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# WOW REVIEW

READING ACROSS CULTURES  
VOLUME XVI, ISSUE 2

Winter 2023

Global perspectives in biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, and  
fictionalized biographies

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WOW Review: Volume XVI, Issue 2

Winter 2023

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## Introduction and Editor's Note

Stories of the lives of real people offer a window not only into their time and sphere of influence, but also into their thinking processes. This is particularly true of this group of biographies because each person profiled dealt with social issues that limited them and they resisted in ways that prompted change.

Two of the stories feature artists, Hilma af Klint and Jerry Pinkney. They grew up decades and worlds apart—Hilma during the second half of the 1800's in Sweden, Jerry a century later in Pennsylvania. Both left a mark on the world of the arts; Hilma painting the abstract spiritual world and Jerry anchored in the world of nature or historical events. *The Art and Life of Hilma af Klint* profiles her efforts to be recognized as the first abstract painter, something that did not happen as a woman until after her death. In *Just Jerry*, Pinkney talks not only about growing up Black in the 1950's but also how he overcame the limitations of dyslexia.

Several of the books highlight people who worked for civil rights, whether in the 1700's with the slave trade through the voice of Olaudah Equiano or in the 1950's with justice for a Black boy in the South through the bravery of his mother. *Nearer My Freedom* is the extraordinary story of an enslaved person who purchased his freedom, worked as an abolitionist, and became the first best-selling author of African descent in the Western world. *Choosing Brave* is the story of Mamie Till-Mobley, the mother who bravely showed the world her son's body after he was violently murdered.

More recent activism is profiled in *Playing at the Border*, describing the efforts of Yo-Yo Ma in 2018-2020 when he played his cello on geographical borders to build bridges instead of walls. Finally young activists are given a voice in *Until Someone Listens* through the story of Estela Juarez who wrote letters in protest of the deportation of her mother. Both Yo-Yo Ma and Estela Juarez worked to tear down walls instead of build them.

We invite you to read the stories of how each person made the decision to take a stand and speak out, whether through writing, painting, speaking or playing an instrument.

**Volume 16, Issue 3 – Open theme** (Spring 2024) – submission deadline: March 15, 2024. 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 4 – Themed issue on technology and inventiveness in our lives** (Summer 2024) – submission deadline June 1, 2024. The editors welcome reviews of global or multicultural children's or young adult books published within the last three years that address technology and human invention in daily life; books that approach technology as the practical application of scientific knowledge to solve problems and fulfill human needs.

Susan Corapi, co-editor

María V. Acevedo-Aquino, co-editor

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***The Art and Life of Hilma af Klint***

Written by Ylva Hillström

Illustrated by Karin Eklund

Translated by B.J. Epstein

Thames & Hudson, 2022, 64 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 978-0500653173

Hilma af Klint was born in 1862 at Karlberg Palace in Stockholm, Sweden. Born into a family of Navy commanders, Hilma was familiar with nautical charts and the concept of mapping the land, the sea, and what's beneath the water. As a child, she studied math, sailing, physics, and botany. Later, she joined the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm as one of the first female students. After her sister's death and into adulthood, Hilma became

fascinated with the spirit world. As her spiritual journey evolved, she began “painting pictures that contained messages from the universe”. The invisible world guided her paintings. In her artistic journey, Hilma learned that not everyone was ready for the mysterious and non-figurative art she was creating; for example, author and theosophist Rudolf Steiner ignored her work repeatedly. However, she continued her “adventures to unknown places” that resulted in over a thousand pictures mapping the spiritual world. Before her death in 1944, Hilma asked her nephew Erik to take care of her work as she uttered: “The time isn’t right yet.” More than twenty years passed before Erik opened the crate and shared with the world the revolutionary work of the person who is, arguably, the inventor of abstract painting.

This picturebook makes a significant contribution to the history of art, particularly the role of female artists in the development of abstract art—a style historically attributed to male Russian artists Wassily Kandinsky and Kazimir Malevich. Addressing gender discrimination, the story introduces readers to additional female characters (Hilma’s sister Hermina, spurious mediums Kate and Maggie Fox, Hilma’s friends Anna, Mathilda, Cornelia, Sigrid, and theosophist Helena Petrovna Blavatsky) whose brief but meaningful references create parallel counternarratives in a sociohistorical time that was male-dominant. The story also introduces readers to important concepts that explore the multiple influences shaping Hilma’s life, such as the idea of invisible waves from the work of inventors like Samuel Morse, Thomas Edison, and Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen. Other concepts defined in the book include spiritualism, theosophy, synesthesia, the Fibonacci sequence, and alchemy.

Karin Eklund created the illustrations that appear to be pencil and wash. The numerous characters have white or pale pink skin tones. Overall symbolism, juxtaposition of images, sporadic picture frames, white backgrounds, dynamic perspectives, changing fonts, occasional bolded words, contrast, movement, and a pale color palette support readers in engaging with and enjoying this unique story. The most salient feature about the illustrations is the integration of 15 reproductions of Hilma af Klint’s art and an interpretive chart of some of the symbols and colors in her work. Readers experience a mind-blowing effect when unfolding the four-illustration pop-up sequence of the Altarpiece series.

*The Art and Life of Hilma af Klint* is on the USBBY’s 2024 Outstanding International Books list and is perhaps the first introduction to the life of this artist to a young audience. The book can be paired with titles targeting an older audience, like *Hilma af Klint: A Biography* by Julia Voss (2022). It can also be paired with the documentary called “Beyond the Visible: Hilma af Klint” by Zeitgeist Films (Official US trailer [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGw9sAxxXXw>]). Readers may also enjoy reading the af Klint story alongside the biography of Wassily Kandinsky in *The Noisy Paint Box: The Colors and Sounds of Kandinsky’s Abstract Art* by Barb Rosenstock and Mary GrandPre (2014). The biography visually explains synesthesia, a condition in which a person hears sounds in colors. The alphabet concept book on women artists, *Women Artists A to Z* by Melanie La Barge and Caroline Corrigan (2020), features well-known artists like Frida Kahlo, along with lesser-known artists like the Gee Bend Quilters and Hilma af Klint.

Ylva Hillström works as a curator in the Learning Department at Moderna Museet, Stockholm. She specializes in esoteric currents in early 20th-century art and is actively involved in environmental issues. For example, in 2016 she initiated Acclimatize—a platform encouraging creative responses to the climate crisis. She has also published two additional books about art in Swedish.

Karin Eklund is an illustrator, artist, author, university lecturer, yoga instructor and public speaker with an MA in Children’s Book Illustrations from Cambridge School of Art. *The Art and Life of Hilma af Klint* is her third picturebook. She has also illustrated book covers and posters. Visit Eklund’s website (<https://karineklund.com/>) to learn more about her work.

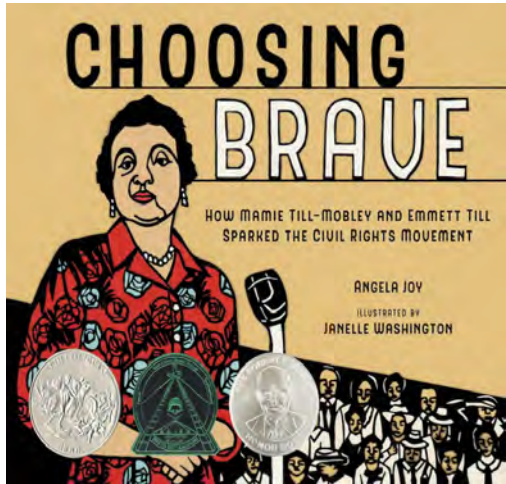
B.J. Epstein is a writer, editor, and Swedish-to-English translator, who has authored books such as *Are the Kids All Right?* (2013) and *Translating Expressive Language in Children’s Literature* (2012). B.J. is also a senior lecturer in literature and translation at the University of East Anglia in England. She lives with her wife and children and can be reached at [bjepstein@gmail.com](mailto:bjepstein@gmail.com).

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***Choosing Brave: How Mamie Till-Mobley and Emmett Till Sparked the Civil Rights Movement***

Written by Angela Joy

Illustrated by Janelle Washington

Roaring Book Press, 2022, 60 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 978-1250220950

The story of Emmett Till’s life and the impact of his mother’s stance is encapsulated within this powerful narrative, both visually and verbally. This biography is like no other as it highlights a story untold. Mamie Till-Mobley, Emmett’s mother, takes a road less traveled by choosing to be brave and heralding the Civil Rights Movement through her decision to

get her son’s body back to the North and into the forefront of the American visual field. Her decision was a galvanizing event for the Civil Rights Movement. Even though she knew what had happened and how hard it would be to see the deformed body of her son, she did not back away from the truth of the event that took her son away from her forever. Her words lend credence to the narrative of her life where she takes the harder path to speak truth to power and fight oppression: “Let the people see what I have seen. We have averted our eyes far too long. Everybody needs to know what happened to Emmett Till.” Mamie Mobley’s strength of character overcame everything that hit her in life. With each blow she got up and moved on to reach academic and personal heights.

The narrative exhibits the life of mother and son and their close bond, which is both physical and emotional. The first double spread opens the story of the death of Emmett with an image in silhouette and with the words, “the sheriff set out to dig a grave that day, to hide the crime in the mud of Mississippi, where no one would see the boy’s suffering. But Mamie said, ‘No. You send my son home.’” The choice of words and their echoing repetition adds to the story and grief felt by the reader and the author alike. Words such as “bruised, scared, swollen” for Emmett when he is born are repeated when Mamie sees her dead child and are simultaneously thoughtful and thought provoking.

The lyrical text adds to the strength of the visual elements that transport the reader to another dimension where history meets reality. With Emmett’s passing on August 31, 1955, until the time of her own death in 2003, Mamie struggled to tell her story and, in her passing, left a legacy that mothers of black and brown children can draw on as they talk and prepare their children for what they may face one day. The brilliance of the story is the weaving of the old and the new, the past and the present. This book has strong back matter that speaks to and reinforces the research done by the author and the illustrator along with a timeline of events.

There are other high quality tasteful books that speak to African American legacy and history. Several that would pair well with *Choosing Brave* are *Ain’t Burned All the Bright* by Jason Reynolds and Jason Griffin (2022), *Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre* by Carole Boston Weatherford and Floyd Cooper (2021), *An American Story* by Kwame Alexander and Dare Coulter (2023), *There was a Party*

for *Langston* by Jason Reynolds, Jerome Pumphrey and Jarrett Pumphrey (2023), and *The Spirit of Harriet Tubman: Awakening from the Underground* by Spring Washam (2023).

This book is a must read for all ages. It has won multiple, well deserved, prestigious awards. It was named a Caldecott Honor Book, a Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Honor and an Orbis Pictus Honor Book. It won the Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe Award for Illustrations, the Jane Addams Children's Book Award, and the Walter Dean Myers Award.

Born and raised in Minneapolis, Angela Joy graduated Summa Cum Laude from the University of Minnesota. She attended New York University and Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. Angela traveled abroad extensively as a background vocalist, also working in television and movie soundtracks. She now lives in southern California with her family. Her choice of subject matter and her meticulous research juxtaposes with the lyrical and poetic text to make the narrative of Mamie's life come across seamlessly.

The remarkable illustrator, Janelle Washington, is a self-taught paper cut artist from Virginia. Her work is displayed at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, and the Downing-Gross Community Arts Center in Newport News, Virginia. She is also a member of The Guild of American Papercutters. *Choosing Brave* is her first picturebook. As an expert in cut paper art, she created the images within this book by adding layers of white, blue, and red to her cut paper images. Her expressive artistic style impacts the visual elements needed for the story.

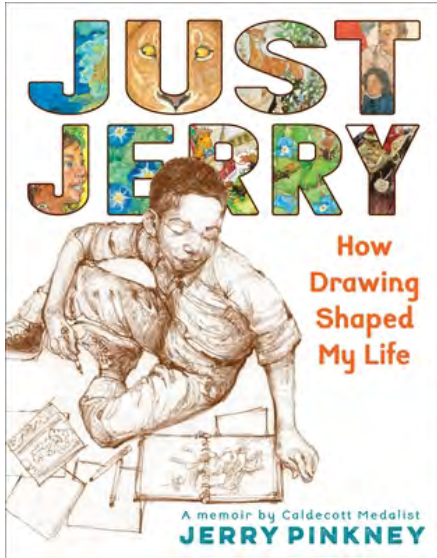
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***Just Jerry: How Drawing Shaped My Life***

Written & illustrated by Jerry Pinkney

Little, Brown & Co, 2023, 147 pp

ISBN: 978-0316383851

Award-winning author and illustrator Jerry Pinkney worked on his memoir during the decade before his death in 2021. While the published memoir is not as Jerry had envisioned with colorful illustrations and panels, the notes and sketches that composed the manuscript were detailed enough so the unnamed editor could publish the memoir. The memoir is organized in concentric circles. Pinkney first explores relationships with the family circle in his home, then expands to his neighborhood and school. He concludes with places that stretched his growth

dramatically when he describes discovering nature through a visit to rural New Jersey, then getting a job selling newspapers where he met a professional artist, and finally moving into high school and college studies and eventual employment in the art field. Jerry's reflections about his life at times move back and forth across those circles, but the detailed timeline in the backmatter helps answer any sequential questions a reader might have.

The bulk of the memoir is focused on his early life. Growing up in a large family in Philadelphia in the 50's and 60's was not easy for someone who was Black and struggling with undiagnosed dyslexia. Pinkney describes the Black neighborhood where it was safer, and where his parents had settled after leaving the South and the Jim Crow limitations. He also describes how difficult school was as he struggled to keep words on the right lines, make sense of a text, or write his weekly spelling test. However what shines through the narrative is the perseverance and growth mindset that his parents instilled in him. With a pencil and paper, he captured moments or scenes from his day or drew animals and heroes from TV shows. A turning point was when a teacher called him the class artist and asked him to draw a fire engine so that the class would be able to understand the various parts of the vehicle. Another significant step in building his confidence as an artist was when he got a job selling newspapers. His boss would let him sketch when customers were slow, and one day someone noticed his drawing and asked to purchase it, and that was the beginning of his commercial venture, a nickel for a newspaper and a nickel for a drawing.

The illustrations for the book are sketches in sepia-toned ink that Jerry had planned on adding color to. Some are quick—the kind an artist draws to capture or remember a moment in time. For example, on page 75, Jerry sketched his memory of sitting on his bunk while he finished his drawing of the best part of the day, that of watching a tugboat pass under the bridge he was standing on. Other illustrations are more detailed. The drawing on page 45 depicts Jerry, his face nervous as he thought about going to school where he struggled with reading and writing, and beside him the concerned and loving face of his mother who understood how he was feeling and wanted to help. In an article in the New York Times, illustrator David Small (2023) reviewed *Just Jerry* and pointed out that “Pinkney’s pure, spontaneous drawing process has previously been hidden for the most part by his

finished illustrations’ perfectionism. Not so in this posthumous memoir. . . These loose sketches reveal another, unbound side of Pinkney, a side that might never have been seen outside his archives had his work on this book not been interrupted. They are the visual equivalent of memory itself.”

Books that pair well with *Just Jerry* include award-winning titles that Pinkney illustrated, such as the Caldecott winner *The Lion and the Mouse* (2009), the Coretta Scott King winners *The Patchwork Quilt* (Valerie Flourney, 1985), *Half a Moon and One Whole Star* (Crescent Dragonwagon, 1986), *Mirandy and Brother Wind* (Patricia McKissack, 1988), *Minty, A Story of Young Harriet Tubman* (Alan Schroeder, 1996), and *Goin’ Someplace Special* (Patricia McKissack, 2001), or the New York Times Best Illustrated winner *The Hired Hand: An African-American Folktale* (Robert D. San Souci, 1997) and the Sydney Taylor Award winner *Noah’s Ark* (2002).

Titles that would also pair well with *Just Jerry* are other memoirs written by illustrators profiling their childhood or youth, such as *Drawing from Memory* (Allen Say, 2011), *A First Time for Everything* (Dan Santat, 2023) or *Hey, Kiddo* (Jarrett J. Krosoczka, 2018).

Jerry Pinkney (1939-2021) illustrated over 100 books across his career. He won many awards for his work and was nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen and Astrid Lindgren awards for his body of work and influence on children’s books. Perhaps his greatest legacy is the “Pinkney dynasty” that started with book collaborations with his wife, and continued with passing on his love of the arts to his four children, their spouses and grandchildren. His final book, *A Walk in the Woods* (2023), was a collaboration with poet Nikki Grimes, with illustrations finished posthumously by his son Brian Pinkney and granddaughter Charnelle Pinkney Barlow.

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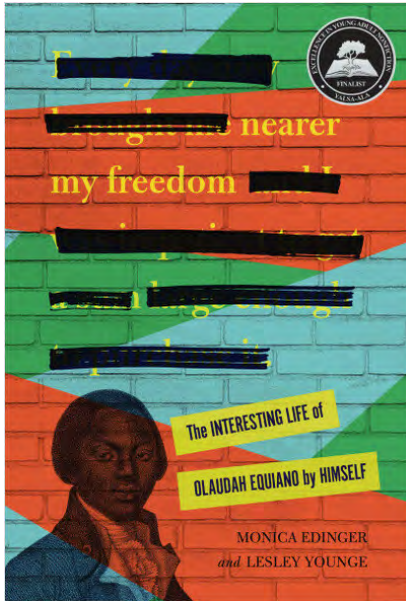
Storymakers with Nikki Grimes & Brian Pinkney: A Walk in the Woods. <https://www.justjerrypinkney.com/#books100>

Susan Corapi, Trinity International University

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***Nearer My Freedom: The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano by Himself***

Written by Monica Edinger and Lesley Younge

Zest Books, 2023, 216 pp

ISBN: 978-1728464077

This multigenre biography is based on Equiano’s autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (1789). This series of 119 first-person found poems presented in chronological order is interspersed with one- or two-page informational prose sections that provide historical context and further information for the previous or following section of poems. The book is lightly illustrated with portraits, maps, and drawings of the period.

“A Note on Language” at the beginning of the book attests to the authors’ commitment to preserving the original text, including using “Negro,” “slave,” and “master” as well as some British spellings and archaic words. In the informational sections, they use updated terms, including “Black,” “enslaved person,” and “enslaver.”

In his autobiography published in 1789, Olaudah Equiano begins by sharing his journey as a captive of the transatlantic slave trade. He was born in 1745 and started life as a free child in the advanced kingdom of Benin in the southern part of what is now Nigeria.

“2.  
We are a nation of dancers, musicians, poets.

Every great event  
every triumphant return from battle  
celebrated with songs and public dances” (p. 15).

The informational text that follows notes that “Equiano’s description tells us about the loving families, safe homes, and rich cultures from which enslaved people were torn” (p. 19). Over twelve million Africans were captured for enslavement between 1492 and 1870 (p. 33). A quote from his autobiography describes his horrific experience in the cargo hold on the Middle Passage, the journey from Africa to the Americas, which took twenty-one to ninety days (p. 41).

He first arrived in the Americas in Barbados where he described himself as “unsaleable” (p. 49) and was shipped off to Virginia.

“23.  
Now on a Virginia plantation  
Now called Jacob

I was born and named Olaudah

Now weeding grass and gathering stones  
Now with no person I could understand

Now exceedingly miserable  
Now constantly grieving

Now I wished for death” (p. 50).

After a short time in agriculture, Equiano became an enslaved sailor in the British military during the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763). He tells of learning to use weapons, to read and write, and how to sail. After the war, he worked on merchant ships where he was paid. Still, he was sold or passed from one owner to another.

“61.  
In all the islands in which I have been  
(no less than fifteen)  
the treatment of the slaves was nearly the same.

The slave trade has a tendency  
To debauch men’s minds,  
To harden them to every feeling of humanity!” (pp. 93-94).

Equiano “strategically tried to stay close to those who might help him reach his goal of liberation” (p. 102). Overcoming trickery, through hard work, and with the help of one of his “masters,” Captain Pascal, he eventually purchased his freedom (his manumission is printed in full on page 115). Equiano then worked as a skilled sailor who traveled extensively while participating in the slave trade as a buyer, seller, and transporter of enslaved people (p. 188). Ironically, he served as a free man on Pascal’s sloop. When the captain died while they were at sea, Equiano served in his place and brought the ship safely to port (poems 76 and 77, pp. 117-118).

During his journeys, Equiano met Quakers and other abolitionists and came to understand that his own freedom was dependent on freeing all enslaved people. He took a prominent role as an abolitionist leader in England. In 1788, he wrote an eloquent letter to Queen Charlotte and implored her to use her influence to end enslavement (pp. 186-187). His best-selling autobiography made Equiano “the first successful professional writer of African descent in the English-speaking world” (p. 56). The book was released at a critical time when Parliament was debating the future of slavery throughout the colonies.

In a section at the end of the book titled “Creating A Verse Version,” co-authors Monica Edinger and Lesley Younge share their process for crafting Equiano’s autobiography into a series of found-verse poems. They provide an example of how they looked for “Equiano’s most glittering gems of phrasing and descriptions” and molded his words “around poetic devices and forms” (p. 196) to arrive at each poem found in this book.

This book can be used with the haunting and powerful black and white wordless book *The Middle Passage: White Ships/Black Cargo* by Tom Feelings. First published in 1995, the 2017 reprint includes two additional introductions by author-illustrator Kadir Nelson and by Feelings’ son Kamili along with historical notes by scholar Dr. Sylviane A. Diouf. In addition, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* by Johannes Postma (2005) includes excerpts from Equiano’s autobiography and other first-person accounts of people who were victims or perpetrators of transatlantic human trafficking.

The authors of *Nearer My Freedom* offer both a bibliography and titles for additional reading including other informational books such as *To Be a Slave* by Julius Lester (1968) and *Never Caught: The Washington’s Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge* by Erica Armstrong Dunbar (2017). There is also a young readers edition of the latter, *Never Caught: The Story of Ona Judge* by Erica Armstrong Dunbar and Kathleen Van Cleve (2020).

*Nearer My Freedom* can be paired with another first-person biography of a prominent enslaved author presented in verse format, *The Slave Poet of Cuba: A Biography of Juan Francisco Manzano* by Margarita Engle and Sean Qualls (2011). Fiction pairs could include YA first-person verse narratives such as *Home Is Not a Country* by Safia Elhillo (2021), *Solo* by Kwame Alexander with Mary Rand Hess (2022), and *Punching the Air* by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam (2019).

*Nearer My Freedom: The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano* was a 2024 Young Adult Library Services Association finalist for the YALSA Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults Award.

The co-authors of this biography have served as educators. Monica Edinger taught 4th-grade at the Dalton School, and Lesley Younge has taught for seventeen years in progressive independent schools. After college, Monica spent two years in Sierra Leone as a Peace Corps volunteer. Her previous book for young people is *Africa Is My Home: A Child of the Amistad* (2013), illustrated by Robert Byrd. In addition to *Nearer My Freedom*, Lesley has published a picturebook, *A-Train Allen* (2023), illustrated by Lonnie Ollivierre.

Judy Moreillon, Tucson, Arizona

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***Playing at the Border: A Story of Yo-Yo Ma***

Written by Joanna Ho

Illustrated by Teresa Martínez

Harper, 2021, 32 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 978-0062994547

This picturebook biography is a beautiful testament to the vision and philosophy that has made Yo-Yo Ma one of the most beloved musicians of our time. Yo-Yo Ma, a world renowned cellist, has dedicated his career and life to using his cello and music as a bridge across cultural divides. This picturebook highlights one of the performances from the Bach Project, a two-year project aimed at increasing cultural connections and building understanding. During this project,

Ma traveled across six continents and visited thirty-six communities. In each community Ma played J. S. Bach's cello suites. The community featured in this picturebook is in San Antonio, Texas; however, his history with crossing cultures started much earlier. Born in Paris, France to Chinese parents, Yo-Yo Ma's family immigrated to New York when Yo-Yo was seven years old. Yo-Yo began playing the cello at age 4. When he and his family moved to New York, he was already an accomplished cellist and, along with his sister, played before both Presidents John F. Kennedy and Dwight D. Eisenhower at the age of 7.

The many ways that Yo-Yo Ma has worked to challenge musical and social conventions and bring unity are depicted in both words and pictures throughout this picturebook. Yo-Yo Ma's career has spanned many decades. What distinguishes his career as a performing artist is his keen desire to inspire hope, understanding, and world peace through the use of music. Using the backdrop of the Bach Project and playing at the border, the book looks back on the many ways throughout his life that Yo-Yo Ma crossed borders and used his music to inspire unity. In 1998, Ma started the Silk Road Project (<https://www.silkroad.org/>), which brought together musicians from around the globe combining languages and various instruments for making music. Breaking down political barriers, this group continues to travel, inspiring peace and a spirit of collaboration around the world. In 2006, Ma was awarded the Messenger of Peace award by the United Nations, and in 2010 President Obama awarded Ma the Presidential Medal of Freedom. These are just a few of Ma's life events presented poetically throughout this picturebook.

From the musical notes on the endpapers to Yo-Yo Ma playing his cello surrounded by people of many colors holding hands on the cover, the illustrations in *Playing at the Border* continue the cherished work of building bridges through music. Martínez's illustrations have a beautiful fluidity connecting each page with the rhythm and flow of music. The theme of making connections and coming together across time, geographical locations, musical genres, cultures, and borders is gracefully captured on each page.

The back matter in the book provides biographical information on Yo-Yo Ma, more information about the Bach Project, and notes on Yo-Yo Ma's special cello, named Petunia, which is made of parts from around the world. In her note, author Joanna Ho shares her connection to Yo-Yo Ma's

music, which her mother played every Saturday morning. As a child she cringed at listening to this music and only wanted to sleep. After learning about the Bach Project she saw the importance of Yo-Yo Ma and his work in recognizing the value and dignity of each person, especially those who have immigrated to a new place. She ends her note by writing, “Yo-Yo Ma builds bridges. Let us all build bridges, not walls.”

This book would pair well with other picturebooks inspiring transformative social change through art. *The People’s Painter: How Ben Shahn Fought for Justice with Art* written by Cynthia Levinson and illustrated by Evan Turk (2021) tells the story of Ben Shahn, a Lithuanian immigrant whose paintings told the story of the struggles of immigrants, political protesters, civil rights activists and others seeking human rights and justice. Another book written by Joanna Ho and illustrated by Catia Chien (2023), *On the Tip of a Wave: How Ai Weiwei’s Art Is Changing the Tide* reveals how Ai Weiwei, a contemporary Chinese artist, became an activist and how he used the Life Jackets exhibit at Konzerthaus Berlin to draw global attention to the refugee crisis. *Change Sings* written by Amanda Gorman and illustrated by Loren Long (2021) would be a good book to bring this text set together and provide an invitation for the many ways that students can use their talents to make transformative change in the world.

Joanna Ho (<https://www.joannahowrites.com/bio-for-serious-people>) is the daughter of immigrants from Taiwan and China. She currently lives in the Bay area of California. She has written many books that convey her passion for affirming diversity, seeking equity, and standing against racism, including *Eyes That Kiss in the Corners* (with Dung Ho, 2021), *Eyes that Speak to the Stars* (with Dung Ho, 2022), *Say My Name* (with Khoa Le, 2023) and her most recent release, *We Who Produce Pearls: An Anthem for Asia America* (with Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya, 2024).

Teresa Martínez (<https://www.behance.net/teresamtz>) spent her childhood in a small town north of Mexico and then moved to Monterrey, Mexico. Wanting to pursue art, she moved to Italy to study graphic design. She now lives in Puerto Vallarta where she works as a freelance illustrator. Other books illustrated by Teresa include *Sing with Me: The Story of Selena Quintanilla* (Diana López, 2021) and *Duck Duck Taco Truck* (Laura Lavoie, 2024).

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***Until Someone Listens: A Story About Borders, Family, and One Girl's Mission***

Written by Estela Juarez with Lissette Norman

Illustrated by Teresa Martínez

Roaring Brook Press, 2022, 32 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 978-1250832122

Spanish edition: *Hasta que alguien me escuche*

This emotional autobiographical account is written in the voice of a child whose mother was deported to Mexico when she was eight years old. Estela's mother came to the U.S. as a teen to attend school and work, eventually marrying a U.S. marine and having two daughters who live together in "a

house full of love." When her mother is forced to return to Mexico, Estela is devastated and her family is distraught, feeling as if "someone ripped us in half." Because Estela was especially close to her mother, her father finally takes Estela to Mexico for a year so she can be with her mother. The support of her family leads Estela to write letters to government officials and newspapers and speak at public forums "until someone listens." Estela directly states her theme of discovering that "my words have power" and that "families should end up how they started—together." The book takes a clear stance on speaking out against injustice.

The digital illustrations by Teresa Martínez use color to convey the changing emotions of Estela and her family. Warm colors of yellows and oranges full of sun and light fill the pages depicting the family togetherness, while cool blues and purples create scribbled shadows on pages highlighting separation. One particularly poignant page depicts Estela huddling on the floor, with her sad eyes staring out at the reader. A hummingbird appears throughout the book as a symbol of the mother's love and energy and the hope of the family being together.

A two-page author's note provides background information about the family's story and five-year ordeal until the mother is temporarily allowed to reunite with her husband and children in the U.S. in 2021, indicating that the family's story is still in process. The author's note makes clear how presidential politics in different administrations affected her mother's deportation. Estela's words in the book are direct in describing the impact and confusion of immigration policies and the overwhelming emotions experienced by loving families separated by these policies.

This picturebook can be paired with other picturebooks about the separation and detention of families, such as *Hear My Voice/Escucha mi voz*, edited by William Binford (2021) that highlights the voices of migrant children in detention centers at the border and *Mama's Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation* by Edwidge Danticat and Leslie Staub (2015) about a child who takes action when her Haitian immigrant mother is put in a detention center. *Mango Moon* by Diane De Anda and Sue Cornelison (2019) is in the voice of a child whose father has been taken to a detention center and faces deportation to Mexico. Families separated by borders is the theme of *Between Us & Abuela* by Mitali Perkins and Sara Palacios (2019) about a family who goes to the border to visit their Abuela, separated by the border wall, and *A Sky without Lines* by Krystia Basil



and Laura Borràs (2020) in which a child dreams of flying through the open sky to see his mother and brother across the border. One other interesting pairing is *My Name is Bana* by Bana Alabed and Nez Riaz (2021), an autobiographical picturebook of a Syrian girl who escapes Aleppo and documents the war for social media.

Estela Juarez (<https://estelajuarez.com/>) wrote this book with assistance from Lissette Norman when she was thirteen-years-old. Her acknowledgements also name other people who supported her in her efforts to publish this book.

Lissette Norman (<https://www.lissettejnorman.com/>) is an Afro-Dominican poet and picturebook editor, who has written several picturebooks, including *Plátanos Go with Everything/Los plátanos van con todo* (Sara Palacios, 2023).

Teresa Martínez (<https://www.instagram.com/teresamtzjun/?hl=en>) is a picturebook illustrator who lives in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico and has illustrated other books including *Mi Ciudad Sings* (Cynthia Harmony, 2022) and *Playing at the Border: A Story of Yo-Yo Ma* (Joanna Ho, 2021).

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