



CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHT

Literacy at Topeka Collegiate

December 3, 2021

Literacy is among the most important facets of a complete and comprehensive education, and it receives heavy focus from the very first day students begin their schooling. Literacy instruction has many components, and one of the most enjoyable for students is their time spent in the library for story and skill time.

Topeka Collegiate is fortunate to have a volunteer providing many kinds of literacy experiences to supplement the regular classroom reading program. Mrs. Kimberly Svaty spends every Tuesday afternoon working with all Topeka Collegiate Lower School students in the library.



Just this week, the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students began a three-week unit featuring a wonderful story started but not finished by Mark Twain. Philip Stead, a wonderful contemporary children's author, and his talented daughter, Erin Stead, took up the unfinished Twain story and completed the story, and brought it to life with magnificent illustrations. A delightful book, full of flowery language, imagery, and satire, is a perfect example of creative writing and the importance of illustration to help bring a story to life.

[The Purloining of Prince Oleomargarine by Mark Twain \(goodreads.com\)](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1111111111)



Our Pre-K students have spent time reading through several new books donated to our library by Paper June, a local bookseller in Topeka. They LOVE their story and discussion time with Mrs. Svaty, all together on the rug in our cozy, imaginative library. A couple of their favorites are listed below.

[The Bear and the Moon by Matthew Burgess. Catia Chien. Hardcover | Barnes & Noble® \(barnesandnoble.com\)](#)

[Vanilla Ice Cream by Bob Graham \(goodreads.com\)](#)

Our Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade students, enjoyed a wonderfully illustrated version of Robert Frost's famous poem "Stopping By the Woods on a Snowy Evening". The words of the poem are lyrical, but in the illustrated version they read, are made even more impactful by the delicately beautiful images. The students loved talking about the drawings on the page and how life-like they are. They also read a book from the TCS BookFair entitled, "A Kid is a Kid is a Kid" which highlights many of the common questions school children ask one another. In Mrs. Svaty's lesson, they took the questions posed and thought about different ways they could ask the questions that uplift people rather than make them sad or ways to pose questions that let others know you are interested in and care about them. These lessons tie in with the citizenship work our students have been focusing on in the classrooms recently.

[Amazon.com: Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening: 9780525467342: Frost, Robert, Jeffers, Susan: Books](#)

[A Kid Is a Kid Is a Kid: O'Leary, Sara, Leng, Qin: 9781773062501: Amazon.com: Books](#)

Grades 3, 4, and 5 have spent the last several weeks discussing long-form non-fiction as they have read a "New Yorker" article entitled "The Really Big One" about the Cascadia fault line in the Pacific Northwest.

At times, non-fiction can seem too factual to be really interesting to young minds, but this article is captivating and encompasses many of the topics the students are learning in geography, science, and language arts. Writing long-form, non-fiction that keeps the reader's attention is a skill and one that TCS works hard to develop in our students. The 5th graders had questions about the work Mrs. Svaty does with Harvesters, the Community Food Network. So, time was rearranged for a discussion about food insecurity and the role of food networks and food banks in our community. It was an excellent conversation and incorporated many of the traits TCS strives to teach to our students.

[The Earthquake That Will Devastate the Pacific Northwest | The New Yorker](#)

Would you like to suggest a curriculum highlight?

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