Saturday Workshop Descriptions
You will be assigned to two (2) YAL book workshops based on availability from your top 5 choices.

**Rare Minerals, Technology, Global Social Justice, and You**

*Blue Gold* by Elizabeth Stewart

Presenter: Beverly Rowls

You possess a dynamic piece of technology, right in your pocket, purse, or hand. Most of us feel we couldn’t live without our Smart phones, cell phones, or computers. But our ability to have this technology comes at a cost that few in the Western world are aware even exists.

*Blue Gold* by Elizabeth Stewart takes the reader into three separate, very distinct modern worlds: Fiona of middle-class Canada, Sylvie of the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp in Tanzania, and Laiping of industrial China. All three girls are linked by a rare mineral called coltan, a required component in all the electronic gadgets we value so highly. This novel intertwines their lives and experiences into a mosaic that could also include you. Our demand for the latest piece of technology comes at a high cost to the lives of people throughout the world.

This workshop will combine content from Geology, Geography, Current Events, and English/Language Arts to form a cross-disciplinary unit to examine how the use of every day technology (to us) has a great impact on the lives of our brothers and sisters with whom we share this Big, Blue Marble. We will examine the point-of-view of each character and how coltan impacts their lives. We will gain knowledge of rare minerals and their impact on the lives of others from around the world. We will inquire into the concept of being our brother’s keeper, and whether we should care that our comfort comes at a tremendous expense to others. Join us as we explore the complex world of our increasing need for and use of technology in our daily lives.

Beverly Rowls enjoys reading fiction and nonfiction written for both young adults and adults. She has provided professional development support for literacy instruction to Chicago and Illinois area teachers for nearly twenty years. An avid reader and student, she finds her main focus in life to be studying historical events that she uses as fodder for creating relevant and motivational curricula for both youth and adults.

**Strangers in a Strange Land: The Story of the Unknown American**

*The Book of Unknown Americans* by Cristina Henríquez

Presenter: Cynthia Zucker

“We’re the unknown Americans, the ones no one even wants to know, because they’ve been told they’re supposed to be scared of us and because maybe if they did take the time to get to know us, they might realize that we’re not that bad, maybe
even that we’re a lot like them.” So states one of the characters in this novel by Cristina Henríquez. Told through the voices of numerous immigrants from Latin America, many stories unfold in this book, with a focus on the star-crossed young lovers Maribel Rivera and Mayor Toro. The characters come together in an apartment building in Delaware. Maribel’s family has come from Pátzcuaro, Mexico, to seek the right medical attention and school for their daughter. Mayor’s family has come from Panama, after the American invasion to remove the strongman Manuel Noriega. We follow the developing relationship of Mayor and Maribel as well as the voices of their parents and neighbors who struggle with survival, violence, and love.

In our workshop we will explore issues of point of view, the role of girls and women in immigrant communities, perceptions of ability and disability, the treatment of immigrants by the police, and current issues of immigration in the U.S. We will examine the relationship between immigration to the U.S. and the political and violent upheavals that have taken place in Latin American countries that are alluded to in the novel. Finally, we will create and perform a group poem using voices of various characters from the book.

Cindy Zucker is an ESL Bilingual Specialist from the Center for College Access and Success. She was a bilingual and ESL teacher and administrator in CPS and taught at Inter-American Magnet School, a dual language program in Chicago. She helps to coordinate ESL and Bilingual teacher cohorts and works in the after school 21st Century program in the Morton H.S. district.


_Chen Girl Dreaming_ by Jacqueline Woodson

Presenters: Susan Garr and Christine Johnson

Written in free verse, vivid and direct, Jacqueline Woodson’s memoir explores her dreams, family history, identity and voice. She shares memories of growing up during Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement, and of leaving her Southern home for multi-ethnic New York. She reveals her difficulties in school at the same time that she discovers her love of stories and her beginnings as a writer. Through her poetry, we look into the soul of a young girl, then a young woman, as she learns who she is and who she can be.

Brown Girl Dreaming invites the reader to examine the significance of personal history and how it connects with the broader history of our times. Woodson urges us to ask: How am I shaped by history? And how might I shape history? Woodson weaves her memories and dreams into beautiful poems that offer our students both a window and a mirror into what it takes to know the self—to ask Who am I? Where do I belong? How do I know?
This hands-on, inquiry-based workshop will use Brown Girl Dreaming to explore identity, connect our personal stories to our country’s history, and consider its relevance to the world today. Strategies to be experienced: gallery walk, reading as inquiry, thinking like a writer, discussion circles and inquiry stations. Join us for a lively and engaging journey into this book, and be ready to share your dreams.

Literacy Specialist Susan A. Garr, MA, taught high school English and Film Studies for 10 years prior to joining CCAS/NEIU. She collaborates with teachers to build standards-based inquiry units. After 25 years as an educator, she is still awed by the talent, time and creative force our GEAR UP Network teachers bring to their students. Chris Johnson is the Professional Development Manager at the Center for College Access and Success and has worked with the GEAR UP program and the YAL Conference for more than 10 years. She believes that it is more important than ever that we each find our personal connection to our country’s history and future, that we raise our voices for justice, and that we hold fast to our dreams.

Can Fiction Help Us All Face Facts? For Grade 7 and up

The Carbon Diaries 2015 by Saci Lloyd & Eyes Wide Open: Going Behind the Environmental Headlines by Paul Fleischman

Presenters: Mary Massie and Kate Thomas

The Carbon Diaries 2015 describes a near-future world of cataclysmic climate change with ensuing natural and social disasters as experienced by a 16-year-old girl, her family, friends, and neighbors who must radically reduce their use of everyday energy sources to comply with carbon rationing in London. It combines elements of a thriller with a coming-of-age diary, all grounded in some pretty startling climate science. The voice of narrator Laura is funny, ironic, warm and entertaining, even during frightening circumstances and multiplying troubles. The book paints a plausible picture of events that may well be coming soon, leavened with humor, humanity, and hope.

In Eyes Wide Open, award-winning YA author Paul Fleischman moves briskly through some very heavy topics, not by dumbing down content, but by dividing it into compact segments with photos, sidebars, and touches of humor. It includes source notes, a rich bibliography, a glossary, and advice on how to weigh information—all perfect elements for inquiry projects.

Our workshop will explore creative ways to use the immediacy and humor of both books to pull readers out of indifference and into active learning, blending well-researched science, social commentary, and the perspectives of teens who really do need to save the world.

Mary Massie, Ph.D., Senior Literacy Specialist at CCAS for 17 years and a founder of the YAL Conference, believes in the potential of literature to lift us all to higher levels of understanding, joy, and achievement. Mary currently directs an NCLB-ITQ literacy grant in J. S. Morton H. S. District 201. Mary loves the hard fun of this annual YAL
celebration of teachers, books, and community. Thanks to everyone who makes it happen! Kate Thomas is an arts educator who has worked with Redmoon Theater and has led arts integration programs in multiple school districts for the past 15 years. She is currently working on her Ph.D. and is interested in the concept of vibrant matter or “thing power.” How do things call to us and how might we re-think environmentalism through this approach?

Anchors, Tentacles and Mapping Happiness

**It's Kind of a Funny Story** by Ned Vizzini

Presenter: Jeremy Babcock

Happiness. What is it exactly? And, more importantly, how do you achieve it? As children move through adolescence and grow into adults, the emphasis tends to be on traveling the “right” path, going to the “right” school, and becoming a successful member of society. But what is the cost of achieving success? And what is the relationship between happiness and success? The turbulence that often accompanies the teenage years must include a healthy discourse on what it means to be happy and how that definition is unique to every individual.

*It’s Kind of a Funny Story* takes the reader on a journey through the eyes of ambitious NYC teenager Craig Gilner, who gets into a top high school where the pressure to succeed takes a toll. After a suicidal episode, Craig finds himself in a mental hospital with a cast of characters who serve as unexpected guides on the road to true happiness. Craig makes a number of discoveries by pressing the pause button on his life to gain a better understanding on what is truly important.

This workshop will use themes from the novel to focus on tangible ways to create classroom community with a focus on social-emotional skills. We will explore the book’s “anchors” and “tentacles” metaphor, along with “brain maps” as tools for students to express thoughts and feelings. This workshop will use the humor and the pain of Craig’s story to help us develop better understandings of teen mental illness and depression, along with ways to identify and offer solutions.

Jeremy Babcock believes in the importance of play and incorporates this belief into his work as an Experiential Learning Specialist with NEIU’s Center for College Access and Success (formerly CTC), and as a Teaching Artist with The Old Town School of Folk Music. In the evening and weekend hours, Jeremy plays music for kids of all ages with The Dreamtree Shakers, ([www.dreamtreeshakers.com](http://www.dreamtreeshakers.com)).

Fantasy Fiction and Found Images For Grade 7 and up

**Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children** by Ransom Riggs

Presenter: Lynette Emmons

“*This fantasy novel mixes adventure fiction and haunting vintage photography in a thrilling, spine tingling adventure. A horrific family tragedy sets sixteen-year-old Jacob journeying to a...*
remote island off the coast of Wales, where he discovers the crumbling ruins of Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children. As he explores, it becomes clear that the children who once lived here—one of whom was his own grandfather—were more than just peculiar.” - Ransom Riggs

Fantasy fiction is taking over the world!

In this workshop we will explore the ways this genre can be a surprisingly useful device in the classroom by looking at how Ransom Riggs uses found photographs and random snapshots to write fantasy adventures. Likewise, we too will closely observe photographs that were rescued from the dustbin to create legendary tales from our own lives. The people in these photos are strangers to us and indeed peculiar, but they will become the inspiration for interesting stories as we exaggerate them to the point of fantasy fiction.

Presenter Lynette Emmons began her teaching career at Nettelhorst School in Chicago. Currently she is the Director of the Center for City Schools in the Urban Institute at National-Louis University. Her work focuses on developing classroom communities where best practices, active learning and collaboration enrich all. Like the author Ransom Riggs, she is also fascinated with found photographs.

Save the Drama for Your Mama: Social Media and Online Ethics

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda by Becky Albertalli

Presenters: Kat Tigges and Molly Kelly- Chicago Public Library

Sixteen-year-old Simon Spier hasn’t come out—not to his friends or family, and certainly not at school. The only exception is his online pen pal, Blue, an anonymous classmate who is in the same situation. When one of Simon’s schoolmates discovers their correspondence and uses it to blackmail Simon, things get even more complicated. Can Simon juggle his role in the school play, friendships old and new, and keep the blackmailer at bay without messing things up with the perfect guy (who he’s never even met)? This humorous and heartwarming story explores the LGBTQ teen experience through Simon’s genuine, believable voice, touching on themes of coming out, coming of age, privacy, bullying, and stigma.

This book is particularly relevant in English and Drama classrooms, though it could be adapted for any classroom discussion of behavior, ethics, diversity, and/or tolerance. As teens increasingly interact with their peers online and through social media, the use and misuse of internet platforms is a topic of heightened importance. In this workshop, we’ll examine this theme within the text, engage in replicable hands-on activities, and explore resources for further consideration with special attention to LGBTQ issues.

Kat Tigges is a Teen Services Librarian at Chicago Public Library. She has worked in libraries and educational institutions since 2002, specializing in Teen Services since 2012. She is an editor for the graphic novel review website No Flying No Tights and currently spearheads an initiative to improve library services for LGBTQ homeless youth. Molly Kelly creates and highlights booklists, online resources, news and events for...
Chicago Public Library as its website teens content curator. She also assists with program planning, events and professional development to directly support staff and teens throughout the city. She received her Master of Library and Information Science degree from Dominican University and earned a Bachelor’s degree in English and Journalism from the University of Iowa. Crafts and lifelong learning are two of her favorite things.

Building Meaning with Spare Parts

*Spare Parts: Four Undocumented Teenagers, One Ugly Robot and the Battle for the American Dream* by Joshua Davis

Presenters: Germania Solorzano and Juan Madrigal

In *Spare Parts: Four Undocumented Teenagers, One Ugly Robot and the Battle for the American Dream*, Joshua Davis lays out the story of four unlikely teenagers who become underwater robotic rock stars by defeating their competition, including MIT. Each young man works through various struggles to reach that victory, primarily poverty and immigration status. Although the boys are victorious at the competition, the book follows them beyond high school graduation, where their struggles with immigration status greatly affect their trajectories. This is reportage. The book alternates between chapters about the boys: their backgrounds, families, schools and teachers, and chapters about immigration policy during the timeline of the events.

This true story could be easily connected to Science, Social Studies as well as English for reading of nonfiction texts. It offers readers the opportunity to follow along on a problem-solving trajectory in the sciences with the creation of the robot; in life, with young men figuring out how to live in the United States despite being undocumented; and in learning in general with youth figuring out their interests and how to pursue those interests with limited resources.

This workshop will offer participants opportunities to explore the text, its themes, as well as hands-on problem-solving activities.

Germania Solorzano is a professional development specialist at the Center for College Access and Success. She has over 20 years of teaching experience with high school, middle school, and college students combined. She is enthralled with stories of problem-solvers, artists, and innovators.

Dignifying the Other: Portraiture in the Classroom

*Working, the Graphic Novel* by Harvey Pekar, adapted from Studs Terkel’s *Working*

Presenters: Polly Mills and Valerie Xanos

Harvey Pekar, genius author of *American Splendor*, adapted 16 of the interviews in Studs Terkel’s iconic *Working* into the text of this graphic novel and invited 16 comic illustrators to each draw one chapter. The voices of the interviewees live on these pages, and Studs pokes his illustrated mug and mic into the corners of the pages from
time to time to introduce the speakers. The interviews represent a range of jobs and voices--folks of all ages and social and ethnic backgrounds--to explore what it means to work in America at a particular moment in our history. This graphic novel brings dignity to work and the human voice. Exemplifying the rewards of listening carefully and asking good questions, the book invites curricular units that include interviewing, blogging, using audio and video recording, portraiture in a variety of visual media, including drawing, painting, and photography, collecting oral histories and ethnographies, and focus on story development, developing characters, dialogue interaction, and sense of place and time.

In this workshop, we’ll be exploring portraiture, beginning with Terkel’s interviews, which, because of his extraordinary listening, breach the genre to become sound portraits. We’ll consider portraits across several genres, including drawing, painting, photography, and writing. What opportunities does creating portraits offer as students develop skills of listening, observation, and inquiry? What is the value of moving past empirical information toward the intuitive and personal in your classroom?

Polly Mills, MA, collaborates with CPS teachers to explore experiential approaches to teaching writing, connected learning, inquiry, and arts integration. She is on the Fiction Writing faculty of Columbia College and certified by the Story Workshop Institute at the level of Master Candidate. Her fiction has been recognized by an AWP Intro Award, two of Columbia University’s Scholastic Press Association Awards, and a Pushcart Prize nomination. She is co-author of Tandem Teaching writing texts, Essays that Open Doors curriculum, and the Young Author Playlist. Valerie Xanos grew up and still lives where she teaches, sharing a connection to her students through community. A 20-year veteran of CPS, her BFA and teaching certificate were earned at The School of The Art Institute of Chicago and The Glasgow School. She works in the media of paint, collage, and photography and she teaches a Guerrilla Art class at Curie Metro High School; you can visit the student blog: Guerrillaart4.blogspot.com. Writing is an integral part of the curriculum, aesthetically and as part of artistic process. Valerie also teaches International Baccalaureate Art and Art Studio I, chronicling her explorations with students on the blog, www.teachersafterhours.com. She is also a mother of four amazing, willful, inspiring young adults.

Register at yal.c4cas.org

When you register, you will indicate your top five preferences for workshops. Depending on availability, we will place you in two of these workshops. Participants are encouraged to register on-line by October 15th to get the workshops they prefer. If registration is received after October 30th, conference participation cannot be guaranteed. Register at yal.c4cas.org. Staff at non-partnership schools may attend for $450 per person. Payment in full is requested by October 30th.

Once we receive your payment, you will receive an e-mail confirmation, then we will send the books for your two workshops. Participants who register and pay the conference fee by October 30th will receive books at their schools. For registrations after 10/30 you may need to pick up books at Center for College Access and Success (770 N. Halsted; enter on Chicago Ave.). We strongly recommend that you read your workshop books before the conference to get the most out of your conference experience.

Questions? Call Dan at (312) 563-7134