

# Inspiring Inventiveness with Literature

Use this tool in combination with other tools to inspire and engage children's inventiveness.

## Step 1

Identify an *Inspiring Inventiveness* [practice](#) that you would like to develop further (e.g., taking risks, normalizing uncertainty, or using imagination).

## Step 2

Choose a book to investigate this practice further with the children (see [page 3](#) for a partial list of book suggestions).

## Step 3

Introduce the book. Tell the children why you've chosen this book to read. Ask questions such as:

- *What predictions do you have? What do you think is going to happen?*
- *What connections are you already making?*
- *What are you wondering?*

## Step 4

Read the book. Pause for conversation when you or the children think it would be meaningful to do so. Balance reading for enjoyment with opportunities to pause and consider the content. Ask big questions as you read — both planned and spontaneous.

## Step 5

When you are finished reading, reflect on the book as a class. Decide on several big questions ahead of time. For support developing such questions, see either [Asking Big Questions](#) or [Asking Unanswerable Questions](#).

## Step 6

Continue to reference the book and conversation as children imagine, get stuck, move forward, express frustration, and more during your unit of study or project work. Continue the conversation with both repeat readings and related texts.

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## Children benefit from the windows and mirrors that immersion in literature provides.

Conversations grounded in literature promote cultures of inventiveness by engaging children's imagination and fostering curiosity and empathy — sometimes disrupting the status quo. Literature of all kinds can and should be brought into all parts of the school day. Literature reflects and validates children's experiences, sparks new questions, and takes children through time, space, and the world of ideas in a way that only books can offer.



### Suggested Time Frame

45 - 60 minutes

### When and How

Make Read-aloud a daily experience.

### Tips and Variations

- Use picture books with children of every age.
- If reading aloud makes you uncomfortable, practice before you read with the children.
- Decide ahead of time where you plan to stop and discuss the book.
- Invite children to make connections to the text. If too many children offer connections at the same time, teach them a hand signal to indicate they, too, have a connection to make.
- Identify a set of texts related to the *Inspiring Inventiveness* practice to use over a series of days. Include different genres.
- Read the book for enjoyment before reading it for discussion.

For video examples and reflections on practices that inspire inventiveness, become an Opal School Online Sustaining Member at [learning.opalschool.org](https://learning.opalschool.org).



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with Literature

Inspiring Inventiveness



## Suggested Books related to Inspiring Inventiveness Practices

**Inventors use curiosity and empathy to discover meaningful problems and develop novel responses.**

- *The Wedding Portrait* by Innosanto Nagara (2017)
- *The Water Princess* by Susan Verde and Georgie Badiel (2016)

**Inventors embrace ambiguity and complexity by building theories, taking risks, and viewing setbacks as opportunities for learning.**

- *Papa's Mechanical Fish* by Candace Fleming (2013)
- *The Dreamer* by Il Sung Na (2018)

**Inventors explore big questions that normalize uncertainty.**

- *White Water* by Michael S. Brandy and Eric Stein (2011)
- *What Do You Do With an Idea?* by Kobi Yamada (2013)

**Inventors rely on the connections between emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual experience.**

- *Martin & Mahalia: His Words, Her Song* by Andrea Davis Pinkney (2013)
- *When Sophie Gets Angry, Really, Really Angry* by Molly Bang (1999)

**Inventors develop ideas through collaboration, feedback, and exchange in diverse communities.**

- *The Book Itch: Freedom, Truth & Harlem's Greatest Bookstore* by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson (2015)
- *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson (2018)

**Inventors use play as a strategy for learning within a conflict-rich environment.**

- *The Cosmobiography of Sun Ra* by Chris Rascha (2014)
- *Drawn Together* by Minh Le (2018)

**Inventors use imagination to challenge the status quo and envision new possibilities.**

- *Electric Arches* by Eve Ewing (2017)
- *Just Like Rube Goldberg: The Incredible True Story of the Man Behind the Machines* by Sarah Aronson (2019)



**Inventors work with materials to prototype, share, research, iterate, and refine ideas.**

- *Rosie Revere, Engineer* by Andrea Beaty (2013)
- *Henry's Bright Idea* by Lauren Bradshaw (2016)

**Inventors create and use cognitive strategies and tools to stay open, disrupt patterns, and find gaps.**

- *The Garden of Happiness* by Erika Tamar (1996)
- *The Dot* by Peter Reynolds (2003)

**Inventors reflect on their thinking and actions in order to make connections they might otherwise miss.**

- *Dreamers* by Yuyi Morales (2018)
- *The Most Magnificent Thing* by Ashley Spires (2014)

**For additional book suggestions see the following websites:**

- The Conscious Kid — <https://www.theconsciouskid.org/>
- American Indians in Children's Literature — <https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/>
- A Mighty Girl — <https://www.amightygirl.com/>
- Books that Heal Kids — <https://booksthathealkids.blogspot.com/>
- Teaching Tolerance — <https://www.tolerance.org/>
- Award-winning books — <http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/childrens-book-awards-other-organizations>
- Diverse Books — <https://diversebooks.org/>

