

Six Ways to Bring History to Life

1. Find connections.

Historical fiction and nonfiction stories aren't just about days gone by. Themes such as parent-child relationships, friendship, resilience and self-discovery are timeless. Remember too that characters in these stories go on journeys and experience emotions such as worry, joy, sadness and pride. Discuss those enduring themes and feelings to help students connect with the books you read.

2. Show and tell.

Remember the kindergarten favorite, show and tell. It's not just for younger kids. You can use it to bring smiles to older children too. When you're planning to share a new history story, let your imagination run free. How can you give kids today an idea of what it was like back then? Think old newspaper and magazine articles, songs, commercials and ads, mementoes, photographs and video. You can even serve a dish that would have been typical of that era or play dress up and don period clothes. Have fun and your students will too.

3. Celebrate diversity.

Make sure to include books that highlight diversity. Children who rarely see themselves or their history reflected in the pages of books can feel invisible and tune out. Share stories that explore a range of cultures, family situations and main characters.

4. Keep it fresh.

By definition, history is something that happened in the past. But the books you share don't have to just focus on events from long, long ago. Along with introducing students to fiction that ties in to older time periods, show them stories that explore more recent history -- Hurricane Katrina, September 11, Million Man March, President Obama. All can be found in picture books.

5. Role play.

Reader's Theater is an amazing way to help kids connect with the past. They're not only

reading the words, but walking in the character's shoes. Incorporate songs, props and other fun elements to take the story from the page to the classroom stage.

6. Create History Miners.

Celebrating history stories in the classroom is a great time to get kids thinking about their experiences and the legacy of their family. Students can interview relatives and mine their memories for special moments. When they understand that they and people around them are part of history, it becomes meaningful and real.

*Kelly Starling Lyons is a children's book author whose mission is to transform moments, memories and history into stories of discovery. Her books include CCBC Choices-honored picture book, **One Million Men and Me; Ellen's Broom**, a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor book, Junior Library Guild and Bank Street Best selection; **Tea Cakes for Tosh**, a Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People and winner of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Award for Juvenile Literature (sponsored by the AAUW of North Carolina) and **Hope's Gift**, a Storytelling World Award winner and SIBA Okra Pick. You can find classroom guides, information about author visits and more on her website: www.kellystarlinglyons.com.*

*Don Tate is the award-winning illustrator of numerous books for young readers. Some of his books include, **SHE LOVED BASEBALL: THE EFFA MANLEY STORY, RON'S BIG MISSION, DUKE ELLINGTON'S NUTCRACKER SUITE**. Don's first authored book, **IT JES' HAPPENED: WHEN BILL TRAYLOR STARTED TO DRAW** is a Lee & Low Books New Voices honor winner. Don lives in Austin, Texas. You can find classroom guides, information about author visits and more on his website: www.dontate.com.*