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~ Educators Guide ~

Two-time Newbery Honor-winning author

PATRICIA REILLY GIFF

introduces readers to a quirky, lovable group of kids,
capturing all the excitement of after-school fun.

Grades
1-4



WENDY
LAMB
BOOKS



LISTENING
LIBRARY

ZigzagSeries.com
www.randomhouse.com/teachers

Dear Teachers:

I still see my reading students coming down the hall, trying to brush the ceiling with their fingers, laughing, or sometimes angry. Emerging readers, all of them, whether they were in second grade or sixth.

I write for them still, picturing their faces, remembering their attempts to master this skill called reading. And what I remember most is their joy when they were able to read a book, cover to cover, by themselves.

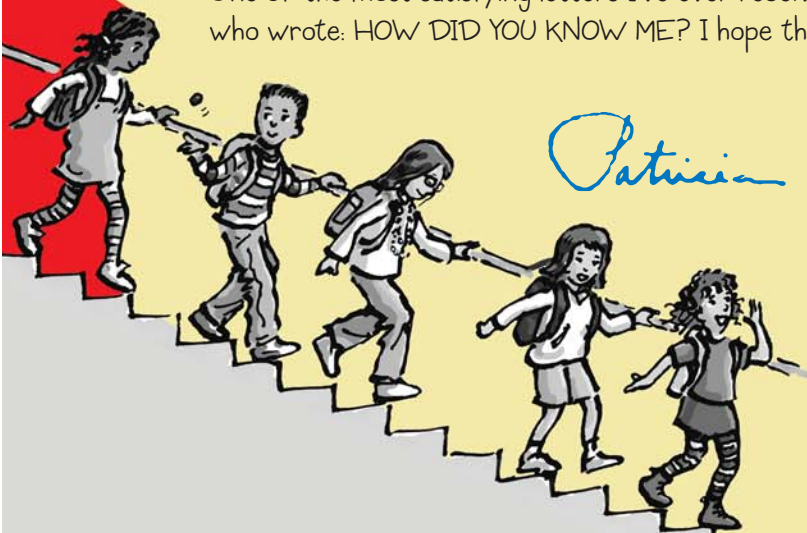
I loved writing the Polk Street School books and for a long time I've wanted to write more for this age group. Recently, my daughter began to talk about the afternoon center in her school. And there was my inspiration.

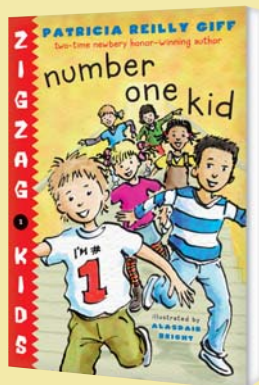
A series about an afternoon center could be a little less structured than the ordinary day with opportunity for dozens of activities, for interaction, for exploring problems. Most importantly, the series would offer all sorts of humorous situations where children could recognize themselves. A perfect way for a writer to connect with young readers.

I call my new series ZIGZAG KIDS. I write for newly independent readers with short sentences; most of the vocabulary is familiar to them, and even unfamiliar words are easy to decode. What I keep thinking of as I write is that the more children read, the more they enjoy it, and the more fluent they become. So in my new series, I've written about everyday situations that make up the world of many schoolchildren.

One of the most satisfying letters I've ever received was from a girl who wrote: HOW DID YOU KNOW ME? I hope that happens again.

Patricia Riley Lipp





Number One Kid

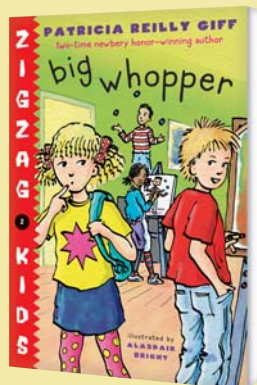
PB: 978-0-553-49468-6
 HC: 978-0-385-74687-8
 GLB: 978-0-385-90925-9
 CD: 978-0-307-73866-0

About the Book

Mitchell McCabe is the number one kid in the eyes of his grandmother, and he has a t-shirt to prove it. But being the number one kid at his new school may take more than a shirt, especially when a school bully makes other promises. Mitchell isn't too sure about the Zelda A. Zigzag School, especially the Afternoon Center. What if he isn't good at any of the activities? Maybe he won't win a prize. What if Peter Petway is right? Maybe he is a loser. In just a week's time, Mitchell discovers that everyone is good at something, and the Zelda A. Zigzag School just might be the number one school.

Discussion Questions

- Discuss why the idea of the Afternoon Center seems a little scary to Mitchell. Why does Mitchell's sister, Angel, like the idea?
- Describe Angel. How might Mitchell describe his sister? How does his attitude toward his sister change by the end of the story?
- Why does Peter Petway scare Mitchell? Discuss ways to deal with bullies.
- Have students brainstorm ways to make the new kids at school feel welcome.



Big Whopper

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 HC: 978-0-385-74688-5
 GLB: 978-0-385-90926-6
 CD: 978-0-307-73866-0

About the Book

It's Discovery Week at the Afternoon Center, and all the students at the Zelda A. Zigzag School are buzzing with excitement. Everyone is eager to record a discovery on the white paper that lines the wall of the center. This time, it's Mitchell's friend, Destiny Washington, that is worried. She simply cannot think of a discovery. By Tuesday afternoon, Destiny is so desperate for an idea that she tells a "big whopper." Somehow seeing her "whopper" on the discovery wall doesn't feel good at all, and Destiny makes a "real discovery" when she figures out a way to reveal the truth.

Discussion Questions

- Discuss the term *discover*. Mrs. Farelli says, "Anything you see or learn for the first time counts." (p.7) Discuss whether Destiny was trying too hard to discover something. How do you know that she wants to discover something a little different or unusual?
- Describe Gina. Why does Destiny think that Gina is snooty? What does Destiny think of Gina by the end of the story?
- How is Mitchell a good friend to Destiny?
- Discuss how one whopper often leads to another whopper. How does telling the truth make Destiny feel better?

Classroom and After School Activities

- Challenge students to make a list of rules for the Afternoon Center that doesn't include the word *don't*. (e.g., instead of saying "Don't run," say "Walk") Divide the class into small groups and assign each group one rule. Ask them to find a creative way to present the rule to the class. They may sing it, act it, or draw it.
- In *Number One Kid*, Mitchell is nervous because he is the new kid at Zelda A. Zigzag School. Have students make a welcome kit for new students. Suggest that they include a welcome letter, something about the school, a school map, a description of Afternoon Center activities, items like an eraser, pencil, etc.
- In *Number One Kid*, Mitchell has to work on the story of his life so far. Ask students to think about the kind of information that should go into a story about one's life. Then, think of other interesting things that people might like to know. Ask students to write the story of their life so far.
- Fill a paper bag with things like colored paper, paper clips, pipe cleaners, popsicle sticks, glue sticks, markers, etc. Have students make the mask that Trevor and Clifton won their medals for in *Number One Kid*.
- Take a look at the cast of Zigzag Kid characters. Write one sentence that each character might write that best describes them.
- Writers like to use language to make readers think about things in a different way. For example, Patricia Reilly Giff likes to use similes to help readers better know her characters, and their actions: "Gina was as strong as a coyote." (*Big Whopper*, p. 27) Have students think of other similes that might describe Gina's strength. Then, have students look for other examples of simile in *Number One Kid* and *Big Whopper*.



Themes

Friendship
Humor
Cultural Diversity
Character Education
School



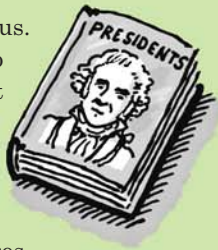


- In *Big Whopper*, students in the Afternoon Center are asked to discover something. Some of them have trouble with their discoveries. Instruct students to make three types of discoveries:

1. Something they notice about themselves, their family, a classmate, or a neighbor
2. Something they learn about their town, community leaders, or founding citizens
3. Information they find out about our nation's history

Have them make a plan for making each type of discovery. This may include interviewing people, going to the school or public library, or visiting Web sites. As a class, make questions to answer as they embark on their discoveries.

- Have the class discover something about the U.S. presidents from resources in the school library or sites on the Internet such as www.ipl.org/div/potus. Ask each student to select one president to research and present to the class. If possible, students might share virtual pictures of the president, his family, birthplace, etc.



- Send students on a national tour and have them discover something about one of the fifty states at www.americaslibrary.gov/es/index.php.

Brainstorm the kinds of information to research, such as:

- Where the state is located
- The State Flower • The State Capital
- The State Motto • The State Bird
- Two interesting facts

- The flowers in the lunchroom at the Zelda A. Zigzag School haven't bloomed at the beginning of *Big Whopper*.

Ask students to make a paper flower that represents each of the states that they visited in the above activity. Have them decorate a flowerpot with a map of the state and some other symbol of the state. Then place the flower in the pot.



- Sumiko is a student at the Zelda A. Zigzag School. In *Number One Kid*, she is learning Japanese from her parents. Ramón is a college helper in the Afternoon Center. What other language might he speak? Ask if there are students in the classroom that speak other languages. If so, have them teach their classmates how to say "friend" in the other language. Have students learn to say "hello" and "goodbye" in three other languages. They can visit www.ipl.org/div/hello. Display a world map. Point to the countries where these languages are spoken.

Check out the all-new blog at
PatriciaReillyGiff.com



*Teacher
Talk* with

PATRICIA REILLY GIFF

EDUCATOR • AUTHOR • PARENT

Photo credit: Tim Keating

THE KIDS OF THE POLK STREET SCHOOL

Also by
Patricia
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