

**CYRM RESOURCE GUIDE  
PICTURE BOOKS  
FOR OLDER READERS  
(GRADE 4 AND UP)  
2012-2013**

***Nubs:***

***The True Story of a Mutt, a Marine and a Miracle***

by Brian Dennis

Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2009

***Nurse, Soldier, Spy:***

***The Story of Sarah Edmonds, A Civil War Hero***

by Marissa Moss

illustrated by John Hendrix

Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2011

***The Junkyard Wonders***

Patricia Polacco

Philomel Books, 2010

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California Young Reader Medal  
PICTURE BOOKS FOR OLDER  
READERS BALLOT  
2012-2013

\_\_\_\_\_ *Nubs*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Nurse, Soldier, Spy*

\_\_\_\_\_ *The Junkyard Wonders*

California Young Reader Medal  
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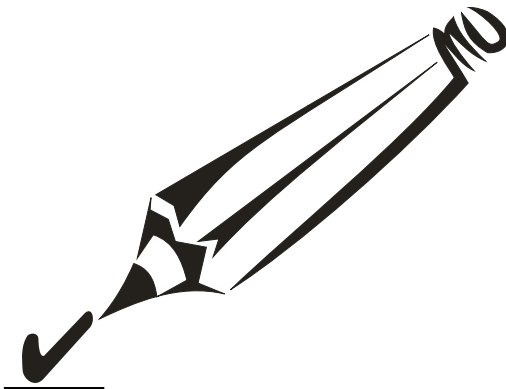
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# ***NUBS: THE TRUE STORY OF A MUTT, A MARINE AND A MIRACLE***

**by Brian Dennis**



## **MEET THE AUTHORS**

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Brian Dennis is the major in the Marines who had been a pilot and served in Iraq. He and Nubs live in San Diego.

Kirby Larson is the acclaimed author of the 2007 Newbery Honor book, *Hattie Big Sky*. Her most recent title is *Two Bobbies: A True Story of Hurricane Katrina, Friendship and Survival*, co-written with Mary Nethery. Kirby lives in Kenmore, Washington.

Mary Nethery is the author of many picture books, including *Hannah and Jack*, *Mary Veronica's Egg*, and *Orange Cat Goes to Market*. Mary lives in Eureka, California.

### **PLOT SYNOPSIS**

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Nubs, an Iraqi dog of war, never had a home or a person of his own. He was the leader of a pack of wild dogs living off the land and barely surviving. When Nubs met Marine Major Brian Dennis, the two formed a fast friendship. Nubs had no way of knowing that Marines were not allowed to have pets. Nubs became part of Dennis's human "pack" until duty required the Marines to relocate--without him. So began an incredible journey that would take Nubs through a freezing desert, filled with danger to find his friend and would lead Dennis on a mission that would touch the hearts of people all over the world.



### **HOOKS**

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- Someone's best friend doesn't have to be a person. Have you ever had an animal as a best friend? In this true story, find out how far a dog will travel to find his best human friend.



### **CONNECTIONS**

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Nubs and Dennis will remind readers that friendship has the power to cross deserts, continents, and even species.

#### **Read about other daring dogs:**

*Little Lost Dog* by Monica Carnesi. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2012.

*The Incredible Life of Balto* by Meghan McCarthy. Alfred A. Knopf, 2011.

*Meet the Dogs of Bedlam Farm* by Jon Katz. H. Holt, 2011.

*Saving Audie: A Pit Bull Puppy Gets a Second Chance* by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent. Walker & Company, 2011.

#### **Learn about courageous animals that survive incredible journeys**

*Winter's Tail: How One Little Dolphin Learned To Swim Again* by Juliana Hatkoff. Scholastic Press, 2009.

*Two Bobbies: A True Story of Hurricane Katrina, Friendship, and Survival* by Kirby Larson. Walker, 2008.

#### **Get to know animal friendships**

*Tarra & Bella: The Elephant and Dog Who Became Best Friends* by Carol Buckley. G.P. Putnam's Sons Penguin Young Readers Group, 2009.

*Owen and Mzee: The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship* by Isabella Hatkoff, Scholastic Press, 2007.

*Friends: True Stories of Extraordinary Animal Friendships* by Catherine Thimmesh. Houghton Mifflin, 2011.

## WRITING PROMPTS FOR *NUBS*

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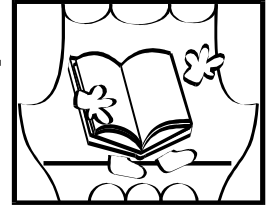


- Rewrite the story from the point of view of Nubs as you imagine how he felt through all the changes in his life.
- Using examples from the story, explain how Nubs is a very smart dog.
- Who do you consider to be a true friend? What does it mean to have a true friend? How far would you travel and what would you do to help or reach your friend?
- Research where the story took place – Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. Write letters to our servicemen who are serving there now.

# READERS' THEATER FOR *NUBS*

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(Arranged for Reader's Theater by CYRM Committee Members for classroom use only).



## ***Nubs: The True Story of a Mutt, a Marine and a Miracle*** by Major Brian Dennis, Kerby Larson and Mary Nethery

Narrator 1  
Narrator 4

Narrator 2  
Brian

Narrator 3

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Narrator 1: Outside a border fort in the desert of western Iraq, a small, thin dog watched and waited. His ears had been cut off to make him a dog of war. He had no name and no person to call his own.

Narrator 2: Despite his size, he was the leader of his pack, a group of wild dogs that survived by eating desert mice and rats and scraps from the Iraqi soldiers stationed at the fort.

Narrator 3: As the dog scanned the desert for a possible meal, the stillness of the fall morning was broken by the roar of engines, rumbling closer and closer. He hunkered down in the sand.

Narrator 4: Three military Humvees, carrying Major Brian Dennis and his ten Marines, lumbered to a stop. They were part of Border Transition Team 3/5/2, there to help train the Iraqi soldiers.

Brian: The other pack dogs raced to greet us, but the dog without ears cautiously approached me. I knelt down on one knee to meet him. I called him Nubs because his ears look like little "nubs." We clicked right away. He flipped on his back and made me rub his stomach. I taught him to sit and shake in about 5 minutes.

Narrator 1: That night, Nubs and Brian ate dinner together. They shared Brian's MREs...that's Meals Ready-to-Eat...of spaghetti and Cajun Beans and rice. For dessert, Nubs sampled a strawberry Pop-Tart, wagging his tail.

Narrator 2: Later that evening, Nubs stayed with Brian when it was his turn at guard duty. Together they kept everyone safe.

Narrator 3: The next day, Brian gave Nubs an extra long belly rub. Then he stepped into his Humvee and drove away.

Narrator 4: The whole pack chased after the vehicles but quickly lost interest and turned back.

Narrator 1: Not Nubs. Running faster and faster, he tried to catch up with Brian. He ran for more than a mile. He had no way of knowing that it was against the rules for Marines to have pets.

Narrator 2: Left behind, Nubs stared after the Humvees as they disappeared into the shimmering heat of the desert.

Narrator 3: Long, lonely weeks passed without any sight of that trio of Humvees the Marines called Scout, Boss, and Chuck.

Narrator 4: At the fort, without Brian, there were no belly rubs. Winter's cold winds began to scour the desert, leaving Nubs scrambling for someplace warm to sleep.

Narrator 1: As the pack leader, he faced constant challenges from younger dogs wanting his job. Sometimes groups of dogs from other forts fought Nubs and his pack over the little food they had. Nubs lived his rough, harsh life waiting for each time Boss carried Brian back to him.

Brian: On our last trip north, I was expecting to see Nubs again. I didn't. We didn't make it as far north as we did last trip, but I still thought I'd see him. I hope that crazy little dog is okay.

Narrator 2: Near the end of December, when the temperature dipped to a bone-chilling 30 degrees, the Humvees again rumbled up to the border fort. The pack dogs ran to greet Brian. But not Nubs. He hung back, gaunt and weak from a deep wound in his side.

Narrator 3: Shivering from pain, Nubs allowed Brian and the team medic to clean the wound and apply antiseptic ointment from the men's first-aid kits. He even swallowed the child-sized dose of antibiotic Brian gave him. But Nubs refused to eat or drink. It hurt so much, he tried to sleep standing up.

Brian: We tried to put a blanket on Nubs when we bedded down for the night in the desert, but he wouldn't let us. I said a prayer for him. He slept near me. It got down to 18 degrees that night and I kept waking up to check on him. Every time I woke up, I wondered if he'd be alive.

Narrator 4: When Brian got up at 4 a.m. for his turn at watch, Nubs stiffly padded into place beside him. Head and tail drooping, he faithfully made the rounds with Brian.

Narrator 1: The next day, Nubs watched as Brian and his team prepared to leave. He touched his nose to Brian's face as Brian bent down to pet him good-bye. He felt Brian's head on his and heard him whispering...

Brian: Hey, buddy, you need to eat. You need to get better.

Narrator 2: Then Brian climbed into Boss and the three Humvees pulled away. Determined not to be left behind again, Nubs chased after Brian. He couldn't keep up. Alone, he returned to the fort.

Narrator 3: Two long weeks later, Scout, Boss, and Chuck thundered up to Nub's fort again. This time Nubs was there to greet them, tail wagging but still moving slowly.

Narrator 4: For a few peaceful days, Nubs stuck close to his human "pack." Brian took special care of him, doctoring his wound every morning. Nubs gobbled up his share of Brian's MREs, especially the beef patties. They wrestled and played "give me five." Brian rubbed Nubs' belly every time he asked. If Brian stopped too soon, Nubs pawed him and made him rub some more.

Narrator 1: Each night, after the sun set over the desert, Nubs and Brian did their job together. Under an ice-black sky of a thousand stars, they kept watch over everyone.

Narrator 2: All too soon, it was time for Brian to leave again. Nubs followed close on his heels. Brian tightened his winter scarf around his neck and then climbed inside the Humvee. He leaned out and said to Nubs...

Brian: You take care of yourself, buddy.

Narrator 3: The vehicles rolled across the desert, slowly at first, then picking up speed, heading for the Command Outpost, far away on the Jordanian border.

Narrator 4: Nubs cried as he chased them across the cold, coarse sand. Because of his wound, he could not keep up. He dropped to the ground, exhausted and completely alone.

Narrator 1: When Nubs sat up, Scout, Boss and Chuck were out of sight. He struggled to his feet and began walking.

Narrator 2: Nubs trekked mile after treacherous mile across the desert, shivering through frozen days and nights. There was little to eat and even less to drink. With barely a moment's rest, Nubs pushed on fighting his way through territories fiercely protected by wolves and wild dogs.



Narrator 3: Two snowy days and 70 miles later, Nubs limped into the Iraqi battalion headquarters, where Brian was working.

Narrator 4: A team member ran inside, shouting to Brian, "You're not going to believe who is here!"

Narrator 1: When Nubs saw Brian, he ran with his tongue out and tail wagging, right into his arms.

Brian: What are you doing here?

Narrator 2: Brian held Nubs close and rubbed him all over. Nubs finally felt warm again.

Narrator 3: Nubs watched Brian climb into Boss, ordering his team back to the Command Outpost just half a mile away.

Brian: I know we're not supposed to have dogs at the outpost. But if Nubs follows us, what can we do?

Narrator 4: When the Humvees began to roll, Nubs trotted right behind them until they reached the Command Outpost.

Brian: Nubs was starving and exhausted from his ordeal. He wolfed down pancakes, eggs, and sausages all the Marines brought him. He made dog angels, rolling over and over in the freshly fallen snow.

Narrator 1: The Marines built him a brand-new doghouse.

Narrator 2: Nubs liked living at the Command Outpost with Brian's men and all the other soldiers. He proudly wore a collar the Marines had fashioned from woven bracelets sent to them from schoolchildren back home in the states.

Brian: He cheered up everyone, collected belly rubs and made us all laugh. Even though he had his own doghouse, most of the nights, he curled up in the barracks with me and my team.

Narrator 3: But all this was about to change.

Brian: This all came to a crashing halt when two soldiers, who were not a part of our team, reported us. We were given four days to "get rid of the dog or else." That night I sat down and talked to my Marines. We knew that if we took Nubs to the fort he would come back to us. This made the decision easy for me. Nubs was going to America. This dog who had been through a lifetime of fighting war and abuse was going to have a nice sunny life and would never be cold again!

- Narrator 4: Nubs sat close by as Brian e-mailed his family and friends back home. He supervised the men as they put up flyers to raise the money needed for his journey.
- Brian: Nubs was the first to hear the good news. Family and friends wanted to help. He posed for his passport photo. He took three baths in three days to get ready for his trip.
- Narrator 1: On the last day, Brian packed Nub's brown blanket and his favorite super-hero toy. He made a rope leash for him. Nubs knew something was up. He didn't play with anyone as he usually did. Instead, he sat quietly in a corner.
- Narrator 2: When it was time to go, Brian scooped him up and put him in Boss. Together they drove to No Man's Land, the zone between Iraq and Jordan. There, they met the brother of Brian's interpreter, who had agreed to help get Nubs from Jordan to the States. He was escorted by a Jordanian official.
- Narrator 3: Brian carried Nubs to the Land Rover.
- Brian: Be good and don't cause any trouble. These guys will take care of you. I'll see you in a couple of months, I promise.
- Narrator 4: Nubs sat at the border checkpoint for hours as officials pored over his paperwork, making sure everything was in order.
- Brian: I had my interpreter call his brother every 30 minutes. I wanted to know when Nubs was headed out, on the highway to Amman. I was sending him off with strangers. I was worried I'd never see him again.
- Narrator 1: Finally Nubs arrived in Amman, Jordan. The King of Jordan's veterinarian gave him his first check-up and shots. He stayed at the vet's kennels while his travel was being arranged.
- Narrator 2: Two weeks later, Nubs flew the ten-hour flight from Amman to Chicago. Brian's friends picked Nubs up at the airport. Nubs ate steak and strawberry Pop-Tarts for dinner.
- Narrator 3: A few days later, Nubs flew out of Chicago on the last leg of his long journey, all the way to San Diego.
- Narrator 4: When Nubs stepped off the plane in San Diego, he was greeted with banners and all kinds of cameras. He patiently posed for the "pawparazzi" but was glad to leave the airport crowd with Brian's friends, Eric and Chrissy.

Brian: Well, it's official. Nubs is in San Diego living the good life like a little rock star. I can't wait to get home and take him to the beach.

Narrator 1: Nubs slept in a comfy new dog bed, tried all kinds of tasty food, and went for walks in the dog park. But someone was missing.

Narrator 2: On March 23, 2008, Eric and Chrissy drove Nubs to Camp Pendleton. The "pawparazzi" were there again! Nubs waited and waited. When he finally saw Brian, he leaped into his arms and covered him with kisses.

Brian: Today, we lead a very busy life. We play at the dog beach and cruise around in my truck. We go running or hike in Mission Trails Regional Park.

Narrator 3: Nubs romps with his friends Bogey and Kublai. He even goes to school. His trainer, Graham, gives him straight A's.

Narrator 4: This small dog has done amazing things in his short life. It was a miracle he survived. The bigger miracle may be that this dog of war chose to become a dog of peace.

Narrator 1: Now Nubs has a name and a person to call his own. And he shares the friendship and love he found with everyone he meets.

Narrator 2: But Nubs saves his best kisses for his best buddy, Brian.

# ***NURSE, SOLDIER, SPY: THE STORY OF SARAH EDMONDS, A CIVIL WAR HERO***

**by Marissa Moss**

**illustrated by John Hendrix**



## **MEET THE AUTHOR**

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Marissa Moss is an author and illustrator who has produced picture books and chapter books and is best known for her series of beginning readers featuring a young writer named Amelia. Moss began her career as a picture-book illustrator. In addition to her "Amelia's Notebooks" and "Max Disaster" stories, Moss has created a series focusing on young writers from different historical periods. She has authored or illustrated over 50 books.

Find out more about Marissa from her website: <http://www.marissamoss.com>



## **MEET THE ILLUSTRATOR**

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John Hendrix loves to draw. In fact, he is drawing right now. Born in St. Louis, John has been drawing since shortly after that moment. John attended The University of Kansas to study graphic design and illustration and after working for a few years as a designer started teaching Illustration and Communication Design at Washington University in St. Louis. John lives in the neighborhood of University City, with his beautiful wife Andrea, son Jack and daughter Annie.

Find out more about John from his website:

<http://johnhendrix.com/portfolio/about/john/>

### **PLOT SYNOPSIS**

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Read about the true story of a young Canadian girl named Sarah Emma Edmonds, who disguised herself as a man in order to fight in the Civil War. She took the name Frank Thompson and joined a Michigan army regiment to battle the Confederacy. Sarah proved to be an excellent soldier and nurse on the battlefield. Her life became even more exciting when she was then asked to become a spy!



#### **HOOKS**

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- Imagine saving the day, or saving a life. Now imagine having to do it in disguise! Does that sound like something a superhero would do? Find out how Sarah Emma Edmonds might just be a real life super hero of the Civil War!



#### **CONNECTIONS**

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##### **Ladies in disguise:**

*Four Gallant Sisters* by Eric Kimmel. H. Holt, 1992.

*Elena's Serenade* by Campbell Geeslin. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2005.

*Fa Mulan: The Story of A Woman Warrior* by Robert D. San Souci. Hyperion Books for Children, 1998.

##### **True Stories of Daring Women You Might Not Know About:**

*Here Come the Girl Scouts!: The Amazing All-True Story of Juliette 'Daisy' Gordon Low and Her Great Adventure* by Shana Corey. Scholastic Press, 2012.

*Basketball Belles: How Two Teams and One Scrappy Player Put Women's Hoops on the Map* by Sue Macy. Holiday House, 2011.

*Me...Jane* by Patrick McDonnell, Little, Brown, 2011.

*Tillie the Terrible Swede: How One Woman, a Sewing Needle, and a Bicycle Changed History* by Sue Stauffacher. A. Knopf, 2011.

*Queen of the Falls* by Chris VanAllsburg. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010.

*She Loved Baseball: The Effa Manley Story* by Audrey Vernick. HarperCollins, 2010.

## WRITING PROMPTS FOR *NURSE, SOLDIER, SPY*

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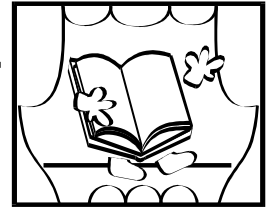


- Using facts from the book, describe what can be inferred about the status of women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?
- Imagine you are 20-year old “Frank Thompson” enlisting in the Union Army. Describe how you feel about your situation and the action you are about to undertake.
- Do you think Sarah ever regretted her decision to pose as a man and enlist in the Union Army? Why or why not?
- “I am naturally fond of adventure, a little ambitious, and a good deal romantic – but patriotism was the true secret of my success.” This quote is attributed to Sarah Edmonds. Using examples from this book, describe how this quote accurately describes her.

# READERS' THEATER FOR *NURSE, SOLDIER, SPY*

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(Arranged for Reader's Theater by CYRM Committee Members for classroom use only).



## ***Nurse, Soldier, Spy:*** ***The Story of Sarah Edmonds, A Civil War Her***

By Marissa Mosa

Illustrated by John Hendrix

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Narrator 1	Narrator 2	Narrator 3	Narrator 4
Narrator 5	Sarah/Frank	Young Boy	Recruiter/Soldier 2
Soldier 1 and 3	Chaplain/Peddler		

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Narrator 1: President Lincoln had just declared war on the Southern states seceding from the Union and the new army needed men. When Frank Thompson saw a poster requesting recruits, he decided that he would be one of them.

Sarah: Except Frank isn't my real name. I am not a man. I am really Sarah Emma Edmonds. I am only nineteen, but I have already been dressing as a man for three years.

Narrator 2: Originally, she had cut her brown wavy hair and put on pants to escape a marriage arranged by her parents.

Narrator 3: She had run away, crossing the border from Canada into the United States, trading a bridal gown for trousers, trading countries, without a single regret. Once she discovered the freedom of taking big strides unhindered by heavy skirts, and the freedom to travel when and where she wanted, she couldn't put a dress back on.

Sarah: Now I joined a long line of men snaking around the Michigan court house, eager to give back to the country that had given me new life.

Narrator 4: When it was her turn, she leaned over the pen, ready to sign on to the Union Army.

Recruiter: Just a moment there...

Sarah: I froze. Could he tell I was a woman? How? I'd been fooling people for so long, I thought my disguise was perfect.

Narrator 5: Growing on a farm, she'd learned how to handle a gun and a horse. Even then, she'd put on her brother's homespun pants to hunt. So learning to walk, talk, eat and gesture like a man had come easy to her. By now it was a habit.

Sarah: Yes?

Recruiter: I know you love your country, but you need to grow up a bit before you join the army. We aren't taking any sixteen-year-olds.

Sarah: But...

Recruiter: By the time you're old enough, son, this war will be over. Now go on home.

Narrator 1: The recruiter took the pen and passed it to the unshaven farmer behind her.

Narrator 2: Sarah was unhappy. When the men left for basic training, the whole town of Flint, Michigan, saw them off. It was like a parade. Sarah cheered with everyone else, but she wanted desperately to be one of those going, not one of those staying behind and waving handkerchiefs in a teary good-bye.

Sarah: A month later, I got my chance.

Narrator 3: More men were needed. This time the recruiter only glanced at Sarah.

Recruiter: Another boy...

Narrator 4: He'd already signed up a dozen gangly teenagers. This fresh-faced kid was no different. Sarah signed her name, Frank Thompson, with a firm flourish.

Sarah: I was now a private in Company F, Second Michigan Volunteer Infantry of the Army of the Potomac.

Narrator 5: Frank could outshoot and outride many country boys and was certainly more skilled than all the city folk. She felt at home in the army, living with a large group of men, practicing drills together, learning the discipline of a fighting force. She liked sharing a tent. Since the soldiers slept in their clothes, it didn't seem risky, but cozy.

Sarah: I loved the easy camaraderie and jokes, sharing stories and letters from back home.



Narrator 1: She didn't even mind being teased. The other soldiers laughed at her small boots and called her...

All :           OUR LITTLE WOMAN!  
(except Sarah)

Narrator 2: Frank laughed louder than the rest of them at the nickname. If only they knew!

Narrator 3: For the first time in years, Frank had friends and work that really mattered.

Sarah:         I was proud of what I was doing. First I learned to be a soldier. Then I trained to be a nurse, which was something only men with the strongest stomachs did because of the long, draining hours and the horrors of surgery without anesthetic.

Narrator 4: One bloody battle followed another. Sometimes the North won, some times the South. But always the soldiers lost, thousands of them dying or maimed.

Narrator 5: Frank fought alongside her friends in the Battle of Bull Run and the Battle of Fair Oaks. She pulled wounded men from the battlefield, racing through minie balls and shells to save as many as possible.

Narrator 1: One late April night when the troops were preparing for the siege of Yorktown, Frank was making the rounds in the hospital tent when the regimental chaplain approached her.

Chaplain: If you're willing, there's an important job I want to recommend you for. It's dangerous, but I wouldn't ask you if I didn't think you could do it.

Frank:         More dangerous than fighting????

Chaplain: One of our best spies has been captured and killed. I think you're just the man to replace him. I'd like to give your name to the generals. Will you do it?

Frank: I        I'M YOUR MAN!

Narrator 2: For her first mission, Frank decided to disguise herself as a freed slave. She knew that white men, especially Southerners, didn't look closely at black men. Slaves were even more invisible than old women, people who were looked past, not at. So she darkened her skin with silver nitrate, put on a wig and torn clothes, and headed off to the rebel lines just as the day was dawning.

- Narrator 3: In the darkened stillness, she crawled along the ground, stopping every time she heard a twig snap or a branch rustle.
- Narrator 4: When she thought she must have passed the sentries, she stood up on nervous legs, looking for the tents of the Confederate camp. She soon ran into a group of slaves bringing breakfast to the rebel pickets, the men who guarded the camp.
- Sarah: Mind if I join you? I'm lookin' for work.
- Young Boy: We got work aplenty, if that's what you want.
- Narrator 5: A skinny young boy offered her corn bread and coffee. Frank wolfed it down, nodding her thanks. But after she helped carry food to the pickets and followed the group back into camp, she wasn't sure what to do.
- Sarah: Everyone knew exactly where to go. Which one should I follow? Where would I learn the most?
- Soldier 1: YOU THERE, BOY! WHO DO YOU BELONG TO? WHY ARE YOU STANDING THERE, GAWKING?
- Sarah: I don't belong to no man. I'm headin' to Richmond to find work.
- Soldier 1: As long as there's a Confederate army, y'all belong to SOMEONE! There'll be no free slaves so long as our hearts beat strong, and don't you forget it! Now go work on the fortifications if you don't want a whuppin'.
- Narrator 1: Frank gritted her teeth, but she did as she was told.
- Narrator 2: Frank followed the line of sweating black workers pushing gravel-filled wheelbarrows over a narrow plank to build up the earthworks facing the Union army. Frank was used to hard work, but by midday her palms were bloody and raw.
- Narrator 3: She almost tipped her wheelbarrow twice. Each time, another worker rushed over to help her. For now, all she could do was nod her thanks, but she was determined that she would find a way to repay her new friends.
- Narrator 4: While digging, wheeling and heaping up gravel, Frank studied the layout of the rebel fortifications. She counted guns and noted logs that had been painted black and set up to look like cannons from a distance. When night fell, and everyone was asleep, she took out the paper and pencil she'd hidden in her shoe and started to write what she remembered.

Sarah: 15—3" rifled cannons  
18—4 1/2" rifled cannons  
29— 32 pounders  
21 —42 pounders  
23 —8" Columbiads  
14 — 10" mortars  
7 " siege howitzers

Narrator 5: After listing the weapons, she flipped over the paper to sketch to ramparts and mark where each gun stood. Footsteps clomped behind her, and she quickly folded the plan and stuck it back in its hiding place.

Narrator 1: The next morning, her muscles were stiff and sore and her palms so raw she didn't see how she could manage the pickax. When she saw the slender boy with the friendly eyes again, this time filling buckets with water, she got an idea.

Sarah: You bringin' water to the troops?

Young Boy: Uh-huh

Sarah: Would you mind tradin' jobs with me? I got no skin left on my hands. I'll give you thirty cents if you switch with me.

Young Boy: I can't use money. But I'll switch jobs, don't you worry.

Sarah: I'll make it up to you, I promise.

Narrator 2: Frank heaved up the heavy buckets and headed for a cluster of soldiers. As she filled canteens, she was surprised to recognize a tall, lanky peddler who came to the Union camp once a week, selling newspapers and stationery for letters home. He was busy describing the layout of the Union camp and its defenses.

Sarah: Well, I'll be.

Peddler: Hey, watch it there, dolt.

Sarah: Sorry, sorry.

Narrator 3: And she was sorry...sorry that she couldn't rush back to the Union camp right then and tell the generals what she'd learned.

Narrator 4: But she waited until the sun set, and then she headed toward the pickets, hoping she could slip by a soldier if he nodded off or got distracted. The only thing to hide her was the darkness.

Soldier 2: YOU THERE! Take this rifle and head for the picket post by the brambles. The guard was shot, so we need a replacement. And don't you even think about shutting those eyes of yours!

Narrator 5: Frank headed off, surprised that the rebel would hand a weapon to a slave. Didn't he worry about a slave revolt?

Sarah: Later, I learned that it was Confederate policy not to arm slaves, something that particular officer didn't seem to care about.

Narrator 1: Frank got to her post and then kept on going. Once she got close to the Union pickets, she curled up on the ground to wait until morning. As the sun rose, Frank took off her wig and waved it at the Union picket near her. Her hair felt cool and free in the morning breeze.

Sarah: IT'S PRIVATE FRANK THOMPSON!

Soldier 3: I don't care what yo' name is. Ya ain't comin' one step closer less'n you got the password.

Narrator 2: The guard cocked his rifle and squinted down the barrel.

Sarah: LIBERTY BELL.

Narrator 3: Frank grinned, twirling the wig on her finger. The guard gaped, but lowered his gun.

Sarah: I must have made an odd sight, dressed in rags, with darkened skin and matted hair.

Narrator 4: She took long, easy strides, tired and hungry, but feeling strangely light inside.

Sarah: Freedom wasn't something to take for granted. It was something to fight for, to cherish.

Narrator 5: And so long as her heart was beating strong, that's just what she would do.

# ***THE JUNKYARD WONDERS***

**by Patricia Polacco**

## **MEET THE AUTHOR**

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Patricia Polacco's parents were divorced when she was 3 years old. They both moved back in with their parents, so she got to spend a lot of time with both sets of grandparents. She struggled in school and learned to express herself through art. She finally learned to read at the age of 14 after she was diagnosed with dyslexia and got the help she needed. After college she worked restoring ancient pieces of art for museums.

Patricia didn't start writing children's books until she was 41 years old. She began writing down the stories that were in her head, and was then encouraged to join the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. There she learned how to put together a dummy and get a story into the form of a children's picture book. Her mother paid for a trip to New York, where the two visited 16 publishers in one week. She submitted everything she had to more than one house. By the time she returned home the following week, she had sold just about everything.

She lived in Oakland, California for nearly 37 years, but now she's living back in Union City, Michigan where she grew up. She has written over 50 books.

You can find out more about Patricia Polacco at;  
[www.patriciapolacco.com](http://www.patriciapolacco.com).

## ***THE JUNKYARD WONDERS***

### **PLOT SYNOPSIS**

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Trisha moved from her old town so she wouldn't be in a special class anymore! When she finds out her class at the new school is known as "The Junkyard" she is devastated. But then she meets her teacher, the quirky and invincible Mrs. Peterson, and her classmates, she learns the true meaning of genius. She discovers how this group of students has his or her own unique talent that makes them each "wonders". Based on a real-life event in Patricia Polacco's childhood, this ode to teachers will inspire all readers to find their inner genius.



### **HOOKS**

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- Some things seem very hard to do, alone. What kinds of things are possible with the help of other people?

### **CONNECTIONS**



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Read other stories by Patricia Polacco.

#### **Students who didn't give up:**

*Ron's Big Mission* by Rose Blue. Dutton Childrens Books, 2009.

*Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* by Andrea Davis Pinkney. Little, Brown, 2010.

*The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson. Putnam's, 2011.

*Ms. McCaw Learns to Draw* by Kaethe Zemach. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2008.

## WRITING PROMPTS FOR *THE JUNKYARD WONDERS*

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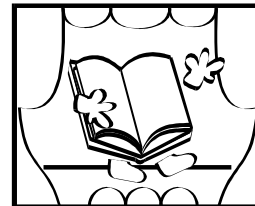


- Describe a time when you have faced a difficult situation at school. How did you deal with the issue or problem?
- Mrs. Peterson encourages her students to recycle old materials from the junkyard. Think about the concept of recycling. In what ways might you be able to reuse old toys, clothes, etc. that you have?
- The issue of bullying and how to prevent it is important. In what ways do kids bully each other in school? What can you do to make sure you don't participate in that type of behavior? Do you think books like this one are important in the prevention of bullying? How?
- If you were to create your own junkyard wonder, what would you create? Write a story about your junkyard wonder.

# READERS' THEATER FOR *THE JUNKYARD WONDERS*

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(Arranged for Reader's Theater by CYRM Committee Members for classroom use only).



## **The Junkyard Wonders**

by Patricia Polacco

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Narrator 1	Narrator 2	Narrator 3	Narrator 4	Patricia	
Thom	Mrs. Peterson	Jody	Ravanne	Gibbie	Daddy

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Patricia: It was the end of summer. The katydids were still buzzing when I finally summoned up the courage to ask my dad if I could stay with him and Gramma for the school year instead of going back to California to be with Mom like always.

Daddy: Your mother would miss you, Trisha, but I will talk with her.

Patricia: I had a reason for staying. A good reason. In my old school in California, the kids all knew that I had just learned to read...that I used to be dumb. Everyone knew I was in special classes. Here no one would know. No one would tease me. And I already had one new friend, Katy.

Narrator 1: Patricia was happy as she walked to school with all the kids on her gramma's block on the first day of school.

Patricia: But when I got to the front of the school, all of the kids ran off to their classes. Katy wouldn't even wave at me. When I showed a girl my class card, she got a funny look on her face.

Narrator 2: You're in Mrs. Peterson's class. Upstairs, Room 206.

Narrator 3: Patricia found Room 206. In the classroom, a gawky boy she'd never seen before yelled out...

Thom: Hey! The name's Thom, not spelled T-o-m, but T-h-o-m. Sit next to me.

Patricia: I sat down and looked around. Everyone seemed different in one way or another. I couldn't put my finger on it.

Narrator 4: Suddenly everyone snapped to attention. The teacher was standing in the doorway. She was short and stout and seemed a little scary. But her eyes...her eyes were friendly.



Narrator 1: She walked up to the podium at the front of the room and slammed an enormous dictionary on top of it. Then she adjusted her glasses, and without saying hello or how are you, she started reading in this no-nonsense voice...

Mrs. P: The definition of genius...  
Genius is neither learned nor acquired.  
It is knowing without experience.  
It is risking without fear of failure.  
It is perception without touch.  
It is understanding without research.  
It is certainty without proof.  
It is ability without practice.  
It is imagination without boundaries.  
It is creativity without constraints.  
It is extraordinary intelligence!

Narrator 2: Then she slammed the book shut.

Mrs. P: Welcome to the junkyard. I am your teacher, Mrs. Peterson. I want all of you to write the definition on the blackboard. Post it on your mirrors. Look at it every day. Memorize it! The definition describes every one of you.

Narrator 3: At recess that day, Patricia couldn't wait to ask Thom...

Patricia: Why is our class called the junkyard?

Thom: Because we are...didn't you notice?...all of us are different. You know... odd. Like stuff in a junkyard. See that super-tall kid over there? That's Jody Beach. He's got some disease that makes him grow too fast. He's my bodyguard; no one picks on me when he's around. Over there, that kid? That's Gibbie McDonald. He has Tourette's. There's Stuart Bean. He has diabetes. Me? Well, I have trouble seeing. They call me Sissy Boy because, even so, I love ballet! It's my life!

Patricia: I take ballet, too. At least I did in California.

Narrator 4: Patricia felt she had found a soul mate in Thom and since he thought Jody was nifty, so did she. But it only helped a little.

Narrator 1: The next day, Mrs. Peterson arrived in class with a basket full of little bottles

Mrs. P: Today we are going to determine your tribes.

Narrator 2: She gave each of them a vial. They tipped it on their wrists. They then found others with the same smell. And that was their tribe.

Narrator 3: Finally the day came when we were to present our stupendous projects. All the tribes presented theirs. Then it was the Vanilla's turn. Gibbie pulled the covering off.

Narrator 4: Booth, one of the class members, said that it was just an old model airplane.

Gibbie: Wrong! This here airplane is going to defy gravity. This baby is goin' all the way to the moon!

Narrator 1: Everyone laughed.

Mrs. P If Gibbie says it is destined for the moon, I, for one, believe him!

Narrator 2: Come on, Gibbie, will that thing fly?

Narrator 3: The Vanillas had flown it off Putnam's Hill, so they knew it could fly.

Gibbie: But for it to fly by itself, it will need a propulsion unit.

Patricia: He means a motor. And we found the perfect one. It will take the plane right into the sky. The trouble is, it's expensive.

Narrator 4: That's when the tribes stepped in. Mrs. Peterson asked the whole class if they'd help raise money for the motor. Everyone cheered! It was unanimous: they would.

Narrator 1: By that spring, they had made enough money to buy that perfect motor. So then, they had to set a date for the launch. They decided to do it the day of the science fair. That way everyone in the school could see it.

Jody: Perfect. We could launch it from the school roof, and it would fly right over the field where the fair is.

Narrator 2: Jody sure had been looking pale lately and he'd missed a lot of school.

Mrs. P: We need a name for this magnificent airship.

Narrator 3: Everyone started shouting out names.

Jody: I think she needs to be called the Junkyard Wonder because we made it out of junk and because we Junkyard Wonders made it. That plane is us!

Narrator 4: It was just a week later when Mrs. Peterson was late. She was never late! And her eyes were red and she looked sad.

- Mrs. P: Please sit down. I have some very bad news. We have lost Jody Beach. He passed away last night in his sleep. Jody had a disease that made his body grow faster than it should. It just kept growing and growing so fast that his dear heart couldn't keep up. It just gave out.
- Narrator 1: The class went to the woods behind the school to collect flowers and to remember Jody. All of a sudden, they heard someone speaking. To their shock, they realized that it was Ravanne, the first time anyone had heard her speak.
- Ravanne: Now I know what the plane has to be called. Jody wanted it to be called the Junkyard Wonders. That's what it has to be.
- Narrator 2: Everyone agreed.
- Gibbie: The day of the science fair and the launch of the Wonder was drawing closer. We had tried the motor out, but wanted to try it from the roof. Unfortunately, Barton was listening to us and told the principal. That principal took our plane and locked it up in the janitor's closet.
- Narrator 3: Everyone was very sad.
- Ravanne: This was going to be for Jody.
- Mrs. P: We are going to launch the Wonder tomorrow...just as we planned. And from the roof! Be at Mr. Weeks' closet tomorrow morning, the morning of the fair.
- Thom: We could launch it because Mr. McDonald, Gibbie's dad, would stay with us during the launch and the principal said that was o.k.
- Narrator 4: They all climbed up to the roof and set up the Wonder, primed the pump to deliver fuel into the engine.
- Patricia: Maybe it will go all the way to Lansing?
- Thom: Maybe even to Detroit?
- Ravanne: Maybe even around the whole world.
- Gibbie: No, this baby is goin' all the way to the moon.
- Narrator 1: They tried to start the engine. It didn't catch. They tried again. This time with a loud bang, the propeller started spinning.

Gibbie: Let her go.

Narrator 2: The Junkyard Wonder shot out of everybody's hands. It was airborne. First it went out over the field. Then, as suddenly as it started, it sputtered and seemed to stall. Then the engine roared to life again with a noise that was deafening. The Wonder's nose pointed straight up...up and up...straight toward the sun.

Patricia: We all watched until it became a speck in the sky. Then we couldn't see it any more.

Gibbie: Like I said, that baby is going straight to the moon.