

A DOZEN ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS FOR TEACHERS TO PASS ON— also for parents, grandparents and other mentors . . .

BY JUDITH WATSON

A college professor had his sociology class go into the Baltimore slums to get case histories of 200 young boys. They were asked to write an evaluation of each boy's future. In every case the students wrote, "He hasn't got a chance." Twenty-five years later another sociology professor came across the earlier study. He had his students follow up on the project to see what had happened to these boys. With the exception of 20 boys who had moved away or died, the students learned that 176 of the remaining 180 had achieved more than ordinary success as lawyers, doctors and businessmen.

The professor was astounded and decided to pursue the matter further. Fortunately, all the men were in the area and he was able to ask each one, "How do you account for your success?" In each case the reply came with feeling, "There was a teacher."

The teacher was still alive, so he sought her out and asked the old but still alert lady what magic formula she had used to pull these boys out of the slums into successful achievement.

The teacher's eyes sparkled and her lips broke into a gentle smile. "It's really very simple," she said. "I loved those boys."

*Eric Butterworth
Chicken Soup for the Soul*

INTRODUCTION

You do not need to be part of a faculty or in a classroom to be a teacher—of children or anyone else.

If you are currently part of the American education system, there is a good chance you don't get to do very much educating, but spend your time instead on discipline, administration, and training designed to help students do well on certain tests. Training, while useful, is not educating.

Teaching is an incredible calling, both noble and sacred, certainly challenging and, on the good days, enormous fun. It is also profoundly important in the process of personal and collective transformation. Mere training is in some other category altogether.

When teaching is about true education, the relationship between teacher and student can be mutually life-changing, and there are times when an entire classroom becomes a resonant field of shared experience, ideas, and appreciation as well as a foundation for spiritual growth.

One of the most instrumental ways we could bring the New Age into being is to encourage education rather than instruction in our schools and homes. One of the qualities of the best teachers is that they tell their students the truth, respecting the fact that the students probably already know it anyway. Masking the truth just makes a mockery of the relationship between teacher and pupil. It does not need to be told harshly, of course, but that is a different matter.

Another attribute of the most effective teachers is that they guide students to be responsible for their own behavior. A young person who can take such responsibility will grow up empowered to make the world a better place, rather than assuming someone else will do it—or blaming others when the world seems oppressive.

There are a few key concepts that make life easier for us to accept and deal with. They are not necessarily complicated ideas, and children can readily understand most of them, depending on the way the ideas are presented. However, even most adults do not know them.

We get caught up in living and trying to solve our problems, always hoping we don't get caught looking stupid. We don't necessarily think in big-picture concepts or share them when we find them because they suddenly seem obvious, and we assume everyone else has probably known them all along.

Here are twelve such ideas we are about to explore. If we could fully grasp half of them, the world would be an entirely different place.

1. Knowledge changes

Knowledge is not a static thing, and our perception of what we know is always evolving and expanding. This is true for us individually, as a culture and as a species.

2. Shift happens

A paradigm is a belief system. A change in belief creates a paradigm shift. One obvious example is the shift away from believing the earth to be flat.

3. Emotions are messages

Your feelings are more than just feelings. They contain information that can help you make changes toward better health and happiness in your life.

4. Love or fear

Love and fear are opposites, and all other emotions come from one of these two.

5. Just because you can't see something doesn't mean it isn't there

From the physical, like microorganisms or sound waves, to the abstract, like joy and grief, we cannot necessarily prove something exists by seeing it—or disprove it because we cannot see/taste/hear/touch/smell it. So, how do we know what's really real?

6. Just because you can see something doesn't mean it is there

Our brains are quite capable of altering reality. In fact, they do it all the time.

7. We are energy

Ultimately, what makes us alive and unique is not something physical. Physics demonstrates that the entire universe is made of energy—and nothing but energy. Matter is merely energy condensed into a physical form, much the way steam condenses into water. You and I are also made of energy.

8. All life is one

Not only are we all made of energy, we are all part of a single energy field. The greeting *Namaste* so often used by New Agers could translate as “The light in me recognizes the same light in you.”

9. The true law of survival is cooperation

The old world paradigm: you *or* me. The new paradigm: you *and* me. Look at the difference one tiny conjunction can make.

10. Head and heart must be in balance

Your head makes decisions with detachment and analysis; your heart uses intuition and compassion. Each has value and both need each other, just as birds need two wings in order to have balance and fly straight. If you “live in your head”—or in your heart—you are missing out on more than you realize.

11. The scarcity scare

The more we are inundated with messages of fear, the more we become fear-full. We are led to believe there is not enough to go around, which in turn causes our decisions and behavior to come from fear rather than love, which in turn makes us very easy to polarize and manipulate.

12. Without you, the universe would not be complete

Every one of us has some special quality or capacity. No one is irrelevant to the whole.

CONCEPT #1 - Knowledge changes

Think about this for a minute: knowledge actually changes all the time—or, more accurately, **our perspective on what we know keeps expanding**. Science at last has come to acknowledge that. Accounts of history finally show more than one perspective and include women and minorities who never appeared before. Even permissible sentence structure and language usage changes. Like, awesome, Dude. Nobody seems to mention very often that we spend years in school learning information that does not remain the same!

People have a difficult time with change. They want the truth to remain intact and unchanging partly because that feels dependable and safe and partly so they don't have to do the work of thinking things through in light of new information. But it is a *good* thing to keep learning! That is what makes progress possible.

Smart as we now think we are in this age of technology, there is an enormous amount still to be discovered. In Bill Bryson's amazing book, *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, he includes:

We live in a universe whose age we can't quite compute, surrounded by stars whose distances we don't altogether know, filled with matter we can't identify, operating in conformance with physical laws whose properties we don't truly understand.

We don't have the faintest idea of the number of things that live on our planet. Estimates range from 3 million to 200 million, and it may be as many as 97 percent that we haven't discovered yet.

Because they can't run from predators, plants have had to develop chemical defenses, and so are particularly intriguing. At least 99 percent of flowering plants have never been tested for their medicinal properties. Nearly a quarter of all prescribed medicines are derived from just forty plants.

The idea of atoms and the term "atom" were developed by the ancient Greeks, but a modern understanding and acceptance of them didn't really happen until the 1900s.

It has been said that there are three stages in scientific discovery: first, people deny that it is true; then they deny that it is important; finally they credit the wrong person.

The other related concept it is important to remember is this: **You can't know something until you know it.** That's a statement of the obvious, true, but consider how many times you've felt like a complete fool for not knowing something—simply because you didn't know it yet. We test and evaluate students on whether or not they have assimilated information they may or may not find interesting or pertinent, and there will be more discoveries in their lifetimes than ever before in human history. Surely it is only fair to tell them that knowledge evolves.

Children tend to think of people in the "olden days" as stupider than we are because they didn't know what we now know. The truth of the matter is that their brains were as remarkable as ours; they were just in a different place in historical discovery. Plus, we are learning that they sometimes had knowledge and skills that we don't have today.

The other side of that idea is that once you know something, you can't return to not knowing it. We're not capable of un-evolving.

CONCEPT #2 - Shift happens

A change in your beliefs about reality is called a **paradigm shift**. A paradigm is simply the way you see things, like the widespread belief most people held at one time that

the world is flat. But that belief has been disproved, and we can never go back to it again. Sometimes a paradigm shift happens because of a new invention, like a jet engine or a cell phone. New ideas can also cause a change in paradigms. They are not always easy to accept. Sometimes people have died to make paradigm shifts happen.

Whether they happen gradually or in an instant, painfully or peacefully, internally or publicly, paradigm shifts do happen, and there will be more of them in the coming few years than humanity has ever experienced. There will be so many that the cumulative effect will create—and, in fact, is already creating--an entirely New Paradigm on earth. Many people call it the New Age.

A new paradigm can actually alter the dimensions we live in. Consider cars and planes vs. travel by horse. What changed? Obviously, in cars and planes we could ride in comfort, and we could go much faster between one place and another. But that difference not only changed the way we travel, it changed both time and distance! It once took many days to get from Boston to Philadelphia by horseback, but it is only a matter of hours now that we have airplanes. What was once a long and physically demanding journey made the distance between the two cities gigantic, where now it is no big deal. Another way to say that is that **a week became less than a day!** The world actually became “smaller” because it was so much easier and faster to get around it.

Television also changed everything, making it possible to know what was happening half way around the world at the very moment it was happening. Even if they weren't physically in the same place, people from different countries and cultures could see each other, sometimes for the first time. When that happens, people become connected in new ways. When you meet someone, you can choose to fear or resent them because they are different from you, but once you get to know them, you almost always start to care about and try to understand them and their problems. Either way you can no longer ignore them entirely.

Caring about other people is absolutely part of New Age thinking.

CONCEPT #3 - Emotions are messages

Emotions have remarkable power, and some of us are more effective than others at keeping our emotions under control. Letting your emotions show is often considered childish, or leaves you unguarded and vulnerable and therefore feeling unsafe. However, people are often taught and expected to mask or manage their “negative” emotions, which leads to feeling ashamed of even having these emotions. When we are told that we should

not *show* our “negative” emotions—anger, fear, disgust, hurting—we become convinced that we should not *feel* these things. This is the source of a great deal of unhappiness—and some serious neuroses.

But if you pay attention to your emotions, you’ll find that they contain a wealth of information which can serve you well. We soon learn, for example, to “push each other’s buttons.” Growing children will irritate each other and their parents relentlessly that way. So instead of becoming furious with the perpetrator each time, imagine taking a good look at the trigger and the emotions that follow. Who or what comes to mind? What is the unfinished business there? You’ll be amazed what you may discover.

Pain is not necessarily a bad thing—not that it’s any fun—but it can bring healing, learning and wisdom if you listen to it. Feel the feelings. The longer you put it off, the longer they have the power to keep hurting you, limiting you, and making you ill--and the more the pattern will keep repeating itself. Then you might try talking to your emotions to see what they’re trying to tell you. Physical and emotional hurts can heal much faster if you respect them as messengers rather than trying to ignore them.

CONCEPT #4 - Love or fear

The funny thing is, despite lots of different emotions, there are basically only two responses to all that life brings you: love and fear. All the positive feelings of joy, creativity, wonder, comfort, enthusiasm--you name it--all stem from a sense of loving or being loved. When you are in the energy of love, then body, mind and spirit are all in tune; your heart is open, time and stress disappear, all things seem possible, and you like everyone, including yourself.

Any feelings that are not sourced in love actually stem from fear. Despair, envy, greed, hatred, anxiety and anger are all ways that fear expresses itself. We fear pain, we fear death, we fear lack, we fear abandonment, and worst of all, we feel we are somehow “not good enough.” Fear is often overwhelming and all-consuming; when you are in fear, it feels as if there is no other reality—and never will be.

Also, judgment and criticism you feel for other people not only are signs of fear, they even are a message that you fear those things in yourself. Sorry, but it’s true. If you see somebody doing something that’s really bugging you, ask yourself, “Okay, now when do I behave like that?” Often you’ll suddenly see it right away and go, “Oh, nooooooo!” If you spot it, you got it.

Life is not easy. Try not to make it more difficult for yourself and other people than it already is. Embrace and appreciate the times of love, and more will come. When the dark times come, as they do for all of us, try to treat yourself (and others) with compassion rather than disdain.

The Piscean Age honored personal suffering in service to others, but it has finally passed. We have come to the Age of Aquarius, which honors joy in loving. Let's get with the program!

CONCEPT #5 - Just because you can't see something doesn't mean it isn't there

From the physical, like microorganisms or sound waves, to the abstract, like joy and grief, we cannot decide something doesn't exist just because we can't see it with our eyes.

It took one scientist eleven full years of hunting for neutrons before finally succeeding in 1932. Until 1932 we could not "see" neutrons—couldn't prove they exist. But they were there all along.

In the children's story *Horton Hears a Who*, no one but Horton the elephant could tell that there was an entire small city on a dust speck until all the inhabitants of Whoville worked together to prove it. But they did it.

It is resistance to whatever is happening that causes many of life's difficulties. If you can relax and accept whatever comes your way, it is much easier for positive change to happen. The more rigid your belief system, the more you are certain that things should go the way you think they should, the more it will appear to you that things are "going wrong." The more certain you are of exactly what is and isn't possible, the fewer miracles you invite into your life.

Keeping an open mind about what's possible is not the same thing as gullibly believing everything you hear. Nevertheless, New Age philosophy invites us to open up our thinking to be inclusive to a wide range of ideas and possibilities. A clear understanding that just because you can't see something doesn't mean it isn't there may well be a useful avenue to help bring new paradigms into being with ease rather than high anxiety.

The partner to that idea is that just because you *can* see something doesn't necessarily mean it actually *is* there.

CONCEPT # 6 - Just because you can see something doesn't mean it is there

When a bicycle wheel spins very fast, the spokes blur together until it looks as though the wheel is solid. It's sort of like that with us. The molecules that form us are made up of sub-atomic bits of matter and energy whizzing around so much that we appear solid, although we're really not. We are made of atoms, and atoms consist almost entirely of empty space.

Another example: Our brains are amazing instruments and will actually fill in information for us, whether or not it's really there—completing a line or a pattern for us. When you write something and accidentally leave a word out, you really may not be able to see that it's missing because your brain “sees” it for you.

So, don't get too caught up in the ability of the five senses to be infallible.

The point is not to convince children that they can never trust their senses or the things they hear or read. The point is to give them the idea of a larger picture. Just as they are changing—growing taller and smarter every day, so also the world they live in is constantly changing. That is a very fascinating and exciting notion!

CONCEPT #7 - We are energy

Although we appear solid, mostly we are not. In fact, what makes us alive and unique is not the bits of physical matter we're made of. Primarily, **we are energy**. There are a number of ways to think about that.

For one thing, there is all that energy of the whizzing atoms we're made of.

Bill Bryson says:

We are made of very ordinary elements. The only thing special about the atoms that make you is that they make you . . . For you to be here, trillions of atoms had to assemble in an intricate and intriguing manner to create you in an arrangement so specialized and particular that it has never been tried before and will only exist this once.

Why should they bother? The atoms that make you don't care about you—or even know you're there. For that matter, they don't know that they are there. They have no mind, and are not

even themselves alive . . . If you were to pick yourself apart with tweezers, one atom at a time, you would end up with a pile of atomic dust, none of which had ever been alive, but all of which had once been you.

When you die, the atoms that were you go off to be something else. They make everything. If you had to reduce scientific history to one important statement it would be, "All things are made of atoms."

If you think of yourself as energy, it changes what's possible and what's important. No matter what you look like, your physical qualities are not what make you you. Neither are where you live, or who you know, or what you do for a living, or any number of the other things we think define us. If those things aren't what matters most, then what does?

CONCEPT #8 - All life is one

Every atom you possess has almost certainly passed through several stars and been part of millions of organisms on its way to becoming you.

Our existence as energy is true of everyone and everything, which means we're all part of the same whole. We are individual beings, yes, but we're also each a part of the same energy field or collective consciousness. Principles of both science and spirituality are now aligning in the understanding that **all life is one**.

There are a number of ways to interpret that statement and integrate it into our lives.

I grew up being told to finish the food on my plate because there were children starving in Africa. The logic was never clear to me, and I'm still not sure if I was supposed to feel guilty about leftovers being wasted, blessed beyond measure that I had to eat asparagus, or compassion and responsibility for those less fortunate than I. Because of the well-intentioned picture books and geography texts of the time, what was clear to me was that I had nothing whatsoever in common with the prettily costumed or nearly naked children in their pictures.

Besides, what on earth could I do for children starving on the other side of the world? Sending them my uneaten broccoli or even my allowance was clearly such a ludicrously inadequate drop in the bucket that even I knew it. As one comedian says, "So I finished my food. I got fat, and the children in Africa went right on starving."

I was fifty years old before I started to have any inkling of the way we are all interconnected. Neale Donald Walsh's *Conversations with God* books were a real eye-opener. Even more so was living and teaching overseas.

On one occasion, I was reading to a group of international students what I thought was a very American story about a mother so uptight that she put the same number of chocolate chips in each cookie she baked. Not surprisingly, she also carefully covered all her furniture in plastic. A Saudi Arabian student sat there shaking his head more and more noticeably, until finally I asked, “What is it, Omar?”

“Oh,” he moaned, “this is *sooo* describing my mother!”

I was flabbergasted. No matter our age, wealth, climate, history, surroundings, education, whatever, we are the same the entire world over. We laugh at the same things, freak out at the same things, love and fear the same things, and wonder about the same things. Yes, we each meet some people who become closer friends than others do, but that is based on values you share, and it doesn’t matter what the heritage of that person is or how close to you they live.

We all share the same planet, and most of us are quite capable of communicating—and negotiating—with each other if we choose to do so.

The other thing *all life is one* means is that if one limb is injured, the entire plant is jeopardized. If you break a leg, your entire body is affected, not to mention your mind and spirit as well. The days of living in isolation from each other are over, in terms of both technology and ethics.

A friend of mine spent many years in international work. When people learn that he has been globe-trotting for 40 years, they are often overly impressed. He shrugs it off, saying, “It’s a small planet.” On a small planet, what each of us thinks, says and does makes life a little better—or a little worse—for everyone else on the planet.

As the ever practical Ben Franklin said, We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.

CONCEPT # 9 - The true law of survival is cooperation

In fact, it is collaboration, not hoarding, that creates prosperity.

The “survival of the fittest” theory of evolution justified centuries of killing and war as people tried to dominate and control each other. A brilliant man named Buckminster Fuller referred to it as a you-*or*-me world, where we actually needed to fight and compete

to determine a winner. Back in the 1970s he spoke of the need to change to a you-*and*-me world, where we all have enough of what we need.

The old paradigm: you *or* me. The new paradigm: you *and* me.

In fact, that single conjunction can transform life as we know it; and, along with many others, I have come to think in terms of an Old Paradigm world and a New Paradigm, which is the New Age, where our evolved understanding of who we are and what we need to do to survive together changes everything. I believe that, whether or not they would express it in the same way, that's the message President Obama and other far-sighted world leaders are bringing to the planet.

Many traditions speak of a radical shift in or around the year 2012, which is now only a few years away. Some predict catastrophe, others anticipate phenomenal opportunity. Barbara Marx Hubbard calls this **a time of conscious evolution in which old ways are breaking down and new ways are breaking through.**

Our utmost effort to switch to a you-and-me world just may work. I believe nothing else will.

CONCEPT #10 - Head and heart must be in balance

Such things as physical strength, courage, the ability to focus thinking and action on a single task, strategizing, competition, and direct action are the skills that enable the human race to survive and grow and become powerful in the physical world. These are sometimes referred to as masculine qualities, and they are associated with the mind.

The attributes of intuition, nurturing, bearing and caring for the young, the ability to do several tasks at once, cooperation, and patience are the skills that raise the human from being “just another animal” and ensure that, even as humanity evolves and matures, it never loses its anchor in spiritual awareness. These are considered feminine qualities, associated primarily with the heart.

Masculine and feminine do not necessarily mean qualities that men have or women have. All of us have both masculine and feminine qualities in varying degrees, and the real trick is to be aware of which qualities are most dominant in you, and to find the wisdom to decide which occasion calls for which kind of response. Both have validity; both are essential to life. Finding a balance of masculine and feminine energy is necessary because mind without heart can become cruel; heart without mind ultimately becomes foolish.

CONCEPT #11 - **The scarcity scare**

The international philanthropist Lynn Twist has written a marvelous book called *The Soul of Money* (W. W. Norton & Co., 2003).

She says there are widely held assumptions in our society that we often take to be true. But they are actually not facts – just assumptions. And they are based on a pervasive belief in scarcity.

Example #1: There's not enough.

The old paradigm belief is that there's not enough to go around. Everyone can't make it. Somebody's going to be left out. There are way too many people. There's not enough food. There's not enough water. There's not enough time. There's not enough money. There's not enough love.

'There's not enough' generates a fear that drives us to make sure we and our loved ones aren't the people who get crushed, marginalized, or left out. We view everything through a lens of what is missing instead of what is there. The *New Paradigm* idea asserts that **we are surrounded by abundance**.

Try seeing your life through that lens. "I've got the sun in the morning and the moon at night" is the song's version of being surrounded by everything you need to make you happy. The world is full of wondrous resources, and if we steward wisely, there is plenty for all. Gratitude and generosity are both expressions of love.

Example #2: More is better.

'More is better' is a chase with no end and a race without winners. It's like a hamster wheel that we hop onto, get going, and then forget how to stop. Eventually, the chase for more becomes an addiction, and as with any addiction, it's almost impossible to stop the process when you're in its grip. But no matter how far you go, or how fast, or how many other people you pass up, you can't win. In the mind-set of scarcity, even *too much is not enough*.

Greed is indeed a "deadly sin" and the primary cause of all wars.

'More is better' misguides us in a deeper way. It leads us to define ourselves by what we have--power, fame and money. We judge others based on what they have and how much they have, and miss the immeasurable inner gifts they bring to life . . . In the pursuit

of more we overlook the fullness and completeness that are already within us waiting to be discovered. By what reasoning is it that we judge ourselves and others by what we possess rather than by who we are? How would the world—and we ourselves—be different if we valued people for who they *are* rather than what they *have*--the possessions they (or their parents) had managed to accumulate?

Actually, **enough is plenty**, and, no matter who we are, there is no need for us to try to be more than that.

CONCEPT #12 - Without you, the universe would not be complete

The Great Lie most of us are grappling with is that we are somehow inadequate, unworthy, and even unlovable. The journey of life appears to be about figuring out that we really believe that lie--and then setting it down again to embrace ourselves as we are.

Somehow we each need to know it's okay to value ourselves on our own terms and for our own reasons, not those of other people—not by how others say they see us, or how we think they see us, which is based on assumption and illusion or a different value system than our own, anyway.

Imagine that we are indeed at a point in evolution as dramatic as that between life in water and life on land or between plant and animal. The shift this time could be from unaware human to conscious human. Just as a rhododendron could not imagine what it would be like to be a dog, so we can't really wrap our heads around what may be coming in the way of our next evolutionary step and the potential it holds for each of us--our world and even beyond.

We are now an interconnected and mutually inter-dependent planet. We have seen ourselves from space, and we have invented the Internet communications network. Our personal and national economies depend on each other, and we've finally almost come to terms with the fact that the environment belongs to us all. Some of us are still blowing each other to bits as though that will resolve something, but at least there are massive global protests about it now.

I believe we are learning and growing. The more of us who do that individually, the more likely we are to cross some kind of critical threshold to reach some mass that tips the balance in favor of preserving ourselves and our small planet rather than annihilating ourselves and the Earth.

Just imagine what becomes possible when every child grows up seeing themselves as a unique part of the whole, indispensable and cherished, with something valuable to contribute. What kind of a world could we all share then?

Let us guide and support them in doing exactly that.

READING LIST

Books Often Presumed to be for Children

Children's books can be stunning and momentous, both visually and in their message. Reading aloud to children—or anyone--creates one of life's richest bonds, also called a resonant field.

In addition, *"If parents understood the huge educational benefits and intense happiness brought about by reading aloud to their children, and if every parent—and every adult caring for a child—read aloud a minimum of three stories a day to the children in their lives, we could probably wipe out illiteracy within one generation."*

From *Reading Magic* by Mem Fox, Harcourt, Inc., 2001. For more information on the joys and importance of reading aloud, you can also investigate authors Lucy McCormick Calkins and Jim Trelease.

These books are listed because they are so special in their own right and have the potential to create wonderful discussions with students of all ages and nationalities.

Abbott, Edwin, *Flatland--a Romance of Many Dimensions*, first published in London in 1884. May need to be adapted and paraphrased for children, but it is simple enough to do that and well worth the effort in terms of opening up to new dimensions. Helpful in a conversation about how [perspective changes](#).

Anno, Mitsumasa, *Anno's Medieval World*, 1979. In 1600 a monk named Giordano Bruno was actually burned at the stake for telling people that the earth revolves around the sun. This book tells very clearly the process a transformation in ideas needs to go through. Books ostensibly for children can be a phenomenal resource for big ideas. Especially effective for explaining [paradigm shifts](#).

Boritzer, Etan, *What is God?* Firefly Books, 1990.

Boynton, Sandra, *Yay, You!* Simon & Schuster, New York, 2001. Wonderful illustrations, wonderful message.

Buscaglia, Leo, *The Fall of Freddy the Leaf, A Story of Life for all ages*, 1982. One of the best, most reassuring explanations about death I've ever read. [We are energy](#).

Emberley, Ed, *Drummer Hoff*, won an award for its gorgeous illustrations. It's lyric and great fun to read aloud, and the subtle anti-war message is artistry at its best--a great jumping off point for discussion.

Gerstein, Mordicai, *The Mountains of Tibet*, HarperCollins, 1987. A gentle introduction to the possibility of reincarnation—with a surprise ending.

Leaf, Munroe, *Ferdinand, the Bull*, a classic from 1938. [Each of us is special.](#)

Mehdi, Sharon, *The Great Silent Grandmother Gathering*, Viking, 2005, calls itself *a story for anyone who thinks she can't save the world*. This book made me laugh with delight, then gave me goosebumps, and I finished it with a lump in my throat. The language is a joy, and the message inspired and inspiring.

Saint-Exupery, Antoine de, *The Little Prince*, Harcourt, 1943. Reality takes many forms.

Dr. Seuss' *Horton Hears a Who*, 1954, is one of the books that should be required reading for everyone on earth of all ages. Many wonderful themes, including but not limited to [just because you can't see something doesn't mean it isn't there.](#)

Smith, David J. and Shelagh Armstrong, *If the World Were a Village: A Book about the World's People*, Kids Can Press, 2002. A clear and helpful way to look at how the world is made up.

Spier, Peter, *People*, 1980, a beautifully illustrated look at who we are and how we are, and why it is so imperative and delightful that we are all different.

Thurber, James, *Many Moons*, 1943, an enchanting fairy tale about a young princess who wants the moon and the ways we each interpret our own reality. Every person's perception has validity, even if it ultimately doesn't have the whole truth.

Tillman, Nancy, *On the Night You were Born*, Feiwel and Friends, New York, 2005, lovingly given to my little girl for her healing, Christmas 2008. A wonderful version of [you are special.](#)

Viorst, Judith, *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney*, 1971, a brilliantly simple explanation of what happens after a pet dies to reassure a child that those who die are never truly gone. [All life is one.](#)

Warburg, Sandol Stoddard, *I Like You*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1965. Lyric, silly, and wonderfully affirming.

Williams, Sheron, *And in the Beginning*, Atheneum Publishers, New York, 1992. Gorgeous book in which the first man happens to be formed from the black sod of Kilimanjaro.

Wood, Douglas, *Old Turtle*, Scholastic Press, 2007.

Zemach, Margot, *It Could Always Be Worse: A Yiddish Folk Tale* (Michael Di Capua books), 1990. Another wonderful story lesson in how changing your perspective changes your perception.

See also www.chinaberry.com: Chinaberry sells outstanding children's books, quality toys, fun family games and puzzles, kids' arts and crafts, and many other gifts and treasures to support mindful parenting. They search high and low for only the very best in kids' literature, the most fun and engaging educational games and children's crafts, and meaningful toys that stimulate imaginations and are truly built to last.

Chinaberry offers items to support families in raising their children with love, honesty and joy to be reverent, loving caretakers of each other and the earth. We are committed to making this world a kinder, gentler place, both with the products we offer and in the way we do business.

The best Required Reading List for Teachers ever assembled

Here is a listing of additional resources to encourage and inspire you and to keep you company on your journey into the field of education. Be sure to include—and read aloud to your students--the ones listed above that speak to you as well.

Avi, *Nothing but the Truth*, HarperTrophy, 1991. A fictional series of letters exposing the politics of public education like nothing else I've ever seen.

Bache, Christopher M., *The Living Classroom*, SUNY Press, 2008. A fascinating look at the *resonant field* that happens in a classroom and what then becomes possible.

Bryson, Bill, *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, Broadway Books, New York, 2003. Made the world of science absolutely fascinating to me, which is more than any teacher ever did.

Chapter 8—called *School Days*—of Bill Bryson's *Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid*, Broadway Books, New York, 2006, contains one of the funniest, most astute descriptions of public education ever written.

Codell, Esme Raji, *Educating Esme, Diary of a Teacher's First Year*, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2001. Moving, funny, brilliant.

Fried, Robert L., *The Passionate Teacher*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2001. Oh, yes!

Gardner, Howard, *Multiple Intelligences New Horizons*, Basic Books, New York, 2006. Also *Five Minds for the Future*, Harvard Business School Press, 2006. Professor Gardner is considered one of the most influential intellects of our time, and he is speaking to educators of things that truly matter.

Gatto, John Taylor, *Dumbing Us Down*, New Society Publishers, Canada, 2005. This former New York teacher does not mince words about the breakdown of old paradigm education.

Hentoff, Nat, *The Day They Came to Arrest the Book*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, New York, 1982. Nice fictional look at two sides of the question of censorship.

Jensen, Derrick, *Walking on Water, Reading, Writing, and Revolution*, Chelsea Green Publishing Co., White River Junction, VT, 2004. Mr. Jensen teaches writing as part of creative and critical thinking at the university level and in prison. His writing about education is dynamic, compelling, and, in my opinion, long overdue.

Keyes, Ken Jr., *The Hundredth Monkey*, 1984. A fable for our time written to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons. It could readily be adapted for the classroom.

Kidder, Tracy, *Among Schoolchildren*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1989. A caring, dedicated teacher struggles with the nearly superhuman task of teaching inner-city children, many from impoverished and broken homes.

Meier, Deborah, *In Schools We Trust*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2002. *Creating Communities of Learning in an era of testing and standardization* from “one of the best-known and most celebrated educators in the country.”

Palmer, Parker J., *The Courage to Teach*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1998. Big ideas. This book describes teaching *as a spiritual practice*. I couldn't put it down.

Peck, M. Scott, *The Road Less Travelled*, Hutchinson & Co., London, 1983, one of the most wonderful books about self-awareness ever written. And teachers have as much or more need to be fortified with self-awareness as anyone!

Ruiz, Don Miguel, *The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom, A Toltec Wisdom Book*, Amber-Allen Publishing, so very succinct and wise. Students could understand and benefit from the agreements.

Schneider, Michael S., *A Beginner's Guide to Constructing the Universe, The Mathematical Archetypes of Nature, Art, and Science: A Voyage from 1 to 10*, HarperCollins, 1994. This book is not always easy reading, but its perspective is truly mind-expanding.

Sentilles, Sarah, *Taught by America*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2005. Breathtaking, appalling, absolutely real.

Sounds True compilation, *The Mystery of 2012, Predictions, Prophecies & Possibilities*, 2007. Well done—a varied collection of authors, opinions, and basic information. As the time approaches, children will want to know what 2012 is all about and will probably pick up considerable misinformation from the things they watch and say to each other.

Wigginton, Eliot, *Sometimes a Shining Moment: the Foxfire Experience*, Anchor, 1986. One of the most inspiring books I've ever read.

Zinn, Howard, *A People's History of the United States 1492-Present*, Harper Collins, New York, 1980. History as I've never read it before.

Also published in a revised 2 volumes as *A Young People's History of the United States* by Rebecca Stefoff and Howard Zinn, 2007.

Zinsser, William, *On Writing Well*, Harper-Collins Publishers, Inc., New York, 2001 (originally published 1976). Inspired me to want to get writing right.

*Judith Watson has been fascinated by the field of education since her Middle School crush on her 8th grade English teacher. She has taught students from all over the world, discovering along the way that what children most need to know is seldom found in textbooks. She believes that teachers are an essential source of affirmation and a bridge between old and new world views. This excerpt will be part of the book she is writing entitled **Teachers Affect Eternity—and We are All Teachers.***