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Human-Animal Relationships

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WOW Review: Volume XVII, Issue 2
Winter 2024
Human-Animal Relationships

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Contributors to this Issue:

María V. Acevedo-Aquino, Texas A&M-San Antoni, San Antonio, TX
Willeena Booker, Hatboro-Horsham School District, Horsham, PA
Susan Corapi, Trinity International University, Deerfield, IL
Junko Sakoi, Tucson Unified School District, Tucson, AZ
Kathy G. Short, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ
Deonna Tourtellot, Red Rock Elementary, Red Rock, AZ

Editors:

Susan Corapi, Trinity International University, Deerfield, IL
María V. Acevedo-Aquino, Texas A&M University-San Antonio, San Antonio, TX

Production Editor:

Aika Adamson, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ



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Introduction and Editor's Note

Animals and humans bond in many ways. They are friends and companions, whether they are the family pet, a therapy animal, or a set of non-judgemental listening ears for children to read to. They are rescuers and first responders, digging in rubble from earthquakes, avalanches or bombs. They are helpers, serving people with a wide array of abilities. Their increased sense of smell, geographical orientation, hearing, and speed serve many. This group of titles explores that bond, and the creativity, healing, and strong emotions that take place as humans and animals interact.

Several titles demonstrate the value humans place on animals. In the biographical *Lion Lights*, a young Maasai adolescent works to protect his family's cattle from predatory lions. He discovers that lions will not attack an enclosure with lights that flash in a moving pattern, imitating a guard walking the enclosure with a flashlight. His invention is now used around the world to protect domestic animals from predators. In contrast, the humorous *All the Dear Little Animals* narrates the efforts of three bored children to spend one day giving dead creatures, whether a pet like a dog or rabbit or a wild creature like a beetle, a proper funeral complete with grave markers, flowers, poetry celebrating their lives, and proper crying for the deceased.

The special bond between children and their pets has been a popular subject in juvenile literature for decades, but the titles in this issue present a unique element of that bond based in the setting. In *Along the Tapajós*, the children have to battle an anaconda to rescue their pet tortoise from the snake and the flooding Amazon River. In *Night Market Rescue*, a lost little girl in Taipei, Taiwan wanders the night market when she discovers an abandoned, hungry, but friendly dog. The quickly-built bond between the young girl and GoGo is comforting while she looks for her parents, and eventually the dog finds a family and a home, and the girl a special companion. Finally, *Mishka* is the story of a refugee family from Afghanistan who is settling into a new permanent life in the Netherlands, and adopt a dwarf rabbit as a sign of that permanence. When Mishka goes missing, the whole family participates in the search, meeting neighbors and making new friends, while looking for the small mammal that means so much to each of them.

Two unique stories discuss the palpable special bond created between a child and an animal regarded as dangerous. In the Indigenous book *The Girl and the Wolf*, a girl wanders away from her mother into the woods and gets hopelessly lost. She encounters a wise wolf, who, through questions about her surroundings and past guidance from adults, guides her back to her family. Anchored in history during WWII and the Blitz, *When the Sky Falls* tells the story of Joseph, an angry adolescent who has been evacuated to a zookeeper's home. As he learns to care for the few remaining animals, he deals with his own anger at being left behind. He eventually makes friends with a silverback gorilla, Adonis, who ends up rescuing Joseph from bullies and famished wolves, demonstrating the caring bond that can develop between a huge mammal and a hurting child.

We invite you to read and think with these titles and consider submitting a review for future issues. Please refer to calls below and the submission guidelines.

Volume 17, Issue 3 (Spring 2025 – submission deadline: April 30, 2025) – Open theme. The editors welcome reviews of global or multicultural children’s or young adult books published within the last three years that highlight intercultural understanding and global perspectives.

Volume 17, Issue 4 (Summer 2025- submission deadline July 1, 2025) – Themed issue on climate change and environmental concerns. The editors welcome reviews of global or multicultural children’s or young adult books published within the last three years that address concerns for the environment, whether addressing issues such as climate change, recycling or repurposing, or sustainable practices that support green living. The titles need to include a call to action.

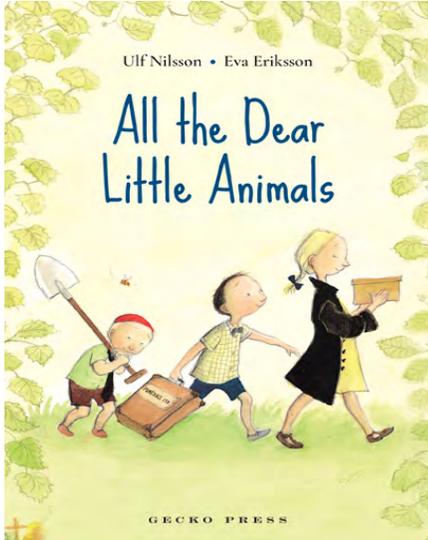
Susan Corapi, co-editor

María V. Acevedo-Aquino, co-editor

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All the Dear Little Animals

Written by Ulf Nilsson

Illustrated by Eva Eriksson

Translated by Julia Marshall

Gecko Press, 2020, 57 pp

ISBN: 9781776572892

In this translated book from Sweden, three children decide to create a business, Funeral Ltd., and take on the responsibility of burying all the poor dead animals on earth. Esther, the oldest, will do the digging, the boy narrator will write poems memorializing the animals, and Esther's little brother Puttie will do the crying.

“...Someone unselfish must make sure all these dead things get buried.”

“Who must?” I asked.

“We must,” she said. (p. 9)

The story is beautifully told from the narrator's perspective and addresses the heavy subject of the suddenness and finality of death and the accompanying grief. The children pay respect to all living things that die, from a small bee to a large hare and other animals in between. Ulf Nilsson uses humor and the narrator's poems to honor the lives of the animals that pass.

The characters in the text each process and respond to grief differently. Esther responds by keeping busy. She looks for other animals to bury, and takes charge of directing others in the tasks of preparing to say goodbye. Esther's younger brother Puttie asks a lot of questions, including if he will die too! The questions reflect the curiosity of young children as they process heavy concepts such as death and dying. Esther is very determined to bury the animals with care, but she does not cry. In contrast, Puttie cries for each animal and remains very sad, struggling with the permanence of death when he speculates a blackbird can be happy again (p. 50) and wants to wake up Harold the hamster (p. 26). The narrator of the story deals with his own fear of death, and uses his poetry to honor death with simple lines that are somewhat humorous.

Through the story of the three children, Nilsson explores the nature of death and dying, such as loss without warning. The narrator references this sudden reality of death with his poem,

Death comes just as the clock strikes ten.

Why? Why? Why just then? (p. 31)

In contrast, the book also demonstrates the worth of every living creature and that they deserve to be honored in death. The honoring happens with each animal being named and receiving a grave marker. The narrator composes a poem for each funeral (e.g., “Harold Hymns” to sing at the hamster’s funeral).

Children’s literature that focuses on death and dying is discussed in the article, “Communication about Dying, Death, and Bereavement: A Systematic Review of Children’s Literature” (Arruda-Colli, Weaver & Wiener, 2017). This study includes an analysis of books written for children around death and dying. The authors state that books on loss are helpful for families, as parents often struggle with how to raise difficult topics with their child and may often remain silent due to concern for making a mistake in their explanation. Books can provide both the language parents may need to explain a topic and an opportunity to explore a child’s understanding and feelings, while considering that child’s cognitive and emotional development and understanding of the world.

The ability to adapt to loss, cope with death, and express grief is critical for healthy childhood development. *All the Dear Little Animals* can be used to introduce the topic of death and dying to children due to the structure of the text, engaging illustrations, and appropriate wording. However gaps still exist in current children’s literature to effectively encourage children to reflect on their own dying processes. The study found that few books exist that reflect on a child dying and less than one-quarter of the books included tools for readers to address the topic of death. In *All the Dear Little Animals*, the author writes about death happening suddenly and without warning to animals. The text lacks a human element that connects the characters to loss of a human, so it does not provide a tool for the reader to examine their own experience with grief due to loss of a friend or family member.

The illustrations are bright and colorful. The shades of yellow and green are soft and warm and inviting to the reader. Eriksson displays the deceased animals with care, peace, and gentleness. Crosses are displayed on the tiny graves with a colorful bouquet honoring the life of each animal who looks peacefully asleep. The bright pictures invite readers to feel a warmth and appreciation for each living creature as the children honor the lives of the animals. On page 44, the picture of the hare lying in a makeshift coffin depicts both a pillow and a blanket, reflecting the blanket and pillow used in funerals today, and giving a real world connection.

Books that could pair with *All the Dear Little Animals* include titles like *Paws and Edward* (Espen Dekko & Mari Kanstad Johnsen, 2019) that explore the relationship between children and their pets and the loss they feel when a pet dies. *The Flat Rabbit* (Bárdur Oskarsson, 2013) is a compassionate exploration of death in which a dog and rat find a rabbit who had been run over and decide what to do with the body. Finally, Matt James (2018) explores the experience of two children attending a service honoring their great uncle’s life in *The Funeral*.

Ulf Nilsson was a Swedish children’s book author (1948-2021). He wrote over 100 books with many of them translated into English by Gecko Press. Nilsson’s popular titles include the

Detective Gordon series with a mystery-solving toad, *The First Case* (2015), *A Complicated Case* (2016), *A Case in Any Case* (2017), *A Case for Buffy* (2018), and *A Case with a Bang* (2023). He won the August Award (Sweden) and his 1987 title *If You Didn't Have Me* won the Batchelder Award.

Eva Eriksson was born in Halmstad, Sweden in 1949. She graduated from Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts, and Design. She has illustrated many children's books such as the series written by Rose Lagercrantz about an optimistic girl, *My Happy Life* (2017), *Where Dani Goes Happy Follows* (2019), and *All's Happy that Ends Happy* (2020). She recently collaborated with Barbro Lindgren (2022) on *The Tale of the Tiny Man*. Her body of work was rewarded with the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2001.

Julia Marshall is the founder, CEO and publisher of Gecko Press, based in New Zealand. She lived in Sweden for twelve years where she made international magazines translated in up to 22 languages. It was there she learned the art of translation and what makes a good translation. At Gecko, she aims to find books with heart that are an antidote to "sameness." More information can be found in an interview between Julia and the Cast of Thousands blogger (<https://www.castofthousands.co.uk/blog/a-life-with-books-julia-marshall-of-gecko-press->).

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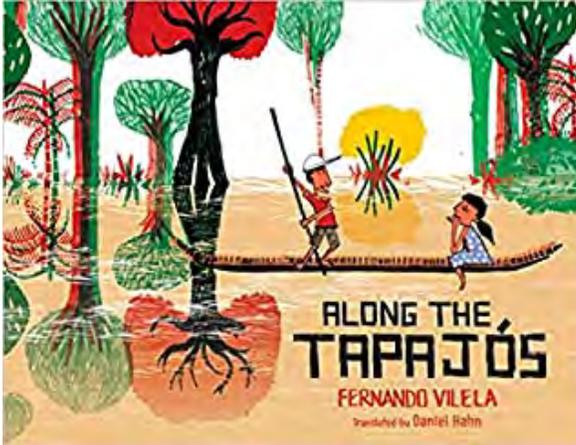
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Willeena Booker, Hatboro-Horsham School District

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Along the Tapajós

Written and illustrated by Fernando Vilela

Translated by Daniel Hahn

Amazon Crossing Kids, 2019, 40 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 9781542008686

Life along the Tapajós river in Brazil begins like the days of many children for brother and sister, Cauã and Inaê, members of an Indigenous tribe who have learned to live with the rainy seasons in the Amazon rainforest. They eat breakfast, grab their school bags, and head off to school in their boat. While at school, the skies grow dark signaling

the start of the winter season when it rains nonstop causing the river to flood and families to relocate to dry ground. When Cauã and Inaê return home, they find that Ma and Pa have packed everything from the house into a boat and are ready for the move.

Once they reach dry ground, Inaê realizes they have left behind something very important: their pet tortoise, Titi! Filled with worry, the brother and sister decide to sneak back to their village against their mother's wishes to save their beloved pet. When they return home, they find that only the rooftop is above water and Titi is alive on the roof with a giant anaconda lurking behind him. Cauã must swoop in to save the tortoise and risk being eaten by the giant snake. Somehow, the snake becomes entangled and Titi is saved, leaving the tortoise and the children happily reconnected and demonstrating the strong bond that can exist between humans and animals and the extent to which that bond prompts action.

The author and illustrator, Vilela, draws on his experiences in the Amazon rainforest of his native Brazil. He uses a landscape orientation and double-page spreads to mimic the length of the river and provide a wide view of the scenery. The majority of the colors used are green, black, and brown to depict the scenery, including the river, plant life and the buildings along the river. Pops of color are shown in the wildlife, plant life, and clothing of the people. In contrast to the vast scenery, human characters are relatively small within the double-page spreads. These elements, along with the bold lines featured throughout, help to accentuate the setting as an integral part to the story. Effectively, the reader comes to know the Tapajós river as an element that drastically impacts the lives of those who live along its banks. The narrative also illustrates ways in which Indigenous people adapt to cycles of flooding, living with nature instead of building structures like dams and levees to change natural river cycles.

The back matter provides information about the Tapajós river as well as information about the author's visit to the Amazon rainforest that inspired the book. These elements help to draw a line between the reality of life along the river and the fantastical elements within the plot. Without these features, the flooding and relocating of the people who live there could be seen as another made-up plot twist to readers who have never experienced life along a river, in particular the Tapajós.

While life of the populações ribeirinhas (riverside populations) comprises many differences from

those who do not live there, children across the globe who own a pet will easily make a connection with Cauã and Inaê's love for their pet tortoise. Other aspects of the book may seem far away or imagined, but the love of a pet is very real for those who have experienced such a connection. Often pets become valued members of the family and children develop strong bonds with their pets. The small image of Inaê and Titi nose to nose with smiles on their faces and Inaê's hand on Titi's back perfectly depicts the strong relationships that can form between humans and the animals they love and care for. These human-animal relationships transcend time, borders, and cultures and provide a source for children to find connections with cultures that differ from their own.

Along the Tapajós would pair well with other global books that explore relationships between children and their pets such as *My Dog Mouse* by Eva Lindstrom (2017, Sweden), *The Lost Kitten* written by Lee Lee and illustrated by Komako Sakai (2017, Japan), and *Loula and Mister the Monster* by Anne Villeneuve (2015, Canada). Like *Along the Tapajós*, each of these books examines the connection between humans and animals and how pets can become beloved members of the family.

Along the Tapajós was first published in 2015 in Brazil under the title *Tapajós* by Brazilian author and illustrator, Fernando Vilela. Vilela resides in the capital city of São Paulo, Brazil and frequents the Amazon rainforest. Vilela's books have been published in 14 countries and his artwork can be found in New York and Brazil. Vilela has received five Jabuti Awards (Brazil) for his picturebooks, some of which portray the rich cultures of the Amazon basin. He collaborated with poet Jorge Argueta (2010) on *Rice Pudding: A Cooking Poem / Arroz con leche: un poema para cocinar*, commended by the 2011 Américas Award and listed as an Outstanding International Book for 2011. Learn more about Fernando Vilela and his work at his website (<http://www.fernandovilela.com.br/>).

Daniel Hahn is a British writer, editor, and translator. He translates works from Portuguese, Spanish, and French. Hahn won the International Dublin Literary Award in 2017 for his translation of *A General Theory of Oblivion* by José Eduardo Agualusa.

Deonna Tourtellot, Red Rock Elementary, Red Rock, Arizona

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The Girl and the Wolf

Written by Katherena Vermette

Illustrated by Julie Flett

Theytus Books, 2019, 32 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 9781926886541

The story begins with the innocence of a child at play.

The little girl is running through the bush while her mother is picking berries.

“Don’t go too far,” her mother called. “It’s going to be dark soon.”

“Okay,” the girl said but kept running.

Suddenly the girl looked up and couldn’t see her mother anymore.

The girl is lost, alone, and scared in the bush when a wolf comes along.

Out from between the trees, a tall grey wolf with big white teeth appeared.

The girl was very still.

“What are you doing out here by yourself?” asked the wolf.

“I lost my mother,” she said. “I can’t see my way back.”

Vermette challenges the familiar narrative of the scary wolf who is the antagonist in most fairy tales. The girl is lost with only the wolf to help her, but across the narrative she learns to trust the wolf. The wolf is gentle, protective, friendly, trusting, and calm, challenging the girl to notice her surroundings. The girl follows the wolf’s guidance, and this leads her to trust her inner self and make purposeful decisions that ultimately lead her back to the safety of her mother. The illustrations are simple with clear lines of detail. Flett is careful to give room on the page to honor the trees, birds, and berries. The humans in the picture are not the focus but rather nature that surrounds the girl and her mother. This tribute and esteem of nature is reflective of Indigenous culture.

Vermette includes an Author’s Note to share the inspiration for this fictional story. It was important for the author to show the wolf in a different light from European fairy tales. Many of those stories show the wolf as a scary animal who outsmarts its prey and eats the human. For example, Little Red Riding Hood and The Three Little Pigs show the “Big Bad Wolf” who does harm to humans in the story. The author wants to persuade readers to see the wolf as a gentle loving creature capable of giving care and protection to humans.

Julie Flett’s illustrations make the story come alive. The face of the child and the mother are not detailed, however the detail is on the wolf’s face. The wolf is painted in a light gray and white pinned against the dark gray and black color used for the dark forest. Flett is purposeful in depicting the wolf in a gentle, protective, strong and loving way. Flett uses a butterfly on each page before the child becomes lost and frightened. The color red, symbolizing strength in Indigenous culture, is used to illustrate the child’s dress and the cloth she uses to tie the tobacco gift she left for the wolf in return for helping her find inner strength to make it home.

Readers can extend the theme of appreciating things in nature that typically are feared by reading *The Thing About Bees: A Love Letter* by Shabazz Larkin (2019). In this text, the author writes to his sons and pays tribute to bees by showing appreciation for the foods they pollinate and the family loves to eat. In both Larkin’s and Vermette’s texts, the stories present a positive relationship between humans and animals/insects that are typically feared. In the same vein, books that demonstrate the value of wolves in an ecosystem can act as a counter-narrative to the fairy tale image of the big bad wolf. One example is *When the Wolves Returned: Restoring Nature’s Balance in Yellowstone* (Dorothy Hinshaw Patent, Dan Hartman and Cassie Hartman, 2008)

Katherena Vermette is an award-winning novelist, poet, children’s author, and filmmaker. She is a Michif (Red River Métis) from the heart of the Métis Nation in Manitoba, Canada. Born in Winnipeg, her Michif roots are on her paternal side with Mennonite roots on her maternal side. She authored a picturebook series for children that describe the Seven Teachings of the Anishinaabe (love, wisdom, humility, courage, respect, honesty, and truth) as well as the graphic novel series profiling a young teen Métis called Echo. More information can be found on her website (<https://katherenavermette.com/>).

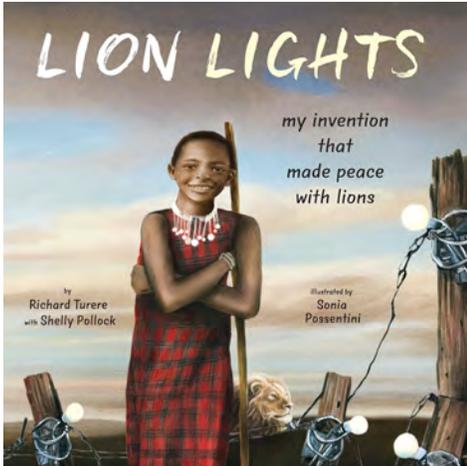
Julie Flett is a Cree–Métis author, illustrator, and artist who has received numerous awards for her books, including two Governor General’s Awards, the American Indian Library Association Award, and the TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award. Her books reflect many aspects of Indigenous life such as the joy of cross-generational relationships (*Birdsong*, 2019). Many of her titles are bilingual in English and Cree (*Let’s Go!*, 2024). More information can be found on her website (<https://www.julieflett.com/>).

Willeena Booker, Hatboro-Horsham School District

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Lion Lights: My Invention That Made Peace with Lions

Written by Richard Turere with Shelly Pollock

Illustrated by Sonia Possentini

Tilbury House Publishers, 2022, 32 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 9780884488859

Richard Turere tells the story of how he invented a system of lights to protect livestock from predators, now used in many places around the world. Richard is Maasai, and was trained from the time he was a young boy to herd sheep and goats, moving on at age nine to guarding the family's mobile wealth, his family's cows. The family farm borders the unfenced south side of Nairobi

National Park in Kenya, so lions target the easy prey of cattle instead of faster zebras. The cows are herded each night into a boma or corral, constructed of thorny acacia branches. The bomas keep the cows in but are not effective at keeping the lions out.

Richard tries all kinds of ways of keeping the predators at bay; fires and scarecrows work temporarily, but lions are smart and not easily fooled, quickly figuring out that the scarecrows or fires stay in the same place so can be circumvented. Desperate farmers kill and poison lions, while conservationists try to protect the disappearing lions by paying for dead cows, building chain-link fences, or offering guard dogs. Nothing works—lions keep killing cows and Maasai men keep killing lions. When Richard discovers the family's bull dead from a lion attack, he realizes he needs to either outsmart the lions or hate them.

Richard has always been curious and takes electronic items like TVs and radios apart in order to figure out how they work. One night he notices that lions stay away from his moving flashlight when he patrols the boma. He finds and collects spare electronic parts like light bulbs, wires and switches. He experiments until one evening, after wiring flashlight bulbs to the boma fence posts, he flips a switch and the bulbs flash on and off in a circular fashion so it looks like someone is constantly walking around the boma. The lions stay away night after night. The Lion Lights keep the cattle safe! Richard has saved the family's cows, which is a Maasai warrior's duty, but the lights also keep the lions safe. Since then, he has refined his invention so that the sequence of flashing lights varies and lions are unable to learn the light patterns.

The World Wide Fund (WWF) (https://www.wwfkenya.org/lion_conservation_/) for Nature/Kenya estimates that 43% of the African continent's lions have disappeared over the last 20 years, and one of the main reasons is human-lion conflict and the lack of incentives for communities to tolerate lions. Richard's Lion Lights won the European Patent Office's Young Inventor Award, and are now used around the world with wildlife including elephants in other African countries, pumas in Argentina, and tigers in India. They are an example of creative ways humans adapt techniques so that they can live in harmony with wildlife.

The illustrations by Sonia Possentini use dramatic colors to underscore the life and death struggle of cattle with predators and the zeal of herders and conservationists to keep all animals safe. The realistic paintings portray the gorgeous landscapes of the Kenyan savanna, but also the drama of

Richard trying to protect his family's cattle, the lions trying to survive, and the Maasai people trying to meld their traditions with reduced grazing land and the need to support Kenya's tourism trade.

Many themes suggest possible book pairs. One theme is other ways in which humans have learned to live in harmony with wildlife. Structures to facilitate wildlife crossings are explained in *Make Way for Animals!: A World of Wildlife Crossings* (Meeg Pincus & Bao Luu, 2022), and *Crossings: Extraordinary Structures for Extraordinary Animals* (Katy Duffield & Mike Orodán, 2020). In *The Lion Who Stole My Arm* (Nicola Davies & Anabel Wright, 2013) a boy in Mozambique loses an arm in a lion attack but gains knowledge from scientists who help him change from a focus on revenge to understanding the plight of lions and working in conservation. Another theme is the value placed on cattle by the Maasai, vividly portrayed in *14 Cows for America* (Carmen Agra Deedy, Thomas Gonzalez, & Wilson Kimeli Naiyomah, 2008).

The back matter includes a two-page history of the Maasai, a glossary of Maasai words, and print and digital resources to expand learning. This history gives additional information that explains the cultural significance for the Maasai of cattle. Author Shelley Pollack has created an impressive website to support extended learning about Richard Turere, Lion Lights, and the conservation of wildlife.

Richard Turere invented Lion Lights at the age of 12. He is now a graduate of the African Leadership University where he studied wildlife conservation. He presented a 2013 TED talk in California at the age of 13, became a National Geographic Young Explorer in 2020, and won the European Young Inventor's Prize in 2023.

Shelley Pollack taught school for decades. When she heard the story of the Lion Lights, she knew that children needed to hear about Richard and his invention; however it took years and many tries to get the story published. Find out more about the book on her website (<https://shellypollack.com/lion-lights/>).

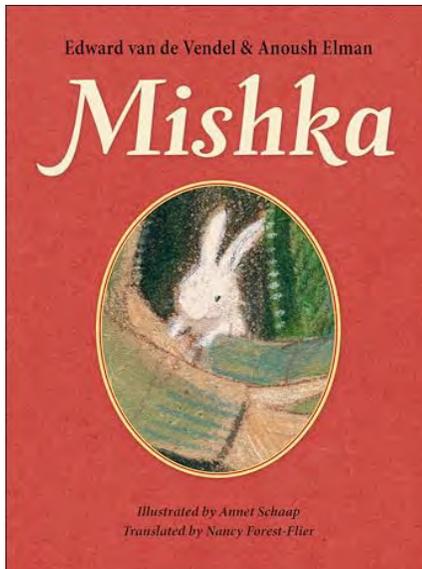
Sonia Possentini is an award-winning painter from Modena, Italy. She is a professor of illustration at the International School of Comics in Reggio Emilia and at the University in Padua. She is passionate about art, gardening, and her two dogs who go everywhere with her. Her favorite spreads in the book to illustrate were the lions, and she hopes to someday see a live one! More information can be found at the website for *Lion Lights* (<https://shellypollack.com/lion-lights/>).

Susan Corapi, Trinity International University

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Mishka

Written by Edward van de Vendel & Anoush Elman

Illustrated by Annet Schaap

Translated by Nancy Forest-Flier

Levine Querido, 2024, 152 pp

ISBN: 9781646144587

Roya’s family left Afghanistan by plane, train, bus, and foot. Finally, after five long years in a refugee center, they can stay in the Netherlands. As they settle into their new home Mama, Papa, Roya, and her three older brothers, Bashir, Hamayan, and Navid, welcome a new family member, Mishka, a dwarf rabbit. Mishka quickly becomes an important part of their home, especially for Roya, who finds in Mishka a confident and non-judgmental ear. When Mishka goes missing, Roya has a breakdown at school that reflects her deep

connection with her pet as well as the beautiful relationship she shares with her brothers.

Originally written in Dutch and told through Roya’s eyes, this award-winning book is funny, sweet and touching. Readers will enjoy the playful moments between Roya, her brothers, and Mishka, particularly as Roya discovers Mishka’s unique way of expressing deep comfort and security. Now, Roya can only hope for Mishka to feel that same sense of trust with her.

At the same time, the story addresses the family’s refugee experience by highlighting the role of stories and storying as a vehicle for remembering, restoring, and healing. The family’s memories of Afghanistan can help readers understand the characters’ lives and cultural identities in a meaningful way. Simultaneously, the story shows the challenges the family faces as refugees, such as experiencing microaggressions from neighbors. Readers will notice that the siblings are depicted as strong, knowledgeable, and compassionate individuals able to navigate complex situations across contexts.

Mishka can be read alongside other titles that explore themes of displacement, cultural adaptation, and refugee experiences in general, or the Afghan refugee experience, in particular. For example, the biography titled *Fly, Girl, Fly!: Shaesta Waiz Soars Around the World* by Nancy Row Pim and Alexandra Bye (2020) follows a young Afghan girl living in the United States who pursues her big dreams and becomes the youngest woman—and the first from Afghanistan—to fly solo around the globe in a single-engine aircraft. Another pairing is about siblings together on a difficult journey. Erika Meza (2023) in *To the Other Side* addresses children crossing the U.S. border by using masks and play to narrate the difficult times along with feelings of hope. So many wonderful titles could be paired with *Mishka*! One that also addresses animals is *The Rabbit Listened* by Cori Doerrfeld (2018). In this kind story, the rabbit is the only animal who listens to Taylor after something sad has happened. While *Mishka* does not rely on the personification of animal characters, both stories highlight the profound and meaningful role animals play in shaping human lives and relationships.

Edward van de Vendel has been a Dutch author, school principal, teacher, and founder. He has been nominated for prestigious awards like the Hans Christian Andersen Prize and the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award and won the German Jugendliteratur Prize. In 2023, he received the Netherlands’ highest award for children’s literature, the Gouden Griffel, for *Mishka*. Edward resides in Amersfoort

and his work can be further explored on his website (<https://www.edwardvandevedel.nl/en>).

Ramin Kawous, who uses the pen name Anoush Elman, was born in Kabul, Afghanistan. He moved to the Netherlands with his parents, brothers, and sister, when he was 12 years old. Just like Roya's family, his family waited seven years to receive their residence permit. He studied applied psychology, worked as a senior researcher at Pharos (the Dutch Center of Expertise on Health Disparities), and earned his doctorate in 2022.

Annet Schaap is a Dutch author and illustrator who has been translated into 22 languages. Her debut book *Lampe* (2017) won the Gouden Griffel, the British Carnegie Medal, and the Premio Strega Ragazze e Ragazzi. Readers can find more about her work at her website (<https://www.annetschaap.com/>).

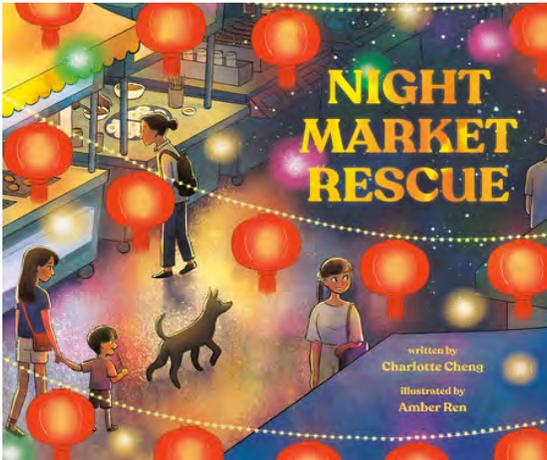
Nancy Forest-Flier, an American translator and editor, resides and works in the Netherlands. She has translated novels for both adults and children, as well as works of historical nonfiction. Additionally, she has worked with various Dutch museums and institutes, including the Anne Frank House, providing translation services. Her work can be further explored on her website (<http://forestflier.com/>).

María V. Acevedo-Aquino, Texas A&M-San Antonio

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Night Market Rescue

Written by Charlotte Cheng

Illustrated by Amber Ren

Rocky Pond Books, 2023, 32 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 9780593531723

Set in the night market in Taipei, Taiwan, this picturebook beautifully captures the bond that forms between a stray dog named GoGo and a lost little girl – culminating in their journey to find a home and become a family. The story begins with GoGo resting alone in a quiet spot on a hot and humid summer evening. Lured by the sweet and

spicy aromas wafting through the air, he ventures into the bustling night market, a world he has never encountered before. The lively streets are illuminated by red, oval-shaped lanterns and lined with rows of local food vendors displaying eye-catching signs lit by colorful electric lights and large Chinese characters.

Hungry and curious, GoGo seizes opportunities to slurp ginger tea and chew baby bok choy left on the ground when no one is watching. As he continues to explore, GoGo notices a little girl sitting alone under a tree, her knees drawn up and her arms wrapped tightly around them. GoGo comes gently closer to her and quickly becomes her friend. Together, they explore the night market until she finds her worried parents. Though GoGo is left alone, he is not truly alone – the little girl and her parents welcome him into their family. Finally, GoGo finds a place to call home.

This heartwarming story is great as a read aloud. The simple, lyrical text gently conveys the emotions of both GoGo and the little girl. The story ends with a touching moment:

Now GoGo is ... alone.

BUT ...

she whispers to the strangers,

who then turn to look at GoGo

and they call to him with open arms.

Now GoGo's found ...

a HOME.

This book invites readers to connect with the evolving inner emotions of GoGo and the little girl through visual images. Their delight in forming a new friendship is beautifully conveyed through the soft red and pink hues that fill their background, symbolizing mutual care, empathy, and emotional comfort. In contrast, GoGo's loneliness and sadness upon being alone again are depicted through his posture as he walks downcast along the busy night market street, unnoticed by the bustling crowd. The story culminates in a heartwarming depiction of GoGo's joy and sense of belonging as he finds a home. Soft-colored, vibrant bubbles scattered across the two-page spreads express GoGo's happiness and the comfort of being part of a family.

Given the themes of mutual care and empathy, *Night Market Rescue* would pair well with *Rescue and Jessica: A Life-Changing Friendship* by Jessica Kensky, Patrick Downes, and Scott Magoon (2018). The book tells the story of the strong bond between Jessica, who was injured in the Boston Marathon bombing, and her service dog, Rescue. It highlights how both Jessica and Rescue care for and support each other. Another great pairing is *The Cat Man of Aleppo* by Karim Shamsi-Basha, Irene Latham, and Yuko Shimizu (2020), which tells the story of mutual care between humans and animals. Set against the backdrop of the Syrian civil war, the book focuses on Alaa and stray cats, who rely on each other for emotional comfort, survival, and hope amidst the devastation of war.

Night Market Rescue is written by Charlotte Cheng, an accomplished author and illustrator of children's books. Drawing inspiration from her childhood memories of visiting the Taiwanese night markets with her parents, she has woven these experiences into the heart of this story. Charlotte's other work includes *Roar-Choo!* (2024), *I Miss You Most* (2024), and *A Moment in Time* (2012). Charlotte actively engages students in reading and writing through school visits, leads interactive workshops for both children and adults, and provides consultation on children's book projects. Residing in the San Francisco Bay Area, Charlotte invites readers to explore her creative work on her website (<https://charlotte.art/>).

Amber Ren is a visual development artist specializing in background painting, color styling, and children's book illustration. She was born and raised in China and moved to California with her family. Her debut picturebook *BECAUSE* (2019), written by Mo Willems, is a New York Times Best Seller, and her work includes *The Star in You* (Katrina Moore, 2024) and *Looking for a Jumbie* (Tracey Baptiste, 2021). Her work was featured in The Eric Carle Museum's first online exhibition, *ART in Place: Social Distancing in the Studio*. Amber is currently working in the animation industry and illustrating picturebooks during her free time. Her work can be explored on her website (<https://www.amber-ren.com/home>).

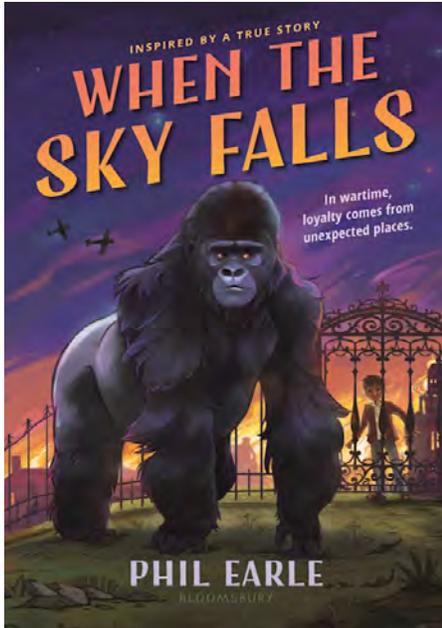
Junko Sakoi, Tucson Unified School District

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When the Sky Falls

Written by Phil Earle

Bloomsbury, 2022, 312 pp

ISBN: 9781547609307

In 1940s London, Joseph is headed into the city in the opposite direction of children fleeing into the countryside away from the regular bombings of the city during WWII. Twelve-year Joseph is angry—his mother has died, his father has left to fight in the war, and he believes that his grandmother does not want him. His anger grows as he faces bullying and struggles with severe dyslexia, making school a nightmare. He has been sent to live with a gruff elderly woman, Mrs. F., who is charged with the difficult task of caring for the remaining animals in the city zoo, including a volatile silverback gorilla named Adonis. Joseph discovers that Mrs. F. stands guard outside Adonis’s cage during the nightly bombings, prepared to shoot him if the bombs open his cage.

Joseph takes over guarding the cage, uncertain if he could ever shoot Adonis. Sadness fills the book as Mrs. F. watches over the decaying zoo and violence and death exact a heavy toll in the city. At the same time, trust and a strong caring relationship build between Adonis and Joseph through their battles with anger and the pain of loss.

This book takes place during the Blitz, a German bombing campaign against the United Kingdom that lasted for eight months, from September 7, 1940, through May 11, 1941. These massive air attacks began in London with systematic bombings for 56 days in a row, followed by a large daylight attack, and continued as a regular nightly bombing campaign. 10,000 civilians were killed with more than a million houses destroyed or damaged. The goal of demoralizing the British into surrender failed and little damage was done to the war economy. Communal and private shelters were built where people spent their nights, and many women and children were evacuated to the remote countryside. The book’s focus grew out of a story from a friend who told the author that his father had to sit outside the lion’s cage with his gun trained on the animal whenever the air-raid sirens sounded.

Gripping and emotionally devastating, the healing power of animal/human relationships shines through in this book, leaving readers with hope for Joseph’s future. Readers become deeply invested in Joseph’s pain and his growing relationship with Adonis. The book also effectively conveys what it was like to live through the Blitz in London. Although there are many WWII books, this middle-grade novel stands out because of the focus on animal/human relationships and the unique characters.

Other books could be paired to depict relationships between animals and humans during war contexts. In *An Elephant in the Garden* by Michael Morpurgo (2013), Lizzie and Karl’s mother works in a local zoo in Dresden, Germany during WWII and brings home a baby elephant who is slated to be destroyed. Forced to flee, they take the baby elephant with them, both protecting and being

protected by her. *The Tortoise and the Soldier* by Michael Foreman (2013) is based on a true story of a Royal Navy soldier in WWI who found the strength to survive through a friendship he formed with a tortoise. *Soldier Bear* by Bibi Dumon Tak (2013) won the Batchelder Award for this true story of an orphaned Syrian bear cub who was adopted by Polish soldiers during WWII and served as their mischievous mascot in Iran and Italy. *While the Storm Rages* by Phil Earle (2022) is about a boy whose father asks him to keep their dog safe, but then the government asks people to put their pets to sleep because of war responsibilities. Noah and two friends go on the run to save as many animals as possible.

Phil Earle is a British children's author who worked as a drama therapist with abused adolescents in London, including working with many dyslexic children. He became a children's bookseller and developed an obsession for young adult fiction and went on to work in several publishing companies. Phil lives in West Yorkshire, with his wife, five children, two dogs and a dragon called Baz. *When the Sky Falls* was named Book of the Year by the British Book Awards and was also named to the 2023 Outstanding International Book award list.

Kathy G. Short, University of Arizona

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