

# SCHOOL START-UP LITERACY EVENT

## Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed

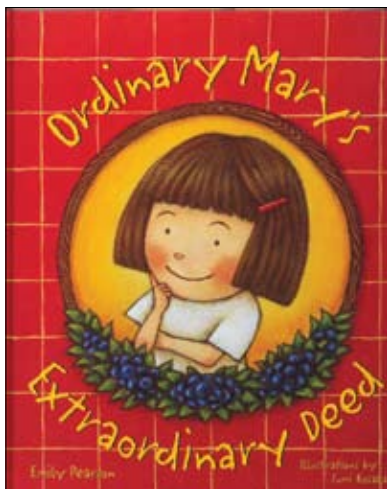
by Brenda Boreham



Brenda is the Literacy Resource Teacher at her school. This .2 position allows her to plan fun literacy events when she isn't busy in her own classroom.

This is the latest in a series of The Planning Department articles that suggest ways to organize school-wide literacy events around a single book title. The previous articles are available online at [www.CanadianTeacherMagazine.com](http://www.CanadianTeacherMagazine.com). Click on "Selected Articles" and then "Literacy."

Thanks go to Sharon Niddrie for introducing me to this book and being a source of inspiration.



*Ordinary Mary was so very ordinary that you'd never guess she could change the world. This ordinary kid? She did! She changed the world!*

*One ordinary day, skipping on her way from her ordinary school to her ordinary house, she passed an ordinary vacant lot filled with ordinary bushes growing ordinary berries—ordinary blue and juicy, luscious lovely berries.*

*Well, Ordinary Mary picked the ordinary berries and brought them in a big brown bowl to Mrs. Bishop's porch. What? Left berries in a big brown bowl on Mrs. Bishop's porch? That sneaky kid! She did!*

This small act of kindness starts a chain reaction that circles the world. Mrs. Bishop bakes blueberry muffins and gives them to five people. One of these passes a kindness on to five other people. One of these helps five other people and so on.

Meeting new people, making friends and settling into new routines are a big part of the first few weeks in an elementary school. Classes traditionally spend time developing social skills, building relationships and a spirit of co-operation among the children. Our staff thought that *Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed* by Emily Pearson would be an ideal book for a school-wide literacy project for our school start up in September.

### WHAT RESOURCES WERE NEEDED?

#### MATERIALS

- multiple copies of *Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed* by Emily Pearson (Gibbs Smith, 2002. ISBN 978-0-87905-978-1)
- timetable/day plans for the first week of school in September
- lesson plans and instructional materials

#### PEOPLE

- school based literacy committee and co-ordinator
- school start up committee
- administration and staff as a planning group
- assembly performer

### WHAT WAS THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS?

#### FEBRUARY

- The literacy committee short listed a number of books for the next year's start up week and chose *Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed*.
- Multiple copies of the book were ordered.

#### APRIL

- Part of a school based professional day was dedicated to reading the book and brainstorming the following: resource people, related art/craft projects, related music (we chose "My Own Two Hands" by Jack Johnson and Friends), assembly ideas, literacy activities, physical education activities, related videos and books, etc.

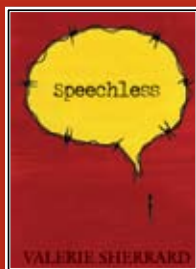
#### MAY

The lead literacy teacher and committees worked to:

- plan the timetable for the primary and intermediate classes for the first week of school
- take the ideas from the brainstorming session and format four literacy lessons, instructional materials, as well as a craft activity to be used to decorate the hallways
- book an assembly performer
- put all of this information into a printed package for the staff
- collect donations of craft materials (feathers, buttons, stickers, glitter, fabric, lace, braid, etc.) for the craft project



## Teacher Resource Guides Available

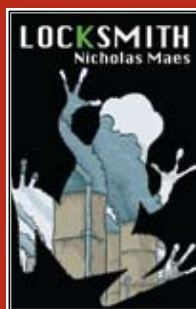


### SPEECHLESS

by Valerie Sherrard

978-1-55002-701-3 / \$12.99 paper  
Fiction, Ages 10+

Griffin sets off a bizarre chain of events and will have to face things he never imagined, and all without saying a word, when he comes up with a plan to get out of his class' yearly speech.

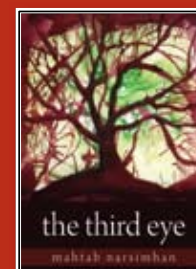


### LOCKSMITH

by Nicholas Maes

978-1-55002-791-4 / \$11.99 paper  
Fantasy, Ages 10+

Something rotten is about to be unleashed on the planet, and 12-year-old Lewis may be the only one who can avert disaster as he's sent to northern Alberta, the scene of a disastrous chemical spill a year before.



### THE THIRD EYE

*Tara Trilogy*  
by Mahtab Narsimhan

978-1-55002-750-1 / \$12.99 paper  
Fantasy, Ages 10+

When a new healer, a mysterious man with a third eye possessing strange power, suddenly appears in Morni, India, all are mesmerized by his magic – all except Tara, who sees through his evil disguise.

## JUNE PROFESSIONAL DAY

Two hours were set aside on this day to prepare and package all of the materials that would be needed to support this theme for the first week of September. The staff formed work parties to take care of jobs such as planning a half-day “old fashioned sports day” and a school-wide fitness activity, cutting name tags, photocopying, packaging craft materials in zip lock bags, etc. By the end of this time all of the planning was finished and support materials were stored in bins ready for September!

## SEPTEMBER - FIRST WEEK

Students were placed in grade groups each day but were not assigned to permanent classes until Friday afternoon (this is standard policy at our school since the school population changes so much over the summer). Each student engaged in Before Reading activities with the teacher they were with.

## SEPTEMBER - SECOND WEEK

All students were now placed with their classroom teachers. Various During and After Reading activities took place, depending on the grade level.

## SEPTEMBER - THIRD WEEK

All classes were assigned a scheduled time during this week to take part in a school-wide story writing activity. We used the pattern in the book as a model and wrote a similar story with each class building on the previous episode—one class wrote and illustrated the beginning of the story, then passed it on to the next class, which added on another episode, then passed it on, and so on, until each class had had a turn to develop the story.

## SEPTEMBER - FOURTH WEEK

The story telling project was presented to all classes during their visits to the library. The librarian chose one illustration from each class and read the entire story, showing the chosen illustrations.

An assembly was held to wrap up the theme.

## A LITERACY ACTIVITY THAT WORKS WITH THIS BOOK

### BEFORE READING

The four literacy lessons that we planned for the first week were designed to introduce important vocabulary in the story (ordinary, extraordinary, good deed and kindness). The students knew nothing about the story at this point, and we wanted to tap into their prior knowledge and experiences, and to challenge them to think about what the story might be about. This is one of the lessons we used to reinforce understanding of the terms “ordinary” and “extraordinary.”

### Extraordinary Art Project

#### Materials

- ordinary and extraordinary illustrations (1 per class). “Ordinary” illustrations are simple line drawings which might be found in colouring books or created for this purpose, and matched with “extraordinary” art illustrations from calendars, magazines, picture or art books, etc.
- paper doll template (2 per child)



- creative materials to transform the paper doll template (e.g. glitter, feathers, buttons, sequins, ribbon, lace)
- basic craft materials (e.g. scissors, glue, coloured paper)

### Goals

- Behaviour goal: To use oral language and respectful listening and speaking skills.
- Literacy goal: To access prior knowledge and to make connections.
- Fine Arts goal: To demonstrate understanding through creative representation.

### Process

1. Lead a review of the terms “ordinary” and “extraordinary” (accessing prior knowledge).
2. Show the sample of an ordinary illustration and discuss it with the class.
3. Repeat the process with the extraordinary illustration.
4. Through structured partner talk, the students discuss and report to the class on the following question: *What makes the second picture extraordinary?* Record the responses on the chalkboard.
5. Repeat with the following question: *What could you add to the ordinary picture to make it extraordinary?*
6. Show the class a copy of the paper doll template. Through partner talk, the students discuss what could be done to make the blank template extraordinary (processing). Students are asked to think specifically (“adding details” should be expanded to what specific details should be added—colour, glitter, feathers, etc.)
7. Give each student a plain doll template. Invite them to transform the figure using the provided materials. Stop after ten minutes and have all of the students stand and walk around to look at the other work in progress. Give students encouragement to add to their thinking/ideas for their own project. Circulate to encourage, help and comment on how the ideas match the criteria.
8. Students in grades 2–7 could complete the sentence template: *My figure is extraordinary because...*
9. Reflecting: at completion of the projects, the students share their work with the class. As the students show the figures, ask: *Did you make changes after you looked at the other figures? What might you do next time to change an ordinary figure?*
10. Collect all figures and display on the bulletin boards in the hallways, alongside a set of ordinary (blank) figures.



## Do you know that your students are missing 25% of your lesson?

### Why?

- Noisy HVAC systems
- Unfamiliar material
- Inexperienced listeners

Children can not reconstruct key words and phrases they've missed because they lack the vocabulary and brain development to fill in the gaps.



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