

Teacher's Guide

The Magician's Hat



Written By Malcolm Mitchell

Art By Dennis Campay

Teacher's Guide Prepared by Tanya Hudson

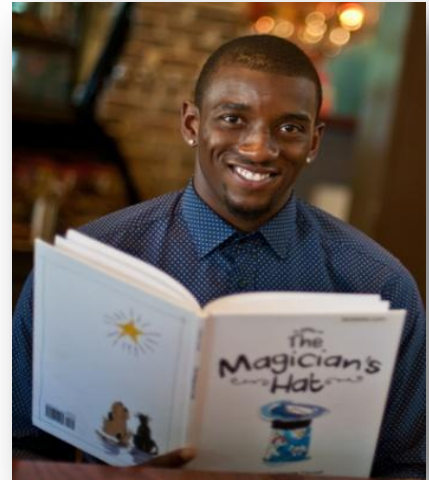
About Malcolm Mitchell

***“Follow your dreams, and they will
take you wherever you want to go.”***

- The Magician’s Hat

David, the magician in Malcolm Mitchell’s debut children’s book, leaves readers with this inspiring message—a message that captures some of the magic of Malcolm’s own life.

After a successful college career with the Georgia Bulldogs, Malcolm Mitchell has achieved his dream of becoming a professional football player, starting the 2016 season with the New England Patriots. In 2015, he became a published author. But none of these successes came easily.



Growing up, Malcolm Mitchell was a talented athlete, but he wasn’t known for his prowess in academics. He struggled with reading, procrastinated doing his assignments, distracted his teachers when they called on him in class, and even skipped school.

Mitchell also faced challenges at home. His mother, Pratina Woods, battled breast cancer for two years. When Malcolm was 11, she went through a divorce, moving Malcolm and his two siblings from their home in Florida to her mother’s house in Valdosta, Georgia. For more than two years, the kids slept on air mattresses and sofas while she applied for, and was denied, public housing.

And then, shortly after earning a promotion at work, Malcolm’s mother found out that her application to Habitat for Humanity had been approved; she had finally achieved her dream of owning a home. It was a new beginning for Malcolm’s family.

Malcolm Mitchell graduated from Valdosta High School in 2011 reading on what he estimates to be about a middle school level—but his athletic skill earned him a college scholarship and a starting position on the University of Georgia football team. While earning All-SEC honors on the field, Mitchell also worked hard to make great strides in his progress as a reader.

The turning point in Malcolm’s literate life was a knee injury in the fall of 2013. He spent his recuperation period reading everything he could get his hands on—including kids’ books like the *Harry Potter* series, *The Hunger Games*, and the magical works of Shel Silverstein and Dr. Seuss.

The following summer, a browsing session at a bookstore turned into a huge reading opportunity. Malcolm befriended a local woman and ended up joining her book club—an all-female group of readers, many of whom were old enough to be his mother!

In August of 2015, as Malcolm Mitchell began his senior year at UGA, he also published his first children’s book, *The Magician’s Hat*. And as he prepared to begin his professional football career with the New England Patriots in 2016, he shared this advice—clearly inspired by his own experience:

“If you pick up a book and read, your life will never be the same.”

About *The Magician's Hat*

From ReadWithMalcolm.com:

David, the Magician, loves to perform magic—but his favorite trick is not pulling a rabbit out of a hat or finding quarters behind the ears of children.

Instead, David knows the magical power of books, which can explore dreams and develop creativity. Bring your imagination and look inside *The Magician's Hat*.



Setting

Family Fun Day at the public library

Characters

David – a magician who was inspired by a book about magic to follow his dreams; his magical hat can reveal the dreams of whoever reaches inside

Amy – a girl who dreams of becoming a dentist

Matt – a boy who dreams of becoming a famous football player

Ryan – a boy who is skeptical about David's magic tricks until the hat reveals his true dreams

Summary

Children gather at the public library's Family Fun Day, enjoying the festivities and eagerly anticipating the performance of David the magician.

After a few tricks, David tells the story of his own childhood visit to Family Fun Day at the library, when, "Out of hundreds of books, one jumped out at me." It was a book about magic, and it inspired him to become a magician.

For David's final trick, he calls several children up from the audience to reach inside his hat. They excitedly find books related to their own dreams for the future.

But a boy named Ryan is unconvinced. He tries to trick David by telling him he wants to be a dog when he grows up. After reaching deep into David's hat, Ryan is surprised to pull out a book not about dogs but about outer space—and he has always wanted to be an astronaut!

David closes his performance by telling the children, "Follow your dreams, and they will take you wherever you want to go."

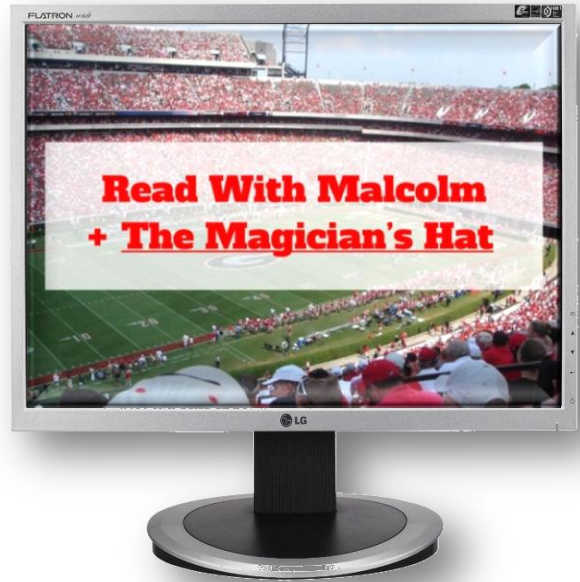
Plug-and-Play Presentation

This teacher's guide includes access to digital resources to help you introduce the book in your classroom. The content in these resources can be adapted to meet your instructional needs.

These resources focus primarily on Malcolm Mitchell's childhood, his football career, his struggles with reading, and how he overcame countless obstacles to become the avid reader and writer he is today.

Visit the links below to open a Google Slides presentation and speaker notes.

A Google account is not necessary for access to these files, but if you do have a Google account, it's easy to make your own copy of the slideshow in your Google Drive for easy editing and additions.



Slideshow¹

Visit the following link to access the Google Slides presentation about Malcolm Mitchell and *The Magician's Hat*. The cloud-based presentation is viewable across all devices (Windows, Apple, Chrome, Android, etc.).

tiny.cc/readwithmalcolm

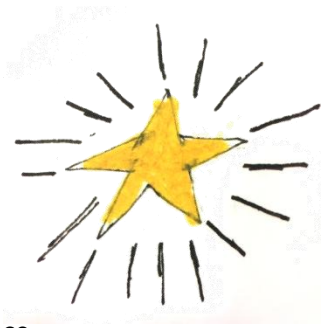
Speaker Notes

You can view speaker notes for the Google Slides presentation by pressing **S** on your keyboard while in presentation mode or by opening the file in your Google Drive. You can also download a PDF of the slides annotated with the speaker notes here:

tiny.cc/rwmspeakernotes

¹ **CCRA.R.7 / CCRA.SL.2** Integrate and evaluate content and information presented in diverse media and formats.

Working With Words²



Vocabulary Preview and Review

- ★ **Tricky Words³** This book uses words that may challenge some readers:

gather	perform	series	audience
scavenger hunt	wander	inspire	blurt
snicker	puzzled	expression	desire

You may want to preview these words with students before reading. Students can also use **context clues**, the book’s **illustrations**, and their own **prior knowledge** to figure out these tricky words as they read or listen to the story.

- ★ **What’s That Word?⁴** Play vocabulary charades! Many of the words above describe actions. Have one student act out an action word while other students guess which word is being performed. Students could also play Pictionary, with one student drawing a picture representing a word while the others guess what the word is.

Shades of Meaning

- ★ **Talking Words⁵** While the book uses basic conversation verbs like “asked” and “said,” many of the speech verbs in the story refer to more specific ways of using one’s voice:

shout	scream	blurt	roar
bark	challenge	snicker	whisper

These words all indicate different ways of speaking—different volumes, attitudes, facial expressions, gestures. Talk with students about these words’ **shades of meaning**. What’s the difference between a shout and a scream? When would someone blurt or whisper?

- ★ **Shout It Out!⁶** Write the eight “talking words” above on slips of paper, fold the slips, and put them in a hat or other container. Then, pick a sentence from the book, for example the closing question: “What are your dreams?” When it is a student’s turn, have the student pull a word slip from the hat. The word slip determines how the student will say the sentence out loud. Other students can try to guess which talking word is being demonstrated!

² **CCRA.R.4** Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

³ **CCRA.L.4** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

⁴ **CCRA.SL.6** Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks.

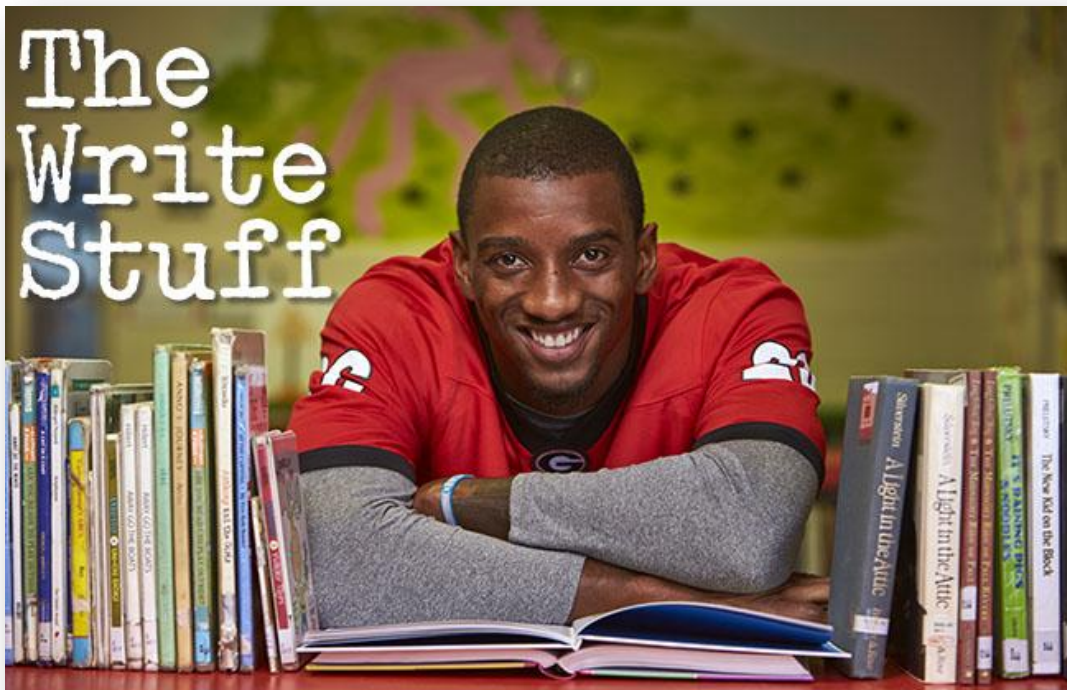
⁵ **CCRA.L.5** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

⁶ **CCRA.SL.6** Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks.

Discussion Questions



- ★ **Setting** This book takes place at a public library. Why do you think Malcolm Mitchell picked this setting for the story? What do libraries have to do following one's dreams?
 - ★ **Character** Which character from the story do you most closely identify with and why?
 - ★ **Theme**⁷ David the Magician says, "Follow your dreams, and they will take you wherever you want to go." Do you think this is an important life lesson? Why or why not?
 - ★ **Story Connections**⁸ What other stories (fictional or true) have you read about characters following their dreams? How do these stories relate to each other and to *The Magician's Hat*?
- ★ **Author Connections**⁹ After learning about Malcolm Mitchell's life, what connections can you make between his life story and *The Magician's Hat*? How does his life reflect the book's theme of following your dreams?



⁷ **CCRA.R.2** Determine central themes of a text; analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

⁸ **CCRA.R.9** Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

⁹ **CCRA.R.6** Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Extension Activities



- ★ **Personal Writing**¹⁰ The book ends with a question: “What are your dreams?” Write a journal entry exploring your own dreams for the future. How could reading help you follow your dreams?
- ★ **Narrative Writing**¹¹ Use the following sentence to start a fictional story: “One day, while I was visiting the library, a book jumped out at me!” (What happens next? Does the book inspire you like it inspired David? Is it magical? What else can the book do?)
- ★ **Art** If you pulled a book out of David’s hat, what would the book be about? Design a book cover that represents your own dreams for the future. [**Teacher note:** Students’ artwork could be compiled into a class book of dreams for the future.]
- ★ **Drama**¹² Rewrite the magic trick scene from the book to include your classmates and their own dreams for the future. Then, act out the scene as a class!
- ★ **Math**¹³ Survey your classmates (or a wider pool of respondents) about their dreams for the future. Create a graph that represents your findings. Do you see any interesting patterns? Are there certain types of dreams that are common across respondents?
- ★ **Research**^{14, 15} What do you want to be when you grow up? Research a career that interests you. Learn about what your responsibilities would be for your chosen career, what a day at work would be like, and what skills and education you would need to achieve your dreams of having this career one day. Create a piece of informational writing that could teach others about the career of your dreams.
- ★ **Writing / Social Studies**^{16, 17} Learn more about a famous person from history who followed their dreams, even in the face of adversity. Suggestions: Martin Luther King, Jr., Michael Jordan, J.K. Rowling, Walt Disney, Albert Einstein, Stephen Spielberg, Thomas Edison, Wilma Rudolph, Jane Goodall, Oprah Winfrey, Frederick Douglass, and many more! Write a first-person narrative from your subject’s point of view telling about how his or her dream was achieved.

¹⁰ **CCRA.W.10** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

¹¹ **CCRA.W.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

¹² **CCRA.SL.1** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively

¹³ **CCSS.MATH.PRACTICE.MP1** Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them. Represent and interpret data.

¹⁴ **CCRA.W.7** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

¹⁵ **CCRA.W.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

¹⁶ **CCRA.W.7** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

¹⁷ **CCRA.W.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

More about Malcolm Mitchell ¹⁸

If you'd like to learn more about Malcolm Mitchell—his childhood, his football career, his life as a reader and writer, or how his organization Read with Malcolm is working to spread a lifelong love of reading and learning to children around the country—visit the links below!



★ **Read with Malcolm**

Read with Malcolm is a youth literacy initiative funded by the non-profit Share the Magic Foundation. The goal of Read with Malcolm and the Share the Magic Foundation aligns with Malcolm Mitchell's personal mission: to transform the lives of students through literacy. Visit the official Read with Malcolm website for more information:

www.readwithmalcolm.com

★ **Bio Page for the University of Georgia Athletics**

Visit this page for more information about Malcolm Mitchell's college football career at the University of Georgia:

www.georgiadogs.com/sports/m-footbl/mtt/malcolm_mitchell_742379.html

★ **Bio Page for the New England Patriots**

Visit this page for more information about Malcolm Mitchell's professional football career with the New England Patriots:

www.patriots.com/team/players/roster/malcolm-mitchell

★ **NFL Network Path to the Draft Recap: Malcolm Mitchell**

In this short video (also linked in the Plug-and-Play Presentation above), Andrew Siciliano of the NFL Network discusses Malcolm Mitchell's football career and his literacy journey:

tiny.cc/malcomdraftpath

¹⁸ CCRA.R.7 / CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate content and information presented in diverse media and formats.

More about Malcolm Mitchell (continued)

★ ***The Boston Herald: The Book on Patriots' Malcolm Mitchell is All Perseverance & Heart***

Journalist Jeff Howe shares a detailed account of Malcolm Mitchell's story with a focus on how his mother inspired him to achieve great things and what his success means to her:

www.bostonherald.com/sports/patriots/2016/05/the_book_on_patriots_malcolm_mitchell_is_all_perseverance_heart

★ ***Sports Illustrated Kids: For National Reading Month, Georgia Receiver Malcolm Mitchell Tells Us All About His Love of Books***

Sport Illustrated Kids' Lauren Shute explores Malcolm Mitchell's literacy transformation:

www.sikids.com/si-kids/2016/03/10/national-reading-month-georgia-receiver-malcolm-mitchell-tells-us-all-about-his-love-books

★ ***Bleacher Report: Malcolm Mitchell's Magical Foray into Children's Books***

NFL Analyst Brent Sobleski chronicles Malcolm Mitchell's journey to becoming not just a better reader but also a published author:

bleacherreport.com/articles/2621854-malcolm-mitchells-magical-foray-into-childrens-books

★ ***NCAA Champion Magazine: Hitting the Book***

Jordan Schwartz discusses how Malcolm Mitchell's 2013 season-ending ACL injury was a "blessing in disguise," giving him an opportunity to pursue his newfound passions for reading and writing:

www.ncaa.org/champion/hitting-book



★ ***Southern Journal Magazine: Excellency off the Field***

Shana Thornton's profile of Malcolm Mitchell focuses on how he has turned ideas into action with his commitment to literacy through the Read with Malcolm initiative:

southernjournalmagazine.com/cover-story-malcolm-mitchell

★ ***Habitat: Malcolm's Magic***

Habitat for Humanity International's online magazine shares the important role their organization played in helping Malcolm Mitchell's mother, Pratina Woods, achieve her dreams--and how she inspired her son to do the same:

www.habitat.org/magazine/article/malcolms-magic



Additional Classroom Resources for Exploring Dreams

Stock your classroom library and read-aloud arsenal with great books that will inspire your students to follow their dreams. Visit the links below for recommendations!

★ **14 Books to Inspire Kids to Follow Their Dreams**¹⁹

This list, from blogger Erica at *What Do We Do All Day?* is a fantastic collection of picture book biographies about a variety of historical figures who pursued their dreams in all kinds of different fields.

www.whatdowedoallday.com/2015/06/books-to-inspire-kids-to-follow-their-dreams.html

★ **Big Dreams for a New Year: Books to Inspire Your Mighty Girl in 2016**

While the title of this post from Katherine Handcock at *A Mighty Girl* is gender-specific, the books on this list will inspire girls and boys alike. The list includes picture books for younger readers all the way up to novels and nonfiction for teens and young adults. (You can also search *A Mighty Girl's* archives for lists from previous years as well as many other suggestions!)

www.amightygirl.com/blog?p=10834

★ **Read-Alouds to Inspire Hopes and Dreams**

Margaret Berry Wilson's list at *Responsive Classroom* includes a variety of fictional and true stories about following dreams as well as ideas for how teachers can use these books in the classroom.

www.responsiveclassroom.org/read-alouds-to-inspire-hopes-and-dreams/

★ **Hopes and Dreams: A Strategy to Begin the Year**²⁰

This resource does not contain book suggestions; it describes the Responsive Classroom practice of having students begin their school year by developing hopes and dreams. The procedures for doing this are described in detail so that teachers can make the activity meaningful for their students. This classroom strategy could easily be integrated with a read-aloud of *The Magician's Hat* and many of the books listed in the links above.

www.educationworld.com/a_curr/columnists/charney/charney001.shtml

¹⁹ **CCRA.R.9** Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

²⁰ **CCRA.SL.1** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.