



WOW REVIEW

READING ACROSS CULTURES
VOLUME XI, ISSUE 2

Winter 2018

Trauma

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College
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Education

WOW Review: Volume XI Issue 2
Winter 2018
Trauma

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Contributors to This Issue:

Maria Acevedo-Aquino, Texas A&M San Antonio
Susan Corapi, Trinity International University
Desiree Cueto, Western Washington University
Holly Johnson, University of Cincinnati
Prisca Martens, Towson University
Megan McCaffrey, Governors University
Nithya Sivashankar, Ohio State University
Katie Walker, Coastal Carolina University

Editors:

Susan Corapi, Trinity International University, Deerfield, IL
Prisca Martens, Towson University, Towson, MD

Production Editor:

Blair Krakowitz, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ



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Based on a work at <http://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volume-xi-issue-2/>

Volume XI Issue 2: Trauma

Introduction

Trauma is a word originally from Greek that literally means 'wound.' The wounds profiled in this issue span emotional, physical and intellectual trauma and impact children of all ages, all over the world. Trauma is a universal experience, and this issue gives readers a look at wounds that hurt regardless of age or location.

A feeling of being traumatized is usually generated by an event. Several of the titles in this issue involve war and the sudden intrusion of gunfire, bombs, grenades and death into children's lives--*The Day the War Came* and *Grenade*. Other titles portray the violence and danger of civil unrest or living within an oppressive regime--*Walk with Me* and *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree*. Sometimes a bully instigates the trauma--*The Stars at Oktober Bend* and *Amal Unbound*. In other titles it is an illness (*Dorothea's Eyes*), an episode of depression (*Night Shift*), death of loved ones (*Calling the Water Drum*), or coping with being a teen in a new culture (*Anya's Ghost*). The titles demonstrate that trauma can occur in many ways.

If the stories stopped with a description of the traumatic events, they would be a depressing set of books to read! But just as the trauma portrayed covers a range of instigators, they also portray the hope, the perseverance, and the tools that each protagonist uses to cope and survive. In *The Stars at Oktober Bend*, Alice uses her own poetry to regain her voice, and, in *Calling the Water Drum*, Henri uses a musical instrument to communicate the grief his mouth cannot express. In *Walk with Me*, the sister cares for her young brother with the help of an imaginary lion, and in *Night Shift*, it is the sight of a simple feather that helps give hope to a depressed young woman.

Stories of trauma give hope. While the events in these stories can be hard to read about, the resiliency of the human spirit comes through.

We invite submission of critical book reviews! The next themes and submission deadlines are below.

Spring 2019: Open-themed issue, submission deadline Feb. 15, 2019

Summer 2019: Global Non-Fiction themed issue, submission deadline May 15, 2019

We invite critical book reviews of informational texts that portray global cultures in some way. This includes the range of titles that are typically shelved with the Dewey system in a public library. They can be created by global author/illustrators, feature information from other parts of

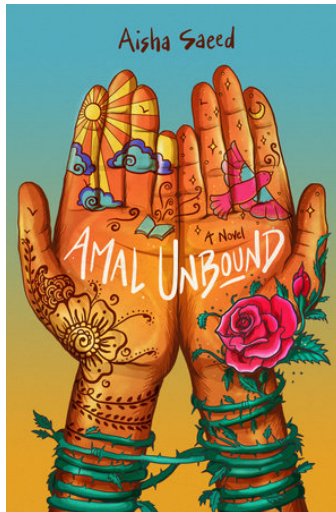
the world, or feature biographies of people who have made an impact on their part of the world.

Susan Corapi and Prisca Martens, Editors

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Amal Unbound

Written by Aisha Saeed

Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018, 226 pp

ISBN: 978-0399544682

Set in a tiny Punjabi village in Pakistan, Saeed's middle-grade novel deals with the travails and trauma of a young girl who is forced into indentured servitude by a local landlord. The narrative opens with a scene in Amal's school and establishes up front her love of learning and her aspirations to become a teacher when she grows up. Her mother is pregnant, and Amal recognizes that, as the eldest daughter, she is expected to be by her mother's side and help her by taking care of her little sisters. She tells her teacher that she cannot stay after school to help clean the classroom because her father

wants her back home. At the end of the first chapter, the reader learns that this will be Amal's "last afternoon at school" (p.4).

As the story moves on, Saeed shows us Amal's life at home after her mother's childbirth. Her conservative parents are unhappy because their fifth child is also a girl, and her mother subsequently suffers from postpartum depression. As a result, Amal is forced to stay at home and take care of the chores as well as her younger sisters. One afternoon, unable to handle her sisters' clamor and her mother's endless silence, Amal takes off to the market. At the vegetable and fruit store, her eyes fall upon two red pomegranates and she considers them to be "the sign of hope [she] needed. A bit of sweetness after all the bitterness" (p.48). She feels happy having purchased the delicious-looking fruit, but is hit by a car as soon as she steps out of the shop. Amal is badly bruised and her groceries scattered, when the person whose car rammed into her walks up, holding her pomegranate in his hand. He offers to drop her home but asks her for the fruit, which his mother loves. She refuses to give the pomegranate, saying that "it was the last one" and is "not for sale" (p.50). "Tired of feeling powerless" and tired of denying her "own needs because someone else needed something," she yells at him, snatches the fruit and walks away (p.50). She learns only the next afternoon that the person she had stood up against is Jawad Sahib, the village's most powerful and ruthless landlord.

Amal learns that her father owes money to Jawad Sahib, and that this incident could complicate things for her and her family. Subsequently, the heartless landlord pays a visit to her house and declares that if her father is unable to pay back the money, Amal will need to live at his estate and work for him to pay off her father's debts. The story then chronicles Amal's life as an indentured servant at Jawad Sahib's home, working as a domestic help and trying to stay out of trouble. It renders her trauma and agony in being forcefully separated from her home as well as her yearning for freedom and education. *Amal Unbound* ends on a happy and hopeful note, presenting the protagonist as a fighter who not only overcomes her own struggles but also liberates her fellow-indentured-servants and the villagers from the clutches of the powerful landlord and his family.

Saeed's novel can be used in middle-grade classrooms to initiate discussions on modern slavery, gender bias, power, and the right to education. It provides a window into hierarchical structures that exist in societies globally, and serves to tell a story of a girl who questions and acts against the status quo. *Amal Unbound* can be paired with narratives about Malala Yousafzai including Yousafzai's and Patricia McCormick's (2014) *I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World*, and Yousafzai's and Kerascoët's (2017) *Malala's Magic Pencil*. It can also be taught along with books about strong women such as Chelsea Clinton and Alexandra Boiger's (2018) *She Persisted Around the World: 13 Women Who Changed History*, and with those about modern slavery such as *Hidden Girl: The True Story of a Modern-Day Child Slave* by Shyima Hall and Lisa Wysocky (2014).

Aisha Saeed is a Pakistani-American writer and is one of the founding members of the We Need Diverse Books initiative. Her debut novel, *Written in the Stars* (2015) about forced marriage, set in Pakistan is targeted towards young adult readers, and *Amal Unbound* is her first novel for middle-graders. Her picturebook titled *Bilal Cooks Daal* is due to be published in 2019. In addition to writing books for children and young adults, Aisha's works have also appeared in the ALAN journal and the *Orlando Sentinel*. To learn more about her, visit <http://aishasaeed.com>.

Nithya Sivashankar, Ohio State University

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Anya's Ghost

Written & Illustrated by Vera Brosgol

Square Fish, 2011, 240 pp

ISBN: 978-1250040015

Vera Brosgol spins a chilling tale of teenage self-acceptance and friendship in this gripping graphic novel. Anya Borzakovskaya is strong young woman who is struggling to find her place in a world that pressures girls to fit certain expectations. As an immigrant to the U.S., she fears that her Russian accent and heritage have cast her as an outsider. She rejects her family's food, fearing that she's too fat, works hard to lose her accent, lies about her last name, and constantly worries about coming across as "fobby" – fresh off the boat.

Her only friend is a tough Irish girl whom she cuts class to smoke with. The boy that she thinks she's in love with is currently dating the prettiest girl in school.

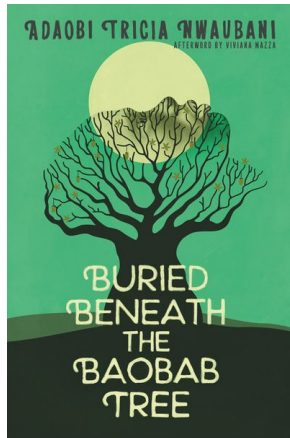
After an incident in the park, she befriends a ghost girl and it seems that life begins to improve. As the friendship between Anya and the ghost progresses, things begin to unravel and Anya realizes that nothing is as it appears. In the end, Anya realizes that the very things she rejected are now the things she must preserve by defeating a demonic spirit. *Anya's Ghost* has all of the elements of a young adult novel with its brutally honest portrayal of the trauma of life for a teen immigrant and of a fairy tale that reminds us that good conquers evil only when we accept who we are and hold our family dear.

The gray-scale artwork lends a dark humor to the novel. The images are visually pleasing and successfully enhance the storyline, driving the reader forward to see what happens next. Brosgol expertly uses her imagery to provide varying perspectives and to draw her reader deep into Anya's world. The artwork and the narrative pair beautifully to create a page-turning experience for the reader.

This text could be paired with *Hansel & Gretel* (Neil Gaiman & Lorenzo Mattotti, 2014) and *The Sleeper and the Spindle* (Neil Gaiman & Chris Riddell, 2014) to examine the elements of fairy tale, author's purpose, varying perspectives, and the use of visuals and media to influence a message. It could also be paired with *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (Stephen Chbosky, 1999) and *The Outsiders* (S. E. Hinton, 1967) to examine the elements of novel and social themes that are common issues for teenagers such as identity, social expectations, or relationships. Another possibility are books on immigrant experiences.

Vera Brosgol is an award-winning author who lives in Portland, Oregon. Anya's authentic voice and experience are natural extensions of Brosgol's own experience as a first-generation immigrant from Moscow, Russia who spent most of her life in the United States. According to an interview with Brosgol, the big difference between herself and Anya was that Brosgol was a good student in school.

Katie Walker, Coastal Carolina University
© Katie Walker



Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree

Written by Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani

HarperCollins, 2018, 330 pp

ISBN: 978-0-06-269672-4

"You belong to Boko Haram," the Leader says. "You are now our slaves." (p. 111)

Based on the abduction of 276 Nigerian girls by the Boko Haram in 2014, this book chronicles the captivity of those girls and the 57 girls who escaped when the terrorist group's compound came under attack in 2016. Told in first person, short vignettes, the story of one girl, "Ya-Ta" (my daughter), stands as representative for several of the "daughters" who were kidnapped and escaped from the Boko Haram. Abducted, forced to either convert to Islam or be killed (and buried under the baobab tree), and then "married" to their captors, many of the girls do what is necessary to survive. It is the story of their survival that creates such a compelling read. Not all the girls merely survive; many are brainwashed into the thinking of their captors and participate in some of their terrorist acts.

Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree is a riveting story that gives an inside view of the terrorist group plaguing the Borno area of Nigeria. Readers are first grounded in the context of life in the village of Chibok (the village from which the girls were abducted) as explained by several girls who were abducted and other primary sources. It is a life of hope and happiness with a vague concern about the Boko Haram. The narrator's story is about a gifted girl who hopes to go to university and has just found out she has won a scholarship. Ya-Ta can follow her dreams! Those dreams are horribly thwarted, however, when she witnesses the destruction of her village and is taken forcibly from her home.

Not only is this a chronicle that tells a compelling story with authentic details and characterization, it is a testimony to the resilience of those who lived through the harrowing and traumatic experiences while under the control of the Boko Haram. It also stands as a powerful indictment of the cruelty propagated by the Boko Haram and its perversion of the beauty of Islam.

Two pieces of fiction that complement this text include *The Red Pencil* by Andrea Davis Pinkney (2015) and *Lost Girl Found* by Leah Bassoff and Laura DeLuca (2014), both of which give accounts of girls who show resilience in dire situations. *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree* could also be included in a text set about young people who strive and survive. Books for this set could include *Golden Boy* by Tara Sullivan (2014), *Escape from Aleppo* by N.H. Senzai (2018), *The Smell of Other People's Houses* by Bonnie-Sue Hitchcock (2017), *Amal Unbound* by Aisha Saeed (2018), *A Land of Permanent Goodbyes* by Atia Abawi (2018), and *Harbor Me* by Jacqueline Woodson (2018).

Nwaubani worked with Italian journalist Vivianna Mazza on the research for this book. Together they traveled to the Borno region of Nigeria and interviewed those who could give an account of the events that occurred on April 14, 2014 and then the subsequent accounts of being held

by the Boko Haram. Mazza wrote the afterward explaining the events that surround this fictionalized account.

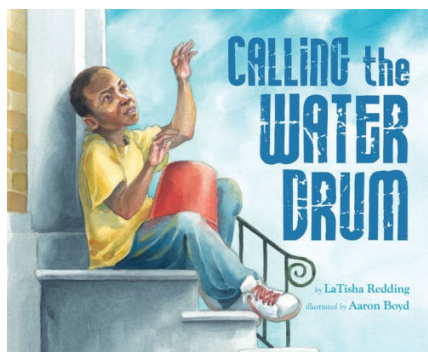
Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani is a Nigerian writer, essayist, and journalist who has won several awards for her writings. Born in Nigeria in 1976, she won her first writing competition at the age of 13 and has a column on the BBC website from the “Letter from Africa” section. Nwaubani lives in Abuja, Nigeria. Her other works include *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009) as well as articles for the BBC, the *New York Times*, Al Jazeera, CNN, and *Sunday Express* among others. She also has several videos that detail some of the atrocities women and children face in parts of Nigeria and Africa, including one, “Beyond Boko Haram” (2017), which readers might find of interest. More information on Nwaubani can be found at: <https://adaobitricia.com>.

Holly Johnson, University of Cincinnati

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Calling the Water Drum

Written by LaTisha Redding

Illustrated by Aaron Boyd

Lee & Low Books, 2016, 32 pp

ISBN: 978-1620141946

Henri is a young boy living in Haiti with his mother (Man-man) and his father (Papa). One day Henri's Uncle Jacques from New York City invites Henri and his parents to move there and live with him. Jacques sends money along with the invitation so that they can buy a boat for the trip. There is only enough money for Papa to buy a small, rickety boat that they are not aware has a small hole. The family sets out; however, the trip quickly turns dangerous and the boat capsizes. Papa places Henri on top of the boat for safety as he and Manman slowly drift away. The next day Henri is picked up by other Haitians on a bigger boat and makes it safely to Florida. The note his mother put in his pocket has his uncle's name and contact information which allows Henri to find safety in the United States.

Traumatized with grief, Henri no longer speaks. Without speech, Henri has only a plastic water bucket to speak for him. Henri's friend Karrine tells him to thump on it once for yes and twice for no. Henri's bucket soon becomes his drum, reminding him of his parents and his life in Haiti when he regularly carried a bucket to market for clean water. The bucket becomes a link to his past and both figuratively and literally an instrument for expressing his emotions. Through his drumming and his uncle's and friends' kindness, Henri is able to slowly find his way in his new home without his parents.

The illustrations are bright, beautiful and detailed. Boyd's watercolors show Henri's emotional disposition in the ocean and vividly detail the dangers of crossing the ocean in a rowboat. Boyd's illustrations expressively convey the sentiments of hope, danger, trauma, and finally hope again with the use of bold primary colors.

Calling the Water Drum delves into challenging concepts around the theme of immigration such as loss, grief, and trauma. The story highlights realities faced by individuals from all over the world who seek a better life out of poverty or refuge from harm in another country. The topic of immigration is appropriate for discussion in any classroom in the United States as it is a subject that affects all individuals. Circumstances of the immigration experience are vast, and providing students with many examples allows them to have a broad perspective on the subject. *Calling the Water Drum* offers students a powerful story from a child's point of view. As the author, Redding stated in an interview "Henri's story is painful, yes, and it's full of hope too." Every immigration story does not have a perfect ending, but rather offers a better understanding of the experience to outsiders looking in at the experience, and connections for those who share an immigration experience.

Calling the Water Drum can be paired with books to cover a number of themes though trauma or immigration seem to be the most natural fit. Other children's literature appropriate to pair with this story are *Marvelous Cornelius: Hurricane Katrina and the Spirit of New Orleans* by Phil

Bildner and John Parra (2015) and *A Storm Called Katrina* by Myron Uhlberg and Colin Bootman (2015). Both of these books deal with the aftermath and displacement of individuals from Hurricane Katrina. Henri's friend, Karrine, in the story *Calling the Water Drum*, was displaced after Hurricane Katrina to New York, and similar to Henri lost her father in the storm; secondly, students can learn that reasons for individuals immigrating can also take place within the United States such as natural disasters.

Calling the Water Drum is LaTisha Redding's first picturebook. She was inspired to write this story based on the memories of childhood Haitian friends' stories of how they arrived in the United States. In the endnotes of the book, Redding tells readers that when she moved to New York City as a child from the southern United States, she had many classmates who had immigrated to America from around the world. Each of her classmates had their own immigration story, but all her Haitian classmates' stories were much different because they were full of risk and death. Those stories stayed with Redding and she dedicates this story to them. Today, Redding lives in Florida.

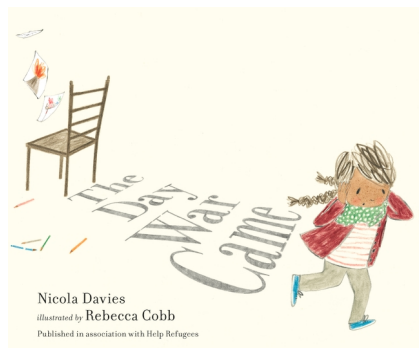
Aaron Boyd has been an illustrator for over 20 years and has illustrated over 30 books. He lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Several books he has illustrated include *Janna and the Kings* (2016) and *Babu's Song* (2008), both Lee & Low Books. His work has been recognized by the Children's Africana Book Award and the International Literacy Association (ILA). His medium of choice is watercolor but he has stated that he also dabbles in inks, paper, crayon and oils.

Megan McCaffrey, Governor's University

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The Day War Came

Written by Nicola Davies

Illustrated by Rebecca Cobb

Candlewick, 2018, 32 pp

ISBN: 9781406376326

In our human interactions and our interactions with books, hosting someone else's story requires us to stand with and listen with greater openness, which then allows us to build a more just world. Of all the books I've read this year, none has

caused me to consider the significance of hosting more than *The Day War Came*. Written by Nicola Davies and illustrated by Rebecca Cobb, the book asks readers to, "Imagine if...". On the opening spread, a little girl sits at the kitchen table, eating breakfast with her family before heading off to school. Flowers are set on the windowsill, her father sings a lullaby to her baby brother, and her mother kisses her on the nose. The school day begins like any other day. Cobb's illustrations, a mixture of ink, watercolor, colored pencil, and pencil, show the little girl and her classmates learning about volcanos and tadpoles and drawing pictures to be hung on the classroom walls. Then, war comes, and everything changes. On the pages that follow, visual depictions of a darkened town in the aftermath of an attack spill out to the edges of the paper. Davies' conveys trauma through what the little girl can and cannot describe, "I can't say the words that tell you about that blackened hole that had been my home. All I can say is this: War took everything. War took everyone." A series of vignettes show her wounded, orphaned and displaced by war. She seeks shelter, but is repeatedly turned away.

On the back pages of the book, Davies shares how her inspiration to write this story came from the stories of millions of children who remain the most vulnerable in our current refugee crisis. One story, in particular, spoke about a little girl who was denied access to education because there were not enough chairs in the classroom. In *The Day War Came*, she asks readers to, "Imagine that there was no welcome at the end, and no room for you even to take a seat at school." She then shows what might happen if even one person were able to host this story, "And then imagine that a child, just like you, gave you a gift..." I will not spoil the ending, but it is so very, very hopeful!

Throughout this review I have highlighted scenes from the book and quoted lines from a poem that Nicola Davies wrote and published on the Guardian newspaper's website. She wrote the poem in response to the U.K. government's refusal to accept 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children and the US government's decision to lower the annual refugee ceiling. What followed was an outpouring of support from ordinary people, artists and illustrators who posted images of empty chairs with the hashtag #3000chairs. One suggestion for classroom teachers is to pair *The Day War Came* with Davies' poem and discuss how the two inform each other. In addition, the book is connected to the [Help Refugees project](#). Even if a school is not in a position to make a financial contribution, the website shares statistics and stories that personalize refugee experiences and may inspire students to take other forms of action. A book that might also support this message is *14 Cows for America* (Carmen Agra Deedy & Thomas Gonzalez, 2009), which tells the story of the extraordinary gift the Maasai people of Kenya bestowed upon Americans

in the wake of 9/11.

Nicola Davies has two successful careers—she is a zoologist and a children’s book author. Some of her books of fiction and nonfiction include, *King of the Sky* (2017) and *The Promise* (2014), both illustrated by Laura Carlin; *Bat Loves the Night*, illustrated by Sarah Fox Davies (2004) and *White Owl, Barn Owl*, illustrated by Michael Foreman (2009). See her website for a more extensive list: <https://www.nicola-davies.com>. Also, check out her blog post and learn about how she built a chair while writing *The Day War Came*: <https://nicola-davies.com/blog/?p=960>.

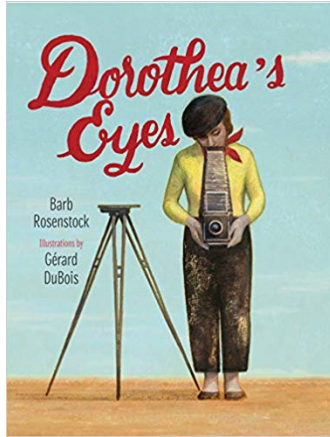
Like Nicola Davies, Rebecca Cobb is from the United Kingdom. She has several solo books including, *Missing Mommy* (2013), *Lunchtime* (2013) and *Aunt Amelia* (2014) as well as captivating work done in collaboration with author Julia Donaldson in *The Paper Dolls* (2013) and *The Everywhere Bear* (2017). See more at <http://www.rebeccacobb.co.uk>.

Desiree Cueto, Western Washington University

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Dorothea's Eyes: Dorothea Lange Photographs the Truth

Written by Barb Rosenstock

Illustrated by Gérard DuBois

Calkins Creek, 2016, 32 pp

ISBN 978-1-62979-208-8

"This is the way it is! Look at it! Look at it!"

-Dorothea Lange

Dorothea Lange's life did not start out with clues that she would become a famous photographer. Instead, she experienced trauma in her childhood that helped her notice difficulties. Her childhood story includes losing a father, being raised by a domineering mother, and a bout with polio that left her limping the rest of her life. Author Barb Rosenstock helps readers see that these early experiences gave Lange the sensitivity to quietly watch and eventually record the world that surrounds her.

As a young woman, she apprenticed with well-known photographers in New York, then moved to San Francisco where she became a sought-after portrait photographer. One day she looked out the window, noticed the bread line near-by, grabbed her camera and began recording the faces and emotions of people as they struggled to survive during the Great Depression. That was the birth of her well-known documentary photographic style that depicts actual situations of sociological or political import.

By centering the narrative of the book on *Dorothea's Eyes*, Rosenstock conveys the power of Lange's photographs in which she saw and recorded the circumstantial poverty but also the human spirit of her subjects. Across the years she photographed migrant workers, sharecroppers, the jobless, the hungry, the homeless--people the world can't see or chooses to ignore. Eventually her photographs convinced the government to provide aid. Rosenstock concludes her narrative with the observation that "*Dorothea's Eyes* help us see with our hearts." Lange's work joins with that of photographers who changed the way the world is seen (e.g. Mathew Brady, Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine, Margaret Bourke-White, Ansel Adams).

The artwork by Gerard DuBois is rendered in acrylics. His earth-toned paintings convey the "down-to-earth" subject matter of Lange's photographs. Close-ups keep the focus on Lange and her eyes that see a world ignored by others.

This book pairs well with other biographies of visual and musical artists by Rosenstock, including *Vincent Can't Sleep: Van Gogh Paints the Night Sky* (illustrated by Mary Grandpré, 2017), *Through the Window: Views of Marc Chagall's Life and Art*, (illustrated by Mary Grandpré, 2018), and *The Noisy Paintbox: The Colors and Sounds of Kandinsky's Abstract Art* (illustrated by Mary Grandpré, 2014). Additional biographies for the text set might be *The Secret Kingdom: Nekk Chand, A Changing India, and a Hidden World of Art* (illustrated by Claire A. Nivola, 2018) and *Blue Grass Boy: the Story of Bill Monroe, Father of Bluegrass Music* (illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham, 2018).

Barb Rosenstock lives in the Chicago area with her family. She worked for many years in advertising, but began writing books when she wanted to read biographies to her sons that captured their attention. She is active in schools where she does workshops on writing biographies or using art as a window into a story. She is passionate about books in the classroom, and her website includes examples of ways teachers have used her books to teach writing, history, art, etc. Her biography of Kandinsky, illustrated by Mary GrandPré, won a Caldecott Honor. Since then they have collaborated on biographies of Van Gogh and Chagall. More information on Rosenstock can be found at <https://barbroosenstock.com>.

Gérard DuBois was born in France and studied graphic design in Paris before moving to Montreal. His work has been a finalist several times for Canada's Governor General's Award. He has also received a Bologna Ragazzi Special Mention. DuBois has been described as "an artist of extraordinary sensitivity born of empathy for normal lives" (Porter, n.d.) and in that sense his art reflects the photography of Lange in which she captured the heart of people experiencing tough times. More information on DuBois can be found at <https://www.gdubois.com>.

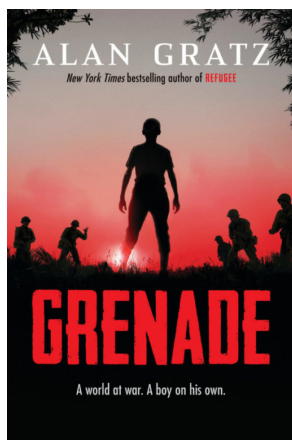
Porter, M. Gerard DuBois (n.d.). *Communication Arts*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.commart.com/features/g-rard-dubois>

Susan Corapi, Trinity International University

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Grenade

Written by Alan Gratz

Scholastic, 2018, 270 pp

ISBN: 978-1-338-24569-1

It's April 1, 1945, and World War II has reached the shores of Okinawa where 14-year-old Hideki Kaneshiro lives with his family. When an American bomb explodes near his school, Hideki and his classmates are immediately forced into the Blood and Iron Student Corp to defend Okinawa and fight for the Japanese Army. The boys are each handed two grenades and told to use one to kill Americans and the other to kill themselves. At the same time, Private Ray Majors, a newly enlisted 18-year-old American Marine from Nebraska, is on an amphibious carrier with other troops headed for the beaches of Okinawa. He too has grenades and other supplies and is advised by a Corporal to shoot the Japs before they shoot him. Hideki and Ray are both inexperienced in war, afraid of the unknown, and desperate to survive. They each experience the trauma of war as they battle their way across the island, managing to stay alive through multiple ambushes and traps. Eventually, during a battle they come face-to-face and the choices they each make in that instance results in changes that can't be undone.

In this riveting story, Alan Gratz realistically describes events of World War II's Love Day and its devastating effects. Told in Hideki's and Ray's alternating voices, readers feel the trauma they each experience both physically and emotionally. They wrestle with Hideki over the realization that the Japanese military abandoned the Okinawan people, leaving Okinawa as a sacrificial stone in their overall battle plans. Readers also grapple with Ray's attempts to understand the relationship between the Okinawan civilians and the Japanese military. Gratz portrays the trauma of war and its effects on people, particularly innocent civilians in real and honest ways. Moments of hope emerge, though, as when Hideki and his sister save a group of children and when Hideki overcomes what he believes is a family curse by demonstrating multiple acts of courage.

For a more general exploration of trauma related to World War II, *Grenade* might be paired with *Prisoner B-3087* (Alan Gratz, 2013), *The War I Finally Won* (Kimberly Brubaker Bradley, 2017), and *Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor's Story* (Caren Stelson, 2016). To further consider the trauma of World War II from two perspectives, *Grenade* could be paired with *When My Name was Keoko* (Linda Sue Park, 2012).

Alan Gratz spent his early life in Knoxville, Tennessee, and later majored in creative writing at the University of Tennessee. Since then he has written close to 15 books for young readers. In 2010, Gratz spent two months in Japan as a writer in residence at a school after which he lived with a Japanese family. While there, he met a man who had been a boy in Okinawa the day the Americans invaded. The man told Gratz how the Japanese army pulled him and other middle school boys out of school, gave them grenades, and told them to go kill Americans. Through research he found similar stories which led to him writing this book. Gratz currently lives with

his family in Western North Carolina. More information about Gratz can be found on his website: <http://www.alangratz.com>.

Prisca Martens, Towson University

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Night Shift

Written by Debi Gliori

Penguin Random House, 2017, 32 pp

ISBN 978-0-451-8173-3

Scottish author/illustrator Debi Gliori describes her own traumatic journey with depression in this small but powerful picturebook. She narrates how her depression, personified by one of her signature dragons, unexplainably shows up one day and keeps increasing in size, debilitating her life more and more. She ably portrays the eventual paralysis she feels, until, finally, while running from her dragons, she finds a feather that shifts the night for her.

Gliori combines her visual description of depression with sparse text that creates a visceral understanding of what depression feels like. She names her feelings in a series of single-page spreads that cumulatively create a feeling of hopelessness: fatigue, dread, hammering heart, hollowed out, diminished and fearful. She describes how, as an author, even her words leave so she has nothing to say. Even the “isms” she grew up with, such as “chin up” or “pull yourself together,” do nothing to give her the necessary energy to work with words or perform the actions of daily life. In the darkest night, illustrated with a blindfolded Gliori walking on a tight-rope across an abyss, she just aims to survive, “holding fast to nothing in the knowledge that nothing will last forever.” In the end, it is the intricacies of a single black and white feather on the sand dune that helps her begin to shift out of the darkness.

The illustrations are two-toned images except for the few touches of red flame as the dragon seeks to consume her. The black and white images communicate the colorless world of depression that Gliori experiences. In an Author’s Note, she states that her hope in writing the book is to help others understand the depths of darkness that is depression.

While depression in children has not been a prominent theme explored in picture books, the increased numbers of diagnosed bouts of depression in children and youth has generated an interest in quality books that can connect with readers who themselves struggle with depression. There are excellent books that pair well with *Night Shift*. *Meh* (Deborah Malcolm, 2015), *The Princess and the Fog* (Lloyd Jones, 2015), and *Willy and the Cloud* (Anthony Browne, 2017) all deal with childhood depression from the perspective of a child. There are also quality texts in which a child talks about depression in a family member: *The Color Thief* (Andrew Peters, Polly Peters & Karen Littlewood, 2014) and *Virginia Wolf* (Kyo Maclear & Isabelle Arsenault, 2012).

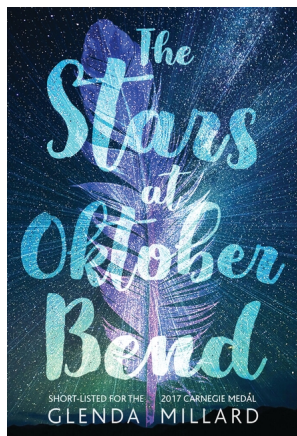
Debi Gliori is a Scottish writer and illustrator of many popular children’s books, including *What’s the Time, Mr. Wolf?* (2012) and the Mr. Bear series. Several of her titles have been nominated for the Kate Greenaway Medal (*Mr. Bear to the Rescue*, 1996; *The Trouble with Dragons*, 2008, a cautionary rhyming tale asking readers to car for the environment). She is also the author of the *Pure Dead* series for middle grades.

Susan Corapi, Trinity International University

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The Stars at Oktober Bend

Written by Glenda Millard

Candlewick, 2018, 266 pp

ISBN: 978-0-76369272-8

"i named my book for what words gave me. alice's book of flying."
(p.13)

When Alice was 12 years old, she was brutally attacked, leaving her so badly wounded that the question of her ability to communicate—and develop cognitively—came into question. Now, three years later, and on the verge of becoming “grown,” Alice feels her life is filled with many silences as her family continues to recover from the trauma that not only changed Alice, but her family as a unit. She lives with her brother Joey, their dog Bear, and Gram, who loves and guides Alice and Joey since their mother deserted them years earlier. The three live a rich life on the edge of their Australian town, hidden from view most of the time.

Joey, who is 14, goes to school, but Alice, with her cognitive damage, is not expected to attend. Yet, Alice keeps her “book of flying” and learns from the knowledge Joey shares with her from school. Eventually, Alice’s poetry must fly from her book and into the world. She begins to secretly post her poems throughout her town hoping to connect with the world. One evening as he is out running from the memories of his traumatic past, 16-year-old Manny, a refugee from an African nation torn by war, sees a pale girl with flaming red hair on the roof of what must be her house—a house on stilts in the treetops that he had never noticed. Mesmerized by her bravery, yet fearful she will fall, Manny watches as Alice creates an image that becomes burned in his mind—an image of a girl throwing her poems to the wind.

The Stars at Oktober Bend is a beautiful story of love between two young people who learn to move beyond their painful pasts with each other’s help. Yet, this narrative is also about the love within two families and what family members are willing to do to help Alice and Manny grow and survive the trauma each has experienced. Filled with poetry and a richness of language, readers will also become enamored with Alice and Manny as they experience first love and its wonder.

Not only is this a terrific narrative with a compelling plot and authentic characters, it is filled with an amazing use of language found in Alice’s storytelling and her book of flying. Alice’s ability to communicate her thoughts morphs across the novel from stilted sentences to complex thoughts, reflecting the healing she experiences through relationships with Manny and her family. The richness of language is magical and profound, and would make a powerful model for adolescents as they learn to communicate through their own writings and with their own unique voices.

Two pieces of fiction that would complement this text include *The Sun is Also a Star* by Nicola Yoon (2016) and *Tell Me Three Things* by Julie Buxbaum (2016), both of which address love stories between unlikely couples in unlikely circumstances. Other books that address trauma and

how characters overcome could include *This Thing Called the Future* by J.L. Powers (2011), and the riveting fantasy, *Children of Blood and Bone* by Tomi Adeyemi (2018).

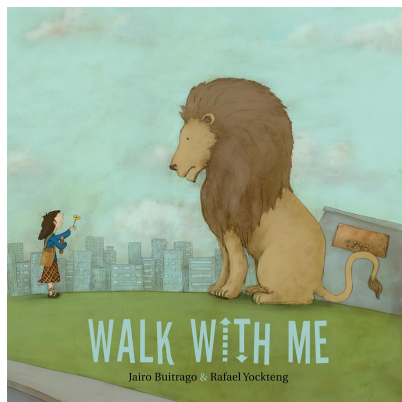
Glenda Millard lives in Australia, and is the author of numerous books for children and young adults. Her other works include *A Small Free Kiss in the Dark* (2010), which won an award in Queensland, Australia and the picturebook *Once a Shepherd*, (2014) which was on the USBBY's Outstanding International Books List for 2015. More information on Millard can be found at: <https://glendamillard.com>

Holly Johnson, University of Cincinnati

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Walk with Me

Written by Jairo Buitrago

Illustrated by Rafael Yockteng

Translated by Elisa Amado

Groundwood Books, 2017, 35 pp

ISBN-13: 978-1554988570

Originally published in 2008 by Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, D.F.

Walk with Me takes the reader through the complex reality of a girl whose father has gone missing in Colombia, leaving her to walk home by herself. But the girl is not alone. A lion keeps her company and, most importantly, keeps her safe, strong, and awake. They walk from the girl's *escuela*, through busy streets that take them "out of the city", to the *guardería*, where she must pick up her baby brother. Together, they enter *la tienda* and get all the groceries they need from the vendor who otherwise wouldn't give them credit. Still together, lion, baby brother, and girl walk home, prepare a meal, set the table for four, and patiently "wait till Mama gets home from the factory". Once Mama is home, the girl invites the lion to "go up into the hills again" until the girl calls him back.

The illustrations, sketched on paper, scanned and then redrawn and colored digitally, create a rich sociopolitical context with specific references to two historical incidents in Bogotá, Colombia. The first one appears on the cover of the English version. The year 1948 on the metal plaque on the pedestal references the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, leader of the Liberal Party and presidential candidate, under the government of President Mariano Ospina Pérez. The assassination led to a series of massive riots named *El Bogotazo* which destroyed most of downtown Bogotá and was followed by a decade of intense violence known as *La Violencia*. The second historical event is introduced on the last double-page spread which depicts a night table, a family picture including Mama, Papa, baby brother and the girl, and a pile of newspapers highlighting the Spanish headline: "FAMILIAS DE DESAPARECIDOS EN 1985". The newspaper article about families of missing individuals in 1985 references November 6, 1985 when the M-19 rebels took over Colombia's Palace of Justice, leaving a hundred dead and over a dozen missing. More recent, *La corte interamericana de derechos humanos* (Interamerican Court of Human Rights) held the Colombian government and military responsible for the *desaparición forzada*, forced disappearance of individuals suspected of participating in the attack and/or somehow collaborating with the M-19 group. For over 30 years the families of the missing individuals have fought to find the truth about their loved ones.

This is a story about hope and resiliency that describes the daily responsibilities and sacrifices that a girl takes on in order to support her family's survival. The walk home is long and presents challenges that encourage her to rethink and reimagine a safe space. Jairo Buitrago, Rafael Yockteng, and Elisa Amado have created a book full of symbolism and opportunities for multiple interpretations and further inquiry. For example, why did the child encourage the lion to return to the hills (a place where Colombian guerrillas have historically and consistently hid and trained?) If the lion is imaginary, why can everyone see it? Why is the child trying not to fall

asleep? Is it so she can continue her daily chores or is it perhaps a deeper metaphor to continue fighting for her life, family, and country? Where is her father? What does it mean to be a rebel? A liberal? What does the lion represent? What is the role of creativity in coping with difficult times? How many children in Colombia walk alone? How many children in the United States walk alone? Why?

Walk with Me can be paired with other books by Jairo Buitrago, Rafael Yockteng, and Elisa Amado, such as *Two White Rabbits* (2015) and *Jimmy, the Greatest* (2012). It can be further paired with stories that explore children taking action in difficult times, such as John McCutcheon's (2017) *Flowers for Sarajevo*, Kerascoët's (2018) *I Walk with Vanessa*, and Antonio Skarmeta's (2003) *The Composition*. A third potential pairing could include books about father-child relationships through uncommon storylines, such as Karen Hesse's (2018) *Night Job* and Ross Watkins' (2018) *Dad's Camera*.

Jairo Buitrago is a Colombian author, illustrator, and movie researcher. He described his work as an *alegoría política*, a space with multiple symbolisms that welcomes fantasy while introducing young readers to reality *sin tabúes ni prejuicios* (González, 2013). To learn more about Buitrago's art, visit <http://jairo-buitrago.blogspot.com/>.

Rafael Yockteng was born in Lima, Perú, and moved to Colombia at the age of four. He studied graphic design at the Jorge Tadeo Lozano University in Bogotá. His work and presentations can be followed on Facebook: Rafael Yockteng.

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1430 East Second Street, Tucson, AZ 85721

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