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# WOW STORIES

GLOBAL LITERACY COMMUNITIES: CREATING  
CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS ACROSS  
LOCAL AND GLOBAL CULTURES

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Volume IV, Issue 4

**WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom** is a regular on-line publication of WOW containing vignettes written by classroom educators about children's experiences reading and responding to literature in the classroom setting.

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**Creating Cross-Curricular Connections across Local and Global Cultures**

Global Literacy Communities are small groups of educators who engage in professional inquiry on building international understanding through global children's and adolescent literature. These communities meet regularly to explore global literature and ways of using these books in K-12 classroom contexts. The communities may be school-based, district-based, community-based, or university/school collaborations, but they share a commitment to thinking together as a professional learning community as well as transforming their practice.

In 2011-2012, twelve Global Literacy Communities received grants from Worlds of Words to support their work and to encourage their explorations of innovative practices. Community members also participated in an online forum where they could share their explorations and support each other across the different groups. In turn, each literacy community has written at least one vignette for *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom*. This effort by Worlds of Words was supported by the Longview Foundation for World Affairs and International Understanding, an organization that has been helping young people in the United States learn about world regions and global issues since 1966.

This issue of *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom* focuses on nine Global Literacy Communities, four that focused on engagements with young children and four that focused on middle school classrooms. The groups range from Maryland to Washington and consisted of educators from a range of school and university contexts. Some are school-based and involve a close collaboration across a group of teachers and others are community-based with teachers in different school contexts who meet to share ideas and books. The authors have included examples of student work, book lists, and videos of their students' responses.

The first set of vignettes focuses on K-3 classrooms in elementary schools with a number of the groups creating strong home-school partnerships. The Spokane Literacy Community created Family Story Book Bags that were sent home to parents who were encouraged to write their stories in a journal. Their vignette relates their experiences across different classrooms and provides lists of the books placed in the book bags around themes to encourage family storytelling. The Hobgood Professional Learning Community in Tennessee focused on young English Language Learners and included a family-based component in which families had the opportunity to respond to a global picturebook. Students brought the book back to school for discussion and for integration into writing workshops.

The second grade teachers in the Madeira Literacy Community in Ohio worked together to identify global literature to read and discuss with their students. Their vignette particularly highlights the significance of student dialogue about picture books in promoting global awareness. The Orono Literacy Community in Maine also focused on picture books across a range of university and elementary contexts, particularly highlighting the universal concepts that connect global cultures.

The second set of vignettes focus on cross-curricular connections in middle school and intermediate classrooms. The Global Environmental Literacy Community in Maryland explored the integration of global literature that highlighted the environmental concepts and issues into the transdisciplinary units in their classrooms. The other three communities used a team-teaching approach where the same unit was shared across teachers in the content areas of math, science, social studies and language arts. The Martin Luther King Middle School Literacy Community in

Michigan engaged in inquiries around Latin America using texts sets, while the Harlee Middle School Literacy Community collaborated on classroom experiences around the novel, *Shizuko's Daughter*, set in Japan. The Shaker Heights Literacy Community was a collaboration across reading, social studies, science, and math that focused on a study of the Silk Road that included learning stations and in-depth inquiries by students. The final vignette comes from a community-based literacy group on Vashon Island off the coast of Washington and focuses on two middle-school teachers and their explorations of global literature.

Our next issue of *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom* will focus on a set of vignettes from the final Global Literacy Community. We will have an unthemed issue in the spring of 2013. Think about how you connect students of all ages with literature in ways that promote intercultural understandings. Consider sharing your innovative practices by submitting a vignette to *WOW Stories*. We are interested in descriptions of interactions with literature in classrooms and libraries at preschool through graduate levels. [See our call for manuscripts and author guidelines for more information.](#)

### **Exploring Cultures in Primary Classrooms**

Marilyn Carpenter and the Spokane Literacy Community

Our literacy community started the school year in September with an after school meeting in Abby Spencer's classroom. Our gathering included me and seven primary teachers representing three school districts in the Spokane, Washington area. We had worked together as a literacy community the previous year and planned that our main goal this year would be to share an abundance of global literature with our students through read alouds, text set explorations and independent reading. Our second goal was to collaboratively support each other in this focus. One of the ways we did this was to schedule our monthly meetings in different members' classrooms. It was helpful to see examples of the curriculum we were exploring. Observing our colleagues' bulletin boards, class books, students' journals provided inspiration. Abby sparked our first meeting by sharing some of the books that she already had read aloud to her class.

Our third goal was to base our study group meetings and the design of the students' explorations of global literature on the curriculum framework in "Curriculum that is International" (Short, 2007). Our plan was to spend two months on each part of the framework. In our classrooms we began by sharing children's literature that promoted responses regarding personal cultural identities, the center of this curriculum framework. Then we planned to proceed through the curriculum framework, ending with inquires into global issues. We intended that the last part of our curriculum would be to guide our students to take actions based on their exploration of global

issues.

At our September meeting, we read “The Curricula of Sharing Family Stories” (Fimbres, 2011). Gabrielle Fimbres described how the University of Arizona’s College of Education worked closely with the Flowing Wells Unified School District to develop a pilot program to encourage students’ families to share their own stories. Backpacks were sent home with children’s books centered about a theme. Families were invited to record their own stories in a journal or on a digital recorder. Fimbres’ article prompted a discussion of how we could do a similar project to encourage our students’ explorations of personal cultural identities through the sharing of family stories. We decided to lengthen the time for this study to complete what we called the “Family Story Book Bags” project. When we decided to adopt the Family Story Book Bag project, it meant a change in the means of accomplishing our goal regarding personal cultural identities. Therefore we spent two more months than planned on exploring personal cultural identities. In our meeting we collaborated on how we would present the Family Story Book Bag project in our classrooms. The majority of this vignette will focus on that one part of our curriculum that was common to each classroom, the Family Story Book Bags, with specific examples from Melissa Carpenter’s second grade classroom.

First, we developed a letter that would go home to parents a week prior to the start of the project describing the “Family Story Book Bags.” Here is a sample letter that went home in Melissa’s classroom:

Dear Families,

During the next few months our class will engage in a literacy activity called Family Story Book Bags. These book bags contain children’s books to share and enjoy at home—and most of all to inspire you to tell your own stories as a family. The books included in the book bags will explore topics important to families, such as Relationships, Celebrations, Foods, Heritage, Hobbies and Play. The purpose of this literacy project is to provide a springboard for sharing family stories as a way for children to learn about their own culture.

Here is how it works. Each week, five children from the classroom will bring home one of the Family Story Book Bags. Each book bag has a selection of books centered on familiar family topics. When your child brings home a book bag, your family will have one week to read and enjoy the books and to write and/or draw your responses and family stories in the journal. Since each family is different, each response will be unique as well. As you enter your responses in the journal, please include the title of the book, your child’s name, and your name(s) at the beginning of the response. Please note that Nightly Reading and Math homework will not be required of your child during the week you have a Family Story Book

Bag. The books in the book bag and the journal entries you and your family complete will take the place of regular homework.

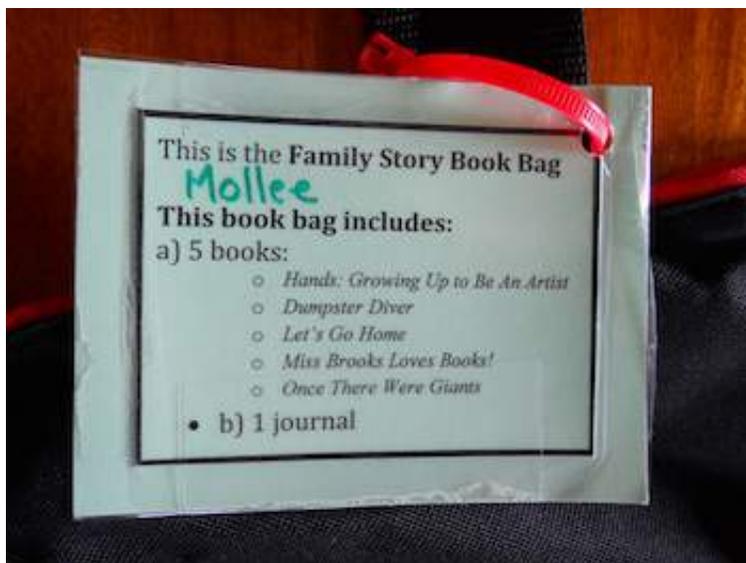
When you return the book bag another student will be able to take it home. In this way all students will have been able to take home a book bag before the winter break when we wrap up our social studies unit on personal culture.

When each child has had an opportunity to take home the book bag and return it, we will share the journal responses in class. In this way, we will be able to learn about each other and our families and how our personal culture is formed in our family.

Have fun with the books and be as creative as you like with the responses. Thank you for your support and enthusiasm.

Each class had four or five bags to send home depending on the class size. Charlotte Streit and Meg Baker had a supply of bags from our local teachers' credit union that they shared with the other teachers. In Melissa's classroom each week five bags went home on Mondays to be returned on the following Monday.

Each bag featured five books that connected with personal culture. A laminated tag attached to the outside of the bag listed the titles inside the bag. The backside of the tag featured the logo of the school and her room number.





The teachers thoughtfully selected the books in the bags ([download the list of books that were used in the book bags here](#)). The teachers decided on similar categories for the books the bags to encourage family stories. Melissa used these categories to organize the books in the bags she sent home:

- Favorite family foods;
- Games/play;
- Family Structures;
- Heritage;
- Everyday life including hobbies, music, etc.

A journal to record family stories in a written or graphic way was placed in each bag together with a laminated letter to parents. Here is a template of Melissa's letter:

Dear Families,

Today \_\_\_\_\_ will take home the Family Story Book Bag.

In this book bag your family will find:

- Five books

*Alex and the Wednesday Chess Club*

*Clouds for Dinner*

*Music, Music for Everyone*

*The Visit*

*Wink*

- One journal

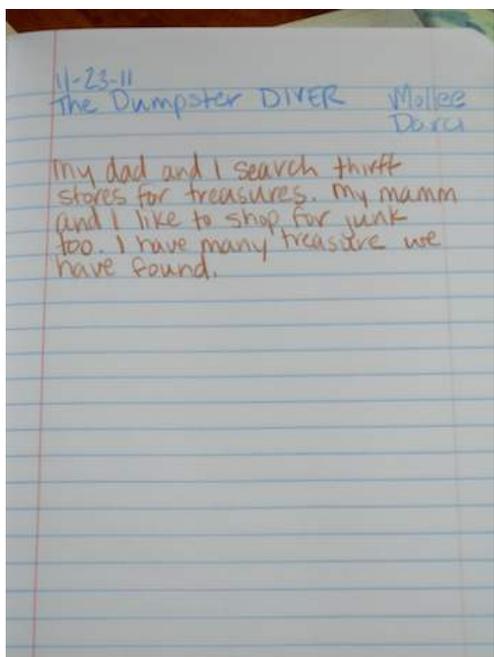
During the week the books are yours to read and enjoy. Use the books to tell your own family stories and to share the memories that come to your mind. Draw and/or write your responses to the books in the journal.

**As you enter your responses in the journal, please include the title of the book, your child's name, and your name(s) at the beginning of the response.**

Please remember to return the Family Story Book Bag on \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your collaboration. Enjoy!

The journals were a hit with the families as they responded to the book they read together from the bags and described their own family stories. One of Melissa's students wrote and illustrated a response to *Hands: Growing Up to Be An Artist* (Ehlert, 2004), saying, "I read Hands. My dad builds things together like birdhomes. Me and my Mom plant flowers together." *Dumpster Diver* (Wong, 2007) inspired another response: "My dad and I search thrift stores for treasures. My mom and I like to shop for junk too. I have many treasures we have found."



When all the books had been read and the journal entries made and the bags returned, the teachers provided classroom time for sharing the books and journal entries. Some of the teachers read aloud several books from the Book Bags and guided the children in responding to those books. The children shared their journal entries in small groups. Then the teachers guided discussion about the family stories and guided children to reflect on what they learned from their families' stories.

Two things we will remember for the future:

1. Encourage the children to write the journal entries, instead of the parents.
2. The first journal entry appeared to be a model for the next families to follow, so be selective in the first child chosen to take home a bag.

Books that went home in the Book Bags that worked well are: [\*One Green Apple\*](#) (Bunting, 2006), *A Ride on My Mother's Back* (Bernhard, 1996), *Bread, Bread, Bread* and other titles in the *Around the World Series* (Morris, 1993), *Clouds For Dinner* (Perkins, 1997), [\*Wink: The Ninja Who Wanted to Be Noticed\*](#) (Phillips, 2007) and *Let's Go Home* (Rylant, 2002).

The teachers are planning to repeat the Family Story Book Bag project. We found that the Family Story Book Bags project provided our students with the background knowledge they needed to explore the rest of the curriculum framework. The students discovered the stories of their own families as well as those of their classmates.

Even though we spent more time on exploring personal culture through the Family Story Book Bag project we were able to complete our study of each part of the curriculum framework, (Short, 2007). The last part of the framework, "Inquiries into Global Issues" was our curriculum focus at the end of the school year. All the teachers shared books with their classes about the issue of water use across the globe. Books like *All the Water in the World* (Lyon, 2011), [\*One Well: The Story of Water on Earth\*](#) (Strauss, 2007), and [\*Our World of Water\*](#) (Hollyer, 2009) were read aloud. The children engaged in responses and discussions about actions they could take to conserve their use of water.

At our last community meeting, one of the teachers, Meg Baker, commented that she has become more aware of learning and teaching about culture because of her experiences with global literature in our community. Therefore she is more effective in guiding discussion and responses. The teachers also noticed a more mature use of language on the part of the students when discussing the books. In the next three vignettes, the teachers describe how the curriculum study unfolded in five different classrooms. Each of the vignettes mentions the Family Story Book Bags, since that curriculum exploration was common to each classroom.

\* \* \* \* \*

### ❑ **Exploring Personal Cultures:** Lacey Grummons

I began the school year with my 22 (13 boys and 9 girls) lively all-day kindergarteners by immersing them in literature to help build community and an awareness of their personal culture. My goal was to culminate these experiences with the Family Story Book Bags project that our literacy community had selected as one of our curriculum explorations. Since I would be on

maternity leave after the first of the year, I had a lot to accomplish.

To begin I read aloud the Polly Dunbar series about Tilly and her friends, which helped the students identify what they enjoyed doing at home with family and friends and to think about their personal cultures. *Plaidypus Lost* (Crummel & Stevens, 2004) and *Mary and the Mouse and The Mouse and Mary* (Donofrio, & McClintock, 2007) were two other books I read aloud to encourage students to think about their friends and hobbies.

We continued our focus on personal culture with a personal culture bag. To foster a more focused discussion on students' lives and help them be aware of their own personal culture, I asked each student to fill a Ziploc bag with items that represented their personal culture. I shared my personal culture bag to help students get a picture of items they could bring that would represent their cultures. Photographs of family members, an empty coffee cup, my Bible, and a pen were some of the items in my bag that represented my personal culture.

Each week five students returned their bags filled with items. The students gathered in a circle and the five bags were placed in the middle of the circle for students to guess whose bag belonged to whom. I wanted students to learn that each person's culture is different, yet there are similarities with others.

One student's father was serving in Afghanistan and she brought an army camo doll with a face of a photograph of her father. When students saw this item in her bag, they guessed it belonged to a boy. I asked, "Whose bag do you think this belongs to?" Many eager hands rose to share their guess. Gavin said, "It's Kolby's." When I asked why, he said, "Because it is green and brown. Those are boy colors." To his surprise when I asked the owner of the bag to stand-up, Jaycee, a girl, proudly stood up. She shared with us that the doll was a gift from her dad before he left to war. She said, "Whenever I miss my dad, I hug it."



to Jaycee  
loves ponies and her  
dad.

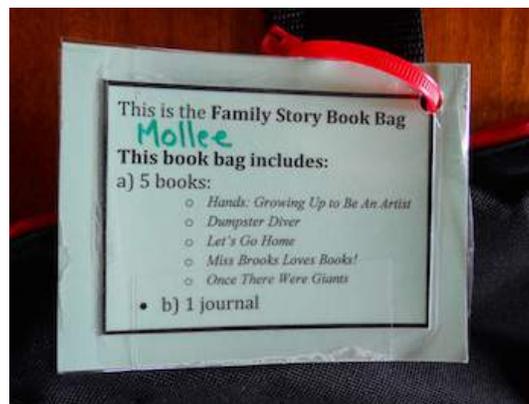
Another student brought a photograph of himself and his two mothers. "Mommy Suey and Mommy Shelly took me to Seattle to see the Space Needle," Brendon explained as he walked around the circle to show-off his photograph. Other students brought such items as: a cross necklace, a figurine of Santa Claus, baseball cards and favorite stuffed animals.

Once all students shared their culture bags, I took photographs of them with their favorite item in their bag. I made a Personal Culture book out of each student's photographs for students to read in our class library. The students came to new understandings about their own cultures and those of

their classmates.

Finally, in November and December we moved into our exploration of personal cultures with the Family Story Book Bag project. Each book bag contained four personal culture books and a journal for families to write/draw about connections they had with the books. Each story explored important topics about family, such as relationships, celebrations, foods, heritage, hobbies, and play. (See a list of books that were used in the book bags at the end of these vignettes.) The purpose of the Family Story Book Bags was to provide a springboard for sharing family stories as a way for children to learn about their own cultures.

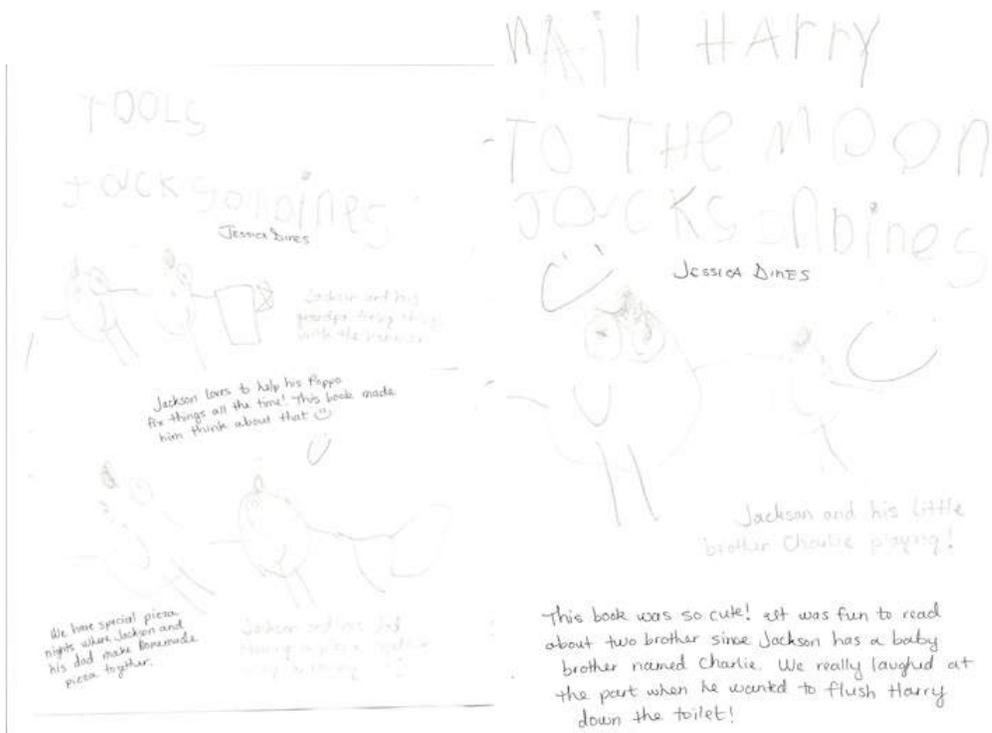
Students had a week to enjoy the books in their book bags. I didn't give families explicit directions about the journal portion of the bags because I didn't want to limit them to what they could write and/or draw. Once students returned their book bags and journals, I encouraged students to share their favorite book and journal entry with the class.



Landen and his family read *Always* (Stott & Phlen, 2008). The story is about a mother/son relationship. The boy gets in trouble but in the end, his mother tells him how she will always love him no matter what. Landen drew a picture of his mother and himself. His mother wrote, "This book reminds Landen about his family and how we say we love each other every night or before we go somewhere."



*Mail Harry To The Moon* (Harris & Emberley, 2008) was the book Jackson enjoyed with his family. This hilarious story is about a brother who's learning what it's like to have a new baby brother in his family. Jackson drew a sketch of himself and his little brother Charlie. When Jackson shared his journal entry with our class I asked him if he could relate to how Harry treated his baby brother. He said, "Yeah, sometimes Charlie bites me and I want to send him to the moon!"



These activities helped students understand that they each are unique and have a culture to celebrate. The children also made deeper discoveries about their classmates because they had shared their personal culture bags and family story book bag. In the process they learned that their personal cultures and family stories are the same and different.

Next fall, I will encourage my new students to get to know each other and build our classroom community through participating in these activities. I will read aloud more books about other cultures to stimulate discussion and an understanding of other cultures around the world.

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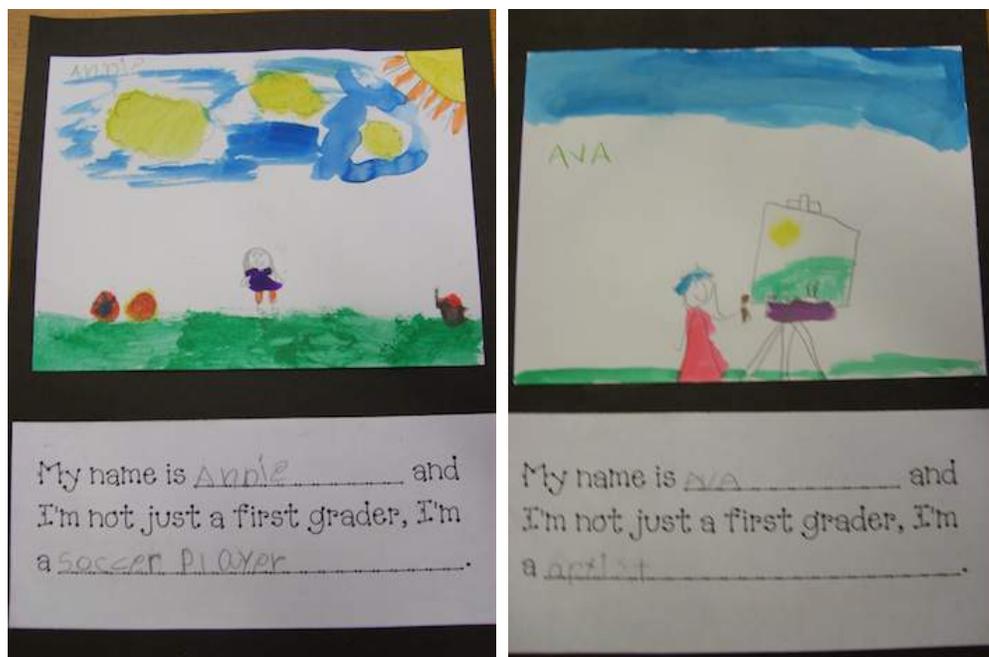
### Developing an Understanding about Cultures: Janelle Stolp and Lindsay Abbey

We are first grade teachers in a school in Spokane Valley, Washington. At our school there are about 440 students with sixty-three percent of those students qualified for free or reduced lunch. The community ranges from a low to middle-class. Our classrooms are made up of Caucasian, Hispanic, Asian and African American students.

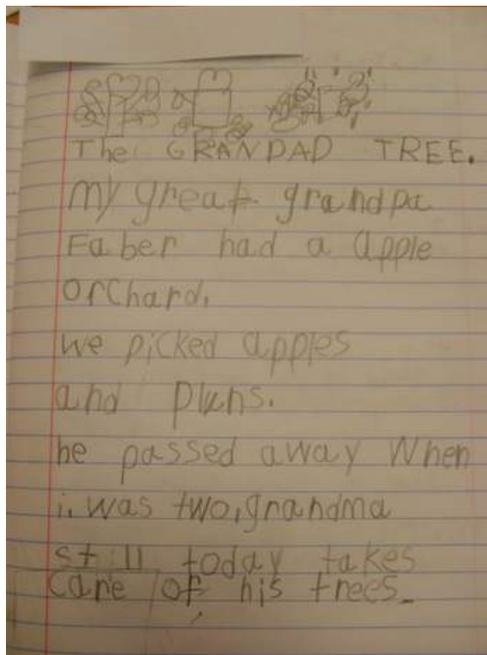
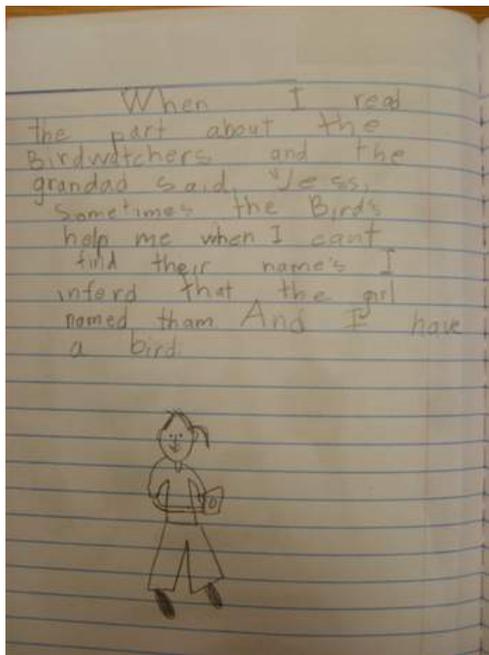
This year we started our focus on international curriculum with an exploration of the students' understandings of personal culture. Another part of our curriculum plan was to give our students opportunities to enhance their knowledge about other cultures around the world. We planned to do this through experiences with carefully chosen children's literature. As teachers, we wanted our students to gain awareness for similarities and differences among ourselves and others. One way our literacy community decided to pursue the exploration of personal culture was to engage the

children in the Family Story Book Bags project.

Our first grade team worked hard at the beginning of the year to ensure that our students discovered that each one of them is unique in their own way. We did this by reading aloud many books throughout the first few weeks of school, including *The Colors of Us*, (Katz, 2007), *Enemy Pie* (Munson, 2000), *You Are Special* (Lucado, 1997) and *Chrysanthemum* (Henkes, 2007). After reading these stories we discussed what made each of the students special and they created self-portraits and did some response writing. Every child was able to share these with the class. This was the first part of our unit on personal culture.



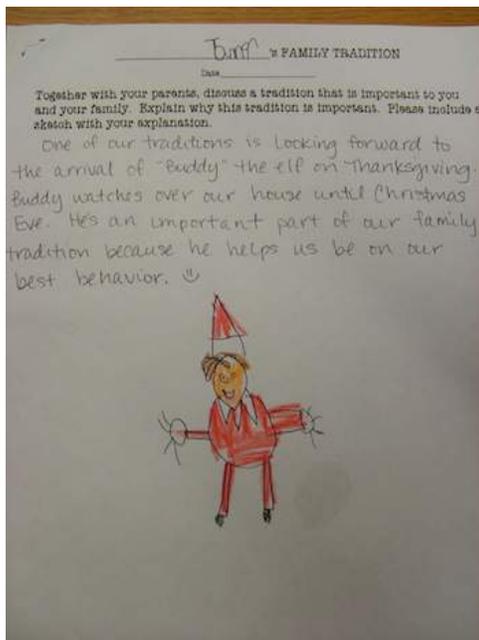
We planned for another exploration of personal culture with our Family Story Book Bags project. These book bags contained children's books to share and enjoy at home. Most of all we wanted to encourage families to tell their own stories. The books included in the book bags explored topics important to families such as relationships, celebrations, foods, heritage, hobbies and play. These topics helped our students learn about their own culture. (See a list of books that were used in the book bags at the end of these vignettes.) Each child had one week to read the books with their family and respond to at least one of the stories in a journal that was provided. Each week, the students that brought their books back were able to join together and share their responses with each other. Below are some responses students wrote after they read the books.



The students enjoyed learning not only about their own families, but about other families as well, and what makes each of us unique. This project was very well received by families. Many of our parents asked if we could do a second round of Family Book Bags during the spring. We felt grateful to be able to get literature into the hands of our families, and provide them with a way to spend time with their children. As a culmination of the project, the students chose their favorite book from the Family Story Book Bags and designed a T-shirt to represent their family connections to the story.



Throughout the year, we involved our families with our study of cultures. Around the holidays in December, we asked families to share their traditions. Each child drew a picture and wrote about a tradition. This gave us insight about our families within our two classrooms.



Around the New Year, we discussed different activities of families to celebrate the upcoming year. We read-aloud [Wish](#) (Thong, 2008) to learn about how people in different countries make wishes. The children discovered how other cultures have celebrations through listening to and discussing this book. Many students only knew about the kind of wish they make before they blow out their birthday candle. However, they learned about many other ways to make wishes. Following that read-aloud, we invited our students to write a New Year's wish for their family and one for the world.

The last part of the curriculum framework (Short, 2007) focuses on inquires into global issues. We decided one way to pursue this part of the framework was to link Children’s Book Day to Earth Day. We read aloud [Book Fiesta!](#) (Mora, 2009) to kick off our celebration! To make the connection with Earth Day we studied ways to take care of our Earth through our science unit. The students were particularly interested in recycling. They decided to recycle books from their home libraries to share with class members. Each student who brought a book gave a book talk to the class. After everyone presented their book talks, we placed the books in the center of our circle and drew names to choose a book. The readers discovered that recycling books could make an impact in our world. As a culminating project of our celebration we used ideas from the website [El día de los niños/El día de los libros](#) to encourage students to share their favorite books. The children had a difficult time choosing just one favorite story!

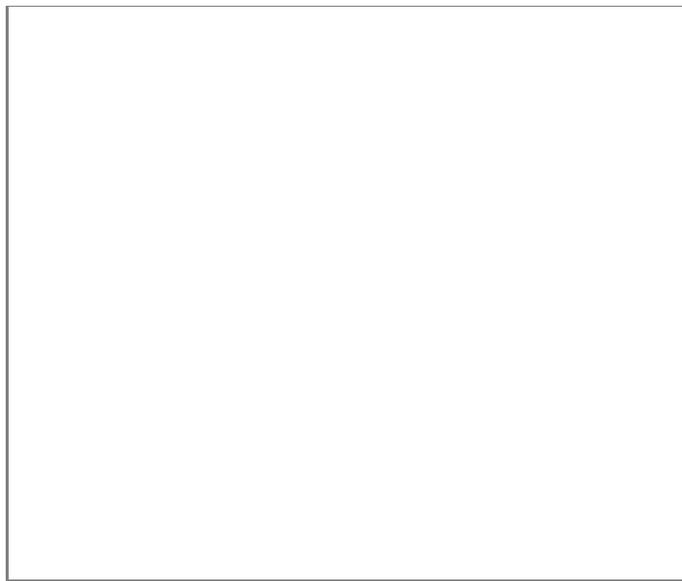
We found that teaching for global understanding can be tricky for first graders. First, we needed to build the children’s background prior to reading books centered around global understandings so they could more effectively comprehend the books that had a focus on global settings and issues. We believe that all the ways we shared books about personal and global cultures helped increase their knowledge so they can take their places as global citizens.

\* \* \* \* \*

### ▣ **Layers of Learning in Exploring Cultures in First Grade:** Meg Baker and Charlotte Streit

We teach first grade in a school in Northern Spokane. As part of the Spokane literacy community, we were eager to explore aspects of culture for the second year. It seemed so simple-- learn about cultures! Given that young children love to talk about themselves, their families and their world our task seemed straightforward. It quickly became evident however that there would be many more layers to this onion that we would be peeling away. In our Spokane community meetings we considered how the curriculum framework in “Curriculum that is International” (Short, 2007) could be implemented in our classroom studies about personal and global cultures. In this vignette we will describe a variety of ways we implemented the curriculum from the framework. In particular we will explain the experiences our students had with the Family Story Book Bags project used by other teachers in our literacy community.

We embarked on our journey of cultural exploration in our first grade classrooms utilizing exquisite pieces of global literature. We were confident that these beautiful books would allow our first graders to connect to the abstract concepts of cultural identity in an enjoyably authentic way.



### Our journey of Cultural Exploration

Our students explored the concept of culture in a range of ways. One day, the class gathered around the meeting area to hear a story about making, being and having friends, Meg opened a new book, *The Skin You Live In* (Tyler, 2005). The story ends with these words:

And like flowers in the fields that make wonderful views  
when we stand side-by-side in our wonderful hues,  
we all make a beauty so wonderfully true.  
We are special and different and just the same, too. (n.p.)

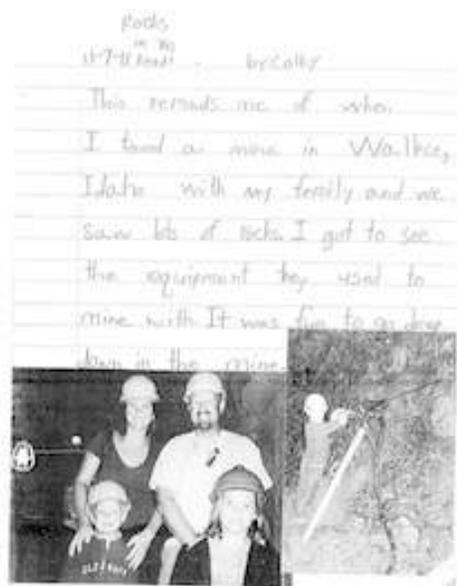
In our discussion of the story the students remarked on the differences in each other's skin, hair and eye color. Then they discussed the idea that we have so many feelings in common. They were able to more deeply understand their own similarities and differences.

In Charlotte's classroom the students enjoyed listening to the delightful story of picture pals across the ocean, [\*Same, Same, But Different\*](#) (Kostecki-Shaw, 2001). As the story unfolded, the children took great delight in chiming in with the repeated phrase "same, same, but different" and were surprised when on the last page there was twist of the phrase:

We're best friends . . .  
even though we live in two different worlds.  
Or do we?  
Different, different, but the same. (n.p.)

Many times over the next weeks, when reading other variations on this theme, the children would chant the now familiar phrases with glee.

In our literacy community we decided to help the children explore the ways in which culture begins within the family through the Family Story Book Bags project. With the help of Marilyn Carpenter's extensive collection of global literature as well as our own classroom libraries, we created five book bags for each class. Each book bag contained fiction and non-fiction selections on themes important to families such as grandparents, bedtime, everyday life, hobbies, and food. (See a list of books that were used in the book bags at the end of these vignettes.) The book bags also contained a journal for parents and students to record with pictures and words how their family story connected to the book. The responses were as varied as the families who created them. Some students realized their family experiences were similar to those they were reading about in the books. Others were given an opportunity to hear stories about their own family that they hadn't heard before. In all cases, parents and children had a literary experience that opened the doors to discussion of family stories and traditions.



Jake's & Cody's Journal



### Mikaela's Journal

First graders love to celebrate and we took every opportunity to combine our celebrations with literacy activities. To commemorate International Children's Book Day the students dressed up as their favorite book character and shared with the class their character and the book from which it came.



To expand our exploration of culture beyond our own front doors we read books with a global focus. Meg introduced the books [Whoever You Are](#) (Fox, 1997) and [Frozen Land](#) (Reynolds 2007), while Charlotte read aloud *Our World of Water* (Hollyer, 2009). Through words and pictures in the books we read aloud, the students learned of life in places vastly different from their own. To allow the students the opportunity to delve a little deeper into life in a country of their choice, we launched the Paper Dolls around the World project. Each child chose a country that was interesting or connected to his or her family culture in some way. At home, families worked together to create a decorated paper doll and conduct research addressing basic questions about the country they



artifacts made by students, including Mayan Masks, Aztec Clay Suns, and Paper Bag Piñatas all on display in our Mexican Museum. [\*The Piñata Maker\*](#) (Ancona, 1994) provided a glimpse into this traditional art form that was engaging for children and informative.

As our yearlong exploration of culture came to a close, the layers of learning kept unfolding. The culmination of our study of culture featured a display and sharing of the student authored books and reports on tri-fold display boards and artistic artifacts that the students had created. Students shared with each other what they learned and discovered about Mexico and global cultures in general. The learning was multi-layered and will continue to expand as students read and experience more. We have noticed that our students need even more exposure to books set in other countries. As one student in Meg's class said, "I've been to the three countries, too; Holland, Hawaii and Seattle!" Clearly, next year there will need to be more books, more explorations, more learning about different countries and places in our own country. We are eager to share the journey with our students.

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Click here to download the list of books used for the [Family Story Book Bags](#).

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## **Global Perspectives of Literacy and Social Studies**

Jeanne Fain and the Hobgood Professional Learning Community

This project initially was conceived when I was sitting on the floor in a book center reading to young children in an urban elementary school in Nashville, Tennessee. I was continuing my exploration of how young children grapple with critical texts. The prekindergarten teacher quickly introduced me to a group of teachers that were visiting the elementary school. The English Language Coordinator asked me if I would be interested in starting a project at their school, Hobgood Elementary, in Murfreesboro. I invited my colleague Bobbie Solley to work with me on this project.

Our group was a professional literacy community and was school-based with a university partnership. This group met in January to discuss a plan to integrate global literature in the classroom and to expand teaching practices for bilingual learners during the next school year. The principal invited teachers from Kindergarten to Second Grade to establish a professional learning community. We started with a large group of teachers, but after outlining the expectations for our community, several teachers decided to postpone their involvement. For the purpose of our community, it was important that participation be voluntary and based upon desire to learn more about the use of global texts.

The final professional community consisted of the English Language Coordinator and eight classroom teachers who worked across this project. This project served Kindergarten through second grade elementary students and English Learners and their families. These classrooms had high populations of English Language Learners that need additional support academically so it was important for us to include a family-based component based upon funds of knowledge (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). Spanish was the dominant language of many of the students and additional languages represented included Hmong, Laotian, Swahili, Visaya, and Gujurati.

Our community discussed the real challenges of integrating global literature in the classroom with the newly adopted mandated scripted program. The push to stick to the script in the teaching of reading and writing was a real tension that the teachers had to grapple with and there were genuine concerns about meeting the state and federal demands that left little room for inquiry.

The solution to finding space in the curriculum for this type of work was to begin with the Social Studies Standards. We examined the social studies standards for the K-2 Classroom and discussed the teaching of the social studies objectives. We realized that we could use global texts in social studies. Teachers then moved to linking the global texts in writer's workshop. The construction of this project was based upon sociocultural theories of learning and literacy (Vygotsky, 1978) as well as discourse analysis and content analysis as related to book selection. We worked to build intentionality with the use of these texts in the classroom alongside students and their families (Short & Thomas, 2011; Short, 2009). Our professional learning community focused attention toward cultural authenticity of texts (Bishop, 1997) and developed ways of thinking about these texts alongside several classroom teachers.

This project has two significant components that included using global texts in curriculum and promoting critical conversations and connecting families with global texts. The first component, using global texts in curriculum, began with an examination of book selection. When teachers were asked to provide names of global literature that we could use, many weren't sure where to find these texts. I generated a list of literature from established websites that have carefully reviewed international, global texts, and dual language texts. In addition, we selected literature that

promoted a global view and teachers spent significant time reviewing the literature and reflecting upon the representation of the characters so that they would honor multiple voices and cultures. We met in grade level groups and discussed the possible titles that we wanted to use for this project. Initially, there was some hesitation with the range of difficulty in the texts and a general feeling that several books were too challenging. As a group, we made the decision to try out the books and see how the students would respond to the global texts.

As we developed this project, we initially held monthly meetings after school. However, we quickly realized that our group needed another meeting time that would be less rushed and lead to greater reflection. The principal arranged two different times across our project for the professional learning community to meet in the morning. We had graduate students cover the classes and we arranged a two-hour block of time to think about global texts and how to use them strategically in the curriculum. The move to finding space to reflect during the school day was significant for our group. We used this time to read books that we were using in this project and think about how to use them in authentic ways within the curriculum.

During this two hour block, I generated a list of response strategies adapted from Short (2009) that would fit Kindergarten through second grade. The strategies also were selected from a WOW vignette from the Worlds of Words website. We divided up the strategies and teachers selected texts and matched the texts with the strategies. We engaged in the strategies ourselves with the new texts during our professional learning block. Our community learned about response strategies and writing invitations to extend the literature in real ways and about critical talk and discussions with the texts. We worked at facilitating global perspectives about the literature.

The second component of this project included families. Books were sent home and families responded to the books in literature response notebooks. Families were encouraged to respond in their native languages and/or English. Many families responded to the texts and supported their children in their child's first and second language.

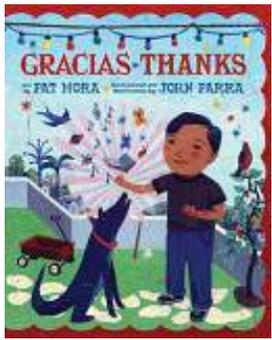
The first vignette written by Janna McClain (ELL), Andrea Sumrall (first grade), and Kimberly Swift (ELL) demonstrates the power of collaboration. Their work highlights the book, [\*Gracias/Thanks\*](#) by Mora and Parra (2009). Their work speaks to building upon the linguistic strengths and social capital of the first graders and the fifth and sixth graders who worked to create their own interpretation of the book in English and Spanish. Their work is captured in a podcast. The second vignette written by Martin Ridgley (first grade) examines how families supported children in making connections across many of the books that were sent home. Children used their knowledge from Writer's workshop to extend their thinking about the books.

□ \* \* \* \* \*

**Recognizing the Global in Our Own Community:** Janna McClain with Andrea Sumrall and Kimberly Swift

Suburban Murfreesboro Tennessee may seem like an unlikely place to find ethnic diversity, but at our school, approximately 1 out of 5 community members (students, teachers and staff) speak a language other than English at home. The most prevalent language is Spanish, but there are also some who speak Asian languages like Laotian, Vietnamese, Filipino and Visayan, as well as those who speak African languages like Bari or Swahili.

Our original intent was to establish a school to home reading connection. K-2 teachers read, discussed, and responded to picture books with global themes, then sent those books home to allow families to formulate their own ideas about the text. Many of the teachers in our cohort commented that this practice was a valuable way to capitalize upon the strengths families bring to students' learning experiences. As a specialist in working with English Learners, I wanted to extend the purpose of these books to include recognition of the global capital in our own community.



Unfortunately, the environment in education today emphasizes the weaknesses instead of the strengths of English Learners. The students are labeled “at risk,” “limited English proficient,” “below basic.” Attention is given to what they lack, rather than what they bring to the table. This can be particularly difficult for newcomer students, who in the “English only” state of Tennessee must take the math, science, and social studies sections of the state standardized test in English during their first year at an American school. They must begin the Language Arts assessment their second year. I proposed collaboration focused on Pat Mora’s *Gracias/Thanks* between a first grade classroom and our fifth and sixth-grade newcomer students that would capitalize on the strengths our newcomers bring to the building.

With their homeroom teacher, first graders read, discussed, and responded in journals to *Gracias/Thanks* by Pat Mora (2009). The homeroom teacher sent the text home for parents to read with the children, discuss, and respond in family journals. The parameters for these discussions were left intentionally broad, and the students expressed diverse thoughts about the book. Some students commented on the beautiful pictures in the books. Others appreciated the little details on each page. Some noticed a repeated pattern in the text. Some parents highlighted the moral implications of the text and shared that it helped their family find their own opportunities for expressing gratitude.

I did a mini-unit in Writer’s Workshop where we followed the steps of the writing process and used the text as a mentor and wrote our own “Gracias, Thanks” poem. On the first day, we reviewed the writing process. Based on what they had learned, students shared with me that, “You start with a

sloppy copy,” and “Then we do a published story.” I informed students we would begin with a list to help us come up with ideas for the book we would publish together. I modeled the format for the list, adding two of my own ideas before soliciting ideas from the students, which included “helping my mom cook,” “good books,” “my sister gave me a cookie” and “my furry pets.” Students then created their own lists. I reiterated that the purpose of a list is to come up with as many ideas as possible. Every student in the class generated at least 3 ideas. In our closing session, I highlighted two students, though not necessarily the strongest writers in the class, who had filled their entire page with ideas on their list.

On the second day, we revisited *Gracias/Thanks* with a discussion about whether it was a poem or a story. I reminded them that a story has a beginning, middle, and an end. Most students agreed that this poem was not a story because “nothing happens in the book.” Another student said, “It’s a poem because it keeps saying the same words.” I jumped on his statement and taught the students the academic content vocabulary of repetition. I shared that repetition is when a writer repeats the same words over and over in a pattern, and that lots of poems have repetition. Then I asked students to listen as I read *Gracias/Thanks* aloud to see if they could spot the repetition. I invited students to say the repeated words aloud with me as I read, and by the end of the text all students in the class had recognized the pattern. I modeled how to take the pattern and put in my own ideas. Students helped me take ideas from our brainstormed list to create lines in the format of *Gracias, Thanks*. Then they began writing their own lines.

On the third day, we began revising. Throughout the year, the first grade team had taught students how to make “skinny” stories “fat” with juicy details. We looked in *Gracias/Thanks* for examples of details that could make our writing more interesting. I modeled revising the phrase “For good books, thanks!” by adding the phrase “For good books, with pictures that make me laugh, thanks.” Students generated more examples to add to our list, like “For math because it helps me learn information,” or “For my dad, working hard as a fireman.”

On the fourth day, we reminded students of the writing conventions we had worked on during the year: making sure our written words include all their sounds, capitalizing words at the beginning of the sentence, and placing periods at the end. We also looked at the pictures in *Gracias/Thanks* and noted how colorful they were. We gave each student a revising/editing checklist to assess the model I had made for the class. Each student then assessed him/herself before conferencing with a teacher to turn in their page to be published.

In addition to the steps in the writing process that students were already familiar with, we added a final step: sending their words to translators (the fifth and sixth-grade newcomers) who would write their words in Spanish, just as the model text had been translated. Mrs. Swift, the ESL teacher who works with fifth and sixth-grade newcomers, typed up an edited version of the first

grade text and divided it among the fifth and sixth-grade students, who took great pride in translating the text accurately into Spanish. A mild debate broke out on whether or not “caballos” (horse) was an acceptable translation of the word “pony.” Having spent the past month preparing for daunting standardized tests in a language they had been learning for less than one year, these students were all too familiar with the feeling that they were inadequate. Conscientious and bright students, they expressed real concerns about their ability to perform well on the test. This project was a breath of fresh air—rather than focus on their inadequacies, it allowed them to claim their expertise.

Once the older students had completed their translations, we laminated and assembled the bilingual text and presented it to the first grade class. The newcomers beamed with pride as I explained to the class that they can read and write in English and Spanish, so they have the skill to translate the text for us. I called the first graders individually to record their voices reading their text in English, followed by one of the newcomers reading the same text in Spanish. One native English speaking first grader particularly enjoyed hearing his words translated into Spanish. His eyes grew wide and he exclaimed “Wow!” when he heard the recording played back. Later, when I asked him what he thought about having his words translated, he told me “I thought it was so cool and funny! I thought it was really awesome!”



Gracias/Thanks

The following week was the first grade author’s celebration, where parents and other community members come to celebrate students’ growth in writing throughout the year. Mrs. Sumrall and I

had the opportunity to thank parents for responding in their journals, as well as share the bilingual book we published as a class. While we shared the book, one bilingual family that has both first grade and fifth and sixth-grade newcomer children grabbed their cell phones to video the work their children did together.

After the celebration, I took the time to interview students about their experience. Some of their responses include:

*We got to write and make our pictures. It was nice of them to do that so we could hear it in Spanish.* -Juan, native Spanish Speaker

*Spanish is a different language, and it's cool to speak Spanish. I hope people who speak Spanish like our book.* -Jayda, native English Speak

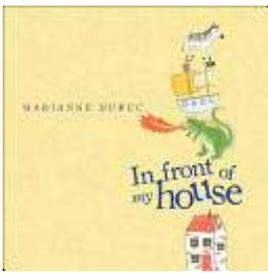
This project encouraged our first graders to recognize and respect the global capital in our community. They began to understand that other languages are to be valued. The fifth and sixth-grade students definitely felt empowered as leaders, rather than burdens, in an academic context. They began interacting more with younger students, as well as primary teachers, in the building. They too recognized the global capital they possess, and ended the year confident of their ability to participate in our school community.

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### **First Graders Connect Literature and Writer's Workshop:** Martin Ridgley

It isn't unusual for students at Hobgood Elementary to participate in meaningful book discussions during the school day. The hope has always been that these moments of powerful discussion would find their way into the homes of our students. However, the catalyst for those discussions, the effective and carefully chosen books, never strayed far from the teacher's shelf. Therefore, the powerful discussions did not travel any further than the classroom walls.

During the past school year, an effort was created to send high quality multicultural trade books and a small journal home with students to share with their families. The hope was for families to simply participate in book talks. However, the end results far exceeded our expectations, as students began to make powerful connections to writing that they were learning about in a daily Writer's Workshop.



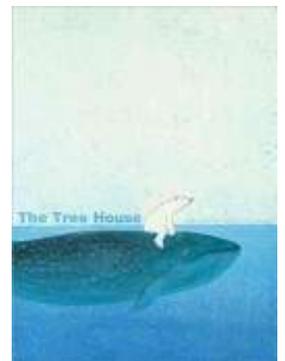
In March, [\*In Front of My House\*](#) by Marianne Dubuc (2010), was shared during class. The students enjoyed the imaginative twists, predicting what they would find on each page, and loved how the author took us “all around the world” before ending back in front of the house. After sharing the story, the discussion immediately went to what students could find in front of their own houses.

Suddenly the classroom was filled with discussions of “dogs on chains”, “parked cars”, and “old rusty lawn chairs.” The students worked in groups to create a graffiti wall of what was in front of their houses.

The students were thrilled to learn that this would be the first book to take home.

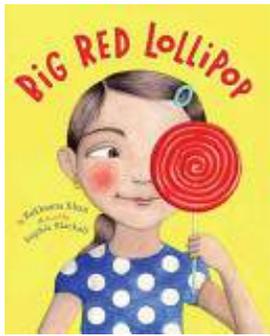
Every student was given a copy of the book along with a journal and writing supplies. The only stipulation was that the book and journal had to be shared with a family member and then returned to school. The first week we had complete participation and 100% of the books and journals were returned to school. The amazing part of the week was what happened at the homes and in the journals. Most families took time to write in the journals about their favorite part of the story or to share their feelings about the book. It was apparent that discussions were taking place and the students were returning to school eager to tell which page their parents liked most. One student and her family wrote a story in the journal and called it “In Front of My School”. She retold the story, telling us, “I made my story go all around the world, just like the author did.” She told the class that she remembered that writers get ideas from other writers and sometimes change the words around to “make it their own”. This conversation seemed to be the spark that ignited others into examining literature from a writer’s perspective.

[\*The Tree House\*](#) by Marije Tolman (2010) was the next book shared. This wordless picture book tells a very imaginative story about a bear that discovers a tree house. The students felt some discomfort with the book due to the absence of text. For many students a wordless picture book was a new experience. Some students expressed disappointment in not having the words tell the story. Others enjoyed the freedom to make up their own meaning to the story. Following the initial uneasiness by some, discussions followed that stirred creativity and the students again were eager to share this story with their families.



During the week, as children returned their take home copy of *The Tree House*, they were eager to share how their families felt about the book. As Jeremiah placed his book and journal on the table he laughed, “My mom said she didn’t get it! She liked the pictures, but didn’t get the story.” This was immediately followed with a whispering debate at several tables throughout the room about how other families felt about the book. The students were eager to begin sharing how their families felt and to tell what type of discussions they had at their own homes. As was the case with *In Front*

of *My House*, many students and families elected to analyze their favorite pages or favorite parts of the story. However, several students began to critique the story from a writer's perspective. One student, Erica, shared that her family used speech bubbles to give the story some text. In her version, the two bears were cousins who liked to spend seasons together. Another child's family created an entire text for the story. He said that he let his mom write the "sloppy copy," and that "he cleaned it up and added all the periods." One student asked why the illustrator didn't "collaborate" with an author. An unexpected connection was happening in the classroom in that students were participating in meaningful dialogue not only about the content of the stories, but their own language as writers. This book talk experience was turning into a discussion about the process of writing a story. Later that same day, students were interested in trying their hand at wordless picture books during writer's workshop.



The [\*Big Red Lollipop\*](#) by Rukhsana Khan (2010) was the final book used for the home and school book bags. In this story, a young girl, named Rubina, attempts to teach her family about birthday customs when she is forced to take her little sister, Sana, to a friend's birthday party. What follows is a story of sibling rivalry and cultural differences. The story was a family favorite with many quality responses from students and their parents. One parent wrote a lengthy response in the journal in which she felt that the parent in the story didn't treat the daughters the same and was too tough on the older child. This led to class discussions about whether parents treat older siblings different from younger siblings.

The most interesting moment came during a class discussion when one student identified this story as an example of an author writing a "small moment" story. This was a type of writing that we had explored in our Writer's Workshop class back in the Fall. He identified the character in the story as the author when she was a little girl, and cleverly used his index fingers to frame the author's name so that the class could easily see the name "Sana." The class was thrilled to learn that this was an example of a small moment and over the next few weeks students were in the library and book corner using their framing fingers trying to find other examples of authors secretly placing their names within stories.

The intent of this project was to place high quality literature in the homes of first grade students. The hope was for students and families to share time together and have dialogue around books. The connections that students made to their own writing were an added bonus. Many parents commented on the types of books chosen for the program. They were pleased with the multicultural aspects, enjoyed the fact that each book was different, and appreciated the opportunity to share their feelings about the books in the journal that accompanied the book bags.

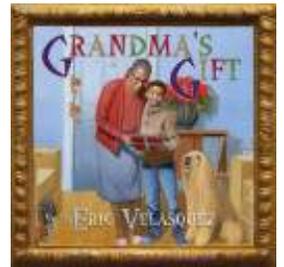
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## Final Reflections

As a professional learning community, we had several conclusions about the power of this project. For this community, we learned that sending books home in small groups made more sense than sending them home with the entire class. The issue was one of organization in terms of sending books home and having all of them returned. Interest in the books made a real difference in the family responses that we received. Without some hype and perfect timing, less emphasis had a related impact on response. When we exerted substantial effort in highlighting the books in positive ways prior to sending them home, families engaged in higher quality responses related to the literature. Additionally, home letters that included family invitations with ideas for responses and contributions made a significant difference. The Latino families from this school overwhelmingly participated in the family response journals in Spanish and English. Families had discussions about the books and shared their knowledge and values with their children. There was a proud feeling among the children that their families had something to say about the global literature.

Teachers saw that connections were created with home “instead of us.” Children made different connections with home support. There was a circle of connections created where family, children, and teachers came together with their knowledge around the literature. Families and children were linguistic and cultural experts. Also, discussion wasn’t forced as children came to school with something to say about the texts. The connections felt less hurried. This project provided an authentic space for enjoying book without the pressure of producing a product to the point that teachers and children “became drained out.” In order for this project to work, we had to be prepared and we came with questions and children made real connections with the literature. Thus, their excitement was generated from the literature.

Book selection plays an important role in creating global connections. The books in this project pushed children to explore more to talk about besides wrestling. For example, [\*Grandma's Gift\*](#) by Eric Velasquez (2010) led to discussion about how it would feel to be in a place where no one looks for you. Children experienced the power of reading. Spanish read aloud for the first time and children helped us with the Spanish. We also realized that children were not fluent in their own languages so the literature helped to strengthen their knowledge of their languages.



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## **Promoting Global Awareness in Second Grade Students**

Fran Wilson and the Madeira Literacy Community

Our school-based literacy group consisted of four second grade teachers as well as the elementary art, music, library, gym, and computer teachers in the Madeira City School District. All of the team members worked at the elementary building so it was convenient to meet in the mornings prior to the start of the school day. The literacy team met twice per month in the elementary school library starting in September. Rich discussions were the focus of our meetings. We began the year by establishing a goal for our learning together as colleagues and for the learning that we hoped would occur in our classrooms.

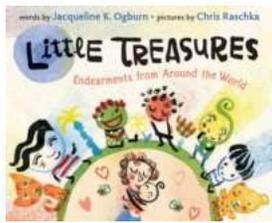
During our initial meetings each team member set a personal goal for our study. These goals helped to keep everyone focused during the year of learning together. The team's goal was to promote global awareness among our students due to the limited diversity within our school district's population. The first action step for the team was to select quality children's literature about children from around the world and use the power of reading aloud to encourage student thinking and understanding of the world. The read alouds would also be used to promote cross-curricular instruction as our students learned about the geographical locations and everyday life and cultures. In addition, we hoped that through our regular meetings our team would learn how to encourage an appreciation for all people of the world using global literature and follow up activities in the classroom and through working with other teachers in specials.

Our next step was to begin the process of selecting quality children's literature to use with our students. Initially we thought that we would determine specific countries around the world and find literature to depict the people and land of each. The Worlds of Words website enabled us to search for lists of books by both country and age of reader. The synopsis of each book provided on this site is very helpful.

The August/September issue of *Reading Today* included an article written by Kathy Short and several members of the Notable Books for a Global Society Award. This article became the focus of discussion at one of our team meetings. The team's thinking about our planned book selection for the year shifted. We decided not to select specific countries and books because we didn't want our students to acquire information about other cultures from the tourist perspective. Instead we

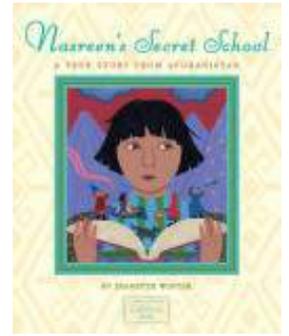
decided to select books with a story that would enable our children to acquire an understanding of how people in that culture live, think, and feel while making emotional connections and developing empathy. We felt that this would enable our students to make personal connections to the characters of the books and truly allow our students to relate to other children of the world. The guidelines in the article as well as on [Worlds of Words](#) assisted us in selecting books to use in the classrooms and the library.

Before we began using the global children's literature with our students, each second grade teacher posed a question in their classroom: Are all the people in the world the same? This led to some interesting discussion in each class. Some of the children quickly responded, "No," while others thought for a minute and gave responses like: "We're all people." "We all need to eat." "We all wear clothes." "We all like to play." A few children began to question the idea stating that they didn't think all children of the world played because they had to work. The children brainstormed ways that they could discover if people of the world are the same. While the student suggestion of traveling to a few other countries was a great idea, the children generated new ideas when they learned that most of them didn't have passports or the money to cover travel expenses. The children then decided that they would learn about people of the world through books!



Throughout the year our team met and discussed activities that could be used to extend the children's understanding of global cultures after the sharing of particular books. In art, it was fun to study houses around the world with [If You Lived Here: Houses of the World](#) (Larouche, 2011). After careful planning and discussion, each child created a collage style picture of a house from somewhere across the globe. The children enjoyed reading about the games played by the Maasai children in [Only the Mountains Do Not Move](#) (Reynolds, 2011) and were inspired to research games around the world on the internet to play in gym class. The computer teacher encouraged the children to use Google Maps to explore the countries that the children had visited through the reading the books. Each child created a travel brochure during computer class. During the social studies unit on heroes, the children realized that everyone in the world could be a hero. The music teacher taught the children a song about being an everyday hero to make a difference in the lives of others. The theme of the second grade musical was caring for the earth. This enabled the children to make real world connections with the use of [Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai](#) (Nivola, 2008) and [The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families](#) (Roth & Trumbore, 2011).

The team witnessed our student’s empathy towards other children in the world. They connected deeply to the lives presented in the global literature. The librarian shared the book, [\*Rain School\*](#) (Rumford, 2010) with the second graders. Our students were surprised to learn that each year the students in Chad began the school year by helping to rebuild their school from mud. The children made connections with *Rain School* after the reading of [\*Listen to the Wind\*](#) (Mortenson, 2009) and [\*Nasreen’s Secret School\*](#) (Winters, 2009). They learned that some children don’t have schools and a teacher everyday to teach while other countries don’t permit girls to attend classes.



After reading these books a second grader declared, “We need to do something to help other children.” The result was “Project Guatemala.” The children planned and carried out an initiative to raise money to promote literacy in a school through the organization Cooperative for Education. The children felt empowered by their actions as they worked to help other children receive an education.



Guatemala Project

Our team quickly realized that one of the most important things that we could do as teachers to facilitate global awareness within our students was to engage children in meaningful discussions after reading each book. While the activities within the classrooms and at specials extended learning, we could not discount the importance of genuine classroom discussion. As educators we needed to shift our focus from product to process. For our children to grow in their understanding of others, they needed to be encouraged to reflect, share, and make personal connections between

themselves and the global literature. The children also needed to have multiple opportunities across time to experience this type of literature and to continue to engage in discussions to foster the development and appreciation for all the people of the earth. Writing about the global literature promoted greater depth in the children's thinking.

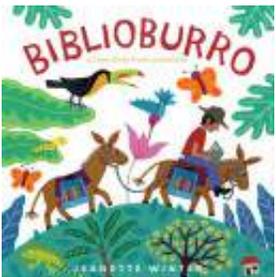


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## **Writing Book Reviews on Global Literature in a Second Grade Classroom:** Nicole Prater

In January our second grade class did a writing unit on book reviews. Because the students loved so many of the global books we were reading, we decided to pick our two favorite books and do class book reviews. We chose to review [\*Biblioburro\*](#), by Jeannette Winter (2010) and [\*Muktar and the Camels\*](#), by Janet Graber (2009). Those two books created rich discussion when we first read them. The students were struck by the fact that children in other parts of the world had to have books delivered to them by a camel or a burro. They could relate so easily to the children's love for reading in each of the stories and the longing to have good books to read.

Writing the book reviews on these two books allowed the children another chance to interact with the story and each other. They were asked to discuss the overall main idea and what decisions the author made when writing the books. Conversation and writing enhanced student understanding.

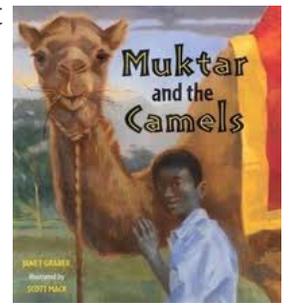


Have you ever seen books traveling on a donkey? We have! In this book we learned about a man named Luis who brings books to poor people in isolated villages. One day his house was full of books so he decided to bring them to the people in the poor villages. He buys two donkeys to carry him and the books to these villagers. On his way to one of the villages he saw a bandit. He said, "Give me your silver." Luis said, "Can you please let us go by. The children are waiting for the books." At the very end of the book everyone is very happy with their books.

This book is a true story about a teacher named Luis, who lives in Colombia and delivers books to the kids every weekend. This book reminds us of *Muktar and the Camels* because they're both about traveling libraries on animals. Our favorite part was when we saw the bandit reading a book under a tree. The illustrations in this book were drawings and paper cutouts. We thought they were very creative and funny. We would recommend this book to all ages.

Have you ever wanted to take care of animals that are hurt? Muktar has. In this book Muktar is a boy who is an orphan and who loves camels. One day a librarian comes and delivers books to the orphanage. The books are being carried on camels. Muktar is really happy to see the camels. He

spots that the Number Three camel has a really deep cut on his hoof. If you want to find out what happens next, read this book!



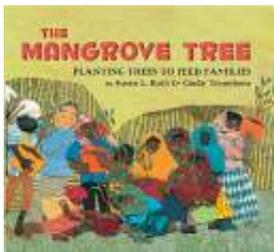
We liked the illustrations because they added a lot of details. The illustrator painted them. This book is a realistic fiction book. It takes place in Africa. Our favorite part is when he rips off his shirt and helps the Number Three camel. This book reminds us of giving money to Guatemala and traveling to different places in the world. We would recommend this book to people of all ages and anyone who likes animals.

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### **Cultural Conversations:** Kristy Wanstrath

The Madeira Literacy Community found out just how important the power of student conversations could be. Whether long, short, spontaneous or prompted by the teacher, cultural conversations of all kinds took place among children in our Madeira second grade classrooms. These conversations grew out of quality children's literature, thoughtful questions posed by the teacher, and comfortable classroom conditions in which students could freely express themselves.



Fortunately, many of the most powerful conversations that occurred in our classrooms can be accredited to the rich literature we incorporated into our daily lessons. Some of the literature that spurred valuable dialogue between students included texts such as *Biblioburro* (Winter, 2010), *The Rule of Hats* (McDuffie, 2008), *Rain School* (Rumford, 2010), *The Mangrove Tree* (Roth, 2011) and *Mukhtar and the Camels* (Graber, 2009), to name a few.

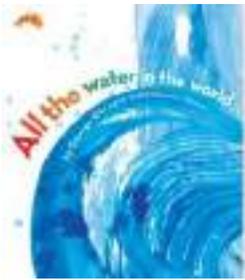
Some of the reoccurring ideas that surfaced before, during and after reading these books include:

- children are more alike than different
- children from around the world eat, play, attend school and have a culture unique to their surroundings
- just because something (or someone) is different doesn't mean it is negative, better or worse
- diversity is necessary and should be appreciated
- wealth means different things to different people
- people of the world should grow to be aware of the world around them

While our literacy community provided various outlets for children to explore the world around them, we all agree that the conversations that occurred in our classrooms were tremendously valuable, meaningful and life-changing. When children are provided with the opportunity to

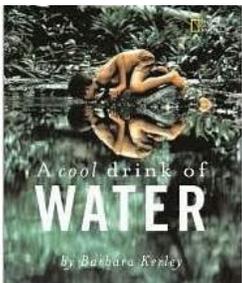
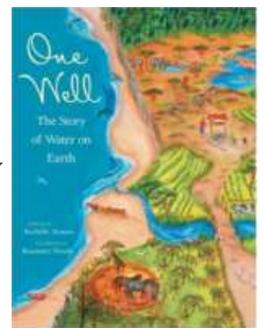
socially interact with each other, particularly in conjunction with a good book, they begin to act in ways that embrace the cultures of the world. With powerful literature paving the way, students really can participate in global experiences that allow them to connect to the world around them.

### ☐ **Celebrating World Water Day:** Tammy Saunders



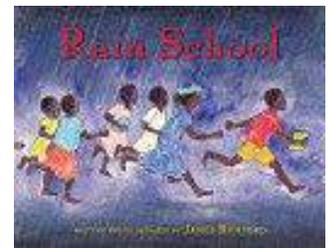
We began our global awareness literature journey in September. As World Water Day approached in March, students' minds were already focused on people around the world, children in particular, and how a person's place in the world shapes lives in certain ways. In our science unit on weather, we studied the water cycle and the need for water to ensure survival. We read many "weather" books, including *What Makes It Rain?: The Story of a Raindrop* by Keith Brandt (1996).

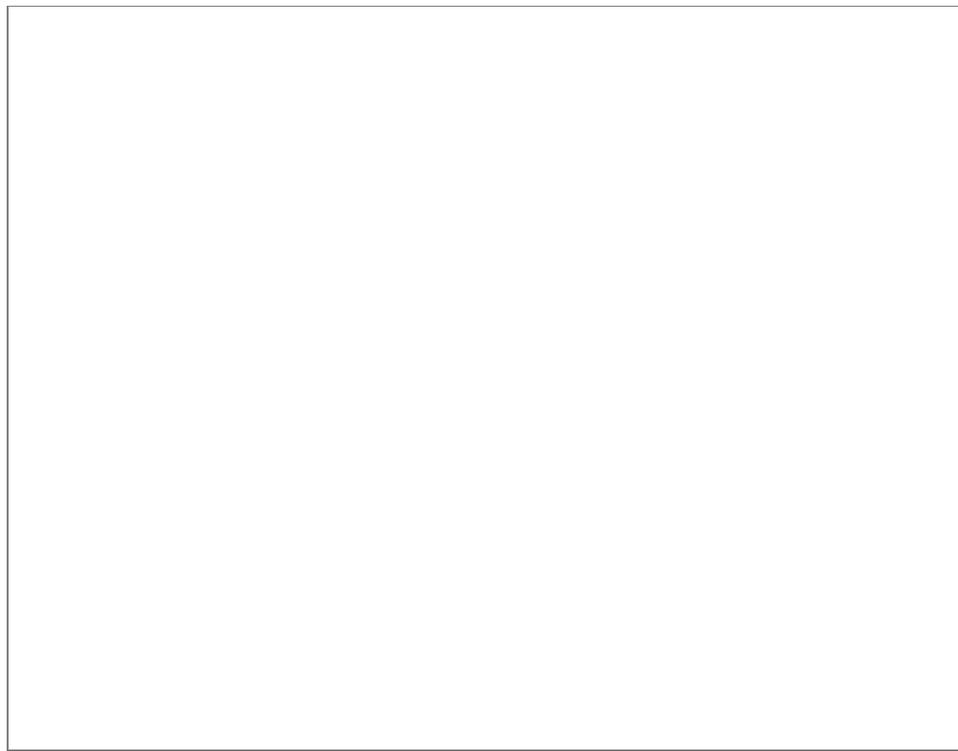
As we approached World Water Day, I thought the students had a real understanding of rain, the water cycle, pollution's effects, and conservation of water. Students also had a growing appreciation of people of the world. I shared books such as *All the Water in the World* by George Ella Lyon (2011), *One Well* by Rochelle Strauss (2007), *A Cool Drink of Water* by Barbara Kerley (2006), and *Rain School* by James Rumford (2010).



I was surprised and touched during our discussion of these books, which so intertwined water and people of the world. The students' comments reflected a deeper, more intimate understanding of the connectivity of our world and its resources. They loved retelling that there has always been the same amount of water in the world. It was as if a switch suddenly turned on. My students were stirred up. Students found the need and availability of water to be a local and global concern. They

wrote responses from the heart and recognized the need to use water wisely and identified how water is important to all people of the world.





## World Water Day

### **Final Reflections: End of the Year Global Celebration**

A Global Awareness Celebration Day was planned to acknowledge the children's work across the year. The children's reflections on their favorite books became one of the focal points of the celebration. Each of the four classrooms, the librarian, and the art teacher selected several books to reflect upon for the program. The children collaborated to determine the main idea of each of the books as well as why each book was particularly meaningful to the class. Speakers from each classroom were chosen to share these points during the program. A PowerPoint of photos of each book cover was projected onto a screen as the children delivered a book talk on each featured book to the audience of parents, grandparents, and administrators. A documentary that compiled much of the student's writing, artwork, songs, games, and video clips of students sharing what they had learned was aired. The children and guests enjoyed many snacks of foods from around the world before touring the hallway of the student artwork and written reflections, and visiting the classrooms to view individual student posters created on a choice of research topics of the people, cultures, land, or climate outside of the U.S.A.



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This was a year of learning for both the members of the Madeira Literacy Team as well as the second grade students at Madeira Elementary. The sharing of global literature with students through classroom and library read alouds provided opportunities for our students to gain knowledge of other cultures as well as encouraged students to form strong emotional connections to people around the world. The immersion in the literature encouraged empathy and the need to work toward the basic human right for other children to receive an education and have the opportunity to learn.

The students' initiative to want to help others surprised us. We typically teach seven and eight year olds whose lives seem to revolve around themselves and their own needs. The global literature that

they experienced through read alouds, discussions, and extension activities has created a positive attitude towards the people in other parts of the world. Our assistant superintendent commented to the team that we might never know the long-term impact of the experiences that we have provided for our second graders.

As teachers we learned to value process over product. An understanding of global awareness doesn't happen overnight. Teachers need to select quality literature that encourages students to naturally make connections to the characters and storylines. Rich literature stirs children's emotions and fosters an understanding of others while simultaneously enabling children to learn about the people and land on this earth. Encouraging meaningful discussions involves creating an open atmosphere where children freely share their insights on the books and facilitating with open questions that prompt student thinking and growth. Most importantly, we learned that teachers also learn best when involved in an experience where we share our personal steps in the process with one another to grow together.

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## **Recognizing the Familiar in the Faraway through Children's Literature**

By Jane Wellman-Little, Cynthia Crosser, Jessica Dunton, and Barbara Keene

When Jane Wellman-Little contacted teachers who had taken her graduate course in picturebooks to see if we would be interested in forming a community to focus on global picturebooks, all of us were excited about the possibility. Maine, especially regions outside of the greater Portland area, tends to be insular, and many students are unfamiliar with people and cultures outside of Maine. We saw this as a wonderful opportunity to study together and support each other in helping Maine students explore other cultures through global literature.

Our group is comprised of one teacher educator (Jane), one education librarian (Cynthia), one third grade teacher (Jessica), one K-8 Title One teacher (Barbara), and one high school English teacher (Kelly). The entire group met approximately once a month to discuss issues of global children's literature and to examine and share global children's literature books.

We had one dinner meeting with global children's author Margy Burns Knight, who impressed us with her emphasis on positive aspects of cultures in other countries. Subsequent meetings consisted of discussions of professional literature such as *Reading Globally, K-8* (Lehman, Freeman & Scharer, 2010) and sharing children's and young adult books with one another. Each meeting one or more members provided books for the discussion. The library purchased the full back run of *Sankofa*, which was an invaluable resource for evaluating and selecting African children's and young adult literature. This journal deals with complex contemporary issues,