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WOW STORIES

GLOBAL LITERACY COMMUNITIES: TEACHER BOOK CLUBS AND GLOBAL EXPLORATIONS

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WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom *is a regular on-line publication of WOW containing vignettes written by classroom educators about children's experiences reading and responding to literature in the classroom setting.*

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Global Literacy Communities: Teacher Book Clubs and Global Explorations

Global Literacy Communities are small groups of educators who engage in professional inquiry on building international understanding through global children's and adolescent literature. These communities meet regularly to explore global literature and ways of using these books in K-12 classroom contexts. The communities may be school-based, district-based, community-based, or university/school collaborations, but they share a commitment to thinking together as a professional learning community as well as transforming their practice.

In 2011-2012, twelve Global Literacy Communities received grants from Worlds of Words to support their work and to encourage their explorations of innovative practices. Community members also participated in an online forum where they could share their explorations and support each other across the different groups. In turn, each literacy community has written at least one vignette for *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom*. Over the next several months, we will publish these vignettes in several issues of the journal. This effort by Worlds of Words was supported by the Longview Foundation for World Affairs and International Understanding, an organization that has been helping young people in the United States learn about world regions and global issues since 1966.

This issue of *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom* focuses on two Global Literacy Communities that took the form of book groups—groups of teachers and teacher educators who meet once a month on a Saturday morning to talk about literature. The two groups, one on Long Island in New York and the other in Columbia, Missouri, consisted of educators from a range of school and university contexts, who decided to focus their reading on global literature.

The Teacher Talk/TALL (Teachers Applying Language and Literacy) group is a University-based inquiry group for teachers who have been or are involved with the Literacy Studies program at Hofstra University. The group ranges from early childhood, elementary, middle school, and high school and includes classroom teachers, an ESL teacher, English teachers, literacy specialists, a University reading clinic director, and teacher educators. The group uses a blog and Skype to connect with a member who is a district literacy specialist in Kaneohe, Hawaii. The goal of this group was to read a wide range of global literature and to encourage children to think about the world beyond their cultural boundaries. The group read and discussed books in their monthly meetings, with a major focus on *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhha Lai (2012). They each brought the literature and new understandings from these meetings back to their classrooms to develop a specific literacy event around global literature with students. These literacy events are the focus of each person's short vignette within the larger group vignette.

The Saturday Book Group Literacy Community is a community-based group that consists of K-8 classroom teachers and professors from mid-Missouri, who are also members of Teachers Applying Whole Language. The Saturday Book Group meets once or twice a month on Saturday mornings to examine new books, plan engagements with children, and write reviews of good titles to share with group members and other teachers. The group decided to focus on newcomer global cultures for students in their schools. They put together text sets for five cultural groups—Cuba, Pacific Islands, Russia, Somalia, and Myanamar/Burma—and spent their group meetings sharing books with each other and working on packets. These packets for each of the five cultures contain an annotated book list, suggestions for integrated activities, a fiction and nonfiction lesson plan for two books, and a brief fact sheet. These packets and sets of books were used in local classrooms and loaned to

interested teachers. Their vignette includes short vignettes written by group members about classroom experiences as well as a description of their process as a group. The packets of books, lesson plans, and information on the five global cultures are available as downloads in their vignette.

Our next issue of *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom* will focus on vignettes from other Global Literacy Communities. We will have an unthemed issue in the spring of 2013. Think about how you connect students of all ages with literature in ways that promote intercultural understandings. Consider sharing your innovative practices by submitting a vignette to *WOW Stories*. We are interested in descriptions of interactions with literature in classrooms and libraries at preschool through graduate levels. See our call for manuscripts and author guidelines for more information.

Kathy G. Short, Director of Worlds of Words

The Teacher Talk Literacy Community: Our Study of 'What Is Global Literature?'

> *Welcome to a "typical" Teacher Talk Meeting, one of the WOW learning communities during the 2011-2012 school year. If you listen carefully, you'll hear the process of learning we went through as we read and taught with global literature this year. Click on our names and you'll go to a fuller description of our individual vignettes.*

It's 6 p.m. on a Monday after a long day of teaching. One by one, 11 teachers gather around the long table in a classroom at Hofstra University, on Long Island in New York, carrying books, coffee mugs, and tea cups. The teachers greet one another, chat about their day, and say hi to Esmeralda Carini who appears on the large screen in the room, Skyping from her school in Hawaii. At the table are the stories that each will share this evening based on the wide variety of their teaching settings.

Joan: (Dr. Joan Zaleski, associate professor, Literacy Studies, Hofstra University, NY)

> Let's begin tonight by thinking about the work that each of us has been doing this year. We've spent the year focusing on the question of what is global literature by looking at what this means for our own teaching.

Michele: (Michele Marx, administrative coordinator, Reading/Writing/Learning Clinic, Hofstra University, NY)

From our readings and our discussions, I don't think we see global literature as a single text or as a collection of texts. We've been using children's literature to explore global issues and to influence what Kathy Short refers to as intercultural understanding. But I think that for each of the books we've read together our conversation has focused on our personal connections and how those connections relate to our common humanity.

Joan:

Yes, that has been an important discovery for us this year as we read *The Dreamer* and *Inside Out & Back Again*, and shared a variety of picture books and poetry that we felt might be global. Would someone like to begin tonight by sharing what you've been doing in the classroom? How are your projects going?

Amy: (Amy Gaddes, ESL teacher, Gotham Avenue School, Elmont, NY)

As you all know, one of my assignments this year has been to work with a blended fifth grade class of ELL students and struggling 5th grade mainstream readers. I thought *Inside Out & Back Again* would be a good book for both groups of students to share common experiences and to learn from each other. It was, but it was so much more.

Joan:

I also used *Inside Out & Back Again* with my undergrads in our annual read-a-thon. I was able to give each of them a copy of their own book. The experience and the discussions really built community. Their books became valuable treasures to them.

Esmeralda: (Esmeralda Carini, Literacy Content Specialist, Kaneohe, Hawaii)

Since you're talking about *Inside Out & Back Again,* I have to tell you about the in-service workshop I created for my teachers to help them develop strategies for discussing multicultural books. The teachers who read aloud *Inside Out & Back Again* in their classrooms felt that it was a perfect text to share with their students since Hawaii is made up of so many ethnicities, especially from Asian countries. But many teachers had trouble finding ways to connect to *The Dreamer*. The family dynamics, the time period, and fear of the ocean were obstacles for making text-to-self connections.

Louise: (Louise J. Shaw, instructor, Literacy Education, Dowling College, NY)

The same thing happened when my undergraduate students read *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*. They were sure they wouldn't like the book from the cover and the title. I also questioned how I would move forward and have them connect to the text. But they did.

They began to connect to the characters' feelings.

Stephanie E.: (Stephanie Eberhard, English teacher, Bayport-BluePoint High School, Center Moriches, NY)

Feelings became a universal language, instead of culture becoming a barrier.

Louise:

Being bullied, having an alcoholic parent, what it's like to lose a friend, and what it means to want something better for yourself. That's what my students were connecting to.

Michele:

With *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian* and the interpretive community you created, a critical space was developed where your readers could see themselves.

Amy:

That is what was so powerful with my group of fifth graders. Although they didn't all share the immigrant experience of the characters in *Inside Out & Back Again,* they all had shared an experience of having to leave behind something or someone they loved.

Jennifer: (Jennifer Pullara, literacy specialist, East School, Long Beach, NY)

The fourth graders that I read this book with were very connected to the wide range of feelings the characters exhibited as they fled Vietnam and came to America. In our discussions and in their written reflections, they were also personally connecting to these emotions and thinking about their own abilities to be as brave, or as hopeful as Hà was.

Stephanie A.: (Stephanie Annunziata, kindergarten teacher, Our Lady of Grace Montessori School, Manhasset, NY)

I think that's what the author of *Inside Out & Back Again* meant in her Author's Note when she said that she wanted "to capture Hà's emotional life" so that readers can imagine what it felt like to start over again in a new place. Although I wasn't able to use this book with my kindergartners, I did think about the question of 'how much do we know about those around us?' as I shared books with my students.

Joan:

Thank you for bringing up the Author's Note, Stephanie, because it resonated with me, too,

almost as much as the rest of the book. I loved Thanhha Lai's invitation to 'sit close to someone you love and implore that person to tell and tell and tell their story.' Valuing our students' stories is what we are all trying to do as we invite them to respond to this literature. What my colleagues and I discovered in talking with our undergrads about *Inside Out & Back Again* was how few stories their grandfathers and uncles were sharing about their time in Vietnam. Reading and talking about this book was the first story they had read from that time period and it helped them understand why their families might be silent about the Vietnam War.

I know this book has made an impact on many of us in Teacher Talk this year. But how about those of you who used other books to promote global understanding? How have stories helped your students to develop deeper understandings of the world around them?

AmyMarie: (AmyMarie Livermore, literacy specialist, Lockhart Elementary School, Massapequa, NY)

I didn't read *Inside Out & Back Again* with my students, but I found the author's quote of 'how much do we really know about those around us?' important for me too. Throughout this school year I have explored rich literature with my third graders on various topics and from different cultures. They found new ways to make connections and tell their own stories from what they have read. As they shared their family stories of customs and traditions, we gained respect for each other's backgrounds.

Liza: (Liza Carfora, literacy specialist, Reading/Writing/Learning Clinic, Saltzman Community Center, Hofstra University, NY)

The fourth grade ELL students I've been working with on Saturday mornings at the Clinic have used stories, along with non-fiction, to focus on their academic literacies. What helped them develop understandings on the topic of trees were the connections they made to their own experiences with nature in their home countries, as well as here in the United States. Many personal stories were told. Reading fiction and non-fiction about trees helped them to realize how fragile and interconnected the world is.

Vera: (Vera Zinnel, 3rd grade teacher, Bowling Green Elementary School, East Meadow, NY)

Like Liza did with her study of trees, I incorporated global thinking into our social studies content area with our study of Columbus Day. My third graders began by role playing and interviewing each other, as either members of Columbus' ship or as native Taíno. This raised lots of real questions they wanted to explore. Then we read fiction and non-fiction to think about different perspectives and finally they wrote an 'inner monologue' that expressed these perspectives. What they learned from this unit is to question history and to think about who

gets to tell the story of history.

Joan, and others:

Wow. Pretty powerful learning for third graders. It is possible for 3rd graders to be critical readers and writers by thinking globally.

Michele:

And children's literature played an important role in creating these global conversations in a classroom community that supports critical inquiry.

Joan:

If no one has anything to add, I think this is a good place for us to end tonight. It has been a good year for our Teacher Talk community. We learned that it is not enough to merely select a globally themed book to use with our students. To have deeper global understandings requires that we need to facilitate the talk that goes on around books. As Esmeralda and Louise found, when students personally connect to the emotions and feelings of what they are reading, it is much easier for them to share their own stories, make their own meanings of these books. It is truly a transactional reading experience, as all of us found with the books we used this year. I think we've all grown this year in both the depth and breadth of our knowledge of global children's literature. And yet, this is only the beginning.

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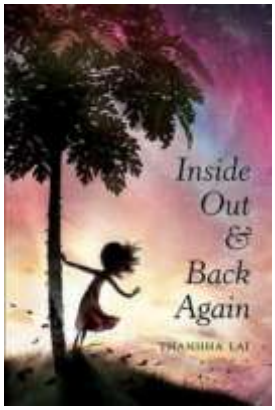
Transcribed by Joan Zaleski is a former associate professor in Literacy Studies at Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York and Michele Marx is the administrative coordinator of the Reading/Writing/Learning Clinic at Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York, where she is a doctoral candidate in Literacy Studies.

A Read-a-Thon with Pre-Service Education Students

Joan Zaleski

Every spring semester I teach an undergraduate language arts methods course called *The Integrated Teaching of Reading, Writing, and Children's Literature*. This five credit course is the only opportunity these pre-service teacher education students will have to prepare them to teach language arts and literacy in the elementary classroom. The course has a heavy emphasis on children's literature to demonstrate reading and writing across the curriculum, as well as reading for meaning and enjoyment. The students take this methods course at the same time they are taking their social studies methods course. In order to demonstrate the integration of these two subject areas, the instructors of these methods courses work as a team to intentionally collaborate in front of students by building assignments together, holding joint classes, and making explicit to students the opportunities for building a shared community of learners.

One of the most memorable experiences we have each year is a Read-A-Thon of a children's novel. This has always been an enjoyable way for both faculty and students to experience reading together as a group, hearing different voices, choosing to read or listen, and immersing oneself in a story from beginning to end in one sitting. Books selected for this Read-A-Thon usually come from the Notable Books in the Social Studies list or Newbery Award winners since we believe that students should always be exposed to the best that children's literature can offer. This year's selection came directly from our Teacher Talk group and our discoveries about reading and teaching with global literature.



One book that had made a powerful impact in our Teacher Talk group was *Inside Out & Back Again*, written by Thanhha Lai (2011). Winner of the National Book Award and a Newbery Honor Book, this novel in verse tells a family's story over one year as they fled from the fall of Saigon in 1975 to become new arrivals in the United States. The individual verses read as journal entries in the voice of ten-year-old Há, who demonstrates a range of emotions as she tells her story of loss, fear, confusion, isolation, sadness, happiness, and acceptance.

Immigration is such a familiar social studies unit that our students often fall easily into thinking of immigration as happening long ago and from European countries, despite the fact that the majority of students they will teach are recent immigrants from Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Asia, and the Middle East. We also recognize that the study of the Vietnam War is often missing from classroom conversations. For all these reasons, we selected *Inside Out & Back Again* for the Read-A-Thon.

The format of the Read-A-Thon is simple. All 26 students who take both the language arts and

social studies methods courses and their three instructors meet during their regular class times, beginning at 9 a.m. and ending at 3:15 p.m. We intentionally schedule our classes to create overlapping blocks of time when we can meet as a group. Faculty who are not teaching at that time make themselves available to participate. In the past, we have told participants that it is not necessary to have an individual copy of the book in order to participate. Students listen while others read and books are passed around to readers. Some students bring their own copies, borrow them from the library, or download them to their e-readers or laptops. This year, we were able to purchase enough copies of the book for each student. Their appreciation was evident in the way they held their books and poured over the front and back covers. Thinking of their own classrooms one day, they smiled with gratitude for a book to put on their personal teaching bookshelves. Referring to a recommendation by Sharon Taberski (2000), one student said, "Now I only need 1,999 more books for my classroom bookshelf!"

Since the idea of the Read-A-Thon is to finish the book in one sitting, we discussed if and how we would leave time to talk about the book. We agreed to take a "food" break after each of the four sections of the book and to comment and question what we had read up to that point. I brought information about the author (Wolf, 2012) and my social studies colleague brought background information on Vietnam to share on the Smartboard, if needed.

One of the faculty members began to read aloud. We had explained that a reader can read until he or she wanted to stop. Then anyone else could pick up from there. There was no preset order or length. We allowed for gaps of silence between readers and didn't pressure anyone who didn't want to read to do so. Listening was also welcome. Given this loose structure, there was about 90% participation in reading out loud, with everyone following along in their own copies.

The discussions between the sections of the book, and bites of pizza, evoked some interesting comments:

- *Even though the father was missing, I really felt his presence.*
- *What is papaya?*
- *My [grandfather/uncle] never talks about his time in Vietnam.*
- *Há's teacher thought she was being helpful, but she only made things worse.*
- *I can see why it took the author 15 years to write this book. Every word and every line is so spare and meaningful.*
- *There are such strong images in these poems.*
- *I really feel like I know Há. I can see her and feel the same things she feels.*
- *I'd like to think I would be Há's friend in class.*
- *I don't think I would have read this book on my own.*
- *I am definitely going to read this aloud to my future students.*

These comments led to sometimes lengthy discussions about the Vietnam War and the geopolitical area of Southeast Asia, which my social studies colleague was ready for with pictures and maps and stories. It also led to cultural questions about foods and holidays. No one in the class had tasted papaya or knew what it looked like. Of course, we quickly remedied that. But most of all these comments reflected the personal connections students were making to what it means to be a child during wartime, to have to leave behind everything you know and travel to a new life someplace strange. It was the humanity in this story that resonated with the students. I know none of us were the same people after having shared this book together. We saw the world, and our place in it, differently.

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Joan Zaleski is a former associate professor in Literacy Studies at Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York.

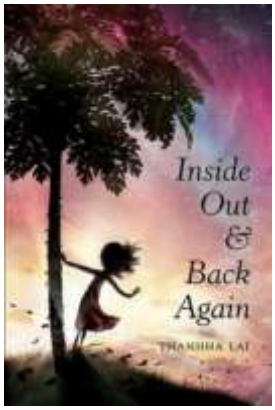
Bringing Global Themes into a "Local" Classroom Discussion

Amy Gaddes

By the end of May, I was wrapping up a year of instruction with a group of fifth graders in my K-6 elementary setting in a suburban school district just outside of New York City. As a fifth-grade English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher and literacy specialist, I spent the year with a unique group of six English Language Learners (ELLs) and seven native English speaking, or mainstream students, who had been identified as 'struggling readers' by their scores on standardized and local assessments. Because of the unusual configuration of the class, I was careful to create community-building opportunities for these literacy learners who came from very diverse linguistic, cultural, and academic backgrounds. Prior to this year's assignment, these same six ELL students came to my class in a pull-out model of instruction. Now, they were placed with their native English-speaking peers for ELA instruction beyond that sheltered environment.

As an ESL teacher, I believe that in addition to meeting district and state standard-driven

mandates, my primary goal is to help maintain and nurture the academic and language learning confidence of my English Language Learners. Over the school year, we worked hard as a group to foster an understanding of our unique backgrounds. The class was very cohesive and supportive of each other as learners. Friendships were fostered that the ELLs may not have had the opportunity to develop when isolated from their peers in a pull-out program. We were unified as a learning community, but I still felt the need to help the mainstream students develop a deeper understanding of the immigrant experience of their peers and their families.



I selected *Inside Out & Back Again*, by Thanhha Lai (2011) as a text that might create that understanding. This sensitive text holds many opportunities to frame the deeper discussions I longed to have with my students. The group demonstrated a developmental and emotional readiness to go deeper into our shared experiences. The text's linguistic nuances and geographic and historic aspects may have been lost to the students without my support, so I chose to read this poetic novel aloud. The story is narrated by Hà, a young Vietnamese girl who, with her family, immigrates to the United States during the height of the Vietnam conflict. Hà painfully articulates her language and cultural loss and the arduous task of learning English with its 'hissing sounds' and 'confusing grammar rules.' This protagonist became a spokeswoman, a voice, to help my young English Language Learners begin a dialogue with their peers about their own losses and challenging gains. At the same time, the native speakers identified similar experiences within their own families.

I invited the students to engage in written conversations by 'talking' to the protagonist about her experiences. One student, who emigrated from Mexico at a young age, told the protagonist in a script that he too felt like everyone was staring at him when he was arriving at the airport. This memory, from several years back, was unearthed and explored through the student's meaningful connection.

After dialoguing with the protagonist, the students were ready to talk to each other. I created question cards with starting ideas to help frame the dialogue between partners, one English Language Learner and one mainstreamed learner. These cards supported the conversation about the specific immigration stories the ELLs carried. Questions offered to the mainstream students to begin a dialogue with their ELL peer included:

- What did your family tell you about learning English?
- Tell me about your house in your country compared to your first house here in America.
- What were your first English words?
- What did you think about American food?
- How does it feel to know 2 languages?

Questions that the ELLs could start asking their mainstream partner included:

- •What is it like when a new ELL student comes to your class?
- •Why does Hà talk about loneliness in her poem, "Out the Too-High Window?"
- •Why do you think Hà's mother told her children that they must master English?
- •Why do you think the sponsor's wife insisted the Vietnamese children keep out of her neighbor's sight?
- •Why do you think Hà has to practice 'hissing like a snake' in order to speak English?

The children were invited to choose a card. By offering these questions, I tried to support students' comfort levels in dialoguing about the character's experience as well as help them establish their own perspectives based on their own experiences.

A student from Pakistan described having to leave her new bike and all her toys when she came to the United States. A boy from the Philippines poignantly wrote about parting from his mother and baby brother. One mainstream student sadly shared his experience moving from Georgia and missing a family funeral. As the students shared what was left behind in their young lives, they connected personally to each other as well as to the text's protagonist.

Lai's *Inside Out & Back Again* provided a tool to talk about the diversity of perspectives and experiences in the world around us. By creating opportunities for the students to explore their experiences through written dialogue, a space was created that validated each child.

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Amy Gaddes is an ESL teacher at the Gotham Avenue School in Elmont, New York.

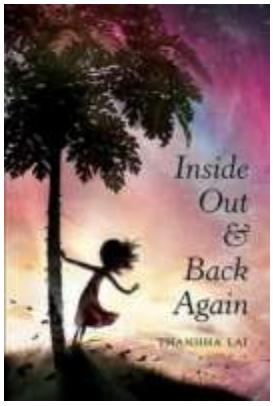
The Heart of Literature is Conversation

Esmeralda Carini

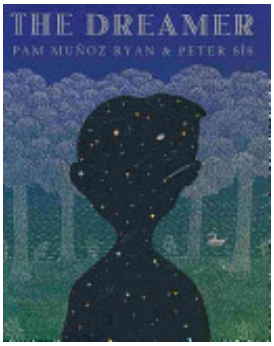
I am passionate about literature, especially children's literature that is rich and reflective of the human experiences we all share. My belief is that rich literature connects us to each other. It opens our hearts and minds to the similarities and differences between us, gives us hope, and sometimes helps us to find solutions for moving forward together in life's journey. By exploring children's literature that focuses on diverse cultures and is reflective of the interconnectedness of society, we support the principles of a democratic society. "Education is about life and the world around us. It helps individuals to realize their full potential and to become productive members of their

communities" (Suh & Samuel, 2001, p.1).

As a content literacy specialist I take joy in sharing my passion for stories that value a diversity of experiences and celebrates our common humanity with the children and teachers I work with on a daily basis. Wanting to inform my understanding of sharing children's literature in a balanced literacy framework, I became part of the Teacher Talk professional community who gathers together to discuss children's literature, literacy and best practice. Conversations with these colleagues about books that represent the diversity of cultures and experiences found both within and outside the United States gave me direction for building Professional Development workshops for the inservice teachers I work with in Hawaii.



Through these Professional Development workshops, I had an opportunity to engage in literature discussions of multicultural texts with the teachers who live and teach in the Kailua/Kalaheo complex. During our literature discussions we began a dialogue about what multicultural literature is and how it can be a tool to impact student learning. In addition to introducing new literature response strategies to these inservice teachers, I wanted to address how multicultural literature gives way to higher level thinking and provides an opening for students to explore their own assumptions and life experiences. The two primary books we discussed were *The Dreamer* (Ryan, 2010) and *Inside Out & Back Again* (Lai, 2011); these books are particularly appropriate for upper elementary/intermediate grades. I was able to make available copies of these books for these participating teachers' classroom use and libraries.



Several of the teachers used at least one of the texts as a read aloud selection with their classes. Those that selected *The Dreamer* (Ryan, 2012) shared that they felt it had some contextual themes that their students could not connect to. Specifically, they shared that the complex family dynamics of the characters, the turn of the century setting, and the boy's fear of the ocean were obstacles for them as Hawaiians when making text-to-self connections. It was difficult for these teachers to connect this literature response strategy for building comprehension to the kind of literature conversation that connects our students to each other and the greater world around them. In contrast, the teachers who selected *Inside Out & Back Again* (Lai, 2011) felt that it was a perfect text to share with their students. They shared that both they and their students particularly related to the protagonist's cultural heritage; which, as Southeast Asian, is well represented in Hawaii's diverse community. Multicultural literature connects students to each other, not just by nurturing our students' awareness and empathy for other ways of being in the world, but also by starting conversations about our common human experiences; however, beginning these conversations and scaffolding inservice teachers into this

kind of dialogue has been more challenging than I anticipated.

After a year of participating in a professional literacy community, I have learned that the true heart of literature is conversation and that discussion of children's literature is just as important for teachers as it is for our students. I have rediscovered the joy of sharing rich literature; reading with colleagues and getting excited about "jewels" in children's literature. These discoveries have informed my Professional Development workshops and I will continue to look for new ways to respond to literature in the classroom. I would like to pass on to teachers comprehension strategies that lend themselves to opening the kind of rich discussion that supports concepts of tolerance, diversity and acceptance of all. It is the perceptions, the responses, and personal connections that we make with texts as well as our conversations with others that really bring stories to life. And that helps us all to connect to the human experiences we share in life.

Downloadable engagements related to *Inside Out and Back Again*:
Save the Last Word for Me
Placing Students in a Story Context lesson
Literature Response Sheet

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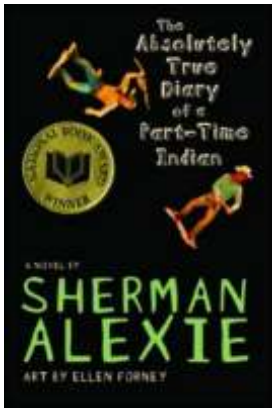
Esmeralda Carini is a district Literacy Content Specialist in Kaneohe, Hawaii.

What is Global Literature?

Louise J. Shaw

What is *global literature*? Exploring this question during the past year has meant reflecting on the metaphorical meaning of what makes literature *global*. Is it literature that pertains to the "globe," or to the whole world? Is it another way to say that literature is multicultural in the broad sense that it includes the "multitude of cultures that exist in the world" (Cai, 1998, p. 313)? Is it a separate genre or does it describe a perspective, an individual's way of reading and thinking about a piece of literature? These questions led me to reconsider my own assumptions about the term *global literature* because my conceptualization will impact how I approach it in the classroom

(Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).



I teach in the Literacy Education Department at Dowling College and my exploration of global literature took place in an undergraduate literacy course. I wanted to use a young adult (YA) novel as a text to engage students in reading and to provoke critical discussion so they could examine their own strategic reading processes as they learned about teaching reading. One of my colleagues recommended Sherman Alexie's (2007) *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, a semi-autobiographical coming-of-age story about Junior, a 14-year-old Spokane Indian living on a reservation in Washington. By his account, Junior contends with bullying, alcoholism, violence, and the self-destructive behaviors of family and friends. His desire for a brighter future leads him to transfer to the more privileged all-white school in a neighboring town. Junior experiences typical teenage activities such as homework, dating, and sports in the context of stereotyping, prejudice, and the reality of his family's poverty. He wrestles with questions about identity, family, and community ties.

This book is interesting for a number of literary reasons, including the engaging main character, the message of hope, the importance of the illustrations, and the controversy surrounding the appropriateness of the book's content. In relation to global literature, this book offers possible insights into life on a reservation in the United States, something that would be an unfamiliar experience for most, if not all, of the students in this course. I was looking forward to using the book with them and was surprised when some expressed resistance to reading it. They said that they did not relate to the title and they did not think the topic of the book would interest them. I contemplated changing the book because I know that choice is important to readers. Instead, however, I asked them to give it a try. Although I had not intended to use this book for my exploration of global literature, I realized that the story of Junior's life on the reservation - with all of its cultural, historical, social, political, economic, and ideological implications - was an unfamiliar "world" to the students and worthy of exploration as global literature as they also learned about the processes of making meaning with text.

Discussing *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* in literature circles resulted in resistant students making personal connections to the characters' lives through their dialogue (Gallart, 2002). They considered questions about the meaning of life experiences such as being bullied or wanting something more from life. The conversations sometimes spilled into writer's notebooks (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001), where some students wrote deeply about connections to personal loss or struggles with family alcoholism. As they imagined Junior's life through reading and dialogue with others, students came to better understand aspects of their own lives (Gomez & White, 2010). A "world" that seemed unfamiliar at first became more familiar as students recognized what they had in common with Junior.

What is global literature? It may depend upon the experiences of the reader before, during, and after reading a piece of literature. In this context, students gained insight into someone else's perspective on the world while learning more about their own. "It is through gazing at one another and exchanging points of view in a continual dialectic that we come to understand ourselves and those whom we see" (Gomez & White, 2010, p. 1017). I believe that this is the essence of global literature.

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Getting Started with Global Literature in the High School English Classroom

Stephanie Eberhard

My journey with integrating a new multicultural perspective in my classroom has yet to begin. I have reveled in being part of our Teacher Talk learning community and have been eager to contribute to our monthly discussions, responding to our readings and supporting my colleagues' experiences with literature. The student population I work with is very homogeneous, culturally and economically. I know they require a wider lens to be prepared to enter the world outside of their K-12 schooling. As we have begun curriculum adjustments to accommodate the common core requirement to read more non-fiction at the high school level, I am appreciative of the Worlds of Words website resources. This Teacher Talk group allows for professionals from all levels to gain

perspective and turnkey that to our students. I am grateful for this opportunity to learn from my colleagues in Teacher Talk and appreciate all of the support and meaningful reflection.

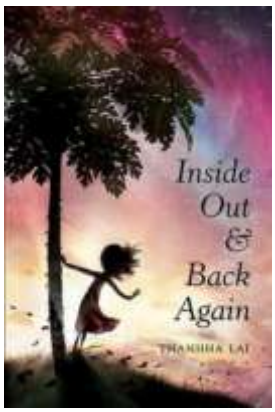
Stephanie Eberhard is an English teacher at Bayport-BluePoint High School in Center Moriches, New York. She is also a doctoral student in Literacy Studies at Hofstra University.

Learning and Reading the World through Literature

Jennifer Pullara

The exact thing that makes us all alike is our differences. We are each unique. This concept is not new. However, as I think of literacy experiences that students have in classrooms, with peers, and with the world around them, I believe that teachers can create rich literacy interactions as a means for students to explore who they are, while simultaneously discovering what it means to live in the larger global community of similarities and differences.

I am a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister; a dreamer, an optimist, a person who perseveres. I am also a literacy specialist who shares a passion for teaching children. At school I work with students in kindergarten through fifth grade at a public elementary school in New York State. Focusing on global literature with our Teacher Talk group this year gave me opportunities to learn how to discuss critical issues with my students, to develop deep comprehensive thinking, and to create text-based dialogue that was rich and meaningful. My vision of what it means to teach, motivate, and engage students with literature has changed from this experience.



Although I worked with grades K-5 this past year, my vignette is about a group of five fourth graders who read and discussed *Inside Out & Back Again* by Thanhha Lai (2011), a book we chose to read in Teacher Talk. This group of students are all in remedial reading. Three students are boys, while the other two students are girls. All of these students have excellent decoding and fluency skills. The area of concern is comprehension. I hoped that the students could increase their literal and inferential comprehension by reading, discussing, and writing about this text. This group was all engaged, immersed, and reached levels of higher level thinking. By asking each student to think from the perspective of Hà, the main character, they were able to think, discuss, and answer questions such as, “How can you describe the way Hà feels right now?” or “Can you justify the actions of the character?” Students also analyzed, evaluated, or created in order to answer higher level comprehension questions and so were able to interact with the text in a more passionate, authentic way.

Before reading the book, the fourth graders read an interview with Thannha Lai (Wolf, 2012). We read this interview together and discussed how the author's life might have many similarities to the main character, Hà, in her book. As the students briefly studied the author, the book seemed to come alive. They made the connection that this book was in some ways like a memoir for Lai. The students also made predictions about why she would write a book that was so similar to a personal history. We agreed that sharing your life story makes it feel important and you may find a way to inspire other people.

These activities helped the students get ready for the book. As the students read the interview they generated questions about history, geography, and cultural customs. These discussions created a context for the background of the story and motivated readers by sparking their interest and curiosity.

Our group read the book, *Inside Out & Back Again* in different ways: whole group, partners, small group, and independently. Students identified text excerpts that made them question, wonder, or comment. Some days our group read twenty pages, other days only one or two because we had so much to talk about. Some days the students asked to write reading reflections on how Hà was feeling at a certain point in the story. Other writing pieces were guided around the deep vocabulary and rich, descriptive language used in the text. Conversations about friendship, hardship, family, culture, country pride, citizenship, and religion surfaced. Other conversations were themed around emotions such as pride, bravery, jealousy, loneliness, depression, joy, happiness, and love.

After reading the book, the students were asked to identify three different character traits for Há. We discussed word choice and how powerful words can be. The students chose specific character traits that they believed could best explain who Hà was. Through rich conversation each student explained what they thought the character trait meant and then together the group thought of examples from the book to support Hà's traits. Each student really had to think deeply. The students supported each other in understanding Há and using text to support their answers. The students were given choice in literary expression, but they all chose to write literary essays. I think they all chose this because they were also writing in this format in their classrooms and they felt comfortable with a five paragraph literary essay. Each student chose words such as "brave, afraid, annoyed, embarrassed, hopeful, and calm." The character trait words were all supported with evidence and examples from the story. All of the students challenged themselves by writing creatively, articulately, and thoughtfully. The best outcome was the pride I observed in them as they each shared their work.

Through the professional journey I traveled this year exploring global literature, I learned personal and professional lessons. In past practice, I used the song lyrics from "We All Laugh in the Same Language" by Marla Lewis (2005) to discuss with children the global concepts of being similar. The lyrics sing,

> *"We all laugh in the same language. We all love to learn and play. Our hearts beat in the same rhythm. Round the world, we're all the same."*

This type of international thought supported my idea of teaching tolerance, acceptance, and diversity. However, after using children's literature to engage my students in thinking about the meaning of "global literature" and to think beyond the classroom walls towards global thinking led us to realize that differences are what make us all alike. The connections my students made to the

characters in *Inside Out & Back Again* gave new meaning to difference. Their world became wider and larger as they thought about Hà's experiences. So as I continue to challenge students and bring self-awareness to outstanding concepts that occur globally, I will not provide them with preconceived information. I will offer literacy opportunities to stretch their own thinking, create their own opinions, and nurture a rich literacy classroom community. Their personal connections, their questions, and their feelings about what they are reading will guide their global thinking.

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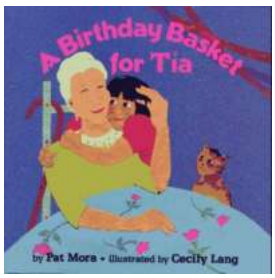
Widening the World: Mapping Global Literature in a Kindergarten Classroom

Stephanie Annunziata

I consider myself lucky to teach in school where diversity and culture are valued through celebrations and classroom studies. There are many cultures that make up my school community and each student is exposed extensively to the world's geography. However, as I attended our Teacher Talk meetings each month, I began to wonder how much of the literature that the students at my school were exposed to was reflective of multicultural or global literature.



One afternoon, I sat down in my classroom library and read through and examined the books. I tried to categorize the books that fit into a global idea or theme. I came up very short with that pile. So I closely examined the books to look for experiences of the characters that could be connected to a human experience, one that is shared by people around the world, along with my students. There were several more books that I had come across in my library once I applied this view of global literature to my search. Among them I found: *A Birthday Basket for Tia* by Pat Mora (1997), *Gabriella's Song* by Candace Flemming (2001), *Wombat Divine* by Mem Fox (1999) and *Olivia* by Ian Falconer (2010).

My goal was to take these books and bring them to the forefront of my classroom in order to go

beyond what Kathy Short (2009) calls “the tourist perspective”, the surface-level information about another culture. Instead, I wanted to bring the idea of a common humanity to my students as well as opening up the world spatially to them to see where these stories were taking place. I wanted them to know that people/characters from other cultures can have similar experiences to them and that stories don’t just come from the people in our culture, state, country.

I understood that as concrete thinkers, my kindergartners would need some visual representation to serve as a reference point for our discussions. I was inspired by reading the vignettes of other Worlds of Words literacy communities and all the work that they did with their students to “build bridges of understanding across global cultures”. In particular, the mapping that was done by Van Horne Elementary School was helpful to encourage the development of conceptual thinking and to offer their students a way to organize their responses to changes and journeys within the literature that they were reading. I took their idea of mapping very literally and went out and purchased a large world map that served as a visual of all the stories we read and where they came from.

As we began our literary journey through books that represented global ideas, we fastened our seatbelts and spent a day or two just examining the map and what we saw, already knew, thought, had traveled to, had relatives from and any other connections that five year olds had about why the map was there and what we would be doing with it. While I had a firm grasp on their curiosity, I sat everyone down and read *How Big is The World?* by Britta Teckentrup (2007). The book follows a mole on his adventure to find out just how big the world is. The animals he encounters answer his question in beautiful similes that illustrate the great depth of the world.

After I had read the book to them, we had a lengthy discussion in which I posed the question that

mole had asked throughout the book, “Just how big is the world?” They responded with answers such as “50,000 feet”, “one to infinity”, and “humongous.” However, I think that they really started to understand the idea of the book by the end of our discussion when I had asked “Why does the whale say he has never seen the end?” and a student responded “because the world gets bigger and bigger each time we see something new.” This became our theme for the rest of the year as we journeyed through global literature.

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Teaching Humanism through Global Literature in the Elementary Reading Classroom

AmyMarie Livermore

When I began my journey toward teaching global literature and talking about the global world, I started by asking myself: "What do I really want my students to learn, and how am I going to teach it to them?" Before pursuing answers to these questions, I first needed to establish a clear objective/goal for my class of third grade students. My goal became to teach my students about various cultures and countries with global literature while focusing on our common humanity. I chose to focus on common traits where similarities among cultures are discussed, embraced, and nurtured; rather than focusing only on differences, which carries the danger of an “us versus them” dichotomy.

In order to teach with global literature I first had to find rich, authentic texts which would act as an

avenue toward beginning to talk and learn about people in the world around us. As a beginning teacher, researching books on the internet and having discussions with my colleagues became essential in putting me on the path toward finding books that my students would be interested in and be able to connect with. Through highlighting the similarities among all people, reading various texts/genres, and engaging my students in classroom discussions, they were then able to make and develop personal connections to the texts through the exploration of books such as: *Same, Same, But Different* (Kostecki-Shaw, 2011), *Whoever You Are* (Fox, 1997), and *This Child, Every Child* (Smith, 2011). After reading these books, we talked about the traditions and stories from our own cultures. Rich literature provided the space for classroom discussions that explored how children all over the world face similar experiences with school, family, and everyday life, as well as what makes them unique.

One country that my students and I chose to explore together through global literature was Japan. Some texts that I utilized to teach about Japan's culture were *Grandfather's Journey* (Say, 1993), and *Crow Boy* (Yashima, 1983). After reading and discussing these texts, I immersed students into the culture by using multimodal teaching techniques to aid them in going beyond these texts. Our class began with a morning message that incorporated Japanese writing which taught the children about the Japanese language while also providing an agenda that explained what we would be learning about in class. We then practiced speaking and writing phrases in Japanese, wrote a Haiku, created origami, listened to relaxing Japanese instrumental music, and went to various websites to read and learn about daily life in Japan. Each of these experiences aided students in better understanding Japanese culture. Including engagements that examined the daily life of children in Japan and revisiting texts like *Same, Same, But Different* (Kostecki-Shaw, 2011) allowed my class to continue our dialogue about our universal similarities and unique differences.

The texts we used opened the door to new worlds and also kept our conversations about our shared experiences as our central focus. Through the use of global literature, literature that opened new dialogue, I was able to create a world where students could make connections to the lives of people from other cultures by seeing themselves.

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We Speak for the Trees!
Fourth Graders Investigate their Global Relationship with Nature

Liza M. Carfora

Often when we consider addressing global relationships with our students we select texts that address or introduce cultures from around the world; we focus on the perspectives and lifestyles of people different from our own. Seldom do we consider our global relationship with nature.

Working with a group of twelve fourth-grade English Language Learners in a Saturday morning literacy program gave me the space to consider global relationships with nature with children using children's literature. In early October, just as the trees were beginning to change colors for the fall season, my co-teacher and I invited our students to take a nature walk. We gave the children sketchbooks and asked them to sketch their observations of nature. Wanting them to have authority over their inquiry, we hoped this walk would elicit possible topics of interest to study over the course of the program. Excited to get outside and out of the classroom, they touched snails, ran under trees, and touched the leaves still damp from the morning air. When we returned to the classroom, we listed all the things we noticed on our walk and charted possible topics for our study. It soon became clear that the majority of the students were curious about trees.

To facilitate our initial conversations we read *Fernando's Gift* (Keister, 1995), a bilingual text about a boy living in the rainforest of Costa Rica, and *Our Tree Named Steve* (Zweibel, 2005), a text about a family's relationship with the large tree that grew outside their home. In selecting these texts, particularly *Fernando's Gift,* we hoped the children would reflect not only on their relationship with nature in New York, but also with how they remember nature in their homeland. Responding to the question, "What is close to your heart in nature?" one child, who emigrated from Honduras, remembered how much he loved the red and white bird that would sit in the tree near his house; another shared that there was a tree like Steve in her family and it was at this very tree where her grandparents met each other. Still another said that his first toy, a wooden duck, was something close to his heart from nature because it was made from the trees in El Salvador.

The children each chose a tree to observe over the year and our nature walks became an important part of our program. By connecting our walks to our reading our texts took on new meaning. *The Tree in the Ancient Forest* (Jones-Reed, 1995), a book about an ancient forest, began to make sense to the children when they noticed a tree with a plaque that read "*planted in 2002"*. They recognized that this tree was nowhere near the height of full-grown trees that surrounded it. By pairing this book with *The Lorax* (Geisel, 1971), which invites readers to consider a world without trees, the children explored issues of logging, deforestation and regeneration.

Our discussions flowed from personal perspectives to global perspectives as we introduced texts and literacy engagements to support the children in understanding the interdependence of people, trees and the health of our planet. In *The Great Kapok Tree* (Cherry, 1990) the tree is referred to as a tree of miracles. Illustrating their developing understanding of some of the ways people are

connected to trees they explained that it is a tree of miracles because it provides home for the animals and gives us fruit and products that are derived from trees like medicine, gum, and syrup. Yet, when tracing the connections of animals to trees and negotiating the needs of animals versus the needs of people a *them* versus *us* debate ensued. Moving from personal perspectives to global perspectives often paired our reading of rich literature with nonfiction texts. In response prompts like "If your tree could talk what would it say? How is it feeling?" the children had to consider the weather and time of the season by bringing in nonfiction texts to support their personified responses.

As our in-depth study began to conclude we focused on a line from *The Lorax, "We speak for the trees."* For our culminating project, the children considered the question, "If you could speak for the trees what would you say?" as they designed brochures. For their brochures they developed a slogan from the perspective of trees and included information to support their position. Some of their slogans included: *Use a tree, plant a tree; Plant a tree every time you cut one down*; *If you cut down a tree, use it wisely,* and *Trees make us healthy*. Sketches and photographs of their trees created during our nature walks were available to add illustration.

Critically thinking with our students about our global relationship with nature and inviting them to respectfully consider different perspectives, listen and offer creative solutions empowered these bilingual learners to find and share their own voices. Teaching for global relationships with nature using rich children's literature as our primary tool brought the joy of awakening our students to new understandings.

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Liza Carfora was a literacy specialist at the Reading/Writing/Learning Clinic at Hofstra University and is now teaching third grade at the Spruce Street School in New York City.

Who Writes History? A Study of Columbus' Voyage

Vera Zinnel

This past school year, my third graders and I read a variety of texts with different perspectives about Christopher Columbus. As a result I doubt my students will ever look at history the same way again.

As a teacher, I am very influenced by the work of Linda Christensen (2000, 2009), whose books have helped me teach with a social justice perspective in which students respect the past, the present, and each other. By focusing lessons around the 'big ideas', such as the story of Columbus, by using literature with a global perspective, and by adding increasingly complex texts for students to read and think about, Christensen has led me to help my students become critical thinkers as well as address the new Common Core State Standards.

As I planned this unit on Columbus, I kept in mind the criteria which Christensen suggests for creating classrooms for equity and justice:

- Lessons should be grounded in the lives of students
- Lessons should be critical (look at the reasons why things are the way they are… who benefitted, who lost, who won)
- They should incorporate multicultural, anti-racists, and pro–justice ideas (soft multiculturalism, hard racism- looking at hard issues)
- There should be a participatory, experiential portion (role playing to help understanding – theatre of the oppressed)
- They should be hopeful, joyful, kind, visionary (who got it right…look for the good as well as the bad)
- They should encourage activism (students act on the knowledge they learned, finding a way to do something good in the world)
- The tasks should be academically rigorous (lens and focus)
- The lessons and materials must be culturally sensitive (sensitive)

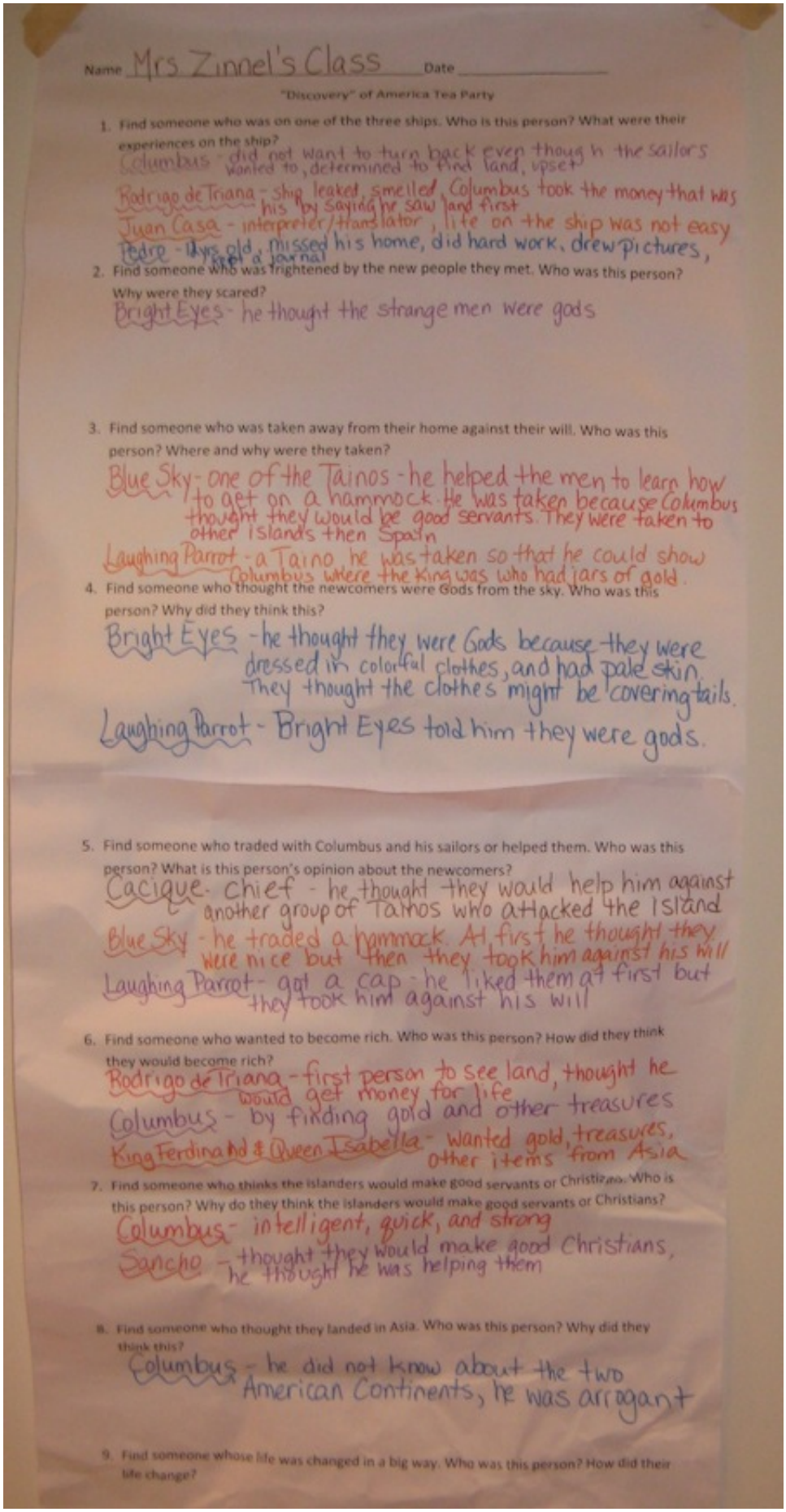
Columbus Day was approaching and I thought this was the perfect lesson to focus on equity and social justice. To start the unit I asked my class what "history" was. After coming up with some responses (happened long ago, events that happened in the past, a story reborn, his-story) I then asked them whom they thought writes history (people who lived through it, people in it, person in charge). I noted their responses on a chart. Then I told the class the following story about two islands:

> *Island "A" was a peaceful island in which the natives grew most of their food and took from the sea what they didn't grow. On Island "A" grew a special tree. The tree produced a fruit that had many purposes. They could eat the fruit and make wonderful things from it. The peel of the fruit had many uses as well. They could make bowls from the peel when it dried. The children made toys. It was a great tree. One thing the fruit could do was float. There was another Island, Island "B". They did not have the special tree but they had mountains and caves on their island. In the caves was metal that they used to make many things. One day a fruit from the tree on Island "A" floated over and landed on the shores of Island "B". The people of Island "B" thought the fruit was the greatest. They wondered where it came from so some of them set out to search the area. In time they came to Island "A" and saw the tree. The met the people of Island "A" and asked about the fruit. The people of Island "A" were more than happy to share the fruit but that was not good enough for the people of Island "B". They wanted it all for themselves. So they decided to come back and take the fruit. Because they had metal on their island they had better weapons and by the end of the Fruit War, no one who lived on Island "A" survived. The people of Island "B" eventually started to live on both*

islands and many years passed. In time books were written about the history of the people of the two islands. Children were taught the history in school. The history books said this… "One time there were two islands. One had many wonderful people on it. The other had no people living there but they had a special tree. Brave explorers found the island and the fruit from the special tree. That is how our great nation came to live on two islands."

Of course the class had much to say about the fairness of the history and so we started out to learn about the "discovery" of our nation. They went back to the list they had made and added that "the winners wrote history".

A "Tea Party" is another strategy from Linda Christensen (2009) that encourages role playing in classrooms to help students take on different perspectives and to get inside a historical person's actions. To start my "tea party" I wrote nine different monologues from different perspectives of people who lived during that time. I included Columbus, the interpreter brought along on the ship, Rodrigo De Tirana who was the first to see land, a ship boy, and five Taino people. The children each read the role they picked and we had a class tea party. In groups of three, each character introduced themselves to the class. We then filled out a question sheet looking for those who felt Columbus was a good friend, or those who had been taken against their will. At the end of the activity, the class had a different perspective about what Columbus Day actually celebrates.



Name Mrs Zinnel's Class Date

"Discovery" of America Tea Party

1. Find someone who was on one of the three ships. Who is this person? What were their experiences on the ship?
Columbus - did not want to turn back even though the sailors wanted to, determined to find land, upset
Rodrigo de Triana - ship leaked, smelled, Columbus took the money that was his by saying he saw land first
Juan Casa - interpreter/translator, life on the ship was not easy
Pedro - 13yrs old, missed his home, did hard work, drew pictures, kept a journal

2. Find someone who was frightened by the new people they met. Who was this person? Why were they scared?
Bright Eyes - he thought the strange men were gods

3. Find someone who was taken away from their home against their will. Who was this person? Where and why were they taken?
Blue Sky - one of the Tainos - he helped the men to learn how to get on a hammock. He was taken because Columbus thought they would be good servants. They were taken to other islands then Spain
Laughing Parrot - a Taino he was taken so that he could show Columbus where the king was who had jars of gold.

4. Find someone who thought the newcomers were Gods from the sky. Who was this person? Why did they think this?
Bright Eyes - he thought they were Gods because they were dressed in colorful clothes, and had pale skin. They thought the clothes might be covering tails.
Laughing Parrot - Bright Eyes told him they were gods.

5. Find someone who traded with Columbus and his sailors or helped them. Who was this person? What is this person's opinion about the newcomers?
Cacique - chief - he thought they would help him against another group of Tainos who attacked the island
Blue Sky - he traded a hammock. At first he thought they were nice but then they took him against his will
Laughing Parrot - got a cap - he liked them at first but they took him against his will

6. Find someone who wanted to become rich. Who was this person? How did they think they would become rich?
Rodrigo de Triana - first person to see land, thought he would get money for life
Columbus - by finding gold and other treasures
King Ferdinand & Queen Isabella - wanted gold, treasures, other items from Asia

7. Find someone who thinks the islanders would make good servants or Christians. Who is this person? Why do they think the islanders would make good servants or Christians?
Columbus - intelligent, quick, and strong
Sancho - thought they would make good Christians, he thought he was helping them

8. Find someone who thought they landed in Asia. Who was this person? Why did they think this?
Columbus - he did not know about the two American Continents, he was arrogant

9. Find someone whose life was changed in a big way. Who was this person? How did their life change?

This role-playing initiated a lot of questions and discoveries from my students. One thing they

wanted to know more about was why Spain and other countries did not want to travel by land to Asia and wanted to find water routes instead. Something else they became fascinated with was the amount of words our language borrowed from the Taino language. I read to them excerpts from Columbus's journal, and *Morning Girl* by Michael Dorris (1992), which is about a Taino brother and sister before Columbus arrives on their island. Another document I shared with them was a pamphlet put out by The Sons of Italy organization. This pamphlet argues for why Columbus should have his day of recognition. We learned some interesting information. The class learned that many cultures captured slaves, not just the Spanish invaders. This fact was upsetting to them. They spoke a lot about how slavery was wrong.

To end the unit, each child chose a character and wrote an inner monologue, in the style of Morning Girl and her brother Star Boy. This was an academically rigorous task for third grade students. Nevertheless, I was very pleased with their efforts. Examples of their Inner Monologues include:

> *I am a sailor. I am Rodrigo de Triana. I sailed on the Pinta. I saw land first. I wanted to become rich. Columbus said the money is his. The King promised money to the first man who saw land. I really wanted to get rich. I was mad because I didn't get any money. When I go back to Spain I will say, "Columbus took my money!"* Kyle (Grade 3)

****

> *I think the people taking my friends and family should not be taking them. I am frightened because I don't want to be taken. I told my friend that did not get taken, "Don't get too close or they will take you too!" He did not listen to me. They took him away! Now they're gone and I feel very upset.* Ann (Grade 3)

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> *My name is Sunrise Girl. I am a native. I sleep on a hammock. With my friends* I *like to have fun and to make stuff. I see mom plant and I see dad hunting for food. I go to see the water and my friends come with me. I saw three ships coming my way and I ran to tell the chief what I saw. He said, "What are you talking about?"*
>
> *I said, "I saw three ships." Then he saw the ships. Soon little boats came and landed here. We said hi to the people. We gave them stuff. They were looking for gold when I was playing and talking with friends. Everyone thinks the strangers are nice but I think they want something that is ours, and when I mean something . . . that something is food! They asked, "Where is the gold?" Then their leader took our people and made them show them where the gold was. My friends and I ran away. "I told you that he is bad," I said to my friends.*

They said, "You were right and we were wrong."

"We have to leave if they don't leave," I said. So we went to see if the strangers were gone. They were… but so were some of our friends. My friends and I are alone. How can we live if we don't know how to plant and to hunt? Soon we walked down to our hammocks, but we have a hard time sleeping. When I woke up I thought it was a bad dream, but it was real. I soon figure out how to plant because I did it with my mom. We ate the food. 50 years later I have grown old. When I was sleeping, I died with my friends. Britt (Grade 3)

What my class learned was the following:

•Not everything you read is true
•There are many sides to an event in history
•History, for the most part, is written by those in power
•Just because something is common practice does not make it right

The actions we took based on what we learned:

•We applied what we discovered to other historical events throughout the year, such as Thanksgiving
•We put ourselves in others' shoes to try to understand them.
•We created inner monologues for other characters in books to imagine what they may have been thinking
•We asked questions… all the time… and tried to find answers.

The Common Core State Standards we addressed:

RL 3.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 2 – 3 text complexity band independently and proficiently
RL 3.11 Recognize and make connection in narratives, poetry, and drama to other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, personal events, and situations
W 3.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons
W 3.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences

Many of my colleagues were impressed at how well some of the students related to and understood some very complex concepts. Besides enjoying this task, the students liked having knowledge that some people still do not have.

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Using Global Literature to Build Understandings for All Students

Carol Gilles and the Saturday Morning Book Group

This email demonstrates a teacher's reflection on interactions among students in our Global Literature Project:

> *I introduced the Burma books to my class yesterday. It was a great learning opportunity, and it gave my students a chance to ask questions of and get to know better my two students from Burma. The student from Burma that has been here all year (and has enough English to communicate pretty well at this point in the year) was so happy that her culture was being brought into the classroom. It was tough to pull her away from the books during math.*
> Christie (Grade 5 teacher)

We are a community group of classroom teachers and professors from around the mid-Missouri area, who are all Teachers Applying Whole Language (TAWL) members. For the last twelve years we have been reading new children's literature, using those books with children, writing reviews and then sharing the information with our group as well as other teachers. We conduct a number of service projects each year, including reading and reviewing the books nominated for Missouri awards (Show Me, Mark Twain, Gateway and Truman) and then sharing those books with over 100 teachers at the January TAWL meeting. We decided to be involved in this project because we saw a need for more global literature in our community. As we pursued the project our group members also learned more about global literature and how to use it.

Why Use Global Literature?

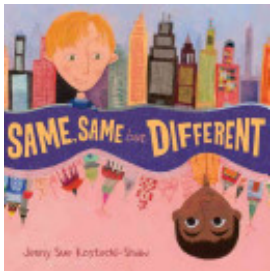
We decided to pursue our project because one of our group members, Tara, a second grade teacher, said, "I wish I could do more for my newcomers. At times, they seem so alone. . . I don't know their unique histories, their pasts and their cultures." Tara reminded us that teachers often may appear insensitive to the issues of newcomers simply because they don't understand their cultures. We discovered that there are over 40 languages spoken by newcomers in our district. Many of their teachers have not learned about these various cultures in their teacher preparation classes, nor do they have the time to research each culture. Likewise, because these children come from distant places like Myanmar or Somalia, they rarely see books that reflect their cultures. We wondered if using global literature picture books highlighting particular cultures would help to make our newcomers feel more welcomed, as well as teach the other students about the cultures of their classmates and promote understanding.

We selected two elementary schools that had a large number of ELL students in which to concentrate our work. Based on the input from the ELL teachers, we chose to highlight Myanmar (Burma), Somalia, Cuba, Russia and the Pacific Island cultures since there were many students from those countries and resources were difficult for classroom teachers to find. Our plan was to purchase picture books through the grant to highlight these particular cultures, and create sets of books complete with guides to help classroom teachers and their students enjoy and learn from the books.

Our Process

Researching web sites, perusing book reviews and talking together, our book group located picture books. We found for some countries, like Somalia, few books were available. Others countries, like Russia, had many books and we had to sift through the reviews to choose appropriate texts for our project. We also were sensitive about what kinds of books we would choose. We didn't want to ignore conflict and wars in the countries, nor did we want the representation of the countries to

only be about war. We decided to include a book of photographs of the current country, a book of more historical/geographical material, a folktale, and a book that emphasized something that the country was famous for (baseball in Cuba, music in Russia.) To round out the set, we included books that added detail and reality to the set, such as a cookbook to the Cuba set.



Once the books arrived, we decided that we needed continuity from set to set, so we included the book, *Same, Same, but Different* (Kostecki-Shaw, 2011) in each set. In this book, an American boy and an Asian (Indian) boy become pen pals and compare their families, interests, and cultures through their letters. The story starts in an art classroom, and includes captivating illustrations contrasting similarities and differences. This book provided a visual introduction to the notion that cultures may be far apart and look different, but have similar components.

We also decided to make a packet to help guide the teacher that included:

1) A bibliography of the books, along with pictures of the covers and a short annotation of each book.

2) Overview of the Text Set included suggestions for integrated activities for a culture study using the books, including day-by-day plans.

3) A detailed lesson plan of two books (one fiction and one non-fiction) with before, during and after reading questions and strategies. These strategies and activities were aligned with Common Core State Standards and suggestions for revisiting the books and websites were provided.

4) A brief "fact sheet" in each folder about the country on items such as the capital, area, languages, religions, currency, a map and other details were compiled to help teachers have a better understanding of the country and the cultures. On-line resources were listed for additional information.

The complete packets for Cuba, Myanamar (Burma), Somalia, Russia and the Pacific Islands are available here as downloads for educators who would find these useful.

We began circulating the books among the teachers in February. We included eight teachers who used at least one set of books with a few incorporating multiple sets of books. Most used the books for two-three weeks. Book club members offered to help the classroom teachers, to read books aloud to students, to take notes of how students used the books and to move the books from classroom to classroom.

The Cycle of the Project

These five vignettes highlight the natural rhythm of the project – introducing the book sets through read aloud with small groups, as well as read-aloud and discussion with the whole group, exploring the concepts, especially through art, and reflecting on what has been learned. Jean Dickinson and Missy Morrison explore how the book sets were introduced to first graders in various ways. Linda Wycoff with Janice Henson and Gennie Pfannentsteil with Linda Aulgur highlight the ways in which discussion and art were used to integrate these books into the curriculum. Finally, Tara Gutshall reflects on what her second graders learned as they engaged in text sets about Russia and Somalia.

Introducing the Text Sets: Investigating Myanmar (Burma) with First and Fifth Grade Buddies

Jean Dickinson

Myanmar (Burma) Packet Download

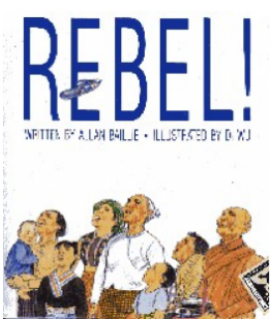
Ms. Woods decided to use read aloud and small group discussions to introduce the books from Myanmar. She first began with her first graders and the following week invited the fifth grade class to act as scribes for her students in the small groups.

To begin, Ms. Woods gathered her first graders on the carpet. She talked briefly about the text set and reminded the class that they had two classmates from Myanmar. In the focus lesson, Ms. Woods read aloud *M is for Myanmar* (Rush, 2011). In this book one sister explains to the other what she remembers about Myanmar. The story is told in vignettes and poems, written in English and Burmese. Poems tell about the holidays, the lifestyles, the buildings, and foods of Myanmar. Vibrant artwork and expressive typefaces add to the short, simple poetic style.

Ms. Woods slowly paged through the text and asked students to share their observations about the text and illustrations, emphasizing the importance of looking at the illustrations and/or photos in their books. She asked the students to think about questions they had about Myanmar. Children asked about people speaking different languages and questioned if the country was as hot as Missouri.

When asked what they noticed in the book, students first responded with comments about differences. They noticed that the houses didn't look like their houses. Several students noted pictures of elephants and of people riding elephants. One student described the buildings she saw as golden castles. At this point the children were focusing more on the differences between the two cultures.

After dividing the students into four groups of five or six, Ms. Woods gave each group one of the books from the Myanmar set and asked students to look through the books. Since they were first graders with limited reading skills, she stressed the importance of looking at the illustrations and/or photos in their books and instructed the students to think about their questions.



One book that grabbed the attention of the first graders because of the illustrations was *Rebel* (Baillie, 1994). This fiction story is based on a true incident that occurred in Rangoon, when an arriving army destroys a school's playground as part of controlling the town. One child rebels by throwing his sandal and hitting the general on the head. When the general orders the students to stand before him in an effort to determine the culprit, the students and their teachers remove their shoes, and the general's plan fails. The theme of unity in the face of adversity is enhanced by the full-page watercolor and pencil illustrations.

One student determined from one of the illustrations that the children might be scared of the soldiers and another noted that they lived in a country where soldiers tell them what to do. Adding to the discussion, another student inferred that the people didn't have liberty. As a group, the first graders decided the students in the story were afraid of the soldiers. This book offered students an alternative view of soldiers.

By prior arrangement two fifth graders who were from Myanmar joined the class and one small group. The group sharing the book *M is for Myanmar* came across several pictures in which children had a white substance on their cheeks. The two fifth graders from Myanmar who were the experts explained that the white substance was sugar used to prevent sunburns. Giving older children from the country the opportunity to be resources for the first graders benefitted both groups.

When the students completed their investigation of the books, two main ideas emerged from the closing discussion: elephants are important to the people in Myanmar and their homes are different from the students' home. The group reviewing *Same, Same but Different* (Kosteci-Shaw, 2011) used their book to remind classmates that indeed, people everywhere are alike in many ways and yet each of us is different.

Later in the week, the fifth-grade class joined the first-grade students on their cultural journey. Both classroom teachers along with a mentor teacher facilitated these students in their exploration and conversation revolving around noticings and questions from the text sets. The fifth graders recorded the observations and the questions on sentence strips. The teachers moved among the eight groups and helped facilitate the discussions. The lesson concluded when each group shared their noticings and questions.

Looking over the notes scribed by the students as they worked with a partner, several categories emerged. The students were addressing the topics of culture, housing, schools, and the kinds of work done by the people of Myanmar. Students commented about connections they made between their own backgrounds and what they saw in the books. The students noted issues of politics and in particular the involvement of the army in the lives of the people.

At this point the groundwork had been laid and the context had been set in both classrooms. The books were kept in a common spot and each teacher could use the books and revisit them in ways that were appropriate to their classroom. The books had touched the children from Myanmar, who had seen pictures and words of their culture, as well as the other first and fifth graders, who began to consider a culture different from their own.

First Grade's Introduction to Cuba

Missy Morrison

Cuba Packet Download

Mrs. White, a first grade teacher, was interested in using a set of books about Cuba to help make a newly arrived Cuban child feel more at home, as well as to help other children in the classroom gain an understanding of Cuban culture. She decided to introduce these books through whole group read-alouds and discussion. Unfortunately the Cuban student, who we will call Luis, was absent the morning the unit began.

To help prepare the students for immersion into the text set about Cuba, Mrs. White began by reading *Martina, the Beautiful Cockroach* (Deedy, 2007). This story is a common Cuban folktale with Deedy's own unique humorous twists. Mrs. White halted when reading some of the Spanish words within the text and her students suggested that if only Luis was at school, he could help with the pronunciation! The children had already noticed one of Luis's strengths and how, given his knowledge of Spanish, he would have contributed to the classroom community. This is important because often international students may be embarrassed that they speak another language.

Mrs. White invited the children to choose a character from the story and write three important facts about the character. As the children worked at their pods, they helped each other with spelling and locating needed words like *abuela* for their writing. Using a map, Mrs. White guided the students in locating Cuba and explained that it is an island. In response to the question, "What

do we know about islands located near the equator?" the students responded, "It's hot!"

Later in the day, Mrs. White shared another book from the Cuba text set, *Countries of the World: Cuba* (Mara, 1999). This nonfiction book discusses the history, landscape, people, animals, food, sports, and culture of Cuba. The last few pages of the book provide information about playing Cuban games, learning Spanish, or finding books and internet sites that provide more information.

As the class discussed the book, the children were especially surprised that some middle school-aged children in Cuba move away from their families to attend boarding school. Several children seemed shocked and thought that they wouldn't want to do it. But, one girl thought it sounded a lot like what happened at college – a big slumber party!

Mrs. White continued reading from various topics using the table of contents as a guide. All children contributed to the discussion, which consisted mostly of comparisons between what they were familiar with in Missouri and the United States and how it was different or the same from what they might experience if living in Cuba. At the end of the exploration time about Cuba, students shared their understandings, while the teacher recorded it on a chart:

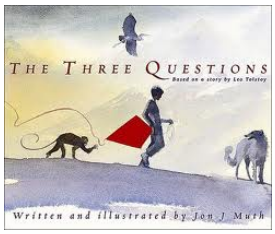
- Baseball is the most popular sport;
- Cuba's an island and surrounded by water;
- They eat a lot of rice;
- Kids have to wear uniforms;
- They play guitars and drums;
- If you go to middle school, you have to live there.

Listening to these books and discussing them formed a firm foundation for revisiting the books later and Mrs. White continued to revisit these books throughout the next couple of weeks. Throughout this study, her first graders developed a deeper understanding of their classmate's home country, Cuba, and Luis was able to share his expertise to add to their insights.

From *The Three Questions* to about a Million More: Kindergarteners Explore Russia

Linda Wycoff with Janice Henson

Russia Packet Download



In Mrs. Kruse's kindergarten classroom, one student native to Russia and a number of other cultures were represented. As a first activity, she chose to focus on how her kindergarteners view themselves and then used those insights to help them open up to a more global study. On the day she read aloud *The Three Questions* (Muth, 2002) there were seventeen students present. In the book, based on a story by Tolstoy, Nikolai wants to know the answers to his three questions*: When is the best time to do things? Who is the most important one? What is the right thing to do?* He finally asks Leo, the old turtle, to help him and through a series of circumstances he learns, "Remember then that there is only one important time, and that time is now. The most important one is always the one you are with. And the most important thing is to do good for the one who is standing at your side. For these, my dear boy, are the answers to what is most important in this world. This is why we are here" (np), The watercolor illustrations draw children into this lovely story about compassion.

The concept of another country and culture was a big idea for kindergarteners to begin to understand. During the interactive read-aloud, I noticed that the kindergartners had a vague concept of how far away Russia was. When Mrs. Kruse told her class the characters were from Russia and asked if Russia was close to us, the students responded in unison with a resounding, "NOOOOOO!" One student thought it might take about two hours on a small plane to get to Russia.

Commonalities that kindergartners shared with young children around the world are the concepts of friends, family, and helping. Mrs. Kruse asked the children to answer a big question just like the boy in the story. When she asked, "What is important now?," students talked about their friends. She then asked how this answer might change if the children were at home. The students responded with answers about their families. She then asked how the answer might change if they were at work. The responses shifted to the job – to whatever they were doing. In this discussion the students seemed to be conceptualizing a big idea that important changes depend on the context.

Another example of kindergartners trying to grasp a big idea from a narrow lens was shown at the close of the session. Mrs. Kruse, looking at me, stated that this book is a good book no matter what your age. The children commented "like six" "or seven." They had missed the teacher's implication that this book is ageless and were commenting about their own ages.

As a follow-up, Mrs. Kruse asked them to respond to the three questions from the book: When is the best time to do things? Who is the most important one? What is the right thing to do? She suggested their responses could be watercolor illustrations for the class bulletin board. Again the patterns of friends, family, and helping emerged:

> "When I played with my friends at recess… The most important one was my classmate. The

most important thing to do was play with him because he is sad and does not know anyone at our school." By Annie

"When I helped my brother climb a tree… The most important thing to do was help my brother climb the tree. I lifted him up with my hands and helped him so he did not fall." By Mira

"When I helped my little sister walk home, the most important time was helping my sister walk safely home. The most important one was my little sister… I had to hold her hand so she did not walk in the street." By VanRun

"The most important time was when I helped my teacher make flowers for the bulletin. The most important one was my teacher." By Kelsey

The ideas of family, friends, and being a helper seem to be common threads interwoven throughout the discussions and in answer to the big questions. Kindergartners stepped outside their safe worlds where any age is six or seven and all day is about two hours. They grappled with, thought about and questioned the big idea of Russia and its nearness and "far-awayness" as a result of their experiences with this book and teacher facilitation. Starting with the similarities from the Russsian folktale, the teacher could then later build on these experiences to help them learn more about the Russian culture.

Using Arts/Literacy Integration with Global Literature

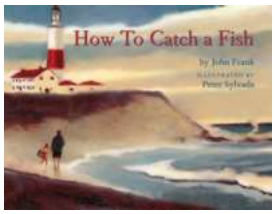
Gennie Pfannenstiel with Linda Aulgur

Linda, a group member, helped Gennie, an art teacher, use text sets with a variety of elementary students to integrate cultural understandings in classes with students who have recently immigrated to America from the Truk Islands and Somalia. These literature text sets were shared with kindergarten/first, second, fourth and fifth grade classes. In this vignette we hear Gennie's voice.

Same, Same, but Different (Kostecki-Shaw, 2011) was used to introduce all of the classes to their particular cultural study. After reading this book aloud, the children were asked to draw a response using the title cover as a model, with one culture represented on top and the other culture on the bottom. The children used this format to draw and discuss how things can be same, yet different, in terms of their lives within family, school, community, and geographic regions. The book provided a venue for examining differences and the children referred back to the book's title often, whenever a certain culture was discussed. It served as a reference for discussions about living with blended families, moving from school to school, visiting relatives in other states, as well as understanding classmates who came from other parts of the world.

Learning about the Pacific Islands through Art

During art a first-grade class looked at the book *The Hawaiian Alphabet*, (Phillips, 2004) and discussed how one of the girls in their class was from this part of the world, and that there are different languages spoken there. Although this girl was not comfortable saying any of the words out loud in front of her classmates, the rest of the class was intrigued by the colorful alphabet representations. Thinking about Hawaii served as a background for discussion of island life in other parts of the world.



The class then reviewed parts of *How to Catch a Fish* (Frank & Sylvada, 2007). This book demonstrates fishing around the world through lush paintings. I asked the children to note how many different kinds of fish there were and that people all over the world fished. After looking at more pictures in *Children of Micronesia*, (Hermes, 1995), a picture-book of life on various islands between Hawaii and the Philippines, I demonstrated how the children could make a print fish, using rubber models. This art method, Gyotaku (fish-rubbing) comes from the Japanese culture, using real fish to print. The children eagerly painted and printed. The girl from the Pacific Islands, although very shy, seemed happy to nod in response to the pictures from the alphabet book and when asked if she had seen fish like the print models, she said yes. Another girl in the class explained how she and her dad went fishing the previous weekend. This experience sparked further fishing stories from a lot of the students. The class gained important concepts regarding similarities among different

cultures. The children often interjected a choral response from the introductory text, “Same, same, but different!” This influenced me as well in planning future lessons to incorporate the fishing traditions of children from this predominantly African American school.

I presented the same lesson to the fifth-grade class and the girl from the Truk Islands was too shy to talk about her culture so her African American friend told the class about the Truk culture for her. Another class member asked why the girl from the Truk islands didn’t tell this herself, and he was reminded by this friend that kindness and patience is needed for people to be comfortable sharing. This important lesson represents how children benefited from this interaction with multicultural literature.

Exploring Connections with Somalian Students

Early in the year the Somalian families from our school had brought cultural artifacts and food to the classroom to share. This served as background knowledge that the class utilized when discussing the books in the Somalia text set.

On Good Friday, kindergarten/first grade children wearing bunny ears, arrived in the art room. They looked at pictures from *The Color of Home* (Hoffman, 2002), a book about Hassan, a newcomer in America, who recounts his journey from Somalia to America. The book shows Somalian women wearing the headdress, *hijab*. Two members of the class, both Somalian boys, excitedly pointed out that the women and girls in their families also wore the hijab. One boy stood up to demonstrate how his mother folded her hands under her hijab when praying, and then how she knelt. But he also explained that the men and boys did a different prayer position, and he and the other Somalian boy then got up to demonstrate the call to prayer from the mosque, and how one bows and the leader calls the prayer, using a microphone. The rest of the class listened respectfully, and talked some about other ways to pray. The boys circulated around their classmates, shaking hands in a friendship gesture. It was a spellbound moment of multicultural sharing, with everyone present visibly connected to one another despite differences.

Later the children's classroom teacher shared *The Color of Home* again and the children discussed the story. The children felt scared and worried when Hassan, the main character, had to hide under a bed hugging his pet cat for comfort, when the soldiers came in the night, Later the family had to leave the cat behind and he missed his pet and this made the children sad. But they felt happy at the end of the story when Hassan drew a picture of his cat and learned how to speak English. This particular story helped the children appreciate some of the struggles of a refugee.

In the fourth grade class, two Somalian girls, wearing their hijabs, listened with the rest of the class to two books, *All the Colors of the Earth* (Hamanka, 1994) about different skin tones of all the children in the world, and *The Color of Home* (Hoffman, 2002) about a Somalian boy in a new home in the U.S. who uses colors to express his experiences in his home country. The characters' names in the book were familiar to the class, who knew several Somalian students in the school, and they eagerly pointed this out. They discussed how color could help express feelings. One of the Somalian girls had previously read this book individually with me during recess and had really enjoyed the book, asking if I could read it to her class. We used the other non-fiction book, *Somalia in Pictures*, (Hamilton, 2007) as a resource to check for same and different animals found in Somalia and America. The Somalian students were surprised to learn that there are goats in America as well as Somalia!

After reading *Same, Same, Different*, I invited the Somalian girls to demonstrate some of the alphabet in their native language, like the book showed two languages of writing. The class was supportive of their efforts and applauded them. The girls seemed to be pleased with the positive attention. Later during the class, I invited the children to shape camels, an animal common in

Somalia, from clay.

A younger sister of the Somalian girls in this class also came during recess to the art room to look at the books about Somalia. I wanted her to get her feedback on which of the Somalian books should be shared with the second grade art class. She flopped down the table and cried, “I don’t feel like talking about my country today.” She had just gotten word that her cousin still in Somalia had just died.

“How did this happen?” I asked.

“In my country, mean people come in the middle of the night and kill people.”

I reassured her that I would honor her grieving and wait to talk about Somalia with the whole class. She gave the books back to me so they could be used later. This reminded me that we are not just looking at books and learning about various cultures, but learning about people’s lives.

Growing Compassion: Using Global Text Sets with Second Graders

Tara Gutshall

Somalia Packet Download

I was fortunate to have a diverse class with three students who were bilingual, two in Spanish, one in Korean. Three students were English language-learners, one from Russia and two refugees from Rwanda and Somalia. Another student’s mother’s family was from Rwanda. This of course, does not reflect children’s different academic abilities, personalities and range of interests. From the beginning, I knew it would be important to embrace our diversity.

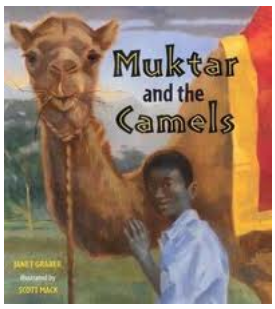
After spring break, we read *Welcome to Somalia* (Schemenauer, 2008) from the *Welcome to the World,* non-fiction series. This introductory book includes information about the land, plants and animals, the people, schools, language, work, food, and holidays. The book is divided into short segments with lists of information, bolded words, and photos of the land and people. Fast facts, a mini-language guide, glossary, and references for additional information are included.

A few weeks earlier, a member of our class who was a refugee from Somalia, Asad, moved away without notice. I found out he would not return to our class through an email. Simply mentioning the name “Somalia” reminded the class of when I shared the news of his moving. Saying the class missed him would be an understatement. At one point, Jackson suggested, “Let’s not even talk about it (Asad’s moving). It’s too sad.”

Prior to the read aloud, students knew there had been fighting between Somalia and Russia. When a group of students learned about this conflict, they worried it would cause conflict between the two students in our classroom from Somalia and Russia. They were also familiar with the location of Somalia. We often pulled down the large map or looked at the globe to locate the different countries our classroom represented.

As we read the book, students learned about Somalia's seasons and animals, which include badgers, jackals, gazelles and antelopes. The suggestion that Somalia had some elephants, giraffes, and zebras, a few big cats and poisonous snakes left the class *"oohing"* and *"ahhing."* At the conclusion of the book, children explored the vast differences between the lives of Somalian children and their own, including the school environment, daily work, and food. The new information also made them wonder about the lifestyle of a student, Gahuj, who joined our classroom from Rwanda.

During independent reading time and buddy reading, many students chose to further explore the books about Somalia. After reading a different non-fiction book, Jordan raced up to me and said, "Look! We need to get this book." as he pointed to "Rwanda" which was listed on the back cover with other book titles in the Visual Geography Series. He knew our class would be interested in learning about Gahuj's native country.



Later in the week, I read aloud *Muktar and the Camels* (Graber, 2009), a book about a Somalian orphan boy who dreams about being back with his family and tending to the family's camels. By looking at the front cover, children noticed there was a camel, not a familiar animal to them, and a boy who had darker skin, similar to the classmates from Rwanda and Somalia. They also pointed out the artwork, which seemed to be painted on canvas.

After the read aloud, Jordan asked, "I wonder if Asad's older brother ever helped with the camels because Asad wouldn't be old enough." During the read aloud, we learned 12 to 13 year old boys were sometimes asked to help with the camels. Then the child from Rwanda raised his hand and shared his experiences. Kevin, who was sitting next to him, coached him in sharing his thought, one word at a time as he shared about his brother and camels. The rest of the class patiently waited. When he finished sharing, everyone exhaled, in awe of his words. This was the first time the child raised his hand and verbally shared a complete thought during any of our class experiences!

Throughout the year my class became more compassionate towards one another. New students were not only helped to learn the classroom routines, but they were helped to find a voice, no matter their native language and even it meant coaching them to share one word at a time.

The student from Rwanda transferred schools a week before the last day of school. Two days before he said good-bye, we sat in our Morning Meeting and listened as he shared in halting English he was moving. When he finished, tears streamed down my face. As I looked around the room, many faces were red with emotion; Jordan and Jackson had tears in their eyes. These kids had a unique bond and cared about one another deeply.

In reflection, I think these texts helped our class begin to understand each of our unique histories. Later in the year, a child and her mother took the initiative to teach the class about her family's history. They included facts about Spain's geography, sports' teams, food and more. This study helped me be aware of our class differences and to listen to student questions and attempts to share what made each of us unique. Students are eager to share, listen and learn about each of our differences. It seems our differences are what brought us together as *one* community.

Final Reflection: What Did We Learn?

Carol Gilles

Our book group loved learning more about global literature, creating the curriculum packets for teacher use, and especially witnessing the children's discussions and connections. We noted several "transformational moments" in our study, such as the classrooms that explored Mynamar. We also discovered that these books led to sensitive topics, such as war in Myanmar and Somalia, and political issues in Cuba. Teachers had to negotiate the tensions of trying to be sensitive to these cultures and avoid stereotypes, while at the same time not 'sanitizing' the issues. For example, one class of second graders became concerned that two class members' countries, one from Somalia and one from Russia, might be having a war. They wondered if the two class members would have to be angry with one another if their countries were at war. This question prompted discussion and inquiry.

This was a large project that depended on the interest and good will of the participating classroom teachers. As much as teachers wanted to have the books and use them with their children, there was a tension between what they wished and the school mandates. For example, Gennie, our book club member who is an art teacher, introduced several of the Somalia and Pacific Islands books in art and the children used the books to springboard into art activities. Then Gennie invited teachers to continue using the books and studying these cultures in their classrooms. Unfortunately, only a few teachers responded to this invitation. We also noticed that first year teachers, who were really eager to work with the books, were often so overwhelmed with learning their craft that they were not able to find time to use the books. Visiting with many of the teachers at the end of the project, teachers told us that they would have participated more if the books had been centrally located and

they could access the set when it fit more naturally in their curriculum. We understand and appreciate that logical reasoning and are exploring this option.

Even though we encountered some difficulties, working through these books and having the discussions they provoked transformed our book group members and teachers, as well as the children. As we shared the books, our understanding of the world deepened and became more concrete. We learned that we all are the "Same, same, but different" in everything that matters.

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