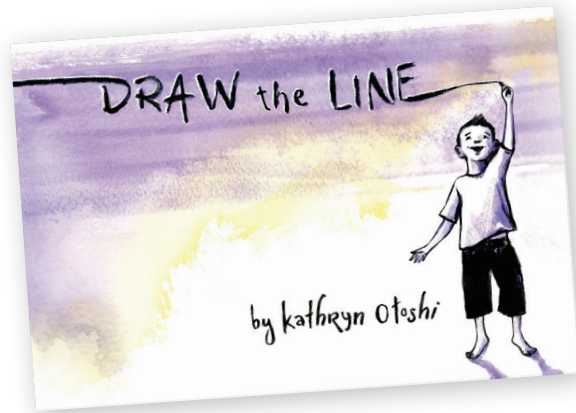


Reviewed by Christine Ballenger

Draw the Line

Written and Illustrated by Kathryn Otoshi
Roaring Book Press, 2017



When two boys draw their own lines and realize they can connect them—magic happens! But then a misstep causes their lines to get crossed. Push! Pull! Tug! Yank! Soon their line unravels into a tug-of-war. With a growing rift between them, will the boys ever find a way to come together again?

These words on the dust jacket cover immediately drew me in, and I eagerly opened the book only to find there were no words! After taking in the pages, I realized no words were needed to tell the story—this is a book about actions and choices, creating and destroying, teamwork and discord. These are all parts of life often experienced in an Orff Schulwerk lesson when students are able to create.

Kathryn Otoshi's *Draw the Line* opens with two children, each drawing, focused on their own lines. One boy's line swirls while the other's is straight. Suddenly, a bump and an acknowledgement of the other, and a new endeavor begins. The boys have fun together until their ideas no longer align. How often do we see this in our classrooms? Small group work is going well until, well, it is not. The students disagree on how to continue and are at odds on how to move forward. They may often end up asking for help. My preference is to teach

my students how to compromise and give them opportunities to at least try the idea about which they are unsure. *Draw the Line* may be a useful tool for demonstrating this type of bump in the creative process—when you are working together but come to a point where you would rather be working alone. How can you ever finish the project you have started when you and your partner cannot agree?

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In addition to this book serving as a jumping off point for a discussion on how to work together and how projects may shift over time, you can explore the idea of lines converging. Perhaps a movement experience in pathways can begin with one partner as a shadow, and alternating turns being the leader. Then they can use paper and marker or watercolor to explore a similar idea—one partner begins a line, and the other is responsible for continuing it. Next, what sounds may be inspired from the lines on the page? What designs? If adding art is not practical, have students form groups of four, with two acting as line-movers and two providing the musical accompaniment—one person per mover, creating sound to match the movement observed. Finally, this book, with no given words, could be a perfect opportunity for your students to try out their narrative writing as either a full class

project, in small groups, or as individuals. From there, how could you present it musically and dramatically for an audience?

Draw the Line is a beautifully simple book featuring only the colors black, gray, white, purple, and yellow. The conflict feels surprising, but natural, and the resolution brings relief and a reminder that when we just stop and look at what others are doing, more often than not, we find their intentions are good. Even when

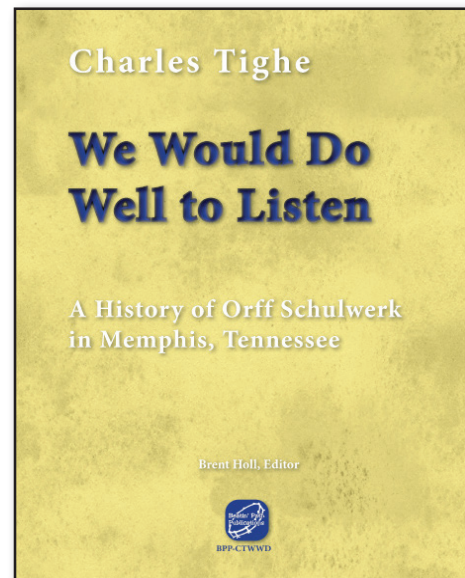
working separately, we can create something bigger and better when we put our work together! ■

CHRISTINE BALLENGER teaches pre-kindergarten through Grade 4 music and movement outside of Houston, Texas. She is an approved teacher educator in basic pedagogy, recorder, and movement for the American Orff-Schulwerk Association. She currently serves on *The Orff Echo* Editorial Board and enjoys discovering children’s literature to explore with her students.

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