



MEG CLEMENTS

MASTER OF TEACHING, OISE

TRILLIUM LAKELANDS DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

JUNIOR TEACHER

READING quite literally was the only thing that would slow me down. Growing up as a real-life Jillian Jiggs, I was the ringleader of my own circus of fearless younger brothers who fronted all of my escapades and grandiose plans. Little did my parents know, that handing me a book would fuel the imaginative designs behind the forts we made, the treasure maps we drew, and the persuasive letters we wrote to negotiate a hard bargain. Ultimately, I don't think anyone of us realized that it would be my love for reading that slowed me down enough to shape me into who I am today.

My name is Meg Clements, and I am the walking, talking, rollerblading quintessential emodiment of a "lifelong learner." I've loved reading longer than I have loved anything in my life, other than my family. I love learning new words. I love becoming immersed in the illustrations and art. I loved visiting the library as a kid. I loved it when my mom read to me at night. AND, I lived for counting down the days until sequels for books were released (it feels like it was yesterday that fourth grade me was overcome with anticipation for the 2000 release of Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire). Naively enough, it wasn't until I was well into my journey of becoming a teacher that the realization that not every student embraces books or has a positive outlook towards reading, stopped me dead in my tracks. I let that sink in for a minute... #challengeaccepted.

With a strong belief that every student can love reading, I've spent the last 8 years of my teaching career ensuring that the right books are being intentionally placed in my students' hands. If I can so assuredly credit Shel Silverstein, E.B. White and J. K. Rowling for shaping me into the person I am today, this speaks volumes to the immeasurable influence a classroom library has on the future world leaders and difference makers we have presently in our rooms.

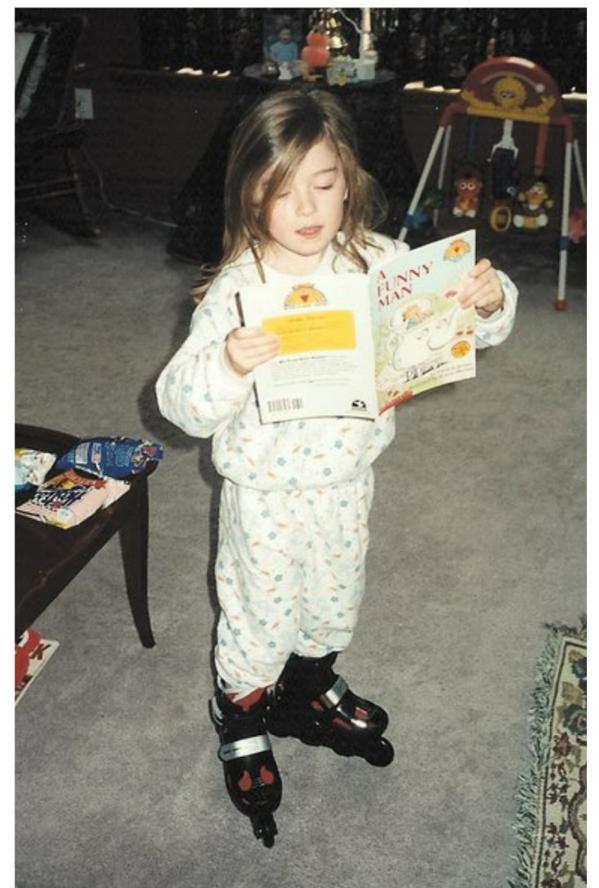
Simply put, I wholeheartedly believe that the books we surround our students with need to be chosen with as much care and attention as we would put into choosing the clothes we wear, the food we eat and the friends we surround ourselves with. It is through literature that students learn to be a friend like Charlotte was to Wilbur, to sing about Redemption like Bob Marley, to write lyrics in code like Harriet Tubman, to be as honourable as Atticus Finch, to be as Fearless as Amari, to fight with their words like Martin, to show courage like Auggie Pullman and to find themselves like King does in King & The Dragonflies.

With many of us feeling the weight of the world as of recent, and those of us who still may find it hard to *s l o w d*

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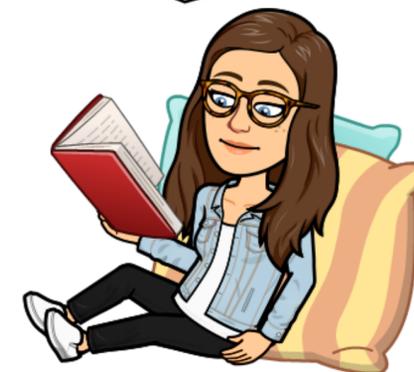
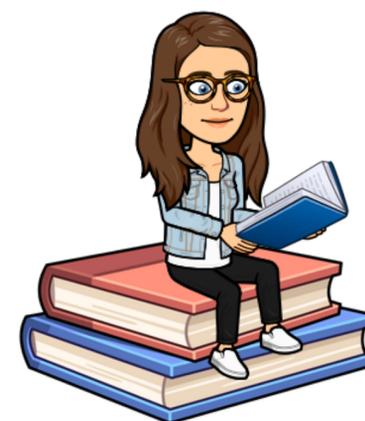
I am reminded everyday of the good in this world, simply by looking at the 25 faces in my classroom. I've learned the importance of "stopping to smell the roses." In grade 4/5, this looks like *stopping* to read a book, *pausing* talk about characters, *taking a break* from a lesson to pursue a teachable moment, *finding a spare second* to wonder and question, and always, always, always making it a priority to take the time to connect with each student over reading and books.

Being a teacher and believer in the gift of reading and literacy, I've learned to never underestimate the power of a book and to **never** underestimate the students within your classroom. There is no doubt in my mind that with the support of the Book Love Foundation and the authors who will fill the minds of our future generations with empathy, compassion and curiosity, our world is in good hands.



I first met Meg 8 years ago as a colleague when she moved into the classroom we would share as co-teachers of a Grade 5½ class. Aside from noticing her radiating energy, one of the first things I noticed was her picture book collection she had up on a shelf. As a book lover myself, I was immediately drawn to her choices and knew without a doubt that as colleagues, we'd get along just fine.

Since then, Meg's book collection has grown immensely; continuously hitting up thrift stores on weekends, ordering massive online hauls, or heading to our local department store. The critical piece here is that the selection of books she chooses is never just on a whim: they are well-thought out based on the topic of the book along with the interests of her students. Meg believes that we can teach tough topics through books, build and embrace diversity, and she also understands that often it is just one book that can be life-changing for a student. I can remember recently she took to her Twitter to celebrate finding a book at a thrift store that one of her students was wanting to read as the next book in a series. Not only was she excited to head out on a weekend mission to find this book and bring this student joy, but she took to her Twitter to inspire other educators to do the same.



Finding diverse books for our students to read is part of our mission; the other part is to actually spark curiosity for a student to pick up a book and create energy and enthusiasm about the book. Meg does all of these things. If you've heard of the saying, "She could sell ice to an Eskimo", you would understand that this saying actually describes Meg's ability to get people excited about books. As an example, I am not a huge fan of books within the fantasy genre, however, if Meg described the book to me with her captivating storytelling and incredible energy, I know I would 100% pick it up! She book talks every book before it hits her bookshelf with her kiddos and makes recommendations of books she thinks the kids might enjoy during conferences with them. She is very in tune to their interests and needs as both humans and readers and has a knack for knowing which books will spark joy and meet her kids' needs.

A critical piece to all of this is being willing to devote time to reading in our classrooms. I don't just mean a teacher reading a book and the students listening, or using a mentor text as a teaching tool for curriculum. I mean true independent reading, literacy circles, and/or book clubs. Meg gets that this is a vital and valuable component to student learning and our teaching practice. She conferences with students during independent reading to understand their needs, what they're enjoying about the books, and gathering this information helps her plan forward for ALL students in her class.

As a colleague, Meg has inspired me to pick up books that I never in a million years would have touched or thought about buying for my students. She does this so naturally without even trying. She is a leader amongst her colleagues at Dr. George Hall Public School (and within our Board), with teachers gravitating towards her for books, ideas for teaching, or to talk through challenges they're having with their students. I can't think of another person that you would want who represents what you're looking for in your Book Love Foundation. She has a vast following on her Twitter and uses it regularly to showcase the learning her students are doing, while also to build capacity with other educators in her online learning community.

You're looking for someone who believes that a love of reading is essential - you found her. She's inspiring, relentless in her pursuit of finding books that will spark joy for her kiddos, passionate about reading and promoting reading, and is committed to engaging our young students in reading. I wholeheartedly know she embodies what your Foundation is looking for and cannot endorse and recommend her enough to receive this grant.

Kristy Hainer
TLDSB Educator

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- Reading is like a piece of art. I think books are as beautiful as the Mona Lisa. (Grade 4 Student)
 - When we read a lot we learn new words. Like the word "bombard" - it means very crowded. I wouldn't have known that word unless I was reading books at school. (Grade 4 Student)
 - Ms. Clements knows us so well because she reads with us everyday. (Grade 4 Student)
 - Ms. Clements makes me love reading at school. We learn and grow with each book we read! (Grade 4 Student)