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Enhancing Experiences with Global Picturebooks by Learning the
Language of Art

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 Enhancing Experiences with Global Picturebooks by Learning the Language of Art
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Editors Note:

The Power of Literature

Prisca and Ray Martens introduce us to Storying Studios in this themed issue of *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom* through vignettes written by elementary school educators who are members of a long-standing literacy community. Their work focuses on literacy and art as language in Storying Studios. Robbie, a kindergarten teacher, explains:

Even though I read aloud to my students throughout the day, Storying Studio is a special time we set aside to read and discuss stories...Our daily Storying Studio lesson always includes reading a mentor text, discussing the story, and having a mini-lesson focused on an aspect of writing or art. Following the lesson, students have time to explore, write, and illustrate related to the mini-lesson focus.

Prisca, Ray, Robbie, Laura, Jenna and Michelle have been incorporating Storying Studio in primary classrooms to enrich and extend the grade level curriculum. The vignettes included in this issue provide a glimpse into their classrooms to see the ways these educators implement global literature into reading, language arts and social studies instruction. We transition with them from instruction to Storying Studio where we experience the different ways children use art to connect to the characters, setting and plot in the global literature selected by the teachers.

Kindergartners in Robbie's classroom use art to make connections between themselves and the main character in *Town is by the Sea* (Schwartz, 2017). Laura uses *Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah* (Thompson, 2015) to enrich a language arts unit for students in her second-grade classroom. Third grade students in Michelle's classroom read *Ada's Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay* (Hood, 2016) and then create their own musical instruments in Storying Studio. Third grade students in Jenna's classroom read and discuss *Ghost Hands: A Story Inspired by Patagonia's Cave of the Hands* (Barron, 2011) and then create brochures about the Cave of the Hands as a way to extend their thinking about perseverance in Storying Studio.

Robbie, Laura, Michelle and Jenna capture students' work during Storying Studio in photographs. Each vignette features colorful and creative photos of artifacts that exemplify the possibilities that can occur when educators expand their curriculum to include global literature and Storying Studio.

We at *WOW Stories* think you will enjoy reading about the lived experiences of educators and children reading global literature and participating in Storying Studio. We hope these vignettes inspire you to include Storying Studios in your own classrooms and we'd like to hear about your experiences if you do. Consider

submitting a manuscript that shares your experiences using global literature and Storying Studio in your classroom.

Mary Fahrenbruck and Tracy Smiles, Co - Editors, *WOW Stories*

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Enhancing Experiences with Global Picturebooks by Learning the Language of Art

Prisca Martens and Ray Martens

For the past 10 years we have been members of a literacy community with K-3 teachers in the Baltimore, Maryland area. Our community has met regularly to discuss literature, literacy issues, and response to literature, and to plan new experiences to engage students. Currently, our community includes classroom teachers Robbie Stout (Kindergarten, Franklin Elementary), Elizabeth Soper (First grade, Pot Spring Elementary), Laura Fuhrman (Second grade, Pot Spring Elementary), Michelle Doyle (Third grade, Pot Spring Elementary), and Jenna Loomis (Third grade, Seventh District Elementary). We teach at Towson University, Prisca in literacy and children's literature and Ray in art education. Our community has consistently had two primary foci to support our work with students--global literature and art as language.

Global Literature

Our commitment to reading and exploring global literature and developing students' intercultural understandings through these books is unwavering. Global literature is "any book that is set in a global context outside the reader's own global location" (Short, 2016, p. 5) which for us is the United States. Like multicultural literature, global literature encourages learners to respect and accept people who are different than themselves and break attitudes that are oppressive and prejudicial (Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010).

Discussions and experiences with global literature facilitate the ongoing development of readers' intercultural understandings, that is, their "stance of openness to multiple ways of thinking and being in the world and to differences as resources for our shared humanity and responsibility in working together to create a better and more just world" (Short, 2016, p. 10). That's of key importance to us for the students in our classrooms. Our world has become increasingly diverse and interconnected, particularly through technology. Daily we interact with others from a range of diverse backgrounds and learn about events and communicate with others around the world in "real" time. As diversity increases, it's more important than ever that we help students develop knowledge, understanding, and respect for people in other places in the world, including their beliefs, values, traditions, and ways of living and being (Short, 2009).

Art as Language

The second focus of our literacy community is art as a language, that is, developing students' knowledge and understanding of how artists think and the art concepts and tools they use in their work. Knowing this enhances both the students' reading of picturebooks and their composing of their own stories in writing and art. Because our work is with young children, the global literature we read is primarily picturebooks. By definition, the art in picturebooks is just as integral to the story as the written text (Kiefer, 1995; Sipe, 2008). In other words, to fully understand and appreciate the story in picturebooks, it is necessary to read and integrate meanings in both the art and the written text.

Art and written language are both texts, or units of meaning (Halliday & Hasan, 1975; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). To read and comprehend texts, readers integrate cues to predict and

construct meaning (Goodman, 2003; Piro, 2002; Pumphrey, 1996; Rosenblatt, 1978). In our work, we highlight and help students think about the cues artists place in their work to convey meaning in addition to the cues authors use. For example, we talk about why artists may have selected particular colors or drawn lines in certain ways, how/why they used contrast or texture, or the ways they created a sense of depth or 3-dimensionality in the art. Students are then encouraged to use these same artistic cues/styles in the art they create for their own stories. By thinking and composing like artists, students read and appreciate meanings in the art beyond a picture walk in which they identify objects and images.

Storying Studio

As our work with global literature and art has evolved, we began referring to the time for reading, minilessons, and composing stories as Storying Studio (Martens et al., 2018). Storying Studio celebrates stories in literature and the stories students share about themselves and their lives, as well as diverse ways of making meaning, specifically art and written language. Story is how humans make sense of the world, organize their lives, know themselves and others, and learn (Rosen, 1985; Short, 2012). We use the term “storying” as a verb to refer to the process of how stories are composed by interweaving meanings in writing and art. Studios are places for creativity and meaning making.

We structure Storying Studio similar to writing workshop with mini-lessons and time to explore ideas and write. Mini-lessons focus on the art in picturebooks in addition to the written text. In Storying Studio, studios are blocks of time, sometimes once during the day and other times in smaller segments, in classroom schedules organized around read-alouds/mini-lessons, time to explore the focus, and opportunities to compose in writing and art. Teachers use document cameras for the read alouds to make it easier for students to focus on the mini-lesson topic. These topics include aspects of writing (i.e., story beginnings, descriptive adjectives) as well as art (i.e., color, line).

Shelves and tables hold different types/colors of paper, scissors, staplers, glue, colored pencils, markers, etc., that students freely access. Teachers conference with students about their in-process and completed stories while others work.

Our Work as a Literacy Community

Over our years together we have studied a range of aspects of global literature and art as language. Through our studies we have learned, for example, that experiences with global literature support students’ understanding of culture and themselves as cultural beings, their appreciation of the range of ways they are both similar to and different than others, and their identification of themselves as global citizens with responsibilities to make their communities and the world a better place (i.e., Martens et al., 2015; Martens et al., 2016; Pot Spring Learning Community, 2012). We have also found that examining communication through art challenges students’ imaginations and creativity; encourages them to reason, problem-solve, and think critically; and pushes them to attend to details and make strong inferences (e.g., Maderazo et al., 2010; Martens, Martens, Doyle, Loomis, & Aghalarov, 2012, 2013; Martens et al., 2018).

In our work we have always lived with a tension, though. Our desire is to always explore and discuss the stories in global literature as well as examine the art simultaneously but we have found that difficult to do well with young children. It feels “overwhelming” for the children and

for us. We've found it more manageable to have one primary focus while still addressing the other. For example, we may emphasize the story and developing intercultural understandings, with art used more for response than learning art language. Or, we discuss the literature and global concepts, but emphasize learning the language of art. (Sometimes, when the emphasis is on art, we also use other picturebooks as examples.) When the emphasis is on the art, teachers read and discuss global picturebooks, but spend more time discussing the art and the meanings the artists embed in their drawings/paintings. Following these discussions children compose stories but topics are usually more open to their imaginations and creativity related to the art than as responses to the literature.

Since the majority of past issues of *WOW Stories* have focused on developing students' global understandings, our purpose with this issue is to concentrate primarily on how we focus on art in Storying Studio. The experiences with global literature the teachers share in their vignettes address the art focus in different ways, depending on the literature, the focus of the lesson they were teaching, and the students. Our hope is that we can demonstrate a range of ways to integrate art and inspire students that support teachers as they read global literature with students.

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Learning and Making Global Connections Through *Town Is by the Sea*

Robbie Stout

Global children's literature is important to my teaching. I read it to enhance my curriculum because it adds complex text, rich illustrations, and global characters and settings. Through stories in global literature students learn about themselves and others around the world and begin to understand that "their perspective is one of many ways to view the world" (Short, 2009, p. 4).

I have been teaching kindergarten students for 10 years. My current school is quite diverse. In 2018, my kindergarten class of 21 students (13 girls, 8 boys) was 38% African American, 4% Asian, 2% Russian, 2% Hispanic, and 54% European American. One student was an English Language Learner. The global literature we read and discussed provided mirrors for students to see themselves and their classmates in books as well as windows to learn about others in the world (Bishop, 1990).

Storying Studio

Even though I read aloud to students throughout the day, Storying Studio is a special time set aside to read and discuss stories. Students love Storying Studio. Our daily Storying Studio lesson always includes reading a mentor text, discussing the story, and engaging in a mini-lesson on an aspect of writing or art. Following the lesson, students have time to explore, write, and illustrate related to the mini-lesson focus. At the end of Storying Studio, students take a seat in the Author's Chair (Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001) to share their stories with their peers. Peers respond with compliments and feedback. Each student has a Storying Studio folder to keep ideas for characters, stories, and their works in progress.

Depending on my purpose, I use both global literature and other literature as mentor texts in Storying Studio to highlight specific aspects of art. With kindergarteners, to focus on art I find it helpful to use literature with large clear illustrations. For example, I like to use Elephant and Piggie books by Mo Willems and *The Rain Came Down* by David Shannon (2000) to talk about how artists use lines to indicate movement and expression. *When Sophie Gets Angry, Really, Really Angry* by Molly Bang (1999) works well for talking about color and emotion. *Louise Loves Art* by Kelly Light (2014) and *The Sandwich Swap* by Queen Rania of Jordan Al Abdullah, Kelly DiPucchio, and Tricia Tusa (2010) are helpful for discussing contrast; how, for example, artists use different types of lines, colors, or textures for different purposes. The use of mentor texts inspires students' creativity and imagination.

Mini-Lessons on Placement

This year students were excited to explore how images are placed and positioned on the page. We started the inquiry with an exploration of book gutters. Gutters are where the pages come together in the book's spine. I introduced gutters using

Shy by Deborah Freedman (2016) and *This Book Just Ate My Dog* by Richard Byrne (2014). In both of these books characters in the story are hidden or disappear into the gutter. Books like these challenge and inspire students to think about where and how they place characters in the art for their stories.

From gutters we moved to talking about horizon lines (“grass lines” as I explained to students) that separate the sky and the earth on the page. I used *Over and Under the Snow* (2014) and *Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt* (2017) by Kate Messner and Christopher Silas Neal as mentor texts to talk about why different images in the art were placed above or below the horizon line. Students caught on quickly and created their own pencil drawings of what they thought would be over and under the snow.

To build on these understandings and broaden students’ perspectives of communities and people around the world, I read *Town Is by the Sea* by Joanne Schwartz and Sydney Smith (2017) as a mentor text. Set in a Canadian mining town near the sea, the story is about a boy who watches his dad go off to work in the tunnels, mining in the earth under the sea. The illustrations show contrast between the light on the ocean and the darkness of the mining tunnels.

As we always do when we read global literature, we went to the map to find the setting of the story and then added new vocabulary words, such as Canada, mining, and coal, to our anchor charts as we read. We use anchor charts to make notes about things we want to remember as we read. Students noticed many similarities between themselves and the boy in the story as they considered where their families live, jobs their parents have, clothes they wear, etc., compared to those of the boy. Because we had previously discussed placement and horizon lines students were excited about the story and immediately connected it to the previous over/under stories.

When I asked students to paint their own over/under illustrations with watercolors, they were thrilled. For this painting, I let them choose what they wanted to paint to challenge their thinking and creativity and not limit the possibilities. Before painting, I suggested they look through their Storying Studio folders for inspiration. Their folders contained lists of character ideas, their illustrations of other settings, and responses to other stories we had read together.

While students easily represented what was above and below the horizon line, many still painted a sky above. Horizon lines were a new and difficult concept for them to fully comprehend, and I knew it would take time for them to fully implement into their art.



Figure 1: Amy chose to paint bugs crawling underground with herself standing by her house above them.

Amy chose to paint bugs crawling underground with herself standing by her house above them (see Figure 1). She stated, “I had to draw the bugs first with crayon. Then, I could paint the brown color all around them. This is me looking down on them. They live under the house.”



Figure 2: Bailey decided to paint the sea.

Bailey decided to paint the sea (see Figure 2). She explained, “I painted the sun shining on the water. I also painted the plants under the sea. I had to let the blue dry first so the plants would be bright and not blue.” When I asked her about the water, she clarified, “I didn’t paint everywhere blue because then you couldn’t see the light.”



Figure 3: Callie also painted the sea but left the underwater white.

Callie also painted the sea but left the underwater white (see Figure 3). She shared that she was “afraid to paint water because she wouldn’t be able to see the fish.” When I asked her about the flag, she said it was for our country, indicating she understood that we live in a different country than Canada, the setting for *Town Is by the Sea*.

Closing Thoughts

Students are inspired by and love listening to good, global literature stories. Through global literature they experience different ways of living and being in the world and, because it is a story, they make connections and learn (Martens et al., 2016). They enjoy seeing themselves and their lives (and those of their classmates) reflected in the “mirror” aspects of stories as well as looking through the “windows” to learn about other people, places, and cultures in the world that are new to them (Bishop, 1990). With *Town Is by the Sea*, they experienced and grew to respect and understand another place and way of life that was different (i.e., mining, living by the sea) from their own, but also with which there were commonalities they shared (i.e., loving families, fathers going to work, homes).

Students also learned about horizon lines and explored how to use them. I find that students are motivated to write more content when they are inspired by their own artwork. Creating art stimulates their thinking and creativity in ways that beginning with writing a story first doesn’t. While students didn’t write their

stories the same day they painted due to time, they remembered the stories behind their paintings. The paintings stayed in their Storying Studio folders until writing time. I like extending projects over several days because students learn that writing is a process and that stories do not happen at one seating or in one day. They do, however, view themselves as authors, artists, and readers and this is the greatest gift I believe I can give them.

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Exploring the Story and Art in *Emmanuel's Dream*

Laura Fuhrman

"You can do it, you can do it!" I must say that a thousand times a week to my students. I am a veteran teacher of 26 years, spending most of my career teaching first grade, although I did teach third grade for two years in a private school setting. The 2017-2018 school year was my first- year teaching second grade. It took me many years before I realized there were wonderful resources outside of the county curriculum I'm required to teach. Once I was introduced to global literature and other rich literature, I began integrating it to enrich the curriculum and my students' learning, including in my new second grade position. I've learned that global literature challenges students' thinking, broadens their perspectives of themselves, others, and the world, and develops their intercultural understandings (Martens et al., 2016; Short, 2016). My second-grade class of 20 students (12 girls, 8 boys) was unique because I'd taught most of them in first grade and looped up with them, meaning I moved to second grade with the same students I taught in first grade. Six students were native Spanish speakers and received ELL (English Language Learners) services, one student had an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) for speech, and six others received reading resource support from the school's Reading Specialist. My class was diverse as is our school population. Three students were European-American, nine African American, one Asian American, six Latinx, and one mixed race. Their reading levels according to Fountas and Pinnell ranged from kindergarten to 4th grade.

Reading *Emmanuel's Dream*

Since the second-grade curriculum guide included few literature suggestions, I found places to add global literature stories to enhance students' understandings of themselves and others around the world. One of our language arts curriculum units focused on influential people, such as Bessie Coleman and César Chávez, and how they overcame the struggles in their lives. I decided to add *Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah* by Laurie Ann Thompson and Sean Qualls (2015) to enrich the unit and students' understandings. In addition to Emmanuel's determination to overcome his struggles, the setting of the story is Ghana, West Africa, and three students had family living in Kenya. Since both countries were on the continent of Africa, I thought the book would help them as well as other students make a meaningful connection to this area of the world.

Emmanuel's Dream is a biography of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah who was born with a deformed leg. While others looked down on him, including his father who left the family, his mother encouraged him to follow his dreams. He hopped to school, learned to play soccer, supported his family, and became a cyclist. After his mother's death Emmanuel persevered and developed a plan to cycle 400 miles around Ghana to show that "disability doesn't mean inability". Through his travels and conversations with other people with disabilities and followers, Emmanuel accomplished his dream. He continues to work for people with disabilities today.

Because of student connections with Africa, I thought reading *Emmanuel's Dream* to start the unit on influential people and their struggles would interest and motivate them. When I introduced the book and mentioned it was set in a country in Africa, several students said, "That's where I'm from!" As I read the book, we discussed Emmanuel's struggles and how he accomplished his dream. Samuel raised his hand and stated, "Wow, how could he ride all that

way with one leg?" We discussed how he tied his deformed leg to the bicycle and also how hard it would be to ride with just one strong leg and stay balanced.

In our daily class meeting the next morning we referred back to *Emmanuel's Dream* and discussed what it means to have a condition seen as a disability. Several students had first-hand experiences with relatives who are labeled as disabled. Jay, for example, spoke from his heart when he described his sister who is in a wheelchair and how he helps her retrieve things. Perseverance is one of the virtues at our school so, this story built on previous discussions.

Creating in Storying Studio

Later in the day we had Storying Studio, a time in which we use picturebooks as mentor texts to inspire students to create their own stories in writing and art. We've examined and studied many authors and artists and have learned a range of aspects of writing and art through mini-lessons.

In Storying Studio, we examined the illustrations in *Emmanuel's Dream* to see how the artist, Sean Qualls, created each picture. As we explored and discussed the double-page spreads we noticed that Qualls used simple shapes, watercolors, stencils, black marker, and scrapbook paper in each illustration. On an anchor chart, we listed these materials and how they were used. For example, we noted Qualls used simple shapes for images, such as circles for the sun, trees, fruit, and people's heads.

Then it was time for the students to create their own art and write stories. I provided large pieces of white paper and told them to explore, creating what they wanted using any of the materials and ideas for images listed on the anchor chart. In our classroom I have table full of supplies, so students have access to multiple sized and shaped premade books, watercolors, stencils, construction paper, writing paper, markers, crayons, colored pencils, and scrapbook paper. During Storying Studio, they use any of these materials to create their stories. So, when creating artwork similar to Sean Qualls's art, lots of options were available. Students also had paper to write a story for their art.

While students connected with Emmanuel and his story, I chose to leave the focus for their work open-ended rather than directly related to the story. My philosophy in writing is to not limit a child's creativity. As a child I grew up being told what to write about. I was a very creative child and realized later in life I would have been a more successful student had I been given open-ended assignments. Also, I was curious to see what students would create with so many materials available to use in their artwork.

Students worked diligently on their artwork and stories for about a week. They worked on their stories in the morning when other seatwork was complete and during our Storying Studio time in the afternoon. The time would vary each day, but they usually had 30-40 minutes to work during Studio. There was much diversity in the materials and shapes students used in their artwork and in their stories.



Figure 1: Anthony, an English Language Learner, wrote "Flowers in the Rainy."

Anthony, an English Language Learner, wrote "Flowers in the Rainy." His art in Figure 1 used markers for the clouds, watercolors and markers for the flowers and rain drops, and scrapbook paper for the grass. His story read (spelling corrected):

It was a rainy day the flowers was small then tomorrow it was rainy too then the flowers got a little bigger then tomorrow it was big and big and tomorrow it was summer and they give water to the flowers.



Figure 2: José, also an English Language Learner, wrote “The Black War.”

José, also an English Language Learner, wrote “The Black War.” José used watercolors for the sun, buildings, and Zombie monsters, crayons for the background, and construction paper for himself, the enemy and the plane in the sky. He also used markers to make jagged lines to show danger and straight lines to show movement (see Figure 2). His story read (spelling corrected):

One day there was a storm of enemies came out of the sky to fight with the good guys were me and Anthony and Boston and Chase and Edwin. until they separated just me and Anthony and Edwin. We were to find them but it didn't work they became Zombies. We were trying our best but we did but me and Anthony, were still alive we fought. and we won.



Figure 3: Seema titled her story “The Trip to the Market” and used watercolors for the background, carts, and parents, and markers for the children and some other people, buildings, writing, and vegetables.

Seema titled her story “The Trip to the Market” and used watercolors for the background, carts, and parents, and markers for the children and some other people, buildings, writing, and vegetables (see Figure 3). She used scrapbook paper for the table, food, a banner, and signs. While working on her art, Seema commented, “This is so much fun being able to work like a real illustrator!” Her story read (spelling corrected):

Today the Hot Dog family was going to the market. Lizy, Lily, Rosa, Lucy, Emma, Emily, Trisha, Kara, Karina, Rori, Simon, JR, Sam, Danny, Harry, Fin, Fred, and Timmy were all in the Hot Dog family and were so excited. The Hot Dog family went in their \$1,000,000 car cause they had a big family. Their family had 18 children and 23 cousins and 14 aunties. But they weren't going together with their whole family. Their cousins and aunties are staying home and will clean the living room. The family drove and the kids kept on singing. They were finally at the market. The kids wanted a cookie but their parents said “NO!” The kids all cried so it was really loud. So the parents said yes and the kids screamed with joy. “YAY!” the kids yelled. “I can't wait to taste mine”, said Trisha. “Me too,” said Sam. The kids' parents bought a toy for each kid. It was \$23. The kids were sooooo happy! They left the store and went home. The kids all slept in the car the whole way home cause it was a tiring day. The End.



Figure 4: Carter's art was very intricate and detailed, but he ran out of time to complete his story in school.

Carter's art (see Figure 4) was very intricate and detailed, but he ran out of time to complete his story in school. Carter used watercolors for the ground, trees, and bushes, markers for the tree trunks, and scrapbook paper for tree branches/vines and the different animals in his jungle. While working, Carter stated, "I am so glad I get to write about anything I want!" The beginning of his story read (spelling corrected):

Long ago there was a jungle nobody knew. It was called the tropical jungle. There was treasure. Pirates wanted it. So they went to get it. Meanwhile on the tropical jungle animal names Leo, Christina, Zed...

Closing Thoughts

Emmanuel's Dream is a powerful story about persevering to follow your dreams. The story generated important and powerful conversations. Though the setting was in Ghana, students made strong connections between the story and their personal lives. They learned about another culture and understood that others there have struggles, dreams, and persevere just like they do. I was also excited about students' art creations based on Sean Qualls's work and their stories. I found that the time and detail students invest in their art was usually reflected in their writing. Their art inspired their imaginations and creativity. After many years of teaching young children, I believe that discussing rich global literature to broaden students' perspectives and understandings of themselves and others in the world and encouraging them to write about what interests them develops strong independent thinkers, readers, writers, and artists.

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“Pursue Your Dreams”: Reading and Experiencing *Ada’s Violin*

Michelle Hassay Doyle

The past two years have been a change for me because I moved from teaching first grade to teaching in a departmentalized third grade with 69 students. My responsibility on our third-grade team was to teach social studies, science and health. I looked for rich learning opportunities to use global literature to help students make strong, authentic, and meaningful reading and writing connections. In addition to learning content, my goal was for students to apply and strengthen their knowledge and skills to become more proficient readers and writers. I also wanted students to develop an appreciation of and respect for people in our global society.

The third-grade social studies curriculum I am required to follow focuses on three continents: Asia, South America, and Europe. For each continent the curriculum explores a few countries in detail. For each of these countries we study the type of government, human-made and natural features, the culture, geography, and climate of the area, the types of industries and jobs, school systems and folktales.

The curriculum does not include a textbook, children’s literature or global literature. So, to prepare and organize each social studies unit, I search our school and local libraries for related global children’s books to add to the curriculum. My goal is to have students read and immerse themselves deeply in the culture of each country and provide opportunities to explore topics that are of interest to them. Through their personal explorations and our collaborative discussions, I believe students develop richer intercultural understandings that go beyond surface content about food, festivals, fashion, folktales, and famous people (Short, 2009).

We take about six weeks to study each continent. Towards the end of each study, students compare and contrast the particular countries within the continent and eventually compare and contrast the continents, including our continent of North America.

Reading and Experiencing *Ada’s Violin*

This past year, 69 students in three classrooms comprised the third grade. About 30% were African American, 35% European American, 19% Hispanic, and 11% Asian, Indian, or another heritage. Of these, 10% were English Language Learners and about 50% received free and reduced meals from the school.

As part of our study of South America I introduced students to *Ada’s Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay* by Susan Hood and Sally Wern Comport (2016). Paraguay was not one of the focal countries in the unit, but I knew the book would enhance the students’ appreciation and understanding of the diversity within the continent, the different ways people live, and the real life struggles some face, as well as people’s resiliency. The book also demonstrates the importance of perseverance which was the virtue our entire school was focusing on at the time.

Ada’s Violin is a nonfiction story of a girl named Ada Rios who lived in Cateura, a

small town in Paraguay that is literally built on a landfill. Community members search through the landfill every day for cardboard, plastic, and anything else they can recycle or sell. Ada's family love music and listen on their radio. When Favio Chávez, a music teacher arrives and wants to give the children music lessons, Ada is eager to participate. She dreams of playing the violin, but that is not a realistic option for her since her family has little money for anything but the necessities of daily living. To come up with enough instruments for the children, Señor Chávez begins digging through trash in the landfill for items he then uses to invent and create instruments. Ada chooses to play a violin Señor Chávez makes and her dream becomes a reality. The Recycled Orchestra now plays around the world.

I introduced this book after our study of South America when I knew the students would have a better understanding of the culture, geographic features, and climate on the continent. I told the students that this was a nonfiction story and we began carefully reading the illustrations as well as the written text, noting the intricate details. As we studied the art, we discussed how Comport created the illustrations through painting, drawing, and collagé that included materials such as newspaper, photographs, and sheet music. The red, yellow, and brown colors are warm, rich, and realistic. We talked about how the art was created from recycled materials just as the instruments were. I read the entire book except for the Author's Note on the last two pages that included a photograph of the actual children in the orchestra and their instruments, including Ada and her violin.

After our reading and discussion, I asked students to reflect on the book and write what they thought was the message of the story. Then we shared the responses.

- “I think she wrote this story because the city’s landfill turned trash into inspiration and also perseverance.” Zachary
- “I think the author wrote this book to tell us that you can do anything and imagine.” Lucas
- “I think the author wrote the story because it’s telling you to pursue your dreams even if you think it’s impossible! That’s what Ada did!” Hope
- “I think that the message of the story is you can do something from almost nothing.” Ryan
- “I think the message was that beauty is on the inside because they made beautiful music out of trash. Some people would think it would make terrible music but it doesn’t. The message might also be one man’s trash is another’s treasure because they made treasures out of trash.” Shay
- “I think that trash can turn into something grateful is the message of *Ada’s Violin* because *Ada’s Violin* was first trash but then it turned into something brand new. I think that the author wrote this story because she wanted to show the world what trash can turn into.” Luke

- “The author wrote the story to show that you can do anything you put your mind to just like Ada who build her own violin.” Jacob
- “The message is that you can make something little to really huge. The author wrote this story to tell kids, ‘Hey these young kids did something good.’” Karl

Following our discussion in which students shared their appreciation of the struggles some communities face, I decided to utilize our school’s Makerspace as part of Storying Studio to challenge students’ creativity and problem solving with limited resources, realizing that this would in no way equate with the experiences of Ada and her friends. I told students to imagine they had the opportunity to help the children from Cateura, Paraguay, by recycling materials to create instruments for their orchestra. Since I purposely hadn’t shown students the photograph at the end of the book, I knew they’d have to use their imaginations and not be influenced by what they saw.

Our work in the Makerspace took place over two days. The first day was an introduction. In the Makerspace students explored the recycled materials, including cereal boxes, egg cartons, rubber bands, paper towel rolls, etc. I wanted them to have their own discovery time first to generate ideas and inspire them to be as creative as possible with the resources that we had available to us. To help students prepare, I gave them a planning sheet on which to make notes about the type of instrument that they were interested in creating, the materials they thought they would use, and how they would put the materials together. I suggested they create a string, percussion, shaker, or instrument of their own imagination. They were limited, though, to using no more than five resources in the Makerspace. This way they were making the connection to the concept of limited resources that we’d discussed.

On the second day the students were so excited to be going to the Makerspace to create their very own instruments that they worked diligently to do so.



Figure 1: Alex selected some cardboard boxes and rubber bands to create her string instrument.

Alex selected some cardboard boxes and rubber bands to create her string instrument (see Figure 1).



Figure 2: Ben worked hard to add the washer seen here to his strumming instrument.

Ben worked hard to add the washer seen here to his strumming instrument (see Figure 2).

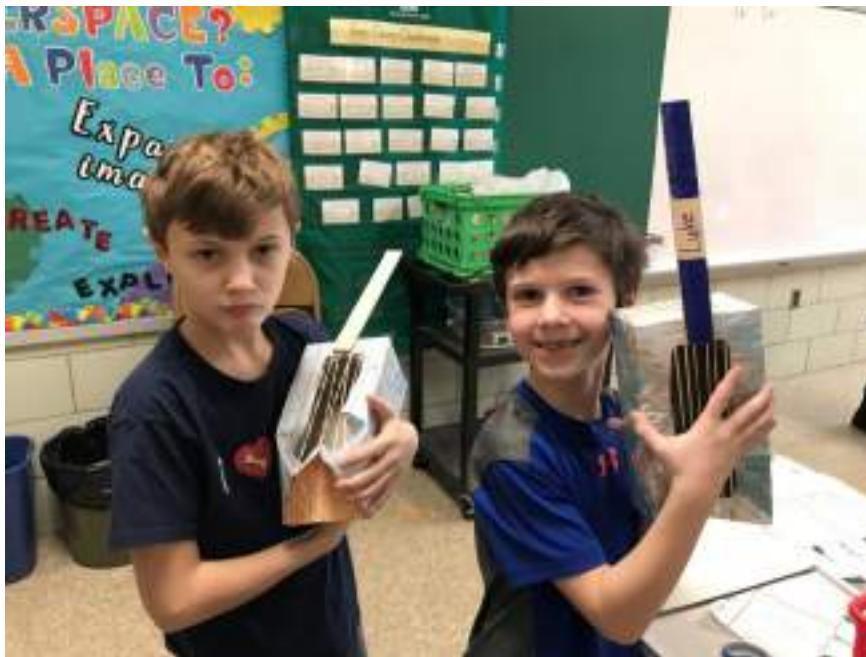


Figure 3: Jacob and Luke chose tissue boxes, paint sticks and rubber bands for their string instrument.

Jacob and Luke chose tissue boxes, paint sticks and rubber bands for their string instrument (see Figure 3).



Figure 4: Yug selected clay to add more detail and texture to his instrument.

Yug selected clay to add more detail and texture to his instrument (see Figure 4). After sharing their instruments with each other, students reflected on their experience in the Makerspace.

- “I liked it because it was hard to do. I wish I could do it again. I like to do hard stuff. I like to go to the Makerspace.” Lily

- “I feel very happy I finished my instrument and I persevered and never gave up and I can’t wait to take it home.” Karen
- “It was fun because we got to create an instrument of our choice. For me, I love anything with strings. It was a really good experience.” Tommy
- “I felt proud because I was so happy that I made something by myself.” Carter
- “I liked this experience because it let me use my imagination to create something cool. It let me show what I felt like inside to create a great think, we all did!” Ben
- “I love it because we make new things, we create, we are inventers. It was fun because we mixed up things and made new things.” Edwin

Finally, after we read and discussed the book, and students made their instruments, I showed the photograph on the last page of the book. We also watched the video of Ada and her classmates playing their instruments in the orchestra. Students were amazed and quite surprised to see that Ada was a real person and not a fictional character. Even though they knew the book was nonfiction, seeing the video made them understand this actually happened.

I was invited to the district social studies office in our county to share these lessons with other social studies teachers as part of their professional development. After my presentation Michael Crispens, Coordinator for Elementary Social Studies in Baltimore County Public Schools, commented, “This is a lesson and experience that Mrs. Doyle’s students will remember the rest of their lives.”

Closing Thoughts

This lesson illustrates the power of rich global literature and authentic creative experiences and how those experiences enhance, deepen, and transform students’ understandings. Lessons that make an impact like this one should be the norm and not the exception. The unit on South America itself was similar to the other units in the curriculum. Students studied photographs and watched informational videos. They learned that the continent was extremely diverse throughout the different countries for a variety of reasons. They made connections that the climate was different depending on how near or far communities were from the equator. These readings, discussions, and visuals certainly impacted their learning.

However, it wasn’t until the students read *Ada’s Violin*, made their instruments in the Makerspace, and saw the video of Ada playing with the Recycled Orchestra that their understandings were transformed. They were astonished and amazed when they realized that Ada and her friends were real people and this truly happened and wasn’t a fictional story. Students saw that although Ada and her friends’ lives were filled with struggles, they persevered and dreamed under seemingly impossible circumstances. While my students’ experience of recycling and creating instruments

in the Makerspace were not on the scale of Ada's, it gave them a slight taste of "limited resources" and planted seeds to deepen their understandings. Their respect for others and their ways of life and how they persevere through difficulties to create something beautiful increased and inspired them. This happened through the connections students made to Ada and her friends through story (Martens et al., 2016; Short, 2012). My students will remember this lesson and experience for the rest of their lives.

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People did great things with their hands": Telling Stories to Engage with Culture

Jenna Loomis

Teaching with global literature is important in all classrooms, but especially so in my third-grade classroom. The school where I teach is located in a rural area in the northernmost part of Baltimore County in Maryland. Ninety percent of our school population identifies as white, 4% as Hispanic/Latino, and 6% as all other cultures, including students who identify as two or more races. With little racial diversity throughout our school, it is important to expose students to different cultures and perspectives. This year, in our departmentalized third grade, I taught English Language Arts to a total of 59 students. This included all general education students and three students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP's).

Every year our school holds an "International Day" when each grade level learns about a country or continent, creates a project based on the learning, engages with guest speakers, and experiences aspects of the cultures about which they are learning. While this day offers students general knowledge, this type of learning often does not promote significant understandings or cultural perspectives. By immersing students in a culture through stories and experiences, they move beyond knowing the surface characteristics of a culture, such as food, festivals, famous people, folklore, and fashion, to understanding the beliefs, values, perspectives, and the diversity that exists within a specific culture (Short, 2007).

So, my challenge was to create a learning experience that fit within the existing structure of International Day but at the same time enhanced my students' understandings of themselves and people within a culture. Although a single text is not ideal for an intentional teaching and learning experience, I found myself in this situation for a variety of reasons. Nonetheless, I set about creating a valuable learning experience using information provided in the Author's Note in the book along with video resources I had located online.

Learning Through *Ghost Hands*

Working with the social studies teacher, we decided to focus on South America because students explored various aspects of culture in different South American countries as part of the social studies curriculum. These curricular cultural topics included government, resources and economics, school life, religion, food and clothing and special customs. The Cave of Hands in the Patagonian region in Argentina offered an intriguing departure from this kind of study. Archaeologists have discovered a cave in which 890 hands have been negative-painted, or stenciled on the walls, along with one foot and a variety of hand-drawn elements such as the sun, indigenous animals, hunting, and a variety of shapes and patterns.

Ghost Hands: A Story Inspired by Patagonia's Cave of the Hands (2011), written by T.A Barron and illustrated by William Low, tells the story of how one foot may have come to be painted on the wall among the hundreds of hands. The book includes a

note to the reader giving information about the cave and reports that the Tehuelche tribe was all but wiped out by settlers who massacred, poisoned, and drove the people off their land so settlers could use it for sheep farming. Rather than focusing on the demise of the tribe or the details of how the foot may have become important enough to paint, I chose to delve deeper into the illustrations and writing to help students explore the values and beliefs of the Tehuelche.

In the story, a boy named Auki, whose name means “little hunter,” sets out to prove that he is worthy of his name. He has been told again that he is not ready to hunt even though he has practiced his skills and patience. He sets out on his own to prove he is “brave enough to face a puma.” When he meets the puma, he falls into a canyon and injures his foot. As he tries to get back to his family before the puma finds him, he finds the entrance to a cave with walls covered with hand prints. At first, Auki thinks the paintings look like ghost hands waving at him. Auki meets Pajar, a strange and unfriendly man who calls himself “the painter of our people.” When Pajar tries to chase Auki away from the cave, the puma appears and threatens them. Auki races toward the puma trying to scare it away and trips on a bowl of paint. While his legs are flailing through the air, Auki’s foot strikes the puma and he saves their lives. Pajar nurses Auki back to health and before painting Auki’s foot, he declares, “I will paint someone very brave, so brave he saved my life.”

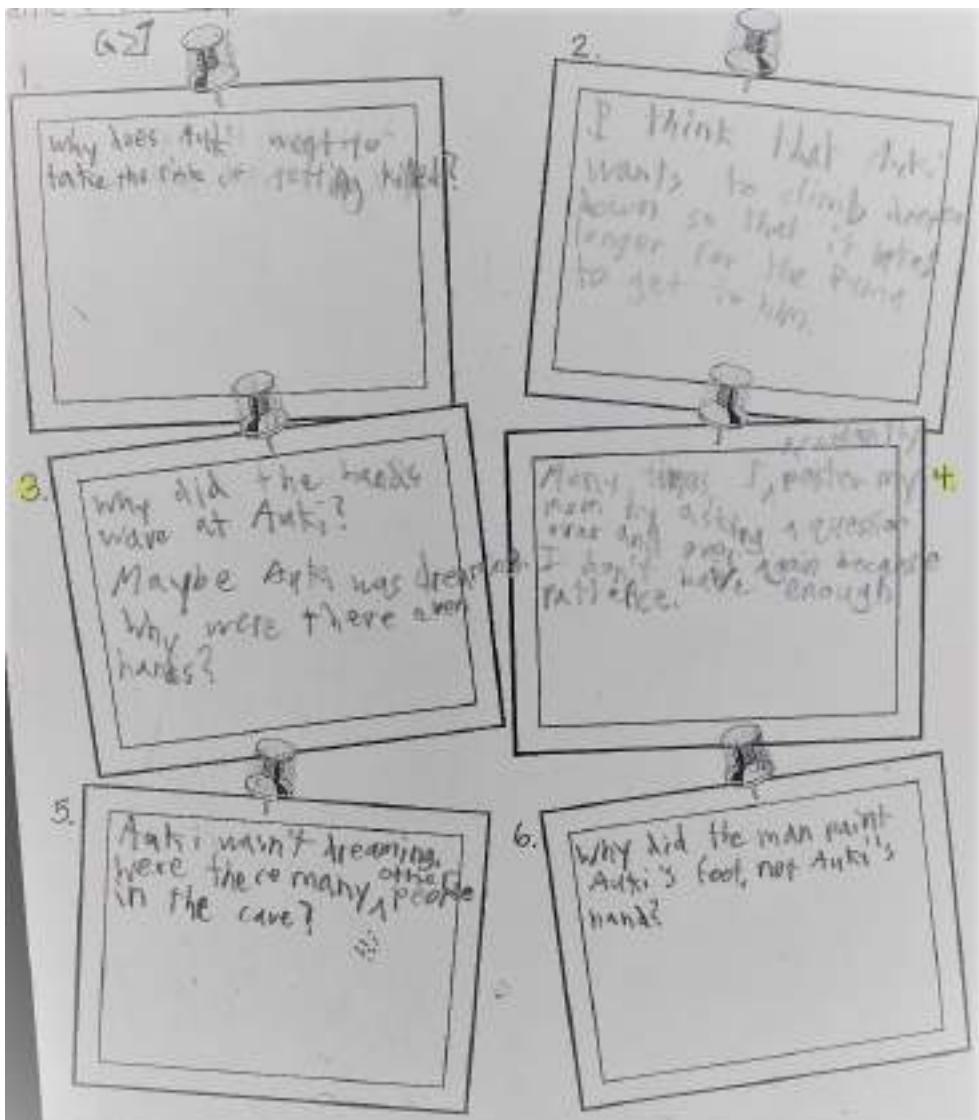


Figure 1: I gave students a note page with six different boxes to record their predictions, questions, and connections as we read.

I gave students a note page with six different boxes to record their predictions, questions, and connections as we read (see Figure 1). I modeled the instructions for students in the first box and we all discussed ideas for the second box before students recorded their ideas. Students recorded their own thinking in the remaining four boxes. Uri's notes demonstrate his evolving thinking as we read (see Figure 1). On the third note, he wrote "Why did the hands wave at Auki? Maybe Auki was dreaming. Why were there even hands?" His fifth note read, "Auki wasn't dreaming. Were there many other people in the cave?"

As we continued reading we stopped in strategic places I had marked in the story, such as the end of page that reads, "Ghost hands! My heart galloped like a fleeing herd!" when Auki enters the cave and sees the painted hands. The illustration on this page is a double-page spread with the hands covering two-thirds of the page. The figurative language that reflects Auki's culture made this a compelling page on which to pause.

Likewise, we stopped after Pajar explains to Auki, "These hands threw spears, carried children, found healing herbs, and pointed to the stars. They protected our people, and also our traditions" (Barron, 2011, np). The accompanying illustration covers both pages, with Auki and Pajar highlighted in the front against slightly blurred images of people behind them holding their hands, haloed in color, high. This page connected the events of the story and begged to be pored over. After some discussion, students jotted on their note page. Megan concluded "I think the hands are the hands of brave hunters." Another student reflected and wrote, "The hands remind me of war, peace, protection, freedom." We continued to explore and reflect on the story until its conclusion, pausing on pages that held important story events, language and visual imagery.

Once students understood the basic story elements and plot, they met in literature circles, using ideas from their note pages as conversation starters. As students shared their predictions that were correct, thinking that needed to be changed, and questions and connections, I circulated through the discussion groups and joined the conversations. Students helped each other understand basic aspects of the story as they answered each other's questions such as:

- "Elders are ghosts?"
- "How can your foot scream?" (When Auki hurt his foot, he said his foot "screamed.")
- "Why does the old man not want Auki in the cave?"

In their literature circles, they also helped each other understand the Tehuelche's values and beliefs as they addressed questions such as the following:

- "Why would someone spend so much time painting HANDS? (This was written in capitals to emphasize that it was a strange thing to spend so much time painting.)
- "What does he mean by 'painter of the people'?"
- "Did the boy ever become a hunter?" This question was important because it led to a discussion about the qualities of a hunter--strong, "brave enough to face the puma", older, and experienced--and why it would be so important for hunters to have these characteristics. We discussed whether Auki's actions in the story demonstrated those valued characteristics.
- Jason wondered whether Auki would be the painter after Pajar died. This led to a discussion about the qualities considered to be important in the person chosen to be the painter of the people and whether Auki had those qualities. These wonderings also led students back to the end of the story that says, "a boy who became a hunter and a painter."

- When Pajar explains the hands to Auki, he says, “that secret has been known only by elders. And now...by you.” Jimmy wondered, “Why was the secret only shared with old people and not kids.” This discussion gave us insight into the tribe’s views of older versus younger people.
- Another student shared, “Now I know why it says they tell stories with hands, because there are hands on the wall from the elders.”

Some students made connections:

- Kerry wrote, “This reminds me of when I put my hand on a piece of clay for an ornament so when I was older I would remember how small my hand was,” which led to a discussion in Kerry’s group about why the people might want to remember the hands that were painted on the wall.
- Kaitlyn recorded, “Auki reminds me of me because one time I learned a lesson about patience.” Students connected with being impatient for something that meant a lot to them.
- Uri wrote, “Many times, I accidentally pester my mom by asking a question over and over again because I don’t have enough patience.”

After small group conversations, the class gathered and highlighted conclusions that groups drew about the characters, the tribe’s values, and their connections. Ethan decided they painted hands in the cave because “people did great things with their hands.” The hands reflected the values of the people and the important aspects of their lives that they determined were considered “great.” Students’ thinking was further validated when I shared that Tehuelche means “brave people” as this detail was not shared in the book. These small group conversations were amazing!

Sharing Our Understandings

My challenge was to have something to share that conveyed the learning that had taken place. We decided to create brochures about the region and the cave to show parents and students who visited our classroom on International Night.

The brochures highlighted three topics--the geography of the region, the people and the cave. All the information students included in their brochures came from the story, the illustrations, the literature circles, and a short clip from a National Geographic documentary about the region. We used the video to compare how the region was portrayed in the illustrations with actual footage from the area. Students determined that the illustrations were excellent sources of information because they accurately depicted the landscape, animals, and challenges of living in the area. The students’ descriptions of the Tehuelche people on the brochures included:

- The elders were important because they helped out with a lot of things.

- They liked to draw and just tell stories about spirits and other things they do.
- They tell stories with words or hands.
- They tell stories about people who did great things.
- They drew pictures to represent the words.
- The hands represent the history of the people that died for them.
- In these tribes, people tell stories, write stories, and read stories.
- They tell stories of the past and present.
- Why does the tribe tell stories? Telling stories is telling you about the tribe and their history. It tells you about their culture and history.

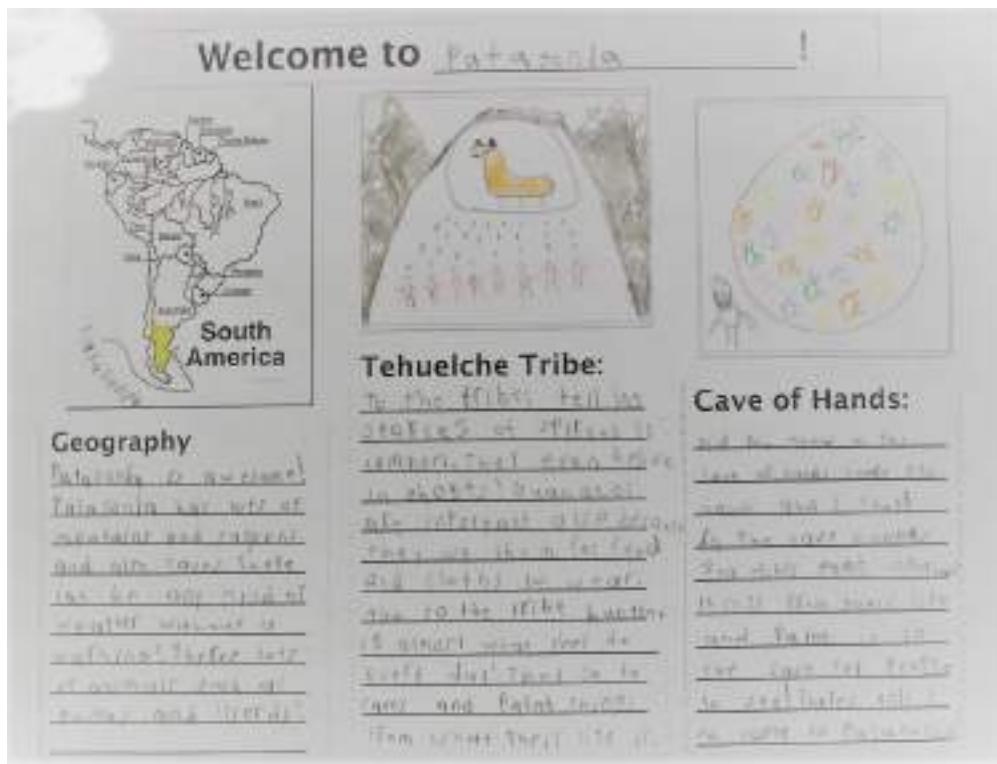


Figure 2: In Annie's brochure, she discussed the mountains and canyons, the weather, the Cave of Hands, and the Tehuelche, writing, "To the tribes, telling stories of spirits is common...They go to the caves and paint things from what their life is."

In Annie's brochure (see Figure 2), she discussed the mountains and canyons, the weather, the Cave of Hands, and the Tehuelche, writing, "To the tribes, telling stories of spirits is common...They go to the caves and paint things from what their life is."

These brochures demonstrated an understanding about a tribe of people who no longer live in the Patagonian region in South America. In fact, the last of these

original Patagonians died in 1960. Rather than reporting only about what they wore, that they hunted guanacos in the canyons, or that a mysterious cave filled with hands can be found in the region, students gained insight and appreciation for a tribe with deep values, respect for the past, and an understanding of the importance of story and remembering in the Tehuelche's lives.



Figure 3: We created an interactive “Mural of Hands” in the hallway outside our classroom.

We created an interactive “Mural of Hands” in the hallway outside our classroom (see Figure 3). The mural was interactive in the sense that students and visitors added their own hands and wrote about the amazing things they did with their hands. Throughout the night, the mural grew. At a station in our classroom, visitors created their own “negative-painted” handprint with paper and crayons to do rubbings. Ethan’s quote about people doing great things with their hands stood at the top of the mural. Students wrote:

- They help me with sports and writing.
- They help me play piano, building and hugging.
- My hands help to grow more plants and make the environment a better place to live.
- My hands are useful for holding chicks and chickens.
- My hands can cook, take care of a dog, write stories, and play games. I love my hands!
- My hands draw design and create new things.

Later in the week, when we thought about all the great things our hands do listed on our wall, we noticed that our hands tell a story about us, too. Common themes such as playing sports or music, cooking, eating, writing, drawing and all manners of creating, and doing chores showed that many people in our community valued those as important and even “amazing” things they did. We agreed that those activities represent us well, as most students were able to tell stories that were important to them about at least a few activities on that list.

Closing Thoughts

The important things that students identified about their hands tell a story about families whose children attend our school. We were able to connect our experience

with the stories the hands in the cave tell about the Tehuelche tribe as we reflected one more time on the words, “My people tell many stories – even one about a boy who became a hunter and a painter. Sometimes they tell those stories with words, sometimes with hands” (Barron, 2011, np). Through their experiences with *Ghost Hands* students recognized “their places and their particular experiences as part of the universal whole of humanity” (Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010, p. 19).

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