

# MUSE Youth Curriculum

Music *U*niting Students and Elders

Music is a language that is understood across all culturally-created boundaries. Music has the ability to lift spirits, lessen pain, and unite the worst of enemies. The MUSE program unites musicians from the Bangor Symphony Orchestra and the elderly in residential facilities in Penobscot and Piscataquis counties in Maine. MUSE further provides the opportunity for local youth to participate in these events through their schools and other programs. These events help breakdown the boundaries across the ages, dispel the myths of aging, teach the wonders of music, and most of all provide an unforgettably wonderful time!

For too long elders have been segregated into isolated, self-contained homes and pushed out of the main stream of society. New ways to integrate young and old are needed to re-establish continuity and connectedness to our communities. For some who are unable to leave their residences to participate in community life, this program will provide an opportunity to not only enjoy a cultural event, but also have the experience enriched by sharing it with young people. Conversely, students will benefit from the intellectual and emotional development provided by arts education and the opportunity to have meaningful shared experiences with elders.

## **PURPOSE:**

The following curriculum is recommended for children 5 years of age and older or children in 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The purpose of the curriculum is to act as a catalyst for discussing aging, to dispel the myths of aging, to provide an opportunity to connect generations, and for youth to share with others their experiences, ancestry and family traditions. Furthermore, this curriculum allows for youth to connect with elders in their community. The participants will have the opportunity to learn personal history and visit with an elder who may not have family near by. This activity is a form of community service and can instill the importance and the value of volunteerism and social capital. Lastly, one may find a friend for life.

## **BE PREPARED:**

The presentation of this material may induce strong emotions from the participants as discussions of aging, sickness, and death, may arise. We recommend that you notify your school counselor of your participation in this program prior to program commencement in case of a child's need for further support. It may be appropriate to invite your school counselor to attend class during the days that this curriculum is covered in order to aid in discussion facilitation and student support.

## **GETTING STARTED:**

- 1) Choose a book from the book list.
- 2) Select a series of days to host the MUSE curriculum that has close proximity to a scheduled MUSE event.
- 3) Contact the MUSE coordinator in order to finalize event dates and times. Allow at least 1 hour per MUSE curriculum day. One the days which a MUSE event occurs, please allow 3 hours.
- 4) Begin Curriculum.

**NOTE:** Curriculum is not restricted to consecutive days. However, it is recommended for consistency and an optimum learning environment to host each MUSE curriculum day within a few days of the last. Day 5 of the curriculum is on-going and not necessarily one that occurs a few days after Day 4 of the curriculum.

MUSE is a program of the University of Maine Center on Aging and the Bangor Symphony Orchestra.

For more information, please contact a MUSE coordinator

Milja Brecher-DeMuro: (207)288-0660

Diane Kern: (207)942-5555

## Day 1

- Read book out loud to group
- Discuss book and concepts introduced in the book using the questions that accompany the book as a guide.
- Assign homework. Suggested homework projects accompany the questions for each book.

## Day 2

- Children to present their homework assignments to the group. Children to discuss what they learned about aging and elders from their project experiences.

## Day 3

- Attend a MUSE event
- Students and faculty are recommended to socialize with elders at the facility as well as the musicians
- Return to classroom and discuss the event
- Youth and faculty to complete event evaluations

## Day 4

- Establish an E-Pal connection with the elder facility  
(E-pals is similar to pen-pals except the communication is primarily done through e-mail. Each group of students participating in the MUSE youth curriculum will e-mail a group of residents at the facility where they attended the MUSE event. This communication will continue back and forth until it no longer is satisfying for both parties. We recommend that e-pal communication occur at least at least once a week. Please set up the e-pal program with the Activity Director at the facility that you visit for MUSE immediately following the event. The youth can e-mail the older adults as soon as they return to school so that the friendship connections are still fresh. You may need to set up a new e-mail account within your school just for this purpose.)
- Once/week email elder facility as a class

## Day 5

- Visit elder facility for a second MUSE event
- Youth and faculty to complete event evaluations
- Continue E-Pal connection with elder facility

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# MUSE Youth Curriculum Book Selections

**Miss Rumphius**  
Story and Pictures By: **Barbara Cooney**

**Annie and the Old One**  
Written By **Miska Miles**; Illustrated By: **Peter Parnall**

**Mandy's Grandmother**  
By **Liesel Moak Skorpen**

**Knots an a Counting Rope**  
By **Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault**

**Sea Swan**  
By **Kathryn Lasky**

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## **Miss Rumphius** **Story and Pictures By: Barbara Cooney**

**Description:** Miss Rumphius is a story of aging and individuality and the mark one can leave on people and in the world. Recommended for children in 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

**Questions:**

- 1) Why was Miss Rumphius sometimes called “that crazy old lady”?
- 2) Was she really “a crazy old lady”?
- 3) What can our elders teach us?
- 4) What are some of the things that you have been taught by your elders?
- 5) When Miss Rumphius was a little girl in the story, her grandfather seemed very wise, what does it mean to be wise?
- 6) What can we learn from “wise” people?
- 7) In the story Miss Rumphius hurt her back. How did she hurt it?
- 8) Did hurting her back make her less wise?
- 9) What lesson about aging can we learn from this book?

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# **Annie and the Old One**

## **Written By Miska Miles; Illustrated By: Peter Parnall**

**Description:** Annie and the old one is the story of a young Native American girl and her aging grandmother. This story touches on topics of wisdom, relationships, death, dying, sadness, and growing older. Recommended for children in grades 5-6.

### **Questions:**

- 1) What are the similarities between Annie and her grandmother that Annie speaks of in the beginning of the story?
- 2) Anne mentions in the story that there are two sides to her grandmother, what are they?
- 3) What are the similarities between weaving and Annie's grandmother's life?
- 4) Why do Annie and Annie's parents treat the Old One with such respect?
- 5) What is the significance of the gifts that Annie's grandmother gave to Annie and her mother and father?
- 6) What is the significance of Annie's weaving?
- 7) What lessons about aging did you learn from this story?

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# **Mandy's Grandmother**

## **By Liesel Moak Skorpen**

**Description:** Mandy's grandmother is coming for a visit. Mandy has never met her before, but she had a picture book with a grandmother in the story. The grandmother in the story took her granddaughter for walks and to the zoo, and she held her in her lap which was wonderful. But when Mandy's grandmother arrives, she brings the best present to Mandy's baby brother, she wants Mandy to eat oatmeal for breakfast, and is afraid of Mandy's pet frog. It doesn't take Mandy long to decide that the book about grandmothers was all wrong. Then Mandy and her grandmother begin to love and accept each other for who they are. Recommended for children in 2-3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

### **Questions:**

- 1)** Mandy was questioning herself about what does she know about grandmothers? What are some of the things you know about grandmothers or grandfathers, or other older adults?
- 2)** What kind of things do you do with your grandparents or other older adults?
- 3)** When Mandy's grandmother was Mandy's age, do you think she liked the same things as Mandy does?
- 4)** What kinds of thing do elders do today to have fun?

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## **Knots an a Counting Rope**

**By Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault**

**Description:** This story is about a boy and his grandfather. The grandfather tells the boy the story of his birth and while he does, he ties another knot in the boys counting rope. The counting rope is a metaphor for the passage of time. Recommended for children in 5-6<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Questions:**

- 1) Why do you think Billy liked his grandfather to tell him the story of his birth?
  
- 2) Billy is fortunate to have his grandfather spend time with him and to teach him about growing up. Have you ever had talks with your grandparents about growing up, or how they grew up?
  
- 3) In the story Billy says “I always feel strong when you are with me, grandfather.” What do you think he means?
  
- 4) Do you think when Billy’s grandfather was Billy’s age he had a counting rope too? Who do you think told the grandfather his birth story?
  
- 5) What stories do you think the grandfather can tell Billy about getting old?

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## **Sea Swan**

### **By Kathryn Lasky**

**Description:** Elzibah Swan lives on Boston's Beacon Hill in a tall brick house that her great-grandfather built. Her life is ordered and comfortable, and when her grandchildren come to visit, it is even sometimes exciting. But after the children leave, Elzibah is restless and discontent, feeling that life is passing her by. So on the morning of her seventy-fifth birthday, she tells her cat, Zanzibar, that she has decided to learn something new. Recommended for children in 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade.

#### **Questions:**

- 1) Do you think Elzibah is too old to learn new things?
- 2) Do you think older people can't learn something new, if so why?
- 3) When you turn seventy-five what kind of new thing would you like to learn?
- 4) Elzibah loves to swim; how can swimming help Elzibah stay healthy?

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## Helpful Definitions

**Aging:** to become old

**Elder:** 1) of earlier birth or greater age 2) one who is older: SENIOR > one having authority by virtue of age and experience

**Wise:** 1) characterized by wisdom: marked by deep understanding, keen discernment, and a capacity for sound judgment

Definitions are from the Webster New Collegiate Dictionary

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