



National Council of  
Teachers of English

# Teaching with the 2019 Orbis Pictus Books

## 2019 Orbis Pictus Committee Members:

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## Orbis Pictus Winner

***Between the Lines: How Ernie Barnes Went from the Football Field to the Art Gallery***, written by Sandra Neil Wallace, Illustrated by Brian Collier

- Explore this [Classroom Bookshelf entry](#) from *School Library Journal* on teaching with *Between the Lines*.
- **Absence and Presence.** Using the two articles listed below as some of your resources, explore the spaces and places Ernie Barnes remains absent/unknown as well as where present and discuss the possible implications of his absence and presence.
  - A June 2019 article from the Guardian UK that speaks to Ernie's legacy yet his noticeable absence in art history textbooks:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/jun/27/ernie-barnes-legacy-nfl-painting-olympics-art>
  - A September 2019 article written by noted basketball player Kareem Abdul-Jabbar about Ernie Barnes' authentic art as related to a California African American Museum exhibit that concluded in September 2019:  
<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/kareem-abdul-jabbar-how-athlete-artist-ernie-barnes-captured-black-cultures-communal-dignity-1209376>
- **Artist Athletes.** Explore other individuals who are both artists and athletes, such as Serena Williams, Usain Bolt, Tyson Chandler, etc.
- **Artistic Inspirations.** Illustrator Bryan Collier has discussed the influence Ernie Barnes had on his artistic processes and identity. Explore how Ernie Barnes' work might be similar to other children's book artists such as Frank Morrison (*Jazzy Miz Mozetta*, *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone*, *I Got the Rhythm*, etc.). Investigate other artistic inspirations within the children's book community and the larger world of art.
- **Collage.** Analyze collage as a medium of illustration. Bryan Collier has said: "[Collage is more than just an art style. Collage is all about bringing different elements together. Once you form a sensibility about connection, how different elements relate to each other, you deepen your understanding of yourself and others.](#)" How did Bryan Collier create the collage illustrations for *Between the Lines*? What is his process? Have students explore the back matter of *Between the Lines* and then explore other artists who work in collage, such as [Susan Roth](#) and [Ekua Holmes](#).

## Orbis Pictus Honor Books

***Champion: The Comeback Tale of the American Chestnut*** written by Sally Walker

- **Scientific Literacy.** Read *Champion* in science class to launch your school year with a

conversation about the disciplinary literacy of science. How do scientists ask and answer questions? What kinds of questions have scientists been asking about the American Chestnut over the past one hundred years? Why is it helpful for scientists to pursue different research projects in order to answer the same shared question?

- **Saving the American Chestnut.** With your secondary students, explore what American Chestnut research may be happening in your region. Bring researchers into class in-person or via Skype to talk about what they do. [The American Chestnut Foundation](#) has links to state chapters where you can [find out how to volunteer](#) as part of research efforts. Follow the links to see what's happening in your state and how you, your students, and their families can participate.
- **Citizen Science.** When students read *Champion: The Comeback Tale of the American Chestnut*, they see scientists, citizens, and students working together on research projects and American Chestnut restoration efforts. While you may not have local American Chestnut research happening in the region in which you teach, there are other citizen science projects that you and your students can participate in. Use the [Citizen Science website](#) from the U.S. government to locate federal projects that you, your students, and their families can volunteer for as citizen scientists. Or, you can use the resources from the [Citizen Science Association](#) and the [Citizen Science Alliance](#) to identify a project in which you can participate.

**Pass Go and Collect \$200: The Story of How Monopoly was Invented** written by Tanya Lee Stone, illustrated by Stephen Salerno

- History involves perspective. See below for more accessible articles.
  - Smithsonian Magazine's Sept. 2018 coverage of the evolution of Monopoly: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/monopoly-was-designed-teach-99-about-income-inequality-180953630/>
  - The National Museum of American History: 2015 article that includes primary sources of original Monopoly artifacts and more information about Lizzie Magie: <https://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/monopoly-80th-anniversary>
  - CBS News video clip of Monopoly then and now: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz5H0cg2uXs>
- The verbal and visual story begins and ends with Lizzie. Explore where Lizzie enters and exits the narrative and invite explorations of her presence and absence and the possible reasons for why. Furthermore, discuss how Lizzie is visually represented in terms of her own self and in relation to other individuals represented on the same openings. How do these visual representations connect to self-management, responsible decision-making, and relationships?
- The backmatter identifies who might have inspired Lizzie that goes unnamed in historical narratives. How does the knowledge that Lizzie's idea was inspired by someone else who does not receive credit affect your thoughts about what happened, if it does?
- Explore the concepts of ownership and contribution from legal and economic perspectives. Who is entitled to receive credit, especially in an era of crowdsourcing, new literacies, and collective knowledge building?
- Explore more inventions and patents that are created by women or other marginalized or minoritized people. Possible books are Catherine Thimmish's *Girls Think of Everything*, Linda Skeers' *Women Who Dared: 52 Stories of Fearless Daredevils, Adventurers and Rebels*

***The Secret Kingdom: Nek Chand, A Changing India, and a Hidden World of Art***, written by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by Claire Nivola

- **Inquiry Cycle.** Use the Inquiry Cycle to explore the history of the Indo-Pak subcontinent and Nek Chand.
- **Self-Taught Artists.** Nek Chand uses art as a way to heal himself after the trauma of relocating from a small village to a big city in the aftermath of the partitioning of India and Pakistan. As a self-taught artists, Chand collects and gathers material to create something new. Contact your local museum, art gallery, or arts organization to find self-taught artists in your community. Have students share Nek Chand's experience with them, and in turn, have them share their artistic processes with your students.

Explore the following resources about Nek Chand:

- *Nek Chand's outsider art: the rock garden of Chandigarh*, by Lucienne Peiry, John Maizels, Philippe Lespinasse, Nek Chand. Published by Flammarion, 2006. [ISBN 2-08-030518-2](#).
- *The Collection, the Ruin and the Theatre: Architecture, sculpture and landscape in Nek Chand's Rock Garden*, by Soumyen Bandyopadhyay and Iain Jackson. Liverpool University Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-84631-120-9](#).
- *Sublime Spaces and Visionary Worlds: Built Environments of Vernacular Artists*, by Leslie Umberger (author), Erika Doss (contributor), Ruth Kohler (contributor), Lisa Stone (contributor).
- [Nek Chand Rock Garden](#) *Sublime Spaces and Visionary Worlds: Built Environments of Vernacular Artists*, by Leslie Umberger, Erika Lee Doss, Ruth DeYoung Kohler, Lisa Stone. Published by Princeton Architectural Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-56898-728-5](#). Page 319-Page 322.
- ["Night tourism to light up 'rocks'"](#). The Times of India. 1 July 2012. Retrieved 30 October 2012.
- ["Working wealth out of waste"](#).
- ["Chandigarh, the City Beautiful: Environmental Profile of a Modern Indian City"](#).
- ["Picturing South Asian Culture in English: Textual and Visual Representations"](#).
- ["Pak scribes tour city, visit Rock Garden"](#). The Indian Express. 22 November 2011. Retrieved 12 February 2017.
- TNN (1 October 2009). ["'Pricey' weddings at Rock Garden"](#). The Times of India. Retrieved 12 February 2017.
- ["Chandigarh Rock Garden to get a face-lift"](#).
- ["Encyclopaedia of Tourism Resources in India, Volume 1"](#).
- ["The Rock Garden, Chandigarh, India," PBS Independent Lens, Off the Map](#)
- ["Discover India by Rail"](#).
- <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chandigarh/doll-museum-opens-in-memory-of-nek-chand/articleshow/59120534.cms>
- <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/nek-chand-saini>
- <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nek-Chand>
- **Videos of Nek Chand**
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Vzf9FiBsGA>
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5RtTOs\\_Im8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5RtTOs_Im8)
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEk9Mj7yb80>

***Thirty Minutes Over Oregon: A Japanese Pilot's World War II Story***, written by Marc Tyler Nobleman, illustrated by Melissa Iwai

- *Thirty Minutes Over Oregon*: visit the author's blog to discover this process and why he chose to write about this event. What was it that compelled him to tell this story? Does he achieve his objectives?
- View this two-minute, silent video of Fujita's story. Both author and filmmaker end on the same note. Consider why. (<https://www.opb.org/news/video/nobuo-fujita-brookings-oregon-wwii/>)
- See this [Classroom Bookshelf entry](#) from *School Library Journal* on teaching with *Thirty Minutes Over Oregon*.

***We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga***, written by Traci Sorell, illustrated by Frané Lessac

- **Learning Cherokee Words.** After reading *We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* with your students, play [this book trailer](#) created by Charlesbridge Publishers. Students can hear the pronunciation of the Cherokee words within the book, and practice pronouncing the words and reading the book aloud.
- **The Back Story.** After reading *We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga*, have students read "[Five Questions for Traci Sorell and Frané Lessac](#)" from *The Horn Book*. How does hearing about the process of writing, editing, and illustrating the book allow students to understand the book more deeply?
- **Gratitude Across Texts.** Pair *We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* with *Thanku: Poems of Gratitude (2019)*. Start off by reading *We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* aloud to your class. Have your students identify the different ways in which members of the Cherokee Nation express their gratitude throughout the year. Next, have students explore the poems in *Thanku*. Depending on the age of your students, you might have them read the poems independently in small groups, or you might provide specific selections that you read aloud using a document camera. Again, have your students identify the different things for which the various poets are grateful. In a shared or interactive writing activity, have your students compile a class list of the things for which they are grateful. Have students decide whether they would like to use *We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* or *Thanku* as a mentor text for your own class book on gratitude. Note: This idea originally appeared in an entry on [Thanku: Poems of Gratitude](#) on "The Classroom Bookshelf" blog of *School Library Journal*.

## Orbis Pictus Recommended Titles

***Boots on the Ground: America's War in Vietnam***, by Elizabeth Partridge

- **Historical Literacy.** Explore *Boots on the Ground* to launch a conversation about the disciplinary literacy of history. Why do historians write about particular topics? What was the catalyst for this book? How did Partridge go about conducting research? What sources did she use and why? What is shared with her readers about this process? How is that process revealed in the text?
- **The Backstory.** Before, during, or after reading *Boots on the Ground*, have your students watch this [twenty-minute video](#) of Elizabeth Partridge talking about the book at the San Francisco Library in 2018.

- **Local Oral History Projects.** Have students interview residents of their town about a historic or controversial event they witnessed or experienced. How do their memories, opinions differ? Ask: Since the event have you reflected on or tempered their early reaction or opinion? How so?
- **Investigate** our understanding and treatment of combat stress from the determination of the “shell shock” of WWI to today’s diagnosis of PTSD. How does PTSD manifest itself on the ground?
- A number of contributors to *Boots on the Ground* discuss **Racism in the military**. Explore other historical accounts of life in the military by people of color, including: Smithsonian. *We Return Fighting: World War I and the Shaping of Modern Black Identity*. (Smithsonian, 2019; Gr 9 Up); Bryan, Ashley. *Infinite Hope: A Black Artist's Journey from World War II to Peace*. (Atheneum, 2019; Gr 6 Up); Sheinkin, Steve. *The Port Chicago 50: Disaster, Mutiny, and the Fight for Civil Rights* Square Fish/Macmillan; Gr 7 Up); Tonatiuh, Duncan. *Soldier for Equality: José de la Luz Sáenz and the Great War*. (Abrams, 2019; Gr 3 Up); Walker, Sally M. *Deadly Aim: The Civil War Story of Michigan’s Anishinaabe Sharpshooters*. (Henry Holt, 2019; Gr 7 Up) Discuss the threads of their experiences and responses.
- Discuss the reaction to Maya Lin’s design of the Vietnam War Memorial. See also Susan Goldman Rubin’s *Thinking With Her Hands* (Chronicle, 2017; Gr 6 Up). How would you characterize the reaction? Why?

***Facing Frederick: The Life of Frederick Douglass, a Monumental Man* by Tonya Bolden**

- Frederick Douglass loved photography for its “democratizing effect,” and that it allowed people to “see themselves as others see them, and as they will be seen by those [who] shall come after them.” Douglass himself was one of the most photographed individuals of the 19th century. Create a gallery of photographs of the man. What does the images tell us about how he wanted to be remembered?
- Frederick Douglass believed in human rights, all human rights, and was an early supporter of women’s suffrage, attending the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. His newspaper logo stated: “Right is of no sex, truth is of no color.” Explore how and when he differed in opinion from the [William Lloyd] Garrison abolitionists and the Women’s Suffrage Movement, and his responses to their treatment.
- Locate images & copies of Douglass’s newspaper *The North Star* online. What were some of topics the paper covered? How would you characterize the topics and the authors’ opinions expressed in them? <https://www.biography.com/news/frederick-douglass-photos-black-history-nmaahc>
- View this video of Chadwick Boseman reading the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S6vB1xbYWxo>). View writer and actor, Roger Guenveur Smith, in a recitation of one of Frederick Douglass's most famous speeches, "Fourth of July Speech," at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, 2009 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUPsfRSomj4> ). What qualities do these

performances embody that we have come to know about Frederick Douglass as an orator? How would you describe Douglass's telling of his life story compared to the wording of his speech?

- Author study literature circles using Tonya Bolden's books <https://www.tonyaboldenbooks.com/>
- **Historical Literacy.** Explore *Facing Frederick* to launch a conversation about the disciplinary literacy of history. Why do historians write about particular topics? What was the catalyst for this book? How did Bolden go about conducting research? What sources did she use and why? What is shared with her readers about this process? How is that process revealed in the text?

***Game Changers: The Story of Venus and Serena Williams***, written by Lisa Cline-Ransome, illustrated by James Ransome

- Extend the conversation to how the Williams sisters continue to be game changers off of the court.
- What did it take? Explore the ways in which Venus and Serena are depicted as determined and/or resilient within the running text and then in the backmatter. Who and what contributed to their determination and/or resilience? What did they overcome or persevere through? How did they and their family build relationships? Where did responsible decision making, self-awareness, and self-management occur? Also consider exploring the language used to represent their determination and/or resilience. What was said and by whom?

***Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor: The Woman Who Loved Reptiles***, written by Patricia Valdez, illustrated by Felicita Sala

- **Scientific Literacy.** Read *Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor* in science class to launch your school year with a conversation about the disciplinary literacy of science. What images of Joan "doing science" do we see throughout the book, from childhood to adulthood? What do these images tell us about how scientists construct knowledge? How does Joan apply her research at the London Zoo?
- **Doing Scientific Observations.** From start to finish, the text and images in *Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor* reveal Joan deeply engaged in scientific inquiry. The end pages show a close-up of Joan doing research by reading books, observing specimens closely, and taking notes. Throughout the book, readers see Joan engaged in close observation of animals and their habitats, and drawing on those observations to provide create spaces and care protocols conducive to animal health and well-being. Embed scientific observations of live animals into the daily life of your classroom. Curate a series of animal webcams, including the following: [The Houston Zoo](#), [The San Diego Zoo](#), [The Smithsonian National Zoo](#), and the [Earth Cam](#) curated site of animal cameras from around the world. Students can share the responsibility of monitoring animals of choice at various points during the school day (recognizing the challenges that time zone differences present) or students can start each morning or end each day with the ritual of animal observation and note-taking. These live scientific observations could also be part of individualized student research on animals.
- **Women in Science Text Set.** Joan Procter is just one example of a self-taught scientist working in the field professionally before the second half of the 20th century ushered in a new era of women in the workplace. After reading *Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor*, have your students explore other picture books about female scientists working in different

time periods, such as *Ada Lovelace: Poet of Science, Who Says Women Can't Be Doctors? The Story of Elizabeth Blackwell*, *Life in the Ocean: The Story of Oceanographer Sylvia Earle*, *Counting on Katherine: How Katherine Johnson Saved Apollo 13*, *Wangari Maathai: The Woman Who Planted Millions of Trees*, *Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World*, *Shark Lady: The True Story of How Eugenie Clark Became the Ocean's Most Fearless Scientist*, *Grace Hopper: Queen of the Code*, and *Mae Among the Stars*.

***Nothing Stopped Sophie: The Story of the Unshakable Mathematician Sophie Germain***, written by Cheryl Bardoe, illustrated by Barbara McClintock

- See this [Classroom Bookshelf entry](#) from *School Library Journal* on teaching with *Nothing Stopped Sophie*.
- **Mathematical Literacy.** Read *Nothing Stopped Sophie* in math class to launch your school year with a conversation about the disciplinary literacy of mathematics. How and why do equations for certain concepts get developed? Why does Sophie think of mathematical equations as poems? What do poems and equations have in common? You might want to have your students try to write equation poems as they ponder this question. For an example of an equation poem, see [Thanku: Poems of Gratitude](#).

***Otis and Will Discover the Deep: The Record-Setting Dive of the Bathysphere***, written by Barb Rosenstock, illustrated by Katherine Roy

- **Making Models.** Challenge your students to make a model of the bathysphere. You may do this simply, inviting students to represent the Bathysphere with a string on the floor outlining its size, or you could make it more complex by inviting them to build a 3D version. Challenging students to do the math necessary to create the model can go from as simple as figuring out how big it was through measuring, to using formulas to find diameter and volume. The book shares the diameter of the bathysphere. Simply giving students a sense of what it would be like to be bolted into a sphere that size provides a moment for learning and reflection.



- **Invite Inquiry.** *Otis and Will Discover the Deep* is a compelling book that take most readers in dynamic different directions. After reading the book aloud, ask students what they wonder, or what they are thinking about. Wonders or thinking may include ideas about the nature of discovery itself, the time period in history, the physics of the deep ocean, the engineering of a Bathysphere, the species of a deep ocean ecosystem, invention or many more avenues. Use wonders to launch investigations or research.
- [Otis and Will Discover the Deep Trailer](#) from Barb Rosenstock
- [Discovering the Deep/ Barbara Rosenstock](#) talks at the Library of Congress

- [Wildlife Conservation Society; Bathysphere and Beyond](#)
- [The Official William Beebe Site](#)
- [179-Bathysphere](#) on *99% Invisible*.

***Something Rotten: A Fresh Look at Roadkill*** written by Heather Montgomery, illustrated by Kevin O'Malley

- Heather Montgomery shares her winding inquiry into the world of roadkill. Invite students to check out the newly more visible results in the world that resulted from studying roadkill: [10 Most Beautiful Wildlife Crossings Around the World](#).
- Ask students to follow their own inquiries that begin with looking closely at the world, much as Heather Montgomery did.
- [Heather Montgomery's page for \*Something Rotten\*](#)

***What Do You Do with a Voice Like That? The Story of Extraordinary Congresswoman Barbara Jordan***, written by Chris Barton, illustrated by Ekua Holmes

- **Front Matter and Back Matter.** Using the timeline in the backmatter, connect the written narrative with the events and discuss the ways in which Barbara Jordan engaged in responsible decision making, cultivated relationships and promoted social awareness and the effects of those various acts.
- **Words and Images.** Investigate the ways in which Barbara Jordan is represented within the book through word and image. Consider extending the investigation to how Barbara Jordan represents herself through her own words and actions.
- YouTube Video of Barbara Jordan reading (impeachment): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDcYiyF5eLc>
- Oral History Interview with Barbara Jordan in 1984: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5iWYv-FeyM>

## Teaching Ideas Across the Orbis Pictus Books

- **Considering Prior Knowledge.** Have students create wordles about what they know about the Vietnam War, Frederick Douglass, or Japanese soldiers during WWII before they read *Boots on the Ground*, *Frederick Douglass*, *Thirty Minutes Over Oregon*, then after. Have them discuss what assumptions they may have had and/or what they have learned.
- **Mentor Texts for Organizing Writing.** Have students examine the following biographies, separately, or as a set: *Between the Lines*, *Joan Proctor*, *Dragon Doctor*, *What Do You Do With a Voice Like That*, and *Nothing Stopped Sophie*. Highlight authors' strategy of using a narrow but deep focus, built around a single trait or quality. Students can see how that quality is mentioned repeatedly, serving as a frame or skeleton for the narrative. Teachers can guide students to create outlines for writing

using these texts, and then transfer them to their own personal or researched biographical narratives.

- **Writing Style and Mentor Texts: Repetition.** Have students read *Between the Lines*, *Nothing Stopped Sophie*, *Otis and Will*, and *We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga*. Ask students to consider why certain words or phrases are repeated within each text. What is the impact of repetition within each of these texts individually? How does repetition help the reader to build meaning? What role does repetition play in the illustrations in each text? Looking across these various picture books, how does repetition serve as an effective stylistic choice? Have students experiment with adding the repetition of a word or phrase into a piece of their own writing.
- **Writing Style and Mentor Texts: Alliteration.** Have students read *Between the Lines*, *The Secret Kingdom*, *Joan Procter*, *Dragon Doctor*, and *We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga*. Ask students to consider why certain words or phrases are repeated within each text. What is the impact of alliteration within each of these texts individually? Looking across these various picture books, how does alliteration serve as an effective stylistic choice? Have students experiment with adding alliteration to a piece of their own writing.
- **Writing Style and Mentor Texts: Sentence Variety.** Have students read a selection of 2019 Orbis Pictus picture books and chapter books. Ask students to locate paragraphs or pages of writing that they find particularly interesting. What's happening with paragraphs? Across paragraphs? How do authors vary their sentence lengths to create mood? Convey ideas? Demonstrate time passing or action? Looking across these various books, how does sentence variety serve as an effective stylistic choice? Have students experiment with varying their sentence lengths in a piece of their own writing.
- **Writing Style and Mentor Texts: Precise Word Choice.** Have students read a selection of 2019 Orbis Pictus picture books and chapter books. Ask students to locate paragraphs that they find particularly interesting. What words help to make the paragraph interesting? How do precise words help to create mood? Convey ideas? Looking across these various books, how does precise word choice serve as an effective stylistic choice? Have students experiment with adding precise words to their own piece of writing.
- **Global Thinking: Comparing to Understand:** Intercultural understanding involves a willingness to engage with complexity by exploring both how we connect to people in a specific global context and how we value what makes each culture unique. Compare two photographs or illustrations from 2019 Orbis Pictus Books in which people are engaged in a similar activity but in different cultural contexts and explore the following questions.
  - **Looking for connections and similarity** What are the connections across these two situations? What about these two situations looks similar?
  - **Looking for uniqueness and difference:** What is unique about each situation? What about these two situations looks different? What is the reason?
  - **Asking deep questions:** What deep questions or big ideas might help us understand what is going on? What are possible reasons *why* these actions are occurring in each situation
  - **Going beyond:** What questions do we still have? What do we need to know more about to understand these situations? How can we go beyond our current understandings?

