook until she learns tricks perfectly. Hastin protects Nandita as best as he can, knowing that the only way they will both survive is if he can find a way for them to escape.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Lynne Kelly grew up in Houston, lived in a couple of much colder places, then returned to the Houston area, where she works as a sign language interpreter and writes novels for children and young adults. She fell in love with children's literature during a short stint as a special education teacher—when she realized she loved working with children but did not like the paperwork or planning needed to be a teacher! *Chained* is her first novel.

HOOKS

- Have you ever had a pet that you would do *anything* for, in order to protect it from harm? How far would you go?
- It is said that "elephants never forget." What do you think this means? What do you know, or what have you heard, about elephants?
- Have you ever seen elephants or other animals perform in a circus or other venue? Do you think the animals enjoy performing? Why or why not?
- Should animals be captured from their native habitat so people can see them in a zoo or perform in a circus? Why or why not?

CONNECTIONS

Applegate, Katherine. *The One and Only Ivan*. Harper Collins, 2012.

DiCamillo, Kate. *The Magician's Elephant*. Candlewick Press, 2009.

Kadohata, Cynthia. *A Million Shades of Grey*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2010.

Morpurgo, Michael. *An Elephant in the Garden*. Feiwel & Friends, 2011.

Smith, Roland. *Elephant Run*. Hyperion Books for Children, 2007.

Tsuchiya, Yuko. *Faithful Elephants: A True Story of Animals, People, and War* (picture book). Houghton Mifflin, 1988.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Lynne Kelly has developed an excellent, extensive website that includes a 34-page curriculum and activity guide for *Chained*. The activities are aligned with the CCSS, and include a list of the standards covered. You will find numerous thought provoking writing and art activities, plus questions for each chapter. <http://chained.lynnekellybooks.com> Here are a few highlights:

The Bio-Pyramid:

- What are some words that best describe Hastin's character?
- How can Hastin's childhood best be described?
- What is the biggest problem that he must overcome?
- Think about Hastin's many accomplishments. Which are the best three?
- How did his accomplishments benefit others?

Then, instruct the students to fill in the bio-Pyramid blanks with their best descriptive words.

Hastin

Two words describing Hastin

Three words describing Hastin's childhood

Middle School/Junior High

Four words indicating a problem Hastin must overcome

Five words indicating one of Hastin's accomplishments

Six words indicating another one of Hastin's accomplishments

Seven words indicating another one of Hastin's accomplishments

Eight words stating how Hastin's accomplishments benefited others

Discussion Questions and/or Writing Prompts for Chapters 1 through 6:

For each of the quotations below, ask students to respond to one of the questions by writing a paragraph or two in their journal.

But we hold on to Ganesh. He is the remover of obstacles and we need him (10)

- Identify the obstacles Hastin is referring to.
 - With regard to Baba?
 - With regard to Chanda?
 - With regard to Amma?
- Summarize the challenges set before Hastin and tell why he holds on to Ganesh.
- How can a young boy construct a plan to save his family without the resources to do so?
- Is faith in Ganesh's abilities to remove obstacles Hastin's only option?

My stomach knots with worry when I notice blue-black skin around her left eye. In the short time since I've seen her, she looks smaller somehow, so I'm careful not to squeeze her too hard (21)

- Can you predict what has happened to Amma, Hastin's mother?
- Consider Amma's nature as described in the early pages of the book.
 - How is she the same?
 - How is she different?

Middle School/Junior High

I picked up a tiny carved elephant, painted yellow. Its wood is smooth, but I rub a spot that should have been sanded more. And perhaps the trunk needs more detail... (27)

- Baba, Hastin's father, was a master wood carver. Do you think the experience Hastin had carving wood with his father had something to do with his critique of craftsmanship?
- Or do you think there might be something within Hastin that guided his opinion of craftsmanship?
- Do you think the author made a conscious choice for Hastin to pick up a painted wooden elephant? If so, why?

I shake Timir's hand. His long fingers curl around my hand, crushing it in his grip, and his ring digs into my palm (41).

- A hand shake is a gesture of trust and friendship. So you think Timir is interested in trust and friendship?
- What is your impression of Timir? What action(s) create your impression of him?
- Can you predict what Hastin's relationship with Timir will be? Is working for Timir a good choice?

Ne Min isn't much taller than I am, and his hair is thin and white. The lines around his eyes look like they're used to be wrinkled up by smiling, but I think there's something sad about his eyes, too (48).

- From Hastin's description of Ne Min, can you make an assumption about his physical being?
- From his description, can you get a sense of Ne Min's emotional being?
- What do you think has caused the sadness that burns in Ne Min's eyes?
- Do you predict that Ne Min can be trusted? Tell why or why not.
- Where is Ganesh in all of this?

Be sure to check out the author's webpage! You will find so many more activities, like

- Directions and patterns for a painted elephant mask
- A foldable of the Indian Gods
- Thinking hats: A study of points of view
- Elephant hand painting
- Reading assignment bookmarks

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ELEPHANTS

www.elephantaidinternational.org

The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (The elephant orphanage!)

www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org

www.elephantvoices.org

The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee

www.elephants.com

San Diego Zoo Elephant Cam

www.sandiegozoo.org

THE FALSE PRINCE

BY JENNIFER A. NIELSEN

SYNOPSIS

In order to unify the unstable medieval kingdom of Carthya where the royal family has recently been murdered, Conner, a nobleman, devises a plan to find an imposter to impersonate the king's long lost son, Jaron, and install him as a puppet prince. Three orphans are recruited and trained, but only one orphan will be chosen for this dangerous impersonation plan.

It is believed that Prince Jaron was killed by pirates, but his body was never found. Conner has two weeks to train the orphan boys and choose one of them to impersonate the prince. When he appears before the royal court, he will claim to have found the missing prince. The story centers on 15-year-old Sage, a feisty and defiant orphan, who becomes a beguiling anti-hero.

The False Prince is the first of book in the Ascendance trilogy. The second book, *The Runaway King*, continues the story, and the third and final book, *The Shadow Throne*, was released in early 2014.

Watch a trailer of *The False Prince* at www.scholastic.com/falseprince/.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Jennifer A. Nielsen was born and raised in northern Utah. She lives there with her husband and three children. She began writing in elementary school, producing her first full-length story when she was in sixth grade. She still has several stories from her days in elementary and middle school, along with her poems and cartoons, hiding in a box in the back of her closet.

Nielsen has always loved to read. When she discovered that the author of her favorite book, *The Outsiders*, was only 17 when it was published, she decided to be a published author even sooner. But she got involved in local theater and school speech and debate competitions and didn't write her first book until she was in her early 20's. It wasn't very good and neither were her second, third, or fourth books. And then she changed to writing young adult and children's fantasy books.

Nielsen's first book was *Elliot and the Goblin War*, which became the series *The Underworld Chronicles*. She has also written the sixth book for the *Infinity Ring* series, and the three books in the *Ascendance* trilogy.

Learn more about Jennifer Nielsen at her website, www.jennielsen.com.

HOOKS

- Can you imagine living without your parents and brothers and sisters?
- Have you ever pretended to be someone you weren't?
- What would it be like to be an orphan? Do you know what happens to children who are orphans today?
- Can you imagine what it would be like to live in a castle?
- What are the benefits and burdens of being a real prince? Would you want to be a prince?
- Take Scholastic's "Are You the False Prince?" quiz by going to the following link: <http://www.scholastic.com/falseprince/>.

CONNECTIONS

Courts and Courtiers

Bell, Hilari. *Sword of Waters*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2008.

Cavendish, Grace. *The Grace Mysteries: Assassin and Betrayal*. Delacorte Press/Random House Inc., 2010.

Flanagan, John. *The Kings of Conmel*. Puffin Books, 2010.

Maas, Sarah. *The Assassin and the Pirate Lord*. Bloomsbury, 2012.

Pierce, Tamora. *Trickster's Choice*. Random House/Listening Library, 2005.

Impersonation

McMullan, Kate. *Knight for a Day*. Grosset & Dunlap, 1999.

Peck, Richard. *Amanda/Miranda*. Puffin Books, 2001.

Wooding, Chris. *Pandemonium*. Graphix, 2012.

Middle School/Junior High

Orphans

Blackwood, Gary L. *Shakespeare's Scribe*. Dutton's Children's Books, 2000.

Bradford, Chris. *Young Samurai: The Way of the Dragon*. Disney/Hyperion Books, 2011.

Creech, Sharon. *The Castle Corona*. Joanna Cotler Books, 2007.

Creech, Sharon. *The Boy on the Porch*. Harper Collins, 2013.

Fforde, Jasper. *The Last Dragonslayer*. HMH Books for Young Readers, 2013.

Gaiman, Neil. *The Graveyard Book*. Harper Collins, 2008.

Riordan, Rick. *The Maze of Bones*. Scholastic, 2008.

Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. Scholastic, 1997.

Schlitz, Laura Amy. *Splendors and Glooms*. Candlewick Press, 2012.

Books by Jennifer A. Nielsen

The Underworld Chronicles series: Book 1, Elliot and the Goblin War; Book 2, Elliot and the Pixie Plot; Book 3, Elliot and the Last Underworld War. Sourcebooks Jabberwocky, 2012.

The Infinity Ring series: Book 6, Behind Enemy Lines. Scholastic Press, 2013.

The Ascendance Trilogy: Book 1, The False Prince; Book 2, The Runaway King; Book 3, The Shadow Throne. Scholastic Press, 2014.

WRITING PROMPTS

- Why does Conner choose orphans to carry out his plan?
- How do you think being an orphan would help to prepare Sage, Tobias, or Roden to become king?
- Conner wants to fool the whole country with his plan. Do you think his plan will work? Why or why not?
- Who do you think is Sage's biggest threat in preventing him from becoming Prince Jaron? Why?

Middle School/Junior High

- Who do you think is Sage's greatest ally? How does he or she help Sage? Do you think he could have succeeded without their help?
- How are Imogen and Sage alike? How are they different? Do you think they could ever be a couple?
- Why does Sage feel he can never truly be free? Do you agree?
- Do you think it was difficult for Jaron to let go of his royal past to become Sage? How did he have to change his life?
- Do you think it will be difficult for Sage to become Jaron again? Why or why not?
- Do you think Sage made the right decision in letting Roden escape? Why or why not? Would you have done the same thing?
- How do you think Jaron's struggles before he became Sage will be different from the ones he will face when he becomes King Jaron?
- Did you realize that Sage was really Prince Jaron before it became clear in the story? If so, when and how?
- There is a lot of deceit and lying in this story. Is any of it justified?

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Scholastic Materials: Scholastic has created discussion questions for the story; see the following links, <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/false-prince-and-runaway-king-discussion-guide>
http://www.scholastic.com/motherdaughterbookclub/pdf/Scholastic_MD_BC_FalsePrinceQA.pdf

Leadership Qualities: What qualities should a leader possess? Find examples of leadership qualities in each of the orphans in the story. Make sure students provide page references. Have students compare and contrast the three final orphans. Are the qualities needed for leadership different today from the time of the story?

Competition: The competition between the orphans to be king is ruthless. Conduct a classroom discussion about the benefits and drawbacks of

Middle School/Junior High

competition. Have students write an opinion paper about the value or danger of competition.

Point of View: The story is told from the third person perspective until chapter 43; then it is told from the first person perspective. Challenge students to re-write chapters in the first person from the perspective of one of the orphans.

Lying and Honesty: Deception is a major theme of the story. Have a classroom discussion about when and if lying is justifiable, either in the context of the story or in life. After finishing the story, ask students to respond to the question, "Who is the real master of deceit?" Have them to provide examples from the story to support their opinion.

Monarchies: Have students compare and contrast the benefits of monarchies with other forms of government (for example, democracies, republics, dictatorships). Extend this discussion by having students research monarchies today; do monarchs today perform more than ceremonial functions? Conclude by having students write an opinion paper about the best type of government.

The Middle Ages: Despite wretched plumbing and rampant disease, the Middle Ages remains a time of fascination. Have students learn more about an aspect of the Middle Ages. Topics could include: castle architecture, armor, crusades, monarchies, Arthurian legends, plumbing, transportation, sanitation, famous kings, diseases, torture, clothing, rivalries, and crown jewels. Allow students to create a variety of final projects, from re-creating castles to creating vintage clothing.

Other Fantasy Series: Challenge voracious readers to read other fantasy series and then compare and contrast these series with the Ascendance Trilogy in a well-reasoned paper with evidential support. Among the many fantasy series, consider the following to suggest to students: Harry Potter by J.K. Rowling, The Underland Chronicles by Suzanne Collins, Ranger's Apprentice by John Flanagan, Peter and the Starcatchers by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson, The Books of Beginning by John Stephens, Fablehaven and Beyonders by Brandon Mull, Artemis Fowl by Eoin Colfer, Percy Jackson and the Olympians by Rick Riordan (plus other series by Rick Riordan), The Inheritance Cycle by Christopher Paolini.

Orphans: Discuss with students how childhood mortality has dropped in modern times, creating far fewer orphans. Discuss how society handled orphans in earlier times. Engage students in a discussion about why many novels have orphans as the central character.