

Gennifer Choldenko

School- or Library-Ready Program

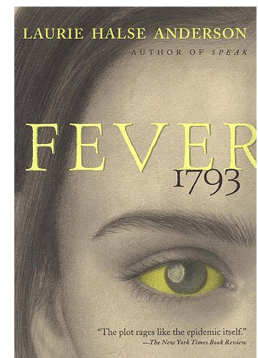
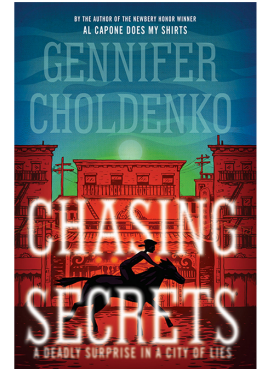
Making History Come Alive for Kids 8-13

An improvisation around *Chasing Secrets* by Gennifer Choldenko and *Fever 1793* by Laurie Halse Anderson

In my presentations, my goal is to find the core issue in a historical fiction novel that resonates with large groups of kids. I am searching for kid appeal and for issues that are important in today's world.

This is an immensely popular improv. I've done it at least 100 times and it has gone well every time. It brings home these important points. These issues were as relevant in 1900 as they are today.

- A. New diseases can suddenly pop up. And old diseases long dormant can reemerge.
- B. Medicine is an evolving science. We know more now than we did in 1900, but there is still much we don't know.
- C. Before a cure is known, patients must make their own decisions about which doctor to trust.



What you need: White board or large tablet and marker, two different colored bags of candy, envelope with FUTURE written on it and 20 small pieces of paper inside, (10 should say the color of one bag of candy 10 the color of the other bag of candy.) 2 white lab coats (these are optional, but lots of fun if you have them).

Step-by-step:

1. Background. Medical science has come a long way in the last 119 years. A woman giving birth in 1900 would be twice as likely to die in childbirth if she went to a hospital to give birth instead of giving birth at home. Progress has been made by scientific testing of what works and what doesn't work.
2. Set up. In my lifetime there have been many new diseases that have suddenly appeared. It takes medical science years of testing to develop cures and preventative measures. (Examples: AIDs, Avian flu, Ebola.)

3. Ask for a volunteer who is a good speller. The good speller stands at the whiteboard and records much of what is said below.
4. Ask for hands for a favorite color.
5. Ask for hands for an animal name.
6. Announce that everyone in the audience has the (color, animal) disease.
7. Ask for hands for what body part swells up when you get that disease.
8. Ask for hands for what percent of the time the (color, animal) disease is fatal. (Must be over 50%.)
9. Pick an audience member who makes good sound effects. He or she demonstrates the sound you make when you die of the (color, animal) disease.
10. Ask for a volunteer to be a doctor. This volunteer puts on the labcoat, and gets one candy packet (the medicine). He or she has come up with a cure for (color, animal) disease. Interview the doctor about their cure. (How much does it cost? Does insurance cover the cost? Any side effects? Does the cure work?)
11. Ask a second volunteer to be a second doctor and go through the steps above, except this “doctor” is given the other color candy packet.
12. Reiterate that medical science takes time to develop a cure. Ask the audience to vote for which cure they are going to try – which doctor they are going to trust.
13. Explain that we won’t know which cure works until the medical establishment is finished testing (until the FUTURE.) Ask for a volunteer who can see into the future.
14. Do a drum roll. The person who can see into the future picks one of the colors out of the envelope that says FUTURE. This is the cure that works
15. Sound effects: A kid can demo the sound effect of dying of the (color, animal) disease again.