

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**GIRLS READ | GUYS READ Web Initiative  
Features Authors and Illustrators  
Jon Scieszka, Rita Williams-Garcia, Jack Gantos,  
Katherine Paterson, Jeff Kinney, and  
National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature  
Gene Luen Yang**



*Event Videos and Complementary Education Materials Aim to Inspire Educators and Librarians to Get and Keep Boys and Girls Reading—and Reading Widely*

FRANKLIN, Massachusetts (December 11, 2017)—The National Children’s Book and Literacy Alliance (NCBLA) is launching its GIRLS READ | GUYS READ web initiative, a creative collaboration with WETA Public Television/Reading Rockets, designed to expand the audience for its two author-illustrator panel discussions hosted this year: *Celebrating Heroines in Fact and Fiction* and *How to Get and Keep Boys Reading*. Both events were held at best-selling author and illustrator Jeff Kinney’s bookstore and community gathering place, An Unlikely Story Bookstore in Plainville, Massachusetts.

The goal of GIRLS READ | GUYS READ is to provide in one, easy-to-access location, the video content from both events, as well as extensive education materials that complement and expand the event conversations, which focused on how authors, illustrators, and all adults who live and work with young people can create and empower life-long readers who choose to read beyond perceived gender barriers and their own comfort zones to ultimately explore an unlimited range of characters, experiences, plots, and topics. The extensive education materials include education guides featuring discussion questions and classroom activities for participating authors’ and illustrators’ own books, relevant articles on the NCBLA and Reading Rockets websites, and links to additional video interviews with each of the authors and illustrators. All content is provided on the NCBLA’s education website [thencbla.org](http://thencbla.org) on the GIRLS READ | GUYS READ page, which is included in the EDUCATION menu.

*Celebrating Heroines in Fact and Fiction* featured authors Katherine Paterson, Rita Williams-Garcia, Jeannine Atkins, Heather Lang, and illustrator Ekua Holmes. In addition to discussing their own literary and artistic work, the panelists addressed topics ranging from the characteristics of a heroine, to how authors choose what to



Photograph 1: Jon Scieszka, Gene Luen Yang, Maria Salvadore, Jarrett J. Krosoczka, Jeff Kinney, and Jack Gantos. Photograph by Richard Groth, The National Children’s Book and Literacy Alliance.



Photograph 2: Grace Worcester Greene, Jeannine Atkins, Heather Lang, Ekua Holmes, Katherine Paterson, and Rita Williams-Garcia. Photograph by Richard Groth, The National Children’s Book and Literacy Alliance.

write, to how to encourage boys and girls to read all kinds of books. Librarian Grace Worcester Greene moderated the discussion.

*How to Get and Keep Boys Reading* included National Ambassador for Young People's Literature Gene Luen Yang, Jack Gantos, Jeff Kinney, Jarrett J. Krosoczka, and Jon Scieszka. This event addressed a wide range of topics, including how to inspire boys to read and write, each author's own sources of inspiration, the impact of visuals on books, and how to encourage life-long reading. Librarian and Children's Literature expert Maria Salvadore moderated the panel discussion.

### **About the Celebrating Heroines in Fact and Fiction Panelists**

**Jeannine Atkins** writes mainly about strong girls and women. Her historical verse includes *Finding Wonders: Three Girls Who Changed Science* (Atheneum); *Stone Mirrors: The Sculpture and Silence of Edmonia Lewis* (Atheneum); and *Borrowed Names: Poems about Laura Ingalls Wilder, Madam C. J. Walker, Marie Curie and Their Daughters* (Holt). Atkins also teaches writing in the MFA program at Simmons at the Carle. Learn more at [JeannineAtkins.com](http://JeannineAtkins.com).

**Grace Worcester Greene** has spent her career working in libraries with and for young people. Greene recently retired from her position as the Youth Services Consultant at the Vermont Department of Libraries. Greene has also served as adjunct faculty at several New England colleges teaching courses in children's literature and collection development, chaired the *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award* committee, and served on the Newbery and Caldecott Medal Award committees.

**Ekua Holmes** is a fine artist whose work explores themes of family, relationships, hope, and faith. Her first picture book *Voice of Freedom, Fannie Lou Hamer: Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement* (written by Carole Boston Weatherford; Candlewick Press), was awarded multiple prestigious awards, including a Caldecott Honor, a Robert F. Sibert Honor, the Society of Illustrators Original Art Silver medal, and the Coretta Scott King John Steptoe award for New Talent. Learn more at [EkuaHolmes.com](http://EkuaHolmes.com).

**Heather Lang** loves to research and write about real women who overcame extraordinary obstacles and never gave up on their dreams. Her books include *Swimming with Sharks: The Daring Discoveries of Eugenie Clark*; *Fearless Flyer: Ruth Law and Her Flying Machine*; *The Original Cowgirl: The Wild Adventures of Lucille Mulhall*; and *Queen of the Track: Alice Coachman, Olympic High-Jump Champion*. All four of Lang's books were selected for the ALA Amelia Bloomer List. Learn more at [HeatherLangBooks.com](http://HeatherLangBooks.com).

**Katherine Paterson** is the author of *Bridge to Terabithia* and *Jacob Have I Loved*, both winners of the Newbery Medal. She has won the National Book Award twice, the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, the Hans Christian Andersen Medal, and served as the second United States National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. Her most recent book is *Stories of My Life*. The movie based on *The Great Gilly Hopkins* was released last fall. Learn more at [KatherinePaterson.com](http://KatherinePaterson.com).

**Rita Williams-Garcia** is the author of the Newbery Honor-winning novel *One Crazy Summer*, which was also a winner of the Coretta Scott King Award, a National Book Award finalist, and recipient of the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction. The sequel, *P.S. Be Eleven*, was a Coretta Scott King Award winner and an ALA Notable Children's Book for Middle Readers. Williams-Garcia is on the faculty at the Vermont College of Fine Arts in the Writing for Children & Young Adults Program. Learn more at [Rita-WilliamsGarcia.SquareSpace.com](http://Rita-WilliamsGarcia.SquareSpace.com).

## About the *How to Get and Keep Boys Reading* Panelists

**Jack Gantos** has written books for readers of all ages, from picture books and middle-grade fiction to novels for young adults and adults. His works include *Hole in My Life*, a memoir that won the Michael L. Printz and Robert F. Sibert honors; *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key*, a National Book Award Finalist; *Joey Pigza Loses Control*, a Newbery Honor book; and *Dead End in Norvelt*, the 2012 Newbery Medal Winner and the Scott O’Dell Award Winner for Best Historic Fiction. Learn more at [JackGantos.com](http://JackGantos.com).

**Jeff Kinney** came up with the idea for *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* in 1998, a story about a middle-school weakling named Greg Heffley. Jeff worked on his book for almost eight years before showing it to a publisher. In 2006, Jeff signed a multi-book deal with publisher Harry N. Abrams, Inc. to turn *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* into a print series. The first *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* book was published in 2007 and became an instant bestseller. There are now more than 180 million copies of the series in print worldwide. Learn more at [WimpyKid.com](http://WimpyKid.com).

**Jarrett J. Krosoczka**, a *New York Times* bestselling author/illustrator and two-time winner of the Children’s Choice Book Awards (Third to Fourth Grade Book of the Year), creates books with humor, heart, and a deep respect for his young readers. First published at the age of twenty-three, Krosoczka has more than thirty published books to his credit. Titles include several picture books, his wildly popular *Lunch Lady* graphic novels, and the *Platypus Police Squad* middle-grade novels. Learn more at [StudioJJK.com](http://StudioJJK.com).

**Maria Salvatore** has been involved with children’s literature and literacy activities for her entire career. She has taught graduate and undergraduate courses in children’s literature; reviews and writes a blog for *Reading Rockets*; and consults with local, regional, and national organizations. Salvatore has been the Children’s Services Coordinator for the Washington, D.C. Public Library and the Cambridge, Massachusetts Public Library. She has chaired or served on numerous committees, including the Caldecott and Newbery.

**Jon Scieszka** is a bestselling author and the first National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature, having been appointed in January 2008. Scieszka is the author of many children’s titles, including *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (winner of a Caldecott Honor medal), *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, *Math Curse*, *Robot Zot!*, and the *Time Warp Trio*, a chapter book series. In addition, Scieszka is the founder of *Guys Read*, a nonprofit literacy organization. Learn more at [JSWorldwide.com](http://JSWorldwide.com).

**Gene Luen Yang** began making comics and graphic novels in the fifth grade. His book *American Born Chinese* was published in 2006 and became the first graphic novel to be nominated for a National Book Award and the first to win the American Library Association’s Printz Award. It also won an Eisner Award for Best Graphic Album – New. Yang’s two-volume graphic novel *Boxers & Saints* was nominated for a National Book Award and won the L.A. Times Book Prize. Yang currently serves as the National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature. Learn more at [GeneYang.com](http://GeneYang.com).

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**The National Children’s Book and Literacy Alliance** (the NCBLA) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization founded by award-winning young people’s authors and illustrators. Acting as an independent creative agent or in partnership with interested parties, the NCBLA develops original projects, programs, and educational outreach that advocate for and educate about literacy, literature, libraries, the arts, and humanities. Learn more about NCBLA news and events on the NCBLA website ([thencbla.org](http://thencbla.org)), blog ([thencbla.blogspot.com](http://thencbla.blogspot.com)), and Facebook page ([Facebook.com/TheNCBLA](http://Facebook.com/TheNCBLA)).

**WETA Public Television/Reading Rockets** is a national multimedia literacy initiative offering information and resources on how young kids learn to read, why so many struggle, and how caring adults can help. Reading Rockets aims to bring the best research-based strategies to teachers, parents, administrators, librarians, childcare providers, and anyone else involved in helping a young child become a strong, confident reader. Learn more at [ReadingRockets.org](http://ReadingRockets.org).

**An Unlikely Story Bookstore & Café** is a community gathering place that includes an indie bookstore, a café, and an event space, created by Julie and Jeff Kinney and located in Plainville, Massachusetts. Learn more at [AnUnlikelyStory.com](http://AnUnlikelyStory.com).

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