



WOW REVIEW

VOLUME X, ISSUE 1

Fall 2017

Changes, Choices, and Difficult Transitions

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WOW Review: Volume X Issue 1

Fall 2017

A World of Changes, Choices, and Difficult Transitions

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Volume X Issue 1: A World of Changes, Choices, and Difficult Transitions

Introduction and Editor's Note:

This issue presents reviews of books with the potential for deep thought as well as inquiry. For younger readers, there are books such as *Life According to Dani* and *The Upside Down Boy/El Niño de Cabeza*, showing us the world through the perspectives of children who must negotiate life changes that seem too big for them. For older readers, there are books like *Beck*, *I am Not a Dunce*, *Sunny*, and *The Bone Sparrow*, which present both current and historical situations that young people have had to overcome on their way to belonging (to others and to the world). Finally, there is *Half a Man* and *Talking Leaves*, two stories that present readers with situations that will both enlighten as well as provoke inquiry into historical events that changed the world.

The books in this issue contain difficult situations that readers may find disconcerting. The world is filled with such disequilibrium, and by reading the truth of others' experiences and situations, we have the opportunity to make choices that might lead to more acceptance, more kindness, and more understanding that can change the world.

Readers are invited to submit reviews for our next issues:

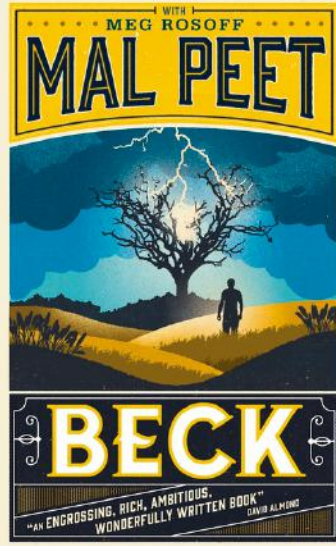
Winter 2017-2018: (Submission Deadline: November, 30, 2017) "The World in the Early 20th Century". Review books that present the years between 1900 and 1936 in any part of the world. Books about global topics such as world-wide immigration, the Great Depression, WWI, the Great Migration, the Russian Revolution, Spanish influenza pandemic, opening of the Panama Canal, Chinese Communism establishment, the race to the North Pole, and Hitler's ascent to power, and open up this time period around the world to readers.

Spring 2018: (Submission Deadline: January 30, 2018) – Open Issue. Submit reviews of recent children's and young adult books that highlight intercultural understanding and global perspectives.

Summer 2018: (Submission Deadline: April 30, 2018) – Moral/Ethical Dilemmas: Books that highlight dilemmas of conscience or situations that present aspects of communities and societies that conflict with traditional thinking or ways of behaving.

Happy and Thoughtful Reading!

Holly Johnson, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH



Beck

Written by Mal Peet with Meg Rosoff

Walker Books, 2016, 267 pp.

ISBN: 978-1-4063-3112-7

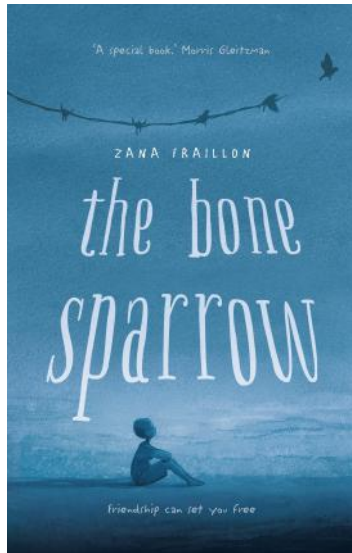
What happens when a young person is separated from family and country during the first part of the 20th century? This historical fiction novel is the story of Beck, the biracial son of a sex worker. Beck is orphaned in Liverpool after his entire family is wiped out by the flu. He is taken in by the Sisters of Mercy, who are not so merciful, and then pawned off on the Christian Brothers, whose actions are less than Christian. Beck is then sent to Canada to work as an indentured servant in Ontario. His journey is one of abject suffering with glimpses of temporary hope when he becomes part of a bootleg gang. Throughout these hardships remains the hope of finding love in the world.

This is a tough text. Within the first 55 pages, the issues raised include prostitution, drug addiction, mental illness, death, sexual abuse in the workplace, racism, death, pedophilia, and rape. While this all sounds rather overwhelming, Beck is a meditation on belonging. It could be an interesting atmospheric novel to read, as there is dialogue written in different dialects -- Scouse, Irish, and old-fashioned Canadian. There are also the settings -- the quays of Liverpool and the wilderness of Eastern Canada -- which are bleak and unappealing. The historical setting shows the reader how the British used the colonies as a dumping ground for “undesirables.” There are also the particular kinds of British and Canadian racism, which were different from the US, where slavery was the most definitive aspect of history.

Beck could be read as a critique of our present times in the Anglo world. There are pedophilic and sadistic Catholic clergy, unaccompanied minors entering North America, and the despair that can ravage a populace. To further explore the issues of this text, it could be paired with such “classic” novels as *The Color Purple* (2003) by Alice Walker or any of Charles Dickens' works. Other readings could include *The Smell of Other People's Houses* (2017) by Bonnie Sue Hitchcock and *In the Storm* (2011) by Karen Metcalfe.

This novel was started by the late Mal Peet and finished by Meg Rosoff. Both authors are famous in the United Kingdom for such award-winning novels as *Tamar* (Peet, 2007) and *How I Live Now* (Rosoff, 2006). *Beck* was shortlisted for the Carnegie Medal.

Melissa Wilson, Leeds Trinity University, Leeds, United Kingdom



The Bone Sparrow

Written by Zana Fraillon

Disney Hyperion, 2016, 240 pp.

ISBN: 978-1484781517

“Luck is like that. You have to know it is coming to see it when it does” (p. 178).

Written for young adults, *The Bone Sparrow* tells the story of Subhi, a boy living in an Australian detention center. Subhi was born in the detention center, where he lives with his mother and sister, Noor. While there, he meets a girl named Jimmie from the outside. Both Subhi and Jimmie are growing up in isolated conditions. Subhi lacks freedom, his mother is ill, and his sister struggles to survive within the center. Jimmie's mother has died and her father works long hours, so she is alone most of the time. Jimmie brings notebooks written by her mother for Subhi to read to her. It is through reading that they form a strong bond.

Subhi is a Rohingya Muslim, and the Myanmar Government does not consider them to be Burmese citizens, deporting many of them to different places across the world. Australia is one location where these refugees have been sent. The Rohingya Muslims are a currently persecuted ethnic group who are in danger of being intentionally eradicated. They are denied basic human rights, including the right to their own language (Amnesty International).

This text deals with issues of inequity, namely a minority population being endangered by a more powerful population that won't allow them to earn a living wage or to acquire an education, resulting in systematic removal from their homeland. As a work of realistic fiction, the characters allow the reader into their world and their unique perspectives. Subhi is a highly imaginative child who knows nothing of life outside of the detention center he was born into. Jimmie is sorrowful and independent. The most successful aspect of the text is the way life is depicted in the detention center. The reader gets to learn about the culture of a detention center. We have a clear sense of the rigidity of the culture when the guards are labeled "the Jackets," "Beta Compound" is described as the "loneliest place on earth," there are "electric fences" that must be navigated, and even underwear is only available through theft (p. 26). Jimmie has to navigate the fence in order to see Subhi and have him read to her. It is in this navigation that Fraillon creates a realistic portrayal of separation, where one is isolated and others are not. This power structure allows the reader to understand what it may be like for refugees.

According to Fraillon, the novel is about the critical issue of the treatment of asylum seekers around the world, but specifically addresses asylum seekers within the Australian system. Other books that may interest readers are: *City of Thorns: Nine Lives in the World's Largest Refugee Camp* by Ben Rawlence (2016); *The Good Braider* by Terry Farish (2012); *Four Feet, Two Sandals* by Karen Williams and Khandra Mohammed (2007); and *Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family's Journey* by Margriet Ruurs (2016) and Falah Raheem (Translator). These books are about people living in refugee camps. These texts about refugee life

allow readers to understand how detention centers and refugee camps are global human rights issues that extend beyond the Australian setting of Fraillon's text.

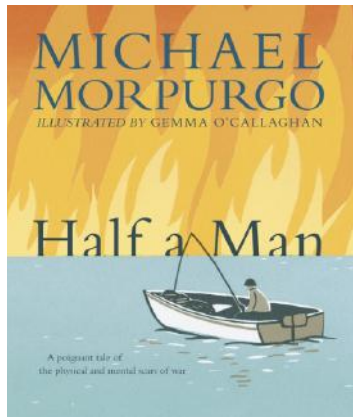
Fraillon, a voracious lifelong reader, is a native Australian and currently lives in Melbourne. After studying history at university, she worked as an Integration Aid, then a primary teacher, before becoming a writer. *The Bone Sparrow* won the 2017 Australian Book Industry Award Book of the Year for Older Children. In writing *The Bone Sparrow*, Fraillon researched on the internet, including news articles and redacted incident reports from detention centers, to increase the authenticity of her text. While writing the story, pictures drawn by children living in the real conditions became the research tool that provided the most information represented in the text. As Fraillon researched information about refugees and detention, she decided to give Subhi a Rohingya identity, and the text was inspired by the article, "Indefinite detention for mother of three judged a security risk" (2013) by Daniel Flitton and Michael Gordon. More information on the author can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWEL_y7SRRO and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnCmO4_fpq4.

Amber Gordon, University of New Mexico, Taos, New Mexico

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Amnesty International. (2016). *Who are the Rohingya refugees*. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org.au/who-are-the-rohingya-refugees/>

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Half a Man

Written by Michael Morpurgo

Illustrated by Gemma O'Callaghan

Candlewick Press, 2015, 54 pp.

ISBN: 9780763680916

“He was right about a lot of things. But he wasn’t half a man.” (p. 53)

Michael’s grandfather comes to visit his family in London from his home in the Scilly Isles once every few years. However, it is not the rarity of his visits that causes the most stress, but his physical appearance, which causes everyone to be “on eggshells.” Michael’s grandfather was burned badly and lost most of both hands when his ship was torpedoed and sank during WWII. Despite the severity of the injuries, no one really knows the story of what caused them. All Michael knows is that he is not supposed to look at his grandfather and staring is definitely not allowed. Yet Michael cannot help but engage with his grandfather. From the first sentence, readers are drawn into seven-year-old Michael’s thoughts as he reflects on growing up with a rather unusual, somewhat taciturn, alienated grandfather.

As the story progresses, Michael’s relationship with his grandfather grows. When he is 12 years old, Michael begins visiting his grandfather in Bryher during summer breaks. Over the next six years, Michael gains an appreciation for his grandfather and the rural isles of his grandfather’s home. Michael has always been able to see past the scars, and that ability helps heal the emotional scars, as well. By the end of the story, Michael learns why he never knew his grandmother, what truly happened to his grandfather, the realities of coming home injured from war, and, most of all, that his grandfather is much more than half a man.

This book would be perfect for young adults ages 10 and up. While the story is a quick and easy read, the ideas within the book are deep and meaningful. This book could easily be used as an introduction to wartime poetry or literature. You could pair this book with any number of war movies or clips like *The Hurt Locker* (2008) or *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946). One movie to pair this with for older students is *The Man Without a Face* (1993) starring Mel Gibson. You could combine one of those movies and this young adult book with *The Odyssey* by Homer or *Corlianus* by Shakespeare to create a unit on returning home from war or the physical and psychological toll of war. You could invite students into discussions or Socratic seminars about PTSD, the hardships of returning to “normal” life and the lasting effects war has on not only the soldier, but everyone he encounters. Linking this book to a novel like *The Impossible Knife of Memory* (2014) by Laurie Halse Anderson or even books like *Catching Fire* (2009) or *Mockingjay* (2010) by Suzanne Collins could allow for greater discussion and more connections when dealing with characters struggling with PTSD and the emotional, psychological, and physical fallout of war.

Michael Morpurgo is a master storyteller and from the first line, readers are reminded of his talent to engage others in his stories. Growing up in England, the son of a soldier and a soldier himself, and having done his own research and interviewing soldiers for his masterpiece *War Horse* (1982), Morpurgo definitely has insight into the sadness that one can expe-

rience when coming home from the front. Morpurgo weaves a tale that starts with a boy at the age of 7 and follows his life and progression of understanding through high school graduation. Contrasting the life of a boy in London with that of a grandfather in a rural town is genius, and Morpurgo, being from England and having spent a majority of his life in both city and rural settings, uses the contrast to add to the authenticity of the story.

Michael Morpurgo lives in Devon, England with his wife Clare. He has written over 140 books and has just completed a new book called *Toto* (2017), which is a new take on the story of *The Wizard of Oz*. He is best known for his novel *War Horse* (1982), which became a Broadway play and a major motion picture. You can learn more about him at his website: <https://www.michaelmorpurgo.com>.

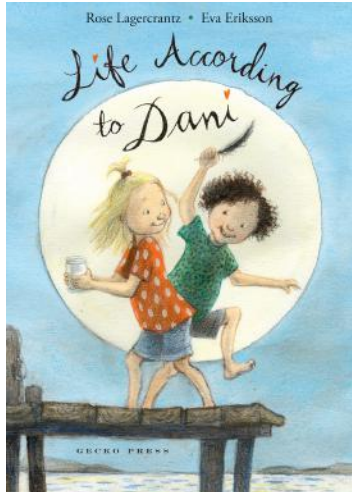
The illustrator, Gemma O'Callaghan, lives in Nottingham, England with her husband Paul. She is rather new to the young adult novel scene and this book represents her most notable experience in the young adult literature field as an illustrator. You can read more about her and see more of her artwork at her website: <http://www.gemma-ocallaghan.co.uk>. Her illustrations are simple, beautiful, and create just the right sense of imagery, inviting reader to connect to their memories on the page. She does a phenomenal job of never starkly revealing the grandfather's injuries, because that is not what the story is about. While we read about his injuries and hear of how awful they are, O'Callaghan never gives in to the temptation to show them to us, but rather she lets our imagination take us there. The varying use of perspective and color makes a great story by Morpurgo complete.

Bill Visco, University of North Texas, Denton, TX

ence Ignat feels over his sensitive nature would fit well with *Ballad of the Broken Nose* (2016) by Arne Svingen and Kari Dickson.

Nina Dashevskaya lives in Moscow; she is a musician and a violinist at the orchestra of the Moscow State Opera and Ballet Theater for Youth. She has published six books for children and young readers and received several prestigious Russian book prizes for her writing for teens. Music is always a crucial part of her writing.

Olga Bukhina, Librarian and Russian Translator, New York City



Life According To Dani

Written by Rose Lagercrantz

Illustrated by Eva Eriksson

Translated by Julia Marshall

Gecko Press, 2016, 103 pp.

ISBN: 978-1776570706

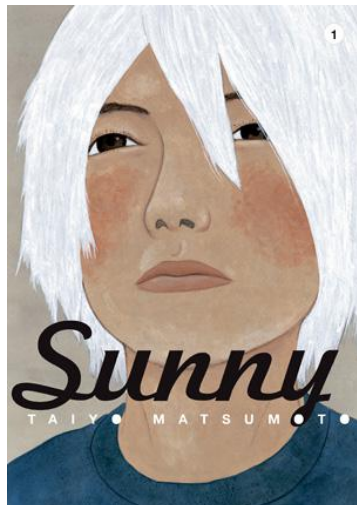
Dani lives with her father, and when he is injured and needs to recover in the hospital, she moves in with her best friend Ella on a small island where Ella's family stays during the summer. Dani feels like the happiest girl in the world as she does not have to worry about anything and can have fun with Ella. The girls spend their time swimming, playing the violin, baking and selling goods as well as exploring the nature around them. One day, however, Dani's carefree life and happy mood change when her father visits her on the island. Dani is introduced to Sadie, her father's new girlfriend. The sudden appearance of this woman with her father makes Dani worry that she will be replaced by Sadie in her father's heart. As a child, she perceives Sadie as a rival and behaves rudely toward her, causing Dani's father to leave the island with Sadie. As a result, this becomes a challenge for everyone.

Life According to Dani is the story of adapting to changes within a family, and the worry about how a current—and wonderful—life is over. A sweet story to share with children who are dealing with similar family dynamics, readers will experience how change is normal and to be expected. Furthermore, with the support from friends and beloved others, those changes can be more easily negotiated. An interesting read for any age and a good starting place for discussions on life issues, this book is similar to *Goodnight Night, Commander* (2010) by Ahmad Akbarpour, in which the main character has lost his mother and faces having a "new mother." Both books are international and translated to English.

The author, Rose Lagercrantz, was born in Stockholm in 1947. Lagercrantz is a well-known Swedish author who predominantly writes the books for children, but has an adult audience as well. She has received numerous literature rewards such as the August Prize and the Astrid Lindgren Prize. Many of her books are translated into English, German, Korean, Japanese, Italian, and Russian. Julia Marshall translated this book from Swedish to English.

Eva Eriksson illustrated the novel. Notable all over the world as a talented illustrator, Eva has been nominated for many international awards, including the Hans Christian Andersen Prize. Her charming and charismatic illustrations create an endearing image of Dani and engage readers from the very first drawing. This is the fourth endeavor writer Lagercrantz and illustrator Eriksson have completed together around these characters on the island, creating a complementary text with illustrations realistically reflecting the emotions described within the written work. These books include *My Happy Life* (2012), *When I am Happiest* (2015), and *My Heart is Laughing* (2014). Further information can be found at: https://geckopress.com/author_illustrator/rose-lagercrantz/.

Sara Alharbi, University of North Texas, Denton



Sunny

Written and illustrated by Taiyo Matsumoto

Translated by Michael Arias

VIZ Media LLC, 2011, 224pp.

ISBN: 1421555255

Sunny is Taiyo Matsumoto's autobiographical youth manga, set in rural 1970s' Japan. The story portrays the everyday life of foster children, ranging from toddlers to teens, who live in a foster home called the "Star Kid Home." The children come from different problematic situations, including broken homes and dysfunctional families. Sunny 1200, a broken down yellow Nissan sitting in the back yard, is an important shared space for them. Within the car and their imaginations, they can become anyone and go anywhere, such as outer space, fantasy lands, or simply

home. They share concerns and worries, and sometimes smoke and read forbidden porn magazines in secret.

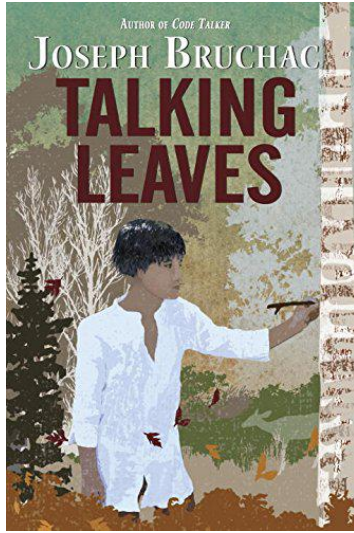
Sunny consists of six chapters. Each chapter concentrates on one child's life story or tells a tale from his or her perspective. The stories are low-key without much dynamic action, but are never boring. As readers, we empathize with the children's feelings of abandonment, loneliness, distress, desperation for familial love, strengths, and sensitivities. These are delineated in black-and-white details, and occasionally in colored, washy ink illustrations. Readers are not told why Haruo, one of the children, always carries Nivea cream, but he is shown smelling the cream when he misses his mother and shares the pain of loneliness with others by having them smell it. There is no narrative to describe why Kenji comes to the foster home, but he is shown visiting his alcoholic father and taking care of him. During winter, Sei comes to the home from Yokohama. His parents promise to come back and pick him up before summer, but they never reappear. Sei does not lose hope and is always ready to go back to Yokohama. Although the other children soon get used to speaking in the town's dialect, Sei never changes his ways, and that seems like a sign of his resistance against fitting into the foster home as he clings to his sense of belonging with his parents.

This powerful story about foster children and their resilience can be paired with *Nobody Knows* by Shelley Tanaka (2012), a contemporary realistic fiction based on a true story set in Japan. This story portrays abandoned siblings and their struggles. *Harry Potter* is also a great narrative for exploring the lives of abandoned children through Harry's and Neville Longbottom's experiences. Harry, for example, shows his desolation with his foster family and his resistance to them along with his resilience. Foster teens' experiences can be seen in other realistic fiction stories such as *Pictures of Hollis Wood* by Patricia Reilly Giff (2002) and *The Great Gilly Hopkins* by Katherine Paterson (1978). Picturebooks such as *Kids Need to Be Safe: A Book for Children in Foster Care* by Julie Nelson (2005) and *Maybe Days: A Book for Children in Foster Care* by Jennifer Wilgocki (2001) address foster children's questions, feelings, and concerns.

Taiyo Matsumoto won the Eisner Award for his youth manga *Tekkon Kinkreet: Black & White* (2007). He is one of Japan's most acclaimed manga artists and children's literature

authors. *Sunny* was nominated for the 2014 Great Graphic Novel Award by the American Young Adult Library Services Association, and won the 2016 Shogakukan Manga Award, one of the most prestigious awards for manga artists in Japan. *Sunny* continues with six more volumes, available in English in the US. These volumes dig into the foster children's personalities, development, and family and peer cultures. Taiyo Matsumoto's website is run by one of his fans and provides accurate information on his past and recent works.

Junko Sakoi, Tucson Unified School District, Tucson, AZ



Talking Leaves
Written by Joseph Bruchac
Puffin, 2016, 256 pp.
ISBN: 978-0803735088

The story of Sequoyah, creator of the written Cherokee language, is told from the perspective of his son, Uwohali. Sequoyah has remarried after Uwohali's mother ended their marriage years ago and has returned to Alabama after being chased away for being a crazy man performing witchcraft. Uwohali now faces a reunion with his father and half-sister Ahyokah, both of whom still interact with the strange markings, the cause of the accusations of witchcraft against Sequoyah. Uwohali discovers that these markings are used to symbolize the sounds of their native language and, recognizing their importance and power, commits to learning the symbols alongside his half-sister. The tribe, though, remains fearful and plots to kill Sequoyah and his children. Thus, Uwohali must convince his closest friend and mother of the significance of the markings. With their support, he can sway the tribe to save his life, as well as his father's and sister's, while embracing the new written language.

Many students with divorced parents, regardless of their culture, will understand Uwohali's fear of reconnecting with his father and his new wife and daughter. His mixed feelings toward the new sibling and uncertainty about his father's intentions will also resonate. The disconnect may come because, "Whereas Western folktales are located in settings understood as universal," Native American stories "belong to particular tracts of country and can be told only by those identified as their custodians" (Bradford, 2011, p. 336). The underlying culture in *Talking Leaves* is that of the Cherokee Indians and, though told by a Native storyteller, it is significant that the story is relayed from the perspective of Sequoyah's son, who is not taken in thoroughly by the belief in witchcraft that is prominent in the village. The existence of this witchcraft belief does not "conform to a limited number of [stereo]types" that "non-Indigenous authors and illustrators draw upon" when depicting Native Americans (Bradford, 2011, p. 332).

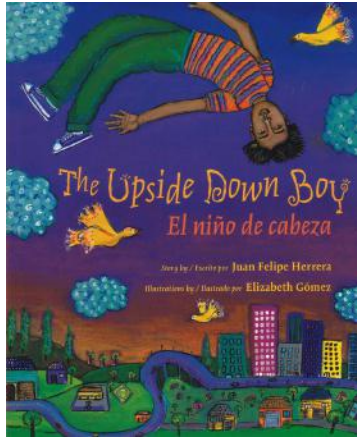
In the world of *Talking Leaves*, readers are exposed to an alphabet "perfect in its entirety" for a language other than English, and a need for a community to be in complete agreement for peace (Bruchac, 2016, p. 237). Teachers could pair this text with nonfiction books such as *Sequoyah: The Cherokee Man Who Gave His People Writing* by James Rumford (2004) or *Sequoyah's Gift: A Portrait of the Cherokee Leader* by Janet Klausner (1993). A full history of Sequoyah can be found online at the official Cherokee website, <http://www.cherokee.org/About-The-Nation/History/Facts/Sequoyah-and-the-Cherokee-Syllabary>. By using resources like these, close investigation of Sequoyah and the Cherokees provides opportunities to evaluate historical accuracy in *Talking Leaves* while further exploring Cherokee culture. The Cherokee language may also be explored by visiting the site, <http://www.cherokee.org/LearningCenter/>.

Joseph Bruchac, an award-winning author, is of Abenaki ancestry and grew up in the Adirondack mountain foothills. His awards include the Cherokee Nation Prose Award, Hope S. Dean Award for Notable Achievement in Children's Literature, the Virginia Hamilton Literary Award (2005), and awards earlier on from the Native Writers Circle of the Americas.

Robyn Bashaw, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX

References:

Bradford, C. (2011). *Reading indigeneity: The ethics of interpretation and representation*, 23, 331-334. Deakin University.



The Upside Down Boy / El Niño De Cabeza

Written by Juan Felipe Herrera

Illustrated by Elizabeth Gómez.

Children's Book Press, 2000, 32 pp.

ISBN: 978-0-89239-217-9

“Each word, each language has its own magic / Cada palabra, cada idioma tiene su propia magia” (p. 23).

The process of acquiring a new language can sometimes be challenging, especially for a young student who has been placed into a new environment. If readers were to imagine themselves attending a school where a language other than their mother

tongue is spoken, there might be moments when they feel “upside down” while adjusting into the new classroom and culture. What are ways to overcome the confusion encountered as a new student? In this bilingual picturebook, written in both English and Spanish, the author shares how he feels “upside down” in such circumstances until he recognizes the beauty in his voice when using a new language.

The Upside Down Boy / El Niño De Cabeza is based on the author's childhood experiences when he moved to a big city for the first time with his parents, who worked as campesinos. The story is told from the perspective of the main character, Juanito, in a narrative that is poetic and lyrical, enabling the reader to understand Juanito's emotions and his initial concerns about not knowing English. He asks his father, “Will my tongue turn into a rock? / ¿Se me hará la lengua una piedra?” (pp. 6-7). As a new student, he is unfamiliar with the school routine, so he mistakenly eats his lunch at recess and plays during lunch time. Also, he jumps when others sit, and he sits when others jump, so Juanito considers himself as “The upside down boy / El niño de cabeza”.

Although he is unable to speak English at first, the eight-year-old boy uses his experiences on farms to learn the English alphabet and words by writing his name with seven chilis. The illustrations present the letters ‘A’, ‘B’, and ‘C’ growing out from the ground with roots and leaves, showing Juanito making connections to his background knowledge while trying to learn the new language. The colorful illustrations also portray the main character's psychological state through detailed facial expressions. There are pages that show his serious facial expressions, which portray the tension he feels when he goes to school for the first time, unable to communicate in English. There are also pages with illustrations that show Juanito's excitement when he begins to find joy in learning English.

This book presents the process of how the author himself came to be excited about learning English. Those who encourage the main character Juanito to learn are his third grade teacher Mrs. Lucille Sampson and his parents. Their encouragement plays a powerful role which ignites Juanito's desire to learn the new language. This points out how important the role of teachers and parents are when children acquire another language because the positive feedback they provide has a strong impact that helps them continue to study.

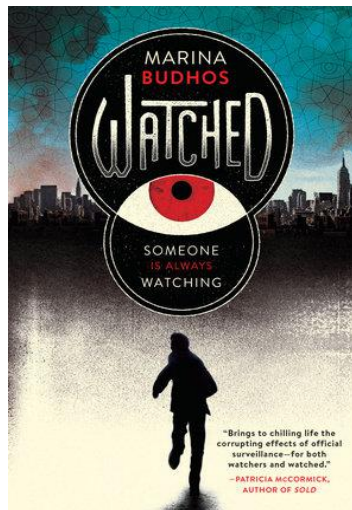
This book also remarkably shares the emotions and psychological mind of the author regarding how he felt while acquiring English. For those who have not had these experiences, this book will be helpful in understanding how English language learners might feel when they enter a classroom before they are able to communicate in English. There are thousands of languages that exist in the world. The differences between diverse languages and cultures at times can make one feel upside down, but learning another language enables a person to share how different language speakers can come together and create a story about their experience of language acquisition.

The Upside Down Boy / El Niño De Cabeza would make a great pair with *My Name is Maria Isabel* by Alma Flor Ada (1995) and *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi (2003). These books can be used together because they contain stories about students from immigrant families who begin school where a language different from their mother tongue is used and they access a new culture for the first time. The books also portray how the students feel accepted, appreciated, and eventually can have pride in who they are and where they come from when they enter the classrooms without having to lose their own culture. This is crucial for such students in order to achieve academic success as they obtain knowledge at school in a new language.

The author, Juan Felipe Herrera, is a Mexican American poet whose parents were migrant farm workers. He has versatile roles as a performer, writer, educator, activist, actor, and musician. He is currently working as a professor in the Department of Creative Writing at the University of California - Riverside. More information about Juan Felipe Herrera can be found at: <http://www.cherokee.org/About-The-Nation/History/Facts/Sequoyah-and-the-Cherokee-Syllabary> and <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/juan-felipe-herrera>.

The illustrator of this book is Elizabeth Gómez, an internationally exhibited painter who is a native of Mexico City. She used acrylic on paper for the paintings in this book, her first book for children. Her work has been influenced by popular arts from around the world in addition to surreal artists. More information about Elizabeth Gómez can be found online at: <http://www.elizabethgomezart.com/ebktwvmax9z7z718fg8m425mhmfli2>.

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Watched

Written by Marina Budhos
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Naeem is a typical American teen settled in Queens, New York, who is also Muslim. He is ready to graduate from high school, and moves within the boundaries of his immigrant community, where he is often faced with neighborly disapproval. He grew up in Bangladesh and came to the US when he was eleven. As a younger teen, Naeem was a star student and very popular in the neighborhood. But then he reached puberty, and things began to change. His grades dropped, and he befriended Ibrahim, who is a couple of years older than him. Ibrahim is a shady character, but Naeem is attracted to Ibrahim's freewheeling ways. Naeem gets into trouble but escapes punishment, even though the cops are on to him for shoplifting and other minor offences. In many ways, Naeem and his friends push the edge of acceptable behavior within their community.

Naeem's immigrant community is typically under surveillance, so people are conscious of what they do or say. His family owns a store and do not practice Islam, and his aging, depressed father avoids going to the Masjid after detectives approach him about a neighbor. Naeem's mother passed away when he was five and he misses her. His stepmother, however, tries to work with Naeem. One day Naeem is "caught" shoplifting when Ibrahim shoplifts but disappears after stuffing the expensive things in Naeem's backpack (pp. 36-37). Naeem does not realize he has been framed by his own friend and country-mate. He is grilled by detectives, then offered an out if he becomes an informant for them and will receive monetary rewards for his work. Naeem agrees, and initially feels guilty.

As he embeds himself in the community, Naeem begins to find his own identity as he meets people who are strong role models and use their voices to protest injustice to immigrants. Naeem starts to question the reasoning of the detectives, especially when he cannot find anything to report. Furthermore, he comes to realize the detectives have no evidence of his involvement in the crime of which they accused him. Eventually they can no longer coerce him, but he realizes he will not get paid if he does not find and inform them of leads. They force him to create a scene where he is supposed to frame Ibrahim. Naeem draws the line and refuses to do so and walks away from them and the situation.

This is a necessary novel at this time in history. Budhos refers to her previous novel *Ask Me No Questions* by adding the character of Tasleema to this sequel. Tasleema is Naeem's cousin who gives him an opportunity to belong to a youth group that is working to provide resources to immigrants that are being persecuted due to their socio-political status. References to the negative role of Pakistan and its impact on the creation of Bangladesh are also mentioned multiple times in the text.

This book touches on the sensitive issue of surveillance. To address this issue, educators might introduce the topic in a general overarching theme of the 'right to privacy' and 'safe

spaces.' Keeping in view the present political scenario and the War on Terror, questions to consider with students include: What are our rights as citizens living in this country? Non-citizens? Why is surveillance such a controversial issue? Books to pair with this could be George Orwell's (1950) *1984*, Miriam Halahmy's (2016) *Hidden*, and Marina Budhos' earlier book, *Ask Me No Questions* (2007).

Marina Budhos is from New York and lives there with her husband. She is a professor of English at William Paterson University. She has won several awards for her young adult literature including the inaugural James Cook Teen Book Award for *Ask Me No Questions*. She also writes for adults. More information about Marina can be found at: <http://www.elizabethgomezart.com/ebktwvmax9z7z718fg8m425mhmfli2>

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