

ISSN 2577-0527



WOW REVIEW

READING ACROSS CULTURES
VOLUME VI, ISSUE 2

Winter 2013
Global Award Winning Titles

Worlds
of WORDS 



College
of
Education

wowlit.org

WOW Review: Volume VI, Issue 2
Winter 2013
Global Award Winning Titles

Table of Contents

Introduction and Editor's Note	2
<i>Calling the Gods</i>	3-5
<i>The Circus in the Treasure Box</i>	6-7
<i>The Hangman in the Mirror</i>	8-9
<i>Liar and Spy</i>	10-11
<i>Maggot Moon</i>	12-14
<i>Mister Whistler</i>	15-17
<i>My Brother's War</i>	18-20
<i>Oh No, George!</i>	21-22
<i>Rahui</i>	23-24
<i>Shigeru no Kachan (Shigeru's Mom)</i>	25-26
<i>A Straight Line to My Heart</i>	27-28
<i>There</i>	29-30
<i>When You Were Small</i>	30-31

Contributors to this Issue:

Olga Bukhina, International Association for the Humanities, New York,
NY

Sue Corbin, Shaker Heights Middle School, Shaker Heights, Ohio

Rebecca Gasiewicz, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio

Lisa Patrick, The Ohio State University at Marion, Marion, OH

Gail Pritchard, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ

Kathy Meyer Reimer, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

Junko Sakoi, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ

Yoo Kyung Sung, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM

Melissa B. Wilson, Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA

Jongsun Wee, Winona State University, Winona, MN

ditor:

Janelle Mathis, University of North Texas, Denton, TX

Production ditor:

Richard Clift



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 2 by World of Words is licensed under
a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0
International License. Based on work at [https://wowlit.org/on-line-
publications/review/volumevi2/](https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/)

Introduction and Editors Note

An awareness of what is acknowledged as significant literature in a country provides insight into its cultures, values, and life experiences for readers in the global community, WOW Review Volume VI, Issue 2, called for reviews of “Global Award Winning Titles.” As a result, this issue is an interesting array of reviews that represent seven countries, include both young adult novels and children’s picture books, and reflect historical fiction, realistic fiction, and fantasy genre.

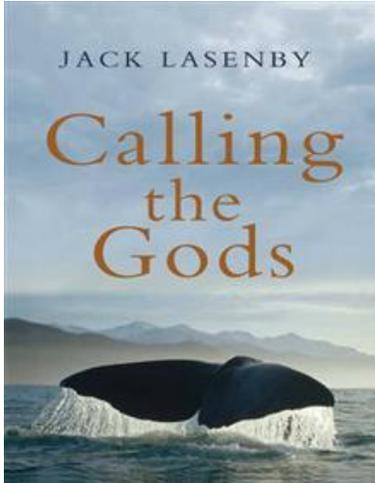
Among these titles are the rich traditions of historical fiction as seen in *My Brother’s War* and *The Hangman in the Mirror*. Realities of contemporary issues in the lives of young adults are the focus of *A Straight Line to My Heart*, *Liar and Spy*, and *Shigeru no Kacchan (Shigeru’s Mom)*; the realistic life experiences that help younger readers realize the commonalities they share with children in other countries can be found in *When You Were Small, There*, and *Rahui*. Fantasy continues to win awards across the global community and is represented here through picture books that reveal the universal delight of a tale well told through images and text, as in *Oh, No George*, *Mister Whistler*, and *The Circus in the Box*, as well as reflections of more complex dystopian works with their roots in history as in *Calling the Gods* and *Maggot Moon*.

Perspective, social issues, humor, imagination, and universality are threads that run throughout the well created and highly recognized international books. We hope these titles will inspire further reading into the award winning children’s and young adult literature from other countries.

Janelle Mathis, Editor



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 2 by World of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on work by Janelle Mathis at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/2/>



Calling the Gods

Written by Jack Lasenby

Auckland, New Zealand: HarperCollins, 304 pp.

ISBN: 978-1869509484

The 2012 New Zealand Post Children's Award for fiction went to Jack Lasenby for *Calling the Gods*. Selene (the Greek name for the goddess of the moon) is the female chosen by her village to call the whales—the community's gods—home each spring. Selene has the traits of the Māori Paikea, or whale rider, who is able to communicate with whales and who sees whales as the heart of the community.

In their seaside community of Hornish, Larish and her family are jealous of Selene being chosen to call the whales and of Selene's father's power as chief. Because it is a prosperous community, outsiders come to trade iron and guns for fish and whale oil, and this is where difficulties begin. Selene is banished when Larish's family accuses her of causing the difficulties. Even though Selene is sent off, the troubles do not end and Larish's family takes a second step by betraying Selene's father in his plan to rid themselves of outsiders. This betrayal results in the death of most of the community, including Selene's parents and one of her brothers.

Selene returns following the devastation to try to save her remaining brothers and finds that her brothers and Larish and two of her siblings have survived. Although she knows what Larish and her family have done, Selene can't leave them to die, so she takes them with her when she sails to the land of her ancestors to start a new settlement. Selene is a skilled leader and others who end up stranded nearby join them as the new community develops. The whales also venture to their new community when Selene calls them, which shows that the gods approve.

Their community flourishes and prospers under the mutual work of those who have joined, but Selene knows that the biggest threat to a community usually comes from within, not from without. She is aware of Larish's continued discontent and jealousy. Indeed, Larish's jealousy starts to fester and she ends up secretly poisoning two community members of whom she is jealous. Selene remembers her father's ideals of justice and says that if they kill Larish in return, that is no better than what she has done, so the community decides to banish her to another island with supplies to build a new life. Larish's jealousy drives her mad, so she devises a plan to return to the community and destroy it, which she does. The book ends with Selene leading those who have survived this second devastation so they can start again.

The story is mostly told through Selene, but her plight is also revealed through the stories told by each person as they die. Throughout the book, there are also brief interjections by Jim Rotherham, an older man living on the same land as Selene in the past/future. (Is Selene's culture one that follows his or precedes his? That is one of the questions

throughout the book). He is living in the reader's present and is able to time shift into Selene's world—they can't see or hear him, but he can hear and see them. He is able to piece some events together from his observations, which also builds the story.

The sense of impending doom—knowing that Larish is capable of monstrous acts and waiting to see what she plans to do—pervades the book and the observations Jim interjects. He is an intruder on the scene, as are the readers. Why is Jim brought in? Is it to suggest that the society before Selene's also fell to the hands of a greedy and jealous people? It is interesting that an older man's voice interprets a young woman's story, just as it is interesting that a male author writes this story of a female protagonist and antagonist.

Clearly Lasenby has superb knowledge of survival skills in the bush and on the sea. He understands the foods, the tools, and the methods used to survive—potentially due to his 10 years as a deer-culler in the Urewa bush. The landscape is critical—sea, islands, bush—the backdrop in many stories by New Zealand authors and particularly noticeable in New Zealand fantasy. The landscape and Lasenby's excellent knowledge of survival living are critical to telling this story in a believable way and provide added depth.

After Larish poisons two people and is banished, the reader is positioned to believe that Selene has done a noble thing by not giving in to revenge, but also that she has protected her community and they are safe from the impending sense of danger that has shadowed the narrative. To have Selene face betrayal a third time at the hands of Larish (the first time being her banishment, the second the killing of community members, and now to return to destroy the community and kill more members) leaves the reader wondering what the author is trying to say about grace and forgiveness or about choosing alternatives to revenge. Indeed Selene persists and survives and starts again—she has survived where Larish has destroyed herself. There is a deeper message but it does not come in a neat, tidy or easy package.

This is a time warp telling—going between Selene's time and Jim's time. Ostensibly it is fantasy set in the future, but it reads like fantasy set in the past drawing on Māori themes and cultural understandings as key elements of the plot (though no culture is ever named for the people). At times, as a reader, I wondered if this was fantasy or survival literature, with the amount of attention and detail given to description of methods of survival. It could read like a good historical survival novel.

A wonderful pairing for this book would be Joy Cowley's *Hunter* (a New Zealand Post Children's Award Book of the Year as well as Junior Fiction Award book in 2006). *Hunter* is a story in which a male from 1805 who is surviving on the land as an escapee from captors is aware of a female stranded by a plane accident in 2005 on the same island beach but with much less knowledge of survival. He is able to think some ideas to her through the time warp so that she is able to keep herself and her brother alive until they are rescued. The hunter finds a way to escape his captors and survive and the female turns out to be his great, great, great granddaughter. The setting, survival knowledge and critical aspect of thinking/seeing/hearing across time but in the same place make these two an interesting match. While the structure and idea is much the same, the content of connection across time rather than disconnect across time is an interesting contrast.

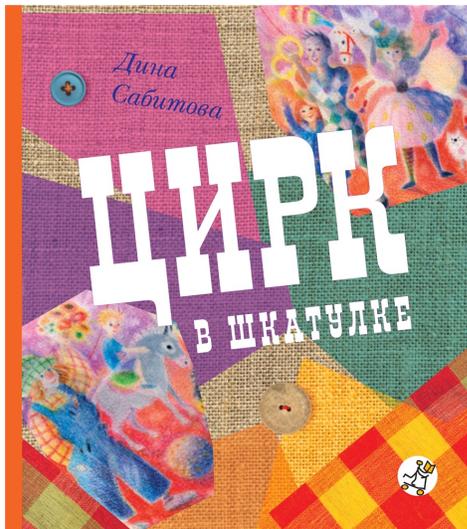
Lasenby, who was a deer-culler, an editor, and a teacher before becoming a full time writer has many awards which attest to his writing ability. Starting with the Esther Glen Award in 1989 for *The Mangrove Summer*, he continued to receive awards and honors for many of his books including winning the New Zealand Post Children's Award four times prior to winning in 2012 for *Calling the Gods*. Storylines and AIM Children's Book Awards have honored him as well.

Kathy Meyer Reimer, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

© 2013 Kathy Meyer Reimer



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 2 by World of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on work by Kathy Meyer Reimer at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/3/>



The Circus in the Treasure Box

Written by Dina Sabitova

Illustrated by Natalia Salienko

Moscow, Russia: Samokat, 2008, 272 pp.

ISBN: 978-5902326731

The Circus in the Treasure Box by a popular Russian children’s writer Dina Sabitova was published in Moscow in 2008 (Publishing House Samokat). In 2007 when the book was still in manuscript format, it received a prestigious Russian award, The Incredible Dream Award for Children’s Books. The main character of this book is a small

boy named Marek, who is an orphan. Unlike many orphans in children’s books, he does not live in a horrible orphanage, nor does he sleep on the street, cold and hungry. He lives in a small foster home with just a few children and has his own room with pretty curtains on the windows. But despite such a nice place, there is the lack of something very, very important—the lack of love and a mother’s lullaby. Marek simply cannot stay there anymore and runs away.

Marek meets a traveling circus. This circus has everything – a juggler, a beautiful horse and her rider, a magician, and a kind ringmaster. The only one who is missing is a clown. But the respectable circus cannot exist without a clown. Marek helps his new friends to find a clown, a woman with the strange name of Treasure Box. Now they are ready to travel and perform in the capital city, but the city officials cancel the performances and put the ringmaster into the prison because the circus does not have a minister of culture permit to perform

In the capital, all entertainment is postponed until the princess finishes her math homework. This little princess soon becomes Marek’s best friend, even though they have not yet met. She lives in the king’s palace. Her mother and father call her Amelia “Caramellia.” She is very unhappy because her mother, a queen, who is also a minister of finance for the whole country, is so busy that she keeps forgetting to kiss the princess goodnight. The king is also terribly busy and forgets to remind the mother to kiss their daughter goodnight.

How to help the circus and the ringmaster? It takes two circus dogs, a donkey, a beautiful horse, one boy and one princess to figure it out. But it is not the end of the adventures of Marek and the princess. Even though the characters experience ups and downs in their quest for happiness and a place of acceptance, this book warms the reader’s heart. After all, its setting is a circus, a source of delight for most children.

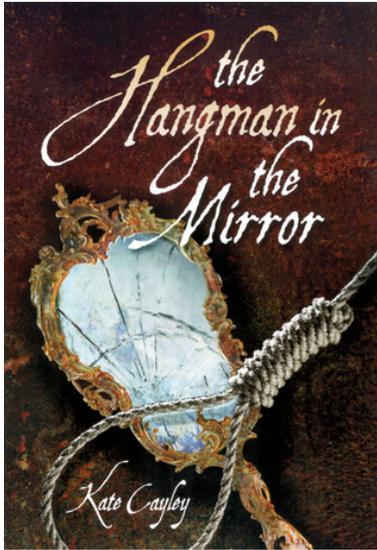
Dina Sabitova is the author of several children’s books, including *Tales about Martha* (2011), *No-Winter Land* (2011), *Your Three Names* (2012), and *Glikeria, the Mouse* (2012). These works might be paired in an author study to look not only at characteristics of this author but cultural insights into the Russian audience for whom they are written.

Olga Bukhina, International Association for the Humanities, New York, NY

© 2013 Olga Bukhina



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 2 by World of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on work by Olga Bukhina <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/4/>



The Hangman in the Mirror

Written by Kate Cayley
Annick Press 2011, 232 pp.
ISBN 978-1554513574

Kate Cayley's choice for the title of her first YA novel, *The Hangman in the Mirror*, is eerily ominous of the story that is told within the pages of this book. Françoise Laurent, the protagonist, was an actual girl who lived in 18th century Montréal when it was known as New France. It was a rough place to grow up if you were poor, and Françoise's family could not have been any more destitute. Her mother was a prostitute who had been sent to New France as punishment, and her father was in the military. Both parents were

irreparable alcoholics, and so any money that was made from Madame Laurent's laundry business and Monsieur Laurent's military salary was quickly spent on spirits. Françoise's life appeared to be doomed to inherit the job as washerwoman to the high-born ladies who sent their clothes, dirtied from wayward trysts, to Madame Laurent out of shame. Françoise had seen the homes of these women while delivering and picking up laundry, and she knew how much better her life could be if she were lucky enough to become a maid in one of these fine households.

Françoise finally realizes her dream after her parents die in a measles epidemic. Through her friend, Mathilde, Françoise is able to procure a letter of recommendation from her father's former army commander to present to Madame Pommereau who is in need of a maid. She fast becomes Madame Pommereau's pet, and she is treated to all of the fineries of the household. However, Françoise's downfall is her need for more, for something beautiful that she can own for herself. This leads her to steal a pair of gloves from her mistress' drawer, and when she is found out, she is sentenced to death by hanging. It is a harsh sentence, meant to serve as a warning to other domestics. As Françoise awaits her doom in a dark and damp cell, she remembers a way out of her predicament, something that she had heard from Madame Pommereau. It was based on an old tradition that held that if a woman could find a hangman to marry her, she might be let out of her death sentence. When Françoise realizes that a boy she had met in the marketplace is in the cell next to hers for wounding a man in a duel, she manipulates him with talk of love and appeals to his sympathy for her through a small hole in the cell walls. Jean Corolère agrees to marry her and to become a hangman when he is released from his short sentence.

Little is known of the real Françoise and Jean. There is a brief biography of Corolère in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (2005, University of Toronto Press) that Cayley used as a major source. Corolère reluctantly agreed to become a hangman and marry Françoise in 1751, but no record of either one of them exists after 1752. Readers will be inclined to hope that they lived happily ever after because Cayley's interpretation of their story is so riveting.

Kate Cayley is an author and playwright who brings her theatrical talent into her writing. According to her Facebook page, she is the writer in residence at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto. *The Hangman in the Mirror* began as a play that was produced at the Stranger Theatre which Cayley co-founded. Cayley states in her Facebook biography (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Kate-Cayley/167778573302995>) that “as the play developed, so did the book, until the story took on a fictional form quite different from the dramatic one. In the end, the voice of the heroine became so demanding that the book seemed to be writing itself.” The voice of Françoise in the book certainly is strong and commanding, painting a graphic picture of one woman’s struggle to survive in the face of poverty and prejudice. Cayley’s portrayal of 18th century Montréal is genuine, with a playwright’s attention to detail and authenticity.

The Hangman in the Mirror won the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People in 2012. This award is presented annually to Canadian authors of historical fiction, and presents a prize of \$5000.00 to the winner. Bilson himself wrote historical fiction for children and young adults and was a history professor at the University of Saskatchewan when he died in 1987. The award was created in his honor in 1988. Criteria considerations are similar to the Carter G. Woodson Award in that literary quality as well as cultural authenticity are necessary components.

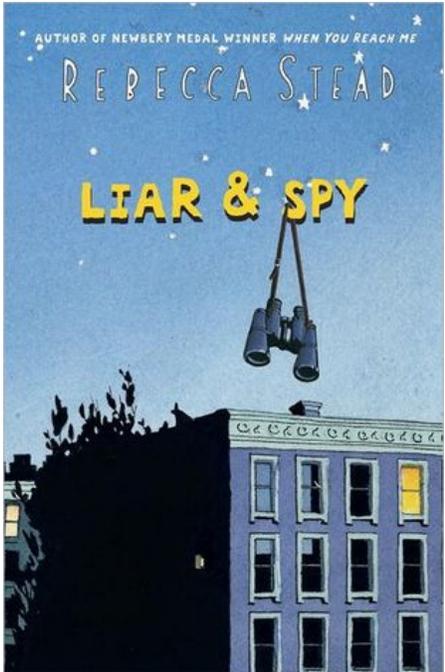
This book could be paired with other works of historical fiction dealing with the plight of young women who lived in poverty but fought to obtain a better life for themselves. Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Fever 1793* (2011) would be one of these, particularly as it deals with life in the New World in the 18th century and the challenges of surviving poverty and disease. The heroine of this story, Mattie Cook, is another strong female character who overcomes her lot and triumphs in the end.

Sue Corbin, Shaker Heights Middle School, Shaker Heights, Ohio

© 2013 Sue Corbin



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 2 by World of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on work by Sue Corbin at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/5/>



Liar & Spy

Written by Rebecca Stead

Yearling, 2012, 180 pp.

ISBN: 978-0375850875

Mom says our Seurat poster reminds her to look at the big picture. Like when it hurts to think about selling the house, she tells herself how that bad feeling is just one dot in the giant Seurat painting of our lives. (p. 11)

Thematically, *Liar & Spy* is a big Seurat painting—a pointalistic text in which the reader sees what appears to be solid lines and color and is slowly led closer and closer to the canvas to discover that the dots are creating an illusion. A tension is created between what things appear to be and what things, in fact, are.

Rebecca Stead is the first American to win the Guardian Children’s Fiction Prize (UK). This award was opened to American authors in 2012. Other books that made the short list were *The Fault in Our Stars* (John Green, 2012), *The Boy who Swam with Piranhas* (David Almond, 2013), and *Maggot Moon* (Sally Gardner, 2013). Stead’s second novel, *When You Reach Me*, won the 2010 Newbery Award. She grew up in New York City and is now raising her children there.

It is hard to summarize the plot of this novel without giving away the individual dots that readers are gradually shown. The big picture is the protagonist, Georges (named after Seurat), a lonely, bullied child who moves to an apartment after his father loses his job. His mother is an ICU nurse and is at the hospital for the entire novel. At the new building Georges meets a bohemian, home-schooled boy called Safer, who pushes Georges to spy on a neighbor. Georges and Safer spend most of the novel lying to each other, to themselves, and to readers.

As an American novel that is being marketed and read in the UK, *Liar & Spy* shows a very specific United States. The characters inhabiting this text are all middle/upper middle class, white, urbane Americans who live in a Brooklyn, the good part. The kind of people who eat out a lot, have cars, rent large apartments, and care about anti-privileged people with money. *Liar & Spy*’s America, its setting and privilege, is certainly not representative of the majority of the U.S. Thematically it is very American in that it pits Georges’ mother’s sunny optimism against his father’s pragmatism. Americans believe in a national credo that hard work and a good attitude makes anything possible, while at the same time, we deal in our day-to-day lives with glaring evidence that it is a myth, dots on a paper that together look magnificent.

This novel could be paired with another mysterious story set in upper class New York City, *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil F. Frankweiler* by L. Kongisburg (1967). It could

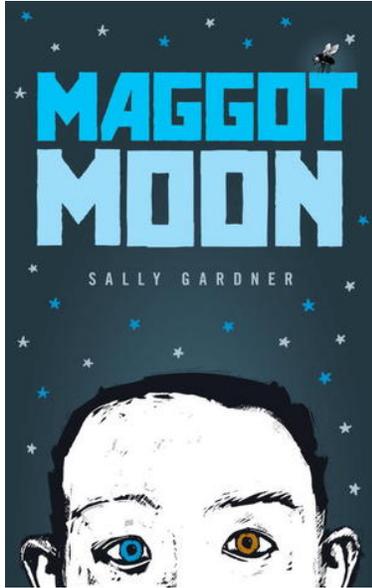
also be a part of a thematic set about living in Brooklyn that could include *Locomotion* by Jacqueline Woodson (2003), a novel written from a contemporary African American perspective that takes place in a different Brooklyn, as well as *Brooklyn Bridge* by Karen Hesse (2008), a historical fiction piece about growing up in early 1900s Jewish Brooklyn.

Melissa B. Wilson, Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA

2013 Melissa B. Wilson



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 2 by World of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on work by Melissa B. Wilson at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/6/>



Maggot Moon

Written by Sally Gardner

Illustrated by Julian Crouch

Candlewick Press, 2013, 288 pp.

ISBN: 978-0763665531

Maggot Moon represents a rare genre, a young adult novel that blends history with speculative fiction. While the book has often been labeled a dystopia, Gardner shares that she never thought she was writing a dystopia, but rather, a “what if?” story. While researching World War II for another book, she became fascinated by “what if” questions of life and history. *Maggot Moon* grew out of two such compelling questions: What if the Allies had not won WWII, and what if no one had been to the moon yet? In Gardner’s alternative history set in London in the 1950’s, the Motherland is a ruthless

regime resolutely determined to win against its enemies in a race to the moon.

Set against a backdrop of brutality, a 15-year-old boy whose exceptional ability to think outside the box is in a unique position to challenge the government’s tyranny. Standish Treadwell and his grandfather live with the outcasts in Zone 7. When his best friend disappears, Standish embarks on a quest to find him, one that takes him to the heart of the Motherland and the dangerous secret it guards with violence and propaganda. Gardner’s story is a chilling and gripping account of one individual’s endeavor to stand up to an all-powerful regime. The narrative is so compelling and believable that I frequently had to remind myself that I was not reading historical fiction.

Standish is an anti-hero with dyslexia he can neither read nor write. Because he is incapable of writing his story, he must tell it to the reader. Gardner shares that she used a disjointed style of writing to try and mirror the kind of back-and-forward thinking that goes on in one’s head in the attempt to recount a story. Sally Gardner states that she has dyslexia and did not read until she was 14-years-old.

Maggot Moon is organized into 100 very short chapters that span only one, two or three pages. This design was intentional on the part of the author. Gardner wished to make the book accessible to dyslexic readers because she remembers feeling terrified of books with long chapters. She always felt a great sense of achievement when she got to the end of the first chapter, so she made the opening chapter of the book only seven lines long. Gardner’s advocacy for students who exist on the margins of school is reflected in the book’s dedication: For you the dreamers/Overlooked at school/Never won prizes/You who will own tomorrow.

Julian Crouch created the digital illustrations for *Maggot Moon*. Designed like a flip-book, the figure of a rat appears throughout much of the book, seen moving in and out of a hole at the bottom of the page. At one point, the rat discovers a bottle of poison, drinks it, and dies. A fly then lays eggs in the rat’s mouth. Eventually all that is left is a skeleton of wriggling

maggots, from which one lone fly hatches and flies away on the last page of the book. This grisly scene of death and decay draws eerie and disturbing parallels to the plot and themes found within Gardner's text. This is not a book to finish in public. While the ending is satisfying and hopeful, it is also tragic and heartbreaking.

Sally Gardner won the 2013 Carnegie Medal, which is awarded annually in the United Kingdom to the writer of an outstanding book for children. *Maggot Moon* was originally published in the UK in 2012 by Hot Key Books. The UK's most prestigious children's book awards are the Carnegie Medal for outstanding writing and the Kate Greenaway Medal for distinguished illustration, awarded by CILIP (The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals). The Carnegie Medal was established in 1936 and named in memory of Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish-American industrialist-turned-philanthropist who established more than 2800 libraries around the world. Books from English-speaking countries outside of the UK are eligible for the awards, as long as they are co-published in the UK within three months of their original publication date.

According to the award criteria, the winning book must exemplify outstanding literary quality. In describing the ideal winning book, the award criteria page on the CILIP website (<http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/home/index.php>) states: The whole work should provide pleasure, not merely from the surface enjoyment of a good read, but also the deeper subconscious satisfaction of having gone through a vicarious, but at the time of reading, a real experience that is retained afterwards. The criteria also specify quality in attributes of three literary elements: plot, characterization, and style. The U.S.'s equivalent award, the Newbery Medal, also considers these elements, as well as theme, presentation of information, and setting.

Readers who wish to participate in a mock-award process may visit CILIP's Shadowing Site (<http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/shadowingsite/index.php>), which offers a wide array of free resources and shadowing activities. Participants may join book groups that read and discuss the shortlisted books for the two medals, view videos of the authors and illustrators talking about their books, and read and post book reviews. Over 1,500 reviews of *Maggot Moon* have been posted on the site thus far. Sally Gardner is featured in twelve short video clips (<http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/shadowingsite/watch.php> authorid 3) in which she answers questions and offers advice for young writers. In fact, much of the information for this review came from these captivating and informative interviews.

Maggot Moon has its own website where readers may download a preview of the book and a book poster, listen to an extract of the audio book, learn about the book's background and author, access a discussion guide designed to spark conversation, and sample the *Maggot Moon* interactive iBook. This enhanced multi-touch iBook contains a variety of engaging content, from video and audio clips to interviews with the author and resources about dyslexia. The iBook uses a dyslexic-friendly font, and it shows readers an animation of what writing looks like to a person with dyslexia. Readers can actually experience what Sally Gardner sees when she looks at words.

The Book of everything, by Dutch author Guus Kuijer (2006), is the perfect book to pair with *Maggot Moon*. Thomas, the book's protagonist, has visions of things that other people cannot

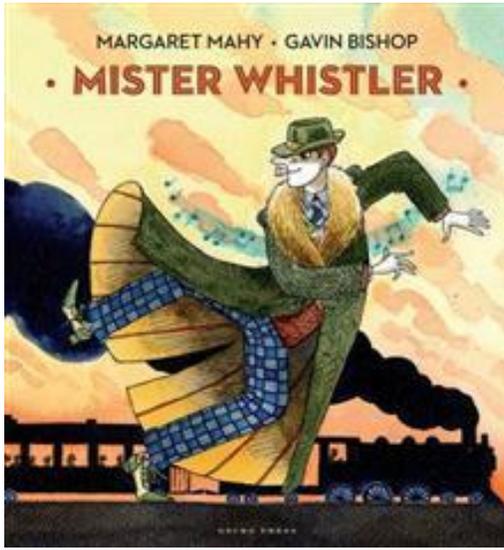
see, and he records these in his Book of everything. Thomas' goal in life is to find happiness when he grows up, but happiness is elusive in a home oppressed by his abusive father. Both books are suitable for those who enjoy the challenge of a genre-bending reading experience. Each story contains elements of speculative fiction the line between what is real and what is imagined is blurred. It could be quite interesting to compare and contrast the protagonists: Standish stands up to the tyrannical Motherland for the sake of his family and friend, and Thomas stands up to his tyrannical father for the sake of his mother and sister. Both books contain brave and complex characters, as well as powerful themes of secrets and sacrifice.

Lisa Patrick, The Ohio State University at Marion, Marion, OH

2013 Lisa Patrick



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 2 by World of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on work by Lisa Patrick at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/7/>



Mister Whistler

Written by Margaret Mahy

Illustrated by Gavin Bishop

Gecko Press: Wellington, New Zealand, 2012, n.p.

Lerner Publishing: Minneapolis, MN, 2013, n.p.

ISBN: 978-1877467912

Margaret Mahy's last picture book in her career as a children's book author fittingly won the New Zealand Post Children's Book Award for 2013 in the picture book category. The New Zealand Post Children's Book Award is given at the end of the New Zealand Book Council Festival each May to recognize excellence in writing in four categories: picture books, junior fiction, young adult fiction

and non-fiction.

Mister Whistler is the whimsical story of a young man who wakes up with a song in his head and dance steps in his feet.

He dances and hums his way through putting on each item of clothing before going to catch the train to his aunt's house. When he gets to the train station he puts his ticket between his teeth as he checks his pockets for his handkerchief. He then dances his way across the platform to realize he doesn't know where his ticket is. As he searches all his pockets for his ticket he dances himself out of his coat, jacket, waistcoat, shirt, trousers and all the way down to his underwear—still no ticket. The crowds have gathered and are loving his dance steps. When he takes off his hat to check the headband for his ticket his appreciative audience fill his hat with money.

When he realizes that his ticket is not in any pocket, he exclaims that he can't find his ticket, only to see it floating to the ground as it flies out from his now-open mouth. He scoops it up and starts to get dressed again (trousers, shirt, waistcoat, jacket, coat—the now-familiar order), only to find he needs both hands to button his clothes and puts the ticket back between his teeth to free his hands. Mister Whistler has to hurry as the train has come and he jumps onto the train just in time as the crowds cheer him on. He goes to find his ticket again and when he laughs, remembering his ticket is now in his teeth, he swallows it! Luckily for him, he has the money in his hat from dancing, so he can buy a new ticket.

The text is lyrical, the words a song in their pacing. The tune in his head is part of the cadence of the words and the meter part of the putting on and taking off each item of clothing. As in Mahy's *The Moon and Farmer McPhee* (2010) the words move from page to page with rhythm. While not a rhyming book (some of her books rely heavily on a rhyming scheme), it has a clear rhythm and cadence all its own.

The rhythm of the words is matched with Gavin Bishop's charming watercolor wash illustrations to add lightness to Mister Whistler's feet. His body moves throughout the book so

1430 East Second Street, Tucson, AZ 85721520.621.9340 wowlit.org © 2013 Kathy Meyer Reimer

we also get a sense of his dance and the music in his head (which also floats across the page.) Bishop has added wonderful details and visual humor. The woman in the advertising poster in the station, who sees him dancing and is aware of his lost ticket adventures from her spot on the station wall, ends up being the woman who is sitting in front of him on the train. The design on the end pages matches the design on the wall paper in his bedroom, which matches the design on his waistcoat. Some of the posies surrounding the train station end up in his hat and are also held in a little bouquet by the woman in front of him on the train. These sorts of lovely details and visual jokes add depth to the already-delightful story.

Both Margaret Mahy and Gavin Bishop have been working in children's literature for a long time. They were both living in Christchurch when they worked on this book (and both were born on the South Island of New Zealand) and were friends. The way the text and illustrations mirror the same tone, flow, and whimsical character attests to their relationship and similar cultural understanding

Margaret Mahy, who was trained as a librarian and wrote her first published pieces in 1965, started writing full-time in 1980. After many years of writing and sharing stories and books with children, she died July 23, 2012 not living long enough to see this book in print or to know that it had won the New Zealand Post Children's Book Award. She wrote over 100 books for children and also published for adults. In her career she won the Hans Christian Anderson Award from the International Board on Books for Young People and the Carnegie Medal from the U.K. 2 times. She also had numerous titles that were finalist or honorable mentions for awards.

There are many opportunities for pairing with this book as the theme and style lead in many directions. Thinking about losing something that is right in front of you would connect this book to *Five Silly Fishermen* by Roberta Edwards (1989) where the fishermen go out and worry they are coming back with only 4 people because they each forget to count themselves. In the way the story has Mister Whistler put on his clothes and take off his clothing items as part of the rhythm of the story, it would make a nice partner book to *Sam and the Tigers* (Julius Lester, 2000), where Sam gets his new smart outfit piece by piece, takes it off to give the tigers and puts it back on when they have run themselves to butter.

Yet another angle to approach this book would be to look at writing style or form. Mahy ends by speaking directly to the reader with a comment: Wasn't it a lucky thing he'd earned all that money with his wild dancing This is similar to what she does in *The Great White Man-eating Shark* (1989) where she ends the book with: Though he was a plain boy, he had made rather a good-looking shark, and I think he was very wise not to take any dangerous chances. Mahy's side comments to the reader could make an interesting look at writing style. Thinking about how the main character moves to the music—a book that has a real musical rhythm to both text and illustration, it could pair nicely with *Charlie Parker Played Be-Bop* by Chris Raschka (1992) where the words and music are not a song, but clearly have a musical rhythm to it and were inspired by a song.

As Mahy was such a prolific writer, a study of a number of her books in tandem would be a rich experience—looking at how she uses rhythm and rhyme, how she tells a story, how she is informal, yet follows the conventions of a book...all could make for a wonderful author unit.

Mister Whistler is currently being published in the US as well as in New Zealand.

References

Bishop, G. (August 13, 2013). New Zealand authors writing for New Zealand children. Presented at the Storylines Festival panel discussion. Auckland, New Zealand.

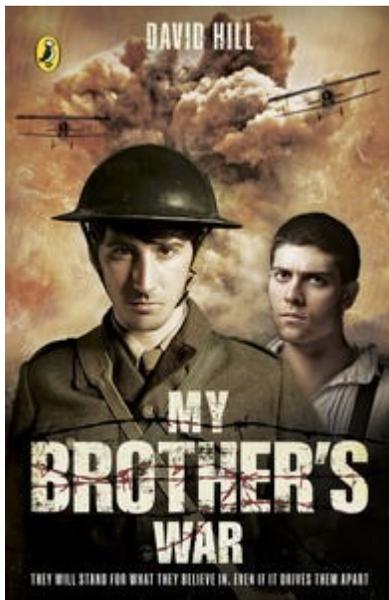
Under, T. (2012). *Margaret Mahy: A writer's life*. Auckland, New Zealand: Harper Collins.

Kathy Meyer Reimer, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

2013 Kathy Meyer Reimer



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 2 by World of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on work by Kathy Meyer Reimer at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/8/>



My Brother's War

Written by David Hill

Auckland, New Zealand: Puffin, 2012, pp. 252

ISBN: 978-0143307174

The 2013 winner of the New Zealand Post Children's Book Award for Junior Fiction is David Hill's *My Brother's War*. It is the story of two New Zealand brothers at the start of World War I as those in the British Commonwealth are called to join the war on behalf of Britain. The older brother, William, is taken by the idea of being a hero and joining the action of the war to fight against Germany and enlists. The younger brother, Edmund, decides he cannot kill other people and does not enlist even when it is mandated instead becoming a conscientious objector.

In the end, both boys set sail for Britain and then France on different ships—William as part of his company and with much fanfare, and Edmund forced with shame and ridicule as his punishment for not complying with the law. Both end up experiencing the pain, devastation and cruelty of war as well as the small kindnesses of humans under stress and in highly emotionally charged settings. Both brothers believe strongly in what they are doing and both face dire consequences for their choices. In the end, William and Edmund meet on a battlefield in France with a new understanding of each other. Edmund is aware that those who enlisted believed they could do some good and William realizes that there might be a reason to protest what happens in war. Both come to think of the other in different terms.

The book is divided into 7 parts and includes the voice of each brother telling about their experiences at that stage of the war. Each part (save one, when they are in the heat of battle and no one could write a letter) begins with a letter from one brother back home to their mother and sister, Jessie. Whenever the voice changes, it is indicated by a letter home from that brother.

Hill brings a believable voice to each brother. He does not mince words, euphemize or make situations less bleak than they are. On the other hand, he does not wallow in the cruelties of war. He has pitched to the junior fiction level—the 9-14 year old—and has done so well. While the ending brings mutual understanding and points toward a happy resolution, it is not so cheery as to seem totally unbelievable—but more pleasant than the reader had feared along the way.

Each brother's letters are in a different font, so it is easy to keep track of who is narrating and which story is being told. Many of the pages look as though they have a mud spot on them—as if they were read in a trench—which gives a sense of placing the reader in the setting in a way that few chapter books attempt to do. The reading is fast-paced, which mirrors the action.

At the beginning of his career, Hill was a secondary teacher for 14 years before becoming a full-time writer. He has had a varied and versatile life as a writer in New Zealand from journalism to reviewer to teacher of writing to writer of plays as well as fiction. David has spent much of his life around youth and is able to speak to the issues and concerns of that age group. As well as winning the New Zealand Post Children's Book Award, he has won the LIAN A (Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa) Esther Glen Award for Junior Fiction in 2003 and the Margaret Mahy Award of the Children's Literature Foundation of New Zealand in 2005 (<http://www.storylines.org.nz/Profiles/Profiles-David-Hill.html>).

Another book about someone who didn't fight in a war that could pair with this book is Carolyn Reeder's *Shades of Gray* (1999) where the protagonist finds out his uncle did not fight in the Civil War that left him orphaned. There have been a number of books written about brothers or family who make different choices in wars such as James Collier's *My Brother Sam is Dead* (2005) set in the Revolutionary War and *Across Five Aprils* (Irene Hunt, 2002) set in the Civil War. In both of these the plot hinges on choosing different sides to fight in the war rather than one brother who chooses not to fight. Nonetheless, the family strife, different loyalties and emotional weight of *My Brother's War* would pair well with any of these. Anita Lobel's picture book from a number of years ago (and speaking to the situation of the Vietnam War) *Potatoes, Potatoes* (1967) has a mother wishing both her boys would stop fighting—no matter what side they are on. She sees no purpose in the destruction and would rather they help her raise potatoes to feed people. This one would work well to express the sense of the purposelessness or damage and death in war as Desmond feels in *My Brother's War*.

Another wonderful pairing would be *Nice Day for a War*, the 2011 non-fiction winner of the New Zealand Post Children's Book Award. It is the story of Cyril Elliot told through his diary, documents and the reconstructed history by his grandson, Matt Elliot and graphic novelist Chris Slane. This is the same war in the same time period by another New Zealander with a number of the same battles and events mentioned—only in non-fiction form. It makes a striking pairing and it is interesting that these two books came out within a year of each other.

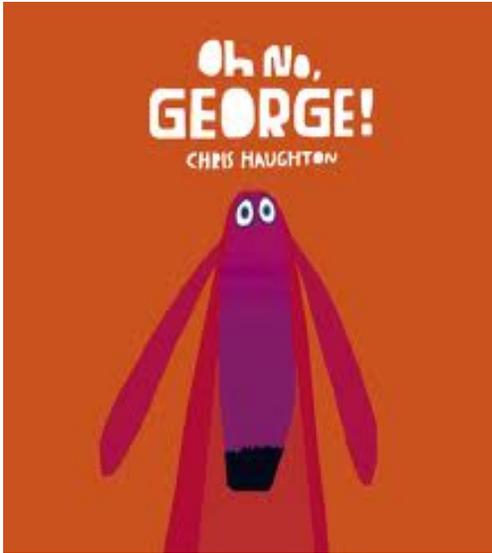
Because of the number of countries involved in WWI, including the United States, it is in some ways not a story of any one culture but all the cultures drawn into the war. While there are a number of culturally specific aspects to the story (names of specific units or the specific military structure of the battalion) authentic to New Zealand, the theme of going to war or deciding not to go to war is a universal one. This story would help young people in any culture consider what choices family and friends in our own context have had to make.

Kathy Meyer Reimer, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

2013 Kathy Meyer Reimer



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 2 by World of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on work by Kathy Meyer Reimer at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/9/>



Oh No, George!

Written by Chris Haughton

Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2012, n.p.

ISBN: 978-07636554564

Anyone who is crazy about dogs will love *Oh No, George!* and those just wanting a fun read will as well. George wants to be good. He has the best intentions, but he just can't help himself. He eats all of the cake, chases the cat, and digs in the dirt. With a great deal of effort and the desire to please his people, George manages to resist his next encounters with a cake, a cat, and the dirt, but what about that wonderfully smelly trash can....

It's not clear whether George is actually a dachshund, but if his snout is any indicator, he's got some badgerhound in his blood and certainly in his heart! George has that weinerdog look. Every doxie owner in the world knows that look—it's the one where they turn their head and look at you over their shoulder with the whites of their eyes showing. That look can mean anything from woe is me to how could you. Haughton's illustrations catch those well-known looks and all the others—the wheel's turning look, also known as what can I get into now. Then there's the cat, cat, cat! look—it's one of unmistakable glee as the chase begins. Haughton, who is an Irish designer and illustrator now living in London, creates the pictorial text with pencil and digital media, capturing the whimsical nature of George from his sorrowful looks to the joy of the chase. Haughton says, "I try to tell the story through the images alone and the text just serves as an extra to accompany it. Readers will delight in all of George's looks and for those who want to know how Haughton developed the idea for *Oh No, George!*, they can visit his website (<http://chrishaughton.com/george/>).

Haughton explains that it took him two years to make this book, after first rejecting three other ideas. He describes his use of the page-turn, a technique that builds up the action across the page so the reader must turn the page to find out what happens next. The character sketches where he shares messy outlines of what will eventually become George are especially interesting and could inspire George-like dog drawings. He also includes photos of himself at work on the book while in Katmandu. Another thing he discusses is a quote by pictetus on the title page—something I completely missed on my initial read and which perfectly captures George's spirit.

Like his first book, *A Bit Lost*, which won nine awards in seven countries, *Oh No, George!* has won and/or been nominated for quite a few awards, including Germany's Leipzig Book Fair Prize, 2-6 Category, and its 2013 White Raven Selection. It was France's 2013 Je lis, J' lis (I read, I elect) Picture Book Award winner. In the U.K. and Ireland it was the Junior Magazine Picture Book of the Year and was nominated for the Roald Dahl Funny Prize, the UKLA Awards, the Irish Book Awards, the CLIP Carnegie Kate Greenaway Medal, the

Waterstones Prize, the CBI Awards Ireland (Children’s Books Ireland), and the Coventry Inspiration Book Awards. In the U.S. it was the winner of the 2012 Little Awards for Book Books, Picture Book and Amazon.com’s 10 Picture Books of 2012. In Switzerland, it was nominated for the Carouge Story Book Award.

Haughton began his work as an illustrator for magazines and advertising, but always wanted to write and illustrate my own children’s book. Haughton credits the success of his picture book appeal to time he spent teaching English to youngsters in Hong Kong there he used drama, role play, and illustration to create opportunities for the children to respond to the books he checked out from the school’s library. He says from this experience, he decided he wanted his books to be theatrical and very visual, he wanted them to involve humor and the desire to read and re-read, he wanted them to be repetitive so that young children can join easily with the story, he wanted the images to be read, and he wanted visual symbolism in his books. Kirkus (<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/chris-haughton/oh-no-george/>) described the illustrations in *Oh No, George!* as, jazzy artistic style, minimalist, with geometric shapes and a striking palette of bold oranges, red and purple and while I read a few reviews where the color palette was not appreciated, I think the colors add to George’s whimsical personality.

Comparing the writing and illustrations of his first book, *A Bit Lost* (2010), and his soon to debut third book, *Don’t Worry, I Have a Plan*, with *Oh No, George!* will lead to some interesting discussions about digital media and the elements of illustrations, such as overall composition, color, line, and shape. Other interesting pairings to talk about the characters and their antics might be: Marta Alt’s (2011) *No!*, Nick Bruel’s (2005) *Bad Kitty*, David Shannon’s (1998) *No, David!* and Gene Luen Yang’s (2006, 50th anniversary edition) *Harry the Dirty Dog*. For added interest, I would want to show some of the YouTube videos Haughton references on his website—guilty dogs—they are just too funny and it’s easy to see how he incorporated these guilty dogs’ looks onto George.

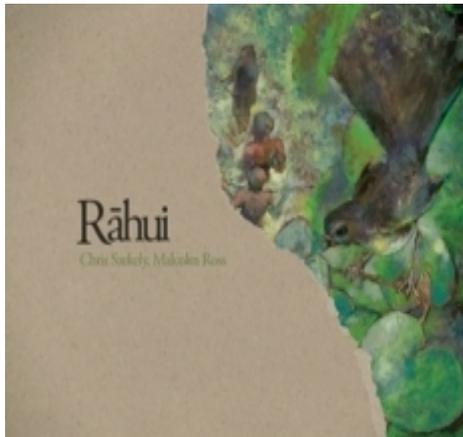
After reading *Oh No, George!* and doing a little research on Chris Haughton, I’ve become a huge fan and you can bet I’ll be collecting his books from here on out.

T. Gail Pritchard, University of Arizona, Tucson, A

2013 T. Gail Pritchard



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 2 by World of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on work by T. Gail Pritchard at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/10/>



Rāhui

Written by Chris Szekely

Illustrated by Malcolm Ross

Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand: Huia Publishers, 2011, n.p.

ISBN: 978-1869694708

Chris Szekely writes from his childhood memories of summer holidays at the beach. Summer has come and the main character's family goes to visit relations in the country. They love being able to play in the bush, ride

horses, catch eels, but most of all they love to go to the beach. They swim, fish, eat, and play. One day they think his cousin, Thomas, has gone home early because they can't find him as they swim. Later the father finds him drowned. After the funeral, a rāhui—the Māori word for restriction—is put on the beach and they cannot go to swim or fish or eat or play. Our hearts weep for Thomas as he joins our ancestors. And we say farewell. A year later a headstone is unveiled and the restriction is lifted. The friends can all go to the beach again. They are delighted to do so, but as the last words in the book say, our love remains.

This is a beautiful and powerful book. The words are straight-forward and direct. The sentences are short. There are no euphemisms. The meaning is clear and open. It is almost a poem in honor of all that life holds—great joy and deep sadness. The end pages are done in brown paper—rough and unfinished. This matches the illustrations, done by Malcolm Ross—oil on brown paper—that also have an unfinished feel. The images are bold and strong and match the directness of the text.

The author is Māori and there are Māori words throughout—but in places where it is clear what the words mean even if you don't know the language (There is also a glossary at the end that defines all the words, if you want more than context for interpretation.) The illustrator grew up in Māori areas and has authentically used Māori imagery in the illustrations. While set in a specific cultural context, the theme and illustrations are universal.

Chris Szekely is chief librarian at the Alexander Turnbull library of the New Zealand National Library. This was his first book, but he has since written a retelling of a Māori traditional tale. In the 1980s Szekely and Ross were colleagues and started to collaborate on Rāhui. In the intervening years Malcolm died and the project was left unfinished. In 2010 the paintings came into the possession of Duncan Ross, Malcolm's older brother, who reconnected with Szekely and the publisher to bring the book to fruition (Szekely, C., October 30, 2013, e-mail correspondence with the author).

Rāhui won the 2012 New Zealand Post Children's Award for Best Picture Book and also 3 awards from LIANZA (Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa)—the Russell Clark Award, the Librarians' Choice Award Winner and the Te Kura Pounamu

shortlist. The New Zealand Post Children’s Book Award is given at the end of the New Zealand Book Council Festival each May to recognize excellence in writing in four categories: picture books, junior fiction, young adult fiction and non-fiction. The LIAN A Awards are given annually—the Russell Clark award is for the most distinguished children’s text and illustrations.

The book deals simply, directly and beautifully with death and could be used with younger children in tandem with other books that deal with the rituals around a death such as *Dead Bird* by Margaret Wise Brown (1995). Because of its straight forward style and illustrations, it also would work with an elementary or middle school aged child—partly because of the impact of the theme and partly because the illustrations are not totally representational. For the older child, it would pair nicely with *On My Honor* by Marian Kane Bauer (2012, reissue) where the child feels some responsibility for the death of a friend while playing and swimming.

The book is published by Huia Publishers in New Zealand and currently does not have a U.S. publisher, though it has been taken to the Bologna Children’s Book Fair according to Frances Plumpton, literary agent in Auckland, New Zealand (Plumpton, F., September 25, 2013. Personal conversation.) This is a huge loss as it is one of the most moving and honest books I have read and certainly would speak directly to children in the U.S. who have had experiences of loss of friends or family through drowning. It was not taken by U.S. publishers because they said it was too culturally tied to the Māori culture. It references Māori rituals, and does so with authenticity and transparency—which is what brings the richness that cuts across cultures. I found it enriching to have it placed in this context. Since it is a fairly new book, my hope is that a publisher may yet choose to bring it to the U.S.—we would all benefit.

Kathy Meyer Reimer, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana

2013 Kathy Meyer Reimer



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 2 by World of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on work by Kathy Meyer Reimer at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/11/>



Shigeru no Kachan (Shigeru's Mom)

Written by Matsuko Jyonouchi

Illustrated by Ikuno Ohata

Iwasaki Shoten, Japan, 2012, n.p.

ISBN: 978-4265081165

The cover of *Shigeru no Kachan (Shigeru's Mom)* shows a small boy beside a young woman who has dyed-brown hair and wears mascara over false eyelashes. Who are they? The boy is Shigeru, a first-grade student, and the woman is his mother—a single Japanese woman working as a truck driver. Shigeru is proud of his mother because he believes that she can do things that seem difficult for women. For example, when a typhoon demolishes a kennel, she fixes it with just a screwdriver. In another example, she leads a

group in extinguishing a fire that threatens to destroy a food store—a modern hero for all intents and purposes. In a poignant image depicting the strong bond between mother and son, Shigeru returns home from school with his mother in her truck one afternoon. He proudly announces, My mom is cool. Shigeru's friends respond with, Shigeru's mom is a dud! She is cool, though. Their words imply compliment and admiration towards Shigeru's mother that acknowledge her strength of character.

Ikuno Ohata's colorful and dynamic watercolor illustrations enable readers to experience this strength. Readers may also metaphorically experience the energy and courage of Shigeru's mother through her abilities in truck driving and, even at one point, grass cutting that she handles masterfully. The expressive faces of characters portray a range of emotions from fearful to joyous, while the vivid and detailed illustrations of characters and landscapes gracefully contribute to the story by allowing the reader to picture themes of hope, courage, and the bonds of a single-parent family.

This realistic fictional story reflects current changes in the Japanese public's awareness of multiple family lifestyles. Since the 1990s, there have been a growing number of single-parent families due to a significant rise in the number of divorced and unmarried mothers in Japan. Somewhat previously concealed in society, single mothers have become more visible through various media. Children's literature is one medium through which the topic has been dealt, giving voice to these marginalized women. Furthermore, *Shigeru's Mom* presents a single mother's self-sufficiency through the prowess of various employments, such as a truck driver. This trend has continued with the publication of recent Japanese children's books that show the shrinking of gender disparity regarding access to jobs. For example, *My Mom is a Train Conductor* (2012) by Yasuo Otomo, is a story about a mother working as a train conductor. Additionally, *Shigeru's Mom* highlights another cultural aspect of Japanese single mothers over 80 percent hold down jobs, far exceeding the majority of other industrialized countries (Fujiwara, 2008). Women who become homemakers following childbirth are generally seen as having limited work experience therefore, offered salaries are low. Consequently, this low-income factor causes single mothers, who wish to work, to choose extraordinary jobs. They

have limited employment opportunities, so physical or blue-collar work has become the only route to make money. Shigeru's truck-driving mother is an example.

Published in 2012, *Shigeru's Mom* won the 2013 Japan Picture Book award that was founded in 1978 by the Yomiuri Shinbun (a Japanese national newspaper company) and the Japan School Library Association to disseminate picture book arts, promote reading, and contribute to the development of children's books. This is the first picture book published in Japan by the author, Matsuko Jyonouchi, while Ikuno Ohata is an illustrator of children's literature having studied oil painting at Western Wyoming Community College in the U.S.

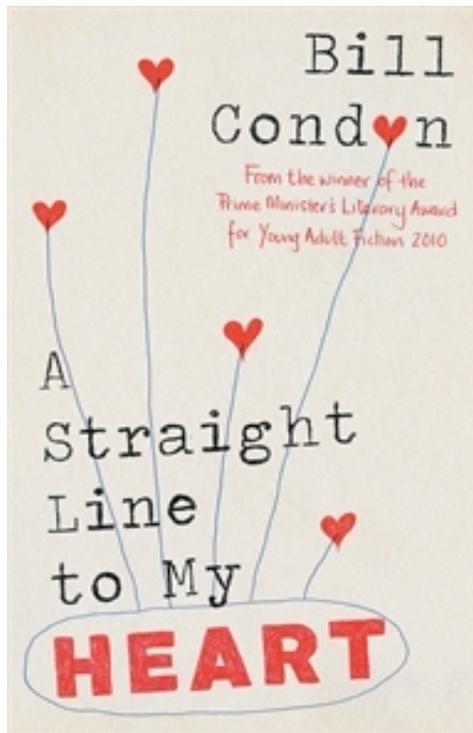
As yet, *Shigeru's Mom* has not been made available in English, but future translation could be paired with works that pick up on the values, traditions, and diversities of family lifestyles. *I Live in Tokyo* (2001), the story of a two-generation family living in Tokyo by Mari Takabayashi, is one such example. Additionally, *The Way We Live It in Japan* (2002) by Geneva Cobb Lijima and Paige Billin-Frye presents the story of a Japanese-American bicultural family set in Japan. Books that offer characters who explore their identity, such as *Tea with Milk* (1999) by Allen Say and *Hiromi's Hands* (2007) by Lynne Barasch, are further connections. *Ruby's Wish* (2002) by Shirin Yim and Sophie Blackall explores a Chinese girl's struggle with gender inequality in China, while *Sing to the Dawn* (1996), a novel by Minfong Ho in which a young village girl from Thailand seeks a place for female, also offer numerous possibilities for discussion on gender and identity.

Junko Sakoi, University of Arizona, Tucson, A

2013 Junko Sakoi



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 2 by World of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on work by Junko Sakoi at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/12/>



A Straight Line to My Heart

Written by Bill Condon
Allen Unwin, 2011, 216 pp.
ISBN: 9781742377308

A Straight Line to My Heart has been recognized by two major Australian awards. In 2012, the Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) bestowed an honor award in the mature readers category and it was on the young adult short list for the 2012 Prime Minister's Literary Award. Both awards recognize range of excellent books that appeal to different age groups from early childhood, younger, and older with the Prime Minister's Award being fairly new as it was established in 2008.

As an excellent example of contemporary realistic fiction, *A Straight Line to My Heart* is about a girl, Tiff (Short for Tiffany) who lives in small town, Gungee

Creek. The central theme of this story is family, which is uniquely realistic. Tiff describes their atypical family history as kind of twisty-turny (p. 13). Stories of people in Tiff's life illustrate life normality through abnormality. Three family members are not biologically related but care for and love each other like most families. Tiff's mum passed away when Tiff was born and had only one sister – ebbie, who couldn't take care of the baby. Therefore, ebbie's friends, Reggie and his wife, Nell, raised her. Nell was married before to somebody else. When she moved in with Reggie, her son, Bull, also joined as the package deal (p. 13). Bull was twenty-two when Tiff joined this family. Tiff recalls, I think it was only a stop-gap fostering thing at first, but I was probably a really cute baby, so I stayed (p. 13). The narrating point of view is Tiff's being almost grown up. She just finished school forever and the new chapter in her life is about to start. A big transition is waiting for her.

In the book, Tiff has largely three units of relationships. First, she has a great loving family relationship with two men, old and young, Reggie and Bull. Also there is awkward relationship with Bull's girlfriend, one who is uncomfortable with Tiff until the midpoint of the book. Another unit is her best friend, Kayla, and her family. Best friends, Tiff and Kayla have known each other since they were 9 years old. Kayla's family is also nontraditional. Tiff introduces Kayla's mother as someone who has a tribe of kids involving two or three different fathers. Tiff also has a cute yet subtle romance with a young man, Davey, whom readers meet at the beginning of the book and discover with Tiff at the end. The third relationship is Tiff's first boss, Shark, at the local paper, The Eagle. Tiff's journey in her new job helps her to grow and mature through different experiences with people and journalists' tasks. The story mirrors life honestly and humorously. Readers will taste richly portrayed colors of emotions through Tiff's family and friends. Australian English language and contemporary Australian youth language will offer literary Aussie experience to the readers

in the U.S. Also, the local setting like Gungee Creek invites readers to think about regional diversity in Australia beyond big cities like Sydney or Melbourne.

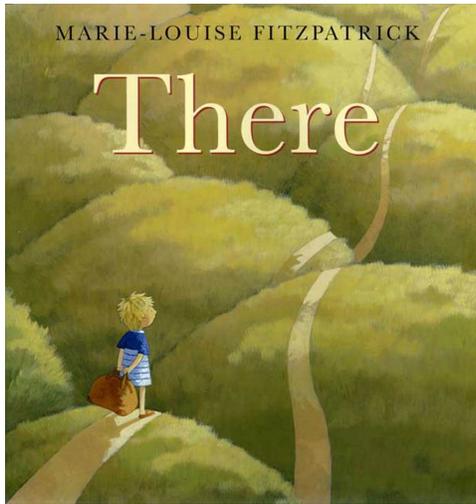
Author, Bill Condon, is a well-known Australian author. *A Straight Line to My Heart* is not his first book to be recognized by CBCA (Children’s Book Council of Australia—Australia’s book of the year) and the Prime Minister’s Literary Award. Previously his other books have won or been honored by other children’s literature awards in Australia. Condon is not only a YA book author but also playwright, poet, and previously newspaper journalist. Descriptive episodes in Tiff’s new job at the local newspaper, *The Eagle*, reflect the author’s journalist background. Young people’s nontraditional family stories can be experienced in other books like *Tupac and Foster* by Jacqueline Woodson (2010), *One for Murphys* by Linda Hunt (2013), *Locomotion* by Jacqueline Woodson (2010), and *The Lily Pond* by Annika Thor (2011). These books illustrate foster family dynamics through different styles and issues. Some are highly focused on the discomfoting side of being a foster child and some are looking at the journey to be accepted and accepting what family is. Across the books, young people discover their agency and self-empowerment through the theme of family despite their family history being kind of twisty and turny (p. 13).

Yoo Kyung Sung, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM

2013 Yoo Kyung Sung



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 2 by World of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on work by Yoo Kyung Sung at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/13/>



There

Written and Illustrated by Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick
Roaring Brook Press, 2009, m.p.
ISBN: 978-1596430877

When will I get There How will I know Will there be a sign that says, Here is there'

A nameless young girl wonders and fantasizes about arriving there, a symbolic representation of what her future holds as she contemplates embarking on that journey. The author's illustrations represent the openness of opportunity and the seemingly endless possibilities before her. As she questions what there will look like and what will happen, her thoughts are interspersed with the idea of not wanting to let go of childhood as she moves forward towards there. Her young spirit remains present in her certainty that when she gets to there she will still build snowmen and sandcastles. Her imagination also allows her to state with certainty that if a dragon appears at there, she knows how to conquer it. While she yearns to be there, she also yearns to maintain her youth and ability to dream.

While questioning her own path, she wonders if others are on the same path, on their own journey towards there. She also considers her own choices and her path towards there, and if she can make different choices on her journey. In the end she makes the definitive decision to remain a child for today, and tomorrow, start her venture towards there.

The illustrations, also by Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick, truly make this book. While the text provokes thought, the pages are filled with vibrant colors, yet soft portrayals of a young girl on her picture book journey towards adulthood. The variety of sea and landscapes are a perfect portrayal of the openness the future holds for many and the adventures that await. Read critically, however, there is the question of whether or not all children have such possibilities. The child is depicted somewhat culturally generic as far as specific features go although she is fair with blonde hair. While the future certainly seems wide open, cultural mores and traditions may not so easily be transcended.

Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick (<http://www.marielouisefitzpatrick.com/>) is an author and illustrator from Ireland, where she currently resides. While her other picture books have won many awards, this book in particular is the winner of the Bisto Book of the Year award in 2010, the Bisto Illustration Honor Award, and an Eric Carle Museum Best Picture Book of 2009. The Bisto award is considered the most prestigious book award (<http://www.childrensbooksireland.ie/>) in Ireland, and it is awarded annually. This award considers excellence in literary and artistic technique, respect, engagement, and experience.

This book is relevant and appropriate for all ages. While younger students may understand

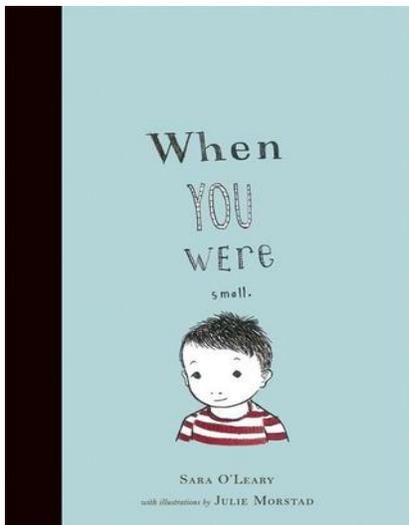
the story on a surface level, older students can appreciate the depth, curiosity, and determination the young character has as she approaches her future. This book is reminiscent of *Oh, the Places You'll Go* by Dr. Seuss (1990). The book would also pair well with texts thematically related to a journey, such as *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho (2006), in which a young male protagonist, Santiago, is on a quest for a hidden treasure and in search of his destiny. Like the character in *There*, Santiago has an innocence about him, yet is determined to seek out his future.

Rebecca Gasiewicz, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio

2013 Rebecca Gasiewicz



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 4 by World of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on work by Rebecca Gasiewicz at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/14/>



When You Were Small

Written by Sara O'Leary

Illustrated by Julie Morstad

Simply Read Books, Vancouver, Canada, 2006, 32pp.

ISBN: 978-1894965361

When You Were Small is a fun adventure bedtime story and winner of Canada's 2007 Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award. An adventure may seem inappropriate for a bedtime story, but in this story, Henry's adventure is melded into a bedtime story his father tells. If readers pay attention to the end papers, they will find out the story starts from there. In the end papers, the protagonist, Henry, is looking at pictures on the wall, which show readers Henry's fun adventures,

such as Henry in a teacup, Henry on a person's hand, and Henry on a bird. In the story, every night Henry asks his father to tell him a story about when Henry was small, and soon, the father's narrations invite readers to the world of imagination. Children will enjoy imagining themselves as small Henry and doing things like Henry did, such as fighting as a knight on a chessboard, sleeping in a slipper, and carried in a pocket of a shirt.

From the beginning to the end, the text appears on the left side and the illustrations on the right side. It seems the editor was picturing a bedtime story scene, a parent on the left side and a child on the right side. With this sitting arrangement, it is easy for a child to look at the illustrations while the parent reads. Besides the simple arrangement of texts and illustrations, less than five lines of text on one page, large text size, and a lot of empty space create a smooth and relaxed mood for bedtime. The soft color tone along with limited number of colors is also well balanced with the adventures of Henry and helps children calm down and prepare for bed.

The Marilyn Baillie picture book award is a fairly new Canadian children's book award presented by the Canadian Children's Book Centre (CCBC). It is awarded to an excellent picture book published in Canada and written and illustrated by Canadians. Fiction, non-fiction, and poetry are all eligible genres for this award. Marilyn's husband launched this award as a gift to his wife, a children's book author who had many careers, including a nursery school teacher, an interior designer, and a magazine editor. Visit CCBC's website (http://www.bookcentre.ca/awards/marilyn_baillie_picture_book_award) for more about the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award.

According to Simply Read Books, Sara O'Leary, the author of *When You Were Small* (2006) is a playwright, fiction writer, and literary journalist. After *When You Were Small* (2006), she published two more books with the same illustrator, Julie Morstad. They are *When I Was Small* (2012) and *Where You Came From* (2008). Their books make a fun bedtime story series for children. Since these three books share a lot in common, children can easily make connections among these books. It will be fun to compare Henry in *When You Were Small* (2006) to the other protagonist in a different bedtime story such as Max in Maurice

Sendak's (1963) *Where Wild Things Are*, Patrick in Kate Lum's (1999) *What! Cried Granny an Almost Bedtime Story*, and the boy in Coralie Saudo's (2012) *My Sad is Big and Strong. but... A Bedtime Story*.

Jongsun Wee, Winona State University, Winona, MN

2013 Jongsun Wee



WOW Review, Volume VI, Issue 2 by World of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Based on work by Jongsun Wee at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volumevi2/15/>