

A school counselor and close friend has been coming into my class every Wednesday morning for 45 minutes. He has been teaching my students lessons on "Communication, Cooperation, and Choices."

I've always wanted to see the teaching model where students are given rather difficult tasks they can work on together and then led through some guided reflection on what happened. Mike's doing it masterfully and it really does build the community in the class.

I particularly like how he identified those three C's as the main topics that we learn about each week. This past Wednesday the students were divided into groups of five. Each group had to stand on one side of a 3 by 6-foot piece of butcher paper (their magic carpets). The challenge was to get across the gym floor without anyone getting off the paper and without ripping it. Great challenge, great set-up, and great discussion after they all finished.

Even though I have the books that Mike gets these lessons from, and even though I've always thought it would be cool to try out, I'm going to have enough confidence and ideas to really do it with my class next year, if Mike isn't able to come back.

My class of second graders is full of some of the most delightful humans I know. For many reasons. They are curious and adventurous and loving. They are excited about learning and exploring and simply being. Do you remember this story from a few years ago? This small child pulled several of his classmates out from the earthquake rubble at his school. Many of the young children I know would probably do the same thing if they were put in the same situation. I want a kind and brave heart like that, too. I am grateful I am surrounded by little humans that teach me a wonderful and happy way of being in our world.

## The Outlandish Adventures of Liberty Ames

This book is a sparkling jewel. The narrative voice is funny and distinct, a lot like Lemony Snickett, but less pompous and less grating. The plot is a lot like Roald Dahl, with completely outlandish and impossible events and talking mutant animals and magic elixirs. Yet the narrator and the main character Liberty are both somehow compelling enough that these impossibilities are easy to imagine and believe.

Liberty has two super awful parents and the only way she has managed to cope with their abuse is by reading her way through a library of books that she found hidden in her house. Although he is pure evil, her father is also a "friggin genius". Liberty manages to escape from her parents by breaking into her father's secret laboratory and drinking some of his potions. She has never been outside of her house and must use her own incredible wits and her new friendships in order to avoid capture.

One of the potions that she steals lets her talk with animals. She befriends a street cat and a pigeon. The other potion makes her float up into the sky. In addition to the animals, she also makes a couple of human friends as she searches for a private school that she read about once, where she imagines she will finally be happy. I can think of many kids who will enjoy reading this book.