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# WOW REVIEW

READING ACROSS CULTURES  
VOLUME XVI, ISSUE 4

Summer 2024  
Technology in a Global World

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WOW Review: Volume XVI, Issue 4  
Summer 2024  
Technology in a Global World

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## Introduction and Editor's Note

Over the last 40 years, technology has radically changed how we explore, gather information, perform tasks, communicate, and even socialize. Technology tools help us solve huge problems that impact daily life, and help us answer small questions that make us wonder. But for all its advantages, technology also adds new layers and stressors in our lives. This group of titles explores those layers. Some are based in the real world but others introduce imaginative worlds that are currently outside of our reality.

Titles are arranged alphabetically in each issue of WOW Review, but appropriately this issue starts out with the beginnings of technology in *Afterward, Everything Was Different* which takes place in the Pleistocene era. An early artist uses a charcoal tool to record the clan's history on the walls of a cave, preserving for posterity the story of their life as hunters and gatherers. The second title, *Ain't Burned All the Bright*, moves forward many millennia to 2020 and a family using technology during the COVID-19 pandemic for entertainment, communication, and health.

Several titles feature advances in technology precipitated by conflict or a town crisis. *The Enigma Girls: How Ten Teenagers Broke Ciphers, Kept Secrets, and Helped Win World War II* chronicles the stories of teens who were part of the efforts to use Bomba, the early computer used to decode messages sent by Nazi military leaders. During the same global conflict, *Classified: The Secret Career of Mary Golda Ross, Cherokee Aerospace Engineer* describes how Ross defied categories as a woman and a Cherokee to become an engineer involved in creating the designs for the P-38 Lightning Fighter. Later on, she was a key player in the secret plans designing the technology needed for space flight. Set in a different kind of crisis, *Zero Waste: How One Community is Leading a World Recycling Revolution* describes how the town of Kamikatsu in Japan dealt with the pervasive odor of their landfill and the fumes of burning garbage in a 20 year effort to recycle, reuse, and reduce to the point of zero waste.

Several titles deal with futuristic technology. *A Rover's Story* is told from the perspective of Resilience, a Mars rover who accumulates facts but also learns about emotions such as trust. In *City Under the City*, a young girl named Bix escapes her world of all-seeing roaming eyes that scrutinize and direct daily life. Through a crack in a wall she tumbles into an ancient city in which she discovers a different way of living that includes a library where she can joyfully choose what she wants to read.

One final title connects technology with magical realism. *Catfish Rolling* is set within the context of the devastating earthquake in Japan that caused three nuclear reactors to melt down. The 9.1 earthquake actually shifted the axis of the planet, impacting the passage of time. In this science fiction novel, the quake breaks and shifts time, and Sora and her scientist father have to work together to figure out how to reunite with family members lost in the quake.

We hope you will dig into these titles as we grapple with the impact of our devices on our daily lives.

We invite you to submit a review for future issues.

**Volume 17, Issue 1 (Fall 2024 – submission deadline September 1, 2024)** – Open theme. 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.

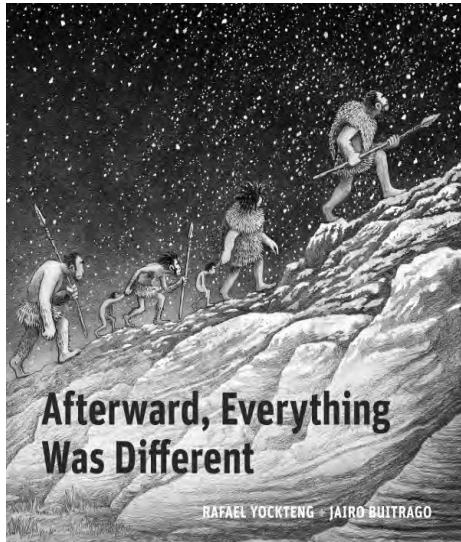
**Volume 17, Issue 2 (Winter 2025 – submission deadline November 15, 2024)** – Sharing Space: Animal/Human Relationships, a themed issue on the relationships between humans and animals as they share spaces in the world (e.g., protection of endangered animals, relationships with pets, human/animal dynamics). The editors welcome reviews of fiction and nonfiction global or multicultural children’s or young adult books published within the last three years that highlight intercultural understanding and global perspectives.

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

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*Afterward, Everything Was Different: A Tale from the Pleistocene*

Written by Jairo Buitrago

Illustrated by Rafael Yockteng

Translated by Elisa Amado

Aldana Libros/Greystone Kids , 2023, 60 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 978-1778400605

“Somewhere between two and a half million and ten thousand years ago, in the era we now call the Pleistocene, small groups of people traveled around their known world, hunting for food, seeking shelter, and slowly becoming more like the people we are today” (Authors’ Note). This stunningly illustrated, mostly wordless book imagines how art and storytelling emerged from one young girl’s keen observations during the Pleistocene era. The book begins

before the copyright and title pages with six double-page graphite sketches depicting a bison hunt, volcano eruptions, Eremotherium Rusconi (ground sloths), people with long spears, and challenges of the time.

The story follows a Pleistocene-era group of human families as they explore and walk the land, seeking food and shelter. Readers will quickly notice that one child in particular pays attention to details that the rest seem to overlook. She notices a giant footprint, a sea animal posing an imminent threat to an individual taking a nap, a starry night, and a tree tall enough for people to climb to avoid land predators. When the group finds a cave large enough to shelter everyone, this child creates lasting marks on stone to tell her people’s stories.

Originally written in Spanish and published in Colombia, this intricate book has strong potential for inquiry and dialogue. For example, some readers may make connections to science-related concepts like human beings or evolution. However, they will notice that the author’s text in the back seems to have intentionally opted for words that offer a broader narrative about people and becoming, a strategy that can encourage explorations and conversations around the non-fictional details that inspired the story.

A second point of interest may be that the gender of the child protagonist is neutral throughout the story. Yet, the author’s notes include the pronouns she and her. Readers may wonder if the authors depicted a young girl to provide an alternative perspective to stories about the Pleistocene era, which traditionally highlight the importance of males’ physical strength for survival. In this counternarrative, readers are introduced to a young girl, whose ability and willingness to create, share, and preserve stories will eventually lead her to become the clan leader (Authors’ Note). The decision to highlight a child character in this era should also be noted because it positions children’s curiosity, inventiveness, and storytelling as important resources for survival, but also for community transformation.

Last but not least, the gorgeous black and white drawings in graphite and white ink on lilac 104 Canson paper encourage readers to be as observant as the child in the story. Yockteng’s meticulous

shading, dramatic use of scale, and humoristic tone depict the family's interactions with their environment, encouraging readers to explore the joys, dangers, and family dynamics of Pleistocene life. From human feet under a massive rock, to a giant bearlike creature turned into a rug, the illustrations captivate readers instantly. Readers also feel compelled to investigate how the child was able to draw on the stone with a stick. As such, they find themselves revisiting the illustrations (including the endpapers!) and rereading the author's notes to find the answers.

With regards to the theme of this issue around human invention, *Afterward, Everything Was Different* explores the act of creating and preserving pictorial representations and stories (writing) as an innovation that changed people's history. This book can be read alongside other stories that highlight the human need to record history through stories, in books such as *I Am a Story* by Dan Yaccarino (2016), or *Dia's Story Cloth: The Hmong People's Journey of Freedom* by Dia Cha and illustrated by Chue and Nhia Thao Cha (1996). Additional pairing possibilities could be informational books about the Pleistocene era like *Stone Age Beasts* by Ben Lerwill and illustrated by Grahame Baker-Smith (2023).

Jairo Buitrago is an award-winning Colombian children's books author. He is also a researcher of children's literature and film history. Rather than writing about princesses and dragons, Buitrago's stories address complex themes such as immigration, violence, wars, and exile (Ramirez, 2018). His books have been translated into English, Portuguese, Catalan, Chinese, Turkish, Japanese, Korean, and Swedish. Buitrago and Yockteng have collaborated on many picturebooks, such as *Jimmy the Greatest!* (2012), *Two White Rabbits* (2015), *Walk with Me* (2017), and *Lion and Mouse* (2019).

Rafael Yockteng is a Peruvian children's books illustrator raised in Colombia. His books address social issues rarely present in children's literature. Recently he has collaborated with the Ministerio de Educaci n de Colombia facilitating art workshops for children and educators in Indigenous communities and underserved communities in rural regions of the country.

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***Ain't Burned All the Bright***

Written by Jason Reynolds

Illustrated by Jason Griffin

Atheneum, 2022, 384 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 978-1534439467

Reynolds' and Griffin's latest collaboration melds their poetic and artistic strengths to create an unforgettable YA book that comments on life in the middle of a pandemic. The book is divided in three distinct parts named for three breaths that speak to the right to breathe freely in society with health and with hope.

Breath One speaks to the fearful confusion that a Black child faces as he

lives through what is ostensibly a double pandemic: age-old systematic racism and the illness and death that COVID-19 brought to the planet and specifically to economically challenged communities within the US. The scene is set with the young narrator struggling to make sense of all that is happening. At first readers see stereotypes of a small Black family as disconnected family members unaware of each other's struggles. At the beginning of the book technology in the form of TV, a gaming device and a telephone seem to dominate this small family's existence. Three siblings live in their own separate worlds due to their devices; their mother seems to be shut in her own world, continuously watching the television while the same news story of violence, death, fire and destruction is played repeatedly in words and images. A sister is always on the phone, a brother on his gaming device, and the narrator is an observer who questions and comments.

In the second portion of the book, Breath Two, the father is in the next room, sick with COVID as he coughs and strains against the illness. The narrator is stopped by the mother as he tries to physically approach his father. The readers see the positive impact of a sick father, who is connected to his family who, even though he cannot be near them physically. He is depicted as "screaming his love through the door." In hopes of helping, the narrator searches for an elusive oxygen mask that would heal all.

The final portion of this book is Breath Three in which the narrator creates a list of images that can be interpreted as picturing a hopeful future where one can breathe freely as a human and as a Black child growing up in an underprivileged family. Here the accepted stereotypes are broken as the family comes together as if they have awakened to each other's presence after a long nightmarish sleep. The parents bring the siblings together as the ties to technological devices are broken "and my mother raises her voice inside and tells us all to sit down and my father yells the same from the other room."

Reynolds and Griffin use the interplay of words and images to create the raw emotion of the book. The repetitive words are written in typeface cutouts and are poetic, flowing with a rhythm that's tangible. The colors and images have their own language and add to the emotion. Griffin's mesmerizing collages in multimedia accurately and symbolically capture a constant state of apprehension and dread, but later lead to visual moments that encourage the reader to focus on the

positive. Initially, colors are predominantly black and red on lined and unlined paper. The images are flat geometric shapes and many of them depict fire. Some pages are left black especially where police violence is referred to by TV anchors. Later in the book the colors change to include some with greenery and trees; even the black pages are broken and interspersed with white dots in reference to stars on a clear night.

One cannot ignore the political aspect of the narrative. The symbolism of Black fists and fighting against injustice are present in the visual and the verbal aspects of the story. While this is a story that takes place during the pandemic, the narrative adds layers that make this book stand alone and reflect Black and Brown lives over time. The injustices, violence, and the police brutality represented makes this narrative timeless. This work of art is a fusion of verbal and visual art as it captures what it is to be Black in the present-day. This masterpiece speaks truth to power as it tracks and honors Black lives. As a novel-length picturebook, it may be a quick read, but it is hard to put down as readers look through the layers and read between the lines, coming away with a multitude of thought-provoking details.

Technology played a huge role in the sheer creation and making of this book because of the world being in a lock down. The back and forth of images and writing happened online for both Jasons. The book garnered many awards and honors. It is a Caldecott Honor winner, and was also named an NCTE Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts, a Boston Globe/Horn Book Award winner, an ALA/YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults and won a spot on the international White Raven Award list.

This book can be paired with many others depending on the theme. While this book is a stand-alone in its political and social commentary through closely related words and images, other books that have the same verbal and visual interplay and magic include Brian Selznick's books like *Big Tree* (2023). The theme of modern civil rights is a rich one to explore, starting with an early activist in *Choosing Brave: How Mamie Till-Mobley and Emmett Till Sparked the Civil Rights Movement* (Angela Joy & Janelle Washington, 2022) and Reynolds' collaboration with Ibram X. Kendi (2020) on racism in the U.S., *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*. Reynolds tackles another form of technology, guns, in his novel-in-verse *Long Way Down* (2019).

Jason Reynolds is a renowned New York Times bestselling author and has won many book awards and lifetime achievement recognition. He was also the 2020–2022 National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. Reynolds writes in many genres (poetry, contemporary fiction, historical fiction, graphic novels, picturebook biography). *Ain't Burned All the Bright* is his second collaboration with Jason Griffin. Together they created *My Name is Jason. Mine too. Our Story. Our Way* (2022), which chronicles their friendship. Reynolds lives and works in Washington, DC, and can be accessed through [JasonWritesBooks.com](http://JasonWritesBooks.com).

Jason Griffin won a Caldecott Honor for his artwork in *Ain't Burned All the Bright*. He made the images for this book on pocket-sized moleskine. He has presented his work nationally and internationally. His most recent projects include a mural commissioned for the children's cancer



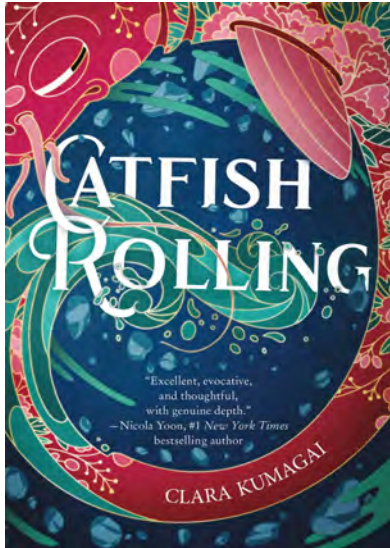
wing at Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx and an art residency in Amsterdam. He currently lives and works in Queens, New York

Seemi Aziz, University of Arizona

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***Catfish Rolling***

Written by Clara Kumagai  
Amulet Books, 2023, 415 pp  
ISBN: 978-1419768514

There's a catfish under the islands of Japan. That's what shakes everything up: the catfish twisting and turning in the mud beneath us. It rolls and the ground trembles, water crashes, time cracks and breaks. I hate that . . . catfish (p. 1).

Grieving and unmoored, Sora has just graduated from high school. Six years before, on what was supposed to be a visit to her maternal grandfather in Japan from her home in Vancouver, Sora lost both her mother and grandfather in a terrible earthquake. This disaster also interrupted time as we know it. Some of the areas affected are zones where time is slower, and some zones have time that is faster. The Japanese government has made most of these zones off limits as their health effects are unknown.

Sora and her scientist father have been searching these zones for the past six years, alone and together, trying to make sense of what has happened. As her father becomes more and more ill, Sora must venture further into the unknown to save her father.

*Catfish Rolling*, an award-winning young adult science fiction novel, exploring themes of time, space and identity. As a person who is half Japanese, Sora doesn't feel like she belongs in Japan. Her Japanese mother is gone and her Canadian father is almost as lost as her mother. Sora's only friend, Koki, has also disappeared into a new life in Tokyo at university. Sora's world is as fractured as the landscape. Sora's quest to help her father is also a quest to start to figure out who she is and where she belongs. Sora searches these liminal spaces for her past and learns how to move forward in the present.

*Catfish Rolling* combines Japanese mythology about the origin of earthquakes with the reality of the devastating earthquakes that have struck the island nation in the last two decades including the strongest recorded earthquake in Japan in 2011. The 9.1 magnitude quake precipitated a tsunami that in turn caused three nuclear reactors to melt down at the Fukushima nuclear power plant and the discharge of radioactive water—an example of nature impacting modern technology.

Other texts that deal with the aftermath of earthquakes include *The House of the Lost on the Cape* (Sachiko Kashiwaba & Yukiko Saito, 2023) in which mythology is combined with reality. *Up From the Sea* (Leza Lowitz, 2016), *Tsunami Girl* (Julian Sedgwick & Chie Kutsuwada, 2021) and *The Phone*

*Booth in Mr. Hirota's Garden* (Heather Smith & Rachel Wada, 2021) portray the emotional aftermath of the resulting tsunami. Other possible pairings include themes of figuring out how to live in the context of a disaster, such as *How I Live Now* by Meg Rosoff (2004) or *The Blue Book of Nebo* by Manon Steffon Ross (2021). *Catfish Rolling* could also be read with texts that explore identity such as *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* by Sherman Alexie (2007) or *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang (2006).

Clara Kumagai is a Japanese/Irish/Canadian author who, while growing up in Ireland, rarely saw multiracial kids like herself in young adult literature. This absence spurred her to write a book that she wished she could have read as a teenager, one that reflected her and her family's lives. She was also inspired to tell this particular story by the 2011 Japanese earthquake that resulted in the Fukushima nuclear disaster. This disaster displaced many residents who may not be able to ever return home. Its strength also caused the earth to shift on its axis, which resulted in the year becoming almost imperceptibly shorter.

Melissa Wilson, Cardiff, Wales

Editors' note: Junko Sakai and Yoo Kyung Sung wrote a 3-part blog in WOW Currents about the trauma and recovery process following the 2011 earthquake.

Part 1: Natural Disasters: What Should Children Learn? (<https://wowlit.org/blog/2015/12/15/natural-disasters-what-should-children-learn/>)

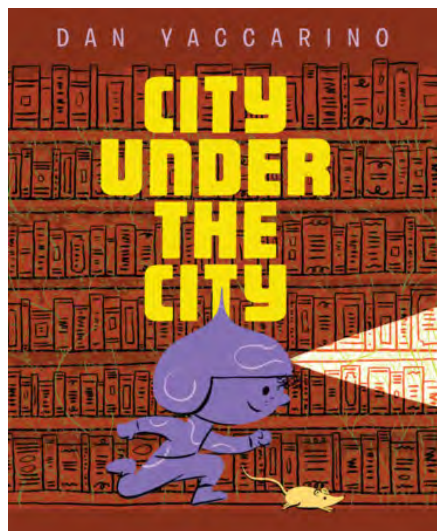
Part 2: Japanese National Trauma: Changing Trends in Japanese Picturebooks Since the Tohoku Earthquake (<https://wowlit.org/blog/2015/12/21/japanese-national-trauma-changing-trends-in-japanese-picture-books-since-the-tohoku-earthquake/>)

Part 3: Community Outreach Literacy Practices After the March 2011 Earthquake (<https://wowlit.org/blog/2016/01/04/community-outreach-literacy-practices-after-the-march-2011-earthquake/>)

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### *City Under the City*

Written and illustrated by Dan Yaccarino

MineditionUS, 2022, 68 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 978-1662650895

In a futuristic world, technology makes everyone's life easier from waking people in their pods each morning to brushing their teeth and choosing the books they have on their screens. Everyone walks around with their eyes on handheld screens, except for Bix who grows bored with her screen but can find no one, not even her family, to interact with. Bix resents the giant eyeballs, bright yellow spheres with one eye and a retractable arm, that constantly hover above, not only to help, but to monitor and control. One day, in trying to escape being watched, Bix follows a friendly creature and falls deep underground into a city under a city. She discovers many wonders, including a library full of books, where she spends hours reading and learns that the Eyes did not always exist. When she returns to her family, she brings a cartload of books and sparks a reading revolution, leading to an uprising against the Eye's regime.

This picturebook is illustrated in ink on vellum and rendered digitally. The illustrations play a key role in providing many cues to the reader about the differences between the two worlds. The futuristic world is depicted in cool colors of light blue, purple, and white, reflecting the controlled and impersonal nature of a world ruled by technology. The city under the city, in contrast, is depicted in warm reds with hints of green sprouts. Details in the illustrations provide many important hints to this subterranean world and what occurred. Bix does not just enter any library, but a library guarded by the famous New York City Public Library lions. The walls of buildings in the abandoned city contain posters urging people to vote and warning of the dangers of the Eyes.

Messages about the dangers of technology going beyond making life easy, to controlling and monitoring our lives are clearly at the heart of this picturebook—particularly a world in which everyone's eyes are on their screens, eliminating contact with each other. The power of history and reading are an even stronger message, particularly at a time when books are being challenged and banned. Through books, Bix realizes history provides evidence that there are many ways to live together within a community and that people have resisted authoritarian regimes that tell them how to live. The controlled reading in school holds no appeal for Bix who decides she must not like reading until she discovers new worlds in the underground library. The power of reading is reflected in the role of books in building resistance to the Eyes.

One interesting pairing with this picturebook is *The King Who Banned the Dark* by Emily Haworth-Booth (2019) in which a prince, who is afraid of the dark, passes laws to ban the dark when he becomes king, installing an artificial light to light the sky when the sun goes down. The king uses gossip and misinformation to instill fear of the dark and people do not realize the consequences of the new law until they lose the night. Just as in *City Under the City*, ordinary people eventually stage

a resistance. *This Book is Banned* by Raj Halidar and Julia Patton (2023) is a fun pairing; in this case as the narrator introduces giraffes, hippos, birthday parties and so on, an objection is raised, and they are stricken from the book with a red pencil. Another relevant picturebook is *The Great Banned-Books Bake Sale* by Aya Khalil and Anait Semirdzhyan (2023) about a school in which “diverse books” are removed from the library and a child is unable to find any books that reflect her identity. She and her classmates hold a book sale to purchase diverse books for their Little Free Libraries, eventually leading to a change in the school policy.

These picturebooks are aimed at a similar younger audience, but there are also many novels about book banning for older readers, such as *Ban This Book* by Alan Gratz (2017), *Attack of the Black Rectangles* by Amy Sarig King (2022), and *Finally Seen* by Kelly Yang (2023). One final pairing is *It's a Book* by Lane Smith (2010), in which a donkey with a laptop and a money with a hardcover book discuss the merits of their preferred formats.

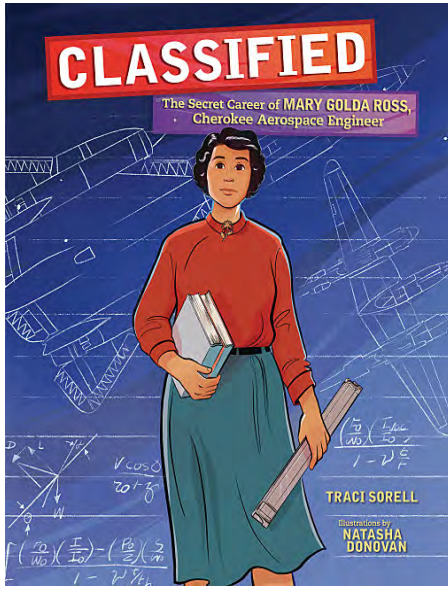
Dan Yaccarino is a well-known U.S. illustrator, recognized for his bold stylized digital illustrations. He is also the creator and producer of several animated series. His picturebooks include *The Longest Storm* (2021), *All the Way to America* (2011), *I am a Story* (2016), *Doug Unplugged* (2013), and *Every Friday* (2012). He explores the merits of first-hand exploration in *Doug Unplugged* in which Doug, a robot, is plugged in every morning to start information download, until one day he unplugs and spends an exciting day of adventure and discovery.

Kathy G. Short, University of Arizona

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***Classified: The Secret Career of Mary Golda Ross, Cherokee Aerospace Engineer***

Written by Traci Sorell

Illustrated by Natasha Donovan

Millbrook Press, 2021, 32 pp (unpaged)

ISBN: 978-1541579149

Cherokee author Traci Sorell begins the amazing life story of Mary Golda Ross (1908-2008) with a note that describes these four Cherokee values: “gaining skills in all areas of life (both within and outside of the classroom), working cooperatively with others, remaining humble when others recognize your talents, and helping ensure equal education and opportunity for all.” Each of these values is exemplified in Mary’s life.

Mary Golda Ross’s great-grandfather John Ross, who had served as the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, created the school that 16-year-old math-whiz Mary attended. She graduated and taught high school math and science. Later, she served as a girls’ adviser at the Santa Fe, New Mexico, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) boarding school where she continued to encourage girls to learn. This story addresses the obstacles that Indigenous people and women encountered in pursuing formal education.

During World War II, Mary landed a position with Lockheed Aircraft based on her skills in mathematics. Following the war, when she wanted to help design and build aircraft and spacecraft, she studied to be an engineer and was hired as Lockheed’s first female engineer. In 1953, she joined Lockheed’s top-secret Skunk Works division with the mission of “taking the theoretical and making it real.” Mary collaborated on an aerospace team that developed satellites and technology to assist astronauts in landing on the moon. Her contributions were not acknowledged during her lifetime.

Throughout her life she encouraged others, especially young women, to study and excel as engineers. “Do the best you can and search out available knowledge and build on it. I started with a firm foundation in mathematics and qualities that came down to me from my Indian heritage” (Mary Golda Ross, April, 2008). Pursuing knowledge, engaging in teamwork, practicing humility, and providing opportunities for others—her Cherokee values—framed her life.

The book’s backmatter includes two photographs of Mary and a timeline of her life and accomplishments. In 2004, at the age of 96, she participated in the Native Nations Procession when the National Museum of the American Indian opened in Washington, DC. In 2019, her work in the space program was commemorated when she was selected as an honoree for a U.S. Native American dollar for her work in the space program. *Classified* was named an Orbis Pictus Honor Book and an American Indian Library Association (AILA) American Indian Youth Literature Award Honor Book.

Natasha Donovan’s illustrations were created with pencil, ink, and Procreate software. Her bold double-page artwork completes the text and makes the book an effective read-aloud selection as well as a choice for independent reading and researching. Many of Natasha’s illustrations include STEM activities—from mathematical equations to drawings of various aircraft to images of the moon landing. The artwork also shows Mary working on all-male teams.

In addition to being paired with other books in this WOW Review issue, *Classified* can be paired with other biographies of women, particularly those focused on the achievements of Indigenous women. These titles can make a powerful text set: *Ella Cara Deloria: Dakota Language Protector* by Diane Wilson (2021), *Sharice's Big Voice: How a Native Kid Becomes a Congresswoman* by Sharice Davis with Nancy K. Mays (2021), *She Persisted: Wilma Mankiller* by Traci Sorell (2021), *She Persisted: Maria Tallchief* by Christine Day (2021), *She Persisted: Deb Haaland* by Laurel Goodluck (2023), and *The Water Lady: How Darlene Arviso Helps a Thirsty Navajo Nation* by Alice B. McGinty (2021).

*Classified* can also be paired with other picturebooks that focus on Cherokee culture, such as *When We Gather (Ostadahlisiha): A Cherokee Tribal Feast* written by Andrea L. Rogers (Cherokee Nation) and illustrated by Madelyn Goodnight (Chickasaw) (2024). Nonfiction titles that accurately portray Cherokee people and culture, past and present, can also help readers build or extend their background knowledge before or after reading this book.

Traci Sorrell is an award-winning author and enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation. She writes historical and contemporary fiction and nonfiction in a variety of formats for young people. Her book *We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* (2018) was named a 2019 Sibert Honor Book and Orbis Pictus Honor Book. Traci lives in Oklahoma. Readers can learn more about her work on her website (<https://www.tracisorell.com/>).

Illustrator Natasha Donovan grew up in Vancouver, British Columbia. She is Métis and currently lives in Washington State. Natasha illustrated the graphic novel *Surviving the City*, written by Tasha Spillitt (2018). Their book earned an AILA American Indian Youth Literature Honor Award. See more of her work on her website (<https://www.natashadonovan.com/>).

Judi Moreillon, Tucson, AZ

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**The Enigma Girls: How Ten Teenagers Broke Ciphers, Kept Secrets, and Helped Win World War II**

Written by Candace Fleming  
Scholastic Focus, 2024, 371 pp  
ISBN: 978-1338749571

The setting is England as Hitler breaks promises and spreads his power over more of continental Europe. It is clear he wants to extend his reach across the English Channel. The question for Winston Churchill and other world leaders is, How do we stop him? Their answer is to find out his plans and movements so the Allied forces can strike effectively and cripple his plans. Enter Bletchley Park, a top secret center about 50 miles outside of London. This is where the British government collected an army of people who worked 24 hours a day decoding and deciphering messages collected from the airwaves by listeners scattered across the coastline. Some of them are

well known, like Alan Turing who famously developed an early form of computer that could break the Enigma code. The code was the product of an almost unbreakable coding machine that allowed the Nazis to communicate their secret plans. The Enigma Machine had four wheels that were reset every 24 hours, so even if someone broke the code one day, it changed the next. Even with Turing's computer, it took an army of people to listen, collect, run the Bombas (the name given to Turing's code-breaking computer), check and translate the message, catalog and cross-reference it to look for patterns in the communication, and then pass on the information to the military decision-makers. Many of those who did this work were teenage girls, recruited because they could speak other languages or had performed well in school.

Candace Fleming's account of these girls emphasizes the secrecy of what they were doing and their sheer dedication for the war effort. Each person at Bletchley Park had to sign a document promising never to speak to anyone, including their co-workers, about their work, and they were to keep this promise for the rest of their lives. The intent was to create silos where the girls understood their task but did not understand how they contributed to the whole war effort. However, they did understand their work contributed to saving lives and willingly worked long shifts in less than ideal conditions. Once the British government released documents in the 1970's about the work done at Bletchley Park, the workers were then free to tell their families what they did during WWII.

The book chronicles ten of the teens who worked in various roles at Bletchley Park. Fleming's account, like all of her nonfiction, is well-researched with copious source notes and bibliographies. She skillfully weaves in the girls' personalities, so the book reads like a movie script with action and suspense. The book is heavily illustrated with historic photographs, lending authenticity to the story. Fleming's narratives of the teens are based on books and memoirs they wrote once they were permitted to talk about their war work.



While Fleming’s book focuses on the technology, the human skill of breaking the codes and understanding the communications between Hitler and his military forces, it also includes descriptions of how the British misdirected the German forces, including feeding double agents false information and dumping a body planted with false invasion plans that washed up on the Spanish shore. The plans were opened and decrypted by the Nazis before the documents were returned to the British.

Books pairing well with *The Enigma Girls* include titles emphasizing espionage in wartime, such as *Bomb! The Race to Build and Steal the World’s Most Dangerous Weapon* (Steve Sheinkin, 2012) or *Code Name Verity* (Elizabeth Wein, 2012). Another type of coded communication is portrayed in *Code Talker: A Novel About the Navajo Marines of World War Two* (Joseph Bruchac, 2005). Two other books featuring the Enigma Machine are the graphic novel *The Imitation Game: Alan Turing Decoded* (Jim Ottaviani and Leland Purvis, 2019) and the novel *The Enigma Game* (Elizabeth Wein, 2020). Finally the *Bletchley Riddle*, coming out in October 2024, is a historical fiction novel co-authored by Steve Sheinkin and Ruta Sepetys that highlights the mysterious work at Bletchley Park.

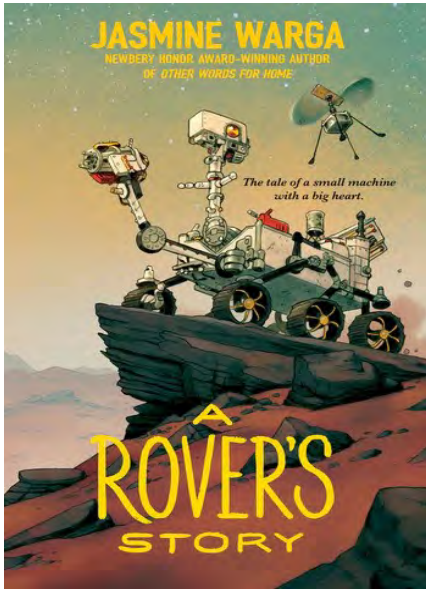
Candace Fleming is an award-winning author of historical nonfiction. She grew up telling stories and filling notebooks with imaginative tales and beautiful language. Then in college she discovered history. Writing historical accounts, like *The Enigma Girls*, demonstrates her linguistic skill at retelling true stories in a way that captures readers on page one and does not let them go until the final punctuation. She explains, “after all, some of the best stories are true ones — tales of heroism and villainy made more incredible by the fact they really happened.” More information about the 52 books (historical accounts, non-fiction texts, novels, and picturebooks) she has authored can be found on her website (<https://www.candacefleming.com/index.html>).

Susan Corapi, Trinity International University

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### ***A Rover's Story***

Written by Jasmine Warga

Balzer+Bray, 2022, 294 pp

ISBN: 978-0063113923

“Resilience,” built to be logical, not emotional, is a rover created to explore Mars by a passionate team of NASA engineers. Res embarks on a pioneering mission to Mars that includes collecting and transmitting data back to Earth, finding the former rover, and searching for evidence of past life. However, Res’s journey across the harsh Martian terrain encounters unexpected challenges. Despite these obstacles, Res completes his mission, and the team on Earth remains unwavering in their belief in him. In this compelling sci-fi narrative, a blend of hope and a deep sense of caring connects Res and the team, ensuring his return to Earth, and a permanent home for the rover.

*A Rover's Story* is a beautifully crafted novel that explores the connection between technology and humanity. Set in an advanced technological era, this story invites readers to ponder the essence of being human and our relationship with technology. Emotions have been considered a distinctively human trait, in contrast with the logical nature of machines. However, this story prompts readers to reflect on the role of emotions in defining what is human as Res develops human-like emotions throughout his journey. The story emphasizes the importance of emotions in human life and highlights the profound impact of forming relationships between humans, between humans and machines, and between machines. The bond Res forms with its creators, Rania and Xander, exemplifies the power of relationships in facing challenges that result in the agency needed to complete an impossible mission. The emotional investment of humans in Res, presented by Sophie’s letters, shows their deep connection and affection, bridging the gap between human emotions and machine logic.

Traditionally, humans have been defined in contrast to non-humans, with only humans seen as autonomous agents who possess emotions. Non-humans have been excluded from the position of subjects and considered as passive objects, disposable according to human needs and desires. Through modernity, rationality has been overly recognized at the expense of emotion. This story creates fissures in these rigid dichotomies and blurs the boundaries between these distinctions. Res makes decisions grounded not only in rationality, which is verified by the analysis of vast quantities of data, but also based on emotions of caring for humans and other robots. Res develops a determined agency to complete missions and finally accomplishes groundbreaking achievements for expanding human knowledge. This book forces us to delve into our dichotomous views of human/non-human, and reason/emotion.

This book makes us re-evaluate the role of science fiction. Science fiction has long been valued for its ability to foster imagination and envision an unknown future. In an era of high technology, we are prompted to ponder the fundamental question of what it means to be human and encouraged to resist any foregone conclusions and focus instead on the ongoing process of transformation

(Braidotti, 2017). Science fiction can provide a space to explore the immediate challenges of the unknown future. *A Rover's Story* leverages this genre to delve into humanity and our responsibilities in a high-tech society.

*A Rover's Story* follows in the footsteps of *The Giver* by Lois Lowry (1993) to ponder questions of humanity in a future tech society. *The Giver* explores a controlled, dystopian world where emotions are suppressed, providing a stark contrast to the emotional growth seen in Res. Additionally, *The House of the Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer (2002) can be read alongside these books to explore the ethical use of technology. Farmer's novel delves into cloning and the moral dilemmas it presents, echoing themes of identity and humanity seen in *A Rover's Story*. These stories collectively encourage reflection on how technology shapes our identities, our ethical choices, and our interactions in the high-tech future world.

Jasmine Warga, the author of this book, brings a unique perspective to the narrative. Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, to a white American mother and a Middle Eastern immigrant father, Jasmine grew up feeling alienated from both cultural heritages but learned to recognize her unique position as an asset to her writing (Rosenzweig, 2020). This multicultural background enriches the story, adding depth and diversity to the exploration of emotions and identity. Warga's ability to weave complex themes of technology, emotion, and human connection into a compelling narrative, grounded in scientific knowledge and research, makes *A Rover's Story* a standout in the genre of science fiction for children.

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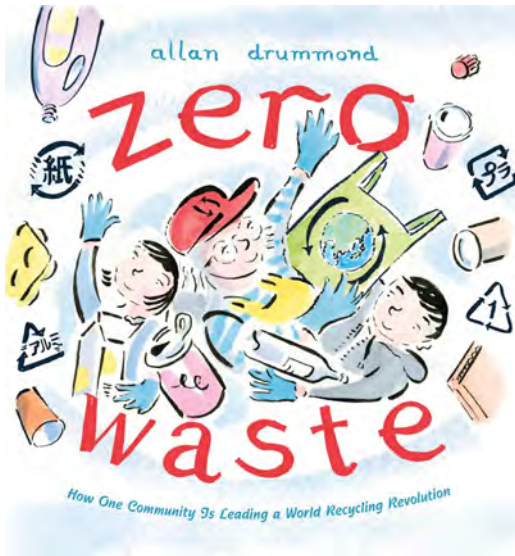
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***Zero Waste: How One Community is Leading a World Recycling Revolution***

Written and Illustrated by Allan Drummond  
Farrar Straus Giroux, 2023, 36 pp (unpaged)  
ISBN: 978-0374388409

This picturebook tells the journey of how an actual small village in Japan made and carried out their commitment to becoming a zero-waste community. It begins with two children visiting their energetic and wise grandmother who explains to them how and why the citizens of Kamikatsu increased their efforts to recycle, reuse what they have, and reduce the number of items they purchase to achieve zero waste. Kamikatsu, Japan, is now known worldwide for its sanitation innovations.

Told through illustrated and written text, the whimsical graphic style creates an element of fun, inviting readers to join the journey through the lens of one who might visit Kamikatsu. The opening end page visually welcomes readers to, “a small town... high up in the mountains... on an island... in Japan” providing readers with a feel for the geographic context where the story is situated. In a simple, yet sophisticated, manner the story includes thought and speech bubbles which give a conversational tone and represent different opinions, such as typical wonderings about how the community operates to achieve zero waste or a comment from someone who might doubt or question the work involved. Using Japanese proverbs, Grandma, a woman of few words but big action, teaches her grandchildren how to sort her trash for recycling. When they take the trash to the town recycling center, they learn that everyone in the town tries to recycle everything, which means sorting almost 50 different types of waste. There the journey shifts to Grandma telling the community’s struggles, which leads to Kamikatsu setting a goal and the collective work that gradually changes attitudes and practices over the span of twenty years.

Technology and human invention in daily life are depicted through the concept of zero-waste. In the small town of Kamikatsu, we see how wasteful behavior is unsustainable for the future. Everyone once deposited trash into “a great big hole” in the ground. Later, the filthy air and gasses produced by the town’s incinerators begins to destroy the beauty of the natural environment. It shows how individuals in the town worked to change the culture of thinking to achieve the goal of zero-waste. A new recycling center was built and is run by the Zero Waste Academy using the four L’s—local, low cost, low impact, and low tech—to guide its operations (Gray, 2019). We can learn from Kamikatsu’s example how humans might reduce, recycle, and reuse to solve problems and fulfill human needs.

Drummond conveys and reinforces the story’s message using sayings in the Japanese language. Grandma begins with *kachou fuugetsu* reminding children to, “Experience the beauty of nature. Learn about yourself.” Then she teaches them the importance of *mottainai* or “Waste not, want not.” Finally, in a message to encourage the world to join in the zero-waste trek, she uses the phrase *chiritsumo* or “A journey begins with the first step. Perseverance means power.” While they are introduced in Japanese which adds an authentic cultural layer to the story, the values that represent the words are universal and show connection through how they can be applied globally.

In *Zero Waste*, Drummond’s distinctive ink and watercolor illustrations are colorful, playful, and inviting. The book concludes with resources for further reading and a statement that the COVID-19 pandemic prevented him from traveling to Japan. He does not provide information about personal communication with individuals from Kamikatsu, thus, it might be implied that the sources listed were used as part of the research conducted to write the story. Pictures of Kamikatsu residents and of the recycling facility from Getty Images are presented on the author’s note page and since Kamikatsu has received worldwide notoriety, there are news stories (Lee & Inuma, 2022) and interview/presentations from sources, such as Akira Sakano, Deputy Chief Officer of Kamikatsu’s Zero Waste Academy, that are readily available online (Ted Talks, 2017) and support the accuracy of Drummond’s narrative.

Allan Drummond’s *Green Power* series highlights everyday communities. These stories—*Energy Island* (2011), *Green City* (2016), *Pedal Power* (2017), and *Solar Story* (2020)—make a wonderful text set for students to learn about different communities and how they have taken steps to make a difference and live more sustainably. Another book that might inspire children to act is *Old Enough to Save the Planet*, (Loll Kirby & Adelina Lirius, 2021) a nonfiction picturebook about children around the world who made positive impacts in their communities to help save the planet.

Noted for his work as a children’s book author/illustrator, award-winning Allan Drummond is listed as a Suffolk artist who has also lived in Savannah, Georgia. His website (<https://www.allandrummond.com/>) features his work as a children’s author/illustrator.

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