Play? In the Library???

EXACTLY. But isn’t that noisy? Usually, maybe, sometimes. Doesn’t it make a mess? Sure does, most of the time. But why let kids play in the library? Let me tell you.

I am sharing excerpts (with permission) from the book, The Power of Play. *

“Play is a ‘jumping off place’ that can set in motion the possibility of learning. Play should open up possibilities and an inspired sense of discovery. This kind of play can be described in many ways: ‘purposeful play’, ‘free play’, ‘imaginative play’, ‘dramatic play’, and ‘meaningful play’. You may have also heard about ‘role playing’, ‘constructive playing’, ‘social playing’, and ‘rough-and-tumble playing’. Many parents, caregivers, librarians, and teachers understand this kind of engagement through their daily observations that children learn best when they are happy and at play.

“Curiosity drives learning. The inspiration to explore and the need to discover are a portkey to higher-level thinking. Curiosity is the secret to a child’s natural enthusiasm about life and rapid development toward maturity.

“Play is a first step in life by which a child can mature into a thinking person. Libraries can offer opportunities for children – and adults – to engage their mindsthrough play and learning activities, books, information, conversations, and reflection time. Libraries can offer opportunities for children to plant seed thoughts...in their own minds that will germinate, blossom, and ripen as they grow into young men and women.

“What better place for parents and caregivers to inspire this type of learning and for children to develop the mature and playful mind that at the library?”

So many of the libraries in Alabama reside in areas where industry has been lost, the economy has become depressed, and the poverty level is high. Children in these areas have little or no opportunities at home for play, with
toys, books, or simply their imagination. We can support the community and the children’s learning process by offering even simple, inexpensive play spaces at our libraries.

*The Power of Play*; Stoltz, Dorothy, Conner, Marisa, and Bradberry, James; ALA Editions; 2015. Used with permission.

Dorothy Stoltz coordinates programming and outreach services at Carroll County (MD) Public Library.

Marisa Conner coordinates programming for children and youth at Baltimore County Public library.

James Bradberry is an award winning architect/author and principal of James Bradberry Architects in Bryn Mawr, PA.

The fact is, children who engage in dramatic, creative, and constructive play tend to do better in school and life. Our goal as youth librarians should be to not only provide books but other critical learning opportunities for the children we serve.

Many of us work in areas that are economically depressed. This means the children in our area may not have access to the vital tools or opportunities for play in their homes. Adding these structured and unstructured activities/learning opportunities in our libraries would, as with summer reading, help to level the playing field for economically disadvantaged children.

~Gail Sheldon, an editorial (facts from *The Importance of Play, Particularly Constructive Play, in Public Library Programming*)
Webinars


Other Stuff

OCT. 28: International Observe the Moon Night. For all sorts of resources to help celebrate this event, check out [www.starnetlibraries.org/international-observe-the-moon-night/](http://www.starnetlibraries.org/international-observe-the-moon-night/). They have resources, activities and a webinar recording available. Join the rest of the world to celebrate this event. (HINT: I’ll be looking for pictures!!!)

ALSC/Candlewick Press "Light the Way" Grant: The ALSC/Candlewick Press “Light the Way” Grant is sponsored by Candlewick Press in honor of author Kate DiCamillo and the themes represented in her books. The award consists of a $3,000 grant to assist a library in conducting exemplary and replicable outreach to underserved populations through a new and innovative program or an expansion of work already being done. Applicants must be members of the American Library Association. For complete information about eligible projects and requirements visit: [http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/profawards/candlewicklighttheway](http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/profawards/candlewicklighttheway).

Libraries and Autism Grant: The “Autism Welcome Here: Library Programs, Services and More” grant is sponsored by Libraries and Autism: We’re Connected. This grant honors the groundbreaking work of Libraries and Autism: We’re Connected co-founder Meg Kolaya. Applications open: September 1, 2017; Deadline for submissions is December 1, 2017. For more information: [http://www.librariesandautism.org/index.htm](http://www.librariesandautism.org/index.htm)

The Association of Library Services to Children (ALSC) offers new, FREE, Día Program downloads such as “Building STEAM with Día”. El día de los niños/El día de los libros (Children’s Day/Book Day), The celebration emphasizes the importance of literacy for children of all linguistic and cultural backgrounds. [http://dia.ala.org/content/free-program-downloads](http://dia.ala.org/content/free-program-downloads).
STEAMing Along

Paper Building Blocks
Pictures and craft from Babble-Dabble-Do (www.babbledabbledo.com)

Most paper crafts revolve around creating something fancy out of paper; but paper can also be used as a structural material! These simple paper building blocks are a great way to demonstrate engineering for kids in a variety of ways. First, you take a material that is weak, in and of itself - i.e. paper, fold it into a robust shape such as a triangle, and voila! you are now building with paper!

**Just how strong can paper actually be??** Make a few blocks, and put it to the test. Just grab your materials, follow the instructions and test away! There are some examples that follow, but you, your staff, and, most definitely the kids will come up with a bunch of ideas. Some will work, some won’t. Then they can figure out why. It’s all part of the learning process!

**Materials:**
Thick colored paper, select multiple colors (card stock or heavy scrapbook paper are good choices)
Paper cutter (optional)
Exacto knife, straightedge, cutting mat
Tape

**Instructional Notes:** These blocks are based on a 1 inch module, but you can increase the size proportionally to make bigger blocks. Adults should be in charge of steps one through four. Kids can take over at step five.

**Instructions:**

1. Select your first piece of paper and place it on your cutting mat. Score your paper vertically at the 1-inch and 2-inch marks and trim through the paper completely at the 3-inch mark. To score paper lightly drag your exacto blade along your straightedge, making a light line in the paper. This will make folding easier.
2. Repeat the scoring and trimming process with each piece of paper.

3. Trim the lengths of scored paper cross-wise into 1-inch strips. Using a paper cutter for this step would be faster, otherwise you can use the exacto blade and straightedge.

4. Cut some paper “planks”, 1-inch strips of paper that are not scored. They can be 3-6 inches long.

5. Fold your 1-inch strips of paper into thirds along the scored lines.

6. Tape the open edges together to form a triangle.

7. Repeat steps 5 and six until you have a bunch of blocks.

Start positioning the triangles in a row, alternating between triangles that are right side up and upside down. Add a plank or two on top of each layer. When you have a few layers start testing how strong your structure is!

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**Steaming Along Books**


Arrr... Talk Like a Pirate Day!

MCCPL-Pike Rd

Albert L. Scott

Dothan-Houston

Tupper Lightfoot

Homewood
Ms. Frances at Aliceville Public Library shares the book “The Three Hungry Wolves Who Came to Dinner” with the Pickens County Headstart class. You can’t tell who’s having more fun - the kids or Ms. Frances!

Junior builders of all ages use colorful blocks with their imaginations during the September 5 session of the Lego® League at the Albert L. Scott Library in Alabaster.

Icky Ricky strikes again! This time it’s sleepover madness when his best friends come over for some fun. By the end of it, there’s nowhere clean to sleep on the floor so what do they do? Stick their sleeping bags to the ceiling of course! The Oneonta Public Library decided to see just how strong peanut butter was for ourselves and boy were we surprised! We expected the lighter stuff to stick, but a rock?! The kids had an absolute blast sticking stuff into peanut butter and it served as a great little experiment for them.
Fun Stuff

Save like-size boxes and create your own life-size library JENGA.

Make your own sorting and matching tins using old bakeware and stuff you have just lying around.

Corner play area idea - impact with just a little space.

Turn an old library table into a chalkboard table with paint samples & chalkboard paint.

LEGO/DUPLO blocks can be vertical instead of flat.
Title: Mask of Shadows

Author: Lindsey Miller

Release Date: August 2017

*Editor’s Note: As you are reading you will notice the main character being referred to in the plural. This is due to the nature of the character and their gender identity on a day-to-day basis.

Sal Leon is a surprisingly loyal supporter of the queen, considering their life as a highway robber. They also have dreams of being more. So when they get their hands on a poster that announces the information they need to join in the competition to be one of the queen’s assassins, Sal jumps on the chance to leave their own life behind in order to serve the queen...as well as the chance to take the revenge Sal has been dreaming of for years.

Because Sal remembers the days before the Queen took power. Sal remembers the war between the two countries. Sal remembers their home, stuck between the two warring nations and how it was devastated thanks to the actions of the one to whom they owed their allegiance. And Sal remembers how it was the queen that took action.

But now Sal is stepping into a world that is far removed from any they have known. The competition is deadly, enemies are everywhere, and Sal is going to have to pull off the impossible to reach their goals.

I was really excited to read Mask of Shadows. Mostly because you do not see a lot of fiction with genderfluid characters (in that they do not particularly identify with a specific sex but instead are more likely to fluidly switch from day to day as to what they identify as) but also because the story looked interesting. Unfortunately, the start of the story was rough. Linsey Miller decided to write the story in first person, and that is always a challenge to pull off well. Miller improved as she continued, but the first couple of chapters are hard to get through as you try to figure out Sal, the world in general, and the plot specifically.

As the story continued, I was able to settle down and enjoy the read but it never really grabbed me. It was a superficial story in which I felt I never really got to know any of
the characters very well, even the main one. For instance, (and I’m about to do a bit of spoiling here) when Sal arrives and is asked to kill a guard to prove themselves, Sal, despite having never killed anyone before, immediately jumps into action and is ready to break the guard’s neck before they are called off. This is explained away as Sal being willing to do anything for the queen, and feeling that anyone in service to the queen should be willing to lay down their life, but that didn’t really settle with me. I think a lot of the difficulty was due to the fact that Miller did decide to do a fantasy story in first person. It is hard to expect someone to convey the full depth of a fantasy world while limited to pretty much dialogue and internal stream of thought.

In the end, I doubt I will ever read the sequel if it comes out. It is unfortunate that the main thing a story has going for it is the sexual identity of its main character, but to be fair there are a lot of other YA novels out there with a similar quality of writing and not even that to recommend it. It was enjoyable enough to get me through the book, so if someone simply wants to add this title to their collection in order to provide more diversity I’d say go for it. But if you’re on a tight budget, look around more. I am all for better representation in literature, but it helps if a book has more going for it than that.

**Recommended for:** Fans of gritty fantasy.

**Things to watch out for:** The main character is part of the LGBTQ+ community. There is a great deal of violence, murder, and crime. Surprisingly there is little swearing and nothing more than a bit of kissing.

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**Other Resources:**

Global Family Research Project has lots of research based articles available such as *Seven Research Based Ways that Families Promote Early Literacy*. Go to: [https://globalfrp.org/](https://globalfrp.org/).

Association of Library Services to Children: *The Importance of Play, Particularly Constructive Play, in Public Library Programming*: [http://www.ala.org/alsc/publications-resources/white-papers/importance-play](http://www.ala.org/alsc/publications-resources/white-papers/importance-play)

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*Play is often talked about as if were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.*

— Fred Rogers