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President's Message...

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Michigan Reading Association

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President's Message...

by Colby Sharp, MRA President 2020-2021

Dear Michigan Reading Association Members,

Like just about everyone else teaching during the 2020-2021 school, I often feel like I have no idea what I'm doing. One day I'm teaching 19 kids in class and 10 online. The next day those numbers are flipped, and a week later the whole school district is closed to in-person learning for five weeks.

On the Monday before winter break, I logged onto my morning Zoom session with my students. Looking into the eyes of my students, at least the ones that had their cameras on, it didn't take long before I thought that I was in for a long week. The kids looked done. Done with Zoom. Done with virtual learning. Done with masks. Done with it all.

To be honest, I felt a little done myself.

The next day, I read them Sarah Jacoby's picture book *Forever or a Day*. We had an amazing conversation about trying to live in the moment. The kids talked about the things that were hard about 2020. By the end of our conversation, it felt like none of us were "done." In that moment, we committed to making the most of our final week before winter break, and whatever else 2020 had in store for us. It was a good day.

As we begin to navigate a new year, I can't help but think about the power of story. *Forever or a Day* helped my students finish off 2020 strong, and we kicked off 2021 reading aloud Kate DiCamillo's *Flora & Ulysses*. In a time where so many of us feel disconnected, Kate's platform when she was National Ambassador for Young People's Literature keeps popping into my head: stories connect us. In a time of uncertainty, it is more important than ever that we connect through story.

The theme of our 2021 Annual Conference is "The Power of Story". I can't think of a better way for us to come together, and make 2021 a year that none of us will ever forget.

-Colby Sharp



Colby Sharp