



THE CALIFORNIA READER

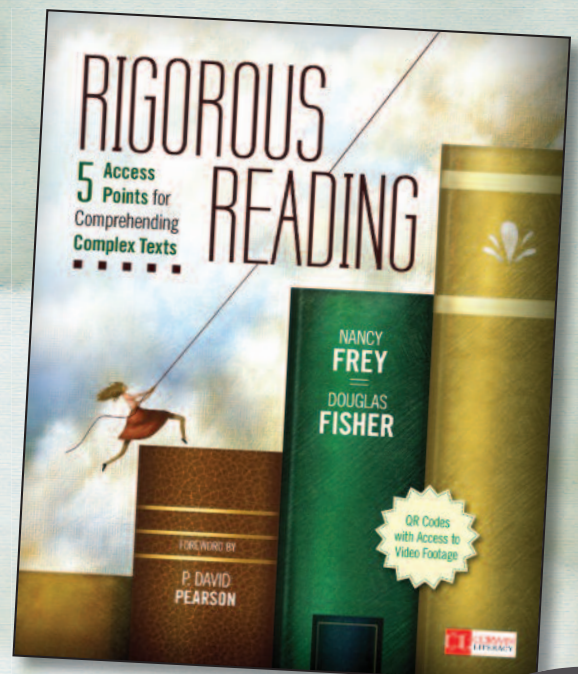
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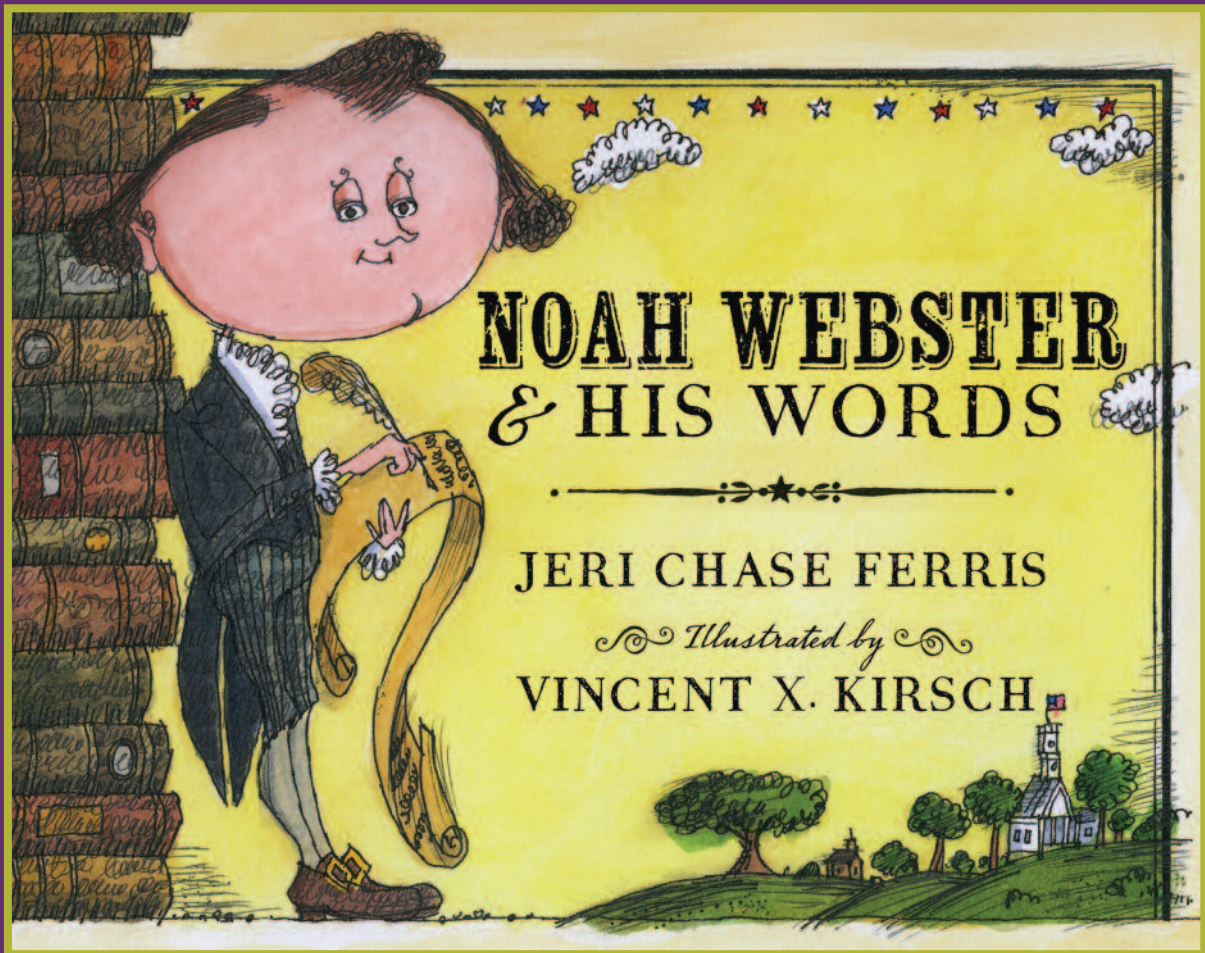
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about the COVER

FROM THE COVER EDITOR: DR. VIRGINIA LOH-HAGAN

I thank Dr. Helen Foster James for bringing our featured book to my attention. She said to me, “What would make a better literacy connection than Noah and his dictionary?” As lovers of words [*noun, plural: sounds or combinations of sounds that have meaning and are spoken or written*], we just couldn’t resist supporting the man who created the first American dictionary. For *Noah Webster & His Words* (Houghton Mifflin Books, 2012), Jeri Chase Ferris won a CRA “Eureka! Nonfiction Honor Book” and the Golden Kite Award for “best nonfiction book of 2012” from SCBWI. For her body of work, Jeri won the CRA 2013 Armin R. Schulz Award for outstanding contributions in promoting social justice through books. I am thrilled to be featuring Jeri in our summer issue of *The California Reader*.

Dr. Virginia Loh-Hagan is a published author, former K-8 teacher, university professor, and Research Fellow at the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh. If you want to geek out about books, please feel free to contact her at virginialoh@cs.com or visit her website at www.virginialoh.com. If you are a CA author or illustrator and wish to be featured on the cover, please contact her for consideration requirements.



IN HER OWN WORDS: OUR FEATURED AUTHOR, JERI CHASE FERRIS



As I tell kids in my school visits, “I like to be treated fairly. You like to be treated fairly. But many of the people I write about weren’t.” So I write biographies to set the record straight.

I write about people who made a difference in America, but didn’t receive the recognition due them, usually because of prejudice and racism. This is why I’ve written biographies of Benjamin Banneker, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Biddy Mason, Susan LaFlesche Picotte, Matthew Henson, Marian Anderson, and more.

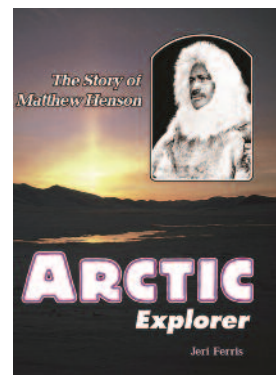
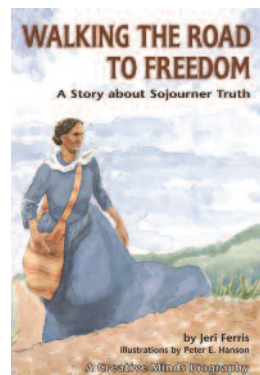
But why write about Noah Webster? He was a white man in a white man’s world. No prejudice there. He made a difference in America and everyone already knows what that was – he wrote the dictionary, right? Right. Noah Webster wrote Webster’s Dictionary, and this was a hugely-eventful undertaking, but what ELSE did Noah do?

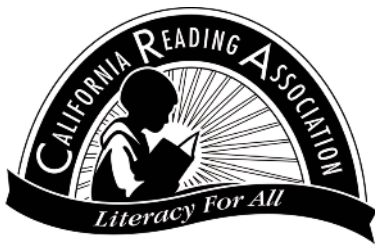
Very few Americans know all that Noah did for our brand-new United States – until they read *Noah Webster & His Words*, that is. There we learn how Noah helped keep our fledgling United States united...And we discover what ELSE he did.

In researching Noah, I corresponded with his great-great-great-grandson, which was like reaching back into history. Of course I worked with all the historical societies and libraries and specialists on Webster, but there’s nothing quite like talking to an actual descendant to set the record straight!

It’s probably obvious that I love history and research, courage and justice. I’m also passionate about Russia, a passion which began in 1969 when my husband Tom and I took his Beverly Hills H.S. Russian Studies class on a field trip (to the USSR). This passion resulted in the Ferris Russian Collection of 10,000 items specializing in the Stalin era, called “unmatched in the western world,” and also is the background for my current book, a historical fiction set during the Siege of Leningrad.

Jeri lives in Lincoln, CA. For more about NOAH, Russia, and Jeri, please go to jerichaseferris.com.





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Using *Noah Webster & His Words* in Your Classroom

BY DR. VIRGINIA LOH-HAGAN*

The following is an example of how to align the featured book on this issue's cover to 4th grade Common Core State Standards:

ABOUT THE TEXT: *Noah Webster & His Words* is a picture book biography about Noah Webster, the boy who didn't become a farmer. Instead, Webster became a teacher, scholar, and creator of the first American dictionary.

ABOUT THE TASK: Have students work individually to write an explanatory paragraph given this prompt: "Explain how Noah

Webster's words united America as claimed by the author." The students must refer to the text in order to support their responses.

FOCUS STANDARD: W.4.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

*Dr. Virginia Loh-Hagan designs research-based, CCSS-aligned units of study for the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh. Please visit the IFL website for more information about their services, which includes curricula and professional development: <http://ifl.lrdc.pitt.edu>