Learning Resources Approval Request List—May 2013—Language Arts

**Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead**

**Tom Stoppard**

**AP English**

The play of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* concerns the misadventures of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two minor characters from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* who are childhood friends of the prince, focusing on their actions with the events of *Hamlet* as background. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is structured as the inverse of *Hamlet*; the title characters are the leads, not supporting players, and Hamlet himself has only a small part.

The duo appears on stage here when they are off-stage in Shakespeare's play, with the exception of a few short scenes in which the dramatic events of both plays coincide. In *Hamlet*, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are used by the King in an attempt to discover Hamlet's motives and to plot against him. Hamlet, however, mocks and outwits them, so that they, rather than he, are executed in the end. Thus, from Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's perspective, the action in *Hamlet* is largely comical.

**When My Name Was Keoko**

**Linda Sue Park**

**Grade 8 and up**

Inspired by her own family's stories of living in South Korea during the Japanese occupation in the years preceding World War II, Newbery Medal-winning author Linda Sue Park chronicles the compelling story of two siblings, 10-year-old Sun-hee and 13-year-old Tae-yul, and their battle to maintain their identity and dignity during one of Korea's most difficult and turbulent times. In alternating first-person chapters, they relate their family's troubles under the strict fascist regime.

The Kim family is stripped of their cultural symbols, only permitted to learn Japanese history and language, and forced to convert their names to Japanese. Sun-hee, now Keoko, struggles to reconcile her Korean home life with her Japanese school and friends, while Tae-yul, now Nobuo, attempts to convert his growing anger into a more positive passion for flight and airplanes. Both are worried for their uncle, whom they discover is printing an underground Korean resistance paper.

This well-researched historical novel is accompanied by a thoughtful author's note that explains what happened to Korea and families like the Kims after WWII and a bibliography to entice interested young readers into learning more about a topic largely unknown to American audiences.

**Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance**

**Robert Pirsig**

**Grade 12**

One of the most important and influential books of the past half-century, Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is a powerful, moving, and penetrating examination of how we live and a meditation on how to live better. The narrative of a father on a summer motorcycle trip across America's Northwest with his young son, it becomes a profound personal and philosophical odyssey into life's fundamental questions.

**Wonder**

**R.J. Palacio**

**Grade 6**

August Pullman was born with a facial deformity that, up until now, has prevented him from going to a mainstream school. Starting 5th grade at Beecher Prep, he wants nothing more than to be treated as an ordinary kid—but his new classmates can’t get past Auggie’s extraordinary face.

*Wonder*, now a #1 *New York Times* bestseller, begins from Auggie’s point of view, but soon switches to include his classmates, his sister, her boyfriend, and others. These perspectives converge in a portrait of one community’s struggle with empathy, compassion, and acceptance.