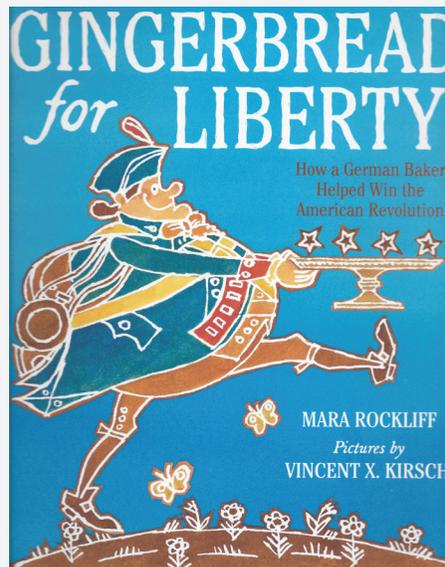


Second Reaction: Speech Is Sweet

Rockliff, Mara. *Gingerbread for Liberty!* Illus. Vincent X. Kirsch.
New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015. Print.

Laura Strack



I read *Gingerbread for Liberty!* to two male, fourth grade students who come to me for speech-language intervention services in the public school system. These are students who struggle with reading comprehension, identifying parts of a story, and have difficulty making predictions, inferences, and observations as well as defining vocabulary words and picking up on the nuances of the English language. These are struggling readers who desperately need to find a connection to text in order to maintain attention and comprehend the material, much of which I've come to notice is a rare occasion.

Pre-reading activities were very beneficial in engaging this group. We discussed the genre, the difference between an author and an illustrator, and what we thought this book might be about. We also predicted who the characters might be and where this story would take place.

Written by Mara Rockliff and illustrated by Vincent X. Kirsch, *Gingerbread Liberty* lends itself to young readers, especially to these fourth grade boys, in many ways. The illustrations were ideal for stimulating conversation outside of the text. For instance, we discussed as a group how clothing and transportation have changed over the course of history by comparing and contrasting the soldiers and the boats in the pictures to Google images of soldiers and ships

today. Some words within the text were unknown to these struggling readers (revolution, liberty, independence, general, etc.). We took the opportunity to jot down words unfamiliar to us and used a dictionary to find the definitions. In short, this session was a vocabulary, story elements, and history lesson all wrapped into one. As a busy speech pathologist, I very much appreciate the relevant material and lesson flexibility provided by this book.

The theme of this book fit perfectly into our politics theme for the end of October and early November. It is important to me as a clinician that I engage my students with text that is not only interesting and fun, but educational, as well. The feedback I received from these students was very positive. They could hardly contain their excitement between the pre-reading session and the session where we actually read the book together. These boys in particular were very interested in the soldiers and their gear as they have military family members of their own.

Now that we have finished reading the book, I am very excited about some follow-up activities we have planned. Not only will we be answering questions related to this text and reviewing the vocabulary words we learned, but we will also be making a list of ingredients and following the directions to make some gingerbread of our own.

About the Author

Laura Strack is a speech-language pathologist (MS, CF-SLP) and clinical fellow in a rural community forty miles south of Indianapolis, Indiana. She provides speech and language intervention for children in preschool through twelfth grade. She enjoys camping and hiking, reading, and spending time with her family.