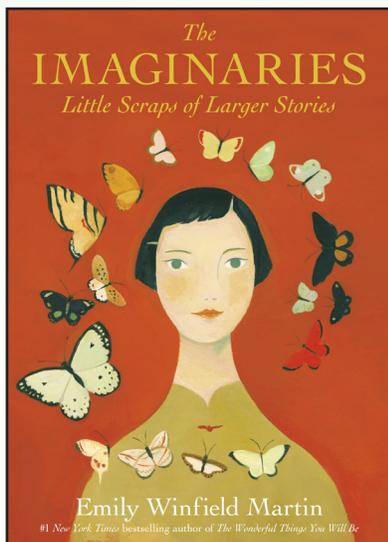




## A Workshop for Imaginative Writing (Grade 7 & Up)

Found art, wordless picture books, graphic novels, and nonfiction titles will push students to focus on details—sensory details, thematic details, and details critical to bolstering authorial arguments. These activities can be done at home or used by teachers managing classes online to practice creative writing. Each task can be completed in under an hour.



### Imaginative Exercises to Accompany *The Imaginaries*

“Show, don’t tell,” say readers of college essays, experienced writers, and English teachers everywhere. But why?

Showing, rather than telling, means writing with sensory details: using words and phrases that let us see, smell, hear, touch, and taste. Writing with sensory details is important not only because it helps the reader to experience a scene more fully but also because details communicate tension or give us important information about a character. Details also matter because they inform us about unseen or unheard parts of the story. Take, for example, a pirate with a

hook for a hand; this detail provides information about his backstory—potentially a troubled past. It produces tension and implies conflict or an element of suspense. We wonder how he lost his hand. Explore these imaginative writing activities to become detail-oriented readers and writers.



Details matter, and good writers use details to stir emotions, questions, and engagement in their readers.

1. Write a few sentences about one of the following. What's the story behind the detail?
  - A scar
  - A favorite or least favorite food
  - A childhood toy
2. Flip through a copy (or electronic copy) of *The Imaginaries*. Which pages evoke an emotional—positive or negative—response from you? Which illustration do you like the best? Why?



Say: Let's learn about connotations, or the emotional weight of details. Details matter because details connote, or suggest, emotions, concepts, qualities, or values. Examine the image and writing on pages 10 and 11. "Genevieve preferred a crown of flowers to a crown of gold." In this example, "crown" connotes royalty, wealth, and luxury, whereas "flowers" connote beauty, romance, love, and nature. Through examining connotation of word choice, we learn something about Genevieve. What do we learn?

3. Have students return to the image they selected from *The Imaginaries* for task two. Unpack two details from the image by writing down what they connote.
4. Tell students to select any image from *The Imaginaries* to write a story about, but not to indicate which image they selected. Stories should include a beginning, a middle and an end. Things to consider:
  - A. What details are in the illustration?
  - B. What are the connotations of those details?
  - C. What do those connotations reveal to you?

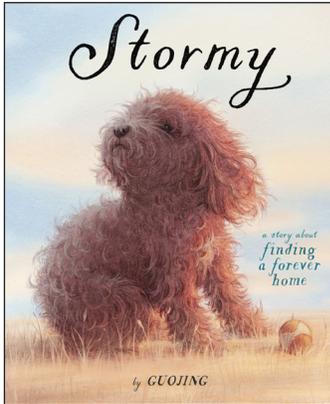




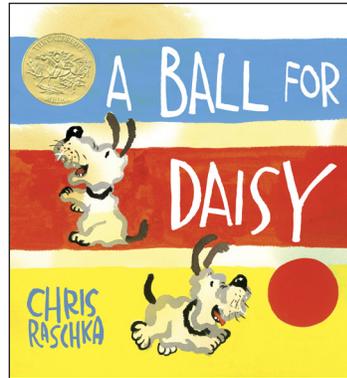
## Writing to Read

Wordless picture books can jump-start great conversations. “Reading” a wordless picture book forces students to infer meaning and pay attention to details—especially when asked to focus on an illustrator’s use of color or another technique.

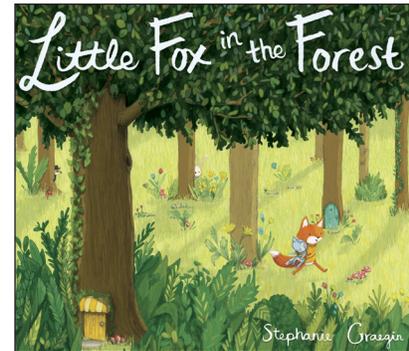
*With students, “read” one of the following wordless (or almost wordless) picture books.*



**Stormy**  
by Guojing



**A Ball for Daisy**  
by Chris Raschka



**Little Fox in the Forest**  
by Stephanie Graegin

1. Analyze one of the illustrator’s choices or techniques (color, light, expression and body language, for example), and document how it changes over the course of the story.
2. Write it out: Paying attention to how color, light, or expression shifted over the course of the wordless book—craft a story that reflects those shifts. Be creative in your writing, but stay true to the heart of the story.

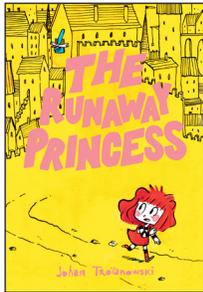




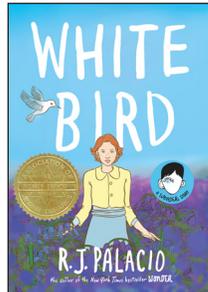
## Be an Artist

Graphic novels are a great way to get kids reading—especially kids who are typically reluctant readers.

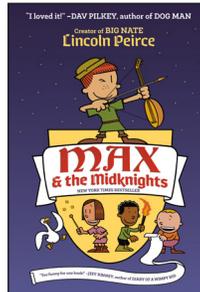
*Assign one of the following graphic novels to students to read.*



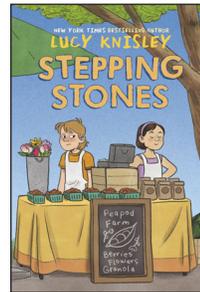
**The Runaway Princess**  
by Johan Tröianowski



**White Bird:  
A Wonder Story**  
by R. J. Palacio



**Max and the Midknights**  
by Lincoln Peirce



**Stepping Stones**  
by Lucy Knisley



**The Cardboard Kingdom**  
by Chad Sell

Ask students to find a scene that is alluded to but not illustrated in the book. This could be a scene from the backstory, a scene that is mentioned in one detail, or a scene that might have occurred after the narrative's conclusion. Instruct students to illustrate and narrate two pages worth of graphic novel panels. Encourage students to stay true to the character personalities and plot in the original story.



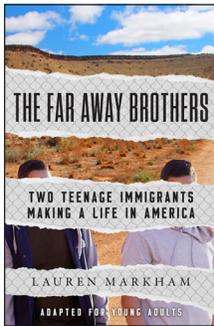


## Tough Topics

Nonfiction can be challenging for students when the main ideas of a text get lost in the details. Working with engaging nonfiction and completing projects, such as the one below, will give students practice in consolidating main ideas and help them to focus on the most important details.

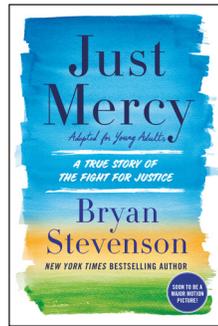
*Assign one of the following nonfiction titles.*

### Immigration



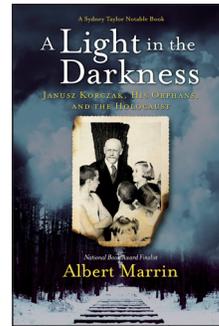
**The Far Away Brothers (Adapted for Young Adults)**  
by Lauren Markham

### Criminal Justice



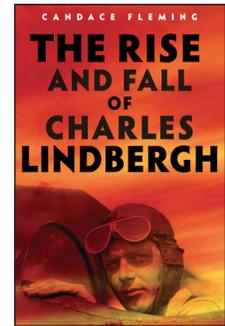
**Just Mercy (Adapted for Young Adults)**  
by Bryan Stevenson

### The Holocaust



**A Light in the Darkness**  
by Albert Marrin

### White Nationalism



**The Rise and Fall of Charles Lindbergh**  
by Candace Fleming

Ask students to create an advertisement for the book. Their advertisement must contain the following:

- A. a powerful image
- B. a hook
- C. the book's main ideas in 100 words or less

