Norah Dooley:
Storytelling: Your Program
Educational Guide, Grades K-8

About the Performance

Norah puts her extensive trove of stories, folktales, fables, and songs to work for you by crafting a unique storytelling program centered on the theme or culture of your choice – and linking it directly in with your curriculum. Possible themes include Irish stories, Italian stories, Caribbean stories, bullying, nonviolent conflict resolution, tricksters, female heroines, and more!



About the Artist

Norah Dooley, storyteller, is a critically-acclaimed children's author and educator who performs in schools, libraries, conferences, and festivals throughout the U.S. and abroad. Norah's popular picture books, *Everybody Cooks Rice* and *Everybody Bakes Bread*, are two of four titles in a series about her neighbors and former neighborhood in Cambridge, MA. Norah specializes in Irish and Italian folklore, as well as teaching people of all ages how important their stories are and how to tell them. She has been a full-time classroom teacher and instructor in visual and performing arts in elementary and middle schools, has taught storytelling at Lesley University's Graduate School of Education, Lesley, Tufts, Boston and Suffolk Universities, and has lectured teachers of English and graduate students in Japan, India and Tanzania. Norah has been a featured performer at the Exchange Place of the National Storytelling Festival (TN), the Clearwater Festival (NY), the Newport Folk Festival (RI) and Cambridge Revels (MA). For four years, she appeared as a historical storyteller for Boston's Save the Harbor initiative, and for over 25 summers she told stories to thousands of children through the Storymobile of Read Boston. Norah has an M.Ed. in Creative Arts and Learning and is a Nationally Accredited Artist through Young Audiences Arts for Learning.

Program Learning Goals

1. To demonstrate the use of oral language and storytelling as a foundation for writing.
2. To identify and explore strategies in approaching and embracing the writing process.
3. To empower students to believe in the potential of their imaginations to create their own original stories through observation, sustained effort, and dedication.

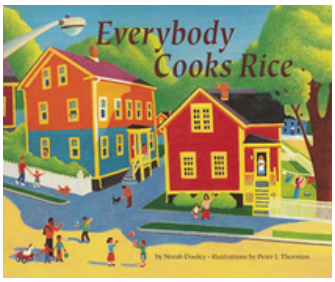
Essential Questions

1. Why is imagination important in writing?
2. How can listening to others and sharing stories make our writing stronger?
3. What makes your story your own?

Vocabulary

- **Storytelling:** the art of telling a story about real or imagined events using gestures and words to bring the events and characters of the story to life in the minds of those listening
- **Storyteller:** a person who tells or writes stories
- **Author:** a person who writes a story, novel, poem, or other written work
- **Fiction:** a story that is created from the imagination
- **Non-fiction:** a piece of writing that consists of facts and information about actual events or topics

Key Facts and Context for Students

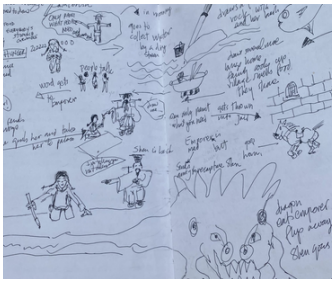


Everybody... Books

Norah's books were inspired by bedtime stories she told to her children. Her daughters were curious about their neighbors, and Norah would make up stories about them. After a block party where everyone brought different kids of rice dishes, she had the idea for her first book, *Everybody Cooks Rice*. This lead to a series of books exploring different cultures through food.

Approaching the Writing Process

Everyone has an imagination, and our imaginations are fully active even before we learn to write! We tell stories every day to friends and family. Authors craft stories from their own imaginations and experiences in a way for other people to understand and appreciate them. There are many ways a story can go from imagination to written work. Pre-writing strategies such as exchanging verbal stories and visual tools all help to capture ideas. Figuring out who the characters in the story are, when and where they live, and what they do help to bring them to life. Once these ideas are written down in a first draft of the story, authors reread and rewrite their stories, often with the help of peer editing and constructive feedback. This makes their stories as strong and engaging as possible. Remember anyone can be a writer and explore this art form!



Visual Pre-Writing Tools

Many authors use visual tools to brainstorm their stories, such as drawings, storyboards, graphic organizers, and diagrams. In her writing process, Norah often uses story maps. Story maps can be a combination of pictures and text to layout the characters and plot before writing a first draft of the story. It is also a helpful learning tool to break down an existing story into the most important events and putting them in order.

Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

- What do you know about creating and telling stories?
- What are some of your favorite stories? What happens in these stories? What do these stories teach you?
- Who tells stories in your family? What are those stories about?
- How can drawing or using pictures help us tell a story?

Pre-Performance Activity: Mapping Stories

Learning Goal:
To understand the elements (characters, setting, problem, conclusion, and moral) of stories by author Norah Dooley.



Materials:
Copies of Norah's books (*see page 6 for titles and ordering information*), Story Map worksheet (*see page 4*), coloring supplies

Directions:

1. Read one of Norah Dooley's books to the class.
2. Discuss the story. Who are the main characters? What cultures are the neighborhood families from? Where did the story take place? What multicultural foods were represented? How did the story end?
3. Create a "story map" on the board for this story using drawings and text. Include the characters, the setting, the cultures represented, the activities that occur, etc.
4. Read another one of Norah's books (either as a group or independently depending on student age and ability). Discuss the storyline without going into too much detail. What are similarities (i.e., the characters of Carrie, Mom, Anthony, Anna and Dad) and what are differences (i.e., multicultural foods and neighborhood families)?
5. Have students complete the Story Map worksheet for the second book.
6. Share the story maps with the class.

Extensions:

- Discuss students' neighborhoods (people, traditions, climate, geography, culture, etc.) and develop research questions to explore their neighborhoods in more depth.
- Read additional stories by Norah Dooley. List similarities and differences.

Name: _____

Book Title: _____

STORY MAP

Directions: Draw and/or describe the elements of the story in each box.

Setting:

Main Characters:

Plot:

1

2

3

4

5

6

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

- What was your favorite part of the performance? What did you learn about Norah, her stories, and the writing process?
- Where do ideas for stories come from? What helps writers get started when they don't know what to write? How do writers turn ideas into finished stories?
- What do writers do when their first try isn't perfect? What is the value of rewriting or editing a story?
- How can talking about our ideas help us become better writers?

Post-Performance Activity: Dancing a Story

Learning Goals:

- To respond creatively to Norah Dooley's performance
- To bring ideas and methods learned from the artist to classroom studies.



Materials:
Art supplies, favorite music, paper and pens

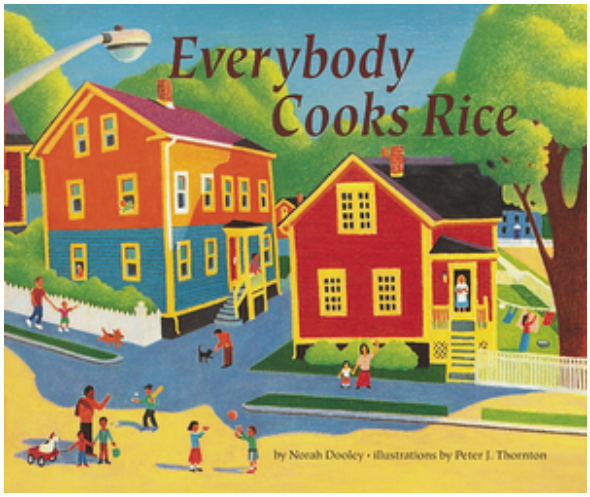
Directions:

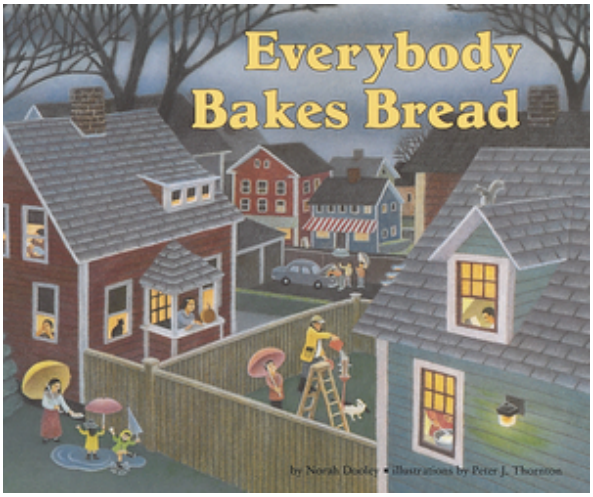
1. Debrief and reflect upon Norah's performance with your students.
2. Divide students into small groups. Have each group pick one of Norah's stories to retell.
3. Encourage students to be creative in how they retell the story. Options can include writing a song, making a drawing, choreographing a dance, etc.
4. Allow students plenty of time to create their retellings. Offer supplies to support their creations, such as art supplies, favorite music, etc.
5. Share performances with the class.

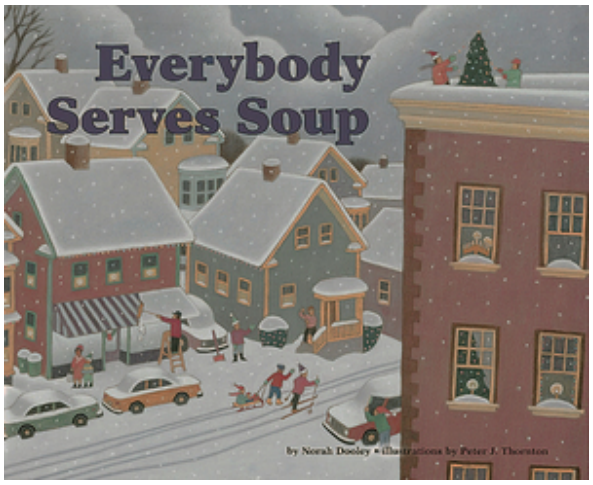
Extensions:

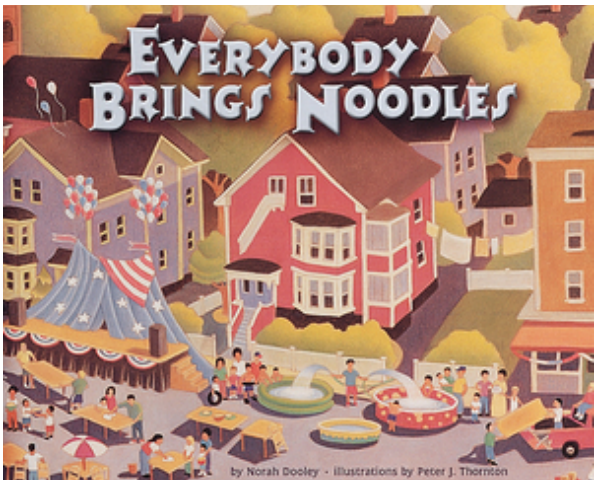
- Plan a classroom "block party". Discuss what can bring communities together (actions, events, food, music, etc.). Invite each student to bring in something to share with the class that represents an aspect of their identity.
- Make note of favorite shapes and movements in the illustrations throughout Norah's books. In pairs, have students "mold" each other into statues of these frozen pictures.
- Invite students to create their own books, using writings and drawing inspired by this program. Share with each other.

Norah Dooley Books









All of Norah's titles can be ordered in hard cover and paperback from:
Lerner Books
lernerbooks.com
800-328-4929



Further Resources

- Norah Dooley Website
- Scholastic Publishing: "Websites Where Kids Can Create Books"
- Bauer, Caroline Feller: *Read for the Fun of It: Active Programming with Books for Children,* H.H. Wilson Company (1992)
- Brawner, Tayla, Sarah Ivey, and Sholachauntel Shoda: *Sebastian's Apartment Family*, Shout Mouse Press (2022)
- Cumpiano, Ina: *Quinito's Neighborhood / El Vecindario de Quinito*, Children's Book Press (2013)
- Gregory, Cynde: *Childmade: Awakening Children to Creative Writing*, Station Hill Press (2010)
- Sanders, Joshunda: *I Can Write the World*, Six Foot Press (2019)
- Trelease, Jim: *Read-Aloud Handbook: Eighth Edition*, Penguin Books (2019)



Curricular Connections

Arts Standards: Theatre and Visual Arts

Creating

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. (T.Cr.01, V.Cr.01)
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. (T.Cr.02, V.Cr.02)

Performing

- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. (T.P.06, V.P.06)

Responding

- Perceive and analyze artistic work. (T.R.07, V.P.07)
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (T.R.08, V.P.08)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. (T.R.09, V.R.09)

Connecting

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. (T.Co.10, V.Co.10)
- Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding. (T.Co.11, V.Co.11)

...continued on next page

Curricular Connections, continued

English Language Arts and Literacy Anchor Standards

Reading

- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (R.PK-12.2)
- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. (R.PK-12.4)

Writing

- Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences. (W.PK-12.3)

Speaking and Listening

- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (SL.PK-12.2)
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric. (SL.PK-12.3)

Language

- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. (L.PK-12.3)
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings. (L.PK-12.5)



National Residency
TEACHING ARTIST
Credential

...continued on next page

Curricular Connections, continued

History and Social Science

K

- Topic 1: Civics: classroom citizenship (HSS.K.T1)
- Topic 2: Geography: connections among places (HSS.K.T2)
- Topic 3: History: shared traditions (HSS.K.T3)

Grade 1

- Topic 1: Civics: communities, elections, and leadership (HSS.1.T1)
- Topic 3: History: unity and diversity in the United States (HSS.1.T3)

Grade 2

- Topic 3: History: migrations and cultures (HSS.2.T3)

