



the Dragon Code

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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. 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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the *Dragon* *Lode*

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Edited by Sandip Wilson and Mary Ellen Oslick

A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS



AS A LITERACY COMMUNITY, we seek conversations and collaborations that support and challenge us to revise and strengthen our practices. This issue of *The Dragon Lodge* includes articles that extend our understanding of the potential of children's literature in our classrooms and in children's lives. The authors present perspectives on text complexity, multicultural literature, student agency, and critical literacy. We hope you enjoy engaging with these important topics, and feel challenged, affirmed, and inspired in your own teaching and research.

Miriam Martinez, Janis M. Harmon, and Marcy Wilburn provide a perspective on the possibilities and challenges of analyzing text complexity to help students access more complex texts in "Extending the Measures of Text Complexity for Literary Texts." In "Challenging Single Stories: Critical Engagements and Careful Considerations When Pairing Picturebooks About Immigration," Paul H. Ricks, Terrell A. Young, and Sara Koford examine how pairing two texts can challenge stereotypes about immigrants for young readers. Further, the authors encourage readers to consider how these books can also perpetuate stereotypes if educators do not interrogate the perspectives they offer. Amanda Deliman and Janet Breitenstein shift the focus to the youngest readers in "Nurturing Meaningful Student Agency: A Kindergarten Teacher Supports Beginning Readers Using Wordless and Postmodern Picturebooks." The authors present a qualitative case study describing how they facilitated meaning construction in a kindergarten classroom using wordless picturebooks. The authors discuss the use of drama-based strategies as a form of inquiry and meaning construction around postmodern, wordless picturebooks. Katie Schrodt, Michelle Medlin Hasty, and Ally Hauptman present a practical tool for facilitating critical literacy conversations in a classroom in "Planning, Co-Construction, Action: A Frame-

work for Critical Literacy Instruction." This is a tool readers can use immediately in their classrooms to bring critical literacy to the forefront. This collection of articles challenges us to consider the potential and possibility of children's literature in the classroom to provide the ubiquitous windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors to all of our students.

The "Poet's Corner" column for this issue encourages us to consider the continued use of poetry Zoom sessions with our students, even as author visits slowly return to in-person contexts. Janet Wong gives us tips and strategies for scheduling the virtual sessions and maximizing their potential to energize our students around poetry. Included are outstanding recommendations of poets to consider for your next virtual author visit. Finally, the Notable Books for a Global Society Committee presents the 2022 Notable Books, carefully selected from over 600 books read and reviewed by the committee. This list is a valuable resource to enhance classroom collections and read-alouds with high-quality literature representing diverse perspectives.

This issue is filled with practical suggestions, new ways of thinking about using children's literature in the classroom, and exciting research possibilities. Thank you to our outstanding authors for their contributions to this issue of *The Dragon Lodge*. •

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CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

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.

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.

GUIDELINES

EMAIL MANUSCRIPTS TO: 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.

EDITOR SEARCH

The current editorial team for *The Dragon Lode* will conclude its role after producing the Spring 2023 issue. The Board of Directors of the Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group (CL/R SIG) of the International Literacy Association (ILA) is seeking a new editor or team of editors to serve a three-year term (Fall 2023—Spring 2026). Co-editors or editorial teams are strongly encouraged to apply. Applicants must be current CL/R SIG members or agree to join the SIG if selected. Applications should be submitted electronically no later than June 15, 2022, and include the following information:

1. A LETTER OF INTEREST DESCRIBING . . .

- General qualifications of applicants/team of applicants in the field of children's literature.
- Prior experiences with the CL/R SIG and ILA.
- Previous writing and publishing experience in the field of children's literature.
- Previous editorial and editing experience.
- Available resources to support the editorship, including institutional support from each institution represented.
- Technological expertise.

2. A VISION STATEMENT FOR THE JOURNAL'S GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING POSSIBLE THEMES FOR FORTHCOMING ISSUES.

3. A STATEMENT OF LOGISTICS INCLUDING A MANUSCRIPT PROCESS FLOW CHART, PROPOSED TIMELINE, AND THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH TEAM MEMBER.

4. A CURRICULUM VITAE FROM EACH APPLICANT.

5. A DIGITAL COPY OF A WRITING SAMPLE FROM AT LEAST ONE APPLICANT.

Applicants will be contacted after the deadline and may be asked to provide additional information or materials. The applicants appointed by the Board of Directors of the CL/R SIG will have Board support in effecting a transition and preparing for the Fall 2023 issue of the journal.

Questions and applications should be directed to Danielle Hartsfield, CL/R SIG president (danielle.hartsfield@ung.edu), and Sandip Wilson, CL/R SIG president-elect (wilsonsa@husson.edu).

EXTENDING THE MEASURES OF TEXT COMPLEXITY FOR LITERARY TEXTS



Miriam Martinez, Janis M. Harmon,
and Marcy Wilburn

MUCH OF THE WORK of English language arts teachers centers around engaging students in explorations of literature with a particular emphasis on fiction. While works of fiction can be described in terms of common literary elements such as characterization and plot, authors arrange these elements in markedly different ways. These differences may well mean that what makes a literary text complex can vary greatly from one work to another. Such variations in complexity can impact student engagement with particular texts. While we frequently ask students to reread short texts or text excerpts more closely, especially those that are complex (Wolsey & Lapp, 2017), our focus is on full-length texts (i.e., chapter books). We believe that to support student engagement, teachers must closely reread individual texts to understand the complexities that may challenge student engagement. In this article, we share the discoveries we made as we reread three high-quality chapter books, looking closely at their features. What we discovered were both complexities and possibilities. We believe that such discoveries position teachers to create the necessary scaffolds to help students navigate through texts to reach for a deeper understanding.

Background

To understand the uniqueness of literary text complexity, it is helpful to first consider the concept of text complexity within a broader perspective. Text complexity has long been a topic of interest to researchers. However, in more recent years, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) has broadened the

perspectives on the topic. The CCSS has drawn attention to the need for students to read increasingly more difficult and complex texts.

The CCSS defines text complexity as “the inherent difficulty of reading and comprehending a text combined with consideration of reader and task variables” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 43). To determine text complexity, the standards rely on a three-pronged model emphasizing quantitative measures, qualitative values, and reader/task features.

The quantitative measures provide numerical information for classifying books, such as readability formulas and the Lexile Framework (Fisher et al., 2016). These measures rely primarily on sentence length and multisyllabic words as indicators of complexity.

Hiebert (2014) noted that quantitative measures provide only an overview of text complexity. In contrast, qualitative measures give us greater insight. The CCSS describes the features of literary texts in terms of levels of meaning and purpose, structure, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands. Yet, the CCSS’s descriptions of these qualitative factors are broad and, hence, offer only minimal guidance to teachers.

In this article, we focus on fictional literary texts. Alsup (2013) noted: “Reading and responding to fiction is a complex activity, and fictional texts are complex texts” (p. 184). The sources of complexity in literary texts may be intrinsically related to literary features, such as narrative structure and the multidimensional

mensionality of characters. In addition, text complexity may also be inherent in features of literary works that are specific to the individual text (Lee, 2011). Hence, teachers must look closely at each book they plan to use with students to better understand the features that may contribute to the book's complexity.

In addressing complexity, the CCSS also recognized the importance of task variables. While literature instruction is sometimes focused on only identifying literary elements, Hillocks (2016) argued for an "expanded treatment concerning how literature works [rather than what] is provided by traditional lists of the 'elements of literature'" (p. 118). Instead, he observed that "at the core, literature is concerned not only with character, plot, and setting but with moral and philosophical issues" (p. 110). Attention to such issues means teachers need to engage students in complex tasks that require analysis and interpretation.

Many books used in upper elementary and middle school are highly complex. In light of this, our research question was the following: What is the nature of text complexity in high-quality chapter books for older readers? To address this question, we closely examined three chapter books to identify the features contributing to complexity.

Methodology

The research team was composed of three individuals, two of whom are university professors who engage in research in children's and young adult literature. The third is a doctoral student in literacy. All three have experience teaching English language arts and reading to older learners.

Text Selection

In selecting the books, we used three criteria. We wanted high-quality books, books that would likely pose challenges for readers, and books of the same genre. We selected three Newbery titles—all historical fiction—meeting these criteria: *The Wednesday Wars* (Schmidt, 2007), *Moon Over Manifest* (Vanderpool, 2010), and *Splendors and Glooms* (Schlitz, 2012).

Procedures

We sought to identify elements in the books that might challenge readers. For each book, we individually took detailed notes about elements that we believed contributed to the book's complexity. We came together to discuss and compare notes about the features that we noticed. Through these discussions, we realized that the best way to systematically compile our thinking was to create charts describing key literary elements

and devices. One chart focused on character and the other on narrative structure. In the character chart, we included for each main character key information, including character traits, relationships, changes, and conflicts. A second chart focused on narrative structure that identified major plot strands, the organization of plot strands (e.g., linear), and the inclusion of literary devices (e.g., symbols, elements of strangeness).

As we continued our discussions of the books, we realized that for *Moon Over Manifest*, a particular action sequence—trickery—appeared repeatedly in the book. This repeated action sequence formed a pattern contributing to the complexity of the structure. This led us to do a second reading to document the occurrences of this action sequence. Our discussions led us to wonder if the other books also contained this type of pattern. As a result, we conducted second readings of the other two books to identify possible occurrences of patterns. These multiple readings enabled us to describe the various facets of complexity for each book.

Findings

We present each book by initially providing an overview of the plot, followed by descriptions of particular elements that appear to create distinctive complexities for readers.

Analysis of *The Wednesday Wars*

At Holling Hoodhood's middle school, Catholic students are dismissed early on Wednesdays to attend Catechism and Jewish students are dismissed to attend Hebrew school. Holling—the only Presbyterian—stays at school with his seventh-grade English teacher, Mrs. Baker, who decides he will spend Wednesday afternoons studying Shakespearean plays. Holling is convinced that Mrs. Baker must hate him; why else would she make him read Shakespeare?

But it soon becomes evident that Mrs. Baker is not the problem. Readers discover the other issues Holling faces—dealing with eighth-grade bullies, living with a sister who says he has no guts, and having to wear yellow tights bedecked with feathers in a Shakespearean play. Yet, Holling's most significant problem is a dominating father who controls his son's life while simultaneously neglecting him. And all this unfolds in the midst of the Vietnam War.

Levels of Meaning

The CCSS identified "levels of meaning" as one measure of complexity. While authors can create depth of meaning using

different literary devices, for this book, we found that depth of meaning was conveyed through three patterns woven throughout the book.

Pattern of Bullying. The bullying pattern is introduced early on when readers gain insight into the relationship between Holling and his father, who is determined to have the perfect house, the perfect family, and the perfect architectural firm. As the book develops, readers learn that he also attempts to dictate the future of his children, expecting Holling to eventually take over his firm and Holling's sister, Heather, to become a secretary in the firm.

This pattern is amplified throughout the book. Holling is repeatedly bullied by eighth graders who post throughout the school photographs of Holling dressed as the fairy Ariel in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Other characters are also the victims of bullies. Holling's father attempts to destroy the architectural firm of a competitor. Mai Thi, a young Vietnamese refugee, is bullied by both eighth graders and Mrs. Bigio, the cafeteria lady, whose husband was killed in Vietnam. Even Mickey Mantle briefly appears as a bully. When Holling goes directly to Mantle's autograph session from his performance, still dressed as Ariel the fairy, Mantle refuses to autograph his baseball. These and other examples of bullying woven throughout the story underscore the structural complexity of the book.

Pattern of Alliance. In tandem with the episodes of bullying, a second pattern emerges, one in which characters step forward to support the bullied. This pattern is most evident in Holling's relationship with Mrs. Baker. Early on, Mrs. Baker resents having to devote Wednesday afternoons to one student. Yet, as she comes to know Holling, she becomes his ally and begins to use the plays to help Holling gain insight into his life, in particular the pressure placed upon him by his father. Mrs. Baker also steps forward to help Holling when his parents fail to provide support. For example, she attends his performance in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and even helps him train for an upcoming track meet, ultimately enabling him to beat his eighth-grade tormentors.

Similar to the bullying strand, the alliance strand is also amplified in repeated episodes throughout the book. It is not just Mrs. Baker who serves as an ally for Holling. His friends also step into this role. When Mickey Mantle refuses to autograph the baseball, Danny Hupfer gives his signed baseball back to Mickey Mantle, saying, "I guess I don't need this after all" (p. 92).

Other characters also need allies. For example, Danny becomes Mai Thi's ally when an eighth grader taunts her in the cafeteria. Even Mrs. Bigio, the cafeteria lady, who initially bullied Mai Thi, has a change of heart and invites Mai Thi to live with her. Of particular note is Holling's transformation from victim to ally. At the end of the story, he defies his father to support his sister, Heather, who ran away from home and now needs help coming back.

Pattern of Interactions Around Shakespearean Plays. *The Wednesday Wars* becomes even more complex through the repeated inclusion of a third pattern, conversations between Holling and Mrs. Baker about the different plays Holling reads each month. Given the intended audience, readers will have little familiarity with the plays of Shakespeare. The author includes minimal information about the plot of each play, nor is this information necessary. Rather, the author uses Holling's responses to the plays, as well as his conversations with Mrs. Baker, to provide insights into Holling's character growth. Such subtle clues demand thoughtful attention.

Initially, Holling is drawn to the language and action scenes in the plays. For example, he becomes enamored with Shakespearean insults and curses, such as "pied ninny" (p. 57) and "Toads, beetles, bats, light on you!" (p. 51). Yet, as the year moves on, readers see a gradual deepening of Holling's responses as he begins to use the plays as a window into the lives of the people around him. Then, gradually, Holling begins to apply the works of Shakespeare to think about issues he is facing in school. In reference to *Macbeth*, Mrs. Baker observes that "compared to love, malice is a small and petty thing" (p. 109). Thinking about the photos of him in the fairy costume that the eighth graders posted, Holling counters with, "Malice is not always small and petty. Have you seen what Doug Swietek's brother put up in the halls?" (p. 109). Only toward the second half of the school year does Holling begin to use Shakespeare to understand his own family dynamics. Initially, his readings of *The Merchant of Venice* and *Romeo and Juliet* give him insights that help him try to understand the person his father has become:

I suddenly wondered if my father was really like Shylock...I wondered if he had ever had a choice, or if he had ever felt trapped...I wondered if it was what he wanted—or if there was a time when he might have wanted something else. Or if I wanted something else. Or if we were both only Fortune's fools—like Romeo. (p. 154)

At the end of the school year, when reading *Hamlet*, Holling uses Shakespeare to understand the ways in which his father's expectations for his future would constrain his own life choices:

“But you want to decide for yourself,” said Mrs. Baker.

I nodded. I wanted to decide for myself.

“And you're afraid,” said Mrs. Baker, “that you won't get the chance.”

“That I won't get the chance to see what I can do with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” I said. (p. 220)

It is this insight that gives Holling the courage to defy his father and extend a helping hand to his sister who ran away from home.

Analysis of *Moon Over Manifest*

Moon Over Manifest has two interwoven strands, one set in 1936 and the other in 1918. The 1936 strand centers around Abilene, a young girl whose father, Gideon, has sent her to live in Manifest, the town of his youth, while he seeks work during the Depression. Abilene is perplexed: Why has her father sent her to Manifest? Why can she no longer travel with him? Why can she find no clues that he actually lived in Manifest?

The 1918 story strand unfolds through the stories told to Abilene by Miss Sadie, a strange “diviner” who lives in Manifest. The stories initially seem to center around Jinx, a young drifter and inveterate trickster, who has come to live in the town. Soon, though, Miss Sadie's stories expand to encompass the broader community of immigrant mine workers who are deliberately segregated in work shifts by the wealthy mine owner. By intentionally organizing shifts based upon nationality, the owner maintains control over the mine workers. Miss Sadie's stories also include the role that Jinx plays in addressing the inequities imposed on this immigrant community. Ultimately, Abilene, like the reader, weaves together the story of the town's history to discover that young Jinx is actually Gideon, her father.

In *Moon Over Manifest*, we found three facets of text complexity aligned with the features identified by the CCSS: the historical background demands, various elements of narrative structure, and the inclusion of patterns that deepen levels of meaning.

Background Demands on the Reader

As noted earlier, the book is set in two eras. To fully grasp Abilene's situation, readers need to understand that in 1936, many families lost their homes and were forced to travel across the country looking for work. Yet, the author provides no explanation of this broader context. Rather, the kind of information she offers about the Depression focuses only on details related to daily life.

The 1918 story strand requires even more background knowledge. Miss Sadie's stories are filled with characters whose lives are affected by broader societal issues, including the Ku Klux Klan, the orphan trains, and World War I. Central to her stories, though, is the exploitation faced by the immigrant population. Understanding this strand also requires historical background knowledge about racism existing in this era, prohibition regulations in Kansas, and the Spanish flu. The issues characters face are integrally related to this historical information. While these demands add to the complexity of the text, the author provides no background knowledge related to these facets of history.

Narrative Structure

The book's structure is complicated. The two story strands are woven together in such a way that readers are continuously moving back and forth across time periods. To further complicate the structure, the author uses three different formats: traditional chapters written in a straight narrative format, letters, and newspaper articles. A majority of the traditional chapters, set in 1936, are told from the first-person point of view of Abilene. However, the other chapters, set in 1918, relay Miss Sadie's stories about the past that are linked to letters found by Abilene. The letters were written in 1918 to Jinx by his friend Ned, who was fighting in World War I. The letters offer Abilene tantalizing clues about the past that is unfolding through Miss Sadie's stories. The newspaper articles, largely from 1918, offer further clues the reader must weave together. So, the complexity of the narrative structure emerges, in part, from the shifting between time periods, the changes in perspectives, and the use of different formats.

The author provides some support for dealing with these complexities. Chapter headings identify the time period in which events are occurring. In addition, the 1918 chapters are written in a different font. Further, the newspaper articles are presented in narrow columns, mirroring a newspaper format, while the letters are italicized. The author is intentional in the

use of these textual clues; however, readers must be attuned to them to benefit from these supports.

Number of Characters and Their Connections Across Eras

The sheer number of characters adds to the complexity, with some appearing in both time periods. At the beginning of the book, the author offers a character list based upon time period and countries of origin. Despite what first appears to be a lengthy list of characters, it is incomplete. There are still other characters who play important roles in the story who are not on the list. So, readers must hold on to a broad array of characters while moving across both time periods as they read the text.

Levels of Meaning

The book becomes even more complex with the addition of two major patterns—a pattern of trickery and a pattern of storytelling.

Pattern of Trickery. Trickery serves as an important link braiding together the plot strands and characters. We identified more than 20 tricks, most in the 1918 strand, with Jinx being the major trickster (though eventually others follow Jinx's lead in using trickery). Early on, Jinx's tricks are either for personal gain or for retribution. For example, when Jinx first comes to Manifest, hungry and on the lam, he tricks Ned out of the fish he has just caught. Soon, though, Jinx finds himself allied with Ned when Klansmen steal their clothes from the banks of the creek. To retaliate, Jinx steals two Klansmen's robes, and he and Ned infiltrate the Klan's rally, replacing newspapers in the outhouse with poison ivy leaves.

When the townspeople see an opportunity to free themselves from the mine owner's control, the nature of trickery takes a more serious turn. As the townspeople and the mine owner simultaneously learn that the property adjacent to the mine likely contains valuable coal, both are determined to purchase the land. So, Jinx devises a scheme to engage the mine workers in an effort to trick the mine owner into believing that the Spanish flu is running rampant in the town. Fearing the worst, the elite of Manifest leave town, freeing the townspeople to launch a successful bootlegging business to raise the money needed to purchase the land. Hence, trickery becomes a tool for uniting a disparate immigrant community against the injustices they are experiencing at the hands of the wealthy.

Pattern of Storytelling. The importance of the storytelling pattern is evident from the beginning of *Moon Over Manifest*. On Abilene's first day in Manifest, she is sent to school—even though it is the last day before summer vacation. The teacher, Sister Redempta, gives Abilene an assignment to complete over the summer: writing a story. Unbeknownst to Abilene, this is the beginning of her own story as she seeks to learn about her father and his place in Manifest—thus launching what can be described as a web of storytelling.

When Abilene accidentally breaks Miss Sadie's flowerpot, she is obligated to work off her debt. During her time with Miss Sadie, the diviner begins to tell stories of Manifest in 1918. Ultimately, it is through these stories that the power of storytelling is revealed: Storytelling unifies the disconnected miners of 1918 to fight injustice. Storytelling gives Abilene pieces of the puzzle she needs to understand the reasons her father sent her to live in Manifest. Storytelling also serves as a vehicle for healing Miss Sadie, who has suffered unfathomable losses of her own. And ultimately, the patterns of trickery and storytelling come together. Through the stories told by Miss Sadie, Abilene learns the craft of trickery that, in turn, she uses to devise her own trick to bring her father back home to Manifest.

Analysis of *Splendors and Glooms*

Set in Victorian England, *Splendors and Glooms* is the story of three children whose lives intersect with those of two dark-hearted magicians, Grisini and Cassandra, who share a disreputable past. Grisini, a cruel puppeteer, manipulates not only puppets but also two orphans, Lizzie Rose and Parsefall, who assist him with the puppet shows. Grisini and his orphans are invited to perform in the home of a wealthy London doctor. The daughter, Clara, welcomes them as a relief from the depressing, guilt-ridden life she leads. Grisini seizes this opportunity to increase his financial state by kidnapping Clara and then using his magic to turn her into a puppet.

To save Clara, Lizzie Rose and Parsefall find themselves tangled in a devious plan contrived by Grisini to gain possession of the phoenix-stone, a stone that gives Cassandra immense magical powers. Ironically, the stone is also slowly destroying Cassandra, yet her only release can come by someone *stealing* the stone. Seeking the power and wealth of the phoenix-stone, Grisini is determined to take possession of it. To do so, he and Cassandra conceive of a plan to involve the children in stealing the stone. Even while confronting the machinations of both

magicians, Lizzie Rose and Parsefall continue their pursuit to save Clara and free themselves from the clutches of Cassandra and Grisini.

We identified three factors that add to the complexity of *Splendors and Glooms*. The first is the structure. Elements of strangeness is the second factor, and the third is a pattern of puppetry.

Narrative Structure

While the plot is linear, with a few key flashbacks, this description is somewhat deceptive. The way in which the five major characters are introduced adds to the book's complexity. In the prologue, Cassandra figures prominently. She is introduced as a witch possessing the phoenix-stone. Through her dream, readers are also introduced to Grisini, described as Cassandra's fellow magician. The brief description of the dream also alludes to two or three shadowy figures that are perhaps children, but at this point, we learn nothing about these shadowy figures. So, the prologue introduces us to two major characters, hints of characters to come, and plants a seed by introducing the phoenix-stone, all of which leave readers wondering how this seed will develop.

Yet, there is no apparent connection between the prologue and the story that unfolds in Part 1—other than the appearance of Grisini. Five of the six chapters that follow have titles that each name a different character. Further, these chapters make no mention of Cassandra. This shifting from character to character in the initial chapters challenges readers in knowing which of the characters might be considered a main character, or if all should be.

As Part 1 develops, it soon becomes evident that much of this section does not center around Cassandra at all. Rather, the focus shifts to the experiences of these other characters, and the key plot strands associated with them begin to unfold. We find out how the lives of Grisini, Parsefall, Clara, and Lizzie Rose intersect. Yet, it is only well into Part 1 before the reader understands how Cassandra's story is connected to their lives. Through much of Part 1, readers must put together the pieces of this puzzle. It is not until approximately a third of the way through the book that readers begin to see how the lives of *all* the characters intertwine.

Elements of Strangeness

Another element adding to the book's complexity is the inclusion of elements of "strangeness" (Rainey, 2016). These ele-

ments are clues, yet the author drops them into the story seemingly out of nowhere, and hence they seem strange and out of place. The author repeatedly references objects that seemingly have no apparent connection to immediate events. For example, readers may be puzzled by repeated references to Grisini's automaton watch with a gold wolf stalking a silver swan that can never escape. Only as the story unfolds do readers come to realize the symbolic value of this object.

There are also examples of strangeness directly related to characters. For example, we learn early on that Parsefall has only nine fingers:

Parsefall didn't know what had become of it [his finger]. He was almost certain that he had once had ten fingers, and it tormented him that he couldn't remember what had become of the one he lost. (p. 26)

At this point in the story, there is no further mention of the missing finger until the end. Another example occurs when Lizzie Rose and Parsefall speculate about Grisini's possible involvement in past kidnappings. Then, in the final paragraph of this chapter, a disconnect with earlier chapter events abruptly occurs:

Clara slept. Never in her life had she known so dense a sleep: a sleep without dreaming, without the slightest twitch of finger or eyelid. She was as lifeless as a pressed flower. (p. 66)

This reference appears before readers learn that Clara has been transformed into a puppet. So, readers are left wondering why Clara is introduced here and why her sleep is so deep.

Levels of Meaning

For *Splendors and Glooms*, we again identified a pattern that added to the complexity of the book. This was the inclusion of a pattern of puppetry.

Pattern of Puppetry. Puppet shows appear early on when readers first meet Clara, who is excited about having a puppet performance at her birthday party. Soon, however, the concept of puppetry takes a dark turn. Just as puppets are controlled by puppeteers, readers begin to see that characters are being controlled by others. The use of puppetry then becomes a metaphor providing insights into character relationships. For example, Grisini uses his magic to turn Clara into an actual puppet. He also controls the lives of both Parsefall and Lizzie

Rose, who are totally dependent upon him for all their needs. Of particular note is the seemingly inexplicable control Grisini wields over Parsefall. Parsefall cowers in the presence of Grisini, he steals for Grisini, and he practices endless hours to live up to Grisini's expectations to be the best puppeteer.

Throughout the book, there are other puppet/puppeteer relationships. For example, Grisini is Cassandra's puppet. Even before Clara was transformed into an actual puppet, she was her mother's "puppet" in real life. Readers learn that all four of Clara's siblings had died of cholera. As a result, the only focus in her mother's life is the children who had passed away. In turn, she repeatedly forces Clara to participate in ritual-like remembrances of her siblings.

Only at the end of the story does puppetry become a force for good, when Clara is transformed back into a child and is in danger of drowning in an icy lake. At this point, Parsefall uses a rope to save her:

Clara lay flat. She felt the tension of the rope as she began to move, the ridges in the ice scraping her skin. She heard her skirt tear. She thought, *Parsefall is pulling my strings*, and in spite of the danger in the piercing cold, she laughed. (p. 330)

Discussion

We identified three of the CCSS qualitative factors contributing to the complexity of the books we analyzed: knowledge demands, structure, and levels of meaning and purpose. However, these features played out in nuanced and varied ways in each book.

Knowledge Demands

Each of the three books was a work of historical fiction, a genre in which knowledge demands are often great. Yet, these demands varied across the books. *Splendors and Glooms* was set in Victorian England, a time and place far removed from the experiences of today's readers. Yet, rather than impacting major story events, this setting came into play largely in the characters' everyday lives. By contrast, the historical setting of the Vietnam War in *The Wednesday Wars* played a far more significant role in the development of the story. The author provides support for readers by infusing the needed background information about the war through his inclusion of evening newscasts viewed by the characters.

Only in *Moon Over Manifest* did the background knowledge demands appear to impact text complexity in

a significant way. In this book, multiple historical issues impacted the lives of characters and shaped the narrative. In this book, the author appeared to assume that readers had this information, hence increasing the book's complexity. In effect, our analysis suggests the need for a thoughtful look at the ways in which an author supports readers by infusing background information into the narrative.

Narrative Structure

Discussions about structural demands typically highlight plot linearity or nonlinearity as a key element contributing to complexity. Further, a common assumption is that flashbacks, flash-forwards, and manipulations of time and sequence also increase complexity. In *The Wednesday Wars*, the structure was linear and did not contribute to its complexity. However, in the other books, structural elements did contribute to complexity. *Moon Over Manifest* repeatedly shifted between two time periods. The author also included various text formats, requiring readers to shift between formats. In *Splendors and Glooms*, complexity was created by introducing a different character in each of the first five chapters, making it difficult for the reader to determine the book's major character(s).

Levels of Meaning and Purpose

The CCSS recognizes the impact of task on text complexity, and we believe that the task of reading quality literature involves seeking deeper levels of meaning. However, the CCSS provides only minimal information about "levels of meaning" for literary texts:

Literary texts with a single level of meaning tend to be easier to read than literary texts with multiple levels of meaning (such as satires, in which the author's literal message is intentionally at odds with his or her underlying message). (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 5)

The CCSS lacks any further mention of other features that may lead readers to deeper, interpretive levels of meaning. Yet, as we read and reread these books, we identified in each book one or more patterns with the potential to lead readers toward deeper levels of meaning.

The patterns functioned differently in each book. In *Splendors and Glooms*, we identified a single pattern. While

actual puppets and puppet shows are important to the plot, the pattern of puppetry goes beyond this to also define character relationships. Repeatedly, different characters controlled others or were themselves controlled, revealing the destructive nature of this type of relationship. In *Moon Over Manifest*, the two patterns of trickery and storytelling were not interrelated but each took the reader to a deeper level of thematic insight.

By contrast, in *The Wednesday Wars* we identified a web of patterns that led to deeper insights. The bullying pattern appeared repeatedly, with different characters, young and old, being bullied. This pattern worked in tandem with the pattern of alliance in which one character stepped in to support the person being bullied. These two patterns were deepened even further through the inclusion of a third pattern—the protagonist’s reflections on the Shakespearean plays, which led to a consideration of whether bullies might themselves be the victims of bullying.

As we noted in the introduction, rereading texts can reveal both complexities and possibilities. The patterns we discovered seem to hold particularly important possibilities for taking readers to deeper meaning. Literary readers attend to patterns (Rainey, 2016). However, there is rarely time in school for students to reread a book. So, instead, teachers must seek out patterns through rereading and scaffold students’ experiences so they too explore the patterns.

While scaffolding can take many forms, one tool well suited for this purpose is the language chart. A language chart is a large wall matrix where students’ reflections about a book can be recorded following discussion (Roser et al., 1992). Guiding questions at the top of the chart can direct attention to a given pattern, and after the class (or small group) discusses each segment of text (or the text in its entirety), their responses to the questions are recorded on the chart. The ideas gathered offer students fodder for making

Table 1
LANGUAGE CHART DESIGNED TO EXPLORE BULLYING AND ALLIANCE IN *THE WEDNESDAY WARS*

WHO IS THE VICTIM OF BULLYING?	BY WHOM ARE THEY BULLIED?	WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE BULLYING?	WHO STEPS IN AS AN ALLY?
Holling	Father	Father dictates Holling’s future path.	Ms. Baker
Heather	Father	Father dictates Heather’s future path.	Holling
Holling	Eighth graders	They post throughout the school photos of Holling dressed for his role as a fairy in <i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i> .	Ms. Baker
Holling	Mickey Mantle	He refuses to autograph Holling’s baseball because he is dressed as a fairy.	Danny Hupfer
Mr. Kowalski	Father	Father attempts to destroy Mr. Kowalski’s architectural firm.	Ms. Baker
Mai Thi, a Vietnamese refugee in Holling’s class	Eighth graders	The eighth graders taunt Mai Thi in the cafeteria.	Danny Hupfer
Mai Thi, a Vietnamese refugee in Holling’s class	Ms. Bigio, the cafeteria lady whose husband was killed in Vietnam	Ms. Bigio refuses to give Mai Thi a treat.	Ms. Bigio

inferences related to the pattern (Wilburn et al., 2021). A sample chart for *The Wednesday Wars* appears in Table 1. This language chart is designed to explore the related patterns of bullying and alliance.

A Final Thought

We believe our work extends the contribution of the CCSS by identifying patterns as a particular feature that may lead readers to deeper levels of meaning. Yet, because students typically read books only once in the classroom, it may be unlikely that they would discover any embedded patterns. Therefore, teachers need to be prepared to step into the role of curator, helping students see a work of literature “in ways they may not have discovered if left on their own” (Eeds & Peterson, 1991, p. 118). It is with this kind of scaffolding that students may be more likely to follow patterns that can lead to deeper levels of meaning. •

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CHALLENGING SINGLE STORIES: Critical Engagements and Careful Considerations When Pairing Picturebooks About Immigration



Paul H. Ricks, Terrell A. Young, and Sara Koford

IN JULY 2009, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie gave a TED Talk entitled “The Danger of a Single Story” in which she described how exposure to and acceptance of single stories (i.e., narratives reductively representing a one-size-fits-all version of people and their experiences) can create damaging misunderstandings and prejudice. Many of these single stories result from tellers’ deficient knowledge, though some are promulgated with malicious intent.

Adichie (2009) recalled that at an early age she read only American and British books, and her tales as a young writer included blue-eyed boys and girls who ate apples, talked about the weather, and drank ginger beer. She had never been exposed to characters with “skin the color of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails” (2:26), so she accepted the single story that all books were about white children. She didn’t imagine that books could be about people who looked and lived like she did. However, she experienced “a mental shift” (2:20) in what stories could and should be like when she was finally introduced to books by African writers.

As an elementary teacher and two children’s literature professors, the authors of this article are interested in how the words and insights of Adichie (2009)

can guide educators as they prepare to engage young readers in critical conversations. More specifically, we wish to examine how pairing two texts can challenge stereotypes (Short, 2017) and help young readers to dismantle othering narratives about immigrants who come to the United States by way of the southern border. Adichie (2009) asserted that limitation to a single story “robs people of dignity” and “makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult” (13:57). A single story also “emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar” (14:04). In this article, we provide educators with a critical multicultural analysis of two paired picturebooks in an effort to demonstrate how said texts can both disrupt and—if we are not careful—re-create single stories that deserve to be interrogated.

We wish to examine how pairing two texts can challenge stereotypes and help young readers to dismantle othering narratives about immigrants who come to the United States by way of the southern border.

Review of Related Literature

As stated above, in this study we examine possible disruptions and reifications of stereotypes that can surface by pairing two illustrated texts for young readers. Such text pairings can offer “different perspectives on a topic” (Leland et al., 2013, p. 88) that in turn help students unpack the “variety of understandings and misunderstandings” (p. 84) they may have about the many worlds they inhabit. In the tradition of critical scholarship that focuses on the

ideological underpinnings and implications of children's texts (McCallum & Stephens, 2011) featuring characters often kept at the margins (e.g., immigrants who cross the U.S.–Mexico border), our analysis is guided by Adichie's (2009) words, which have found widespread influence across a variety of academic disciplines.

For instance, Makama et al. (2019) examined stereotypical single stories about African men and proposed “advancing a feminism that is committed to the promoting of positive masculinities rather than simply the surfacing of toxic masculinities” (p. 61). In an earlier study, Brooks (2018) analyzed and compared two novels by African authors that deconstructed a prevalent single story of poverty in African daily life. In a study that applied a single story that has gone beyond literature, A. Rosenblatt (2019) found that forensic scientists' response to violence—humanitarian forensic action—must be viewed more broadly through “divergent mandates, working methods, and definitions of humanitarianism” (p. 75) in response to mass violence in the world.

In other research, Linda Christensen (2012), director of the Oregon Writing Project, described an assignment in which she paired the essay “Just Walk On By: Black Men and Public Spaces” by Pulitzer Prize winner Brent Staples with Adichie's TED Talk. Christensen's aim was to get Black male high school students to write about and deconstruct the single stories told about them. Applying the single-story issue to teacher candidates, Roselle et al. (2013) designed a method to take these individuals beyond single stories by uncovering the cultural layers that define them. Additionally, Braunstein et al. (2020) developed an online discussion board for their preservice teachers of color in response to Adichie's TED Talk. They found three themes in the teacher candidates' responses—(a) resisting essentializing and racializing discourses, (b) recognizing hybrid identities, and (c) participating in solidarity and community building—that allowed them to make recommendations for creating more equitable teacher preparation programs.

Methods

In the following sections, we outline our methods of analysis for critically examining *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* (Tonatiuh, 2013) and *Two White Rabbits* (Buitrago, 2015). We first discuss our identities and positionalities, which undoubtedly influenced our readings of these two texts. We then briefly present our rationale in pairing these picture-

books. We conclude by describing the theoretical framework of our study and the ways it informed our analysis of these texts, which portray immigrants traveling across the U.S.–Mexico border.

Participants

The three of us chose to engage with *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* and *Two White Rabbits*, considering that our unique backgrounds, histories, and ways of seeing and being would likely affect how we examined the two picturebooks (Milner, 2007). As white, middle-class educators who live in the American West, we are cultural outsiders of immigration stories, particularly those stories that occur at the U.S.–Mexico border. Much of our understanding of these settings has been acquired secondhand rather than through lived experience, and we by no means consider ourselves authorities on this topic. Though we speak other languages (Portuguese, Korean, and Spanish) and have taught outside of the United States in non-English-speaking countries, English is our primary language and the language in which we read both texts.

We also understand that our respective teaching experiences affected our examinations of the two texts. At the time of this study, Sara had recently completed her university studies and was beginning her first year as an elementary school classroom teacher. Her students were a diverse group of young learners: Some were first- and second-generation immigrants from South and Central America as well as other regions of the world, and some had been born and raised in the United States in the majority culture.

Paul and Terrell had also taught in elementary schools serving diverse populations, though more recently they worked primarily with white, middle-class, female teacher candidates in university courses. Paul and Terrell noted that many of the teacher candidates they worked with expressed both a desire and a reticence to share texts in order to engage in critical conversations with young learners. The teacher candidates seemed to recognize the importance of using texts to engage in critical conversations, but at times they felt uncomfortable, overwhelmed, and anxious that they wouldn't be able to use texts “correctly” or with the sensitivity that such conversations deserve. The three of us admit to having had similar misgivings about our abilities to examine texts portraying immigrant stories, but our goal for this study was to contribute worthwhile insights to the field despite our limitations as researchers and critical readers.

Text Selection

We sought a text pair “with overtly political messages” about immigration that would potentially help “stimulate conversations with readers about their implications” (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. 266). Recalling former students’ responses to *Two White Rabbits* (Buitrago, 2015), we searched for another picturebook that would push young learners to engage with “the explicit exercise of coercive power” and would “invite critiquing of the microinteractions among characters, reconstructing them toward collaborative power” (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. 266). As Short (2016) affirmed, researchers often begin by “researching many different text possibilities before deciding on a specific text or set of texts for analysis” (p. 8). This was our procedure as we considered a number of texts with related topics and themes before ultimately deciding to use Duncan Tonatiuh’s (2013) *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote*.

We chose to pair *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* and *Two White Rabbits* for three main reasons. First, we noted that their various similarities— anthropomorphized animals (specifically rabbits and coyotes), ambiguous endings, written text with both Spanish and English words, and back matter with information providing readers with additional context—could enhance readers’ understanding of the topics and themes and thus open discussions about how these books complemented and supported each other. Second, these picturebooks have various differences, including genre, illustrative style, and narrator voice, and we felt that educators could guide discussions considering the unique affordances of the two texts. Finally, as both texts were created by Latinx authors and illustrators, we felt that these texts were more likely to present important insider perspectives (i.e., #OwnVoices) that have historically been pushed to the margins or silenced completely.

Analysis

We examined *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* and *Two White Rabbits* using the critical framework developed by Botelho and Rudman (2009), which they termed “critical multicultural analysis” (CMA). CMA is at once “a theoretical stance in literary study” and “a method of analysis that allows readers to engage deeply with a text by looking closely at language and at character relationships to power and each other” (Johnson & Gasiewicz, 2016, p. 41). Drawing from a wide range of theoretical lenses, CMA is at its core “an interruption of the status quo” (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. 3), as it encourages readers

to “read all texts critically” (p. 7) in order to bring about social action. By examining the interconnectedness of culture, ethnicity, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, CMA provides a lens through which readers can critique texts by asking questions such as “Who is represented, underrepresented, misrepresented, and/or invisible?” and “How is power exercised?” (p. xiv).

Although CMA requires that readers engage in a number of efferent readings (L. Rosenblatt, 1978) to interrogate representations of power in texts, we emphasized first reading through the picturebooks for aesthetic stances in order to emotionally connect with and make sense of their narratives. After these initial readings, undertaken individually, we reread the texts while considering the following research questions:

- Which single stories can potentially be dismantled or deconstructed by pairing *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* and *Two White Rabbits*?
- Which single stories can potentially be reified or reconstructed by pairing *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* and *Two White Rabbits*?

This reading also was independent, and we paused throughout to jot down preliminary notes about possible deconstructions and reconstructions.

After examining the texts individually, we met via video chat to discuss potential ways the texts might dismantle or reify certain single stories. We shared various deconstructions and reconstructions we had identified through our initial readings, and we created short lists with informal descriptions. We also shared specific textual (visual and print) examples of these deconstructions and reconstructions to enable us to list and think through our preliminary categories.

Next we revisited the texts independently to assess our disagreements and agreements about ways that the texts might dismantle or reify certain single stories. We also revisited the texts to identify additional dismantlings or reifications that we might have missed in our initial readings. As we engaged in subsequent close readings of the texts in this manner, we again made notes and looked for specific examples from the picturebooks that we planned to discuss during our video chats. We repeated this process and met weekly over the month.

We were eventually able to identify and agree upon three single stories that the texts could collectively deconstruct and three single stories that the texts could potentially reify. In the

following sections of our article, we present these dismantlings and reconstructions and discuss their implications for educators.

Findings

Deconstructing Single Stories

Our first research question asked which single stories could potentially be deconstructed by pairing *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* and *Two White Rabbits*. As noted previously, our readings of the two texts led us to deeply consider how they were graying certain binaries (e.g., good and bad, right and wrong) that are often used to divisively categorize and separate individuals' worlds. We highlight these important deconstructions of certain single stories in the sections that follow.

Picturebooks as Benign Stories for Young Readers

A prevalent single story that can be deconstructed by pairing *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* (Tonatiuh, 2013) and *Two White Rabbits* (Buitrago, 2015) is that children's books, especially picturebooks, should present an ideal world free of conflict, harshness, pain, and suffering. This idea of protecting young children from a world that is often dark and frightening can be particularly appealing for teachers and parents (Young et al., 2020). Thus, an abundance of cute, gentle, happy, safe, and even sentimental books are published each year.

However, other observers, including a number of prominent authors, question the notion that texts for young readers should avoid material that some might consider too harsh or frightening for children. Newbery-winning author Matt de la Peña (2018) has asked, "How honest should we be with our readers? Is the job of the writer for the very young to tell the truth or preserve innocence?" (para. 8). In response, de la Peña suggested that instead of hiding difficulty, pain, or loss, books should reveal their presence and provide children with support for encountering them. Kate DiCamillo (2018), another Newbery medalist, similarly asserted that authors need to "tell the truth and make that truth bearable" (para. 7). DiCamillo added that including a little sadness in stories can help children realize that they are not alone because of difficulties in their lives and that problems should not make them feel shame.

Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote and *Two White Rabbits* both responsibly portray the dangerous, harsh, and frightening realities involved in traveling north to enter the United States. In *Pancho Rabbit*, the author explicitly tells readers that Papá Rabbit and other animals left because of crop failure and to earn money to send home to their families. In *Two White Rab-*

bits, readers must speculate about the reasons the father and his young daughter leave the home they love and know to travel north, but potential reasons include crop failure as well as dangers associated with gangs and drug cartels.

The illustrations in both books portray the perils protagonists encounter, which include riding on top of fast-moving trains, walking through barren deserts, and crossing treacherous rivers. Also, the characters are portrayed entrusting their lives and safety to enigmatic coyotes who navigate the places and spaces controlled by armed militias. The dangers are accompanied by the sadness associated with leaving homes and loved ones behind. These harsh realities for immigrants who travel to the United States are not the stories commonly shared in children's books, but their treatments serve as necessary voices in contrast to the norms currently depicted in picturebooks.

Undocumented Immigrants as Violent Criminals

Another single story that can be dismantled by pairing *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* and *Two White Rabbits* is that those who cross the U.S.–Mexico border illegally are unquestionably "bad" people. Many Americans believe that entering the country without documentation justifies applying derogatory labels, and excessively emotional, factually deficient rallying cries voice and influence the opinions of the masses. When Donald J. Trump first ran for president of the United States, he asserted, "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best.... They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with [them]. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists" (Lee, 2015, para. 1). Despite studies showing that "undocumented immigrants commit violent crimes at lower rates than US citizens" (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, 2019, para. 4), this vitriolic rhetoric garnered sufficient support to elect Trump to public office. As such, on some levels, this highly questionable story was, and undoubtedly still is, accepted by many as "the only story" (Adichie, 2009, 13:23).

However, in *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* and *Two White Rabbits*, readers are given positive portrayals of those who migrate north, and these representations can lead readers to interrogate and reconsider the above insidious single story. Both texts depict characters with whom readers can empathize (e.g., parents who are concerned, children who long for stability); therefore together they serve as counternarratives to the "dangerous immigrant" stereotype. Potentially, both those who see their stories and those who see the stories of others in

these texts (Bishop, 1990) will be encouraged to question the notion that all undocumented immigrants are violent criminals to be feared.

For example, in one of the first spreads of *Two White Rabbits*, Rafael Yockteng's illustrations depict a young daughter perched on her father's shoulders. Both are looking lovingly into each other's eyes, and they playfully extend their arms as if pretending to fly while running down a sidewalk. In the next spread, the same father–daughter duo are kneeling next to a group of chickens. They are happily engaged in a counting game, and their facial expressions and affectionate physical proximity show that they present no danger to themselves or others. Similarly, the title page of *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* depicts a loving family seated together as the father reads a story aloud to them. The next spread depicts a heart-wrenching moment as the family waves goodbye to the father and his compatriots who “set out north to find work in the great carrot and lettuce fields” where they can “earn money for their families.” These and other, similar scenes show readers that a single story about immigrants being violent criminals badly misrepresents a much wider and more nuanced story that deserves to be considered. Additionally, as the two picturebooks focus on very young protagonists who innocently approach many difficult life circumstances, these protagonists hardly come across as the future hardened “drug lords” and “rapists” described elsewhere.

Ease of Crossing the U.S.–Mexico Border

The U.S.–Mexico border is 1,954 miles long, spanning from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean. The Rio Grande River accounts for 1,254 miles of the border, and in some places the river spans to 500 feet wide and 60 feet deep (Trumble et al., 2018). Many Americans believe crossing this southern border is easy—perhaps too easy, which is a narrative often promulgated by conservative politicians (Jenkins, 2015). In reality, many inherent natural dangers make this crossing perilous, including dangerous currents and alligators in the Rio Grande River (Kanno-Youngs, 2019), extreme temperatures (111 degrees in summer months), desert terrain (Jenkins, 2015), and even hurricane-driven giant rats and venomous snakes in tent encampments (Sanchez, 2020). Also, there are human hazards such as coyotes (paid to smuggle immigrants across the border) who might abuse or abandon their charges, as well as militias made up of “anti-immigration activists who see migrants as a threat to American society and regularly patrol the border looking to intercept crossers” (Jenkins, 2015, para. 21).

The United Nations reported 514 migrant deaths between January 1 and August 16, 2019 (Wright, 2019), a 33% increase from the deaths reported in 2018. Over half of these deaths were due to drownings in river crossings or shipwrecks in coastal areas. Other causes of death included highway and railroad accidents, dehydration and exposure, violence, sickness, and lack of medical care. Of note, the reported 514 migrant deaths did not include those who died in detention centers in the United States or Mexico or those who died after crossing into the United States.

Adding to the dangers of crossing the border, patrol personnel and technology were increased to prevent unauthorized immigrants from entering the United States during the Bush and Obama presidencies. This technology included towers fixed with cameras, radios, and microwave transmitters; Tethered Aerostat Radar Systems; and more than 12,000 motion sensors and remote video or mobile surveillance systems (Trumble et al., 2018). Such increases in technology and personnel undoubtedly decreased the “ease” and “safety” that might have once been associated with crossing the U.S.–Mexico border.

Both books we examined disrupt the single story of an easy border crossing by illustrating the many dangers and difficulties of attempting to reach the United States with the aid of a coyote. In *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote*, Pancho heads north to find his father. On his journey with a sneaky coyote, Pancho travels on top of trains, crosses both a river and a desert, and encounters rattlesnakes collecting tolls to enter a tunnel. The coyote tries to make Pancho Rabbit his meal when the young rabbit's food supply is depleted. Similarly, in *Two White Rabbits*, a father and daughter face a number of dangerous and otherwise difficult situations. They travel on top of a speeding train called “La Bestia” (The Beast) after camping near the railroad and interacting with people who place their heads on the tracks to determine when the train will arrive. Additionally, they hitchhike along improvised routes and outmaneuver armed officers who are shown taking others into custody.

In an article about the perils migrants face, Villegas (2014) noted that those who travel through Mexico on La Bestia are the poorest of the poor and risk many dangers, including “injury or death from unsafe travelling conditions, gang violence, sexual assault, extortion, kidnapping, and recruitment by organized crime” (para. 9). The Mexican government has attempted to prevent Central American migrants from traveling through Mexico on these trains by adding more border patrols

and road checkpoints and by increasing the trains' speed. Thus, the existing dangers, along with the increased personnel and technology, make crossing the border more difficult than ever before, and these two picturebooks depict this reality.

Reifying or Reconstructing Single-Story Concerns

With our second research question, we asked if there are single stories that can potentially be reified or reconstructed by pairing *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* and *Two White Rabbits*. After careful examination, we identified three single stories, which we discuss in the following sections.

All Immigrants as Undocumented and From Mexico

A single story that all immigrants who come to the United States are from Mexico and enter the country illegally can potentially be reified by pairing *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* and *Two White Rabbits*. Both books depict characters who “come to the United States looking for work and a better life for themselves and their families” (Tonatiuh, 2013), leaving “the world they know and love to go to a different country” (Aldana, as cited in Buitrago, 2015). Because the two books show characters without documentation crossing the U.S.–Mexico border and also provide statistics in the back matter attesting to the large number of immigrants who enter the United States through Mexico, some readers may interpret these texts to portray the “typical” immigrant experience.

The notion that all immigrants are from Mexico and that they all come to the United States illegally is one of various highly politicized stereotypes of our day. Adichie (2009) rightfully cautioned that “the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (13:14). It is not inaccurate to state that a great number of immigrants come to the United States through the U.S.–Mexico border illegally. But tens of thousands enter legally each year, and some have argued that “the vast majority of immigrants coming to the U.S.–Mexico border clearly want the opportunity to enter a legal process” and are “accessing the only legal process available to them: asylum” (Bier, 2019, p. 2). Furthermore, we must note that in the last decade, “India and China overtook Mexico as the top countries of origin for new arrivals, displacing its longstanding position” (Batalova et al., 2021, “Immigrants Now & Historically” section, para. 14). Thoughtful critical conversations would likely include this type of information in order to disrupt the single story of all immigrants as undocumented and from Mexico

that could potentially be reified if readers understood that the texts do not represent all immigrant and refugee stories.

Inhumanity of All “Coyotes”

Another single story that can potentially be reified is considering certain anthropomorphized characters as less than human because of the ways they are represented in the picturebooks. Both books feature coyote characters, which undoubtedly are meant to stand in for human “coyotes”: “slang for a person who smuggles people across the US–Mexico border” (Tonatiuh, 2013). Though the texts are by no means identical in their depictions of these characters, together they can create a particular message: that all smugglers are dangerous, evil, coldhearted beasts—a message that needs to be questioned.

For example, in Tonatiuh's fable, Señor Coyote is drawn in a way unlike the other characters in the story. He walks on all fours, though many “civilized” animal characters (e.g., rabbits, sheep, pigs) stand on two feet, and his only article of clothing is a handkerchief tied around his neck, although the other characters wear pants, shirts, skirts, hats, scarves, and so on. Additionally, his physical features (e.g., sharp fangs, jagged claws, and blood-red eyes) all lead readers to believe that he is a threat (Bang, 2016). Those who pair Tonatiuh's *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* with Buitrago's *Two White Rabbits* could frame Buitrago's coyote called “chucho” according to what they see in the other text. “Chucho” also arranges perilous passage across unnamed rivers, warily avoids law enforcement, and affords himself comforts he does not share with others. If readers identify the character in one story as the obvious bad guy, and if they notice that the coyotes in both stories seem have a lot in common, readers could assume that everyone who smuggles immigrants across the border is more feral than civilized, more creature than person.

Some have argued that “ubiquitous anthropomorphism in children's literature does have ethical consequences, and unfortunately they are rarely questioned” (Fraustino, 2014, p. 159). Thus, we maintain that well-meaning educators should be warned against unwittingly re-creating some single stories as they seek to dismantle others. We do not wish to imply that the creators of these two picturebooks have done anything wrong by portraying human characters as animals, since children's literature carries a long tradition of allowing animal stand-ins “when the story message is very powerful, personal, and painful” (Burke & Copenhaver, 2004, p. 213). Nor do we wish to deny the fact that abhorrent and monstrous acts have occurred

and continue to occur at the hands of smugglers. But we must also remember that the “coyotes” of the world—just like the immigrants portrayed in these stories—are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, and friends, some of whom undoubtedly deconstruct the predatory stereotype, and we do ourselves a major disservice if we allow texts to dissuade us from seeing the humanity that can at times be found in unlikely circumstances.

Cruelty of All Border Patrol Officers

A third single story to avoid reifying is that border patrol officers are, without exception, thoughtless bullies who inflict pain on defenseless immigrants. Though only included across one spread in *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* and two spreads in *Two White Rabbits*, these brief depictions can be interpreted as suggesting that all who are paid to enforce current laws and regulations are brutish as they carry out their jobs. We by no means wish to imply that this is either the correct or the intended message of these picturebooks; we simply explore it as a possibility to remind readers of the active stances (Botelho, 2015; Botelho & Rudman, 2009) they must maintain to avoid the re-creating of single stories, especially as they read texts specifically designed to dismantle those stories.

These two texts may re-create a particular story about border patrol officers because of the officers’ minor roles and brief presentations. They are inherently flat characters, “depicted as having one typical trait or none at all,” and can “be ascribed features such as ‘good’ or ‘evil’” (Nikolajeva, 2002, p. 129). It’s important to remember that just because “the author chooses to emphasize one single trait in the character does not mean that the character reflects a real person with only one trait, which by experience we know is impossible” (Nikolajeva, 2002, pp. 129–130). But as the officers are depicted as venomous rattlesnakes who accept bribes in *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* and as gun-toting simpletons who verbally and physically abuse those who seem helpless in *Two White Rabbits*, some readers may come away feeling a certain disdain for the officers of the border patrol.

Although these depictions may, if read in isolation, create a single story about border patrol officers, they can also help to dismantle a different single story some readers may have already accepted. On television programs such as the documentary series *Border Wars*, viewers have been repeatedly exposed to propagandistic portrayals of border patrol officers “as brave, patriotic, and compassionate individuals who simultaneously fight the war on drugs, battle with terrorism, and save lives

of immigrants stranded in the desert” (Jones, 2014, p. 186). Thus, depending on one’s positionality and familiarity with certain types of media, these two picturebooks may portray not so much a single story that negatively frames those who work at the U.S.–Mexico border but a counterstory that layers or questions the idealistic treatment of border patrol officers in other contexts.

Discussion and Conclusion

Because of our roles and positions as children’s literature scholars and critical pedagogists, we are constantly seeking opportunities to enhance the literary experiences of educators and their young students by encouraging them to take children’s literature seriously and to read for social change as well as pleasure (Yenika-Agbaw, 1997). Using Adichie’s (2009) ideas that engagement with different stories can enhance one’s understanding of the world and break down barriers of closed-mindedness that may result from lack of exposure and experience, we critically examined two picturebooks in order to think through how they might perpetuate or dismantle single stories that deserve to be interrogated. As shown in these examples, pairing texts with some like characteristics can potentially create spaces for critical conversations that generate extensive consideration, commitment, and care, particularly as our biases and limitations, along with those of others, are unveiled.

Following Botelho’s (2021) argument that paired readings “around a similar cultural theme can provide multiple perspectives and nuanced cultural portrayals,” particularly when they are examined “side by side” for their “intertextual ties, connections, disconnections, and questions” (p. 122), we attempted to unpack certain ways that children’s texts can both dismantle and perpetuate negative stereotypes. We examined critically paired picturebooks according to two research questions that we consider simple enough to apply to most texts teachers choose to share with young learners. However, engaging with these relatively simple prompts required significant effort, and we anticipate some educators may consider it a challenging process to analyze books in terms of dismantling or perpetuating stereotypes. Additionally, we imagine such engagements will likely yield more hard questions than easy answers. That said, analyzing books like we have explained will also likely yield opportunities for growth and compassion in which teachers and students can create spaces for the myriad stories that need to be told, celebrated, and examined.

As educators, we must do our best to ensure that our

engagements with texts actively dismantle closed-mindedness and harmful stereotypes. We can begin by considering the single stories (Adichie, 2009) that might be (un)told through the texts we share. This requires the willingness and capacity to discuss difficult topics and thoughtful preparation for and openness to the unexpected and unknown. We cannot assume “because a book is deemed multicultural” that “its words and images will resonate with readers, or that it is immune to stereotypes and dominant worldviews” (Botelho, 2021, p. 122). Moreover, we cannot assume our transactions (L. Rosenblatt, 1978) will be exactly like, or even remotely close to, those of others. However, we can take up the call to help students engage with the messier, multifaceted, politicized ideas of our day and co-create with them more equitable worlds in which expansive narratives that disrupt single stories are shared, valued, and understood. •

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NURTURING MEANINGFUL STUDENT AGENCY: A Kindergarten Teacher Supports Beginning Readers Using Wordless and Postmodern Picturebooks



Amanda Deliman and Janet Breitenstein

Ally, a student in the audience: “Hey, mouse!
Why are you running?”

Mrs. Brown, the classroom teacher: “Wow, that is
a very good question! Excellent job. You were really
helping Adam think like the character. What’s
your answer, Adam? Remember to answer like the
character.”

Adam, a student playing in role: “Because the owl
is trying to grab me.”

Mrs. Brown: “Who has another question?”

Melissa: “Hey, mouse! What’s that behind you?”

Mrs. Brown: “I like that question, Melissa.”

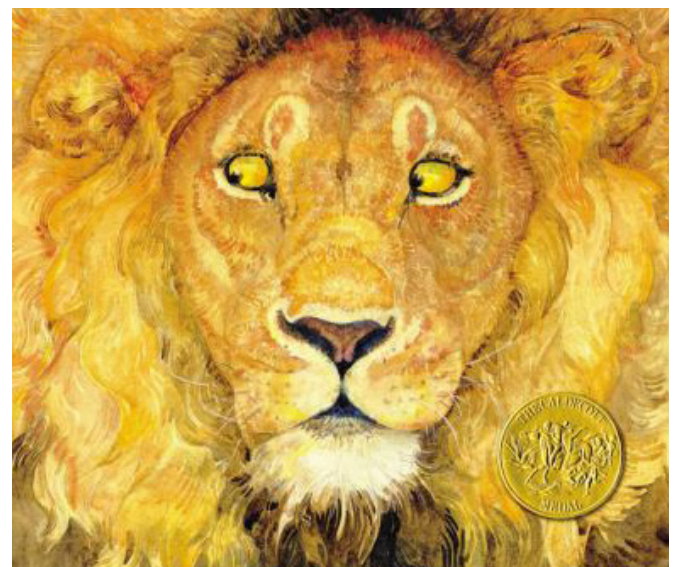
Adam¹: “I’m on top of the lion.”

*(laughter and “aw”s from the class of
kindergarten students)*

THIS EXCERPT WAS RECORDED in one kindergarten
classroom where the teacher was supporting beginning readers’
comprehension practices using dramatic inquiry while read-
ing a wordless picturebook, *The Lion and the Mouse* (Pinkney,
2009). Wordless picturebooks are defined as books with few

or no words. Postmodern picturebooks, another type of book
used in this study, are stories often told in nonlinear forms and
can have few words, which differs from a traditional picture-
book. By intentionally selecting these types of books for pic-
turebook read-alouds, there is a greater opening for students to
make sense of the story using their own thoughts and words.
When students are given spaces to show agency (Ellsworth,
1989), where they can be both producers and consumers of
knowledge, then it is also possible for motivation and inter-
est-driven learning to reach high levels.

Cover of *The Lion and the Mouse* (Pinkney, 2009)



¹ All names are pseudonyms.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how early elementary children created meaning together using wordless and postmodern picturebooks as read-alouds. One kindergarten teacher supported the beginning readers' emergent literacy practices while facilitating collaborative conversations about the picturebooks. Additionally, the students were introduced to drama-based strategies as a form of inquiry and were provided rich writing experiences to share their interpretations of the stories through pictures.

Beyond answering the research questions guiding this work, this study aimed to support and extend research that offers explanations for developmental learning through storying and picturebooks (Jalongo et al., 2002), explores how picturebooks can support English learners in their own analytical responses to and with the text (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015; Martinez-Roldan & Newcomer, 2011), and describes ways to provide openings for young readers to effectively use multiple semiotic resources to enhance meaning-making (Kachorsky et al., 2017). This investigation focuses on components of multimodality (Kress, 2010) and reader response, where readers fill in gaps to make meaning (Iser, 1978), and discusses implications regarding collective agency when transactions are forged between reader(s) and text (Rosenblatt, 1978). Studying classroom practices that shed light on nuanced understandings of how students personally make meaning and collectively expand the perspectives of one another can inform teacher-education programs and novice and veteran teachers alike. The next sections of this article define key theoretical underpinnings that help situate this work and are later connected to themes that emerged as a result of this investigation in one kindergarten classroom.

Agency in Young Children

"Agency" is a term used globally and abundantly across many disciplines. However, through research, it is evident that the definition is varied and can be contradictory in many fields (Ahearn, 2001; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). For this article, the definition provided by Ahearn (2001), "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (p. 112), best supports how beginning readers demonstrate collective and individual agency when interpreting picturebooks. Considering language as a social action and the co-construction of knowledge as a collaborative process, nurturing these acts can help support and foster increased agency among our youngest readers (Ahearn, 2001). Young readers recontextualize their "experiences and re-

lational histories" as they imagine the meaning of the story and comprehend; "they listen, respond, and participate in vicarious social worlds where they can feel joy, comfort, tension, or conflict" (Lysaker, 2019, p. 7). As educators supporting beginning readers, building from this sense-making is advantageous and fosters creative and collaborative decision-making.

Young children provide an excellent example of using agency in language and the use of social imagination (Lysaker, 2019). When children read picturebooks, more specifically wordless picturebooks, they use illustrations to comprehend and interpret the text. Wordless picturebooks invite social imagination to the forefront of the conversation when making meaning as a class community.

Literacy as Inquiry

When observing our youngest readers' meaning-making abilities, we often observe the use of images to make sense of the story or the use of words. Other times, emergent readers use a combination of text, images, and building background knowledge. Reading is "a constructive act done in conjunction with mediating texts and the cultural-historical context in which reading takes place" (Smagorinsky, 2001, p. 137). Inquiry supports this act of reading.

Inquiry-based learning focuses on students becoming researchers. Opportunities to investigate topics and issues stemming from their interests can lead to undetermined paths, expunging the concept that there is only one conclusion (Monson & Monson, 1994). As students use inquiry, they ask their questions, take ownership of their learning, and cultivate their understanding of topics (Chu & Chow, 2011). With these thoughts in mind, we need "to appreciate the kinds of relationships and experiences that students bring to their reading and the constructive ways in which their life narratives can help produce new texts in the transaction with literary texts" (Smagorinsky, 2001, p. 158).

A 2011 research study focused on primary students' literacy and technology skills development, using inquiry as the learning approach. The findings showed increased student outcomes in areas that promote deeper thinking, applying knowledge, and reasoning skills.

Inquiry learning supports students in taking charge of their learning, thus reinforcing the concept that "students are active constructors of knowledge" (Chu et al., 2011, p. 133).

Cleovoulou's (2018) study explored how combining critical literacy practices and inquiry-based pedagogies in the ele-

mentary classroom led to increased engagement and validation of ideas. Cleovoulou (2018) articulated, “The teacher’s role is to listen, question, affirm, and provide resources that offer more information so as to move [students] forward in their ideas and thinking” (p. 326). These acts nurture student agency and promote empowerment, strengthening the collective meaning-making across the learning environment.

Additional studies support inquiry as an essential component of student achievement (Abdi, 2014), advanced reasoning, deeper critical thinking, application of knowledge (Chu et al., 2011; Duran & Dökme, 2016; Wu & Hsieh, 2006), and creating an awareness of others (Cleovoulou, 2018). As encouraging as these studies are, however, a study on elementary teachers’ conceptions of inquiry teaching revealed that there are erroneous beliefs about the implementation of learning through inquiry (Ireland et al., 2012). In addition to the misconceptions, the practice of teaching by inquiry was underutilized. “Pedagogical practices that hope to achieve the greatest outcomes for students through inquiry teaching should look beyond motivating students through interesting experiences, and beyond challenging them with teacher-generated problems, to actually scaffolding students in the asking and answering their own questions” (Ireland et al., 2012, p. 175). Literacy as inquiry, developed through students’ curiosity while allowing them to ask and answer higher-level questions and challenge their understanding, is vital for students’ success.

Playing With Picturebooks

Literacy as inquiry and student agency help transport picturebooks into play within the classroom. Implementing picturebooks in the classroom allows students to gather new information from the text and combine it with existing information and playful pedagogies, affording more opportunities to expand their understanding (Serafini, 2011). “Wordless picturebooks may stimulate interest as well as conversation among readers,” providing “an invitation to explore and make sense of the world they inhabit” (Ciecierski et al., 2017, p. 126). “In successful reading, the reader also demonstrates the capacity to enter into the next world and to make sense of text through a personal, relational experience” (Rosenblatt, 1994, as cited in Lysaker, 2006, p. 34). In this exploration of playing with picturebooks, we examine how opportunities for students to play with the storytelling (Lysaker, 2006) using dramatic inquiry helps produce more opportunities for emergent literacy practices to advance for the readers. Smagorinsky (2001) suggested

that if “schools can provide more opportunities for imaginative responses to reading, [it could] enable the richest transactions possible for the broadest range of students” (p. 162).

Additional research studies, including several studies by Callow (2017, 2018), looked at the implementation and benefits of playing with picturebooks within the classroom. One study “examined how students interpreted image and text, with particular emphasis on how the visual resources were used in picturebooks” (Callow, 2017, p. 233). Data gathered through student interviews proved encouraging, and it was determined that the students used pictures and words to recognize the story’s messages and connected the images and text. In 2018, Callow continued this study, discussing strategies for assessing how students interpret a multimodal text, concluding that authentic literature should underpin every classroom. Students need to be involved with reflective discovery and thoughtful discussions to extrapolate the multiple meanings of picturebooks. Callow (2018) also suggested utilizing well-developed questions that allow students to interpret meanings through connecting words and images. Drawing pictures is a valuable assessment for younger students.

Pantaleo (2015), using Rosenblatt’s (1978) fundamental tenets of the transactional theory, studied “the dynamic and synergistic roles of the reader, the text, and the context” (p. 116). In addition, “in the research classrooms, the students were expected to approach the literature from an aesthetic stance (Rosenblatt, 1978) and to explore multiple interpretations of the texts” (Pantaleo, 2015, p. 116). Numerous opportunities were provided for students to share their interpretations and gain insight from their peers, understanding that constructing meaning takes place while collaborating with others.

Conclusions from multiple research studies indicate that “it is fundamental to develop students’ visual literacy competencies, [and] learning about the architecture of a diverse array of texts will develop students’ appreciation of a designer’s use of semiotic resources and agency in the meaning-making process” (Pantaleo, 2015, p. 126). Building on these theoretical underpinnings, this study examines how wordless and postmodern picturebooks aid in sense-making, boost agency, and enhance inquiry experiences for beginning readers.

Context and Study Design

The investigation was conducted in one kindergarten classroom in a K–6 school located in a small Midwestern town. This study specifically focuses on the teacher’s perspective of

the students' comprehension and meaning-making practices using children's picturebook read-alouds as the stepping stone for nurturing agency and building meaning-making through collaborative engagement. This exploration took place over the course of six months during the global pandemic, which impacted student attendance in person and online, with some absences due to quarantine. Therefore, the research process became highly reflective by nature and the needs of the teacher and students were made a top priority. One principal investigator and classroom teacher worked collaboratively to answer the questions guiding the study. A graduate research assistant supported the creative endeavor by reviewing and synthesizing relevant studies pertinent to the work.

As the principal investigator, I started with a suggested list of books to use for the study, and the classroom teacher, Mrs. Brown, added titles that she regularly used in her class. Several selected titles for this study are listed in Table 1. Additionally, I suggested strategies for dramatic inquiry and worked with Mrs. Brown to determine which writing practices were already being used and would be most meaningful and appropriate for the beginning readers participating in this study. Mrs. Brown selected appropriate times to conduct the read-alouds with her students and chose a title from the list to review before facilitating discussions with the students before, during, and after each read-aloud. Subsequent drama and writing activities were included after conducting some of the picturebook read-alouds.

Qualitative inquiry requires the researcher to make decisions about large amounts of raw data, to reduce data into manageable and useable parts, and to pull apart significant findings to deconstruct and report on the findings using a particular conceptual framework. Throughout this study, multiple forms of qualitative data were collected, including Mrs. Brown's descriptions and interpretations of the observations and audiovisual recordings of students' participation in the discussions, dramatic engagements, and subsequent writing activities. The read-alouds and discussions were also audio recorded and transcribed. The interviews between the principal investigator and the classroom teacher were conducted via email, through phone calls, and on Zoom. During these member check-in conversations, children's interpretations of books were discussed, as well as strategies for incorporating writing and drama activities. These conversations were recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

Two questions guided the study:

1. What strategic openings support comprehension and meaning-making when using wordless and postmodern picturebooks?
2. How do children specifically respond to wordless and postmodern picturebooks through read-alouds, discussions, writing, and drama?

The descriptive and exploratory nature of this work provided insights into how children responded to wordless and postmodern picturebooks through these various forms of collected data.

Table 1

CHILDREN'S WORDLESS AND POSTMODERN PICTUREBOOKS

Briggs, R. (1978). <i>The Snowman</i> . Random House.	A wordless book that shares the adventure of a little boy and a snowman
Pinkney, J. (2009). <i>The Lion and the Mouse</i> . Little Brown Company.	A wordless adaptation of one of Aesop's fables
Thompson, B. (2010). <i>Chalk</i> . Two Lions Publishing.	A wordless book about the power of imagination as a group of young children have adventures with magic chalk
Whamond, D. (2018). <i>Rosie's Glasses</i> . Kids Can Press.	A wordless book about a girl who appears to be living in a monochrome world until she finds magic glasses
Wiesner, D. (2011). <i>Tuesday</i> . Clarion Books.	A near-wordless postmodern book about frogs who suddenly start to float

Thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) was used for interpreting and analyzing the data. Analysis of the data was ongoing and iterative as the findings were analyzed within and across the data sets and again in comparison to other studies. Interpreting the findings became a recursive practice of continuous reflection as data were synthesized, deconstructed, and then reconstructed again (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Yin, 2009). In the next sections, we will discuss the findings in terms of several of the themes that emerged after careful analysis of the collected data.

Individual and Collective Agency Revealed

The first major theme that emerged from analysis of the large data pool involved the agency revealed by the students, both as individuals and as a collective group. Here, we will provide some examples that show how the students' collective agency became one driving force for meaning-making as they worked collaboratively in sharing interpretations of the wordless and postmodern picturebooks. Additionally, we will share some student artifacts to further explain how the meaningful writing practices nurtured agency as the readers made meaning of a selected text.

Challenges associated with teaching comprehension to beginning readers can include getting the students interested in books, teaching them how to self-monitor their own learning, and helping them learn to be comfortable with making mistakes. In accordance with these challenges, Mrs. Brown carefully adjusted her questioning techniques to meet the unique needs of the students during each picturebook read-aloud. Additionally, Mrs. Brown created a safe space for the students to respond in ways that were personally meaningful, without bringing attention to "right" or "wrong" answers. During one of our interviews together, Mrs. Brown described how it was necessary for her to initiate some prompting questions to get the conversation going. All ideas were valued and welcomed in the learning space.

Mrs. Brown shared that the postmodern books were slightly more challenging to have conversations about due to some of the fantastical elements. However, she noted that having conversations about the books helped the students expand their comprehension and meaning-making abilities. Her prompting aided in these processes. Mrs. Brown also mentioned that references to familiar topics or ideas, where the students had more background knowledge, also provoked more dialogue between the students. For this reason, Mrs. Brown intentionally point-

ed things out that were unfamiliar to the students in order to initiate further discussion. This strategy can be used to support self-resilience and self-monitoring in beginning readers. For example, in the wordless book *The Snowman* (Briggs, 1978), there is a scene where a punching bag comes back and hits the snowman after the snowman punches it. The students were not familiar with what a punching bag is or its movement after being punched. Mrs. Brown noticed in these moments of exploring unfamiliar topics that collective agency and collaborative meaning-making helped the students make sense of what was being shared in the sequenced images, especially when the content was unfamiliar. The students were using background knowledge, attending to visual elements, and listening to their peers' observations. These types of deeper conversations do not always happen in traditional read-alouds where the words help tell part of the story. Supporting visual literacy skills is another key literacy practice that was reinforced when reading aloud this picturebook since there are multiple frames and images on each individual page. Readers assign meaning to images based

Cover of *The Snowman* (Briggs, 1978)

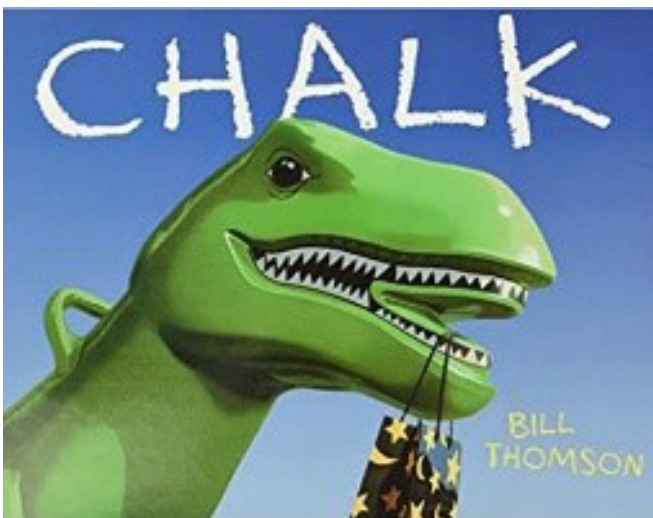


on background knowledge and intertextual cues. Collaborative conversations further enhance meaning for the emergent readers as they process the dialogic interactions along with messages shared in the text.

When reading *Chalk* (Thompson, 2010), the students displayed more collective agency when interpreting the text together. This story is about the main characters' playful imaginations, which in turn inspires young readers to use their own imaginations while reading and interpreting the story. As the class was reading and discussing the text, Mrs. Brown noticed that the students were connecting to some of the emotional life skills lessons that they had had in previous class sessions. Various facial expressions of the characters throughout the story prompted the children to think about and identify emotions and how those impacted the story line. Mrs. Brown observed that the collective conversation promoted more dialogue about what was happening in the story. The familiar (social-emotional learning and life skills) and the unfamiliar (the plot of this never-heard story) became entangled as the students worked together to make sense of what was happening in the story.

While building upon and nurturing the collective agency, it was also evident that individual students were displaying their own agency through freedom of expression and knowledge-sharing as they made sense of the images with their peers. Mrs. Brown's practices of honoring diverse voices and unique interpretations helped create a welcoming and safe space where the children felt validated for sharing their ideas. These practices were continuously nurtured with frequent read-aloud experiences that promoted dialogic engagement, idea sharing,

Cover of *Chalk* (Thompson, 2010)



and opportunities for the students to question the messages imparted in the texts.

Next, we will show more data that represent individual contributions where agency was further cultivated. In order for the students to add to the conversations, they first had to make sense of the text on their own. Mrs. Brown encouraged everyone to share their ideas and called on different students often to give everyone a chance to share their thinking. Another way to capture individual meaning-making came in the form of writing engagements. After reading *The Snowman* (Briggs, 1978) together, Mrs. Brown asked the students to respond to this prompt: "What would you show the snowman and why?" The writing samples demonstrate how the children were creatively interpreting the text through writing. These data indicated that the students utilized emergent literacy practices of strong readers and writers. After the students responded to the prompts, Mrs. Brown asked the students to describe their writing and recorded each transcription. The description for each writing sample, as narrated by the children, is portrayed in each figure title. In Figure 1, the emergent writer drew on background knowledge about her understanding of seasons.

In a second example, shown in Figure 2, the writer infused meaning about understanding how the snowman may have felt in the story and what might help the snowman feel better. When students are provided opportunities to visualize, make predictions, and make inferences about a text, it strengthens their awareness about how to use these strategies in future reading encounters.

Figure 1

I would show the snowman flowers with bees because they are pretty and he doesn't see them in the winter.

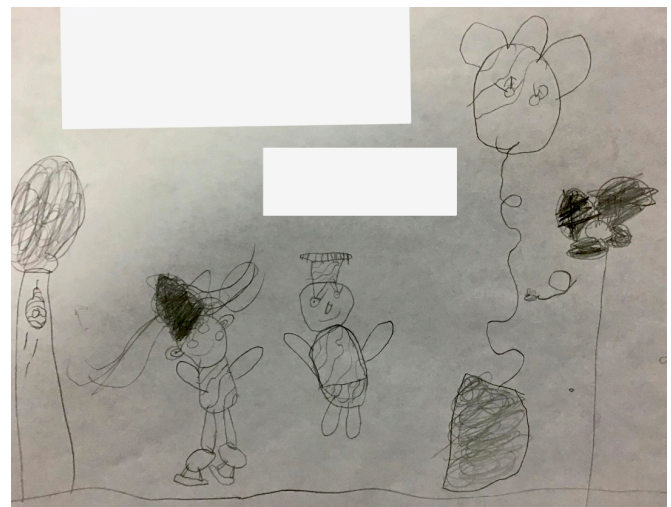


Figure 2

Take the snowman to the store to teach him how to buy something. He will buy a stuffed animal to cuddle with so he won't be lonely.

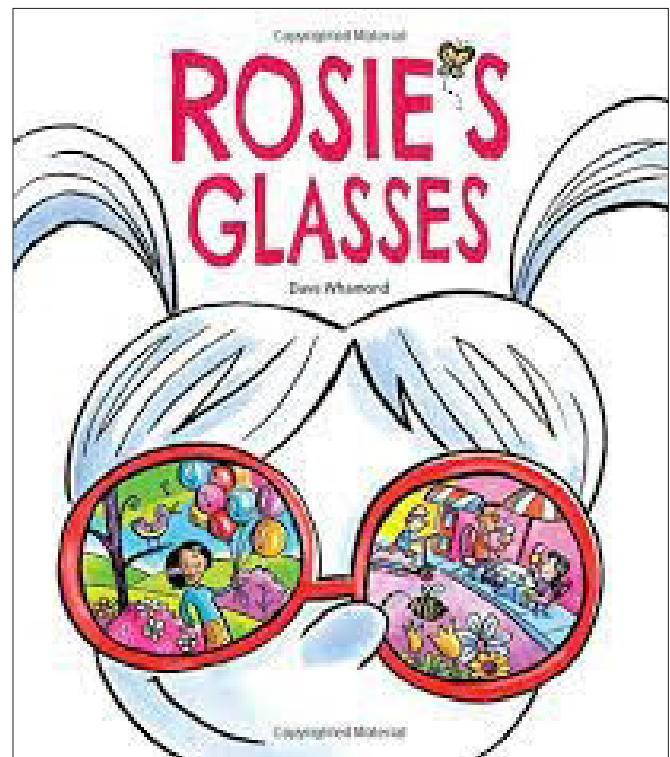


Across multiple read-alouds throughout the study, collective agency was revealed as the children acknowledged one another's ideas, which in turn helped empower their own perceptions (Mathis, 2016) about the messages shared in the text. Additionally, Mrs. Brown was able to differentiate questioning and provide openings for the children to demonstrate understanding through discussions, drama, and writing engagements, further revealing meaningful student agency.

Playing With Meaning

A second major theme that emerged repeatedly was how the students were playing with meaning using background knowledge and collaborative decision-making. *Rosie's Glasses* (Whamond, 2018) is a wordless picturebook about a girl named Rosie who wakes up in a monochrome world that seems to impact her mood and experiences until she finds glasses that transform her world and bring everything into color. The second theme, playing with meaning, emerged most significantly when the students began to pay more careful attention to the images. Mrs. Brown prompted the students to ask and answer questions about why things were happening the way they were for Rosie. Now that the students had had more exposure to reading wordless books together, Mrs. Brown said she noticed the children were really getting involved in making sense of the

Cover of *Rosie's Glasses* (Whamond, 2018)



story while bouncing ideas off of one another. It's interesting to note that a good part of the story is written without color and that the pictures with color in this story prompted more discussion with the students. The students also paid particular attention to motion lines and color schemes while making sense of this story. As they played with meaning during the telling and collective retelling of the story, the students first made sense of what was happening on their own, and then they would work together to collectively expand the perspectives of one another.

The subsequent writing activity prompted more rich interpretations. At the end of this story, Rosie loses the glasses and the scene ends with a boy looking at the glasses. In the image, the only thing that appears in color are the glasses. Mrs. Brown gave the students a writing prompt and asked them to write about what they think might happen next. She did not guide them. Instead, they were able to represent their own unique interpretations through drawing.

In the writing sample shown in Figure 3, the student drew a sequenced image, which can be noted by the intentional changing color schemes. Mrs. Brown was encouraged by this representation because earlier in the day, this particular student was not able to complete a sequencing activity of a fairy tale. One can infer that the collective agency and opportunities to

play with meaning influenced this student's ability to make a reasonable prediction using the skills he practiced during the read-aloud and discussions.

In a second example, shown in Figure 4, the student wrote about the rain cloud that followed Rosie and suggested in his prediction that the cloud would follow someone else.

Figure 3

The boy will put on the glasses and everything will be colorful again.

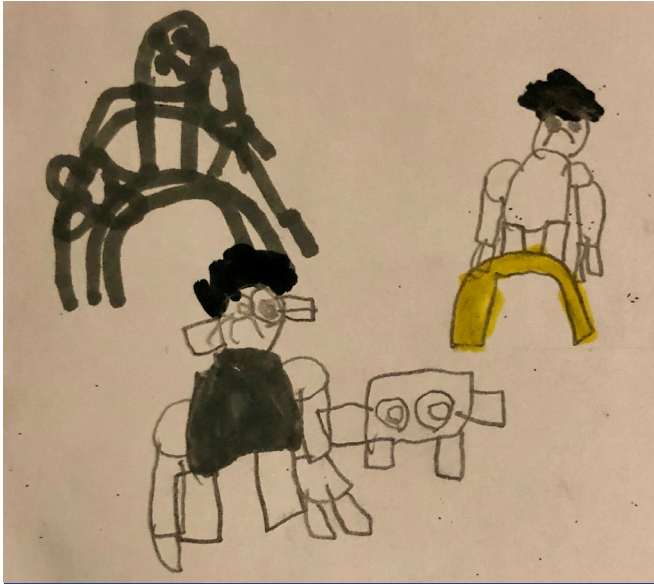


Figure 4

I think the rain cloud will go to someone else.



This interpretation exhibits recall of major events in the story and shows how the student played with meaning in a way that was personally meaningful. Throughout this read-aloud and subsequent writing engagement, Mrs. Brown fostered agency and meaning-making among the students. This is an integral component to nurturing children's emergent literacy development. In these instances, writing also became a means for the children to personally express their ideas and to communicate meaning and their own interpretations of the text. Providing openings for children to emphasize expression through writing, while linking it back to picturebook read-alouds, can build a vital bridge toward strengthening emergent literacy practices.

Constructing, Deconstructing, and Reconstructing Oral Language

The third theme we will discuss demonstrates how oral language skills were developed while reading and interpreting the postmodern and wordless picturebooks through discussions and dramatic inquiry. During one session of the study, Mrs. Brown read the award-winning picturebook *The Lion and the Mouse* (Pinkney, 2009) to the students. This artfully illustrated picturebook is a wordless adapted version of one of Aesop's fables. As depicted in the anecdote opening this article, Mrs. Brown facilitated an engaging discussion about the picturebook using the drama strategy called hotseating. Hotseating is a drama activity where a person, playing in role, sits in the "hotseat," which is some type of seat or designated space that can be placed in front of the class. Then, others in the audience ask questions of the character in the hotseat. In this scenario, the student in the hotseat was playing in role as the mouse. This was the first time Mrs. Brown used this strategy with the students.

The drama engagements not only strengthened the oral language development of the students as individuals but also influenced meaning-making and the students' uses of various comprehension strategies as they worked together to understand the story. They collaboratively constructed and deconstructed meaning and learned how to ask insightful questions. This also served as a formative assessment for Mrs. Brown since she could assess the students by the types of questions they were asking, while determining who was showing evidence of understanding the story. In the next data excerpt, we will share the exchange that happened when the students first used the new drama strategy.

Mrs. Brown explained the hotseating to the students by saying their job was “to jump into the story and figure out what is happening in the story.” Beginning by showing the students page 1, Mrs. Brown asked Adam, who was sitting in the hotseat, a question so the students could understand the drama strategy.

Mrs. Brown: “Okay, I’ll ask the first question. Adam, what are you thinking?”

Adam: “I’m thinking of what I should do.”

Mrs. Brown: “Okay, great! Now will someone ask our main character another question?”

A student was called on and made a statement.

Mollie: “The little thing right there.”

Mrs. Brown prompted the student by asking some questions directed toward using this particular drama strategy.

Mrs. Brown: “How can you ask a question to the main character about that? What would you say?”

Mrs. Brown offered to ask another question as the students learned how to use the hotseating strategy.

Mrs. Brown: “Hey, mouse! Where are you?”

Adam: “I’m outside on rocks looking at something.”

Before turning the page, Mrs. Brown read the words on the page.

Mrs. Brown: “Woo, woo, woo!”

A student’s hand shot up to ask a question.

Mary: “Hey, mouse! What are you doing?”

Adam: “I’m hiding because it’s scary.”

Kaitlyn: “Is a bird trying to get you?”

This short transcript demonstrates how the drama technique hotseating served as a strategic opening to support comprehension and meaning-making when using wordless picturebooks. Mrs. Brown carefully crafted prompts, supported engagement, and met the learners at their individual levels of understanding. Using this type of drama technique caters to the abilities of all

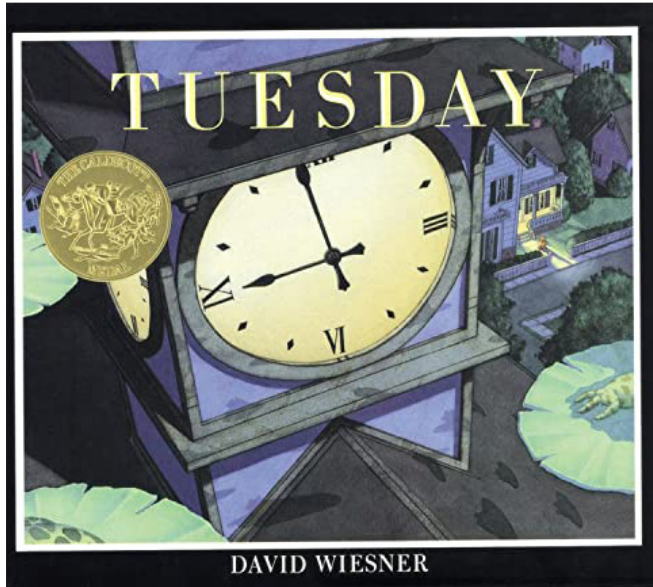
the learners since the teacher, as facilitator, can give guidance when needed. Individual contributions of oral language lead to the enhancement of meaning-making among emerging readers. The students worked together to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct the meaning of the story through oral language and visual literacy.

Through careful analysis of the data, including reflection on Mrs. Brown’s interview responses, it is evident that hotseating encouraged the students to consider more complex questions as the reading of the story continued. In this instance, the student who sat in the hotseat was able to take on the persona of the mouse as his peers began to ask him more questions. Mrs. Brown also asked a second person to safely socially distance and sit in a second hotseat to take on the persona of the lion in the story. Mrs. Brown described how the conversations about the stories helped nurture meaningful student agency and the drama “leveled everything up.” It is important to note that hotseating also supported equitable sharing time for the students. Mrs. Brown specifically chose the more vocal students to sit in the hotseat. The role-playing and individualized prompts provided an opportunity for more equity in the sharing of ideas. This served as an effective assessment strategy for Mrs. Brown to determine who was understanding the story using effective questioning during the hotseating engagement.

During another picturebook read-aloud, Mrs. Brown noted that there was a mix of balancing background knowledge and introducing new knowledge, which helped the students think more deeply about what they were reading. *Tuesday* (Wiesner, 2011) is a postmodern picturebook that is not entirely wordless. When introducing this book, Mrs. Brown told the students that on certain pages they would be learning information using words, while on most of the other pages, they would make sense of the images together, just as they had been doing when reading some of the other wordless picturebooks. Since this postmodern picturebook takes on more fantastical and nonlinear elements, there were more prompts for discussion. As a result, the need for students to construct and deconstruct meaning using oral language added a layer of engagement and purpose to the emergent readers’ literacy practices. The vivid imagery and elaborate explanations shared by the students prompted more agency and provided openings for the students to take apart the story and reconstruct its meaning as a collective group. In these instances, the postmodern picturebook helped encour-

age freedom of expression and openings to build meaning together. Both wordless and postmodern picturebooks improve oral language development, increase vocabulary usage, and expand comprehension as the readers tell the story in their own words.

Cover of *Tuesday* (Wiesner, 2011)



Implications

The findings suggest that strategic openings, coupled with the wordless and postmodern picturebooks, helped the young children comprehend complex ideas while grappling with their own perceptions of the meaning conveyed in the text. Furthermore, the students were able to show collective agency as they interrogated multiple viewpoints while drawing on their own personal and cultural resources (Leland et al., 2013). This research illustrates a range of ways that young people can engage with literacy using picturebooks in the early childhood setting.

An implication for practitioners interested in fostering agency, developing oral language experiences, and providing rich openings for young readers to play with meaning includes knowing how to share wordless and postmodern picturebooks in the form of a read-aloud. Interpretations of these types of picturebooks require the reader to put the story into their own words. The organic conversations that unfold infuse background knowledge and new knowledge together as the readers make sense of the messages shared in the text. Allowing proper time to read the story in its entirety, encouraging multiple readers to share ideas, and enlisting enough wait time for students

to process the information so that they can contribute to the conversation are key factors when reading wordless books to emergent readers. Considerations for teachers using these strategies should include various depth-of-knowledge questions to promote higher-level thinking and scaffolding instruction. The prompts and guidance can be differentiated to meet individual student needs while encouraging creative thinking and openings for students to formulate their own effective questions. A second implication is to consider how the use of drama techniques helps to foster meaningful and engaging collaborative conversations with readers. When using a wordless or postmodern picturebook for interactive read-alouds, the teacher facilitates conversations while the readers listen and convey understanding in ways that are personally meaningful. It is essential for all students to be able to see the images in the text. It can be particularly helpful to read the story through at least once before attempting to enhance meaning-making using a drama technique such as hotseating.

Additional benefits for using wordless and postmodern picturebooks as read-alouds include the importance of strengthening key literacy skills to help readers understand elements of a story. Deepening inferencing skills, further developing visual literacy skills, and learning how to self-monitor during reading are key comprehension strategies used by highly effective readers. Implementing the strategies outlined in this article will positively influence literacy development in young readers while also helping them to better understand how background knowledge supports understanding and how illustrations carry meaning.

Nurturing Meaning-Making and Agency

Reading as a relational experience (Lysaker, 2006) and student empowerment are crucially interdependent components of learning that can motivate children to share ideas while simultaneously helping them feel validated for their efforts. These semiotic practices can serve as openings for young readers to boost comprehension and develop meaning-making abilities through collaboration and collective agency. Acknowledging the positive impact that wordless books can have on emergent literacy practices could benefit those in teacher education programs and novice and veteran teachers who are looking for ways to expand comprehension abilities in young learners with diverse learning needs.

Furthermore, when considering the comparison of wordless picturebooks and traditional read-alouds, Mrs. Brown not-

ed that it was helpful to have the added dramatic engagement to increase comprehension and meaning-making practices for the students. Building on these inquiry-based and artful pedagogical practices helped provide the readers the support they needed to make sense of the story.

Linked to Kress's (2010) work on multimodality, the read-alouds, collective discussions, and dramatic engagements added complexity to overall understanding and helped reinforce the importance of using multiple modes of expression, such as language and gesture, while making sense of the text. Another focal point, using multimodality in this investigation, describes how the images and texts played off one another while simultaneously working alone to convey meaning (Serafini, 2014).

This investigation demonstrates how the readers developed their capacities to self-monitor and question messages shared in the texts, which extends research that offers explanations for supporting developmental learning through storying. For students who may be demonstrating emergent oral language abilities, the strategies suggested in this study can help initiate more opportunities to play with language and sense-making.

The intentional selection of wordless and postmodern picturebooks proved to be the opening needed to nurture meaningful student agency. Supporting readers to become resilient and inquisitive should be a top priority, specifically with our beginning readers. Integrating high-quality children's literature into early literacy classrooms, while providing openings for children to engage in deeper meaning-making through shared dialogue, can enhance the reading engagement and experiences of young children (Serafini & Tompkins, 2015). Moreover, engaging children using these narrative genres of books can help foster a sense of curiosity while building key literacy skills that can help create a thriving and compassionate learning community. •

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PLANNING, CO-CONSTRUCTION, ACTION: A Framework for Critical Literacy Instruction



Katie Schrodtt, Michelle Medlin Hasty, and Ally Hauptman

“WE CHOOSE TO go to the moon!” Almost 60 years have passed since John F. Kennedy’s 1962 Moon Speech, and it is difficult, even today, not to cheer upon hearing this emphatic line. The Space Race: an American story passed down for generations. The moon landing had always seemed like an event easily agreed upon as positive and hopeful—certainly worthy of celebration. In my (first author) household, we love space. My son’s middle name is even Apollo! Then one day, while watching the movie *Hidden Figures*, I heard a song that offered a new perspective of the Space Race, and I realized that I was experiencing the very thing I wanted my students to learn—a critical stance. The words “The man jus’ upped my rent las’ night, (’cause Whitey’s on the moon) No hot water, no toilets, no lights. (but Whitey’s on the moon) I wonder why he’s uppi’ me? (’cause Whitey’s on the moon?) I was already payin’ ’im fifty a week. (with Whitey on the moon)” rang through my head. Quite suddenly, I realized not everyone wanted to spend upwards of 28 million dollars to go to the moon.

The song “Whitey on the Moon” by Gil Scott-Heron was the first time I heard a different view of the Space Race. It was the first time I began to think critically, asking myself, “Whose story is missing here?” (the Space Race opposition), and my questions emerged from the juxtaposition of these two different perspectives on America’s role in the Space Race. Experiences such as these are a continual catalyst for us as literacy educators to answer the questions, How can we teach students to critically analyze texts for issues of equity, power, and social

justice? and What texts are most useful for teaching students to read from a critical stance?

Rooted in sociocultural perspectives of literacy, critical literacy is an instructional approach for examining the relationships of language and power in texts. As Vasquez et al. (2019) claimed, “critical literacy is not a singular concept to be studied over a period of time and then mastered,” but rather is a way of teaching students to “view the world with a critical eye” (p. 306). Critical literacy requires looking “beyond a passive acceptance of a text” (Kelly et al., 2020, p. 298) in order to interrogate and explore texts for issues of power and privilege, stereotypes and assumptions.

Lewison et al. (2002) synthesized years of research in order to define critical literacy as an intermingling of four dimensions: (a) disrupting the commonplace, (b) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (c) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (d) taking action and promoting social justice. Disrupting the commonplace may include rethinking a traditionally accepted interpretation of a well-known story, highlighting stereotypes and examining the author’s purpose for using them. Interrogating multiple viewpoints could mean exploring the perspectives of various characters within the story and readers’ own reactions and responses to the story. Considering the sociopolitical aspects of a text entails thinking about how power is distributed in the story, by whom, and for what reasons.

Taking action and promoting social justice can be a post-reading response to a new understanding from reading

texts critically, but inquiry and action can also be centered within the dimensions of critical literacy as the text is being read. Taking an active stance, the reader searches for and may intentionally construct counternarratives for the story that is presented by the author. Readers interrogate texts with critical questions, such as, Who wrote this text? Is there anything that was omitted from this text that might be important? Whose experience is being presented? Whose experience is being ignored? Engaging in this critical interaction with a text allows readers to consider power structures and issues of social justice as they read and respond to texts.

In the classroom, critical literacy is a way of approaching texts through a collaboration between teacher and students (Vasquez, 2014). Together, even the youngest classrooms are capable of negotiating a critical curriculum if they are willing to “tune in to issues of social justice and equity” (Vasquez, 2014, p. xiv). In a pedagogical sense, the teacher designs a classroom environment that is conducive to inquiry and welcoming to multiple perspectives. This environment encourages questioning and deconstruction of texts, setting up frameworks and introducing books and other media using a critical stance. Teachers and students become co-constructors of knowledge as they encounter texts together with a critical lens. As Vasquez (2014) argued, critical literacy must also be “about the active production and redesign of those problematic ways of being,” or the stereotypes and assumptions present in texts (p. 14). It is not enough to simply question and think deeply about a text, but one must also *respond*. As Vasquez et al. (2019) stated, it is “teachers’ jobs to help students assume agency and act to make a difference, however small” (p. 306).

Discussion is an important part of taking a critical stance. Classroom dialogue around texts allows for teachers and students to negotiate meaning and co-construct new ways of thinking. This type of discussion moves beyond the common, but ineffective, Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) model of questioning (Flood, 2021). In this model, the teacher initiates a question, the student answers the question, and the teacher evaluates if the answer is right or wrong. IRE questions typically have one right answer, encouraging a teacher-dominated discussion path, rather than dialogic, critical discussion. Encouraging critical accountable talk, including teaching students to respectfully agree, disagree, and use evidence, is crucial to this type of discussion.

Reading and discussing picturebooks boosts children’s general language competence as well as the process of ques-

tioning, listening, and responding to a story. These skills offer a foundation for critical thinking and reflections (Demoigny & Ferraras-Stone, 2018). A high-quality, diverse text can encourage critical conversation around life and history by providing a voice to individuals who have been marginalized in society, and can illustrate how individuals can address issues related to significant social matters (Wandasari et al., 2019).

Discussion is an important first step, but the work toward a critical stance does not end with classroom conversations. “Critical expressionism” is a term that describes an expanded view of what critical response looks like in the classroom (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2019). In critical expressionism, students might respond critically to texts by creating a podcast, a piece of art, a short film, or a song in a call for action or social change. Students use multiple representations of their thinking, responding in multimodal ways as “text-designers,” working in and across various sign systems to create and express meaning (Knobel & Lankshear, 2004). This response can lead to deeper comprehension and can serve as the springboard for reconstruction and social action.

In this article, we present a pedagogical framework for teaching critical literacy with picturebooks and middle-grade novels, giving examples that encompass several grade spans. Then, we will offer several texts we have found useful for teaching critical literacy and embed them in this framework as classroom examples in action.

Framework for Teaching Critical Literacy

The purpose of this framework is to help teachers plan and implement critical literacy lessons using carefully selected texts. This framework contains three connected parts: the *Planning*, the *Co-Construction*, and the *Action* (see Table 2). There is no one way to teach critical literacy. We offer this framework as a way to help guide teachers’ thinking as they work to present critical curriculum to their students. This framework can be adapted to meet the needs of each educator as they develop their own ways of being in the classroom.

The Planning

Although there is no one way to teach critical literacy, it is well established that “teachers themselves must first become critically literate” before teaching a classroom of students with a critical pedagogy (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2019, p. 588). One way to develop as a critical literacy educator is to participate in thoughtful, reflective, guided planning. Designing a strong

essential question can help orient students to the critical stance because the nature of this big, overarching question with many possible answers lends itself to deep, inquiry-based thinking. Initially, the teacher may choose the essential question, but as the classroom becomes more comfortable with critical thinking, students can help to create new essential questions. This idea of developing an essential question in the planning stages lays the groundwork to accomplish all four dimensions of critical literacy. According to McTighe and Wiggins (2013), an effective essential question is open-ended and thought-provoking, requiring higher-order thinking and sparking further questions on a topic. The essential question might be inspired by or connected to state standards and creates a space for students to think critically about texts and concepts presented.

After identifying the essential question, it is time to choose texts that can support the co-construction of knowledge toward this question. One text alone will not be able to “answer” an essential question, but will serve as a springboard for conversation, knowledge building, and future inquiry. Book award lists are a great place to start when choosing a trustworthy, current, diverse book. See Table 2 for a list of reliable sources for choosing texts. It is important to note that high-quality texts can also inspire essential questions. At times, a teacher may build a unit with essential questions inspired directly from the text.

When planning a critical literacy experience, it is helpful to read through the texts or portions of the text multiple times. In the first read of the text, read for enjoyment and understanding, looking at the text through the lens of the essential question. In the second read, begin to search for keywords, marking places of considerable importance for knowledge building. Ask yourself, What is the key content I want students to understand? Consider three to five effective places in the reading to stop and discuss something related to the essential question. Reflect on the content you want to present and ask yourself, Are there any multimodal ways outside of this text to present this content? This question forces thought on the expansion of the view of what counts as text. Is there a video or photo that could be linked with a QR code to help clarify meaning, expand knowledge, and make this text multimodal? Think about the setting and time period of the text. Are there related pieces of music, aspects of culture, maps, or photos that would bring the setting to life? Anticipate where a student might have trouble understanding or where they could dig deeper.

In the third read of the text, consider multiple perspectives and differing viewpoints. Ask yourself the question, Is anything being left out of this text that I want my students to know? Is there another perspective to demonstrate? This is an opportunity to link new content into the text via a QR code. Link a video, article, or photo that demonstrates another perspective, making the read-aloud multimodal and bringing the reader outside of the text to interrogate multiple viewpoints. Lastly, consider current events and updated information. Is there a current event that could help students build knowledge and perspective in the content? Link these within the text via QR code. Schrodt et al.'s (2020) work includes more information about conducting a professional development on adding QR codes to texts for knowledge building.

The Co-Construction

The second part of the framework for teaching critical literacy with texts is the co-construction of meaning. Co-construction happens when the teacher and the students work together to make meaning of texts. It is important to privilege the funds of knowledge and multiple perspectives that students bring to a text (Vasquez, 2014). As the class engages with a text, each student brings their own way of being, with unique perspectives and background knowledge. The co-construction allows the classroom to grapple with the text, consider multiple viewpoints, and together create a more in-depth understanding.

In order to include all voices in co-construction, the read-aloud of the text must be interactive. Planned stopping points will facilitate times for students to turn and talk from a critical stance about the text. It is helpful to implement and practice discussion protocols with students, scaffolding them into effective critical discussion. The first protocol is practicing a co-construction twist on accountable talk. Accountable talk is intentional, open-ended conversation where participants listen, confirm, question, justify, and add on to thoughts and opinions related to the text or subject at hand. Wolf et al. (2006) described three aspects of accountable talk: accountability to the learning community, accountability to accurate knowledge, and accountability to rigorous thinking.

A common accountable talk classroom practice is to give students sentence stems before they begin discussion. A twist on this practice helps create a more organic approach, allowing students to be a part of the construction of authentic talk. Rather than handing students sentence stems, begin by directing students' attention to their own body language and words

as they discuss. After the initial discussion, reflect as a group, charting what students noticed about their own discussion. Allow effective pairs of students to fishbowl model, reflecting on the discussion in action. As students learn to thoughtfully and respectfully interrogate a text, modeling and practicing accountable talk could be helpful to encouraging both listening and responding. Table 1 gives steps for co-constructing discussion norms as a class.

The Action

The third part of the framework is the action. Critical literacy practices can lead to change when we make space for the critique and subsequently the redesign and reconstruction of a text or idea (Vasquez, 2014). Social action is an important part of critical literacy practice (Lewison et al., 2002), and it is critical that students take action linked to social justice and a call for change. As students do the work of analyzing texts critically, it is important for them to take the time to take action, sending a new text out into the world beyond the four walls of the classroom.

The action begins after engaging in the co-construction. Students and teachers together can ask themselves, What does this text now inspire me to do? (Fisher et al., 2020). After stu-

dents have analyzed a text, they can transform that text into something they can send out into the world that represents a new point of view, or advocates for an issue, or remedies problematic ideals. This could include the creation of a public service announcement (PSA), poster, or podcast informing readers of a social justice issue. This could also be the creation of artwork or other multimodal representations, linking back to the idea of critical expressionism. Students have the opportunity to continue to practice critical thinking in the way they choose to express their newly synthesized ideas.

Below, three effective texts representing multiple grade spans have been chosen to represent how they might look when embedded into this framework for critical literacy instruction. These lessons could be used tomorrow in the classroom, or they could be adapted to meet the needs of individual learners. We hope these examples will help make visible the work of critical literacy in the classroom using children’s books.

Hidden Figures (Grades 2–5)

The Planning. The book *Hidden Figures* by Margot Lee Shetterly (2018) is the story of four Black women who were NASA engineers during the civil rights era. This award-winning book aligns with a fifth-grade social studies standard addressing John

Table 1
CO-CONSTRUCTING DISCUSSION NORMS

ACTION STEP	EXAMPLE				
Direct student attention to their discussion.	While you discuss today, take particular notice of your body. What do your eyes do when you are talking? How does your body feel? What about when your discussion partner is talking? What are you doing? Also notice your words. What kinds of things are you saying to your partner? Do you always agree? What happens when you disagree?				
After the discussion is over, reflect as a class with a shared writing on a piece of chart paper.	<p>Let’s create a chart together as a class that will help us be the most effective communicators we can be when we are discussing critical topics.</p> <p>Effective Classroom Discussion</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="548 1524 1409 1612"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="555 1528 980 1570">Looks like...</th> <th data-bbox="987 1528 1403 1570">Sounds like...</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="555 1579 980 1612"></td> <td data-bbox="987 1579 1403 1612"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Looks like...	Sounds like...		
Looks like...	Sounds like...				
Fishbowl model.	I see that some of our discussion partners disagreed today. What did this look like? Would one pair like to volunteer to fishbowl model for us, re-creating your discussion?				
Reflect, revise, and co-construct.	<p>After seeing the fishbowl, what else do we need to add or change on our chart?</p> <p>Hang the chart on the wall. Continue to come back to the chart to reflect, revise, and co-construct as a class.</p>				

Table 2
FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING CRITICAL LITERACY WITH TEXTS

FRAMEWORK COMPONENT	ACTION STEPS	DETAILS
<i>Planning</i>	Identify the essential question.*	Does my essential question meet the following criteria? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-ended • Thought-provoking • Calls for higher-order thinking • Points toward important, transferable ideas • Raises additional questions • Requires support and justification • Recurs over time (McTighe & Wiggins, 2013, p. 4)
	Choose current, high-quality diverse texts (including an expanded view of texts: songs, photographs, blogs, etc.).*	A variety of dependable lists guide our choices. These include (but are not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coretta Scott King Book Award (African American experience) • Stonewall Book Award (LGBTQIA+ experience) • Pura Belpré Award (Latino cultural experience) • Orbis Pictus Award (nonfiction) • CLA Notables Award • Nerdy Book Club • We Need Diverse Books movement
	Plan multimodal stopping points and questions for an interactive reading.	While planning, consider reading through the text (or portions of the text) multiple times. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st read: Read for enjoyment and understanding through the lens of the essential question. • 2nd read: Consider 3–5 stopping points for discussion. Link multimodal QR codes related to the setting (including music, photos, maps, etc.). • 3rd read: Consider multiple perspectives and differing viewpoints. Link QR codes of articles, photos, and current events that help the reader interrogate the text.
<i>Co-Construction</i>	Conduct an interactive read-aloud.	Turn and talk during the read-aloud, including all voices in the classroom.
	Engage in critical interaction.	Use protocols to scaffold students into critical conversation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-constructing effective classroom conversations norms • Argument protocol
<i>Action</i>	What does this text inspire you to do beyond the walls of the classroom?	Redesign, construct, and create new text to share outside of the classroom. This could include (but is not limited to) creating the following: PSAs, letters, posters, songs, written arguments, podcasts, or a gallery of artwork.
	Explore further reading.	What questions did the co-construction inspire? What further reading needs to be done?
	Consider new essential questions.	Engaging in this process can inspire new essential questions for further reading, inquiry, and action.

**The first two steps may be switched. A carefully selected text can also inspire essential questions.*

F. Kennedy's impact as president, including civil rights and the space program. The essential question for this text is, *What is progress? Is all progress good?*

One page in *Hidden Figures* quickly references John F. Kennedy's famous Moon Speech. This page will serve as an example of one effective place to stop for discussion in the text. JFK's live speech is readily available on YouTube and can be linked by a QR code as a primary source. Seeing this speech live demonstrates its persuasive power. The transcript will serve as an important text for students to critically analyze during the co-construction. Students might feel excited as JFK emphatically states, "We choose to go to the moon!" But then they might take a closer look at how he addresses money and justifies the extraordinary spending. This speech set in motion a race to the moon that would culminate in 28 billion dollars (\$283 billion adjusted for inflation) of government spending.

While reading the book for planning, ask the questions, Whose story is being told here? Are there any other sides of the story that are not being told? What else might I want to know about what was going on during this time period? These planning questions lead to a series of three QR codes. On the left-hand side of Figure 1 is a link to the government spending for the Apollo space missions, an article about opposition to the moon missions, and a song by Gil Scott-Heron titled "Whitey on the Moon" addressing racial and socioeconomic implications of the space missions. These QR codes help students build knowledge and critical thinking skills as they learn about the complexity of the historic space missions. On the right-hand side of Figure 1, the links to JFK's speech and the current status of NASA's 60 years of service to space exploration help support another side of the essential question, *What is progress? Is all progress good?* This planning then leads to the co-construction as teachers and students make meaning of the text together. Final-

ly, teachers can plan for a discussion on how this is important to us today, circling back to the essential question. What progress is being made now? Is it all good? At what cost does progress come? Can we apply this to technology we use now?

The Co-Construction. *Hidden Figures* might be used to explore how JFK, the space program, and civil rights are all connected and engage in critical conversation. The first step is to read the book to the class as an interactive read-aloud, stopping multiple times to allow for discussion and basic understanding of the text. During a second read-aloud of the text, stop and allow time to explore multimodal resources connected via QR code, such as the page in Figure 1. As a class, explore the multiple viewpoints presented in the QR codes. Analyze JFK's speech and Gil Scott-Heron's song. What is Gil Scott-Heron trying to say when he says, "A rat done bit my sister Nell (with Whitey on the moon)...I can't pay no doctor bill (but Whitey's on the moon)"? What is JFK trying to do when he says, "That budget now stands at \$5,400 million a year—a staggering sum, though somewhat less than we pay for cigarettes and cigars every year"? JFK speaks of progress in his speech. Pose the questions, What progress is presented in the book *Hidden Figures*? Is the progress good?

As a class, allow the students time to have a conversation using the co-constructed norms for discussion (Table 1). During the discussion, pause the class, asking, "Has anyone disagreed in their discussion yet? If so, please share with the class your interaction." After the pair shares their experience, reference the norms chart and ask students, "Has hearing from this group changed your thinking? Continue to discuss." Close the co-construction time with a whole-group discussion: What progress is being made now? Is it all good? At what cost does progress come? Can we apply this to technology we use now?

During the co-construction of this text, students and teachers are weaving in the first three components of critical literacy, co-constructing meaning that (a) disrupts the commonplace, (b) interrogates multiple viewpoints, and (c) focuses on sociopolitical issues. During this discussion, students disrupt the commonplace as they begin to consider new frames of thinking for commonly held beliefs, such as that the Space Race was supported by all Americans and was completed through the work of white, male astronauts like Neil Armstrong. As the students begin to disrupt the commonplace, they are naturally led to multiple viewpoints, hearing the stories of Black women mathematicians and

Figure 1
Hidden Figures Embedded QR Codes

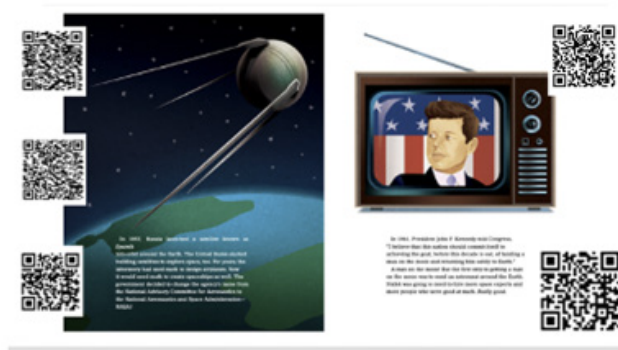


Table 3
EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTION FOR HIDDEN FIGURES

ESSENTIAL QUESTION: WHAT IS PROGRESS? IS ALL PROGRESS GOOD?	
Topic	Action
Elon Musk and Tesla cars	<p>Students create a piece of art showing a Tesla car. The artwork will advocate for electric cars as good for the environment.</p> <p>Knowledge-building supporting fact: <i>Over 550K Tesla vehicles have been sold, and they have driven over 10B miles to date, resulting in a combined savings of over 4M metric tons of CO₂.</i></p>
Creation of social media and mental health	<p>Students create a TikTok post demonstrating the potential for social media to negatively affect mental health.</p> <p>Knowledge-building supporting fact: <i>A 2018 University of Pennsylvania study found that reducing social media use to 30 minutes a day resulted in a significant reduction in levels of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and sleep problems.</i></p>
Fracking for oil and gas	<p>Students create signs for an environmental protest.</p> <p>Knowledge-building supporting fact: <i>Hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” is revolutionizing oil and gas drilling across the country. However, without rigorous safety regulations, it can poison groundwater, pollute surface water, impair wild landscapes, and threaten wildlife.</i></p>

reading articles of the Space Race opposition. This opposition is interwoven with sociopolitical issues, as students begin to see the stories of these “hidden figures” come to life. Students are exposed to artists who used their songs as a form of protest against the Space Race and are given the opportunity to analyze a very persuasive presidential speech. This co-construction builds a foundation of knowledge and critical thinking that allows for students to do the fourth tenet of critical literacy instruction, (d) taking action and promoting social justice.

The Action. As students think through the essential question in relation to the Space Race—*What is progress? Is all progress good?*—it will lead to the action of how this relates to our lives now. In what other ways has progress served us well or been of harm? Is there anything going on now that is similar to JFK and the Space Race? Table 3 is a chart of possible social justice action topics that students can research and respond to.

The Night Diary (Grades 4–8)

The Planning. *The Night Diary*, by Veera Hiranandani, is a 2018 Newbery Honor book, suggested for children ages 8 to 12. Through entries written each night to her mother who died giving birth to Nisha and her twin brother Amil, *The Night*

Diary tells the story of a family fleeing their home when Pakistan and India are divided in 1947. Nisha and Amil’s mother was Muslim, and their father is Hindu. The religious difference becomes deadly when British rule in India ends, and Nisha feels confused and conflicted as she sees her community and her family torn apart. As Nisha leaves everything she has ever known, she writes to understand who she is. Asking students to explore the essential question *What shapes our identity?* could help them to connect with the main character and to think about the text from a critical perspective.

The cube strategy could assist students to view the book through multiple perspectives and to examine the characters’ and the author’s values and assumptions. A possibility appropriate for older middle school students is to adapt Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) narrative analysis framework for thinking critically about *The Night Diary*. The narrative analysis framework includes three dimensions: continuity (time), situation (place), and interaction (relationships).

The Co-Construction. Since there are three components in this framework and six sides of the cube, students can juxtapose two characters’ perspectives, values, or stereotypes/biases for each of the components. Ideally, the teacher models thinking and then opens discussion for suggestions or asks students to talk through plans for their own cubes. The cube’s sides can

include QR codes, quotes, images, six-word stories, or poems.

For the continuity dimension, students might assign one side of the cube as an analysis of the past and how that contributes to Nisha's and her uncle's beliefs and values, and another side to the events happening currently in the story. Students could create a QR code that links to historical information on the partition of India and write a found poem underneath the code, giving the viewer a hint of what is activated by the QR code.

To represent the situation dimension, students could paste a map or a QR code linking a map so viewers could see the area through which Nisha traversed leaving Pakistan for India. Images of the terrain might also clarify how difficult the trek was, how little water was available, and how challenging it was to find shelter from the blazing sun.

The interaction dimension might be shown on sides that address Nisha's relationship with her father and Rashid Uncle's relationship with his brother-in-law. Nisha wonders at one point if her uncle keeps a hidden hate in his heart for her father, and this could be a useful tension for students to explore. Readers might explore Nisha's assumptions about her uncle and compare these to the assumptions and stereotypes present in the adults' warnings to Nisha and her brother to hide from the neighbors. Here, students might attach quotes from the story, their own drawings of a scene including the characters, and poems expressing each character's feelings.

The Action. If a class or classes have created multiple cubes, they could be displayed for schoolmates and faculty and administration, families, and community members. Students could serve as docents, guiding visitors around the displays, or students could be stationed at tables ready to answer questions about the cubes or help guests navigate the QR codes.

The World of Weird Animals Series (Grades K–3)

The Planning. Jess Keating, children's book author and zoologist, writes a series recommended for ages 5 to 8 titled *The World of Weird Animals*. Information is presented about each "weird" animal, as well as the use of text features, such as photographs, cartoons, and colorful headings. This series aligns with any unit discussing the concepts of animal adaptations and change.

Planning for an essential question for critical literacy is made simple by the author. For example, in *What Makes a Monster?* (2017), the last "monster" is a human. Keating posits that humans don't have fangs or venom but might be consid-

ered monsters for the way they act toward the environment. At the end of the book, Keating lists important questions, such as "Why do I think this animal is scary? Is it because of how it looks? Does it behave monstrously?" In all of the books in this series, Keating presents details about animals and then asks readers to question their own biases and consider another perspective. Thus, the overarching essential question becomes, *Why do I think this?* and *How has my thinking changed?*

The Co-Construction. The interactive read-aloud format is an effective way to model and scaffold critical literacy skills in the elementary grades. The planned essential question(s) guide stopping points and the way students analyze and approach text. When using *What Makes a Monster?*, the teacher might read the text focusing on collecting information about each animal and analyzing why students judge an animal to be scary or not. For example, the teacher might create an anchor chart with the headings: Animal Facts / Is this animal scary? / Why do I think that? As the teacher reads about each animal, they model determining important facts, making decisions based on information presented, and synthesizing their thinking with the text to form new ideas. This not only models several comprehension strategies, but forces students to think critically about why they hold beliefs about certain animals.

During the second read of the text, the teacher can highlight four animals from the text and read about each in depth, including new information from other texts like National Geographic Kids. Students choose which of the four they believe is the scariest. The teacher models how to take notes on each animal, continuing to ask, "What makes this animal scary?" and "Why do you think that?"

After critically reading about four select "monsters," the teacher can ask students to check their notes and choose the animal they would like to argue is the scariest. Allowing students to practice oral argument first leads to co-constructed knowledge and is a scaffold to writing argument pieces (Ehrenworth & Minor, 2014). The "Argument Talk Protocol" developed through the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (Ehrenworth, 2017) can be used to teach young students how to synthesize multiple sources of information, present an argument, and gain insight into others' perspectives.

Have photographs of each animal in each of the four corners of the classroom. Ask students to go to the corner that represents the animal they will argue is the scariest. Then, walk them through the Argument Talk Protocol, which can be mod-

ified for any age level. Ehrenworth (2017) called this oral portion of the protocol a “flash debate.” This type of quick debate gives students a low-stakes way to co-construct knowledge as they consider another viewpoint by caucusing with their side, developing an argument, and then debating with an opponent.

The Action. In keeping with the idea of critical literacy naturally leading to critical expressionism, ask students to create something that presents their animal and how their thinking has changed. This could take the form of a presentation to their family, a collage, reading an animal report to the principal, or writing a fiction story with their animal as the main character dealing with the stereotype of being “scary.” Having the choice of how to present gives students the space for action that is authentic and meaningful.

Closing

Children’s literature offers a way for teachers to help students approach texts from a critical stance. Within the familiar context of a story, teachers can guide students to think in ways that may be unfamiliar, asking them to consider how the text presents issues of power, fairness, or conventional beliefs about the world around them. Critical literacy is complex, and a framework, such as the one we have outlined in this article, may make the challenge of teaching students to read critically more accessible. Planning an essential question broadens and deepens the learning while simultaneously modeling for students the big, overarching inquiry we want them to eventually initiate themselves. Co-constructing meaning empowers students to actively engage in the learning process and honors the concept of multiple perspectives. Taking action seals the learning because the co-constructed meaning becomes a lived experience shared by teachers, students, and possibly a school community as students give expression to their new understandings. The action component further equips students to make connections between the work they have done in the classroom and the world outside the classroom. The multimodal aspect we describe here may also feel familiar and interesting to students as using technology such as QR codes or creating TikTok posts are likely experiences students already engage in outside school. We have created a Google Doc ([link](#)) that provides recommendations of engaging critical texts by grade level.

Sixty years after JFK’s Moon Speech, billionaires around the world are paying out of pocket for a chance to

go to space. The Internet is being flooded with songs and memes about Amazon owner Jeff Bezos as people around the world engage in critical expressionism. Do “we” actually “choose to go to the moon”? Whose story is being told? Whose is being left out? It is important for us to empower children to think and talk about these kinds of things. There is no one way to do this work, but we hope this framework helps more teachers engage in planning, co-construction, and action in their critical literacy instruction. •

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THE POET'S CORNER

Zoom With Poetry



Janet Wong

PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC, many schools hosted an in-person author visit with assemblies or workshops. During the pandemic, authors in all genres took to Zoom to reach readers. Many authors are happy to be doing in-person events again—and there is no denying the power of an in-person assembly to get elementary students excited about reading—but I'd like to advocate the regular use of virtual visits to put poetry in the classroom.

A *Publishers Weekly* article on “The Future of School Author Visits” suggested that while “there’s nothing like in-person,” the “Pandemic Pivot” allowed schools that had never hosted an author visit to finally be able to afford one. But economic issues are only part of the story; planning and hosting a traditional author visit takes a lot of time—time that schools might not have. There are many reasons that poetry is perfect for virtual programs, but the most compelling one might be that poetry is short, so no advance preparation is needed.

That’s right: *zero* preparation. Teachers are busy. Spending an afternoon sharing a poet’s work in advance would enhance a visit, but there are only so many hours in the day—and author visits should bring stress relief, not more stress. A poet can share a 30-second poem aloud and engage students immediately. Because poems are short, a lot of material can be covered in 20 minutes. Students can do an echo read or choral reading. Poems can be selected at random (as from a Poetry Suitcase) for a lively program with an element of surprise. And poets can even model writing a poem on the spot.

Maybe most important of all: It’s easy to arrange a Poetry Zoom. It can take as little as 10 minutes of correspondence to get everything set. There are many poets who write for children and are eager to do virtual programs. You might not be able to find novelists who would be willing and able to do a 20-minute Zoom, but you can find dozens of poets who could provide a meaningful break from your usual routine. Why limit yourself

to just one author visit per year? With affordable Zoom sessions (and no travel expenses), you could ask your parent association or district foundation to provide a poet visit every single week.

How do you choose these poets? If budget is a concern, I would recommend selecting up-and-coming poets who might not have their own poetry collections yet, but who have poems in magazines and journals as well as in large anthologies compiled by me and Sylvia Vardell, Lee Bennett Hopkins, J. Patrick Lewis, and others. Many of these poets have been teachers or librarians and are experts at working with kids. Ask if they will do a program for \$50 to \$100. If you have a larger budget (\$100 to \$250), choose an author with one or two books of their own. Invite an established poet—or a newer poet for a series of five to 10 workshops—if your budget is \$500 or more.

Honor diversity and inclusion, but think about those terms as broadly as possible. Promote BIPOC poets, but also include LGBTQ, disabled, and neuro-diverse poets, poets who are cancer survivors, poets who have served in the military, poets with unusual career paths, poets who are deeply committed to charitable causes, and poets with expat or global travel experiences. Invite bubbly, extroverted poets and also calmer, more reflective poets. Show your students that, no matter who they are (or what they like to read and write), there is a poet who has something for them. With the old model of just one author per year, there are bound to be some kids who won’t feel a connection. With multiple poet Zooms per year, all children will hopefully find at least one poet whose work resonates.

On the following pages are some favorite poets that you might consider. I’m presenting them in alphabetical order, along with their poems from the two recent anthologies created by me and Sylvia Vardell, *Things We Do* and *Things We Eat*, both of which are fundraiser books for the IBBY Children in Crisis Fund (with 100% of the profits donated via USBBY).

Kelly Conroy (kellyconroy.com)

Kelly Conroy is a picturebook writer, poet, and former actuary who loves all things magical, whimsical, and numerical. Her goal in life is to make people smile. You can find her eating avocado toast in Pennsylvania or dreaming about avocado trees in Hawaii. Here is her poem "Avocado" from *Things We Eat*.



FROM THINGS WE EAT
BY SYLVIA VARDELL & JANET WONG

AVOCADO

by Kelly Conroy

Look at me!
I'm in a tree
testing my bravado.
I'm climbing high,
up to the sky
to reach that **avocado**.

I'll pluck it,
cut it,
gut it, then
I'll sprinkle it with lime.
And when my snack is gone
I'll pick –
another tree to climb.

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"AVOCADO" POEM © 2022 BY KELLY CONROY


Jone Rush MacCulloch (jonerushmacculloch.com)

Jone Rush MacCulloch is a former library media specialist and teacher who is a poet, photographer, and Poetry Friday blogger. You can see her zooming around town, walking, and zooming in on nature with her camera in the Pacific Northwest. Here is her poem "Zoom" from *Things We Do*.



FROM THINGS WE DO
BY SYLVIA VARDELL & JANET WONG

ZOOM

by Jone Rush MacCulloch

Helmet on
Time alone
Zoom, zoom, zoom

Pedal quick
Set the pace
Zoom, zoom, zoom

Shift the gears
Faster still
Zoom, zoom, zoom

Wheels whir
My world blurs –
ZOOM!

learn more at
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"ZOOM" POEM © 2021 BY JONE RUSH MACCULLOCH



Linda Kulp Trout (lindakulptrout.blogspot.com)

Linda Kulp Trout is a retired teacher whose poems, short stories, and articles have appeared in many publications. She loves to visit the library, and often holds the door open to help people. Here is her poem "Open" from *Things We Do*.



FROM **THINGS WE DO**
BY SYLVIA VARDELL & JANET WONG

OPEN

by Linda Kulp Trout

I race my brother
down the sidewalk to the library,
each of us wanting to be first to go inside.

I'm way ahead, almost there
when I see a white-haired lady,
bag of books in one hand,
cane in the other.

I stop –
wait to **open** the door for her.
My brother charges by.
I don't mind.

I could've been first – but instead,
I choose to be kind.



"OPEN" POEM © 2021 BY LINDA KULP TROUT

April Halprin Wayland (aprilwayland.com)

April Halprin Wayland is a poet, author, and teacher. Her award-winning books include the verse novel *Girl Coming in for a Landing* and the picturebook *More Than Enough: A Passover Story*. Here is her poem "Taco" from *Things We Eat*. Her favorite tacos? Shrimp!



FROM **THINGS WE EAT**
BY SYLVIA VARDELL & JANET WONG

TACO

by April Halprin Wayland

Every Friday smells like **tacos**.
Paco's truck parks on our street.

Friday's Dia de los **Tacos**.
Me and Mama come to eat!

Every Friday's warm tortillas
filled with salsa, cheese, and meat.

Paco winks, spoons extra guac –
avocado-yummy treat!



learn more at
POMELOBOOKS.COM



"TACO" POEM © 2022 BY APRIL HALPRIN WAYLAND

Helen Kemp Zax (helenzax.com)

Helen Kemp Zax is a former lawyer whose poems have been published in anthologies such as *Hop to It: Poems to Get You Moving*. She often misses her children and always enjoys their visits. Here is her poem "Visit" from *Things We Do*.

FROM **THINGS WE DO**

BY SYLVIA VARDELL & JANET WONG

VISIT

by Helen Kemp Zax

When I **visit** my grandma
in winter and spring,
we build snowmen, drink cocoa,
find tadpoles, and swing.

When I **visit** my grandpa
in summer and fall,
we go swimming, pick berries,
fly kites, and play ball.

I couldn't go **visit**
for more than a year.
But the missing's gone missing . . .
now that I'm here!



learn more at
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"VISIT" POEM © 2021 BY HELEN KEMP ZAX

When I meet students, they don't really care about the number of books that I've written (or, more accurately, the number of books that have been published). Mainly they are intrigued by the concept that I spend my time, hours and hours, sitting and thinking and writing and re-writing—or, as I want them to understand it, playing with words. It doesn't matter whether this writing is for a magazine or an anthology or a collection or a textbook or a verse novel or a blog. They want to know: *Where do you get your ideas? Why do you love writing? How do you decide that it's finished?* These answers are as individualized and personal and varied as our hairstyles and dinner choices and favorite colors. Let's let kids see that. Let them see that, in this big real world full of dizzying differences, there is room for all our voices. •

Janet Wong is the author of dozens of books for children and is the co-creator (with Sylvia Vardell) of the *Poetry Friday Anthology* series. Her most recent anthologies (with Sylvia Vardell and dozens of poets) are *Things We Do*, *Things We Eat*, and *Things We Feel*, fundraiser books for the IBBY Children in Crisis Fund. Email: janet@janetwong.com

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2022 NOTABLE BOOKS FOR A GLOBAL SOCIETY: A Booklist for Grades PK–12 Stories of Hope, Courage, and Discovery



Edited by Sandip Wilson and Mary Ellen Oslick

Committee Members and Contributing Writers for the 2022 NBGS Award List

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Central Western University, Ellensburg

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University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa

Anne Katz
University of Houston, Texas

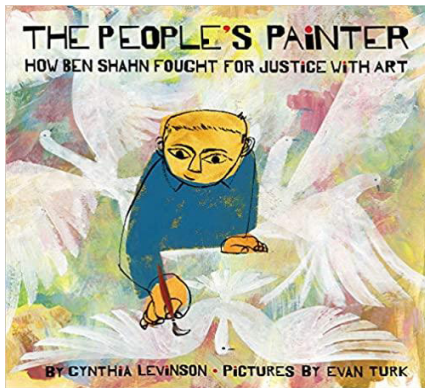
Jeanne Fain
Lipscomb University, Tennessee

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY of character, story, life, tension, pain, dreams, and hopes in children's and young adult literature is the goal of the Notable Books for a Global Society (NBGS) Committee. Each year, the topics the members review reveal expanding horizons of books published for children and young adults, demonstrating that a book might reflect readers' experiences, show them they are not alone, or give insight into lives and experiences that are different from theirs.

Since 1996, the committee has presented a collection of books demonstrating multiple perspectives and diverse experiences. Parsons (2016) noted, "When we take seriously our responsibility to find and promote many voices, we are in essence, working toward justice and creating a more peaceful world" (p. 23). Members share this sense of responsibility. In the presentation of the 2009 NBGS books,

Ward (2009) said that literature has multiple values, "one of which is to help readers view the world through different lenses" (p. 26). The committee has continued that legacy. We read stories and nonfiction unfamiliar to readers, in voices they may not have heard before. In our exploration of more than 600 books, members admitted the challenges of making choices to select 25 books for PK–12 readers in multiple genres.

Hadjoannou (2021) has observed that access to books "through the physical presence in children's environments, combined with plentiful opportunities to engage with books" (p. 8), can help them "make meaning of their lives" (p. 9). That access can help them understand the cultures and experiences of others (p. 9). The challenge of access to books in contemporary America reinforces the members' dedication to selecting books that can speak to many readers.



Levinson, Cynthia. (2021). *The People's Painter: How Ben Shahn Fought for Justice With Art* (Evan Turk, Illus.). Abrams Books for Young Readers. 40 pp. GR 2–6. Picturebook/biography.

“The first thing I can remember,” Ben Shahn said, “I drew.” As a child in Lithuania, he drew everything he could, even sketching in his family’s Bible during a paper shortage. As a young immigrant in the United States, he used his art to show injustices he saw around him, such as being bullied at school for being Jewish, and to tell stories of outsiders such as immigrants and prisoners. During the Depression, his photographs “revealed hard lives in troubled times.” His paintings chronicled stories of “people clamoring for their rights,” such as workers demanding fair pay, civil rights activists, and advocates for peace, stories depicted in Turk’s bold illustrations of mixed media that reflect Shahn’s artistic technique. The back matter includes an author’s and illustrator’s note, a timeline of Shahn’s life and events of 1900s American history, and references. *Reviewed by Ann Digiacomio*

Teaching Suggestions

- In the text’s back matter, illustrator Evan Turk writes that Ben Shahn drew people how they felt to him, not necessarily capturing how they looked. Upper elementary students can similarly draw or paint people and places how they feel to them, using techniques similar to those used in the book, such as through exaggeration and distortion to highlight an emotional response or experience.
- Many artists have used their art to call attention to social justice issues. Help students brainstorm how they can use their own art to be change makers and stand up for issues important to them. Using art or photography,

work with students to create a poster project on one of the issues to share with the wider school community.

- Students can view Ben Shahn’s art online at the National Gallery of Art’s website (<https://www.nga.gov/collec-tion/artist-info.3030.html#works>). Encourage students to imagine what the artist was trying to express through different works, and compare and contrast his art to illustrator Evan Turk’s work in the picturebook.

Related Books

- Hinrichs, A. S. D. (2021). *The traveling camera: Lewis Hine and the fight to end child labor* (M. Garland, Illus.). Getty.
- Nichols, D. (2021). *Art of protest: Creating, discovering, and activating art for your revolution* (D. Dagadita, M. Mendoza, O. Twist, Saddo, & D. Beccas, Illus.). Big Picture Press.
- O’Neill, A. (2020). *Jacob Riis’s camera: Bringing light to tenement children* (G. Kelley, Illus.). Calkins Creek/Boyd’s Mills & Kane.
- Rippon, J. (2019). *Rise up: The art of protest*. Charlesbridge.



Higuera, Donna Barba. (2021). *The Last Cuentista*. An Arthur A. Levine Book. 416 pp. GR 7 and up. Science fiction.

What do you bring with you to start over? With a comet coming to destroy Earth, Petra and her family are forced to face this question. They are among the few chosen to travel to a new planet with their combined technological and scientific knowledge. Petra brings her family’s folklore and cuentos (stories). During the several-hundred-year journey, a rogue group called the Collective erases their memories. Petra awakes to a new reality, where everyone else has forgotten the history of life on Earth and the differences that make the human race both flawed and

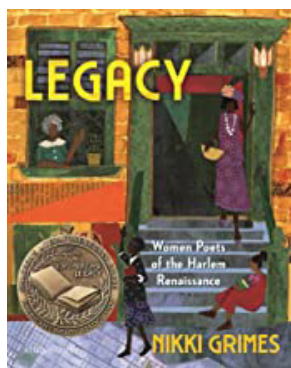
dynamic. As she realizes that she is the only remaining storyteller, she must decide how to escape the Collective and start over on her own. *Reviewed by Mary Ellen Oslick*

Teaching Suggestions

- With students, conduct a discussion about the power of storytelling, which is a common theme throughout the novel. Push students to consider the meanings we can get from folklore and mythology. They can make connections to other texts (e.g., film, television shows, and books).
- View the NASA website regarding exoplanet exploration (<https://exoplanets.nasa.gov/search-for-life/habitable-zone/>). In small groups, students can watch videos about what scientists are looking for in habitable zones in the Milky Way galaxy and examine a list of planets that could support life. Have them discuss their findings.
- Watch the video *How to Recognize a Dystopia* on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a6k-bU88wu0>). Ask students to consider if Petra lives in a dystopian society. They can cite evidence from the book for agreeing or disagreeing.

Related Books

Deonn, T. (2020). *Legendborn*. Margaret K. McElderry Books.
 Onyebuchi, T. (2019). *War girls*. Razorbill.
 Riordan, R. (Ed.). (2021). *The cursed carnival and other calamities: New stories about mythic heroes*. Rick Riordan Presents.



Grimes, Nikki. (2021). *Legacy: Women Poets of the Harlem Renaissance*. Bloomsbury Children's Books. 144 pp. GR 6 and up. Poetry.

This anthology embraces experience conveyed by Black Renaissance women poets, each poem followed by Grimes's

original poem in the Golden Shovel form. She selects a key line of the poem whose words resonate with strength on themes of family, community, and Earth Mother and makes each word in the line the last word in each line of the new poem. The bold artwork of contemporary Black women artists accompanying each of the poems adds momentum to this mosaic of women's voices. Front matter provides historical context and an introduction to the Golden Shovel form. The back matter includes the artists' biographies and references and online resources.

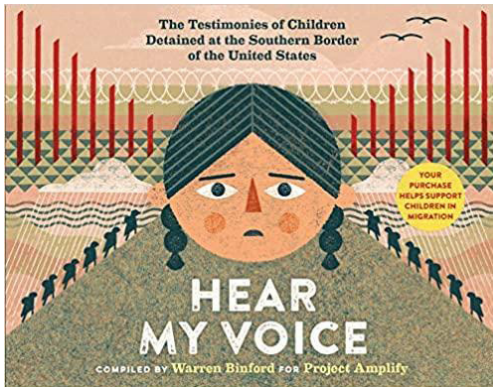
Reviewed by Maria Teresa Manteo

Teaching Suggestions

- Nikki Grimes created poetry from leading or selected lines of existing poems of the poets in her anthology. Have students read poems in the book and select lines that resonate for them. They can work in small groups to select a line from a poem and create poems using the Golden Shovel method.
- Harlem was a destination for African Americans who escaped from the racism in the South. Learn more about conditions that drove the Great Migration at the MoMA website's [One-Way Ticket: Jacob Lawrence's Migration Series](https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1495) (<https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1495>). Conduct a discussion of the promise and perils of the migration from the U.S. South to the North. Also read Langston Hughes's "One-Way Ticket" online and discuss what made Harlem a place of hope and renewal in African American culture.
- Visit [the Poetry Foundation](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/145704/) (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/145704/>) for an introduction to the Harlem Renaissance. Compare the list of poets on the site with the poets featured in *Legacy*. Have students read different poems together. Have students consider themes and the use of language and imagery and decide which women poets they would add to the list.

Related Books

Cline-Ransome, L. (2018). *Finding Langston*. Holiday House.
 Grimes, N. (2017). *One last word*. Bloomsbury.
 Shabazz, I. (with Jackson, T. D.). (2021). *The awakening of Malcolm X*. Farrar Straus Giroux.
 Whitney, D. (Ed.). (2021). *You don't have to be everything*. Workman.



Compiled by Warren Binford for Project Amplify. (2021). *Escucha Mi Voz / Hear My Voice: The Testimonies of Children Detained at the Southern Border of the United States* (Cecilia Ruiz et al., Illus.). Workman. 96 pp. GR 3 and up. Nonfiction.

Written in Spanish and English, this picturebook, read in two directions, highlights testimonies of 61 children, ages 5 to 17, who migrated from Honduras, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Ecuador to escape violence and poverty, but are detained at the U.S.–Mexico border in Clint, Texas. Their interviews reveal their treatment in the detention centers: “We are kept in a cage. It is very crowded. There is no room to move without stepping over others.” Another child explains, “The guards say, ‘Go back to where you came from. You are pigs. You came here to ruin my country.’” A different contemporary Latinx illustrator provides artwork for each child’s story. The children’s heartbreaking testimonies share hopes for reuniting with family and working hard in school. The back matter includes information on the 15 illustrators. *Reviewed by Julia Hillman*

Teaching Suggestions

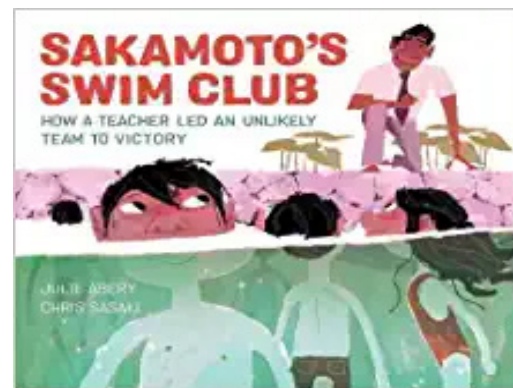
- With the whole class, discuss the terms “migration” and “borders.” Examine borders featured in the book. Use a world map to show and discuss human migration within and across borders. Suggest other borders in the world that experience migration. Highlight the migration patterns of the children and families mentioned in *Hear My Voice*.
- Why do people migrate? Read portions of the book and discuss the question with the whole class. Record students’ responses on chart paper. Research causes of migration from the countries included in the book and

discuss new ideas and understandings that come from the voices in the book.

- Discuss connections between reasons for migration and the pursuit of families’ hopes and dreams. Read the related books and compare the wants, wishes, and hopes of children across stories to your own stories to show the connections among humanity.

Related Books

- Bowles, D. (2021). *My two border towns* (E. Meza, Illus.). Kokila.
- Kuklin, K. (2019). *We are here to stay: Voices of undocumented young adults*. Candlewick.
- Morales, A. (2021). *Areli is a dreamer: A true story* (L. Uribe, Illus.). Random House.
- Perkins, M. (2019). *Between us and Abuela: A family story from the border* (S. Palacios, Illus.). Farrar Straus Giroux.



Abery, Julie. (2021). *Sakamoto’s Swim Club: How a Teacher Led an Unlikely Team to Victory* (Chris Sasaki, Illus.). Kids Can Press. 38 pp. GR PK–2. Picturebook/nonfiction.

From his classroom in Maui in the 1930s, science teacher Soichi Sakamoto observed children of workers in sugar cane fields playing in the cooling irrigation ditches until they were run off by plantation police. Although he wasn’t a strong swimmer, he wanted to help them and decided to teach them to swim using the current of the ditch as resistance, concepts of science, and swimming techniques that he learned. They became such strong swimmers they won competitions. Sakamoto formed a Three-Year Swimming Club, whose members, committed to practice, pursued a dream of swimming in the Olympics. Written as poetry, this nonfiction account of a little-known teacher shows the effects of faith, vision, and commitment. The back

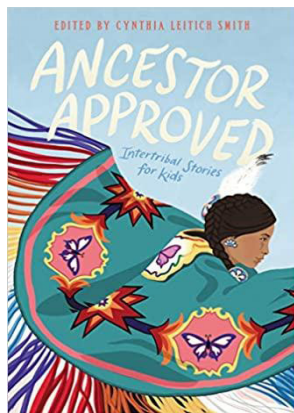
matter includes further information on Sakamoto and the team and references. *Reviewed by Sandip Wilson*

Teaching Suggestions

- Using the references in the back matter, have students research the writers and the articles they wrote about the Swimming Club. Have them discuss what they learn and create a montage of biographies of the different writers and their articles.
- Conduct a discussion of activities students are committed to. After modeling a personal narrative, have students write personal narratives about their activities, creating a collage of narratives for display in the classroom. As an extension, encourage other classes to complete the project and mount a school display.
- The book is written in short rhyming lines. Have students in small groups rehearse selected sections and do a readers' theater, sequencing the readings in a choral montage. One group of students might rehearse reading the back matter as commentators for the readers' theater.

Related Books

- Brown, D. J. (2015). *The boys in the boat: The true story of an American team's epic journey to win gold at the 1936 Olympics*. Viking.
- Riley, S. (2021). *The floating field: How a group of Thai boys built their own soccer field* (N. Quang & K. Lien, Illus.). Millbrook.
- Singh, S. J. (2020). *Fauja Singh keeps going: The true story of the oldest person to ever run a marathon* (B. Kaur, Illus.). Kokila.



Leitich Smith, Cynthia (Ed.). (2021). *Ancestor Approved: Intertribal Stories for Kids*. Heartdrum. 310 pp. GR 3–6. Realistic fiction.

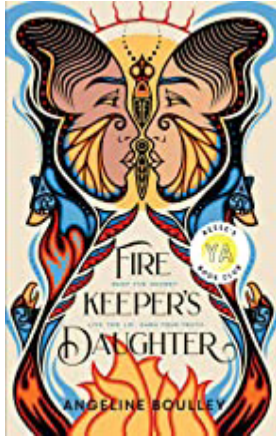
This anthology includes stories shared by 17 Indigenous children (and their families) from Nations in North America who travel to the Earth Mother powwow to celebrate, heal, and inspire. In “Fancy Dancer,” Rory embraces his connection with his Cree ancestry through a new family member. In “Flying Together,” Jessie coaxes her grandpa Lou to dance again after his wife’s passing. In another story, Luksi learns to be a warrior of forgiveness from a Choctaw elder who forgave the boy for stealing her gift card. Mystery, jealousy, and dealing with the unknown appear in stories, leaving readers wanting more. The back matter includes a glossary of words in Tuscarora/Haudenosaunee, Choctaw, Ojibwe, Cherokee, Navajo, Abenaki, and Cree and biographies of the Indigenous contributors. *Reviewed by Julia Hillman*

Teaching Suggestions

- Each week, read one of the short stories from *Ancestor Approved* and create a detailed map charting each character’s journey from their home to Ann Arbor, Michigan. Include a detail about each character such as their name, their tribe, their language, or their hopes.
- Have students research different powwows and take note of what they notice in a journal. As a whole group, discuss the different information everyone gathers.
- Read “What We Know About Glaciers” in *Ancestor Approved* and a related book, *Sharice’s Big Voice*. In a whole-group class discussion, compare Brooke’s and Sharice’s accomplishments and their paths to success.

Related Books

- Bruchac, J. (2021). *Rez dogs*. Dial Books.
- Dauids, S. (with Mays, N. K.). (2021). *Sharice’s big voice: A native kid becomes a Congresswoman* (J. M. Pawls-Steckley, Illus.). HarperCollins.
- Jones, D. S. (2021). *Living ghosts and mischievous monsters: Chilling American Indian stories* (W. Alvitre, Illus.). Scholastic.
- Mallard, K. N. (2019). *Fry bread: A Native-American family story* (J. Martinez-Neal, Illus.). Roaring Brook Press.
- Sorell, T. (2021). *We are still here!: Native American truths everyone should know* (F. Lessac, Illus.). Charlesbridge.



Boulley, Angeline. (2021). *Fire Keeper's Daughter*. Henry Holt. 496 pp. GR 8 and up. Realistic fiction.

Daunis, a biracial, unenrolled tribal member, faces dualities in her heritage, country, family, and friends. She considers her pending acceptance to college, visits her ill and aging grandmother, and reflects on her family. She explains, “We are descendants—rather than enrolled members—of the Sugar Island Ojibwe Tribe” along the U.S.–Canadian border (p. 18). Her father is not listed on her birth certificate, but she regards the Tribe as hers, from the outside looking in (p. 18). After witnessing a heinous crime, she is thrust into an undercover FBI investigation of a new drug and during the investigation learns secrets that cause her to reckon with historical injustices. As a member of the Sault St. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Boulley uses her voice to explore the influence of inaction and tension between government and tribal authority in this timely coming-of-age story that mirrors adolescent experiences while revealing the consequences of history and modern conflicts in the governance of Indigenous people. *Reviewed by Tracey Hodges*

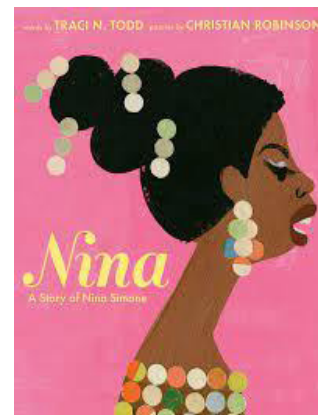
Teaching Suggestions

- View the National Congress of American Indians’ conversation with Angeline Boulley and Louise Erdrich on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0X-uKsdkJ6M>) to allow students to hear the Ojibwe language and learn more about Indigenous culture.
- Have students conduct a WebQuest about the Ojibwe people and allow them to present their research as a poster, podcast, or piece of writing.

- Create a text set about the Ojibwe people, using texts from the Related Books section, as well as others. Provide students time to read and explore the text set and then discuss what they have learned.

Related Books

- Quigley, D. (2021). *Jo Jo Makoons: The used-to-be best friend* (T. Audibert, Illus.). Heartdrum.
- Smith, C. L. (2021). *Ancestor approved: Intertribal stories for kids*. Heartdrum.
- Sorell, T. (2021). *We are still here!: Native American truths everyone should know* (F. Lessac, Illus.). Charlesbridge.



Todd, Traci N. (2021). *Nina: A Story of Nina Simone* (Christian Robinson, Illus.). G.P. Putnam's Sons. 56 pp. GR PK–3. Picturebook/biography.

This biography traces the rise to stardom of Nina Simone, born Eunice Waymon, and chronicles her struggles as a Black artist in the time of Jim Crow segregation laws. After being rejected at the prestigious Curtis Institute, the singer took jobs playing piano in rough New Jersey pubs, adopting her stage name. Audiences flocked to hear her sad and bluesy voice. Her perseverance was rewarded; in 1963, Simone performed at Carnegie Hall, earning a standing ovation. But after Martin Luther King’s assassination, she turned her passion to the cause of social justice, and her voice resounded with “the whole story of Black America for everyone to hear.” Todd’s text is complemented by Robinson’s bold illustrations. The back matter includes biographical detail. *Reviewed by Maria Teresa Manteo*

Teaching Suggestions

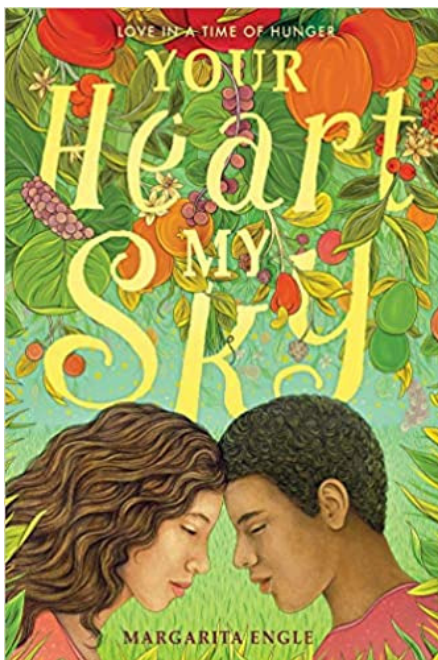
- Have students examine the endpaper and illustrations to find objects that enhance the beauty of the African

American musician. What do these objects say about the singer? Research the events noted in the book and discuss their role in the singer's life promoting social justice.

- The prose is rich in auditory images, which adds to the musical quality of the narrative. Have students find some of these images and illustrate them. Include visual details, such as the use of repetition, color, and pattern, that complement this auditory effect.
- Listen to a sample of Nina Simone's "Ain't Got No, I Got Life" online. Imagine possible situations where each of the lines comes to life. Ask students, "How do the lyrics speak to you?" Sing in a circle, dancing and clapping to the rhythm. Have students write their own songs following the structure of the lyrics.

Related Books

- Brown, M. L., Acevedo, E., & Gatwood, O. (2020). *Woke: A young poet's call to justice* (T. Taylor III, Illus.). Roaring Brook Press.
- De Nichols. (2021). *Art of protest: Creating, discovering, and activating art for your revolution* (D. Dagadita, M. Mendoza, O. Twist, Saddo, & D. Beccas, Illus.). Big Picture Press.
- Kimmelman, L. (2018). *Write on, Irving Berlin* (D. C. Gardner, Illus.). Sleeping Bear Press.
- Levinson, C. (2021). *The people's painter: How Ben Shahn fought for justice with art* (E. Turk, Illus.). Abrams Books.



Engle, Margarita. (2021). *Your Heart, My Sky*. Atheneum. 208 pp. GR 4 and up. Historical fiction novel in verse.

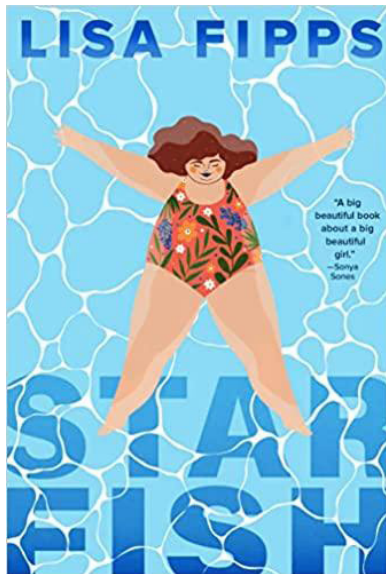
During the 1991 Havana Pan-Am Games, the Cuban government displayed the prosperity of the island country, but many Cubans were left to starve as a result of government hoarding, favored political affiliation, and food shortages. Teens Liana and Amado find each other through a chance encounter in their quests for food. Uniting forces in young love, they devise a plan to escape Cuba in hopes of a better life in the United States, but when the time comes, they must decide whether to risk the water passage of the Florida Straits or stay. Through this story of Cuban history, Engle is a storyteller, poet, and historian of the Cuban experience. Her endnote provides a background of the 1991 Havana Pan-Am Games. *Reviewed by Sharryn Larsen Walker*

Teaching Suggestions

- View a physical map of the Caribbean Sea and the surrounding land. What island nations are in the Caribbean Sea? Look specifically at the Florida Straits. Ask, "Why would those from Cuba choose to cross the Straits to Florida?" How have these crossings influenced the culture of the southern Florida area?
- Real-life newspaper accounts of Cubans crossing the Florida Straits in their attempts to reach the United States are published. Ask pairs of students to read a story found through an Internet search. Have them record their findings in a two-column note sheet. On the left side of the sheet, have them record "What I Noticed." On the right side, have them record "My Thoughts" about what they noticed. When students have completed their notes, have a class discussion and record similarities and differences between the stories of immigration through the Florida Straits.

Related Books

- Behar, R. (2021). *Letters from Cuba*. Nancy Paulsen Books.
- Engle, M. (2010). *The Firefly Letters: A suffragette's journey to Cuba*. Square Fish.
- Gratz, A. (2017). *Refugee*. Scholastic.
- Leatherdale, M. B., & Shakespeare, E. (2017). *Stormy seas: Stories of young boat refugees*. Annick Press.



Fipps, Lisa. *Star Fish*. Nancy Paulsen Books. 249 pp. GR 5–8. Realistic fiction novel in verse.

Ellie, a big beautiful sixth-grade girl, grapples with the challenges of trying to fit in with her peers in her middle school. Her mother and siblings remind Ellie that she needs to change her size, and her mother considers fat-reduction surgery. Ellie learns to starfish while swimming, taking up her space with confidence. With the help of a friend, she finds her voice in facing verbal abuse regarding her weight, and she learns to love herself, standing up for who she is, with the support of her therapist and father. She even finds support from her two best friends. Fipps explains that she utilizes her personal experiences to shed light on the destructive practices of fat-shaming in this novel in verse. *Reviewed by Jeanne Fain*

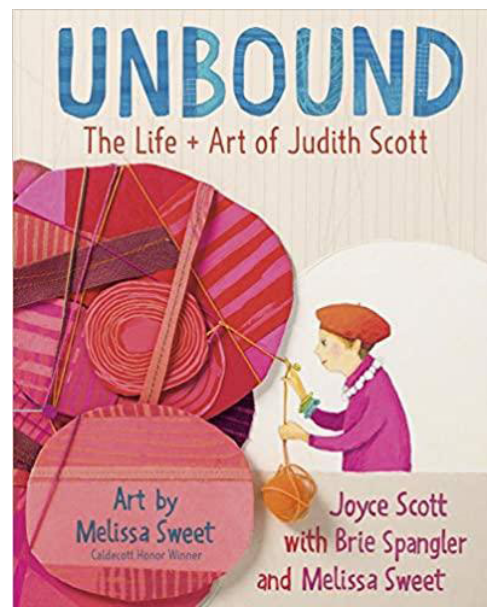
Teaching Suggestions

- Examine and discuss how teenagers are portrayed in the images. What is the range of representation in terms of body image? Discuss the definition of beauty in the media.
- Have students do a quick-write in prose that discusses a moment when they had to overcome a challenge such as bullying or learning to find their voice. They can consider how they might have approached this challenge differently after reading about Ellie.
- Analyze size and standards of beauty in Disney villains. Discuss the issues of standards of beauty in protagonists

(e.g., Cinderella) and antagonists (e.g., Ursula). What differences do students notice? How do these differences influence their thinking about the characters?

Related Books

- Baron, C. (2021). *All of me*. Square Fish.
- Connor, L. (2020). *The truth as told by Mason Buttle*. Katherine Tegen Books.
- LaRocca, R. (2021). *Red, white, and whole*. Quill Tree Books.
- Williams, A. D. (2020). *Genesis begins again*. Atheneum.



Scott, Joyce (with Spangler, Brie, and Sweet, Melissa). (2021). *Unbound: The Life and Art of Judith Scott* (Melissa Sweet, Illus.). Alfred A. Knopf. 48 pp. GR 2 and up. Picturebook/biography.

Twins Judith and Joyce Scott are inseparable during their childhood as they play together, but Judith, who is born deaf with Down syndrome, is sent to an institution where she is denied the right to learn. With beautiful mixed-media illustrations, the biography depicts Joyce's determination to reunite with her sister as an adult. She creates a caring home for Judith and nurtures her creativity, enrolling her in an arts center devoted to serving people with disabilities. Judith flourishes, becoming a talented fiber artist whose unique work is exhibited in museums and galleries. This powerful biography celebrates Judith's strengths as she breaks through limitations imposed on her to inspire others through her art. The back matter includes information on Judith, author's and

illustrator's notes, a timeline, sources, and information on Down syndrome. *Reviewed by Anne Katz*

Teaching Suggestions

- Explore the Creative Growth Art Center website (<https://creativegrowth.org/>), an inclusive art studio where Judith worked five days a week, creating more than 160 sculptures. Learn more about its history (<https://creativegrowth.org/about>) and explore the work of its artists (<https://creativegrowth.org/artists>).
- The back matter includes a timeline of Judith's and Joyce's lives. Have students create a timeline of life events that are important to them; they can include family photos, mementoes and personally meaningful items, and illustrations that remind them of important events.
- In the illustrator's note, Melissa Sweet describes how the "paintings and collages for this book were created with watercolor, colored pencils, and mixed media." She says, "I interpreted Judith's work with found objects, wood, yarn, thread, and twine." Inspired by Judith's work, have students gather materials and supplies to create their own collages or sculptures. They can share their work with a friend and explain its inspiration.

Related Books

- Khalil, A. (2020). *The Arabic quilt: An immigrant story* (A. Semirdzhyan, Illus.). Tilbury House.
- Leung, J. (2020). *Paper son: The inspiring story of Cyrus Wong, immigrant and artist* (C. Sasaki, Illus.). Penguin Random House.
- Levinson, C. (2021). *The people's painter: How Ben Shahn fought for justice with art* (E. Turk, Illus.). Abrams Books for Young Readers.

Trebinčević, Kenan, and Shapiro, Susan. (2021). *World in Between: Based on a True Refugee Story*. Clarion Books. 375 pp. GR 5–8. Realistic fiction.

Kenan, a young Muslim boy, enjoys soccer and friends in his life in Yugoslavia until the Bosnian War suddenly begins. One day, his family watches the news begin reporting about protests and potential disagreements, and the next, they are huddled together in their home, unable to leave the destroyed town. Sharing with unwavering authenticity, Kenan details wartime trauma, seeking refuge in Austria and the United States, and transition-

ing to his new lifestyle. He and his family learn that some people will take advantage of them, but that kind, generous people can also be found everywhere. In his new life, Kenan gets to enjoy soccer, friends, and life with his family in the United States. The author's note states that the book originated from a middle school writing assignment. *Reviewed by Tracey Hodges*

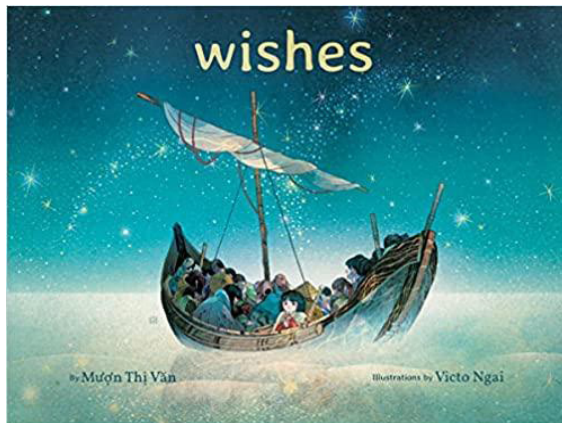
Teaching Suggestions

- Allow students to write a journal about their own experiences with a momentous time in their lives. This journal writing can be integrated with memoir writing as the instructional genre.
- Research the Bosnian War with students. Ask them to create a timeline of events from the book and cross-reference with other sources.
- Create a map detailing locations Kenan and his family traveled and sought refuge. Have students include notes about the language, religions, geographic elements, and other characteristics of each location to compare.

Related Books

- Aleman, D. (2021). *Indivisible*. Little Brown.
- Butler, G. (2021). *Drawn across borders: True stories of human migration*. Candlewick Press.
- Marsh, K. (2018). *Nowhere boy*. MacMillan.
- Yang, K. K. (2021). *From the tops of the trees* (R. Wada, Illus.). Learner Group.





Văn, Mượn Thị. (2021). *Wishes* (Victo Ngai, Illus.). Orchard Books. 40 pp. GR PK–2. Picturebook.

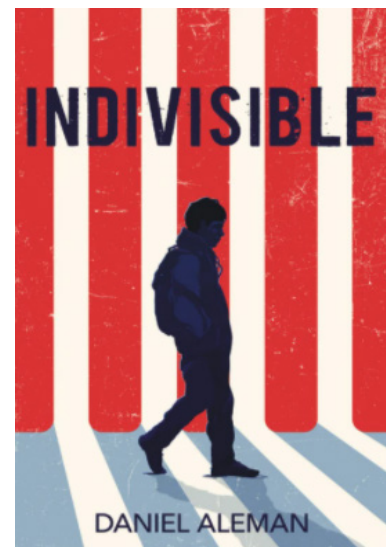
Vibrant illustrations depict a young girl's eventful journey into her immigration story. The young narrator shares her deep despair and grief as she mourns the loss of leaving her home behind. Her family boards a boat that travels treacherous waters. Filled with ambivalence, she learns to leave her past and embrace wishes for her future in this stunning narrative of new journeys. The artist shares the challenges in each illustration, using art to convey the emotions. The back matter includes an extensive note from the author and artist. This realistic fictional story comes from the author's personal experiences when forced to leave Vietnam and leave behind her village. *Reviewed by Jeanne Fain*

Teaching Suggestions

- Have students make a list of future wishes for the young girl in the story. Students can use poetic language to capture the wishes and illustrate them.
- As a class, select a page and analyze the illustration. Look at the use of imagery and color, the positioning of images, and the effects of the illustration on readers. Then, analyze the immigration journey based upon the images. How do the images complement the emotions of the immigrants?
- In her author's note, Văn offers suggestions for supporting refugees. Have students research refugee populations in their area (towns, cities, counties) and what services are available to them. Students may also brainstorm their own ways they can help (e.g., a food drive).

Related Books

- Bowles, D. (2021). *My two border towns* (E. Meza, Illus.). Kokila.
- Morales, A. (2021). *Areli is a dreamer: A true story* (L. Uribe, Illus.). Random House Studio.
- Nguyen, T. L. (2020). *The magic fish*. RH Graphic.
- Phi, B. (2017). *A different pond* (T. Bui, Illus.). Capstone.
- Wang, A. (2021). *Watercress* (J. Chin, Illus.). Neal Porter Books.



Aleman, Daniel. (2021). *Indivisible*. Little Brown. 400 pp. GR 8–11. Realistic fiction.

Mateo works hard, studies hard, and has dreams of being an actor on Broadway, but he lives in fear of ICE and the deportation of his undocumented parents from Mexico. In pondering this possibility, he faces tensions when he sees that many of his classmates do not live with this burden. One day, he returns home from school to find that his parents have been arrested and may be sent back to Mexico, where they have not lived for years. However, he and his sister are American-born, adding complexity to what will happen to the family. This powerful and remarkable novel, authentic and intimate in its exploration of family, sacrifice, hope, and immigration, depicts the daily fears and uncertainties of undocumented families in the United States. *Reviewed by Tracey Hodges*

Teaching Suggestions

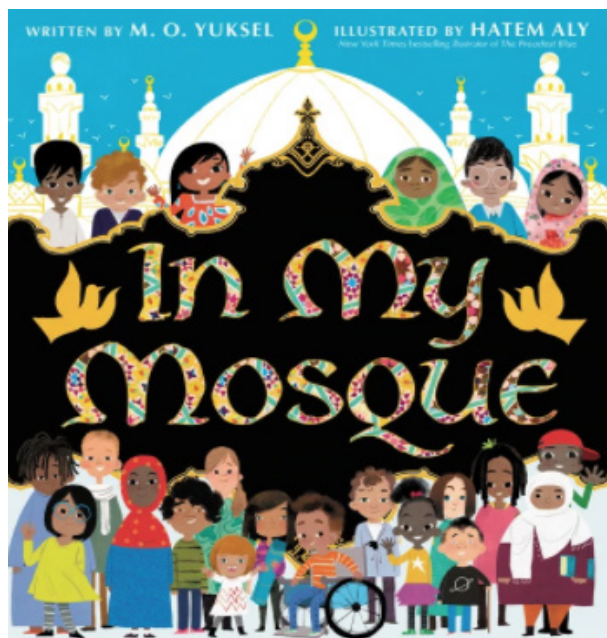
- Performing in theater on Broadway is important to Mateo, and he and his friends get tickets to see *Hamilton*. Have students research this Broadway show or others.

Begin a discussion about what elements of storytelling overlap between *Hamilton* and *Indivisible*.

- Visit the Poetry Foundation's site (<https://www.poetry-foundation.org/learn/children>). Have students in pairs or small groups select a poem, read it, and then discuss how the themes are similar to or different from those they find in *Indivisible*.
- With students, read an interview with the author on Literary Rambles (<http://www.literaryrambles.com/2021/05/debut-author-interview-daniel-aleman.html>). Aleman distinguishes between the legal and political aspects of immigration and the personal and human experiences. Discuss the meaning of rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos) with students and model examples. Have students discuss the appeals they see in the novel and how they contribute to the storytelling.

Related Books

- Binford, W. (compiled for Project Amnesty). (2021). *Hear my voice: The testimonies of children detained at the southern border of the United States*. (Cecilia Ruiz et al., Illus.). Workman.
- Cisneros, E. (2019). *Efren divided*. Harper Collins.
- Morales, A. (2021). *Areli is a dreamer: A true story* (L. Uribe, Illus.). Random House Studio.
- Valdivia, P. (2021). *Nosotros means us: A bilingual story / Un cuento bilingue*. Alfred A. Knopf.



Yuksel, M. O. (2021). *In My Mosque* (Hatem Aly, Illus.). HarperCollins. 40 pp. GR K–2. Picturebook.

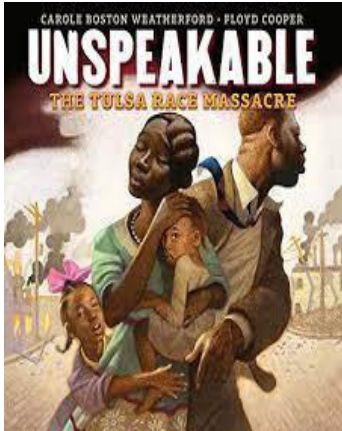
Take a joyful and welcoming tour of mosques around the world in this brightly illustrated picturebook. Serving as an introduction to Islam and the millions of people who gather, pray, and share within these beloved houses of worship, diverse people from around the world are highlighted. The reader can almost hear Muslims from many cultures expressing peace, love, and joy in different accents, just as the narrator's friends pray in churches, temples, and synagogues. In the back matter, Yuksel writes that mosques are hospitable places, and encourages readers to arrange a visit to a mosque, where "peace and blessings [will] be upon you." Also included are a glossary, an author's note, and a list of famous and historic mosques around the world. *Reviewed by Ann Digiacomio*

Teaching Suggestions

- The author identifies the unique mosques illustrated in the book on her website, which includes historically significant mosques in Egypt, China, France, India, and the United States, among several others (<https://www.moyuksel.com/in-my-mosque-resources.html>). Using the author's site and a world map, help students match mosques in the picturebook to their locations around the world. After identifying each mosque's location, help students research which languages are spoken in each of the countries, and discuss how prayer and fellowship may be the same yet different in mosques around the world.
- Students can illustrate or write about their own special places in their community, where they may feel welcome, supported, or loved. Encourage them to include sensory details. Celebrate the stories with the wider school community.

Related Books

- Gonzalez, M. (2017). *Yo soy Muslim: A father's letter to his daughter* (M. Amini, Illus.). Simon & Schuster.
- Penfold, A. (2018). *All are welcome* (S. Kaufman, Illus.). Alfred A. Knopf.
- Rashid, Q. (2021). *Hannah and the Ramadan gift* (A. Jaleel, Illus.). Viking.
- Thompkins-Bigelow, J. (2018). *Mommy's khimar* (E. Glenn, Illus.). Salaam Reads.



Weatherford, Carole Boston. (2021). *Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre* (Floyd Cooper, Illus.). Carolrhoda. 32 pp. GR 2 and up. Picturebook/nonfiction.

Weatherford begins with, “Once upon a time near Tulsa, Oklahoma...” lived a population of Black Indians, freed slaves, and people fleeing the violence and racism of the South. Railroad tracks divided the Black community of Greenwood from white Tulsa. Prosperity from oil fields generated employment, and growth helped the community thrive, with libraries, a hospital, a post office, schools, and many businesses owned and operated by Black residents. The white community became angered that “African Americans could achieve just as much, if not more than whites.” A disagreement between two teenagers, one Black and one white, gave rise to a white mob who looted and burned Greenwood to the ground. About 300 Black people were killed, hundreds were injured, and over 8,000 people were left homeless. *Reviewed by Osha Lynette Smith*

Teaching Suggestions

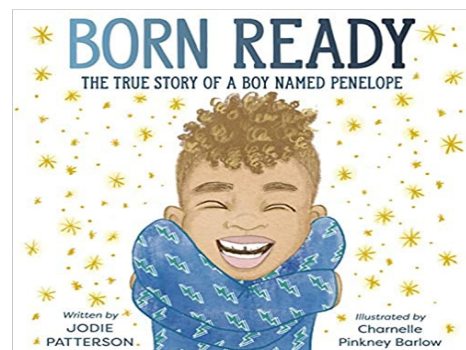
- During a close reading, have students highlight key details of the story to identify the author’s craft. Have them create a timeline with images. Finally, encourage students to write a personal reflection on how the author’s craft impacted the emotions they felt while reading the story.
- Introduce a poetry unit by reading a selection of poetry from *Call Us What We Carry* by Amanda Gorman. Have students brainstorm moments in their lives when something “unspeakable” has happened to them, to someone they knew, or to their environment. Have students write

a poem to reflect on one of those moments. Encourage students to share their poetry in a poetry slam or other open forum.

- Providing clear expectations, have small groups of students discuss what they notice about their world and their experiences in comparison to those depicted in the book. Have students report their points in a T-chart or other presentation. Consider the themes of power, privilege, and bias. This activity may be a personal narrative.

Related Books

- Ball, A. (2021). *Across the tracks: Remembering Greenwood, Black Wall Street, and the Tulsa race massacre*. Abrams ComicArts.
- Latham, J. (2017). *Dreamland burning*. Little Brown.
- Madigan, T. (2021). *The burning: Black Wall Street and the Tulsa race massacre of 1921*. Henry Holt.
- Pink, R. (2021). *Angel of Greenwood*. Feiwel & Friends.



Patterson, Jodie. (2021) *Born Ready: The True Story of a Boy Named Penelope* (Charnelle Pinkney Barlow, Illus.). Crown. 40 pp. GR K–2. Picturebook/biography.

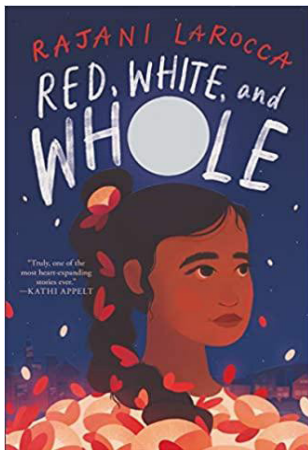
In this colorful picturebook, Penelope tells his own story, and he knows exactly who he is: a young boy who loves karate and pretends to be a ninja. He knows he likes skateboards, high-tops, baggy blue jeans, and button-up shirts. The problem is, everyone else thinks he is a girl because they’re too busy to really see him. When he stomps around, shoving people so he is seen and heard, his mother asks what’s going on. That’s when Penelope musters up the courage to say, “...Mama, I’m a boy.” In explaining who he is, he finds the loving support of his family and community. This empowering story encourages all children to be who they were born to be. *Reviewed by Julia Hillman*

Teaching Suggestions

- Read the related book *Outside, Inside* and discuss the theme of the story. Discuss connections that can be made between *Outside, Inside* and *Born Ready*.
- Read the related book *Calvin* and summarize Penelope's and Calvin's stories and as a class discuss the connections between the two. Then, have students work in pairs to compare the individuals and their stories.
- Read the related book *Be Your Own Best Friend Forever*. Make connections across the books to inspire self-love, empathy, and understanding of differences.

Related Books

- Ford, J. R., & Ford, V. (2021). *Calvin* (K. Harryn, Illus.). G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Pham, L. (2021). *Outside, inside*. Roaring Brook Press.
- Robinson, G. (2021). *Be your own best friend forever*. 7th Generation.



LaRocca, Rajani. (2021). *Red, White, and Whole*. Quilltree Books. 217 pp. GR 5–8. Realistic fiction.

Cyndi Lauper sang that “girls just want to have fun” in 1983, and middle schooler Reha wholeheartedly agrees. But Reha is weighed down with the burden of being the only Indian American in her school and living up to her immigrant parents’ high and more traditional expectations at home and in their community. In this novel in verse, Reha works to balance the American and Indian complexities of her identity with her friends and parents. When her mother falls ill with leukemia, Reha reflects on how red and white blood cells can work together to heal her mother and what she might do to help. Although the book is not

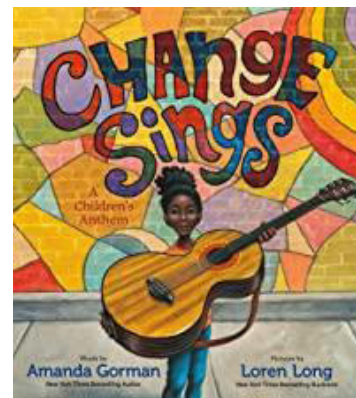
a memoir, LaRocca uses many of her own experiences as an immigrant growing up in the 1980s. *Reviewed by Mary Ellen Oslick*

Teaching Suggestions

- Watch an author interview on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/ptzeK93ucNo>). Discuss how the interview helps readers understand the characters in the book. What are some additional questions students would like to ask?
- 1980s pop culture is important to Reha: “Pop music connects us—all of my friends, everyone I know, Indian and not” (p. 47). Have students look up the lyrics for the song titles used throughout the book; they can then consider why these songs were significant to Reha (and the author).
- Have students construct their own bio-poems after discussing their description on the website Facing History and Ourselves (<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/biopoem-identity-poetry>). Students can read their poems to the whole class. Each reader is assigned a “responder.” After the bio-poem is read aloud, the responder comments about something they heard that was particularly interesting or surprising.

Related Books

- Bailar, S. (2021). *Obie is man enough*. Crown Books.
- Faruqi, R. (2021). *Unsettled*. HarperCollins.
- Fipps, L. (2021). *Starfish*. Nancy Paulsen Books.



Gorman, Amanda. (2021). *Change Sings: A Children's Anthem* (Loren Long, Illus.). Viking. 32 pp. GR 1–3. Picturebook.

Join the First Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman and illustrator Loren Long as they invite readers to partici-

pate in the parade of social change and civic engagement. Through the lyrical verse of the anthem and fluidity of the illustrations, readers are shown examples of working in their communities and offering support to others. The active engagement portrayed and the thoughtful illustrations draw readers to collectively march onward while singing the anthem of Gorman's words. Gorman's choice of the couplet poetic form presents a strong, forceful call to engage in one's community through the rhythm of the melody. The anthem closes with an invitation for readers to join in. Although this is a picturebook, the topic of the book is appropriate for all grade levels. *Reviewed by Sharryn Larsen Walker*

Teaching Suggestions

- View Gorman's 2020 inaugural poem, "The Hill We Climb," with the class (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ055iLiN4>). Ask students to listen to her reading by analyzing her intonation, fluency, cadence, expressiveness, and attire. Have students discuss reasons for choices she made in the delivery.
- View the Poetry Out Loud website (<https://www.poetryoutloud.org/>) with the class and review the competition criteria for reading with students. As a class, discuss how presentations available on the website illustrate criteria. Ask students how they could use the criteria in their own presentations.
- Suggestions for poems to recite are on the Poetry Out Loud website (<https://www.poetryoutloud.org/>). Have students work in pairs to select and practice the delivery of a poem using what they learned from Gorman's book and the Poetry Out Loud criteria. Suggest they practice one or more of the criteria for reading. Have students recite their poems in person or in a recording.

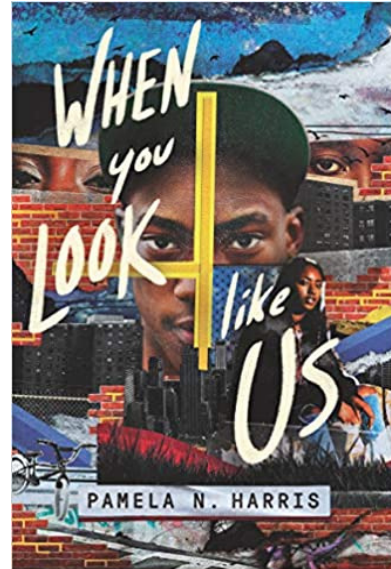
Related Books

Chambers, V., & the Staff of the *New York Times*. (2020). *Finish the fight: The brave and revolutionary women who fought for the right to vote*. Versify.

Hale, C. (2019). *Todos iguales: Un corrido de Lemon Grove / All equal: A ballad of Lemon Grove*. Lee & Low Books.

Klein, N. (2021). *How to change everything*. Atheneum Books.

McDivitt, L. (2021). *A plan for the people: Nelson Mandela's hope for his nation* (C. Palmer, Illus.). Eerdman's.



Harris, Pamela N. *When You Look Like Us*. Quill Tree Press. 368 pp. GR 9–12. Realistic fiction.

Harris chronicles the story of Nicole, a young Black girl from the projects who suddenly goes missing. Thoughts intensify as Nicole's brother, Jay, hangs up when Nicole calls pleading for help. The plot unfolds with pertinent background about Nicole and her drug-dealing boyfriend. The situation becomes disturbing as the Newport News police department does not take Nicole's disappearance seriously and the officer in charge voices stereotypical comments and misperceptions as Jay tries to enlist his help in locating Nicole. While Jay deals with his demons as he imagines the worst, his friend, Riley, supports him on his dangerous quest. Harris gives a realistic look into the life of an inner-city Black youth who knows that "when you look like us," the world thinks whatever trouble you are in was brought on by yourself, and you deserve whatever happens.

Reviewed by Osha Lynette Smith

Teaching Suggestions

- During reading-aloud sessions, have students make predictions about what they think happened to Nicole. Students can argue their predictions and support them in small groups.
- Prepare students to think and write about connections they make between the characters and their communities. Have students work in pairs to share related experiences.

- As students read this novel, ask them to consider the overarching themes they find in the book. Have them list these themes in their reading journals, making sure they include text evidence to support their themes, for later small-group discussion. As a class, discuss the themes and write an argument to support the choice of themes.
- As a culminating project, have students design a CD cover and create a playlist of 10 or more songs that relate to the events in the novel. The titles can be original songs or popular songs that fit the criteria.

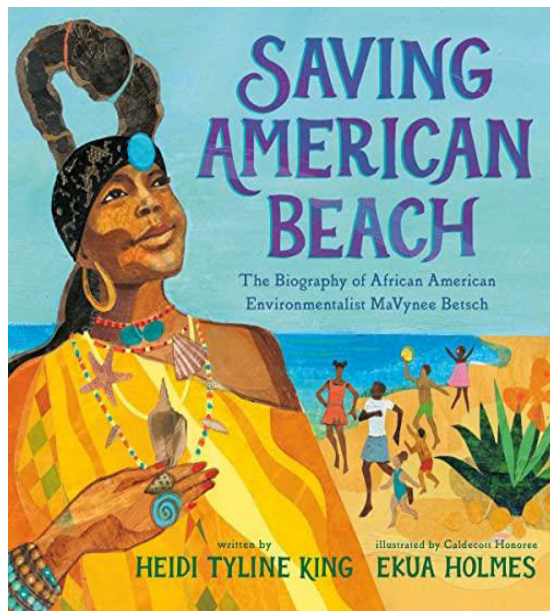
Related Books

Johnson, K. (2020). *This is my America*. Random House.

Moulite, M., & Moulite, M. (2021). *One of the good ones*. Ink-yard Press.

Stone, N. (2020). *Dear Justyce*. Crown.

Thomas, A. (2021). *Concrete rose*. Balzer & Bray.



King, Heidi Tyline. (2021). *Saving American Beach: The Biography of African American Environmentalist MaVynee Betsch* (Ekua Holmes, Illus.). G. P. Putnam's Sons. 40 pp. GR 2 and up. Biography.

MaVynee Betsch's work as an environmentalist was shaped by a childhood spent on beach land her great-grandfather, Abraham Lincoln Lewis, had purchased for African

Americans to enjoy near Jacksonville, Florida. Inspired by the melodies of the ocean and influenced by her grandfather's belief that a beach should be open for everyone to enjoy, Betsch grew up to study music and sing stories as opera singer around the world. This beautifully illustrated biography details Betsch's journey from international opera singer back to American Beach, where she dedicated her life as an activist. Her letter writing, speeches, and marches inspired others and saved American Beach from destruction.

Reviewed by Anne Katz

Teaching Suggestions

- Established in 2014, the A. L. Lewis Museum has information on the legacy of American Beach (<https://americanbeachmuseum.org/origins-and-history/>). In pairs or small groups, have students explore the origins, history, timeline, and photos of American Beach on the website. Have each group report on their findings.
- Explore "American Beach: Then and Now" at the A. L. Lewis Museum website (<https://americanbeachmuseum.org/then-and-now/>) and have students discuss what they learn from exploring resources. Why was preserving this piece of history so important to MaVynee Betsch?
- *School Library Journal* features a conversation between Peri Frances, the niece of MaVynee Betsch, and Heidi Tyline King and Ekua Holmes in which they describe the lesson they want readers to take away from the book. As a class, read the conversation (<https://www.slj.com/?detailStory=a-conversation-with-heidi-tyline-king-and-ekua-holmes-creators-behind-saving-american-beach>) to examine lessons the author and illustrator would like readers to have. What lessons do students take away from this book?

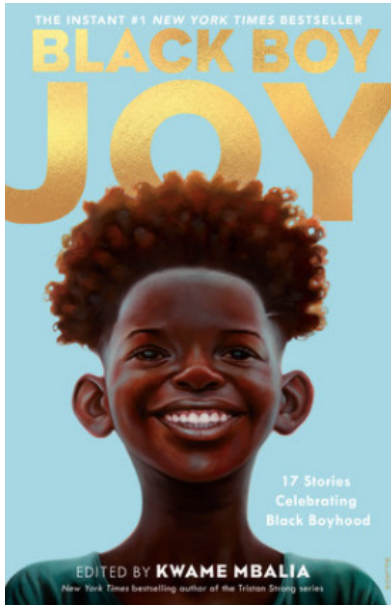
Related Books

Cline-Ransome, L. (2020). *The power of her pen: The story of groundbreaking journalist Ethel L. Payne* (J. Parra, Illus.). Paula Wiseman Books.

Grimes, N. (2021). *Legacy: Women poets of the Harlem Renaissance*. Bloomsbury.

Lindstrom, C. (2020). *We are water protectors* (M. Goade, Illus.). Roaring Brook Press.

Prévot, F. (2015). *Wangari Maathai: The woman who planted millions of trees* (A. Fronty, Illus.). Charlesbridge.



Mbalia, Kwame (Ed.). (2021). *Black Boy Joy*. Delacorte Press. 310 pp. GR 4 and up. Realistic fiction short story collection.

This collection in three parts of 17 stories by celebrated contemporary African American authors begins and ends with Fortitude Jones, who discovers that “joy is the center of everything. Just have to coax it out,” according to his mentor, Mr. G. In this collection of fantasy and realistic fiction, the boys discover themselves in their relationships, and explore their talents, hopes, and disappointments in stories that are funny, poignant, and thought-provoking. In “First-Day Fly” by Jason Reynolds, the character carefully describes his preparations for the first day of school as he reflects on his school life. Stories show how characters find joy where they do not expect it in the small things of their lives. The back matter includes biographies of the 17 contributing authors. *Reviewed by Sandip Wilson*

Teaching Suggestions

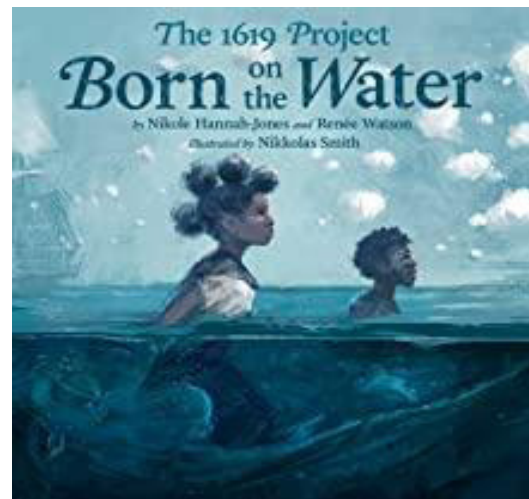
- The short stories are candidates for reading aloud and readers’ theater. After reading them aloud, conduct whole-group discussions and have students select a story to read as readers’ theater. Share guidelines on pointers for readers’ theater from the Literacy Nest (<https://www.theliteracynest.com/2013/12/guidelines-for-performing-readers-theater.html>).
- Select and read a story with students, telling them that they are going to rewrite the ending. Discuss

endings of stories they have read to explore ways authors end stories. Have students work in small groups to rewrite endings.

- While reading a story, show students that sometimes authors will go from one scene to the next leaving out details. Read aloud a story, then a story’s section in which the author goes from one scene to the next. Have students work in pairs to select scenes to narrate the story between those two scenes.

Related Books

- Clayton, D., Jackson, T. D., Stone, N., Thomas, A., Woodfolk, A., & Yoon, N. (2021). *Blackout*. Quill Tree Books.
- Hudson, W., & Hudson, C. W. (Eds.). (2021). *The talk: Conversations about race, love and truth*. Crown.
- Joseph, F. (2020). *The Black friend: On being a better white person*. Candlewick.
- Oh, E. (Ed.). (2017). *Flying lessons and other stories*. Crown.



Hannah-Jones, Nikole, and Watson, Renée. (2021). *Born on the Water: The 1619 Project* (Nikkolas Smith, Illus.). Kokila. 48 pp. GR 2 and up. Picturebook.

A young African American girl feels ashamed by the question “Who are you?” in a school assignment since she does not know her family’s story beyond three generations. Her grandmother gathers the family and shares the painful but uplifting history of her family. The illustrations depict the story in verse, telling of a time in 1619 when ancestors lost their freedom, names, and homes in Africa, kidnapped and transported to

North America on the ship *White Lion*. “Ours is no immigration story,” the girl’s grandmother says, as she describes how people died during the journey and how their lives remained painful for generations, requiring new meanings for Kimbundu words for “love,” “family,” “joy,” and “home.” But Grandma says, “Be proud! You come from strong people who survived and thrived.” *Reviewed by Osha Lynette Smith*

Teaching Suggestions

- Before reading the book, preteach vocabulary needed for comprehension, such as “legacy,” “immigration,” and “equality.” Students can develop meanings of the vocabulary from what they already know, adding information and new vocabulary as they read.
- Create a text set with related books or articles. Have students keep a reading journal for reflections during and after reading. Provide open-ended questions for writing, such as “What do you notice? What questions do you have?” Students can also include illustrations in their journals.
- Since students may not understand that Africa is a continent, have them select a country in Africa to study, after viewing a map of the continent and referring to the related book *Africa, Amazing Africa*. To present their research, have students select an option such as a written or verbal report, illustrations, or an infographic.

Related Books

- Atinuke. (2021). *Africa, amazing Africa* (M. Feddag, Illus.). Candlewick Press.
- Clarke, B. (2021). *When we say Black lives matter*. Candlewick.
- Gorman, A. (2021). *Call us what we carry*. Viking.
- Reynolds, J., & Kendi, I. (2021). *Stamped for kids: Racism, anti-racism and you* (R. Baker, Illus.). Little Brown.

Young, Brian. (2021). *Healer of the Water Monster*. Heartdrum. 362 pp. GR 5–8. Fiction.

Twelve-year-old Nathan visits his Navajo grandmother’s summer place in New Mexico, where he has no Internet to connect with his friends and no running water for a science project he is to conduct, planting traditional and modern corn in the arid earth. During his planting, he meets spirits of the land, a toad in a turquoise necklace, a spider who befriends him, and Pond, the

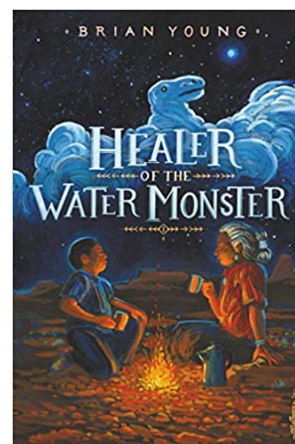
water monster who is growing weak and needs Nathan to save him. Learning that spirits speak only to children, Nathan finds he is chosen to travel to other worlds to save Pond in this coming-of-age novel of family, courage, and finding one’s strength. The back matter includes a glossary of Diné/Navajo terms and sentences included in the novel. *Reviewed by Sandip Wilson*

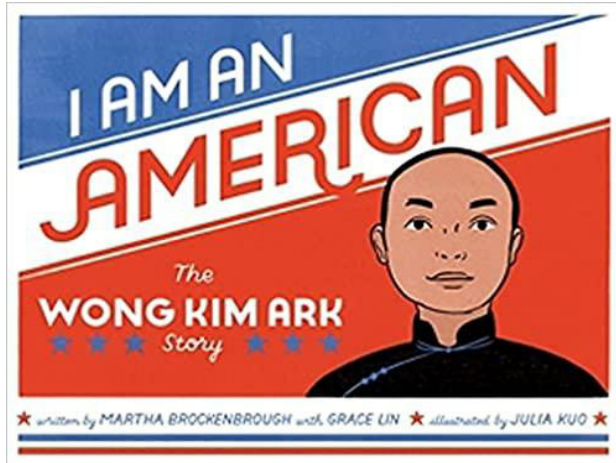
Teaching Suggestions

- Nathan meets divine spirits who help him. Have students write narratives from the points of view of two or more of the spirits to address an issue students face in school. What would the spirits say to advise and guide the students in addressing the issues?
- Nathan’s story might be considered a hero’s quest. Introduce stages of the hero’s quest cycle and have students select sections of the novel to show how Nathan takes the journey and learns about his own strengths and his relationships. Students might illustrate the scenes and organize them in a hero’s quest sequence.
- Have students work in pairs or small groups and read aloud passages of Nathan’s story. Have them draw the passage in sketch to stretch or picture-mapping activities to complete a visual depiction of the scene.

Related Books

- Cisneros, E. (2020). *Efren divided*. Harper.
- Jones, D. S. (2021). *Living ghosts and mischievous monsters: Chilling American Indian stories* (W. Alvitre, Illus.). Scholastic Press.
- Little Badger, D. (2021). *A snake falls to Earth*. Levine Querido.
- Rivera, K. (2021). *Cece Rios and the desert of souls*. Harper.





Brockenbrough, Martha (with Lin, Grace). (2021). *I Am an American: The Wong Kim Ark Story* (Julia Kuo, Illus.). Little Brown. 32 pp. GR 3–5. Picturebook/biography.

Wong Kim Ark was born to Chinese immigrants in San Francisco in 1873, but finding life continued discrimination in the United States, his parents returned to China in 1890. Wong visited them briefly and returned to San Francisco but, missing them, traveled again in 1894. Returning in 1895, Wong was detained, although he had identification papers as prescribed under the 1892 Geary Act. Wong fought his detention, claiming that under the 14th Amendment, he was an American citizen. The 1898 landmark decision in favor of Wong said that since he was born in the United States, he had American birthright. Kuo's striking illustrations in red and black highlight Wong in each illustration. The timeline included in the back matter provides a progression of Wong's life and decisions that affected Chinese immigrants and Chinese American citizens. *Reviewed by Sharryn Larsen Walker*

Teaching Suggestions

- Have students research the exclusionary acts directed toward those of Asian ancestry. Create a class timeline of the acts, discovering when they were enacted, when they were rescinded, and the rationale behind the acts (<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/immigration/chinese/exclusion/>).
- There are many documents available for viewing at the Library of Congress website (<https://www.loc.gov/>). Have students find the documents related to the exclusionary acts there. Ask them to discuss how those acts affected the lives of people of Asian ancestry. They can also discuss the residual effects of the acts as evidenced in contemporary life.
- Research Angel Island, a West Coast immigration entry station (https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=468). Ask, "Why was Angel Island established? What is the history of Angel Island? How was its purpose like and different from the purpose of Ellis Island?"

Related Books

- Bausum, A. (2009). *Denied, detained, deported: Stories from the dark side of American immigration*. National Geographic.
- Chee, T. (2020). *We are not free*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Freedman, R. (2014). *Angel Island: Gateway to Gold Mountain*. Clarion.

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PUBLISHERS AND IMPRINTS SUPPORTING THE 2022 NOTABLE BOOKS FOR A GLOBAL SOCIETY

ABRAMS:	Creston Books	Lee & Low Books:	Dial Books for Young Readers	Scholastic:
Abrams Appleseed	Disney:	Children's Book Press	Dutton Books	Graphix
Abrams Books	Disney Hyperion	Cinco Punto Press	G. P. Putnam's Sons	Orchard Books
ABRAMS Books for Young Readers	Rick Riordan Presents	Tu Books	Kokila	PUSH
Abrams ComicArts	Flyaway Books	Lerner Group:	Make Me a World	Scholastic Press
Amulet Books	Greystone Books	Carolrhoda Books	Nancy Paulsen Books	Simon & Schuster:
Getty Publications	Groundwood Books:	Carolrhoda LAB	Penguin	Aladdin
Harry N. Abrams	House of Anansi Press	Millbrook Press	Penguin Workshop	Atheneum Books
Amazon Publishing:	HarperCollins:	Twenty-First Century Books	Philomel Books	Atheneum Books for Young Readers
Amazon Crossing Kids	Balzer + Bray	Zest Books	Razorbill	Beach Lane Books
Annick Press	Greenwillow Books	Levine Querido:	Rise x	Caitlyn Dlouhy Books
Bloomsbury:	Harper	Arthur A. Levine	Viking	Denene Millner Books
Bloomsbury Children's Books	HarperTeen	Little Brown:	Pomelo Books:	Margaret K. McElderry Books
Bloomsbury YA	Heartdrum	Little, Brown Books for Young Readers	Yuzue	Paula Wiseman Books
Boyd's Mills & Kane:	Katherine Tegen Books	Macmillan Publishers:	Random House:	Salaam Reads
Boyd's Mills Press	Quill Tree Books	Farrar, Straus and Giroux	Alfred A. Knopf	Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers
Calkins Creek	Walden Pond Press	Feiwei & Friends	Crown	Simon Spotlight
Candlewick Press:	HighWater Press	First Second	Crown Books	Sleeping Bear Press
MIT Kids Press	Houghton Mifflin Harcourt:	Godwin Books	Delacorte Press	Wm. B. Eerdmans:
Walker Books	Clarion Books	Henry Holt	Doubleday Books	Eerdmans Books for Young Readers
Capstone:	Etch	Make Your Mark	RH Graphic	Workman
Capstone Editions	HMH Books for Young Readers	Roaring Brook Press	Rodale Kids	
Charlesbridge:	Versify	Penguin Random House:	Schwartz & Wade Books	
Charlesbridge Teen	Kane Miller	Dial Books	Wendy Lamb Books	
Chronicle Books	Kids Can Press:			
	Citizen Kid			



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

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

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:

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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>**

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