



Promoting literacy among disadvantaged children, one book and author at a time

April 27, 2016

Dear Friends of An Open Book Foundation,

The past few months our newsletters have explored the inner workings of An Open Book, from our book selection process to the logistics involved in a successful AOB event. The end of an author's presentation can mean a world of new beginnings for the students we have met, so this month we would like to share with you what happens **after the visit**.

Sometimes There Is More To Say

When Ruta Sepetys visited an 11th grade class at Capital City Public Charter School in early February, she recounted her immersive research and writing process. Because Ruta shared her own experiences so candidly, students felt immediately connected to *Salt to the Sea* and eagerly received their signed copies. When the bell rang, the author/student connection was so intense that Ruta offered a Skype visit the following month for a follow-up conversation!

Mid-book tour and quite literally half a world away, Ruta stayed in touch and enthusiastic about the CCPCS group. In early March, over pizza and cookies, the

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Fundraising Spotlight

Martha's Table

Our community partners are critical allies, and we appreciated the recent coverage of AOB's program work in the

readers gave up a free period to reconvene.

[Martha's Table Spring Newsletter.](#)



More will come soon on the full range of AOB's extracurricular partnerships!

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Over Skype, Ruta answered questions left lingering at the book's close. One dedicated young reader reported she was so sad to reach the book's end that she immediately returned to the beginning and read it again. We can relate. Sometimes we cannot bear for an author's event to end—if we could find a way to return to the beginning of Ruta's presentations and do them again, we would!

Sometimes There Is More To Write

A Way with Words

Multiple award winning poet Marilyn Nelson chooses her words carefully. After her visit with students at Potomac Prep and at the after school teen program at Martha's



Table, Marilyn was moved to pen an ode to the experience. Our words fail us in describing Marilyn's poem, so we simply [point you to her work](#) with the understanding that sometimes, there is more to write after a visit.

There Is Always More to Read

School librarians make fabulous spies, and we delight in reported sightings of AOB books tucked in lockers and carried through hallways after our visits. After seventh and eighth graders from Charles Hart Middle School spent time with Andrea Davis Pinkney in February, librarian Nijma Esad spotted Andrea's powerful novel in verse *The Red Pencil* clutched in student arms over several subsequent weeks.

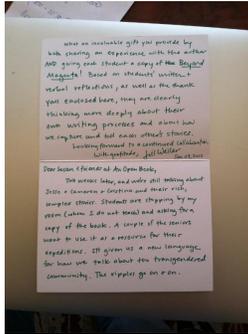
Librarian Melody Soopper reports that since Mary Quattlebaum's visit to Bunker Hill Elementary School Mary's "books are often messed up on the shelves because they are handled so often," laughing as only a dedicated librarian can that the books are "rarely returned on time and we know this is a good thing."

AOB books get savored and revisited at home and in school, across every reading level. Because every

student, classroom, and library we visit receives their own book to keep, there is always more to read after an AOB event!

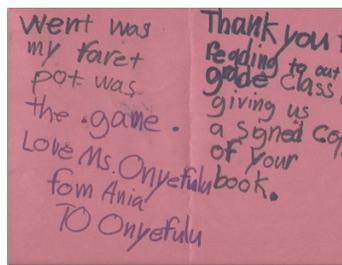


The Lingering Impact of an AOB Visit



The author and AOB staff may be gone, but teachers and librarians remain to see the lasting impact of our events. "Two weeks later, and we're all still talking about...their rich, complex stories," CCPCS teacher Jill Weiler wrote us last year after a visit from *Beyond Magenta* author Susan Kuklin.

Stacks of colorful construction paper thank you notes share heartfelt appreciation from grade schoolers with sentiments like those below, from a first grader at Center City PCS after Ifeoma Onyefulu's visit.



While we never expect such letters, we appreciate knowing that teachers and librarians spend time with students processing an author's visit in the days that follow and, we hope, rereading the classroom or library's copy of the books from AOB.

Sometimes an idea that originates during an AOB event has legs—or flippers, as the case may be for author/illustrator Jennifer O'Connell's December visit to Langdon Elementary School.



Compelled by the whale's tale in O'Connell's nonfiction picture book *The Eye of the Whale*, Langdon students worked with their librarian to form a Save the Whales

club and with their art teacher to create pieces inspired by Jennifer's presentation.

While we will explore the curricular impact of our work in greater detail at a later date, we love the larger than life impact of these visits well after their temporal end!

An Open Book visits a school for an hour, or a morning, or the day. But the event is only the beginning of the impact AOB's work has on young readers. Books are read, questions are raised, conversations flow, and thoughts linger. These threads, spun out, are woven into not only the rich fabric of dedicated readers, but also a safety net beneath those children who might not otherwise enjoy access to books or authors. Thank you, as always, for your support of AOB's important work!

Sincerely,

Dara La Porte
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