

ISSN 2577-0527



WOW REVIEW

READING ACROSS CULTURES
VOLUME XV, ISSUE 3

Spring 2023
Open Theme

Worlds
of WORDS 



College
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wowlit.org

WOW Review: Volume XV Issue 3
Spring 2023
Open Theme

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Contributors to This Issue:

Tura Campanella Cook, Austin, Texas
Deanna Day, Washington State University
Kate Jung, Trinity International University
HeeYoung Kim, West Texas A&M University
Jana Maiuri, University of Arizona, Tucson
Judi Moreillon, Tucson, Arizona
Kathy G. Short, University of Arizona, Tucson

Editor:

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

Production Editor:

Aika Adamson, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ



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Introduction and Editor's Note

This wonderful collection consists of three picturebooks, one novel in verse, two chapter books, and one mix manga novel/picturebook addressing the importance of family and community artifacts in pursuit of survival and dignity.

Sometimes the artifacts support a character's quest for survival. In *Blood Brothers*, Calvin or "Poet Boy" writes poems to share about his experience as one of three white brothers who contracted HIV from tainted blood infusions. This novel in verse describes the harassment and rejection experienced by the siblings, from school peers spitting, cussing, and assaulting them to hateful graffiti sprayed on the front of their home reading: "AIDS SUCKS! / GET OUT OF TOWN! / NO! NO! NO!" (p. 108). The poems eventually allow Calvin to find his voice and fight against prejudice, fear, and ignorance. In *Ida in the Middle*, Palestinian-American Ida is ostracized in her predominately white school and concerned about the implications of Islamophobic bullying. Invisible but also overtly seen as Palestinian, Ida sees how school initiatives, intended to be supportive, are still grounded in misinformation about historical and current events in the Middle East, which lead to misrepresentations and stereotypical views of Palestinians. After eating magic olives from her relatives' farm in Palestine, she is transported to Busala, her family's ancestral village and learns about the life her family would have lived if they had not moved to the U.S. She also learns about Palestine's history and constantly fears that her home will be bulldozed by Israelis.

Other artifacts address the power of creating new adventures. In the bilingual picturebook, *Arletis, Abuelo, and the Message in a Bottle / Arletis, abuelo y el mensaje en la botella*, the adventure begins when Arletis finds a bottle on a Cuban coast with a message. After reading "If you find this bottle, please write and tell me about your world" she begins a beautiful friendship with Steve, the old man who wrote the message and who had forever wished to sail around the world. In *Temple Alley Summer*, Kazu discovers the history and interconnectedness between the old house where he lives, the mysterious temple in his neighborhood, a map, the Buddhist statue with the power to bring people back to life, and the ghost of a long-dead girl who wears a white kimono. But some adventures are more voluntary or pleasant than others. In *Gibberish*, Dat has recently moved to a new place where the language sounds like gibberish and people look cartoonish. As a result, Dat moves through his world almost silently, saying little but his own name. Eventually, Dat meets Julie, a monster-looking gibberish speaking girl who teaches Dat English words through drawings and labels. Julie's notebook became a vehicle to embark on adventures around bilingual worlds and new friendships. In the manga-inspired story of *Shuna's Journey*, prince Shuna goes on a dangerous quest for a golden grain to save his community from poverty and hunger; the mysterious seeds are from a secret land with the power to grow crops for generations to come. When Shuna finds the hostile Land of the God-Folk he sacrifices his speech and memory for the golden seeds. Upon Shuna's return, he relies on the strength and kindness of Thea and her sister, both whom he once saved, to bring back his memory and save his kingdom.

In our last picturebook, *The Many Colors of Harpreet Singh*, artifacts constitute symbols of cultural pride but also individuality as young Harpreet introduces his colorful patkas (a smaller

under-turban for Sikh boys) and his enjoyment of wearing them. However, when he moves across the country to a new home, he begins wearing colors that he associates with nervousness or shyness. As Harpreet gradually adapts to his new environment, the white patka that he once wore when he did not want to be seen, becomes the patka he wears when he wants to be reminded of his new enjoyment for snow.

Which artifacts are dear to your heart and your stories? Why?

Please consider submitting a review for our future issues. The editors welcome reviews of children's or YA books that highlight intercultural understanding and global perspectives around these themes:

Volume 16, Issue 1 – Open theme (Fall 2023) – submission deadline September 15, 2023. The editors welcome reviews of global or multicultural children's or young adult books published within the last three years that highlight intercultural understanding and global perspectives.

Volume 16, Issue 2 – Multicultural or global biographies, autobiographies, memoirs and/or fictionalized biographies (Winter 2023) – Submission deadline November 15, 2023. The editors welcome reviews of global or multicultural children's or young adult books published within the last three years that highlight biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, and/or fictionalized biographies about important figures across the world.

María V. Acevedo-Aquino and Susan Corapi, Co-editors

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Arletis, Abuelo, and the Message in a Bottle / Arletis, abuelo y el mensaje en la botella

Written by Lea Aschkenas

Illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright & Ying-Hwa Hu

Star Bright Books, 2023, 48 pp (unpaged)

English ISBN: 978-1595729699

Spanish ISBN: 978-1595729729

Arletis, Abuelo, and the Message in a Bottle opens with a verse from a Cuban children’s song “Little Paper Boat” presented in Spanish and then in English:

*Little paper boat, my faithful friend,
take me sailing across the wide sea.
I want to make friends from here and there,
and to give everyone my flower of friendship.
Down with war, up with peace;
we children want to laugh and sing.*

*—Cuban children’s song
by Enriqueta Almanza and Celia Torriente*

The story begins: “Once, on an alligator-shaped island in the middle of a wide sea, there lived a little girl named Arletis.” Arletis lives in a rural Cuban village, loves maps, and is curious about the world beyond her island home. With lovely imagery and vibrant illustrations, readers learn about Arletis’s loving relationships with family and community. She finds joy in making her favorite dessert, *cascos de toronja*, with Abuelita, eating Cuba’s luscious tropical fruits, playing with cousins and friends at the river, and dancing mambo and more in the streets.

At the same point in time, “in another part of the world, at the mouth of a wide bay, there was an old man named Steve who lived alone on a tiny tugboat.” In his younger years, Steve dreamed of sailing the world and wondered if there was something more beyond his solitary life living on a boat. He wrote a message, put it in a bottle, and asked a friend who was sailing south to throw it into the ocean: “If you find this bottle, please write and tell me about your world.”

Far from that bay, Arletis and her family visit the beach for her eighth birthday where she finds a bottle on the shore containing a message written in a foreign language. Although she is unable to understand the message, Arletis writes to the address at the end of the note. She asks every question she can think of about the message-writer’s home country.

How lucky that Steve is learning Spanish and their exchange of letters, photographs, and friendship begins. Arletis addresses her letters: “Querido Abuelo Esteban / Dear Grandfather

Steve.” She hopes that one day he will visit her and her family like an abuelo, since her abuelo died before she had the chance to know him. When Abuelo Esteban at last visits the island, he brings a map showing the route the bottle must have taken in order to reach a beach in Cuba.

The book includes an author’s note, a recipe for Arletis’s favorite dessert, and a bibliography for further reading about Cuba. The English language edition also contains a glossary of Spanish words and phrases.

This book can be paired with picturebooks about Cuba or stories that involve Cuban children. The bibliography at the end of the book offers informational books such as *Hola, Cuba* by Meghan Gottschall (2021), the historical fiction novel *My Brigadista Year* by Katherine Paterson (2017), and websites in English and in Spanish, including a link to Cuban singer Omara Portuondo singing “Barquito de Papel” (<https://youtu.be/erViODSZI90>). Additional books that can be paired include *Where the Flame Trees Bloom* by Alma Flor Ada (1994) which includes eleven true stories about growing up in Cuba and a childhood filled with the love of family and friends. The sequel, *Under the Royal Palms: A Childhood in Cuba / Bajo las palmas reales: Una Infancia Cubana* (1998), includes more stories from her early years. The English/Spanish bilingual book *My Name Is Celia: The Life of Celia Cruz / Me Llamo Celia: La Vida De Celia Cruz* by Monica Brown, illustrated by Rafael López (2004) describes the “Queen of Salsa’s” childhood in Cuba and her musical career that brought Cuban music and dance to the attention of people around the globe. *Alicia Alonso Dances On* written by Rose Viña and illustrated by Gloria Félix (2021) is a picturebook biography of a young Cuban girl who overcomes many obstacles to achieve her dream to be a ballerina.

Author Lea Aschkenas is a public librarian and teaches with the California Poets in the Schools program. *Arletis, Abuelo, and the Message in a Bottle* is her first book for children. She fell in love with Cuba and its people in 2000 on her first trip and has been returning nearly every year since. According to her author’s note, Aschkenas heard the story of Arletis and Steve from Abuelo Esteban himself, a library patron. She was taken by their story and long-lasting friendship. When she traveled illegally to Cuba, she visited with Arletis and her family. Arletis is now a mother with two young children and the green bottle that contained Steve’s first message sits atop a dresser in her home. Steve continues to visit and their caring friendship continues to this day. To learn more about her connection to Cuba, visit her website (<https://leaschkenas.com/>).

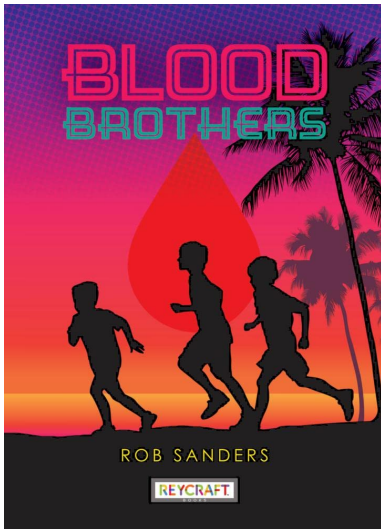
Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu are a husband-and-wife children’s book illustration team. Their watercolor illustrations capture the beauty of Cuba and richness of Cuban culture. They have won awards for their individual as well as their joint projects. They live in New York City. View their work on their website (<https://www.pencilmoonstudio.com/>).

Judi Moreillon, Tucson, Arizona

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Blood Brothers

Written by Rob Sanders
Reycraft Books, 2022, 476 pp
ISBN: 978-1478869276

This heartbreaking verse novel based on a true story covers a 14-day period in August 1987. Three white brothers, Calvin, Charlie and Curtis Johnston, are hemophiliacs who have contracted HIV from tainted blood infusions, thus they call themselves the Blood Brothers. All three have been kicked out of elementary school, Boy Scouts, Little League and their church due to their condition.

The boys' mother fights for them to return to school, even taking her

request to court where the judge proclaims: “No reason / medically or legally / to keep the Johnston brothers / out of school” (p. 55). Much of the community is outraged by this decision, showing up at a school board meeting—shouting, chanting and waving hate filled signs. The angry citizens share their thoughts at the microphone: “But I don’t want / those kids with my son. / It’s not safe. / Not healthy. / Plain and simple” (p. 103).

Each month the family visits their grandparents’ cabin at the beach where they can be normal boys: digging trenches in the sand, creating forts with driftwood, returning conch shells to the ocean, roping off turtle nests from tourists and hanging out with their beach sister, Izzy. Although Calvin tells Izzy, his best friend, that she is the fish eyes to his fish guts, he doesn’t share his biggest secret—that he is HIV positive.

When the Johnston family thinks things can’t get any worse, they find open trash bags in their front yard, graffiti sprayed on the front of their home with unfriendly messages: “AIDS SUCKS! / GET OUT OF TOWN! / NO! NO! NO!” (p. 108), and they are harassed day and night by anonymous phone calls: “Next time, / there will be gunshots” (p. 170), showing readers how fear and hate can mimic a virus. When the brothers finally return to school, they are demoted one grade level because the district doesn’t recognize home schooling as valid education. Furthermore, some families pull their children from school because they are so worried their children will be infected. The boys are not allowed to use the school restrooms, water fountains or eat their lunch in the cafeteria. They are spit on, cussed at, called names, and assaulted by their classmates.

The next time the family visits the beach, their secret is completely out, and Izzy’s Gramps forbids her from spending time with the brothers because he’s afraid she will get their disease. But the best friends find a way to communicate and see each other anyway. Izzy encourages Calvin or “Poet Boy” to use his long-silent voice to fight against these prejudices. Calvin begins writing poems about his experiences and reads aloud the following one to his sixth-grade class:

*I am the boy with HIV.
But that is not all of me.
I'm a brother.
A poet.
A dreamer.
I'm a beach lover.
And a baseball player.
I'm a son. And a friend to
Anyone who'll be a friend to me.*

*I am the boy with HIV.
But that is not all of me.
I want to date someday.
Maybe even kiss a girl.
I want to graduate from high school.
Maybe go to college.
I want to get married.
Maybe have some kids.*

*I am the boy with HIV.
But that is not all of me.
Don't look at me
Scared of what you think you'll catch.
Look at me
Excited for what I have to give.
I listen.
I hear.
I try to understand.
I'm fair.
I'm honest.
I try to treat everyone
The same—no matter
Who you are,
Or what you are,
Or what you're not.*

*I am the boy with HIV.
But that is not all of me.
I am the boy with HIV.
Please don't let that be all you see (pp. 344-345).*

The book closes with several tragic events, but a police officer's family, Calvin's sixth grade teacher and a newspaper reporter support and encourage the Johnston family.

The back matter of *Blood Brothers* contains a playlist, a note from the author, a timeline of AIDS in America, and current information about HIV and AIDS in the United States as well as information about the real brothers (Ricky, Robert and Randy Ray) at the heart of the story.

Sanders mostly writes picturebooks about heroes in the LGBTQIA+ community. Some of his well-known titles include *Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag* (2018), *Stonewall: A Building. An Uprising. A Revolution* (2019) and *Stitch by Stitch: Cleve Jones and the AIDS Memorial Quilt* (2021). Visit teachingbooks.net for a list of all of his book titles with additional resources. As an elementary language arts teacher in Florida for many years, Sanders' fourth-grade students encouraged him to become an author and write the books he wished he had when he was growing up (Murphy, 2021). He retired early to write full time yet manages to find time to teach and mentor other writers. He teaches writing for the Highlights Foundation, The Writing Barn and the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators Florida region.

In an interview with From the Mixed-up Files (n.d.), the author shared that while doing research for one of his informational picturebooks he saw a photograph about the real "blood brothers" in an article in *Life* (Voboril, 1987). He wrote a poem in response to the photo which eventually became the first poem/chapter in *Blood Brothers*. In order to write this historical fiction title, he researched the early years of the AIDS epidemic and Ryan White, another hemophiliac who contracted HIV in the 1980s. He watched news reports and documentaries, scoured government websites for statistics and read every magazine and newspaper he could find.

He chose to tell this story through verse because poetry is personal and provides a way to address a difficult topic without overwhelming readers. Rob shared that he would rather engulf readers with emotions than too many words (From the Mixed-up Files, n.d.). One thing he found helpful in writing was to "sit in the scene" and think of every emotion possible as he figured out the best words, phrases, similes, or images to elevate the poetry.

Blood Brothers could be paired with *A High-Five for Glenn Burke* by Phil Bildner (2020), *Ryan White: My Own Story* written by Ryan White and Ann Marie Cunningham (1992), *What is the AIDS Crisis?* by Nico Medina and Tim Foley (2022) and the first children's book about AIDS, *Losing Uncle Tim* written by MaryKate Jordan and illustrated by Judith Friedman (1989).

This extraordinary middle-grade novel would be a powerful book as a read aloud or to discuss in literature circles. Readers will be inspired to think about their fears and prejudices, wonder about their own actions and reactions if they were a part of the same classrooms or community as the Johnston brothers, and consider whether they would be brave enough to stand up for someone with HIV, AIDS or another disease and someone different from themselves. Although this book describes unfounded fear and hate, it also depicts agency, love, and hope.

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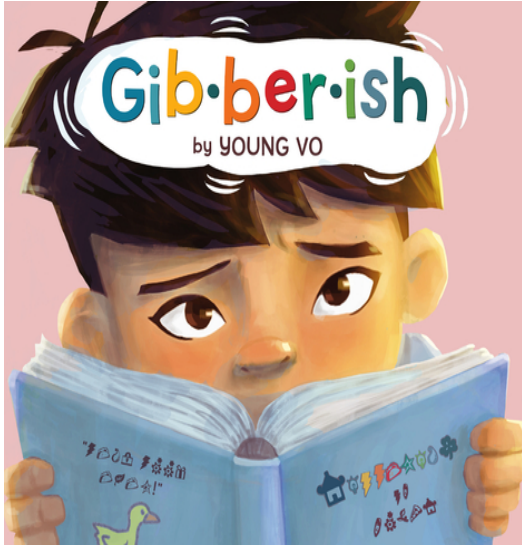
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Deanna Day, Washington State University

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Gibberish

Written and illustrated by Young Vo
Levine Querido, 2022, 32 pp (unpaged)
ISBN: 978-1646141104

This picturebook highlights the dual worlds of Dat, a young boy who “sailed on a boat, then flew on a plane,” and now must encounter a new school, new expectations, and a new language that sounds like gibberish. The illustrations highlight the contrasts between Dat’s home life and school life. Classmates and teachers appear as smiling, black-and-white cartoon monsters, while Dat and his mother are portrayed realistically in full color. Tiny picture “gibberish” speech bubbles take the place of written English as Dat tries to introduce himself, only to have his name mispronounced

by the bus driver and his new teacher.

Faced with all this uncertainty, Dat moves through his world almost silently, saying little but his own name. Finally, he encounters a friendly face: a small, boisterous monster who slowly morphs into a realistic, full-color girl named Julie as she teaches Dat words in English. Those who have had to learn a language in a new community will know that the frustration is reduced by the presence of a patient friend, one who will take the time to answer questions and get to know you when the teacher will not; however, it can be frustrating to feel like Dat needs to be saved.

The real power of this book is in the pictures. The visual language of video games is international and universal (dotted pathways, monsters to fight, doorways to traverse). Author Young Vo does animation for role-playing video games and those elements appear in *Gibberish*: Dat, as the main character, leaves a dotted pathway behind him as he moves through different monster worlds. The cartoon characters representing the English-speaking world are unsettling and the pictorial font intentionally confusing. Native English readers, trying to parse the unfamiliar font, will feel empathy for Dat’s situation. Shape and color are also imbued with meaning: when Dat is in comfortable spaces, he is surrounded by circles, while his uncomfortable moments are enclosed in boxes with sharp edges. It’s also interesting that the pictorial font actually corresponds letter-to-letter with English, and clues on the inside of the covers can help curious readers “decode” the speech in the book.

In international student forums, multilingual people recall their first experiences with English as a kind of familiar-sounding nonsense; recognizable from American music and movies but ultimately sounding like rhythmic noise mixed with the occasional word. The clever “gibberish” in this book creates a sense that understanding is close, but is out of reach for the moment. The way the world and words morph into full-color, recognizable ideas will help students understand that the confusing and unfamiliar become familiar over time.

Reading this book alongside a narrative that delves more deeply into the main character’s thoughts and feelings would allow for strong comparisons and learning. Possible choices are Bao

Phi's (2017) *A Different Pond* or *The Day Saida Arrived* by Susana Gómez Redondo (2015). For more language play and experience with disorienting language, read with Carson Ellis' (2016) *Du Iz Tak?*.

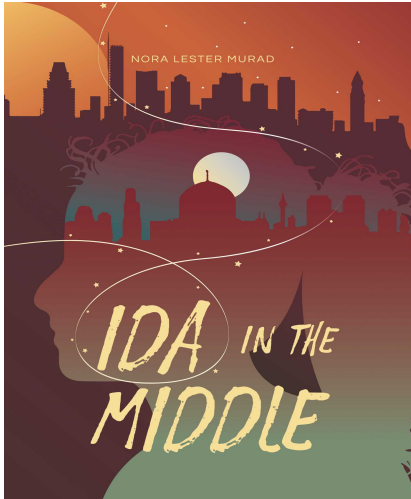
Author Young Vo came to the United States as a young child and a refugee. Based in Baltimore, he has been an animator for digital games. According to an interview with Politics and Prose linked on his website, his own sketches and English picturebooks were a way to connect when he didn't understand the language, and he remembers that the "language barrier fell away when you just talk and play together." He wanted to create a book for "the Dats and the Julies." *Gibberish* is his first book for children.

Jana Maiuri, University of Arizona, Tucson

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Ida in the Middle

Written by Nora Lester Murad
Crocodile Books, 2022, 224 pp
ISBN: 978-1623718060

Ida is an eighth-grade first-generation Palestinian American girl who is ostracized in her predominately White school. Yet she is not the only middle schooler who experiences or witnesses bullying and exclusion because of name, ethnicity, and appearance. Ida is frustrated and angry when peers and teachers hold her personally responsible for current events in the Middle East. The novel explores how she deals with being both invisible as a person and hyper-visible as a scapegoat and stereotype. After

violence erupts in Jerusalem, Ida’s Christian and Jewish classmates start a pro-Israel club that misrepresents Palestinians and their desire for safety and freedom. When Ida complains to the school principal, he suggests she start a Muslim club. But that does not address how the club negatively impacts her or the misinformation it is perpetuating.

When Ida changes schools, things seem to improve. But what will Ida write about for her Passion Project, a major assignment about herself and topic of interest? Stressed about this assignment, Ida snacks on olives sent from her relatives in Palestine and is magically transported to the life she would have lived if her parents had not emigrated to the United States. Eventually Ida returns to her life in the US more informed and inspired. What will she do for her own dignity and to support the struggles of others? Now in her daily life Ida experiences the humility and inconvenience of military check-points and the fear of encroaching home demolitions. Family and neighbors discuss how to cope and defend themselves. Ida returns to her life in the US more informed and inspired to take action for her own dignity and to support the struggles of others. In some ways her school situation improves with a principal who supports diversity and a different learning environment, but misunderstandings of Palestinians remain.

Twenty-nine years ago, I met my first Palestinian American protagonist in contemporary children’s literature. She was young Mona in *Sitti’s Secrets* by Naomi Shihab Nye (1994). I was an adult with school-age children at the time. I recognized the void in my own education and historic awareness of Palestine, Palestinians, and Arab perspectives on current events. I applauded the publication of this book and the voice of the author as a sign that the next generation would be better informed. Yet since that time, there have been just a handful of books for children and young adults that flesh out Palestinian and Palestinian American experiences—a story and a history that is broad and multi-faceted. They include *Habibi* by Naomi Shihab Nye (1997), *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood* by Ibtisam Barakat (2007), *The Shepherd’s Granddaughter* by Anne Laurel Carter (2008), *Balcony On the Moon: Coming of Age in Palestine* by Ibtisam Barakat (2016), and *Determined To Stay: Palestinian Youth Fight for Their Village* by Jody Sokolower (2021).

Ida in the Middle by Nora Lester Murad (2022) is the latest such book and is rich in opportunities for thought and discussion about the treatment of Palestinian Americans in the US and daily life of Palestinians under Israeli occupation. In recent years the State Board of Education in California

censored mention of Palestine in state standards for social studies curricula and considered the exclusion of Arab Americans from ethnic studies (Kirk, 2020). In such an environment the rare fact-based novel is a vital source of missing information and perspective. *Ida in the Middle* acts as a counternarrative to mainstream US news media and popular culture that do not mention the impact of home demolition or military invasion or the imprisonment of children in Israeli military jails, and describe Israel as a Western democracy threatened by terrorism but not as a settler colonial apartheid state, the experience of Palestinians.

The author, Nora Lester Murad, is mindful that parents and teachers may find Palestine a difficult subject and “too complicated” for young readers. Her website for the book addresses these questions and concerns and includes a 2-minute video featuring young women discussing their feelings of belonging and not belonging as a tool to spur classroom discussion. It includes Nora’s presentation of a study she conducted with Palestinian teachers about how Palestinians are portrayed in children’s books and a spreadsheet of lesson plans and background material related to teaching about Palestine at all levels. Also featured is a comprehensive six-week curriculum that can be used for 6-9th grade in ELA and social studies.

Nora is a writer, educator, and activist. *Ida in the Middle* is her first book for young readers. She co-authored *Rest in My Shade: A Poem About Roots* with Danna Masad (2019) and edited *I Found Myself in Palestine: Stories of Love and Renewal from Around the Globe* (2020). She has more than 20 years of experience teaching international and intercultural topics, including at Lesley, Bentley and Fordham universities. While living in Palestine, Nora co-founded Dalia Association, Palestine’s community foundation, and Aid Watch Palestine, an aid accountability initiative. She now lives in Massachusetts where she organizes to expand the teaching of Palestine in schools, among other social justice issues. Nora is a policy member of Al-Shabaka, the Palestinian Policy Network and serves on the Board of Visualizing Palestine. She was selected as a 2023 participating author in the PEN/Faulkner Writers in Schools Program. Nora blogs at www.noralestermurad.com.

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Tura Campanella Cook, Austin, Texas

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The Many Colors of Harpreet Singh

Written by Supriya Kelkar

Illustrated by Alea Marley

Sterling, 2019, 32 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 978-1454931843

Harpreet Singh is an Indian American Sikh who has a different color patka (head covering) for every occasion. Harpreet’s patkas are part of his Sikh practices, but are also a way for him to express himself and his emotions. He wears yellow when he feels sunny and full of cheer, pink when he feels like celebrating, and red when he needs to feel brave. When his mom gets a job in a small snowy town across the country, Harpreet begins to wear colors for not-so-happy occasions because he is apprehensive about the move,

regardless of his parents’ assurance that this is going to be a fun adventure. Harpreet wears blue and gray because he is nervous and sad. But most of all Harpreet wears white, as he feels shy and thinks it would be best to match the snowy cold outdoors to be invisible. His parents try to get him to wear different colors but he refuses. Then one day, Harpreet sees his classmate’s yellow hat in the snow. When he returns it to her, she says she loves his patka and he is reminded of how much he loves to be cheerful through colors. So, Harpreet starts to wear colors again to express his feelings, especially about his new friend.

Kelkar’s storytelling of Harpreet’s experience is clean and simple, beautifully depicting the power of color in Harpreet’s life as he changes patkas to reflect his feelings. Patkas are worn by young Sikhs to hide their long hair and keep it tidy. Kelkar does an excellent job of normalizing the religious practice of wearing head coverings by making it an expression of Harpreet’s personality. Readers are often faced with challenges when it comes to religious expression, since it is an avenue that involves individual belief systems and personal opinions. Tapping into elements that are specific to a particular person often gets sensitive because they go deeper than the surface—dealing with one’s heart and heavier internal battles.

This story focuses on the nervousness and loneliness of moving and finding your way in a new place. Kelkar’s emphasis on the emotion of colors becomes more powerful because the discovery of a new friend points to the sense of belonging Harpreet is searching for. The connection between social-emotional health and colors is important for readers to understand because it helps to make readers aware in a concrete way about the challenges of learning in a new place. A new place is a difficult adaptation for children, especially when cultural differences play a big factor in creating a comfortable, safe, accepting environment. Marley’s vibrant illustrations ingeniously convey the cultural differences that make Harpreet feel unaccepted and invisible to his classmates. For example, on the lunchroom page with his classmates, Harpreet has a traditional Indian meal of bread and soup, whereas his peers are depicted eating more American-style dishes like cake and fruit.

Moving for students can be challenging especially when they are entering a new environment that

creates communication issues due to language. In *My Two Blankets* by Irena Kobald and Freya Blackwood (2015), becoming comfortable in a new language is personified by adding new patterns to a favorite quilt. While *My Two Blankets* focuses more on pattern than color, another book pair, *The Color of Home*, written by Mary Hoffman and illustrated by Karin Littlewood (2002), is the story of a boy in London who longs for the vibrant colors of Somalia, his homeland. When given a box of crayons, he draws a picture that helps him feel at home in a new place and also conveys the trauma of war. *The Color Monster* by Anna Llenas (2018) would be another great book pair as it taps into the idea of colors representing the social-emotional well-being of an individual.

Supria Kelkar (<https://supriyakelkar.com/about/>) was born and raised in the Midwest where she learned Hindi as a child through watching three Hindi movies a week. In addition to being an award-winning author she also is a screenwriter who has worked on the writing teams for several Hindi films.

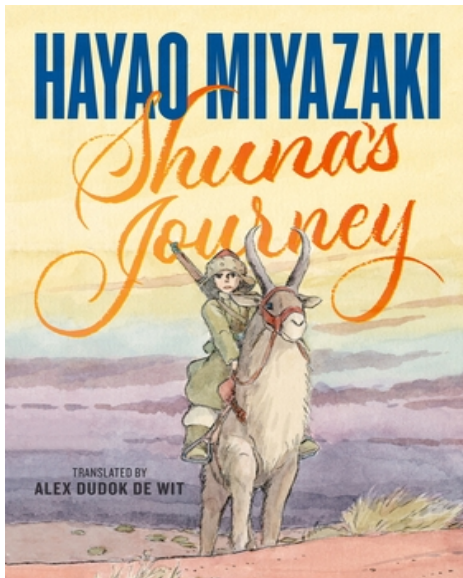
Alea Marley (<https://aleamarley.co.uk/>) is a children's illustrator living and working in England. She has a passion for creating scenes filled with plant life, patterns, textures, whimsical movements and lots of color. In addition to those passions, Marley also loves being a part of books that are diverse because she believes every child deserves to see someone like themselves depicted in books.

Kate Jung, Trinity International University

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Shuna's Journey

Written and illustrated by Hayo Miyazaki
Trans. from Japanese by Alex Dudok De Wit
First Second, 2022, 160 pp (unpaged)
ISBN: 978-1250846525

“At the bottom of an ancient valley carved out by a glacier, there was a small kingdom which time had abandoned” (p. 1). These opening words frame a two-page spread showing a tiny kingdom in a valley overwhelmed by mountains and cliffs. In this visually lush fantasy, a prince goes on a dangerous quest for a golden grain that could save his people from poverty and starvation. When a mysterious traveler presents Shuna with a few seeds from a secret land, he sets off to find the source of the grain, living seeds that can grow crops for generations to

come. Along the way, he meets a proud refugee girl who is being held in captivity, freeing her and continuing on his quest. He sees many unbelievable sights, eventually finding the hostile Land of the God-Folk but sacrifices his memory and speech for the grain. When he returns, he relies on the strength and kindness of Thea and her sister to bring back his memory and save his kingdom.

In a mix between a manga novel and a picturebook, full-page watercolor illustrations are intermixed with panels to encourage readers to linger over an image or to read quickly to follow the action-filled story in manga style, right-to-left. The written narration is placed outside or along the edges of panels, allowing readers to immerse themselves in the breathtaking visuals.

Afterwords from the author and translator provide insights into the story's roots in a Tibetan folktale and the connections between this book and Miyazaki's later animated works. These cultural roots are reflected in the visual elements in the panels, such as the embroidered clothing, rooms with painted murals and woven tapestries, and towering statues. The reimagined tale explores themes of environmental degradation and acts of kindness within a cruel and dehumanizing world. The tale is full of adventure and mystery in an imagined world where humans barter for dead seeds that can only be consumed, instead of living seeds that can sustain life. Messages of courage and hope fill the reader through the appearance of green seedlings, providing the possibility of a different future.

One interesting pairing with this book is *The Wanderer* by Peter Van den Ende (2020), a 90-page visual narrative in which a paper boat navigates an intercontinental voyage through marvelous and oppressive worlds, ending with the emergence of a human figure. Another pairing is with fantasies such as *The Barren Grounds* by David Robertson (2020) in which two Cree children go through a portal into a wintry land where a Misewa community of animal beings need their help to survive. Dystopias provide another possibility, such as Daniel José Older's *Flood City* (2021) in which humans battle for the last habitable place left above the waters covering Earth. Finally, realistic fiction, such as Alan Gratz's *Two Degrees* (2022), can connect this fantasy with our current world. In parallel narratives, three children endure climate change disasters—a wildfire in California, a close encounter with a hungry polar bear in Canada, and a massive hurricane in Florida.

Hayo Miyazaki is a legendary Japanese artist, animator, director, and founder of Studio Ghibli. He is most well known for his animated film masterpieces, such as “Spirited Away,” “Princess Mononoke,” and “My Neighbor Totoro.” These films feature Miyazaki’s detailed animations to tell stories about characters who journey into supernatural worlds on dark and dangerous journeys, a similar pathway as *Shuna’s Journey*. Miyazaki grew up drawing and dreamed of becoming a manga artist. His conservative parents opposed his ambitions, wanting him to become a business executive. While he studied economics in college, he also met with a children’s literature study group. They read Western classics, such as books by Jules Verne and Frances Hodgson Burnett, leading him to a career in animation and storytelling around adventures, gardens, and strange encounters. His worlds are places where nature, animals, gods, and humans interact. *Shuna’s Journey* was originally published in 1983 in Japanese but not translated into English until 2022.

The translator Alex Dubok de Wit is a British freelance animation journalist. His love of animation and respect for Hayo Miyazaki led him to take on the translation of the book from Japanese to English. His knowledge of Japanese animation and respect for visual image allowed him to capture the beauty and brevity of Miyazaki’s written word, keeping the visual images at the forefront.

Readers will return from this voyage into a mythic realm of beauty and heartbreak challenged to consider how they might work for a better future.

Kathy G. Short, University of Arizona, Tucson

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Temple Alley Summer

Written by Sachiko Kashiwaba

Illustrated by Miho Satake

Translated by Avery Fischer Udagawa

Restless Books, 2021, 232 pp

ISBN: 978-1632063038

This imaginative story is about a boy's discovery of a ghost girl and their friendship. In the middle of the night, Kazu, a fifth-grader boy, sees a girl in a white kimono walking out of his family altar. The next day, Kazu is frightened to see her in his classroom. Her name is Akari, and her presence is normal to everybody else. Curious, Kazu investigates the mystery and discovers that his house was built on the site of a temple called Kimyo, which means 'the dead coming back to life.' Through the magic of the temple's statue, Akari

came back to life after her death 40 years ago. However, because the council of elders believe that the dead should not come back to life, she might die again. Kazu tries to protect the statue, which keeps Akari alive, while the elders want to destroy it. He also wants to do something meaningful for Akari to make her happy during the limited time she has left. Before Akari died, she had been reading a serial story in a magazine, and wants to read how the story ends before she passes away again. Kazu finds out that the magazine has been discontinued, and the story's author is Minakami, a member of the council. Akari asks her to write the story, and then Minakami completes the story only for Akari.

This imaginative, suspenseful novel draws thoughtful questions of life and death in a different cultural context. Originally written in Japanese and translated into English, this book presents rich cultural aspects of Japan. Readers are introduced to different religious perspectives about life and death, mediated through Buddhist philosophy. This literary experience is valuable in developing open-mindedness to people whose cultural values and beliefs differ from their own. Readers in the U.S. predominantly adhere to Western ideas and ways of thinking. Dallmayr (2003) expresses concern that a universal belief system runs the risk of becoming hegemonic and imperialistic because it overlooks distinctions between different belief systems. According to Choo (2013), engaging in extraterritorial questioning effectively provides access to the consciousness and belief systems of another person or community, and literature is a powerful tool as an entry point into ethical, philosophical, and religious discussion.

This book recognizes the power of storytelling in another way. Using the magazine plotline, the author creates a story within a story, connecting Akari's two different lives within the narrative. The embedded narrative, which is a Western tale about a European witch who loses her son, connects to the central narrative and broadens the cultural imagination of the novel's audience. The publisher's choice to print the embedded narrative in a different color of paper is an effective organizational and storytelling technique.

This book can be read alongside *The Day of the Death – Día De Los Muertos*, written by Hannah Eliot and illustrated by Jorge Gutierrez (2018), which portrays the traditional Mexican holiday

when people honor their ancestors and loved ones who have passed by commemorating the cycle of life. *When You Trap a Tiger*, written by Tae Keller (2020), is another good book to pair with *Temple Alley Summer*. In this Newberry Award-winning book, Lily, a Korean American girl, discovers her inner strength and personal voice by embracing her grandmother's history. Similarly to Kashiwaba, Keller uses an embedded narrative to address questions about life and death. This set of books will provide an opportunity in which readers can be introduced to philosophical thoughts about life and death in different cultures.

Sachiko Kashiwaba is a prolific Japanese writer of children's and young adult fantasy. Her works have been loved for more than four decades. Her popular works, *The Wonderland* and *The House of the Lost on the Cape* (2023) have been animated for film. *The Marvelous Village Veiled in Mist* (2019) influenced Hayao Miyazaki's film "Spirited Away". She lives in Iwate, Japan.

Miho Satake, a Japanese artist and illustrator, contributed the cover art for *Temple Alley Summer* as well as illustrations within the book. She is best known for illustrating the Japanese editions of *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004) and the twentieth-anniversary edition of the *Harry Potter* series.

This book is translated by Avery Udagawa. She grew up in Kansas and majored in English and Asian Studies. She holds an M.A. in Advanced Japanese Studies. She has studied abroad in Nagoya and Yokohama in Japan. She lives near Bangkok, Thailand with her bicultural family.

Temple Alley Summer is a winner of the Mildred L. Batchelder Award (2022) which is awarded to an American publisher for the most outstanding translated children's book in English.

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HeeYoung Kim, West Texas A&M University

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