

GOOD YEAR BOOKS

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Creative Activities for Gifted Readers

Grades 3–6

Dynamic Investigations, Challenging Projects,
and Energizing Assignments

Anthony D. Fredericks



Good Year Books
Culver City, California

~~~~~  
*To Richard Disher,  
creative raconteur, gifted wit, and  
one heck of a brother-in-law.*  
~~~~~

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Introduction

*“The time has come,” the Walrus said,
“To talk of many things:
Of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—
Of cabbages—and kings—
And why the sea is boiling hot—
And whether pigs have wings.”*
—Lewis Carroll

Gifted students present a unique challenge to elementary teachers. They are often the first ones done with a reading assignment or those who continually ask for more creative and interesting work. What these students frequently demand are ideas and materials that are not only challenging but relevant as well. What they need are exciting activities, energizing projects, and focused activity sheets that offer a creative curriculum within the framework of the regular reading program.

This book has been written with these gifted readers in mind. It contains a wide variety of ideas and suggestions designed to assist gifted children in developing the skills necessary to expand their reading horizons. A major focus of the book is to help children learn and apply the thinking and creative skills appropriate for reading competence. Assignments are offered that both extend the classroom reading program and help students explore the world around them.

Specifically, the objectives of this book are as follows:

1. Students will be involved in a facilitative learning process. They will be encouraged to plan and select assignments that meet their individual needs and interests. In turn, these self-directed explorations will lead to greater personal involvement and participation.
2. Students will learn to assume more responsibility for their own learning. In so doing, they will gain a greater awareness of their own abilities, develop a sense of self-direction, and improve their self-esteem.
3. Students will be exposed to a wide range of materials, assignments, and experiences—all designed to stimulate reading exploration above and beyond the basal text.
4. Divergent thinking skills will be emphasized in concert with creative endeavors. Thus, pupils will be encouraged to both process and interpret information. As a result, they will come to appreciate reading as a multifaceted subject.
5. Students will be able to explore reading beyond the walls of the classroom. By using their skills in practical and meaningful pursuits, they will gain a heightened awareness of their own competencies.

Each of the six units in this book focuses on six thinking skills and four creative extensions. The thinking skills include literal, reorganization, interpretive, evaluation, appreciation, and application. The four creative extensions are fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration.

Thinking Skills

1. *Literal.* The literal level of thinking involves the student's ability to locate, identify, recall, and remember specific facts in written material.
 2. *Reorganization.* This refers to the ability to sort, group, or classify ideas into new patterns. Putting concepts or items into categories is one method of reorganization.
 3. *Interpretive.* Using their own background of experiences, students develop inferences about story information. Making educational guesses is one use of interpretive skills.
 4. *Evaluation.* Using a set of established criteria, students make personal judgments about the worth or merit of written material.
 5. *Appreciation.* This refers to students' emotional responses to stories or books. It entails identifying affective reactions to written material.
 6. *Application.* This skill focuses on students' ability to use information obtained from written sources in a variety of new situations.
2. *Flexibility.* This skill involves drawing relationships between seemingly unrelated ideas (for example: "How is a rubber band like a dictionary?"). Locating common elements between items helps students look for many possible answers to a problem.
 3. *Originality.* This refers to the creation of ideas that are singular and unique—those that are different from all others. It is the creative process we most often associate with gifted youngsters.
 4. *Elaboration.* This is the process individuals go through to expand an idea—to enlarge it until it is workable or feasible. It is a process of addition or multiplication that builds ideas into their final form.

The assignments in this book have been developed in concert with varied groups of gifted youngsters. Many children have participated in the development of each activity sheet, activity, project, and story energizer, thus ensuring the relevancy of each assignment for all gifted readers. However, it is important that whichever assignments you select for your students, you take sufficient time to discuss the purpose of each one, in terms of both its immediate importance and its long-range implications. Providing opportunity for pupils to share and discuss the implications of these ideas for their own reading development will help them appreciate the selected assignments as a positive extension of their literacy development.

You are also encouraged to solicit follow-up activities from your gifted students. These units are not rigid; they can be modified and expanded as the dynamics of individuals or groups may warrant. When students have opportunities to extend and expand the ideas within each of these units, they will be able to see

Creative Extensions

1. *Fluency.* This is the ability to create a potpourri of ideas or lists of ideas. It involves the generation of many thoughts without regard to quality. Brainstorming is a good way to enhance fluency.

the value of their work in terms of long-range reading goals.

In short, the activity sheets, projects, activities, and story energizers in this book should serve as launching pads for students' imagination, thinking-skills development, and creativity enhancement.

The assignments are designed to be used in whatever order or sequence you feel to be most appropriate. You should plan to use a mix from the units throughout the year, providing varied opportunities for students to become actively

involved in a selection of ideas, themes, and interests. In turn, their interest will be piqued and their motivation ensured.

This book has been written for the teacher who wishes to stimulate, encourage, and extend the learning opportunities for gifted readers. A healthy dose of these assignments within and throughout the reading program can produce pupils who are eager participants in the reading process. In turn, literacy growth can become an exciting and dynamic part of the world of gifted readers.

How to Use This Book

This book can be used in a variety of classrooms, grouping situations, or instructional formats. Here are some possibilities:

1. *The Regular Classroom.* All of the units can be used in a regular classroom containing both gifted and on-level readers. As such, units can be assigned (a) when scheduled reading assignments have been completed, (b) in place of regular assignments, or (c) as supplemental work to strengthen concepts presented in the reading curriculum.
2. *Special Gifted Class.* This book presents a number of options for special gifted classes. These include (a) using the units in addition to the regular reading curriculum, (b) developing a complete reading curriculum for gifted pupils based on these assignments, or (c) scheduling individual or small-group work as an extension of previously learned concepts and skills.
3. *At Home.* Parents will find these assignments appropriate for home use, too. Each unit focuses on a variety of thinking skills and creative extensions, using a nonthreatening format that families can enjoy together. Parents should treat these ideas as fun-to-do assignments rather than as graded work. It is important, therefore, that the atmosphere be low-key, relaxed, and informal—enjoyment should be the watchword. Total family involvement will help gifted students apply classroom-learned skills in a variety of practical situations.

This book can be used in a variety of ways, depending on individual classroom dynamics and on the instructional plans you wish to emphasize. In choosing assignments for your gifted students, you may wish to give some thought to the following:

1. Try a variety of grouping strategies. Most of the activity sheets, activities, projects, and story energizers can be done as individual or as small-group work. Provide children with a selection of sharing opportunities, too.
2. All of the units are nongraded. However, you may wish to set up your own evaluation system or have students help in establishing appropriate evaluation criteria. This will ensure maximum pupil involvement—a factor that enhances both cognitive and affective development.
3. There is no set order or sequence to the assignments. You are free to choose appropriate work or allow students a measure of self-selection in determining the assignments they would like to pursue.
4. Whatever activity sheets, activities, projects, or story energizers you or your students select, it will be important to keep time limits flexible. Suggested completion times are included in the introduction to each unit but are offered as approximations only. After students have completed several assignments, you will be able to judge appropriate time limits for future work.

5. Most of the units require either some degree of student independence or an extended period of time for completion. Consequently, it is strongly suggested that you schedule periodic conferences with individual students or with small groups of students. These conferences can provide you with an opportunity to gauge student progress and discuss issues or concerns specific to individual assignments.

Assignment Scheduling

Following is a suggested plan for assigning individual lessons within each unit. Feel free to modify it according to the dynamics or time limitations of your classes.

1. Introduce an assignment or lesson to individuals or small groups. Be sure to provide a complete list of all the necessary requirements.
2. Have students discuss several options for completing an assignment. Make sure discussion centers on how the assignment will be initiated, pursued, and terminated.
3. Give students plenty of time to examine several assignments thoroughly and to make their own choices. Students may opt to work on specific lessons individually or in small groups.

4. Have students begin working on selected activity sheets, activities, projects, or story energizers.
5. Allow students sufficient time to plan culminating projects or presentations. Have them set a target date for completion of a selected assignment.
6. Provide opportunities to share the results of an assignment, to discuss its implications, and to evaluate the product(s).

Reporting Formats

As students complete the individual activity sheets, activities, projects, or story energizers, they will want to report their newly discovered information. The list on page 6 contains several possibilities for sharing student information with other class members as well as with you. You should encourage students to select a variety of reporting formats throughout the year and throughout the assignments.

The variety of instructional options and reporting formats guarantees that students will be able to discover many exciting dimensions to the world of reading. In so doing, they will have the opportunity to use their classroom skills in varied literary explorations beyond the classroom.

book reviews	booklets	storytelling
illustrated talks	videos	carvings
posters	file boxes	clay models
poems	recordings	book talks
chalk talks	charts	advertisements
brochures	bulletin boards	scripts
dramas	cartoons	filmstrips
folders	sculptures	guidebooks
games	pantomimes	displays
panoramas	book jackets	diaries
mobiles	reference books	drawings
discussion groups	roller movies	news articles
murals	time lines	scrapbooks
dioramas	puppets	models
maps	puzzles	letters to authors
dances	PA announcements	collages
shadowboxes	activity sheets	flannel boards
collections	songs	bookmarks
lists	CDs	Videodisks
Web pages	Webquests	iTunes
PowerPoint presentations		
blogs (as appropriate)		
e-mail communiqués (as appropriate)		

Puzzles and Problems

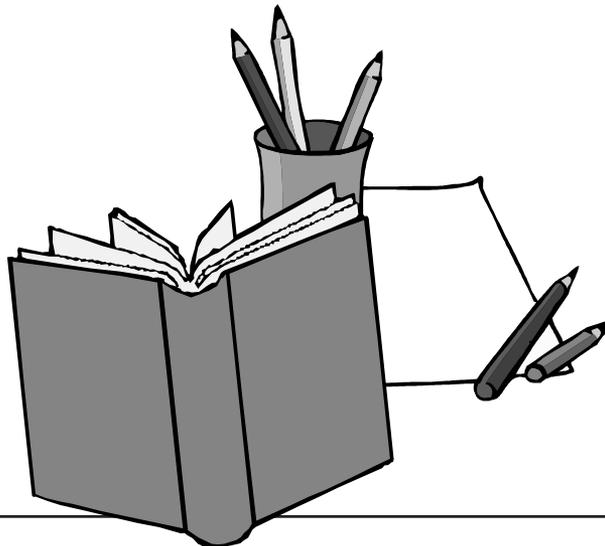
Independent learning has long been a hallmark of gifted reading instruction. This first unit offers gifted students a number of motivating activity sheets designed to challenge them in a variety of reading areas, to encourage them in the development of both reading and creative skills, and to provide them with opportunities for individual exploration of selected interest areas.

You can reproduce each activity sheet and give it to students. Each emphasizes at least two thinking skills and is designed to reinforce and extend students' cognitive processes. Although this section can often be completed without additional reference materials, encourage students to engage in extra research whenever necessary, using a multitude of classroom or library resources. This option stimulates students

to experience and appreciate the universality of reading in their lives.

Students should be able to finish each activity sheet in one or two class periods. Each can be completed independently or by a small group of two or three students. You can use the activity sheets in any order. You may wish to use them upon completion of a regular reading assignment, as an element in a guided reading lesson, as a separate assignment, or as a special homework paper.

In all, the activity sheets offer students opportunities to develop thinking skills in a fun, interesting, and meaningful format. Sprinkled liberally throughout the reading curriculum, they can add a touch of spice to gifted students' development as well-rounded readers.



Color My World

Thinking Skills

- Literal
- Reorganization

Name _____

Date _____

Directions:

Many words and phrases in our language include color words. For example, the word *greenbacks* means dollar bills or money. Locate and write a definition for each of the following colorful words and phrases:

red tape _____

golden rule _____

yellowjacket _____

blacktop _____

blue chip _____

silver lining _____

yellow streak _____

white elephant _____

red alert _____

blackmail _____

silversmith _____

blue bloods _____

whitewash _____

Directions:

For each of the definitions below, locate a colorful word or phrase:

Highest rank in tae kwon do _____

Place where plants are grown _____

Girl who visited the three bears _____

Heated to a very high temperature _____

Something an expert gardener is said to have _____

The brain _____

A novice _____

A tropical disease _____

To edit a manuscript _____

To be sad _____

Special grass in Kentucky _____

