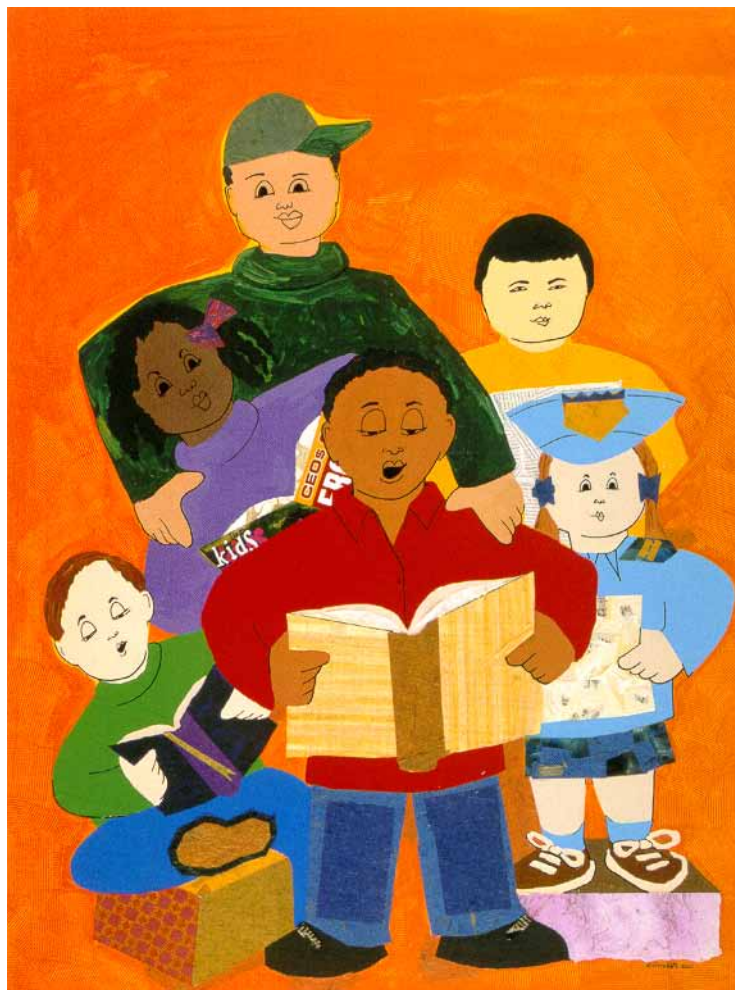




Artists on Tour

A. Ruth Creations

What's the Word? READ!



STUDY GUIDE

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PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

Presentation Format

Through an interactive performance, Annie Ruth takes students on a creative and cultural journey emphasizing the value of reading. *What's the Word? READ!* is about promoting reading, literacy, and positive self-expression

Introduction of *What's the Word? READ!*

Who is Annie Ruth and why is she sending out the call of "What's the Word?"

Presentation/Performance

Spoken word performance with Annie Ruth.

Areas of study the presentation enhances: writing, visual art, citizenship, drama, and music.

INTRODUCTION

Hello Educators,

My name is Annie Ruth and I am a visual artist, poet, author and speaker. Please encourage your students to call me "Miss Annie" or "Miss Annie Ruth."

What's the Word? READ! is an interactive format designed to take students and educators on an adventure through the arts, utilizing visual art, song, dance and imaginations. I only have two golden rules when sharing my work:

1. Everyone is creative
2. There is no right or wrong answer when interpreting Miss Annie Ruth's art. If you see it then it's in there. (This concept allows me to help students explore the world around them and value positive self-expression.)

Because I am a positive individual, I will always keep my presentations on a positive note, even when dealing with difficult subjects. Please enjoy the learning packet that has been prepared for you.

In the spirit of creativity,



Annie Ruth

ANNIE RUTH

Her art, literature, and positive works are global and she reaches people of various ages cultures and backgrounds. The works that she creates can be found in homes, schools, businesses, and churches. She is more than an artist. Annie Ruth is a catalyst of creativity – a woman who helps to set the standards for artistic excellence.

For more than 30 years Annie Ruth has been cultivating and sharing the gifts that she was blessed with because she knew that she was given more than just mere talent. She is an artist, poet, author, speaker, and the list goes on. It keeps growing! The more she does, the more she is able to do.

ACTIVITIES

I. CULTURE/HISTORY/ CITIZENSHIP

WHAT'S THE WORD? READ!: THE LANGUAGE

To simplify the linguistic term, many people refer to the language as Swahili, but it is properly called Kiswahili. The Ki prefix represents the actual language as opposed to the people who speak the language.

People all across the world speak different languages. The languages vary according to the country, community, culture, and families that people live in. Many of us know some words from languages other than English but how many of us know any words from an African language?

Africa is one of the largest continents in the world. It spreads over 11 million square miles and there are approximately 800 African languages spoken in the many nations within it. Swahili is the language of over 45 million people in eastern Africa, in all or parts of the countries of Kenya, Uganda, the People's Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), Zaire, Somalia, Tanzania, Rwanda, Zambia, Mozambique, and numerous others. Because Swahili is spoken across such a large area of the African continent, it possibly can serve as the universal language of the continent.

In learning some of the language, it is possible to understand more of the culture (the way of life, the customs, values and history) of our brothers and sisters in East Africa.

JAMBO (JAHM-BOW) WATOTO (WAH-TOE-TOE)

(For group activities, teachers can incorporate song, dance, and drum with a Caribbean flare. Use percussion instruments and sounds.)

Before we delve further into the activities, there are two special words that I want to teach everyone. The words are "Jambo" and "Watoto." These two words are Swahili. Jambo means "hello" and Watoto means "children." Whatever I see the students, I will greet them with "Jambo Watoto" and they should respond with "Jambo Miss Annie Ruth."

Voice Exercise: Practice singing these two words to various beat and tempos. Clap your hands and stomp your feet as you sing the song together.

Visual Art Project: Gather old popcorn tins, cookie can, or cardboard oatmeal containers. Gather scraps of colorful fabric or construction paper. Glue the fabric and/or paper around the tin cans. Make unique patterns. Cover the top of your drum with fabric or vinyl cloth to muffle the tin sound.

Reading Activity: Two suggested books for reading with students in the primary grades are *Moja Means One: Swahili Counting Book* and *Jambo Means Hello: Swahili Alphabet Book* by Muriel Feelings. The books are Caldecott Honor Books and available in hardcover edition and paperback.

Storytelling/Writing Exercise: Write or tell a special story using two special words that you've learned by reading the books above or books about another language other than English.

Question: What are some of the words that we use to greet each other in our family, school, church, and community?

II. CALL AND RESPONSE

Call and Response is a technique used in literature and song; this technique has its roots in African history as well. Ask the students in the room, “who likes poetry?” Ask all of the students, “who likes rap?”

Did you know that rap is a form of poetry – one of the freest forms of poetic voice and full of self-expression? Paul Laurence Dunbar used this type of poetic style in many of his works. The point that I want to leave with you is that even some rap, depending upon what the message is, should be viewed as positive self-expression.

Throughout numerous African villages, the elders would put out the call and the villagers would response. Within this context, I am the elder and the students are the villagers. The call is “What’s the word?” and the response is “READ.”

So, **What’s the Word? READ!**

Say, **What’s the Word? READ!**

Music Exercise: Practice rapping in a call and response format.

This next poem is called “Reader’s Rap” by Sharon M. Draper, educator, author, poet, speaker, and the 1997 National Teacher of the Year. The poem is available in two publications:

- *Let the Circle Be Unbroken – Collected Poems* by Sharon M. Draper © 1997
- *Not Quite Burned Out, But Crispy on the Edges: Inspiration, Laughter, and Encouragement for Teachers* by Sharon M. Draper © 2001.

One book is for educators and the other is for children. Because Ms. Draper is also a Cincinnati-based author, the books are available at www.sharondraper.com.

READER’S RAP

I’ll say, “Hey! Hey! I read a book today” – that’s the call. And your response is to repeat whatever I say. (So what would you say?) If I said, “Yo! Yo! I’m gonna read some mo’!” (What would you say?)

During the performance I will be using adlib. Adlib is adding words not necessarily in the written version but the words will flow with what was created. Adlib is generally used in performing lyrics or music. It is spontaneous and usually thought of on the spot. It incorporates the energy from the audience and performer. (Much of what I may adlib in the Reader’s Rap will come from the energy that I receive from the students – my villagers.)

READER'S RAP

Say hey hey!
I read a book today!

Say hey hey!
I read a book today!

Say yo yo!
I'm gonna read some mo'!

Say yo yo!
I'm gonna read some mo'!

In a book I find the magic
In a book I find the key
When I read my brain is busy
When I read my mind is free

Say hey hey!
I read a book today!

Say hey hey!
I read a book today!

Say yo yo!
I'm gonna read some mo'!

Say yo yo!
I'm gonna read some mo'!

In a book I find the answers
In a book I find the clues
When I read I am the captain
When I read I NEVER LOSE!

Say hey hey!
I read a book today!

Say hey hey!
I read a book today!

Say yo yo!
I'm gonna read some mo'!

Say yo yo!
I'm gonna read some mo'!

With a book I have the victory
With a book I have a friend
With a book I am a champion
With a book I always win!

Say hey hey!
I read a book today!

Say hey hey!
I read a book today!

Say yo yo!
I'm gonna read some mo'!

Say yo yo!
I'm gonna read some mo'!

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Performance Exercise: Break your class up into two groups. Chose a leader to read the verse in the rap. Have one group call and have the other group respond.

Question: How does rapping something positive like the "Reader's Rap" make you feel?

III. LOVE

Love is the greatest gift that we can have or give. The question is where can we find love? We are almost sure of finding love with our parents, our friends, our sisters and brothers but where does love live? In my poem called “Searching,” a narrative poem (a poem that tells a story), I described my search for love. I wanted to know where love lived – Where was his or her house?

SEARCHING

I went walking down the street one day
Searching for his home
But I didn't have his address
Or his telephone . . .

I went walking up and down
And asking all around
“Do you know where love lives
Or where he can be found?”

But as I walked around the blocks
And saw the ticking clocks
I knew I should be heading home
For it was getting dark

And as I walked up on my steps
To the front door
I knew my search was over
And I would search no more

This strange fellow was standing there
And he told me something true
He said, “You don't have to search for love
Because he lives inside of you.”

Exercise: Have the students pretend that love is a person. Have them create and write a poem or short story about their search for love.

IV. THINGS THAT ARE SPECIAL TO ME

. . . (MY MAMA)

Our last poem is a special poem. It is called a tribute. Have students practice saying “tribute.” A tribute is recognition, appreciation or an honor. We often honor our mothers on various occasions. Mama can be who? Yes, mama can be your biological mother, aunt, grandmother, and older sister, a foster mother, cousin, and so much more – there’s no right or wrong answer.

Mama is a word that we use in the English language but it has African roots as well. In Swahili “mama” is pronounced (mah-mah) and spelled exactly the same. Many people often spell Mama, “Momma,” particularly when writing poetry.

Exercise: This poem is also call and response. A leader reads some questions about a mama and the group responds with “MY MAMA” (very energetically). Have students create additional stanzas throughout the poem by incorporating attributes about their mamas.

My Mama

Who’s that wearing rags and strings
Compared to your fine clothes
And fancy things?
MY MAMA

Who’s that working endless nights
To make sure you grow up
Proper and right?
MY MAMA

Who’s that washing your clothes
Changing those diapers
And cleaning your nose?
MY MAMA

Who’s that walking up and down the street
Carrying those large sacks
Full of food to eat?
MY MAMA

Who’s that draggin’ a laundry bag down
To the washing machine
Or making sure that the house is clean?
MY MAMA

Who’s that wiping away your tears
Or singing softly
To calm your fears?
MY MAMA

Who’s that at home praying in the dark
While you’re out hanging with friends
Or playing in the park?
MY MAMA

Who’s that person that no one can replace
Has a special place in your heart
And brings a smile to your face?
MY MAMA

Who’s that lady who deserves the best
A lifetime of mother’s days –
Something different than the rest
MY MAMA

Depending on where we are from and how we do things in our families, all of our mothers do different things for us. Some have to work harder than others. But there’s no better or worse or right or wrong – just different. This poem was written as a tribute to my mother . . .

V. WHAT'S THE WORD? READ!

(THE ARTWORK)

Annie Ruth will bring with her a special poster entitled, *What's the Word? READ!* This is a complimentary poster for your school or classroom. It incorporates the visual art of Annie Ruth and the poetry of Sharon M. Draper.

Before you get started remember the second golden rule. Repeat after me. Take a good look at the artwork and write down what you see. Now remember that the question is what does each individual see? — Not, what does his or her neighbor see? Keep in mind that there's no right or wrong answer – if the students see it then it's in there.

What kinds of things can we read? Just like art, reading is beyond the surface of what we see and there is so much that we can gain by reading and by exposing ourselves to a variety of art and literature.

The art featured in this presentation goes beyond the surface of the art into a world called "imagination." It requires you to erase all of the formal learning that you've acquired or expectations that you may have about my work or me. You must simply feel what has been placed onto the paper.

The artwork process is much like that of an author who places himself into a character. (It is depicted from the innocent mind of a child, yet the themes are complex and require you to dig deeper than the surface.)

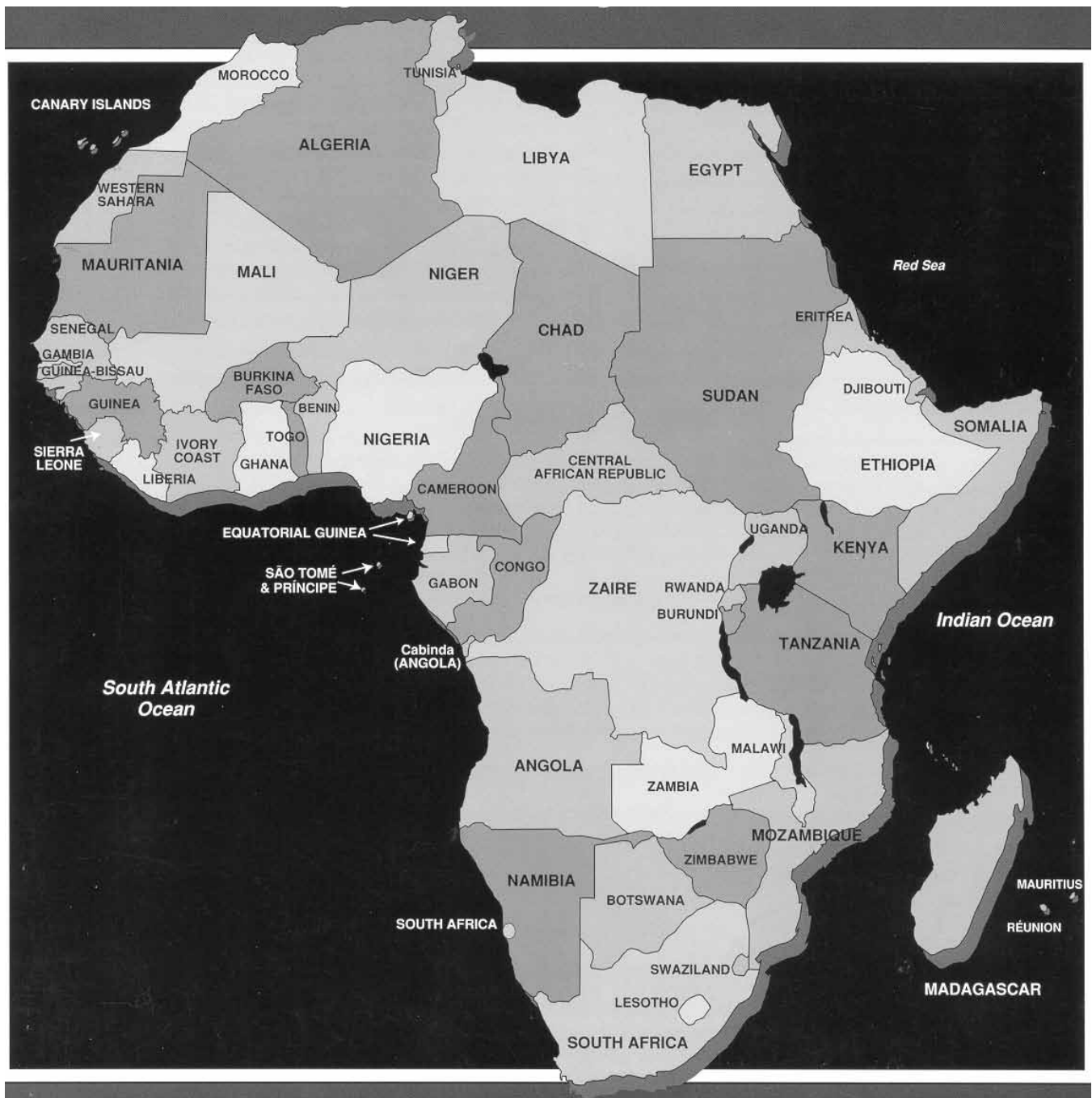
The artistic style, which my friend artist Brian Joiner, best described as direct innocence, is one that I have adapted in my works for and about children.

Open your mind as you experience the art of *What the Word? READ!* It will not only change the way you view art but it will change the way you view life.

Last call. So, What's the Word? READ! . . . say, What's the Word? READ! . . . When people read you, let them read something positive.



AFRICA



IN THE HANDS BY ANNIE RUTH

