

FREEDOM TO READ

Kelley Donner

Resource Pack

for use in
Elementary Education
Primarily grades 2-6



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Note to teachers:

Understanding Perspectives

Some of these lesson plans and worksheets require students to use first, second, and third person perspective. These are not equally difficult. The ability to take the perspective of another is called in psychology Theory of Mind (Premack and Woodruff, 1978). Most children acquire this skill around age five, however children with autism and certain learning disabilities may have difficulties with Theory of Mind through adulthood.

First Person Perspective

First person perspective means your point of view. That means understanding your own desires, wishes, or intent. Not all children are good at understanding why they think or feel certain things but most children should be able to use first person perspective in some way or another. An example of first person perspective would be to ask a child, “Did you enjoy the book? Why?”

Second Person Perspective

Second person perspective is understanding someone else’s perspective. In order to do this, you need to be able to think about how someone else feels and what their desires, wishes, or intent are. This is more difficult and requires children to think harder. An example of this would be to ask a child, “How do you think Amy felt when she found the book?”

Third Person Perspective

Third person perspective is the most difficult. This is the ability to think about how someone else views another person. An example of this would be to ask, “How do you think Amy thought the principal felt when he first began to read her book?” This perspective is by far the hardest and I would suffice to say that many adults are not even good at it. Asking questions in third person should be used sparingly.

Choosing Activities

One of the wonderful things a book can do is to help a child understand another’s perspective. Nevertheless, it is always critical to consider whether or not the children that you are teaching are developmentally able to understand what you are teaching. These lesson plans are for grades 2-6 but it is clear that a second grader will not be as good at perspectives as a sixth grader. I have listed all worksheets with A, B, and C based on difficulty. All of these activities are supposed to make children think but some are more difficult than others. They all require perspective taking to one degree or another. Please remember this and be kind to those children who have difficulties with Theory of Mind when asking questions or giving activities which require difficult skills in perspective-taking.

If you would like more information on this subject, then you may enjoy an article I wrote for the Journal of Visual Literacy on the topic called, “The impact of theory of mind barriers in interpreting illustrations used in primary school early readers: four brief case studies of false-belief scenarios.” You can find the link in the About section of my website at KelleyDonner.com.

Lesson Plan 1:

Truth or Fiction

Warm up activities:

Mind-Map

Write three circles on the board with the words **Truth**, **Fiction** and **Opinion**.

Discuss the meaning of the three words by adding examples to the mind-map. Use the following definitions for guidance.

Truth: Real things, events, or facts. (Topeka is the capitol of Kansas)

Fiction: Something invented by the imagination. (Dumbledore is the head of Hogwarts)

Opinion: a personal view about something. (Rocket league is the best online game)

Brainstorm

Discuss the following statements (or create your own). Decide if they are fact, fiction, or opinion:

The surface of the earth is mostly water. (fact)

Ice cream is the best food to eat when it is warm outside. (opinion)

Dragons only fly during the daytime. (fiction)

Summer is the hottest season in the US. (fact)

Turtles are bigger than elephants. (fiction)

Elephants are the prettiest animals in the world. (opinion)

Optional Writing Activity

Write three sentences of your own.

One should be a fact, one fiction, and one your opinion.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Where can you find truth? Where can you get facts?

Possible answer: At your library. From the news. From people you trust.

2. Have you ever thought something was true and found out it was false? Or, have you ever wondered if something you saw on Youtube/TikTok actually happened or if it was fake? How can you check if a fact is really happened?

Possible answer: You can check other sources. Ask lots of questions. Does it sound too good to be true? Is this article/video trying to influence me to buy something? etc...

3. You hear the following statement: Boy lands in hospital after getting hit in the head by falling coconut. Could this be true? How can you check? *Answer. It could be true. 150 people die a year from fallen coconuts. Sometimes the truth might be surprising.*

4. How about this statement: Girl breaks record by throwing a baseball one mile. *Answer. Not likely true. This is physically impossible. Fa zit: If it sounds to good to be true, then it is likely false.*

Nevertheless, it is always better to check than to assume.

5. What does it mean to stretch the truth? Example: Mom finds out from child's coach that he was not at practice. Mom asks son: Did you go to practice today? Son replies: Yes, I left for practice at 3 pm. What the son doesn't say: He left for practice, but he never made it there... Ask students if they have ever stretched the truth?
6. Have you ever said the truth and someone didn't believe you? How did it make you feel?
7. How does telling the truth build trust?
8. Is it important to speak the truth? Would you like to go to a school where you are only allowed to speak the truth? Why or why not?
9. Do you prefer to read fiction or non-fiction? Why?

Reading

Read the book *Freedom to Read* or watch the story-time video.

Post Reading Activities

Post-Reading Questions

1. How was the news given at Amy's school? *Answer: By Mrs. Jones.*
2. Did Amy know why books were forbidden? *Answer: No.*
3. Why do you think Amy didn't know this bit of history? *Answer: Because it is possible that this part of history was not taught in school. Perhaps the school did not want children to know this information.*

Discuss

Worksheet : Understanding the Story

Complete worksheet. This worksheet is much easier than the following one.

Worksheet : Book Censorship through History

Complete worksheet A, B, or C depending on level.

Discussion

It is hard to imagine not being able to read what you want to read. You can go to a library and check out any book. You can go online and find millions of books to read. You can go home and find books in many rooms in your house. This is a freedom that many of us take for granted.

Can you imagine being told what you are allowed to read?

Can you imagine being put in prison or killed for reading a book?

What would you do if books were banned at your school or community?

Lesson Plan 2:

The Value of a Book

Warm up activities:

Mind-Map

Answer the following question: Why do we read books? Create a mind-map and discuss why children read books. Possible answers: To learn. For fun. To relax. To see someone else's point of view... You can add to this mind-map at the end of the lesson and see if children have more answers.

Pre- Reading Questions:

1. Why do you read books?
2. Can you think of a book that taught you something new?
3. How do books allow us to explore different places?
4. How do books spark our imagination?
5. How can books help us solve problems?
6. How can books give us comfort?
7. Why is it important to read different kinds of books?
8. Did a book ever help you understand someone else's perspective?

Read Book

Read the book *Freedom to Read* by Kelley Donner or watch the story-time video.

Freedom to Read has a lot of areas where the author has built suspense. While reading the book, stop anytime that the story gets suspenseful and ask the students what they think happens next. For example, you can stop the book on the page where Amy is about to grab the book. Another example is the page where Amy is about to go in the library.

Post Reading Activities

Post Reading Questions

1. Did you enjoy the book?
2. What was your favorite part and why?
3. How did the author build suspense?
4. What did you learn from the pictures that you didn't get in the text?
5. What was your favorite illustration and why?

Worksheet: Behind the Book

Read what the author has to say about why she wrote the book.

Worksheet: Understanding Amy

This worksheet is a bit more difficult than the Understanding the Story worksheet as it looks into who Amy is and why she thinks the way she does. This worksheet should be used with older children. You can also take the questions and use them instead for discussion.

Discussion - Worksheet Understanding Amy

Talk to a partner about the following:

Think about a great book that you read. What did you learn about the main character? Did the main character learn anything or change at all during the book?

Worksheet: Story-writing

Choose one of the story-writing worksheets A, B, or C to use based on the level of your students.

Art Activity Sheet: Coloring Page

Give children one of the coloring sheets such as the one labeled “What are you reading?”

Lesson Plan 3:

The Future of Books

Warm-up activities:

Discover Future technologies

Show students some of the following technologies: Speech to text, text to speech, accessibility features, Chat Gpt, and/or Dall-E (or Midjourney, Adobe Firefly, there are many), Auto Draw, etc... Ask students which ones they currently use. Demonstrate a few of them.

If you do not know enough about these technologies, ask around in your community if there is someone who can come in and talk to your class. There are many areas to choose from. At my son's school, a blind man talked to his third grade class about how he uses social media. The whole class found it fascinating.

Pre- Reading Questions:

1. Where can you read other than in a book?
2. Do you ever listen to books?
3. Do you think you will need to read in the future?
4. How do you think a book in the future might look different than today?
5. How do you think your school will look in the future?
6. Where do you get information about current events?
7. Do you enjoy reading non-fiction? Why?
8. Do you enjoy reading fiction? Why?
9. Can you imagine a world where books are forbidden?

Read

Read the book Freedom to Read or watch the free story-time video.

Post Reading Activities

Post- Reading Questions:

1. Where in the story or the pictures could you tell that it was in the future?
2. Do you think that children will need to be scanned in the future?
3. Where did Amy get information about current events?
4. What do you think that Amy read in school if it wasn't books?
5. How do you think that you will learn in the future?
6. How do you think Amy felt when she found a book?
7. Would you have done the same thing as Amy?

Worksheet: How AI Thinks

A lot of artificial intelligence use a weighted neural network to think. If you read the definition below, it sounds a bit complicated. Nevertheless, once you read through the worksheet, you'll see that it is actually quite simple.

A **weighted neural network** is a type of artificial neural network used in artificial intelligence. It consists of interconnected nodes called neurons, where each connection between neurons has a weight associated with it. These weights determine the importance or strength of the connections. The weighted neural network uses these weights to process inputs, calculate weighted sums, and make decisions or predictions. The weights are adjusted during the learning process to optimize the network's performance. By assigning different weights to connections, the network can prioritize certain inputs or features, enabling it to learn and solve complex problems.

Art Activity Sheet: How AI Draws

Have students do the activity sheet How AI Draws. Then read aloud the following simplified explanation of how AI works:

AI finds patterns in what it sees and reads and then uses them to learn new skills. In simple terms, AI processes things a lot like we do. Think about what happens when we are told to draw a tree. We normally do not draw a specific tree. Instead, our brains think about all of the trees that we have ever seen and what things they all have in common. We also consider which trees we have seen the most often. Then it puts all of this information together and our hand draws a tree. The tree that we draw does not actually exist and yet we still recognize it as a tree.

AI works similarly except that since it is a computer it can access far more data and uses a weighted neural network. Nevertheless, it is not human and may sometimes come to incorrect conclusions depending on what data it has been given. For example, if you gave AI only pictures of trees in the spring then it may assume that trees can only have green leaves. This is why AI only works as well as its data.

Worksheet: AI at Work

Have students take the worksheet AI at work and find an adult to interview. Then have students report back to class with what they found out.

Discussion:

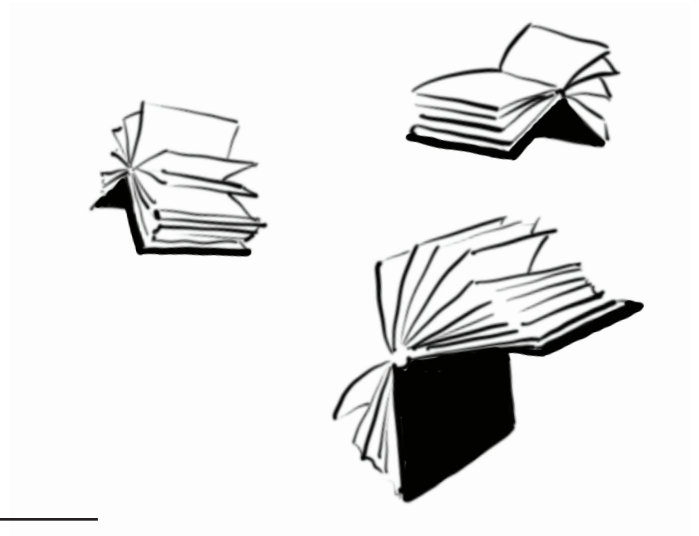
How do you think that AI will change your life? Where do you think AI will be used? As this is currently happening and difficult to predict, let students brainstorm and discuss how they think AI might affect their lives and those around them.

Art Activity Sheet: Draw a picture of a future school

Have students do the worksheet to draw a future school. This should just be a fun activity.

Understanding the Story

Read the story **Freedom to Read** by Kelley Donner.
Answer the following questions:



1. In what year does this story take place? _____

2. What is the name of Amy's school? _____

3. What does Mrs. Jones teach? _____

4. Why do some people say that Amy's Great Grandma Ella is crazy? _____

5. Why is Amy always late for school? _____

6. What is the name of the book that Amy finds? _____

7. What creature in the book was new to Amy? _____

8. How does Amy feel after reading the whole book? _____

9. What is the name of the dragon in Amy's story? _____

10. Room 205 used to be what room at the school? _____

Understanding Amy

In the story **Freedom to Read**, the main character Amy writes a story about a dragon names Samantha. Amy uses Samantha to talk about her life. Look at the excerpt from the story and try to answer the following questions:



Butterfly dragons loved to fly. They were proud of their beautiful multi-colored wings and would parade them around for everyone to see whenever they could. But Samantha was not an ordinary butterfly dragon. She was born with four wings instead of two.

Whenever Samantha flew with the other dragons, she would do her best to hold her wings on each side together so that she would be like the others, but holding her wings in such a way was awkward and uncomfortable. Eventually Samantha would give up and go sit by herself on the hilltop.

One day, after a particularly difficult morning, Samantha found herself again on the hilltop exhausted.

As she watched the other dragons fly effortlessly through the sky, she noticed a little bird flying in her direction. Samantha watched as it landed, walked over to her, looked up, and began to speak...

1. Why can't Samantha fly the same way as the other dragons?

2. How does Samantha feel watching all of the other dragons fly?

3. How does Amy show her own emotions through Samantha?

4. Why do you think Amy chose to write this story?

5. How do you think Amy feels at school?

Story-writing

At the end of **Freedom to Read**, Amy shares a story that she wrote about a dragon named Samantha. This story is written from Amy’s point of view through the eyes of a dragon. Amy compares herself to a dragon with four wings instead of two that has a hard time doing all of the things that other dragons do. Through the voice of the dragon Amy shows her emotions about real life.

Read Amy’s story:



Butterfly dragons loved to fly. They were proud of their beautiful multi-colored wings and would parade them around for everyone to see whenever they could. But Samantha was not an ordinary butterfly dragon. She was born with four wings instead of two.

Whenever Samantha flew with the other dragons, she would do her best to hold her wings on each side together so that she would be like the others, but holding her wings in such a way was awkward and uncomfortable. Eventually Samantha would give up and go sit by herself on the hilltop.

One day, after a particularly difficult morning, Samantha found herself again on the hilltop exhausted.

As she watched the other dragons fly effortlessly through the sky, she noticed a little bird flying in her direction. Samantha watched as it landed, walked over to her, looked up, and began to speak...



Finish the story in your own words:

Worksheet:

Book Censorship in History



Throughout history, religious and political leaders have banned books in order to try and control what people think and believe. You might be amazed just how far some leaders have gone in order to try to stop people from reading. Here are a few examples:

The Soviet Revolution

Between the years 1920-1940, in the Soviet Union (what we now call Russia), Lenin and Stalin tried to control what books the people were allowed to read. They did not want them reading about ideas that did not fit to what they believed. At this time, more than half of all of the books in the libraries were taken away.

Nazi Book Burnings

Before World War II in Germany, a political group called the Nazi party organized book burnings. The books that were targeted were those written by Jewish people and books that the Nazi party found went against their ideals. The Nazis wanted to destroy all books that said things different to their viewpoint.

Chinese Book Bannings

China has been around a very long time and has gone through many periods where books were banned. While Mao Zedong was in power from 1966 to 1976, he forbid many books, put writers in prison, and even closed some schools.

Nevertheless, one of the worst book banners in history was the emperor Shih Huang Ti. In the year 212, he decided to try to burn all of the books in his kingdom. He wanted to claim that history began when he took power.

The Burning of the Library of Alexandria

In ancient times, the library in Alexandria was considered to be the biggest. Unfortunately, around the year 640 the entire library burnt to the ground. Many think that it was burned by political and religious leaders who wanted to control what people know and forbid them from learning certain ideas. Thousands of important documents from ancient Greece and Rome were destroyed.

The Index of Forbidden Books

The time between 1478 and 1834 in Europe was called the Inquisition. During this time in the year 1559, the Catholic Church created a list of books that were considered dangerous called the Librorum Prohibitorum. In English, this would be called The Index of Forbidden Books.

There were 550 books on The Index of Forbidden Books including the German translation of the Bible by Martin Luther. When the church found these books, they would burn them, blacken the texts, or cut out the pages. Owning one of these books could get you killed.

Order of leaders in illustration: A) Pope Paul IV, B) Mao Zedong, C) Adolf Hitler, D) Shih Huang Ti, E) Josef Stalin

Worksheet A:

Book Censorship in History



Questions about text:

1. When did the library in Alexandria burn to the ground?

2. What was the time between 1478 and 1834 in Europe called?

3. What does Librorum Prohibitorum mean in English?

4. What is one famous book that was banned during the Inquisition?

5. What could happen to you during the Inquisition if you owned a banned book?

6. When did the Nazis organize book burnings?

7. What is the name of the country that used to be called the Soviet Union?

8. In what country was Mao Zedong a leader?

9. Why was Shih Huang Ti one of the worst book banners in history?

Worksheet B:

Book Censorship in History



Questions about text:

1. Why was the library in Alexandria burnt to the ground?

2. What was the time between 1478 and 1834 in Europe called?

3. What was the Librorum Prohibitorum?

4. What is one famous book that was banned during the Inquisition?

5. What did the Catholic church do when they found a banned book?

6. Why did the Nazis organize book burnings?

7. How many books were banned in the Soviet Union by Lenin and Stalin?

8. In what country was Mao Zedong a leader?

9. Why was Shih Huang Ti one of the worst book banners in history?

Worksheet A: **Answer Key**

Book Censorship in History



Questions about text:

1. When did the library in Alexandria burn to the ground?

The Library of Alexandria burnt to the ground in 640.

2. What was the time between 1478 and 1834 in Europe called?

This time was called the Inquisition.

3. What does Librorum Prohibitorum mean in English?

Librorum Prohibitorum means The Forbidden Books in English.

4. What is one famous book that was banned during the Inquisition?

The German translation of the bible was banned during the Inquisition.

5. What could happen to you during the Inquisition if you owned a banned book?

You could get fined or killed.

6. When did the Nazis organize book burnings?

The Nazis organized book burnings before World War II.

7. What is the name of the country that used to be called the Soviet Union?

The name of the country that used to be called the Soviet Union is Russia.

8. In what country was Mao Zedong a leader?

Mao Zedong was a leader in China.

9. Why was Shih Huang Ti one of the worst book banners in history?

Shih Huang Ti tried to ban all of the books in his kingdom.

Worksheet B: **Answer Key**

Book Censorship in History



Questions about text:

1. Why was the library in Alexandria burnt to the ground?

It was burnt because political and religious leaders wanted to control what people know.

2. What was the time between 1478 and 1834 in Europe called?

This time was called the Inquisition.

3. What was the Librorum Prohibitorum?

Librorum Prohibitorum was a list of books forbidden by the pope during the Inquisition.

4. What is one famous book that was banned during the Inquisition?

The German translation of the bible was banned during the Inquisition.

5. What did the Catholic church do when they found a banned book?

When the church found these books, they would burn them, blacken the texts, or cut out the pages.

6. Why did the Nazis organize book burnings?

The Nazis wanted to destroy all books that said things different to their viewpoint.

7. How many books were banned in the Soviet Union by Lenin and Stalin?

More than half of all of the books in the libraries were taken away.

8. In what country was Mao Zedong a leader?

Mao Zedong was a leader in China.

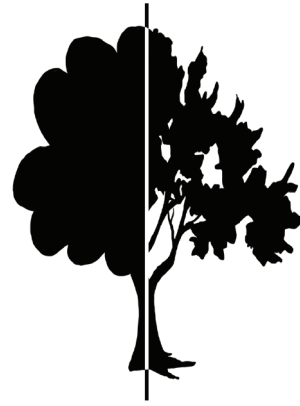
9. Why was Shih Huang Ti one of the worst book banners in history?

Shih Huang Ti tried to ban all of the books in his kingdom.

Art Activity Sheet:

How AI Draws

Think about a tree. Spend 5 minutes drawing a tree out of your head in the box below. Do not look at an actual tree for reference.



Now go outside and find a specific tree. Spend 5 minutes drawing that tree in the box above .

Now answer the following questions:

1. How do your two trees look different?

2. When you drew the tree on the left, did you think about any specific tree?

3. How many trees do you think that your brain has seen in your lifetime?

4. Do you think that you could draw a walnut tree? Why or why not?

How AI Thinks



A **weighted neural network** is a type of artificial neural network used in artificial intelligence. It's how AI thinks.

What does that mean? Let's find out.

You would like to go get some ice cream. In order to decide where you will go, you try to remember what people have said about two ice cream stores in your neighborhood - Jack's Snacks and Johnny's. Look at the thought bubbles below and then answer the questions:

Mom: Johnny's ice cream is the best and you can get 2 scoops for the price of 1.

Your grandpa:
Jack's Snacks has always had great ice cream. Me and Jack go way back. I remember when he first opened his store.

Your best friend:
Johnny's makes an ice cream called the Fantastic Four and it's the best thing I've ever tasted!

Your teacher:
I usually eat vanilla but when I have friends visiting we always go to Jack's Snacks.

Your neighbor:
If I were you, I would go to Jack's Snacks.

1. Whose opinions would be the most important to you?

4. What ice cream shop would you choose and why?

In a weighted neural network, the computer makes decisions a lot like you do. Even if ten people say one thing but someone you trust says something different you will likely go with the person you trust. This is because you have given that person more weight. In the same way, a computer gives all of the information that it receives different weights depending on importance. It then uses this to decide which outcome makes the most sense.

Worksheet:

AI at Work



Find an adult and ask them the following questions.

1. What kind of work do you do?

2. Do you currently use AI in your job?

3. How do you think that AI will affect your job or industry in the future?

4. Do you think that AI will make your job easier or harder? Why?

5. Do you think that AI is a good thing? Why or why not?

Behind the Story

As an author/illustrator I spend a lot of time trying to make the best story possible. Here is a bit about what went in to the creation of the book Freedom to Read.

I decided that I wanted to tell a story about a world where books are no longer a part of life and how that affects the people who live there. I wanted to show how harmful it can be to try to control knowledge and access to books. In addition, I wanted to tell a story of a child who finds herself and how being proud of who you are can have a positive effect on those around you.

When I created Amy, I tried to develop a character who was conflicted and worried about things. We all have things that we struggle with and I wanted to make sure that the main character was not perfect. Amy doesn't feel as if she completely belongs. She is often late and easily distracted. She feels as if a part of her is missing and that she does everything wrong.

Illustrating is not as easy as just drawing pictures that match the story. A good illustration gives more information than the story itself. In Freedom to Read, I wanted to show Amy's transition from someone who hides what she thinks and feels to someone who is proud of who she is. But how do you do this in an illustration?

The first thing I decided to do was to change the background from black to white. The beginning of the story is oil pastel on black paper. When Amy begins to read a book for the first time, the paper changes to white. Just as Amy recognizes that in many ways she has been living in the dark this whole time, as the light begins to shine so does she.

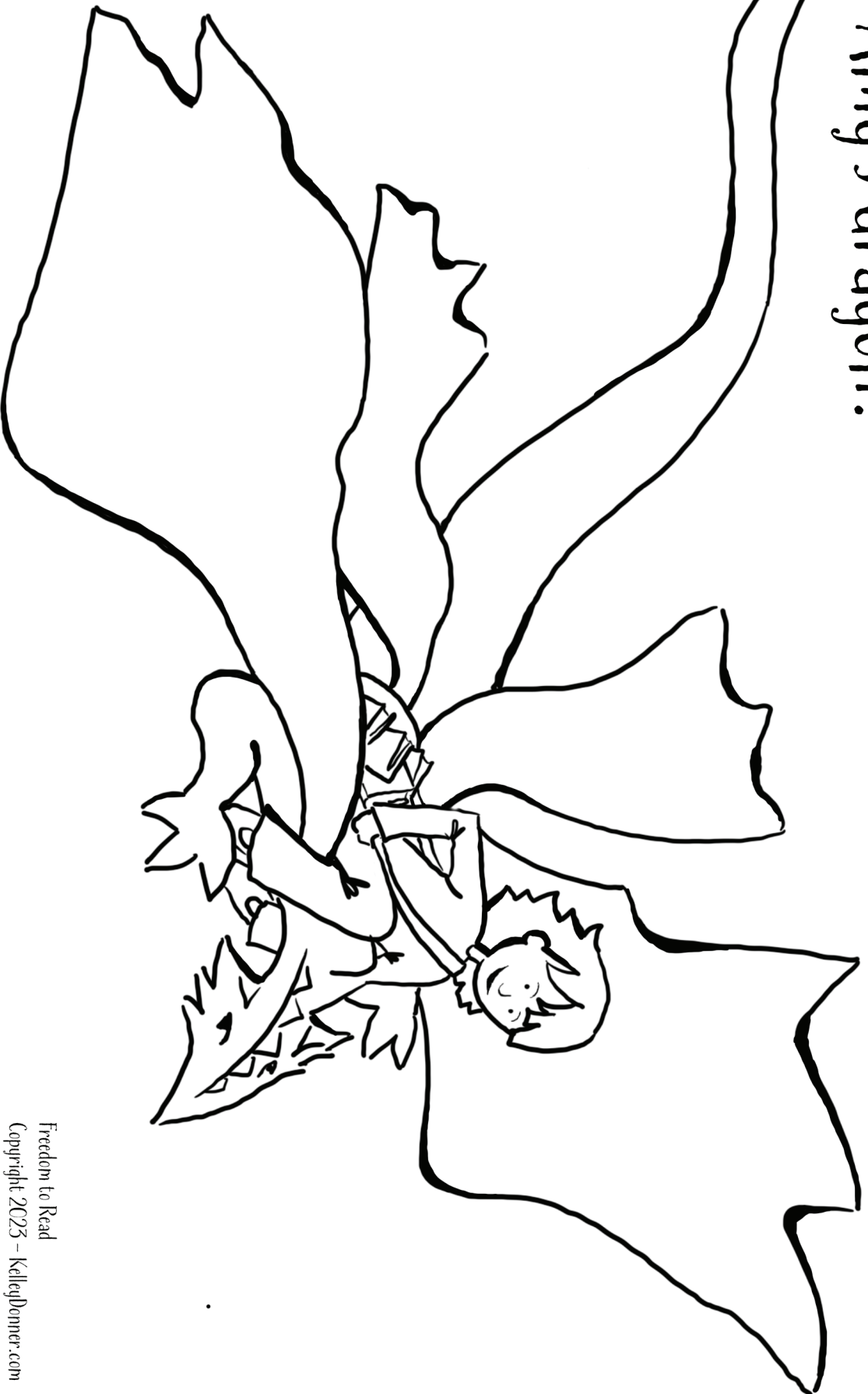
Secondly, I wanted to bring in areas of Amy's real world into her fantasy world. As Amy has not had a lot of access to fiction, her fantasy world is entirely created from things that she knows and sees every day. In the real world, Amy likes to chase butterflies. This is why Samantha, the dragon that she creates, is a combination of the dragon from the story that she read plus the butterfly that she chased at the beginning of the book. In the same manner, the tree that is being swallowed by the ground is also the tree in front of her school.

I also tried to add suspense to the illustrations. In the beginning, everything is black because we don't have a lot of information. Just like Amy, we also do not know why the room is locked or why Great Grandma Ella talks about books. One of my favorite illustrations is when Amy is in the library by herself and just a light beam is shining down on her. For me this light is like a foreshadowing of what is to come. Amy is about to discover a book and soon her world will become brightened by everything that books have to offer.

Finally, I wanted to show emotion. I tried to do this by using facial expressions and colors, but also by showing movement. My favorite image in the entire book is the last one of Amy riding on Samantha. We learned in Amy's story that Samantha, just like Amy, does not feel comfortable being who she is. Amy flying on Samantha illustrates the freedom that Amy feels. She now has not only the freedom to read, but the freedom to be proud of who she is.

Kelley Donner
July 13, 2023

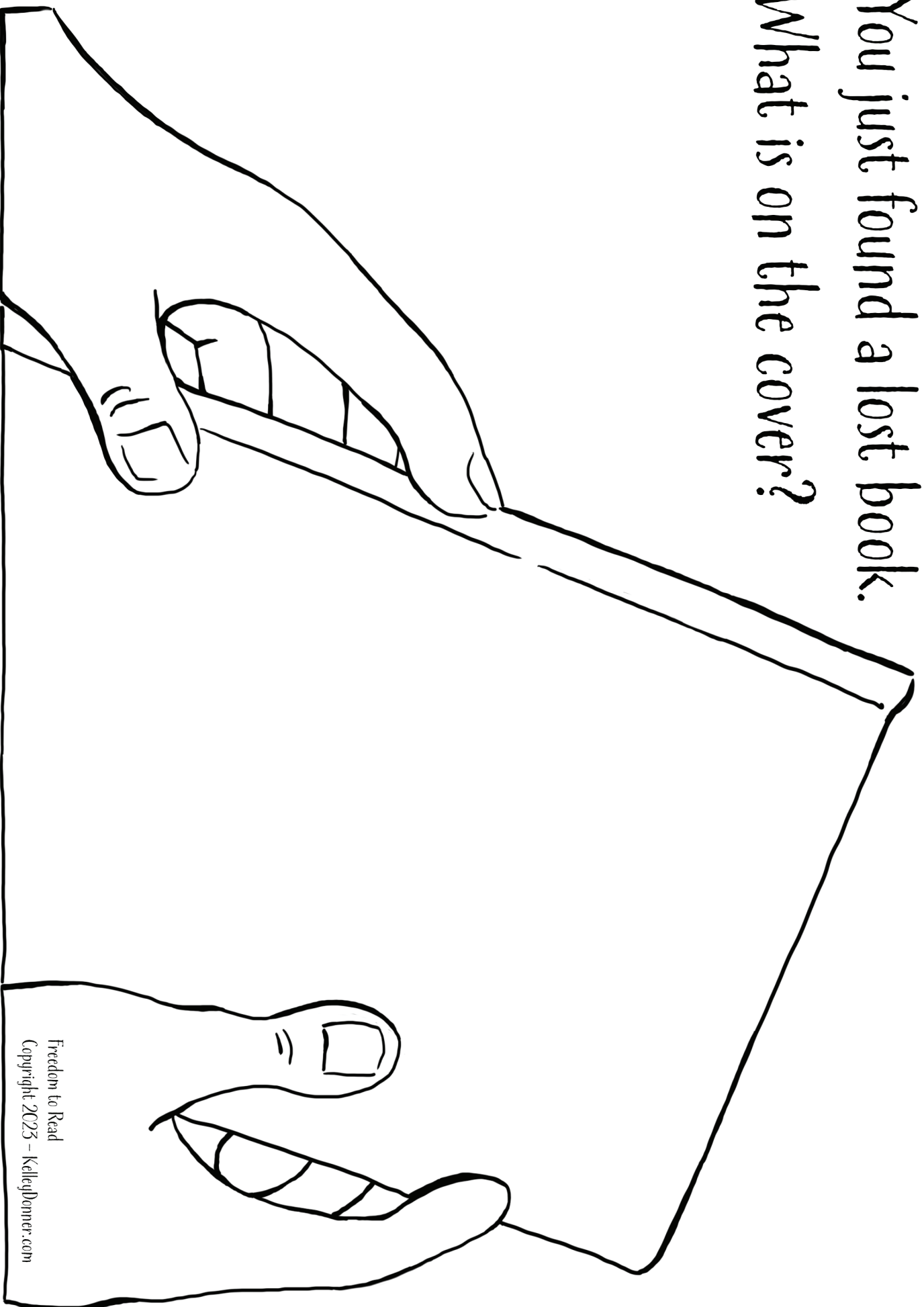
How would you color
Amy's dragon?



What do you think Amy is reading now?



You just found a lost book.
What is on the cover?



Dear Reader,

Thank you for choosing my resource pack and for reading Freedom to Read to your class.

If you enjoy using this material, please help me out by telling your friends about my book, promoting it on social media, and writing an honest review on Amazon, Goodreads, or on your platform of choice. It is not easy to make a living being a writer/illustrator. Only with your support can I continue to bring more books on the market and offer inexpensive lesson plans.

If you have ideas for new lessons , would like to schedule an online school visit, or would like to tell me about a mistake that I made (I'm human), please send an email to kelley.donner@gmail.com.

Thank you!

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelley D", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.