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Migrant Waves in the Making of America

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**WOW Stories: Volume XI, Issue 2
Migrant Waves in the Making of America
Fall 2024**

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Introduction: Migrant Waves in the Making of America

Kathy G. Short

This issue of WOW Stories focuses on a literacy community that was created during a two-week NEH Summer Institute at Worlds of Words Center at the University of Arizona. The institute was attended by thirty K-12 teachers who came from across the U.S. to spend an intense two weeks together, meeting 9-4:30 in Worlds of Words Center in a range of explorations around migration.

After the institute, we met virtually in late fall to share what was happening in their classrooms, and the teaching team did a workshop for local teachers around migration as connected to Arizona history. In addition, several teachers from the institute agreed to write about the units they developed for their classrooms and their work is featured in this issue.

Carol Brochin, Leah Durán, and Kathy Short, faculty in the department of Teaching, Learning and Sociocultural Studies (TLS), served as co-directors. Our teaching team included Angelica Serrano, an elementary classroom teacher who was our teacher leader, along with Dan Moreno, Elizabeth Gaxiola, and LaCher Pacheco, educators with many years of teaching experience who were graduate students in TLS. Richelle Vargas was our institute coordinator and master problem-solver. We met regularly for six months to make detailed plans and locate resources for the institute.

The institute met in Worlds of Words Center of Global Literacies and Literatures, in the College of Education. This center contains a collection of 50,000 children's and young adult books focused on local and global cultures, with the local cultures including extensive Indigenous and Latinx books. As the largest collection of global children's literature in the U.S., the center provides rich resources for participants. In addition to books and original artwork, Worlds of Words also has extensive online resources, including a database of global literature, book lists, and three journals with online book reviews and articles on global literature in K-12.

Our pedagogy in the institute was interdisciplinary, developing learning experiences around literature, historical records, social science research, artifacts, film and hands-on inquiry. Through literature, scholarly articles, historical and anthropological scholars, and museum collections, teachers gained knowledge and strategies to support their classroom teaching. Teachers explored children's and young adult literature, experienced humanities research strategies, and engaged with dialogue strategies (<https://coe.arizona.edu/resources-professor-kathy-short>) around literature, which they then brought into their planning for their own classrooms.

A Case Study of Arizona

The institute began with a case study of Arizona, the last continental state added to the union in 1912. This perspective allowed participants to explore stories and perspectives often left out of traditional narratives of U.S. history, which typically begin with the original thirteen colonies. Since many key events in the history of the region predate statehood, a study of Arizona's history offers an often-overlooked perspective on what it means to become American, particularly the influence of continuous waves of migration on the making of America.

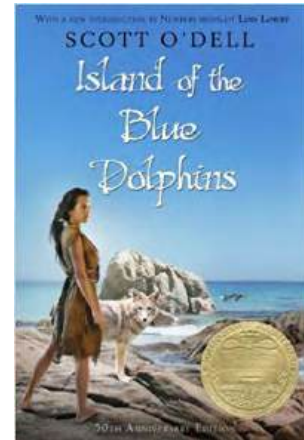
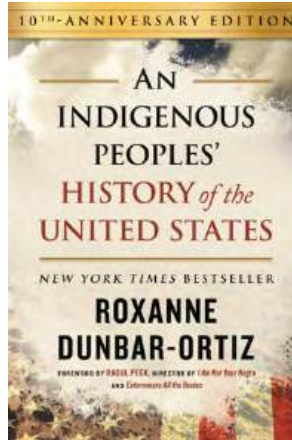
During the second week, teachers used inquiry strategies from the case study to research migrant waves in their states and build multimodal text sets. Throughout the institute our goal was for teachers to learn how to engage in humanities research so they could then bring these strategies into their own teaching.

The first week was framed around different time periods in the history of Arizona, based on the work of Thomas Sheridan (2012), who highlights the contributions of underrepresented groups in Arizona history. Each day was a combination of field trips, discussions around the Sheridan book, responses to fiction literature, browsing of text sets of picturebooks and novels, and interactions with scholars and authors. Teachers received a text set of 14 children's and young adult books as part of their registration for the institute that also included Sheridan's book.

We began with a Sunday late afternoon reception as a social event to get to know each other, introducing ourselves through an artifact that reflected a journey in our lives. On Monday, after an introduction to our themes and inquiry questions, we engaged in discussion of the classic novel, *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell (1960), a book many remembered reading in school contexts. Teachers used a T-chart of Personal Response/Critique to respond to this book alongside an article about the vanishing Indian motif in the book. We then explored the multimodal resources on a National Park Service website (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/islandofthebluedolphins/index.htm>) about this book, that also introduced teachers to an example of a multimodal text set.

In the afternoon, we focused on the early Indigenous history of the land now called Arizona through maps, a chapter from Sheridan, and a chapter from *An Indigenous People's History* (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2019). To demonstrate the significance of maps as a historical strategy, each day we used a map of Arizona from that time period, asking groups to See (what do you see?), Think (what do you think is going on?), and Wonder (what do you wonder?).

We also interacted with an Indigenous scholar, Alyce Sadongei, who was part of a team that created guidelines for museum collections of Indigenous peoples. She raised critical issues around Indigenous collections in museums. In addition, we used an artifact strategy, where each table interacted with an Indigenous artifact that LaCher brought from her home, involving Meet the Artifact, Try to Make Sense of It, Use It as Historical Evidence. We ended the day with time for browsing and independent reading of picturebooks on Indigenous Tribal Nations in the Southwest and text sets of counter-narratives to problematic classic texts like *Little House on the Prairie* (Wilder, 2008) and *Island of the Blue Dolphins*. (Note that all of our text sets can be found on the institute website).



This introduction to the issues around Indigenous museum collections was an excellent resource for the next morning when we visited the Arizona State Museum on the university campus and experienced first hand both the possibilities and the violations of these collections. When we returned to Worlds of Words, several Indigenous teachers in our group shared their personal feelings of discomfort with the museum interaction, while the rest of us listened carefully to try and understand what was problematic and why. This deeply moving discussion was transformational for many in the institute.

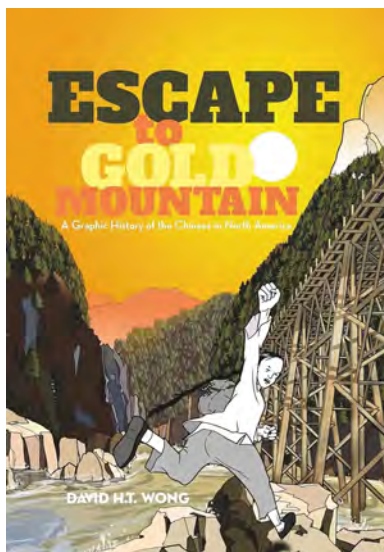


We then moved into examining the period when Arizona was considered part of New Spain, again through maps and readings from Sheridan and Dunbar-Ortiz. After lunch, we engaged in small group discussions using the dialogue strategy of Connect/Extend/Challenge of *The Moor's Account* (Lailami, 2015), a fictional diary of the first African explorer of the U.S. Dr. Michael Eng joined us to talk about contributions of people of African descent during the Spanish Colonial Period, as a challenge to history textbooks which only include enslavement as the history of African Americans coming to the U.S.

We ended Tuesday afternoon by exploring the website and historical resources of the Tumacácori Mission to introduce the stories and perspectives of the Tohono O'odham peoples during the Spanish period. The next morning, we took a field trip to San Xavier Mission del Bac on the Tohono O'odham Nation, which is a living church, not just a historical museum. We toured the mission and also met with a Tribal elder, the current Father of the church, and the director of Patronato San Xavier, who provided differing perspectives of the mission experience in the 1800s and the current relationships of the Nation with the church. We stopped by Mission Gardens on the way back to the university. Mission Gardens is a living agricultural museum with garden plots reflecting many different cultures and migrant waves.

In the afternoon, we moved to the Mexican period, when Arizona was part of Mexico and interacted with a scholar, Dr. Anita Huiza-Hernández, on her research on Mexican American history. We also spent time exploring the online Mexican memory project archives of photographs and browsing text sets of children’s books related to Mexican history and culture.

Thursday morning had been planned as a visit to the Arizona History Museum to learn how to research in museum archives, but they had an emergency closure due to plumbing problems. Instead, the two archivists joined us in Worlds of Words and interacted with teachers as they used the online archives to research a question related to Arizona history. We also interacted with Joan Sandin, an author/illustrator of a picturebook, *Celebrate Arizona* (2012), about the day Arizona became a state. She made extensive use of various archives in researching this book and so could demonstrate how this research influenced both her text and visual images. She brought her original watercolor illustrations and research artifacts for teachers to view.

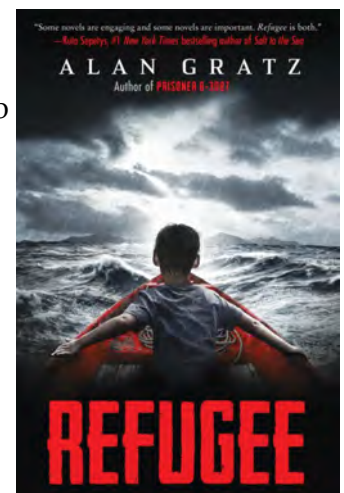


In the afternoon, we moved into the territorial and early statehood period, exploring maps and jigsaw discussions of chapters from the Sheridan book. We focused on Chinese immigrants to Tucson through online resources and discussions of the graphic novel, *Escape to Gold Mountain* (Wong, 2012). We also considered queer migration through a Say Something engagement with a short article and spent time browsing text sets around Chinese experiences in the U.S.

On Friday, our case study of Arizona focused on the modern period and recent migrant and refugee waves in Arizona. After a jigsaw discussion of the final section of Sheridan’s book, Tom Sheridan joined us for an interview/discussion. We then moved into browsing picturebooks on immigration and refugee experiences, while some remained with Sheridan for continued conversations.

In the afternoon, small groups discussed *Refugee* by Alan Gratz (2017), with each group creating a virtual journey map for one of the three stories in the book using jamboard. We also interacted with two community members who are active in refugee organizations to talk about their experiences and recommendations for teachers. The afternoon ended with browsing text sets on the global cultures of recent refugees to Tucson and with meeting in region groups to brainstorm their own multimodal text set projects for the following week.

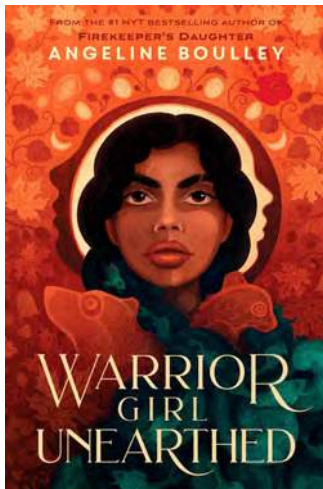
As is evident from this description, we had an intense first week together, with a range of experiences that were carefully developed to provide interactions with a wide variety of resources and strategies for humanities



research. We also worked to build a critical lens from which to view many of these resources, especially museum collections, and to develop awareness of the histories of communities often missing or underrepresented in history textbooks. Teachers from the East Coast realized that much of their curriculum around the Revolutionary War and the Civil War was irrelevant to Arizona history, providing a different lens on their teaching of U.S. history.

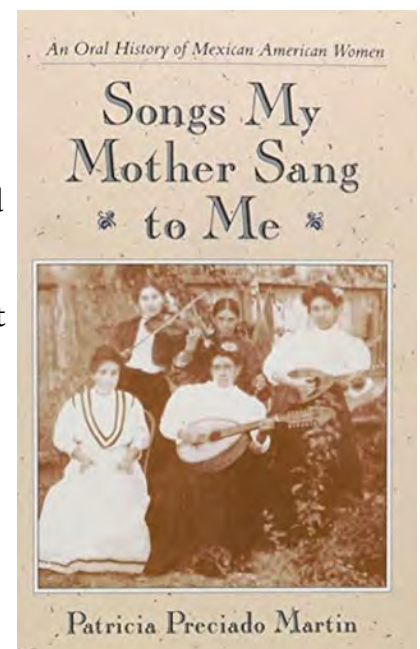
Research within the Humanities

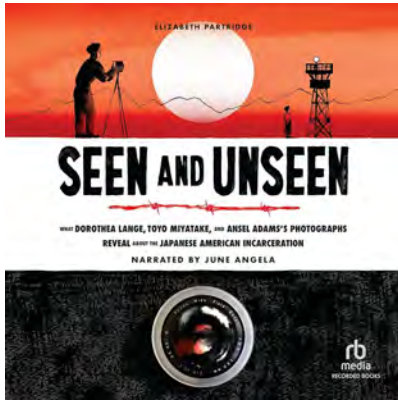
Our focus the second week was on highlighting different research strategies within the humanities, through returning to our case study of Arizona in the mornings to identify resources for their own multimodal text sets. In the afternoons, teachers worked on their own inquiries by using these research strategies. They also met daily with teachers who taught at a similar grade level or subject area to share ideas and resources in a Curricular Conversation about how to use timelines and maps in their classrooms or how they might raise difficult topics with students.



On Monday, we focused on the research strategies of authors and illustrators. Teachers created charts of the strategies and resources they had explored the first week and used Save the Last Word to discuss Angeline Boulley's (2023) *Warrior Girl Unearthed*. We then had a virtual author panel with Angeline Boulley, Guadalupe Garcia McCall, Elizabeth Partridge, and Lauren Tamaki, all of whom we were reading that week. Teachers broke up into three groups for further conversation with one of these authors. In the afternoon, teachers began their research on their own states, time periods, or communities, as well as explored text sets of books by the authors on the panel.

On Tuesday, we focused on the use of oral history and narratives within the humanities, discussing short stories from *Songs My Mother Sang to Me: An Oral History of Mexican American Women* by Patricia Preciado Martin (1992), using consensus boards. Patricia then joined us for an interactive interview and conversation around her use of oral history research. Teachers browsed a text set of her books as well as children's books on Latinx families and communities. In the afternoon, teachers considered how they might use oral narratives and histories in their own inquiries and worked on their research.





On Wednesday, we focused on humanity strategies for locating and sharing hidden histories. A community theatre company, Borderlands Theatre, share their use of creative place-making where they interview residents of a community and create a drama script from those interviews to perform a community location. We also discussed books on forced journeys—*Seen and Unseen* (Partridge & Tamaki, 2022) about the imprisonment of

Japanese Americans and *All the Stars Denied* (McCall, 2018) about the forced deportation of Mexican Americans in the 1930s. In the afternoon, teachers considered how they might locate hidden histories in their own inquiries and browsed a text set of books on Japanese incarceration and U.S./Mexico border experiences.

On Thursday, our humanity research focus was on interviews and memoirs as living histories. We discussed two YA memoirs, *How Dare the Sun Rise* (Uwiringiyimana, 2017) and *When Stars are Scattered* (Jamieson, & Mohamed, 2020), involving refugees from the Congo and Kenya and compared the two books using a Venn Diagram. To think more about how to capture the present moment, we also met in groups to brainstorm how they might capture their experiences from the institute in stories or photos. The afternoon was intense as teachers worked to complete their text sets.



Our focus on Friday was connecting humanities research to social action. Teachers used Sketch to Stretch to discuss a picturebook, *Hear My Voice/ Escucha mi voz* (Binford, 2021), and a novel, *Land of the Cranes* (Salazar, 2020), about the experiences of children separated from parents at the border. The author and author/illustrator of these two books, Yuyi Morales and Aida Salazar, then joined us virtually to talk about their books and their stance

as activists. Teachers also browsed a text set of children's and YA books about activism.

In the afternoon, teachers presented their multimodal inquires to each other using PechaKucha slides (20 slides at 10 seconds a slide). They also met in age level/subject matter groups to discuss plans for bringing the content of this institute and their text sets into their classrooms. We talked about future opportunities for dissemination from the institute (such as creating this issue of WOW Stories) and engaged in several closing experiences.

The Vignettes in this Issue

This institute was grounded in themes of migration and in humanities research strategies to learn how to research and weigh evidence by exploring historical content alongside fictional narratives. Teachers developed strategies for locating, evaluating and interpreting evidence and a critical lens to question whose stories are misrepresented or silent. They left the institute not only with resources, literature, and historical materials, but also with experiences of research to enact in their educational settings.

The vignettes in this issue reflect the work of our teaching team and the ways in which teachers enacted their inquiries in their classroom settings.

- Leah Durán reflects on why we considered migration to be such a generative theme for the institute.
- Carol Brochin looks more closely at the multimodal text sets and how these sets were woven throughout the institute and framed the work of teachers.
- Elizabeth Gaxiola, a member of our teaching team, engaged community college students in responding to literature through photo collages.
- Kim Warren describes her work with secondary students in Utah, many of whom are immigrants from a range of global settings, and how she wove picturebooks and novels into the classroom to invite strong connections for students.
- Agnes Zapata connected historical events of African American migration within the U.S. with current migrations of Guatemalan families for high school students in Oakland, California.
- Kari Matthies developed a study of African American culture and history within Minnesota for special education high school students.
- Roxann Hunsaker broadened her curriculum to not only embrace the cultures of Latinx sixth-grade students in Illinois, but also to invite them to explore the experiences of global cultures through a focus on migration.
- Holly Hardin describes how she took a middle school science unit on the human body and deepened it through examining how body systems are impacted by human rights.

For these educators, having the time to gather text sets of books, videos, music, and other materials as well as planning a stronger focus on migration provided the space for new discussions and insights. These inquiries also invited stronger student engagement in learning and connected contemporary and historical issues and contexts.

The institute also changed us as a teaching team, providing us with new insights into the ways in which resources, literature, and experiences can be woven together to create powerful learning experiences for teachers. We were all kept busy throughout the institute, meeting individual requests and thinking with teachers about their multimodal text sets. We were also continuously moved by their thoughtful responses to literature and eager engagement with authors and scholars.

The last several years have been very difficult for teachers and teacher educators, filled with constant attacks from public officials and the media. The institute provided us with an opportunity to renew our commitment to making a difference by inviting teachers to consider significant issues through powerful pieces of literature.

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Reading the Nation: Migration as a Generative Theme

Leah Durán

Paulo Freire, a foundational figure in field of literacy, introduced the idea that reading the word always also involves reading the world (Freire & Macedo, 2005). In Freire’s work in adult education, “reading the world” was often accomplished through the use of generative themes, in which the words that students first learned were based on important aspects of their social, cultural and political worlds. These topics or themes were characterized as “generative” in that they contained the possibility not only for learning to read and write but also for thinking critically and expansively about the structures of their everyday lives. In this article, I draw on this concept to show how migration served as a generative theme for our work with teachers in a two-week NEH Summer Institute for K-12 teachers.

Migration is a topic of intense interest to many educators in the U.S., in no small part because the past few decades have seen a dramatic increase in the number of people forcibly displaced from their homelands due to war, human rights violations, natural disasters, and other severe hardships (Migration Policy Institute, 2024). In the U.S., 11 million students enrolled in public schools (nearly 1 in 4) are from immigrant-headed households, and many of those children are also immigrants themselves (Camarota, Griffith & Zeigler, 2023). Migration is also deeply intertwined with U.S. history. Many people describe the U.S. as “a nation of immigrants,” a phrase which highlights some aspects of history and obscures others.

In our two-week summer teacher institute for the National Endowment for the Humanities, Carol Brochin, Kathy Short and I thought about how we could explore with our participants the relationship between the complex history of the United States and the many waves of migration. We decided to consider Arizona as a case study before encouraging teachers to explore their own states and regions. We planned this institute in response to a call from the National Endowment for the Humanities to think with teachers about history and the humanities, and specifically, to consider the meaning of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Responding to this invitation, we looked at how our sense of ourselves as a nation—“we the people”—has been shaped (and preceded) by the movement of people across North America.

Over the course of the two weeks, we learned together about the movement of people over time across our own region, and the ways that borders moved with and around them within the broader scope of U.S. history. As guiding questions, we considered:

- What are the ways in which different waves of migrants influence and contribute to the making of a state? Of a nation?
- What histories have been erased and how might they be recovered? How do those recovered histories deepen our understanding of what it means to be American?
- How does learning about Arizona history inform how we conceptualize the formation of other states and the nation?

In her essay, “Between a Place and a Plot: Reimagining the story of Arizona history,” Anita Huizar-Hernández (2022) considers the relationship between the history of Arizona and the story of Arizona. As she argued, there are particular kinds of stories about Arizona that figure prominently in the national imagination, and those stories often conceal more complex histories. One of those prominent Arizona stories, often featured in the news and repeated by politicians, is about the U.S./Mexico border, and how the wall between the U.S. and Mexico keeps danger and immigrants out. Another dominant story about Arizona is that it is a place without a past, a beautiful landscape that is also a blank canvas. To those of us who live here, the border is a much more complicated reality than this story, and one with a much more interesting history.

We began most days in our institute by looking at a map of the region from different time periods in Arizona’s history. Over the course of time, the lines and contours of those maps shifted a great deal. A number of these maps showed what the region looked like before the current U.S./Mexico border existed, and before migration was tightly regulated. We looked at maps that showed areas with fuzzy boundaries indicating the homelands of Indigenous people like the Ancestral Pueblo and Hohokam, spread across North America; maps drawn by Spanish missionaries that faded out north of Santa Fe and east of the Mississippi River; maps that showcased Arizona and New Mexico territories as one singular unit; and maps of modern-day Arizona that show not only the current border between U.S. and Mexico but also those of 22 Native Nations. Looking at these maps across time highlighted the ways that the border has been drawn and re-drawn over time, drawing and erasing new boundaries between “here” and “there” and between “us” and “them.”

In considering stories about migration, we looked for books which showcased little-known histories and complicated some of the dominant narratives. Laila Lalami’s (2015) novel, *The Moor’s Account*, is told from the perspective of a real historical figure, Mustafa al-Zamori (or as he is known to history, Estevan de Dorantes), the first non-Indigenous person to reach what is now Arizona. In the style of a memoir or travelogue, Estevan recounts an extraordinary life—born free in Azemmour, Morocco in the sixteenth century, he accompanied the ill-fated sixteenth century Narváez expedition to Florida while enslaved, survived and made his way to Mexico City on foot, and finally, headed north as a free man to what is now the United States (trace his journey here [<https://lailalalami.com/the-moors-account/map-and-chronology/>]). Learning about this history from Mustafa/Estevan’s perspective invited us to think about all of the ways people of African descent have shaped U.S. history, including hundreds of years before the Declaration of Independence, and far beyond the east coast.

Similarly, we explored the history of Arizona during the time period when it was part of a newly independent Mexico, between 1821 and 1848. In addition to reading books and articles, we looked at images to help bring this era to life. One resource we used was the Mexican Heritage collection from the Arizona Memory Project (<https://azmemory.azlibrary.gov/nodes/view/253?keywords=Mexican+heritage+&highlights=WyJNZXhpY2FuIiwiaGVyaXRhZ2UiLCIiXQ%3D%3D&lsk=89aff72580b29237df024867deb19d1e>), capturing vignettes of everyday life among Mexican Arizonans—picnicking by the river, posing for family portraits and tending their businesses. To make the most of these images as teaching tools, we borrowed a technique from art educators, first

describing the image, then reflecting on our own interpretations and emotional response, and finally formally analyzing the image. We also looked at images as part of our collection of picturebooks which represent Mexican history and culture, including, for example, many books by author/illustrator Duncan Tonatiuh which draw on a distinctively Mesoamerican style of illustrating.

For each migration, we created multimodal text sets (<https://wethepeople.coe.arizona.edu/2023-institute-multi-modal-text-sets>) for participants to interact with, which included maps, photographs, art, music, and archival documents alongside children's and young adult literature. One such example is a text set we created about Chinese immigration in the 19th century. Through a collection of fiction and nonfiction books, like David Wong's (2012) graphic novel, *Escape to Gold Mountain*, Julie Leung's (2019) *Paper Son* and Russell Freeman's (2013) *Angel Island*, we learned about the reasons for the surge in Chinese immigrations to the West in the late 1800s, and how these migrants were received by those already in the U.S. We also looked at oral histories, photos, archival documents, academic scholarship, and community historian's work to understand how this period of time and movement of people shaped communities all across the Western side of North America (including not only Arizona but also Mexico, Canada and Hawai'i), and how this legacy continues in present-day Tucson.

We also closely analyzed how authors and illustrators told stories about migration. For example, we ended the institute by looking closely together at Yuyi Morales' (2021) *Bright Star/Lucero*, and by talking with Morales about her work. Beautifully illustrated with the flora and fauna of the Sonoran desert, *Bright Star* follows the journey of a fawn through the borderlands, harshly interrupted by a border wall. Yuyi Morales' beautiful artwork also shows up in another collection of contemporary migration stories we read, *Hear My Voice/Escucha Mi Voz* (Binford, 2021). This bilingual collection of first-person testimony of children held in immigration detention centers, illustrated by 17 different artists, including Pura Belpré winners like Yuyi Morales and Raúl the Third. Reading these books, alongside others like Aida Salazar's (2020) *Land of the Cranes*, highlights an aspect of Arizona's border story often overlooked by politicians and reporters—that the current conditions for migration are often cruelest to those who are most vulnerable.

In conversation, Morales noted that *Bright Star* was created in response to the detention and separation of the children and families at the border, and her desire to create a book that spoke to the possibility of healing and caring for those same people. This desire showed up not only in the narrator's words of reassurance, but also in the art. For example, keeping in mind the widely circulated photographs of children in detention center covered only by aluminum-foil-like blankets, she wove and embroidered cloth for the endpapers, with the intent of conveying warmth and care. (For more on her process, see here [<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-authors/article/87273-behind-the-scenes-yuyi-morales-on-the-making-of-bright-star.html>]).

Teachers took up these ideas through the creation of their own multimodal text sets (<https://wethepeople.coe.arizona.edu/2023-participant-text-sets>), placing the stories told by authors and illustrators alongside other resources for understanding history. Coming from across the U.S.,

teachers chose the topics that best fit with their own context and work. These thoughtful and detailed collections focus on topics such as the Hmong community in Minnesota; immigration policy along the U.S./Mexico border; the history of the Yaqui (Yoeme) across North America; and counternarratives of the transatlantic migration of African people to the eastern seaboard, among many others. Several of those teachers are featured here in this issue, and we hope that readers can see for themselves how and why migration has been generative for their work.

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Multimodal Text Sets as Curricular Resistance to Untold and Silenced Stories

Carol Brochin

As we designed the NEH summer institute daily schedule, we centered inquiry as a guiding framework to understand the influence of continuous waves of migration on the making of America. We modeled for the teacher-scholars how to study historical time periods and migration by reading young adult literature, historical documents and records, maps, artifacts, newspapers, art, film and hands-on inquiry. These intertextual experiences coupled with interactions with authors, scholars, and artists offered tangible ways for teacher-scholars to engage with multiple modes and forms of texts to deepen how we teach migration histories that have been silenced and left out of traditional historical narratives in the U.S. and across the globe.

We were particularly concerned with the stories often left out of traditional narratives of U.S. history, which are traditionally rooted in the thirteen colonies and often erase the experiences of Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other communities of color. As we centered Arizona as a case study, we found that in order to teach a more nuanced and complex understanding of how migration shaped history, we had to turn to many forms of texts and not rely on traditional historical textbooks since the stories we wanted to tell were often not only left out but purposefully silenced.

One of the key strategies we drew on to understand these hidden histories was the construction of multimodal text sets. Multimodal text sets are collections of materials used to study a topic across a variety of modalities which might include historical documents, oral histories, art, music, fiction, poetry, and picture books. The different modalities beyond the written text offer multiple entry points for understanding a complex theme or topic and have been documented to help deepen students' comprehension, and dialogue (Dowdy & Fleischaker, 2018).

Multimodal text sets are especially impactful to help guide students' inquiry in a digital age that requires us as teachers and scholars to go beyond using traditional literacy texts to teach a more complicated understanding of history and to engage with issues youth are currently facing (Dallacqua, 2020; Hoch et al, 2019). However, constructing multimodal text sets is not as simple as searching the internet for sources. Instead, teacher-scholars provide scaffolds for students on explicit ways to use databases such as the library of congress archives to search for texts related to their inquiry projects.

The text sets (<https://wethepeople.coe.arizona.edu/2021-institute/institute-multi-modal-text-sets>) featured here were created by our teaching team as resources for the institute's participants. Each set includes 10-15 pieces of literature, audio recordings, videos, and primary documents that are conceptually related and provide multiple perspectives on the theme, time period, region or community being highlighted. In these text sets, we brought together different kinds of texts to help learners understand key pieces of our past, and the people and stories that have been a part of that history. Drawing from a variety of texts to understand a particular time period was necessary so that we did not just reproduce dominant narratives.

On the website (<https://wethepeople.coe.arizona.edu/2021-institute-text-sets/institute-multi-modal-text-sets>) are text sets that correspond to one of the days of the institute, and were used to deepen and expand participants' understandings of the highlighted theme, time period, region or community. These sets were central to providing even further depth to our understanding of history and migration. Each day, we introduced one or more thematic text sets and provided time for book browsing, reading, and reflection, as well as for going online to view additional texts such as music, film, and art. These interactions also provided time for sharing learning and insights with each other before engaging in dialogue to compare across perspectives using charts, diagrams, or webs. We modeled daily pedagogical practices and curriculum strategies based in the humanities and we provided the necessary time and resources for teacher-scholars to develop their own inquiry questions and gather their research materials.

Because we were interested in stories that are often left out and untold, we looked for other sources to share because we know that some stories are not present in written documents or official collections and archives. For example, racism has directly impacted how stories of Black communities in the U.S. have been historically left out of official records and most major archival collections until recently (Sturkey, 2021). To this end, we invited participants to explore newspaper archives and community archives to research the ways to intentionally include Black and African American histories and stories in their multimodal text sets.

Additionally, to have a deeper understanding of Mexican American and Latinx families and communities, we curated a collection of books, articles, songs, and images that center around Latinx families and communities. This text set centers the complexities of family dynamics and values of collectivism that hold strength and value in community. The inspiration for this text set came from the themes of family and community present in *Songs My Mother Sang to Me* by Patricia Preciado Martin (1992). In this book, Martin collected oral histories to document the experiences of Mexican American women in the borderlands. She had to conduct these interviews and construct narratives because they had yet to be collected in official historical archives.

As a culminating project, the teacher-scholars in the institute created multimodal text sets that can be explored here (<https://wethepeople.coe.arizona.edu/2023-participant-text-sets>). They were required to build their own multimodal text sets based on their inquiry questions and interests about the histories and migrant waves in their own contexts across the country. Each set consists of a synopsis, digital collection, and an annotated bibliography. For example, Cynthia Vele, a teacher from New York, curated a collection of first-person narratives, documentaries, children's books and novels, and photographs around the untold stories of Ecuadorian migrants to New York over the past 60 years. Alisen Laferriere and Jessica Scott created a text set on the silenced stories of Indigenous peoples forced into boarding schools. Their set also provides examples of how Massachusetts has used media to reinforce historical inaccuracies.

The participants left the institute with their own multimodal texts but also those of their peers. We designed this project so that participants could learn how to research and weigh evidence within the humanities as they explored historical content alongside fictional narratives such as chapter books, poetry, and fiction. Through daily engagements, the teacher-scholars were immersed in research to

develop strategies for locating, evaluating, and interpreting evidence and a critical lens to question whose stories are misrepresented, silent, and purposefully left out of dominant narratives. The goal of the multimodal text set was to provide a tangible way for them to become researchers so they can engage their students as researchers.

One of our key learnings from the institute was the value of teachers having time to research and collect multimodal text sets around topics of significance to their region and students—instead of moving directly to teaching plans. Teachers rarely have time to intensively research a focus so the knowledge and perspectives they explored in gathering these resources for their own inquiries dramatically changed their understandings and shifted their ideas for how these text sets could be integrated into their classrooms. The multimodal nature of the sets also challenged them to go beyond academic and literary texts to songs, videos, podcasts, artwork, photographs, and newspaper articles. Because we integrated many teaching strategies into the institute, they experienced these strategies for themselves around our text sets and so easily made the connection between their multimodal text sets and teaching possibilities.

Multimodal text sets have become central to my own teaching practices with future bilingual teachers and also with graduate students as they offer opportunities for teacher-scholars to explore their research in creative and non-traditional ways. Crafting engagements with a variety of materials encourages intertextual connections as they dig deeper into any given topic or theme. What I especially appreciate about multimodal text sets is that they can be implemented across all content areas and grade levels including with teacher-scholars in the NEH Institute.

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Creative Literacy in Focus: Bridging Social Justice Literature with Visual Art in Our Borderlands

Elizabeth Gaxiola

This vignette explores how using photo collages based on social justice-themed literature has enriched students' learning experiences, fostering empathy, critical thinking, and community dialogue. Through innovative assignments like photo collages, students explore moving themes of immigration, identity, and resilience, using visual storytelling to express their interpretations and reflections. These pedagogical strategies are empowering students to navigate complex social issues and emerge as informed, compassionate advocates for change in their communities and beyond.

During the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer 2023 Institute, "We the People: Migrant Waves in the Making of America," I encountered numerous children's, young adult, and fiction books that made me realize the profound influence they harness in raising awareness about social justice issues within our local, national, and global communities. Through this exposure, I gained further insights into a diverse array of topics, including immigration, identity, water rights, language rights, discrimination, racism, and more.

Upon gaining this new knowledge, I immediately began contemplating ways to share it with undergraduate students. Since 2020, I have been instructing first and second-year students at Pima Community College in Mexican American Studies and American Indian Studies. Located in the breathtaking landscapes of the Southwestern United States, Pima Community College serves Tucson, Arizona and its surrounding communities, offering educational opportunities to approximately 17,000 students. The student body reflects a diverse composition: 48.2% Hispanic or Latinx, 36.5% White, 4.61% Black or African American, 2.84% Asian, 2.77% two or more races, 1.88% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.34% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders. The course where I applied the book suggestions from the institute was primarily attended by Mexican American and Latinx students, ages between 18 and 50.

For several years, I have embedded arts-based pedagogies into my teaching practices in Mexican American Studies, American Indian Studies, and Teaching, Learning, and Sociocultural courses. These courses integrate a focus on social justice, and the use of arts-based approaches has been essential. This approach enables students to express themselves through art rather than conventional written assignments. By incorporating these arts-based methods, the learning experience for students can be profoundly enhanced, offering alternative avenues for learning, self-reflection, and active engagement. Moreover, these teaching methods foster creativity and innovation, vital skills in today's technological world, while encouraging students to become socially conscious contributors to their communities.

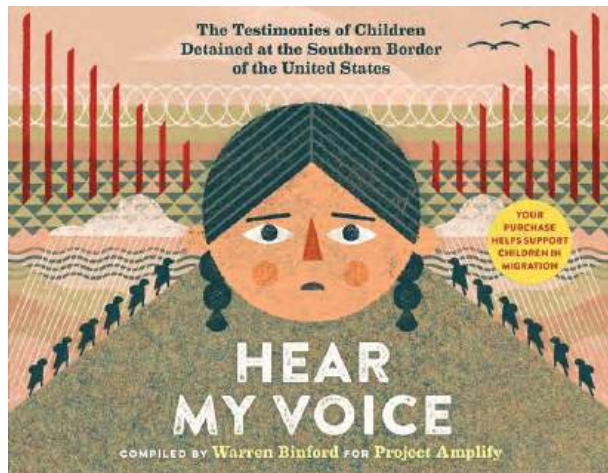
At the start of the semester, I engage students in discussions about the social issues affecting them and their Latinx communities (Josiewicz & Coronado, 2023). This approach is important for several reasons. It makes the academic content more relevant and engaging by connecting it to students' personal experiences. Understanding the real-world impact of social issues provides important context for theoretical concepts and nurtures a supportive learning environment. These

conversations also encourage critical reflection, helping students to develop deeper insights and cultural competence. By addressing these topics early on, we create a classroom atmosphere where students feel seen, valued, and motivated to connect their learning with their lived realities, ultimately promoting a more inclusive educational experience. They also upload artifacts, encouraging them to select arts-based pieces that resonate with the weekly readings, videos, or discussions, supporting a more personalized learning experience as they explore the impact of inequities faced in their Latinx communities. These assignments and pedagogical methods help students prepare for their photo collages as they internalize and articulate complex ideas more vividly and creatively.

I designed an assignment inspired by the text sets I explored during the institute. The assignment prompt was as follows: “Select a book from the provided list or of your own choosing and produce a collage to present to your classmates during class. The collage, composed of images or photographs (including ones you have taken), should reflect your understanding of the book’s concepts, themes, major ideas, and your personal connections, reflections, and reactions.” Once the collages are created, they are submitted to our class Padlet, a digital communications platform that facilitates sharing and interaction among students. I have utilized this platform for several years, enhancing engagement and enjoyment in interactions between students and the instructor.

Students’ Photograph Collages

This section provides examples of students’ photo collages, their take-away or connection with the book and brief summaries of the books they chose. Several students chose the picturebook, *Hear My Voice*.



Book summary: *Hear My Voice: The Testimonies of Children Detained at the Southern Border of the United States*. *Escucha Mi Voz: Los testimonios de los jóvenes detenidos en la frontera sureña de los Estados Unidos*, edited by Warren Binford (2021), gathers firsthand stories from children detained at the U.S./Mexico border, revealing the harsh realities they endure such as poor conditions, family separation, and profound emotional tolls. Bilingual Spanish/English.



Figure 1. Maribel's collage for *Hear My Voice*.

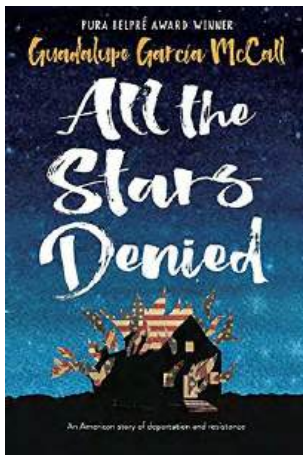
Lydia: "This collage depicts the children who were put into detention centers for crossing the border. As you take a closer look at the children, we see they each have a color bordered around them. These are what the following colors represent: red represents aggressiveness, blue represents dullness, teal represents fussiness, pink represents weakness, purple represents immaturity, white represents coldness, and finally truly inside the children is black which represents lifelessness. Some of these children are looking up into the sky and some are playing and have no idea of what is happening as their life is changing. As we can see the children are standing on the American flag which represents the soil of the United States of America. We see the red text of what the children would say to the guards in charge of watching over these children begging for necessities, the red represents the color of desire. They desire the comfort of their family, the coldness, and the sickness they have in the cages. We do see a barbed fence that is broken to represent what's really on the other side of the 'land of the free.'

Maribel: "Hear My Voice is a great book and even though this is a family book, it really projected the voices of the children being detained at our border detention centers. It really brings awareness to an ongoing issue that has been happening here in our country. I just think it's very controversial that America, which is a country known to protect and aid weak and vulnerable countries that are being attacked, is putting weak and vulnerable children in this situation. It's hard to believe that here on U.S. soil there are camps, detention centers where children are being traumatized for weeks and months at a time to 'protect our country.' Any human being can see that the future of these minors is being taken from them, because of this detainment. This very unfortunate event, considering their age group, will surely live with them for the rest of their lives."



Figure 2. Lydia's collage for *Hear My Voice*.

As we move up in the photo, we see more of the food that is falling from the sky, just a few things that are given to the children. These meals are given three times a day, but they lack what is needed for these children shows how little it is. The flashlight represents how these children are awakened every night to do a body count and all they say to them is 'get up.' I chose this font because I wanted to capture the boldness of this font as well as the scariness of these guards. Most of these children do not speak English so it would just sound scary and bold. We see a bird in a cage locked up. The bird represents the freedom of these children locked up in a cage as well. We see these insects flying away from the children some of them have a white ribbon around them. The white ribbon represents the loss of purity within these children. The butterfly is a metaphor for hope, love, souls, enteral nature, and the red dragonfly represents strength and courage. These insects are flying away from the children to show how easy it is to lose hope for most of them. The last insect that is trapped within the children is the dragonfly in the day which represents realizing maturity at a young age. Lastly, the barbed wire separates these children from the feelings they possibly no longer feel.”



Book summary: *All the Stars Denied* (2018) by Guadalupe Garcia McCall is a YA historical fiction novel set in Texas during the Great Depression and the repatriation of Mexican Americans. It follows the story of Estrella del Toro, a Mexican-American teenager whose family is swept up in the government’s mass deportation campaign. Estrella struggles to bring her family back together while uncovering the truth about their unfair treatment, confronting themes of identity, resilience, and social justice during a challenging time in American history.

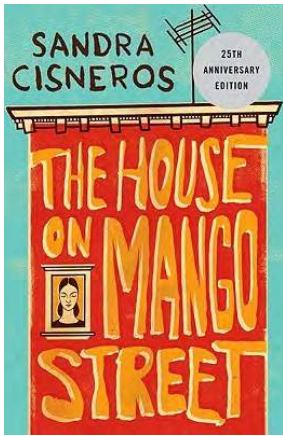


Brenda: “*All the Stars Denied* by Guadalupe Garcia McCall is a fictional book based on a true event that took place during that time period. It followed this family of three, mom, dad, daughter, who were well known in their community of Montesecco as activists. They stood up for their community in times of indifference and fought for their people even when they could/would get in trouble. During the Great Depression, there was a mass deportation in many states including Texas, which is where this story is based on. The police men would do ‘round ups’ and would take anyone that looked Mexican or spoke Spanish regardless if they were American citizens or not. The majority of the people that were shipped to Mexico were American citizens and only had been to Mexico a handful of times.

When the family is fighting for the injustices, their house gets set on fire on purpose and the mother and daughter get separated from the father and get sent to Mexico without any information whatsoever. The woman would not get assistance because she did not have her husband around, she had to jump through so many people just to get the tiniest bit of unhelpful information. Everyone that was taken from their home was put in this corral made for animals and left to the weather conditions and little to no food. Through trials and tribulations, hard work and determination to get back home, the mother took matters into her own hands and found her husband, eventually they were able to prove their citizenship but that was one family out of thousands that couldn’t. This whole book really put this all into perspective that we have

Figure 3. Brenda’s collage for *All the Stars Denied*.

been fighting this fight for a very long time. So much so, that I didn’t even know about this mass deportation. It was eye-opening and life changing, and I hope that more people take the time to learn about this history.”



Book Summary: *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros (1984) follows the life of Esperanza, a young Latina girl, who reflects on her life in a Latinx Chicago neighborhood. She dreams of breaking free from poverty and cultural limitations. This book of short stories explores themes of identity, community, poverty, and the search for self-expression and freedom.

Noemi: “*The House on Mango Street* is a beautiful book written by famous poet and novelist, Sandra Cisneros who writes based on her own life experiences as a Chicana woman who grew up in a working-class family. The book seems simple and a light read at first glance but once you delve into the symbolism and metaphors, a deeper meaning is uncovered. Themes of gender inequalities, language barriers, financial struggles, assault, finding identity, and searching for autonomy as a Chicana all exist. Each chapter consisted of a new story about a different person who lived on Mango Street from the perspective of a young girl named Esperanza, a name that means hope in Spanish. The chapters are no longer than three pages and do not offer a continuous storyline. Still, the stories do illustrate Esperanza’s perception of the world based on the judgments she makes about each person she encounters. I included images pertaining to Chicano protests, especially feminism and education because Esperanza’s mother wanted her to be an educated woman. I also found an image of the actual house on Mango Street and the Little Village, a neighborhood important to the Mexican community in Chicago, the city where the book takes place. I also added images of Sandra and some of her poetry. I really liked the book but it was very sad when I began to reflect on the meaning of each story in relation to Chicano struggles.”



Figure 4. Noemi’s collage for *The House on Mango Street*.

Book Summary: *Sabrina & Corina: Stories* by Kali Fajardo-Anstine (2019) is a collection of interrelated short stories that focus on Latina women of Indigenous ancestry in the American West. Each narrative explores themes of family, heritage, love, and resilience, often through the lens of women navigating complex relationships and personal histories.



Figure 5. Josiah's collage for *Sabrina & Corina: Stories*.

Josiah: "*Sabrina & Corina: Stories* has eleven chapters containing eleven different stories centered around young Indigenous-Mexican women in Colorado. I chose marigolds to be my background because they symbolize love and grief. Marigolds were mentioned in many of the stories. I also made the title font purple to symbolize grief and suffering. Many of the stories such as chapters 1. "Sugar Babies", 2. "Sabrina & Corina", 3. "Sisters", etc. deals with domestic violence and violence against Indigenous women, so I added the MMIW seal to represent the murdered and abused women in this book. I added an intergenerational trauma chart to show how extreme poverty, dysfunctional relationships, trauma and violence affects all generations, this was shown in chapters 6. "Galapago", 8. "Tomi" and 9. "Any Further West". I added a photo of a woman protesting about the gentrification of her home. This represents the grandmother and her grandchildren who had to move because of high prices and crime due to gentrification in chapter 6. "Galapago".

In the bottom left-hand corner, there is a photo of herbal remedies which represents the use of these indigenous herbs in chapters 4. "Remedies" and 10. "All Her Names". The Diné Creation story was mentioned in chapter 11. "Ghost Sickness" and I feel that it meant a lot to the character and the connection to someone she loved. In the top right corner, there is a photo with a mother and her child that represents the special love that these women showed their children in the book. The sugar bag symbolizes the sugar baby that the main character in 1. "Sugar Babies" was assigned to take care of as a real baby. As she dealt with the constant abandonment of her mother, she abandoned the sugar baby. Which can mean that she was getting rid of her anger towards her mother and somewhat understanding her mother's issues. The breast cancer ribbon is for chapter 5. "Julian Plaza", where the daughters and father sacrificed their own wants and needs to take care of their sick mother. I felt that the miracle flaming heart would be the perfect symbolism for the love that was in this book. While many parts were truly sad, there were so many parts filled with love. I definitely recommend reading this book!"

Book summary: *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* by George J. Sánchez (1993) explores how Mexican immigrants and their descendants navigated identity and community formation in early 20th century Los Angeles amidst labor markets, discrimination, and cultural adaptation. The book highlights the complexities of forging a Mexican American identity within urban America.

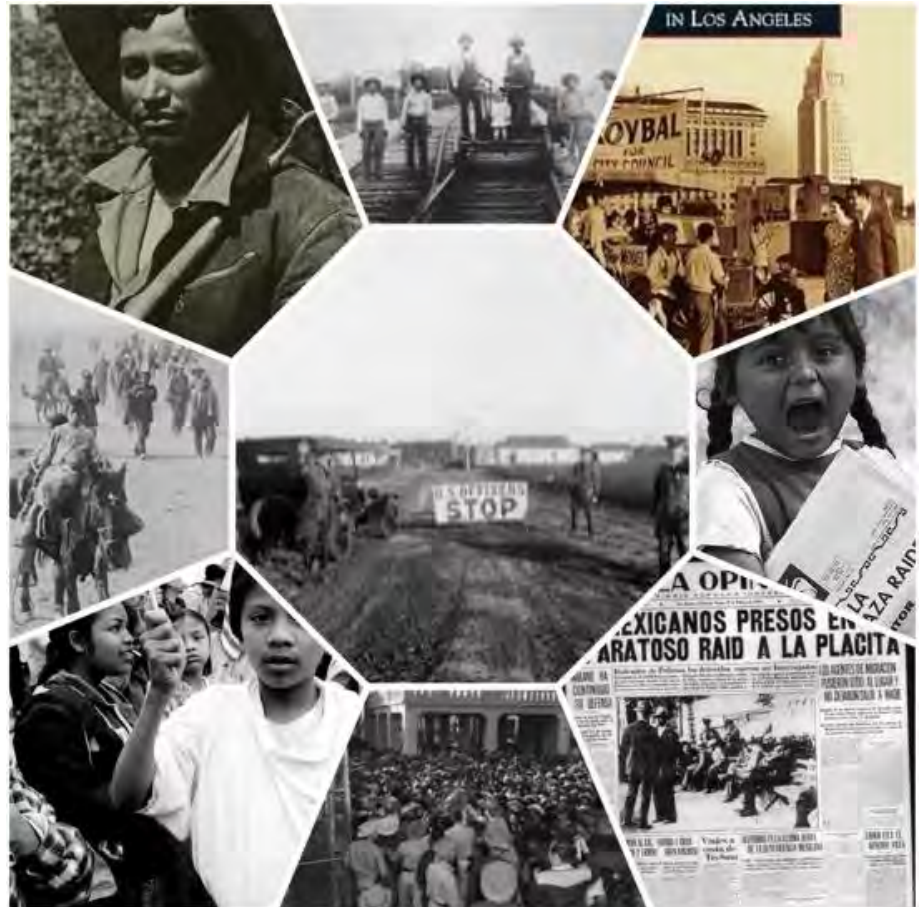
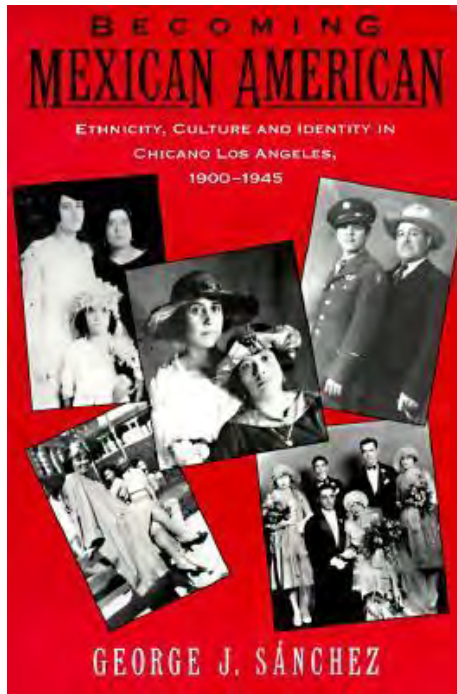


Figure 6. Luis's collage for *Becoming Mexican American*.

Luis: “*Becoming Mexican American Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* by George J. Sánchez examines the cultural adaptation of Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles from 1900 to 1945 and its impact on Chicano identity. The book is divided into four parts. Part 1 covers historical context of Mexico during the 1900s and the history of Mexican in LA during the 1900s up to the great depression. Part 2 talks about how Mexico and America wanted to secure the identity working class of Mexicans. Both failed as this cultural identity of being both American and Mexican cultivating is what part 3 goes more in depth on. Part 4 was about the community’s response to the Great Depression and how Americans treated Mexicans during it (deportation, racism). Sánchez highlights the complexities Chicanos had to experience during the earlier 20th century and challenges previous immigration culture and how it grew in LA. I thought the book was very informative and interesting to see that Chicanos built this sense of identity and culture, even when both of their identities (American and Mexican) treated them wrong.”

Impact of Photo Collages

As seen in the photo collages, reflections, and conversations with students, using photo collage assignments serves several important purposes:

- Photo collages provide a creative and interactive way for students to engage with course materials. They move beyond traditional written assignments, allowing them to express their understanding and interpretations visually. This hands-on approach often results in higher levels of engagement as students can connect personally with the subject matter.
- Creating a collage requires students to critically analyze the themes, concepts, and ideas presented in the literature they are studying. They select images that reflect these elements and explain how they relate to the text. This process encourages deeper reflection and synthesis of information, fostering critical thinking skills.
- Including both pictures and text in learning materials caters to a variety of learning styles. This approach recognizes that students learn in various ways and gives them a chance to show what they understand through visual means. By using different arts-based methods, including collages, learning becomes more effective because it meets the different strengths and preferences students have.
- Photo collages allow students to incorporate personal reflections and reactions into their assignments. They can use photographs they have taken or found that resonate with their own experiences, as a result, making meaningful connections between the literature and their lives. This personalization can deepen their emotional engagement with the material and promotes a sense of ownership over their learning.
- Presenting their collages to classmates encourages students to develop clear and persuasive articulation of their ideas. They must explain their choices of images and how these images relate to the themes of the book, enhancing their verbal communication, visual literacy, and presentation skills.
- Utilizing platforms like Padlet for sharing collages promotes digital literacy and proficiency. Students learn how to navigate digital tools effectively while engaging in collaborative online spaces, preparing them for the workplace where digital communication and collaboration are essential skills.
- Using photo collage assignments not only enriches the learning experience by incorporating creativity and personalization but also cultivates critical thinking, communication, and digital literacy skills among students (Gersenblatt, 2013). This type of assignment empowers students to explore complex topics through a medium that encourages analytical thoroughness and creative expression.

Final Thoughts

The intersection of social justice literature with arts-based assignments enhances academic learning. When students connect books related to social justice topics with their lived experiences through assignments like photo collages, the impact can be significant. This connection bridges theoretical understanding of social justice issues with the practical realities of students' lives, or that of their communities, fostering a deeper personal engagement with the material. It allows students to explore

deeper layers of their identities and cultural heritage at the same time they reflect on the narratives of injustice, resilience, and advocacy in the literature. Additionally, the use of arts-based assignments promotes critical thinking as students interpret and analyze themes visually, using images to convey complex ideas and expression. Beyond academic skills, these assignments nurture empathy by encouraging students to explore varied perspectives and understand societal issues through diverse lenses.

Furthermore, arts-based pedagogies and activities such as found in the web publication, *Digital Collages on Social Justice Issues in Education: Perspectives from BA Educational Studies Students* (2023) support experiential learning by engaging students in hands-on, creative processes that deepen their comprehension and retention of concepts. Creating visual or multimedia projects requires students to synthesize information and translate their understanding into artistic forms, which can enhance intellectual and emotional connections to the material. This process also promotes collaboration and communication skills as students often work together, share feedback, and discuss their interpretations. Arts-based assignments not only enrich students' learning experiences but also provide alternative ways to demonstrate understanding, supporting diverse learning styles and encouraging reflective thought, innovation, and creative thinking.

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Finding a Sense of Place when Displaced: Using Global Literature and Community Outreach with Refugee Youth

Kim Warren

For the past twelve years, I've taught primarily refugee English language learners at Utah International (a secondary school centered in 71% White Salt Lake City, Utah) that espouses the vision of celebrating and honoring students' identities and cultures while empowering them with language, global literacy, collaboration, leadership, and critical thinking skills. Our students are mainly immigrants and refugees from myriad countries: Sudan, Mexico, Venezuela, Congo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Egypt, Malaysia, Honduras, Palestine, Tanzania, Colombia, and the United States who speak multiple languages (Kinyarwanda, Swahili, Rohingya, Spanish, Arabic, Dinka, Dari, Pashto, and more). Our mission at Utah International Charter School is "to give English learners full access to a rigorous secondary curriculum by providing content-based, sheltered English instruction in every class, and to empower refugees, immigrants, and American-born students with collaboration skills, critical-thinking skills, and diverse global perspectives."

As a white educator aware of her privilege and the limits that imposes on the majority of students and their learning environment, representation has been vital in successful student engagement and learning in its ability to disrupt widespread assimilationist teaching practices. Over the years, I've struggled to uphold marginalized voices (past, present, and emerging) against the statistics and stereotypes already spoken for them in our society while delivering quality English Language Arts (ELA) instruction. Most students at Utah International have lived through the damaging effects of violence and trauma in their home villages and countries, and they are now living out their "refuge" in the US amongst daily micro and macro aggressions that target their religions, languages, skin colors, poverty levels, and selves. I focus on the students' brilliance rather than their single story (as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie eloquently states). Still, I also wished to more skillfully honor and maintain space for students to uphold their values, interests, and experiences through a holistic exploration of storytelling and narratives. I needed more tools, resources, and expertise to do this work effectively, and it was challenging to find a variety of global literature that represented our diverse population, was accessible and age-appropriate to a wide range of language learners and sparked a common interest among many students.

My participation in the NEH Summer Institute: "We The People: Migrant Waves in the Making of America" changed that situation and helped Utah International reach our mission last year, primarily due to its comprehensive curriculum, collaborative learning environment, engaging guest speakers, experiential learning methods, outstanding multicultural literary library, and the incredible talent, effort, and drive of the directors and teachers who tirelessly and enthusiastically produced and led the institute. This experience has empowered me to continue my school's mission of representing and upholding the voices of our diverse student population, inspiring me and my colleagues to do the same. The institute also contributed to my long-term leadership goal of influencing current educational policies with cross-cultural practices rooted in understanding and appreciation.

“We the People”: Migrant Waves in the Making of America NEH Summer Institute

During the two-week institute, I worked with other educators to explore the theme of erased histories in conjunction with practices of humanities research methods through global literature, interactions with authors and scholars, museum visits, and hands-on inquiry. I was introduced to multiple global and multicultural texts that represent students, are age-appropriate for middle schoolers, and have proven accessible to a classroom of diverse languages and English abilities. I collected these titles in a digital, multimodal text set designed for middle school refugees and immigrants in the ELA classroom and centered around four diachronic themes. “Origins” explores legends, folktales, and myths from students’ home countries. “Displacement” features characters, places, and stories students can relate to, as well as the fantasy genre. “Belonging” centers on stories about finding a sense of place when displaced. Finally, “Activism” features activists from students’ home countries and current communities.

“Finding a Sense of Place When Displaced: Themes of Origins, Displacement, Belonging, and Activism” (for middle school refugee and immigrant youth)” by Kim Warren. (<https://wethepeople.coe.arizona.edu/2023-participant-text-sets>)

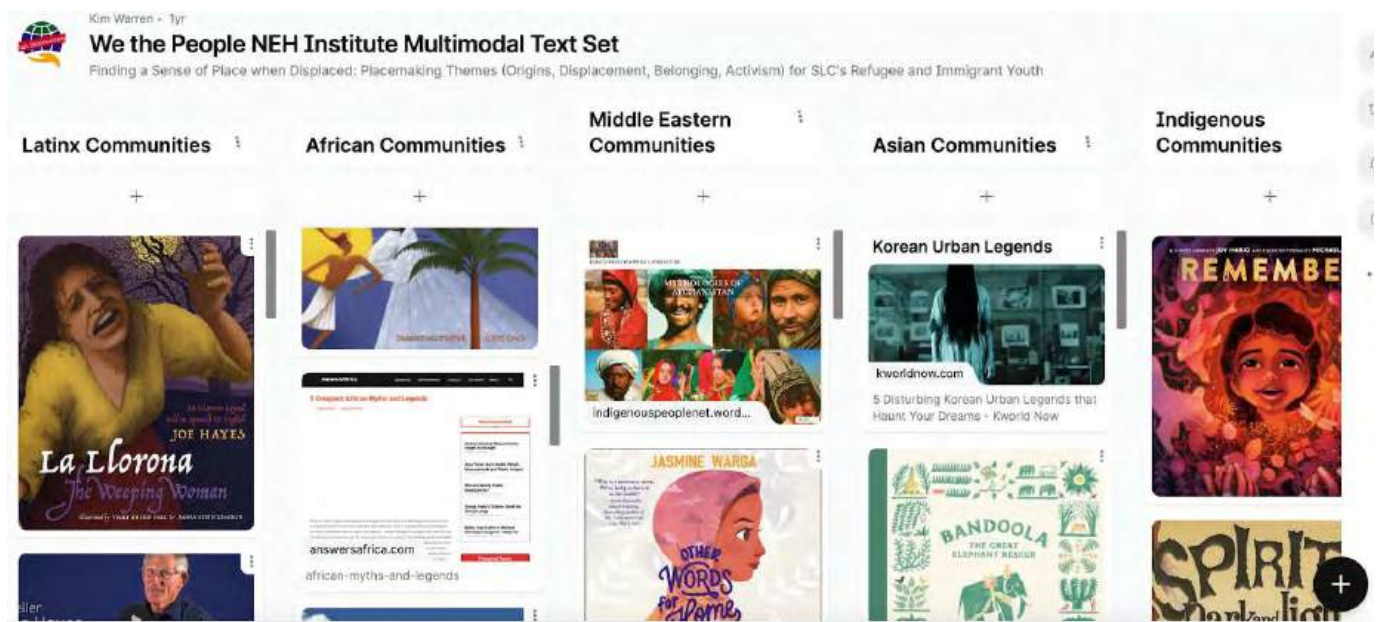


Figure 1. NEH multimodal text set.

In addition to providing me with many culturally diverse texts that reflected my students’ experiences, cultures, and interests, the institute introduced a variety of teaching methods that centered around collaboration both within the classroom, such as collage reading and graffiti board reading strategies (see *Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers*, Kathy G. Short & Jerome Harste) and within the community at large through local partnerships such as Borderlands Theatre in Tucson, Arizona which inspired my community collaborations in SLC, Utah and beyond.

Building a Shared Learning Community through Picturebooks and Culturally Representative Novels

I began the 2023 school year by teaching various picturebooks introduced to me during the institute that reflected student identities, cultures, and experiences. When students are given opportunities to explore, share, and weave their own stories and perspectives into the curriculum, they forge trust with one another and invest in their learning communities. For example, *Bandoola: The Great Elephant Rescue* by William Grill (2021) was of particular interest to Karen, Karenni, Rohingya, and Burmese students, *Dreamers* by Yuyi Morales (2018) and *Still Dreaming* by Claudia Guadalupe Martinez and illustrated by Magdalena Mora (2022) appealed to all students, but especially the Latinx population; Muslim students from many different countries enjoyed *The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family* by Ibtihaj Muhammad with S.K. Ali and art by Hatem Aly (2020); and students enthusiastically read, discussed, analyzed, and enjoyed *Remember* by Joy Harjo and Michaela Goade (2023).

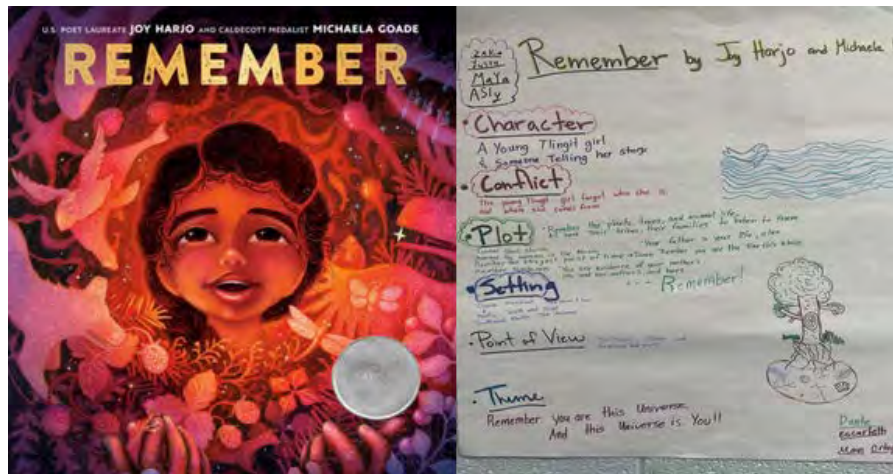


Figure 2. Response to *Remember* (Harjo & Goade, 2022)

Other popular texts included *Lala Salama: A Tanzanian Lullaby* by Patricia MacLachlan (2011); *If I Go Missing* by Brianna Jonnie (2020); *La Llorona/The Weeping Woman: An Hispanic Legend* by Joe Hayes (2004); and *Borders* by Thomas King and illustrated by Natasha Donovan (2021).



Figure 3. Popular picturebooks and graphic novels.

As a result of teaching picturebooks, middle school ELA students could engage in high-level textual analysis of many different culturally diverse characters and origin and displacement themes (despite their varied English reading limitations and skills) during the first week of school! The corresponding pictures and short texts of the picturebooks filled in gaps of understanding that usually take months to bridge in my classes. In addition, because the texts were also relevant to many of the students' own lives and experiences, the initial picturebook unit also forged personal connections for students with the texts and a higher level of classroom community through breakout discussions and student sharing of their own stories with both the texts and each other.

We built on this momentum throughout the rest of the school year by choosing novels together that reflected the communities and experiences of students themselves, using books as platforms of discussion through a collective readers' theater engagement with the novels and routine break-out talking sessions led by student interest and personal connection sharing.

Students responded to the new texts with enthusiasm. *Samira Surfs* by Rukhsanna Guidroz (2022) proved a class favorite, with one Rohingya student sharing her connections with the story, as did *Other Words for Home* by Jasmine Warga (2021), which was selected and elaborated upon by sixth-grade Syrian twins who enjoyed teaching the class about the different foods and Arabic words featured in the novel and shared their family's stories of Syria as we read it together. The global texts increased student participation and buy-in to the class and each other in a way that hasn't happened before in my eleven years of teaching at Utah International!



Figure 4. Middle grade novels enjoyed by students.

I strive to celebrate differences and encourage the strength of students to center curriculum and dialogue around their cultural perspectives and emerging adult identities, so I utilized targeted culturally diverse books to engage students in sharing their voices through literary discussions, fostering a stronger classroom community. My pedagogy normalized multilingualism by drawing on students' linguistic resources to translate and create meaning. Various interdisciplinary lessons utilized scaffolded entry points and

project-based learning to explore a decolonized curriculum that centered on often marginalized students, including literature by Malala Yousafzai (*I Am Malala*, 2014), Trevor Noah (*Born a Crime*, 2019), Jerry Craft (*New Kid*, 2019), and Huda Fahmy (*Yes, I'm Hot in This!* 2018), as well as biographies of Wangari Maathai (Purtill, 2023; Winter, 2018).

Building Community Partnerships in the Classroom

I leveraged my instructional skills with the strength and influence of the local and national community, partnering with leaders who share everyday experiences with students and professionals in the arts and sciences. For example, students in my middle school ELA classes participated in a ZOOM conference

with Dr. Mamta Patel Nagaraja, the Chief Scientist for Exploration and Applied Research at NASA (via the national nonprofit DreamWakers), in which they discussed both space exploration and microaggressions against minoritized people. In addition, my ELA classes partnered with social studies students in a virtual reading and discussion with Navajo author Daniel W. Vandever, which created a more robust engagement with the curriculum in both subjects, creating a sense of excitement and self-importance amongst students who demonstrated their honor to engage with a “real-life author” on ZOOM.

My middle school ELA classes and representatives of the Utah International Student Council also worked with SpyHop Productions (a local nonprofit digital media arts center) to create student-produced films and a podcast about issues surrounding the lives of Utah International students, including power dynamics, racism, concepts of peace and peacebuilding, and the challenges of refugee youth in today’s society.

I extended this work in the spring with another community arts collaboration with Plan-B Theatre Company, which centered around representation to enhance arts education through playwriting. The theatre’s talented, diverse professionals further extended student-centered learning with their residency’s focus on representation and its rigorous yet fun curriculum, which ultimately benefited students by providing facilitators who were both role models and educators. The actor/teacher residents offered learning experiences and educational tools that upheld all student voices, especially those often marginalized or unheard in academic settings, and the residency shaped our spring semester

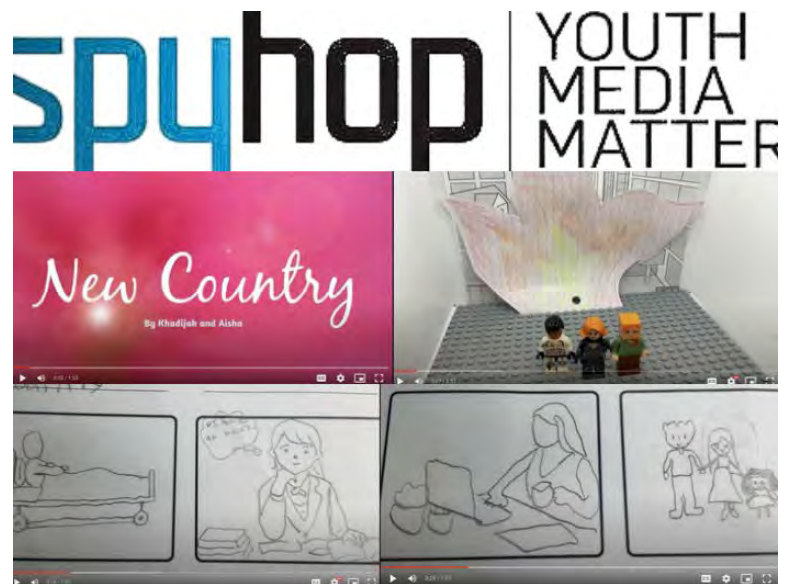


Figure 5. SkyHop Productions.

into one of active participation and full-class engagement, as evidenced by significantly lower tardy and absentee rates during the program.

The actors led students in collaborative discussion and brainstorming, planning, mapping a story, editing, re-editing, finalizing their scripts, and the apex community performance at Salt Lake City’s Living Traditions Festival on May 17th, 2024. Thanks to our collaboration with Plan-B Theatre, students were the empowered centers of their learning and potential this spring. Plan-B Theatre’s Extended’ Playwriting with Young Adults’ professional outreach program was the highlight of the school year for the student participants and even the entire supportive student body who attended the culminating performance and voiced a strong desire to participate one day.



Figure 6. Student participation in a community performance.



Figure 7. Student response to the community performance.

Final Reflections

The research focus of the institute provided my educational community with the tools it urgently needs to reflect the abundant cultural wealth of Utah International’s students and their families amidst an atmosphere of deficit thinking and assimilationist agendas that threaten to uphold the pernicious tradition of silencing migrant and BIPOC narratives about the nurturing roots that they sow in American soil. This emphasis on celebrating cultural wealth is crucial in making the learning community feel appreciative and respectful of diverse cultures, themselves, and each other. Participating in the institute gave me a network of teachers, authors, scholars, and like-minded others within the educational, historical, and artistic community to share ideas and resources to serve students and their families better. This sense of community and shared learning is a powerful force in our educational journey, making us feel connected and part of a more significant educational movement.

Second, I learned how to conduct better research and teach to uncover the silenced voices that have played a pivotal part in America’s past. Meeting Patricia Preciado Martin, author of *Songs My Mother Sang to Me* (2016), was especially influential in my learning and instruction of oral history research. Third, I incorporated creative writing, filmmaking, storytelling, and personal narrative instruction to motivate and cultivate young visionaries and leaders to own their agency and see the possibility of peace and belonging in their lives and communities (both old and new). Finally, I collaborated with various community partners to facilitate what only students themselves can accomplish—self-authored narratives that silence reductive stories.

I highly recommend the institute to teachers who value high-quality ELA instruction through diverse literature, collaborative group work, representation in the classroom, and engaging lessons that reach all students, regardless of nationality, age, gender, and refugee status.

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Building Connections through Exploring Stories of Migration

Agnes Zapata

“Have you noticed that although life has gotten socially better over the decades, there are still a lot of modern-day problems? We need to build hope throughout the world because without it the world would be miserable. If there was no hope everyone would live their lives accepting their fate and the problems going on in the world, which wouldn’t do anything but make these problems progress.” So starts a student’s essay after examining multiple sources to explore the best ways to build hope and fight systems of oppression.

I teach eleventh-grade English, ages 16-18, in an urban public high school in the heart of a vibrant multicultural close-knit community located in the Fruitvale district of Oakland, CA. As such, it is essential for all of us, students and teachers, to learn about the multiple perspectives of others and the rich tapestry of cultures making up our world. In our school, we have roughly 72% Latinx students from countries including Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and more. We have approximately 16% Black students and the remaining 12% are from Tonga, Cambodia, Yemen, and more. About 40% of our students are recently-arrived immigrants who moved to the U.S. in the last 3 years. After engaging in a year-long process of gathering data from surveys, interviews, student shadows, and focus groups, a need that students directly identified is learning about diverse cultures and histories. Additionally, in the pandemic, many students expressed feelings of despair and stress which were exacerbated with the news of various injustices involving police brutality against Black people and people of color.

Considering students’ feelings, needs, backgrounds, and interests and considering my learning from participating in an online global education course as part of a Fulbright fellowship, I created a unit with the essential questions: (1) “How do we resist systems of oppression?” (2) “How can we build hope when the world around us seems to be falling apart?” During the unit, students explored these questions and gathered evidence from our sources in order to respond to one of these questions in a final essay.

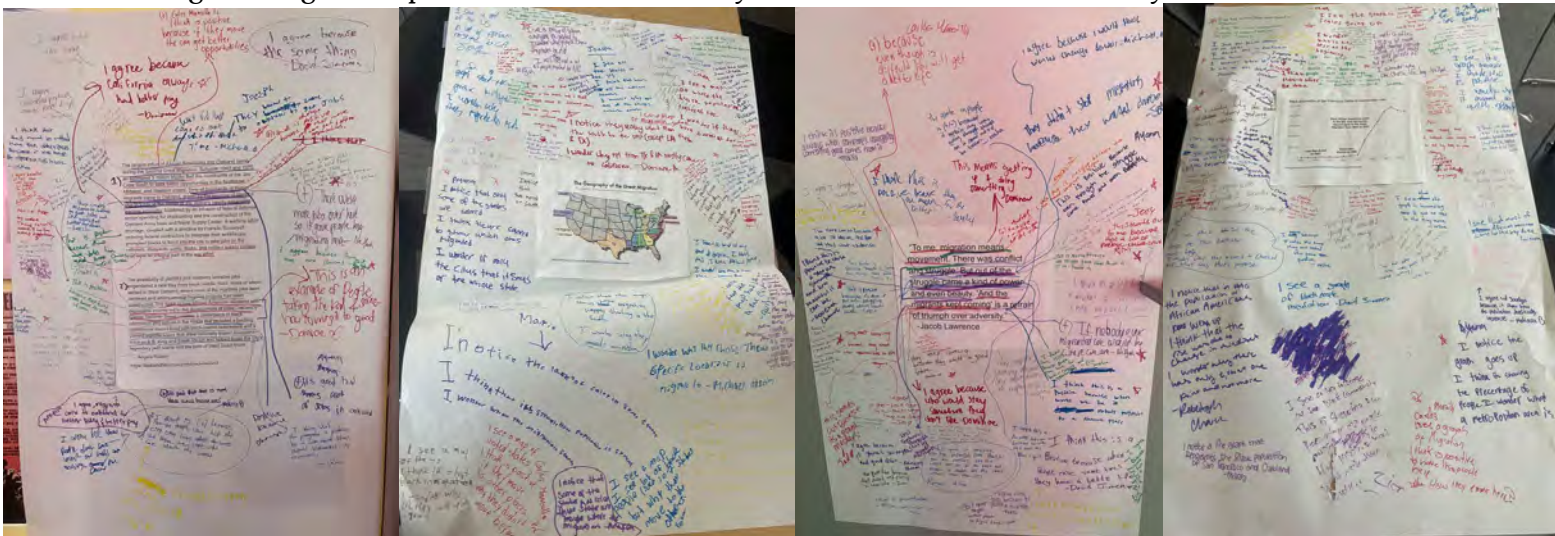
My student teacher and I curated sources and created lessons encouraging students to explore these questions through examples reflecting their local communities and global communities so they could experience and interact with the diversity of cultures they were asking for. We studied several themes which could answer our essential questions. For example, one theme students explored was how education could be a possible way to resist systems of oppression or build hope. Another theme we looked at was how music could be a possible source of hope or resistance. I included a variety of sources including articles, art pieces, audio recordings, multimedia, and social media to provide multiple points of access to the information, to expand literacy skills on different types of sources, and to teach students the use of various sources as evidence for our essay.

Incorporating Migration Stories: Black Migration within the United States

After attending the NEH summer institute in Tucson, I enhanced a part of my unit to incorporate migration as a possible form of resistance and hope. I started our exploration around migration by

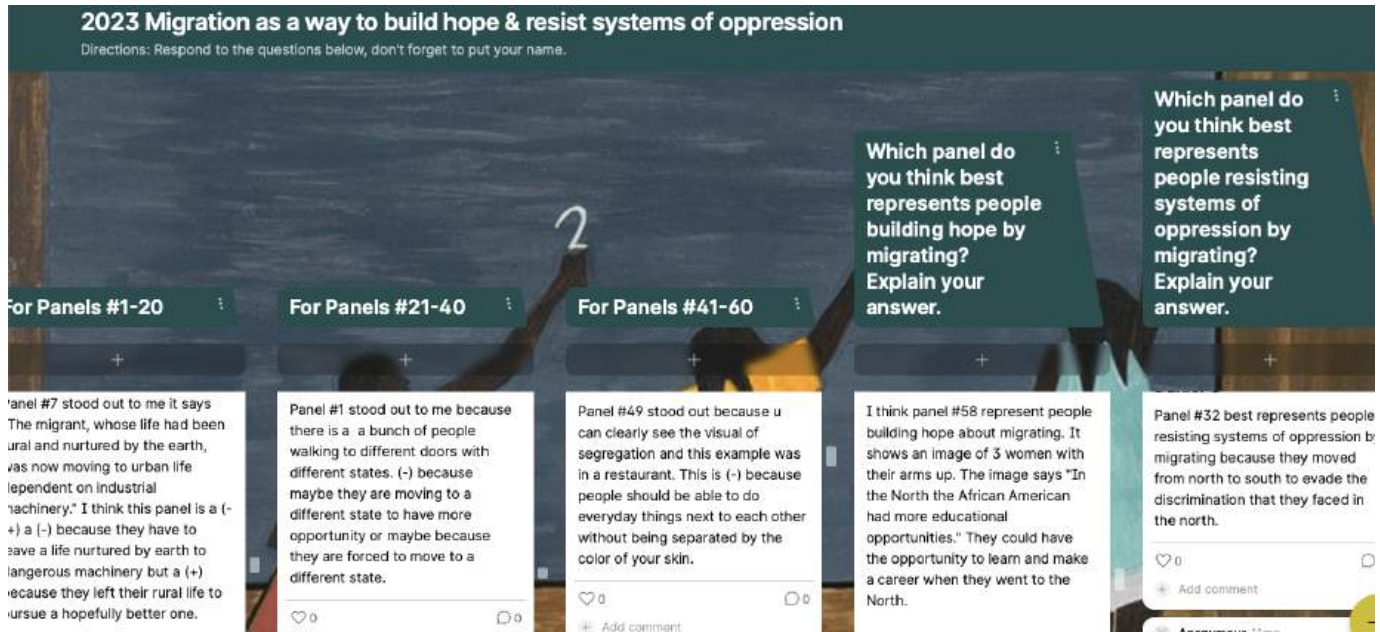
asking students how they arrived in the Bay Area. Some students had immigrated from various countries in Latin America, Yemen, Tonga, or Asia. Others had moved from other parts of the United States or had been born and raised in the Bay Area with either their parents or grandparents moving from other parts of the United States. I showed them a map illustrating the Black population in the United States in 1900. I reminded students of what they had learned in their U.S. History classes about the oppression of the Jim Crow laws in the United States. I asked students what they would do in this situation and whether they would choose to migrate to a new place. Many students, having had first-hand experiences of moving to a new place, felt choosing to migrate was a positive choice and that migration could bring the possibility of a better life. At the same time, students also discussed the difficulty of having to leave home and their family and friends.

Using this discussion as a starting point for engagement, students then analyzed quotes about migration and brief descriptions of the Great Migration. We also examined a migration map from the Great Migration depicting the migration of Black families from the South to the North and the West, including the migration pattern into our own city of Oakland and the wider Bay Area.



This exploration was especially important because many students indicated that they did not know people could migrate within the U.S. and they thought migration was only something people in other countries did. With this background, I introduced the artwork of Jacob Lawrence. Students could explore all of Jacob Lawrence's panels from his Migration Series as a kind of virtual tour (<https://lawrencemigration.phillipscollection.org/the-migration-series>) of The Phillips Collection at the American Museum of Modern Art in Washington DC.

Lawrence has 60 panels with brief captions depicting the Great Migration of Black families moving from the South to the North and the West. In this way the artwork helped students visualize the process of migration which included the struggles and pain as well as the hopes and dreams of the migrants. I created a padlet where students chose different panels that stood out to them and they commented on the panels that most demonstrated migration as hope and migration as an act of resistance in the face of systems of oppression.



Once students had these visuals to aid them, we read excerpts from Isabel Wilkerson's (2011) *The Warmth of Other Suns* so students could examine and connect with eyewitness accounts of the move from the South to the West Coast. For example, while reading about the journey of Dr. Robert Joseph Pershing Foster, students discussed and reflected on his dilemma and ultimate decision to migrate from Louisiana to California. Because of segregation, as a Black man, Dr. Foster was not allowed to practice surgery in Louisiana, and this influenced his decision to move. One student reflected, "This is both negative AND positive. This is negative because he even felt the need to leave because he wasn't allowed to practice surgery, even though he had the knowledge, because he was black. This also positive, though, because he's leaving for a fresh new start." Another student said, "I agree that moving away could help his life get better because it could take a lot of negative energy away from him and he could focus on his dreams more." After reading, when asked if they would also choose to migrate to California, one student said, "Yes I would have because I would like to chase my dreams." Another said, "I would move to the west for more job opportunities." Finally, another said, "I liked that he thought about his son, and he wanted to follow his dream."

Incorporating Migration Stories: Guatemalan Migration to the Bay Area

After reading and discussing both Lawrence's and Wilkerson's works, I paired these sources with an article on immigration from Guatemala (<https://norcalpublicmedia.org/capital-public-radio-latest-news-rss/do-you-speak-mam-growth-of-oaklands-guatemalan-community-sparks-interest-in-indigenous-language>) since I also have many students who immigrated from Guatemala. Students were surprised to learn that Guatemalan immigrants shared similarities to Black Families from the Great Migration and later some chose evidence from these sources for their essay. This positively impacted student learning because students made connections to their own cultures, but also connected to the experiences of other cultures with which they were surprised to find similarities.

One student said, "Some similarities between migration of Mam families from Guatemala into the United States versus migration of Black families from the South to the North of West Coast are that both

have situated themselves in other cities besides their own home countries to escape from war and discrimination against them. Also, both have migrated from afar just to have the opportunity to live in a much better environment that isn't surrounded with violence, war or discrimination." Another student said, "The same way they [Guatemalan immigrants] made themselves feel at home [once they moved to Oakland] is the same way Black people would make themselves at home [when they moved to the West Coast during the Great Migration]."

Final Reflections

Considering the diversity of this class, I was reminded of how valuable it is to create learning experiences where students discover connections with others. After exploring the Great Migration through maps, art, and text, students learned a lot about the migration experience of Black families within the United States. By pairing this study with the article on Guatemalan immigration, students made a lot of connections between the families of the Great Migration and the more recent immigration patterns of Guatemalan immigrants to Oakland and the Bay Area. This brought not only more connection between students but also more empathy as they realized perhaps our whole class consists of families of migrants who are hopeful for a better life — whether they migrated recently to the Bay Area or years ago.

Moving forward, I want to incorporate more experiences like this where students can find connections beyond their own cultures. I especially recommend finding ways to connect the learning material to the local community. Studying migration patterns to the Bay Area helped students connect more personally to the lessons. Additionally, I highly recommend incorporating more art and maps into units before diving into more text heavy works. The art and the maps allowed students to visualize the history of the Great Migration in a way that made it easier to access the Isabel Wilkerson reading later because the students already had a mental image of the history and more background knowledge on the topic.

At the end of the unit, some students named migration as one of the best ways to build hope and to resist systems of oppression. One student wrote, "we can build hope through migration because we build communities with it." I certainly agree.

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Integrating African American Stories into the Language Arts Curriculum

Kari Matthies

I was excited to hear about my acceptance into the NEH summer seminar in 2023 at the Worlds of Words Center. As a twenty-year veteran teacher, I am passionate about helping students find connections to their studies and enabling them to find a sense of place in our school. The seminar explored personal stories, cultural learning, the use of literature to build connections, and the need to expose students to truth in history. Due to my previous participation in several seminars and support from the Native American Education Director, I had already integrated connections to Indigenous students in our school into my curriculum and instruction included connections. What was missing were connections to the rich culture and history of African Americans, especially in Red Wing and Minnesota. I set out to create units of study on African American voices based on the following essential questions.

- What are the prominent events and characters in African American history in Minnesota from 1930 to the present day?
- How do books historically represent the events happening in a community?
- How does culture and literature reflect the history of a community?

I am a High School Special Education teacher in Red Wing, Minnesota. Our town is the home school to the Prairie Island Indian Reservation. Red Wing Minnesota has a population of 16,763 and is a farming community and a hub for city commuters. Our demographics are 77% White, 9% Hispanic/Latinx, 4% Black, 3% American Indian, 1% Asian, and 6% two or more. Red Wing Senior High has 1000 students and is in the bottom 20% of all schools in Minnesota in reading and math proficiency due to a high number of students with special education needs. As of 2022, 23% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Red Wing has a 94% graduation rate. I case manage students in grades eight and nine with learning disabilities and emotional and behavioral challenges. I also teach replacement reading classes for students in grades eight through twelve focusing on strategy and skill development in the areas of literacy and study skills.

My curriculum for this class is based on individual students' literacy and transitional goals on their Individual Education Plans. The goals are based on state standards and modified to meet individual needs. I incorporate high-interest low-Lexile reading books for independent reading (Lexile levels 200-600) and small group instruction. The experiences I share in this article are large group lessons that incorporate literacy skills and transitional skills such as communicating with others, using resources to find needed information, internet skills, social skills, and employment skills.

During the summer institute, I developed a multimodal text set on African American Voices (<https://wethepeople.coe.arizona.edu/2023-participant-text-sets>), specifically the history and contributions of African Americans in Minnesota. Students interacted and developed their stories and learned about their history and the experiences of people of color in Minnesota. I incorporated music and musicians into the unit due to students' connections and interest in music. They were engaged, interacting, and learning.

The reason I chose to focus on African American students is twofold. I have many resources and materials to present in my classes to engage Indigenous students with their stories but lacked any strong materials for students of African American heritage. Working with students who have educational and behavioral needs, I need to build connections so that my instruction is not only educational, but also provides skills for students to be successful.

African American History

My first challenge was to incorporate strong biographical and fiction picturebooks and two chapter books for the unit. The units became the first quarter of the language arts class I teach for students who are two grade levels below in their reading skills due to behavioral differences and learning challenges. I chose a series of children's books and the novels, *Darius and Twig* by Walter Dean Myers (2013) and *Piecing Me Together* by Renee Watson (2017). I read these two novels aloud to students. These books met the criteria of the state standards, introduced characters and events in history, and were the basis for lessons on grammar, writing, mechanics, and comprehension strategies.



Figure 1. *When Marian Sang* by Pam Muñoz Ryan and Brian Selznick (2002).

The slideshow I created on African American history is chronological from pre-1960 to the present day. To build prior knowledge and connections, we started with music from Duke Ellington and an illustrator study of Don Tate. This helped build awareness of illustrations and the use of illustrations to support comprehension strategies while reading. I played all genres of music and opened a discussion of how music can give insight into culture and the current state of the country. I used a picturebook biography of Marian Anderson by Brian Selznick and Pam Muñoz Ryan (2002) about how she overcame prejudice to share her passion and talents. The story opened a discussion of marginalized people and how they can overcome obstacles to be successful.

Darius and Twig by Walter Dean Myers (2013) is the chapter book I read to students. I always start a book with an author study and so added videos of Myers so students could hear his reasoning for writing the book. Since the book does have some language that may be uncomfortable, I discussed how language can affect people and why the language is relevant to a story. We completed an activity making inferences with quotes from the book to facilitate skill instruction and foreshadow what the book is about.

Fridays in our class writing day. I found a website called "Once Upon a Picture" that I often use with students. The site has pictures with questions and students select their pictures and choose a response. They may use the questions, write their own questions, write a story, or write a reflection. As they gain skills and learn about writing types I change the options.

Rubric Title: Weekly Once Upon A Picture		Date: _____		Name: _____	
Criteria	3 Points	2 Points	1 Point		
Selection of Writing Topics and Formats					
Completeness of Responses					
Grammar and Mechanics					

Figure 2. Writing response rubric

Minnesota Connections to African American History

Continuing with the unit, we focused on Minnesota connections to African American history including music, culture, and influential people in Minnesota. We studied some of the current change makers in Minnesota so students could make connections from the past to the present. I used several videos and articles on African Americans in Minnesota who made contributions to Minnesota labor and legal rights. An interactive video on creating timelines helped students choose one of the leaders and create a timeline. Many of the videos and articles were located through the Minnesota Historical Society website (<https://www.mnhs.org/>). Examples of articles used with students are the Frank Boyd Resource (<https://www.mnopedia.org/person/boyd-frank-1881-1962>) and the Nellie Stone Resource (<https://www.mnopedia.org/person/johnson-nellie-stone-1905-2002>). I used the articles for our history studies and to teach students to find appropriate information on the internet.

Tar Beach by Faith Ringgold (1991) was a picturebook we used to study the illustrator Faith Ringgold and how she found her voice through art. We did a Look, Think, and Imagine activity which asks students to discuss their work, moving from a concrete to an abstract perspective, a lens that is complicated for students. Students are first asked to Look at an image and describe literally what they see such as colors, lines, characters, and settings. The Think asks students to answer comprehension questions and make inferences directly from the story. Finally, students are asked to Imagine open-ended responses to predict and determine themes and purpose.

After an exploration of African American leaders in the field of law in Minnesota, the weekly unit ended with a study of Aretha Franklin and her accomplishments and passion to speak out about injustice and her fight for civil rights, reading a picturebook by Carole Boston Weatherford and Frank Morrison (2020). We then returned to Minnesota with a discussion of the “long hot summer” of 1967 when riots erupted in Minnesota over civil rights due to employment discrimination. We later compared these riots to the George Floyd riots by using articles, photos, and music.

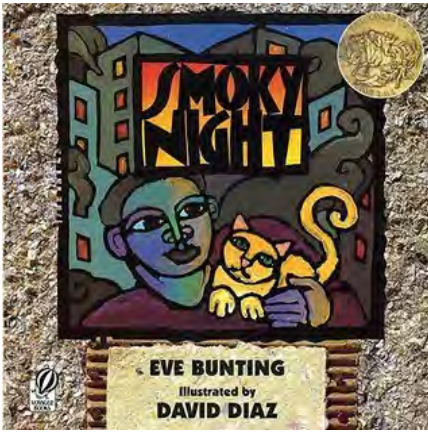


Figure 3. *Smoky Night* by Eve Bunting and David Diaz (1994).

Smoky Night by Eve Bunting and David Diaz (1994) was an excellent read-aloud to open up discussion about rioting and the realities of riots to everyday people. At the end of the book, we did another round of Look, Think, and Imagine but also engaged in “tossing questions.” Tossing Questions came about by accident to engage students, and they enjoyed this strategy. I wrote comprehension questions on sheets of paper and randomly had each student pick one paper with three questions on it related to Look, Imagine, and Think. Students wrote their thoughts on their paper. When everyone was finished, students tossed their papers to the front of the room, and we read them out loud for a discussion. An example of the three questions on one slip of paper is:

- *Look* – Who is the “I” in this story? Where does this story take place? Why are the lights not on?
- *Imagine* – I wonder what would make people so angry that they want to smash and destroy.
- *Think* – How does the neighborhood recover from the riot? Do Daniel, Mama, and Mrs. Kim have a better relationship after this sad night?

The poetry standards in our curriculum were met with a unit on Langston Hughes and Ray Charles. Video interviews, including a visit to Sesame Street (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_WyB4jkcniI) and an interview on a talk show (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm911g_DXLw), were part of the introduction to a comprehension assessment, along with an assignment to write an autobiographical or fiction poem about a young person and their life. As this was our first poem, students wrote a free-verse poem based on “I Too Am American” by Langston Hughes.

One of the class’s favorite lessons was on the Sabathanites Drum Corps, a group founded as a youth organization in Minneapolis in 1964. The exploration started with me reading the name of the group and showing a video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DT6iaAX1YxI&t=226s>) of the group performing in a parade in the 1970s Aquatennial Parade in Minneapolis. Students met in small groups to write an article about the Sabathanites using the five W’s strategy (who, what, why, where, and when) based on the name of the group and the video. Students then learned that the group was started to give youth something to do and to keep them out of trouble in the inner city of Minneapolis by a Baptist church. When the group was performing in a parade in 1967, they were attacked by overzealous police due to concerns about riots. This event was the beginning of the “long hot summer of 1967” in Minneapolis when riots erupted, and entire blocks of neighborhoods and businesses were lost. I also showed a video describing the children’s crusade in 1963 in Birmingham to students. The students wrote a new article using the Five W strategy on either the Children’s March or the Sabathanites Drum Corp, using their new knowledge of events.

Our skills focus was building vocabulary and identifying story elements through picturebooks, articles, and our novel study of *Darius and Twig*. As we continued to move through the decades with Minnesota history and music highlights, I read aloud from *Darius and Twig*. Each day, I chose a student to document our daily reading of the novel, giving that student a note card and a Sharpie. Their task is to choose three things they feel are important in the read-aloud for that day. They can write facts,

observations on story elements, characters, and traits, or draw an illustration on any piece they feel is important to remember from the chapter for that day. I displayed the cards on the closet doors. Each day, before I began reading, I asked three students to say one word to describe what we had last read, using the wall if they were not sure about what to say. Special education teenagers often struggle with behaviors in general education classes due to learning differences and their lack of confidence in front of peers. I try to teach strategies to be successful in our classes, with the goal for them to engage and be successful with their non-disabled peers.

Trombone Shorty by Troy “Trombone Shorty” Andrews and Bryan Collier (2015) is an autobiographical picturebook of an amazingly talented horn player who struggled as a child. Students made strong connections from listening to this book on his childhood and then watching his NPR performance (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwYAEUpH1NM>) as an adult. We then explored the roots of current hip-hop music by completing a “book tasting” of books on Black musicians and looking at local Minnesota icons in hip-hop and music production. A “book tasting” consists of students using one class period to look at books in a genre, recording the title and author, reading the back cover and first page, and choosing one book to read independently.

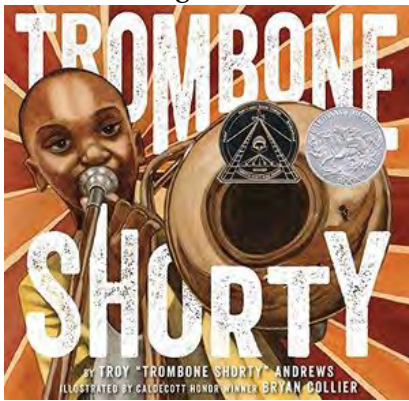


Figure 4. *Trombone Shorty* by Troy Andrews & Bryan Collier (2015).

This picturebook is connected to a study of the Rondo neighborhood in St. Paul that was torn down to construct a highway. Students searched for other examples of marginalized neighborhoods that have been erased and what the current state is of these areas. Then they created a soundtrack they felt represented the plight of marginalized people trying to keep their neighborhoods, businesses, and cultures. We also explored information, articles, and videos of Prince, Bob Dylan, The Andrews Sisters, Jimmy Jam Terry Lewis, and Lizzo. All of these influential artists have ties to Minnesota. Just a fun fact—Lizzo performed on the Indigenous Nation, and her concert video was filmed at the Nation so many Indigenous students were in the video and able to meet her.

When we finished reading *Darius and Twig* aloud, I started reading aloud *Pieces of Me* by Renee Watson (2018). We listened to a talk about Gaelynn Lea Tressler, an American Folk Singer from Minnesota who has significant physical differences. At this point, we started preparing for the writing of a five-paragraph personal narrative that students completed on themselves, someone they know, or one of the people we studied. Students had daily mini lessons, usually using Nearpod, on writing their narratives, and used a variety of graphic organizers to organize their papers at every step. I keep these organizers available for all students to use in their general education settings and showcase a website called TeachRock.org to find biographies and to look at for inspiration and examples along with a collection of biographies in picturebook form.

In the picturebook, *I See the Rhythm* by Michele Wood and Toyomi Igus (1998), several two-page spreads highlight specific historical events and use important vocabulary to describe people and places. People, events, and phrases that we highlighted from this book include:

- Africa: Origins (pp. 4-5) Ibo, Yoruba, and Bantu kingdoms; shackles; the slave trade; the Middle Passage; the differing roles of griots
- Enslavement: Slave Songs (pp. 6-7) Nat Turner; Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad; the Fugitive Slave Act; the Civil War
- Reconstruction: Birth of the Blues (pp. 8-9) The Emancipation Proclamation; Jim Crow laws; Fisk College; Ida B. Wells; lynching
- The Great Migration: Ragtime and Jazz Beginnings (pp. 10-13) National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Madame C. J. Walker; Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association
- The Harlem Renaissance: The Sounds of Swing (pp. 14-17) the Great Depression; “race records”; Marian Anderson
- Civil Rights Movement: Cool Jazz, Gospel, and Rhythm & Blues (pp. 21-25) Brown v. the Board of Education; Rosa Parks; Septima Clarke; Martin Luther King, Jr.; the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom; the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Malcolm X
- Black Power: Black Rock and Funk (pp. 26-29) Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and the Black Panther Party; Vietnam

After exploring this book students created a timeline using Google Slides. They were asked to have at least six slides with one person, place, or event on each slide and adding vocabulary words, people, and events to the appropriate era, at least two other details from the book, and pictures, video, music, and anything else they felt was interesting.



Figure 5. Student work on Google Slides.

The slides of students often are copied and pasted information from the internet without citations. In semester two, students revisit these timelines after learning how to put the information they read into their words. This is a very difficult skill for students to master but is expected in general education classes.

The concluding activities of this unit are a focus on Juneteenth including a visit from the Black Student Union members for a question-and-answer period. Students wrote two questions to ask the union members to culminate our study. Finally, we engaged in a two-day exploration of currently available African American music and theater in Minnesota. I wrote grants to cover the cost of a visit to a theater or to have a theater come in to work with students.

Final Reflections

My heart grew seeing students' success and pride in their learning. Hearing them share their knowledge in their general education classes and seeing their confidence as learners has made me want to continue providing opportunities for them to tell their stories.

Students embraced using learning strategies such as Look, Think, and Learn, completing news articles on events, using primary and secondary sources, and finding appropriate sources for information on the internet. Since they have Individual Educational Plans, I used the lessons and activities to report their progress and was impressed at their growth in areas such as comprehension, figurative language, inferences, and choosing literature to explore on their own.

The next project I want to create is a similar unit on Central America. I have a huge array of resources from the seminar and will use what I have learned at the seminar and from completing the African American Voices (<https://wethepeople.coe.arizona.edu/2023-participant-text-sets>) as a template to create a learning plan to explore the stories and real history of Central America.

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Children’s Literature is a Powerful Tool

Roxann Hunsaker

I teach sixth-grade students in a dual language classroom, teaching half day in English and the other half in Spanish. Laurel Hill Elementary is a small community school located in Hanover Park, Illinois, just outside Chicago. We are a Title 1 school, and the population is about 90% Latinx.

Sixth grade is the year that they turn 12 and are part of the “Cool Kids Club,” no longer seeing themselves as babies. They begin to see adult themes in life, and they can handle mature discussions about difficult issues such as immigration. Throughout the school year, I read and shared texts from my Summer NEH Institute at the University of Arizona to create an inquiry around the theme of migration for the entire school year. Much of the work was tied into our unit on identity and happened at the beginning of the year. I was able to keep the theme alive across the year by reading aloud, having discussions, and exploring current events.

Mi nombre es Lizbeth

Me llamo así porque mi mamá escogió mi nombre pero le gusto tres nombres entonces tuvo opciones Lizbeth, Lizeth, Janeth (my favorite out of all:) ojala me llamara Janeth :(

Figure 1. Lizbeth’s story of her name.

In my practice, I embrace the culture of students, most of whom are of Mexican heritage. I am part Mexican and connect on a personal and professional level. We all practice the same rituals, eat the same food, and have an ofrenda in our homes. We can explore these topics together. Students feel a strong sense of belonging in the classroom and connect to the literature I have chosen because the books represent their Latinx cultures. They see themselves in books. We started the year with *Alma and How She Got Her Name* by Juana Martinez Neal (2018) and explored where they got their names, why

their family selected their names and whether they like their names. There is one example from a student named Lizbeth.

We continued exploring our identities with *La Casa en Mango Street* (Cisneros, 1991). In this book, we learn about a second-generation Chicana and the world around her. The story is set in Chicago. We learn that Esperanza does not like how her world looks—her house is too small, the neighbors too loud, her family too controlling. We focused on some of the vignettes, “Hair” being one that had strong connections. After we read it, students questioned whose hair is their’s, asking about who decided how they wear their hair. It is very common for parents in our community to decide if a girl can cut her hair. I don’t think that parents knew but, after reading the vignette, there were many haircuts.

Hairs

I loved the story hairs. I can make two connections in this story. The first connection I made is when they said that Carlo’s hair is straight and thick my hair is straight I’m not sure if my hair is thick though. And my second connection with hairs is that part where she said, “someday I will have a best friend”. When I was little I wanted a best friend and I got one she is the best .

Figure 2. Response to the short story of “Hairs” by Jenny S.

In keeping with the theme of identity, we visited the Museum of Mexican Art and saw examples of ofrendas on display in a Latinx community. We learned about the history of Mexico, where so many of the students' families are from, and explored the Mayan Civilization and Mesoamerica. We made connections to el Día de los Muertos and made papel picado. We even had a classroom ofrenda, full of photos of people we loved who passed.

Our curriculum is culturally responsive (Hammond, 2014) and I create a bridge between school and home with my choice of texts. These texts affirm students' history and culture to keep students at the center of the classroom. While this curriculum is strong, I want to keep growing and learning to adapt to changing students in a changing world. After I participated in the NEH Summer Institute, I adapted the curriculum to open up to new cultures in my classroom and developed a multimodal text set and plans (<https://wethepeople.coe.arizona.edu/2023-participant-text-sets>).



Figure 3. Ofrenda from the National Museum of Mexican Art.

I love to read aloud after lunch every day. Students calm down and get to go someplace else in their minds for 15-20 minutes. Last year, I read *Refugee* by Alan Gratz (2017) for the first time. They loved it and even took initiative to learn about the St. Louis, questioning if it was a real ship and event in Cuba. After seeing their responses to this book, I knew I could do more in my classroom and searched for summer programs for teachers, finding the NEH Institute, Migrant Waves in the Making of America at the University of Arizona.

During my time at the University of Arizona, I was exposed to Worlds of Words, literally and figuratively. I listened closely to the directors' book recommendations and critiques. I was able to better understand what makes a good text related to immigration. When I went back to my classroom, I updated a lot of my work. As a result, I created a structure for deeper understandings of identity and an awareness of unfamiliar cultures and worlds. We explored migration and why people move. We had a newcomer in our classroom, so he helped provide insight into the experience of being uprooted and feeling like you don't belong.

The movement in the curriculum because of these connections was exciting. We connected to migrants coming to our area since it was current news. We watched Chicago react to Venezuelans arriving, along with other asylum seekers. Some students felt like it was not fair for others to come legally when many of their parents did not. On a personal note, we received a Venezuelan friend of the family whom we decided to sponsor. We read *Ground Zero* by Alan Gratz (2021) about 9/11. In that book, students started to look at the perspective of the people of Afghanistan, not just the U.S. perspective. They began to understand how the people of other countries may not appreciate the U.S. government.

We watched and analyzed the movie “I Learn America” by Jean-Michel Dissard (2013). In this documentary, we follow the lives of newcomers at a high school in New York, learning about Muslim, Polish, Laotian, and Guatemalan students. Students thought about the world beyond the United States and Mexico. They were able to ask questions like, Do Muslim girls want to wear a hijab? Is it ok to be transgender? and we talked about the significance of tolerance. This movie invited students into great discussions about other cultures.

We read picturebooks as well as novels, all due to my time at the summer institute. The first read aloud, *The Land of the Cranes* by Aida Salazar (2020), led students to ask for more of this type of book every day. We connected to issues about crossing the border, encampment, family, and belonging. We read *Dreamers* by Yuyi Morales (2018). *Areli is a Dreamer* by Areli Morales (2021) was what started a conversation around DACA recipients, including one of our sixth-grade teachers. We read *My Two Border Towns* by David Bowles (2021) and our newcomer was so happy to see himself in a story. I read *All the Stars Denied* by Guadalupe Garcia McCall (2018) and compared the story to today how ICE treats undocumented people. As an attendee of the institute, I met the author, Guadalupe Garcia McCall, and she explained how she began to write children’s books, and I could share that story with students. She wrote a book based on her writing with her students and one of her students telling her, “Teacher, you should write a book!”

Other books we read included many different picturebooks by Duncan Tonatiuh. We also read *Somos como las nubes/We Are Like Clouds* (2016) by Jorge Argueta and *Hear My Voice/Escucha mi voz* interviews compiled by Warren Binford (2021). The graphic novel *When Stars are Scattered* (2020) by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohammed (2020) was passed around as well as the graphic novel *Borders* by Thomas King (2021).

When students leave Laurel Hill, they go on to middle school, so having exposure to other cultures in sixth grade better prepares them to work with people who are not like them in their school contexts. By giving them exposure to global cultures through literature, they are more likely to work towards making the world a better place. The books and discussions open up pathways to develop empathy toward characters from cultures beyond their own, creating a pathway to learn about others.

In reflecting, I can see that my previous goal of instilling pride in culture and acceptance of being in a community that is not White has been achieved. Students are proud to be Mexican and to be Latinx. They play with other sixth graders who do not look like them. Students are now self-desegregating. The goal for us is connecting to others who differ from their own culture. We need to see differences as normal. Interactions with cultures beyond our own can teach us a lot—if we are open to learning.

“Children’s books, which present subtle truths in simple terms, offer a valuable tool in retaining our moral bearings, especially amid a maelstrom of grief and rage.” -Miriam Udel (November 9, 2023) New York Times

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“I Have the Right”: Connecting the Human Body to Human Rights

Holly Hardin

“I have the right to have a name, a nationality, an identity... I have the right to go to school... I have the right to be protected from racism. And I have the right to be loved.” Reza Dalvand’s (2023) book *I Have the Right: An Affirmation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* kicked off our unit on the human body for our science class. My seventh and eighth graders, despite wanting to be adults on so many levels, also love being read picturebooks from time to time and making big idea connections, so were captivated and willing to engage with me on how this might link to the human body. After reading the brightly colored, beautifully illustrated book, we used a consensus map to create a list of other rights we believe we all have or should have, before taking a look at the actual UN declaration. As we shared our maps, we discussed different commonalities and differences. I asked them who or why people might be denied these rights, or how migration might positively or negatively affect them.

The next day I began laying out the unit in a familiar project format. I shared with them that in exploring our body systems—digestive, reproductive, skeletal, muscular, endocrine, nervous, excretory, and circulatory—we must ask ourselves how these systems are impacted by our surroundings, and that our project would help us do this. Like many things in our classroom, much of the work along the way is ungraded, but the prep work and research is essential for the final outcome. Students received a checklist to see these steps laid out, even though we weren’t starting the actual project right away, as a way to see where we were heading.

Reframing Our Human Body Study Around Human Rights

I teach in a combined seventh and eighth grade class in a public Montessori magnet school in Durham, North Carolina. I cycle through two groups of 25 students each day that make up our 50-person community, as we call it. Each year we welcome about 25 new students into our community as seventh graders, as we continue to build with the rising eighth graders. Students are not separated by grade for instruction, and when it comes to science, we simply focus on the seventh-grade curriculum one year and eighth grade the next, as neither depends on the other.

Though I primarily teach science and math, our school is configured in a way that we are encouraged to collaborate across subject matter. This includes one day in our schedule where we open a moveable wall between our two classrooms and students engage in open work time, as well as cross curricular project work or field studies. Even when not directly collaborating, working so closely with just one other teacher means I am able to build off of lessons from humanities, allowing even more depth within our science and math work, which was the case for this project.

In summer 2023, I attended the NEH Summer Institute entitled “We The People: Migrant Waves in the Making of America” where we examined migration as a constant in US history, through a focus on the untold and silenced stories of people of color often left out of traditional narratives. At the end of the institute, we worked to create our own text sets, applying what we learned to our own classrooms. In

deciding which science unit to use, I thought about the one that I was often least excited about teaching, in part because I had no project or grounding study within it that helped students create meaning. For me, this was our seventh-grade human body unit. A clunky unit, with very generic and broad standards, there was a lot of room to envision both a text set and accompanying project for students. Additionally, students would have just finished a unit on migration and would be concurrently studying dystopian literature in humanities, a topic that quite lends itself to a discussion of human rights and control of human bodies.

To create this text set (<https://wethepeople.coe.arizona.edu/2023-participant-text-sets>), I asked myself a couple of questions linking our science unit to the topics of the summer: How is our body connected to the land? How does bodily autonomy change when we move, stay, or return to a place? How does our study of the human body systems link to migration and a study of human rights? I knew I wanted to focus on body systems under the framework of bodily autonomy and how the presence or absence of human rights impacts the body itself. In this political moment, with growing attacks on women, nonbinary, and trans people, this project seemed even more relevant, as the concept of bodily sovereignty to captures all the pieces of where we live that affect how we care for our bodies.

As I collected books, film, and other pertinent texts, I tried to organize the works under six categories: The Right to Eat Our Own Foods; The Right to Reproductive Freedom; The Right to Be Safe in Our Bodies; The Right to Love and Be Loved; The Right to Maintain Our Connections to the Land; and The Right to Play. I anchored each right with a poem, and made sure each included picturebooks, young adult novels, a visual component, and interactive websites. Though many of the texts could fall under a multitude of human rights, and for the project students did not necessarily know how I categorized them, this gave me a starting point for gathering the inspiration for our unit. In this article, I'll share about the project that utilized and was built on this text set.

Inspiration from the Texts

After a few days of whole class overviews on the science behind each body system, making sure each student had a basic understanding of function and related organs, we took a day to explore the other picturebooks in our text set. Books were laid out at stations, where students were given time to explore the books and think on two main questions: What human rights do you think the books are discussing & why? And what body systems might be linked to or affected by the protection or denial of that human right?

Just as teachers loved the time to explore text sets in the NEH Summer Institute, students also eased into the idea of snuggling up on the flexible seating in the room with their group and trying to answer the questions. I spread books from my text set, along with a few additional titles I had identified, across tables around the room. A few tables offered both a picturebook and a YA novel, like *We Are Water Protectors* (Lindstrom & Goade, 2020) and *Amazona* (Canizales, 2022), whenever they had similar themes. They were welcome to explore either, but my hopes were in our limited amount of time to pique their interest in the YA novel to come back to, which students did throughout the year. One student made their way through multiple selections by Aida Salazar after reading *Land of the Cranes* (Salazar, 2022) liking her writing in verse. One student picked up *Hear My Voice/Escucha mi voz*

(Binford, 2021) every day for two weeks during our solo time—a 15-minute time in the day where students engage in a solo activity silently—carefully studying each illustration, going back and forth between English and Spanish.

The only thing I would change about this particular part of the experience would potentially be to stretch it over a two-day period or utilize our flexible Wednesday schedule for a longer experience, as students were desirous of more time dedicated to just the texts. I think that would also have allowed me to share some of my non-written texts, such as the artwork, photography, and online material to explore, which I had left out of the stations. While I gave the class the link to my text set for later research, I think that is a very different experience than protected time to explore it, especially for students for whom research is newer. Students were much more likely to return to the picturebooks than any others. When most students had picked their ideas, and even were far along into their project, one student who seemed particularly stuck I encouraged to go back to those titles. After a class period of exploring, he brought up *Salma the Syrian Chef* and excitedly knew that his focus would be on the right to eat food (See Figure 1).

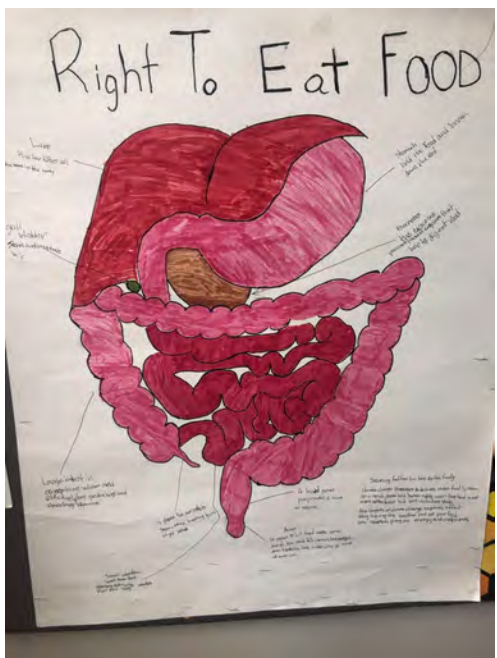


Figure 1. Student's poster on his right to eat food, inspired by *Salma the Syrian Chef*.

The next day we reflected on what we noticed about themes, body systems, and human rights. This reflection made discussing the culminating project easier, both because the books provided support potentially in picking a body system or human right for students needing more scaffolding, but also in providing inspiration in the illustrations and links to real life phenomena, some of which directly affected them. As often occurs, a student questioned the link to science. I let other students provide answers for this, but also shared that part of our responsibility is to learn how our body systems function so that we can better care for our physical needs and the needs of others.

One aspect of the project would be detailed science research about at least one system to learn more about its organs, their specific functions, and how they are impacted by outside conditions. But another piece involved how knowing scientific facts are used to shape our society. If we know what our bodies all need, we can also examine what human rights should be protected to better meet those needs. It's a real-world application that we see play out in the world around us, from not having safe

places to play, to being forced to live in a polluted area, or the very devastating impact of war. All of these conditions can greatly impact our physical and mental wellbeing, and we can use many things to justify the need to shift conditions, including science.

Project Plans

At this point the project became more self-paced, and students had to make their way through a deeper exploration of a few systems of their choice through readings, simulations, microscope work, and

more. This work allowed students to better know the body so they could land on what they might choose to focus on for their project; take a checkpoint on their basic understanding of all the systems and general functions; begin the required research for their project; and submit a project proposal. The project plan (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OrN0kp8hJZNX4Cr3PLfJ8A01WUwQEjn4/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109139836046862980215&rtpof=true&sd=true>) that I gave to students provided structure for this work. Some of these pieces could be done as a group, to balance out the project which was going to be an independent endeavor. The classroom was full of activity over the next week as students worked through these tasks, at times revisiting the text set, both of their own accord, and sometimes in encouragement from me if they were stuck in the planning stage.

Throughout, another immediate world issue was at hand, directly connected to the uptick in force in the genocide in Palestine. During the last days where the body systems were being introduced, a student mid-endocrine system lesson turned and started shouting at a Muslim student in our classroom. We all froze. Before I could even process what was happening and start to escort the student out of the room, a few voices lifted, speaking over his continued retorts: “That is not right!”, “That’s racist!”, “Stop bullying him.” I came back into the room after getting the student to a safe place to process, to several students checking on their classmate, doing what they could to make sure he was OK. Proud of students’ responses, but still very shaken up as a class, it made the next day’s lesson on human rights seem even more pertinent.

When the young person who yelled anti-Muslim language returned to the classroom several days later, it was soon clear that something had shifted, and that he had partaken in more nuanced conversations about the attack on Gaza with his family. This happened as I worked with him 1:1 to give him an abbreviated version of what others had done, and when I asked him what human rights he could name, he immediately shared “The right to food, though the United States and Israel don’t think that’s a right.” For this student, being able to be in control of what he was learning and coming to his own conclusions was really important in how he processed things. The fact that he might undertake a project that had him reflect on his own behaviors, that wasn’t being forced by an adult, was critical. It also helped aid the healing process within our own classroom.

As students started to form their project plans, they met 1:1 with me, to assess what they might still need in terms of research (especially around the human right itself) and in project materials, but also added their human right to a group art piece in the shape which was displayed as part of our project showcase (see Figure 2). We had discussed the multi-faceted meanings of a heart, from our emotions, to love, to the central idea or driving force of a group, to its actual anatomical purpose, so this image seemed to be a good tie into our project. Again, it also served to be a repository of ideas that helped those who were stuck have a list of rights all in one place, and helped other students know someone else was working on a similar idea if they needed a thought partner during their work on their final project.



Figure 2. Classroom watercolor heart mosaic spotlighting all of the human rights we were researching.

In addition to the formal checklist of work that students completed during this unit, we did more informal reflections throughout to spur ideas, including linking it to their humanities work. This often happened at the start of class when we were still all together, before students set forth on their work plans for the day. In the first quarter students discussed migration, which can impact people's bodies in all sorts of ways, both positive and negative: from having to move away from foods that were staple parts of your diet, to moving to find safety in expressing your gender identity. So one question discussed was: How are our body systems impacted by our movement and our surroundings? In the same quarter students were engaged in dystopian studies, which usually are situated around societies that make

decisions affecting citizens' rights, so we asked: How do we know if these decisions are good for us? What things in society might not let our body systems function as they should? For example, how do things like the right to play protect the health of our circulatory system; or the right to clean air affect our respiratory systems? Having these mini seminars both to kickoff class, as well as on our Wednesdays which are more open worktime days, served to get students thinking about the ways rights and our bodies are inextricably linked in a variety of ways.

The research for the project had 7 parts.

1. Purpose/Function of your organ system
2. Organs and parts of this system (this should include details about what they are/how they function)
3. Using the UN Declaration on Human Rights on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, what human right is linked to your organ system & how it is connected?
4. Using your own research or one of the current event/case study articles provided by Ms. Hardin, find 2 current events that spotlight your right and organ system and has an impact on them.
5. How might being denied that right affect your body system?
6. Does it lead to disease or medical conditions? Name at least 2 diseases or medical conditions. Include symptoms and how the problems are treated (if treatable).
7. Identify at least 2 ways we can protect this human right and thus protect or improve the quality of your organ system.

In this process, I failed to have what students needed initially for the fourth question well compiled, which was arguably the hardest part for students to find. In two years when I lead this project again, I will definitely work on locating more sources for students to access so their reliance on me becomes less. Otherwise, students were self-sufficient in completing this work.

Showcasing Their Learning

Once their research was complete, students had some flexibility in how they showcased this learning including, but not limited to a formal paper, poster, presentation/slides, brochure, model with labels, illustrated children’s book, dystopian short story, proposal for the city or county government of Durham, an analysis of the rules of the dystopian society in their humanities novel to address how they each limit or increase the functions of the human body, or a detailed book synopsis (using one of the books from our text set).

The majority of students chose a poster for this part of the work (see Figure 3a, 3b, & 3c), though most of the choices were selected by at least one student, including a dystopian short story about a future society of chickens that were experiencing many injustices around the denial of trans rights.

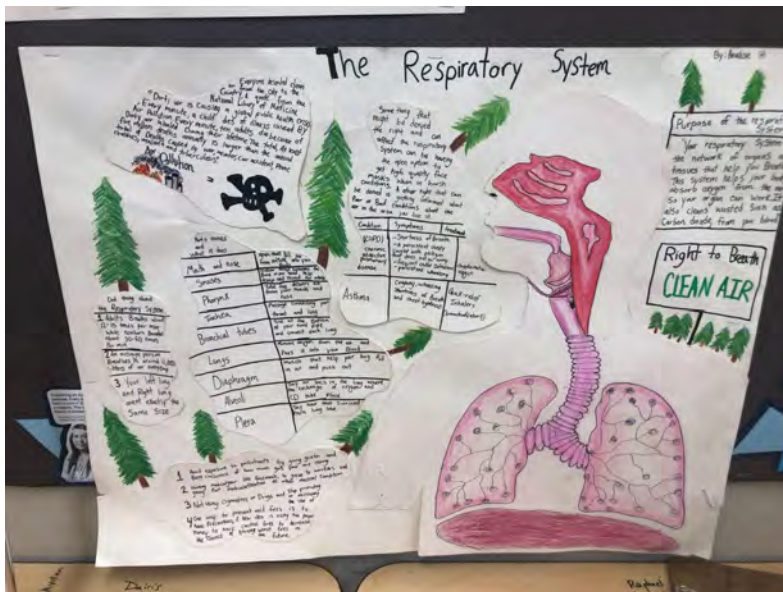


Figure 3a. This student linked the right to breathe clean air with the functions of the respiratory system.

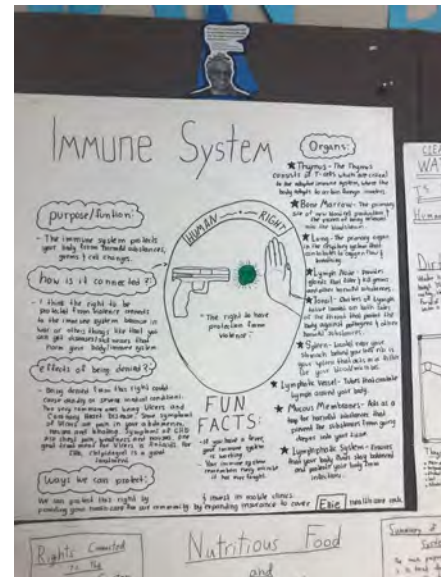


Figure 3b. This student assessed the impact of stress caused by violence to the immune system and the right to have protection from violence.

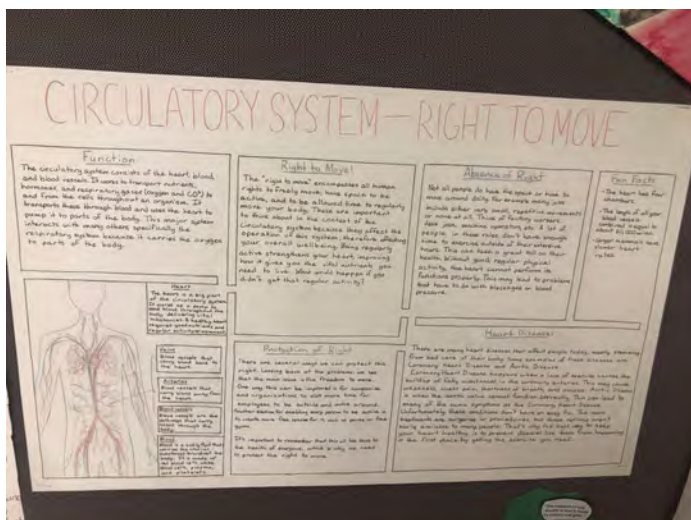


Figure 3c. This student connected the circulatory system and the right to move to highlight how some people’s jobs deny them this right by forcing them into sedentary jobs or ones that only have small, repetitive movements such as factory workers.

Several students made very personal choices in the direction of their project. This included a student whose family had ties to Vietnam wanting to focus on chemical warfare (see Figure 4), a student whose family had immigrated across the US-Mexico border being really interested in the right to food and its links to immigration, and two trans students focusing on rights around bodily autonomy.

History of Agent Orange

During the Vietnam war American soldiers dropped a chemical weapon called Agent Orange, a blend of tactical herbicides, on the forests and vegetation in Vietnam. They dropped it on the forest because the landscape in Vietnam is much more complex than the U.S., and American soldiers couldn't navigate through it. Agent Orange was very harmful as you could contract symptoms/effects by touching it, inhaling it, and consuming contaminated goods. Such effects include, deformities, cancers like lung, blood, and bladder cancers, and birth defects. In Vietnam, research shows a large increase in the risk of birth defects among children whose parents were exposed to Agent Orange. In some places, very high levels of dioxins have been found in soil, sediment, food, and even human breast milk.

Agent Orange and other Chemical Weapons Today

While the chemical weapon, Agent Orange, is no longer in use, other chemical weapons still are in war situations. One of them is white phosphorus which, although its restricted under the International Humanitarian Law, was last used in October 2023 in the War between Israel and Lebanon and Gaza. Some less strong ones that may still be used are tear gas, nerve gas, and pepper spray which is a smaller one that is used more consistently, usually for self defense.



Figure 4. Two slides from a student who focused on the impact of chemical weapons on the nervous system and the right of civilians to the International Humanitarian Law, focusing on Agent Orange and the Vietnam War, as well as chemical weapons used today.

An eighth grader recalled a case study from a short film we watched when he was in seventh grade and pushed himself by choosing a body system not in our curriculum (see Figure 5). Another student who immediately on Day 1 knew he wanted to focus on radiation and radioactive metals did more reading for his project than possibly everyone else combined. Two students, who maybe went less in depth on their projects, learned so many skills on Canva to take going forward.

One parent commented during student-led conferences that when her daughter first told her about the project she was honestly confused about the link between human body and human rights. As her daughter was able to pose questions and articulate many of the discussions we had in class her mother became our biggest supporter and was thinking about how she might apply this to her own work with college and high school age young people.

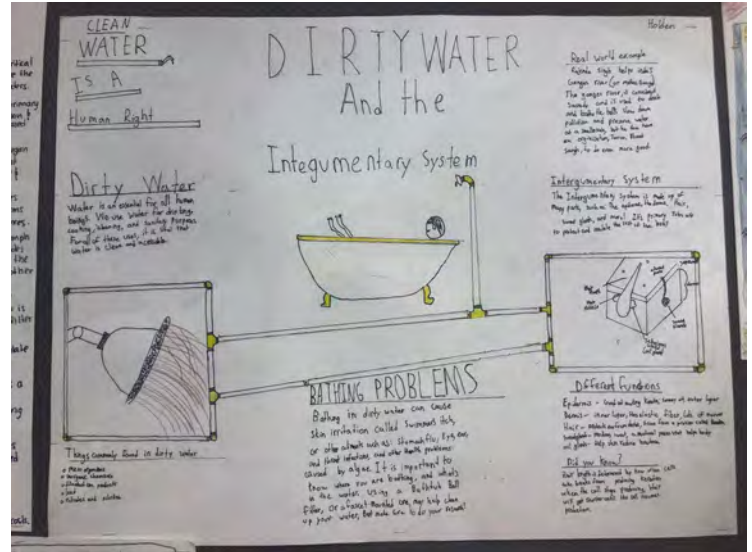


Figure 5. Though the integumentary system is not part of our curriculum, this student completed extra research and connected this system to the right to clean water, highlighting the work of Rajendra Singh on the Ganges River.

Final Reflections

The inclusion of a text set into a science unit is one that I hope to repeat again this year, and potentially over time build for all my units, even if not utilizing a complex text set for a project like this one. The value of exposing students to new titles, that they might not pick up otherwise, felt valuable as it created connections to the subject matter that I may have not been able to facilitate in our curriculum alone. This especially was true with utilizing picturebooks in a middle school setting, as everyone was able to engage with them, and offered a way to begin engaging in heavy or difficult topics, such as detainment at the border or food insecurity, from the point of view of someone closer to their age.

One of my initial goals for my text set, that I did not get to engage in, was centered around the right to play. The summer I was making my text set, lead was being found in community parks in Durham from incinerators built in the early 1900s, and seemingly linked to health impacts in those communities. Students did interact with one of my main texts of this section during our day of exploring titles (a book called *La Calle es Libre/The Streets are Free* (Kurusa, 1998), which I only had written in the original Spanish, which allowed students to rely on each other and picture clues to read), and a few students chose this right to focus on- linking it to a variety of body systems impacted by play. However, my original hopes had been to extend into more of a neighborhood study on the topic, utilizing youth participatory action research and oral history to investigate and act on the issue in our community. I think perhaps the individual project combined with this larger group investigation was too big of a goal to fit inside the time constraints of a state mandated curriculum, but I hope in the future to build a different text set out that could pair with community-based student work.

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