

Stories from the Field

Editors' Note: *Stories from the Field* invites readers to share a story about young adult literature. This section features brief vignettes (approximately 300 words) from practicing teachers and librarians who would like to share their interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators around young adult literature. Please send your stories to: jbach@lsu.edu.

A Special Guest

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While reading about the Klondike Gold Rush in Jack London's *Call of the Wild*, my seventh-graders wondered why the author points out the fact that tender-foot explorers of the frigid Alaskan frontier would bring short-haired pointers to pull their dogsleds. It seemed like an interesting question that deserved some time for investigation. And, as it turned out, this question, and the possible answers it would produce, aligned with state standards as they pertain to the connections readers make between characters and setting in literature.

Austin, a six-year-old German Short-haired Pointer, joined our family after we adopted him from the Kansas Humane Society. Austin was a gentle soul who loved being around people. To facilitate this line of inquiry in my classes, it was decided that Austin

would be our special guest. By introducing Austin to my students, thereby allowing them to infer how a dog like Austin might survive in Alaska, it was my hope they would begin to understand London's purpose for including those details about the inexperienced mushers.

If you have read London's story, you know that the main character is Buck, a large Scotch Shepherd/St. Bernard mix breed. Buck's story progresses through the hands of the many owners he encounters throughout his life. The turning point in the story involves a hero named John Thorton, who saves Buck from imminent doom. After sharing the story of how I met Austin at the Humane Society and brought him home to be a part of our family, Jacob, a student in one of my classes, looked up from his desk and said, "Mr. Skillen, you and Mrs. Skillen are like Austin's 'John Thorton,' aren't you?"

I thought about it for a moment and said, "Yes, Jacob, I suppose we are."

"The Family That Reads Together . . ."

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*Dear 7th-grade family,
This copy of The Hunger Games is a gift to you in celebration of the joy of reading. We hope that you will read it together as a family or pass the book from one*