

Oklahoma Library Association

**2010 Sequoyah  
Children's Masterlist Sampler**

Presented by  
the Sequoyah Children's Reading Team

## Contents

<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Page</u>
<i>The Story of Jonas</i>	Maurine Dahlberg	3
<i>Brendan Buckley's Universe and Everything in It</i>	Sundee Frazier	5
<i>Ham the Astrochimp</i>	Richard Hilliard	6
<i>Animals in the House : A History of Pets and People</i>	Sheila Keenan	7
<i>Me and the Pumpkin Queen.</i>	Marlane Kennedy	8
<i>A Friendship for Today</i>	Patricia C. McKissack	9
<i>Being Teddy Roosevelt</i>	Claudia Mills	10
<i>Lawn Boy</i>	Gary Paulsen	11
<i>Rickshaw Girl</i>	Mitali Perkins	12
<i>The Bearskinner: A Tale of the Brothers Grimm</i>	Laura Amy Schlitz	13
<i>Billy Hooten, Owlboy (Readers' Theater)</i>	Tom Sniegowski	14
<i>Dragon's Egg (Readers' Theater)</i>	Sarah L. Thomson	16
<i>Pete and Fremont</i>	Jenny Tripp	18
<i>A Crooked Kind of Perfect</i>	Linda Urban	19
<i>Jesse Owens: Fastest Man Alive (Trivia Quiz and Vocabulary)</i>	Carole Boston Weatherford	20
<i>Leepike Ridge</i>	N.D. Wilson	22

**Dahlberg, Maurine F. *The Story of Jonas*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.**

Book talk:

Jonas, a thirteen-year-old house slave whose mother has just died, lives on a Missouri farm and has dreams for his future. He wants to be Master William's manservant, after receiving the needed training by Ebenezer, another slave. Jonas is told he will be trained after he accompanies the master's son Percy on a yearlong wagon train trip to the gold fields in Kansas Territory. He is excited about achieving his dream, but worried about taking the trip with the mean-spirited Percy. As their trip begins, Jonas meets Jeremiah Quincy, the leader of their group, Dr. Henry Yoder and his daughter Sky, who all oppose slavery. He learns to be a good cook along the Santa Fe Trail, and even gets to ride on a steamboat, shop for supplies in a store, and see a real city. Jonas seeks even larger dreams. Without the others' knowledge, Sky teaches him how to read, write and count. When word arrives Ebenezer was responsible for a friend's death, Jonas decides going back home is not an option. "How would the new Jonas fit into the old Jonas' life?" Jonas longs for freedom and is willing to make the sacrifices necessary to make that happen. This tale, full of conflicting emotions, shows how difficult it was in 1859 for those on both sides of the slavery issue and makes readers root for Jonas to achieve his new dream.

Possible companion story: *Trouble Don't Last* by Shelley Pearsall.

Samuel, an eleven-year-old Kentucky slave, and Harrison, the elderly slave who helped raise him, attempt to escape to Canada via the Underground Railroad.

Other Pertinent Websites and Primary Sources:

"Slave Auction, 1859", EyeWitness to History, [www.eyewitnesstohistory.com](http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com) (2005). Detailed description of a slave auction which took place outside Savannah, Georgia in March, 1859.

[http://www.territorialkansasonline.org/~imlskto/cgi-bin/index.php?SCREEN=bio\\_sketches/brown\\_john](http://www.territorialkansasonline.org/~imlskto/cgi-bin/index.php?SCREEN=bio_sketches/brown_john)

Of all the characters that played significant roles on the Kansas stage during the drama of Bleeding Kansas, none left a legacy that compares to the controversial abolitionist, John Brown.

<http://www.libertybellshop.com/abolitionist-token--man.html>

Authentic reproduction an anti-slavery token from 1792. In that year, leaders of the Abolitionist Movement issued this copper token which was widely circulated to promote the cause. It portrays a male figure, kneeling and bound in chains with the legend, "Am I Not a Man and a Brother." The reverse of the token bears the clasped hands of brotherhood and the legend, "May Slavery and Oppression Cease Throughout the World."

*(The Story of Jonas, continued)*

<http://www.libertybellshop.com/the-antislavery-alphabet.html>

This Abolitionist publication provides for each letter of the alphabet a four line verse on the evils of slavery. Booklet was published anonymously in 1846.

<http://www.libertybellshop.com/the-antislavery-bugle--1859-rep1859.html>

Full newspaper reproduction of abolitionist paper, The Anti-Slavery Bugle, issued from Salem, Columbiana County, Ohio on Saturday, October 29, 1859. This issue includes numerous accounts of John Brown's raid on the Harper's Ferry Armory on October 16, 1859, and his subsequent trial which brought national attention to the abolitionist cause.

<http://www.21stcenturyabe.org/2009/01/26/excerpt-of-lincoln-speech-against-slavery-1859/>

This primary source document from the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia is an excerpt from Lincoln's speech against slavery in 1859.

<http://www.nyscss.org/pdfs/resources/nyandslavery/Chapter%20E/Documents/18501859.HEN.pdf>

Excerpts from the writings of Henry Ward Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe and minister in Brooklyn, New York who was an opponent of slavery in the 1850s.

**Frazier, Sundee Tucker. *Brendan Buckley's Universe and Everything in It*. New York: Delacourte Press, 2007.**

Book talk:

Ten-year-old Brendan Buckley is looking forward to summer when he can practice his Tae Kwon Do, spend time with his parents and his paternal grandmother, and write more questions (and possibly some answers) in his scientific notebook. Brendan is fascinated by rocks and minerals. His grandmother takes him to the mall where a rock collecting show is taking place. He meets an older man there who is the president of the local group. Brendan wants to join; however, his grandmother sees the man he is with and promptly drags him away without an explanation. The elderly gentleman, it turns out, is Brendan's white maternal grandfather, who has been estranged from the family since his mother married his African-American father. They had never met before, and his mother does not talk to or talk about her father, and Brendan doesn't know why. Brendan decides to meet with his grandfather secretly. He goes to his grandfather's house several times to visit and decides he wants to bring his family back together. Brendan tries to understand his grandfather's racism and prejudice. Brendan learns there are some questions in life that have no good answers. This touching story about a biracial child growing up in today's world teaches us our society has made great strides toward acceptance, but we are still struggling in 21st century America.

Other books which complement this fiction book:

*Growing Up Biracial: Trevor's Story* by Bethany Kandel

*Living in Two Worlds* by George Ancona

*Black, White, Just Right!* by Marguerite W. Davol

*We're Different, We're the Same* by Bobbi Kates

*The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz

*black is brown is tan* by Arnold Adoff

*Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox

**Hilliard, Richard. *Ham the Astrochimp*. Honedale, Pennsylvania: Boyds Mills Press, 2007.**

Book talk:

(Suggestions for presentation: use a chimpanzee puppet or any models of old rockets or astronaut gear you might have. Note: this pre-dates the space shuttle, so don't use those images!)

Have you ever thought of becoming an astronaut? Have you ever wanted to blast off in a rocket? What kind of skills would someone need to go into space? Maybe be very smart? Go to school for many years? Or be brave and daring? Here's a book about one of the first travelers into space – he was not what you might expect!

Back before even your parents were born and before we had gone to the moon, the scientists in the American space program were trying to figure out safe ways to send people into space. Rockets were new and not very safe. Scientists needed someone who was smart, could make decisions, and follow directions but they weren't quite ready to send up a person. So what did they do? Enter Ham the Astrochimp! He was a very smart three-year-old chimpanzee who was gentle and calm and could follow directions well.

This book tells the true story of how the little chimp from Africa became an early star of the American space program. It is full of lifelike illustrations of Ham and his space flight. The book includes interesting facts about those dare-devil days of early space exploration. This is a short book with a jet-pack full of adventure that will make you feel like you're a space pioneer. Blast off with Ham the Astrochimp today!

Other resources:

The publisher's website:

[http://www.boydsmillspress.com/books/nonfiction\\_picture\\_book/ham\\_the\\_astrochimp.html](http://www.boydsmillspress.com/books/nonfiction_picture_book/ham_the_astrochimp.html)

For more information and links to archival photos of Ham go to Absolute Astronomy at [http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Ham\\_the\\_Chimp](http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Ham_the_Chimp)

**Keenan, Sheila. *Animals in the House : A History of Pets and People*. New York: Scholastic, Incorporated, 2007.**

Book talk:

How many of you have a pet or two at your house? Raise your hand if you have a dog, a cat, a reptile, a fish, a bird, a rodent? Did you know that there are more pets in the United States than people? Yes, it's true!! There are pets in two thirds of all homes in the United States. In *Animals in the House : A History of Pets and People* by Sheila Keenan you will learn that we own 90 million cats, 74 million dogs, 17 million birds, 17 million small animals, 9 million reptiles, and 192 million fish!!

You can read all about the pets of famous people. Thomas Jefferson owned a mockingbird. Abraham Lincoln had the first cat in the White House. President Obama's new dog Bo will join the ranks of other White House pets, which have included a badger, a bear, a blue macaw, guinea pigs, a hen, a hyena, a lizard, an owl, a pig, a pony, a rabbit, a one-legged rooster, snakes, and assorted cats and dogs. Wow!!

People from all over the world have owned pets since the beginning of time. Did you know that the ancient Aztecs owned birds and dogs and that the Egyptians were kind to all animals in case any of them were reincarnations of gods or goddesses. When a pet died in Egypt all the members of the household shaved their eyebrows or heads in mourning.

For more fun facts and cool illustrations check out *Animals in the House : A History of Pets and People* by Sheila Keenan.

**Kennedy, Marlane. *Me and the Pumpkin Queen*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 2007.**

Book talk:

Have you ever been obsessed by, consumed with, totally focused on an object or an idea or a task to be completed? Perhaps it is a sport or a video game or a teenage movie star that consumes your thoughts. For eleven-year-old Mildred, it's growing giant pumpkins! While growing pumpkins may seem like an abnormal activity for a young girl, Mildred finds it a natural way to connect with her mother who died when Mildred was just six. An image of her mother "wearing her Pumpkin Queen crown" has inspired Mildred to grow a giant 1000-pound pumpkin to try to win the contest at the Circleville Ohio Pumpkin Festival.

Mildred lives with her veterinarian father who is very understanding of her pumpkin pursuit – unlike her Aunt Arlene who wants Mildred to be more interested in clothes and fashion and other girly things. If Mildred can just distract Aunt Arlene, convince her dad that the backyard should become a pumpkin patch, keep the dogs away from the seedlings, get her best friend Jacob to "help out in a pinch," and find the best Howard Dill's Atlantic Giant seeds, she just might grow the perfect pumpkin!

Read this winning story of a very determined young girl whose motto is to "never, ever, ever give up." You will find yourself cheering for Mildred and giving *Me and the Pumpkin Queen* a grand-prize review!

**McKissack, Patricia C. *A Friendship for Today*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2007.**

Book talk:

Take a step back into the pages of history as you read Patricia McKissack's semiautobiographical story of desegregation, *A Friendship for Today*.

In 1954, Rosemary Patterson begins attending a previously all-white school and faces many challenges. Her best friend, J.J., contracts polio during the summer and struggles to survive. Rosemary, now the only black student in her sixth grade classroom, also struggles to survive. Determined to prove she doesn't need remediation, Rosemary excels academically and refuses to be racially intimidated or stereotyped, even by her neighbor and nemesis, mean Grace Hamilton. Grace's family is openly racist and poverty-stricken. Rosemary is also faced with the reality of her parent's disintegrating marriage.

An unlikely friendship grows between the girls, and they develop a tentative, mutual respect for each other. Rosemary gets support and comfort from storekeeper Mr. Bob, an ex-Tuskegee Airman; her hard-working seamstress mother; her teacher, Mrs. Denapolis, who teaches tolerance and fairness; and Rags, a rescued, injured cat, that won't utter the tiniest of meows. As Rosemary and Grace watch over Rags', the girls gain a deeper understanding of themselves and each other. Grace admits that she no longer agrees with her abusive father's belief that white people are superior. Now she knows better. Rosemary realizes that she and Grace both experience prejudice, parental strife, peer pressure and loneliness.

When Rosemary assures J.J. that Grace hasn't replaced him as her best friend, she says, "Grace and I had a friendship for today...But our friendship is for always...you are my very best friend forever."

**Mills, Claudia. *Being Teddy Roosevelt*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.**

Book talk:

Riley O'Rourke is not an unusual fourth grade student. He forgets his notebook and leaves it at home and leaves the library book he checked out for his assignment in the library. Riley thinks of possible titles for his own biography: Riley O'Rourke: The Boy Who Would Forget His Head If It Weren't Fastened On, or perhaps Riley O'Rourke: The Boy Who Made Homework Disappear.

When he is assigned to be President Theodore Roosevelt for the biography tea Riley is not very excited. Music excites Riley, especially the thought of playing the saxophone. However, Riley's mother refuses to buy or rent a saxophone for him. She reminds him that he forgets his notebook and leaves his library books in the library. Where would the saxophone be likely to wind up?

Riley begins to work on his report and learn about Teddy Roosevelt. One of the first things Riley learns about Teddy is that he did not let obstacles block his path. Teddy Roosevelt was someone that found a way to achieve his goals, usually through hard work and perseverance.

Inspired by Teddy's example, Riley makes the effort needed to meet his goals. But will it be enough? How will things work out for Riley while he is Being Teddy Roosevelt, by Claudia Mills.

**Paulsen, Gary. *Lawn Boy*. New York: Random House. 2007.**

Book talk:

Who has a summer job? Does anyone mow lawns? That is exactly what Lawn Boy did, no summer vacation, no summer reading, just mowing and earning his keep. A birthday gift turns Lawn Boy's summer into a hedge fun, that doesn't need trimming. A neighbor needed his lawn mowed and cannot pay the \$20 fee, so Lawn Boy barter with him for stock options. Bartering is trading for something, like you might trade baseball cards with a friend, one card for another. As the summer flies by, Lawn Boy earns his keep, starts a business, hires workers to mow even more lawns that he could have imagined and even invests money in a boxer! Yes, a fighter named Joey Pow.

All the while, he has to figure out a way to tell his parents what he is up to. "Mom, I thought, Dad, I have something to tell you. I've been mowing lawns...a lot of lawns and I have fifty thousand... Please pass the green beans and by the way I have fifty thousand... Breakfast Over toast. Mom, Dad, you know how I've been mowing lawns everyday? I have-no, we have-something like fifty thousand and change." (pg.50) His grandmother's gift of an old lawn mower, definitely pays off in this Paulsen story of summer investing.

Additional resources:

Davidson, Avelyn. *The Bull and the Bear : How Stock Markets Work*. New York: Children's Press/Scholastic, 2008.

Morgan, Rowland. *How to Make a Million*. New York: Franklin Watts, 2001.

Mayr, Diane. *The Everything Kids' Money book : From Saving to Spending to Investing-- Learn all about Money!* Holbrook, Mass.: Adams Media Corp., 2000.

**Perkins, Mitali. *Rickshaw Girl*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2007.**

Book talk:

What was Naima thinking?! She had only meant to help her weary father who worked such long hours pulling passengers in his rickshaw. Now, she has disappointed her family, endangered their income and future.

Naima helps her mother around the house. She had won the village prize for her intricate alpanas painted on their dirt pathway and stone threshold leading into their clay-walled home. But there are so many things girls in rural Bangladesh are not allowed to do, especially as they near the age to wear sarees, the clothing of the women. Only the daughters of a few families with the most taka can afford to remain in school, so now, Naima's little sister Rashida is taking her turn for three years of study. Talking to boys is no longer allowed, but Naima and Saleem, her neighbor and childhood friend, still meet sometimes to talk behind the banana trees. "No working at men's jobs" is still an important rule in her village, though Naima hears that is changing in the cities, and that's how Naima's impulsive rule-breaking got her family into this mess.

What did she do? Can she make things right? Read: *Rickshaw Girl* by Mitali Perkins.

**Schlitz, Laura Amy. *The Bearskinner: A Tale of the Brothers Grimm*.  
Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press 2007.**

Book talk:

A soldier returns home and finds the devil is in the details in this retelling of the classic folktale from Grimm. After shooting a bear, the soldier makes a bargain for food and a place to sleep; changing his luck he thinks. Like a broken mirror, seven years of misery follow and the soldier along the way tries to outsmart the devil. Part of the bargain gives the "Bearskinner" money to use as often and as much as he chooses. Yet there are waking dreams and nightmares that come to the soldier, as his time goes on he dreams of butterflies and a dark, roaring river. Each year brings a new task for the bearskinner, along with the drudgery of wearing the bearskin the soldier does at least find hope in helping the people he meets along the way. There is a catch in the details, as a fair maiden comes into the tale, along with her two sisters, rounding out this classic story of hope and heartache.

**Sniegowski, Tom. *Billy Hooten, Owlboy*. New York: Yearling, 2007.**

Readers' Theater

Characters:

Narrator	Reggie
Billy Hooten	Danny
Kathy B.	Randy

**Narrator:** Life is never simple for young Billy Hooten. He's not one of the cool kids and he reads comic books like 'Snake'. To make matters worse, the school bully Randy Kulkowski makes it his personal mission to ensure that each of Billy's days is worse than the one before, including calling Billy 'Owlboy'. Then, things get a little strange. Billy hears a call for help and saves Archebold the goblin from the clutches of a hideous pig-man monster. Archebold then tells Billy that it is his destiny to become the Owlboy, legendary protector of Monstos City. To help convince Billy to accept the role of Owlboy, Archebold gives him an Owlboy comic book. Billy is torn between his desire to be a real live hero and his desire to remain real and live. The next Monday at school, he turns to the people he can always count on, his friends.

**Kathy B:** Hey, what's wrong with you, Billy?

**Danny:** He was talking to his book bag when I got here. I thought he was going insane.

**Billy** (eyes crossed, tongue out, in a weird voice): I was hoping you wouldn't notice.

**Reggie:** What's goin' on? You feelin' all right?

**Billy:** I'm fine... Take a look at this comic I... found.

(everyone except Randy and Mitchell ohhhs and ahhhs a little)

**Reggie** (reading with awe): Owlboy... that's an old one. I wonder if that's where Randy got the name.

**Billy:** I doubt it. I don't even think Randy can read.

**Danny:** What's it about? Is it like 'Snake'?

**Billy:** No, it's really different.

**Narrator:** Billy realizes this is a chance to find out what his friends might have done if they had been offered the chance to be the Owlboy.

**Billy:** It's about this kid, who's been chosen to be this superhero... Owlboy, and how he protects this underground city where monsters live from evil and stuff.

**Reggie:** Sounds neat!

**Billy** (warily): Think so? What if you guys were chosen to be a superhero? Would you do it?

**Danny:** Depends on the hero, is this him?

**Billy:** Yeah.

**Danny:** He looks okay. I guess I would do it.

**Reggie:** Me too. Usually, these superhero types have great big laboratories where they do all kinds of experiments.

**Kathy B:** Almost as good as being on stage. And besides, I love the cape. It's very theatrical.

**Randy** (sneering): Well, well, well, what've we have here? Lemme have look at this.

**Billy:** Be careful with that, it's old!

**Randy:** Owlboy? That was my idea! I think I should sue, what d'you think, Hooten?

**Billy** (mumbling): You can't sue anyone Randy, this comic book is twice as old as you are.

**Randy:** What did you just say?

**Billy:** I said... I said, I think you should sue, you could probably make a million dollars.

**Randy** (sneering): Yeah, that's what I thought you said. Don't you know these things will rot your brain?

**Narrator:** Randy crumples the comic and tosses it in the trash.

**Randy:** See ya around, Owlboy! (mocking) Hoot! Hoot!

**Reggie:** Sorry about your comic... we gotta get to class.

**Narrator:** After his friends leave, Billy waits for a few minutes. Slowly, he walks to the trash barrel to get his comic book. When he looks into the barrel he is shocked to see the comic book look exactly as it had before Randy threw it into the trash.

Billy begins to wonder if perhaps it is his destiny to become Owlboy. Should he do it? Can he do it? And what is a Slovakian Rot-toothed Hopping Monkey Demon? These, and other questions, will be answered when you read Billy Hooten, Owlboy!

**Thomson, Sarah L. *Dragon's Egg*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 2007.**

Readers' Theater

Characters:

Narrator

Mella

Dragon

Roger

**Narrator:** She was a keeper. She had promised. The Egg burned in Mella's hands. Without noticing, she began to think of it as the dragon had spoken of it. Not as an egg, but as *the Egg*.

**Mella:** I will.

**Narrator:** The dragon laid his head down again with a long sigh. He lifted his tail and very gently brushed against Mella's cheek.

**Dragon:** (weakly) Good flying. May the wind rise beneath your wings.

**Mella:** I don't have wings.

**Narrator:** The dragon didn't answer. Mella sat back on her heels, holding tightly to the Egg.

**Mella:** What have I done? I'm only twelve years old. I can never do such a thing alone.

**Roger:** Are you really going?

**Mella:** You followed me!

**Roger:** That's a dragon! A real one!! A true dragon!!!

**Mella:** Of course it is.

**Roger:** *Look* at it. I never thought – I didn't know – it's real.

**Narrator:** It's dead, Mella wanted to shout. It's real and it's dead because of your master. But she couldn't. She had to convince him, somehow, to help her save a dragon's egg.

**Mella:** Roger, listen—

**Roger:** That wingspan, it must be twenty feet. Still, it's heavy. How does it get airborne? Does it have hollow bones, like a bird's? And it *talked* to you. I heard it.

**Mella:** It's not my fault. I was just trying to –  
(*Dragon's Egg*, continued)

**Roger:** But its mouth, its tongue – they're not shaped for speech. At least not human speech. How could it talk?

**Narrator:** Mella had a question of her own. Why did the dragon-slayer's squire look like he thought a dragon was a wintertide gift?

**Roger:** Can they really breathe fire?

**Mella:** I don't know. I think it did, back there... The common ones can only snort a little steam.

**Roger:** Really? I wonder how closely they're related. Do you think –

**Mella:** Why did you follow me?

**Roger:** Your healer's with my master, Damien. She sent me out of the room. I don't like blood much. And I remembered which way you'd gone, with that – that thing. *That's a dragon's egg!*

**Mella:** I found it this morning. The dragon was hunting, I think. It had to leave the Egg alone. And I...

**Narrator:** If she hadn't found the Egg, if she hadn't taken it, would the dragon, once it had eaten, have been on its way? Then it would not be dead, and Mella would not have the Egg in her hands and the responsibility for its fate weighing on her. And Damien would have found nothing to fight. That made two deaths on her conscience.

**Roger:** Well, then, we have to get it to the Hatching Ground, don't you think? How much time do we have?

**Mella:** *We?* Why would you want to? It's a dragon! They said your master's dying. It killed him.

**Roger:** Damien's not dead. The healer said he should recover. And anyway, the dragon was just defending its young. Any living thing would do the same. You can't blame it for that.

**Narrator:** Mella shook her head bewildered.

**Roger:** It's a true dragon. I never thought they were real. Can you imagine, seeing one up close? *Talking* to it? Well, you can, I suppose. But *look* at it. It's *magnificent*. We have to take care of that egg. You'll let me come?

**Narrator:** Mella didn't know what to answer.

**Tripp, Jenny. *Pete and Fremont*. Orlando: Harcourt, 2007.**

Book talk:

Pete a magnificent pink poodle is at the top of his game as the star of the Circus Martinez, until that all comes crashing down. Pete misses his step on the springboard and instead of flying safely through the hoop of fire his pom-pom tail catches on fire. This might be the end of his spot on top. Rita, the chimp, gives him heck for messing up. Pete's handler, Mike, tells him he just isn't the dog he used to be, this happens with age. A devastated poodle, Pete is just about ready to roll over and play dead. But luck is on his side. The boost up interest in the Circus Martinez, the ringmaster traps a wild grizzly bear for Charlie, the wild animal tamer, to tame. Charlie is scared silly his "wild" animals, a lazy lion and tiger fit for a petting zoo, aren't as wild as their names would suggest. Rita suggests to Pete that he should become friends with the grizzly bear, Fremont. Together Pete and Rita teach Fremont the ropes of the circus. As a group, they come up with a brilliant act that might just save Pete from the clowns. But, Fremont is from the wild and is very homesick; he doesn't want to live in the circus.

After Pete and Fremont's show stopping performance, while everyone is celebrating, Fremont is looking out the window wistfully at the wildlife he was ripped away from. Pete tries to comfort him, but they are close to his home. Pete sees how upset Fremont is and being the good friend he is, devises an escape plan. Rita tags along to make sure they don't get into too much trouble. After safely taking Fremont back home, and on their walk back Rita comes up with an idea that will help get Pete back on top, a new act involving a pink poodle and a crazy chimpanzee.

**Urban, Linda. *A Crooked Kind of Perfect*. Orlando: Harcourt, 2007.**

Book talk:

Have you ever had a dream so big you thought you'd explode if it ever came true? In *A Crooked Kind of Perfect* by Linda Urban I tell you about my dream.

My name is Zoe Elias and I am ten years old. I was born to be a concert pianist, to dress in a fancy gown, wear a tiara, and play for admiring, awestruck crowds. I tell my mother I want to be a prodigy and play the piano. She says, "Tell your dad." My dad signs me up for piano lessons at the senior center with a man who teaches us on a paper keyboard torn from a book. That was not what I had in mind. I tell my dad I am supposed to have a piano. But instead of going to the used piano store he goes to the mall where a slick salesman sells him a Perfectone D-60 organ. Can you believe it!!! A wood-grained, vinyl-seated, wheeze-bag organ with two keyboards, ten foot pedals, and an 'On' button!! That is not a piano!! There go my dreams of becoming famous and playing Carnegie Hall.

I am learning *Hits from the Sixties and Seventies* that I get to play on a real piano at school when the music teacher is absent. No applauding crowds, but I do get a punch in the arm and a "That was cool." from Wheeler Diggs, who is kind of cute. About Wheeler Diggs...he followed me home from school and keeps coming over – to hang out with my dad and bake cakes – can you believe that!! They bake cakes while I practice my piece for the Perform-O-Rama. That's another thing about the piano – you play Mozart or Beethoven at a classy recital, not "Forever in Blue Jeans" on an organ at the Perform-O-Rama. I am really nervous about this competition – what if my mom can't get off work to drive me there? My dad hates crowds, doesn't like to leave the house, and would get lost anyway. What if I really mess up and embarrass everyone?

You will have to read *A Crooked Kind of Perfect* by Linda Urban to see how I do at the Perform-O-Rama and if my dreams of piano-playing fame come true.

**Weatherford, Carole Boston. *Jesse Owens: Fastest Man Alive*. New York: Walker Publishing Co., Inc., 2007.**

Though he started life as a small and sickly child, James Cleveland Owens, better known as Jesse Owens, would earn the title the Fastest Man Alive.

Training for the Olympics is challenging. Couple those challenges with segregation and injuries, pursuit of Olympic gold is doubly so. Jesse Owens faced not only those challenges but the prejudice of Nazism at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. In lyrical prose, the author shares the heart of a champion.

#### Trivia

1. What is Jesse Owens' real name?
2. What leader refused to congratulate Jesse Owens at the 1936 Berlin Olympics?
3. Who did Jesse Owens marry?
4. In high school, how many championships did Jesse Owens win?
5. What year was Jesse Owens awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Gerald Ford?
6. Who is the fastest woman alive today?
7. Who is the fastest man alive today?
8. How is the title fastest man or woman alive determined?
9. Name four track and field events.
10. With what other Olympian did Jesse become friends?

#### Answers

1. J.C., James Cleveland
2. Adolf Hitler
3. Ruth Solomon
4. Three
5. 1976
6. Usain Bolt
7. Shelly-Ann Fraser

8. In an Olympic year, the gold medalist in the 100 meter Dash.
9. 100 meter Dash, Long Jump, 200 meter Dash, 400 meter Relay
10. Luz Long

Vocabulary

1. Willkommen
2. trowel
3. sprint
4. rhythm
5. stadium
6. Olympic
7. autobahn
8. zeppelin
9. Jim Crow
10. autograph
11. dormitory
12. coil
13. elimination
14. foul
15. segregation

**Wilson, N. D. *Leepike Ridge*. New York: Random House. 2007.**

Book talk:

“In the history of the world there have been lots of *onces* and lots of *times*, and every time has had a once upon it. Most people will tell you that the once upon a time happened in a land far, far away, but it really depends on where you are. The once upon a time may have been just outside your back door. It may have been beneath your very feet.” (Wilson. *Leepike Ridge*. p. 1) So begins the tale of eleven-year-old Tom Hammond. Tom lived with his mother in a house chained to the top of a huge rock so the fierce winds and spring rains could not sweep the house into the river far below.

Tom was unhappy that his mother was dating Mr. Veach, a teacher from his school, and when Mr. Veach proposed to his mother it was almost more than Tom could bear. In the night he crept from the house and floated down the calm river on a big foam packing crate, hoping the night air and the gentle rocking of the river would bring him peace. It worked all too well, and Tom dozed off.

He woke as cold water poured down his back and found himself in the middle of the rapids at the foot of Leepike Ridge. He heard voices and tried to steer his float toward them, but the raging current was too strong and crushed him against the cliff, pulling him down and under the rock face.

“His body was already horizontal, and everything but his arms and face were under the stone. He opened his mouth to yell and swallowed frothing water. Another breath, and another mouthful of stream. Tom’s hand slipped and he shot under, raking his arm on the lip. He spun around and bounced, grinding his cheek on the rock above him.

Very few people can remain calm when trapped underwater. Tom kicked and thrashed as the current rolled him along the underside of the rock. Something collided hard with his ribs and knocked the last of his breath out of him. Tom realized he was going to die. With that, he calmed, floating along in the dark.” (p. 22-23)

Eventually the waters calmed, and Tom found himself drifting through a cavern deep beneath the ridge, lost in total darkness. Each scrape or collision with the unseen rocks terrified him and made his cold, battered body ache. When the raft finally bumped to a gentle stop, Tom carefully felt for the bottom and waded up the steep bank. He felt around in the blackness and touched and grabbed something rubbery... a boot. “He pulled at it, but it was stuck. Groping around, his fingers closed on an ankle.” (p. 30)

The dead body was only the first of many discoveries that Tom made while trying to escape from the caves. He learned truths about himself, his family, and an ancient treasure... truths that could cost him his life, in *Leepike Ridge*, a fast-paced adventure novel by N.D. Wilson.