

Gennifer Choldenko

Possible Presentations

The Al Capone Show

4th-7th grade

One part autobiography, five parts Alcatraz history, a little gangster and Great Depression history, a wacky sense of humor, and forty-nine shakes of purely made up stuff all came together to form *Al Capone Does My Shirts*, *Al Capone Shines My Shoes*, and *Al Capone Does My Homework*. Gennifer has prepared a slide show using vintage Alcatraz photos (courtesy of the San Francisco Library) about the history of the island and how it helped her create the unlikely hero, Moose Flanagan.

What do students learn from this?

1. History is fun and way stranger than you might think.
2. Research is more like a detective game than it is like homework.
3. Writing is a lot easier, if you know about your subject. What goes in your head comes out your fingers.
4. Bad guys can become good guys.

Chasing Secrets Show (The Plague comes to San Francisco: 1900)

4th-7th grade

The story of the plague's stealthy arrival in the Paris of the Pacific is riveting. Gennifer separates fact from fiction as she tells the true story of the plague outbreak in San Francisco. This extremely popular presentation gives kids a taste of what life was like one hundred and sixteen years ago. Enjoy a fun audience game about determining whom you trust. Get a new appreciation of the difficulty of fighting new diseases through a wildly popular make-your-own-disease improvisation.

What do students learn from this?

1. Medical science has come a long way in 116 years.
2. History is fascinating.
3. Medicine is a work in progress.
4. Research fuels good writing.

One-Third Nerd Show

2nd-5th grades

Show a two-minute video on Down Syndrome. Talk about kindness and tolerance for people who are different. Discuss the idea generation process and how the book *One-Third Nerd* evolved. Help kids understand where ideas come from and what they can do to stimulate idea generation. Show how much fun the writing process can be. Let them experience the pure joy of brainstorming.

Dad and the Dinosaur show

K-2nd grades

Involve students in discovering what we now know about dinosaurs. And what new information we are learning every day. Show how the ideas for the book *Dad and the Dinosaur* evolved. Do a reading of the book, then get kids involved with a simple creative improv about dinosaurs.

Where do ideas come from?

1st-3rd grades

This is a presentation designed to answer the question most frequently asked by kids in this age group: where do you get your ideas. The ideas for each of Gennifer's books have come from a different source. Using crazy slides, (cont'd) Gennifer demonstrates all the wacky ways she gets ideas. Includes improvisation and positive brainstorming techniques.

What do students learn from this?

1. How to recognize an idea.
2. Why ideas are so important.
3. How to generate new ideas.
4. Why it's crucial to treat your ideas with the utmost respect.

Student Writer Lunch

4th-8th grades

Students with a special interest in writing win the chance to have lunch with the author. Many schools hold a writing competition. Winning entries win a ticket for lunch. Other schools have teachers identify children with a talent and an interest in writing. This is a "working lunch". Students bring writing problems they are grappling with. For example: What happens if you get bored with a story? How do you select a title? What do you do when you have too many ideas? How do you end a story? Where can a kid get her work published? Gennifer treats this as a shoptalk lunch for writers.

Writing Workshop

3rd-8th grades

From her years of experience teaching writing workshops, Gennifer has learned the kinds of exercises that produce the best writing. She knows how to encourage small changes, which can really improve a child's writing. The creative writing calisthenics Gennifer uses come directly from her own work.

Heroes and Villains: Powering Complex Characters

Age 14 and up

What makes a good character? How do you create villains and heroes who are powerful and original? What kinds of things are helpful to consider in creating your book's cast? What keeps your reader turning the pages? How do you build a character arc? How can you create a character arc for your villain?

I Can't Plot and Other Lies We Tell Ourselves

Age 14 and up

Discover three of Gennifer's favorite plotting strategies. Get a whole tool kit full of solutions to the question: What do I do when I get stuck? How can you create clever, tight spots for your characters? How do you take an intriguing plot to the next level? How do you create and maintain narrative drive?