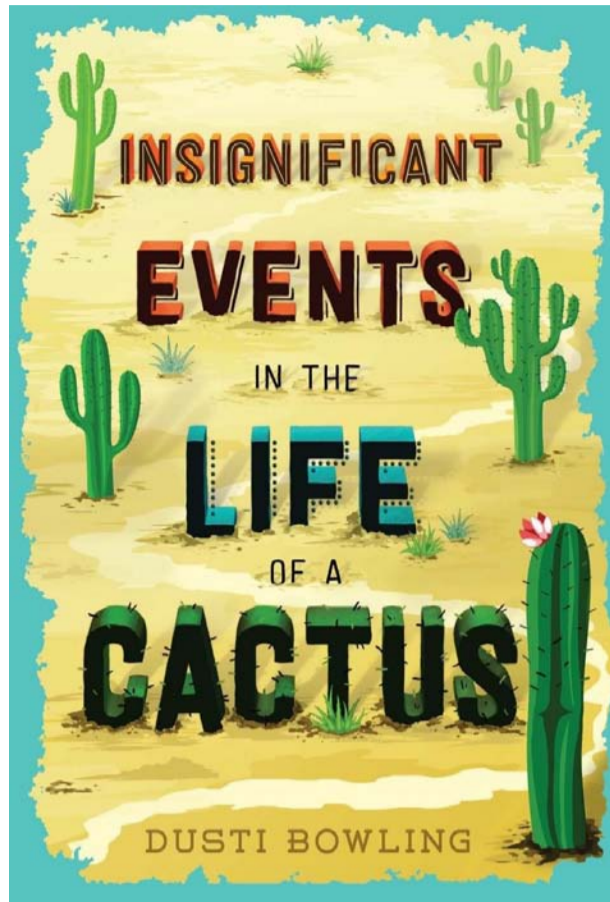




CK Reporter of the Week
Elena Brotherson, Highlands Ranch

YOBOD picks an intriguing book



Thirteen-year-old Aven Green loved her life in Kansas. She had lots of friends and no one treated her differently because she didn't have arms.

But one day, her father receives an invitation from Joe Cavanaugh – a mysterious person they had never met – to manage Stagecoach Pass, an aging Western-themed amusement park in Arizona.

"Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus" by Dusti Bowling is a very intriguing book that shows that people with disabilities are able to overcome challenges and do amazing things.

The author was inspired to write this book after her cousin lost his arm during military service in Iraq 10 years ago.

"I also discovered during that time that there were no children's books that I could find that had characters with limb differences," Bowling explains. "I thought that was really, really sad."

In the book, Aven soon finds herself starting her life all over again. Everyone avoids her because of her lack of arms, and whenever they talk to her it's to ask what happened to them.

Aven had experienced this before, but she would normally tell funny and obviously fake lies about her arms.

However, this time she doesn't feel like telling people that she had been in an alligator wrestling match, in a wildfire in Tanzania, or had saved a puppy tied to a train track.

While exploring the outskirts of the old park, Aven encounters a large cactus. She is intrigued by it and visits it as often as she can, calling it a show-off for its seven large arms.

"Aven's thinking that it's probably 200 years old and she's thinking about all the things that would have happened in the saguaro's life," Bowling explains.

"So she thinks, 'I shouldn't really feel so bad about all this hard stuff I'm going through because really, I'm an entirely insignificant event in the life of this cactus.'"

She and her parents never meet Joe Cavanaugh, and Aven discovers that nearly every trace of him and his family at Stagecoach Pass have been removed, as though they suddenly disappeared along with almost all evidence of them ever being there.

Aven makes friends with Connor, a boy who everyone makes fun of for having Tourette's Syndrome, a condition that makes you twitch with uncontrollable tics and sometimes make noises you also can't help.

Together they find an old building in the theme park that might explain what happened to the Cavanaughs.

"I was inspired to include Connor in the story because my husband and two of my daughters have tic disorders," says Bowling. "I just wanted there to be a character who would be able to provide a better representation of Tourette's Syndrome."

Aven, Connor, and their new friend Zion try to solve the mystery.

They find a lot of clues in the building and around Stagecoach Pass, including a turquoise necklace and a lot of tarantula drawings.

Aven learns that she and her family might have already met Joe Cavanaugh, and that he is closer to her than she thinks.



Dusti Bowling Photo/ Sterling Children's Books

She also learns that she's nowhere near being unimportant – even without arms.

"Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus" is a terrific story for everyone, especially for kids who have disabilities.

It made me think about what the lives of people with disabilities are like in a completely new way.

"It's really targeted for ages 8 to 12-ish, but I do think that it has wide appeal," Bowling says. "Adults seem to enjoy it as well."



By Nandi Strieker,
11, a CK Reporter
from Antonito

Mayor kicks off summer reading fun program

"Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus," by Dusti Bowling, is the selected book for this year's "Youth One Book, One Denver" program, now in its seventh year.

YOBOD is an annual program for kids ages 9-12 to participate in educational shared reading events and fun activities – based on a single book!

Organizers have squeezed lots of material from the book to create this program.

Because its story takes place in a Wild West-themed amusement park in Arizona where the main character – a 13-year-old girl with no arms – lives, the program covers topics like the history of the West, amusement park design, and desert ecology.

It also invites kids at home to do experiments and artwork projects, every one of them connected in some way to Bowling's book.



Mayor Michael B. Hancock unveils the 2018 Youth One Book, One Denver (YOBOD) program selection at Force Elementary School. Force students each got a copy of the book, making them the first to begin the program. Photo/Steve Hostetler)

Most important, the program encourages learning about physical disabilities – including limb differences and Tourette's Syndrome – which are challenges that the main characters in the book have to overcome.

The program is scheduled to run for a month, starting on June 11 and ending on August 10.

The events take place at multiple locations across the Denver area, including 4-day summer camps, a week-long writing camp, and an opportunity for kids to talk with the author.

For more information, schedules of activities and an activity guide to go along with "Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus," go to <http://www.artsandvenuesdenver.com/events-programs/youth-one-book-one-denver>

-- Nandi Strieker



Writing Is Fun!

How Would You Like To Be A Real Reporter?

Find out about all the cool benefits when you apply to be a Colorado Kids reporter at Colorado NIE.com or by emailing dplewka@denverpost.com.

Kit doesn't live up to 'easy to use' or 'fun'

"Gel-a-Peel Fashion Maker" advertises a fun, easy-to-use fashion toy that can customize backpacks, shirts, bags, and more, recommended for ages 8+.

However, this toy isn't nearly as easy to use as advertised, and would be better suited to older kids.

The Fashion Maker comes in an over-large box that seems highly unnecessary other than to show off the color palette, which is limited to mostly stereotypically "girly" colors.

The packaging and materials are really sturdy, to the point that it was difficult to extract the gel tubes.

According to the box, the set should have arrived with a Fashion Station with gel tube storage, 25 design stencils, 15 design templates, 2 gel trays, 2 squeegee tools, 3 round tips, 1 star tip, 3 rake tips, a clear drawing sheet, a cleaning tool, and accessory hardware.

However, according to the manual inside the box, the set should arrive with a 10 design stencils and only one 1 template.

My set arrived with the wrong type and number of tips, which really didn't affect the process in the long run.

The gel tubes are fairly easy to use, but the gel has an odd smell that lingers after it dries, (though admittedly not as strong).

The safety caps are also a pain to put on and take off, while, to clean out the tips to reuse them, you have to wait until the gel inside dries, unless you want to produce a fade/rainbow effect, which is fairly annoying.



Actually designing the patches and jewelry seems easy, up until you try to peel off the dried design and find three or four weak points that break almost immediately.

There is no specified drying time for the clutches and it is difficult to tell when the gel is actually dry.

If you peel them off too soon, not all of it comes off and what you are left with is a sticky, unusable sheet of mostly-dried gel.

To use the templates, you have to latch it into the Fashion Station along with the material you wish to design, which is not specified in the instruction manual although it is pictured on the box.

Otherwise it turns into a blurry mess.

The idea behind this toy is good, but it doesn't work out very well in practice.

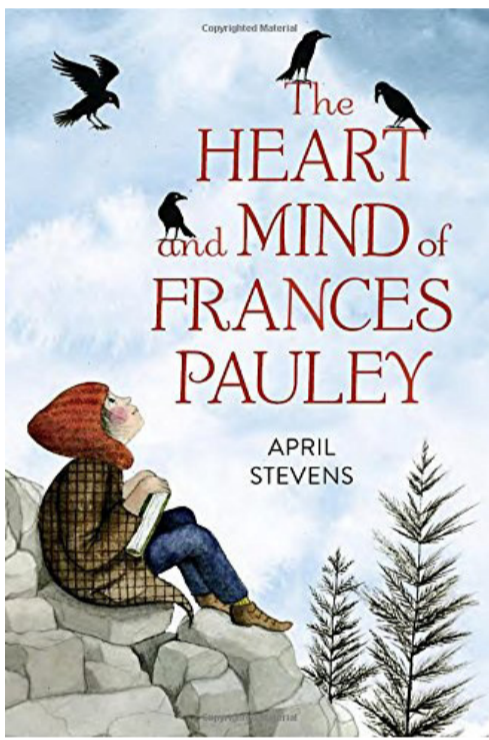
It is fun to squeeze the gel out of the tube, but the drying process takes patience and the final product doesn't always look like it is supposed to.

So, unless you have patience or a good grasp on art skills (or just don't mind if it doesn't come out perfect), I would not recommend this toy for you.



By Maria Ciobanu, 13, a CK Reporter from Denver

Very different girl in a very different novel



In "The Heart and Mind of Frances Pauley," by April Stevens, the title character is a different sort of person from her family, and the people who go to her school. Frances, or, as she likes to be called, Figgrotten, is very different than her sister.

Her mom says that "she is going through changes" but Figgrotten still doesn't understand.

Her sister is always cleaning her room and is always, well, perfect.

Figgrotten on the other hand is the opposite: She loves nature.

Instead of the perfectly clean and kept up room Figgrotten's sister has, she has transformed her room into the most natural place it could be.

Her room is lined with rocks and Figgrotten had brought multiple tree branches in to her room.

Not to mention that she always sleeps with her window open, even when it's freezing outside.

And she always sleeps in her jacket.

Meaning that she is completely rejected by her sister.

Nobody really understands her except her bus driver.

Oh, and maybe that new boy that transferred to her school.

"The Heart and Mind of Frances Pauley" is a very good book and I would definitely suggest reading it.

The description in this book is extraordinary, and the point of view and uniqueness is something very special that you can't find in most books.

Author April Stevens truly showed a spark of imagination when writing this.

This book was fairly long, though, which is why I would recommend it for people who have the time and patience to read something longer, and I would probably recommend this for 9 or 10 and up.

Many people bullied Frances for being different, but she had the heart and mind of a true fighter: The heart and mind of Frances Pauley.



By Katherine Gagner, 13, a CK Reporter from Boulder

Big Nate



Search for aliens takes new direction



Scientists have no problem believing that, as huge as the Universe is, and as many star systems and planets are out there, it's likely we aren't the only place where life exists.

But how to find it?

As we build better telescopes, it becomes easier to find exoplanets.

But the more exoplanets we can find, the more important it becomes to decide which ones are worth examining and which ones

are a waste of time and energy.

Scientists are now trying a new way to sort the possibilities: By analyzing the chemicals present in a planet's light spectrum.

This makes it easier to eliminate a lot of possibilities, but an early clue suggests life may be quite rare.

One critical element for life is phosphorous, which is created in supernovas.

A team of astronomers compared the supernova Cas A, in

the constellation Casseioipia, with a supernova in the Crab Nebula, and found a huge difference in the amount of phosphorus they produced.

Planets near the Crab Nebula's supernova apparently would get far less phosphorus from that explosion than planets near Cas A.

More calculations must be made, but it seems you'd do better to look for life near Cas A rather than near the Crab Nebula.

photo/NASA

Bill Nye the Book Writing Guy has second hit

“Jack and the Geniuses In the Deep Blue Sea”, by Bill Nye and Gregory Mone is a novel brimming with juvenile, yet endearing humor that graces each page with enticement.

This novel is the second book in the “Jack and the Geniuses” New York Times bestselling series about Jack and his siblings.

In this thrilling novel, Ashley Hawking, tech billionaire and engineer Rosa Morris built a contemporary, state-of-the-art electrical power plant which had the sole purpose to collect energy from the depths of the ocean.

To their horror, their revolutionary power plant has been sabotaged.

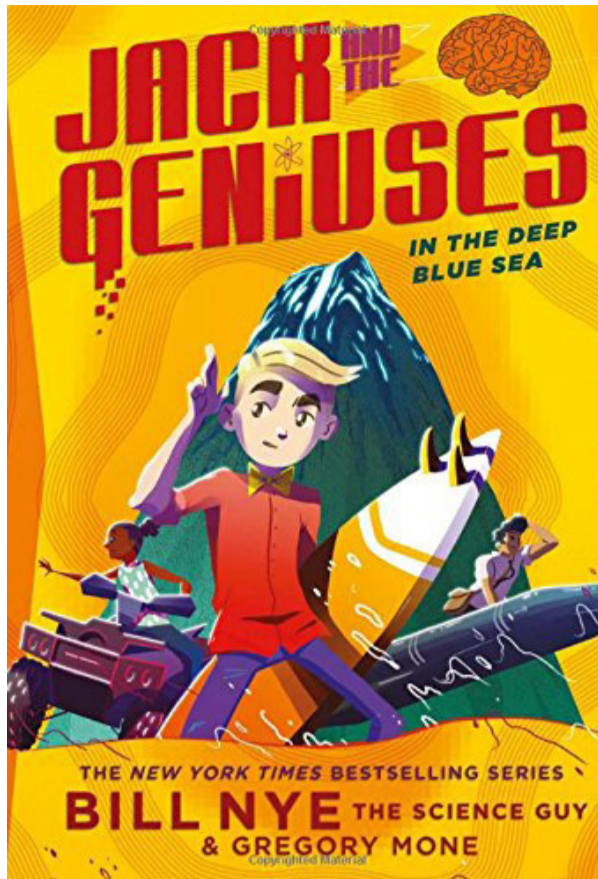
Three siblings -- Matt, Ava, and Jack -- along with Dr. Hank Witherspoon are fixated on finding who was responsible for the sabotage on this cutting-edge project.

On their journey, they go to great lengths (*even under the sea*) to catch the saboteur.

“Jack and the Geniuses In the Deep Blue Sea” begins with a compelling scene in which Hawking is piloting a plane and struggling to control it, trying not to crash into landforms as the plane jolts and seems to have a mind of its own.

The beginning of the book jumps into action with great sensory detail, such as describing characters gripping armrests and faces turning a greenish hue.

Laced throughout this novel, there is so much adventure that is truly captivating and keeps the story alive.



An ample dose of humor is present as well, keeping the book fresh and invigorating.

The humor gets a bit childish at times, but I feel that it is a contributing factor to this novel appealing to a younger audience.

Taking into account humor, reading difficulty, and vocabulary, this book would be best for students ages 8-10.

The writing doesn't have as much science content as I had been expecting due to Bill Nye co-authoring this story, but in the back of the book, there are science-rich sections that seem to redeem that, including a science project you can try at home, courtesy of Bill Nye, and a Q&A about the Deep Blue Sea.

Surprisingly, there are a plethora of pop culture references such as the “Titanic” and the Millennium Falcon from “Star Wars”.

They are used in similes so that readers could make text-to-world connections at such a developing age.

For avid, young readers who have enjoyed the first novel in this series, “Jack and the Geniuses at the Bottom of the World,” it's a sequel they'll really like.



By Kira Zizzo, 13, a CK Reporter from Highlands Ranch

Too much beauty leads to too much sewage

In 2012, Boracay was named the best island in the world by the magazine “Travel and Leisure,” and it has also been at the top of the list of destinations for readers of “Condé Nast Traveler.”

And well before that, the island's white sand beaches and tropical climate lured tourists from around the world.

But there is such a thing as being too popular, and the Philippine government has had to declare Boracay closed to tourists for six months.

Boracay has grown a lot since Spanish explorers first landed there and found 100 natives living on the island, but most of the growth has been in recent years, and it was way too much, way too fast.

Rather than being a quiet, deserted island where people could enjoy the beaches and perhaps get to see some of the flying foxes and fruit bats that live in the forests, Boracay became a busy place with more than 325 hotels, a large golf course and 17,000 people working in the tourist industry.

In the last tourist season, which runs from fall to spring, about 2 million people came to Boracay.

That would be a lot of people in the first place, but a lack of regulations made the situation

truly unbearable.

Boracay has a sewage treatment plant, but only half of the hotels and restaurants, and about a quarter of the houses, are hooked up to it.

The others either use cess pools, flushing their toilets into holes in the ground, or send their waste water directly into the ocean.

This is how you turn a beautiful tropical island into a sewer, and there has been a serious problem with coliform bacteria in the waters around Boracay for several years.

That's not the only environmental problem that popularity has caused: Besides creating more trash than the island can handle, tourism also caused significant damage to the island's coral reefs, some of which has been repaired.

President Rodrigo Duterte has ordered tourism on the island to halt for six months, starting April 26, so that the island can be cleaned up and made ready to handle its popularity.

Many tourism businesses are upset with the closure, saying only violators should be closed and the rest should be able to stay open while the island is cleaned up.

But, while the government is promising to provide money to out-of-work tourism employees, Duterte has made it clear that the island is closed until it is clean and ready for business again.



This bay on Boracay Island looks lovely, but too many tourists and too much development has turned the water into a toxic sewer. (Photo/Magalhães)

Sudoku

	3		1		
					3
6		4			
			4	2	
		6			2
		2		3	

Rules: Every row across, every column down and each of the six smaller boxes must contain numerals 1,2,3,4,5 and 6, one time and one time only.
The solution to this week's puzzle is on Page 4.



Brainteaser

Arbor Day is celebrated on many dates around the world, depending on when it is best to plant trees in each place, but the first American arbor day was on April 10, 1872, so our answers this week will begin with “T” for “tree.”

1. African nation whose capital is Dar es Salaam
2. A Jewish church
3. The Greek hero who slew the Minotaur
4. He became president when Franklin Roosevelt died.
5. Member of the percussion family, sometimes called a kettle drum
6. Metal cup worn over the finger while sewing to protect against the needle
7. Herb used in cooking; it starts with “th” when you spell it, but not when you say it.
8. The Boy King whose tomb was discovered in 1922. We'll take the short version of his name or the long, uncommon version.
9. A grass grown for hay, or one of the people St. Paul wrote letters to.
10. Croatian-born electrician and inventor, he lived for a time in Colorado Springs.

(answers on Page Four)



Update! It's “Baby Ruth”

Last month, CK Reporter Ben Vanourek wrote about the new baby sloth at the Denver Zoo, but reported that it's not possible to know a sloth's sex without a blood test, and that the baby's mother was not letting go of her yet

Denver Zoo just revealed that the Linne's two-toed sloth is a girl and her name is Baby Ruth.

She was born on January 28 to Charlotte, the Zoo's 21-year-old female sloth, and her 27-year-old mate, Elliot, however animal care staff had to wait until very recently to conduct a more thorough examination to determine her sex.

Charlotte and Baby Ruth continue to thrive, and can be found together in their habitat in Bird World at Denver Zoo.



photos/left, Denver Zoo, right, Ben Vanourek

Beyond These Pages!

Hot Links to Cool Sites!

NASA's Space Place

<http://tinyurl.com/ckspace>

NIE Special Report

<http://tinyurl.com/ckniereport>

Headline Geography

<http://tinyurl.com/ckgeography>

Pulse of the Planet

<http://tinyurl.com/ckpulseplanet>

How to become a NextGen Reporter!

<http://tinyurl.com/colokidsreporter>



To read the sources for these stories

Searching for Phosphorus

Boracay Island

YOBOD

go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/ckstorylinks>

I Will Come Home

Chapter Four: Kindness

(Our story so far: Jimmy was able to smuggle a letter out of the POW camp at Andersonville. He and John Kelley are fine, but conditions there are very bad and Charlie Stout has died.)

"It was a kindness for him to say all that about Charlie," Mrs. Baxter said. "Your brother is a kind and thoughtful man."

She had done laundry that day and, when Betsy came from school, they hung the sheets on the line together.

Now they were sitting on the porch, shelling peas and drinking cambric tea while the baby napped beside them in a basket of clean diapers and towels.

Betsy kept her eyes down at the bowl in her lap as she spoke. "I don't know that he said anything very comforting," she replied. "Poor Charlie couldn't even eat. It seemed very sad."

"Even bad news is news," Mrs. Baxter insisted. "It helps to have a picture in your mind, to know at least a little about it."

She reached up to dump the peas from her bowl into the larger pot on the table, then took another handful of pods and put them in her lap.

"To know that your Jim and that John Kelley were there with Charlie at the end, that has to gladden his parents' hearts amid the sorrow," she went on. "I know it gladdened my heart to hear that my Tom knew we had a son. I was afraid my letter didn't get to him in time; that he never saw it."

They said nothing for several minutes, then Mrs. Baxter spoke again. "I shouldn't say this, but I'm glad John is there."

Betsy looked up for a moment, but didn't say anything.

"Goodness knows, I don't mean I'm glad poor John is in prison," Mrs. Baxter went on. "But I'm glad Jim isn't alone. John was never a close friend; Jim and Tom and Charlie were always together while John was always working at his family's store. Still, he is from home. I'm glad Jim has a friend for company."

"I'm not glad of anything," Betsy declared. "And I don't care about anything else. I just want Jimmy to come home! Nothing else. Nothing else will ever make me glad again, ever!"

Mrs. Baxter's eyes began to fill with tears and Betsy suddenly realized the terrible thing she had said. Her brother might yet come home, but Mrs. Baxter's husband never would.

"I'm sorry!" she said, and now she began to cry, too. "I didn't mean it!"

"Of course you did!" Mrs. Baxter said. "Of course you meant it!"

And she put her bowl on the table, and took Betsy's bowl, and then reached over and the young widow and the young sister held each other and wept. It was the first time Betsy had cried since the day Jimmy's first letter arrived and they knew he was a prisoner.

But now little Tommy began to cry, too. Mrs. Baxter wiped her eyes, and laughed, and picked him up from the laundry basket. "Did we wake you up, little fellow?" she asked. "Did those foolish girls wake you up with their caterwauling?"

She played with the baby until he stopped crying, and then put him to her shoulder and patted his back.

"When I first heard about Tom, when your parents brought Jim's letter over, I thought my life was over," she said. "I thought I would never smile again. And then I looked at little Tommy and I knew there was much, much left before me."

She reached out and cupped Betsy's cheek gently with one hand. "Jimmy is coming home. I know he is. Jimmy will come home."

* * *

Betsy was thinking about Tom Baxter, and his widow, and his son, and her own brother, as she walked home. She barely heard the wagon slow to a stop until the voice said, "Would you like a ride?"

It was John Jones, the sexton at her church, the man who had given her the job of helping Mrs. Baxter after school. He held a hand down, inviting her to come up on the seat beside him.

Betsy took his hand and stepped up onto the wagon.

"Thank you, Mr. Jones," she said, and the black man smiled back.

"Mrs. Baxter says you are a great help to her," he said, as he shook the reins and started his horses up again.

Betsy wasn't sure what to say, so she said nothing, and, after a moment, Mr. Jones spoke up again. "I heard you had a letter."

"Yes," Betsy answered.

"He's going to be all right," Mr. Jones said. "He's going to come home. I feel it in my bones!"

Betsy still didn't know what to say. Mr. Jones had been a slave in Virginia, until he and his brothers escaped and came north to freedom, in Elmira.

Then he became a conductor on the Underground Railroad.

Nobody in Elmira talked about it, but everybody knew it: John Jones had helped a lot of slaves to freedom, sending them in railroad boxcars up to Canada, where nobody owned people, where people were free.

But now John Jones busied himself with burying the rebel soldiers, those who enlisted to preserve slavery but then died in the Elmira prison.

He didn't just deliver them to the cemetery. He kept track of each grave. Mr. Jones even put a slip of paper with the name of the prisoner and his regiment in a bottle around each dead man's neck, so that that particular reb's body could never be lost and forgotten.

Betsy rode beside Mr. Jones in silence until they came to her house.

text copyright 2013 Mike Peterson, illustrations copyright 2013 Christopher Baldwin

For a teaching guide, go to <http://tinyurl.com/ckserial>

Sudoku Solution

2	3	5	1	6	4
4	6	1	2	5	3
6	2	4	3	1	5
1	5	3	4	2	6
3	1	6	5	4	2
5	4	2	6	3	1

Brainteaser Solution



(see Page Three)

10 right - Wow!

7 right - Great!

5 right - Good

3 right - See you next time!

1. Tanzania
2. temple
3. Theseus
4. (Harry) Truman
5. tympany
6. thimble
7. thyme
8. Tut or Tutankhaman
9. Timothy
10. (Nikola) Tesla

ColoradoKids

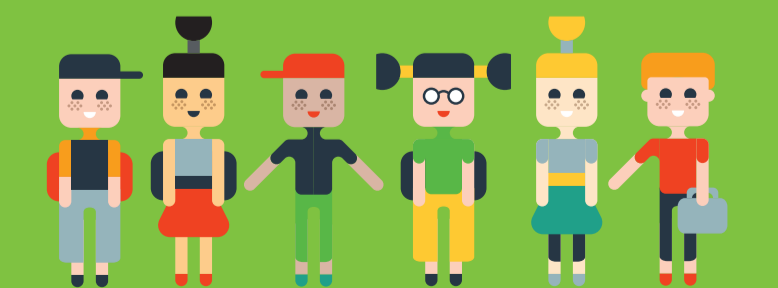
is produced by
Denver Post Educational Services
Executive Editor: Dana Plewka
dplewka@denverpost.com
CK Editor: Mike Peterson
coloradokidseditor@gmail.com
We welcome your comments.

eEditions of the Post are
free of charge for classroom use.
Contact us for information on all
our programs.

Denver Post Educational Services
5990 N. Washington St.
Denver CO 80216
(303) 954-3974
(800) 336-7678

For tools to extend the learning in this feature,
look under "Youth Content" at:
www.ColoradoNIE.com

Stories without bylines were written by the editor.



ColoradoNIE.com