

Barb's BookSpot: Episode 12
Let's Be Creative! Finding Inspiration for Art and Writing
November, 2016

RAIN FISH. Copyright © 2016 by Lois Ehlert. Reproduced by permission of the publisher, Beach Lane Books, an imprint of Simon & Schuster.

In *Rain Fish*, Lois Ehlert demonstrates how everyday scraps and trash can become wonderful works of art. A bit of organizing, a touch of rearrangement and suddenly, we can see fish created from found items. There are more than 40 of them to be found! Her juxtaposition of the objects allows readers to begin to see with their own artist eye before turning the page to see more fully-realized creations. Vibrant blue and black background colors help to emphasize the completed fish, her use of space and placement draw the readers gaze to details which spark ideas. Ehlert uses a variety of textures, shapes and colors in each composition, and naturally occurring features are cleverly used; a dimple from the orange stem becomes an eye. The poetic text is simple, yet engaging, breathing life into creatures born of imagination: "They love to splash in puddles / and dance upon concrete." Enjoy this book filled with read-aloud, rainy-day, fun for all.

FRIDA AND BEAR PLAY THE SHAPE GAME! Copyright © 2015 by Anthony Browne and Hanne Bartholin. Reproduced by permission of the publisher, Candlewick Press, Somerville, MA on behalf of Walker, Books, London.

Frida and Bear love to draw, but one day, Bear stares at his blank white paper with no ideas. Frida draws a loopy shape, and hands him her paper with the suggestion, "Try to turn this shape into something, Bear." As the story progresses, the friends move from starting with hand-drawn shapes, to using found objects, such as an irregularly shaped scrap of cardboard, and a small twig. Each is used to begin a new drawing, inspiring fresh ideas for their artwork. The text is simple and accessible for early readers, and the pages are uncluttered, with focus drawn to the initial shapes and objects within the finished drawings. The final spread shows an array of inspired drawings, and encourages readers to try some of their own.

ALSO AN OCTOPUS. Text copyright © 2016 by Maggie Tokuda-Hall. Illustrations copyright © 2016 by Benji Davies. Reproduced by permission of the publisher, Candlewick Press, Somerville, MA.

Where do you begin to write a story? With nothing and then maybe, a character...an interesting character.. But don't stop there! Think about what your character wants or needs, and what happens or doesn't happen the way it was planned? Through colorful, wacky illustrations and engaging text, this book walks the reader through the elements of a good story. Every writer faces obstacles to completing a story just as the main character in this book – a ukulele-playing Octopus, faces difficulties with his inter-galactic, purple space ship, but in the end, a little inspiration and some new ideas from friends make it all begin to work. The story is left open-ended and final spread shows one of the female characters riding a water-skiing Rhino right of the page into the next adventure. As the back cover reminds us, "Even the most totally awesome story starts with a little nothing. What happens next is up to you!" This book is fun to read aloud, as well as to teach the elements of a story (character, motivation, plot, etc) to your youngest creative writers.

WET CEMENT: A MIX OF CONCRETE POEMS. Copyright © 2016 by Bob Raczka. Reproduced by permission of the publisher, Roaring Brook Press, an imprint of Macmillan Children's Publishing Group.

This wonderful collection of shape-poems features everything from an allusion to the Wright Brothers to icicles dripping. Titles as well as the layout of the poetic text offer plays on words and images. Word=play within the text of the poems offers another layer of meaning. These concrete poems are funny, punny, and rich with opportunities for visualization and as models for creative expression.

