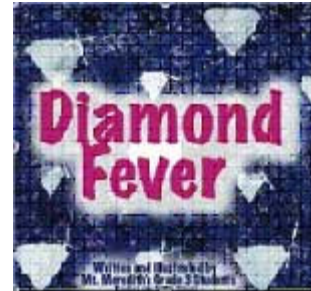


Book Review: *Diamond Fever*

On the bookshelves, there's a new group of authors to watch out for—Ms. Meredith's Grade 3 class.

In 2002, educator Gayla Meredith set out to introduce the writing process to her Grade 3 students at Range Lake North School in Yellowknife, NWT, by having them write a book. The result, *Diamond Fever*, tells the fictional story of Dylan and Katelyn, two friends in search of diamond treasures. But the book was not the only product of the writing exercise; an eager group of published authors was also created.



The class worked together to conceptualize a storyline on Canada's first diamond mines, located in NWT, then created the main character Dylan, a young boy enticed by sparkling objects. Together, they wrote the story's beginning and ending, and then worked in smaller groups to create sub-plots.

Many of the students were inspired to write their own books at home. Student and contributing author Ryan describes his learning experience: "*Diamond Fever* helped me learn more about writing stories. It helped me learn how to make my words interesting."

This 24-page, full-colour publication gives great insight into life in NWT and its growing diamond industry. Readers go on an adventure across Yellowknife Bay, along the shores of Great Slave Lake, and into a local gold mine. The charming illustrations evoke a collage effect with sponge-painted backgrounds and paper cut-outs, all created by the students. The class even came up with a colour key for graphic design continuity.

Meredith explains that the process of generating ideas excited the kids and motivated them to participate more often. "It's easier for kids to participate in a group where everyone feels success," she says. "The students were totally engaged in active learning because it was a choice."

After witnessing the efforts of the class, Meredith wanted to publish their results. The students now receive royalty cheques (via the school) and have even joined their teacher at book signings.

Aimed at a Grade 3 reading level, *Diamond Fever* also appeals to students from kindergarten to Grade 5. Kids will learn lessons of drive and determination while chanting along with Dylan: "Diamonds sparkle, diamonds shine. All o' those diamonds are gonna be mine!"

Order your copy of *Diamond Fever* online through Trafford Publishing at www.trafford.com/05-0828, or go to www.uphere.ca and choose Online Shopping to access the UpHere Trading Post.

How to publish your students' work:

1. Talk with your students' parents and your principal to gain approvals and to define project scope and deadlines.
2. Investigate print-on-demand publishing. All you need is a final product with edited text and original artwork. The publisher can do the rest.
3. Plan ahead! Start early in the school year, and allow a few weeks for the proofreading process as well as an additional month for printing. You should be able to see the final product in hard cover by June.
4. Keep electronic copies of your students' work by scanning it onto a disc.
5. Fundraise to pay for the book publishing. To date, Diamond Fever has generated \$3000 for Range Lake North School.
6. Celebrate your students' success!

"I learned not to use boring words and to see how creative you can get by using new ideas and adding some more ideas."

Troy, contributing author.