



# *the* Dragon Lode

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*Dragon*

# *The* **Dragon Lode**

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**MANUSCRIPTS:** *The Dragon Lodge* features original articles and book reviews that explore the areas of research in Children's Literature, Literature for a Global Society, Children's Literature in the Classroom, Bridges to Content Knowledge, and Home-School Connections. Special topics as announced in the Call for Manuscripts are included in each issue. Initial submissions should be in Microsoft Word and sent as an attachment to [thedragonlode@gmail.com](mailto:thedragonlode@gmail.com). The manuscripts must be typed, double-spaced throughout, including quotations and references. Include only references cited in the text. Each page must have a running head and be numbered. Please use charts, pictures, and graphs judiciously. On a separate page include full name(s) of author(s), addresses, email, school affiliation, and brief biographical information for the notes on the contributors. We do not return manuscripts. Manuscripts submitted to *The Dragon Lodge* are reviewed anonymously by the Manuscript Review Board or occasionally by guest reviewers. Upon submission, a decision is usually reached in 12 weeks. Articles published in *The Dragon Lodge* are copyrighted and the property of the CL-R SIG.

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*Demi*

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# A LETTER FROM THE CL/R SIG PRESIDENT



THIS ISSUE of *The Dragon Lodge* addresses access, a timely and compelling topic since the onset of a global pandemic in early 2020. Like many other educators, I have wondered how to connect my students with high-quality literature when access to library and school collections is limited and how to provide access to engaging learning experiences in online and hybrid settings.

Over the past year, the board of directors of our special interest group (SIG) has also considered the issue of access. How can we better serve you, our members, and provide access to new opportunities? After months of stay-at-home orders and limited contact with our friends and colleagues, building a community of literacy and literature enthusiasts within our SIG is an especially important undertaking.

Recent efforts by the board have included the reactivation of the Ways and Means Committee and the Membership and Publicity Committee. Both committees have been working to establish new initiatives. For several months, our Ways and Means members have been planning a spirit wear event and will soon be selling T-shirts and other items featuring our Dragon Lodge logo. This event is meant to create awareness of and pride in our SIG.

Membership and Publicity members have been meeting to develop criteria for a new award connected to the Notable Books for a Global Society (NBGS), one of our SIG's noteworthy and long-standing endeavors. This new award will honor practitioners who integrate the NBGS in creative ways as well as researchers who incorporate the NBGS in their inquiries.

Further, several of our SIG members have been digitizing previous issues of this journal. Once completed, these issues will be available to all SIG members via the password-protected space on our website ([www.clrsig.org](http://www.clrsig.org)). We hope this effort will result in increased access to the scholarship and practical teaching ideas for which *The Dragon Lodge* is known.

Service on the NBGS committee offers another chance for SIG members to connect with others over children's literature. New committee members will be selected early in 2022. Any SIG member who is interested in serving should submit a letter of interest and a résumé or curriculum vitae to Sandip Wilson ([wilsonsa@husson.edu](mailto:wilsonsa@husson.edu)) and me ([danielle.hartsfield@ung.edu](mailto:danielle.hartsfield@ung.edu)) by January 15, 2022. Please visit the NBGS space on our website to learn more.

And finally, SIG members are invited to contribute book reviews to our website. If you enjoy reading youth literature and writing about it (and most likely you do if you are reading this!), then contributing to our online reviews is another way to engage in the SIG's mission to "promote the educational use of children's books."

If you would like to access the opportunities for involvement that our SIG offers, or if you have new ideas to share, please feel welcome to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you and working alongside you.

Respectfully,

**Danielle Hartsfield, President**

Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group (CL/R SIG)

# A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS



ACCESS TO CHILDREN'S LITERATURE for children across the world became a prevalent issue as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. This issue of *The Dragon Lode* includes articles addressing this timely and critical concern from a wide range of perspectives. The authors take us across format, place, and time to examine how children access quality literature, and how we can advocate for equity and justice for all children.

Xenia Hadjioannou opens the conversation with her invited piece, "Access to High-Quality, Diverse Book Collections Across a Variety of Challenging Times and Contexts." Hadjioannou gives us critical elements to consider as we engage in dialogue surrounding issues of access to children's literature across multiple contexts. In "We Read as One: Strategies for Empowering a Community of Intergenerational Readers," Bonnie A. Barksdale, Katie Schrodt, R. Stacy Fields, and Jennifer Grow describe contexts in which literacy educators faced the challenge of book deserts in their community. Initiatives such as Coffee Shop Bookstore, Literacy Lane (a drive-through book pickup), and Zoom Book Buddies encouraged families to bring literature into their homes and their lives. The authors provide recommendations for other educators addressing similar community-based challenges. Elizabeth M. Bemiss and Melanie G. Keel discuss access to children's literature from a preservice and in-service perspective in "From Paper to Plugged In: Pivoting Access to Children's Literature in Light of the Pandemic." As the pandemic raged, access to children's literature shifted from traditional print copies to digital and electronic books, changing the way in which preservice and in-service teachers selected literature for classroom contexts. The authors describe how they responded to this challenge in their teaching. Finally, James Shanahan and Naheeda Karmali consider

a recent trend in publishing using the example of a popular picturebook. Eager to help children, parents, and teachers respond to the complex emotions and situations resulting from COVID-19, publishers released numerous books reflective of the pandemic. The authors provide a critical analysis of one such hopeful book, helping us consider the numerous implications of literature focused on a shared global experience. This collection of articles challenges us to consider issues of access to children's literature through new lenses, helping us to problematize the issue and develop plans to be sure all children have access to high-quality, diverse collections of literature.

The "Poet's Corner" column for this issue provides an actionable plan for addressing issues of access and responding to the impact of the pandemic. Janet Wong describes, step by step, a project in which children can put their poetry skills to work to honor the contributions of health care workers to our society. We encourage our readers to share how they put this plan into action with us!

This issue is filled with practical suggestions, new ways of thinking about how to access literature regardless of adverse conditions, and empowering, innovative approaches for experiencing high-quality children's literature. Thank you to our outstanding authors for their contributions to this issue of *The Dragon Lode*. •

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## IN MEMORIAM DR. VIVIAN YENIKA-AGBAW

The children's literature community recently lost a dedicated scholar and advocate. Dr. Vivian Yenika-Agbaw was a member of the Editorial Review Board for *The Dragon Lode*. Her time and attention to reviewing colleagues' work, providing thoughtful feedback, and helping shape the field will be greatly missed.

## CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

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Spring 2022 **OPEN THEME**

*MANUSCRIPTS DUE  
DECEMBER 15, 2021*

We invite manuscripts that explore contemporary issues and questions, genre study, literary theory, and research related to children's literature and reading.

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Fall 2022 **USING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE TO SUPPORT STUDENT NEEDS**

*MANUSCRIPTS DUE  
JUNE 15, 2022*

Children's literature can be a critical tool to use throughout the day and throughout the curriculum. It can facilitate student learning while opening up a world of possibilities for supporting students in every way. What are the ways that teachers use children's literature to facilitate student learning while supporting students' needs? How can literature be a tool to further the goals teachers have for their students, grounded in courses of study and curriculum goals? How does children's literature help teachers develop students not only as learners, but also as empathetic members of a community? We invite articles exploring pedagogical applications of children's literature that support students across the curriculum and into their communities.

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Spring 2023 **OPEN THEME**

*MANUSCRIPTS DUE  
DECEMBER 15, 2022*

We invite manuscripts that explore contemporary issues and questions, genre study, literary theory, and research related to children's literature and reading.

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### GUIDELINES

*EMAIL MANUSCRIPTS TO: [THEDRAGONLODE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:THEDRAGONLODE@GMAIL.COM)*

Manuscripts must be submitted electronically and should be no longer than 20 double-spaced, typed pages. Use APA (7th edition) formatting. Author's name, affiliation, mailing address, telephone and fax numbers, and email address should be on a separate cover page. Please be judicious in the use of tables, photographs, and charts. Book covers, photographs, illustrations, and figures should be sent as separate jpeg files. Any reference to the author that would enable the reviewer to know the author's identity should not appear in the manuscript. Book covers, photographs, illustrations, and figures should be sent as separate jpeg files.

# ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY, DIVERSE BOOK COLLECTIONS ACROSS A VARIETY OF CHALLENGING TIMES AND CONTEXTS



Xenia Hadjioannou

## ABSTRACT

Literacy education scholarship is replete with calls for making available to children robust collections of exceptional books that represent diverse perspectives, noting the immense value of high-quality books that can serve as windows to the lives of others and as mirrors for readers' own experiences (Bishop, 1990). Despite intentional efforts to increase the availability of well-diversified children's literature collections in schools and communities, dependable access remains a challenge. The article discusses contexts and circumstances that pose access challenges, focusing on financial constraints and biases of availability.

"I WANT TO surround them with *all* the books!" a middle school English language arts teacher exclaims as we are walking toward our cars after a three-hour graduate class that followed a long day of teaching. Her passion and commitment are palpable as she explains how she is cobbling together school monies and personal funds to identify and bring to her classroom a diverse collection of well-written books for her students. She attends workshops on children's and young adult literature, she connects with book creators on social media to stay informed of new publications, she spends weekends in thrift stores and independent bookstores, and she reads, reads, reads.

As she is talking, I am impressed and delighted by all she does to pursue her crucially important goal of surrounding her students with "all the books" and supporting them as they explore titles, select books they are interested in reading, read those books, and choose how they respond to them in

personally meaningful ways. At the same time, however, I am also struck by how much of what she does represents extraordinary effort on the part of a singular teacher, who must circumnavigate a complex system to make possible this kind of important access to new, high-quality literature that represents diverse perspectives and experiences and is the work of diverse book creators. What is even more troubling is the knowledge that dependable access to rich, well-diversified collections of exceptional children's books remains an intractable challenge for school communities faced with compounding factors that work in both obvious and insidious ways.

## Access Matters

Kiefer et al. (2018) asserted that surrounding children "with books of all kinds" is a vital predisposition to them becoming readers and noted that "children should have immediate access to books whenever they need them" (p. 335). Early immersion in "a book culture" in which books are present, read, and responded to in a variety of ways was described as "critical" by Neuman and Moland (2019), who explained that "when there are no books, or when there are so few that choice is not an option, book reading becomes an occasion and not a routine" (p. 143). Ready access to books through their physical presence in children's environments, combined with plentiful opportunities to engage with books, has been linked to numerous benefits for children. Such access can enrich the personal lives of children (Cooper, 2009; Kiefer et al., 2018; Shaver, 2019; Temple



et al., 2018); help them make meaning of their own lives, cultures, and experiences and understand those of others (Bennett et al., 2021; Children's Literature Assembly, 2019; Kiefer et al., 2018; Temple et al., 2018); support the cultivation of literary insight and a critical perspective (Bennett et al., 2021; Hadjoannou & Loizou, 2011; Parsons et al., 2011; Prior et al., 2012); hone their skills as effective and efficient readers and writers (Allington et al., 2010; Hoffman et al., 2004; Kiefer et al., 2018; Neuman & Moland, 2019; Serafini, 2013; Strickland & Abbott, 2010); and frame their literate identities (Dutro & McIver, 2010).

When describing classroom environments that incorporate sustaining conditions for literacy learning, Cambourne (2000) began by focusing on the "physical paraphernalia" of classrooms, noting as important the presence of "a large and diverse range of readily available books, magazines, and other texts" (p. 513). The value of a rich text environment is corroborated by Hoffman et al. (2004), who also emphasized the significance of the social practices that surround those texts. In classrooms, text resources are typically concentrated in library spaces, which should include a wide selection of trade books of different genres, formats, reading levels, and themes, while also representing a rich diversity of human lives and perspectives (Bishop, 1990; Boyd et al., 2015; Fractor et al., 1993; Hoffman et al., 2004; International Literacy Association, 2019; Kiefer et al., 2018; Temple et al., 2018). Additionally, text resources are housed in school libraries with knowledgeable professional librarians who build rich collections and make them accessible to the school community (Kiefer et al., 2018).

The need to make available to children a "wide range of high-quality literature representing diverse experiences and perspectives" (National Council of Teachers of English, 2006) is emphasized by several professional organizations, which have encoded it in resolutions (National Council of Teachers of English, 2006), position statements (Children's Literature Assembly, 2019), briefs (International Literacy Association, 2018, 2019), and standards (National Council of Teachers of English & International Reading Association, 1996; these standards were also reaffirmed in 2012).

The Children's Literature Assembly (2019) has defined diverse children's literature as referring "to depictions of people, bodies, voices, languages, and ways of loving, living, and being that have been traditionally underrepresented in media like children's literature," and noted that "these narra-

tives may intersect, overlap and braid together in an infinite number of ways among those individuals, communities, or histories it seeks to represent." The need for children to have access to and be purposefully supported in engaging with such diverse stories cannot be understated. Bishop's (1990) metaphor of mirrors and windows remains a valuable frame in articulating this imperative, as does Adichie's (2009) warning over the danger of a single story. By having access to multiple voices and their stories, children's interest in and engagement with literature are ignited through opportunities to read texts that reflect their experiences and preoccupations and help sustain their identities and clarify their inner world, as well as texts that reveal, humanize, and validate experiences and perspectives outside of their own lives (Bennett et al., 2021; Children's Literature Assembly, 2019; Kiefer et al., 2018; Mukunda & Vellanki, 2016).

Indeed, in a recent research brief, the International Literacy Association (2019) recognized access to "supportive learning environments and high-quality resources," including access to well-diversified collections of books, as a children's right (p. 2). However, despite the broad recognition of this need and despite intentional efforts to increase the availability of diverse literature in school libraries and curricula, there are multiple indications that such access is substantially limited for many children, and particularly for children from minoritized communities and those who live in poor communities for extended periods of time (Allington et al., 2010; Neuman & Moland, 2019; Wolf et al., 2010). In the sections that follow, I explore realities of modern schooling in the United States that encumber access to high-quality, well-diversified collections of children's books for students and their teachers.

## Financial Constraints

### The Impact of Persistent Poverty

In their examination of trends in family income segregation between 1970 and 2009, Bischoff and Reardon (2014) reported growing residential segregation by income, noting that this segregation is most pronounced in metropolitan areas. In unpacking these trends, the authors remarked that income segregation is linked to poor families' limited access to high-quality schools that are well-staffed and well-resourced, which is compounded by a divestment from the development of public resources. They explained, "If socioeconomic segregation means that more advantaged families do not

share social environments and public institutions such as schools, public services, and parks with low-income families, advantaged families may hold back their support for investments in shared resources” (p. 227).

In terms of access to books and other print materials, children who live in poor neighborhoods face significant scarcity and limitations in what is available in their schools, in their homes, and in the adjacent community resources, such as libraries and community centers (Allington et al., 2010; Bennett et al., 2021). When comparing print environments between poor and affluent communities, Constantino (2005) found statistically significant differences in the numbers of books available to affluent youth through their homes, their classrooms, and their schools as compared to the children of poor communities, adding that “in some cases, children in affluent communities have access to more books in the home than the other communities have in all school sources combined” (p. 24). Shaver (2019) described “book hunger” as an important challenge faced by low-income families in the United States and elsewhere, explaining that, though poor families recognize the importance of supporting their children as readers, they do not have the resources to maintain a collection of books that evolves as their children grow. This, according to Allington et al. (2010), is linked to lower reading activity by economically disadvantaged children, particularly during the summer months when school is not in session. In their investigation of the impact of economic disparities on children’s access to print, Neuman and Moland (2019) also found that access to books, and particularly to books geared toward young children, was significantly limited for those living in impoverished and borderline communities. This was so much the case that the researchers “suggest[ed] that neighborhoods of concentrated poverty constitute ‘book deserts’” (p. 127), which may have significant consequences for students’ academic performance, continuous growth as readers, and, ultimately, school success (Allington et al., 2010; Neuman & Moland, 2019).

In an era when electronic devices and the Internet are ubiquitous in modern living, we may be tempted to assume

that the scarcity of book and print materials in poor neighborhoods could be readily bridged by access to digital books and other media. And indeed, we have evidence that when Internet access is provided by schools, libraries, and other initiatives, “youth of all demographics naturalize digital technologies” (Lewis & Dockter, 2010, p. 86). However, even in the modern era of ready access to literary resources through the web, economic disparities continue to underprivilege children from impoverished communities, who not only still have limited access to texts, both print and digital, but also experience curtailed opportunities in their formal schooling for “run[ning] with stories” and responding to texts in creative and open-ended ways (Wolf et al., 2010, p. 2).

**In terms of access to books and other print materials, children who live in poor neighborhoods face significant scarcity and limitations in what is available in their schools, in their homes, and in the adjacent community resources, such as libraries and community centers.**

The COVID-19 pandemic brought these inequities of access to literary and other educational resources into sharp relief. As schools shut down in the spring of 2020 and stayed closed for many more weeks than originally imagined, the resource divide between poor and affluent communities was unmistakably obvious, raising significant concerns over an outsized impact of the pandemic on the educational opportunities and educational attainment of underprivileged youth (Bennett et al., 2021; Reimers, 2022). The dearth of books and other reading materials in the homes of poor families precipitated concerns over disproportionate reading loss during their time away from school. In the months that followed, as school systems attempted to resume formal schooling through cobbling together virtual learning initiatives and piloting hybrid learning models, access remained an issue as low-income students had limited access to digital devices, reliable Internet connectivity, and adult supervision for at-home schooling (Bennett et al., 2021).

These patterns of inequity that persistently characterize the experiences of poor families cannot be treated as simply a matter of finances and funding; “inequities in book access and poverty critically intersect with racial/ethnic inequities because of historically high poverty rates among children of Color” (Bennett et al., 2021, p. 785). Indeed, Bischoff and Reardon (2014) reported a significant uptick in residential segregation by income for Latinx and Black families, which

is connected to their escalating clustering in impoverished neighborhoods. They also reported that middle-class Latinx and Black families tend to live not alongside white families of similar income but in neighborhoods with white families of lower income, which suggests that they are not afforded the advantages of the improved communal resources available to their white income-peers. Arguably, this would also include access to more robust children's literature collections through school and community resources.

### **Eroding School Library Budgets and Scarcity of Selection Resources**

As mentioned earlier, school libraries are a vital component to creating and sustaining a literacy-rich school environment. Though classroom libraries are important, and digital devices bring literary and other texts right to the fingertips of young readers, school libraries and the librarians who staff them have a special, irreplaceable role in making rich and well-diversified children's literature options available to students. Owing to school librarians' evolving roles into library and media specialists, these options not only come in print book form but also include digital collections, as well as other resources for identifying and previewing titles of interest (Everhart, 2016).

Under optimal conditions, school librarians leverage their professional expertise to continually enrich their library's holdings with new, exceptional children's titles that reflect high literary quality and an attention to building a rich collection that is not only well diversified but is also in tune with curricular priorities and with the students they serve. Ideally, beyond building their collections, school librarians continue their curating work by organizing shelves, displays, and instructional events to highlight different selections and invite students to explore them. This includes featuring works that would be of particular relevance to members of the school community, as well as works that highlight minoritized voices and perspectives. In addition, they work with groups of students and individual learners to match readers with books they are likely to enjoy (Lagarde & Johnson, 2014; Lance & Kachel, 2018). In this sense, school librarians are crucial agents of access to children's literature for all members of their school community.

In substantiation of the value of librarian-mediated access, Lance and Kachel (2018) reported on a series of impact studies for school libraries, which showed that students

in schools with library media centers staffed by full-time, qualified librarians performed better in standardized tests for reading and writing regardless of student demographics and school characteristics. "In fact," the authors stated, these impact studies "have often found that the benefits associated with good library programs are strongest for the most vulnerable and at-risk learners, including students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities" (p. 15).

**About 38% of responding librarians indicated that their library budget had decreased in 2020–21 compared to the previous year, and 15% of schools reported having no library media center budget for the year.** In addition, about half of the respondents reported facing restrictions in how to spend their budgets, with many indicating that they must secure prior approval for any purchases.

Despite the documented benefits of well-staffed school library media centers, eroding budgets and competing priorities have led to a decline in their presence in schools and in their work with children's literature (Everhart, 2016; Lance & Kachel, 2018). According to the latest data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), in 2015–16, 91% of schools had a library media center (NCES, 2021b), which represented a drop from 94% in 2003–04 (NCES Blog Editor, 2019). In addition, though 92% of suburban schools and 94% of rural schools had library media centers, the percentage dropped down to 88% for urban schools (NCES Blog Editor, 2019).

Though overall school expenditures actually appear to have modestly increased in recent years (NCES, 2021a), the latest School Library Budget and Spending Survey of the *School Library Journal* found that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental impact on school library budgets (Kletter, 2021). About 38% of responding librarians indicated that their library budget had decreased in 2020–21 compared to the previous year, and 15% of schools reported having no library media center budget for the year. In addition, about half of the respondents reported facing restrictions in

how to spend their budgets, with many indicating that they must secure prior approval for any purchases.

Beyond the shrinking of funds for purchasing literary texts and other resources, the effects of budgetary declines for school libraries are also obvious in staffing. According to the NCES (2021b), in 2015–16, there were only “0.7 full-time certified librarians or library media specialists” per library. In further analysis of the NCES data, Lance (2018) reported that between 1999–2000 and 2015–16, about 10,000 full-time school librarian positions were lost, which represented a 19% drop. Though Lance (2018) acknowledged that some of this decline may be attributed to school librarian jobs reforming into differently named positions, such as “digital learning specialist” or “technology integrator,” this shift nevertheless signals an undervaluing of the school library and the professional experts that make it a vital conduit of access to high-quality children’s literature for school communities. And, as Lance and Kachel (2018) observed, this becomes “an issue of social justice, especially when we see that schools in the poorest and most racially diverse communities have the least access to library services” (p. 19).

Another important access issue, related to eroding budgets and the loss of qualified librarians in school communities, is the insufficiency of access to selection resources that can support teachers’ quests for identifying and securing new, high-quality children’s literature titles to support their instruction and their students’ reading diets. Without access to qualified librarians who can offer reliable recommendations or to expansive databases such as the Horn Book Guide or the Children’s Literature Comprehensive Database that can inspire and facilitate their searches and selections, teachers are left without essential support in making well-informed choices. The limited selection resources made available to teachers by their schools, combined with the common trend of removing children’s literature courses from teacher certification requirements and from teacher education degrees (National Council of Teachers of English, 2018), creates a precarious context for student access to robust literature collections.

Thankfully, similarly to the middle school teacher I referenced at the beginning of this article, many teachers make admirable efforts to educate themselves about the need to make available to their students well-diversified children’s literature collections, contrive an assortment of information sources for encountering and evaluating children’s

books, and work to secure funding for making worthwhile titles available to their students. In the absence of such extraordinary efforts, schools and classrooms are in danger of being areas of literary stagnation, where the only literature to which students have access are older titles that narrowly reflect the curriculum, which frequently excludes books written by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and other minoritized creators.

## Availability Bias

### Whose Stories Are Published?

Giving children access to well-diversified children’s literature collections includes making available literature representing traditionally marginalized perspectives and experiences, such as the stories of minoritized racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic communities, of LGBTQ+ people, of immigrants and refugees, of people who are poor, who are neurodivergent, who have disabilities or live with mental illness. Access to such titles is certainly constrained by patterns in acquisition and title spotlighting that are influenced by selection process biases and censoring at different levels of the educational system. In many ways, however, the capacity of school librarians and teachers to be richly inclusive in their selections hinges on the availability of such stories in the catalogues and bundled collections to which they have access.

The matter of whose stories are published, both in terms of protagonists and in terms of book creators, constitutes a de facto throttle to access, particularly when publishing, promotion, and compensation decisions reflect patterns of inequity. According to data compiled by the Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC; 2021), there has been steady yet slow improvement in the publication of children’s books with BIPOC main characters and books written by BIPOC creators. Tyner (2021), a CCBC librarian, shared her excitement about the many wonderful books published in 2019 that “offer deeply authentic depictions of characters and subjects across a vast array of identities” and noted the increase of books that “explore the intersectionality of identities” (p. 51). Still, she reported that “the number of books with BIPOC creators and protagonists lags far behind the number of books with white main characters—or even those with animal or other main characters” (p. 51).

The CCBC’s (2021) data also indicate that in many situations, books about BIPOC are not written by creators who belong to the communities whose stories they tell. This

is particularly true in the case of books about Black/African people; in 2019, of the 451 books about Black/African people received by the CCBC, only 224 had at least one Black creator. Gardner (2020) argued that though on the surface, having more books with Black main characters may satisfy the call for more diverse books, in essence, it is the expression of a long-standing, “anti-Black selective tradition” (p. 10). Ultimately, this creates an access problem for readers; when stories that conform to Eurocentric values and aesthetics and to their framings of Blackness are what is commonly published, books by Black authors that resist assimilationism and center the Black experience never reach readers. Gardner (2020) connected the subversion of Black authors to the proliferation of books that reflect “stock tokenism” and continue “to privilege particular stories, visualities, and meanings about Black people and their experiences while ignoring others” (p. 13). Though Gardner’s analysis is specific to the Black experience, it can be instructive more widely by making visible the dangers of subjugating the drive for more diverse books under colonizing practices that continue to silence the voices of marginalized people by privileging white tellings of their stories.

### **Beyond English and the American Gaze**

One of the benefits that come from having a large market of potential readers is the creation of a sizable publishing industry around children’s literature (Tunnell & Jacobs, 2013), which boasted a market size of \$2 billion in 2021 (IBISWorld, 2020). Because of its size, however, the U.S. children’s book publishing industry is rarely compelled to look outside of its own domain for new voices and new creative products. Therefore, when pursuing the objective of diversifying the selections made available to the U.S. public, the industry looks inward to American creators and American stories. And though this introspective look is crucial in recognizing and honoring the diversity within and in amplifying minoritized voices, it is also closed to experiences and perspectives that do not represent an American gaze—a situation that poses another issue of access for U.S.-based readers, whose access to a more cosmopolitan collection of literary material is hampered by the limited availability of titles written by non-U.S. creators and particularly of titles written in languages other than English.

Several voices in the children’s literature field acknowledge the need for a global perspective and for making avail-

able to U.S. readers books in various languages in support of bilingualism and biliteracies. The United States Board on Books for Young People, with its annual list of Outstanding International Books for young people (the OIB honor list), is a vital resource in this effort, as is the Mildred L. Batchelder Award of the American Library Association, which recognizes translated books that had originally been published outside the United States and in a language other than English. Also worthy of recognition is *Worlds of Words* (<https://wowlit.org>), which provides resources to educators for integrating global literature in their classrooms. Yet, these recommended titles and particularly books in languages other than English are not prominently present in schools and classrooms, though EPIC, which is widely used in U.S. schools, does include a respectable number of recent OIB titles in its collection.

### **Digital Holdings**

Another noteworthy aspect of availability bias involves the increasing shift for school and other libraries that serve young people toward digital holdings. The practice of enhancing collections through the purchase of licenses for ebooks and audiobooks had been gaining momentum for several years, despite challenges related to expensive and complicated licensing cost structures and to the technology requirements for getting etexts into the hands of teachers and students (Collette, 2015; Maughan, 2015). For many schools, moving toward digital options for literary texts was a natural extension of their media literacy priorities. Plus, ebooks had the benefit of not getting lost or damaged, they included accessibility features and other supports for various learning needs and disabilities, and they were often prepackaged and organized in ways that addressed some of the selection and curating work the increasingly scarce staff librarians could no longer do. In addition, the trend was fueled by assumptions that the proximal convenience of ready access to literary texts through digital devices, combined with children’s and adolescents’ affinity toward digital media, would lead to increased reading overall (Merga & Mat Roni, 2017). Though a tide was already forming, the COVID-19 pandemic was a watershed moment in the acquisition of digital collections by schools; the move to virtual learning and the resulting adoption of 1:1 device programs for many schools not only alleviated the technology problems of pre-pandemic

adoptions but made digital access to literary texts a vital component of students' return to school learning.

Making ebooks available to students requires schools or districts to establish relationships with ebook vendors, who, as Maughan (2015) explained, employ a variety of models, "including subscription (e.g., Storia from Scholastic, and Epic!), perpetual access, term license, license with a set number of circulations (publishers including HarperCollins), concurrent use, bundled within another digital product, and pay per use (e.g., Brain Hive's \$1 per circ/check-out)." As digital holdings become more ubiquitous, command increasingly higher portions of school library budgets (Kletter, 2021), and acquire privileged curricular positions, it becomes important to scrutinize them in terms of access. For instance, it becomes significant to ask whether there are any marginalizing patterns in the titles that become available as ebooks and particularly in those bundled in collections that are popularly acquired by school systems.

In a recent examination of the availability of award-winning titles in ebook platforms, Lear and Pritt (2021) found variability in the inclusion of award-winning books across platforms, with Overdrive having the broadest selection, with 80% of desired titles, followed by Follett and Mackin at around 75%, Hoopla at 24%, and Tumblebooks at 0.3%. The researchers also reported that some publishers (e.g., Candlewick, Learner, Disney, and Eerdsmans) were not well featured in the collections of the vendors studied, and neither were smaller, independent publishers. They also found a scarcity of titles about American Indians, as well as of high-quality science-related titles as compared to other subject areas. Ultimately, though the inclusion of award-winning titles in the collections of widely used ebook vendors is heartening, some of the imbalances identified are troubling. In addition, though Lear and Pritt's (2021) work is very informative, it points to the need for further studies that critically examine the makeup of collections that appear poised to claim more of young students' reading time inside and outside of classrooms.

### Conclusion

Access is a matter of justice. Our young people have the right to have unfettered, ready access to exceptional literature that tells a variety of compelling stories; that ignites their passion for literacy; that opens the world to them as a multivoiced,

pluralistic place where they matter; and that talks to them head-on about injustices that need fixing. Our responsibility lies not only in connecting individual readers with exceptional individual books but in working to remove any access obstacles that may hamper their opportunities to read books and run with them. •

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# WE READ AS ONE:

## Strategies for Empowering a Community of Intergenerational Readers



Bonnie A. Barksdale, Katie Schrod, R. Stacy Fields, and Jennifer Grow

### ABSTRACT

Immersing children in book-rich homes improves educational outcomes and empowers young children with “life-long tastes, skills and knowledge” (Sikora et al., 2019, p. 1). Yet many children in the United States are living in “book deserts” with little or no access to the books that could shape their young literate lives (Neuman & Moland, 2019). With the goal of stocking home libraries and empowering parents, literacy educators working in a teacher preparation program in the mid-South developed a variety of events that would deepen literacy in the community. Events like Coffee Shop Book-store and dinnertime read-alouds welcomed parents into the classroom, but when COVID-19 closed schools, educators had to strategically problem-solve ways to foster family literacy. Without school libraries, providing children with access to books became even more crucial. The educators created a Literacy Lane event in which families drove through school parking lots to pick up books and then read aloud together in their cars. Other strategies included book swaps and “book fairies” to share used books among families, a Zoom Book Buddies program to deliver matching books to people in different households so that they could connect over Zoom, and utilizing a school lunch bus delivery system to give students books along with their meals. Each of these events included a component to educate parents on ways to help their children’s literacy grow. The programs ensured that all students had access to books, and also provided fun and inspiring ways for families to connect through reading.

### KEYWORDS

***family literacy, read aloud, elementary, book clubs***

IMMERSING CHILDREN in book-rich home environments improves educational outcomes (Sikora et al., 2019). In fact, the presence of a home library may empower young children with “life-long tastes, skills and knowledge” (Sikora et al., 2019, p. 1). Many children in the United States are living in “book deserts” with little or no access to the books that could shape their young literate lives (Neuman & Moland, 2019). For many children, the school library is the only place to gain consistent access to books. When schools shut down because of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020, book access quickly became a concern.

As literacy educators working in a teacher preparation program in the mid-South, one of our jobs each year is to promote literacy in our local community by hosting family and community literacy events. These events provide education for adults and give away hundreds of books to stock home libraries. The preservice teachers we work with are largely involved in this effort, helping plan and implement the events in local schools.

The one-year anniversary of school shutdowns caused us to pause and reflect on the many ways we adapted to the realities of COVID-19 for preservice teachers and the elementary students we worked with in classrooms across our city. The purpose of this article is to share ways we were able to keep literacy alive in our community with the hope that readers will take these strategies and use them to promote

and empower an intergenerational group of literacy learners in their own communities.

### Family Literacy Programs

Ever since Taylor (1983) first used the term *family literacy*, it has been interpreted in many different ways. For the purpose of this article, family literacy is defined as interactive, intergenerational literacy learning. Parents and caregivers are a child's first teachers. Children who have books in the home and caregivers who read to them show higher levels of literacy skills than children who do not have the same opportunities (Wilson, 2013). A large body of research exists on how important the role of family literacy programs is in developing the literacy skills of young children (Christie et al., 2010; Hannon, 1998; Jaynes, 2012; Morgan et al., 2009; Morrow, 2011; Nutbrown et al., 2005). More specifically, family involvement in literacy programs has been suggested to improve reading and writing skills (Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002), phonological and print awareness (Ihmeideh & Al-Maadadi, 2020), and concepts of print, comprehension, and storytelling (Jordan et al., 2000), and to increase vocabulary and help develop writing skills (Saint-Laurent & Giasson, 2005). Providing these educational opportunities to families, modeling effective literacy activities, and providing parent training will improve the literacy of young learners.

According to the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, family literacy programs integrate (a) interactive literacy activities between parent and child, (b) training in parenting activities, (c) literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency, and (d) age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Family literacy programs in our community vary from school to school as each tries to integrate components of an effective program. Some family literacy programs focus directly on primary grades with the goal of strengthening foundational reading skills and modeling early literacy strategies. Other programs include all grade levels in the school to promote general reading engagement and strengthen comprehension skills. No matter the grade-level focus, these events can be stand-alone, one-time experiences or yearlong commitments that include multiple parent classes, workshops, and community literacy engagement. This article will share in detail about family literacy events hosted at local elementary schools as well as community engagement strategies.

### Family Literacy Events

Before the pandemic, family literacy events offered a unique and nonthreatening opportunity for students to engage with family and literacy in the safe environment of school. In each of these events, families were invited into the schools to participate in an experience that included developmentally appropriate, interactive family literacy activities and parent education, all centered around a theme and a book. In 2019 alone, we hosted 12 family literacy events, providing over 10,000 kids with books and activities.

Each event was unique, tailored to the needs of the families in the school. One school did a "Coffee Shop Bookstore" event in which families came to the school during morning drop-off for coffee, donuts, and book shopping. As families shopped, they were given a printed sheet of paper on a clipboard that supported caregivers in understanding the reading interests of their child (see Table 1). The one-page document included questions for caregivers to ask with the purpose of helping their child choose the best book that day as well as helping caregivers understand their child's reading interests for choosing books in the future.

**Table 1**  
**READING INVENTORY FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

#### READING INVENTORY

**While you shop for your book, have a conversation with your child about their reading interests. This will help you all choose the best book for your child today and also in the future when you visit the library or bookstore.**

- What kind of books do you like to read? (funny, serious, happy, sad, science, informational, sports, history, biography, adventure, graphic novels, mystery, poetry)
- What type of characters do you enjoy reading about? (musicians, athletes, celebrities, people like me, people not like me, actors, animals)
- What kind of books do you not like?
- Where is your favorite place to read?
- Do you like it when someone reads to you?
- Show me a book here that catches your attention. What do you like about it?

In this bookstore event, the first 30 minutes of the school day were dedicated to reading the new books together throughout the school. The morning drop-off timing allowed more caregivers to participate as they were able to come before work. Each book in the “bookstore” was also stuffed with a bookmark (see Figure 1) to help guide caregivers in leading discussions about the text with their children.

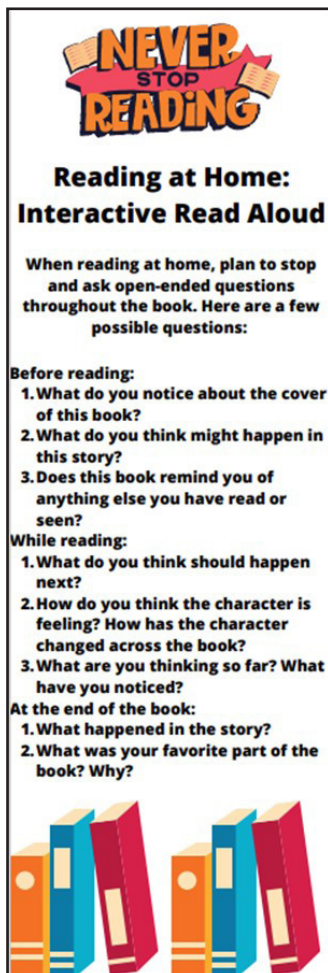
Other events included a more traditional approach by hosting a nighttime experience that included dinner and literacy activities. As a part of the teacher preparation coursework, these events also included preservice teachers who read the themed texts and created high-quality literacy activities from various content areas for the families to engage in. On the night of the event, families and students arrived in anticipation to share a meal in the cafeteria pro-

vided by a local nonprofit organization. Sharing a meal together was a great time for families to pause and engage in conversation, recap the day, and share stories and feelings. During dinner, families were provided with discussion cards to help guide conversation and connection (see Table 2).

After dinner and discussion, a bell would signal time to move to literacy activities in the classrooms. Within each classroom, a themed book was paired with a designated literacy activity where students would engage in high-quality texts, family activities, and critical thinking. Activities in the classrooms were intentional about empowering caregivers to interact with the children through discussion about the book and to work together to co-construct a final product. Upon conclusion, the students and families left with copies of the activities and books to take home. Table 3 shows example themes and activities from family literacy events.

These events provided access to books as well as instruction on effective ways to use these books. The pandemic threatened to shut down these events completely, but with some creativity, we were able to shift the family literacy events into what we called “Literacy Lane.”

**Figure 1**  
**INTERACTIVE READ-ALoud BOOKMARK FOR CAREGIVERS**



### Literacy Lane

The pandemic provided many challenges in getting books and authentic, high-quality literacy activities into the homes of children and families. Turning our family literacy events into drive-through, COVID-friendly events was one of our greatest successes in book access and family engagement throughout the pandemic. These events had all of the components of our in-person events, but instead of eating together at school and completing activities in the classroom, we shifted everything to home. Families drove through the parking lot of the school and stopped at three stations. The first station provided a literacy kit full of activities to do at home with a brand-new book. (See Table 4 for examples of books and literacy kit ideas.) The second station consisted of tables of gently used books. At this station, students could choose extra books to take home. Siblings were also encouraged to grab a book. The last station was a food truck where families were given dinner. The families could then choose to park and picnic in the back of their cars or go home and eat and read together there. Teachers and college students stood outside, socially distanced, waving and cheering to the families as they passed. Many schools even had a school mascot and

Table 2  
**FAMILY MEALTIME DISCUSSION CARDS**

<b>FAMILY MEALTIME DISCUSSION CARDS</b> Mealtime is a great time to connect with your child. Use these discussion starters to get the conversation going and form lasting tabletop memories.		
<b>Best and Worst:</b> What was the best part of your day? What was the worst part?	<b>Gratitude:</b> Name one thing you are grateful for.	<b>Compliments:</b> What do you like the most about the person sitting next to you?
<b>Hopes and Dreams:</b> If you could go anywhere in the world right now, where would you go?	<b>Imagination:</b> If you could have one superpower, what would it be?	<b>Kindness:</b> Tell us about something nice you did for someone this week. What about something nice someone did for you?

Table 3  
**EXAMPLE LITERACY EVENT THEMES**

THEME	BOOK TITLE	FAMILY ACTIVITIES WITH LITERACY SKILL	PARENT EDUCATION COMPONENT
Communities	<i>All Are Welcome</i> by Alexandra Penfold	Poetry writing with rhyming words; shared invitation writing to invite a new friend to play on the playground or other event (with parent permission)	Dinner conversation cards
<i>Titanic</i>	<i>I Survived the Sinking of the Titanic, 1912</i> by Lauren Tarshis	Discussion questions / thick and thin questions “Sink or Float” science experiment	Interactive read-aloud bookmark Step-by-step cards on the experiment
Dreams	<i>Dreamers</i> by Yuyi Morales	Creating large pieces of art on posters that show the hopes, dreams, and accomplishments of their family	A pamphlet of local organizations that provide adult education and free books

played loud music to add to the excitement. Figure 2 shows an example invitation for one Literacy Lane event.

Each Literacy Lane event included a literacy kit that was sent home with the families. In this kit, there was always a letter (Figure 3) to families explaining the purpose and contents of the kits. We also included a recorded read-aloud of the book to support families who may need help reading the text. We linked this recording with a QR code in the letter.

### Video for Interactive Read-Aloud

When we shifted to Literacy Lane events, we wanted the parent education component to continue, despite the fact

that the families would not be interacting face-to-face with the teachers at the event. Along with the idea of the child's first teacher being the parent or caregiver comes the responsibility of developing good literacy habits. To help a child have clear understandings, improved critical thinking, use of strategies, and motivation to learn, parents themselves need to model these strategies in the home. This type of modeling and instruction can take place within the context of an interactive reading session. Incorporation and practice of specific behaviors during shared reading experiences can promote future academic success for children (De Jong & Leseman, 2001; Morrow, 1983, 2011). Typically,

**Figure 2**  
**LITERACY LANE INVITATION EXAMPLE**



**Table 4**  
**LITERACY KIT EXAMPLES**

BOOK TITLE	CONTENTS OF THE KIT
<i>V Is for Volunteer: A Tennessee Alphabet</i> by Michael Shoulders	A whiteboard and Expo marker were placed in each kit. For each letter in the book, families were asked to write words of their own that start with that letter. A list of future literacy activities families could do with the whiteboard was provided.
<i>Bear in Love</i> by Daniel Pinkwater	Beans, paper plates, and yarn were provided for families to make a paper plate tambourine. This instrument was to be used each time Bear sings in the book, making the story more interactive. Figure 3 shows the letter and scavenger hunt provided.

we are able to model an interactive read-aloud in person for our family literacy events. When our events changed to drive-throughs, we knew we still needed this education component. Knowing the importance of this research and wanting to help parents and caregivers continue the love of literacy within their home environments, we created a free, open-access interactive read-aloud instruction video with the target audience of parents and caregivers. In this video, the basics of the interactive read-aloud are reviewed, as well as tips to help with comprehension, background knowledge, and making personal connections to the text. Scan the QR code in Figure 4 and feel free to use this resource in any of your own events in the future.

Hosting family literacy events is one effective way to engage families and build communities, but it is not the only way. Engaging your community in literacy does not require large, complicated events. Below are some quick strategies that address issues of cost, access, and health.

**Zoom Book Buddies: Connecting Across Place**

Zoom Book Buddies is a great way to connect families and friends across the miles or just across town during a pandemic. The idea is simple: Provide matching books to pairs of people, often intergenerational family members (e.g., grandparents and grandchildren), for them to read together over Zoom or any video-conferencing platform. To do this, we gathered pairs of books and posted pictures on social media (see Figure 5) with an open invitation for readers to find a book buddy and respond to the post with their book pick and the addresses of where the books should be sent. A copy of each book was sent to the designated addresses. The participants then read and discussed the books remotely via video conference.

**Book Swap: A Cost-Effective Option**

Book events do not always need to cost money. Book swaps are a fun and free way for families to gain access to “new to you” books. A simple concept, a book swap is where members of a group (e.g., school, class, neighborhood) trade gently used books. The first step is to set a date for the swap, with a two-week window of time for collection. During the collection period, families are encouraged to sort through their bookshelves to identify books they would like to gift to a new reader. In our school-wide book swap event, families donate as many books as they want, knowing their child and all children, regardless of

donation, will receive at least one new book at the book swap. As books are collected, they are sorted by reading level and/or genre or theme. On Book Swap Day, books are spread out on tables for easy viewing and swappers are welcomed to get their new book(s). School logistics require scheduling, but neighborhood or classroom swaps simply open and close. Bookmarks are a fun addition to tuck inside the newfound books, and clever book swappers even create their own logo to go on labels reminding the new owner where they got the book.

### CHOW Bus Book Drops: Helping With Access

Book access sometimes requires creativity—finding ways to put books where the people will be. During the pandemic, access to school lunches became a concern. School communities immediately rallied to ensure students would have access to food in a variety of ways. In order for children to get their free school lunches, our schools use a “CHOW bus” to deliver meals. We quickly realized we needed to collect books to give away along with the food at the CHOW bus. We gathered new and used books, cleaned them, and placed them in large Ziploc bags. The bags also contained the bookmarks and other family literacy literature such as the mealtime conversation starters. As families came for their lunches, they were also given a bag of books to take home.

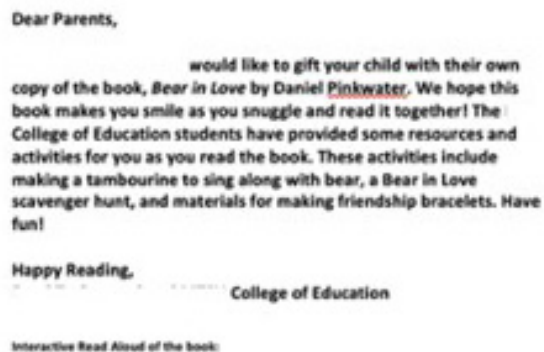
### Book Fairies: Keeping the Magic Alive

According to the website The Book Fairies (<https://ibelieveinbookfairies.com/>), book fairies are “people who, when they’ve finished reading a good book, want a unique and fun way to pass it on to the next person. They pop an official book fairy sticker on it, which reads ‘take this book, read it, and leave it for the next person to enjoy.’ They might even add a ribbon to dress it up as a gift. When they’ve prepared their gift, they will hide it in public to be found.” We have found book fairies to be a fun and easy way to promote literacy and excitement in our community. Figure 6 shows us leaving a book on a park bench for someone to find.

### Lessons Learned Along the Way

Some of the lessons learned along the way involved accessibility, funding, and delivery methods. In the previous year, many different grants for funding of the literacy activities and texts were available. Once the pandemic hit, funding opportunities were no longer available, and we had to redouble our efforts to find funding sources to keep our events from being canceled. We were also forced to think outside the box when

**Figure 3**  
**READ-ALoud LETTER WITH**  
**SCAVENGER HUNT EXAMPLE**



**Figure 4**  
**INTERACTIVE READ-ALoud**  
**INSTRUCTION VIDEO QR CODE**



it came to accessing our elementary school partners with their students. Due to the guidelines of six-foot social distancing, as well as masking, most literacy events were moved to outdoor areas or postponed. Adapting the format to many of the options listed within this article kept the focus of literacy learning a constant during uncertain times. We learned the valuable lesson that when we collaborate for the good of students, it is always worth the work. We can adjust, adapt, and figure out new ways to help children. We do this as teachers every day, and it is worth it every time.

**Figure 5**  
**ZOOM BOOK BUDDIES SOCIAL MEDIA**



## Conclusion

Creating a literacy-rich home environment that improves educational outcomes can occur in a variety of ways during a pandemic. Parents were given a survey after each event. Every event survey indicated the children were very excited about their books and opportunities to read and play with their parents. Parents said the events encouraged them to connect with their children through books. The pandemic has been a stressful time for families. One family said this event was fun and not “stressful like remote learning.”

Knowing that there could be limited access to books, in some instances books may be donated; in others, they may be swapped. Books can be read together via digital platform or in the lap of a caregiver. We have learned in the past year that we may not always be able to read aloud to our students in person, but that does not need to hamper their growth; we can deepen learning in other ways.

The benefits of participating in family literacy programs and events are numerous, including improving comprehension (Jordan et al., 2000), increasing vocabulary (Saint-Laurent & Giasson, 2005), and improving foundational reading and writing skills (Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002). The goal of literacy is to share the love of reading and books with a loved one, no matter where you are. In the end, generations will benefit from the experience. We hope you will use one or some of these ideas, grab some books, and get to reading! •

**Figure 6**  
**BOOK FAIRY EXAMPLE**



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# ANXIOUS HOPE: A Critical Analysis of a Pandemic Picturebook



James Shanahan and Naheeda Karmali

AS THE WORLD GRAPPLES with the spread of COVID-19, the sense among educators is that a crisis of global proportions demands a response. To support the perceived need of parents, families, and children to understand and process what is happening, dozens of picturebooks about the pandemic have been published since the spring of 2020 (Falcus & Caldwell, in press). These books originated from a large variety of sources; everyone from public health organizations to school networks, to individuals, to major international philanthropies and development organizations seemed to be publishing pandemic books (Falcus & Caldwell, in press). Most of these texts were designed as a pedagogical resource for teachers and students to understand the crisis and how they might respond. This article critically examines one such book, *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020), its accompanying pedagogical materials, and its promotional social media campaign, and reveals that they are far from being a straightforward resource for teachers and students. This analysis of the “Hope Movement” argues educators must carefully evaluate pedagogical materials arriving at their doorstep during times of crisis and what agendas may have propelled them there.

## How Hope Found Us

Both authors encountered *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020) in ways that demonstrate the broad reach of this text and explain why we initially became interested in examining it. The second author, living and working in Nairobi,

Kenya, encountered the text during a meeting with a network of schools in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East. While discussing how this network of schools might author its own children’s book about the pandemic, one attendee asked, “Did you see what LEGO did?” and quickly produced her phone to show the group trending social media hashtags—#HopeWhereAreYou—on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. The first author, living and working in New York, USA, encountered the text as an official recommendation from the New York City School Library System.<sup>1</sup> *Hope, Where Are You?*, published in May of 2020, was one of the earliest additions to their collection of free electronic texts meant to help teachers, parents, and students respond to the pandemic. Described as the story of six children around the world who are experiencing school closures because of the pandemic, the picturebook *Hope, Where Are You?* has been downloaded over 1.5 million times and translated into 45 languages. Each story illustrates and narrates “patterns of frustrations and challenge, finding their [the children’s] hope and spreading their hope to others” (Hope Where Are You, n.d.) The book, however, is only the beginning of the work this text promotes. Readers are encouraged to spread hope on social media using the #HopeWhereAreYou hashtag and to donate money to

<sup>1</sup> The library’s website includes a list of free ebooks in many different languages about the coronavirus and COVID-19 (<https://nycdoe.libguides.com/COVID-19ebooks/free>).

UNICEF via the Hope Where Are You website. The website also features ways for people to “Join the Hope Movement” on social media, offers instructional resources students can complete at home, and provides access to the growing number of translations of the text. Our interest in this text, then, stems not only from our professional experience in teaching children’s literature but also from our desire to explore the network producing the text as a curriculum resource proffering a hopeful cure at a time of global crisis.

### Process

Reading children’s literature critically involves paying careful attention to the text, the contexts producing it, and the pedagogical context in which it is read. Short (2016) wrote that “critical content analysis involves bringing a critical lens to an analysis of a text...in an effort to explore the possibly underlying messages...particularly as related to issues of power” (pp. 6–7). In this critique, we use a blend of approaches in critical literature and critical content analyses. Critical peritextual analysis asks readers to consider the unwritten words within interstices of the text. For this to be considered a critical reading, the analysis highlights power relationships, which we allude to when considering broader questions, such as “Whose story is this? Who benefits from this story? Whose voices are not being heard?” (Reese, 2018, as cited in Sivashankar et al., 2020, p. 484). We pair critical peritextual analysis with Short’s (2016) critical content analysis three-part framework. *Focalization* asks whose story is told and from whose perspective. *Social process of the characters* identifies who has power and agency. Finally, *closure* questions how a story is resolved and what assumptions exist in the story. After the critical rereading, we turn to consider how such a text is part of a larger global project, and a vector whereby racist colonizing perspectives enter pedagogical materials in a time of crisis. We consider how educators might use educated hope (Giroux, 2019) to critically evaluate the resources they encounter. Rather than recommending teachers not read this book, we present our critical rereading in order to construct a counternarrative that might guide teachers in how to

conduct their own interrogation and inquire into the text’s problems with students. Our hope is that communities of educators and students might use problematic texts to better understand how essentializing and oppressive discourses find their way into our classrooms and to offer a way to resist those discourses.

### A Summary of *Hope, Where Are You?*

“Schools closed” announces a banner on the opening page of *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020). A diverse array of children stand holding the banner in front of Egyptian pyramids, Big Ben, the Taj Mahal, and other global landmarks. Many visual differences mark the varieties of children in this tableau, including skin tones, ethnic clothing, wheelchairs, and hairstyles. The children are not all smiling. Most appear pensive, with mouths drawn in flat horizontal angles and eyebrows raised to indicate worry. The message is that schools are closed everywhere and these students are facing uncertainty. Accompanying each child’s narrative are brief instructional resources, created by the authors, that are distributed for free online alongside the book.

Mulu, from Africa, is the first story of hope. Mulu lives in a rural village without paved roads, running water, or modern homes. She lives with her family in a hut made from sticks and grass. Because school is closed, Mulu spends her time helping her mother with household chores while her sisters play, and readers learn that for Mulu, “staying busy keeps my mind off my hunger” (p. 7). The main challenge Mulu faces, besides starvation, is that her father will not send her back to school. Instead of going to school, where Mulu dreams of becoming a teacher, she worries that she will become a child bride because her “older sister was married at twelve. I’m just 11” (p. 7). Her challenge resolves when a teacher and two unknown officials arrive at Mulu’s home to discuss her education. Mulu, her mother, and her sisters remain outside while the men speak with Mulu’s father. She is invited to teach a math lesson to the family, and Mulu’s father announces that she will return to school. Mulu finds hope that she will become a teacher. Accompanying Mulu’s story is a short math lesson where students are encouraged to use sticks, leaves, and

**Our hope is that communities of educators and students might use problematic texts to better understand how essentializing and oppressive discourses find their way into our classrooms and to offer a way to resist those discourses.**

stones, like Mulu does, to create a mandala, thus learning geometric concepts.

Nikau, from Oceania, has moved to the country with his family, but he feels lonely without his friends. Although readers do not see Nikau's home, we do see a grassy rural landscape and a spare wooden fence with a single wire running across it. Nikau wears an all-black sports outfit and carries a rugby ball. In response to his loneliness, Nikau's brother suggests using empty moving boxes to make a replica of his old home in the city. He uses old rusty cans to represent germs: "I start throwing my rugby ball to knock them down. I feel empowered. I imagine myself defeating the germs to free my friends in our old neighborhood" (p. 12). He uses his phone to show his new game to friends back in the old neighborhood and does not feel as lonely as before. Nikau's educational activity asks readers to build their own obstacle course and challenge friends online to do the same.

Kate, from North America, is a restless child. She is depicted in her home running around and upsetting her mother, a teacher, and her older brothers, who are learning remotely. Laptops are tumbling and cups spilling as Kate runs through her living room. Staying at home is difficult for Kate: "It feels like my skin is crawling, and I'm antsy" (p. 15). Kate's challenge, then, is to learn to be still at home and feel less restless, but when asked to stand still, Kate's "legs start twitching" (p. 16). A virtual conversation with her teacher reminds Kate that she benefits from yoga. Kate leads her family in yoga exercises and finally feels like herself again. Kate's educational materials encourage readers to do a series of yoga poses and try breathing exercises to help them relax.

Bo, from Asia, refused to bid his parents goodbye out of sadness. Because they are both doctors, they could not come home from work for some time. Bo is, instead, under the care of an aunt who "only loves to watch television" (p. 19). Bo's challenge is his own feeling of shame for not saying goodbye to his parents. To overcome his feeling of shame, Bo uses his computer and 3D printer to create new face masks for his parents and their colleagues. Bo regains his parents' approval and feels better: "Mom and Dad are beaming. I am very busy, feeling more like myself" (p. 21). Bo's instructional resource encourages readers to brainstorm a problem and try to build a product to solve it. They should share their problem and product solutions with friends on social media using the hashtag #MyGreatHopeldea.

Gaby, from Latin America, is having a difficult time being

home with her family all day. Her infant younger brothers are distracting and her papi is not able to work because his business is closed: "He gets angry and yells at mama... I tell [Grandpa] that my parents are stressed and fighting a lot" (p. 23). Gaby misses baking with her father and sharing their cookies with classmates at school. Following her grandpa's suggestion, Gaby writes a story about baking with her father. She shares it with her family, and they all bake a batch of cookies together, singing and feeling like a happy family again. Gaby's instructional activity asks readers to write about what they miss most from life as it used to be, then use household items to create trophies about what they miss doing and have friends guess the activity.

Alessandro, from Europe, loses his grandmother. He is depicted as being at home with his family while his mother is on the phone, presumably with a hospital. The sadness Alessandro feels makes it difficult for him to speak: "I stay quiet, not sure what to say" (p. 28). Alessandro is encouraged to use his violin to express his emotions, and he plays out on his family's city balcony. Others join in from their balconies by singing, clapping, or playing instruments of their own. Playing his violin allows Alessandro to grieve and he feels like himself again. Alessandro's educational materials encourage readers to build their own instruments out of household items.

In addition to the primary narratives, each of the six stories features a pair of small symbolic creatures. A small red creature with spikes resembles the now-ubiquitous image of the coronavirus. With arms, legs, and a face, this COVID critter, "Germ," competes with a small yellow sun, "Hope," on the pages of each child's narrative. The sun, representing hope, always wins by the final page of each narrative, either by trapping the COVID critter or by implying the COVID critter's defeat through its absence from the final page. These additional skits represent the triumph of hope over the virus and overcoming the impact of the pandemic.

The book closes with another tableau of the same group of diverse children and some of the adults from the narratives playing in a field. Many are holding small yellow suns to indicate that they found their respective hopes. Others are holding hands, dancing, and smiling. Behind them, the planet Earth floats in a field of blue, indicating that children throughout the world have found their hope.

### **The Ideologies of Hope, Where Are You?**

Bradford (2010) noted a premise central to our critique here: It is not evident that the end of colonialism frees children's texts

of the “ideological freight of those earlier times” (p. 39). The second author of this article concurs with Bradford; as a citizen of a postcolonial society and living in a culture scarred by racialized inequality, I have witnessed, and can reveal occasional complicity in, the persistence of some habits of thought and devaluing associated with colonial ideologies, even though they are currently being superseded by political and social change. Children’s literature texts, especially those that base the dignity of human beings on racial and other social markers, have often claimed that their crafts “are merely works of their time, as though the authors of these texts were no more than conduits of prevailing cultural norms” (Bradford, 2010, p. 39). *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020) is yet another example of the paucity of creative work offering counternarratives to stereotypical views on lives, peoples, schooling, and children, both visually and in text. The production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements regarding quotidian life on the planet do little to move away from the status quo or colonialist “regimes of truth” (Foucault, 1980; Nodelman, 1992). The implications posed to education suggest that education works to respond to the reification of dominant narratives and Western subjectivities.<sup>2</sup> The presence of stereotypes in children’s literature is antithetical to the cultivation of educated hope, repeats harmful representations of global youth, reveals discourses of supremacy, and speaks to “inter-minoritarian politics” (Leonardo, 2004, p. 145), as we show in our analysis of *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020).

### Hope From Essentialized Stereotypes

The narratives in *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020) communicate an essentializing or reductive form of representation. Mulu, the most obvious outlier in this group of characters, is a well-worn colonial trope. She is a poor, Black, African girl-child and lives without access to water, food, or modern dwellings. Mulu is, like her mother and sisters, subject to her father’s patriarchal power. He has previously arranged an older sister’s marriage at the age of 12, and as an 11-year-old herself, Mulu fears being married off as a child bride instead of

<sup>2</sup> We admit our challenge to categorize the outcomes and fields of education to which this text and its objectives correspond. For their global reach, we considered either multicultural education or global citizenship education, although proponents of both fields would question their affiliation to these bodies of pedagogy and curricula; this issue further confirms our concerns that *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020) and its extended Hope Movement are hard to interpret within genres of scholarly work.

continuing her studies. Mulu’s deliverance from her dire circumstances comes from the external influence of a teacher and some unnamed male officials who negotiate with her father for her to be able to go to school. Her ability to find hope is not her own but is, instead, delivered to her by outside agents.

Other narratives also traffic in stereotyping. Nikau wears a rugby outfit reminiscent of the All Blacks, New Zealand’s national rugby team that is well known for performing a Maori haka, a warrior’s challenge, before each match. Thus, Nikau’s appearance, his love of rugby, and his combatting of the “germs” by throwing his rugby ball at rusty cans invoke the image of a Maori warrior. Kate’s behavior seems to suggest a hyperactivity disorder or, perhaps, an autism spectrum disorder. She cannot sit still, cannot stop bothering her family members, and relies on yoga to calm herself. Again, this is an essentializing stereotype: that American children are hyperactive and need some kind of self-control intervention. (For an analysis of contemporary depictions of yoga in the United States, its commodification, its female objectification, and its cultural appropriation, see Bhalla & Moscovitz [2020].)

Bo, an Asian, lives in a culture of shame where he must live up to his own notions of parental acceptance. Notably, Bo’s parents are so devoted to their careers that they appear to live at the hospital indefinitely. Bo loves science and technology and feels happiest when producing products. Taken together, Bo’s narrative is a blend of tired racial slanders: Asian parents choose work over family, Asian children feel ashamed if they do not live up to parental expectations, and Asians try to excel in the sciences and related industries, thus winning parental pride and approval.

Gaby initially seems to escape being reduced to a stereotype of Latin America, but her narrative is still troubling. Rather than essentializing an entire continent of people, Gaby’s story places responsibility for a family’s happiness on children. Her parents face real challenges because some unnamed event has caused businesses, including her father’s, to close. This creates financial stress, while her two infant brothers cause relational stress. Her father, Papi, responds by yelling at her mother—at the very least, this may be an emotionally abusive situation. Gaby saves the day by writing a story and shows readers that children bear the responsibility of fixing relational strife and undoing the emotional damage of verbally abusive marriages.

Only Alessandro’s story borders on the innocuous. Clearly inspired by real events in Italy during the early pandemic, Alessandro’s playing of the violin on his balcony is

meant to show how to grieve a lost family member. Yet, readers learn nothing of Alessandro's grandmother, why she was sick, or why the family cannot be with her in her final moments. Again, the pandemic, the COVID-19 virus, and the public health responses are absent from the narrative. When he expresses his desire for his dead grandmother to hear his music, Alessandro's hope story is the only one to mention the idea of an afterlife or invoke any kind of spirituality or internal belief system at all. Alessandro's narrative is also the only one to confront the illness and death of a family member—though the causes are unidentified.

Further critical readings could unpack other stereotypical patterns in *Hope, Where Are You?* For example, the boys are active, productive, and expressive. The girls are passive, needing rescue, calmness, or to provide emotional stability for the home. The role of children in each scenario also seems to suggest that each child—except for Mulu—is responsible for his or her own happiness and hope. Critical readers might question which of these children have agency, how far that agency extends, and the entanglements of their self-actualization facilitated by anxious family members. Additionally, there seems to be uneven consideration of parents' and family members' responsibilities toward their children, especially with regard to surviving a deadly pandemic.

### Pandemic “Hope” With No Pandemic

In their study of 73 pandemic-focused picturebooks, Falcus and Caldwell (in press) found that most books present scientific knowledge about the coronavirus and incorporate prior knowledge of germs to produce an explanation for the global disruption. These narratives both feature adults' fears and teach behavioral measures children might take to fight the virus—sometimes featuring children as heroic in their fight against COVID-19 (Falcus & Caldwell, in press). Throughout *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020), the closure of schools serves as an impetus for each child to face a challenge and navigate hope, yet the pandemic is never named as a cause of their troubles and the disruptions to the children's lives remain nebulous. We wonder, for example, why are Bo's parents at the hospital and unable to come home? How does Alessandro's grandmother die? What causes Gaby's father's business to close? While readers will likely assume the pandemic as a proximate cause, without naming and discussing the pandemic these stories seem to live outside of the crisis itself, in an adjacent world where the biggest problem facing children is feeling hope.

Absent, too, are mentions of practical actions children and their families could take to mitigate the risks of catching COVID-19. There is no mention of wearing masks. Social distancing exists in the sense that schools are closed, but there is no portrayal of social distancing otherwise. The concluding tableau depicts characters from the six narratives among others holding hands, playing, and standing close together. Responses to the public health imperatives of the pandemic are put aside in favor of this narrative of hope.

Mulu's narrative, in particular, has very little to do with the pandemic. Her challenge is, instead, an unmodern patriarchy keeping her rooted in a culture of child marriage and material poverty and without further access to education. Her older sister being married off as a child bride happened before the pandemic, so the pandemic cannot be the cause. Instead, it seems that *Hope, Where Are You?* is portraying Mulu's father as generally skeptical of education as a valuable undertaking for his daughters, regardless of the access to schooling due to pandemic-induced closures.

What takes precedence in lieu of discussing the pandemic are small pantomime skits on each page where an anthropomorphized red COVID-looking critter, Germ, and an anthropomorphized yellow sun, Hope, do battle. Usually, the COVID critter has the upper hand and has trapped or evaded the sun, only for the tables to be turned by the end of each of the narratives. The little sun is always victorious over the COVID critter, and thus hope wins in each narrative.

### Is This Hope?

We consider this picture ebook to be a bit of a puzzle: How could a series of problematic narratives that only tangentially approach the crisis become a far-reaching example of pandemic-focused children's literature? We see the emergence of *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020) and the Hope Movement at a time of international crisis as a component of a larger ongoing discourse around international education, neoliberalism, and development. We argue that the book, its associated instructional materials, and the social media-driven movement are examples of all three. The problem of the pandemic as portrayed in the book is not that thousands of people around the world are affected directly or indirectly by the virus, that thousands die each day, or that massive public health interventions require masking, closing schools, and social distancing, but rather that children will lose hope. The urge to do something,

born of anxieties to remain productive and competitive in a global economy, is conscripted into the struggle of finding one's own hope and sharing stories of hope so others may find theirs. We contrast this notion of hope as a "do something" anxious symbol of development logic with a more critical notion of hope, what Henry Giroux (2015) called "educated hope." Using educated hope and drawing on traditions of critical pedagogy, we argue that anyone looking for pedagogical resources during a time of crisis should evaluate them critically. Providing hope in *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020) becomes a silver-bullet solution. Rather than promoting harmful notions of hope embedded in a culturally reductive, essentializing, and colonialist text, educated hope rests in promoting democratic, liberatory, collectively agentive responses to crises.

### **"Did You See What LEGO Did?": Hope as Doing Something**

Writing in the early days of the pandemic, Zadie Smith attempted to capture the affective aspects of living during the initial months of the crisis. In "Something to Do" (Smith, 2020), she considered the urge she felt to fill the time spent during lockdown with doing something: "We make banana bread, we sew dresses, we go for a run, we complete all the levels of Minecraft, we do something, then photograph that *something* and not infrequently put it online" (p. 19). Yet, Smith identified a tension in doing something during the pandemic, namely that we also feel guilt-ridden and uncomfortable while doing it. It is, she said, a source of anxiety because "even as we do something, we simultaneously accuse ourselves: *you use the extremity as only another occasion for self-improvement, another pointless act of self-realization*" (Smith, 2020, p. 19). For Smith, this anxiety is rooted in the feeling that she needs to produce "powerful art" instead of baking banana bread, while knowing that both acts of production are only good and worthwhile if done with caring intent.

We believe Smith artfully identifies the dilemma of neoliberal personhood that underlies many anxieties in today's globalized, networked world. In *Neoliberalism*, Julie Wilson (2018) argued that today's neoliberal world of individuals in competition for scarce resources creates a particular kind of anxiety. "Neoliberalism asks us," she wrote, "to be self-enclosed individuals in charge of our own fates," but "individuals alone cannot control their fates in a global, complex, capitalist society" (p. 4). The insistence on the individual as the unit of agency implies that only proper actions by a self-enclosed individual

as the "enterprising" "CEO of oneself" (Wilson, 2018, p. 4) are considered within this worldview. Hence, Zadie Smith's dilemma that she too feels compelled to do something while also feeling anxious doing it. What Smith surfaces for us is the moral anxiety we as authors/scholars/creatives inhabit by our very nature, the place between compulsion and consecration, a place both physical and affective, which we find ourselves in when writing this critique. Smith, like Wilson, recognizes that the individual's neoliberal self-improvement project in the face of a global pandemic is "pointless" (Smith, 2020, p. 19), but she continues to do something anyway.

*Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020) is both an example of this pressure to do something in the face of a crisis and the networked reproduction of the neoliberal person as a self-enclosed individual. The only actions available to the children in these six stories are those of self-improvement and self-realization. Each child's situation is anxiety-inducing, and for readers, finding hope becomes an anxious pressure for readers themselves to do something by joining the Hope Movement and sharing their own stories of hope on social media. Hope as a concept in these pages becomes the process of self-improvement that is only value-added if shared with others.

### **The Hope Movement as a Proxy for Development Logic**

We first became interested in examining *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020) and the Hope Movement because of this element of sharing hope across networked social media. Both the website and the book are replete with requests to share the book, to share personal stories of finding hope, or to contact the authors via social media—especially on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. The Hope Movement social media campaign stands in as a proxy for the logic of development work and global education under neoliberalism more generally. We draw on the work of Friedrich et al. (2015), who analyzed the way in which Teach For All's extended network shares data on social media to create universalizing statements of problems and solutions. Importantly, and as a connection to both the development logic of the Hope Movement as well as the anxious neoliberal urge to *do something*, the sharing and use of data did not always align with the messages being sent. For example, the authors described

the wide circulation among the Teach For All network via Twitter of international comparative re-

ports (produced or compiled by NGOs such as UNICEF) indicating the countries with the worst absentee problems, lowest performance, etc., without there being any correlation between these countries and the location of the Teach For All programs. (Friedrich et al., 2015, p. 9)

Whether or not the data are directly addressing something relevant is not itself relevant because the data imply that some action can be taken (Friedrich et al., 2015). It is a stand-in for the overall ideas of international development. Put another way, what really matters is that interested individuals do something because doing something reinforces and validates the salience of their program.

In the same way, the eventual success of the Hope Movement, the proliferation of *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020), and the mitigation of the pandemic are secondary to the affective work implied in sharing and promoting a specific kind of hope, an anxious hope. The text and the movement work as a proxy for the perspectives of the international aid organizations. Implicitly via sharing and explicitly in the text and associated instructional resources, the feeling that some places and people need development, international aid, and formal education comes to the foreground, while the response to the pandemic and gaining the upper hand in the face of a global disease shifts to the background.

### Hope as a Silver Bullet

Today's globalized world features international organizations, quasi-governmental entities, philanthropies, and corporations all responding in times of crisis, including responses meant for educational industries. A defining feature of the global education space is that the "distinction between businesses, social enterprises, not-for-profits, and philanthropies is blurred" (Ball, 2012, p. 82). The spaces where education initiatives are conceptualized are often separate from the places where those initiatives take place, yet these differences are often glossed in favor of silver-bullet solutions that are technical, generic, and scalable (Ball, 2012, p. 71). As the pandemic emerged and disrupted education worldwide, a network of individuals from the LEGO Foundation, the UNESCO International Commission for the Futures of Education, and Education Scotland came together to "change the narrative and give children and families hope" (Hope Where Are You, n.d.). Their three stated goals are (a) "to create a resource to support children and families impacted by the pandemic and associated school clo-

tures," (b) "to fundraise 1 million US dollars for the UNICEF COVID-19 Response," and (c) "to create a hope movement" meant to "showcase hope through social and global solidarity" (Hope Where Are You, n.d.). In the blurred production of *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020), the very idea of hope becomes a quick fix. Hope is technical in two ways: It posits a solution to a problem, and desired messaging around hope is distributed electronically as a resource. Hope is generic in that anyone can have hope, regardless of their circumstances, but those with material means can choose to donate money to create more hope. Hope is scalable in that it can be shared along the same networks used to distribute the messaging and facilitate fundraising.

### Critically Interpreting *Hope, Where Are You?*

A critical rereading of *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020) reveals a text that reproduces harmful ethnic stereotypes and superficial forms of youth socialization while remaining disconnected from the pandemic. As mentioned above, each of the six characters in this text embodies problematic representations; however, Mulu's story is the key example of development logic written into the text. Mulu, "from Africa," lives in a rural village without paved roads, running water, or modern homes. The main challenge Mulu faces, besides starvation, is not the pandemic but that her father will not send her back to school. Instead she worries that she will become a child bride (Doucet & Guerra, 2020, p. 7). Mulu's narrative in this text is a stand-in for an entire continent of people, embodying the danger of a "single story" (Adichie, 2009) told from a Western perspective.

The danger in this single story suggests that even a global pandemic cannot interrupt the perspective that African people, especially girls, need the intervention of paternalistic development organizations. Mulu's crisis is the unmodern patriarchal power and material poverty that she faces and must receive outside assistance to overcome. Importantly, the official UNICEF recommendations surrounding child marriage are present in the text, including "exploring the role of men and boys in preventing child marriage" and teaching them "strategies to negotiate family pressures to marry underage girls" (United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF, 2017). Khoja-Moolji (2017) discussed the "reduction of individuals and social projects to economic logics" (p. 542), that is, the process by which such discourses transform girls into economic actors and reduce education to produce flexible labor for a market-driven economy. The logic that girls' education leads to economic growth has

been variously described as “the girl effect” or “the girl dividend” in development studies (Summers, 1992). As readers and lovers of children’s literature, we agree with Khoja-Moolji (2017) and are fatigued by the pervasive tropes, “problem”-solving, and erasures we encounter in contemporary transnational discourses within children’s literature. And, like Bradford (2010), we observe that this contemporary text does not resist tendencies to resort to racialized hierarchies.

Finally, the book portrays children as self-contained individuals responsible in isolation for their own emotional well-being or in need of rescuing, like Mulu, so they may become self-realized individuals who control their own destiny (Mbembe, 2003). Because no one person can end the pandemic, that problem is largely ignored in the text, and the happy resolution to the pandemic is found only through self-discovery. The narrative’s closure is simply assumed, while collective practices to promote health and survival are dangerously omitted. In the face of a global pandemic, the pressure to do something becomes co-opted by globalized education entities to produce a text. Within those pages, hope becomes a personal achievement and gives us all something to do, and sharing how we found hope carries with it the messages of neoliberal productive anxieties. These perspectives’ presence in the story makes sense in light of the network of actors who influenced the creation of this text. Sharing stories of hope on social media and joining the Hope Movement are symbolic proxies for the work done by development organizations (Friedrich et al., 2015) and the assumption that Black and brown children from the Global South are victims and need to be saved from their circumstances by global development networks.

The second author has years of experience working in many countries in the Global South, and she finds portrayals like Mulu’s—stories of Africa and African children, especially girls—to be pernicious. Such stereotypes supersede other ways in which Africa, Africans, and African girls are known to be and can be fierce and hopeful. Contrasting images of lifeworlds from across all corners of the globe belong in children’s literature. As educators, we are committed to resisting the dominant narratives circulating in children’s literature by crafting counternarratives such as this critical rereading of *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020). We intend for this critical reading to be useful for educators by revealing “procedures for critical content analyses that focus on locating power in social practices by understanding, uncovering, and transforming conditions of inequality” (Beach et al., 2009, p. 129).

## Implications

Returning to Short’s (2016) critical reading framework, it becomes clear that *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020) is a very different story than it first appears to be. Focally, it is not truly the story of children responding to school closures or the pandemic. Children’s perspectives within the narratives are not really children’s perspectives at all but are instead repetitions of harmful stereotypical tropes and problematic roles and responsibilities. The point of view is an adult one. The social processes of the characters, their power, and their agency are wrapped up in this adult, ideological perspective. Children are meant to be CEOs of themselves, responsible in isolation for their own emotional well-being, or alternatively, they are in need of rescuing so that they can become self-actualized individuals as seen through the eyes of adult narrators.

In times of local, national, or global emergencies, the need to quickly locate valuable instructional resources means organizations and networks with capacity and scale will be the first movers and can quickly supply materials to meet needs. We therefore urge caution to anyone seeking children’s literature during times of crisis. The reach of *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020) across time zones, continents, and contexts is a testament to the power and efficiency that global education and development networks have at their disposal, but it is a power they have deployed, in this case, irresponsibly. A text that seems innocuous and comes from some sort of officialdom—LEGO, the United Nations—comes laden with meanings that should not go unquestioned by educators or drop into the hands of children unacknowledged.

## Educated Hope as an Alternative Praxis of Hope

As an alternative to the idea of hope as an anxious individual undertaking and as a heuristic for evaluating educational materials that emerge during a crisis, we turn to the work of Henry Giroux and his notion of educated hope. Giroux (1997) regarded educated hope as an act of imagination, based on certain norms that are initiated by educators or produced collaboratively in educational practices. According to Giroux, when problems are posed, educators function as transformative agents by initiating dialogue using language of critique and possibility, thus encouraging and co-creating hope. Critical pedagogy is a form of educated hope committed to producing young people who are able and willing to expand and deepen their sense of themselves, to think of the world critically, to



imagine something beyond their own self-interest and well-being, to serve the public good, to take risks, and to struggle for a substantive democracy (Giroux, 2015).

When we encounter a new text, curriculum, or other resource, as educators we should ask ourselves what kind of work is being done. Will our students learn not just about themselves but about something beyond their own self-interests? Can reading, watching, or participating in these learning experiences encourage children to take risks for the public good with an understanding that others, whoever and wherever they are, also possess dignity and are worthy of respect? Does the text accurately name and address the crisis or, like *Hope, Where Are You?* (Doucet & Guerra, 2020), does it dodge pressing realities in favor of a happier narrative? Asking these questions among others in the frame of criticality, collective construction of knowledge, and challenging oppressive power is a path toward educated hope and away from anxious “do something” hope.

Following Giroux (2019), educating for democracy is a way of thinking about education, connecting “equity to excellence, learning to ethics, and agency to the imperatives of the public good” (p. 151). Pedagogy must therefore be “rigorous, self-reflective and committed to the practice of freedom, to advancing the parameters of knowledge, addressing crucial social issues, and connecting private troubles and public issues” (Giroux, 2019, p. 149). Nonetheless, even a flawed text offers a productive resource for educators and students. Thinking through pedagogies of critical literacy, supporting learners in becoming “consciously aware of the systems of meaning” (Beach et al., 2009, p. 142) that operate in texts, helps us to identify and disrupt the harmful aspects of such texts, speak back to power, and promote democratic representations of cultures and communities.

### Conclusion

Echoing Short (2016), we might also ask, Whose perspective is represented? Who has power and agency? How does the story end with regard to those relationships and representations? Woodson (2003) explained what this could look like: “My hope is that those who write about the tears and the laughter and the language in my grandmother’s house have first sat down at the table with us and dipped the bread of their own experiences into our stew” (p. 45). Thus, a narrative’s ability to represent a particular group or place must be cross-referenced with the political meanings of the text and whether the narrative prizes meaningful relationships with the cultures of depicted characters.

An admirable example of educated hope from crisis literature

comes from Puerto Rico. Torres and Medina (2021) highlighted *cuentos combativos*, stories of resistance during the last four years of disasters. They named four recent children’s books as the latest in a history of “resistance against the trajectories of colonial oppression” and as using “people’s multiliteracy resources as tools for resistance” (p. 243). The stories speak to the consequences of and responses to Hurricane María and are recast as decolonial projects “disrupting dominant portrayals of Puerto Ricans as docile, passive, lazy, and solely dependent on the United States’ aid” (Torres & Medina, 2021, p. 260). *Cuentos combativos* are stories of educated hope. They provide us with a model of children’s literature as resistance to dominant narratives and in their resistance invite a hope for the future that rests on youth being critically engaged. Educated hope is not “a romanticized and empty” version of hope; rather, it is a form of hope enabled by critique that “taps into our deepest experiences and longing for a life of dignity with others, a life in which it becomes possible to imagine a future that does not mimic the present” (Giroux, 2019, p. 151). Educated hope cannot be a silver bullet: It is not technical but embodied, not generic but specific, not scalable but organic. When educators present texts and materials to children, especially in response to a crisis, we encourage them to do so in the spirit of educated hope. For young students to truly find hope in the face of a crisis, like the current global pandemic, they need texts and materials willing to support them in imagining other possible futures. We wish that more literary works, especially those created with children as their readers, would embrace educated hope as an act of imagination beyond present realities. •

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# FROM PAPER TO PLUGGED IN: Pivoting Access to Children's Literature in Light of the Pandemic



Elizabeth M. Bemiss and Melanie G. Keel

ACROSS THE NATION, students in our classrooms come from varying backgrounds and encompass a wide variety of perspectives, histories, and values. However, it is well known that classroom texts, curricula, and materials do not represent the diversity of our students. Children's literature is a powerful tool that can be utilized in classrooms to provide young readers with diverse books that reflect the diverse world in which we live. Educators have the critical task of ensuring that our students have access to children's literature that allows children to see themselves in books and also learn about the lives of others through literature.

We are teacher educators from two disparate Southeastern institutions; one of us teaches pre- and in-service teachers at a small liberal arts private university with a student population of approximately 3,100. The other teaches pre- and in-service teachers at a public, regional comprehensive university with approximately 12,600 students. Both teach children's and young adult literature and literacy methods courses across a variety of degree programs, including English and education (BS), elementary education (BS), exceptional student education (BS), and reading (MEd) programs. As teacher educators for pre- and in-service teachers, the heart of our instruction in our literacy methods and children's and young adult literature courses revolves around the use of children's literature to teach pre- and in-service teachers how to apply theories of literacy development and implement effective practices for instructing students in K–12 classrooms.

Moreover, we emphasize the importance of getting quality literature into the hands of young children to support their reading and literacy growth.

In order to utilize children's literature as a field of learning and classroom application, students must also have access to a range of quality and diverse texts. Therefore, providing access to quality children's literature for our students is central to our work in the classroom. At one institution, the teacher educator incorporated a field trip to the local library in her course with preservice teachers. Students applied for library cards, received a tour of the library, and were made aware of all the services offered. Students had access to the university library as well, where a special room, dedicated to children's literature, had numerous options from which to access children's literature just steps from their dorm room. At the other institution, the teacher educator provided students a tour of the College of Education's Professional Studies Library, a resource center that houses children's literature texts and teaching resources and supplies for education majors. Moreover, grant work has funded the use of a rolling library, where the teacher educator brings hundreds of children's books into the classroom for student use on a weekly basis.

When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down schools, universities, and libraries, educators and community members alike were unaware of the full impact this global crisis would have on students. In our university classrooms, opportunities to engage in field trips to libraries and provide access

to utilize children's literature texts during in-person courses halted. Educators knew the day-to-day practices they took for granted as methods of educating pre- and in-service teachers and classroom students would have to be revisited.

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### Pandemic Impact on Literacy

With rampant school and library closures occurring nationwide, we wondered how this would impact students' literacy achievement. In addition to the closure of schools and libraries, limited access to technology in low-income communities, limited learning materials, and the need for adult supervision for home-based learning are all further factors that affected students during the pandemic (Bennett, Gunn, & Peterson, 2021). Based on the substantial body of research on summer reading loss showing a potential three-month reading gap for some students (Kim & Quinn, 2013; White et al., 2013), we anticipate students and schools will experience a negative impact regarding literacy growth during the extended out-of-school time when the pandemic closed schools. While the body of literature on the consequences of the pandemic for literacy achievement is evolving, one study noted results from gathering data of students' reading habits prior to and during lockdown (Clark & Picton, 2020). The report delineates reading practices of children and young adults before and amid lockdown, and notes that many children found

opportunities to discover or rediscover themselves as readers during pandemic restrictions due to additional time to read and increased access to stories online (Clark & Picton, 2020). However, barriers such as a lack of access to books (due to school and library closures), home environment, and lack of school and/or peer support negatively affected some children's ability to read as well as their motivation to read for pleasure. Given the nascent research on the impact of the pandemic on student achievement (Nazerian, 2020), it is important to also note existing research surrounding access to literature and its impact on student achievement (Alexander et al., 2007; Edwards, 2011; Green et al., 2020; Neuman & Knapczyk, 2020; White et al., 2013) as well as reading loss when students experience an extended period of a lack of interaction with reading, such as the summer reading slide (Alexander et al., 2007; Allington & McGill-Frazen, 2003; White et al., 2013).

The pivot to remote and hybrid instruction, coupled with library closures, led educators and librarians to implement creative means to provide access to books for children. Bennett, Gunn, and Peterson (2021) secured emergency funding in response to COVID-19, with which they worked to deliver quality multicultural and social justice books to K–8 students, ensuring students had access to literature during the pandemic. Public libraries also implemented creative modes to support access to literature for their patrons, including book mobile units, Internet services for families to gain access to online books, and book giveaways (Lawton, 2021). Three librarians in Virginia, worried about their students being left without access to books, borrowed government vehicles and loaded hundreds of books in bins that they delivered to predetermined stops all over the county to distribute books to children in need (Lawton, 2021).

When the pandemic shifted the way teaching and learning occurred in classrooms worldwide, we recognized the significance of modifying our own instruction to support our pre- and in-service teachers' understanding of how to be responsive K–12 educators. Because children's literature and young adult texts are central to our work as teacher educators, we began to brainstorm creative ways to get texts into the hands of our pre- and in-service teachers in an online environment. Using children's award lists and online literature resources, one teacher educator paired award-winning texts with corresponding videos for use by their preservice and in-service teachers. Both teacher educators provided resources

for students to access a variety of children's texts online. Moreover, the implementation of new practices in our classrooms benefitted student learning while supporting community members in a time of need. The following section details the shifts in our instructional practices.

### Shifting Access to Children's Literature in Our Courses

Given the need to support pre- and in-service teachers' access to children's literature for use in both our university courses and K–12 classrooms, we researched and shared resources to get high-quality children's literature texts into the hands of students via online sources. Drawing from Bennett, Gunn, and Peterson's (2021) book-selection criteria for providing access to multicultural children's literature during COVID-19, we aimed to find sources that included four criteria: (a) high-quality, diverse/multicultural literature (Bennet, Gunn, van Beynen, & Morton, 2021; Bishop, 1992; Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001; O'Donnell, 2019; Thomas, 2016); (b) varying complexities, content, and genres (Pearson & Hiebert, 2014); (c) engaging content, language, and visual appeal; and (d) a balance of main character's gender.

One teacher educator began with children's literature award lists and compiled resources that included these four criteria. This was coupled with the introduction of an award list during each class period with corresponding video previews or book trailers of various texts from recent award winners. Over the duration of the course, students ultimately became familiar with the following award lists: the Coretta Scott King Book Award, the Pura Belpré Award, the Caldecott Medal, the Association for Library Service to Children's Notable Children's Books, the Children's Literature Assembly Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts, the Notable Books for a Global Society, and the Orbis Pictus Award.

The other teacher educator encouraged all her students to apply for a local library card. This allowed them the use of Libby, an online library resource that provides access to ebooks. She also provided weekly demonstrations using Libby for her class read-alouds. This enabled the preservice and in-service teachers to gain an awareness of the books that were available and foster a sense of potential challenges when reading books online (i.e., skipping several pages at once). The teacher educator reviewed the sites discussed in this piece (see Table 1) with her students to

ensure that they were familiar with what they had to offer and their potential use with K–12 students.

As we explored resources to find examples of read-alouds, trailers, and previews of books from award-winning lists, we realized that educators, book lovers, authors, and illustrators from around the world were also invested in providing access to books for children. We used websites like Storyline Online, whose list of titles and recordings is ever-evolving, and Unite for Literacy, which provided both fiction and nonfiction texts with predictable patterns, with a narration option. We discovered KidLit TV, whose website features high-quality videos with authors and illustrators. The International Children's Digital Library provided many diverse options, allowing readers to select books by language, genre, and character, to name a few. Additionally, Netflix Bookmarks was brought to our attention as another site created during the pandemic to provide diverse book accessibility along with recorded read-alongs. We also secured educator accounts to book resources like Epic, Vooks, and Open eBooks, which allowed us to share additional access to texts from these apps with our students.

### Shifting Instruction to Provide Community Support

Research shows the connection between community relationships and fostering opportunities to enhance the literacy lives of those in the community (Neuman & Knapczyk, 2020). Instead of assuming what is needed, determining through shared conversation the necessary impact can, in fact, create a shift. For example, to explore the benefits of book accessibility, Neuman and Knapczyk (2020) studied the discrepancy in available books for low-income communities versus wealthier communities. Through their research, they considered not only the physical, but the psychological proximity students had to books through a book vending machine program. They noted that working with community leaders and families better ensured that the vending machines would be used based on their placement.

During the pandemic, a common theme from colleagues and friends was that the children in their lives were falling behind in their reading. In light of the drastic learning shifts occurring, we used instruction as a leverage to support parents, teachers, and community members in their learning endeavors during the pandemic. Based on the premise that service

**Table 1**  
**SUGGESTED SITES FOR PRE- AND IN-SERVICE TEACHER USE**

LITERATURE ACCESS SOURCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
<b>Libby</b> <a href="https://www.overdrive.com/apps/libby/">https://www.overdrive.com/apps/libby/</a>	An app that can be linked to a local library card, through which users can borrow ebooks, audiobooks, and more from their local public library.
<b>Storyline Online</b> <a href="https://storylineonline.net/library/">https://storylineonline.net/library/</a>	Streaming website for videos, featuring celebrated actors reading children's books alongside animated illustrations.
<b>Unite for Literacy</b> <a href="https://www.uniteforliteracy.com/">https://www.uniteforliteracy.com/</a>	Family-friendly website to encourage home literacy, offering a variety of levels of texts, allowing readers to read the books themselves or have them narrated.
<b>KitLit TV</b> <a href="https://www.kidlit.tv/">https://www.kidlit.tv/</a>	Produced by parents, educators, librarians, kid lit creators, and filmmakers, this website showcases a talk show with best-selling authors and illustrators, story time, drawing and illustration inspiration, and more.
<b>International Children's Digital Library</b> <a href="http://en.childrenslibrary.org/">http://en.childrenslibrary.org/</a>	A showcase of a collection of books from the University of Maryland representing outstanding historical and contemporary books from throughout the world. There are books from 76 different languages on the site.
<b>Netflix Bookmarks</b> <a href="https://www.netflixbookmarks.com/">https://www.netflixbookmarks.com/</a>	Developed to celebrate Black voices, this website includes suggested books from birth to age 12, along with featured books and books read by Black actors.
<b>Epic</b> <a href="https://www.getepic.com/">https://www.getepic.com/</a>	A digital reading platform with a collection of 40,000+ books from 250 worldwide publishers.
<b>Vooks</b> <a href="https://www.vooks.com/">https://www.vooks.com/</a>	An app that streams animated storybooks brought to life.
<b>Open eBooks</b> <a href="https://openebooks.net/">https://openebooks.net/</a>	An online library with thousands of titles that are free for children from in-need communities.

learning can support the development, understanding, and evaluation of relationships to create effective work (Bringle et al., 2009), both teacher educators opted to find meaningful ways to have their students engage with their communities.

### Children's Literature Service Learning Initiatives

After teaching graduate students about current research and trends in the field of children's literature, one teacher educator supported students as they worked to increase access to children's literature in the community through service learning projects such as Zoom story time, integrated arts and read-aloud video recordings, virtual read-alouds for "First Chapter Friday" to introduce children to a variety of chapter books, and the creation of digital book flyers with award-winning

books. As schools and libraries remained closed during the production of their service learning, students utilized the resources from Table 1 to select books that showcased the four criteria for book selection we emphasized in our teaching: (a) high-quality, diverse/multicultural literature; (b) varying complexities, content, and genres; (c) engaging content, language, and visual appeal; and (d) a balance of main character's gender. Students facilitated projects over the duration of an academic semester. These projects were shared with local teachers, libraries, and homeschool parents to support K–12 student learning and book access during the pandemic.

### Field Partnerships

One of the requirements for the teacher education program at the liberal arts university is a field experience where preservice

teachers participate with a teacher and local school. Pandemic restrictions created the need for a shift in field experience expectations. One teacher educator tasked her students to work one-on-one with a student in Grades pre-K through 6, engaging them with texts aligned with Bennett, Gunn, and Peterson's (2021) criteria. Preservice teachers determined the interests of their students virtually through the Reading Interest Inventory and then located online books for their students. Since these were to be virtual sessions and libraries were still closed, it was necessary for the preservice teachers to have books accessible for their tutoring sessions. Many of them have just begun to gather books for their own future classroom libraries and have not accumulated the range of texts necessary to meet the needs of their particular tutee. Preservice teachers had to find either a version of a text read aloud online or a book they could download and read to their student. They were also encouraged to utilize the resources listed in Table 1. On some sites, books that met our requirements for high-quality children's literature were challenging to find. For example, on the Libby site, many of the diverse texts were often checked out. However, flexibility with the online resources allowed for a variety of options based on tutee interests and particular needs.

At the regional comprehensive university, one teacher educator partnered with the Child Development Center on campus in order to support undergraduate students in applying theory to practice, while also giving back to the community. Feedback from the director of the center regarding their greatest needs for their preschool students centered around book access for prekindergarten students, particularly online recordings. Therefore, the teacher educator designed a collaboration where preservice teachers in a literacy methods course worked in small groups to select high-quality books aligned with Bennett, Gunn, and Peterson's (2021) criteria and planned a recorded read-aloud, with several requirements, including (a) the selection of a high-quality book with rhyme, rhythm, or repetition; (b) an introduction of the book's cover, title, and author and illustrator; (c) the incorporation of oral language and phonological awareness strategies while reading; and (d) open-ended questions and prompts to support comprehension. The recordings were shared privately with the director of the center and the prekindergarten students. The response from the Child Development Center was very positive. Teachers corresponded after utilizing the record-

ings with pictures of written student responses as a way to say "thank you," revealing the benefits of the recordings to the prekindergarten students.

## Educators need to think strategically about the innovations that ensued from the pandemic and feasible ways to continue to build on these in the future.

### Final Thoughts

As we continue to prepare preservice and in-service teachers to enter the field, we wonder if we will return to pre-pandemic teaching. As we wait with bated breath, there are several questions on our minds. Teacher educators and K–12 teachers alike are anxious to know how their students fared during the lockdown, both academically and emotionally. Educators are also asking themselves what new technologies utilized during the pandemic might be suited for ongoing use in the future. Are there ways for preservice, in-service, classroom, and teacher support that these resources can be part of our day-to-day classroom and home curriculums? Many of the websites mentioned in this piece were free of charge or offered at low cost during the pandemic. Additionally, many school districts and Internet providers offered low-cost or free minutes and Internet access. Going forward, families that no longer have computers or free Internet at home may not be able to use these sites as reading material. Similarly, teachers may not be able to afford the cost of these online resources. Educators need to think strategically about the innovations that ensued from the pandemic and feasible ways to continue to build on these in the future. •

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# THE POET'S CORNER

## Anthologies to Rebuild Community



Janet Wong

DURING THE EARLY WEEKS of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020, people came together to help each other as never before (or since). We checked on our elderly neighbors and went grocery shopping for them. We banged pots and pans to support health care workers. There's even a poem about that: "City Song" by Marilyn Garcia. Reading it transports us back to that time.

### **City Song**

by Marilyn Garcia

Every night at seven o'clock  
we climb the stairs right to the top.  
We see the city's empty streets  
and break its silence with our BEATS!  
AND BANGS! AND CLANGS!  
AND CHEERS! AND CLAPS!  
Our SHOUTS! AND STOMPS!  
AND FINGER SNAPS!

To show we know how much they give  
so  
WE CAN BREATHE  
so  
WE CAN LIVE.

Note: During the COVID pandemic in Spring 2020, many people went outside and made noise to thank health care workers at 7pm each evening.

Copyright © 2020 by Marilyn Garcia from *HOP TO IT: Poems to Get You Moving* (Pomelo Books).

I miss seeing that spirit of unity, especially in our war against the coronavirus. I'd like to suggest that we need to return, on a community level, to highlighting the COVID heroes and victims in our neighborhoods—and that doing so in student anthologies can unify us while also providing lessons to boost social emotional learning (SEL) and literacy skills. Here are 10 steps to guide you.

### **Step 1: Contact Local Hospitals**

Contact the community outreach department of your local hospital to let them know that your students are creating a book to honor health care workers and COVID victims. See if your students can be connected via email with volunteers, hospital staff, or families with stories to share.

### **Step 2: Find Project Leaders**

Many teachers have been creating classroom anthologies for decades, usually as books that are printed out on computer printers and stapled at night by the teachers themselves. The twist that I'd like to propose is that these books should be published professionally. You can let Amazon do the printing and binding. And let someone else take responsibility for this project (ideally two or three people); you have enough to do.

Your PTA can reach out to your local chapter of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) to find project leaders who are familiar with self-publishing (also called "indie publishing"). Look for authors who can work with your PTA for a reasonable fee. There are thousands of indie authors nationwide; your region must have

some. If your PTA cannot find local experts, I can recommend poets from the #Anthologies101 courses that I teach with Sylvia Vardell (see “Curious About Curating?” in the Resources section [Vardell, 2021]). Any of these poets could supervise a project like this via Zoom with a limited budget.

### Step 3: Choose a Printing Company

You can work with a local printer, but printing a simple black-and-white book will usually cost at least \$3 per copy with a minimum order of 100 copies. If you don't have a local printer that is willing to delay payment, using a print-on-demand company is the economical choice. Companies that use print-on-demand technology include Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP), Ingram Spark, Lulu, and Blurb; you can find several reputable companies in the blog post “12 Best Self-Publishing Companies” by Scott Allan (2020). I've had experience with a few companies, and I feel that the best option for beginners is KDP, the self-publishing or “indie-publishing” branch of Amazon. KDP has its limitations, but I'm going to use it as the example in this guide. If you want to use a different company, the steps are very similar.

### Step 4: Create New Accounts

Ask your PTA to establish an email address and Amazon account for this project, such as YourPTANameBooks@gmail.com. The password for this account will need to be shared with the project leaders. After the email account is set up, creating a new KDP Amazon account is as easy as entering that email address at KDP (with the same password for project access).

### Step 5: Divide Into Teams

Have students choose teams. Make sure that all students have a meaningful job. Allowing students to be on more than one team is one way to accomplish this. Ask your PTA to recruit parent volunteers to support the project leaders in helping each team.

#### Team #1: Account Management (3–4 students)

This team will create the basic KDP entries, including the book description on the Amazon listing. They will also work with project leaders to do the actual uploading of the interior PDF and cover PDF.

#### Team #2: Editorial (5–6 students)

Their task is to create the content for the book: (a) collecting and choosing student poems and art that showcase health care heroes and that personalize COVID victims and (b) writing supplemental text for the front matter (copyright notice, etc.) and back matter (poem credits, etc.).

#### Team #3: Design (5–6 students)

This team will work closely with the editorial team. Their task is to arrange the content of the book after the editorial team has collected it. The design team will decide on the layout, placing text and images in an interior PDF and cover PDF. The project leaders and parent volunteers can help these students become comfortable with Pages, Word, or online “click and drop” design websites such as Canva—or the adults can do this work themselves with design input from students.

#### Team #4: Sales and Marketing (3–4 students)

This team will create paper and digital materials to advertise the book in your community and on social media. They will also send emails to encourage local leaders to buy the book.

#### Team #5: Financial (3–4 students)

This team will handle all financial matters, with the help of the PTA treasurer, including monitoring sales and royalties and deciding how to use book profits.

#### Team #6: Logistics (3–4 students)

This team will order “author copies” of the book at a discounted price and handle direct book sales. They will also be in charge of ordering proof copies of the book.

### Step 6: Create Content

Let students have fun and take the lead as they work in their teams. There are millions of books available on Amazon. If this one doesn't end up being as polished as you'd like, it's all right. The only people buying the book will be generous people who want to support your community.

### Step 7: Order Proof Copies

After Team #1 has uploaded the files and filled in all the required fields, you can order a paperback proof of a book before it goes “live” for sale on Amazon. A proof copy will cost approximately \$10 (including shipping). Seeing the

work-in-progress as a paperback (rather than just on their computer screen) will help students decide if they want more content or different images. They'll also spot mistakes that they need to correct; there are always some mistakes.

### Step 8: Approve the Book

When you're ready to go live, you simply click the "Publish" button; you'll have a free listing on Amazon within a day or two.

### Step 9: Order Copies on Amazon

Your PTA will receive a royalty of up to 60% of the retail price for each book that is sold on Amazon. It might be as little as \$2 per book or as much as \$10, depending on the retail price that your students set and the wholesale cost of the book (affected by the number of pages and whether it is in color or in black ink only). It takes about two months before income will be received from KDP, but you can see sales in your account on the same day that Amazon receives an order. Send the Amazon link to school administrators so they can buy the first copies—and have an "unboxing ceremony" in your classroom where students can celebrate the finished book.

### Step 10: Keep Track of Profits

KDP's preferred method of payment of royalties is ACH electronic deposit. Financial literacy is a curricular requirement in many schools, and students can learn more about money by keeping track of profits.

This is a short description of the KDP publishing process. You can find many excellent videos to help you along the way, such as "How to Self-Publish a Book Step by Step on KDP in 10 Minutes" by Dale L. Roberts (2020). It's easy to find blog posts on how to publish a book with KDP; for an overview, see "Amazon KDP: Complete Guide to Kindle Direct Publishing (Step-by-Step)" by Colin Dunbar (2020), or do a five-minute online search.

Better yet, let the kids do it. You have enough to do. •

**Janet Wong** is the author of dozens of books for children and the co-creator (with Sylvia Vardell) of *The Poetry Friday Anthology* series and *Poetry Friday Power Book* series. Her most recent book is *Good Luck Gold & MORE*. Email: janet@janetwong.com

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# The Dragon Lode

*The Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group invites interested members to apply to serve on the Notable Books for a Global Society Committee. The NBGS Committee solicits nominations for the award, reads and evaluates submissions, prepares an annotated list of winners for publication in The Dragon Lode and other publications, presents the books during the annual IRA convention, and conducts other activities to promote this award.*

## Call to Serve on the Notable Books for a Global Society Committee

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### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Membership in the Children's Literature and Reading SIG and the International Reading Association
- Interest in international and multicultural issues in children's literature

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### REQUIREMENTS

- Willingness to attend virtual and in-person committee meetings throughout the year
- Attendance for three years at both NBGS Committee meetings, held at IRA and NCTE annual conferences
- Willingness and ability to read and evaluate 300-400 books for children and young adults annually
- Ability and willingness to write annotations for publication in *The Dragon Lode* and to present the annual NBGS book list at the Children's Literature and Reading SIG session at the IRA convention

The committee consists of 10 members, including the chair and the co-chair, who must attend all meetings of the committee as noted above and perform all duties as directed by the chair. Three members are appointed annually in January by the president and the NBGS incoming chair from among candidates who respond to this call.

As far as possible, the committee members shall be representative of the SIG membership in terms of gender, regions of residence, and professions positions (e.g., classroom teachers, teacher educators, and librarians). Preference is given to applicants who have not served previously on the committee.

Interested applicants should submit letters of interest and curriculum vitae by post or email to:

**Sandip LeeAnne Wilson, EdD**  
Chair of the NBGS Committee  
Professor, School of Education  
Husson University  
1 College Circle  
Bangor, ME 04401  
Wilsonsa@husson.edu

**Danielle Hartsfield, PhD**  
President, Children's Literature and Reading SIG  
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## Join the ILA CL/R SIG

The Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group is a community of individuals who have an abiding interest in the development of literacy and in promoting high-quality literature. Our mission is to promote the educational use of children's books by focusing on recently published children's literature, supportive professional books, issues relative to children's literature, and current research findings. Membership typically includes pre-K through 12 teachers, librarians, teacher candidates, administrators, university professors, authors, and publishers.

Membership benefits include:

- Meeting and working with other literacy professionals who share interest in literature for children and young adults.
- Opportunities for national-level involvement and leadership.
- Two issues a year of *The Dragon Lode* journal.

Membership is open to all members of the International Literacy Association. Student members must be enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate degree program.

- One-year membership: \$25.00 (U.S.)
- One-year student membership: \$10.00 (U.S.)

**To join, go to the CL/R SIG website:  
<http://www.clrsig.org/join-now.html>**

The Journal of the Children's Literature and Reading  
Special Interest Group  
International Literacy Association