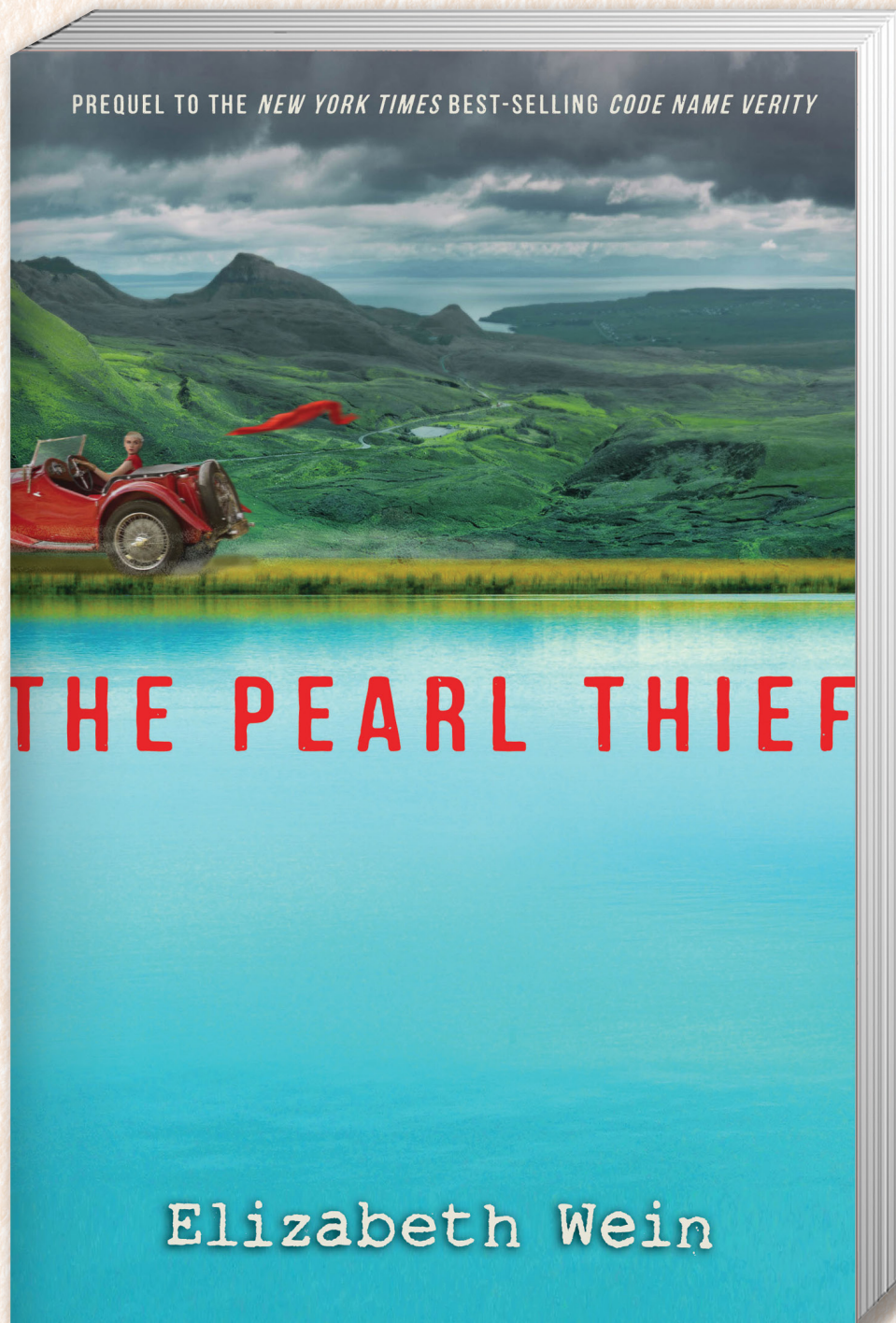
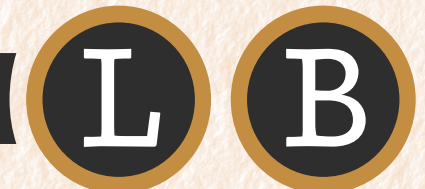


LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

# Educator's Guide | Ages 14 and Up



[LittleBrownLibrary.com](http://LittleBrownLibrary.com)



[LB School](#) [LittleBrownSchool](#)

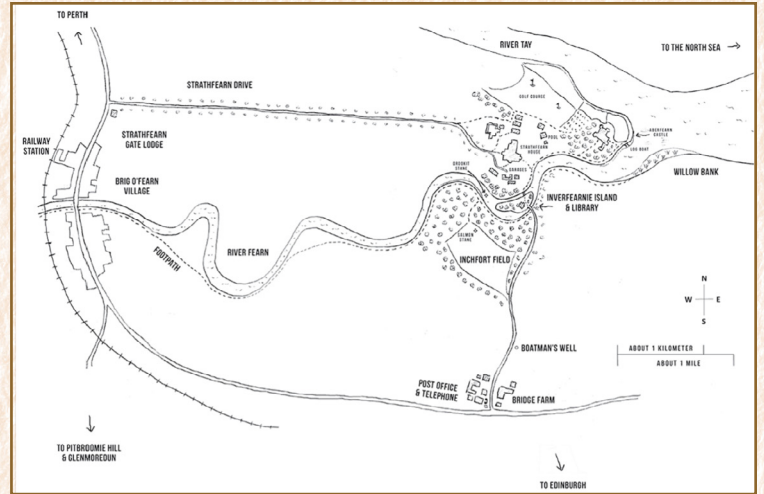


## BEFORE READING

### READING ROAD MAP

*The Pearl Thief* takes place in Scotland, a country rich in history, culture, and traditions. Though Elizabeth Wein's Strathfearn is fictional, she has situated the estate in the very real region of Perthshire, giving the reader, as she explains in her author's note, "a sort of artist's impression of the Earn valley."

Help students get a sense of the geography and geology of Scotland. Start by making sure they can find Scotland on a world map. Then offer them a physical map of Scotland, having them take note of the many rivers and lakes and brainstorming a list of their many important uses. While students may have been aware of Scotland's well-known lakes (known as lochs), did they know about its rivers, its highlands and islands, and its major cities? Ask students: Other than Loch Ness and its famous monster, what comes to mind when you think of Scotland? Where do your ideas and knowledge come from? Where are good places to look for information that goes beyond stereotypes and offers details that help you get to know Scotland? Have students list what they know (or think they know) and explore books, maps, video, websites, and other resources to confirm their knowledge and add to it.



## SCOTS WHA HAE

Another way for students to get to know Scotland is through a great voice of its people—the poet Robert Burns. Start with his poem "A Red, Red Rose," which is the epigraph of *The Pearl Thief*. Get students to read the poem and discuss its themes of love, nature, and the passage of time. Then have them do some research about the life and times of Robert Burns and the role his work plays in Scottish cultural identity.

### RESOURCES:

- The Poetry Foundation: Robert Burns [www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/robert-burns](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/robert-burns)
- Scottish Poetry Library: **Robert Burns** [www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poets/robert-burns](http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poets/robert-burns)
- Burns Country: The Complete Works of Robert Burns [www.robertburns.org/works](http://www.robertburns.org/works)

Have them take what they discover about Burns and his work and articulate hypotheses for why the author included "A Red, Red Rose" as an epigraph. Ask them to consider what Wein's use of Burns suggests and what it inspires them to look for as they read. Let students know that after they read *The Pearl Thief*, you'll be asking them to write a few paragraphs to answer one of the following questions:

- How did knowing more about Robert Burns enhance your reading of the book?
- Given your research about Burns, what ideas and themes in the book drew your attention, and what connections did you make?

Have students share their ideas during class or small-group discussions of the book.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The questions below can be used for class or small-group discussion or offered to students as reflective writing prompts.

1. Remembering and understanding history is at the heart of the novel. What has happened in the past that people seem to have forgotten? Why are these things important? How does knowing about the past—especially Julie’s family’s past—contribute to Julie’s identity? Is family history something that is a part of every person’s identity? How is or isn’t it part of your own?
2. What do you think motivates Julie’s flirtatious behavior? What reason—or reasons—does she have for kissing Frank Dunbar, Florrie, Le Sphinx, Angus Henderson, Ellen, and Euan?
3. How is *The Pearl Thief* a story of Julie’s coming of age?
4. What did you learn about the status of women during the time period of the book? What are some of the ways the female characters deal with societal restrictions and social pressures? Do any of the women in this novel embody feminist ideals? Discuss how opportunities for women have evolved since the 1930s and what prejudices and roadblocks remain. What advice would you give someone who is treated differently or unfairly because of gender or class?
5. Julie says to Ellen, “It’s *hard* to have your happiness tangled up in things you can’t keep.” How does Ellen feel about giving, receiving, and keeping things? How does Julie’s perspective change? Does Ellen’s change as well? How?
6. Though *The Pearl Thief* takes place in 1938, in what ways are its issues of prejudice and discrimination relevant to us today? How has this novel changed the way you think about privilege and persecution? What actions could you take to change the minds of others?
7. Consider the power of place in Julie’s life. How do places—and her experiences in those places—affect her life? Compare and contrast Julie’s relationship to Strathfearn with Ellen’s.
8. What views of gender roles and of “male” and “female” behavior does the novel offer? Where does Julie get her ideas of what “male” and “female” are, and where does she find models of how to behave? Why do you think she enjoys playing at both “being a girl” and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Kidnapped* character Davie Balfour?
9. How does Julie’s memory of her grandfather and the capture of an incompetent pearl hunter set the tone for how she deals with other acts of violation and defilement against people, the river and landscape, and historic artifacts?
10. Julie saves Ellen from sexual assault at the hands of the abusive Sergeant Henderson. Why do you think Julie reacted in the manner that she did? What other options did she—and Ellen—have? How do you think you would have dealt with the situation?
11. What do you think about Julie’s choice of what to do with the recovered pearls? If you had been in Julie’s situation, what would you have done?
12. Is this a book that would have been written for young people in 1938, the time in which it is set? How might the characters have been different if it had been written then? Is there anything about the way the story is told that would make you think the novel was written in the twenty-first century? Explain.



## ACTIVITIES AND CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

### SENSE OF IDENTITY

Throughout the book, Julie enjoys trying on different identities—from posing as a male Traveller to playing the coquette. When Euan catches her concentrating on starting the car, Julie wonders, “What could I possibly look like when I was just being me?” Most people have two identities: one the outside world sees and one that’s internal. Ask students to explore Julie’s identity and consider:

- How Julie sees herself
- How she wants to be seen
- How others see her
- Influences in Julie’s life

Have students list and describe factors that have likely contributed to shaping Julie’s identity, such as race, gender, nationality, class, education, culture, interests, skills, life experiences, history, and so forth. Students can write an essay that offers evidence from the book for how the top factors on their lists have shaped Julie’s identity and affected her actions and activities. Or they can create an identity box for Julie:

An identity box reveals both prescribed and internal identities. Have students cover the outside of a shoe box (or any box of a similar size) with pictures, words, symbols, and drawings that represent how others perceive Julie. Students should include judgments other characters have made about her based on her speech, appearance, and behavior. On the inside of the box, students should use decorations and include objects that represent how Julie describes herself. The inside of the box should reflect the parts of Julie that few people, if any, see. Have students present their boxes in small groups and reflect together on how personal identities develop in both fiction and real life.

Remind students that when they look into what makes a character tick, they can also learn a little more about themselves. Ask: What did you learn about yourself from Julie? Encourage students to create identity boxes for themselves, too.

### HOW TO EXPLAIN

“Respect for a river and its creations goes unwritten,” says Julie’s grandfather when he and Julie catch the poacher. Both are aghast at the man’s ignorance of the appropriate way to treat the river and collect freshwater mussels. Have students use the text to create a piece of procedural writing that would educate novice pearl fishers. As Scotland made pearl fishing illegal in 1998, the how-to should be for an audience of potential fishers from the 1930s—before the freshwater pearl mussel became one of the most endangered species in the world.

The various descriptions of pearl fishing in the book and the author’s note are good starting points for gathering information. Since students won’t have the expertise that the McEwens or Julie’s grandfather had, they’ll also need to conduct research.

To address students’ interests, offer additional prompts for how-to writing related to *The Pearl Thief*:

- How to participate in an archeological dig
- How to confront prejudice
- How to deal with unwanted sexual advances
- How to drive a stick shift
- How to make the best of a “tragic” haircut



## RESOURCES:

- British Pathé: Pearl Fishing (1961), Perth, Scotland: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBr4XR6uoPY>
- National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive: Holiday Scotland (1966), Pearl Fishing on the Tay (8:16): <https://movingimage.nls.uk/film/2631>
- Pearls in Peril: <https://www.pearlsinperil.scot/>
- “Scotland’s One-Man Pearl Fishing Industry” by Nan Gillespie, The Rotarian, July 1975: <https://goo.gl/5EBG2c>

## SCOTTISH GALLERY WALK

Create a classroom gallery walk that helps present new or unfamiliar material found in *The Pearl Thief*. Have small groups research and select texts (definitions, quotations, images, historical documents, etc.) to display on tables or hang on walls about these topics or other subjects of interest:

- Mary Queen of Scots
- The Black Watch, the Royal Regiment of Scotland
- *Kidnapped*, by Robert Louis Stevenson
- The Bronze Age
- Treacher Collins syndrome
- The Iron Age
- Language in Scotland
- Reliquaries

Make sure there’s plenty of space between displays so students have room to access the materials. Instruct them to take informal notes as they view the gallery exhibits, giving them time to make connections to their reading of *The Pearl Thief*. Debrief the experience as a class by asking students to share the ways in which information in the gallery enhanced their understanding of what they read, clarified their thinking, revealed new ideas, or generated additional questions.

## THE TRAVELLERS’ WAY OF LIFE

Have students create an editorial cartoon to make a point about the prejudice, discrimination, and bullying Travellers face in *The Pearl Thief*—and still face today. Students should allude to an incident or incidents in the book and can also take time to research and include more about the history of Highland Travellers.

Have students discuss their drawings with the class.

Julie derides and questions Ellen’s knowledge of history as “old Travellers’ tales passed down from Aunt Bessie?” but the oral traditions of Scottish Travellers have preserved folklore, stories, and songs and oral traditions of Scottish Travellers have greatly contributed to the Scots’ song tradition and storytelling heritage. Have students explore classic Scottish ballads and make sure they understand the way a ballad typically tells a story. Then have them write—and perform—their own ballads about Julie’s adventures. (Students who have read *Code Name Verity* may wish to include more of Julie’s story in their ballads.)

- Scots Language Centre: Types of Scots Song: Travellers’ Songs  
[https://www.scotslanguage.com/Scots\\_Song\\_uid65/Types\\_of\\_Scots\\_Song\\_uid131/Travellers\\_Songs](https://www.scotslanguage.com/Scots_Song_uid65/Types_of_Scots_Song_uid131/Travellers_Songs)
- Scots Language Centre: Types of Scots Song: Ballads, or the Muckle Sangs  
[https://www.scotslanguage.com/Types\\_of\\_Scots\\_Song/Ballads,\\_or\\_the\\_Muckle\\_Sangs](https://www.scotslanguage.com/Types_of_Scots_Song/Ballads,_or_the_Muckle_Sangs)
- Poetry Out Loud: Lesson Plan: The Tabloid Ballad  
[https://www.poetryoutloud.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/07/The\\_Tabloid\\_Ballad.pdf](https://www.poetryoutloud.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/07/The_Tabloid_Ballad.pdf)

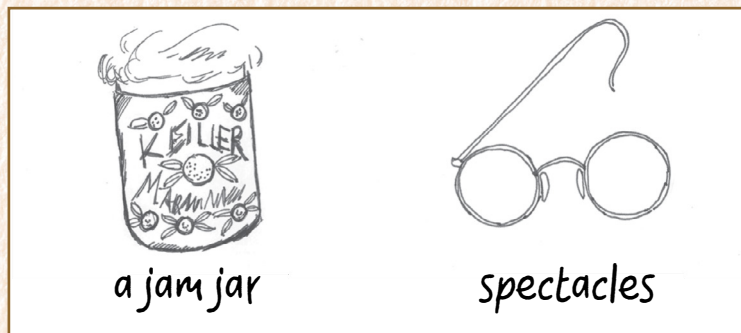


## THE PEARL THIEF

Encourage students to take advantage of historic photographs available online to learn more about the lives of Scottish Travellers. Have them select a photo and write a descriptive journal entry about it from the perspective of one of the characters in *The Pearl Thief*. Students should share the photos they select and read their writing aloud without identifying which character they chose. Through character analysis, the class should discuss and determine which character wrote the entry, connecting details from the book to their inference.

### RESOURCES

- Am Baile: Travelling People  
<https://www.ambaile.org.uk/groupitem/62/>
- futuremuseum.co.uk: Southwest Scotland, Galloway Travellers  
<http://www.futuremuseum.co.uk/collections/arts-crafts/arts/photography/galloway-travellers.aspx>
- Tour Scotland Photographs: Old Photographs of Gypsies in Scotland <https://youtu.be/CEWERBeUdPA>
- Scottish Traveller Education Programme: Community Voices  
<https://www.step.education.ed.ac.uk/about-us/community-voices/>



## MYSTERIES OF THE BOG

Discuss with students what bogs and peat are and investigate how conditions in these wetland environments have preserved the past. How do buried clues help archeologists and anthropologists answer questions about life long ago? Have students brainstorm questions that they might ask to learn more about the body found on the River Fearn, along with the best ways to get answers (both in 1938 and now). Have them identify some of the past and present tools and processes that might be used to find answers to their questions.

With thoughts stirred about what's possibly buried in the peat, ask students to write a short mystery story that features something found in a bog—a body, a weapon, or a treasure. Have students share their stories with the class.

### RESOURCES

- Smithsonian: Europe's Famed Bog Bodies Are Starting to Reveal Their Secrets  
[www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/europe-bog-bodies-revealsecrets-180962770/](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/europe-bog-bodies-revealsecrets-180962770/)
- NOVA: The Perfect Corpse [www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/bog/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/bog/)
- Archeology Magazine Archive: Bodies of the Bogs  
<http://archive.archaeology.org/online/features/bog/>



## About the Author



**Elizabeth Wein** lives in Scotland and is a member of both the Ninety-Nines (the International Organization of Women Pilots) and the British Women Pilots Association. She has a PhD in Folklore from the University of Pennsylvania. Some of her titles include *Code Name Verity*, *The Pearl Thief*, *The Enigma Game*, *Black Dove*, *White Raven*, and *Rose Under Fire*. Elizabeth is married to games developer Tim Gatland, and they have two grown children. ([www.elizabethwein.com](http://www.elizabethwein.com))

## About the Book



9781484719510 EBOOK  
9781484717165 HC  
9781484723708 TP

### Before Verity . . . there was Julie.

When fifteen-year-old Julia Beaufort-Stuart wakes up in the hospital, she knows the lazy summer break she'd imagined won't be exactly what she anticipated. And once she returns to her grandfather's estate, a bit banged up but alive, she begins to realize that her injury might not have been an accident. One of her family's employees is missing, and he disappeared on the very same day she landed in the hospital.

Desperate to figure out what happened, she befriends Euan McEwen, the Scottish Traveller boy who found her when she was injured, and his standoffish sister, Ellen. As Julie grows closer to this family, she witnesses firsthand some of the prejudices they've grown used to—a stark contrast to her own upbringing—and finds herself exploring thrilling new experiences that have nothing to do with a missing-person investigation.

Her memory of that day returns to her in pieces, and when a body is discovered, her new friends are caught in the crosshairs of long-held biases about Travellers. Julie must get to the bottom of the mystery in order to keep them from being framed for the crime.

This exhilarating coming-of-age story, a prequel to the Printz Honor Book *Code Name Verity*, returns to a beloved character just before she first takes flight.

## Praise for THE PEARL THIEF

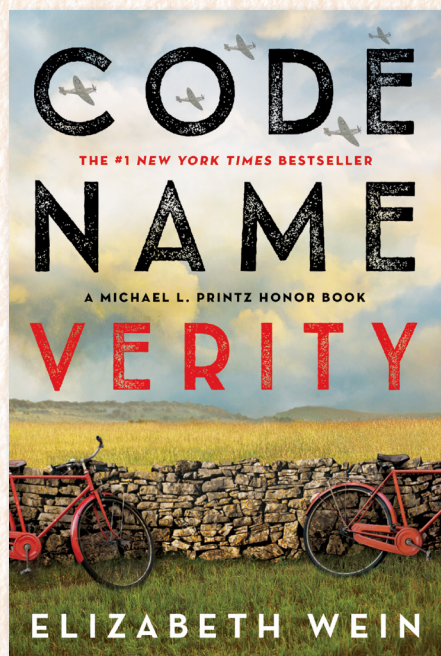
- ★ "Each thread of this novel is exquisitely woven." —*Publishers Weekly*
- ★ "Another ripping yarn from a brilliant author." —*Kirkus Reviews*
- ★ "A finely crafted book that brings one girl's coming-of-age story to life." —*Booklist*

continued on next page . . .

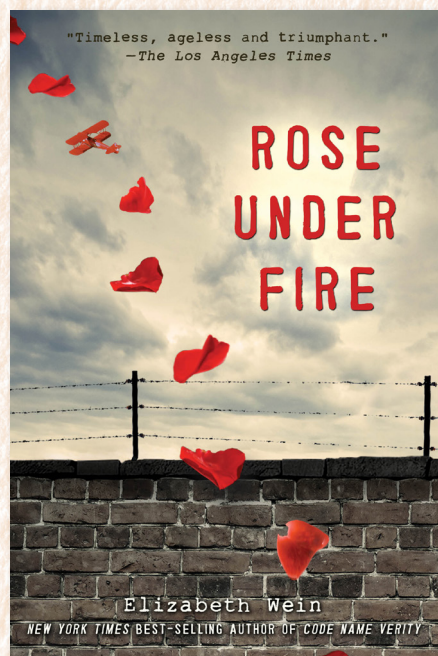


## THE PEARL THIEF

### The Code Name Verity Collection



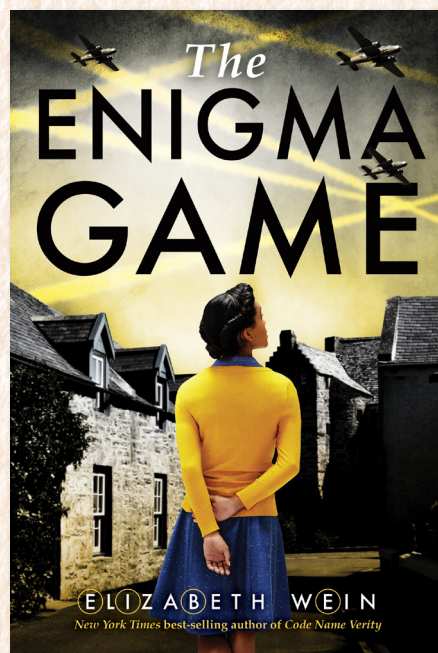
9781423152880 TP  
9781423153252 EBOOK  
9781423152194 HC  
9780316426312 ANNIVERSARY EDITION



9781423198697 EBOOK  
9781423183099 HC  
9781423184690 TP



9781484719510 EBOOK  
9781484717165 HC  
9781484723708 TP



9781368016513 EBOOK  
9781368012584 HC  
9780759557628 TP

### Also by Elizabeth Wein



9781484707807 EBOOK  
9781423183105 HC  
9781423185239 TP



**ON SHELVES FALL 2022**  
9780316591249 HC

Rachael Walker ([www.belleofthebook.com](http://www.belleofthebook.com)) created this guide. She consults on a wide variety of educational programs and multimedia projects with a special focus on children's literacy, and develops educational materials and reading resources for children, parents and teachers.

