<u>Lucy Calkins Classroom Libraries Video Interview Transcript</u>

View this video and more [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Question: *What makes the TCRWP Classroom Libraries special, or different from other libraries?*

Lucy: People often ask, "How are these libraries different from other libraries?" I think that what I want you to know is that we saw these as a gift, and, really, as a moral obligation. We worked unbelievably hard to try to make sure that we were finding the very best books we possibly could, for kids. So, we searched the country for people who know books, and we have friends in all kinds of places all around the nation, all around the world, and we asked everybody that we know to send us their very best recommendations. So, we got recommendations from David Booth and Jim Trelease and Lester Laminack, Katherine Bomer, Ralph Fletcher, Georgia Heard, and from the fabulous librarian in Brooklyn and the amazing classroom teacher in Seattle and this teacher in a little village in Mexico—just all around. People sent us recommendations and we got about 22,000 recommendations of books that people said, "These are the to-die-for books that will really, really turn kids into readers."

Then we got copies of all of those books. The publishers were so generous and gave us the books, so that we could actually look through them, and the project has about 80 staff developers and, among us, there are people who are passionate about different genres, so Colleen Cruz and Mary Ehrenworth are passionate lovers of Fantasy, and have just read all of the Fantasy in the world, so they took on the job of curating the Fantasy shelves. And, with five or six people helping them, they took the recommendations we had for 5th grade Fantasy and thought, "Of these books, "which will we put in the series?" So, we had no constraints. We were able to get books from any publisher, books that were published on any date. We were willing to go to hardcovers or to paperbacks, whatever was the way to get the very best books.

We were fortunate enough to hire people who are real experts on children's literature, to function as advisors for us, so we brought in Anita Silvey, for example, who was the editor of *The Horn Book*, the premiere journal on Children's Lit. She edited that for 10 years and has spent a lifetime reading thousands and thousands of children's books every year. Anita helped us to get a whole network of other Children's Lit experts. We used that expertise, but we also used the expertise of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, and of all the colleagues that we work with and our own personal knowledge of how kids learn to read.

For example, let's look at Biography. We had this huge mountain of Biography, and narrowed it down, and began to say that we think these are the best Biography for 4th grade, and then Anita came in, and she looked at the biographies, and she said, "Lucy, "some of these books are really fictionalized," and she says, "I'd call them Biography-ish, but not really Biography. Biography's a non-fiction genre." So, then

began this whole new process, because she would suggest biographies that she thinks are better written, saying "this is the best biography on Helen Keller, ever." And then, we would have to look between this fabulous biography of Helen Keller, and what we know about young kids, as readers, where we know, for 4th graders, it's really important to teach them that you can read Biography with a sense of story structure, and be thinking about, you know, who's this main character, the subject, and what are the character's wants and needs, and think about the story arc of Helen Keller's life. So, we're able to draw on what we know, as teachers of Reading, and as experts in Children's Lit, and from people from all around the world, and, in that way, to put together libraries that we think are really worthy of our children.

To learn more about the TCRWP Classroom Libraries, browse representative titles, and order shelves, visit calkinslibraries.com