

Lucy Calkins Classroom Libraries Video Interview Transcript

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Question: *What inspired the TCRWP Classroom Libraries project?*

Lucy: I'm glad to have a chance to talk to you about the library project, and I think what I want to do is to talk about a couple things. First of all, I want to tell you why we did this project, and secondly, how we did it. And then I just want to kind of zoom in on some of the particular shelves so that you get an idea about the logic that informs the collection, the curating process.

So, first of all, why did we do it? Just pause for a moment to think about how much the particular book matters; think about how Harry Potter has made a whole nation of readers, because those books were irresistible to so many people. And the truth of the matter is I think we've all seen kids where you put the right book in their hands and they'll just read up a storm, and the wrong book, it's hard to get them to read at all. This summer, I went to the local library, and I got a big pile of six books, and I came home ready to read 'em, and I actually just sort of took books that caught my eye on the shelf. And I started reading one, and it's like, uh, this is really a bad book. And I gave it up, and then I went to the next one, and I didn't like it either. And I realized, the truth is, getting somebody to recommend books for you, and to steer you so that the books are just the kind of book that you want to read makes a huge difference.

So we started to think about how so many classroom teachers come into a classroom and perhaps some people come in at the beginning of their teaching career, and there are no books there at all. And they'll head off with a station wagon and drive across the town to a warehouse that they hear has a book sale, and perhaps they're given a plastic bag, and you can have one bag full of books for 10 dollars, and they run through the warehouse and scoop up books and pour 'em into this plastic bag, and that's their library. Or how many libraries are just all the dregs that nobody's wanted, and they just stay in the classroom because nobody wants them. They're just the books that are so hard to get kids to read. So we started to think about how important it is to find the people in the world who really, really know books, and to get them to help steer the process of curating an absolutely state-of-the-art, irresistible classroom library.

To learn more about the TCRWP Classroom Libraries, browse representative titles, and order shelves, visit calkinslibraries.com