



WOW REVIEW

READING ACROSS CULTURES
VOLUME III, ISSUE 3

Spring 2011
Open Theme

Worlds
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College
of
Education

WOW Review: Volume III, Issue 3

Spring 2011

Open Theme

Table of Contents

Introduction and Editor's Note	2
<i>Dancing with Dziadziu</i>	3-4
<i>Family Pictures/Cuadros de Familia</i>	5
<i>Guardian of the Dead</i>	6-7
<i>Jack & Jim</i>	8-9
<i>Kamishibai: Hats for the Jizos</i>	10-11
<i>Life as It Comes</i>	12-13
<i>Mao and Me</i>	14-15
<i>Mirror</i>	16-19
<i>My Childhood Under Fire: A Sarajevo Diary</i>	20-21
<i>My Land Sings: Stories from the Rio Grande</i>	22-23
<i>My Nana's Remedies/ Los remedios de mi nana</i>	24-25
<i>Tales from Outer Suburbia</i>	26-27
<i>South Africa: Explore the World Through Soccer</i>	28-29
<i>What Can You Do with a Rebozo? Que puedes hacer con un rebozo</i>	30-31

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Introduction

This unthemed issue of *WOW Review* offers a variety of potential reading experiences across genre, eras, themes and topics, in particular the themes of family and acceptance are highlighted in these fourteen titles along with history, imagination, and tradition. *Dancing with Dziadziu* and *My Nana's Remedies/ Los remedios de mi nana* tell of relationships with grandmothers as well as shared cultural traditions. *What Can You Do with a Rebozo? Que puedes hacer con un rebozo/*, *Family Pictures/Cuadros de Familia*, and *Mirror* continue this theme with images of daily family life in different cultural settings. *South Africa: Explore the World Through Soccer* also contains strong elements of family and daily life with a focus on a young eight-year-old girl's love of soccer as she shares about life in her country. Family is also a central theme of *Mao and Me* and *My Childhood under Fire: A Sarajevo Diary* along with the historical significance of major events in those countries. A family focus for older readers is found in *Life as It Comes*, a contemporary novel set in France.

Of course, what is a family focus without the traditional stories told within those families? *My Land Sings: Stories from the Rio Grande* is a collection of ten stories from the Rio Grande area that serve as a reminder of the power of story as a legacy for all cultures. *Kamishibai: Hats for the Jizos* brings another traditional storytelling format with elements of fantasy to our attention and invites readers to explore the more contemporary fantasy tales in this issue. *Guardian of the Dead* brings Maori mythology to life in a novel about a young New Zealand girl who receives magical powers. This story of loyalty and acceptance for older readers has a counterpart in the theme of acceptance in the picture book, *Jack and Jim*. The philosophical stance in *Jack and Jim* is also found interwoven throughout *Tales from Outer Suburbia*.

It is hoped that these reviews will add to your enjoyment and insight of each title, including ones that you may have already read. A number of the reviewers write out of personal connections to their own cultures and families and this adds to our understandings of these books. The invitation to explore these reviews is, of course, an invitation to read the books that might be new to you and to consider the reviewers' comments. We look forward to your insights and contributions as you respond. In addition please consider submitting a review for our next themed call, "Young People Taking Action for Social Change." The call for this issue is provided on this site.

Janelle Mathis, Editor

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Dancing with Dziadziu

Written by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

Illustrated by Annika Nelson

Harcourt Brace, 1997, 40 pp.

ISBN: 978-0152006754

Dancing with Dziadziu begins with Gabriella performing her snowflake ballet routine for her sick grandma, Babci. Although Gabriella is dissatisfied with her performance, Babci is reminded of the music that she danced to with Gabriella's grandfather when he was still alive and she tells Gabriella the story of her Polish parents' cross-

Atlantic voyage to the United States. When Babci falls asleep, Gabriella finds her mother in the kitchen preparing an early Easter meal because she is afraid that Babci will not live to Easter. Later, Babci tells Gabriella more stories of her life growing up in the United States, and Gabriella feels connected to her grandmother. On Sunday, the family invites the priest to their house, and they celebrate the early Easter dinner with Polish food, making Babci smile. After dinner Gabriella is able to perform her snowflake routine just right for Babci, and she realizes that dance connects her to her grandmother.

Dance is a tradition that connects people in Gabriella's family, regardless of the generation. Gabriella knows that she will always remember and honor her grandparents through her dance performances; thus she is able to cross the generational and cultural divide with her grandmother. This theme can provoke a discussion of how traditions are passed down through generations and the ways that we are connected to others although we have different cultural experiences growing up. Other books that would lend themselves to exploring grandchild-grandparents relationships and traditions in families are *The Keeping Quilt* (Patricia Polacco, 2001), *Thundercake* (Patricia Polacco, 1997), and *Tortillas and Lullabies* (Lynn Reiser, 2008).

As a Polish immigrant, I found that many cultural elements included in this picture book are authentic. Gabriella compares her grandmother to a round loaf of bread, a staple of the Polish diet. Babci talks about Polish songs, including the polonaise, polka, and mazurka. The traditional Polish clothing and headdress depicted in the book are authentic, including the flowered skirts and vests decorated with beads, braided women's hair, and halos of ribbons and flowers. A reference to a prized tea set is also reflective of important values in Polish culture. The Easter meal that the family prepares, which includes ham, kielbasa, horseradish, lamb butter, and Paska bread, represents an authentic tradition for Polish Catholics.

The life that Babci describes as an immigrant reflects Polish immigrants' 20th century experiences, including having to bathe in a washtub, raising chickens, baking bread, and heating the house and water with coal. Annika Nelson's illustrations portray all of these details and events realistically. Furthermore, Nelson illustrated the text using printmaking, an art form that is practiced in Poland, adding to the authenticity of the text.

At first, as a Polish-speaking reader, the inclusion of the word Babci seemed problematic to me. Polish nouns have declensions based on the context of the sentence. To me, Babci is equivalent to

saying Grandmother's, not Grandma. However, through personal correspondence, the author indicated that Babci is a regional word for Grandmother. Thus, the author represented this family based on what she knew of Polish immigrants in her region (Pennsylvania).

One issue of authenticity is the Easter meal. While all of the foods included in this meal are authentic, the family eats them for dinner. Traditionally, Poles celebrate Easter with a big Sunday breakfast following the morning mass. Although it is possible that this family's custom has changed because several generations have lived in the United States, the fact that Babci insists on a traditional Easter meal makes me question why the family did not eat it at breakfast time. Also, a staple in the Polish Easter meal is pisanki – colored eggs. While the illustrator included two illustrations of pisanki in the story, they are not mentioned in the text.

Throughout the book there is little use of Polish words to represent Polish concepts; instead only the English translations are used. This takes away from the authenticity of the text, as many Polish immigrants and their descendants think of their traditional foods and customs in the original language, not in their English translation. The colors, illustrations, and immigrant experiences portrayed in *Dancing with Dziadziu* represent authentic Polish immigrant experiences, but this authenticity is affected by the lack of Polish words. Perhaps if Bartoletti had researched the language of immigrant families, she would have found that words that represent traditional foods, customs, and people are retained in their original language, and would have been able to create a more authentic representation of the language used within Polish families.

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Family Pictures/Cuadros de Familia

Written by Carmen Lomas Garza

Children's Book Press, 1990, 32 pp.

ISBN 13: 978-0892392063

I since I was 13 years old that I wanted to be an artist. And all those things that I dreamed of doing as an artist, I'm finally doing now. (p.30)

This bilingual book, based on Carmen Lomas Garza's life, includes illustrations painted from the author's memories of growing up in Kingsville, Texas. Every page is a different painting showing a piece of her childhood along with a written description of childhood memories. Many of the illustrations depict the family spending time gathering food, cooking and eating and include memories, such as going to her grandparent's house, and family traditions, such as acting out the story of Mary and Joseph during the Christmas season. Each painting focuses on a different aspect of traditional Mexican American culture. In *Family Pictures*, the artist's paintings demonstrate tales of her childhood and, by extension, the childhoods of numerous people who grew up during this period in South Texas. Garza provides a vital linkage to an earlier period that natives of this region are familiar with and rarely see in children's books. Due to the popularity of her books, entire generations of children have been introduced to Mexican American culture.

Family Pictures is a heart-warming book that engages children ages 6-12 as well as people of all ages. It informs readers about Mexican American families and how they enjoy spending time together. Personally speaking as Mexican American individuals who were born and raised in Texas, Garza's family reminds us of authentic elements in our own Mexican American families and the traditions we experienced and believe in. It is a book about a family working together and having fun together. Other books that share the Mexican American culture include *The First Tortilla: A Bilingual Story* (Rudolpho Anaya, 2007) and *Too Many Tamales* (Gary Soto, 1996), as well as *In My Family/En mi familia* by Carmen Lomas Garza (2000). Readers interested in books about families could also read *Family* (Isabel Monk, 2001) and *The Family Book* (Todd Parr, 2003).

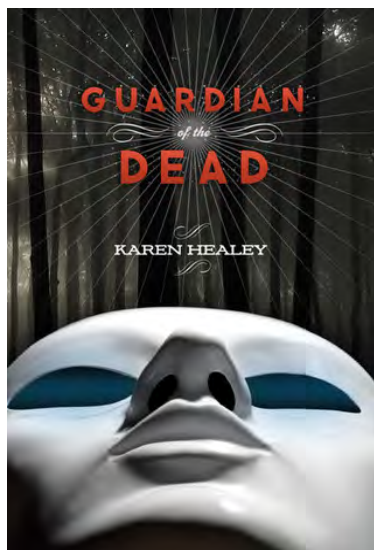
Carmen Lomas Garza is an artist who has had numerous individual exhibitions and group exhibitions of her paintings over the past 20 years all over the United States. She grew up in south Texas close to the Mexican border and was raised in the Mexican American culture surrounded by her family. Garza has become one of the most famous Chicana artists because of her focus on family and the cultural activities that connect to the lives of so many Mexican American families.

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Guardian of the Dead

Written by Karen Healey
Little, Brown, 2010, 352 pp.
ISBN: 978-0316044301

Ellie is an 18-year-old boarding school student on the South Island of New Zealand. Her life is that of a pretty normal high school girl until an accidental brush with a magical object (and her mysterious crush) awakens latent magical powers that she didn't know she had (and isn't sure she wants). With her new awakening comes encounters with magical creatures and the ability to see an alternate reality in the everyday—both based on Maori mythology. But it also comes with the knowledge that the Eyeslasher murders plaguing the North Island and the beautiful Reka who is eerily eyeing Ellie's best

friend Kevin are part of two separate, evil plans. Ellie needs to help stop these plans in order to save the fate of New Zealand and that of her friend.

With a female heroine saving the day and the males, a boy-girl friendship in which neither secretly pine after the other, and a not quite happily-ever-after ending, *Guardian of the Dead* defies typical young adult fantasy novels, with the added benefit of a cast of magical creatures and mythology based on Maori lore. This book is also exceptional in that the female lead is not a typical beauty—she is described as very tall, overweight and insecure, gaining confidence as the book progresses and ultimately (although with a twist) gets the guy. The story explores themes of loyalty, choice, and acceptance of differences—from appearances to cultural. This book would be best for adolescent readers, but educators should note that there is graphic violence and adult language throughout the book.

Karen Healey is a native of New Zealand. While not a Maori, she did extensive research on Maori mythology and in the book's afterword notes the authorial license she took in adapting these legends to fit the purposes of her story. While the novel has a glossary of some of the Maori words used in the text, many words are not explained, but are usually understandable in context, because they are common Maori words used in the everyday language of New Zealanders. When the words aren't explained, it can be frustrating for those unfamiliar with the Maori language, but this is only occasionally a problem.

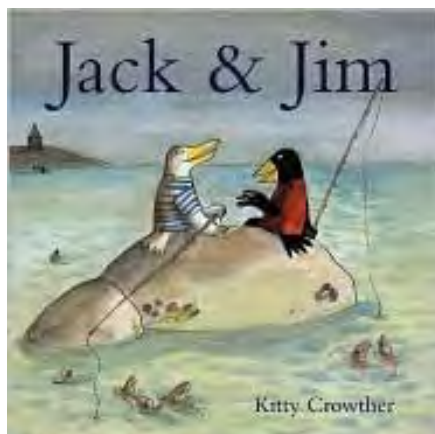
Guardian of the Dead would make a great addition to a unit on world mythology, fantasy novels, or New Zealand. By pairing it with more classical Maori mythology books such as *Taniwha* by Robyn Kahukiwa (1987) and *Maui and the Sun: A Maori Tale* by Gavin Bishop (1996), readers can explore how the Maori mythology was used in *Guardian of the Dead* and the differences between the classic mythology and the modern spin. The novel could also be paired with *The Whale Rider* by Witi Ihimaera (2010) for two modern looks at Maori mythology. However the book is used, it is an engaging story that captures the reader and has received favorable reviews including a starred review from School Library Journal.

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Jack & Jim

Written & Illustrated by Kitty Crowther
Hyperion Books, 2000, 32 pp.
ISBN: 978-078680614

Jack, a blackbird from the forest, goes exploring and makes friends with Jim, a seagull. When Jim invites Jack to visit him in his seaside village, Jack discovers a whole new world that he did not know existed. As the two friends explore Jim's home, the seagulls in the village turn up their noses at having a blackbird as a neighbor. Their friendship grows in spite of the treatment from others. One day they

look in a sea chest full of books that Jim uses to light fires. When Jack quizzes Jim about why he does not read them, Jim confesses that no one in the village knows how to read. Jack introduces Jim to books and storytelling. Unbeknownst to him, Jack not only has Jim as an audience but also a little Norbert seagull outside the window who spreads the word about the wonderful stories Jack is reading. Gradually more and more villagers come to hear Jack's tales and eventually accept him as a welcome member of the community. The friendship across 'bird ethnicity' is sealed. The last frame shows Jack sitting on an ocean rock, listening while Norbert reads to him.

The narrative is almost poetic as Jack and Jim notice their different feet, tastes in food, habitats, and literacy skills. While Jack and Jim are curious about diversity, the villagers are suspicious until Jack introduces them to the greater world of story, turning their focus away from differences to the common experience of laughing over a good book.

The picture book is written and illustrated by Belgian Kitty Crowther. While there are not cultural markers that place the story in Europe, there are elements such as dress and food that make the illustrations feel European. The book is written with multiple frames on most pages. Crowther manages to convey a lot of emotion in the eyes and body language of birds. With a dot she communicates the hostility of the village seagulls, transforming the same small dots into hilarity as the seagulls laugh at Jack's stories. Crowther primarily illustrates her books with pencils, colored pencils and ink outlines. However this particular book is mainly done in watercolors, filling the pages with transparent watery light. Her style is simple, making the anthropomorphized birds warm and welcoming to the young reader.

The text was originally written in French (*Mon ami Jim/My friend Jim*) and published by Pastel in 1996. The translator made decisions that change the pacing of the story and created tension for reviewers. By interchanging the words for forest and woods, the English text frustrated a reviewer who criticized Crowther, saying that she did not cover the blackbird villager's reactions to a seagull when the two protagonists visited Jack's forest home (which they never did but instead visited a nearby wood). The original text is written more simply with fewer words highlighting Jack's desire to explore, Jim's simple friendship, and the change in attitude of the villagers. The translator added content, interpreting the story for an English-speaking audience. The story still has impact, but adding to the narrative gears the story for an older set of readers than does the original text and changes the rhythm of a read-aloud.

Crowther grew up in a multilingual and multicultural home and the universal theme of cross-cultural friendship comes through loud and clear. The book could be paired with *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson (2000) and *How My Parents Learned to Eat* by Ina Friedman (1984). The book would work best with elementary-aged children since the pictures and text font are smaller in size and rich in detail.

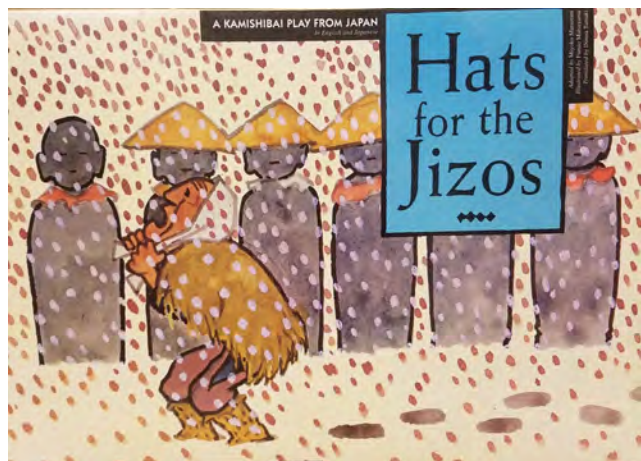
Kitty Crowther's work is not available in English but that will probably soon change. She is the 2010 Astrid Lindgren award winner so hopefully her work will soon be available in other languages. Her work is often peppered with little black mouse-like creatures like *Poka and Mine* in her well known series with that name. The two little friends have adventures in many places, similar to Paulette Bourgeois' *Franklin the Turtle* or Margaret and H. A. Rey's *Curious George*.

Susan Corapi, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ

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Kamishibai: Hats for the Jizos

Retold by Miyoko Matsutani,
Illustrated by Fumio Matsuyama
Translated by Donna Tamaki
Kamishibai for Kids, 2002, 16 pp.
ISBN: 978-4947613172

Kamishibai (ka-mee-she-bye) is a traditional Japanese form of visual storytelling that literally means paper (kami) play at a theater (shibai). This unique form of Japanese storytelling is currently being utilized as a means for teaching history, social science, foreign

language, and Japanese culture in educational settings in the United States. Kamishibai are usually larger than the average picture books (the standard size is 15"x11") and most kamishibai stories consist of 12 to 16 sturdy storyboards. Unlike picture books in which illustrations and texts are printed on the same pages, kamishibai illustrations are printed on the front of the storyboard, and on the back of the board is the text to be read. The kamishibai audience looks only at the illustrations while a storyteller reads the text. During story time, the storyteller holds a stack of kamishibai storyboards and proceeds by pulling out the front storyboard and sliding it to the back of the stack, reading the text of the next picture that has just appeared to the audience. The storyteller dramatizes a story by manipulating the pace of sliding the storyboards slowly, quickly, or even stopping in the middle. Moreover, he/she creates theatrical effects by changing voice tones as well as using onomatopoeia, which is heavily used in Japanese literature.

Hats for the Jizos tells the story of an old man who goes to town on the last day of the year, hoping to sell a piece of cloth so he can buy special food to celebrate the New Year with his wife. No one is interested in buying the cloth, and so he exchanges his cloth for straw hats another man is trying to sell. On the way home, it starts snowing. The old man sees six stone statues of the deity Jizo (jee-zoh), a guardian of children, in the heavy fall of snow. He feels sorry for them because they look cold and don't have any offerings of food for New Year's Day, so he covers their bare heads with his straw hats and gives his own scarf to the sixth Jizo. Back at home the old man and his wife plan to celebrate the New Year with the modest food they usually eat, however, on New Year's Eve, they are mysteriously rewarded with abundant food and gifts for his unselfish generosity by the deity Jizos.

This kamishibai story can be read alongside *Kamishibai Man* (Allan Say, 2005), in remembrance of a time in Japan when professional kamishibai storytellers were common street entertainment. Reading the two stories together provides children with an opportunity to experience this culturally unique form of visual storytelling and understand its role in Japanese culture. They can also potentially explore kamishibai as a story form, the deity of Jizos, and cultural ways of celebrating New Year's Day.

Kamishibai is a wonderful addition to literacy activities in classrooms. It can be a meaningful tool for developing children's reading, writing, speaking, listening, research, and art skills. For example, teachers can encourage students to create their original stories as drawing illustrations,

so that they strengthen sequence skills and understand a logical progression or sequence to writing stories.

The author of *Hats for the Jizos*, Matustani, grew up in Japan and is a writer of children's literature. She has retold many Japanese folktales and published the stories in the form of kamishibai. The illustrator, Matsuyama, is a Japanese artist of cartoon and children's literature. The translator, Tamaki, lived in Kyoto, Japan for over 30 years, working as a teacher of English and as a translator. She has been actively working to make English-language kamishibai stories available to U.S. educators at Kamishibai for Kids (www.kamishibai.com), which provides educators with resources through an up-to-date guide of kamishibai.

The International Kamishibai Association of Japan (IKAJ) is a global union of educators from all over the world who collaboratively study kamishibai. They promote resources for literacy development and cultural studies. The IKAJ website provides teaching resources and information of educational development at www.geocities.jp/kamishibai/index-e.html.

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Life as It Comes

Written by Anne-Laure Bondoux

Delacorte Books, 2008, 211 pp.

ISBN: 978-0440239697

"I watch Patty as she chews her gum. Her mouth opens, closes, distorts. In the silent apartment, the spongy noise of her mastication marks the passage of time like the ticktock of a clock" (p. 1).

Thus begins the story of *Life as It Comes*, an adolescent novel set in France. The book tells the story of two French sisters, Mado, who is fifteen years old, and Patty, who is twenty years old, as they struggle to make their way in life. The two sisters stick together, soon finding that their lives will become intertwined forever.

Although Patty is the older sister, she is more carefree. Mado, the younger sister, is the "brainy" one. The sisters are orphans; their parents died in a car accident in the south of France the year before. Patty goes to Amsterdam to have an abortion, but she is too far along in her pregnancy. For two weeks in August, the sisters go to the family vacation home in the Ardèche, a region in southern France. While there, Patty gives birth to her baby boy. One morning, Mado wakes up to find that Patty has left for destinations unknown. When Luigi, Patty's ex-boyfriend, arrives looking for her, he discovers he is now a father. They go in search of Patty, finally locating her in Paris. Luigi decides he wants to keep the baby, and so he and Patty share custody. Mado ends the book by realizing that despite all its toils, life is worth living: "One of the things I've learned lately: even through hard times, life is worth it" (p. 209).

The story in *Life as It Comes* revolves around each character's inner struggles to resolve competing loyalties. Patty wants to live a carefree existence while also realizing that she must take care of her younger sister. Mado wants to be able to live her own life while also realizing that she needs to be responsible for the baby. Luigi is torn between being a father to his newborn son and rekindling his relationship with Patty. The characters in this book struggle to find their way in life while also coping with the problems life throws at them. Despite their struggles, each character finds moments of peace and happiness within the chaos that is their lives.

Life as It Comes has qualities that are specific to French culture and other qualities that are universal in nature. In the story there are specific references to French culture. Some of the names in the book are French (Mado, Judicaëlle), and the names of other characters are names used in both France and other countries (Patty, Olivia, Maude, Sabrina, Luigi). Several places in both Paris (the Butte de Montmartre, the Eiffel Tower, Aubervilliers, La Chapelle, the Seine) and France (Ardèche, Lille, Nanterre, Senlis, Pas-de-Calais) are mentioned as well as several French food items (brioche, pain au chocolat). The overall plot of the story, however, is common not only in France but in many other countries as well. Bondoux does a great job of combining elements that are specific to France and French culture with other elements that are more universal.

This book can be paired with other books by the same author, including *The Killer's Tears* (2007), a story of a young Chilean boy who is orphaned and taken care of by his parents' murderer, and *A Time of Miracles* (2010), a story about a seven-year-old boy who flees with his caretaker during the collapse of the Soviet Union. The book can also be paired with other books on characters who struggle with family relationships, including *The Pull of the Ocean* (Jean-Claude Mourlevat, 2009), a modern-day version of Tom Thumb, *Ask Me No Questions* (Marina Tamar Budhos, 2007), the story of a fourteen-year-old Bangladeshi girl living as an undocumented person in New York, and *Skinny* (Ibi Kaslik, 2006), the story of a twenty-two-year-old girl who seems to have a full life but underneath experiences many problems based on her relationship with her deceased father.

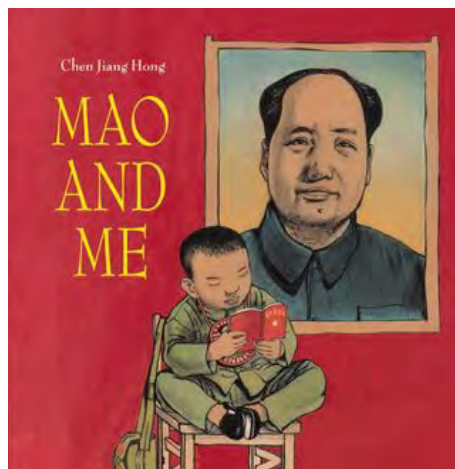
Anne-Laure Bondoux was born in a suburb surrounding Paris in 1971 and lives there today with her two children. She received her degree in modern letters at the University of Paris X-Nanterre. She has created writing workshops for children in urban areas. In addition to the titles mentioned above, Bondoux is the author of other books about children—*The Destiny of Linus Hoppe* (2006), and *The Second Life of Linus Hoppe* (2007).

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Mao and Me

Written and Illustrated by Chen Jiang Hong

Enchanted Lion Books, 2008, 77 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-1592700790

Mao and Me is a graphic memoir of Chen Jiang Hong who grew up in North China in an era of political turbulence and material scarcity. Chen lives with his parents, grandparents and two older sisters in a narrow dark apartment in Tianjin (a major city 90 miles away from Beijing). Life is difficult but the family manages it happily until one day, “a voice announced from the radio – ‘Chairman Mao has proclaimed a great Cultural

Revolution in our country!’” Three years of natural disasters in the early 1960s had ripped China of any form of material abundance. In fact, many people were living in extreme poverty. Told through an ordinary boy’s eyes, the story is set in the aftermath of the natural disasters and great famine and witnesses the ten years (1966-1976) of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Neighbors and colleagues were turned into class enemies overnight and the entire country became fanatical causing class wars and chaos.

Chen is three years old when the Cultural Revolution turns his world upside down. He sees his grandparents destroying old photos and any trace of a better life, he witnesses people being publicly beaten, among them Old Mr. Huang and his beloved neighbor Mrs. Liu; he sees his father sent off to a forest farm on the Russian border for re-education; he joins the Little Red Guard at school and works alongside peasants and soldiers; he quietly bears the sorrow of losing his grandfather, and plays tricks to make his grandmother smile in her depression at the loss of her husband and chickens.

Chen replicates the illustration style of Lian Huan Hua, literally translated as “linked pictures,” a predominant illustration style in China’s picture books up until the 1980s. The linked pictures successfully convey the sequence of the story even without the words. The artistic media of ink, brush and watercolor visually presents the details of real life scenes with historical and cultural authenticity. The intimacy of everyday family life alternates with the political uproar of national events on small frames and large pictures as the story unfolds. The black outlines with ink and brush of characters and the details of their facial expressions fill each page with intense emotions.

This powerful book can be paired with other picture books and novels, such as *Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party* by Ying Chang Compestine (2007) to give readers multiple representations of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Since the story is about an ordinary boy who lives in an extraordinary historical period, the book can teach diversity and unity through global literature. Except for living in an unusual historical context, Chen shares much in common with other children all over the world –he enjoys childhood games of building blocks and catching fireflies; he endures sorrow for losing his pet and his beloved grandfather; he is thrilled at learning to ride a bike; and above all, he likes to draw. Chen’s book can be used with other books that reflect commonalities across childhoods, such as *The Composition* (Antonio Skarmeta, 2000), *First One Foot, Now the Other* (Tomie de Paola, 1981), *When I Was Young in the Mountains* (Cynthia Rylant,

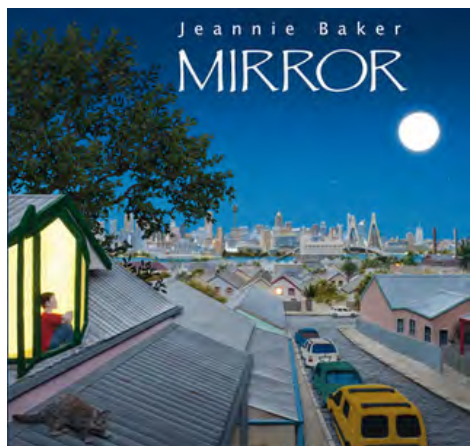
1982), and *Little Leap Forward: A Boy in Beijing* (Guo Yue & Clare Farrow, 2008).

Ke Huang, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ

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Mirror

Written and Illustrated by Jeannie Baker

Candlewick Press, 2010, 48 pp.

ISBN: 978-0-763-64848-0

This picture book from the award-winning Australian illustrator and author, Jeannie Baker, is receiving universal praise and excellent reviews as visually stunning, spectacular, original, timely and timeless with its thoughtful message of global diversity and interdependence. The content, design, and illustrations interweave to create a powerful statement about

the ways in which our lives mirror each other across diverse cultural contexts and ways of living. This exemplary picture book is sure to receive multiple awards and recognition, but it also raises questions about whether we evaluate a book only as an individual piece of literature or also consider the broader sociopolitical context of images about particular parts of the world. The issue of representation is one that complicates the author's intent and the place of this book within the field of children's literature.

The clever design of the book immediately captures the reader's attention in opening the cover to find two side-by-side wordless books, one to be read from left to right and the other from right to left. The foldout format allows both stories to be viewed simultaneously so that the stories provide a mirror for each other as the reader follows the lives of two boys and their families on a day of shopping, one in rural Morocco and the other in Sydney, Australia. A bilingual introduction in English and Arabic notes that the boys' lives are different and yet similar, and leads the reader into parallel illustrations showing both boys looking out their windows at the same moon, one in a big city and the other in a remote village. Themes of family life and global interdependence weave through the stories of father-son outings, one by car to a hardware store and the other by donkey to a marketplace. The differences in their lives are visually evident in the comparisons of a crowded modern city filled with traffic and stores alongside the unpopulated mountains and deserts filled with sand and camels. The interdependence is clear as one looks closer, noticing the cell phone in the rural marketplace and the man in a turban and a woman in a hijab at a store in Sydney. This interdependence becomes the focal point as the story ends with the Australian family sitting on the handmade rug that was sold by the Moroccan father in the marketplace and purchased in a store in Sydney, while the Moroccan boy sets up his new computer, purchased with the profits from the rug.

Baker has woven such rich details of the boys' lives within and across these two cultures that readers will keep coming back to discover something new each time they open the book. Comparisons of family life, clothing, meals, shopping, and communities are evident in the illustrations of the boys' lives as well as the broader comparisons of the landscapes, cities, and villages. Differences in culture, environment and lifestyle are highlighted in order to allow the reader to also see the connections and similarities across their lives. Baker has clearly worked hard to create a thoughtful comparison of life in two cultures, avoiding exoticism or the valuing of one way of life over the other and making evident the ways in which both cultures influence the other.

The stories are told through richly detailed collage illustrations that are visually stunning in color and texture. Baker says that she began the illustrations as drawings and then constructed them layer upon layer on a wooden baseboard using natural and artificial materials, including sand, earth, paints, vegetation, paper, fabric, wool, tin and plastic. She preserved the natural materials and then added fresh coloring. The illustrations have attracted a great deal of attention and are touring as an exhibition throughout Australia in various art museums.

Baker is well known and respected for her beautifully illustrated collage picture books that convey strong environmental themes, such as *Belonging* (2007), *Home* (2004), *Window* (2002), *The Story of Rosy Dock* (1995) and *Where the Forest Meets the Sea* (1988). She states that the idea of this book came from her travels in countries and cultures that differ from her own. At a time of strong negative rhetoric in Australia about “illegal” immigrants and antagonism toward anyone or anything viewed as “foreign,” she was struck by the friendliness and generosity that she experienced in traveling alone in rural Morocco. This experience led her to the theme of this book, “that outward appearances may be very different but the inner person of a ‘stranger’ may not be a stranger at all. We all live to be loved by family and friends and to be part of a larger family, a community. Inwardly we are all so alike that it could be each other we see when we look in a mirror.” She sees the book as a celebration of differences and diversities and as a glimpse into the common humanity that connects us so that “we are the mirror of each other” (<http://www.jeanniebaker.com/>).

Often, when authors and illustrators are outsiders to the cultures in their books, reviewers raise concerns about cultural authenticity and question the depiction of the values and beliefs of that culture or the accuracy of the details of daily life. Authenticity, however, does not appear to be a concern with this book. The details of rural life in Morocco seem carefully researched and the author clearly brings an attitude of respect toward traditional lifestyles in Morocco. The only problematic stereotype is that the Australian family buys the carpet from a Magic Carpet store and the Australian boy draws flying carpets for his family. The connection of flying carpets with Arabic culture has been so overdone that it has become offensive in much the same way as the sombrero has become resented as a symbol of the “lazy” Mexican.

The issue in this book is not cultural authenticity, but representation, particularly the author’s decision to contrast rural isolated Morocco with modern urban Australia. The reality of our modern world is that countries are not equal in their economic and political positions of power. These differences matter and lead to inequities in the global marketplace and in lifestyles and opportunities. There is a hierarchy of power and oppression across countries within the global world and Australia is much higher on that hierarchy than Morocco. Given the global power differences, the comparison of rural traditional Morocco with modern urban Sydney is an unfair comparison that perpetuates stereotypes, despite the author’s thoughtful intentions. A comparison of two rural communities or two urban cities in both countries would have been a more fair comparison of similarities and differences or a rural Australian outback community could have been compared with a modern Moroccan city to challenge viewers to confront their stereotypes of both cultures.

By emphasizing the message that we are all alike on the inside, the danger exists that we overlook the deeper ideologies that affect the distribution of power in society. A message of racial and global

harmony is important in a world characterized by intolerance and fear of anything or anyone viewed as “foreign.” The focus on harmony through cultural awareness and sensitivity, however, should not come at the expense of also recognizing the inequitable issues of power in society. That message is missing from this book.

Another issue is the place of this book within the broader collection of children’s picture books that are set in North Africa and the Middle East. A survey of books from these regions indicates the overwhelming depiction of rural isolated villages with lots of camels and sand (Aziz, 2009). Over and over, children in Western cultures see depictions of this part of the world as set back in time with few modern conveniences. Although there are rural remote villages in this part of the world, there are also modern cities with large stores, cars, trucks, and the latest technology. The problem is the almost total absence of modern city life from picture books set in this part of the world. The issue is not cultural authenticity, because the rural isolated villages exist, but the lack of diversity in the representations and images of life and geographical settings in North Africa and the Middle East. The few books that do show cities in this part of the world often contain problematic images; for example, Ted Lewin’s illustrations in *The Day of Ahmed’s Secret* (Florence H. Parry, 1995) depict camels on the streets of Cairo, when in actuality the streets are filled with fast-moving cars and trucks. If children’s books contained a broad representation of many ways of life within this part of the world, this book would be an exemplary addition to those representations. Instead this book adds to a limited representation that establishes misleading stereotypes for children as readers and as global citizens.

This book has caused a great deal of conflict for me as a reader and a critic. As an individual piece of literature, I consider the book exemplary in design and illustrations with a heart-warming and thoughtful message of global interdependence. The complexity of the details woven into the illustrations and design all point to an aesthetic masterpiece. On the other hand, books do not stand alone and we cannot act as if children’s literature is not political. When considered within the broader collection of children’s books on this part of the world, this book is a problematic representation that raises questions about the responsibility of authors to explore how their individual creations fit within images available to children.

Normally, when a book is problematic in its representation, it can be read alongside other books in a text set so that children can make their own connections and critiques. In this case, the lack of picture books showing modern city life in Arabic countries makes this pairing difficult. An alternative would be to find internet images of cities within Morocco or to search out informational books to find those images. Another possibility is to pair it with a book, such as *A Country Far Away* (Nigel Gray, 1999), which compares a day in the life of a child in rural Africa with a child in a Western city, so that readers can identify the pattern of portraying Western culture as urban and modern and Africa as rural and dated. The book could also be paired with the novel *City Boy* (Jan Michael, 2009) about a boy who is taken by his aunt to live in a rural Malawi village, leaving behind his computer, his private school and the comforts of city life. This story portrays both modern city life and more traditional village life within the same African country.

The intent of *Mirror* is clearly one of respect for traditional ways of life within rural Morocco as well as the ways in which all peoples are globally connected. Unintentionally, however, an unfair comparison is created that does not challenge existing stereotypes and does not consider these

representations in relation to the political structures of society and the broader body of children's books. The book raises provocative questions about our responsibilities as authors, critics, and teachers to be critical readers of both the world and the word.

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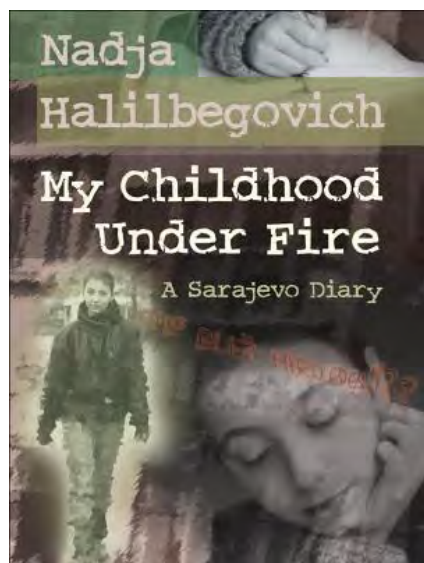
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Kathy G. Short, University of Arizona

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My Childhood Under Fire: A Sarajevo Diary

Written by Nadja Halilbegovich

Kids Can Press, 2008, 120 pp.

ISBN: 978-1554532674

This moving autobiographical book focuses on the actual experiences of a young girl, Nadja, and her family during the siege of Sarajevo in 1992. When the siege officially began, Nadja Halilbegovich was twelve years old. In her diary, she documents the events of the next three and a half years and her feelings about them. Interspersed with the vignettes are simple drawings and photographs she created to accompany the vignettes. For instance, *"Bombs are exploding all over the city. I hide my feelings from everyone, but I am drowning in despair. When will this war end?"*

"For how long will my life consist of the dead space between two explosions?" (p.53). Nadja writes of her wishes for the violence to end, the stress of having her mother go to work with the threat of sniper fire all around and her own injury with the subsequent painful recovery. At the same time, Nadja sings in a children's choir, asks why there is not more help from the international community and shares her poetry over the radio waves with her fellow citizens of Sarajevo. Eventually, Nadja endures a treacherous journey in an underground tunnel not large enough for her to stand upright in order to escape to safety to a foster family in America.

This book is one of several diaries published by young people who lived through these traumatic events as ethnic, religious and political unrest was the norm in this geographical area during the late eighties and early nineties. Other diaries include *Zlata's Diary* (Filipovich, 1994) and *Not My Turn to Die: Memoirs of a Broken Childhood in Bosnia* (Heleta, 2008). In addition to her diary entries, Nadja includes passages written from the perspective of being an adult looking back on these events. Her initial diary began when she was twelve and ended with her escape at the age of sixteen. Her book was published in 2006 when she was twenty-six. In addition to the powerful rendering of a young girl's struggle to grow up in an untenable circumstance while retaining her optimism and desire to work toward creating a world where other young people are not subject to living through war and violent conflict, Nadja addresses the issues of conflict resolution and peace-making. In a 2006 interview, Nadja comments "I hope to continue speaking and sharing my story and message. I hope that many children, teenagers and adults will read my book and be inspired to become peacemakers in their everyday life." (<http://www.associatedcontent.com>). She also includes a series of black and white photographs which show her as a child, her family, her friends and returning to the tunnel through which she escaped. These photographs give context to the narrative.

A common complaint about this text is that it does not specifically address the causes of war or provide maps and other historical information to help readers learn about this war, which is not well publicized or studied about in the United States. However, the text is a diary which by its very nature reflects the experiences of an individual. This text does a wonderful job of introducing adolescent readers to the challenges of living through war. By experiencing the conflict through the eyes of one young woman, it feels very real and concrete. This is not an

abstract exploration of war in general; it is a personal narrative that is descriptive and clear without being overly graphic or glorifying the violence that does occur. For instance, Nadja describes chopping up the furniture to use in the wood burning stove her family was fortunate to acquire and discovering the mushrooms her father cooked for dinner were actually snails he collected in nearby fields. These sorts of detail add to the cultural authenticity and the ability of readers to relate to a situation with which they may not have a personal experience.

As an adult, Nadja is a public speaker, activist and performer about issues of war and peace. By pairing this diary with her speeches and interviews, the issues of war and conflict can be addressed more broadly. As she states in one interview,

The first time I went back was in the summer of 1996 and it was both wonderful and painful. Of course, it was wonderful to be back home, see my parents, family and friends, but much of the city was in ruins and the lasting consequences of the three and a half years of destruction were very disheartening. The factories, businesses, schools and every part of the city life had to be rebuilt and nourished back to what it was before the war. Over the past decade, I've learned that it takes a long time to rebuild a war torn country. It is much easier to destroy than to create (www.associatedcontent.com).

Statements such as these provide ample fodder for teachers and students to explore which will result in developing empathy for Nadja and other children living through conflicts not of their own making. Additionally, this diary is a wonderful addition to a text set of other similar texts of children living through conflict like *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *A Long Way Gone* by Ismael Beah (2007). This diary is set apart from *Zlata's Diary* (Zlata Filipovic, 2007) the more popular text dealing with the siege of Sarajevo because Zlata clearly expresses her awareness that she was writing her diary as a record of war and expected it might be shared with a larger audience. She had read and been influenced by *Anne Frank—The Diary of a Young Girl* (Anne Frank, 1953). *My Childhood under Fire* does not have the stated intention of addressing a wider audience or serving as a chronicle of war. Instead, this diary serves as a powerful testament to the resiliency of the human spirit, the ingenuity of people in difficult circumstances, the will to survive, common concerns experienced by many adolescents and an exploration of how and why people tolerate this type of conflict in our world.

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My Land Sings: Stories from the Rio Grande

Written by Rudolfo Anaya

Morrow, 1999, 174 pp.

ISBN 978-0380729029

Stories help us understand and appreciate other people, and they hold many valuable lessons. It's exciting to be transported into the world created by a story. Reading is one of the best ways to stimulate your creativity. I hope you remain a reader all your life (p. 16).

A collection of traditional stories retold with an Anaya twist, *My Land Sings* gives the reader a taste of the diverse Mexican American culture near the Rio Grande. Lupe and Carlos follow each other on a dare to the edge of the river at midnight to look for la Llorona, “the crying woman.” What they find is more than they had bargained for. A young girl, Dulcinea disobeys her parents to attend a dance with a handsome new stranger that just arrived in her village. When the clock strikes midnight, the stranger’s true identity is revealed and Dulcinea’s life is forever changed. Rolando de Espada travels a long journey in search of the fountain of youth. He searches and searches until his ambition drives him to the Castle of Lost Souls. Will he trade his soul to live forever?

These enchanted folktales are just three of the ten cuentos or stories in the book, which have been heard along the Rio Grande. These cuentos have helped edify generations of the customs and beliefs of the Mexican American culture. Growing up near the Rio Grande myself, I was able to instantly connect while reading these stories. Each cuento brought long lost memories of my own family sitting around the dinner table eagerly listening for the embedded lesson to be learned. *My Land Sings* remarkably blends the cultures of the “Spanish and Mexican settlers who came to live near the Pueblo Indians of the Rio Grande in 1598” (p. 10). A powerful storytelling feast, this book is appropriately written for children ages nine and up who have experienced the beauty of the rich Mexican American folklore. Each story speaks directly to the reader who is destined to retell and keep them alive from generation to generation.

Rudolfo Anaya is the author of many children’s picture books, non-fiction and anthologies, poetry and plays. Born in the rural village of Pastura, New Mexico, Anaya experienced a humble beginning which provided him with many of the experiences reflected in his writing. Anaya has continued to write and give readers an opportunity to experience rich Hispanic and Native American folklore of the Rio Grande. Readers interested in more children’s books about the Rio Grande could also read, *Crazy Loco* (David Talbot Rice, 2001) and *The Jumping Tree* (René Saldana, 2002). Xavier Garza is also another prolific writer who grew up near the Rio Grande and has written and illustrated many works such as *Creepy Creatures and Other Cucuys* (Xavier Garza 2004), and *Lucha Libre: The Man in the Silver Mask* (Xavier Garza 2005).

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My Nana's Remedies/ Los remedios de mi nana

Written by Roni Capin Rivera-Ashford

Illustrated by Edna San Miguel

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, 2002, 32pp.

ISBN: 978-1886679191.

*Cuando no me siento bien, mi nana siempre está a mi lado, y me dice:
– Sana, Sana, colita de rana. Si no sanas ahora, sanarás mañana
(unpaged)..*

This warm and caring story focuses on a loving Nana (grandmother) who prepares a variety of traditional remedies for her young nieta (granddaughter) to treat everything from an upset stomach to being frightened at night. For each ailment Nana prepares a special tea using one of the many herbs as follows: cinnamon, citrus blossom, chamomile, fresh mint, rosemary and other medicinal plants that have been used for years by Mestizos (descendents of Spaniards and Indians) and continue to be used by many Hispanic cultures. In the book Nana is always dressed in a house gown (una vatita), and an apron. Her hair is always pulled up in a nice bun and her facial features are very reminiscent of our own sweet grandmother's gentle weathered faces. Nana wears a traditional veil to church as many Hispanic grandmothers do today.

Although the book was written about an Indigenous/Hispanic grandmother who lives in the Sonoran Desert region of Arizona which borders Sonora, Mexico, it is very reminiscent of the Hispanic culture we have been exposed to. Our own grandmothers and great grandmothers have done their best to keep with the traditions that they grew up with, in using medicinal plants as medicine, much the same way so many Native American tribes that live along the Sonoran Desert, Tucson, Arizona, the Gulf of California in Western Sonora and Phoenix, Arizona. Whenever our own children are not feeling well we always seek our grandma's home remedies, much the same way the girl in the book seeks out her Nana. This story encompasses a very traditional way many grandchildren and grandparents foster a nurturing and loving relationship in many Southwestern and Hispanic cultures.

The text is accompanied by the vibrant and captivating art of Edna San Miguel. Nana's kitchen resembles that of many traditional Southwestern and Hispanic kitchens, with tamales and watermelon on the table, vibrant colors on the walls and fruit designed dishes. Other texts that could also be used when discussing and learning about cultures and traditions could include, *Grandma and Me at the Flea* (Juan Felipe Herrera, 2002, see WOW Review Vol. 1, 3), as well as *Too Many Tamales* (Gary Soto, 1993). Each one of these books portrays strong Hispanic culture and tradition, one that encompasses love and nurturing relationships.

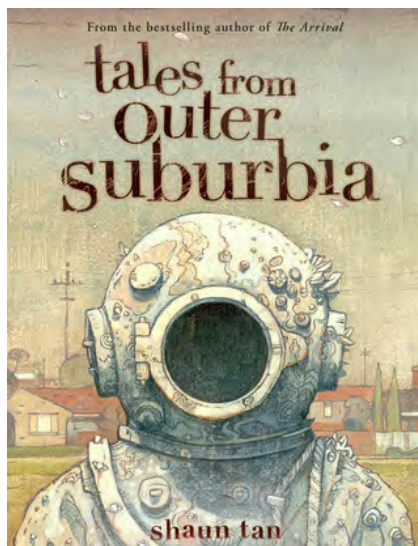
Rivera-Ashford was born to a Nogales, Arizona pioneer Jewish family and grew up in this small town on the border of Mexico where she embraced the people, their language and culture since she was an infant. She is a certified, bilingual elementary schoolteacher and a Spanish language translator/interpreter.

Lisa Castro-Salinas and Jessica Guerra-Salinas, La Joya ISD, La Joya, TX

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Tales from Outer Suburbia

Written and illustrated by Shaun Tan

Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic, 2008, 96 pp.

ISBN: 978-0-545-05587

This highly visual, creative book is a compilation of 15 fictitious tales that occur throughout outer suburbia in Australia. Some stories, such as the opening story, “The Water Buffalo,” are short in length, whereas other stories, such as “Eric,” are longer, encompassing 10 or more pages. All 15 stories are accompanied by highly detailed and engaging illustrations that come together with the text splendidly, giving the reader the opportunity to connect aesthetically with both the visuals and the literary merits. The author and illustrator, Shaun Tan, is an accomplished artist and writer who states on his website

(www.shauntan.net) that his artistic influences have ranged from picture books such as *The Headless Horseman Rides Tonight* written by Jack Prelutsky and illustrated by Andrew Lobel (1992) and *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* by Chris Van Allsburg (1984) to television and film, especially fantasy and science-fiction works such as Star Wars and The Twilight Zone. Among artists whose work has influenced his work, he is able to “list hundreds of illustrators, writers, cartoonists, photographers, filmmakers, and artists,” thus showing the scope of his artistic background. The numerous awards for his art and books include the 2010 Hugo Award for Best Professional Artist, which is given to that year’s best artist of science fiction or fantasy. In 2007, he won the World Fantasy Award, which is awarded to the best fantasy artist for that year. Also, in 2011, Shaun Tan and Andrew Ruhemann won the Animated Short Film Oscar for *The Lost Thing*, based on his book of the same title.

Each story in *Tales from Outer Suburbia* has different characters who face different trials, and each story seems to illustrate a certain theme. For instance, in “Stick Figures,” the reader finds that, in this part of Outer Suburbia there are stick figures who are literally composed of sticks that roam the suburban landscape. The narrator tells us that, “They have always been here, since before anyone remembers, since before the bush was cleared and all the houses were built” (p. 65). The reader finds out that the stick figures are beaten, mistreated, marginalized, and constantly asked why they are there and what they want from the suburbanites. The story ends with the narrator stating that, “if you stop and stare at them for a long time, you can imagine that they too might be searching for answers....It’s as if they take all of our questions and offer them straight back: Who are you? Why are you here? What do you want?” (p. 69). Through discussion, students could come to see that those who are marginalized in society also have their own questions of others’ roles in modern society. And if we remind ourselves and our students that the setting of this story is the Australian suburbia, connections to the marginalization of Aborigines can be made to the marginalization of the stick figures.

Although the stories in *Tales from Outer Suburbia* draw heavily on aspects of the fantasy genre, by reading these stories with a critical lens, readers can draw parallels to modern social issues. Other examples of how the stories in this book highlight sociopolitical issues include “The Amnesia Machine” which presents issues regarding political discourse and deception and ‘Eric,’ which can be used to discuss issues of immigration and migration if read from a critical stance. Another example is

the story ‘Wake,’ which is only two pages, yet can foster significant discussions in regards to issues of animal rights.

Although the stories in this book can be labeled as fantasy, the author has done well to make sure that the setting of the stories—suburban Australia—feels authentic. One example of this authenticity is seen through the author’s word choice. In “Make Your Own Pet,” the author uses phrases such as “rubbish collection” and “gather whatever takes your fancy” (p. 82). It would have been easy for the author or publisher to change the wording in order to make it more familiar for a North American audience; however, the decision to not change the wording in the book keeps the feeling of cultural authenticity. Another example of how authenticity is depicted is through the visuals. On page 11 in “Eric,” there is a picture of an electrical plug that clearly looks Australian and not North American. On the last page of “Grandpa’s Story,” there is a full-page illustration of a road that winds through a suburban neighborhood, with the houses looking similar yet each has different characteristics, exemplifying that, although the Australian suburban life shares similarities, there is diversity in the suburbs as well. Even the trash can in “Stick Figures” has a distinct appearance to it, one which a North American reader will probably not be familiar with. All of these examples lead the reader to feel as though they are encased in a rich Australian setting.

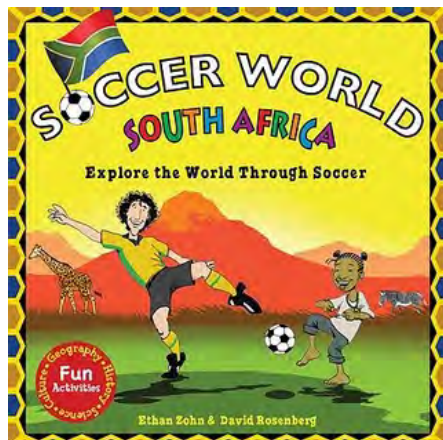
This book can be juxtaposed with other books by Shaun Tan, including *The Arrival* (2007) and *The Red Tree* (2008). Another book that might be of interest for others to pair with *Tales from Outer Suburbia* is *The Dreamer* (2010) by Pam Munoz Ryan and illustrated by Peter Sis. Like Shaun Tan’s books, *The Dreamer* blends beautifully text and visual, but *The Dreamer* gives biographical information of the poet Pablo Neruda, thereby illustrating to students that blending text and visuals can be used in multiple genres.

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South Africa: Explore the World through Soccer

Written by Ethan Zohn and David Rosenberg

Illustrated by Shawn Braley

Nomad Press, 2010, 48 pp.

ISBN: 978-1934670538

South Africa: Explore the World through Soccer is part of a six-book “Soccer World” series written by professional soccer player, Ethan Zohn, and award-winning television and book author, David Rosenberg. Zhon, who is a main character in the book, teams up with an eight-year-old South African Xhosa girl named Tawela to

tell the story of her beautiful country. In the book, we learn why South Africa is called “The Rainbow County,” how to say “hello” in its eleven official languages, what it is like to grow up in Tawela’s neighborhood, the main food dishes, tribal customs and more. To provide children with a “right there” experience of South Africa, the book offers science, social studies and art projects along with recipes and a glossary of terms.

Juxtaposed with a journey through various parts of South Africa is the story of the country’s love for the sport of soccer—a love that seems to unite its people despite their many differences. Zhon says that this game is like a common language that brings people together. He introduces young readers to his motto: “Unity In Diversity,” and while he does not directly address South Africa’s history with apartheid, he mentions that today people are learning to live together in South Africa and that it is important to focus on who people are on the inside instead of what they look like on the outside (p. 4). To demonstrate by example, in chapter two, Ethan and Tawela play soccer with a group of Tawela’s friends. The children are black South Africans who have made a soccer ball out of recycled rags, plastic bags, and string. Because they have no goalposts, Ethan offers his luggage to mark the goals. The game ends in a friendly tie. In the following chapter, we learn that the 2010 world championship of soccer is being held in South Africa and “people from all different walks of life” will come, cheer and have fun together (p. 21).

This book fits, to some extent, with recent books published in South Africa to promote democracy. There is a hint of the past history of apartheid, but the focus is on hope for a better future. Dispersed throughout the text are “Words 2 Know” like “diversity,” “cooperation” and “communication.” The major difference between what Zhon and Rosenberg have produced and the post-apartheid literature that is being published in South Africa is its intended audience. Zhon and Rosenberg, as well as their illustrator, Shawn Braley, are Americans, and the purpose of this book is to provide American children with an opportunity to experience South Africa through soccer. One thing that makes this experience more authentic is the inclusion of Tawela, a black South African child who helps introduce readers to local foods and customs. Another aspect is the accuracy of the portrayal of a segregated country. In chapter two, we visit Tawela’s neighborhood, where the authors do not attempt to portray a racially harmonious South Africa—one in which people of all races, cultures and classes live side by side. Instead, they portray Tawela’s all-black community, where they stay until it is time for the big soccer game.

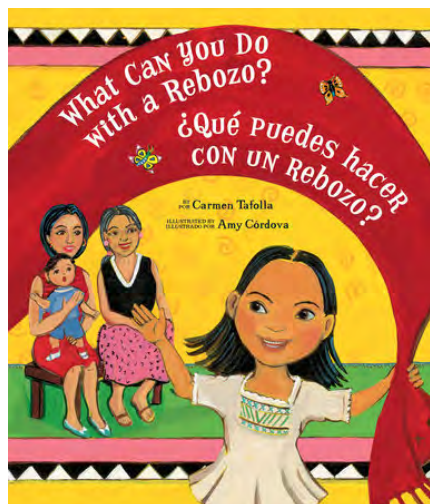
Because of the various ideas and activities presented in *South Africa: Explore the World through Soccer*, the book lends itself well to an integrated curriculum. For children in grades 2-5, it brings up opportunities for discussions surrounding anything from tolerance and teamwork to race and class. While not explicit in the text, the illustrations of all black townships and images of poor black children with homemade soccer balls speak volumes, especially when compared with Soccer City, Johannesburg's 90,000 seat stadium. If encouraged to think critically, children can make a connection between what South Africa is struggling to accomplish in terms of equality with issues encountered in the United States and elsewhere. To help students make the connection between segregation in the United States and South African apartheid, this book could be paired with *Goin' Someplace Special* (Patricia McKissick, 2008) or *The Other Side* (Jacqueline Woodson, 2001). Woodson's *The Other Side* might also compliment Rosenberg and Zohn's efforts to encourage students to ponder what unifies all people, despite race, culture or class.

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What Can You Do with a Rebozo? Que puedes hacer con un rebozo

Written by Carmen Tafolla

Illustrated by Amy Cordova

Spanish translation by Aurora Hernandez

Tricycle Press, 2008, 32 pp.

ISBN: 978-1582462714

In this English/Spanish bilingual picture book, a young girl questions “What can you do with a rebozo?” The character goes on to list the many ways that a rebozo, or Mexican shawl, is used in her family. The girl shows how rebozos may be worn in the hair, to keep warm, or to make a dress fancier. She also uses her imagination and the rebozo becomes the sash of a pirate, a tunnel, a flying cape, and

a slide. However, her favorite thing to do with a rebozo is dance! The author ends the story with an explanation of a rebozo and what it is made of.

The author was raised in the west side barrio of San Antonio, Texas, which is predominately Chicano, “which is the city of my great-grandparents and of my roots” (Tafolla, 2006) Her ancestors and parents helped mold her beliefs and the traditions that she mentions in this story. In the book we cannot tell if the girl lives in Mexico or in the U.S., but it is clear that the traditions and culture that is illustrated have strong Latin American roots. The book mentions traditions that are culturally relevant like piñatas and the song, La Bamba. The illustrator of this book, Amy Cordova, has collaborated with several other authors, like Rodolfo Anaya (2001) on *My Land Sings: Stories from the Rio Grande*, Diana Cohn (2004) on *El Tallador de sueños*, and many others. She is an award-winning book illustrator, artist and educator who lives in New Mexico. Cordova likes to represent her multicultural roots: Hispanic, Native American and Anglo in her work.

As bilingual teachers, we have used this book because we connect with our Mexican heritage given to us by our parents and grandparents. The book has been well received by our students and other teachers of Mexican heritage in our campuses. Readers respond to the various uses of rebozos, which they are familiar with from family members in their homes and visits to Mexico. Children relate their personal connections on rebozos and how they are used in their households. Readers are also attracted to the bright, colorful illustrations and details that reflect Mexico, such as the one where the main character is breaking the piñata, or where she is dancing a traditional Mexican dance.

Readers who are unfamiliar with the Mexican culture depicted in the book will enjoy learning about the traditions and uses associated with rebozos. The English text in this English/Spanish bilingual book contains a few Spanish words and phrases that can be understood through the detailed illustrations. Readers who do not speak Spanish should not have difficulty following the text. This is an interesting text to introduce Mexican culture to monolingual English speakers.

This book would make a good addition to text sets on cultures and traditions. It would fit in with a number other of other books of Mexican culture, such as *Lets Eat! A Comer!* (Pat Mora, 2008); an English/Spanish bilingual book about a Latin American family and their culture in relation to food.

Another great pairing is Carmen Tafolla's, *What Can You Do With A Paleta?* (2009), which has a similar storyline focusing on paletas, a common Mexican treat. *What Can You Do with a Rebozo* pairs well with other books, including *Abuelito Eats with His Fingers* by Janice Levy (1999), which is about a young girl who overcomes her initial reluctance to spend a day with her Spanish-speaking grandfather. *Gracias/Thanks* by Pat Mora (2009), *My Diary from Here to There/ Mi diario de aqui a alla* by Amada Irma Perez (2009) or *My very own room/Mi propio cuartito* by Amada Irma Perez (2008). These are a few books of a long list of books that represent the Latino and Mexican cultures from authors and illustrators who are part of the community.

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