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WOW REVIEW

READING ACROSS CULTURES
VOLUME I, ISSUE 3

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Open Theme

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of
Education

WOW Review: Volume I, Issue 3
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Introduction and Editor's Note

This issue of *WOW Reviews: Reading Across Cultures* provides insights into the authenticity of books that share connections for readers and make a powerful statement about the diversity of cultural situations that situate readers within a global community. *Grandma and Me and the Flea/Los meros meros remateros* and *Playing Lotería/El juego de la lotería*, both used in classroom vignettes found in *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom*, tell of shared cultural experiences for children whose family and cultures reside both in Mexico and the United States. *I Lost My Tooth in Africa* presents yet another child whose life experiences move between two countries, in this case Mali and the United States. *Healing Water: A Hawaiian Story* brings to life a historical fiction account of a teen with leprosy in the 1800's and familiarizes readers with the not-as-well-known history of this state at a time when it was not part of the U.S. *Sweetgrass Basket* and *Shin-Chi's Canoe*, both stories of the Native American residential schools in Canada and the U.S. during the early 1900's, provide another historical look at young people who are resilient despite the oppressive situations in which they live. And, what reader has not heard of *The Five Chinese Brothers*—a book criticized for its lack of cultural sensitivity? *The Seven Chinese Sisters* presents an updated version of this traditional tale to add to other traditional variants that can potentially delight as well as provide examples of strength and wit. Finally, *While We Were Out*, set in Korea, is universal in its potential to evoke personal connections with readers of many countries where pets abound.

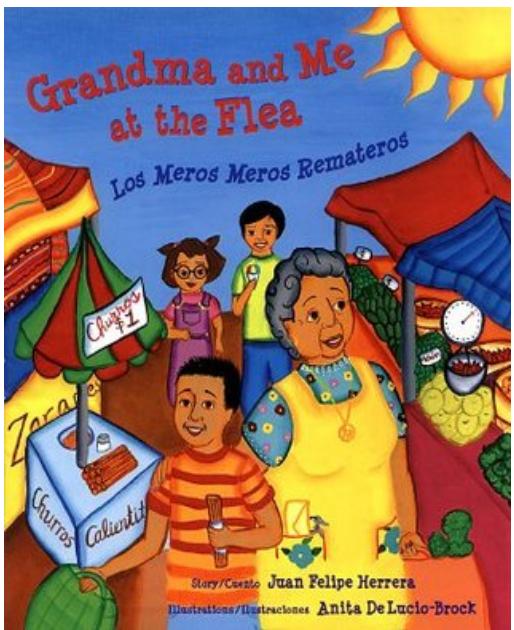
As you enjoy these reviews and contemplate how they can provide insight into the roles of our young readers in this global community, you will probably make connections to other books that you have read and regard as culturally authentic. Please consider reviewing such titles for readers of *WOW Reviews*. The current call for submissions is posted on-line along with guidelines for writing these reviews. Additionally, as you read other issues and reviews, you will become familiar with the general format, length, and items to include in a review. Issue IV will consider any reviews that are based on an international or multicultural book as well as reviews related to the theme of "Through the Eyes of a Child: Resiliency and Hope across Cultures." This theme invites book reviews from all countries to consider how children and adolescents have been portrayed in positions of responsibility, leadership, and survival in countries across the globe. Acceptance of submissions is ongoing as new issues are published quarterly.

Janelle B. Mathis, University of North Texas, Denton, TX

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Grandma and Me and the Flea/Los meros meros remateros

Written by Juan Felipe Herrera

Illustrated by Anita DeLucio-Brock

Children's Book Press, 2002, ISBN: 13: 978-0-89239-171-4

Early Sunday morning Juanito and his grandmother prepare for a day at the flea market. As Grandma, a rematero or flea market vendor, sells used clothing in her booth, Juanito meets old friends and helps his grandmother and the other remateros. At the zarape booth the rematero gives Juanito a peacock blanket for his grandmother, who helped out when a sister injured her back. Then Juanito rushes a letter to Señor Raya at the hardware booth. The letter, written in English by Grandma, will let Señor Raya get a month of free rent while the landlord fixes his damaged apartment. Grandma also trades healing herbs for chiles with another rematero. The

jewelry-man gives Juanito a copper bracelet to ease Grandma's rheumatism in remembrance of her help when he first came to the United States. Juanito and his friends learn that being a true rematero is about helping others.

Both the author and illustrator are Mexican-American. An introduction by the author explains how this story is based on memories of visits to the local remates or flea markets of his childhood. Bright, colorful illustrations reflect Mexican folk art and add a cheerful, busy feel to the book appropriate to the setting. The story calls to mind the active, fast-paced sights and sounds of a flea market as Juanito and his friends explore the different booths. However, the story ends somewhat abruptly.

Traditions and everyday objects familiar to many Mexicans and Mexican-Americans are woven throughout the book, including foods such as churros, nopalitos, chiles and tamales, language brokers who help Spanish-speakers navigate an English-speaking world, the use of healing herbs for health problems, and watching telenovelas. Close familial ties are portrayed as the grandmother takes care of Juanito while his parents migrate north to work in the apple orchards. This book also deals with socioeconomic issues that will be familiar to many readers. Old becomes new again as used clothes and toys are sold at the flea market to people who need the inexpensive items. Finally, by showing how the remateros trade goods and services, the book highlights the informal social and economic networks that have historically helped sustain and support immigrants, migrants, and people living on the margins of mainstream society.

Although this is a bilingual book, the English text includes Spanish words that are always easy to figure out through the surrounding text. An editor's note explains why the English and Spanish titles for the book have somewhat different meanings. Because the exact meaning and connotation for los meros meros is impossible to translate, the author chose an English title that is just as relevant to the story but is not a direct translation. This discrepancy could lead to an interesting discussion about the nature of language and how some words and concepts in one language can not be translated into another language.

Students and teachers in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas who have read this book had many positive reactions to the story. They appreciated the relationships depicted, especially the loving bond between the grandmother and Juanito, and recognized how common it is for relatives to care for a child while the parents are away working. They also enjoyed the depiction of the remate or flea market (although it is more commonly known as a pulga in the Rio Grande Valley), being familiar with them through experiences in their own childhoods or from weekend bargain shopping.

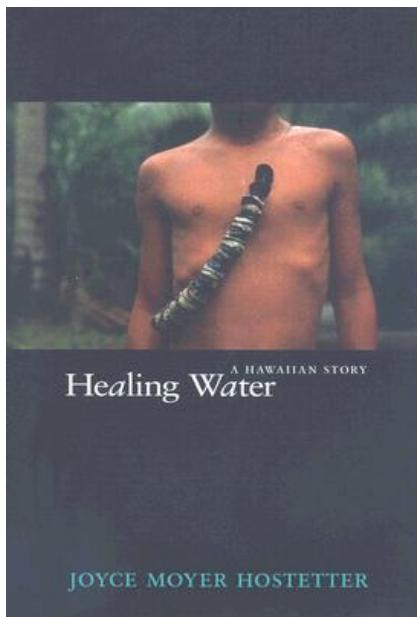
This book could be paired with *Playing Lotería/El juego de la Lotería* by René Colato Laínez (2005), which also deals with a Latino grandmother/grandchild relationship. Another appropriate book is *Speak English for Us, Marisol!* by Karen English (2000). This book depicts the social and economic networks of Marisol and her family as Marisol acts as a language broker for the neighborhood.

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Healing Water: A Hawaiian Story
Written by Joyce Moyer Hostetter
Calkins Creek, 2008, 217 pp
ISBN: 978-1-59078-514-0

This historical fiction novel describes the life of thirteen-year-old Pia, who is diagnosed with leprosy (now known as Hansen's disease) and sent to Kalawao on the island of Moloka'i to live out the rest of his life. Pia's experiences depict the pain and suffering endured by the Hawaiians with the dreaded disease who were exiled to Molokai'i's Kalaupapa peninsula in the mid-1800s. The novel particularly focuses on Father Damien's life and work there in the late 1800s.

Pia's story is driven by his relationship with a family friend, Kamaka, a father figure to Pia, who teaches him survival skills as a child.

When Kamaka learns that Pia is afflicted with leprosy, he withdraws from Pia's life completely. At first Pia is confused and saddened by Kamaka's rejection, but his sorrow soon turns to anger. When Pia arrives on Moloka'i, his life is overcome by his anger and he becomes unruly and unlawful in his struggle to survive. Despite the thievery, starvation, and lawlessness present in Kalawao, others try to convince Pia to find solace with each other and a belief in God. Pia's life takes a turn when Kamaka moves to Kalawao with his wife. Kamaka must fight his own fear of leprosy and make amends with Pia. In the final chapters, Father Damien teaches Pia to forgive and brings comfort, hope, and order to the people on Kalawao.

Another historical fiction novel that adolescent readers might also enjoy reading is *In the Shadow of the Pali: A Story of the Hawaiian Leper Colony* by Lisa Cindrich (2002). Both books are written on the same topic during the same time period and told through the eyes of a teenage character and may provide an interesting discussion for readers to compare differences between how the authors approach this difficult topic.

Some native Hawaiian readers have praised Hostetter for the research she conducted about Moloka'i, Hawaiian culture, and the history of Father Damien's life in Hawai'i. Her research is detailed in an author's note at the end of the book; however, it is not clear how much time the author spent in Hawai'i. She does mention visiting Kalaupapa National Historic Park and acknowledges a number of individuals who assisted her in ensuring historical and cultural accuracy. Another native Hawaiian reader questioned the cultural and historical authenticity of the story with respect to the lifestyle of the main character. This reader's concern was the Hawaiian chapter headings, which may be translated accurately into English, but do not reflect implicit cultural meanings. She suggested these cultural nuances are often difficult to capture in a literal translation. This reader also commented upon the tendency of non-resident writers to highlight the moral depravity of Moloka'i – the stealing, the sexual predators, the lawlessness, and inept managers in Kalawao – more so than books written by residents. Overall, readers find Healing Water to be a wonderful story of rejection and survival and the ultimate power of love and forgiveness. In addition, the chapters about Father Damien and his

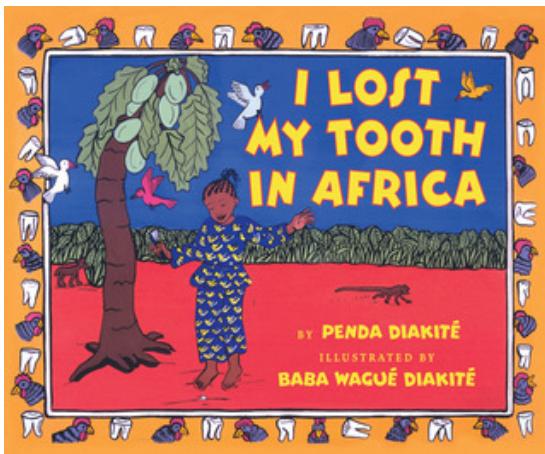
contributions to society make this a valuable story to share with young adult readers around the world.

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I Lost My Tooth in Africa

Written by Penda Diakite

Illustrated by Baba Wague Diakite

Scholastic, 2006

ISBN: 9-780-43966-226-0

"Hi! My Name is Amina." With that beginning Amina takes readers on a journey from her home in Portland, Oregon, to visit her father's family in Bamako, Mali, in West Africa. Just before they arrive, eight-year-old Amina discovers she has a loose tooth. When her father tells her that the African Tooth

Fairy gives a chicken to children who put a tooth under a gourd, Amina is anxious for her tooth to come out. Throughout her visits with cousins, aunts, uncles, and her grandmother, she works on her tooth until it finally pops out as she is brushing her teeth. She places the tooth under a calabash gourd and later finds it replaced with a rooster and a hen. Amina cares for them and is excited to find eggs in their coop one morning. Amina worries that the eggs won't hatch before she leaves but on her last day in Africa, as she is saying good-by, she discovers the eggs are hatching. Uncle Madou promises to care for the chicks until Amina returns.

This enjoyable contemporary realistic story is based on a true account written by the author when she was twelve years old about her younger sister Amina. Penda's father, Baba Wagué Diakite, is the illustrator of this book. An award-winning creator of children's books, he was born and raised in Bamako in Mali, West Africa. He moved to Portland over twenty years ago and married an American artist. While Penda grew up in Portland, she traveled to Mali every year with her family. Inspired by her father's storytelling and these family trips, Penda eagerly wrote her story.

Since losing teeth is a common experience, the story has universal appeal for children. It offers rich possibilities for discussions about growing up, responsibilities, and family and cultural traditions. As she tells the story, Amina invites readers to experience African life and culture, including living with extended family, experiencing foods and communal meals, and spending time in various activities. Readers also learn something about the African language through Bambara (the national language of Mali) phrases used in the text. An appendix that contains a glossary of Bambara words, a good-night song, and recipe for African onion sauce mentioned in the text add to the authenticity of the book.

The illustrations by Baba Wagué Diakite are colorful ceramic tiles framed in distinctive borders that pick up elements of African life related to the story, such as teeth, roosters, hens, sun, moon, eggs, and vegetables. The front and back endpapers display patterns representative of African culture. The lively, lush illustrations convey a close happy family, bring the story to life, and invite readers into Amina's family and adventures.

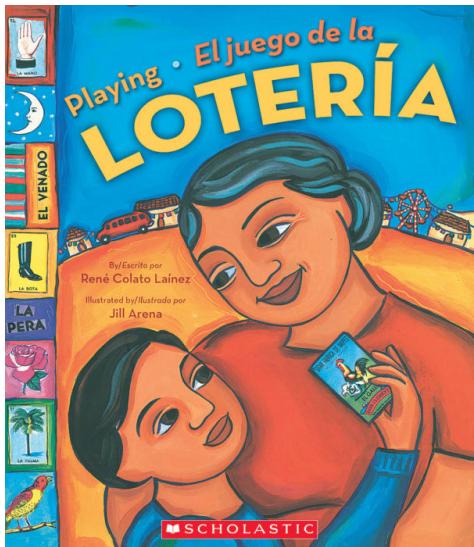
The book would compliment other texts on tooth traditions around the world, such as *Tooth Tales from around the World* (Marlene Targ Brill, 1998) and *Throw Your Tooth on the Roof: Tooth Traditions from Around the World* (Selby Beeler, 1998).

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Playing Lotería/El juego de la lotería

Written by René Colato Laínez

Illustrated by Jill Arena

Luna Rising, 2005, ISBN: 978-0-87358-881-2

In this bilingual picture book, a little boy and his grandmother overcome language issues during a visit together in San Luis de la Paz, Mexico. The grandmother doesn't speak English and the boy, who is not confident of his ability to speak Spanish, worries about how they will communicate. His mother assures him that "Loved ones have special ways of understanding each other." In this case, the fifty-four picture cards of lotería, a Mexican version of bingo, prove to be the special way the boy and his grandmother forge bonds of language and love. The grandmother, who runs a lotería

booth at a local fair, promises to help the boy with the phrases for calling each card, and he offers to teach her English words in return. As the two spend time together exploring the fair and the local market, they enjoy learning new words and phrases. By the end of his visit, the boy has learned all 54 phrases and has gained confidence in his ability to speak Spanish.

The author's personal experience as an immigrant to the United States from El Salvador lends weight to the issues of language, immigration, and ethnicity showcased in this charming story. The boy, who lives in the U.S. and is English-dominant while his grandmother remains in Spanish-speaking Mexico, learns through his visit to value his linguistic heritage as he gains knowledge and confidence in the speaking of Spanish. The family's experience with the erosion of home language ability across generations rings true, as the assimilation into a new country is often accompanied by a loss of the native language. Language difficulties across generations are familiar to many immigrant families. Trips to the home country are common among immigrants today and help strengthen the familial and cultural ties of transnational families.

Each use of this book with students and teachers of Mexican heritage has been received enthusiastically. Readers respond to the close relationship of the boy and his grandmother, the issues of language loss and preservation, and the game of lotería, which they are familiar with from visits to Mexico or in their homes in the United States. Children spill over with personal connections on playing lotería with their families. Readers are also attracted to the colorful illustrations that reflect the bright colors of Mexico, and the numerous depictions of lotería cards that can be found on every page and that form the endpapers.

Readers who are unfamiliar with the cultures depicted in the book will enjoy learning about the game of lotería and will find connections in the trip to visit grandma and the bonds between grandparent and child. While this is a bilingual book, the English text includes many Spanish words and phrases. Most of these can be understood through the context or illustrations, but readers who do not speak Spanish may have some difficulty navigating the text. For monolingual English speakers, this experience may add to their understanding of the story, since a major theme of the book focuses on language issues.

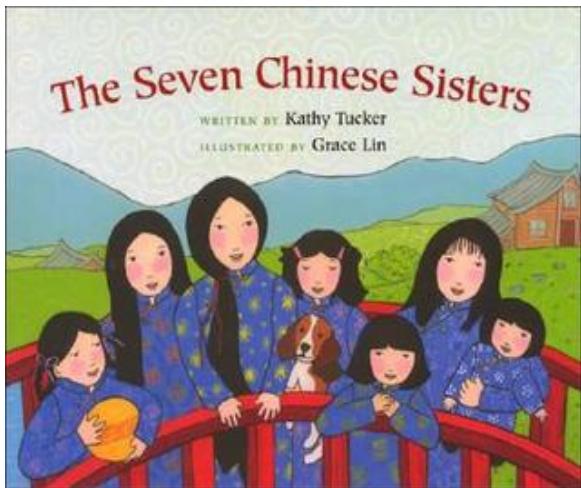
This book would make a good addition to text sets on language issues. It would pair well with a number of different books, including *Abuelito Eats with His Fingers* by Janice Levy (1999), which is about a young girl who overcomes her initial reluctance to spend a day with her Spanish-speaking grandfather. There are similar themes in *Too Young for Yiddish* (2002) by Richard Michelson. In this picture book, a grandson learns to appreciate his grandfather's language and culture.

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The Seven Chinese Sisters

Written by Kathy Tucker

Illustrated by Grace Lin

Albert Whitman, 2003

ISBN: 9-780-80757-310-5

In this retelling of an ancient Chinese folktale, seven Chinese sisters with “shining black hair and sparkling eyes” live together, each possessing with their own unique skill. First Sister rides a scooter as fast as the wind, Second Sister knows karate, Third Sister counts beyond 500, Fourth Sister talks to dogs, Fifth Sister catches any ball,

and Sixth Sister cooks delicious noodle soup. Seventh Sister, the baby, hasn’t spoken or discovered her ability yet. One day a terrible hungry dragon on a faraway mountain wakes up to the smell of Sixth Sister’s noodle soup and flies to their house. When he sees Seventh Sister in the kitchen, he forgets about the soup, snatches her, and takes her to his cave. As soon as he sets her down, Seventh Sister yells her first word, “HELP!” The other sisters take off to rescue Seventh Sister, each using their skill to make their mission successful. Once Seventh Sister is safe, the Sisters take compassion on the starving dragon and promise to bring him soup the next day.

The *Seven Chinese Sisters* is an action-filled story with strong female characters who demonstrate courage and resourcefulness as they work together using their talents to rescue their sister. Each sister is portrayed with her own unique features and personality, unlike the stereotyped characters in books like *The Five Chinese Brothers* (Claire Huchet Bishop & Kurt Wiese, 1938). Lin’s illustrations are brightly colored paintings that convey the action and emotions in the story. Her use of patterns such as in the clothing and background, add to the richness of the illustrations.

Author Kathy Tucker is from the state of Washington and illustrator Grace Lin is Chinese-American and from New York. While Tucker wrote the book to encourage girls to develop their talents and with Lin produced a book with many strengths, numerous aspects of the written text and illustrations are not authentic to Chinese culture, as the following examples demonstrate.

- Dragons in Chinese culture are magnificent and royal, representing good luck and prosperity which contrasts sharply with the weak, anemic-looking dragon.
- Structural features of the house are not authentic to Chinese culture. Chinese houses do not have pillars next to the doors nor windows above doors.
- Also, the windows in traditional Chinese houses are made of bricks or wood and are open, without glass; the windows in the illustrations are common in American homes.
- The Chinese eat at round tables. The rectangular table in the illustration of the kitchen is more like an American dining table.
- The Seven Sisters all wear cheongsam but authentic Chinese cheongsam is a close-fitting dress with low side vents and worn without trousers, not loose-fitting dresses with high vents and trousers.

- Other features not authentic to Chinese culture include Seventh Sister's pacifier, drinking cup, and high chair; oven mitts and the electric stove; and, karate, which is native to Japan.
- An additional issue with the story is that it begins "Once upon a time"—setting it in the long ago past, yet things like the scooter are contemporary.

Reading The Seven Chinese Sisters in a text set with books that are more authentic to Chinese culture, students could be encouraged to think critically about issues of authenticity. Such a text set of folktales might include:

Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China (Ed Young, 1996)

The Lost Horse: A Chinese Folktale (Ed Young, 2004)

Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China (Ai Lin Louie, 1996).

In a text set on dragons, books that would help students explore dragons and their role in the Chinese culture include:

Legend of the Chinese Dragon (Marie Sellier, 2008)

Jin Jin the Dragon (Grace Chang, 2008)

The Dragon's Tale and Other Animal Fables of the Chinese Zodiac (Demi, 1996)

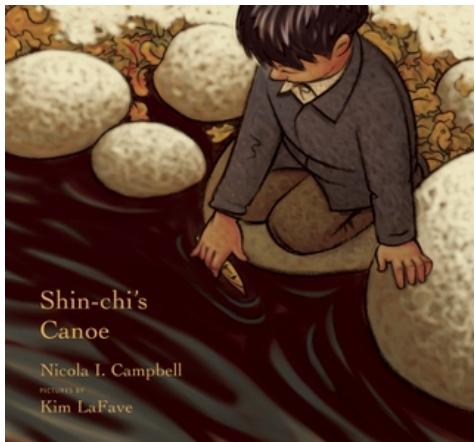
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Shin-chi's Canoe

Written by Nicola I. Campbell
 Illustrated by Kim Lafave
 Groundwood, 2008
 ISBN: 9-780-88899-857-6

Shin-chi's Canoe takes the reader into a young boy's first experience going to an American Indian residential school—a government-sponsored and church-run school established in the late 1800's to colonize and civilize Native children. A finalist in the prestigious Governor General's Literary Awards of the Canada

Council for the Arts, this book portrays sensitively and powerfully this injustice against Native American people at the end of the 19th century and far into the 20th century in Canada and the United States. Campbell's first book, *Shi-shi-etko* (2005), has been praised by scholars as being astounding, honest, and poignant in telling the story of Shi-shi-etko before she leaves her family to go to the school. The story of Shin-chi, little brother, is set at the school.

Shin-chi's Canoe opens in the days before he must go with his sister to the residential school. Knowing that their hair will be cut at the school, the sister asks her grandmother to cut their hair and ceremoniously take it to the mountain. Before they leave on the cattle truck that is sent to gather the children of the village, Shin-chi receives a small wooden canoe from his parents to take with him, and tearfully they part. His sister reminds him to remember the images they pass in traveling away from their home as they will not see their family until the sockeye salmon returns. The canoe is a reminder of a surprise that will be waiting when he returns the following summer, and it becomes a symbol of hope to survive the school year – a year that includes hunger and separation from his sister. The canoe helps to maintain the book's hopeful tone that leads to the joyous reunion of the family.

The author provides a one-page focused and compelling history of the residential schools citing the number of children in Canada and the U.S. who attended as well as more contemporary efforts to compensate for the government's effort to take away culture, language, and family with money and apologies. Having many family members who attended these schools, Campbell gathered information from interviews with her family and tribal elders (Interior Salish and Métis tribes) who survived this experience. Her book points to the "steadfast resistance, determination, courage, healing, strength of spirit and an overwhelming love for our children and family." The illustrator, Kim Lafave, used tribal interviews and archival photographs in the illustrations. The use of drab, muted brown tones and the lack of facial expressions provide a context in which the characters are somewhat dehumanized. In contrast to the colorful images of home, the school images are those of isolation and loneliness.

Shin-Chi's Canoe, alone or paired with *Shi-shi-etko*, provides an excellent and understandable resource for children to learn about the resilience of Native children in this particular era of social injustice. For older students, both may be paired with *Sweetgrass Basket* (Marlene Carvell, 2006). They might also be used in a text set on "Schooling and Social Injustice" in which readers look across

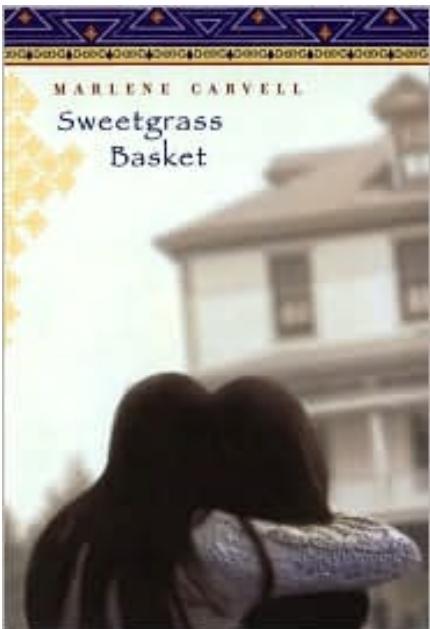
the past century at education in books such as *Remember: The Journey to School Integration* (Toni Morrison, 2003) or *Miss Crandall's School for Young Ladies & Little Misses of Color* (Elizabeth Alexander and Marilyn Nelson, 2007).

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Sweetgrass Basket

Written by Marlene Carvell
 Dutton, 2005, 256 pp
 ISBN: 978-0-52547-547-7

The Carlisle Boarding School was one of many institutions at the turn of the century established to save American Indian children, remove their "Indianess," and prepare them for menial jobs as they became adults in the early 1900's. Through poetic text and alternating voices, Marlene Carvell weaves a moving story of two Mohawk sisters sent to live at the Carlisle Boarding School when their father is convinced by visitors that this is the best place for his daughters following their mother's death. This novel is based on the experiences of members of the author's Mohawk family, four of whom attended Carlisle. History documents the forced assimilation of many Native American children in the United States and Canada

sent to boarding schools when their parents were either convinced it was for the children's own good or forced to send them due to local laws. After arriving at Carlisle, Mattie and Sarah are forced to work and required to use only the English language. Although they are not allowed to have remembrances from home, Sarah surprises Mattie with her beloved sweetgrass basket, a gift from her deceased mother, only to have it destroyed after being taken from them. They keep memories of their home and culture alive amidst the cruelty of the school's director and some of the students, leaning on each other for strength. Mattie, the older sister, is falsely accused of stealing a brooch from the head of the school, and tries to escape and return home. When she is found, she is ill and, after returning to the school, her solitary punishment results in her death.

While oppression is a theme that weaves throughout the story, the girls' resistance offers hope and points to their strength. The girls find friendship with an African American worker who tells them what the school leaders expect and steps in to help the girls when possible, despite his own forced submission to the dominance of those in charge. This friendship strengthens the resilience the girls develop as they work as a seamstress and in the laundry, marching to work and school with frequent reprimands for not following all the rules. Homesickness and defiance enter often into their dialogue, and while they are powerless, Sarah does have the final victory when she finds the missing brooch. Rather than clear her sister's name, she decides not to give the head of the school the pleasure of having her brooch or of thinking it was returned out of guilt. While the story sensitively represents the sadness of tearing families apart and the attempts to strip away the cultural lives of these children, it also preserves the integrity of the culture through the personal insights, strength of spirit, and cultural values of each narrator.

Carvell is known also for her moving novel, *Who Will Tell My Brother* (2004), a contemporary story of a young man who takes a stand against the stereotypical attitudes towards Native Americans at his school. This story captures Carvell's own sons' experiences and, as in *Sweetgrass Basket*, she portrays the Native American struggle through strength and integrity, despite the social injustice. The two books can be used together to compare attitudes toward Native Americans at the turn of

the century and in contemporary times. The images in *Sweetgrass Basket* document the history of the Indian boarding schools through this family generational sharing.

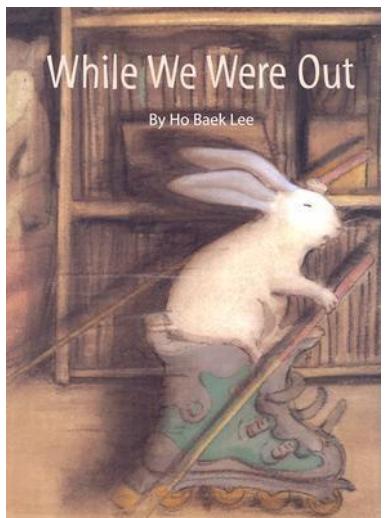
This story can also be paired with the picture book, *Shin-chi's Canoe* by Nicola I. Campbell (2008), to explore the boarding school experience. The friendship shared between two oppressed groups, Native American and African American, can be compared with friendships in such books as *Crossing Boc Chito: A Choctaw Story of Friendship and Freedom* by Tim Tingle (2006), or the friendship between a Japanese-American girl in an internment camp during War II and a Mohawk boy in *Weedflower* by Cynthia Kadohata (2006).

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While We Were Out

Written & illustrated by Ho Baek Lee

Kane/Miller, 2003

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Pet lovers consider their pet to be a member of the family. Owners often wonder what their pets do when the family is not at home. Seen through the eyes of a family pet, Ho Baek Lee's whimsical story of a pet rabbit's adventures at home while the family is out delights the reader. *While We Were Out* opens with the curious rabbit taking advantage of the open patio door. Her adventures reflect what she has learned from the family, starting with her opening the refrigerator and eating at the dining table. She pours through the family's movie collection, plops

herself on the sofa, and even gets herself a snack to enjoy with her movie.

Making the most of her time alone, she explores the world of makeup and fashion as she experiments with lipstick and a Korean costume. She tries to read the family's books, but gets sidetracked by the children's toy robots and magnets. Suddenly, she spies what she has longed for— an opportunity to try a pair of over-sized skates. Using her ingenuity, she cleverly figures out a solution and takes a joy ride. As the day wears on, the little rabbit grows weary and snuggles under the bed covers. In the morning, she returns back to her balcony, musing about her secret adventures. Will the family ever find out?

The simple, pastel-kissed pencil sketches lend an ethereal quality to the rabbit's exploits. The interspersing of bright colors in particular scenes conveys her delight in mimicking what her family does. Lee's story is a well-crafted tale based on the family rabbit and will appeal to rabbit owners and pet-lovers as it provides an insightful peek into a pet's perspective on living with a family of humans.

From a cultural perspective, one native Korean reader points out that this interesting story and illustrations mainly provide a modern look into Koreans' Westernized life style, including similarities to urban life in any culture. This reader infers that a nuclear family lives in the apartment, with working parents who can provide their children with food, books, toys, and a pet. The family may be off visiting grandparents living in rural areas during weekends. While this may be perhaps an authentic, modern-day lifestyle of Korean families, this reader suggests that the story does not present Korean culture other than the use of chopsticks, Korean traditional clothing, and a typical snack of shrimp chips (one of the most popular chips among Koreans). However, it is interesting to note that the book was written from an insider's perspective. The book is a translation into English from a South Korean author/illustrator and was originally written and published for a South Korean audience, thus strengthening cultural authenticity.

While We Were Out can provide children with an opportunity to share their own family pet stories and talk about ideas for writing stories about their pets. The book's lead sentence, "The apartment is quiet" shows children how a good lead can set the tone and mood of the story. The surprise ending is an invitation to young writers— "is this something you might try in your writing?" Telling the story from the rabbit's perspective helps children envision another angle to write about everyday

situations. Other books that provide alternative perspectives include *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (Jon Scieszka, 1989), *Voices in the Park* (Anthony Browne, 1998), *The Diary of a Wombat* (Jackie French, 2003), and *Hey Little Ant* (Phillip & Hannah Hoose, 1998).

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