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# WOW REVIEW

READING ACROSS CULTURES  
VOLUME XII, ISSUE 3

SPRING 2021  
OPEN THEME

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of WORDS 



College  
of  
Education

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# WOW Review: Volume XIII Issue 3

Spring 2021

Open Theme

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## Introduction and Editors' Note

One of the goals shared across time by societies is that their children become effective problem-solvers so that they can face obstacles and impact their circumstances for positive change. This issue profiles stories in which protagonists use their limited resources and creative thinking to solve problems of survival, social interaction, and identity. The books in this issue are wonderful examples of people of all ages using their ingenuity in a range of circumstances to solve what seems like the impossible.

Some of the problems are physical obstacles. In *Adam and Thomas*, two Jewish boys are taken to the Polish forest to hide from Nazi soldiers and must learn to forage for food, build safe shelter and help others who are escaping. But they also have an emotional obstacle—fear—that they overcome through talking and keeping a journal of their experiences. In *Lost and Found Cat*, distance is the obstacle. A family flees their home in Iraq with their beloved cat, but when they arrive safely on a Greek island, the cat escapes the broken carrier and disappears. When the cat is eventually located, refugee workers use social media to locate the family who have moved on to Norway, and reunite them with their cat. In another refugee narrative, the graphic novel *Mexique* tells the story of children fleeing the Spanish Civil War, leaving their parents behind in Spain for what they thought was a short stay in Mexico. As the civil war continues and then WWII erupts, they learn to adapt to a different culture and cope without family.

Some problems are at a systemic societal level. In *Turning Pages*, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor explains how she grew up reading books and learning about freedom, justice, and equity, issues she deals with every day as she defends the spirit of the U.S. Constitution. In *Stamped*, authors Reynolds and Kendi narrate the path from segregation to a possible anti-racist future. Beginning with the writings of Zurara, a 15th century novelist and chronicler of the Age of Discovery and concluding with the writings of Angela Davis, the authors take readers on a story-like narrative of thinking around racial hierarchies. The first book in this issue, *A is for Aloha: A Hawai'i Alphabet*, is not so much about problem-solving but rather introduces a problem to be solved in the future. The reviewer describes the colorful illustrations introducing readers to Hawai'i, but notes that the alphabet used is not that of Hawaiian English. What is missing is an emphasis on the rich indigenous culture that was present before colonization.

The societal problems in this issue are systemic, but the books also portray how these problems impact individuals. In *Sticks and Stones*, Trish moves to a different school and has to cope with the bullying behavior of one of her new classmates. Several of the protagonists in this issue are solving issues of identity. In *Why Johnny Doesn't Flap*, a boy on the autism spectrum rationalizes that his friend is okay even though the boys have different behavior patterns. In *Your Name is a Song*, a young girl does not want to return to school because no one can pronounce her name. Through dialogue with her mother, she learns that names are songs that communicate fire, sparks, and joy. So she returns to school the next day ready to sing her classmates' names and teach them her name song, taking pride in her name as integral to her cultural identity. In *Kaya's Heart Song*, a young girl uses yoga mindfulness to quiet a problem herself—in order to hear her inner self, her heart song.

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

**Volume 14, Issue 1**—Open theme (Fall 2021)—Submission deadline: August 15, 2021. The editors welcome reviews of children's or young adult books that highlight intercultural understanding and global perspectives.

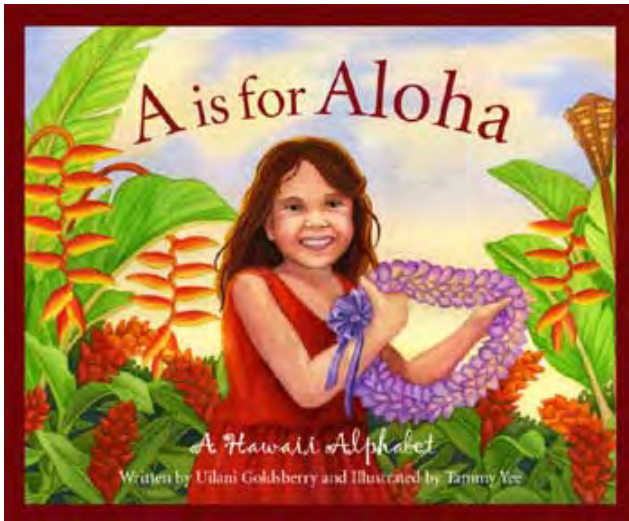
**Volume 14, Issue 2**—Theme: STEM titles (Winter 2022)—Submission deadline: November 15, 2021. The editors welcome reviews of global or multicultural books with subjects that are related to STEM — science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Susan Corapi and Prisca Martens, Co-Editors

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***A is for Aloha: A Hawai'i Alphabet***

Written by U'ilani Goldsberry

Illustrated by Tammy Yee

Sleeping Bear Press, 2005, 36 pp

ISBN: 978-1-58536-146-5

This unique alphabet book guides children through the English alphabet with Hawaiian words, phrases, places, and objects. Each letter also includes more information on the side panels of the pages about either the word or other aspects of Hawai'i related to that letter.

The title of this book could lead Native Hawaiians to believe it is a book depicting the Hawaiian Alphabet (Piapa) which consists of 12 letters (A, E, I, O, U, He, Ke, La, Mu, Nu, Pu, We). But that is not what the book contains. Pages that include the Hawaiian alphabet do not even mention that alphabet. For example, the page for the letter "E" does not include a Hawaiian word beginning with E. These choices provide a "tourist" or Malihini (newcomer) vibe for the book rather than an authentic Native Hawaiian perspective.

The side panels of each letter page have paragraphs that provide greater detail for the letter highlighted on the page. This information ranges from tropical rainforests, to sea life, and to the Hula. The Q page talks about Hawai'i's last reigning Monarch, Queen Lili'uokalani. While this page does talk about her overthrow, it discusses this event as being at the hands of "American Businessmen" rather than having the ownership of this atrocity placed on the United States government and the Marines. It also refers to her time in captivity in the palace. Sadly, the text states she is most known for writing the song *Aloha 'Oe* instead of her role as the last monarch of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

This book provides a very touristy version of Hawai'i and is more from an outsider's perspective rather than the Native Hawaiian perspective one would expect based on the author. The book, unless accompanied by others, could potentially provide a misinterpretation of the Hawaiian culture and language.

One book that pairs well with *A is for Aloha* is *'Ohana Means Family* by Ilima Loomis and Kenard Pak (2020). Loomis and Pak tell what 'Ohana means in Hawai'i by taking readers on a journey of the poi for the 'ohana's l 'au. The journey from harvesting the kalo to the 'ohana's L 'au table demonstrates the connectedness that the Hawaiian people have with not only the land but their kalo as part of their origin story. Another book that pairs well is *Aloha is...* by Tammy Paikai and Rosalie Prussing (2006). The story takes readers through the different meanings of Aloha in Hawai'i. Though the literal definition of "Breath of Life" is not revealed, the book is well written and does help readers understand that Aloha does not just mean hello.

*A is for Aloha: A Hawai'i Alphabet* is written by Native Hawaiian U'ilani Goldsberry. She was born on the island of Maui but relocated at a young age to the island of O'ahu, where

she still resides. U'ilani has written several travel books, cookbooks, and two other children's books, *The Shark Man of H na: O Ke K ne Man O H na* (2004), and *The Storm Dog of the Ko'olau* (2004).

Tammy Yee, a local born illustrator (i.e., born in Hawai'i but not of Hawaiian heritage), provides the beautiful illustrations for *A is for Aloha*. She has been published more than 36 times as either an author or an illustrator. Yee started her adult life as a nurse but after having her own children rediscovered her love for children's books and drawing. Her specialties are children, animals, wildlife, conservation, multicultural, humor and science. Yee uses watercolor, acrylics and digital illustrations. For *A is for Aloha*, she used watercolor to display the beautiful Hawaiian scenery.

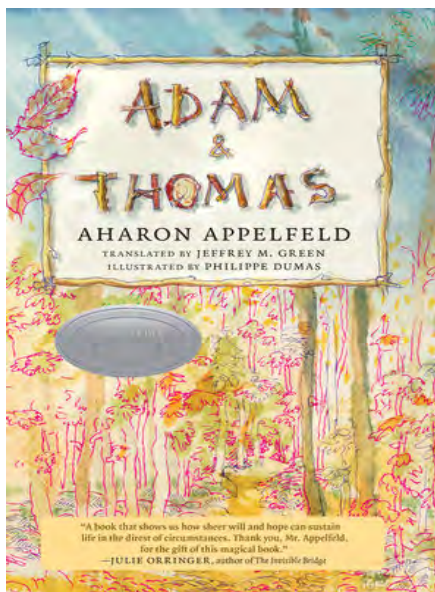
Moanikeala Kanae, University of Arizona

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### ***Adam & Thomas***

Written by Aharon Appelfeld

Illustrated by Philippe Dumas

Translated by Jeffery Green

Seven Stories Press, 2017, 149 pp

ISBN: 978-1-60980-744-3

Part autobiography, part fable, Batchelder Award Honor Book *Adam & Thomas*, by Holocaust survivor Aharon Appelfeld, is a tale of two nine-year-old Jewish boys and their survival in the forests of Ukraine toward the end of the Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe during World War II. Each boy is brought to a large forest separately by their mothers who leave them as Jewish ghettos are emptied and

Jews are transported to concentration and death camps as part of Hitler's Final Solution. Adam, described by Appelfeld as a child of nature, and Thomas, a pensive and serious child of the city, come to rely on each other and survive together. Throughout, Adam teaches Thomas how to survive in the woods, serving as an example of self-sufficiency and strength while Thomas, a sensitive and gifted writer, records their daily activities. Alone in the forests for months, they learn to forage for food, build shelters, and meet up with other Jews who took to the woods to hide, including Mina, a former classmate, who brings them food and other survival essentials. At the end of the war, their mothers return to two very changed boys and the novel concludes with the mothers and Adam and Thomas caring for Mina who is injured and deathly ill.

Throughout the novel, the tale is accompanied by occasional spindly ink and watercolor illustrations by Philippe Dumas that contribute to the ethereal and dream-like mystical aura that Appelfeld creates from the boys' point-of-view. Dumas, a published author and illustrator of children's and young adult books, ably captures the essence of the story including fine details that beautifully contrast with and support Appelfeld's simple but heart-felt prose. While the plot verges on formulaic, including its rather unbelievable ending, there is no mistaking the authenticity of the emotional and physical trauma the boys experience as they will themselves to survive. However, it appears that Appelfeld and Dumas attempted and successfully created a distinct blur of fantasy and reality, textually and illustratively, making this Holocaust novel very readable and less frightening for younger adolescents. Although the novel is usually categorized with more graphically depicted Holocaust atrocity titles for young adults, Appelfeld tells his challenging story of survival in a sensitive, gentle, manner, making this novel a good choice for middle-school grades studying the Holocaust or genocide.

Steeped in Judaic spirituality and wisdom, the story is a very "Jewish" account of the Holocaust experience. It begins and ends with two of the 613 Jewish mitzvot (good deeds) as early on Adam teaches Thomas practical survival skills (honoring learning) and at the end, caring for sick Mina (helping the sick). Additionally, the notion of God is present and

referenced over 20 times by the boys as they appeal for help. Also, the use of the color white, a symbol of purity and grace in Judaism, plays a central role, appearing in the forms of encountered animals in the forest and in dreams the boys relay to each other.

And finally, the book's original title in Hebrew, *Yalda Shelo Minhaolam Hazé* (A Girl from Another World), adapted into English as *Adam & Thomas* by translator Jeffery Green, is curious and sage. Adam in Hebrew means "earth" and Thomas in Hebrew means "twin". These two names signify the novel's main messages, including the down-to-earth friendship between the boys indicating that no matter their differences, surviving traumatic and harsh circumstances and standing ground on the earth together, they are like twins as physical and emotional challenges present themselves. One does wonder, however, about the original title as Mina, the filmy, fragile girl from another world, has a modest role in the overall plot which, at best, is fleeting. However, she does keep the boys alive by slipping them food and warm blankets. The original title could well be Appelfeld's autobiographical way of demonstrating appreciation by paying tribute to these favors which, considering the sizeable risks Mina took to deliver these goods, was huge.

Because the novel is so heavily rich in Jewish folklore and customs, it should be paired with other texts that present Judaic traditions and Holocaust experiences. *Zlateh the Goat and Other Stories* by Issac Bashevis Singer and illustrated by Maurice Sendak (1966) is a wonderful way to showcase simple but culturally rich Eastern European Jewish traditions. By reading it prior to *Adam & Thomas*, the collection provides a glimpse into life and wisdom common to Jewish shtetl life and folklore and demonstrates the value of living life gracefully, spiritually, and fully as Adam and Thomas do. A text set of additional Holocaust titles to accompany *Adam & Thomas* include Mario Escobar's (2018) *Auschwitz Lullaby*, Lois Lowry's (1989) *Number the Stars*, Uri Orlev's (1981) *The Island on Bird Street*, and Eli Wiesel's (1961) *Night*.

Aharon Appelfeld was born in a Burkovian village in Eastern Europe in 1932 and died in Petah Tikva, Israel in 2018. The winner of several prestigious literary prizes and awards, he was Professor Emeritus of Hebrew literature at Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheva, Israel. At the age of eight, he escaped from a concentration camp and wandered the forests of Ukraine for three years until picked up by the Red Army in 1944. He made his way to Palestine in 1946 and remained in Israel until his death.

Philippe Dumas, a French author and illustrator of several children's and young adult books, divides his time between writing and illustrating books and designing and painting theatrical scenery. The grandson of an Hermès CEO, Emile Dumas, Dumas's characters are always playfully rendered with attention to lots of detail and demonstrated care. He is also a scarf designer for the luxury brand, Hermès.

American born translator, Jeffrey Green, relocated to Israel with his wife in 1973 just two weeks before the Yom Kippur War. He worked with Aharon Appelfeld for over 30 years as his official translator. Green also translates works from French to English.

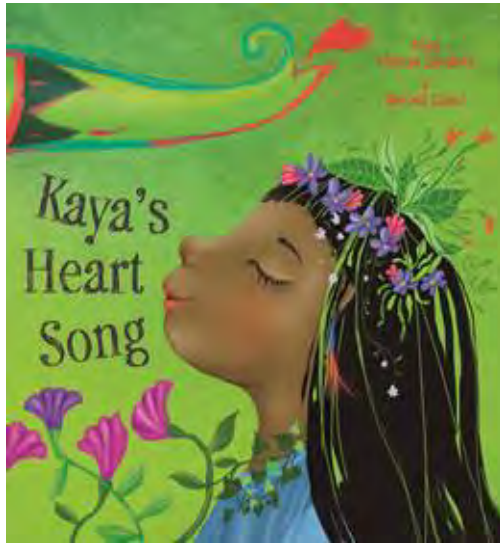


Shelley Baumgarten, University of Arizona

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***Kaya's Heart Song***

Written by Diwa Tharan Sanders

Illustrated by Nerina Canzi

Lantana Publishing, 2019, 38 pp

ISBN: 978-1-911373-22-3

The beautiful, vibrant, yet relaxing colors on the cover of *Kaya's Heart Song* invite readers to dive into a book that appears to be about music or song. The setting, though, is the natural inspiring beauty of the Malaysian jungle, and the story begins with young Kaya watching her mother meditate. Kaya wonders what her mother is singing and begins her journey to find a heart song of her own just as her mother.

Kaya's journey takes her to a part of the forest where she has never been when she follows a butterfly. She meets Pak, the keeper of the gate to an old, broken elephant carousel in the middle of the jungle. Though the carousel appears to be unloved, unused and forgotten, in Kaya's eyes it is beautiful. As Kaya removes the vines from the elephants, her thoughts turn to the princesses who could have ridden the elephants in the jungle. While she is working, her mind becomes quiet and still. Then she hears the sound of a soft melody and feels the music within her body. Upon hearing the music, the broken vine-covered carousel begins to move. The gatekeeper Pak, to his amazement, sees the carousel move and jumps on to enjoy the ride.

Kaya has discovered her heart song! She also understands her mother's words, "If you have a heart song anything is possible". Soon the pages of the book are filled with small children riding the beautifully colored elephants and enjoying the music. Kaya's heart song has created magic in the air. The book ends with the carousel slowing and the music quieting as the elephants curtsy and Pak thanks Kaya for bringing back the magic. Kaya thanks Pak for helping her find her heart song. The vibrant pictures allow readers to feel the emotions of the book and the calming cool colors add to this effect. Kaya agrees to share her heart song for all to hear.

*Kaya's Heart Song* reminds readers that being mindful of themselves and the things around them can impact not only their own lives but the lives of those around them. Humans might feel like broken and useless beings, especially in the pandemic and with social distancing. However, if we are in a mindful state, we can see the beauty in ourselves and bring that beauty out for others to see, giving them a sense of purpose and belonging. We must share our heart songs to keep hope alive along with the magic of being so we are not merely existing.

Other books that can inspire finding our heart songs include *What Does It Mean to Be Present?* (Rana DiOrio & Eliza Wheeler, 2020), *Visiting Feelings* (Lauren Rubenstein & Shelly Hehenberger, 2013), and *Meditation Is an Open Sky: Mindfulness for Kids* (Whitney Stewart & Sally Rippin, 2015).

Diwa Tharan Sanders is a Malaysian author of Indian-Filipino heritage. A keen yoga practitioner, she teaches meditation and breathwork classes, and makes mala necklaces and bracelets for healing, happiness, and inspiration. Like her necklaces and bracelets, her story allows people to understand that the beauty in their hearts can be shared to inspire others. Visit her website (<https://www.diwatharansanders.com/>) for more information.

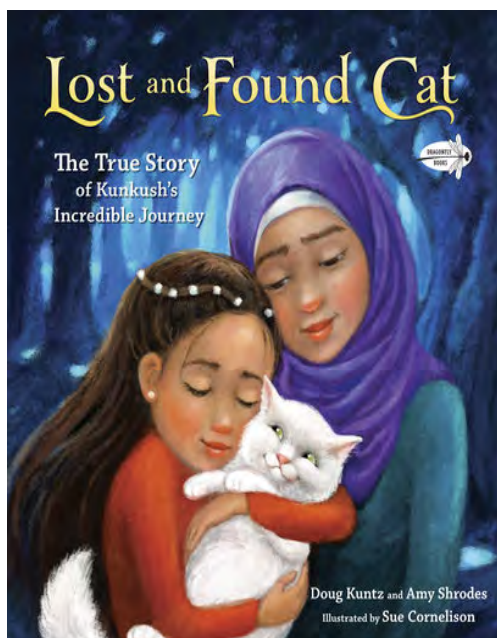
Nerina Canzi was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and has created murals and done other decorative and artistic painting. She currently lives in Argentina. For more information, please visit her website (<https://nerinacanzi.com/> !/-bienvenido-2/).

Keri Collier, Texas Woman's University

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***Lost and Found Cat: The True Story of Kunkush's Incredible Journey***

Written by Doug Kuntz and Amy Shrodes

Illustrated by Sue Cornelison

Dragonfly, 2019, 48 pp

ISBN: 9781524715502

This heartwarming story is inspired by the true story of a cat that is lost during the journey of a refugee family. The family is forced to flee from Mosul, Iraq, and escape to a safer country. They leave behind almost everything, but cannot bear to leave their beloved cat, Kunkush. They risk carrying him through all the stages of their journey from Iraq to Greece and keep him hidden from the smugglers and other passengers. When they arrive in Greece,

unexpectedly Kunkush escapes from the broken cat carrier and disappears. Family, volunteers and everyone on the beach search for Kunkush. Unfortunately, the family has to continue their journey without him.

After the family leaves Greece for Norway, Amy, a volunteer in Greece finds Kunkush. Amy desperately wants to reunite the family with him so takes the frightened cat to the vet, cares for him, and gives him a name. The community and other volunteers collaborate to help Amy by posting on Facebook and other social media attempting to find Kunkush's family. After a few months of searching, the family is found and are able to see Kunkush through a Skype video call. Photojournalist Doug Kuntz offers to take him to the family. However, at the airport, Kunkush is not allowed to travel with Doug because of the size of his carrier, but Doug convinces the airline supervisor that Kunkush can turn 180 degrees around in the carrier. Eventually he is able to deliver Kunkush to the family in Norway for a happy ending.

This true story was written with the help and cooperation of Kunkush's family. The events of the story represent a real-life situation where people who have different cultural backgrounds come together and help each other during difficult times in their lives. Sue Cornelison's illustrations are colorful and realistic and successfully capture the suffering and emotions of the characters.

*Lost and Found Cat* can be paired with *Saving Hanno: The Story of a Refugee Dog* (Miriam Halahmy, 2019) about a boy and his dog, Hanno, who face peril when he is sent from Germany to England on the Kindertransport trains during World War II. The refugee-animal bond can also be explored with *My Beautiful Birds* (Suzanne Del Rizzo, 2017).

*Lost and Found Cat* won several awards, including the Washington Children's Choice Picture Book Award (nominee) in 2019, CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Books for

Young Readers (selection) in 2018, Chicago Public Library's Best of the Best Informational Books for Young Readers (selection) in 2017, and Cooperative Children's Book Center Choices (selection) in 2018.

This story was written by Amy Shrodes and Doug Kuntz, who both volunteered to help refugees in crisis in Greece in different ways. After Doug and Amy met Kunkush, they knew he was somebody's loved pet and decided to help him reunite him with his family.

Amy volunteers to coordinate the arrival of new refugees and increases the awareness of refugees' lives and problems among people from her country. She was born in Denver, Colorado but grew up and worked in Oklahoma City. She currently lives in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Amy is working on a new book about a refugee boy and how he reunites with his mother.

Doug is a photojournalist who spent several months in countries receiving refugees (Greece, Turkey, Norway, etc.). His camera lens captures refugees' crises and brings the images to people around the world.

Illustrator Sue Cornelison lives and works in St Charles, Iowa. She has won over 20 awards such as Washington Children's Choice Picture Book Award and the National Education Association Reading Circle Catalog. In 2017, she won the Chicago Public Library Best of the Best Books for her illustrations in *Lost and Found Cat*.

Miad Bahashwan, University of Arizona

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***Mexique, A Refugee Story from the Spanish Civil War***

Written by María José Ferrada

Illustrated by Ana Penyas

Translated by Elisa Amado

Eerdmans, 2020, 40 pp

ISBN: 978-0-8028-5545-9

Amidst the narratives of refugee children that reflect both history and contemporary times, *Mexique* uniquely and sensitively presents a historical story little known to many cultures. Yet, it reflects a familiar contemporary theme of separation as the result of loving parents who seek the best for their children. With sparse poetic verse,

the child narrator shares his story of boarding the large ship, the *Mexique*, with over 400 other children on a journey that takes them far from home, supposedly for three or four months until “everything calms down.” They are fleeing the Spanish Civil War in 1937 as they travel from Spain to Mexico where they will be cared for and protected until the war subsides. The naïve understandings of the young child represent the innocence, loneliness, and fears of children affected by war, trusting others to care for them. This story takes place over the course of the trip across the ocean as the children play games, shed tears, and turn to other older children for comfort. Eventually they are welcomed in Mexico, and the story ends as they board the train for Morelia, their home for much longer than a few months. Historically, they became known as “The Children of Morelia.”

An afterward is provided at the book’s end explaining the historical context of the Spanish Civil War, a conflict between the Monarchy led by General Franco and the Republicans fighting for democracy, the side from which these children came. Once the longer-than-anticipated conflict ended with General Franco’s victory, the aftermath created danger in Spain for the Republicans due to Franco’s punishment as well as lack of resources for daily life. And, months later the beginning of World War II made Europe unsafe. Morelia was deemed a safer place, and the children remained there until 1948 and beyond. For many it became a permanent home.

With the narrative focused on the child narrator and the historical information shared at the end of the book in an Afterword, author Ferrada maintains the focus of the story on child refugees and the trauma of war. The book’s dedication creates an initial thought that brings together refugees of the past and present:

“To the Children of Morelia,

And to all those who are moving in search of a life without fear.”



While a closing comment in the Afterword similarly sustains this thought:

“We tell the story of one ship, knowing that there is no registry of all those who cross the sea, every day, seeking that basic human right: a life without fear.”

The illustrations within *Mexique* are somewhat haunting with the use of a black and white color palette, occasionally blurred and with accents of a dull red. The child-like style of the drawings is based on actual photographs and appears at times to be drawn over the actual images in the photographs. The illustrations elaborate the metaphoric verse with expressive figures and faces that share the sorrow of families watching their children depart, the seriousness of war as well as the innocence of playing war, the many perceptions of the ocean over time, and the welcoming crowds as the ship approaches Mexico.

A statement at the narrative’s end addresses the extensive research and interviews upon which the story is based as well as the use of photographs of the “Children of Morelia” and the Mexique. Additionally, the publisher acknowledges Fulbright-National Geographic Digital Storyteller, Destry Maria Sibley, for her assistance. She is also a descendant of a Mexique passenger.

*Mexique* was selected to be on USBBY’s Outstanding International Book List for 2021 and the NCTE Notable Poetry List for 2021.

Refugee stories have been told in many ways during the past few years and *Mexique* adds a unique perspective to these books as well as addressing a common theme. Books that align well with this refugee theme might include: *The Journey* (Francesca Sanna, 2016), *Marwan’s Journey* (Patricia De Arias, 2018), *The Day the War Came* (Nicola Davies, 2016), *Azzi in Between* (Sara Garland, 2013), *My Beautiful Birds* (Suzanne Del Rizzo, 2017), *Lubna and Pebble* (Wendy Meddour, 2019).

Author María José Ferrada is a journalist and award-winning writer. Among these awards are the Academia Award for the best book published in Chile, her home country, the Santiago Municipal Literature Award, and the Chilean Ministry of Culture Award. In 2018 she received the Hispanic-American prize for poetry. Currently, living in Santiago, Chile, she works for the National Library of Chile as a children’s editor of a digital resource center. More information about her numerous titles can be found at <https://tinhouse.com/author/maria-jose-ferrada/>.

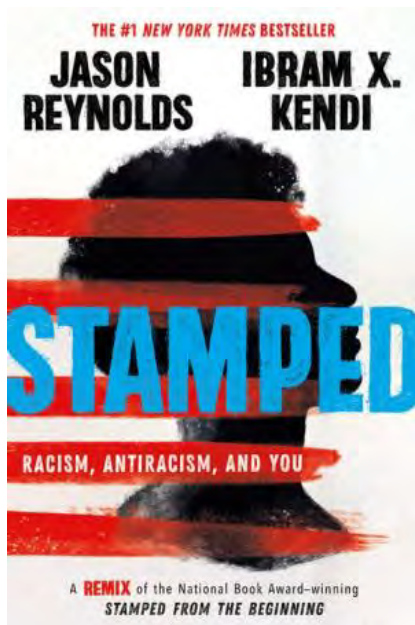
Illustrator Ana Penyas resides in Madrid, Spain and has received awards for her work in comic art. More information can be found at her website.

Janelle Mathis, University of North Texas

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***Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You***

Written by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X.

Kendi

Little, Brown and Company, 2020, 294 pp

ISBN: 978-0-316-45369-1

As seen in the Black Lives Matter marches and protests throughout the summer of 2020, systemic racism is prevalent throughout the United States. Jason Reynolds and Ibram Kendi (2020) ask, “whether you, reader, want to be a segregationist (a hater), an assimilationist (a coward), or an antiracist (someone who truly loves)” (p. 247). Throughout the book, a history of Black America is told through the lens of Black Americans: the broken pathway from

segregationists to assimilationists to the possible antiracist future.

The authors purport that this is NOT a history book. But Jason Reynolds, as a young adult author, and Ibram Kendi, as a historian, have a marvelous way of presenting historical material in a way that makes young adult readers *want* to read the book. The quantity of detail invites readers to absorb the history throughout the book. Short, direct chapters divided into five sections lead readers from the beginnings of racist thoughts with Zurara, a fifteenth century novelist credited as the first defender of African slave trading, to the antiracist possibilities offered by Angela Davis, a modern antiracist academic.

While the sections are divided by dates rather than themes, some themes emerge from the five sections. The first section, 1415-1728, details the beginnings of academic, religious, and scientific arguments for white superiority. The second section, 1743-1826, goes through some of the segregationist ideas that upheld a racial hierarchy, including the belief that the just thing to do was maintaining the hierarchy for the benefit of Blacks. The third section, 1826-1879, shows the liminal period in United States history when abolitionists were mostly segregationists or assimilationists but generally not antiracists. The fourth section, 1868-1963, demonstrates the movement of Blacks toward an assimilationist viewpoint that if they can only do better, they will be accepted in society. The fifth section, 1963-Today, details the systemic issues that keep segregationist and assimilationists in power while perpetuating those beliefs among minoritized individuals. This last section ends with the rejection of a racist future in Black Lives Matters protests.

Jason Reynolds is the primary author of what he calls a “remix” of Kendi’s 2017 National Book Award-winning *Stamped from the Beginning*. Through Kendi’s work as a historian, they provide notes on sources including primary sources such as letters and laws, news articles, and academic texts for students to further explore the presented ideas. These ideas serve as a counternarrative to the majoritized perspective of what it means to be Black in America and history from a Black point of view. This text is in line with other

similar texts such as Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (1980) or Paul Ortiz's *An African American and Latinx History of the United States* (2018), except *Stamped* is much more young adult friendly. *Stamped* has many more entry points for young adult readers, which hooks them into exploring the ideas and yearning for more knowledge (and reading).

The authors provide a list of books for further reading including *March* (Books 1-3) by the late Congressman John Lewis (2013), *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas (2017), and *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison (1970). While these suggested books offer a variety of sources from graphic novels, contemporary novels, and works from the canon, other possibilities might engage students with the history of racism in the United States. Some possibilities with picturebooks include *Something Happened in Our Town* by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard, illustrated by Jennifer Zivion (2018), *Skin Again* by bell hooks and illustrated by Chris Raschka (2004), and *Not My Idea: A Book about Whiteness* by Anatasia Higgginbotham (2018). Some texts that might extend the learning from *Stamped* could be *This Book Is Antiracist* by Tiffany Jewell and Aurelia Durand (2020), *The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin (1963), or *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou (1969).

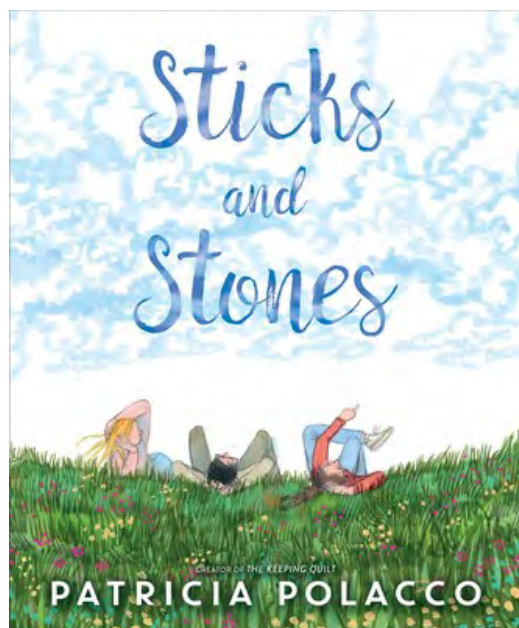
As a young adult, Jason Reynolds was inspired by Queen Latifah's album *Black Reign* (1993), which led him to write for young adults who, like him, did not like to read. His books such as *Ghost* (2016) and *As Brave as You* (2016), offer sliding doorways to Black boys into the world of literature. Ibram Xolani Kendi, as the director of the Center for Antiracist Research, offers historical counternarratives to racist ideals to children in *Antiracist Baby* (2020), to adults in *How to Be an Antiracist* (2019), and to young adults in this nonfiction book.

Victor Lozada, Texas Woman's University

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***Sticks and Stones***

Written and Illustrated by Patricia Polacco

Simon & Schuster, 2020, 46 pp

ISBN: 978-1-5344-2622-1

Patricia Polacco's illustrations magnificently tell the story of Tricia, Thom, and Ravanne, fast and forever friends who spend a year together as middle school misfits. Told in first person through the character of Tricia, *Sticks and Stones* is based on Polacco's own life. Tricia spends the summer with her family in Michigan and attends a whole year in a new school, with whom she thought were her best summer friends. As it turns out, Tricia quickly realizes her summer friends will not be her school friends. They

leave her on the front steps, and Tricia finds herself alone in a new school. A boy named Thom befriends her, realizing they have first period together. Thom is a "gawky looking boy, with dark horn-rimmed glasses so thick that they made his eyes look as big as saucers" (p. 4).

Polacco's stories and drawings are character-focused with the character's faces and bodies large and leaping from the pages, showing emotions of joy, anger, relief, and determination. As in most of her books, Polacco takes on serious topics that are relatable and told in a child-friendly manner. *Sticks and Stones* is based on issues of bullying and examines gender roles, with Thom being a ballet dancer. When other students accidentally find out that Thom takes ballet, the bullying gets worse for him. Another theme of the book is perseverance and self-determination and not being afraid of what others think or say about you.

Patricia Polacco is a natural born storyteller and throughout this book she makes readers laugh. Thom, who is bullied the most, interestingly enough, is also the character with the quickest wit. When Thom and Tricia sit in their first class together, a voice booms, "Well, looky here. Sissy boy! And who's the cootie with him? And look who Sissy Boy and Cootie are sitting with...Her Ugliness!" Thom then goes on to tell the mean boy, Billy, that his name is Thom spelled T-H-O-M and, their names are Ravanne and Tricia. He smiles looking at Tricia and whispers, "we're known as sissy boy and her ugliness...at your service!" (p.4).

*Sticks and Stones* provides rich opportunities for children to share their stories of being bullied or seeing bullying. Furthermore, the character of Tricia is a strong example for young readers who want to stand up and support victims of bullying. The character we know the least about is Billy the bully. Polacco does not choose to tell his story, so we don't know his background, family life, or what makes him so mean. In an Author's Note at the end, Polacco shares information about the real-life characters of Thom and



Ravanne with a “Where They Are Now” cap to the story. She also urges children who feel that they ‘march to a different drum’ to “step high! Strut your stuff with courage and goodwill”. She leaves the readers with her signature saying, “Your heart knows the way!” (p. 46).

*Sticks and Stones* can be paired with numerous books about bullying and anti-bullying, including, Polacco’s (2001) *Mr. Lincoln’s Way* in which Polacco gives voice to the bully and allows the reader to examine possible root causes of a bully’s meanness. Other possible pairs for this book include *Marlene, Marlene, Queen of Mean* by Jane Lynch, Lara Embry, A.E. Mikesell, and Tricia Tusa (2014), *Stick and Stone* by Beth Ferry and Tom Lichtenheld (2015), *Gabe & Izzy: Standing Up for America’s Bullied* by Gabrielle Ford (2014), and *Dear Bully: A Collection of Poems about Bullying* by Joyce Fields (2011).

Patricia Polacco’s notable awards include the 1994 President’s Commendation Medal for *Chicken Sunday* (1992) and *Pink and Say* (1994); the 1996 Jo Osbourne Award for Humor in Children’s Literature; the 2009 Notable list of the National Coalition for the Rights of Gays and Lesbians (*In Our Mother’s House*, 2009); the 1996 David McCord Children’s Literature Citation and award for her body of work.

Patricia Polacco is known for her storytelling and art and has written and illustrated over 115 books for children. Her family comes from Russia, the Ukraine, and County Limerick in Ireland, cultures which value passing down their history through storytelling. Patricia earned multiple degrees in Art and Art History and has studied in the U.S., England, France, Russia and Australia. She is also known as an international advocate for the rights of children. She is a member of the National First Amendment Rights Coalition and has designed an anti-bullying campaign that is nationally recognized. More information can be found on her website [www.patriciapolacco.com](http://www.patriciapolacco.com).

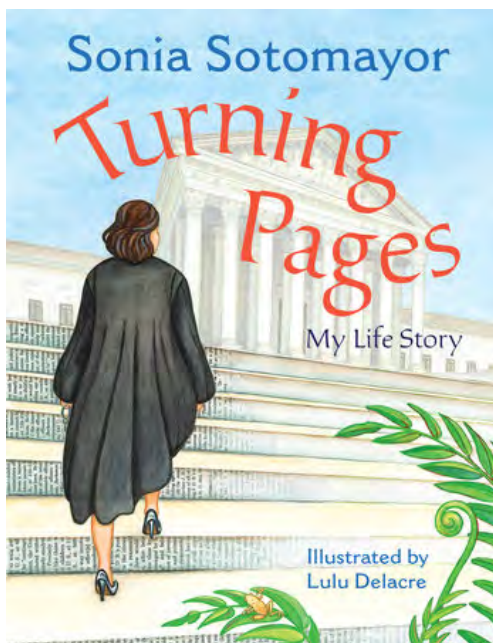
Julie Petitt, Texas Woman’s University

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***Turning Pages: My Life Story***

Written by Sonia Sotomayor

Illustrated by Lulu Delacre

Philomel Books, 2018, 40 pp

ISBN 978-0-525-51408-4

A stairway to change, growth, and success is never an easy path. The cover of *Turning Pages* shows Sonia Sotomayor going up a set of stairs covered with words and resembling book pages. Through her book, she motivates readers to believe in the magic and power of books to improve themselves in life against all odds. This captivating picturebook autobiography by the first Latina Supreme Court Justice and illustrated by Latina artist Lulu Delacre is also available in Spanish as *Pasando páginas: La*

*historia de mi vida*. It tells Sotomayor's story, starting with her childhood and youth in the Bronx, New York, with her immigrant parents. She shares memories of family gatherings and her grandmother reciting nostalgic poems about her home on a faraway island, which marks the beginning of her love for words. She also tells about how her father, like many immigrants, worked hard and was paid very little, with no insurance or health benefits, and how he passed away. The experiences Sotomayor shares of life moving between Puerto Rican and American cultures reveal how she overcame adversity, discrimination, and prejudice. Her life experiences motivated her to take the education pathway and help others who need justice. To treat people fairly under the law is very important to her as is representing people from minoritized communities.

As a child, she discovered that books were a way to escape from an unfair world and find solutions, so she could achieve her goals. Books became her constant friends, through hardships and life experiences, making a path of discovery of both real and fictional worlds. For her, "books were lenses, bringing into focus truths about the world around me". Students of all cultures, genders, and races can relate to this story that reflects the reality of many immigrant children who dream of a better future. Sonia Sotomayor is a role model not just for immigrant children but for all children who believe in treating others fairly. Her legacy of becoming the first Latina Supreme Court Justice is not only an inspirational story but one that touches on important issues of government, justice, and finding oneself.

This book would pair well with *Sonia Sotomayor: A Judge Grows in the Bronx/La juez que creció en el Bronx* (Jonah Winter & Edel Rodriguez, 2009). *Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You* by Sonia Sotomayor and Rafael López (2018) is another relevant text that extends readers' understandings of diversity, tolerance, and justice.

Lulu Delacre is an award-winning Puerto Rican author and illustrator. Her passion is creating books that encourage Latinx children to empower themselves. In this book she uses a

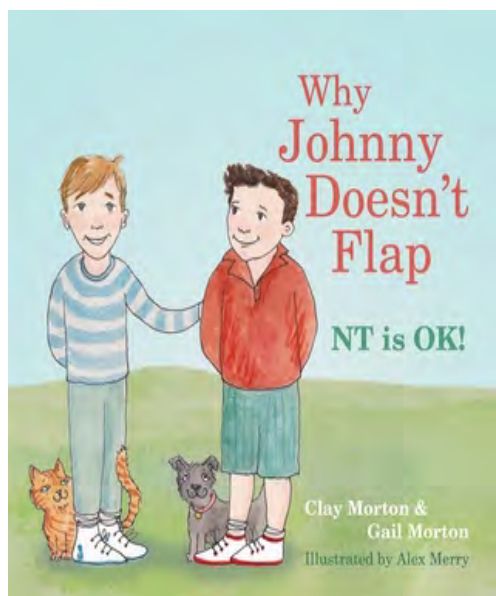
combination of photographs from Sotomayor's life and colorful, active and imaginative watercolor illustrations to explain Sotomayor's point of view and how words and books shaped her into the person she is today. For more information, please visit her website.

Margarita Ramos-Rivera, Texas Woman's University

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***Why Johnny Doesn't Flap: NT is OK!***

Written by Clay Morton and Gail Morton

Illustrated by Alex Merry

Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2016, 32 pp

ISBN: 978-1849057219

The soft and subdued colors of the sky and the delicate colors on the front cover of *Why Johnny Doesn't Flap: NT is OK!* draw in readers and immediately invoke a sense of calmness. The title stands out in bright red and leaves readers wondering, "Why doesn't Johnny flap?" The subtitle is bright green and the letters "NT" and "OK" are capitalized to accentuate meaning. NT is often used to refer to neurotypical individuals, or individuals

who are not on the autism spectrum. Neurotypical individuals adapt to change easily, do not have sensory issues, or do not have dilemmas surrounding interacting with others; however, this is not a limited list (Brusie, 2017).

*Why Johnny Doesn't Flap: NT is OK!* is written from the perspective of an autistic child in the United States and explains being neurotypical and autistic all in one book. It is beautiful, emotional, raw, and to the point. In the first couple of pages, Johnny is introduced as a friend who has lots of fun with the narrator who is autistic.

Contrary to many other books about autism, this one shows that it is ok to be neurotypical, not autistic, which definitely changes the narrative. For instance, in one scene, while the autistic narrator reads his book about hydraulic forklifts, Johnny climbs a tree, which an autistic child does not consider to be the norm. The narrator explains that Johnny's brain works differently, "but that's OK" which is the refrain that ends each scene. Another scene demonstrates that Johnny doesn't have meltdowns when plans are changed or classes are canceled, "but that's OK". The narrator understands that Johnny has a different brain than he does and that is OK. Some scenes make readers giggle and laugh but still take on a serious note and educate readers about how it is ok to be neurotypical; when in actuality, the book is saying that it is ok to be autistic.

*Why Johnny Doesn't Flap: NT is OK!* explains being neurotypical and autistic in simple ways so that children understand. Alex Merry's playful watercolor pictures attract readers and invite them into the story. Possible books that might be paired with this one include *Do you Want to Play: Making Friends with an Autistic Kid* (Daniel Share-Strom & Naghmeh Afshinjah, 2020) and *Noah Chases the Wind* (Michelle Worthington & Joseph Cowman, 2015).

Clay Morton is an Associate Professor of English and the Director of the Honors Program at Middle Georgia State University. His wife, Gail Morton is a Public Services Librarian at Mercer University. Clay and Gail Morton have a child with autism and are advocates for the movement supporting neurodiversity and researching issues in that field. Alex Merry is an illustrator from Gloucestershire.

Sarah Getter, Texas Woman's University

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***Your Name is a Song***

Written by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow

Illustrated by Luisa Uribe

The Innovation Press, 2020, 40 pp

ISBN: 978-1943147724

A young Black Muslim girl does not want to return to school after her first day because her U.S. teachers and classmates are unable to say her West African name. For every terrible moment the girl endures with her name, her mother has a counter approach to viewing the musicality of names and the power of taking pride in one's name as an integral part of cultural identity. She uses examples of names from Middle Eastern, African, European, Asian, Latinx,

and Black-American cultures. Kora-Jalimuso learns that names are powerful and sings her own and her classmates' names at roll call the next morning.

Luisa Uribe's vibrant colored illustrations perfectly compliment Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow's lyrical text. As Kora-Jalimuso's mother describes the musical and powerful nature of names, the pictures breathe magic into the girl's day. Magical elements, such as fire and sparks, continue to curl, grow, and expand. The city disappears, and the girl and her mother walk in the clouds, pulling names from the sky. The illustrations return to the city when the girl must return to school, but the magic returns as Kora-Jalimuso sings everyone's names. Her classmates represent a diverse group of children, both in appearance and in name.

In an interview with Jon Schu (2020), Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow revealed that the main character's name in *Your Name is a Song* was inspired by traditions from her mother's Mandingo griot and her father's Black-American cultures. "Kora-Jalimuso" means "harp of a female griot" with a griot in West Africa being someone who sings an oral history. This name and description are featured in a glossary of names at the back of the book. The glossary contains all of the names used throughout the book along with their common pronunciation, origin, and meaning.

*Your Name is a Song* is featured on numerous best picturebook lists, including the Black Caucus of the American Library Association and multiple state lists. To discuss names as part of cultural identity with children, *Your Name is a Song* can be paired with *The Name Jar* (Yangsook Choi, 2001) and *Alma and How She Got Her Name* (Juana Martinez-Neal, 2018). The book can also be paired with "My Name," an excerpt from *The House on Mango Street* (Sandra Cisneros, 1983) when working with children for a deep discussion on name meaning and cultural identity.

Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow is an educator and writer who focuses on Black and Muslim children in her writings. She currently resides with her family in Philadelphia. Luisa Uribe is an illustrator with a graphic design degree from the National University of Colombia and an MA in art and design from Loughborough University. She lives in Bogotá where she works primarily on picturebooks.

Ashley Wagon, Texas Woman's University

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