



Boxes for Katje

by Candace Fleming

PAGE #	SECTION
2	How to Use this Book Club Kit
3	About the Author... Candace Fleming Book Summary
4	Dinnertime Conversation Starters
5	Digging Deeper: Creative Narration Ideas
6-7	Ways to Celebrate
8-9	Related Reading

READ-ALOUD REVIVAL

How to Use this Book Club Kit

At the Read-Aloud Revival, we like to opt for something better than the school lit-class model when it comes to talking about books with our kids. Instead of assigning books and then drilling our kids with comprehension questions, we try to treat our home like a book club.

- **We choose a book we think we'll all enjoy.**
- **We make snacks. (Something simple and fun.)**
- **And then we talk about and celebrate the book.**

Not in a teacher-like question and answer format, or in an overly complicated way. It's not about finding out if your kids read and understood the book. It's about saddling up next to your child to enjoy a book together.

Approaching books this way can be a game-changer for your kids' (and your own!) relationship with books.

Our hope is that this Whole Family Book Club kit will bring your entire family together around one particular title. We hope you'll make discoveries about each other and the world around you, and that the memories formed while doing so will last a lifetime.

Keep in mind that using this book club kit can be as simple as reading the book together and asking a few of the dinnertime conversation starters. It does not need to be a project.

If you'd like, however, you can ramp it up, add a few themed snacks, and choose a creative narration or celebration activity to do together. It's as simple or as fancy as *you* want it to be.

Please do not consider this kit a lesson plan. Don't attempt to check all of the boxes or complete every suggestion. Instead, use our ideas as jumping-off points for a book-club celebration with your own kids, a group of book-club friends, neighbors down the street, or with grandma and grandpa.

Go build your family culture around books!

Sarah Mackenzie & the RAR Team

About the Author, **Candace Fleming**



Candace Fleming is the author of more than twenty books for children and young adults, including the Los Angeles Times Book Prize honored *The Family Romanov: Murder, Rebellion, and the Fall of the Russian Empire*; Boston Globe/Horn Book Award-winning biography, *The Lincolns*; the bestselling picture book, *Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!*; and the beloved *Boxes for Katje*.

Her versatile work includes picture books, biographies, short stories and novels.

You can learn more about all her work, watch [video interviews](#), and find [reading guides](#) for almost all her books at her website, www.candacefleming.com.

Book **Summary**

Set in the 1940s following World War II, *Boxes for Katje* gives young readers a look at the scarcity that impacted many European nations following the war. But it also shows the importance of one simple act of kindness, and how a child's caring heart can make a wonderful difference.



Dinnertime Conversation Starters

A conversation is a far more meaningful experience than filling out a reading comprehension worksheet.

Choose a couple of these questions and discuss them with your family. Remember- you aren't looking for right answers. This is about making connections and learning how to have an interesting conversation with others.

- * Have you ever sent (or received!) a surprise package?
- * Which of Katje's presents would you most like to receive? Which did she like the best?
- * How are Katje and Rose similar... and different?
- * Should Katje have decided to share her packages?
- * Who was the most generous in this story?
- * Who was the most thankful in this story?
- * Does *Boxes for Katje* remind you of any other story?
- * What surprised you most about this story?

Some of these questions are based on the *Quickstart Guide to Great Conversations with Your Kids*--it's a crash course in asking all the right questions, available to download on the Resources Page inside Membership. [Click here to download yours.](#)

Digging Deeper: Creative Narration Ideas

Narration is the art of telling-back. A child who can narrate well must listen to a story, consider it carefully, and make connections within it (or with other stories and knowledge they already have considered). It's a powerful tool to use when digging into a book.

Below you will find some creative ways your children can “tell back” the story of *Boxes for Katje*.

The Story of *Boxes for Katje* can certainly stand on its own, and you needn't feel any pressure to improve or extend it beyond the reading.

This is a menu, not a lesson plan. Pick and choose what looks good to you, but don't try to tackle everything on the list.

- * Write a letter of your own to Katje or Rosie.
- * Think of five adjectives to describe the illustrations by Stacey Dressen-McQueen.
- * Draw a scene from the story that isn't illustrated.
- * Look up all the Dutch words (try looking up people's last names too!) and translate them into English. Then take [the first lesson in Dutch on Duolingo](#).
- * Play dress up--put on all the dress up clothes like Katje preparing for winter.
- * Draw a tulip. Use [20 Ways to Draw a Tulip](#) for inspiration.
- * Make a list of other things you know about post-World War II history. If you keep a timeline, add the book to it.
- * Older children can read a book from the Related Reading section of this book club kit, and compare/contrast how the story and the events within it are the same and/or different than *Boxes for Katje*.

Ways to Celebrate...

Just as we said in the section for Creative Narration Ideas, a book can stand on its own simply by being read. You needn't feel that extending it with activities and celebrations are necessary for it to be a meaningful experience.

However, many families in our community enjoy adding simple celebrations to family reading times as a way to solidify and memorialize their favorite books. This is a great way to make sure that your children's happiest family memories happen around the books you share together!

Please don't feel pressure to do all of the activities on this list. Celebrations are meant to be enjoyed- consider this a menu of ideas for your family to pick and choose from.

Older children can help with the preparation, and will likely enjoy participating in many of the activities. Find one that sounds like it'll fit your family, and most of all... enjoy!

FOOD

• Cheese, please

Simple: Make a cheese plate! Several tasty cheeses are Dutch and have become world-renowned. Gouda and Edam are available in most larger markets. Beemster makes several Gouda varieties that kids might enjoy. *Warning:* Limburger, although Dutch, is not for the faint of heart!

A little fancier: Add grapes, olives, crackers, berries and almonds to your cheese platter. Serve with grape juice or sparkling cider! Label each cheese variety.

Remind your kids that milk was scarce in Olst; therefore, cheese was too – consider serving dried milk to see what they think.

• Let them eat cake!

The word cookie actually comes from the Dutch word, "koekie," and means "little cake."

Simple: Make a cookie plate, combining two or three of your kids' favorite cookie varieties.

A little fancier: Bake cookies or host a cookie exchange with some friends who have also read the book.

Sugar was hard to come by in the Katje story – check a few boxes or recipes in your home to find out what products and foods your family enjoys that contain sugar.

READ-ALoud REVIVAL

• Oliebollen

Oliebollen are traditional Dutch doughnuts. They are often served around the New Year, but you can make yours any time – we won't tell!

Simple: Serve plain doughnuts and help kids dust them with powdered sugar.

A little fancier: Make your own Oliebollen. This recipe will show you how,

• Chocolate

Katje and her community were so grateful to taste chocolate again. Host a chocolate taste test – can your kids taste the differences between different types of chocolate? Familiar brands like After Eight and Toblerone bars are sold in The Netherlands and Ritter Sport is popular there too. (You can often find Ritter Sport bars at Target, or there's a cute variety pack here.)

ACTIVITIES

- Even in the hardest times, blooming tulips brought happiness and hope to the people of Olst. Plant your own! You could wait until fall, or you can “force” your bulbs to bloom earlier. [Here's how.](#)
- Research the [Children's Aid Society](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#) and [The Red Cross](#).
- Find local programs that benefit those in need in your community or worldwide. [Operation Christmas Child](#) might remind children of the boxes Katje received, and despite the name, you can get involved any time of year. Kids might also enjoy creating a care package as part of [Operation Shoebox](#).
- Find out how far Katje's boxes traveled. Pull out your map, atlas or globe and see how far it is between Mayfield, Indiana, and Olst in The Netherlands. (This is also an opportunity to find out how Holland became known as The Netherlands.)
- Find pen pals. If your children would like to begin writing to a pen pal that lives in another part of the world, start a thread in the [member-only forum](#) to get hooked up with one. Simply state your children's ages, where you live, or ask if anyone else's children would like to be pen pals!
- Exchange small gifts between family members or friends like soap, socks, chocolate, a potted tulip or books, of course. Visit a nearby nursing home and distribute similar gifts or boxes for the residents. See if anyone there can share their memories from the 1940s.
- Make soap. A melt and pour method is easiest, and you can add flower petals and essential oils to make it smell wonderful. [This tutorial](#) is a great place to start.

Related Reading

Toddlers & Preschoolers

****This is the Baby by Candace Fleming...** The baby in this book, also written by Candace Fleming, looks a lot like Rose and Katje!

Elementary

*****Henner's Lydia** by Marguerite de Angeli... A look into the life of a girl in Pennsylvania Dutch country.

The Great Tulip Trade by Beth Wagner Brust... a beginning reader with a twist on the Tulip Trade

****Hanna's Cold Winter** by Tricia Marx... a list of favorites from your childhood or books that you want to revisit— books that comfort you and bring joy. Then place a few in a basket or on your nightstand. Create an invitation to read just for you!

****Miss Rumphius** by Barbara Cooney... A touching story about a woman who used flowers to make the world more beautiful

****Snow Treasure** by Marie McSwigan... Adventure in the snowy fjords of Norway during WW II

Hana in the Time of the Tulips by Deborah Noyes...this sweet picture book about the bonds between a girl and her father is lushly illustrated in the style of Rembrandt

Rembrandt and the Boy Who Drew Dogs by Molly Blaisdell...a picture book starring the master Dutch artist Rembrandt

****Van Gogh and the Sunflowers** by Laurence Anholt A storybook about Dutch artist Vincent Van Gogh

Middle School

The Wheel on the School by Meindert DeJong... A story about kids and projects and learning by a favorite Dutch author

Hans Brinker or The Silver Skates by Mary Mapes Dodge...this novel, set in late 19th century Holland, is a story of a boy growing in virtue

****Grandfather's Journey** by Allen Say A gorgeous picture book about the effects of WWII on the other side of the world in Japan

READ-ALoud REVIVAL

Candy Bomber by Michael O. Tunnell...narrative history about pilots during WWII, includes rich black and white photography

Rebekkah's Journey: A World War II Refugee Story by Ann E. Burg...a fictional story of WWII refugees that settled in America

The Little Ships: The Heroic Rescue at Dunkirk in World War II by Louise Borden... this picture book gives young scholars a good introduction to this piece of WWII history

High School

Farewell to Manzanar by Jeanne Houston...A story of WWII deprivation and suffering that happened on American soil

No Less Than Victory by Jeff Shaara...a novel starring Eisenhower and the Allied commanders

**books marked by asterisks make especially good read-alouds!