



WOW REVIEW

VOLUME IX ISSUE 1

September 2016
Open Theme

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WOW Review: Volume IX Issue 1
September 2016
Open Theme

Table of Contents

Introduction and Editor's Notes	2
<i>Baddawi</i>	3
<i>The Invisible Boy</i>	5
<i>It Ain't So Awful, Falafel</i>	7
<i>Maddi's Fridge</i>	8
<i>The Night Gardener</i>	10
<i>Night of the Moon: A Muslim Holiday Story</i>	12
<i>Their Great Gift</i>	14
<i>The Tortoise and the Soldier: A Story of Courage and Friendship...</i>	16
<i>Tulipán: The Puerto Rican Giraffe</i>	18
<i>Those Shoes</i>	20
<i>The Way Home Looks Now</i>	22
<i>The Whispering Town</i>	24

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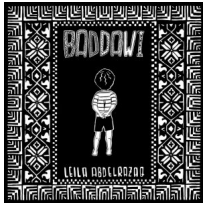
Volume IX, Issue 1: Open Theme
Editor's Note:

This issue of WOW Review includes a host of picture books, a graphic novel, and three wonderful chapter books designed to engage readers in pondering situations that many will not experience in their lifetimes. The picture books *Maddi's Fridge*, *The Invisible Boy*, and *Their Great Gift* invite readers to consider lives that are less than optimal. Forced deportation and immigration, invisibility, and poverty are themes explored in these works. Two other texts, *The Tortoise and the Soldier* and *The Whispering Town*, are books about the great wars that ravaged the world. *It Ain't So Awful*, *Falafel* and *Baddawi* share stories about identity and finding oneself when displaced from home. *The Way Home Looks Now* presents how displacement can come from a missing family member and the gap they leave behind.

Also included in this issue are *The Night Gardener* and *Those Shoes*, two picture books that highlight the importance of small acts that encourage and enfranchise others who are marginalized in some way. Finally, the wonderfully vibrant *Night of the Moon: A Muslim Holiday Story* reminds us that home exists within family traditions and beliefs that transcend geographic boundaries, and *Tulipán: The Puerto Rican Giraffe* suggests our identities are not restricted to what others may say or think about us.

The next issue of *WOW Review* invites readers to share what they have read in response to the theme, Conflict, Dissonance, and Resolution. Conflict can result when challenging or disrupting the status quo, while dissonance may result from a change in the status quo. Consider the books you have read that address conflict, dissonance, and resolution in response to the status quo or a change in the status quo and write a review, due November 1, 2016.

Holly Johnson, Editor



Baddawi

Written and Illustrated by Leila Abdelrazaq

Just World Books, 2015, 128 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-1935982401

Ahmad was raised in Baddawi, a refugee camp in North Lebanon, and struggles to find his sense of place and his own identity while growing up in a place he cannot call home. This story is just one of the many thousands of stories that refugee children born in Palestine have to tell. Forced to leave their homeland after the war in 1948 that established the state of Israel, Ahmad's family lives in the “in-between” being invisible and being recognized, or worse yet, demonized because of their nationality.

This graphic novel is inspired by the experiences and stories that the author’s father shared about his life in the Baddawi refugee camp. Author Leila Abdelrazaq, in an effort to understand her father’s childhood during the 1960s and '70s, shares her father’s story through a young protagonist who witnesses his world crumbling around him. The black and white linear visuals are reinforced by written words that recreate Ahmad’s path through the region’s appalling ambiguity; the result is a life without tangible roots or home. Abdelrazaq’s visuals are reminiscent of Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* (2004), which is based on Satrapi’s childhood growing up in Iran during similar political turmoil.

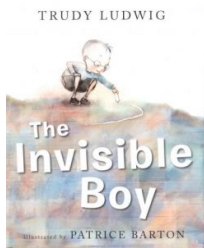
Though bleak in many respects, Ahmad’s life is still filled with joyful holidays and friends as part of an exciting community within the camp. These wonderful experiences are clouded, however, by everyday episodes of school bullying and worries of being separated from his way of life. Ahmed is, inevitably, separated from his family during the Lebanese civil war, leaving a series of painful memories. He persistently pursues education and opportunity and his efforts echo the journey of the Palestinian people today as they make the best of their present circumstances while remaining steadfast in their determination to return to their homeland.

Other books that capture the essence of the Palestinian struggles include: *Where the Streets Had a Name* by Randa Abdul-Fattah (2008), *Samir and Yonatan* by Daniella Carmi (1996), *The Shepherd’s Granddaughter* by Ann Laurel Carter (2010), *A Little Piece of Ground* by Elizabeth Laird & Sonia Nimr (2006), *A Stone in My Hand* by Catherine Clinton (2010), *Habibi* by Naomi Shihab Nye (1997), and *Tasting the Sky* by Ibtisam Barakat (2007).

Leila Abdelrazaq is a Palestinian author and artist based in Chicago. She graduated from DePaul University in 2015 with a B.F.A. in Theatre Arts and a B.A. in Arabic Studies. *Baddawi* is Abdelrazaq's debut graphic novel -- she is also the creator of a number of zines and short comics. Her work primarily explores issues related to diaspora, refugees, history, memory, and borders. Abdelrazaq has been vocal in

regards to Palestinian conflict since 2011. She is currently a member of For the People Artist's Collective, and is a co-founder of Al Mirsa, an organization dedicated to promoting Arab arts and culture in the Chicago area. Her website is www.lalaleila.com.

Seemi Aziz, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ



The Invisible Boy
Written by Trudy Ludwig
Illustrated by Patricia Barton
Knopf Books, 2013, 40 pp.
ISBN-13: 978-1582464503

A timid boy named Brian yearns to belong with the rest of his classmates. His classmates are picked for kickball, invited to birthday parties and asked to share during Choosing Time, while Brian is excluded and invisible to his classmates and teacher. But Brian has a talent that helps distract him from his feelings of isolation. Brian loves to draw dragons, tall buildings, superheroes and pirates.

One day a new student, Justin, arrives and during lunch uses chopsticks to eat *bulgogi* (Korean grilled beef). Everybody laughs at Justin's food and chopsticks except Brian. The next day Justin finds a message in his cubby with a drawing of Brian saying he thought the *bulgogi* looked yummy. Justin does not forget this act of kindness and Brian's good deed leads to a friendship. After finding the note, Justin goes out of his way to include Brian in every activity, and makes room for him at the lunch table. Suddenly, Brian is no longer invisible to his classmates.

Brian is initially drawn small in dull shades of gray in contrast to his classmates, teacher and the classroom, which appear in color. Barton uses soft pencil colors for the illustrations and it is only when Justin invites Brian to join him and his friend Emilio that Brian begins to take on color in the illustrations. From that point, Brian appears in full color in the illustrations. The initial illustrations of Brian without any color capture Brian's isolation and the addition of color toward the end captures Brian's feelings of happiness and belonging.

Two books that could be paired with *The Invisible Boy* are *Each Kindness* written by Jacqueline Woodson (2012) and *Hello, Hello* written and illustrated by Matthew Cordell (2012). *Each Kindness* involves a new girl at school named Maya. Chloe and her friends won't play with Maya because she wears hand-me-down clothes. Maya tries to join Chloe and her friends to play but they always reject her. Eventually, Maya gives up and plays alone. When the teacher gives a lesson on how small acts of kindness can change the world, Chloe reflects on how she could have shown Maya some kindness. But it is too late as Maya has moved.

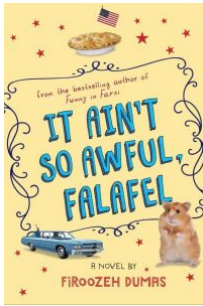
Hello, Hello takes a look at being ignored. A young girl's family is too busy with their gadgets to notice her and the wonderful world around them. She says hello to everyone in her family, but nobody can turn away from their gadgets long enough to do anything more than mumble back a hello, and her brother doesn't even manage that. Lydia decides to go outside and experience life rather than be plugged into an electronic

gadget. She finds that there are so many things to greet. She says hello to the rocks, hello to the leaves, and hello to the flowers. When Lydia goes back home she decides that it is time for her family to say hello to the world and goodbye to their gadgets.

Author Trudy Ludwig is an award-winning children's writer and lecturer who lives in Portland, Oregon with her husband and two children. She is known for tackling the often-complicated world of children's social interactions. Children's books have always been a passion for Ludwig, but it was not until her own daughter was bullied that she turned to writing them. She is an active member of the International Bullying Prevention Association and collaborates with experts and organizations to bring attention to issues that matter to her.

Patricia Barton illustrates both chapter and picture books, adjusting her style in order to better suit each story. In chapter books, Barton believes her job as an illustrator is to support the story but not say too much. In contrast, Barton believes that when she illustrates picture books, her illustrations "speak volumes" and must convey the heart of the matter as well as honor the author's perspective.

Megan McCaffrey, Governor's State University, Chicago, IL



It Ain't So Awful, Falafel

Written by Firoozeh Dumas
Clarion Books, 2016, 384 pp.
ISBN-13: 978-0544612310

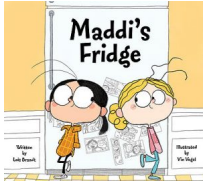
It is the late 1970s and 11-year-old Zomorod "Cindy" Yousefzadeh accompanies her parents as they make their fourth work-related move to the United States from Iran. When they settle in Newport Beach, California, Cindy is determined to be more social, develop friends, and "fit in." After a bumpy start, Cindy finds her niche, sporting mood rings and puka shell necklaces, and attending Girl Scouts. Protests in Iran, however, followed by the Islamic Revolution and the taking of American hostages shatter her family's hopes for Iran's future and raise their concerns for the safety and wellbeing of family and friends in Iran. Before long, they become targets of anti-Iranian sentiments and find their own safety in danger. As the hostage crisis ends, they are faced with the decision of whether or not to return to their beloved Iran.

Cindy narrates this insightful and humorous story in present tense and provides rich glimpses into the immigrant experience. Her struggle to discover her identity as she matures while balancing two different cultures and simultaneously finding friends, dealing with family issues, and overcoming racism is compelling. Details of the Iranian hostage crisis are woven into the story in meaningful ways that convey the complicated realities for Iranians in the United States in the 70s.

This book would work well in a text set focused on friendship and dealing with prejudice as an immigrant. Other books that could be included in the text set include *Just a Drop of Water* by Kerry O'Malley Cerra (2014) and *Under the Blood Red Sun* by Graham Salisbury (1994).

It Ain't So Awful, Falafel is semi-autobiographical for author Firoozeh Dumas. She was born in Iran and moved between Iran and the United States several times while growing up. She was 13 years old and living in California at the time of the Iranian revolution. As in the book, her father lost his job and her mother became depressed. It was the kindness of others who saw and valued the commonalities of people from all cultural backgrounds that helped her through that difficult time, which she writes about in the book.

Prisca Martens, Towson University, Towson, MD



Maddi's Fridge

Written by Lois Brandt

Illustrated by Vin Vogel

Flashlight Press, 2014, 32 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-1936261291

Maddi's Fridge is, at its heart, a story about friendship. Sophia and Maddi are friends, and one day after playing together, Sophia gets hungry and looks around Maddi's kitchen for a snack. When she opens Maddi's fridge, she is surprised to find only one carton of milk inside. Maddi acknowledges that her mother does not have enough money to purchase food. She makes Sophia promise not to tell anybody that her family does not have food. Sophia wants to keep her friend's secret even though it weighs heavy on her heart. Over the next several days Sophia attempts to bring Maddi food – fish (too stinky), eggs (too cracky), but finds out that some foods do not travel well in a backpack. Finally, Sophia tells her mother and breaks her promise to Maddi. Sofia and her mother buy groceries and take them to Maddi's house. Maddi's mother accepts the groceries and shares a cup of coffee with Sophia's mother while the two girls play together.

At the end of the story, Maddi's refrigerator is full of food. This resolution is not necessarily realistic. The groceries in the refrigerator are a quick fix to a much larger problem. In another week, Maddi's refrigerator will be empty again and her mother will still not have enough money to purchase more groceries. Despite the unrealistic happy ending, this book brings awareness to the plight of hunger in the United States. For children who live comfortably, this story provides an entry point to begin to understand and empathize with others who are struggling in some way. Hunger is a very real issue and made known through the story of Maddi and Sophia's friendship. In the Author's Note at the end of the book, Brandt provides suggestions for ways that people can help fight hunger.

The illustrations are a colorful digital cartoon style, depicting a diverse city neighborhood. Each illustration is charming and inviting with a muted palette of yellows, oranges and greens. Two books that could be paired with *Maddi's Fridge* are *Shoebox Sam* by Mary Brigid Barrett (2011) and *The Lunch Thief* by Anne C. Bromley (2010). Both of these books address homelessness and poverty. "Shoebox Sam" owns a shoe store on the corner of Magnolia and Vine where old shoes become like new and anybody in need can find a friend. *The Lunch Thief* addresses homelessness and hunger. Rafael's lunch is stolen at school and he knows who did it, but he decides to bide his time to address the issue and not pick a fight. However, later when Rafael is driving with his mother he sees Kevin, the new kid who took his lunch, carrying a bundle of laundry into a motel room. His mother tells him that many of the people in the motel lost their homes in the wildfires and Rafael decides to invite Kevin to share his lunch the next day rather than accuse Kevin of taking the lunch.

Maddi's Fridge has won numerous awards for both the story and the illustrations. Lois Brandt received the 2015 International Literacy Association Primary Fiction Award, a 2014 Christopher Award, nomination for the 2015/2016 Washington Children's Picture Book Award, nomination for the 2016 Nevada Young Readers' Award, Picture Book Category, a 2014 Top Mighty Girl Book For Younger Readers, 2015 Mitten Honor Book, and was an Anti-Defamation League Book of the Month. Vin Vogel won the 2014 Christopher Awards - Books for Young People for *Maddi's Fridge*.

Maddi's Fridge is Lois Brandt's first book and comes directly from her own experience. Lois, like Sophia, once looked in her best friend's refrigerator and found only one small carton of milk. In addition to her own writing and illustrating, Lois teaches writers of all ages to tell their stories. She lives close to Seattle, Washington, with her husband, kids, dogs, and cat. You can visit Lois at www.loisbrandt.com.

The illustrations in *Maddi's Fridge* are by Vin Vogel. Vogel is an author and illustrator originally from Brazil, though currently living in New York City. Vin has illustrated over 50 children's books to date. In addition to his book illustrations, he provides designs for a variety of print, animation, apparel, and web projects in Brazil, Canada, France and the U.S.

Megan McCaffrey, Governor's State University, Chicago, IL



The Night Gardener

Written and Illustrated by Terry & Eric Fan

Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2016, 48 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-1481439787

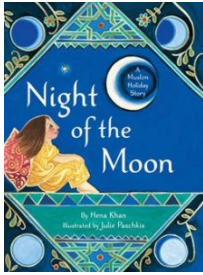
In 1913, Ina D. Ogden, a public school teacher, wrote "Brighten the Corner Where You Are," a song to encourage people to use their unique skills and talents for the benefit of others. The Fan Brothers' debut picture book, *The Night Gardener*, follows a similar theme. The book opens with a forlorn orphan named William sitting slumped on a log, sketching an owl in the dirt. Unbeknownst to him, he catches the eye of a talented passerby. The next morning, William and his neighbors wake to find an enormous topiary owl in front of the Grimloch Orphanage. This discovery brings a sense of hope to the otherwise bleak community. On subsequent mornings, they gather in anticipation of a new garden creation. Someone—they do not know who—is pruning their trees into an eclectic menagerie. One day there is a perched cat, the next a friendly rabbit, then a pretty parakeet and a playful elephant, and finally, "the most magnificent masterpiece yet!"

Over time, the people of Grimloch Lane are transformed by the sculptures that appear "as if by magic." All kinds of people come together to marvel and celebrate. The mystery surrounding the sculptures continues until the night William spots an unfamiliar older gentleman carrying a ladder and shears into Grimloch Park. He follows and the man invites him to help. The two work together under the light of the moon. When he wakes up the next morning, the man has disappeared, but he has left his tools and a note "from the Night Gardener." The central message of the book is that we share our talents and skills to help others tap into their own ability to experience wonder.

The Fan Brothers both received formal art training at the Ontario College of Art and Design. Their drawing techniques and the colors used to illustrate this book enhance the mystery and magic of the story. A blend of pen, ink, and Photoshop manipulations provide a grainy and textured look, while the use of sepia tones, jade and hunter green gives it a vintage feel—circa 1930s. This decade is often characterized as lost within the larger story of the Great Depression, with massive unemployment and near financial and industrial collapse. The illustrations are consistent with the time period—characters don knickers, caps, fedora hats and muted crepe fabrics. As the mood of the book becomes lighter, splashes of red, yellow and medium blue become more frequent. Near the end, the reader is presented with a two-page spread of rich color that is followed again by a mysterious blue-green that inspires further exploration.

Books that would pair well with *The Night Gardener* include: *Something Beautiful* by Sharon Wyeth (1998), *Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood* by F. Isabel Campoy and Theresa Howell (2016), *The Curious Garden* by Peter Brown (2009) and *The Gardener* by Sarah Stewart (2007).

Desiree W. Cueto, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA



Night of the Moon: A Muslim Holiday Story

Written by Hena Khan

Illustrated by Julie Paschkis

Chronicle Books, 2008, 32 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-0-81186-062-8

There are approximately 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide, and 4.3 million Muslims of all ages living in the United States. This story offers a window into modern Muslim culture through a seven-year-old girl celebrating the Muslim holiday of Ramadan. Ramadan occurs during the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. From the first light of dawn until the sun goes down, Muslims do not eat or drink anything. Time is instead spent with family, doing good deeds, in spiritual reflection focusing on God and becoming a better person.

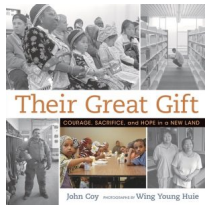
The amazing illustrations evoke Muslim artists, imbuing the text with even more meaning. This story can provide insight for non-Muslim children who want a better understanding of the origins and customs of Ramadan. The book presents Islam in a comprehensible way told through a child's perspective. Also, through the inclusion of Arabic words (with a glossary at the end) the reader can discover new vocabulary related to the Islamic faith. Overall, this representation of Ramadan is reverent and respectful, as readers discover traditions like feasting nightly with family and friends, religious symbols such as the night sky (crescent moon and stars), hands in prayer, and the temple.

Titles that pair well with the text to learn more about Ramadan are *Magid Fasts for Ramadan* by Mary Matthews (1996) and *Celebrating Ramadan* by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith (2001). *Under the Ramadan Moon* by Sylvia Whitman and Sue Williams (2008) and *Moon Watcher: Shirin's Ramadan Miracle* by Reza Jalali and Anne Sibley O'Brien (2010) are similar to *Night of the Moon* in that they use nighttime colors and the symbols of the stars and crescent moon. *The Last Night of Ramadan* by Maissa Hamed and Mohamed El Wakil (2007) is a good companion on the traditions and factual representations of Islam.

Author Hena Khan is a Pakistani-American Muslim born and raised in Maryland who enjoys sharing and writing about her culture and religion. She is an avid reader and always had a book in her hands as a child. Hena Khan has written many other stories from spies to space travel. In an [interview](#) about *Night of the Moon*, Khan stated: "For readers who practice the faith, my hope is that they feel represented and see their lives reflected in my work. I didn't have books with characters that looked like me, had names like mine, or who celebrated my holidays when I was growing up." Khan's goal in writing her book is for readers to acknowledge the Muslim core values of community, family, charity, as the same ones shared by all people in the U.S.

In an interview, Julie Paschkis, the illustrator of the book, reveals that she did not know much about Ramadan before illustrating the book, but loved learning. She liked the way the story celebrated family through the Ramadan holiday. She used the theme of tiles to tie the book together visually. She also picked the color theme from the tiles: beautiful turquoise, cobalt and indigo blues with rust and gold for accents. Julie Paschkis has illustrated many books. She lets the words determine the style of art. The book *Glass Slipper, Gold Sandal: A Worldwide Cinderella* by Paul Fleischman (2007) has a similar richly patterned feel. She loves putting colors next to each other and telling stories with pictures.

Rachel de Oliveira, Texas Woman's University, Plano, TX



Their Great Gift

Written by John Coy

Photographs by Wing Young Huie

Lerner Publishing/Carolrhoda Books, 2016, 32 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-1-4677-8054-4

Many authors and illustrators share stories about situations that compel individuals to leave their homelands. These journeys are often forced by external factors, such as political conflict, or driven by personal reasons, such as economic or professional gain. *Their Great Gift* leaves out the reasons for immigration and focuses on the arrivals of people from diverse backgrounds. The photographs, by Wing Young Huie, feature powerful images that cross generations, eras, and cultures. The photographs record the sacrifices immigrants make as they come to a new land and encounter new and strange languages and cultures. Yet, the immigrants find jobs and some eventually open their own businesses. Written for readers of all ages, the informational text is simple, bold, and focused. The introduction states it is written for the children of immigrants. Since in the U.S., that applies to everyone who is not Native American, the book has wide appeal.

The minimal text is both a strength and weakness of this book. It succeeds in addressing the challenges of families coming to a new land for young readers. A simple sentence on each page is surrounded with photographs of people reflecting on the particular activity or challenge. However, it may be confusing if readers don't realize the text is written from the perspective of a child. (The opening begins, "My family.") For the reader who may be culturally and socially removed by generations from an ancestor's immigration, the text could be confusing. Once this minor point is clarified, the richness of the message within the simple lines and abundant photographs drives home the last line: "What will we do with their great gifts?" These gifts might be an appreciation for families of all backgrounds, consideration of the fact most of us are descendants from some generation of travelers, and renewed interest in individual heritage.

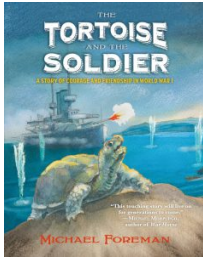
The book cover flap mentions that both the author and photographer's families were immigrants to the U.S., but the text of the book does not specifically mention the United States, so the book is applicable to all Western that receive immigrants. Beginning pages provide a running strip of immigrant faces, reflecting the diversity of people who immigrate. These faces preface the many color and black and white images within. The final pages reveal a display of fireworks along a river's edge, reminding readers of patriotic celebrations.

Their Great Gift provides an important perspective for readers considering the significance of immigration for their country. Other books that discuss the arrivals of immigrants might be paired as well, such as *Denied, Detained, Deported: Stories from the Dark Side of American Immigration* by Ann Bausam (2009), *Children of Ellis Island* by Barry Moreno (2005), *I'm New Here* by Ann Sibley O'Brien (2015),

and *Coolies* by Yin and Chris Sonpiet (2001). The first of these is for older readers but compliments Coy's book well. *Denied, Detained, Deported* extends the immigrant story beyond the journey from the origin country to the new lives at the destination. *WOW Review* offers many titles throughout to consider for such a text set as well, in an issue focused on "[Forced Journeys](#)" (Vol. IV, Issue 2).

Both author and photographer are the children of immigrants and both reside in Minneapolis. Their friendship preceded their collaboration on this book. Wing Hui had been photographing immigrants for 30 years in many neighborhoods and across generations. Thus, his rich collection of people in many different contexts and activities provided many choices for the images used that reflect and embellish each line written by John Coy. Coy and Hui include biographical insights about their own immigrant families in a section called "Our Arrival Stories." Both author and illustrator have other published books.

Janelle Mathis, University of North Texas, Denton, TX



The Tortoise and the Soldier: A Story of Courage and Friendship in World War I

Written and Illustrated by Michael Foreman

Holt, 2015, 128 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-1-62779-173-1

This unique biographical account focuses on Henry Friston's experiences as a Royal Navy sailor during World War I and the bond he formed with a turtle, Ali Pasha. The story is developed around the conversations between Henry and a young reporter, Trevor Roberts, during the 1950s. Henry and Trevor form a close friendship over the many days it takes for Henry to narrate his story. Foreman also includes Trevor's account of meeting Henry and their friendship. As a young reporter for his village newspaper in Canton, England, he initially visited Henry to discover if Ali Pasha had awakened from his winter sleep, thus heralding the arrival of spring for their village.

As a young schoolboy, Henry was fascinated by maps and places he imagined, so as a young teen, he took a job on a ship, and a few years later joined the Royal Navy. The story unfolds slowly as the reporter visits Henry over time. Each time Trevor visits, Henry narrates a bit more of his Naval experiences that eventually led to the horrific battle at Gallipoli. It is there that Henry finds Ali The Turtle, as they both dodged shells and shrapnel within the trenches. Henry survives the battle and returns to his ship with Ali, who becomes a source of hope and friendship for him and his comrades.

This book gives readers a personal perspective of WWI that is blended with historical facts. Michael Foreman actually knew Henry and his son, Don, thus adding authenticity to the account. Readers can also connect with Henry through Foreman's unique storytelling style and character development.

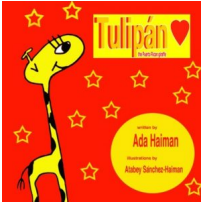
Henry's accounts are printed in italics, setting them apart from the book's narration by Trevor. Henry's diary is printed on cream colored pages with another font style to indicate a journal entry. Throughout are small watercolor illustrations that complement the story. There are also larger double-page spreads that provide images of the various war scenarios that Henry describes. The end papers contain photographs of Henry throughout his life, often with Ali Pasha, and son, Don.

The book relates to other stories of animals in wartime, such as *Soldier Bear* by Bibi Dumon Tak (2013), a WWII story, *The Donkey of Gallipoli: A True Story of Courage in World War I* by Mark Greenwood (2008) and *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo (2010).

An author's note shares that Henry lived to be 83 and Ali Pasha lived another ten years after the story, making him over 100 when he died. Don cared for Ali after his father's death. Ali Pasha became an international hero and upon his death, newspapers paid respect to "The Tortoise Veteran of Gallipoli" (p. 119).

Foreman, a Kate Greenaway Medal winner and Hans Christian Andersen nominee, is a prolific writer. His many books offer other titles to pair with *The Tortoise and the Soldier* for an author study. Both *War Game* (2006), which focuses on a well known WWI event and *War Boy* (1989), an autobiographical story with a WWII setting are good choices for such a study.

Janelle Mathis, University of North Texas, Denton, TX



Tulipán: The Puerto Rican Giraffe
Written by Ada Haiman
Illustrated by Atabey Sánchez-Haiman
La Jirafa Tulipán, 2014, 44 pp.
ISBN-13: 978-0615924083

Some people think Tulipán does not look Puerto Rican. She thinks it could be her long neck, her big eyes, or her spots. She wonders, “What does it mean to be Puerto Rican? Is it in my blood or in my mind and heart?” She compares and contrasts experiences in both of her beloved homes: Aibonito, Puerto Rico and the Bronx, New York, “one cold, one hot, one city, one country.” She also describes how being bilingual and “Nuyorican” (both New Yorker and Puerto Rican) have given her access to more than one world -- “When you leave the metropolitan San Juan and go inland, that’s called ‘going to the island’ although it is all part of the same island. If you are not Puerto Rican, that can be confusing.” Tulipán’s exploration ends when she realizes that “there can be more than one you” and what truly matters are the stories you live. But her journey is just starting.

Picture books published in the United States portraying the experience of Puerto Ricans are limited. Many times, these books overuse national symbols such as the *coquí* (a small frog indigenous to Puerto Rico) in order to look and sound Puerto Rican. While a *coquí* can be representative of many Puertorriqueños, it can also lead to oversimplifying the complexities of being Puerto Rican. Tulipán can support readers in challenging narrowed understandings about culture. From Tulipán’s perspective, what matters are her experiences navigating multiple interconnected cultural communities, and how she can use language to name and understand those experiences. Her new understandings about culture are similar to a funds-of-knowledge approach, which describes historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge, skills, and family practices essential for household or individual functioning and wellbeing, rather than being confined to static notions of culture.

Tulipán uses comparison/contrast to make sense of a wide range of experiences around landscapes, music and rhythms, weather, and languages. These initial observations can serve as starting points for in-depth explorations around cultural connections and differences between life in the Bronx (and United States broadly) and life on the island of Puerto Rico.

Tulipán: The Puerto Rican Giraffe can be paired with other Latino books about cultural identity, such as *René Has Two Last Names* by René Colato Laínez (2009) and *Marisol McDonald Doesn’t Match* by Monica Brown (2011). Both stories describe children’s self-determination in exploring and understanding themselves and their multicultural contexts.

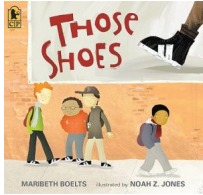
Tulipán can also be paired with additional stories that describe Puerto Rican experiences on the East Coast like *Grandma's Gift* by Eric Velasquez (2013) and *Sofi and the Magic, Musical Mural* by Raquel Ortíz (2015), and stories set on the island like *Mis Abuelos y Yo/My Grandparents and I* by Samuel Caraballo (2003) and *The Coquí and the Iguana* by Alidis Vicente (2011). Both texts describe relationships, between a boy and his grandparents and between humans and nature.

Ada Haiman is a retired professor from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. She wrote *Tulipán: the Puerto Rican Giraffe* after her daughter's giraffe prints were rejected by the Puerto Rican Museum of Contemporary Art in 2004 because "giraffes were not Puerto Rican." Prior to the written text, Haiman shared the story orally at community events. Her audience, including Puerto Ricans who have never left the island, constantly shared personal connections and stories about not looking Puerto Rican enough. These personal accounts inspired Haiman to revisit and publish *Tulipán*.

The author lived in the Bronx during her childhood and utilized these experiences and her expertise in linguistics and literacy analysis to carefully include words throughout the story that could capture the experience of Puerto Ricans in her neighborhood. Still, Latino families from other countries might also identify with some of those words. For example, *chévere* (slang for "cool") is also used in Venezuelan communities, and *guagua* (slang for "minibus") exists in Canarian, Dominican, and Cuban Spanish. Other stories by Haiman include *Tulipan the Puerto Rican Giraffe Thinks about Grades* (2016).

Atabey Sánchez-Haiman's artistic technique involved illustrating on paper, transferring the drawings to the computer, and coloring the illustrations digitally. Sánchez-Haiman uses concrete images such as a giraffe, musical notes, a bus, and a light bulb to create a highly symbolic and abstract visual story. For example, the light bulb represents ideas and the intellectual, which emerge or are fostered at the university. A pointing finger has multiple meanings. Initially it questions Tulipán's identity. Later, it indicates a location, followed by a path to *La Marqueta*, an outdoor market in East Harlem. Towards the end, the pointing finger (along with the light bulb) indicates the emergence of a new awareness and a content Nuyorrican giraffe. Sánchez-Haiman's work can be followed on www.giraffesandrobots.com.

María Acevedo, University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA



Those Shoes

Written by Maribeth Boelts

Illustrated by Noah Z. Jones

Candlewick, 2009, 40 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-0763642846

Those Shoes is the all-too-familiar story of wanting the latest fad. Jeremy is a young boy who wants nothing more than to have the same black high tops with two white stripes as most of the other boys in class. However, when Jeremy shares that he wants those shoes, his grandmother responds, "There's no room for 'want' around here -- just needs." Grandma knows that Jeremy may want high tops, but he needs new winter boots. At school, one of Jeremy's shoes falls apart and Mr. Alfrey, the guidance counselor, gives him another pair with a cartoon character on the side and Velcro -- a little kid's shoes. The other boys laugh when they see Jeremy's shoes -- except Antonio.

When Jeremy and his grandmother go shopping, they see the black high tops with two white stripes are too expensive. However, Jeremy uses his own money to buy a pair at a thrift store, even though they are too small for his feet. A few days later, his grandmother puts a new pair of snow boots in his closet and does not say a word about the too small shoes that hurt Jeremy's feet. At school, Jeremy glances at Antonio's shoes and notices that they are taped up. He knows that Antonio's feet are smaller than his own feet. Jeremy does not want to give away his high tops, but knows what it is like not to have the 'cool' shoes. A couple of days later, Jeremy rings Antonio's doorbell and leaves the black high tops on his doorstep. At school, Antonio is smiling big in his brand-new black high tops.

Books that could be paired with *Those Shoes* are *Stellaluna* by Janelle Cannon (1993) and *Jamaica and Brianna* by Juanita Havill (1996). *Stellaluna* is the story of a bat who finds herself in a nest of birds after her mother is attacked by an owl and Stellaluna is accidentally dropped. Despite their many acknowledged differences, the birds and the bat become the best of friends and share their ways with each other. In *Jamaica and Brianna*, Jamaica needs new winter boots but her father gives her hand-me-down old boots from Ossie, her older brother. Jamaica longs for some pink boots with the fuzzy cuffs like her friend Brianna's boots. Brianna teases Jamaica about her old "boy" boots and the two friends stop talking to each other. However, one kind word between the two friends brings them back together.

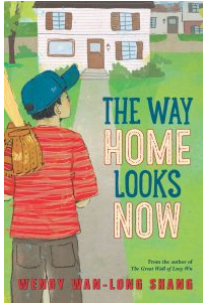
Jones' illustrations set *Those Shoes* in a multiracial urban neighborhood. The subdued tones of blues, greens, and browns are digitally arranged illustrations created from watercolor, ink, and pencil, making use of simple lines to create smooth shapes throughout the story.

Maribeth Boelts was born and raised in Iowa and worked as a preschool teacher for several years before she turned her talent to writing children's books. She is married

and has three grown children and three grandchildren. Boelts is the author of over twenty books including the “Little Bunny” series. She has won the Charlotte Zolotow Award Honor designation, and the Cooperative Children’s Book Center for *Those Shoes*, and several other awards for her book *Before You Were Mine*. To find out more about Maribeth Boelts visit www.maribethboelts.com.

Noah Z. Jones is an author, illustrator, and animator. Jones took part in a monster drawing contest in elementary school and placed fourth out of five contestants, but he knew from that experience that he wanted to continue drawing. He began his career at the FableVision studio as an animator and eventually moved up to creative director. As creative director, Jones headed up award winning projects for Nickelodeon, the Public Broadcasting System, and Houghton Mifflin. However, he and his wife (a children’s librarian) left Boston to move to a small town in New Jersey and pursue a career illustrating children’s books. Visit Noah at www.noahzjones.com.

Megan McCaffrey, Governor’s State University, Chicago, IL



The Way Home Looks Now

Written by Wendy Wan-Long Shang

Scholastic Press, 2015, 272 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-0545-60956-2

With a book cover showing a boy with a baseball cap facing a house, many readers might think *The Way Home Looks Now* would be a piece of contemporary realistic fiction. Set in 1970's Pittsburgh, the story feels like contemporary fiction rather than historical fiction because of the universal childhood themes around baseball. The book is about a Taiwanese-American family's growth and resilience after a family loss, all within complex layers of relationship issues in the family and community. The protagonist, Peter Lee, is the family's second child and is passionate about baseball. (He even completes most of his school projects on baseball topics.) His older brother Nelson is also a great batter and mentor for Peter. Then, Nelson is killed in a car accident.

The author focuses on the drastic changes in home atmosphere after Nelson's death. When Nelson is a part of Peter's life, everything is normal in the household. After Nelson's sudden death, however, Peter's mom sinks into heavy depression and her busy kitchen nearly stops. Cooking becomes a forgotten ritual. Ba, Peter's father, doesn't show his feelings and acts as if nothing has happened. Ba's response may be understood through a cultural lens, as he is an Asian man who grew up under Confucianism's influence. Peter's father is a Taiwanese-born man and his portrayal is similar to typical representations of Asian fathers in the children's books about Asian-Americans/immigrants. He is inflexible but rule-oriented until he becomes involved with the Little League team. The strict and seemingly rigid Ba transforms as he serves as a coach for the team. Peter also experiences and learns about the unknown sides of Ba. After Ba becomes the coach, the Little League team goes through good days and hard situations. Their efforts to keep the team together help Peter and Ba become more open with each other as well as with the other teammates. Eventually they learn to accept each other despite the significant dilemmas around gender and an initial resistance to making an exception for their team.

The Way Home Looks Now portrays Peter's childhood through baseball games, schooling, sports, friendship and death. Sensitive social issues such as sexism and micro-aggressions are also embedded in the storyline, as are cultural connections with Peter's Taiwanese heritage. Wendy Wan-Long Shang's books portray Chinese- and Taiwanese-American experiences as "cosmopolitan." Asian characters are portrayed as members of the transnational community with a mixed cultural ethos and cultural practices. Their social generality as citizens of the U.S. is kept as their main membership.

This story invites the audience to think of the subtle social gaze of "otherness" in which Asian characters, regardless of citizenship, are seen as different. In the book,

"Oriental" is used as an ethnic identifier by another character who expresses his discomfort towards Ba, whose name and language are different from the "typical American's." Martin, a teammate of Peter's, also expresses this otherness when talking about Ba:

"Baaaaaaawwwwww?" Martin stretches and exaggerates the sound. "What kind of name is that?"

"It's Chinese." I try to sound serious and important, but part of me is wishing I had just said 'My father'.... It is not alright with Martin.

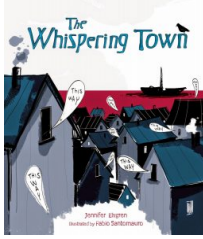
"Baaaaaaaaaa. How do you know a goat won't come instead of your dad? How do you say 'shut up' in Chinese? Is it ching chang chong?" (p. 111-112).

This book brings up issues around cultural, historical, and critical social awareness: how the nation of Taiwan separated from China and Taiwanese national identity and pride as different from Chinese; how Confucianism partially shapes Ba and his transnational identity; how Japan occupied Taiwan and how the Taiwanese Baseball Team was created under Japanese influence; how baseball has unique cultural differences between the U.S. and Taiwan; how Japan's national sport is baseball and how Peter is unaware of this fact because he grew up in America, and sexism's prevalence in 1970s Pittsburgh. Several touches of brief Taiwanese history and cultural ethos are included in authentic ways. Peter's relatability at times negates his status as an outsider in the U.S., which is of concern. The baseball theme serves as an intercultural bridge between U.S. and Northeast Asian history. For example, through a school project, Peter discovers President Roosevelt's "Green Light" Letter, encouraging baseball to go on in spite of WWII.

The Way Home Looks Now can be explored through a variety of sub-themes, including sports, death, family relationships, and social gender stereotypes. *A Long Pitch Home* by Natalie Dias Lorenzi (2016), *Under the Red-Blood Sun* by Graham Salisbury (2014), *Mexican White Boy* by Matt de la Peña (2008), *Catching the Moon: The Story of A Young Girl's Baseball Dream* by Crystal Hubbard (2009), *Keeping Score* by Linda Sue Park (2010), and *Full Cicada Moon* by Marilyn Hilton (2015) would be helpful in drawing intercultural connections with baseball experiences or gender stereotypes and social resistance.

In her author's note, Shang shares her personal inspiration for writing this book, specifically Taiwan's years of dominating the Little League World Series. Her Chinese-American parents grew up in Taiwan (then Chinese Taipei) and their experiences supporting the Taiwanese team inspired the global baseball connections in this book. Cultural authenticity is not a concern with this book in terms of representing Taiwanese-American culture and baseball as two important cultural concepts. The author's note provides insightful story background along with baseball pick-up game ideas.

Yoo Kyung Sung, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque NM



The Whispering Town

Written by Jennifer Elvgren

Illustrated by Fabio Santomauro

Kar-Ben Publishing, 2014, 32 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-1467711951

In October of 1943 in a small fishing village on the Northeast coast of Denmark, Anett's family is hiding Danish Jews in their cellar who are on their way to safety in neutral Sweden. Anett is familiar with the routine: she knows she needs to bring them food; she knows which shopkeepers are sympathetic and will give her extra meat and eggs so her family can feed their "guests." When Nazi soldiers threaten the safety of Anett's new friend Carl, she devises a way to guide Carl and his mother to the harbor. As Carl and his mother walk through the town on the dark moonless night, villagers whisper directions to them from doorways and windows, guiding them to the harbor and the small boat that will take them to Sweden.

The [story](#) of Danish villagers rescuing Jews is a well-known one. Villages up and down the coast were stopping points for the 7500 Jews fleeing the country. The small port of Gilleleje, where this story takes place, was one of the major ports, and many of the village boats were pressed into service to help ferry 1700 Danish Jews across the 15-mile stretch of water from Gilleleje to safety in Sweden.

In the same way that artist Roberto Innocenti uses visual distancing techniques to create emotional distance between the child reader and his Holocaust narratives (Meyer, 2009), Italian artist Fabio Santomauro uses a graphic minimalist style to effectively communicate the danger and tension of the rescue without focusing on the visceral fear of being hunted and fearing capture. The colors are digitally rendered in a reduced darker palette, conveying the furtive nature of the actions of Anett, her parents, and the other villagers. The occasional splash of red keeps the illustrations vivid and communicates the danger of hiding Jews from the Nazis. The minimalist style also gives the illustrator the chance to add facial expressions that communicate fear and friendship without overwhelming the young reader.

What also softens the story are the sparse words; the whispering is rendered in speech bubbles. American author Jennifer Elvgren chose to tell the story from the third-person perspective of a young girl -- the human connection Anett makes with Carl reflects a child's thinking. Anett not only realizes Carl and his mother need food, but she also recognizes that Carl could use some diversion and that perhaps he might want to read some of her favorite books while he waits several days in the cellar. Touched by Anett's empathetic connection, Carl gives her one of his most precious possessions when he leaves, a heart-shaped stone he found on his last walk on the beach with his father (who is absent from the story).

The story is amazing because it shows readers that there were countries who worked tirelessly and collectively to save their citizens from harm. The collective action of

Anett, her parents, the baker, the librarian and the farmer, mirrors the collective action the Danes took in WWII. The book encourages young people to think about taking action themselves. The story is relevant today, given current world controversies surrounding opening or closing doors to refugees who are fleeing for their lives. Great books to pair with *The Whispering Town* include *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry (1989), *The Boys Who Challenged Hitler: Knud Pedersen and the Churchill Club* by Phillip Hoose (2015), *Shadow on the Mountain* by Margi Preus (2014); *The Greatest Skating Race: A World War II Story from the Netherlands* by Louise Borden and Niki Daly (2004), and *The Boy Who Dared* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti (2008).

Jennifer Elvgren is an award-winning American author who transitioned to writing books after a successful career as a journalist and short story writer for magazines. She lives on the East Coast with her husband and children. She wanted to write a book about the Holocaust for young readers, and believes that Holocaust stories for young children should focus on the helpers (like Anett and her family).

Fabio Santomauro is an Italian illustrator living in Rome. He developed his clean graphic style studying animation for cinema. He aims for breadth in his creative expression, so he experiments with many styles he features on a blog. He is also a juggler and a musician! Interviews with author and illustrator can be found [here](#).

Susan Corapi, Trinity International University, Deerfield, IL