



ELLEN POTTER was only eleven years old when she decided to become a children's book author.

"I remember the exact moment when I knew, without a doubt, that I wanted to be a writer. I was eleven years old and I was in my school library, strolling through the aisles, trying to decide what to read next. Should it be A Wrinkle in Time? Or maybe Harriet the Spy. In a flash, I decided that the best books in the world were written for eleven-year-olds! Sadly, my twelfth birthday was just around the corner. So I

reasoned the only thing to do was to grow up and write books for eleven-year-olds." -Ellen Potter

Ellen studied creative writing at Binghamton University and worked a variety of jobs while writing – she was a dog groomer, construction worker, art teacher, and waitress.

Since her epiphany about being a writer, Ellen has authored over a dozen books, including: Olivia Kidney, Slob, Spilling Ink (co-authored with Anne Mazer), The Humming Room, Piper Green and the Fairy Tree, and others.

Her novel Olivia Kidney was a winner of the Child Magazine "Best Book" award and was a "Best Book of the Year" selection for 8 – 12 year-olds by Parenting magazine.

She has been a contributor to Cimarron Review, Epoch, The Hudson Review, and Seventeen.

She lives in Maine with her family and dogs.

SLOB

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What most surprised you about SLOB?

Which character in SLOB could you relate to the most? Why?

Have you ever wanted to believe in something so badly despite what you knew was probably illogical?

Do you think that Owen and “Jeremy” got along well as brother and sister? Why or why not?

Have you ever felt like you wanted to go back in time? What time period would you choose and why?

What thoughts did you have about Owen and Jeremy’s mother as you were reading the story?

How have you been a good friend to someone in your life? How has someone been a good friend to you?

There are lots of references in SLOB about how people look outwardly. How do their looks and how they present themselves effect how they behave?

What do you do to appear a certain way? Why?

Do you believe in ghosts? Why or why not? Are there good ghosts and bad ghosts? What about Karma, which gets mentioned in various ways in the book? Do you think there is such a thing?

Why do you think that “Jeremy” joins GWAB? Have you ever joined a group formally or informally? Why? How did it make you feel?

Why do you think Jeremy tells Owen that he has been heroic? What does being a hero mean to you? Who do you think was a hero in SLOB and why?

Nima seems to be a confidant or trusted friend for Owen, almost mystical. Have you had anyone like that in your life who has shared their particular beliefs and outlook that might have differed from yours? How was that comforting or enlightening for you?

Have you ever had someone in your life you thought was loyal but it turned out that they weren’t? Have you had someone in your life that you thought had crossed you but turned out to be faithful to you? How do either of those situations make you feel?

Owen mentions Thomas Edison’s quote about finding ten thousand ways that something doesn’t work while inventing one new thing. What have you ever pursued despite numerous attempts at success? Did you succeed? How did the process make you feel?

Owen and Jeremy have dealt with a traumatic experience. If you’ve ever lost someone close to you, or a precious family pet, how did you cope? What are some strategies for coping that you’ve used?



SLOB

ACTIVITIES

Build something out of found objects that have meaning to you (either the different components or the final product).

Create a pamphlet, rap or video about anti-bullying and share it at school.

Create acronyms that spell a word as a short cut for some of the daily things in your life.

Research why and how people have seizures, their symptoms, and what you can do if you are present during a seizure.



Make a batch of homemade Oreos or SLOBs and sell them along with other items as a fundraiser to raise anti-bullying activity funds. Use the money for some team-building, fun activities.

Try to prove why or why not Owen's theory of seeing the past would work. Have scientists experimented with anything like Owen's project?

Investigate earlier versions of some of your favorite T.V. shows or movies, or compare old series to new similar series. List some of the differences and some of the similarities. What are the elements that make them all appealing?

Owen, Jeremy and their mom take a Circle Line cruise around Manhattan and get a different perspective of their home. Go someplace, on the water, or a spot where you don't usually go in your town and sit, observe with new eyes - write or draw what you see, hear, feel, and smell. How would you describe what is around you to someone from another country or culture? Be as detailed as possible.



ONLINE CONNECTIONS

Stop Bullying:

<http://www.stopbullying.gov>

Best viral anti-bullying videos:

<http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/best-viral-antibullying-videos/>

Homemade Oreo Cookies:

<http://www.blessthismessplease.com/2012/02/homemade-oreo-cookies.html>

Look at your home/local area using Google Earth:

<https://www.google.com/earth/>

Inventions by Kids (slideshow):

<http://www.cNBC.com/2011/09/29/Inventions-By-Kids.html?slide=1>

Traveling to Alpha Centauri in a Time Machine (video):

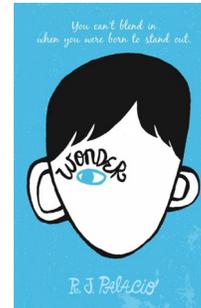
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTeodrMS3HE>

The Nemesis Star - Our Sun's Companion:

<http://space.about.com/od/sunsol/a/Nemesis.htm>



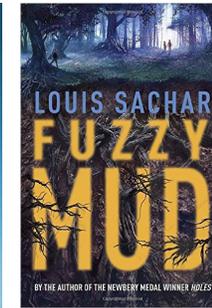
TEXT TO TEXT CONNECTIONS



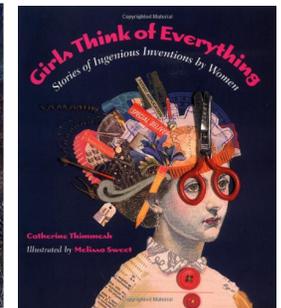
Wonder, by R.J. Palacio



Okay For Now, by Gary D. Schmidt



Fuzzy Mud, by Louis Sachar



Girls Think of Everything: Stories of Ingenious Inventions By Women, by Catherine Thimmesh, illustrated by Melissa Sweet

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

GRADES 5-8

Craft and Structure: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.D

Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.

Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2 and CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.