



# GULFSTREAM 2021

A publication of the Florida Council of Teachers of English  
presented at the annual Writers Award Ceremony,  
February 27, 2021.



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Writing Awards Chair ~ Joanna Fox  
Layout ~ Carrie Perry.

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# GULFSTREAM 2021

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## Preface

*Gulfstream* is an anthology celebrating the writing of Florida students. Each year, FCTE holds a writing contest for students in the state. School years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 have been unusual, marked by various disruptions from Covid-19. As a result, the number of submissions was lower this year than it has been in the past. However, we were pleased to see that despite the hectic and confusing circumstances of the past two years, teachers are still teaching writing, and students are still writing.

We recognize all the students who entered the contest this year and thank their teachers for supporting their students' efforts. We also thank our judges for their commitment to recognizing and choosing outstanding submissions.

FCTE believes in the power of writing to heal, to honor, and to connect. We hope that you enjoy these poems, stories, and essays from the 2021 FCTE Student Writing Award winners. We also hope that you will consider having your students enter next year.

Joanna Fox  
2021 FCTE Writing Awards Chairperson



**DIVISION I: Poetry**

Lillian Williamson, Grade 6

Booker Middle School, Sarasota County

Teacher: Joanna Fox

**Sijo for You**

A rainbow of truth crosses the sky,  
revealed by the tears in your eyes and the smile on your face!  
You show me the rainbow I could never see!

**DIVISION II: Poetry**

Mackenzie Lopatinsky, Grade 8

Booker Middle School, Sarasota County

Teacher: Joanna Fox

**Thirteen**

I was many things when I was 8.  
Not only was I living in blissful ignorance, I was just 8.  
I was not simply happy; I was just 8.  
My life wasn't plain; I was just 8.  
My voice was never heard; I was just 8.  
My opinion didn't matter; I was just 8.  
Now that I'm old enough to think for myself, I'm not 8.  
Not simple minded by force, but my intellect is formed by the matters I choose to take into my own hands.  
But alas, I'm just 13.  
My voice is not yet heard; I am just 13.  
My opinion, though it is now strong, is not valid; I am just 13.  
My life is not as simple as you think, but it doesn't matter, for I am just 13.  
I don't know anything about what's going on in the world, because I am just 13.  
I'm barely a teenager; how can I have a say in the life adults control?  
I am not just 13; I am all the ages I have ever been.  
I am just 10; I still get in trouble.  
I am just 8; I think with innocence  
I am just 5; I mess things up, sometimes.  
I am just 2; I preen when taken care of by my mother.  
I am just 13, with all the life and experience I have, it may not compare with yours.  
I may be just 13, my voice is just as worthy, especially, when you tamper with my future.



## **Starch**

Carefully, I crept across the field. An occasional gust of wind would temporarily reveal my position, and that's when I had to be my stillest. I've always been good at thievery. Some may call it a natural talent. I focus on farmers, because they seem to be the easiest under the cover of darkness. A lot of them are just angry old men.

I finally made it across, after a lot of pausing, and stepped up onto the deck of the small farmhouse. I tested each step, careful not to give away my position by the creaking of the wood. There -- a sack of what seemed to be potatoes. I could get a good price out of that.

The area smelled of wet dirt, the wood rotting along the edges. The air felt thick, but there was no fog. I took my opportunity and made away with the large sack. I made it out undiscovered. Or so I thought.

"Stop, Starch thief!" came a shout from behind me.

I loved that name, Starch. Growing up without a family, I adopted the name of the very thing that I stole. I took off running, as I had spotted a gap in the treeline. Just across was the fortress. Blue lights flickered from inside, illuminating the dark, towering walls. That was the target.

I was faster, but only a little. Whoever my pursuer was clearly still had life left in him. I picked up speed, just enough to get a dozen feet between us, and arrived at the gap. I dove left, into a muddy ditch, and pressed myself under the roots of an overhanging tree. I watched the figure leap into the mud, and sprint away. Now, I'd escaped.

Soaked in mud, I climbed from the ditch into the small forest clearing. I listened to the squelch of my shoes and felt overall discomfort with my current state. I lay on the grass and relaxed, alone. However, to my surprise, I wasn't alone. Three men approached me from the treeline. It seemed they had witnessed my escapade.

"Don't mind me," I stated innocently. "Just relaxing this very fine night." They didn't seem amused, however. My best bet was to lie in wait.

"Tell me, why did you rob the poor fool?" one asked. His voice was gruff, and he was dressed in a suit and tie. Rather formal to be hanging around in a forest.

"Far from poor," I replied. "He's quite wealthy. Someone like me needs to get something to eat now and then."

The three looked at each other, then back at me. Two approached me, watching my moves. "I take it you're Starch, the thief who gets away with everything," continued the apparent leader, leaning against the outer gate at the edge of the clearing. "Tell me, do you know what goes on inside this fortress?"

"No, and I don't rightfully care," I deadpanned. I didn't want to get dragged into whatever they were going to do with me, or whatever they wanted me to do for them.

The trio looked at each other again, then back at me, silently appraising. I searched for a gap to allow my escape. “We think you’ll be interested in what we have to offer,” said the one against the fence, finally. “We want to steal a gem.”

They offered a brief explanation of their plan, and to my surprise, I was a little interested. All we had to do was sneak a rock out of a fortress. Didn’t sound especially difficult.

“I’ll think about it. If you do need me, you’ll give me the proper supplies to go about the operation, since I don’t have much to go on,” I told them. I wanted to test them, see how far they’d go, how desperately they wanted me. I hoped they would drop me. To my disappointment, I was wrong.

“We have everything you need right now, so I suppose there would be no point in waiting. Come along.”

The other two hauled me up, dragging me away from my treasured potato sack. Eventually, we found the tree that hung over the fence, and made our way over. They gave me a rope, knife, and a small satchel.

I reluctantly walked toward the towering fortress. I found the small breach in the wall as they’d described and made way through. It was quiet inside. And then, the realization hit me. They hadn’t followed me in.

A mild panic began to set in. If someone were to find me, I could spend a life in prison, or suffer death in the gallows. Neither sounded very appealing, though, so I gathered my senses. I still had a target, that gem. Whatever it was, it seemed to be important, and it intrigued me. *I’ll retrieve the rock, and get out of here. Easy*, I thought.

I wandered through desolate catacombs. I was aware they could have been lying about the gem, too, but maybe I could find an escape. I stopped in a courtyard, a solitary tree in the middle under an open roof. It was much easier to breathe. Small fire-lit lanterns hung by ropes around the halls.

“Stop where you are,” came a voice from behind, and I tensed. The voice was coarse and demanding.

I raised my hands behind my head, and turned to face my new accoster. He was much taller than I was, and much older. He smelled of gunpowder and was covered in scars.

“Just out for a late-night stroll,” I told him, treating the situation calmly. I gazed around, and found he was standing just behind one of the lanterns.

“Take off the bag, and whatever else you have. Pass them to me,” he commanded. His voice was stern, and I had my idea.

Slowly, I raised my knife. He wanted me to give it to him, so I threw it, hard, with deadly accuracy. I wasn’t aiming for him, however.

The lantern, freed from its rope, fell and shattered. The fire found the leaves. In one glorious moment, flames consumed the fuel, and I lunged for the hall to my left.

Immediately I heard shouts. I noticed the lanterns became sparse the further I went, the walls illuminated by a glowing blue. Eventually, there were no lanterns at all. The blue got brighter as I sprinted, and I found a door. I threw it open, knocking over a nearby closet to block entry. In this room, the blue was its brightest. Turning, I saw the pedestal.

It was a confusing sight. A steel pedestal, with a copper box sitting on top. The box had wires protruding from seemingly

every end, and I could feel the heavy static in the air.

When I made it to the center of the room, I noticed the box had an open top. I peered inside, and found the small treasure. A gem, *the* gem, was sitting in the middle of the box. It was pulsing a deep blue, humming with energy. I had no clue what it was, but I knew it would fetch a fortune. I reached in and extracted it.

As soon as I touched it, my heart started racing. My senses seemed acute. My vision sharp, the smells stronger. And I heard the rapid, numerous footsteps.

They tried to force the door open. I was pinned. I pressed myself against a wall, back against the copper panels, feet on the wires. It didn't take long for the cabinet to shatter to splinters, and the door to fly open. They stopped when they saw me.

"Careful, men!" one of the soldiers, probably a commander, shouted to the rest. They began to creep forward, stepping over the wires toward me. And then, one slipped.

The lone soldier fell against the wires and had a fit of spasms. Electricity surrounded his body before he fell limp. And then, it made sense. The copper, the lights. It was like a battery. A very dangerous battery.

At this realization, I felt bolder. I took steps forward, careful to step on the wires rather than over. The electricity was running through me. I continued my advance. Soldiers parted to let me pass, until armed soldiers found me in the hall.

My only hope was the stretch of forest where I'd hidden from the farmer. I ran powered by fear and heard the soldiers close behind. They were saving their bullets. I dove into the ditch.

All I could hear was the pounding in my heart, and the footsteps of the soldiers. They had slowed, knowing I stopped, and began their search. I wouldn't get out of this alive. Just when I thought they were going to leave, I felt the barrel to my head. This was it. The gem pulsed in my hand. I closed my eyes, and -- a loud bang.

It wasn't a gun, however. It was thunder. The tree went ablaze and dazed everyone, including me for a moment. When the ringing subsided and the numbness faded, I felt the heat. I clambered out, and sprawled in the mud to cool off. I heard the footsteps again, and looked up. But this time, they were running away. I rested my head against the mud again with a squelch, and caught my breath, the heat of the blazing tree still across my face.

I had forgotten all about the potatoes.



## **Hide and Seek**

I've always loved Hide-and-Go-Seek -- maybe a little too much when I was younger. When I was about three or four my mom left me home alone with my dad one day. She had to go to the grocery store and run other errands. I really wanted to play Hide-and-Go-Seek, but my dad was preoccupied, so without telling him I snuck out of the house. I ran down the street as fast as my little legs could carry me and I hid in some rose bushes. It was the perfect hiding place.

"Sydney?" my dad called. "Sydney, where are you?" My dad looked around for me, panicking. He couldn't find me anywhere. I wasn't hiding under my bed or in any of the many closets in the house. I wasn't hiding in any of the bushes or behind the AC unit. He checked all my favorite hiding places, but I was nowhere to be seen. I was gone. Finally, he had to confess to my mother that he lost me.

"Kim... I lost Sydney," my dad confessed over the phone.

When my mom found out that I was missing, she drove home as fast as she could. My parents looked all over the house, but they couldn't find me. I had officially gone missing.

My parents, frantic, called the police. "WE CAN'T FIND OUR DAUGHTER ANYWHERE!" they screamed.

The neighborhood I lived in was gigantic. There were multiple sections, so trying to find me was quite the chore. I could have gone anywhere -- down by the lake where I loved to fish. Or to the park to play on the playground.

The police -- along with my petrified parents -- split up into small groups and scoured the neighborhood. They searched for hours, looking in my favorites spots, but to no avail.

*Where could she be? I am I a bad parent? I should have never left them alone, my mom thought. Does this happen to everyone at some point? Or am I just a really bad parent? I hope she is all right.*

*SHE'S GOING TO KILL ME. I should have been paying attention. Where did she even go? my dad thought. I really hope she's OK. What even happened? Today has been such a nightmare.*

I -- on the other hand -- was having the time of my life. *Where are they? Are they going to find me? I hope not. I really want to win. I have to be quiet or they'll find me, I thought. This is fun! Man, that's a creepy bug. I hope it doesn't come any closer.*

Exhausted and about to give up hope, one of the police officers searched the rose bushes. I was found I was sitting in the landscaping of one of our neighbors, just down the street from my house.

"You found me!" I yelled, with a big smile on my face.

"I sure did! Your parents looked all over the place for you. They're very worried. Let's take you home," the officer said, scooping me up in her arms.

Victorious, the officer carried me home to my very relieved -- and exhausted -- parents. As we walked back to my house, the officer radioed other officers that I was found. My parents thanked the officers for their help and cleaned me up. I'd somehow managed



to get very dirty while I was hiding.

Although I was happy to be home, I was a little disappointed the game was over. I think I was told that I won, but I knew the rules: The whole point of the game is to not be found. I was quite unhappy that I lost.

At the end of the day -- after all of that chaos -- I think my mother made a silent vow to never leave me home alone with my father for extensive amounts of time. Even to this day, when my mother goes on business trips, at least one of my grandparents has to come over and help watch my younger sister and me. My parents used to seem overly protective of my sister and me, and my mother still worries about us. I like to believe this is the reason why.

Even after my potentially traumatic adventure, I still love Hide-and-Go-Seek. It might seem very childish, but I don't mind. If we have guests over, sometimes my sister and I play with them. I will always love this game, even after this strange experience.

# CALL FOR ENTRIES

All Florida students, grades 6-12, are invited to submit writing to FCTE for the SY21-22 Student Writing Awards. The deadline is November 30, 2021. Winners receive \$100 and have their writings published in the *Gulfstream*.

Writings are accepted in the following categories:

- Poetry
- Fiction
- Personal Essay/Memoir
- Nonfiction (analysis, journalism, essay)
- Script/Screenplay

Writings are evaluated in the following divisions:

- Division I – grades 6 and 7
- Division II – grades 8 and 9
- Division III – grades 10-12

More information is available at [www.fcte.org](http://www.fcte.org).

### **DIVISION III: Nonfiction (Literary Analysis)**

Hunter Perry, Grade 10

Sarasota Christian School, Sarasota County

Teacher: Dr. Lisa Kotasek

#### **Banished from the Garden of Eden: The Growing Self-awareness of Sophie and Alberto in Jostein Gaarder's Novel *Sophie's World***

Can characters know that they are characters? Do they know that they are just puppets of someone else's show? *Sophie's World*, a novel written by Jostein Gaarder, illustrates a complex story of Sophie, a fourteen-year-old girl and Alberto Knox, a philosophy teacher. Together they explore the realm of philosophy, and they end up realizing they are characters in Albert Knag's book for his daughter, Hilde. Although Alberto and Sophie are not companions in the same sense as Adam and Eve, it is possible to see the two of them as symbols for this biblical couple as they become self-aware.

Before Sophie and Alberto become self-aware, they behave as typical characters in a story that may or may not be realistic fiction. Sophie goes to school and has a friend, pets, and a concerned mother. The story opens as Sophie and her friend Joanna are walking home from school, describing Sophie's neighborhood as "the outskirts of a sprawling suburb" (Gaarder 3). This day is important, however, as Sophie receives the first communication from an anonymous letter-writer who asks, "Who are you?" (Gaarder 4). This seemingly innocent question will lead Sophie on a long adventure into the study of philosophy, first via letters and later face-to-face with Alberto Knox, who lives in a cabin nearby. Later, after Sophie has spent some time exploring philosophy with her new tutor, she begins applying her newfound knowledge of philosophy at school. On her Religious Knowledge test, Sophie knows she has not studied and decides to use some of what she has learned from Alberto. Her teacher gives her an A for doing good work, despite the fact that it was obvious that Sophie had not studied the class material for the test (Gaarder 125). As the story unfolds, a mystery begins to develop, when Sophie starts seeing messages to someone named Hilde, whom she does not know. This perplexes Sophie but does not seem to bother Alberto as much—at least, at first.

Sophie and Alberto start to realize they are characters in a book being written by Hilde's father, Albert Knag. This understanding grows gradually over the course of the narration. There are some clues for the reader: Alberto can recite long passages of philosophical knowledge from memory, he appears in a video in modern Athens but somehow goes back in time to ancient Athens (Gaarder 73-78), Sophie finds the exact amount she needs for bus fare to get home (Gaarder 211), and Hermes (a dog) talks to Sophie (Gaarder 256), and fictional characters appear to Sophie in order to help her understand a philosophical point, are just a few of the examples of unbelievable events that Sophie accepts easily and which Alberto often calls a "bagatelle" (Gaarder 193, among many others), which means "unimportant matter." When the narration is switched to Hilde's point of view, it is proven to the reader that Sophie and Alberto's suspicions are true: they are just characters in the mind of Albert Knag.

There are many clues throughout the novel to show the two of them as symbols for Adam and Eve. In the Old Testament book of Genesis, we learn that God created Adam and Eve. He told them to enjoy His beautiful creation earth but not to eat from the tree of knowledge. After some time, Adam and Eve gave in to temptation and ate the fruit of the tree. The results of this disobedience to God's instructions were devastating: they were cast out from Eden and cursed to live mortal lives. Another effect, however, was that they had become self-aware.

In a similar way, *Sophie's World* is the story of two characters who, through the study of philosophy (or eating from the tree of knowledge), become self-aware. The first chapter is actually titled "The Garden of Eden" (Gaarder 3), suggesting Sophie lives in a state of pure innocence. Unlike Adam and Eve who, in the Genesis story, became self-aware immediately after eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Alberto's and Sophie's awareness occurs slowly over the course of the narrative. The study of each new philosopher brings them closer to self-awareness. When Sophie expresses her anger at Albert Knag, who seems to be playing with them, Alberto says, "Only philosophy can bring us close to Hilde's father" (Gaarder 193). This suggests that learning is the key to their liberation. Soon after, Alberto shows Sophie artificial intelligence through a program he has installed on his computer. After Sophie tires of talking to the AI, she types "Knag," and Albert Knag uses it as a portal to send his daughter Hilde a birthday greeting (Gaarder 242). After the encounter, both characters realize the similarity between Alberto's and Albert's names (Gaarder 243). Then, as Sophie and Alberto finish their discussion of Spinoza and free will, they find another message from Knag written inside the skin of a banana peel. Sophie jokes, "Maybe he's the one putting all the words in our mouths" (Gaarder 252).

The results of Sophie and Alberto's self-awareness increasingly complicates the plot as the book churns toward its climax. Chapter 32 is titled "Our Own Time," and follows with the subtitle, "man is condemned to be free," suggesting that it is certain Sophie and Alberto realize their existence as characters in a story. Chapter 33, entitled "The Garden Party," cleverly mixes the world of Albert Knag and Hilde with the story of Sophie and Alberto, concluding in a party that perfectly captures the theatre of the absurd. Alberto defines absurdism for Sophie as a set of "highly unrealistic and dreamlike" (narrative) circumstances which characters accept without surprise, compelling readers and viewers to find truth in themselves (Gaarder 455). Sophie and Alberto have stopped accepting the unrealistic events (such as the appearances of Little Red Riding Hood and Scrooge) and have begun looking into themselves for what is true. At the end of Sophie's birthday party, something she has been looking forward to throughout the course of the novel, she says to Alberto, "This was once my little Garden of Eden" (Gaarder 478). Alberto's response reinforces the metaphor, saying, "And now you're being driven out of it" (Gaarder 478). The next chapter is a complex mixture of Hilde's attempt to help free Sophie and Alberto from her father's narrative and Sophie and Alberto's adjustment to life outside their Garden of Eden. The last chapter, "The Big Bang," includes a scene in which the now freed Sophie seems to have been able to affect the reality of Hilde and Albert by smacking Hilde with a wrench. Hilde's response is to think she's been stung by a gadfly, and Albert responds, "It was probably Socrates trying to sting you into life" (Gaarder 503), a reference back to Alberto's quoting of Socrates: "Athens is like a sluggish horse ... and I am the gadfly trying to sting it into life" (Gaarder 67).

In the end, Sophie and Alberto seem to have escaped the narrative—at least, the narrative that Albert Knag was writing. Readers understand that the two characters are still creations of yet another author, Jostein Gaarder. This is where the metaphorical connection is not so clear. Is Gaarder suggesting that the story of humanity one of an inevitable encounter with the Tree of Knowledge, the result of our development of self-awareness and capability of complex thought and questions such as "Who am I" and "Why are we here?" If so, then the metaphor is incomplete, because there is no disobedience to God and original sin. However, humans ARE capable of asking those questions and, in that sense, the metaphor does work, if only for the novel. As many philosophers have concluded, it almost always comes down to faith.

### **Works Cited**

Gaarder, Jostein. *Sophie's World : a Novel about the History of Philosophy* . New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994.

## **DIVISION III: Fiction**

Lexis “Nathan” Wells, Grade 12

Cocoa Beach High School, Brevard County

Teacher: Karrie Hieber

### **Memento**

He was used to the vast, empty landscape surrounding him. It had been years since he first laid eyes upon this place, knowing full well that there was no one else out there who could help him in his quest for answers. Answers to why he was here, and what happened to the people before him that built the labyrinths under the sea and the temples trapped beneath the sand. In the years that had passed, he quickly realized that this world was not one without dangers. Rotting corpses would rise from the earth and beat at his door with their decaying hands, skeletons that could somehow move without their sinew raining down arrows from afar, and spiders half his size all tried to devour him.

He was still learning the ways of the world and it's natural order when he found a crevice leading deep underground, as if some spiteful god carved the land with a dagger long ago. Unfortunately, he found it after falling to the cold stone ground that lay at the bottom. He cried out in agony as his legs shattered beneath him, blood quickly swirling together with the pool of water that rested nearby. He heard the dead shambling towards him, the spiders crawling out of their nests to feast on his flesh. The pain he felt was miniscule in comparison to how helpless he felt in the face of these monsters. He felt them rip into what was left of his muscles, tearing him limb from limb, devouring his soul.

He was terrified when he found himself back in the safety of his warmly lit home, lying in the comfort of his bed of wool with the fireplace crackling nearby. He later inspected his body and found that the injuries from his travels had transformed into nothing more than scars lining his body. He learned from this event, and never traveled far from his home without protective armor made from steel, with weapons to match. He had discovered his immortality, but he did whatever he could to prevent such a thing from happening again.

He traveled across the infinite landscape, sketching out maps and making notes of his surroundings, pillaging the earth beneath him for valuable resources until nothing worth taking was left all to better his chances of never feeling that pain again. He constructed humanoid creatures made of iron to protect him and his home, even naming them after the places he had been to before. In his travels, he found other human-like creatures, but none of them were quite like he was. They weren't as capable as he was, only living in a small village with no defense against the creatures that plagued the land at night. He felt no remorse for them when the villagers had fallen to the rotted corpses, he only turned and left them to their demise.

Nothing he did prepared him for the impossible. As he was tending to his farmland, he heard the sound of someone running in his direction. He turned, readying his steel blade to fight a monster that had grown too brave and found himself staring into the fear-filled eyes of another person. Not like the villagers, but like him. The stranger had auburn hair and bright blue eyes that seemed to pierce the soul, seeing his desires that he tried so desperately to ignore. The stranger, exhausted from running, was unable to tell him what he was running from, only asking for shelter and safety. His need for company was too strong in the face of logic. He helped the stranger into his home and set them down near the fireplace.

After feeding them and letting them rest in his bed, he patiently waited for them to explain why they were running, and where they were running from. When the stranger spoke, he did not understand what they were saying, fueling his confusion even more.

The stranger was an incredible architect, constructing massive walls that shielded the pair from the monsters that chased them and towers to defend themselves from. He wasn't used to such skill in building, he was always more of a warrior at heart. They taught him how to build things he had never seen before, strange contraptions that could move the land and the flip of a switch and strange glass-like frames that held something round in the center of them. He didn't understand why the stranger was so set on fortifying his home, but he did not complain. Even if they could understand each other, he had nothing to complain about.



In the months that followed the fateful encounter, the stranger had managed to create a pathway to another dimension, one they were terrified of venturing into alone. He named the place “Fear”, after the stranger's reaction to the pathway being opened unexpectedly. He then decided to name the stranger “Builder” for reasons he thought obvious. Builder was still a novice when it came to battles, they always hid behind him when creatures got too close. But, he convinced them to finally learn how to defend themselves in the face of what made them so afraid.

After years of training, Builder was finally able to defeat him in a spar. He felt an immense amount of pride welling up within him, despite how Builder was fussing over his injuries. He waved them off, trying to demonstrate that he was okay. Builder didn't care for it, and once again surprised him with their healing capability. They made small bottles out of glass and filled them with a red glowing liquid. After coaxing him into drinking it, he was astonished to find that his wounds had healed, even if they were only small cuts and scrapes. Builder was amazing, and he began to value them as more than just a companion.

He was wide awake the following night, unaware that Builder had stolen his steel armor and weapons and leapt into the realm of Fear. That morning, he searched the house for his friend, ordering his constructs to find them and bring them back. He was riddled with fear and anger, unaware that his friend was battling something that they were destined to die to. He donned his second set of armor, this one made of animal hide, and leapt into the portal after realizing where his friend had gone.

Stars flitted past him, swirling in a way that made him sick. He clutched his bow, his knuckles turning white with rage. The world he knew was gone, now he was stuck in a place of endless night skies and tall, dark creatures that could blink in and out of existence at will. He saw the towers that stabbed into the sky, and the crystals dancing from within their cages above. Then, he saw it.

A black-scaled beast that flew through the air with ease, breathing a purple flame that scorched the strange land this place was made of. He scaled the side of the floating island and attempted to spot his friend, however he could not see them. He swore, then drew his bow and fired at the beast. The arrow bounced off of the creature's thick hide, doing nothing more than alerting it to his presence. The winged monster dived down towards him, razor-like talons snatching him off of the ground and high into the air. He felt his body start to tear, but his will was that of fire. He drew his prized sword, made out of the strongest steel in the known lands, and began tearing into the monster.

It let loose cries of furious pain, crashing into the towers dotting the landscape before succumbing to its wounds and crashing to the ground below. The earth shook as the beast drew its final breath, releasing him from its claws. He clutched his wounds and began to call out for his friend, begging for some kind of response before he saw it.

The mangled corpse of his companion, broken and bloody after falling from a great height. He dropped his sword, the sound of the blade clattering to the ground falling on deaf ears as he sprinted to their side. He held them in his arms, furious with himself for not realizing Builder's plan. He collected his friend's body from the ground, trudging past the dead beast, past the tall creatures, and into a small portal at the center of the world.

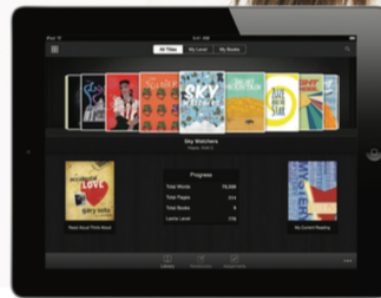
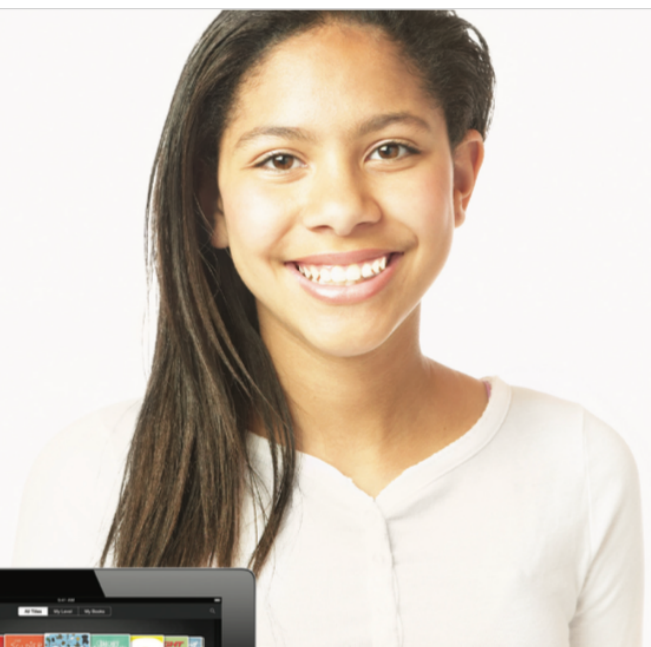
Upon his return, he built a large grave for his friend, with each passing day making it more clear that they could not come back as he could. He abandoned their fortress, instead hiding in the elaborate mines he had created underground for the rest of time. He didn't care if the monsters killed him. Builder was the only reason he kept trying to find answers, without him, there was no point. He didn't fear death anymore, viewing his life as worthless without them. Without Builder, he had nothing to live for.





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- Continuously adaptive and personalized reading and math intervention with real-time and actionable data
- Standards-aligned content to help students become College and Career Ready
- Accurate forecast of student achievement
- Strong ESSA evidence (Every Student Succeeds Act)

**Reading success for all.**

**Achieve math mastery.**



**Reading** focuses on building foundational and close reading skills



**Math** focuses on developing procedural fluency and deep understanding

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# Going Beyond *Florida's B.E.S.T.*



## Introducing *Wit & Wisdom*® Florida Edition



### *More Meaningful English for Florida*

*Wit & Wisdom*® Florida Edition is a comprehensive English language arts curriculum for Grades K–8 that not only aligns with Florida's B.E.S.T. standards—it also brings their vision to life.

*Wit & Wisdom* focuses on building students' knowledge across literature, history, science, and the arts with vertically aligned topics that ensure students are building a base of knowledge from Kindergarten through Grade 8. *Wit & Wisdom* provides

- strategically selected sets of grade-level complex texts that are rich and engaging
- an integrated approach to instruction for greater understanding, engagement, and literacy achievement
- alignment to the B.E.S.T. standards

### **Books Not Basals**

With *Wit & Wisdom*, every text a student touches is authentic and of the highest quality. Students use these texts at every turn—to learn, and eventually master, essential elements of literacy. Instead of basals, students read books they love to build knowledge of important topics and master literacy skills.

### **Art of *Wit & Wisdom***

Just as great literature provides rich content for inquiry and analysis, visual art offers powerful opportunities to build content knowledge. This teacher resource describes how analyzing visual art can boost literacy in all students and includes art lessons, an art glossary, and more.



For more information on  
*Wit & Wisdom* Florida Edition,  
visit [greatminds.org/florida](https://greatminds.org/florida).



every child  
is capable of  
greatness

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**GEODES**®

### *A New Approach to Early Literacy for Florida*

Building a strong foundational skills base is critical for student success. Great Minds' partnership with Wilson Language Training offers Florida educators the opportunity to adopt *Wit & Wisdom* together with Foundations®, a program specifically designed to provide students with a strong foundational skills base. This gives teachers and students access to a strong and comprehensive core ELA curriculum that aligns with the science of reading.

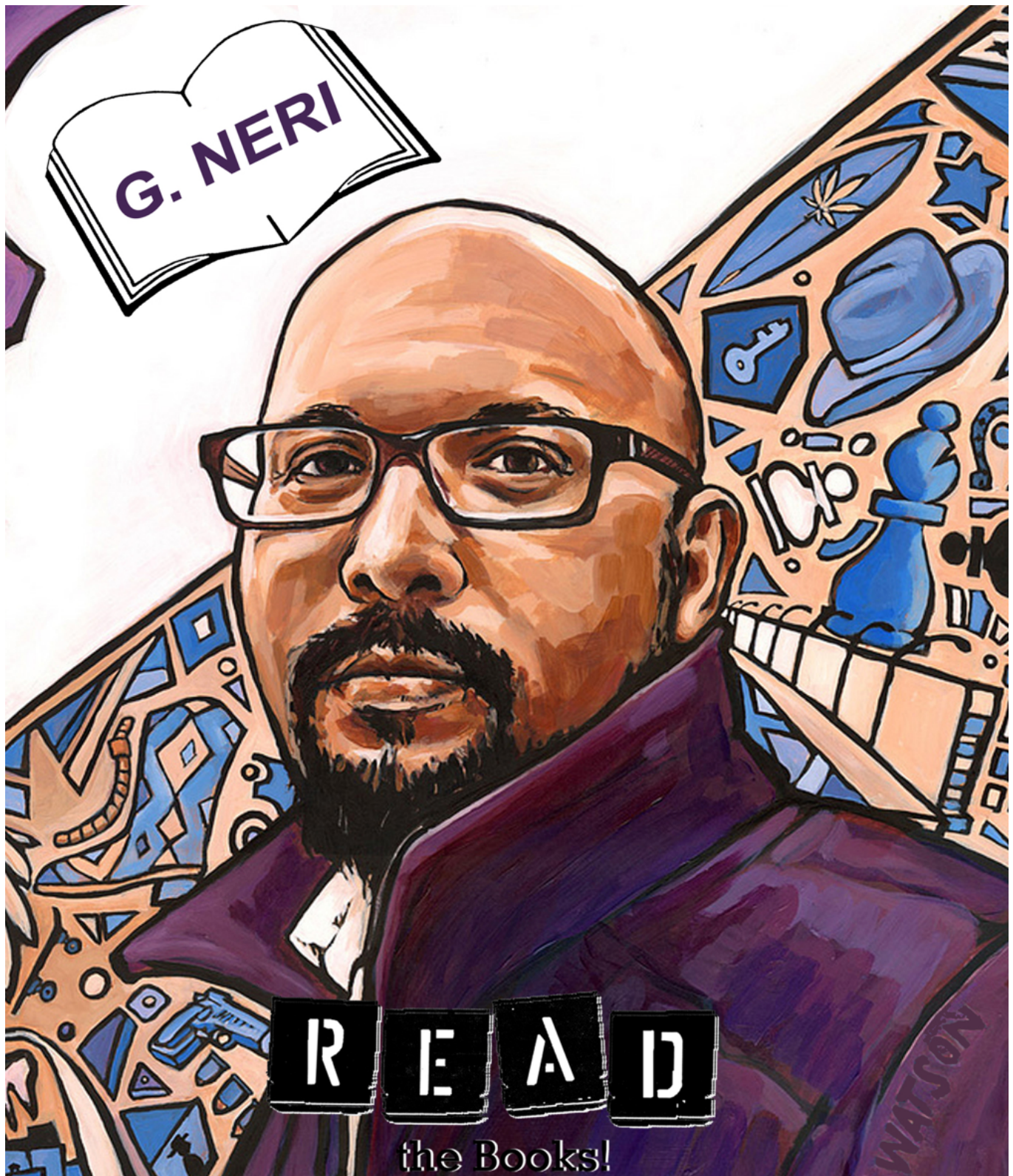
Great Minds® and Wilson Language Training® collaborated to create a new collection of accessible, knowledge-building books for developing readers. **Geodes**® tap into the core strengths of both organizations: Wilson's expertise in foundational reading skills instruction and Great Minds' experience building students' knowledge. The resulting narrative and informational texts allow students to apply their emerging decoding skills while also building content knowledge and vocabulary.

Geodes are the first early literacy texts that unite phonics with exciting content and beautiful art so students in Levels K–2 don't just learn to read—they learn to wonder, decode, and inquire about the world around them.

**With every Geodes text, knowledge opens up.**



Many thanks to GREG NERI, keynote speaker for the  
2021 Student Writing Award ceremony!



Yummy, Ghetto Cowboy, Chess Rumble, Knockout Games, Surf Mules, Hello I'm Johnny Cash