

Teachers' Guide



Counting on Hope

Sylvia Olsen

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Story Synopsis

Twelve-year-old Hope and her family move from England to a small island off the coast of British Columbia when she is ten years old, in 1860. In just two years, she and her younger brother and father fall in love with Wallace Island, which they share peacefully with the Lamalcha people who call the island their summer home. However, Hope's mother and older sister are suspicious of the Lamalcha. As soon as whisky traders bring stories of violence among settlers and First Nations in other areas, Hope's mother decides it's time to leave the island.

As Hope fights to persuade her family to stay on their island, she also becomes friends—secretly—with Letia, a Lamalcha girl of the same age. Ultimately, her love of the island and growing friendship with Letia isn't enough to keep the Richardson family on their homestead. Instead of solving the family's problems, a move to so-called civilization has tragic consequences.

As You Read

Think about the differences between how most other settlers think about the Lamalcha and the way Hope and her father think about their neighbours. Why do you think these differences exist? Which of these two opinions do you think would be most common today?

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think that Hope and Letia were able to form a friendship even though most of the adults around them discouraged it?
2. Imagine you were a settler in the same type of situation as Hope. What would you be most happy about? What would you be sad or scared about? Have you ever moved to a totally new area or started at a new school where you didn't know many people? What was that experience like?
3. If you were in Hope's position, do you think you would want to stay on Wallace Island or move to the larger settlement on Mayne Island? Why?
4. If you were Letia, how do you think you would have felt when Hope's family moved to the island? Happy? Scared? Curious? Why do you think you may have felt this way?
5. Do you think it was fair for Hope's family to move to the island in the first place? Why or why not? Did the fact that the Queen said the island was theirs make any difference?

Connecting Literature and Life

1. Hope's family sees first-hand how disruptive and destructive racism can be. Have you observed any racism in your community? What form did it take? How did it make you feel?

Writing Practice: Imagine you are leaving England to travel to Canada in 1860. Research what such a journey might have been like and write three journal entries from the trip: one from the beginning, one from the middle, and one from the end.

Writing Practice: Victoria was a quickly growing town during the early 1860s and many exciting things happened during this time. Research an event from this time and place and write a newspaper article about it. Remember to answer the most important questions in journalism: who, what, where, why, and how (did the event happen)?

2. Hope and Letia are able to form a friendship despite not speaking the same language. Have you ever become a friend of someone who doesn't (fluently) speak the same language as you? How did you meet? How were you able to become friends? Describe any difficulties you had in communicating. If you've never had a friendship like this, find a friend or family member who has, and conduct a brief interview with them about the experience.

3. A lot of the tension between the Lamalcha and the settlers is related to racism, which is often caused by a lack of knowledge about the "other" person. Though racism continues to occur all over the world, several men and women have emerged as heroes in the fight against racism (for example, Nelson Mandela, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Rosa Parks). Research one such person and write a brief biography.

Plot

1. Create a timeline highlighting at least eight important plot points from the novel. For each event, jot down who was involved and draw a small picture to illustrate what happened.

2. Why do you think the author begins the story in England, with Hope receiving the doll, as opposed to four years later on Wallace Island, where the bulk of the story takes place?

3. The title and cover are an important parts of any novel as it gives hints to the reader as to what the story is about and encourage you to read it.

Option A: Carefully examine the cover and try to decide why the publisher chose this image. Write approximately two paragraphs discussing this choice.

Describe at least two symbols that you can see on the cover relating to the story.

Option B: Draw, paint, or collage your own cover for *Counting on Hope*, and then write two to three sentences explaining why you chose to include the images you did.

Option C: The original title for this book was *Ruby and the Wooden Doll*. Why do you think the title was changed? Which do you like better? What kind of cover would you have envisioned for the other title?

4. Hope has a habit of making deals with the world to encourage her dreams, such as: “if Mother does this before I count to thirty, then this will happen.” Do you have any similar superstitions? What are they? If you don’t, think of a superstition that someone else in your family believes and briefly describe it.

Writing Practice:

1. When the whisky traders come to speak with her family, Hope often dreams of the outcome of these discussions being much different. Choose one such scene and rewrite it in the manner you believe Hope would have wanted it to occur.

2. Interview a member of your family who has moved from one town or country to another. Find out as much about the experience as you can. Try to ask some interesting or unique questions that shed light on what the situation was like for your family member. Transcribe (write out) your interview, concentrating on the most important stories.

Character

1. Pick one character who you think changed the most through the novel and talk about how and why they changed. Then pick one character who didn’t change much and discuss what stayed the same.

2. Sometimes people say that the older members of a community are the most resistant to change. Yet Letia’s grandmother seems to be one of the most open to Hope and Letia’s friendship, which many other Lamalcha, and Hope’s family, don’t approve of. Why do you think that the grandmother approves of the friendship in the way she does?

3. What is the main purpose of having Charlotte in the novel?

4. Who is the bravest character in the novel? Why?

Point of View

1. *Counting on Hope* is written in a unique style, with Hope’s part of the narrative written in fairly typical prose, and Letia’s part written in a looser, more poetic style. What are three reasons you think the author chose to write the novel in this way?

Writing Practice: Choose a situation in your life when you interacted with someone quite different from yourself. Write a story about this interaction. First, tell the story from your point of view using one style of writing. Then relate the incident from the other person's point of view in a different style. Observe how the story changes depending on the narrator.

Setting

1. Mayne Island really exists off the coast of Vancouver Island. Find out as much as you can about what the island is like now. For example: who lives there, how developed is it, and what are the main industries? Once you gather this information, use the details from the novel to create a Venn Diagram that shows what is the same and what is different about the island between then and now.
2. Create a diorama model of Wallace Island showing things such as the Richardson family homestead, the beach where Hope paints, the berry patch where Hope meets Letia, and the Lamalcha summer camp.
3. Hope loves where her family lives and is determined to capture it with paint and paper. Think of a place that you love to spend time in and create a drawing or painting of the parts of it that you love.

Style

1. What kinds of techniques does the author use to
 - bring her characters to life?
 - describe the setting?
 - explore the underlying themes of the book?

Theme

1. *Racism is as big a problem now as it was in 1860.* Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Set up an in-class debate to discuss the topic.
2. What lesson do you think the author is hoping the reader will take away from this novel? Do any of the characters in the novel learn a similar lesson?

Cowichan Area History

Pretend you write for the style or product pages of a local newspaper or magazine and write a short description of each of the following items. Remember to do enough research to keep your descriptions as accurate as possible but make it interesting enough that your readers would be interested in the product.

1. dugout canoe
2. woven blanket
3. Cowichan sweater
4. Salish spindle (for wool spinning)

Changing Times

Throughout the course of the novel, the conflict between the settlers and First Nations people is portrayed as violent and unclear. Today, there is less violence between First Nations and other Canadians, but conflict related to settlement still exists (for example, in the form of land claims and treaty disputes). Find three to five recent articles from Canadian newspapers (*Times Colonist*, *Vancouver Sun*, *Globe and Mail*, *The Province*, etc.) and summarize each one in about a paragraph. In each paragraph, try to identify the main conflict, some of the history, and the suggested solution, if any.

About the Author

Sylvia Olsen was born and brought up in Victoria, B.C. She married into the Tsartlip First Nation when she was seventeen, and for more than thirty years she lived and worked and raised her four children in the Tsartlip community. She returned to school at age thirty-five and earned a master's degree in history, specializing in Native/white relations in Canada. As a writer, she often finds herself exploring the in-between place where Native and non-Native people meet. Sylvia currently works in the area of First Nations community management, with a focus on reserve housing.

Also by Sylvia Olsen

Fiction

The Girl With A Baby

No Time to Say Goodbye: Children's Stories of Kuper Island Residential School

White Girl

Non-Fiction

Just Ask Us: A Conversation with First Nations Teenage Moms

Picture Books

Yetsa's Sweater

Which Way Should I Go?

Websites

www.sononis.com

www.joejack.com/coastsalishhistory.html

<http://saltspringarchives.com/multicultural/firstnations/index.html>

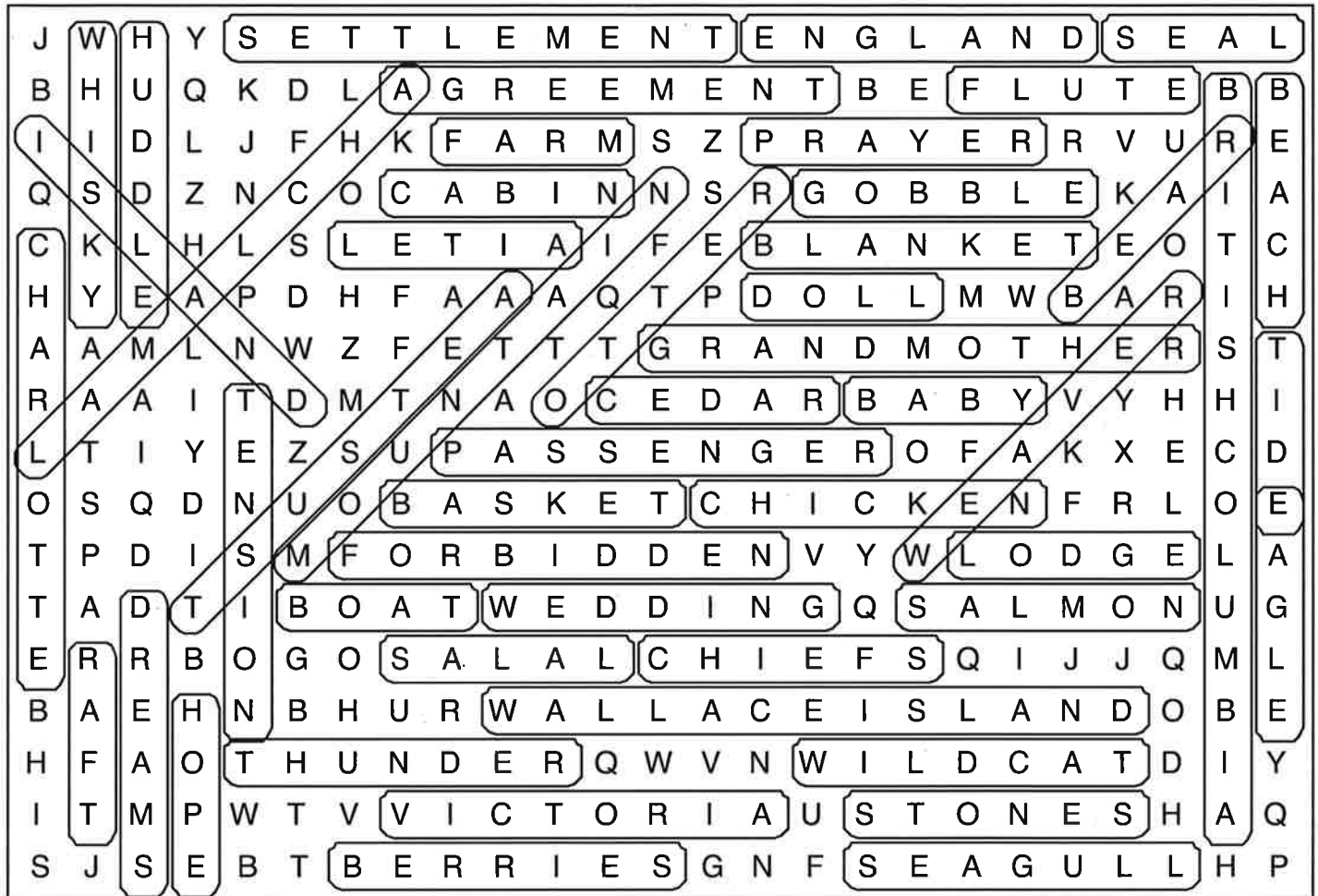
Just for Fun: Word Search

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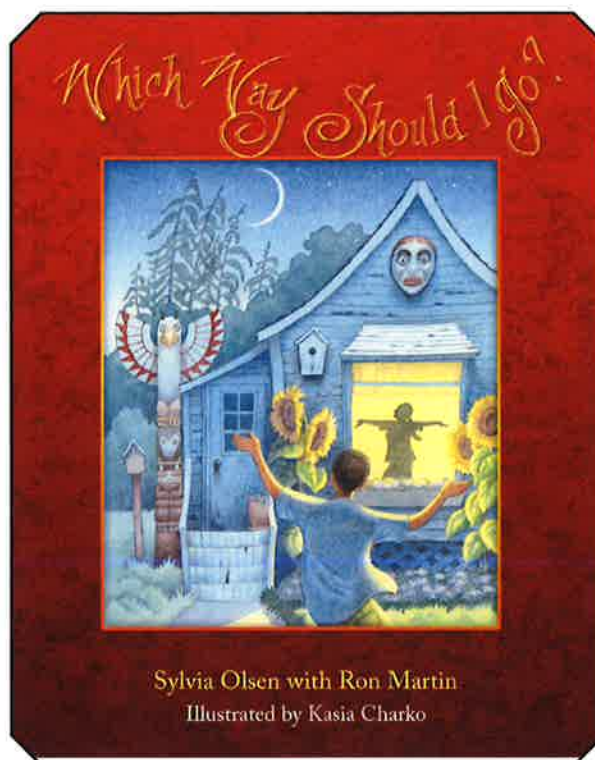
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|---------|----------------|------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Hope | England | British Columbia | Letia | island |
| whisky | Lamalcha | dreams | boat | raft |
| blanket | berries | basket | baby | grandmother |
| huddle | chiefs | seagull | otter | seal |
| eagle | cedar | mountain | beach | flute |
| prayer | Wallace Island | Tsustea | lodge | chicken |
| cabin | settlement | tension | Victoria | doll |
| gobble | wildcat | bear | weaver | salmon |
| salal | agreement | forbidden | stones | tide |
| farm | wedding | thunder | Charlotte | passenger |

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Which Way Should I Go?

Sylvia Olsen with Ron Martin

ISBN: 978-1-55039-161-9

8" X 10", 40 pages

TO ORDER:
Sono Nis Press
1-800-370-5228
or visit
www.sononis.com

BACKGROUND

How to Use this Guide

This guide for teachers includes many ideas for ways to share *Which Way Should I Go?* with students. Read through all the sections and then choose one or more activities that you feel reflect your interests and the needs and interests of your students. Sometimes one activity is best done before (or after) another – read ahead and plan your lessons so you don't spoil any surprises or miss any background information. Have fun!

Story Synopsis

Joey and his grandmother have a special way of doing things. With a song and a dance, they meet the choices they face each day with joy. Should Joey eat applesauce with cinnamon or ice cream? Should he go to soccer practice or stay inside? There's always something to choose, and a fun way to choose it. Well... almost always. When Joey's grandmother dies he can't imagine what kind of choice he's been given in the matter. Angry and sad, Joey needs some time before he finds a way to embrace his grandmother's lesson (and her song and dance) once again.

The Story Behind the Story

Sylvia Olsen's friend, Ron Martin, grew up hearing the stories of his family and community. Ron's father, Robert, was a hereditary chief (Ha'withl) of the Tla-o-qui-aht (formerly known as Clayoquot), one of the Nuuchahnulth First Nations. When Ron and his brothers and sisters visited their grandparents, they often sang and danced along with the song Joey's grandmother sings in *Which Way Should I Go?* As Ron explains, this song reminds us that the way we react to everything in life is a choice. In every waking moment of our lives, we should be aware that we have chosen whatever we are doing or thinking. That is why we sing and dance and pause, to ask ourselves, "Which way should I go?" We can stay in bed or we can get up. We can listen or not listen. We can be angry or not angry. Everything is a choice.

Sylvia Olsen loves Ron's stories. Sylvia wanted to share this song and story with many children. Sylvia and Ron worked on this project together. The result is a story that captures the essence of the teachings that have been passed from generation to generation in the Tla-o-qui-aht culture. Visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89IOGqfjESU> to hear Sylvia singing the *Which Way* song.

The Author

Sylvia Olsen was born and brought up in Victoria, B.C. She married into the Tsartlip First Nation when she was seventeen, and for more than thirty years she has lived and

worked and raised her four children in the Tsartlip community. She returned to school at age thirty-five and earned a master's degree in history, specializing in Native/white relations in Canada.

First and foremost, Sylvia Olsen is a storyteller. Since childhood she has loved to tell and listen to stories. But stories in books didn't fascinate her as much as stories told in person, so it wasn't until Sylvia was over forty years old that she thought about writing. Now she writes every day and has published many books, mostly novels for young people.

The Storyteller

Ron Martin is the eighth child of Robert Martin Sr. and Cecelia Martin (née Lucas) of Opitsaht. Opitsaht, the ancestral home of the Martin family, is situated on Meares Island, across from Tofino, B.C.

Ron's father recognized that Ron, his second youngest son, had a good memory and so he passed on to him the details of the family's history and teachings. All Ron's life he has been a student of these teachings. He now lives and works in Hesquiaht, B.C., the ancestral home of his mother. He has one daughter, Courtney, and many nieces and nephews. He actively passes on teachings and Tla-o-qui-aht history to younger generations, including his daughter, Courtney - from whom he can trace back twenty-six generations. In keeping the history alive, he has earned the respect and honour of his family and his community.

The Illustrator

Kasia Charko is originally from England, where she had an illustrious career in advertising, magazine work and fashion illustration. She now lives outside Toronto and has worked in Canadian advertising and, more recently, book illustration. Children's books are her favourite work. *Which Way Should I Go?* is the eleventh picture book Kasia has illustrated.

TALKING ABOUT THE STORY

Make Predictions

Look at the cover of *Which Way Should I Go?* Before reading the story, ask students what they think the book is about. Here are a few questions to get the conversation started:

What do you think the book is about?

Who are the characters on the cover?

Who is the main character?

What time of year does this story take place?

How do the two people on the cover know each other?

Do you think this image comes from the beginning, middle, or end of the story? Why?

Listen Carefully

Read *Which Way Should I Go?* aloud without showing the pictures or the cover to students. Ask the students what they imagine Joey, his mother, grandmother, and teacher look like. Have the students imagine the store, Grandma's house, and the beach. Read the story a second time, showing the illustrations. Ask the students how the images in their imaginations were the same as or different from the artwork created by Kasia Charko.

STORY ELEMENTS**Questions and Activities for Basic Comprehension****Think While You Read**

As you read the story, stop to discuss some of the following points with students:

- At the beginning of the story, why is Joey a happy boy?
- Why is Joey's grandmother his favourite person in the world?
- How does Joey's grandmother help him make choices?
- How did Simon try to cheer Joey up after his grandmother died?
- How do you know how bad Joey feels after Grandma dies?
- How did Grandma's song help Joey feel better?

Try This

Make up a melody and sing Grandma's song. What kind of dance steps would go along with the song? Divide students into small groups and have them practice their versions of the song and dance featured in the story. Students can perform their dances for the rest of the class.

Look at the Plot

Every good story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Many stories also have some kind of problem or challenge the main character must face and overcome. What challenge does Joey face? Does he overcome his problem by the end of the book? How can you tell?

Create a timeline for the story of *Which Way Should I Go?* Emphasize the key events and make drawings of the most important ones.

Look at Characters

In what ways does Joey change over the course of the book? There are several secondary characters in the book. How does each character try to help Joey? In the end, which character is the most helpful?

Look at the Setting

Remind students that setting is made up of the place and time where the story happens.

Kasia Charko's illustrations provide many clues about the setting of *Which Way Should I Go?* Where does this story take place? When does this story happen? Describe the community where Joey and his family live. Describe Grandma's house, both inside and out.

Consider Theme

What are the major themes in *Which Way Should I Go?*

MAKING STUDENT CONNECTIONS

Every day we each add to our own life stories. When we read, sometimes something in the book reminds us of something that happened in our own lives. Does a picture, part of the story, character or feeling in *Which Way Should I Go?* remind you of something from your own life? Write that idea down and illustrate it.

Does *Which Way Should I Go?* remind you of something that has happened to someone else?

Has anyone ever given you some ideas about how to feel better when you get sad or angry? Do these suggestions help?

When you feel sad or angry, what do you do, think, or say to help make yourself feel better? Is this something that someone else helped you discover or did you figure it out on your own?

Does this story about a boy who is sad and angry remind you of a time when you felt sad or angry?

Do you find it difficult to make choices? Do you think it's possible to choose how you feel? Why or why not? Are some choices easier to make than others?

Does Joey remind you of someone you know? Who? Why?

Does Joey's teacher remind you of someone you know? Who? Why?

Do you have a favourite snack that you like to share with someone in your family?

Do you have a favourite game that you like to play with your best friend?

Imagine This, Imagine That!

Imagine you have come across Joey sitting by himself in the forest. What would you do to try to cheer him up?

Imagine that you are going to the store in Joey's village. Try to imagine every detail of what it would be like to go into the store. What will you buy? Who is with you? What do you see, hear, smell, feel, and taste when you are in the store? Is anyone else shopping? What are they buying? Do you choose paper or plastic bags or did you bring a bag from home? What does the man who owns the store say to you?

Great Words

Each student should choose a favourite word from *Which Way Should I Go?* What colour does this word remind you of? Should it be written large and bold? Tiny and pale? Straight? Crooked? Write the word on a 4 X 5 inch index card. Use coloured pens, pencils, or crayons to write the word. Decorate the card and the word. Display all the word cards on a bulletin board. After the display is taken down, students may wish to glue their word into their writing journals.

Study the Artwork

Each student should select another picture book from the library. Students should divide a page in half lengthwise and write Kasia Charko at the top of one side of the page and the other illustrator's name at the top of the other side. Have students compare the two illustrators' use of colour, texture, shape, perspective, materials, line, space, and general style and approach to their work.

Have the students choose a part of the text in *Which Way Should I Go?* and create their own illustrations. Students may also choose to create a new cover for the story.

Scavenger Hunt

Find the following in the illustrations in *Which Way Should I Go?*

- Braided rug
- Crescent moon
- Pink eraser
- Red dog collar
- Driftwood
- Dandelion
- Cup of coffee
- TV set
- Birdhouses
- Ketchup bottle

Black cat
Ice cream
Basket of yarn
Ferns
Vegetable garden
Hanging basket with red flowers
Red dragon

MAKE INFERENCES

Based on information contained in the text and illustrations, readers can make inferences about details not necessarily revealed in the book. Use these questions to generate discussion about aspects of the story and characters that are not revealed directly.

How long do you think Joey will wait before he teaches his friends Grandma's song and dance?
Do you think Joey's mother also knows the song and dance?
How do you think Joey's teacher feels when Joey is sad in class?
Where do you think Grandma learned the song and dance she teaches to Joey?
Do you think Mr. Smith sells fishing gear at his store?
What grade is Joey in?

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Ask students what they have learned from what Joey's grandmother thinks are the important lessons for her grandson to learn. What are the similarities and differences between the things a teacher, a grandparent, or a parent might teach a child? What message do you think Sylvia Olsen hopes to share with readers?

NEW VOCABULARY

-discouraged
-seldom
-cozy
-subtracting
-served

OTHER PICTURE BOOKS BY SYLVIA OLSEN

Yetsa's Sweater Illustrated by Joan Larson (Sono Nis Press)

OTHER BOOKS AND RESOURCES ABOUT LOSS AND GRIEF

Waiting for the Whales by Sheryl McFarlane

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney by Judith Viorst

When Dinosaurs Die by Laurie Krasny Brown

I Miss You by Pat Thomas

When Your Grandparent Dies: A Child's Guide to Good Grief by Victoria Ryan

Tear Soup by Pat Schweibert

The Saddest Time by Norma Simon

Sad Isn't Bad: A Good-Grief Guidebook for Kids Dealing With Loss

by Michaelene Mundy

Help Me Say Goodbye: Activities for Helping Kids Cope When a Special Person Dies

by Janis Silverman

The Fall of Freddy the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages by Leo Buscaglia

HOST AN AUTHOR VISIT

Sylvia Olsen and Ron Martin love to visit with students to talk about where stories come from and how they are shared. Contact Sono Nis Press at books@sononis.com to learn more about inviting Sylvia and Ron to speak at your school. More information about Sylvia Olsen can be found at her website, sylviaolsen.ca

USEFUL BOOKS FOR TEACHERS

Reading Power: Teaching Students to Think While They Read by Adrienne Gear

Literature is Back! Using the Best Books for Teaching Readers and Writers

Across Genres by Carol J. Fuhler and Maria P. Walther