

COMPLEMENTARY RESOURCE

PAIRING PICTUREBOOKS AND POETRY TO TEACH CONTENT AREA MATERIAL ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

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If I had my life to live over again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week. -Charles Darwin (Goodreads, 2023)

Like Darwin, I also enjoy reading poetry and listening to music. Unlike Darwin, I am not a scientist. I am a former middle grades and high school English/Language Arts (ELA) teacher and now a teacher educator and researcher in literacy education. My teaching and research focus on using picturebooks to teach content area material across the curriculum, K-12. As a teacher educator, I also make it a rule to develop text sets of picturebooks across the curriculum and use them as curricular resources to conduct read alouds for my undergraduate and graduate students at the beginning of each class session.

Recently, I developed a Social Studies text set of picturebooks on the tragic event that occurred in the United States on September 11, 2001, commonly referred to as 9/11. From this text set, I read aloud *America is Under Attack* (Brown, 2011) on September 11, 2023 to students in my graduate course entitled *Reading Across the Content Areas*. Here is a precis:

This picturebook describes the attack on September 11, 2001, planned by Osama Bin Laden, leader of an organization named al-Qaeda. On that day, nineteen members of al-Qaeda posed as ordinary passengers on four commercial airplanes. During each flight, the members of al-Qaeda took control of the cockpits from the pilots and carried out the multi-site attack. On one plane, the members crashed it in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania while fighting off passengers who stormed the cockpit to save their own lives. On another plane, the members crashed the plane into the Pentagon, the military's headquarters in Washington, D.C. On the third and fourth plane, the members crashed one into the North Tower and the other into the South Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. In the end, a total of 2,973 innocent people tragically lost their lives in the attack.

I read aloud this picturebook for four reasons. One, a major goal of the course is to demonstrate and promote the use of picturebooks as tools to teach content area material across the curriculum. Two, another goal is to provide demonstrations of reading aloud as an instructional strategy for teachers to use with readers of all ages. Three, the goal is for students to engage in and reflect on the experience of reading aloud as an instructional strategy to support student engagement and meaningful learning across the curriculum. Four, the course highlights four major content areas: English/Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and Mathematics. I selected this picturebook to pay homage to the innocent lives lost on September 11, 2001, as well as introduce the Social Studies section of the course.

Student Response and Teacher Reflection

After reading *America is Under Attack*, I invited students to share their responses to the picturebook and write reflections on the whole experience. All students responded positively to the picturebook and recognized the power and potential of reading aloud. One response, however, caught my attention.

I have some reflections about this whole experience. I have always thought picturebooks were for children and that's why they are called children's literature. This picturebook, however, is not only for children but also for older students, like middle and high school students, and even adults. I certainly learned some new information about 9/11 from this picturebook. Also, while you were reading aloud the picturebook, I found myself thinking about a poem I read some time ago in high school. At the time, we were studying about 9/11 and read a poem titled Daddy's Day for 9/11. It was about a little girl who, like her classmates, was celebrating daddy's day at school. Her mother worries because her daughter will have to attend the celebration without her father because he died in the 9/11 attack. When her name is called to introduce her daddy, she tells everyone that he can't be there because he lives far away in heaven but still wants to tell them about him, especially that he still loves her. As you were reading, I found myself making lots of connections between the picturebook and the poem.

Afterwards, I found myself thinking more and more about this student's response. Unbeknown to her and me at the time, this student created a paired text. One text was the picturebook *America is Under Attack* and the other was the poem *Daddy's Day for 9/11*. Her connection of a poem to a picturebook introduced me to a new way of seeing and developing paired text, namely, pairing two texts from two different genres, in this instance, picturebooks and poetry. Her response also sparked my curiosity about pairing other picturebooks with poetry to teach important content area material across the curriculum. Ultimately, this student response inspired this article.

The purpose of this article is to share paired text of picturebooks and poetry across the curriculum and share samples of instructional strategies that teachers can use with paired text of picturebooks and poetry to engage student learning across the curriculum. I end with some concluding thoughts.

Paired Text

Paired text is not a new idea. Simply put, a paired text is two texts that are related in some way, e.g. topic, theme, character, etc. Over the years, much research has been conducted on the development and use of paired text to support the process of intertextuality, more commonly referred to as making connections across texts (Author, 2015). More recently, much professional literature has been published about new ways to pair text (see, Lupo, et al., 2019). One way is to pair contradictory texts, two texts that tell the same story but in contradictory ways. Another way is to pair corresponding texts, two texts that address the same theme in unique ways, e.g. different perspectives. Still another way is to pair companion texts, two texts that complement

each other by widening the perspective on a specific topic in a content area. These ways of pairing text primarily use two texts from the same genre. Pairing picturebooks and poetry, however, is a new and exciting way to pair texts.

Pairing Picturebooks and Poetry

In this section, I share examples of paired text that consist of two different genres, picturebooks and poetry. I also share and illustrate instructional strategies teachers can use with this kind of paired text across the curriculum. I organize this section by content area.

English Language Arts (ELA)



The picturebook *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (Jeffers, 2006) and the poem *How to Eat a Poem* (Merriam, 1990) is an entertaining paired text on the important topic of books. *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* is a funny and informative picturebook about a little boy who loved books, all books. He loved books not to read, but to eat! He started reading multiple books at one time. One day, he picked up a half-eaten book and, instead of eating it, he started reading it and discovered he loved to read.

How to Eat a Poem is also an entertaining poem, but with a serious message. It uses eating fruit as a metaphor for reading poetry. Like eating a ripe, juicy apple, reading a poem can be messy. No need to throw any parts away because it is there for each reader to enjoy.

Figure 1 illustrates Identifying & Describing Intertextual Connections as an instructional strategy used with this paired text.

Figure 1

Identifying & Describing Intertextual Connections

<i>The Incredible Book Eating Boy</i> 	Intertextual Connections	How to Eat a Poem 
<p>This is an entertaining and informative picturebook about Henry, a little boy who loved books, all books. He loved books not to read, but to eat! This practice began by mistake. First, Henry ate a single word, then a sentence, and then a whole book. He ate storybooks, dictionaries, and atlases, but red books were his favorite. He realized that the more books he ate the smarter he got. So, he started reading multiple books at one time. One day, he realized that everything he was learning was getting mixed-up. He was eating too many books. He picked up a half-eaten book and, instead of eating it, he started reading it and discovered he loved to read.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Both texts are entertaining and informative and use eating as a metaphor reading. 2) Both texts use descriptive and authentic language. 3) Both texts deal with the topic of reading (one about reading a book and the other about reading a poem). 4) Both texts invite inferential thinking. For example, digesting books and poems can be viewed as an act of comprehension and therefore digesting books and poems is as important as reading them. 5) Both texts have important implications for parents and reading teachers. 	<p>This is a whimsical and entertaining poem with a serious message. It uses eating fruit as a metaphor for reading poetry. A poem should always be enjoyable and memorable. Like a eating a ripe, juicy apple, reading a poem can be messy but that is part of the fun. The poem is ripe for the reader. No need to throw any part away because it is there for each reader to enjoy.</p>

Students write a retelling of the picturebook in the left-hand column and a retelling of the poem in the right-hand column. In the middle students identify and describe intertextual connections they created between the paired text. Appendix A illustrates additional paired texts of picturebooks and poetry in English/Language Arts for the Grade Band 5-8, focusing on six categories: power of books, power of words, parts of speech, punctuation, libraries and librarians, and life at school.

Social Studies

The picturebook biography *Grandad Mandela* (Mandela & Mandela, 2018) and the poem *An Ordinary Man* (Mohare, 2013) is a paired text on the historical character Nelson Mandela in Social Studies. *Grandad Mandela* is an informative picturebook authored jointly by his daughter and great-grandchildren. It is based on the authors’ conversations with their grandmother. It is

these conversations when they learn that Nelson Mandela was a freedom fighter and Nobel Peace Prize-winner.

An Ordinary Man is a poem that pays homage to Nelson Mandela. Although known as a famous man and respected worldwide as a champion of civil rights, it also describes him as an ordinary man. Nelson Mandela was extraordinary because he was rich in spirit, courage, and determination. A fitting tribute is also that he was an ordinary man.

Figure 2 illustrates Intertextual Connections Chart, an instructional strategy used with this paired text.

Figure 2

Intertextual Connections Chart

	Background of Nelson Mandela	Prison	Prison Time	Legacy
<i>Grandad Mandela</i>	Nelson Mandela was an ordinary man. Growing up, he lived in a traditional home, made of clay with a thatched roof. He got water from a river and cooked food in pots on the fire.	Nelson Mandela was unjustly incarcerated for fighting against Apartheid, the law in South Africa that separated black people and white people.	Nelson Mandela spent many years in prison. South African government put Mandela in jail for a long time, hoping he would age and tire, and people would forget about him and what he stood for.	His legacy is the opposite. He remains internationally admired and a hero to all people, especially people in South Africa.
<i>An Ordinary Man</i>	Nelson Mandela was an ordinary man. He was not born into riches or politics. He came from humble beginnings.	Nelson Mandela was a prisoner of freedom.	Nelson Mandela spent many years as a prisoner of freedom and yet he never lost his spirit and determination to fight discrimination.	The world wept when Mandela was freed from prison. Even today, his memory and work live on. Many people around the world continue to inherit his struggle and many parents and teachers continue to tell children his story.

Students identify the picturebook and the poem in the far left-hand column and record intertextual connections on the top row. Underneath each connection, students describe how each text addresses each connection. Appendix A illustrates additional paired texts of picturebooks and poetry in social studies for the Grade Band 5-8, focusing on three categories: biography, racism, computer technology.

Mathematics

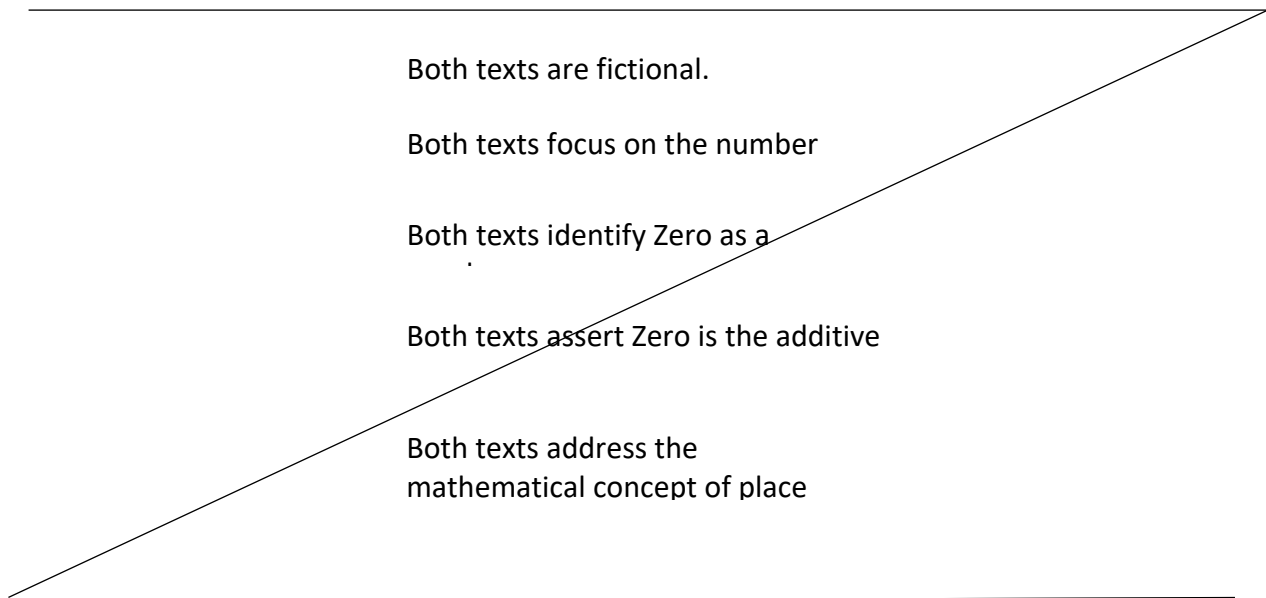
The picturebook *A Place for Zero* (LoPresti, 2003) and the poem, *Zero* (Stamm, 2004) is a paired text on the number of zero in mathematics. *A Place for Zero* is clever and informative picturebook about the problem of Zero. Zero lived in Digitari, a kingdom ruled by King Multiplus and Queen Addeline. Every number in the kingdom has a place except Zero, so he seeks advice from Count Infinity who shapes all numbers. Count Infinity puts Zero and the number 1 into the Numberator Machine and discovers that Zero has an additive identity. Finally, Zero has found his *place*.

Zero is a poem that describes important characteristics and functions of the number zero. One characteristic is that zero is a number that comes first before the rest of the counting numbers. The poem also identifies other illuminating characteristics. *Figure 3* illustrates a *Z-Map*, an instructional strategy used with this paired text.

Figure 3

Z-Map

A Place for Zero: This is an entertaining and informative picturebook about the problem of Zero. He doesn't feel like he adds up to the other digits, 1-9. Zero lived in Digitari, a kingdom ruled by King Multiplus and Queen Addeline. Every number in the kingdom has a place except Zero, so he seeks advice from Count Infinity who shapes all numbers. Count Infinity puts Zero and the number 1 into the Numberator Machine and discovers that Zero has an additive identity. Next, Zero asks King Multiplus to multiply him, hoping it would help him find his place. The King orders Zero and 1 to jump into the factor end of a multi-tube made of integrium. Soon, Zero, 1, and 0 exit the product end of the tube. Happily, the king declares a number multiplied with Zero make another 0. Zero notices that when 1 is added to 9, the sum is a new number. The King declares the new number will be called ten as asks Zero to stand next to the digit one. More and more numbers stand next to Zero making new numbers like 20, 30, and 90 and continue to make 32, 47, and 89. Finally, another 0 stood next to Zero and 1 and make a strange number. Zero stated they now represented ten 10's. Count Infinity praised Zero. He had finally found his *place*.



Zero: This poem describes important characteristics and functions of the number zero. One characteristic is that zero is a number that comes first before the rest of the counting numbers. It separates positive from negative numbers and keeps its identity with addition. Zero cannot be divided into numbers and gives place value structure.

Students write a retelling of the picturebook on top of the line of the letter Z and a retelling of the poem on the bottom line of the letter Z. In between on the diagonal line, students identify intertextual connections between the paired text. Appendix A illustrates additional paired texts of picturebooks and poetry in mathematics for the Grade Band 5-8, focusing on five categories: geometry, probability, graphing, time, and money.

Science

The picturebook *Drop: An Adventure through the Water Cycle* (Moon, 2021) and the poem *Water Cycle Poem* (Mr. R.'s World of Science) is a paired text in science on the topic of the water cycle. *Drop: An Adventure through the Water Cycle* is an informative picturebook that introduces the water cycle. The story is told with two narratives. One narrative is third-person and the other is first person as told by Drop, the main character. The third-person narration describes the water cycle factually.

Water Cycle Poem is an enjoyable and rhyming poem that describes the water cycle. It highlights the idea that the water cycle is a natural process and essential to meet the needs of humans, plants, and animals. *Figure 4* illustrates an H-Map, an instructional strategy used with this paired text.

Figure 4

H-Map

<i>Drop: An Adventure through the Water Cycle</i>		Water Cycle Poem
<p>This entertaining and informative picturebook introduces the water cycle. The story is told with two narratives. One narrative is third person and the other is first person as told by Drop, the main character. The third-person narration describes the water cycle factually. For example, the water cycle is about 4 ½ billion years old, the sun fills Drop with energy, Drop can be rain, but also hail, snow, and ice, even icebergs. Plants and animals can drink drop and then a whole new adventure starts again. At the same time, Drop describes how <i>all bouncy bouncy</i> she feels when she floats into the air, how fun it is for her to be different kinds of rain (sprinklicious, drippity-drip, and splishity-splash), how she glad she is to feed plants by getting back to her roots, and how she announces Woo-Hoo when she starts all over again.</p>	<p>Both texts emphasize the historic importance of water for humans, animals, and plants on planet Earth.</p> <p>Both texts describe the water cycle as a constantly, never-ending event.</p> <p>Both texts identify and describe individual parts of the water cycle.</p> <p>Both texts describe the individual parts of the water cycle as an integrated process.</p> <p>Both texts include important scientific vocabulary, e.g. evaporation, condensation, and precipitation.</p>	<p>This is an enjoyable and rhyming poem that describes the water cycle. It highlights the idea that the water cycle is a natural process, occurs around the world, and is invisible to the naked eye. It is essential to meet the needs of humans, plants, and animals.</p>

Students write a retelling of the picturebook in the left-hand column on the letter H and a retelling of the poem in the right-hand column on the letter H. Students identify intertextual connections in the middle. Appendix A illustrates additional paired texts of picturebooks and poetry in science for the Grade Band 5-8, focusing on five categories: biography, life science, earth science, space science, and physical science (*see also, Appendix A for a complete list of all picturebooks and poetry cited*).

Concluding Thoughts

This article was inspired by a powerful, but unexpected, student response to a picturebook I read aloud to my students about the tragic events on September 11, 2001. At one level, the response was not surprising. This student, like all students in the class, recognized that this picturebook pays respectful homage to all innocent people who lost their lives on that tragic day. At another level, the response was pleasantly surprising and intellectually informed. The surprise and information were that this student created a new way to pair texts, namely, pairing picturebooks with poems.

This article was inspired by this student response. The purpose was to share examples of a variety of paired text of picturebooks and poems across the curriculum, as well as samples of instructional strategies that teachers can use with these paired texts to support the process of intertextuality and engage student learning across the curriculum. My hope is two-fold: 1) these paired text and instructional strategies will, for now, be a valuable resource for teachers to use in the classroom, and 2) a catalyst for teachers to start some new conversations and generate new ideas about ways to develop and use paired text across the curriculum. Let the conversations begin!

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Appendix A.

Paired Texts of Picturebooks and Poetry in English/Language Arts

<i>Power of Books</i>	
Parleto, S. (2008). <i>The world that loved books</i> . Simply Read Books.	Jacobs, L.B. There is a Land. Retrieved from: https://www.best-poems.net/leland-jacobs/there-is-a-land.html , November 12, 2023.
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Merriam, E. (1991). <i>The wise woman and her secret</i> . Simon & Schuster.	Nesbitt, K. I've Got a Secret. Retrieved from: https://poetry4kids.com/poems/ive-got-a-secret/ , November 11, 2023.
<i>Power of Words</i>	
Bryant, J. (2008). <i>A river of words: The story of William Carlos Williams</i> . Eerdmans Books.	Rajaratnam, P. Words. Retrieved from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G._P._Rajaratnam , November 3, 2023.
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<i>Parts of Speech</i>	
Hall, P. (2009). <i>Find your function at conjunction junction</i> . Magic Wagon.	Reamer, J. Conjunction. Retrieved from: https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/conjunction-2/ , November 7, 2023.
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	<i>commas really do make a difference.</i> G.P.Putnam’s Sons.	
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Libraries & Librarians	Winter, J. (2019). <i>The librarian of Basra: A true story from Iraq.</i> Clarion Books.	Metres, P. Hearing of Alia Muhammed Baker’s Stroke. Retrieved from: google.com/Hearing+of+Alia+Muhammad , November 2, 2023.

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Paired Texts of Picturebooks and Poetry in Social Studies

Topic	Picturebook	Poetry
Biography	Krull, K. (2003). <i>Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez</i> . Clarion Books.	In Fields of Woe. In Lewis, J.P. (2007). <i>Poems for teaching in the content areas</i> . Scholastic Teaching Resources.
	Glaser, L. (2010). <i>Emma’s Poem: The Voice of the Statue of Liberty</i> . Clarion Books.	Lazarus, E. The New Colossus. Retrieved from: https://poets.org/poem/new-colossus?gclid=CjwKCAiA9dGqBhAqEiwAmRpTC8WllykDR51siGjWOg4hpUaRNRc1dPwXP4ZGssMWci5phqHHjAchoCUYwQAvD_BwE , November 11, 2023.
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<p>Nelson, K. (2013). <i>Nelson Mandela</i>. Katherine Tegen Books.</p>	<p>Opicho, A.K. Mandela, My Eternal Man. Retrieved from: https://hellopoetry.com/words/mandela November 12, 2023.</p>
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<p>Granfield, L. (2014). <i>In Flanders Fields: The</i></p>	<p>McCrae, J. In Flanders Fields. Retrieved from: https://vfw12002.org/Uploads/Documents/InFlandersFields.pdf, November 12, 2023.</p>

	<p><i>Story of the Poem by John McCrae.</i> Fitzhenry & Whiteside.</p>	
	<p>Yoo, P. (2018). <i>Twenty-Two cents: Muhammad Yunus and the village bank.</i> Lee & Low Books.</p>	<p>Banker to the Poor. In Lewis, J.P. (2013). <i>When thunder comes: Poems for civil rights leaders.</i> Chronicle Books.</p>
	<p>Weatherford, C.B. (2021). <i>Dorothea Lange: The Photographer Who Found the Faces of the Depression.</i> Albert Whitman & Company.</p>	<p>Lewis, J.P. The Captive. Retrieved from: https://www.proquest.com/openview/1bcc3c7f827c115307ea25914bdb4c90/1.pdf?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=1356370, November 2, 2023.</p>
	<p>Demi. (2001). <i>Gandhi.</i> Margaret K. McElderry Books.</p>	<p>Deshpande, A. Mahatma Gandhi. Retrieved from: https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/poems-on-gandhi/index.php, November 10, 2023.</p>
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	<i>of the South Pole</i> . Crabtree Classics.	
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