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WOW STORIES

BUILDING GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING THROUGH
COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

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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.

Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

by Kathy Short

Tri-Cities Global Literacy Community

[Seeing Clearly: Global Visions in a Teacher Inquiry Community](#)

by Kelly Wissman

[ESL Students Find Themselves and Expand their Horizons through Global Literature](#)

by Heather O'Leary

[History Matters: Grade Six Students Reflect on the Effects of War](#)

by Krista Jiampetti

[How a Social Action Project Revitalized a Third Grade Response to Intervention Reading Group](#)

by Maggie Burns

[“Seeing with New Eyes”: Envisioning Learners as Travelers in New Worlds](#)

by Simeen Tabatabai

Teacher Talk, Hofstra

[Expanding the Common Core Text Exemplar List with Global Literature](#)

by Michele Marx

[The Common Core Exemplar List and Books Worth Reading](#)

by Joan Zaleski

[Finding Quality Global Children's Literature](#)

by Angela Buffalino-Morgan

Supporting Teachers' Selection of Texts Beyond CCSS Text Exemplars

by Esmeralda Carini

Global Themes in Poetry Backpacks

by Stephanie Annunziata

Keeping Literature Alive

by Vera Zinnel

Creating Our Cultural Identity Quilt: Using Literature to Explore Who We Are

by Amy Gaddes

A to Z Literacy Movement: Multicultural Book Clubs across Grade Levels

Introduction to Our Community

by Ann Yanchura

Never Underestimate a First Grader

by Mal Keenan

We Should Do This More Often!

by Ann Yanchura

Lessons from Our World of Words Experience

by Amy MacCrindle

Lesson Plans, Anyone?

by Kimberlee Militello

Learning to Believe in Yourself

by Jenna Brogan

Unusual Suspects

by Gabriela Carbajal

Washington County Reader Leaders

Partnering Public Library services with Public Schools

by Heather Dantzler and Jessica Ross

Building Global Understanding through Collaborative Relationships

by Kathy Short

Global Literacy Communities are small groups of educators who are committed to professional inquiries about how to build international understanding through global children's and adolescent literature. These communities meet regularly to immerse themselves in global literature and consider strategies for using these books effectively with students in K-12 classroom contexts. The communities are school-based, community-based, or university/school collaborations whose members have a shared commitment to thinking together as a professional learning community in order to transform their practice.

In 2012-2013, thirteen 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 shared their explorations and resources with each other. Each literacy community also committed to sharing their work with other educators through writing vignettes 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 four Global Literacy Communities that worked collaboratively across contexts. The type of collaboration varies from teachers in different schools planning and thinking together to students engaged in cross-grade level projects to an exchange between a public library and a small school. These groups range from New York to Illinois and Alabama and from urban to rural contexts. Some are school-based and involve a close collaboration across a group of teachers and others are community-based with educators in different school or library contexts who meet to share ideas in person as well as through skype. The authors have included examples of student work, book lists, and visual images of their students' responses.

The first set of vignettes comes from the Tri-Cities Global Literacy Community in Albany, New York, a university/school collaboration that developed out of teachers' concerns about keeping learning alive for their students despite high stakes test pressures. Their focus on meaningful engagements around global literature brought renewed energy to their teaching and exciting opportunities for their students. Their vignettes highlight the work in four classrooms, including an ESL teacher whose students traveled the world through global literature, a literacy specialist whose students engaged in an inquiry on war across global contexts, a reading specialist whose students were moved to action by the true story of a social activist, and a reading teacher who invited students into multi-layered discussions about global texts. Each one shares how the curriculum was broadened through rich reflective conversations and spaces for students to think about their

responsibilities as global citizens. Fiction and nonfiction along with other multigenre texts were combined with an open inviting classroom context to create exciting learning opportunities for teachers and students.

The second set of vignettes features collaborations across a long-time group of educators, the Teacher Talk literacy community, a university-based inquiry group of educators who have been involved with the Literacy Studies program at Hofstra University in Long Island, New York. The group includes early childhood to high school classroom teachers as well as college faculty and school administrators. The group uses a blog and Skype to connect with a member who is a district literacy specialist in Kaneohe, Hawaii. The goal of this group was to inquire into how to globalize the text exemplars from the Common Core State Standards. This exploration built from their [previous inquiry](#) on developing a definition of global literature and using literature to build intercultural understanding. Three group members worked together to develop a unit around [*Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*](#) (Lin, 2009), while others developed classroom inquiries around poetry backpacks, cultural identity, and a critical approach to a problematic book.

The third vignette highlights teachers' reflections on a cross-grade-level collaboration. A to Z Literacy Movement is a grass roots educational initiative that connects children and teachers in several schools in northwest Chicago with schools in Zambia. Their vignette tells the story of the relationships that developed from their work with middle school students reading and discussing multicultural picture books with first graders, in particular the ways in which this collaboration across grades influenced the perspectives of middle school students. These same books were then later shared with teachers in Zambia.

The collaboration between public librarians and kindergarten teachers in rural Alabama is the focus of the fourth vignette. Their focus was to co-plan a series of lessons that broadened the children's understandings of global cultures, highlighting various cultural traditions related to holidays across the year. Their story is told through several visual formats, including a prezi.

These vignettes demonstrate the generative nature of collaboration when members of a group think and work together around a common purpose, sharing knowledge and engaging in reflection and problem-solving about issues that are significant to them. This collaboration was evident in the ways that educators thought together within their literacy communities as well as the ways in which children worked together in classrooms. The learning potential goes far beyond a cooperative group in which members break down a task into roles that each carries out separately.

We will be publishing two more issues of vignettes from Global Literacy Communities and then will have an unthemed issue in the spring of 2014. 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.](#)

Kathy G. Short, Director of Worlds of Words

Seeing Clearly: Global Visions in a Teacher Inquiry Community

by Kelly Wissman

As a university professor with an abiding interest in children's literature and a firm belief in teachers as intellectuals and agents of change, I started the 2012-2013 school year with some trepidation. In addition to a proliferation of media discourses that painted teachers in a negative light, some interpretations of the Common Core State Standards seemed to marginalize both fiction texts as well as the value of engaging students in reflective conversations about literature. Against this backdrop, the Tri-Cities Global Literacy Community began exploring global literature in the summer of 2012. This teacher inquiry community consists of six members, including reading specialists, a reading teacher, an ESL teacher, and teacher educators. One late September afternoon as we all gathered for our monthly meeting, a cacophony of voices traded concerns about new teacher evaluation procedures, the rollout of the Common Core State Standards, and revamped literacy curricula in districts. As more and more examples and stories began to build upon each other, one of the group members proclaimed, "It's hard to see straight!" As our meeting continued, the visual appeal of the global picturebooks surrounding us on our meeting table and the compelling stories housed within them captured our attention and began to focus our discussion on the potential of global literature to revitalize our teaching and to reach our students. While the sense of anxiety around the complex educational climate in which this work would occur lingered, it moved a bit to the background as we considered the picturebooks and their possibilities.

As I have looked back on notes from our meetings and from the time I spent in many of the teachers' classrooms over this past year, references to "seeing" often emerge. At times, group members commented upon how we can sometimes lose sight of children in the midst of high stakes testing pressures. At other times, group members noted how their own eyes have been opened by the global literature they read as a part of this group. Overwhelmingly, though, teachers spoke about how they witnessed their students' eyes light up in response to books that reflected their experiences, that transported them to distant lands, and that inspired them to draw, debate, perform, and take action. For ESL students, "struggling readers," and academically successful students alike, reading global literature cleared spaces for dialogue, creativity, and participation. Reading and responding to global literature troubled some of the students' assumptions and

promoted a sense of empathy. While the dizzying amount of pressures the teachers were under rarely abated across the time we spent together, incorporating global literature helped shift the focus to the global visions students were developing.

Our Process

Our monthly meetings typically started with members sharing their plans for incorporating global literature into their classrooms and seeking out suggestions and responses from the group. A wide array of global literature was also on hand for members to look through and consider. As the school year progressed, members shared teaching experiences, student work, and reflections on their teaching. We also discussed articles or book chapters exploring how other teachers have conceptualized global literature and incorporated global perspectives into their classrooms. Along with another group member and teacher educator, Suzanne Davis, I visited the classrooms of the teachers to learn more about the work they were doing with their students. While both Suzanne and I also incorporated global literature into our own Children's Literature classes with pre-service and in-service teachers, the vignettes we present here focus on the teaching and perspectives of the four K-6 teachers in the group.

The Vignettes

The four vignettes written by the teachers in the Tri-Cities Global Literacy community reflect broad themes across our work together. The vignettes render in vivid detail how students from urban schools to suburban schools, from English Language Learners to native speakers, from Kindergartners through sixth graders, took up opportunities to engage with multiple, critical, and global perspectives in fiction and nonfiction texts. We begin with perspectives from [Heather O'Leary](#), an ESL teacher, who provides windows into how her students' engagements with global literature across the school year prompted rich inquiries into bilingualism, lived experiences of migration, and civic action. Next, [Krista Jiampetti](#) explores her work as a literacy specialist collaborating with a sixth grade teacher to bring global perspectives to a unit on war. In addition to reading and responding to a range of novels, nonfiction texts, and multimedia texts, students also participated in interactive picturebook readalouds that prompted thoughtful, critical, and sometimes emotional conversations about war, the motivations behind it, and the effects on the global community.

[Maggie Burns](#), a reading specialist in an elementary school, then introduces us to a group of third grade boys so moved by the story of one man's efforts to make books available to Colombian children that they mobilized resources –including their own literacies – to make a difference. Finally, [Simeen Tabatabai](#), a fifth grade reading teacher, provides accounts of her students' multi-layered discussions about global texts in a classroom environment founded on the premise that

reading creates opportunities for all students to be world “travelers.” Simeen’s vignette illustrates in vivid ways the central themes of seeing – and seeing anew – that connect all our work.

Engagements with Global Literature: Asking, Listening, and Pausing

Across this year, I have witnessed how important it is not only to have high quality global literature available in classroom, but also to create contexts for meaningful engagements with that literature. When Simeen asked her students, “What are you thinking?” rich reflective conversational spaces were opened where students wrestled with their own responsibilities as global citizens. When Maggie listened to the questions her students asked about “Alfa and Beto: The Biblioburros” (Morrow, 2013), an idea for a social action project was born. When Krista paused in a read aloud and waited for students to share their responses, a range of deeply personal, philosophical, and analytical perspectives about war and its consequences filled the room. In asking, listening, and pausing, each teacher nurtured valuable, purposeful, and intentional engagements with books. The educational moments the teachers describe in their vignettes resulted from:

- wide-ranging study of children’s literature;
- careful thinking about how to surround fiction with nonfiction, multigenre texts;
- thoughtful arrangement of classroom resources to promote discussion;
- considered attention to local, state, and national standards;
- purposeful development of a teaching stance of listening and openness;
- an embrace of the sometimes uncomfortable feeling of not knowing all the answers or how students will respond.

Within such an educational context where engagements with global literature were purposeful and meaningful, the students in Heather’s classroom found themselves in the books and found themselves as readers, thinkers, citizens, and scholars. When “testing season” took over many weeks of instructional time and the books were not as prevalent in the curriculum as before, these same students demanded to know, “Where are *our* books?!” Within that question, asked adamantly and assuredly, the students recognized the power of reading and the value of educational inquiry tied to their worlds and to the broader world. They made a claim to “our books” as an educational birthright. In the vignettes the Tri-Cities teachers share, we see glimpses of how students took up these opportunities to claim books and their own responses to them as evidence of their active participation in and shaping of the world around them.

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Morrow, P. (2013). Alfa and Beto: The biblioburros (abridged version). In I. C. Fountas & G. S. Pinnell, *RED leveled literacy intervention student test preparation booklet* (pp. 19-20). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

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ESL Students Find Themselves and Expand their Horizons through Global Literature

by Heather O'Leary

Twenty-five enthusiastic ESL students, grades K-6, from a small urban school district, participated with me in the Tri-Cities Global Literacy Community. Our elementary school of 400 students is one of nine in the district and has a free lunch rate of 81%. Our school is considered "high needs" and is deemed "low-performing." Although these labels bring frequent accountability visits, rigorous reporting requirements, and implementation of yearly improvement plans, they fail to convey the work and spirit of our ESL classroom. We have a lively and productive learning community and are fortunate to have the support of a talented and energetic principal.

Our participation in the Tri-Cities Global Literacy Community helped keep our focus on what is important: being a part of a learning community that reads authentic, high-quality literature to feed our knowledge and thinking about ourselves and the world. As a teacher with 20 years of experience, it provided me with a deeper appreciation of my ESL students' unique strengths as a result of "living in two worlds." I always try to be conscious of, and open to, the points of view of my students and their parents. This year's project helped me find more ways for my students to express their perspectives and acknowledge them more. As a result, I felt we tapped into a deep well of knowledge, feelings, and ideas which helped develop a greater sense of community, mutual respect, and sharing of ourselves that was both motivating and a basis for deeper academic study.

ESL Students, the ESL Program, and Global Literature as a Good Fit for ESL

In my school, ESL students leave their classrooms for English instruction for three to six hours a week depending on their level of English language proficiency. We try to accomplish an awful lot in that time—from teaching newcomers "survival English" and helping them adjust to a new school, culture, and language – to helping advanced students learn the nuances of the language, expand their vocabulary, build their content knowledge, and hone their skills in order to function on par academically with native speakers of English. With the range of diverse needs, grade levels, and English-proficiency levels, scheduling and grouping students is a huge challenge. Using global literature to teach thematic units helped bridge many differences between students. It helped me offer instruction appropriate to each student's age, interest, and level of academic challenge. Texts sets connected to global themes and stories about historical figures were supported with video and audio clips, and real photographs. This enabled all students to find a foothold in the material.



Using authentic global literature provided my students the opportunity to see themselves in the books we read and to see their memories, experiences, and background knowledge as a strength in their learning and reading. For example, when a second grade girl from Sudan read [*Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors*](#) by Hena Khan (2012), she gasped at each page because the pictures and words resonated so deeply with her. She looked at one page with wonder, her finger moving from right to left under Arabic text and said delightedly, “I can read this! It is written in Arabic and I am learning Arabic at Saturday school!” She was thrilled to see an illustration of a lacy silver lantern and related to us that she and her aunt carried beautiful lanterns like that. She had a genuine connection to each page. She took the book home to keep along with others she loved, such as [*Sitti's Secrets*](#) by Naomi Shihab Nye (1994).



The ESL population in my school is diverse. Some are recent immigrants, while others were born in the U.S. and have not ever visited their parents' native country. Some are struggling to retain their culture, language, and identity. This is especially true of the children from Puerto Rico who are American citizens, and sometimes have earlier exposure to English. Sometimes they are more assimilated to American mainstream culture than a student from the Middle East, Asia, or Africa. Often these students seem to identify with mainstream American culture but have a deep desire to stay in touch with their identity as Puerto Rican people who are bicultural and bilingual.

As members of the Tri-Cities Global Literacy Community, my elementary ESL students and I have grown in knowledge, engagement, and appreciation of our own cultures and that of others. Reading books about people from around the world reminded some of us of home, our parents' stories, our native languages, and our own experiences. Other times, we read about our friends and learned things about them that we didn't know before and appreciated them, their cultures, and their traditions more than ever. We saw our talents, literacy, and awareness of the world grow. It was wonderful learning about our similarities and differences. We gained increased awareness of geography, history, culture, and of inspirational people, some of whom are famous and some who are not.

The books we read in ESL gave acknowledgement to the fact that the students' cultures and native languages are valuable resources that enrich them and their understanding of the world and everything that happens at school. While cultural differences have always been respected and embraced in ESL, the U.S. and English were two big commonalities all the children shared, regardless of their country of origin, so the focus was often on similarities rather than differences. This year, by using global literature, the focus of learning changed to invite students to talk about their *dual* cultural and linguistic identities. I underestimated how much my students would enjoy and learn from it. I was also pleased with how much they began to recognize and take pride in their

biculturalism and bilingualism and how much recognition they began to get from their peers for being people with special strengths rather than students who “need extra help.” This year when I walked into classrooms to shepherd my students to ESL, at least one of their peers would say, “I want to come and learn another language, too!” We did, incidentally, have a “Bring a Friend to ESL” day where friends were given a glimpse into our ESL world and feted with a special lunch.

One particularly successful group who immersed themselves in global literature was a diverse group of ten students in grades 3-6 who met for an hour three times a week for much of the year. A chart showing gender, grade level, native country, and English proficiency level is shown below. Four of the students have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and receive special education services. All the students came to view themselves as readers and writers with special strengths and knowledge.

3 rd grade boy	Puerto Rico	Intermediate
3 rd grade girl	China	Intermediate
3 rd grade boy	Mexico	Beginner/IEP
3 rd grade girl	Mexico	Advanced
4 th grade girl	China	Advanced
4 th grade girl	Puerto Rico	Beginner/IEP
4 th grade girl	Yemen	Advanced
5 th grade girl	Dominican Republic	Intermediate/IEP
5 th grade girl	Puerto Rico	Advanced
6 th grade girl	Puerto Rico	Beginner/IEP

A Mentor Text Inspires Our Own Memoirs

Cynthia Rylant’s (1982) *When I Was Young in the Mountains* inspired our own “When I Was Young” books. Some students wrote about their native countries: *When I Was Young in Yemen*, *When I Was Young in Puerto Rico*, *When I Was Young in Mexico*. Others chose to write about their memories in America: *When I Was Young in Pre-School*, *When I Was Young at Yates* (another school in our district which the student attended her first year after arriving from Puerto Rico). Students worked in pairs to help each other plan their writing and complete a basic graphic organizer. They bounced ideas off each other, edited their writing based on ideas they liked in their peers’ writing, and shared in front of the group. Students brought precious photographs from home

to be photocopied to help illustrate their books. We printed pictures of flags and landmarks and other photos they requested from the Internet, and they filled in with their own drawings. All the while, our language objective was using past tense verbs. The students presented their books to the class, and I videotaped them reading their books. Some students chose to bring a friend to the front of the room when they read their story to the class. There was applause and appreciation for each child's story and an eagerness to share their books with their peers and parents.

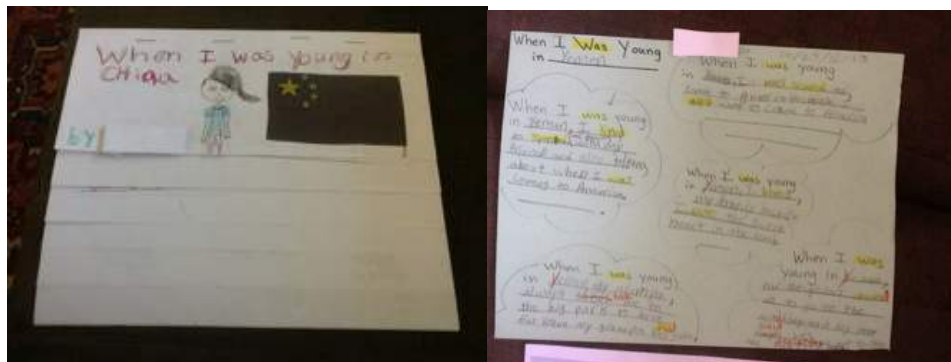


Figure 1. A sampling of the *When I Was Young* flip books and the graphic organizer.

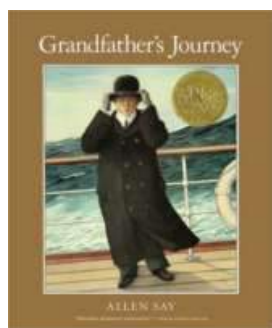
When we read Rylant's book, one of the third graders from Mexico was struck by the similarities of the narrator's experience in the distant past in rural America and his own memories of living in Mexico. While some of his peers were surprised to read about the narrator's simple life with her grandparents and needed some explanation for some of the events in the book, this third grader knew what an outhouse was, describing life in a house with a dirt floor and pumping water from a well to drink. He knew what it was like to live close to the land. His text read:

When I was young in Mexico, sometimes we drank water from our hands instead of from a

cup. When I was young in Mexico, we spoke Trique and Spanish. Now I speak Spanish and English. When I was young in Mexico, there were bathrooms outside and inside. When I was young in Mexico, my dad and everybody killed a cow and we ate the cow. When I was young in Mexico, I lived with my mom, my dad, my brothers, and sister, and grandma and grandpa.

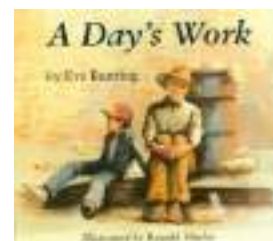
A fourth grader from Yemen brought beautiful photographs to illustrate her book relating her memories of her grandparents and her mixed feelings about coming to America. She loves her new life, has adjusted beautifully, and fits in well with all of her peers. It was fascinating for all of us to catch a glimpse of her world in Yemen and to know that she was both scared and excited about leaving Yemen for America. She wrote:

When I was young in Yemen, my grampa always took me to the big park to have fun when my grampa had time. When I was young in Yemen, I was scared to come to America because I didn't want to come to America. When I was young in Yemen, our neighbors invited us to go to the wedding and my mom said yes. We got to see the beautiful lady. When I was young in Yemen, I liked to spend time playing with my friends and also talking about when I was coming to America.

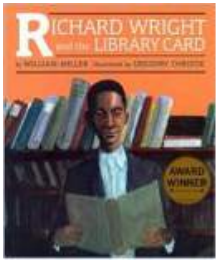


As we thought about our past experiences and some shared stories of being immigrants, we read about immigrants from Japan and Mexico, including two multicultural books about grandfathers: Allen Say's (1993) [*Grandfather's Journey*](#) and Eve Bunting's (1994) *A Day's Work*. These books sparked conversation as students interviewed each other about being bilingual and talked about their experiences translating for others as Francisco did for his grandfather in the Bunting book. Students shared stories about awkward

situations they commonly find themselves in when they must translate for adults. Their feelings about it ranged from a sense of pride and happiness that they could help their parents at the doctor or at the store to being very scared and frightened to be in that position. Many shared the experience of being afraid of what would happen to their parents if they needed them to translate and they were in school and not there to help. One fourth grader from Yemen said, "I worry my mom will get lost and won't be able to ask anyone for help!" The students eagerly requested a reread of *Grandfather's Journey* as they related to the feeling of wanting to live in two places like Grandfather and the grandson in the Say book wanted. The grandson said, "...the moment I am in one country, I am homesick for the other."



Appreciating Access to Schools and Libraries



Two fabulous books, *Tomás and the Library Lady* by Pat Mora (1997) and *Richard Wright and the Library Card* by William Miller (1999) provided material to write compare/contrast essays as well as informal reader responses. Our theme was the wonderful possibilities that libraries and education hold for us. Both main characters heroically pursued education, knowledge, and the opportunity to use the library which we often take for granted. The

students were touched by how both characters were poor and had to find reading materials in garbage cans, how Richard had to warm up beans using tap water running over the can, and how Tomás's mother made a ball for her children from an old teddy bear.

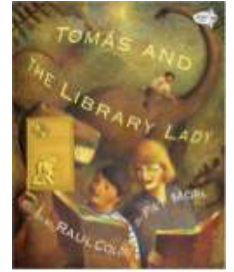
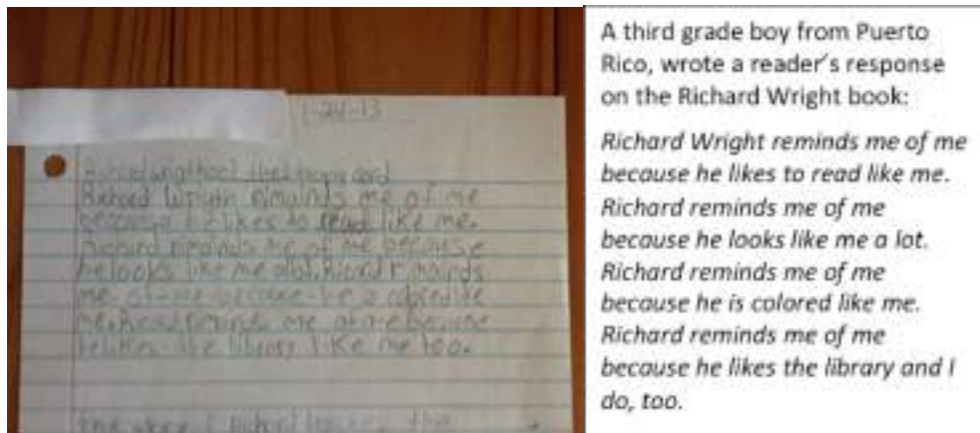


Figure 2. A third grader holds his public library card which he brought to school to show the class after reading *Tomás and the Library Lady*.



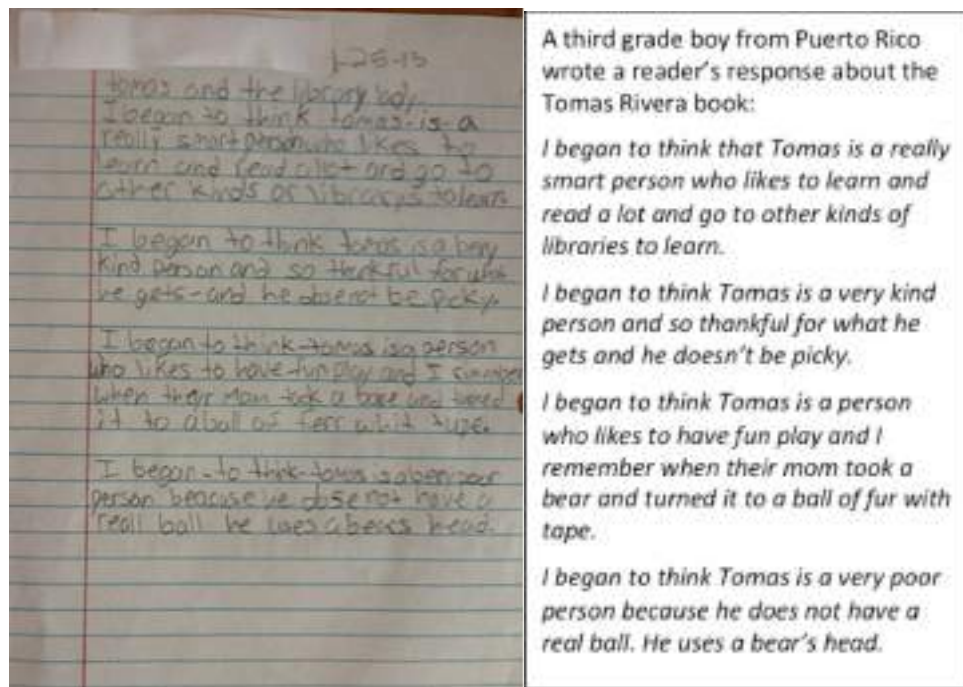


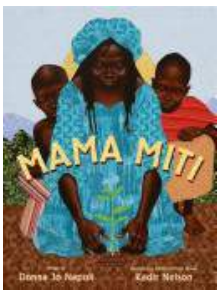
Figure 3. Children's literature responses.

We also fell in love with the story of Ron McNair, an African-American astronaut who died in the Challenger space shuttle explosion in 1986. He had challenged segregation at the public library as a boy in South Carolina. We listened to McNair's brother tell that story on a wonderful audio on NPR's Story Corps. We read the story in *Ron's Big Mission* by Corrine Naden and Rose Blue (2009) and we watched film of Ron McNair as well as archival footage of the sad and fateful day when he died in the Challenger explosion.



Figure 4. A third grader replicated the illustration from the front cover of *Ron's Big Mission*.

One Person Can Make a Difference



The theme of using education to make a positive difference in the world was conveyed through books that we added to our favorites: [*The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*](#) by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer (2012), and a collection of books about Wangari Maathai: [*Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa*](#) by Jeanette Winter (2008), [*Mama Miti*](#) by Donna Jo Napoli (2010), [*Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai*](#) by Claire A. Nivola (2008), and [*Seeds of Change: Planting a Path to Peace*](#) by Jen Cullerton Johnson (2010).

We empathized with Wangari Maathai who was shocked when she saw the effects of deforestation in Kenya that occurred while she was away from her country studying for her doctorate. She used her knowledge of science to combat the problem by planting trees and encouraging others to do the same. This led to the Green Belt Movement. We were inspired by the metaphorical story she told (in a video clip) of a hummingbird trying to put out a massive fire while bigger animals, with more power to help, stood by paralyzed by the enormity of the task. The hummingbird, although small, was doing his best, and Wangari said she was like the hummingbird—just doing the best that she can.



Figure 5. Screenshot of Wangari Maathai telling the story of the hummingbird.

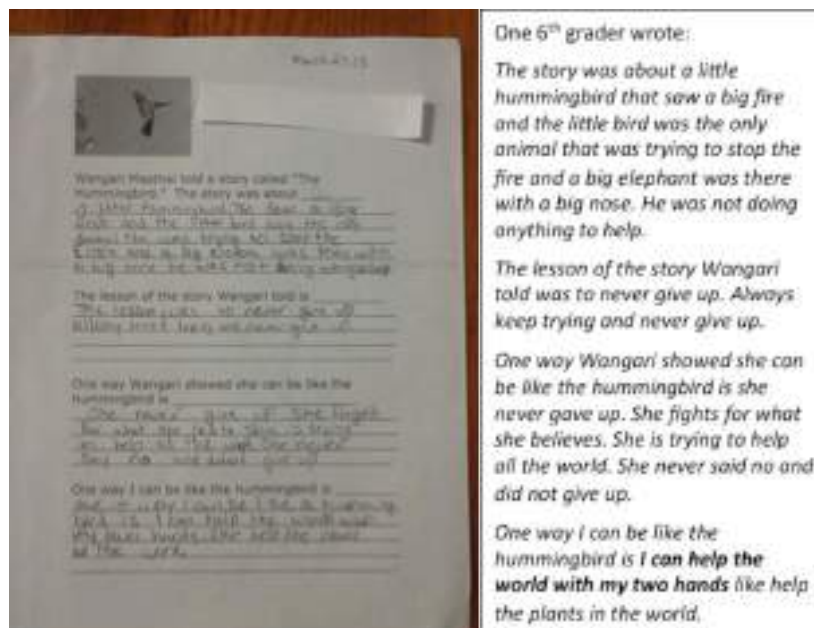


Figure 6. Response to Wangari's hummingbird story.

We were also inspired by William Kamkwamba who educated himself to solve a life-threatening problem in his country: drought and famine. We read that he was so hungry he felt like he had a monster his stomach. We felt genuine sadness when he told of having to drop out of school because his family didn't have any money for tuition. He didn't give up on his education. He read books in English, a foreign language for him at the time, and built a windmill to create electricity for a water pump. He saved his village from starvation. Being bilingual themselves, many ESL students marveled that William had the patience and perseverance to painstakingly translate technical directions, written in a foreign language, so that he *might* be able to find scrap material to build the windmill. Another inspiring connection to the book was that the illustrator, Elizabeth Zunon, was herself an ESL student in a neighboring town.



Figure 7. William Kamkwamba and the windmill. This photo fascinated the students and so I made a one-page, simplified version highlighting and explaining some of the difficult vocabulary.

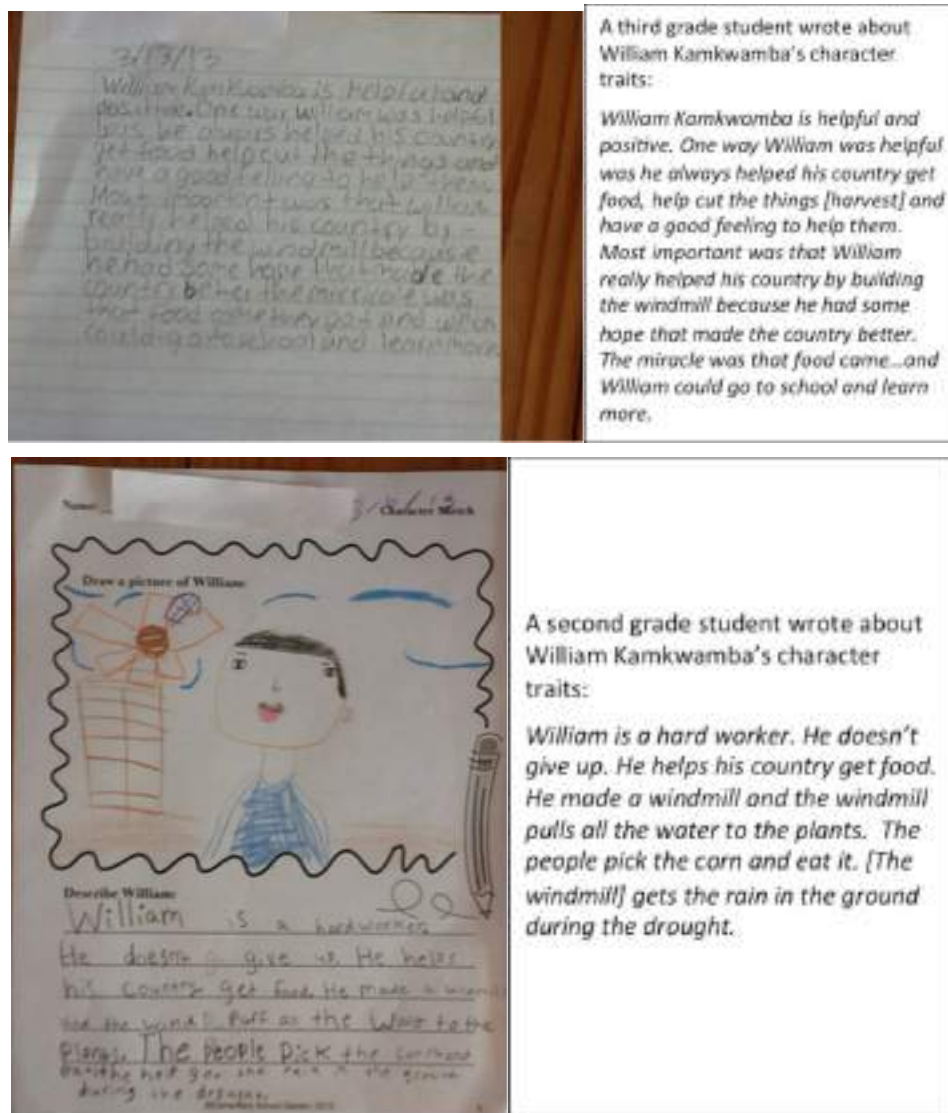


Figure 8. Response to the work of William Kamkwamba.

Civil Rights and Social Justice

While reading about Richard Wright in *Richard Wright and the Library Card*, we delved into the Civil Rights Movement. Even though we felt we knew a lot, we certainly learned a lot. We started with an anticipation guide with four statements to agree or disagree with before we started our reading and study. We were all certain that the police are always right, that there were no white people who supported civil rights, that we should follow all laws, and that all people in jail must have done something so bad that they deserved to be there.

Agree-Disagree: Before and After		
Before Reading	Statement	After Reading
Agree		Disagree
5	1. It is always wrong to break a law. We should always follow rules and laws.	
	2. Regular people like us can not do anything to change laws. Only government leaders can change laws.	
	3. All white people wanted segregation. No white people wanted integration.	
	4. We can always trust authority figures like police officers, presidents, and teachers to do what is right. They will always protect people who are doing the right thing.	
5		

Figure 9. Anticipation guide used before and after Civil Rights Movement study to track changes in thinking.



We then read *Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins* by Carole Boston Weatherford (2005) and watched video of civil rights protestors getting trained in nonviolent protest and noticed that there were some white protestors being trained, too. We watched video of the lunch counter sit-ins and saw how the training was put into action. This brought a deeper understanding of a few important things: When police were called, they were there to jail the protestors, not the white people who were pushing and shoving and trying to antagonize the protestors by pouring hot coffee or ketchup all over them. Also, as soon as one group of protestors was taken to jail, there was another group waiting to take their place, and they actually *wanted* to go to jail to make a point. We knew we were on their side, and we were amazed by the singing, happiness, and solidarity of the protestors in jail.

This book inspired a spontaneous idea in some of the students who wanted to “role play” the lunch counter sit-ins. The students lined up some chairs to represent the counter. A Chinese girl whose family runs a restaurant said she could be the waitress behind the counter. A black boy from Puerto Rico, who was a driving force in this role play, insisted on taking the lead role of Martin Luther King, Jr. because he felt he most resembled him. A number of students wanted to be protestors at the lunch counter. Other students took on the roles of the police and white counter-protestors chanting “Two, four, six, eight, we don’t want to integrate!” One girl from the Dominican Republic didn’t feel comfortable being a police officer or a protestor and created a role for herself: she chose to be a passerby who encouraged the protestors, proclaiming, “You are doing the right thing.” I videotaped. The third grader playing Martin Luther King, Jr. announced that he would bring his “Sunday clothes” the next day so that we could do the role play again and this time, he’d really look

like Dr. King. He followed through and did a wonderful job. No teacher could ask for more intense learning and engagement than these third through sixth graders demonstrated.

What also amazed me was the deep level of vocabulary learning that happened. Students learned what it means to be civilly disobedient—that it requires breaking rules when laws are unjust. My students could apply this complex concept to other situations. When we watched a video clip of Kenya’s former president denouncing and deriding Wangari Maathai, he dismissed her as a “disobedient woman.” One of my students, who has a learning disability, piped up, “Oh she’s disobedient! Like Martin Luther King!”

Global Literature and *Widening* the Curriculum

Making global literature the centerpiece of our year helped keep instruction focused on material that was engaging, challenging, and interconnected. We were armchair travelers as the globe was always on the table while we read, and students looked up the places where the stories took place. Geography started to become ESL students’ strength, especially in relation to their peers. They could pick up the globe, find our location, their native country, and locate William Kamkwamba’s country in Africa or show the distance Wangari Maathai travelled by tracing their finger on the globe from Kenya to the American Midwest where she studied science. We studied the environment, learned vocabulary for the parts of a tree, from roots to trunk to canopy. We talked about racism, protest, and civil disobedience.

In other words, we studied a rich curriculum. We did not fall victim to the narrowed curriculum that has been the unintended consequence of testing and accountability. We resisted the pressure to raise test scores by narrowing the curriculum so that students spend their time on basic skills, learning test-taking strategies, and practicing the “test genre.” Social studies, science, and the arts can sometimes be abandoned so that students spend more time preparing for the tests, reading isolated passages, drilling on practice multiple choice questions, and anticipating what the test-makers and scorers are going to want to see in their written responses. Obviously, we wanted to proceed in a different direction. Global literature helped us stay open to the world, look deeper into a variety of interesting topics, and see the connections between them. We have lots of plans for the coming school year to keep building on and connecting to what we’ve learned and to pursue some interests we discovered.

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History Matters: Grade Six Students Reflect on the Effects of War

by Krista Jiampetti

As a Reading Specialist, I have the pleasure of collaborating and co-teaching with Grade Six English Language Arts teachers in a suburban middle school of approximately 750 students. My role extends beyond small reading groups due to a flexible academic intervention program, which allows me to support students within a classroom setting as well.

Through the many changes and challenges we face each year, one teacher and I find ways to share topics and books with students that are meaningful and interesting. With this in mind, Toni

Corigliano and I welcomed the opportunity we were given when the Grade Six New York State Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy stated:

Respond to literature by employing knowledge of literary language, textual features, and forms to read and comprehend, reflect upon, and interpret literary texts from a variety of genres and a wide spectrum of American and world cultures.

This allowed students in our class to explore their own families' backgrounds, enabled us as teachers to utilize a variety of texts, and opened the door to discovering perspectives of people around the world!

Our implementation of what we titled our "War Unit," which was based on novels about WWII, helped the whole class take on different perspectives of people throughout the world, including but not limited to Denmark, Germany, Japan, Poland, and France. There were several steps to take before reading the novels, which included providing students with knowledge and information they would need in order to understand other perspectives. From there and throughout the unit, all types of texts were referred to and read that supported and strengthened the views and opinions we faced.

Our unit's central theme, or common thread among texts, was: *How do the views and experiences of people around the world support the statement that 'War is never a good idea'?*

This focus point led our discussions and helped students think about who was affected by war, rather than just focusing on the war itself. We not only learned historical information, but also made connections to the importance of this era in today's society.

This chart lists the tasks and activities we employed throughout the unit, as well as the purpose for each. We were constantly adding, modifying, and changing activities as our discussions evolved and as students presented their thoughts and opinions that guided our purpose.

War Unit – Fall 2012 – Grade Six

Type of text/Activity	Purpose
Expose students to the time period of WWII in a read aloud of <i>The Quilt</i> by Gary Paulsen	•Encourage discussion through a Power Point presentation by using vocabulary from the book connected to pictures/music from the time period.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Model and practice taking on another's perspective with the whole class. Respond through writing, drawing, and poetry. •Complete survey responses about students' own backgrounds.
Cultural X-Ray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Students begin with the blank outline of a body figure. We ask them to dig deep and write down aspects of themselves that no one would know just by looking at them (i.e. culture, feelings, beliefs). This writing goes on the inside of the body outline. •On the outside of the outline they write things people can see – possibly their physical traits. •Students complete another X-ray later, based on a character in their books. We encourage students to compare the two and attempt to take on another person's perspective.
<p>Develop the concept of war through reading these picture books (one each day):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Feathers and Fools</i> by Mem Fox •<i>Why War Is Never a Good Idea</i> by Alice Walker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Encourage discussion among students to build knowledge of the concept before reading novels for content. •Students respond, based on what we had read/discussed: "Do you think that war is ever a good idea? State your opinion

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Faithful Elephants</i> by Yukio Tsuchiva •<i>Playing War</i> by Kathy Beckwith <p>Reading response</p>	<p>and use details and examples to convince someone to believe that what you say is true.”</p>
<p>Picture Book Study</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Students work in pairs to read a picture book from the list and consider guiding questions in order to discuss with the class (Appendix B)
<p>Book Talk: WWII Novels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Activities during the reading of novels include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Drawing what they see or feel in response to their books ~Writing poetry ~Finding quotes from the books that stand out to them Small group discussions ~Teacher interviews ~Whole class discussions that compare the books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Match students’ reading levels with books to read (Appendix A) •Students read with a focus that correlates with the common thread
<p>Nonfiction textsArticlesNBC National NewsAnti-bullying classroom meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Information about historical events, recent articles relevant to the unit, and watching the nightly news helps students make connections to their novels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Modern day war ~Social studies topics ~Malala Yousafzai: Should

	<p>she return to her homeland?</p>
<p>Reading WWII novels (Appendix A) Novel notesQuotes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Students read novels silently, taking notes on the WWII event in the book, where the main character is from, and what surprised/worried them about the story. These notes will be useful during discussions as we relate the stories back to our theme. •Students begin to follow the lead of the teachers in sharing quotes from the books that stood out to them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~“There are many reasons for a person to lie, but to have a reason to tell the truth, you must have a deep belief. And great courage.” (<i>The Boy Who Dared</i> by Susan Campbell Bartoletti)
<p>Writing: WWII flyer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Students create a flyer, based on the event in their novels, which tells about the war and tries to convince/persuade people that war is never a good idea.
<p>Whole class share</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Students write a reflection on the unit and choose their best line. We read each line aloud, around the group to create a reflective poem (see below).

Students Reflect

At the end of the unit, students were asked to reflect on the quote, *“After all this is over, all that will have really mattered is how we treated each other.”* Students used their knowledge from what they read, their own opinions, and the perspectives of others to write in connection to the quote. ([Appendix C](#))

We shared by having students choose their best/favorite line within their writing and we shared aloud each line as an oral class poem. Below is our poem, which had a powerful impact in class that day. It also met and exceeded the Common Core State Standard, providing evidence that students can read, interpret, and reflect on their own lives as well as the lives of others.

Reflection on War Poem by Grade Six Students

If you put war first for everything, what’s the world going to turn into?

“After all this is over all that will have really mattered is how we treated each other.”

War takes many tolls.

I still believe that war is a bad idea, but “After all this is over all that will have really mattered is how we treated each other.”

Now I can see more of the sacrifices that people take to protect me and my country. I wish I had realized before now.

We can celebrate what we have in common, not punish our differences.

I’ve noticed that bullying and war aren’t as different as I thought for these reasons – someone gets hurt, there’s never a true winner, and it never benefits either side.

I think that war is a bad idea because cities are destroyed, poisons are in the air, innocent people are killed.

It takes a real brave person to go to a foreign country to help foreign people, and watch your back at the same time.

In war you’re looking at what’s different, but then at the end you look at the same thing.

War affects me because too many people are killed or injured because of things other mean people do to them.

Every person was made with love, not hate in their soul.

People should treat people how they want to be treated.

Don’t be prejudiced to the people around me.

I think there shouldn’t have been war ever and I hope there should never be war again.

“After all this is over all that will have really mattered is how we treated each other.”

Men and boys go into war, leaving families and loved ones behind.

War affects so many people in so many different ways.

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Appendix A

World War II Novels

Grade 6 Unit

Title	Author	# of pages	Fountas & Pinnell Level
<i>Aleutian Sparrow</i>	Karen Hesse	156	N/A
<i>Blue</i>	Joyce Moyer Hostetter	197	S
<i>The Book Thief</i>	Marcus Zusak	560	S
<i>A Boy at War: A Novel of Pearl Harbor</i>	Harry Mazer	112	T
<i>The Boy Who Dared</i>	Susan Campbell Bartoletti	192	S
<i>Code Talker</i>	Joseph Bruchac	231	X
<i>Dawn of Fear</i>	Susan Cooper	176	Z
<i>Dear America: The Fences Between Us</i>	Kirby Lawson	320	R
<i>Don't You Know There's a War On?</i>	Avi	208	S
<i>Elephant Run</i>	Roland Smith	336	S

<i>Four Perfect Pebbles</i>	Lila Perl	144	Z
<i>Hitler's Canary</i>	Sandi Toksvig	192	U
<i>The Journal of Scott Pendleton Collins</i>	Walter Dean Myers	144	U
<i>Journey to Topaz</i>	Yoshiko Uchida	160	Y
<i>Number the Stars</i>	Lois Lowry	156	P
<i>On the Wings of Heroes</i>	Richard Peck	160	R
<i>The Quilt</i>	Gary Paulsen	96	Z
<i>Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes</i>	Eleanor Coerr	64	O
<i>Shadows on the Sea</i>	Joan Hiatt Harlow	244	P
<i>Snow Treasure</i>	Marie McSwigan	208	P
<i>Soldier Bear</i>	Bibi Dumon Tak	158	S
<i>Someone Named Eva</i>	Joan M. Wolf	200	U
<i>Stepping on the Cracks</i>	Mary Downing Hahn	224	S
<i>T4</i>	Ann Clare LeZotte	112	N/A
<i>Under a War-Torn Sky</i>	Laura Malone Elliott	288	O

<i>Warriors in the Crossfire</i>	Nancy Bo Flood	142	M
<i>When My Name Was Keoko</i>	Linda Sue Park	208	O
<i>Willow Run</i>	Patricia Reilly Giff	149	S



Appendix B

WWII Picture Books	
<i>Baseball Saved Us</i>	Ken Mochizuki
<i>Boxes for Katje</i>	Candace Fleming
<i>The Bracelet</i>	Yoshiko Uchida
<i>The Butterfly</i>	Patricia Polacco
<i>The Cello of Mr. O</i>	Jane Cutler
<i>The Greatest Skating Race</i>	Louise Borden
<i>Faithful Elephants</i>	Yukio Tsuchiya
<i>Hiroshima No Pika</i>	Toshi Maruki
<i>The Little Ships: The Heroic Rescue at Dunkirk in WWII</i>	Louise Borden
<i>Mama Played Baseball</i>	David A. Adler
<i>My Hiroshia</i>	Junko Morimoto
<i>My Secret Camera</i>	Frank Dabba Smith
<i>Sadako</i>	Eleanor Coerr
<i>Shin's Tricycle</i>	Tatsuharu Kodama
<i>So Far from the Sea</i>	Eve Bunting
<i>Star of Fear, Star of Hope</i>	Jo Hoestlandt

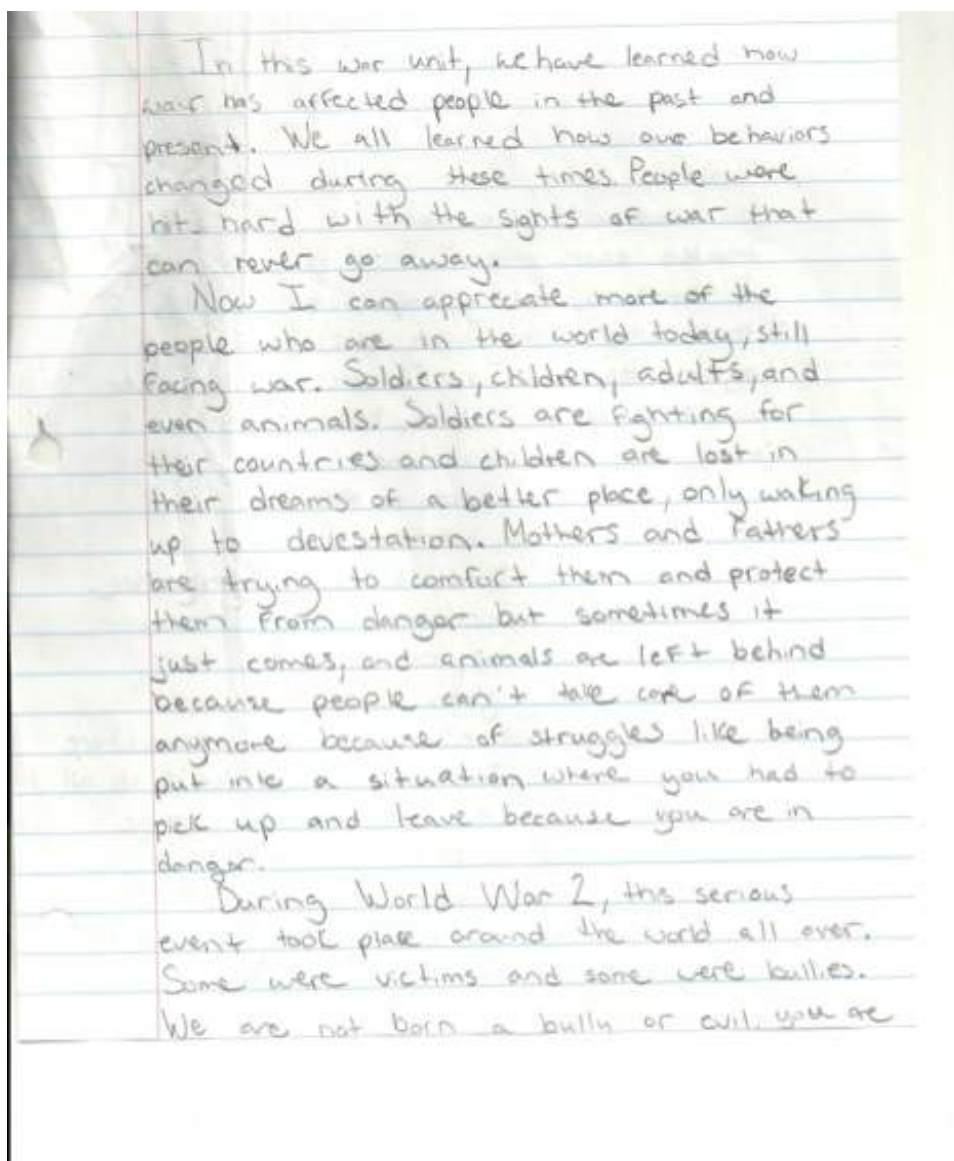
<i>The Unbreakable Code</i>	Sara Hoagland Hunter
<i>The Yellow Star</i>	Carmen Agra Deedy

Picture Books Used as Read-Alouds

<i>Feathers and Fools</i>	Mem Fox
<i>Why War Is Never a Good Idea</i>	Alice Walker
<i>Faithful Elephants</i>	Yukio Tsuchiva
<i>Playing War</i>	Kathy Beckwith



Appendix C



taught to mistreat others or you, too were bullied. Bullied to the max were you're rage come out. We are innocent but sometimes guilty. In the quote, "After all this is over all that will have mattered is how we treated each other." This is a message I think is really important saying that when everything builds back up again, the way we treated each other wouldn't be the same because of how much damage was done.

This quote applies to my own life because I see war on the news everyday and I don't see a difference. The war going on near Israel and Gaza affects us, too because our army has to fight. War is a never ending story. It always pops up somewhere in this world. This quote connects to all of our lives. If we could make a change would it be a better place? Would the earth be a better place or would it be the same. It all starts with you, you could be the one who makes the difference.

Student Reflection – Leah

In this war unit, we have learned how war has affected people in the past and present. We all learned how our behaviors changed during these times. People were hit hard with the sights of war that can never go away.

Now I can appreciate more of the people who are in the world today, still facing war. Soldiers, children, adults, and even animals. Soldiers are fighting for their countries and children are lost in their dreams of a better place, only waking up to devastation. Mothers and fathers are trying to comfort them and protect them from danger but sometimes it just comes, and animals are left behind because people can't take care of them anymore because of struggles like being put in a situation where you had to pick up and leave because you are in danger.

During World War 2, this serious event took place around the world all over. Some were victims

and some were bullies. We are not born a bully or evil, you are taught to mistreat each other or you, too were bullied. Bullied to the max, were you're rage came out. We are innocent but sometimes guilty. In the quote, "After all this is over all that will have mattered is how we treated each other." This is a message I think is really important saying that when everything builds back up again, the way we treated each other wouldn't be the same because of how much damage was done.

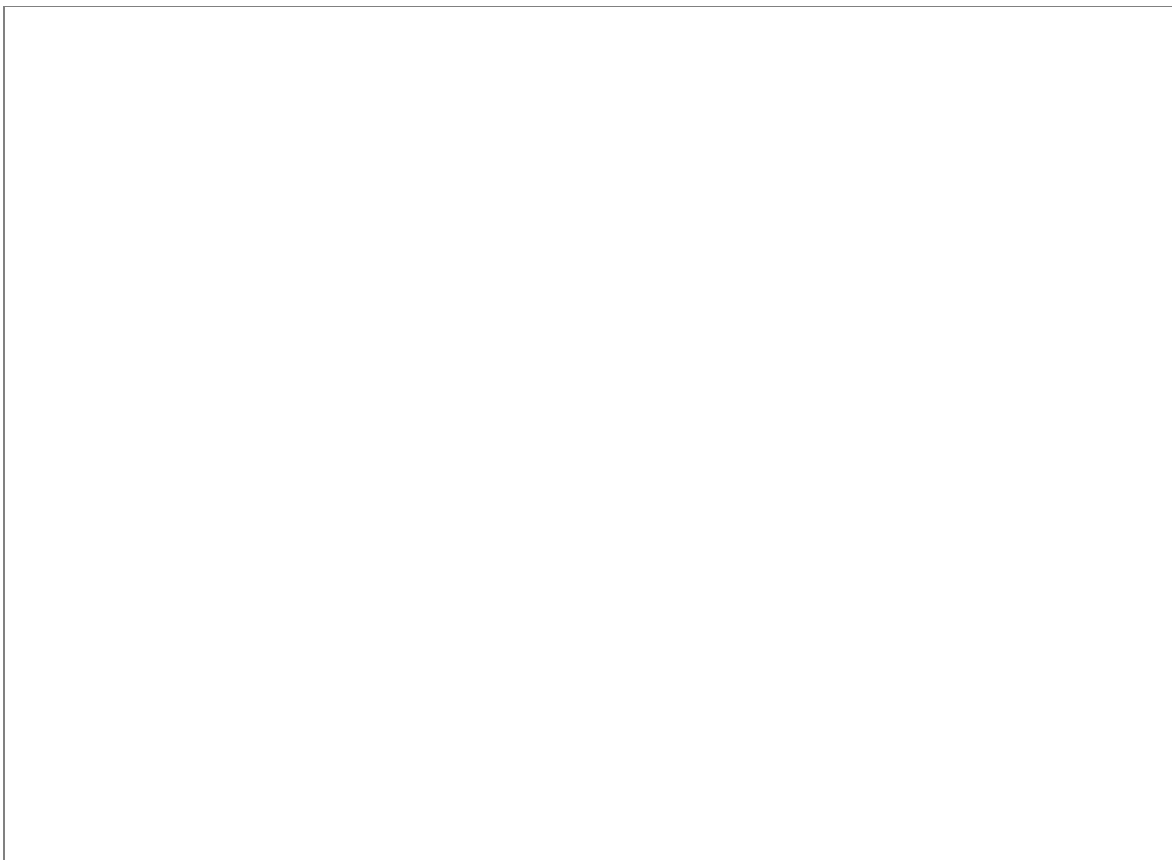
This quote applies to my own life because I see war on the news every day and I don't see a difference. The war going on near Israel and Gasa affects us, too because our army has to fight. War is a never ending story. It always pops up somewhere in this world. This quote connects to all of our lives. If we could make a change would it be a better place? Would the earth be a better place or would it be the same. It all starts with you, you could be the one who makes the difference.

How a Social Action Project Revitalized a Third Grade Response to Intervention Reading Group

by Maggie Burns

It is time for our school's Morning Program. The entire elementary school, grades K-5, has gathered in the school gymnasium to celebrate the social and academic achievements of all members of the school community. Third grade boys, excited and nervous, stand in front of the whole student body ready to present a social action project they designed after engaging with an inspiring text in their reading group. They have spent the past few weeks crafting a "script" to present to the student body, outlining their plan. Large plastic jars line a large folding table, while a Prezi slide show projected on the wall behind them helps illustrate their points.

The boys begin to speak to their peers about raising money for children in rural Colombia, South America who have no schools or books. They smile as they take turns passing the microphone to each other as they proudly explain this project to the school community. When they are done speaking, they excitedly hand out jars to each class that will be used to collect money for their cause.



Two and a half years ago, I left my role as a classroom teacher of 14 years to become a reading specialist. I made this transition fully aware that it would be a significantly different role. Even more changes were on the horizon. New York state adopted the Common Core, initiated a new teacher evaluation system, and my school district piloted a Response to Intervention (RtI) program.

In the midst of these changes, I was also nearing the completion of a second masters degree in Literacy and was eager to implement instructional designs and engagements that I knew could help accelerate, motivate, and engage my students. But how? I was becoming very frustrated because my practice did not always align with my belief system. My students were doing what I asked of them, but were often exhibiting reading behaviors that reflected surface level understandings at best. Maybe, I thought, they were frustrated as well because I was not meeting their needs as readers and writers? Maybe there was more that I could do?

I was fortunate to be a part of the Tri-Cities Global Literacy Community, an inquiry group studying global literature use in classrooms. I was initially hesitant to join the group because of what I perceived as the instructional constraints of my job. How would I be able to use global literature with my struggling readers during my daily half hour with them? Given the expectations of my job, could I pursue teaching in alignment with the focus of our inquiry group?

The group broadened my perspective on teaching and learning. This occurred not only in terms of

deepening my knowledge and understanding of global literature and the many and varied ways to use it across grade levels and curriculum, but also in terms of opening up the sense of isolation many teachers feel in general. The sense of urgency and worry associated with the adoption of the Common Core and the new teacher evaluation system was minimized for me with the exposure to other teachers, schools, and perspectives I may not have experienced had I not stayed with the group.

During my time in the inquiry community, I reflected on my feelings of constraint and I realized that there was a lot more within my control than I had thought. Over time, I realized that although I did not have the same kind of control over my curriculum that others in the inquiry group had, I did have control over the decisions I made within my school's reading program. I had choices within my implementation of the Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention System (LLI) in terms of the texts, the delivery, and the approach. Upon examining the texts included in the intermediate LLI Kit, I found there were many texts that reflected multiple perspectives, cultural differences, and social action.

I decided to make some changes. First, I decided to choose texts that reflected global perspectives and that matched my students' reading levels. Next, I decided to listen more and talk less. When I did talk, I focused on asking more open-ended questions in an effort to get the students thinking about the text. Lastly, I decided that I would respond to students' questions with questions in an effort to construct a possible answer in collaboration with them, instead of giving over the information.

To illustrate what occurred when I made these changes, I describe in detail how my third grade reading group responded to a particularly compelling text describing one man's efforts to bring books to kids in rural parts of Colombia.

The Reading Group

My third grade Response to Intervention (RtI) reading group was comprised of four boys, Rakim, Eric, Jamal, and Sean (all names are pseudonyms). The boys were reading significantly below grade level. They were 9 years old and had been with each other in the same class since first grade. The boys attend our school in which 86% of the students receive free or reduced lunch. All four boys are African American, and all four boys had received intervention services for reading and math since first grade.

This group had incredible chemistry. They truly enjoyed each other. When we met, they entered the room chatting happily with each other about the events of their day. They were eager to share their stories with me and generally inquisitive about the world around them. Their classroom teacher promoted inquiry in the classroom and was very supportive of their interests.

Earlier in the school year, the boys made great efforts to engage in the tasks and texts I presented, but something was missing. We were all being compliant, but the engagement and motivation on both sides (mine and theirs) was missing. I felt by creating a more collaborative environment, the students would feel more in control, more engaged, and more motivated.

Once I decided to make changes in my approach, one of the first readings I presented to the third grade group was called “Alfa and Beto: The Biblioburros” (Morrow, 2013). It was a nonfiction text about a man named Luis Soriano who brought books to children in rural communities in Colombia, South America on his two donkeys, Alfa and Beto. This text instigated a change in this group that I could have never imagined.

When I introduced the text to the boys, they immediately began to read. As the boys read, they began to verbally and non-verbally react to the text. Rakim blurted out, “What? ...Where is this?” Jamal responded, “Wait a minute... He rides a donkey...He broke his leg?” Eric exclaimed, “Wait ‘til you get to this page and it tells you how...You have to read more.” The boys were reading, reacting, and responding to the text without my input. They were helping each other make sense of it. They were questioning it as they read and then going back into the text, hungry to see what happened next. When they looked to me in the midst of all this, all I could do was ask, “What else are you thinking?” What ensued was a conversation initiated by the boys about how people lived without school or books. They were amazed to find out that some kids didn’t have the opportunities they had to go to school and learn to read. They wanted to know where this country was, what it was like, and how Luis really got the books to the kids.

They asked if they could reread the book to see if they missed anything. They had never made this request before. The texts we had engaged in up until this point were more fictional stories with familiar plot lines and characters. This non-fiction text was very different as it examined a different culture, people, and economic context. As they read it again, they continued to discuss with each other their findings and reactions. I did not interrupt, or try to explain anything until they asked it of me. I remained an observer allowing them to move through the text independently and with each other.

The next time we met, I presented the boys with a video I found on Luis and his Biblioburro. This made the text even more real to them. The boys asked if they could figure out something to do to help Luis and the kids. They brainstormed during our session together and came up with the idea of a fund drive to raise money to send to Luis so he could buy more books. The video had raised the issue of maintaining and growing the library in an effort to expose more children to books and reading.

Our school had engaged in a Penny Harvest the year before. The boys thought we could raise

money like the Penny Harvest. They were concerned, though, that pennies would not bring in as much revenue as they would like. They debated with each other about collecting quarters or dollars. They decided that quarters would be more accessible because “some families are going through hard times...and everyone has quarters.”

During the subsequent weeks, the boys engaged in a myriad of engagements centered on their social action project. They had conversations and debates over how to proceed with their fundraiser: how to get the word out, how to collect the money, how to keep people interested. Once they solidified their plan, we made a list of action steps to help them stay on track and meet deadlines. State testing presented a barrier for a two-week window during our planning and action step period. This frustrated the boys at the time; however, they were immediately back on track once testing ended.

The Concept of Audience

Many of the engagements the students instigated as part of this project involved reading and writing. Three such engagements specifically involved getting the word out about their project to the Principal and the student body. The first engagement involved crafting a “script” to read at our school’s Morning Program to present the project and the collection jars they had made to the student body. Their feeling was that if they were to just talk off the cuff, they would forget some important information. So they crafted a script and assigned parts for each group member to say.

When the boys began to craft the script they experienced difficulty in deciding what to say and how to say it. They each had a different idea about how to present the information and no one agreed with each other. I stepped in at this point and talked to them about the concept of audience and invited them to consider who they were writing the script for. This concept of considering audience was surprisingly unfamiliar to the boys. Once they wrapped their heads around the idea of audience they began to work together more collaboratively to create their script, debating what to add or take away, what to say, and how to say it. The conversations were lively and enthusiastic.

Good morning, DCS. We have something exciting to share with you.

We are here because we are trying to raise money for the kids in Colombia, South America. The money will go towards books for kids so they can learn to read.

We read a book called Alpha and Beto: The Biblioburros. It was about a man named Luis Soriano who rode on one donkey, Alpha, and carried books with the other donkey, Beto, to rural villages in Colombia, South America that had no schools or libraries.

Many children do not get to go to school, because there are none. Their parents do not know how to read or write either. Luis and his donkeys and his books help families learn to read.

We can't send books to Luis because we do not know if he already has them in his library. Also, the books need to be in Spanish. Lastly, when we wrote to Luis, he asked for money so he could choose the books he needed.

We want to collect money that Luis will use to buy books so more kids can learn to read, so they can have a successful future. Quarters for Colombia is our charity project for the kids.

We need your help. This is how it will work!
Each classroom will get one of these containers. It will be up to you the students to bring in quarters to fill up these containers. We will have a little over two weeks to raise as much money as we can for Luis and the kids. Our fund drive will end on May 31.

Figure 1. Script the boys wrote and read from during their first presentation to the school introducing Quarters for Colombia.

Once the script was complete, they realized they had not asked the principal for permission to engage in the fundraising and felt they should ask him. One of the boys requested if they could use my email account to send an email from the group to our principal. They then began to craft their email. One of the boys suggested using their script as the email since it had all the important information in it. I supported their decision as they attempted to do this. When they read it over, they felt it did not sound right. This gave us another opportunity to discuss the concept of audience and how different audiences require different writing. We talked about how writing to the Principal in an email was different than writing a script to present to the student body. Rakim said, "He is the boss of the school, we have to be even more respectful...We also have to convince him that this is a good idea." Eric stated, "It can't be as long as our script, because he is a busy man."

The boys decided to use the script as a guide, and began to craft the email. When they wrote both pieces the group worked to choose their words carefully, they reread their writing before they wrote

more, and they listened to what each other had to say. It was truly amazing how empowered the boys felt as they created these writing pieces together in a collaborative way. What added to this feeling of empowerment for them was the validation the principal gave them when he immediately responded to their email and followed up with a visit during their RtI time to discuss the project with the boys.

From: Burns, Maggie
Sent: Tuesday, April 30, 2013 11:07 AM
To:
Subject: From Mrs. Burns Third Grade RTI Students

Dear _____ :

We are emailing you because we are trying to raise money for kids in Colombia, South America. The money will go towards books for kids so they can learn to read.

We read a book called Alpha and Beto: The Biblioburros. It was about a man named Luis Soriano, who rode donkeys to bring books to kids who did not have any. Many children don't go to school because there is no school. Their parents don't know how to read and write. Luis and his books help families learn to read.

We want to collect money to help buy more books so kids can learn to read so they can have a successful future. We can't send books because we don't know if he already has the books in his library. Also, the books need to be in Spanish. Lastly, Luis wrote back to us and asked us for money instead of books.

Quarters for Colombia is our charity project for these kids. Each classroom will receive a container. We need the kids to bring in quarters to fill up the jars. We will take the money collected in two weeks, count it up, and send it to Luis Soriano so he can buy more books for kids.

We are writing to you to ask your permission to do this project. We would like to present our project at the Morning Program on Thursday, if that is alright with you.

Please email us or come see us during our RTI time, which starts at 10:30am with Mrs. Burns, to let us know we can do this.

Thank you and have a nice day.

Sincerely,

Figure 2. Email the boys sent to the principal.

Lastly, the boys wanted to create posters to advertise their project. They felt it was important that students be reminded with posters to bring in their quarters. I asked them what they needed. They

wanted me to print out various size quarter pictures to place on their posters. Again, the concept of audience came up in relation to the poster. Marc said, “We can’t put everything we wrote in our script on the poster...there have to be less words.” Eric said, “We HAVE to put Quarters for Colombia on our poster... that has to go on.” Jamal added, “Let’s put bring in your quarters for Luis and the kids in Colombia.”

Fluency and Feedback

Once the email was sent, the posters were made and the script was set, the boys felt it was important to practice the script. Rakim was specifically concerned with his fluency. He said, “Mrs. Burns, I don’t want to stutter on my words. I want to know them and sound like I am talking -- not reading – when we are in front of all the kids.” The others agreed. They asked if they could use the time during RtI to practice. I agreed to use some of our time and asked if I could record them so they could hear themselves. They were very eager to hear themselves so we engaged in the practice at the beginning of our sessions.

When the students heard themselves they were stunned. They began to comment on their own reading and the reading of others. Some of the comments were less than complimentary, urging the speaker to sound louder, read faster, and try harder. When this started to happen I asked the boys how it felt when someone made a negative comment like that. They all responded that they did not care for it, so I explained the concept of feedback to them and asked if they wanted to try to give more feedback instead of criticism. They agreed and decided when they commented they would like to start with something they liked about how the reader spoke. One student said, “Mrs. Burns, you always start with what you like about our reading. Let’s do that!” (I never even thought they noticed this.) So we audio recorded the reading and gave feedback based on a fluency card the students regularly used in the group, making sure to always begin with a positive comment.

This practice of audio-recording, reading, and giving feedback prior to a public presentation for a real audience brought the students’ performance to another level. Each time they practiced they became more fluent, expressive, and confident. Each time they gave feedback they made sure to begin with the positive and look the speaker in the eye when they spoke to him. Each time they read, they had a sense of purpose.

This was a very organic experience for the boys because they had real purpose as a motivator. They *chose* to engage in most of these activities. They came up with the ideas, the engagements. They wanted to create a script. They wanted to write an email. One boy stated, “We never get to do what we want and you are letting us.” Their efforts resulted in a stellar presentation introducing their project to the school body at the Morning Program and the raising of an impressive amount of funds for their project.

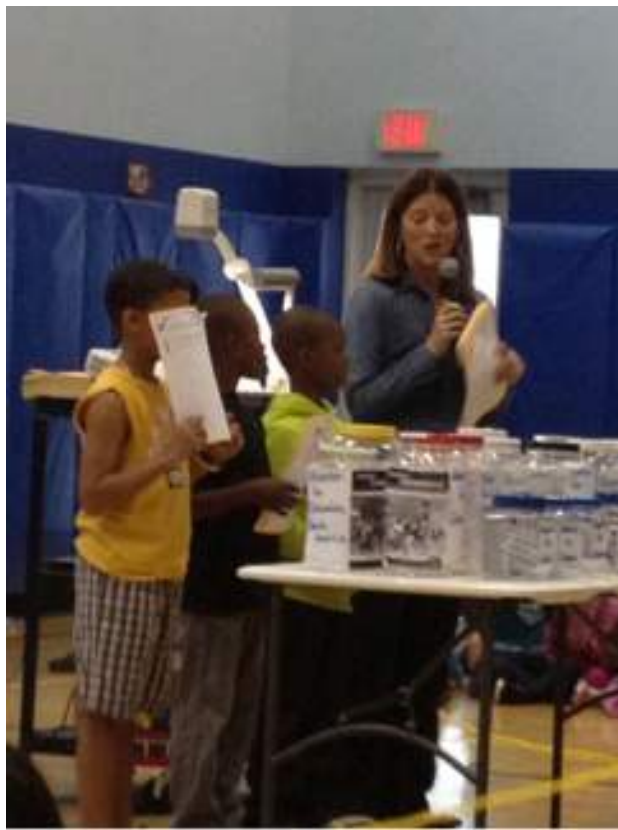


Figure 3. Maggie and her students present Quarters for Colombia at Morning Program.

Quarters for Colombia

After their first presentation in May, the boys made another special guest appearance at our school's last Morning Program in June, two weeks before school ended. It was their intention to share how much money the school had collected for the children in Colombia. Prior to this, the group asked to meet with the principal to reveal the dollar amount to him and ask if they could speak about their success at the last Morning Program. The principal met with them immediately after they counted all the quarters they collected. The following is an excerpt of part of the conversation:

Rakim: *Mr. Smith, you are not going to believe how much money we raised for the kids in Colombia....*

Eric: *We have so many quarters.....*

Marc: *It was hard to count them all...it was a lot!*

Principal Smith: *Well, how much money is it?*

Rakim: *Can I tell?*

Jamal, Marc, and Eric: *Sure...sure.*

Rakim: *Four hundred dollars even!!!! Can you believe it?!*

Principal Smith: *Wow! Boys, you really did it. You should be so proud of your selves! You are helping so many kids to read. How do you all feel?*

Rakim: *Great! So great! I can't wait to tell my grandmother!*

Marc: *I can't believe how much we got. Can we tell the kids at the next Morning Program?*

Principal Smith: *Sure, do you want to write up another script?*

Eric: *No, we just want to say it.*

Rakim: *We just want to say what we did, how much money we raised. Can we just have the microphone and do that? We don't have to say as much as we did the first time! We just want to thank the kids who brought in all that money.*

Principal Smith: *Sounds great to me, if you are comfortable with that!*



Initially inspired by one man's efforts to bring books to children in rural Colombia, the boys mobilized their literacies to think beyond themselves, to develop a plan of action, and to communicate with a wide range of audiences. While they were doing so, they developed a greater sense of agency as readers and writers because they had a purpose that drove and motivated them. These boys continue to serve as an inspiration to me as I continue to seek out possibilities for revitalizing my own teaching with global perspectives.

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“Seeing with New Eyes”: Envisioning Learners as Travelers in New Worlds

by Simeen Tabatabai

“...the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but in seeing with new eyes.”

Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*

Learners as Travelers: The Teacher

What is my way of reading and thinking about a piece of literature? What do I bring of my own self to how and what I teach? I am continually reflecting on these questions as I teach reading to fifth graders at a suburban school in a mid-size city in the Northeast.

While they are still fourth graders, I have my future students visit my class and tell them a little bit about myself. They come into my classroom on the last day of school before their summer vacation, and they are invariably intrigued by this introduction to their soon-to-be-fifth grade reading teacher. I am a little different from the other teachers that they have had. I grew up in Africa at a time when African nations were gaining their independence from their colonizing countries. My parents joined the influx of people from all over the world that came to Africa to bridge the gap in manpower resources that were needed as these nations reorganized their institutions. As a child, I remember being in a class where the 35 students all spoke different languages at home, some speaking multiple languages! I grew up in a truly multicultural environment and had to navigate differences in cultural attitudes, norms, and behaviors as a matter of course.

Early in life I learned that each individual perceives the world around him or her often in quite different ways than everybody else does. Because I understood at a young age that people experienced the world differently, I accepted that what was the norm in my context could be strange to someone else. Having this ability is a challenge, yet a gift all at once. I have always been naturally drawn towards global literature, books that are set in different cultures, and more importantly, books that present different perspectives on the world. Because of my lived experience of perceiving things differently, thinking differently, and being open and accepting of differences, I feel that as a teacher I can challenge my learners in ways in which they may not been challenged before and enrich their learning experience.

Understanding and accepting differences can be strenuous for students being brought up in predominantly mono-cultural environments. Our school is in a predominantly white neighborhood but with a mix of different ethnicities, including African American, Arab, Chinese, Korean, Indian and Pakistani. For example, in this class, one of the three sections of fifth grade that I teach, I have 20 students, 9 boys and 11 girls. Two students are Latino, one is Indian, one Filipino, and one African American. Only about 5% of our overall student population is on free or reduced lunch. In this reflective piece, I explore why I think exposure to global literature is a powerful way in which students can gain direction and personal insight for their futures in a global world. Learning about other cultures and becoming able to explore new ideas and prospects make options available to us

that would not exist otherwise. This is why I believe it is so important for students to have a deeper global awareness and understanding of other cultures. As I explore below, I use global literature texts that appeal to students' interests and abilities to help them step beyond stereotypes and generalizations and towards deeper understandings of differences.

Learners as Travelers: The Students

As fourth graders, my students engage in a comprehensive study of immigration, which is central to the identity of the U.S. as a nation, and to the history of its citizens. The students are excited as they learn about their ancestors' native countries of origin, and discover their own connections to the immigrant experience and to a wider world. Studying immigration as part of their own family story provides an excellent natural context for children to be introduced to the diversity of ethnicities and cultures in the U.S. The children see each other as part of the whole, a nation of people coming together, all sharing the common experience of migration. Celebrating each other's uniqueness together creates unity and friendship. Students are involved in meaningful, active learning experiences supplemented by personal artifacts, films, historical photographs, and timelines. A big focus of the unit is inquiry and having the students ask questions about people who came to America, when they came and why, where they settled, how they were accepted and how they contributed and took part in American life. The students use self-generated questions to investigate history, asking who, what, when, where, how and why to learn the pieces of a story.

In my fifth grade classroom, I build on this concept of questioning through classroom conversations as a fundamental aspect of a critical literacy curriculum. Through conversation, I want my students to explore multiple perspectives, challenge assumptions, look closely at relationships (especially those involving power) and reflect upon how they can take action for social justice in their world (Dozier, Johnston, & Rogers, 2006; Freire, 2004; Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002).

In order to engage the children in what Peter Johnston (2004) has called "dialogic interactions," I work on teaching them how to listen carefully to each other, ask questions, build on each others' ideas and disagree with each other in a respectful way. The children control the conversation and I, their teacher, act as the facilitator. These interactions enable the students to consider multiple perspectives as we read global literature that comes from the many countries (India, Vietnam, China, Mexico, South Africa, and Japan to name a few), some of which the students have explored in their fourth grade immigration unit. The students have built quite a bit of background about each other and their various points of origin. Their curiosity about their friends' cultures and how people live differently is rich ground to start looking at perspective and cultural diversity.

Traveling in New Worlds

During class, my fifth graders and I read a short article by an Indian writer Milan Sandhu from *Highlights Magazine* titled “Bindi!” Sanjay, an Indian student, had found the article in an issue of the magazine that he was reading and I had made copies for everyone. He explained to us that many women and girls in India wear a bindi or a dot on their foreheads. His mother, aunts and grandmothers wear them. The class was immediately curious and they bombarded Sanjay with questions: “What does the word “bindi” mean?” “How do they make bindis?” “Why do they make/wear bindis?” Poor Sanjay was at a loss because he himself did not know the answers to these questions!

We decided to read the article in our small groups to find out more and then discuss what we had read. Some of our misconceptions were revealed right away. Jennifer wondered: “Do they really carve them on their forehead?” Madison countered: “Why would they do that?” “I bet that would bleed,” commented Samantha. We read on and discovered that bindis are either stickers or marks made on the forehead by tinted powders. My students were intrigued by the fact that bindis can match outfits and be a fashion statement!

The questioning and talk, however, slowly led the class to a deeper exploration of Indian culture and religion as we read about why bindis are worn. Alicia speculated, “Do I have a third eye?” We began to unpack the Hindu belief that there is an inner core within each of us that is the seat of concealed wisdom. It is the center point wherein all experience is gathered in total concentration; it is our third eye and that spot is marked on the forehead by the bindi. “Wow! Is that where my soul is then?” exclaimed Eric. A debate ensued about what the soul might be and whether it is the same as or different from the third eye.

There are no answers, but we reached a level of understanding that went beyond just knowing facts. John wondered, “What else do they believe?” We brainstormed how we can discover more about the beliefs and peoples of the Indian Subcontinent. The students were noticing the multiple levels at which some of their ideas and beliefs are the same as what they read in the article, and yet so different, and how fundamental and key ideas are interpreted in different ways in the world.

There were rich side conversations exploring gender roles, customs, science and medicine through questions ranging from: “Can anyone wear a bindi?” (Tara) “Why do they/did they have the tradition of applying blood to the forehead?” (Julian) “How is it cooling?” (Mick) The talk was a process of discovery as the students evolved in their thinking about something that appeared to be peculiar and exotic to them at first, but is in fact the norm for people in its cultural context. We ended the class with Sanjay promising to bring us some bindis to try on and the students excitedly discussing what each of them was going to research online about India.



My fifth graders were engaged in conversations around *Books for Oliver* that I had finished reading aloud to the class. The class had selected the book because it is set in Africa and they love the stories that I tell them about my childhood and life in Africa. The book is about Oliver, who lives with his family in the highlands of Kenya. Oliver is excited about school and the new school year, but he and his parents worry about how they will afford to buy his textbooks.

The students' written reflections following our discussions revealed a wide range of responses. They were clearly moved by the story and had a strong sense of empathy for Oliver. Their writing explored the situation, behavior and relationships of a child who was just like them, but so different in so many ways. Ashanti wrote, "I felt bad when he saw the other kids with books. Once I felt bad when I didn't have something and everybody else had it."

The students identified with Oliver as a student, and with his hopes and desires. They felt the pain of his challenge. Margaret reflected, "If I was Oliver, I would feel scared and embarrassed. I would be scared because I did not have my books and everyone else would. I would feel embarrassed because I could not be able to learn with the other students....I got the same reaction Oliver did when he got books! I was happy, glad, and excited that he got new books!" Brenda empathized with Oliver's determination, writing: "You can tell that Oliver really wants to learn. He wants to succeed and have a bright future, and he won't give up until he is in school learning."

The students' questions and comments expanded their ways of thinking and understanding. By seeing and trying to come to grips with a new and different experience, they explored what they know or have heard about other people and other countries. Max, for example, wrote: "The first feeling I had was a little happy for Oliver because he had such a good (yet simple) life, because when I think of "People in Africa" I think poor people with dirt huts, small and cramped. The next feeling I had was sad that he didn't have any books for school."

The students also puzzled over the differences in their own experiences of schooling and learning and Oliver's. Harris reflected: They love school. It is like winning the lottery for them and kids in America usually don't want to go to school. Which is really amazing!" Michael was thinking along similar lines: "What makes me upset is that sometimes kids in the U.S. don't want to go to school but have to because it is the law."

Just like in our discussion, the written reflections showed the students' thinking taking a turn towards social justice as the students began to tackle the issue of poverty and the ethics and morality of having so much when so many others are deprived. Catherine reasoned, "His life is hard. He is poor and they should get money because they are hard working." The students felt the inter-relatedness of the human experiences and were challenged to seriously examine themselves

and the contrast in their situations and environments. Violet was moved by the difference: “I feel very sad about how their life is there and how lucky we are to live in a place like this.” Eric reflected on some harsh realities: “I honestly don’t think it is fair that in America we don’t need to pay for our school books but in countries like Africa a lot of other people can’t even afford one single book.” Sanjay pondered upon the future as well as the present: “I hope Oliver gets a good job so his kids can have a really good life, because I bet his kid will be just like him.” Katy drew a powerful lesson for herself and all of us from the story: “So maybe next time you go to the store and want something, think about kids in different countries and remember what situation they could be in.”

Seeing with New Eyes

Sometimes we think that young children have limited capacity to think about complex situations, but our vignettes show that creating the spaces to read global literature and nonfiction texts about the wider world, and then taking the time to talk about meaningful issues can allow students to become more powerful and more purposeful, more informed and intelligent, more aware and more free in their thinking. I find my students very quick to identify and to express concerns about their perceptions of unfairness, as well as their empathy for others. My own passion for global literature and my way of thinking and being is an interesting dynamic in the classroom because I am always making the unfamiliar familiar to them by being who I am. At the same time, by bringing the world to my students through offering them opportunities to read global texts, I am always challenging them in their thinking. We travel the world through our reading, and as we do, we look at it together with new eyes and new understandings. To do this, I need to build community and trust, and while that takes time, the end result is that my students feel secure and encouraged to actively seek out views, norms and situations that are different from their own. They are open to exploring them, both to try and truly understand their own selves, as well as to see the humanity of others, which to me is truly the essence of global thinking.

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Expanding the Common Core Text Exemplar List with Global Literature

by Michele Marx

Arms laden with books, Angela burst into our first Teacher Talk meeting of the school year eager to talk about the large selection of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) exemplar texts for the K-1 grade band weighing on her, at that moment both physically and figuratively. Placing her burden on the Teacher Talk table, Angela reviewed each of the texts she was able to collect from her local library. As a teaching veteran with her own first grader at home, Angela regarded the texts with both the eye of a professional and the eye of a parent. Sharing many of the selections with her son, she listened closely to his responses to the texts. Together, they found a few new titles from the exemplar list that she would recommend, or perhaps use when she returns to the classroom; however, overall she was struck by the date of publication of many of the books and the feeling of datedness in many of the stories and illustrations. Exemplar texts for the K-1 grade band especially stood out in relation to selections that were not included. For example, the read aloud exemplar selection of Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, which was originally published in 1900, was more notable for its datedness and its status as classic children's literature than its relevance in a current kindergarten or first grade classroom, particularly with respect to the rich and vast body of contemporary children's literature. With consideration to the CCSS criteria of complexity, quality and range, Angela wondered what were the characteristics of the texts included in the exemplar list, which were intended as "guideposts" for selecting texts? How, we all wondered together, could the CCSS exemplar text list be expanded to include texts representing current multicultural and global perspectives? And, how, most importantly, could we incorporate global literature to support, expand, or use instead of limiting our students to the texts on the exemplar list?

Teacher Talk: Reading and Talking in a Professional Community

The members of Teacher Talk have a history of reading and discussing children's literature together, particularly around topics of social justice and global issues. Initiated in 2000 as a

University-based inquiry and support group for teachers who had graduated from the Literacy Studies programs at Hofstra University, each of the participants in Teacher Talk is dedicated to teaching through children's literature, as well as nurturing their own literacy lives through reading and talking about books together. The group meets monthly during the school year and consists of teachers representing early childhood, elementary, middle school, high school and college instructors and professors of literacy education, as well as school district administrators. We are all, at heart, classroom teachers.

The particular interests of the group have shaped our monthly discussions around professional articles and books, as well as selections of children's literature, that help us better understand the lives of the children we teach as well as the world we live in. Teacher Talk's inquiry into the Text Exemplars, as defined by the Common Core State Standards, came as a natural extension of a yearlong exploration of global literature supported by a grant from Worlds of Words. As we considered what exactly is global literature and what does it mean to read global children's literature to build intercultural understanding, the looming Common Core State Standards influenced how we perceived our opportunities for text selection and literacy experiences in the classroom.

From New York to Hawaii, public school to private school, urban school to suburban school, early childhood classroom to college level seminars, and classroom teacher to school district administrator, the members of the Teacher Talk community lead very different professional lives. We found, however, that the Common Core State Standards gave us a common language to talk across grade levels, learning environments, and school and community demographics. Nevertheless, although we shared a common document, our experiences with the CCSS were vastly different. For example, for some the Text Exemplar List of Appendix B was a mandatory reading list; for our private school teacher, the CCSS was more of a 'good idea' than a set of mandatory expectations.

Given the different interpretations that exist for the Common Core State Standards, we decided to explore how we can develop more opportunities with our students for global thinking with children's literature, and what it means to keep children's literature alive in our classrooms while meeting the requirements of the standards.

According to Short (2012), "Literature expands children's life spaces through inquiries that take them outside the boundaries of their lives to other places, times, and ways of living" (p. 50). Recognizing the globalized world we live in, our interest in global children's literature is as a tool to prepare young readers "with the skills and attitudes necessary to live and work and interact with others in an increasingly diverse, complex and interdependent world" (Nieto, 2005, p. 31).

With a commitment to expanding the exemplar list of texts with global children’s literature, we have closely examined the existing, emerging and competing definitions of global children’s literature to be able to clearly identify global texts. Largely distinguished by origin of the text, in place and authorship as well as in setting and characters, recognizing global children’s literature is about bringing attention to its purpose of enlarging our worldviews and expanding our understanding of ourselves. Thinking about a framework for global literature in this way, global literature is more than just the text; it is what the reader brings to the text and the discussions that emerge (Rosenblatt, 1995).

Expanding the CCSS Text Exemplar List with Global Literature.

We decided that we would begin our inquiry by closely reviewing Appendix B of the CCSS, [Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks for the Common Core Standards English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects](#), and by reading a professional text, *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement* (Calkins, Ehrenworth & Lehman, 2012). These shared readings provided the framework for our understanding, thinking, and work together to expand the text exemplar list with global literature in ways that are relevant to our own individual work and goals.

The exemplar texts are organized by grade bands, which range from the Kindergarten and First grade band, through the Grade 11 and the College and Career Readiness band. The texts for each band are subdivided and the categories of the subdivisions are related to the grade band. For example, the K-1 grade band has the categories of stories, poetry, read aloud stories, read aloud poetry, informational texts and read aloud informational texts, whereas the 6-8 grade band has the categories of stories, drama, poetry, Informational Texts: English Language Arts, Informational Texts: History/Social Studies, and Informational Texts: Science, Mathematics, and Technical Subjects. The authors of the CCSS explicitly state that the text exemplars in each grade band are meant to serve as models for quantitative and qualitative text complexity including length, topic and level of difficulty, literary merit, and breadth of texts (2010b, p.2). The text exemplar list in each grade band is intended to support the standards of the Common Core and is not intended to be a complete, or even a partial reading list; this implies that it is not meant to be a mandatory reading list.

Providing a sense of the texts that meet the criteria for each grade band, Appendix B of the Common Core contains whole or excerpted selections of the texts. It also includes sample performance tasks aligned to the standards. These tasks typically appear after the categories for poetry, or where poetry is represented, as well as for informational text in science, math, and technology.

Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman (2012) advocate for teachers, literacy coaches, and school leaders to question others' interpretations of the Common Core State Standards and place the responsibility of understanding the standards firmly on the individual shoulders of teachers and school and district leaders so that they, themselves, may determine how the goals of the standards are met (p. 2). *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement* (2012) is a powerful affirmation for the professionalism of teachers and school leaders, and a positive discussion of the ELA standards for reading, writing, and speaking and listening.

Armed with a deeper understanding of the Common Core State Standards, particularly as it relates to English Language Arts, we felt empowered to take ownership in our own teaching settings and explore how teachers select books for their classrooms to go beyond the list of text exemplars. We are committed to finding possibilities for teaching with global literature to build knowledge of global issues and cultures. With our focus squarely on global literature, in addition to considering the qualities of the texts so that our selections align to the CCSS, we asked ourselves the following questions.

- What criteria am I using to determine that the text is global literature?
- How does the text incorporate global or universal themes?
- How does the text represent global cultures and/or issues?
- Is the global message conveyed overtly, or is the message more metaphorical or symbolic?
- How do the illustrations in picture books impact global understanding?
- How does the main character express her understanding of universal or global themes?

Literacy Experiences with Global Literature and the CCSS

Our goals as a Teacher Talk community included not only to select global texts for the classroom that go beyond the list of exemplar texts, but to also consider the literacy events that explore what it means to use and read global literature while meeting the requirements of the Common Core State Standards. These literacy events are what happen when we bring our developing understandings of the exemplar list and global literature and align them to the CCSS. To experience what it means to read global literature in the age of the CCSS, we have collected our texts, paired them, and shared them. From the challenges to the victories, these are the stories we want to tell in these vignettes.

Our vignettes can be read in isolation or as a collection; because we approached our inquiry in ways that addressed our individual work and goals, we have different stories to tell. In addition to our shared goals and commitments, we do, however, have common threads, like the value and respect for being a member of a professional study group like Teacher Talk. Joan Zaleski, Angela Buffalino-Morgan, and Esmeralda Carini, all currently in phases of their education careers where they are

not in a classroom, decided to collaborate on planning a cross-curricular unit for third grade using [*Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*](#) (Lin, 2009) as their anchor text. Their successful planning will be fully realized when their unit is implemented in the upcoming school year. As you read their stories, you will notice how they refer to each other and influenced one another in their planning of their unit. But perhaps the greatest thread through all the stories is our united commitment to keep children's literature alive in the age of the Common Core State Standards. Our vignettes can be viewed through our goals.

~Keeping children's literature alive while meeting the CCSS requirements

To nurture a love for reading in children, and to increase children's opportunities with global literature, [Joan Zaleski](#) advocates for developing pre-service and in-service teachers' knowledge of global children's literature. In the age of the CCSS, her work, however, just begins with widening the range of knowledge of children's literature and extends to scaffolding how to share texts creatively. Recognizing the call for cross-disciplinary literacy teaching and learning, Joan describes in her vignette how she developed an ELA Fantasy curriculum unit based on Lin's (2009) *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*. Deciding to collaborate with Joan and using her ELA unit as a model, Angela Buffalino-Morgan webbed themes she identified in Lin's book that reaches across the curriculum to the content areas of social studies, science, and math to include informational texts.

The cross-disciplinary curriculum map that [Angela Buffalino-Morgan](#) developed using Lin's (2009) *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* as an anchor text provided a conceptual and visual framework for creating text sets with global children's literature. However, finding global texts that align to the rigor and expectations of the CCSS was not as easy for Angela as visiting her library with the list of text exemplars in hand, the fruits of which were shared in the opening vignette. In her vignette, Angela describes how she negotiated the challenges of finding texts with cultural authenticity, as well as the availability of global, international, and multicultural children's literature, while contemplating the criteria of the CCSS.

Since neither Joan Zaleski nor Angela Buffalino-Morgan has access to a school-age classroom, Esmeralda Carini provided an opportunity to bring this cross-disciplinary unit to 3rd graders. Having a grade and class to plan for changed their work from an empty exercise and added new motivation and enthusiasm to their collaboration. Recognizing the enormity and challenge of implementing the CCSS for a school leader and classroom teacher, Esmeralda had assigned herself the responsibility of developing a cross-disciplinary unit that is CCSS aligned and incorporates global literature. She welcomed the opportunity to collaborate in a peer supported professional community.

As a content literacy specialist, [Esmeralda Carini](#) has been working hard on her development of Common Core District training for English Language Arts. In her vignette, Esmeralda describes how she used her Professional Development training sessions as an opportunity to encourage classroom teachers by placing decisions determining curriculum development back into their hands. Esmeralda's goal has been to develop an understanding that "the Standards define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach" (2010a, p.6) and by doing so, to develop respect for their own professional judgment and for the professional judgment of each other.

~Creating opportunities for global thinking with children's literature.

[Stephanie Annunziata](#) was motivated by her interest in understanding and interpreting the CCSS for herself, as well as her desire to satisfy the concerns of parents. She undertook a project to create a way to bring global literature and global thinking in a CCSS aligned literacy experience into the homes of her students in a meaningful way. In her vignette, Stephanie shares how she created Poetry Take-Home Backpacks for her 1st-3rd grade students. Given her grade and age range, Stephanie organized three different bags for her students to take home to share with their families/parents. These book bags were organized with texts around global themes, and filled with meaningful engagements that were not only Common Core aligned, but also instigated conversations about global themes of humor, perspectives, and nature.

Faced with a changing curriculum to meet the rigorous expectations of the CCSS, [Vera Zinnel](#) was tackled the challenge of creating space for conversations with global literature and thinking globally with her third grade class. Feeling the pressure to adopt a new curriculum, in her vignette, Vera describes how she struggled with what she would have to give up to have the time to deliver the curriculum being imposed on her and how she held fast to her commitment of keeping literature alive for her students through critical conversations and literary experiences with global literature.

Squeezing in time at the end of the school year to share global literature with her English as a Second Language students, [Amy Gaddes's](#) vignette is a poignant reminder of the importance of global literature for our students. The safe place she creates for dialogue allowed conversations around the texts where her students could explore who they are - their own cultural identity - and could learn about each other. As Amy traveled this journey with her students, she was reminded about how much she can learn from and alongside her students. This is a telling lesson for all of us at the table of Teacher Talk and underscores the importance of selecting global texts to expand the Common Core list for text exemplars. The school year and these stories may have come to an end, but our work with global literature has just begun.

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∞ The Common Core Exemplar List and Books Worth Reading

by Joan Zaleski

My focus throughout this school year has been to find ways to help teachers move beyond the Common Core exemplar list of texts that has seemed to impose itself in teachers' classrooms. Asking teachers to include other possibilities for texts that might help students to think more globally and that might stir their imaginations to help us see the world we live in with new eyes, requires a strong commitment to know and love the literature we bring into our classrooms, and a deep imagination to trust the responses that our students will have to these books. Katherine

Paterson (1995, in Harvey and Goudvis, 2007, p. 253) is quoted as saying,

It is not enough to simply teach children to read; we have to give them something worth reading. Something that will stretch their imaginations - something that will help them make sense of their own lives and encourage them to reach out toward people whose lives are quite different from their own.

In my quest to find ‘something worth reading’, I suggested that our Teacher Talk group read Grace Lin’s (2009) [*Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*](#), a 2010 Newbery Honor Book. The author describes her book as a fantasy, based on the Chinese folktales she remembered from childhood. Full color illustrations by the author enhance the story and bring a welcome visual sense to the fantasy. Young Minli, the strong female character who sets out on her quest to find the Old Man of the Moon, hopes he will help her change her family’s fortune. With similarities to L. Frank Baum’s classic, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Minli meets all kinds of fantastical creatures, good and bad, on her way to Never-Ending Mountain to find the Old Man of the Moon. What makes *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* unique are the many references to Chinese legends that appear through the art of the characters’ storytelling.

When we met in January to discuss the book, it became clear that reading fantasy was a challenge for some in our group. Preferring realistic fiction, non-fiction, historical fiction, and picture books to engage discussion, a few teachers admitted they had little patience for following Minli on her journey. This response provoked a discussion about why fantasy, as a genre, is rarely found in our classrooms, other than the Harry Potter series. If this were to be a book worth reading, we agreed that first of all the teacher needs to be excited about the book. We needed to identify for ourselves what was exciting about this book and how it could meet our goal of extending the exemplar text list and helping students to think globally.

To help tackle these questions, I joined two other members of the group, Angela Buffalino-Morgan and Esmeralda Carini, who were excited about reading *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* and began thinking of all the connections to other texts, to other parts of the curriculum, to themes that resonated for them, and what Common Core Learning Standards could be addressed. Using *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* as our exemplar text for either 3rd or 4th grade, I created a [Fantasy Genre Study Unit](#) (click on the link to download the unit) that identified the characteristics of fantasy this study would provide, a text set based on fantasy themes and a fantasy author study and illustrator study. After meeting with Angela and Esmeralda, I was excited to learn that Esmeralda was working with one of her teachers to implement the fantasy unit. We decided that Angela would develop social studies connections to the book, while I would develop a [language arts lesson](#) (click on the link to download the lesson plan) from the unit.

What I learned this year:

- It is very hard to stay true to your beliefs in developing such units. I kept asking myself, is this a book worth reading, how does this extend the list of exemplar books, and finally, how would this book provoke global thinking in young readers? There is no doubt that sharing these questions in our Teacher Talk group helped us all to grow more deeply as teachers. But I worry that most teachers, without the support of colleagues, would turn to published lists, curriculum, and lesson plans. Caution: Know your books!
- While it is possible to create a unit of study and lesson plans that fit the requirements of the CCSS, it is doubtful that it will have much meaning without knowing your students. Angela and I were limited in not having a class of students to work with this year. However, teaming up with Esmeralda, who is collaborating with a 3rd grade teacher in her district to implement the fantasy unit made it more meaningful. Caution: Know your students!
- Some of the exemplar texts are good. We were all surprised to find that *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* can be found on the grade 4 list, no doubt because of its level of text complexity. I hope that it will also be enjoyed for its imaginative themes of family, cultural identity, and transformation.
- Designing a “curriculum that is international” (Short, 2009) continues to be a dsxwork in progress. I think we are comfortable as teachers with starting with the personal cultural identities of ourselves and our students, and can easily move toward cross-cultural studies, as our fantasy unit does. However, inviting different perspectives and inquiries are bigger steps that remain to be accomplished.



∞ Finding Quality Global Children’s Literature

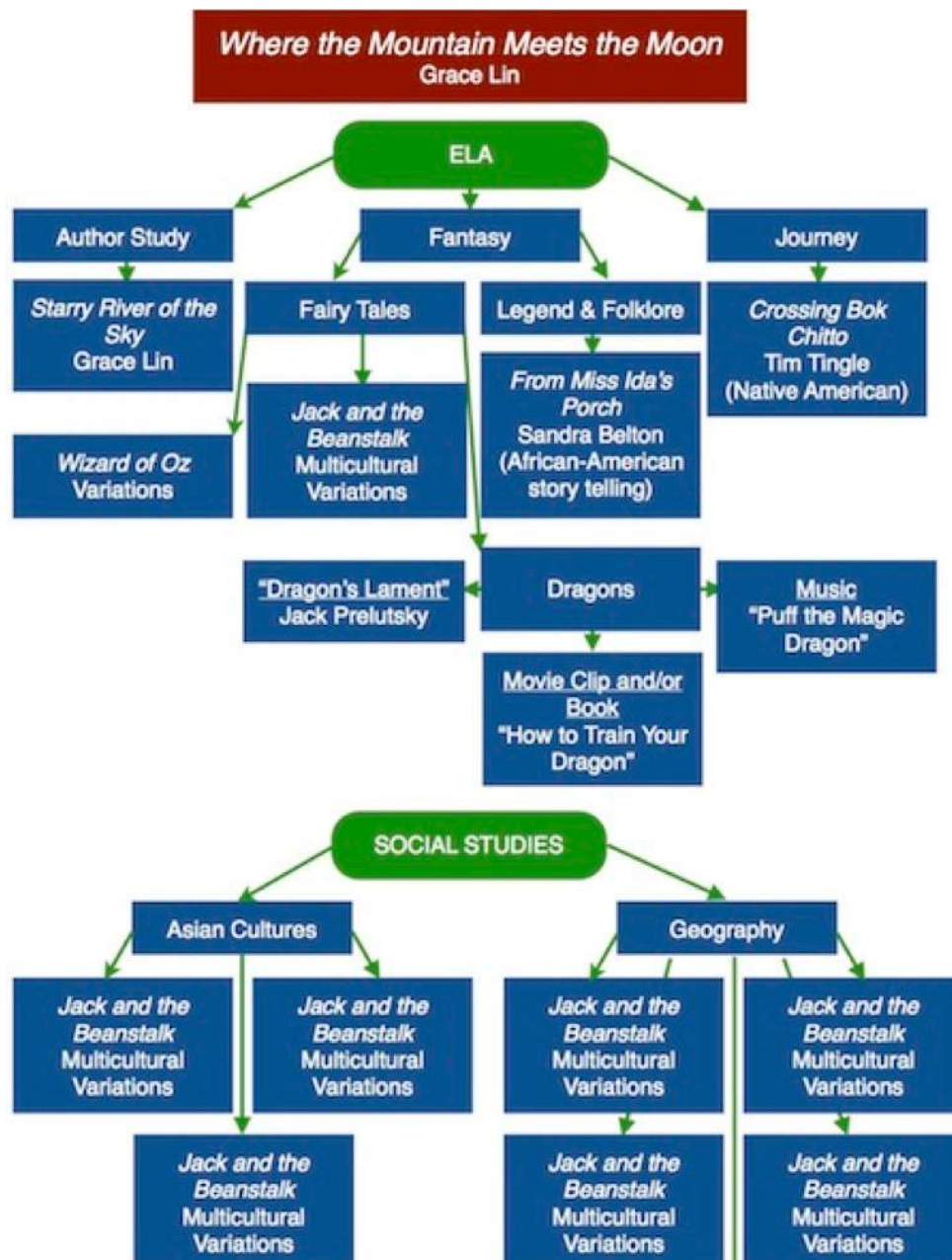
by Angela Buffalino-Morgan

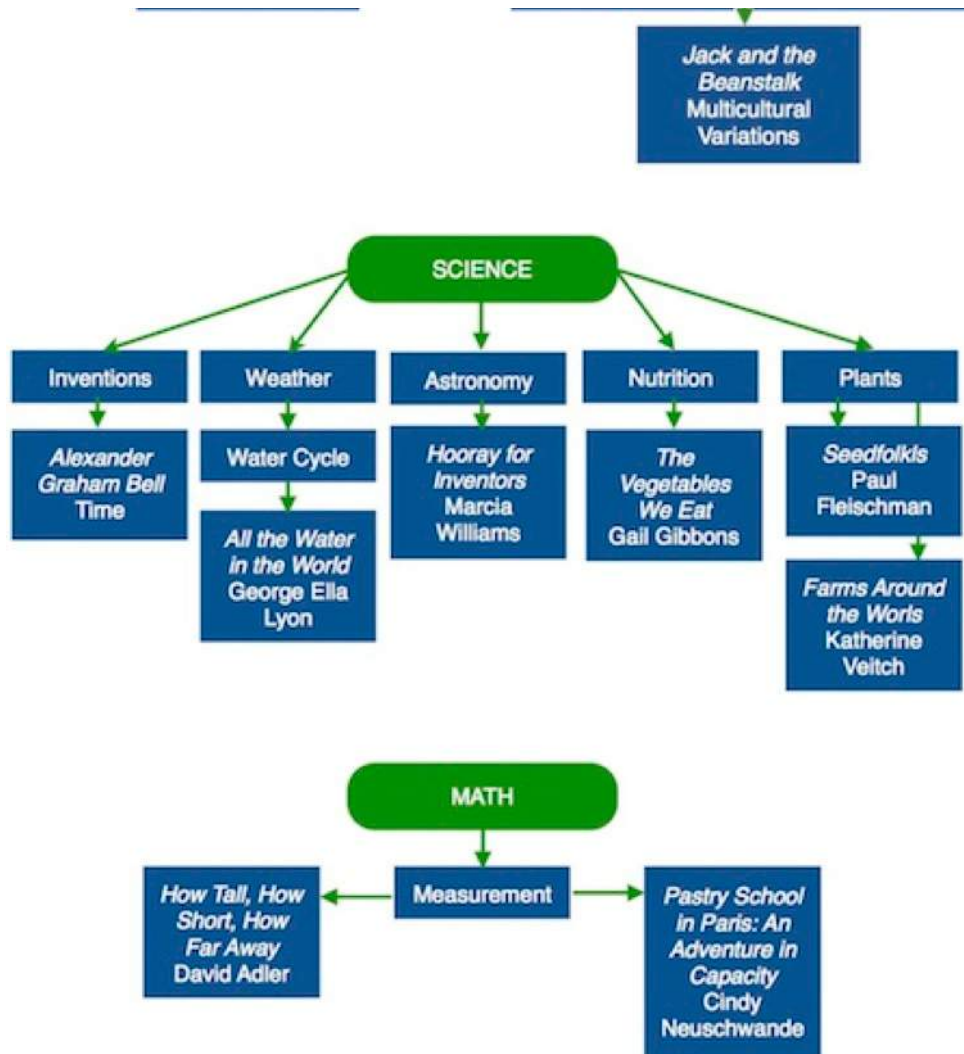
I sat around the table with my Teacher Talk group feeling inspired. Our monthly meeting of educators comes together to share ideas and support one another in our professional work. On this particular evening in January, we were discussing children’s literature and what we identified as an obvious need to expand the Common Core State Standards Text Exemplar List with global literature. As we talked, we thought about the different grade levels we teach and the cross-curriculum opportunities global literature could provide; this led us to think about how we might use global literature as anchor texts.

When we parted ways for the night, I left with *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* by Grace Lin,

(2009) in hand. This text exemplar for grades 4-5 is a fantasy novel about a young girl, Minli, who goes on a journey to seek the Old Man of the Moon to inquire how she can change her fortune. Interwoven with Chinese folklore, Lin details Minli's adventures in the style of Baum's 1900 classic, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

I read *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* over our winter break and immediately fell in love with the story. I started to think about the many different ways this book could be used as an anchor text across the curriculum in an elementary classroom. To organize my thoughts, I created a web illustrating how this story could branch into different elements of an elementary grade curriculum including Language Arts, Science, Social Studies and Math. Once I started to compile the cross-curriculum subject areas I pulled from *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*, I knew I wanted to select global literature to enhance each area.





When Teacher Talk met the following month, I presented my cross-curriculum map to the group. Joan Zaleski and Esmeralda Carini not only shared my passion for *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*, but by utilizing my cross-curriculum map as a springboard, they also saw the many possibilities for using this book as an anchor text. Without classrooms of our own this year, Joan Zaleski and I welcomed the opportunity to join Esmeralda Carini's cross-curriculum implementation of *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* in a third grade classroom in Hawaii; a classroom far away from our New York homes. We agreed that we would each create a unit of study: Joan would create a fantasy genre study, Esmeralda would focus on Language Arts, and I would create a unit for Social Studies. I didn't think much about the direction I wanted my unit to take, other than wanting to include both fiction and non-fiction global literature focusing on maps and mapping skills to align to third grade curriculum standards.

To begin my search for texts for my unit, I sat at home on the computer and pulled up my local public library's online catalogue. I am fortunate to have access to a centralized library catalogue system, which enabled me to expand my search to the collections of neighboring libraries; however, no matter how I tried, the keyword searches I used turned up very few results. So, I

headed to my local library to speak with a librarian and tap into her knowledge, expertise, and resources. After I explained what I was looking for, she quickly began pulling up titles of books she identified as multicultural or global literature and produced more than 30 selections for me to sift through. She also gave me some pointers on how to narrow down my search using the online system.

I started traveling down the aisles in the 900's finding many of the titles my librarian identified for me. In the hopes of compiling an expansive text set, I then requested the transfer of the titles that remained on my list from other library branches. After gathering as many texts as possible, I sorted through the texts I collected. I quickly realized that there were many books that I could dismiss. For some, the complexity of the information was not appropriate for a third grade content level, or the texts were off topic. Others lacked visual appeal for third graders. Several of the texts were just too ancient. As my collection whittled down, I found that not a single text I was left with met the most important criteria I had set, which was that the texts represent diverse cultures in a collection of global literature. Although I did locate some international translated works, I was searching for a higher quality selection. I was looking for more than a story with colorful illustrations of a classroom. Through experiences with global literature, I wanted the students to have an opportunity to learn about themselves and the diversity of experiences in our globalized world while still staying on target for teaching a Social Studies study of maps; I wanted the students, to 'meet' people outside their own communities and see how landscapes influence people's ways of life.

I returned to my computer to see if I could expand my global literature collection; I searched around on various bookseller websites, this time utilizing some of the key words the library specialists helped me hone in on: "multicultural," "global literature," "world literature." After reading various book reviews, I thought I found three solid titles to work with. Because none of my local libraries had copies of these texts, I purchased them and awaited their arrival.

Unfortunately, the books I ordered did not meet my expectations. I felt misled by the publishers' keywords and website product descriptions; I didn't even know how one of the titles I purchased could remotely be labeled as "multicultural" when it has as its main character a dog, and not even a personified dog!

On what I thought would be an easy quest, I was fully confronted with the challenges of bringing international or global children's literature to the classroom. Believing that I had found only one appropriate title to compliment our anchor text in a cross-cultural study, I felt very disappointed. Talking with my professional community at our next monthly meeting of Teacher Talk, I began to question my emphasis on the text itself and was reminded that it was my commitment to and awareness of global literature that would ensure that I would bring multicultural and global

literature to the classroom. But more importantly, I was reminded by the stories of the Teacher Talk community as they shared their experiences of bringing global literature to the classroom that the text is not enough, and that it is the conversations and the engagements with global literature in a curriculum that is international that builds global and intercultural understanding (Short, 2009).

Although my search for finding quality global literature continues, my cross-curriculum map for third grade with Lin's (2009) *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* as the anchor text now includes text selections that I have discovered, as well as selections of global literature that were found by my colleagues, Joan and Esmeralda. Like Minli, I have been on a journey and a quest. What I have learned on my journey thus far is that if I only utilize one title of global literature across the curriculum, I will still accomplish the task of bringing global literature into the classroom and will enrich my curriculum.

Angela Buffalino-Morgan has over 10 years of teaching experience in preschool and elementary school in both urban and suburban environments, and has extensive experience developing classroom curriculum and lesson planning in alignment with state standards. As both a teacher and volunteer leader for several parent organizations, Angela has organized and led many child development and literacy programs.



∞ **Supporting Teachers' Selection of Texts Beyond CCSS Text Exemplars**

by Esmeralda Carini

As Hawaii continues its *race* towards statewide implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), both teachers and principals share the challenge of finding texts that support curriculum and instruction based on the new Standards. At first, Appendix B: Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks of the Common Core State Standards were seen as a gift from the Common Core writers themselves to the schools. Teachers were running with their grade band exemplar lists to their principals, with the hope that they would purchase sets of the texts to use in their classrooms. Principals, many of whom were still trying to get to know the Standards themselves, were happy to oblige in order to provide some support to teachers.

As the literacy content specialist of my complex area, I wanted to bring about some additional understanding of the Common Core's overall premise. CCSS does not promote or mandate any one type of curriculum, text, or teacher's text. More importantly, the CCSS place teachers back in the driver's seat to select and develop curriculum for use in their own classroom instruction (NGACBP & CCSSO, 2010, p.4).

Over the past year, I developed and presented a series of training sessions largely focused on the

CCSS English Language Arts (ELA) standards. In the training sessions, I shared the article *The CCSS Text Exemplars: Understanding Their Aims and Use in Text Selection* (Hiebert, 2012) with my principals, and eventually, with groups of teachers from our complex area. This article helped to open up a much-needed discussion around the following two questions: What are exemplar texts? And, what criteria should be used to select texts to expand the exemplar list? Prior to sharing this article, there were no discussions or trainings that addressed this premise or how to use CCSS. Teachers understandably saw Appendix B as their new curriculum.

This article helped principals and teachers alike build some understanding on how to effectively use the exemplar texts in Appendix B to support their decision-making around their choice of texts. They realized that the exemplar texts should serve as a model for selection of other texts for their instruction. We also discovered that using the exemplar texts in Appendix B as they were intended could increase our teachers' knowledge regarding text complexity. This knowledge would allow teachers to more effectively support the *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard 10 for Reading*, which addresses Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

The trainings and discussions with the principals and teachers led to exciting breakthroughs around text selection and text complexity. I was happy to see that we were on a path to more independence; however, even with all of this newfound knowledge, there was still a lot of wondering as to *how* teachers would build their own text sets if they were not going to rely on Appendix B as their 'newfound curriculum.'

To provide the most effective coaching and support to teachers, I believe it to be of the utmost importance that I have experience and proficiency in performing every literacy task that we are currently requesting teachers do in their classrooms to support instruction (e.g. deconstructing standards, building lessons plans, writing learning targets and creating formative assessments). Because text selection is a critical part of teaching the Standards, I collaborated on developing an interdisciplinary unit that incorporates the Standards at a specific grade level. The student text sets supported instruction, and focusing on a specific grade-level provided an authentic purpose that took this work from an empty exercise to a cross-disciplinary curriculum with possibility.

I developed the cross-disciplinary curriculum with my colleagues in Teacher Talk, a professional learning community I attend monthly via Skype. During one of the Teacher Talk meetings, Joan Zaleski shared a framework she used to build a fantasy genre unit with the book, *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* (Lin, 2009), as the anchor text (See [Zaleski, 2013.](#)) *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* was selected to explore how to incorporate global literature into the curriculum while aligning to the CCSS. The fantasy genre unit that Joan shared with us not only helped to give a place to start using *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* as an anchor text, but

also provided a model for using other text selections, particularly global literature, as an anchor text to build a unit of study that is CCSS aligned.

Joan's description and enthusiasm for the richness of *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* (Lin, 2009) encouraged me to read this text myself and engage in the Teacher Talk meetings that focused on multicultural and global themes and the many ways the study unit approach integrates with the CCSS ELA standards. Reading, reflecting and discussing the texts with colleagues is an important part of the process of selecting texts for instruction.

My collaboration with the Teacher Talk community has not only introduced me to new texts, but has also provided a place to have discussions around the new texts that help me to be more effective in my teaching. Through my participation with Teacher Talk, I have also developed a deeper understanding of the literary elements within the text, including themes and author's purpose, and I am able to model and share this with students, teachers, and principals

Building on the unit of study framework Joan developed around Lin's (2009) *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*, Angela Buffalino-Morgan, created a [cross-disciplinary curriculum map](#) of text resources using those Joan selected for her fantasy genre unit as well as texts for other content areas to be address in the unit. The map visuals were very helpful in supporting the text selection process for our unit because it helped me see exactly what was present in each content area and which areas needed more attention. The map's visuals also guided my text selection conversations with Joan and Angela, my searching for texts, and my understanding of why a particular text may be the best choice to build upon the themes, or compliment the work, of the unit built on the anchor text.

As work on developing the unit progressed, I decided to take the exercise of selecting texts one step further by creating lesson plans for the unit for a teacher to implement in the classroom. I was fortunate to find a thoughtful and enthusiastic 3rd grade teacher in my complex area willing to collaborate on creating lessons and implementing the lessons in her classroom. For me, knowing the actual grade level and the ability levels of the participating students made it much easier when backwards mapping the objectives of the unit (what I wanted the students to know and be able to do as a result of their participation in these lessons) and in the selection of texts.

From here, I went to the Gates Foundation website, www.Commoncore.org to examine other interdisciplinary units (i.e. their big ideas, key elements) to see what text sets they had chosen to support their units of study. These lists helped me learn new text titles that I was unfamiliar with and gave me ideas for authors that I might want to get to know better. I made a list of the titles that I thought would support our unit and checked these out of the Hawaii State Public Library to assess whether the texts would be a right fit for our 3rd grade study unit.

Angela and I made time to Skype together to discuss the lessons I created and the texts I chose or added to the curriculum resource map. We discussed why I chose to keep a certain text or add additional ones to the unit, how each text addressed CCSS, and how and why it was supportive to the individual standard. The collaboration with another teacher really helped me to clarify *why* I had chosen a particular text and *how* I was going to use it in my instruction.

The benefit of all this work really came together for me this summer when I met with teachers from my Complex Area, one of whom is the 3rd grade teacher that will be implementing this unit of study in the coming school year, to collaborate on curriculum mapping and building interdisciplinary units. I shared the information on text selection, the study unit framework, and the curriculum resource map developed by the Teacher Talk group. We discussed developing the study unit and the steps taken in selecting texts that were rich in quality and which also align with the CCSS. The Complex Area teachers were inspired by seeing examples of the Teacher Talk work, hearing about the collaborative process that produced the work and discussing the different types of texts that we might use to teach a particular genre study or Standard. The meeting with the Complex Area teachers also roused belief in their own capabilities in taking this approach. As one teacher put it “It just makes it seem more doable” as she began to brainstorm texts to add to her own unit of study. Many of the participating teachers seemed to feel that they do, indeed, have the competence to expand the Appendix B: Exemplar Text List with rich and meaningful texts to build a curriculum that is aligned to the CCSS. Seeing my teachers feel confident in their ability to select texts and create text sets for instruction made me feel very excited.

Showing teachers how, instead of giving them what to use to support their instruction, is a new mind shift and one that I recommend we all embrace, particularly as we align our teaching practice to the CCSS. Sharing the process and relying on the professionalism and the knowledge teachers bring to the table around different texts will help make instruction more vibrant and put the teacher back in the driver’s seat of the learning that occurs in the classroom.

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Global Themes in Poetry Backpacks

by Stephanie Annunziata

When we sat down last fall at our first Teacher Talk meeting of the school year, the Common Core State Standards already had a very firm grasp on my attention. I was learning about the standards and trying to understand how to fit them into my classroom without compromising what was already happening there. Along with my own interest, I was getting a lot of inquiries from parents asking about the standards and what it meant for their child both at school and at home.

After much conversation, our Teacher Talk group decided that we would focus our discussions on exploring the Common Core Text Exemplar List and how to go beyond it to include global children's literature. We felt that this was important for students in order to develop ideals of global thinking, while still meeting the requirements of the standards. I found several texts with global themes, which, based on Lexile level and genre, fit into the Common Core Text Exemplars. These books were based on common global themes and situations, such as losing a tooth, helping in times of need, and acts of kindness. I shared these books with my class both as read aloud selections and discussion books. We used these books to make connections to personal experiences, current events, and to other books.

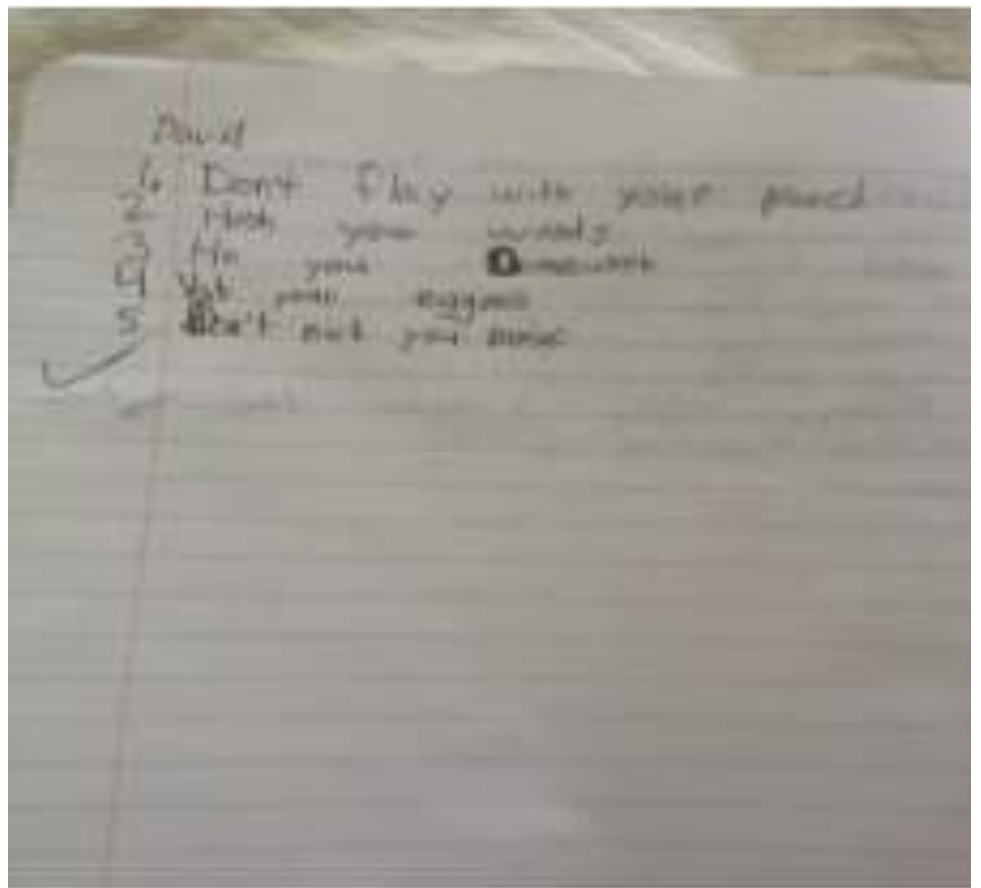
As the year progressed, I decided not only to try and expose my students to global literature equivalent to the ones on the exemplar list in terms of text complexity, but to also include their families in this adventure. I started by providing book suggestions in our monthly newsletter. As

long as they visited the library or bookstore and read the books, this took care of exposing them to global literature; however, I realized that this exposure alone wasn't helping to facilitate discussions that supported global thinking and the key concepts of thinking related to the Common Core Standards. As poetry month approached, I decided I would use a new approach with poetry as a vehicle to achieve this.

This past year I taught in a multi-age classroom (grades 1-3) with 25 students. I had several reading and foundational reading groups with about five children in each group. I wanted to create something that would enable each child to have a chance to share the poetry books that we were reading and investigating in school with their family members. I wanted them to engage with poetry and to discuss these books with their families to create a deeper understanding and enjoyment of them. So, after much thinking, I came up with poetry backpacks. Each backpack, or drawstring bag, consisted of one or two poetry books representing a global theme, a notebook for responses, a family letter, and an activity.



One child in each group would take the backpack home for an entire week to read the poems, complete the activities, and engage in discussions with their families. Each grade level backpack focused on a different global theme and a standard of the Common Core English Language Arts Standards.



The third grade's backpack focused on the work of Shel Silverstein and his humorous poems. Their pack focused on third grade foundational reading skills. The students engaged in word recognition and fluency standards, as they created their own "Runny Babbit-isms" (shown above). They were encouraged to discuss their favorite poems with their families citing lines directly from the stanzas.

The second grade's backpack focused on the global theme of fairytales. The fairytales I selected are classic fairytales told from different points of view. I asked my students to compare and contrast two different texts, a poem and a book, as well as to write an opinion piece as to which they enjoyed best and why. They were encouraged to re-tell the stories verbally to their family members from their point of view, as if they were a character in the story.



The first grade's backpack focused on the global theme of nature and its patterns. They were asked to go on a scavenger hunt and find spirals in nature and document them using both a camera (included in the pack) and their notebook to descriptively write about them. They were encouraged to find and discuss with their families different elements in nature and how they might be helpful to our environment.



In the end, these backpacks created a wealth of excitement about poetry and reading both inside and outside my classroom. They helped the families of my students understand a little more about the Common Core State Standards and how to have meaningful discussions about books guided by those Standards and they helped my students to learn how to engage in a deeper way with books outside the classroom. They also created a poetry explosion that crossed over almost every curriculum in my classroom. The children were especially eager to write their own poems and create their own books for our classroom library. We even devoted an entire day to the reading, writing, and sharing of poetry. I definitely intend to keep up with these backpacks next year filling them with different genres and subject areas. This project encouraged me to go beyond the exemplar list, and, as I did, it opened the door to accessible global literature that meets the standards of the Common Core.

Excerpts of Poetry Taken From:

Dahl, R. (2009). *Revoltin' rhymes*. New York: Puffin.

Bibliography of Books in Poetry Backpacks

First Grade Poetry Backpack:

Lyon, G. E. (2011). *All the water in the world*. New York: Atheneum.

Salas, L. P. (2012). *A leaf can be...* New York: Scholastic.

Sidman, J. (2011). *Swirl by swirl*. New York: Scholastic.

Second Grade Poetry Backpack:

Loewen, N. (2012). *Believe me, Goldilocks rocks!* Minnesota: Picture Window.

Shaskan, T. S. (2012). *Honestly, Red Ridding Hood is rotten!* Minnesota: Picture Window.

Third Grade Poetry Backpack:

Silverstein, S. (2005). *Runny babbit: A billy sook*. New York: Harper Collins.

After many years as a kindergarten teacher, Stephanie Annunziata is co-teaching in a 1st-3rd multi-grade classroom in Our Lady of Grace Montessori School, Manhasset, NY.

Keeping Literature Alive

by Vera Zinnel

The 2012-2013 school year portended to be a challenging one; it would be the first year that my district was going to follow the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) with earnest. We had already been trained with the new math standards and provided with a new curriculum. At the staff development meeting days prior to the opening of the school year, we were presented with the new CCSS for English Language Arts (ELA). The assumption that we made was that implementing these new standards would be up to each teacher. Not only would we be implementing the new standards, but teacher evaluations were also changing. I sat in the cafeteria listening to what standards *I* would be judged by and I felt confident that in my 24th year of teaching I had this!

In late September the third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers were scheduled to attend a district meeting for staff development. We were presented with large binders containing our new ELA curriculum that would help us meet the CCSS. What struck me when I opened the massive binder was the word *draft* printed across all the pages. Why were we being asked to implement a program that was not even finalized? As I read through the binder, I realized the first module dealt with the constitution written by the Iroquois people of New York State. It was very non-fiction heavy. The program was very scripted and the lessons were supposed to take 45 minutes to an hour. I went back to my classroom and put the binder away on my shelf.

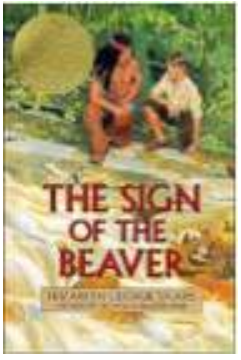
I felt that what I was doing in my classroom already was as rigorous as this new curriculum. No one had said we “had to” do this curriculum and it did say *draft* across all the pages; surely we were not to use a program that was in its draft form. What, I wondered, would I have to give up to fit this curriculum in? I told my class at the beginning of the year that we would be reading many books and learning about how history is written. I told them we would become detectives as we read from different sources in an effort to determine what we think is the truth and what is not. My class was up and running with a routine and our guided reading groups were going well. The class was engaged and starting to read rigorous books. Many of the books that I had chosen fit the criteria of the CCSS but were not on the text exemplar list. I was using the criteria suggested by the CCSS of using Lexile level, guided reading level, and purpose for reading. I felt confident that I was adhering to and incorporating the new standards.

In October, one of my colleagues started the new curriculum. She said she was going to use it as her ELA and Social Studies programs. I had a conversation with her about how she was fitting it all in. She told me that she did not do guided reading groups and that was how she was able to fit it in. I had five guided reading groups going in my class and I was determined not to stop. Math and Science still had to be taught, and combining ELA and Social Studies was not going to help either. With five guided groups meeting for 15 to 20 minutes four days a week, the time was not there.

Shortly after our return to school, which had been interrupted by Super Storm Sandy, I met with my Assistant Principal to discuss my goals for the year. It was then that he asked what I thought of the new curriculum. I told him that I was not using it and preferred what I was doing, explaining that I had no time in my schedule to fit it in. He explained to me that it was expected that I use this curriculum. The district felt that since the program was endorsed by the state and available on the website EngageNY, using it would provide our students with the best preparation for the new state tests they would have to take. I asked where exactly I would be fitting this in. After looking at my schedule, he told me I would have to stop my guided reading groups. I was stunned! We had a long discussion in which I cited various studies and books extolling the benefits of guided reading. Hadn't the district just trained me for the past three years in balanced literacy, the bulk of which dealt with guided reading groups? He shrugged his shoulders and told me this was what would be happening from now on. I guess it was time to dust off the binder.

I logged on to EngageNY and discovered that draft had been removed from the pages of module 1. I took the binder home and tried to figure out how I would use this program and remain committed to my ideals of what was pedagogically and instructionally sound for my students. I dove in with my class and we started our inquiry of the Iroquois Constitution.

When I finally came to terms with implementing this curriculum, I realized that, like anything else, I did not have to stick with the script. I adjusted and tweaked the program to fit the needs of my class. Something was missing, however. The ELA curriculum was non-fiction heavy with only one novel included in module 2. The children were enjoying learning about the Iroquois, but I was concerned about the lack of fiction and I was missing the talk that surrounded reading a good fiction book with my class. I am committed to selecting books that go beyond the CCSS text exemplar list to include global literature and keeping literature alive. I view Appendix B for Text Exemplars as a guideline of sorts. There are so many wonderful, quality books not on the list that all children should have the opportunity to read.



I decided that I could find 15 to 20 minutes three days per week to read a book with the class and selected [*The Sign of the Beaver*](#) by Elisabeth George Speare. It has a high Lexile level, which implies that there will be plenty of opportunity to introduce some enriching vocabulary words. The guided reading level is listed as appropriate for 5th grade. There is also some controversy surrounding the book; some feel that the book does not portray Native Americans in a positive light. The dialogue used for the Native American characters is thought to be old Hollywood stereotypes. Perfect, I thought. We can read this book and read it critically by talking about why some people find the book objectionable and learn some new vocabulary words. In addition, *The Sign of the Beaver* fit nicely into the new curriculum.

The class enjoyed the book right from the start. It was a difficult text for some in the class, but together we read it. The talk was wonderful; “How could the father leave his son alone in the woods?” “Why is Attean so mean to Matt?” We were up and running. Every day, my class would ask, “Are we going to read *The Sign of the Beaver* today?” They made connections to what we were learning about the Iroquois to the novel. They discovered that Native Americans did not only live in upstate New York and on Long Island, but all over the United States.

Through critical conversations, we addressed some the controversies surrounding *The Sign of the Beaver*, particularly the issue of stereotypes. Imbedded in the story is the idea that “Indians” were seen as savages. This is addressed in the text where the main characters read about Robinson Crusoe’s treatment and attitude toward Friday. Because we had been studying the Iroquois Constitution, some students were able to make the connection that “savages” would not have created a whole system of government. One student was able to see that the main native character, Attean, had his own prejudices regarding white men. Another area of controversy is the portrayal of the way that Saknis, the grandfather and native leader, speaks English. The speech patterns are reminiscent of the stereotypes perpetuated in Old Hollywood films. This was not an easy bias for the students to recognize; however, we did discuss preconceived notions about Native Americans. As a part of the required curriculum, we read the book *Eagle Song* by Joseph Bruchac. By pairing this text with Spear’s *The Sign of the Beaver*, the class was able to make the connection that just as the main character in *Eagle Song* was unfairly characterized as living in a teepee and was being called Chief by others, sometimes in books and films, Native Americans are reduced to stereotypical characteristics.

Because the class was really enjoying our reading of *The Sign of the Beaver*, I found that we were spending more time on it and that I was incorporating more resources into our literature unit. While searching on the social website Pinterest, I found many great ideas for whole class reading and implemented several of them. We also discovered that there is a movie based on the book, which we viewed. We found the movie to be very different from the book. This sparked a wonderful

conversation; there were those who liked the new additions present in the movie, and then there were the purists who were indignant that the book was changed. I enjoyed listening to their ideas and thoughts. More importantly, through these literary experiences I believe that I was keeping literature alive in my classroom.

Once we finished reading the book, the class worked in small groups on a lift-a-flap book project. For the project, I asked my students to pick out the scenes they thought best portrayed each character; one of the book's themes; and showed how the characters changed. For each scene, I instructed them to write a paragraph explaining why they selected the scene and how the scene fit the criteria. For the flaps, they drew pictures of the scenes they selected. They enjoyed working on this project. The discussions that took place within each group, as they debated which scenes to portray, were priceless.



At the end of the year, reading that book and the other four books that followed, were listed as some of the students' highlights of their year. Two boys expressed an interest in reading Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, which was featured prominently in *The Sign of the Beaver*. I felt all my students ended the year with a good sense of story. They became more thoughtful readers and were aware of theme. I felt successful in that I was able to keep literature and the novel, a vital part of schooling, alive in my classroom.



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Creating Our Cultural Identity Quilt: Using Literature to Explore Who We Are

by Amy Gaddes

Starting from the end seems like the right approach to tell this story. Beginning at the end, during the last session of the school year with a small group of graduating sixth grade English Language Learners (ELLs) is the place I need to begin because it was at this point that my students joined me in a conversation that not only exemplified the work and trust that we have built as a community of learners, but in many ways also signified a new beginning in our understanding of ourselves as cultural beings. The journey as a community of learners and the texts that helped us frame this conversation will be revealed as I unfold the nuances of what brought us to our final session together.

Before I share this conversation, I will contextualize these learners. In this group of students, I have 8 sixth grade ELLs that can be categorized, based on New York State's Proficiency standards, the following way: 2 beginners, 2 intermediate, and 4 advanced students. Two of the advanced students have been in my English as a Second Language class since first grade. The others in the class have been in the United States from 1-3 years. Each student is, therefore, in various phases of language learning, acculturation, and language and cultural loss.

I approached our final unit for the year with a *backwards design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) to culminate in the creation of a cultural identity quilt. By the last class, we had read several texts that framed our conversations. These texts were chosen from various genres with the central idea of examining the fluid nature of our identity. Each student had individually contributed two handcrafted quilt squares, and participated in a variety of healthy conversations about what 'cultural identity' means to each of us. I want to emphasize, before I retell this pivotal discussion, that the trust and practice in openly sharing has come together over many years for this group. Although some of the students entered this space as newcomers a year or two ago, the rules of engagement had been well practiced. Even with the linguistic challenges newcomers brought to this forum, they could perceive the safe nature of the room for all who came to our learning circle. This allowed us to take all we learned together and respectfully share ideas and experiences, and question how things work in the world.

To help the students consider the idea of their own cultural identity, I framed the unit around learning about the Native American experience in this country. At our previous session, I distributed an article written by a Native American university student about mascots for sports teams that degraded her heritage. At the end of this reading, I included some images of these

mascots and a cartoon for their consideration. In a dialogue bubble, one school-aged child says to another: “But you don’t look Indian.” There is a thought bubble depicting various images in the speaker’s head of Pocahontas, cowboys and Indians, and sports mascots. Armed with this image, weeks of reading and exploring our own cultural identities, and a safe space, my students entered a rich class discussion. (All names are pseudonyms.)



I asked the students to study the cartoon and offer an explanation of what the characters might be thinking. Manal described how the boy in the cartoon might have constructed his ideas of what Native Americans look like from watching television. Prior to this whole class conversation, Manal, who is from Pakistan and has been in the United States for one year had spoken to me about her concerns of people’s misconceptions about Muslim people. She glanced around the circle of her peers and sought eye contact with me as she expanded on her interpretation of the cartoon. She explained to the class that she was Muslim, and how, in her experience, many people seem to get *their* ideas about Muslims from watching television. She shared that although she agreed that some Muslims have done terrible things to other people and other countries, not all Muslims should be categorized in that way. Manal paused and looked at each of her classmates before asking if anything *she* had ever done seemed mean.

At this point, Jejomar, a Filipino who emigrated 5 years ago, asked what a Muslim was. I took the opportunity to explain that being Muslim is a religion, like Catholicism or Judaism. Jejomar pondered this and stated that he did not know what religion he was. Manal added that at her home she and her sister cover their hair because it would be improper, according to her religion, to be around her father and brother-in-law with their hair exposed. Listening to all this, Jejomar raised his hand and asked, “I have another question. If you are Jewish and you went into a Catholic church or where Manal goes, would you be arrested?” While this conversation took twists and turns I had not anticipated, I carefully explained that in the United States, which was founded on religious freedom, something like that would not happen. I went on to have the students consider that their own families may have immigrated to the United States for the very same types of freedoms.

One of my quieter students, Guillermo, who emigrated from Mexico one year ago, asked what freedom meant. With so many classroom discussions with English Language Learners, I have to be acutely aware of everyone's linguistic understandings. Guillermo's question reminded me that I might have let the personal or emotional aspect of this book discussion go beyond the language capabilities of some of my newer learners. I offered a broad definition of freedom as the ability to go wherever you want, say whatever you want, and, in the case of religion, worship wherever you may want.

Another student from Mexico, Estaban, whose family emigrated 4 years ago, had been absorbing this dialogue with careful scrutiny. He raised his hand and stated that immigrants are not free to go where they want to in the United States. He went on to say that there were politicians who didn't want to give immigrants health care or citizenship. Each turn of this discussion challenged my role in the classroom as a caring adult and a culturally sensitive teacher. I asked Estaban if he had conversations like this with his family and he explained to us that he carefully watched and thought about the news. Manal summed up the emotions in the room and asked if we could use another word other than 'immigrant' because it "makes us feel bad."

Our talk, which started with an invitation to explore the cultural identity of Native Americans based on a cartoon image, took us in many challenging directions.

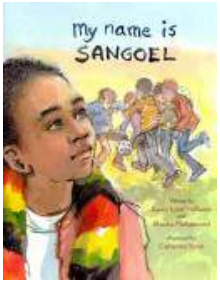
How did we get to such candid and open conversation? What tools did these twelve-year-old students have to so poignantly and deeply explore a cartoon image depicting another culture and relate it to their own lives in such an adult manner? Kathy Short (2009) helps us understand that literature can provide "a window on a culture, but also encourage insights into students' cultural identities." (p. 6).

This unit started about one month before when each student was asked to respond to the prompt, "*Are Native Americans alive today,*" on an index card. Six of the eight children said, "No". Two of the students thought that perhaps there were some '*children of children of children*' who may still be alive today. One stated, "No, I live in New York and I never saw a Native American." After watching a video from the Discovery Channel showing Native American children living on a reservation in today's world, the students were both shocked and intrigued. This set the stage for me to introduce the unit about cultural identity. We talked about their pre-conceived notions of what a Native American may be like and, using the video, the students modified their preliminary ideas. I distributed Post-it notes and asked the students to write down what they wondered about Native Americans at this point. Two examples of their responses include the following statements.

I wonder if Native Americans have to pay taxes?"

I wonder how America got to be so beautiful again after all the conflicts that it had a long

time ago.



To continue my exploration about the universal theme of cultural identity, I turned to a text set of picture books about a person's name and the role that names play as a foundation of our own identity. I read aloud [*My Name is Sangoel*](#), by Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed (2009).

Partners then chose from a text set of picture books.

Calato Laineiz, R. (2009). *Rene has two last names*. Houston, TX: Arte Publico.

Henkes, K. (2008). *Chrysanthemum*. New York: Mulberry Books.

Recorvits, H. (2003). *My name is Yoon*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Williams, K. L. & Mohammed, K. (2009). *My name is Sangoel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman's.

Figure 1: Text set of picture books.

Each student went home and interviewed their family about the origin and meaning of their own names.



I was given this name from

_____.

In my language (or...in my family), my name means

_____.

I like my name because

_____.

I have a nickname _____ that my

_____ gave me because

_____.

Figure 2: Names: A Home Interview

I was particularly moved by the response from my student who emigrated from Pakistan. She wrote: “*I was given this name from my mother. In my language, my name means half of the moon. It represents who I am. It is my identity. It makes me special because everyone’s name is different. But your name is one of a kind.*”

Manal’s comments were written after her sharing about her mother’s death. She was able to make this connection and take this risk in part because of the support offered by the text and the protagonist’s experience with his own name’s origin. Sangoel explains in the beginning of the story that he and his mother and sister had to escape the Sudan after his father was killed. Manal never articulated the nature of her mother’s passing, but she appears to connect great pride to her ‘special’ name given to her by her late mother.

Having these preliminary explorations about cultural identities, we were ready to begin our read aloud of [*Fatty Legs*](#) (Poiak-Fenton, 2010). *Fatty Legs* is the true story of Margaret Poiak-Fenton, who coauthored this book with her sister-in-law, Christy Jordan-Fenton.

Margaret tells her story of being ‘plucked’ from her family at age 8 in her native village north of the Arctic Circle and sent to a boarding school run by Caucasian Catholic nuns and priests. The narrator painfully describes how systematic attempts were made to strip her of her language and cultural practices. They cut her braids, and as she cries she remembers that her father said, “You will always be Inuit...you will always be Olemaun” (her Inuit name). My students made a rich

connection to our previous text, *My Name is Sangoel* (Williams & Mohammed, 2009), where Sangoel's elder tells him, "You will always be Sangoel...always be Dinka, even after you go to the United States."



Signaled by my students' strong connections to these texts, I had my opportunity to introduce our quilt-making project. I offered each student two quilt squares. One was white where the students were invited to draw their country's flag; the other was a color of their choice where they were invited to create an image that showed their cultural identity.

The students were not sure how to start. I returned to our anchor text, *Fatty Legs*, with the characteristics Margaret felt lost to her: her braids, her native name, her mother's cooking, her language, her clothing and even the climate and vegetation from her northern village. I offered the students time to consider their own aspects of their identity. According to Nieto (1999), "culture is dynamic, active, changing, always on the move" (p. 49). We revisited how Margaret's sense of self changed after her two-year stay at the Catholic school. We explored the "hybrid" nature of their own cultural worlds as their lives have unfolded in the United States. I offered access to the Internet for ideas and images that might confirm their current thinking about their identities. Jejomar quickly got to work on his quilt square. He drew Michael Jordan's jersey and a pair of basketball sneakers. Following suit, Guillermo drew a soccer ball and Messi's jersey. The students would not let me miss the fluidity of their own cultures and what needed to go on the quilt. I spoke with them about how much they were able to teach me. They explained to me that this is who they *are*. This allowed me to give them the space to demonstrate this on the quilt. In a very touching way, it also allowed them to re-visit where they came from and where they see themselves going.



I hadn't planned on reading the sequel to *Fatty Legs* (Poiak-Fenton, 2010). The school year was coming to a close and I had just a few more sessions with these students. When I brought in the sequel, [*A Stranger At Home*](#) (Poiak-Fenton, 2011), we explored the title and cover. Some students commented on how it has felt when they returned to their home countries and the conflict they experienced when interacting with relatives who have not left their homeland. My students "already recognized the complexity of culture within their own lives" (Short, 2009, p.5). This helped them to bring insights as they critically discussed Margaret's experience when returning home.

Because of state testing, a week or two went by before we met again. This gave me time to sew the quilt and have it on display for the students' return to my class. With the quilt as the backdrop, our discussion, described earlier, emerged.

There was a lot for me to take away from this experience. First, it is not enough to create a text set and gather anchor texts on a theme you want to explore. You must be patient and carefully place each text into students' hands when they are ready to explore their deeper content. I could have gone from one text to the next, lace in a few writing assignments to see what the students were thinking, and ended it there. I felt enormously rewarded for my willingness to wait, watch, and listen, and let them tell me when and how they could use the texts to support their thinking.

My use of these global texts spoke to my international students in ways I could never have imagined. Beautiful and painful experiences were shared, and stirring questions were asked. My students grew up during these conversations. Likewise, I learned that my own agenda about culture is just that. I needed my students to show me what the quilt needed to look like. I needed them to guide me, as I opened the door for them to look at what culture meant to each of them. Having the texts by our sides allowed each of us to do this with a bit more confidence and candor.

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A to Z Literacy Movement: Multicultural Book Clubs across Grade Levels

Introduction to Our Community: Ann Yanchura

The A to Z Literacy Movement is a grass roots educational mission started by Mal Keenan, a teacher and literacy coach, to provide literacy support in terms of books for children and professional development for the adults who work with them in our local communities northwest of Chicago and to schools in Zambia. As part of our local outreach, we wrote a grant to partner with the local school district and create middle school book clubs whose members would share quality multicultural literature with first graders in a nearby Title One school.

Our stateside adult members are all teachers and literacy coaches who met to learn more about integrating multicultural literature book discussions into our curriculum. In addition to our “stateside” work and learning, we also partnered with Chisiko Community School in Chongwe, Zambia, to offer professional development opportunities to teachers and to share our books with their students.

The project in America consisted of one middle school book club at each of three middle schools who met over the course of the 2012-13 school year to read and discuss multicultural picture books and plan lessons for presenting these books to first graders. The picture books chosen include [*The Gift of the Sun: A Tale from Africa*](#) (Stewart & Daly, 2007), [*Sitti's Secrets*](#) (Nye, 1997), and [*I Love Saturdays y domingos*](#) (Ada, 2004). We visited three different first grade classes in the fall, winter and spring to share the books, our love of reading, and the messages of empowerment, community, and learning that are found in high quality multicultural literature.

The following vignettes provide insight into our Book Clubs experiences and learning. It's impossible to fully describe the exciting impact on our participants. We built bridges and community among our teachers and middle school students and across town to the first graders who came to love and respect their middle school friends. Our teachers and students grew in our understanding of just a few of the varied cultures that make up our schools as we read, thought deeply, and discussed them at length. As these teachers and literacy coaches shared their experiences with colleagues, a new understanding of the vital importance of making high quality multicultural literature a foundation of our instruction is growing and spreading across our school district.

Our professional development work is ongoing with our partner school in Africa through future Skype, email and face to face meetings. We are planning to seek funds to continue and grow this

project in our school district based on the experiences of participating students and teachers and the interest of others in our community who would like to become a part of this work.



∞ **Never Underestimate a First Grader: Mal Keenan**

There is true power in picture books. Picture books offer rich language, incredible stories, and illustrations that add to the experience of any reader. When traveling to schools in Zambia with the A to Z Literacy Movement to help teachers and students, I always find the best lessons to model start with a picture book. As a former elementary school teacher, I'm always surprised at how *few* picture books are used in middle school classrooms today. Participating in the World of Words experience was enlightening for me as well as for the seventh-grade students.

Visiting Mrs. Hall's first grade classroom on three different days, with three different multicultural stories was more than just a project; it was a life lesson for many of the students and adults involved. With each story, the kids became more aware of the multicultural lesson that was tied to each of the books and how much the first grade students had to offer. They took responsibility to ensure the reading and activities were successful and wanted to provide new information to their little first grade pals.



At the end of the project, the seventh-grade readers reflected on their experiences and what they had learned. After a group discussion, I asked the kids to complete an exit slip on their journey. So many of the exit slips made smile as I read through them: “Little kids are smarter than you think”, “I learned that 1st graders have lots of good ideas just like 7th graders, and “Reading educated us on new things and makes us think differently.” One student wrote “1st grade students are really good at noticing things”. The older students recognized the higher level of thinking that the younger students were doing and rose to the occasion. Additionally, the older readers reflected on their new multicultural knowledge and felt empowered to share newly learned information with others in their lives. This project stretched me as a teacher/literacy coach and I was happy to celebrate more multicultural literature in my district.



To take the success of this project one step further, the picture books we used in this project were then shared with a small school, Chishiko Community School, in Zambia, Africa. Work that was completed by students in Crystal Lake, IL was sent as examples of what could be done with students at Chishiko using the picture books, tying the schools, oceans apart, together with memorable stories.



∞ ***We Should Do This More Often!:*** Ann Yanchura

These words were spoken by several middle school students involved in multicultural book clubs that met for three series of sessions over a school year. They were referring to both their meetings with their middle school friends after school and to the three visits we made to a local elementary school to share the books we had read.

Our project was based on the creation of middle school book clubs where students would read and discuss multicultural literature. There was one club at each of the three middle schools in our suburban school district. The teachers who facilitated these clubs had chosen three titles which we rotated among the groups so that each club had read all three titles by the end of the school year. In addition to our own reading and learning, we visited first grade classes at a local elementary school where the middle school students read these books to little ones and facilitated discussions and extension activities.

Obviously, time was an issue in such a complex project. Our middle school students met after school and their busy schedules sometimes interfered with this time commitment. We planned three meetings for each book in order to read it ourselves and prepare for the first grade visits. Each of these meetings included snacks of one kind or another, along with lots of laughing and talking. We heard several times that some students wished we had more meetings so they could enjoy the snacks and hanging out with their friends.



“Wow! The time went fast!” This was a typical reaction when we began to round up our group for

the bus ride back to the middle school. Not only did the sixth graders wish they could spend more time, they also felt that we should make more visits to the first graders. Explaining that we didn't want them to miss any more core instruction time was no consolation.

Now the interesting thing to me is that I agreed with them one hundred percent. We did NOT have enough time. Time, as we all know, is the bane of a teacher's existence. If we teacher facilitators had more time with the sixth grade book clubs, we could have accomplished even more exciting things. There was not enough time to build the cultural background knowledge to help these kids understand the implications of the culture in order to read each book closely and carefully...not enough time for the deep reflection and discussion examining the issues in the book...not enough time to relax and enjoy each other...not enough time to bask in the glory of reading a great book...not enough time to really integrate the study of multicultural literature and make it an embedded part of our curriculum. I think that this was my biggest regret. Isolated instances of multicultural experiences, while beautiful in themselves, do not add up to a culturally sensitive and responsive education. Give us more time! We'll continue on our path towards learning together and accepting each other! We can do it!



∞ **Lessons from Our World of Words Experience: Amy MacCrindle**

You're never too old to grow as an educator. Through this A to Z grant experience I learned how to work with students in a new way. I've learned:

- **Adolescents can be teachers:** I was impressed at how good of teachers adolescent students can be as teachers. Our students were able to think about best practices and how to best teach the 1st graders. One of my favorite moments was when the middle school students began to use "teaching lingo" such as background knowledge, higher order questions, and speaking/listening. What was even more powerful was that the students actually implemented those strategies with the first graders.
- **Adolescents can learn from first graders:** On the bus ride back from school our students

were buzzing with comments such as “wasn’t _____ so cute?” or “Jimmy loved me!” Additionally, we heard phrases like “I can’t believe Susie said this, I never thought of this” or “Have you ever thought of this before?” It’s amazing how much we can grow as people when we allow ourselves the opportunity to be affected by others, no matter their age.

- **Adolescents do care:** I have chosen to be at the middle school level because I love students at this age. That love has grown through this experience because I saw that adolescents care. They *want* to help others in their community. They *want* to be a good example to their peers. They *want* to learn about the world around them.

While I know that the first graders, my adolescent students, and the teachers in Africa grew because of this experience, I did as well. These lessons will continue to influence me and help shape my thinking of adolescent learners.



∞ Lesson Plans, Anyone?: Kimberlee Militello

While there were many signs of growth throughout the school year we were engaged in this project, one of most striking observations was in the growth of our seventh graders' recognition that they needed to be more organized with their planning for our time with the first graders. In our planning sessions for our first visit, the 7th graders mainly worried about reading the text fluently. They really gave little real thought to what they would actually do with the text besides stopping and discussing parts as they read. While this was a good first step, they realized all too late that reading and noticing alone would not fill the hour of time they were given to “teach” the first graders.

During the first session, the seventh graders ran out of material and were forced to ad-lib. This was huge awakening. This made them uncomfortable. This made them want to prepare differently in the future.

Their feelings about having to “just reread the story a bunch of times” were the central discussion point during our second session planning meetings. The seventh graders understood that they still needed to read the story fluently, but they also had a new respect for the lesson planning portion of our meetings. In our second session the students asked if they could make “a lesson plan” that they could follow once we were with the first graders. As teacher leaders we immediately agreed. The students sketched out their ideas through the use of our classroom Smart board.

Suddenly, our informal meeting where kids chatted care-free and read in pairs changed dramatically. The students were more focused on their “job” as teachers. They took their work more seriously and thus produced higher quality activities for the first graders to engage in. The seventh graders often debated the merits of different activities and the order they wanted to

present information/activities. Through this their confidence and the quality of lessons improved greatly.

Lesson Plan for *I Love Saturdays y domingos*

1. Point out that the book tells an idea in English then also uses the same idea in Spanish-Text Structure or Text Organization
2. Read the book
 - a. Stop and tell the words (Mark the words in the text).
3. Memory Game (Create the game).
4. Venn Diagram with Saturdays and domingos (make yarn circles, copy pictures, “Saturday” and “domingo” headings)
5. Organize the pictures in chronological order



∞ Learning to Believe in Yourself: Jenna Brogan

When eighth-grade students were asked if they were interested in reading with first graders, mixed emotions filled the classroom. Many were smiling, some were fearful, and others were anxiously hoping to be a part of the experience. My students each wrote me a persuasive note of why I should choose them for the visits to the elementary school. As the classroom teacher, I carefully chose twelve students, who I felt would be energetic, enthusiastic, and empathetic to read with first grade students.

One student chosen stuck out among the rest. He wrote me a secret note with his concerns about this opportunity. He expressed his excitement about working with young boys and helping them learn to love reading like him; however, he was very reluctant due to his own learning “issues,” as he called them. This young fourteen-year-old receives special education services through his Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Throughout his elementary and early middle school years, he felt that he was always put down and told what he could not do. He rarely felt accepted or that anyone appreciated his unique personality and perspective. I spoke with David about his concerns and learned that he was most afraid of his speech. When David gets excited or nervous, he speaks very quickly! He knew that both of those feelings would continue to radiate within him as we entered the first grade classroom. Therefore, we came up with a plan, and he was pumped!



David and I had been practicing his reading and writing fluency in class. I made three copies of the picture book, *The Gift of the Sun* (Stewart & Daly, 2007), which we would be reading on our first visit. David gave one copy to his speech and language teacher, kept one for home, and put the final on the reading table. Our plan was to practice as often as possible so he felt confident reading with his first grade friends. David didn't want to be a poor example to the new young readers, and he wasn't! He walked into that first grade classroom with his head held high, a smile on his face, and a welcoming demeanor. Time and practice was exactly what he needed, but more importantly, he needed to believe in himself.



∞ Unusual Suspects: Gabriela Carbajal

The objective was clear: gather a group of sixth-grade students to read and explore multicultural picture books to then bring to a first grade classroom to read and transfer the understandings which we gained. The part which was not entirely clear was how I should select such group of students. As teachers, we all have our “star” students. Those who volunteer for projects, are high achievers, and are involved in many extracurricular activities. Those are the students I decided not to pick for this particular project. Maybe this was a bit of a selfish decision, but I wanted to see my quiet, struggling and sometimes off-task students in a different light. I am happy to say I succeeded.

There were two students in particular who surprised me the most: one was Armando, a boy whose English is his second language and has the reputation of being the class clown; a reputation he lives up to. The second was a very reserved girl, Victoria, who did not participate much in class and was quiet all around.

I watched in amazement as my rambunctious Armando became a leader, rather than someone whose purpose was to make his classmates laugh, sometimes even at his own expense. During our after-school meetings, he came up with deep thoughts and ideas to pass on to our first grade friends. I could tell it was hard for him to take on this new personality, which made it all the more special for me to witness. He was able to surpass his classmates' expectations and show a layer of his personality which nobody was aware of. During our trips to visit and read to the first grade class at one of our local elementary schools, this student stood out as one who could relate to the first graders (quite possibly because of the fact that he still has a small piece of childhood in him). He was patient while guiding them to a better understanding of multicultural literature and how it might connect to their own lives.

Victoria, who never acted much like a leader in our sixth-grade classroom, blossomed in the first grade class as the leader of her partnership and an amazing young educator. She was able to come up with and ask questions which elicited deep thinking, and did so at the right times during the

reading. An otherwise somewhat uncomfortable girl in public, she seemed to be very much so in her element during our meetings and interactions with our young friends.

I won't lie; because I decided to choose the "unusual suspects" for our WOW project, there were a few bumps on the road. Not all of my choices rose to the occasion, but I was very glad and it was so worth it for those who did. Although this mission was for the students to learn something new and spread the message of tolerance and acceptance, they taught me to think outside the norm of school culture and take a chance on those students who are typically thought of as NOT the ones to choose.

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Partnering Public Library services with Public Schools

by Heather Dantzler and Jessica Ross

The Washington County Public Library (WCPL) teamed with the kindergarten teachers of Leroy High School to plan and implement lessons that would broaden the students' understandings of global cultures. The Alabama Course of Study objectives for kindergarten social studies state that students should be able to describe ways people celebrate their diverse cultural heritages. The WCPL and kindergarten teachers planned activities to expose students to diverse cultural heritages throughout the year on special holidays observed around the world. Students were exposed to the different cultures through books, crafts, food, and music.

Leroy High School is located in the small rural community of Leroy, Alabama. The school is considered by the federal government to be a low-income school, with nearly 75% of the residents living at or below the poverty level. The 2011-2012 kindergarten class was comprised of 60% White, 30% Black, 8% Native American, and 2% other.

LHS Kindergarten teacher, Kandace Dearmon, and LHS School Media Specialist, Donna Carney, met with WCPL Director, Jessica Ross, to plan ideas for program implementation. Other staff library members, Stacy Fowler, Heather Dantzler, and Paige Dempsey, along with LHS Kindergarten teacher Karen Watkins, joined the planning committee, which met every three months to plan activities to be carried out throughout the year with the kindergarten students.

Global Activities

The first activity took place in the Leroy High School kindergarten classrooms in December. The theme of learning about global cultures was introduced through Christmas customs and traditions celebrated around the world. A WCPL staff member read *Christmas around the World* by Mary Lankford (1998). The students discussed the different traditions described in the book; Sweden

(sweet Lussekatt rolls), Holland (wooden shoes that are filled like stockings), Brazil (fireworks), France (yule log), South Korea (fancy cakes), South Africa and Australia (warm weather) and Mexico (the legend of the poinsettia). The students then created a poinsettia ornament to represent the legend of the Mexican traditional holiday plant. All of the students, the classroom teachers, and school library received a copy of *Christmas Around the World*.

In January, the WCPL visited the kindergarten classes to teach a lesson on the traditions of the Chinese New Year. They began by reading *Celebrating Chinese New Year* by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith (1999) and *Chinese New Year* by David Marx (2002). Students discussed the history, colors, decorations, and traditions explained in the book and created red parade streamers, popped Chinese “firework” poppers, enjoyed fortune cookies, and ate with chopsticks. The teachers and school library received copies of the books.

The celebration of Mardi Gras was chosen to be the focus of the February visit to the kindergarten classrooms. This is a holiday that is quite familiar to the students in this area because of their close proximity to Mobile, Alabama, the birth place of American Mardi Gras. Students learned of the French roots and traditions of the Mardi Gras holiday. A guest reader from Louisiana read the book *Gaston Goes to Mardi Gras* by James Rice (2000) with an authentic Creole dialect and treated students to authentic King Cake brought from Louisiana. The staff and students dressed up with self-made Mardi Gras masks and conducted their own parade for other grades in their building in which they threw beads, candy, and moon pies. The teachers were given a hardback copy and a coloring book copy of *Gaston Goes to Mardi Gras*.

In March, WCPL staff visited the school to discuss the history and traditions of Easter celebrations in the US and around the world. The focus of this visit concentrated on teaching the different views of Easter in different cultures. The WCPL staff read the book *’Twas the Night before Easter* by Natasha Wing (1999) and *Easter Parade* by Lily Karr and Kirsten Richards (2013). The students then heard a story pertaining to the legend of the dogwood tree and the Easter lily. They made an Easter basket that was used in an Easter Egg Hunt located in the yard of the school. As a follow up, students were given Easter-themed coloring pages and fact-filled activity sheets. Each teacher, and the librarian, was given a copy of the two books that were read.

For their visit in April, WCPL staff members were accompanied by the Washington County Native American Education Coordinator and members of the MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians Fancy Dancers. The purpose behind this visit was to teach students about Choctaw Indian and local Native American culture. First, the students listened as the staff read three books to them. The books were *Alabama Native Americans* by Carole Marsh (2004), *North American Indians* by Douglas Gorsline (1977), and *Powwow* by George Ancona (1993). Then, a slide show about Choctaw Indians was presented. Students learned about types of dress, housing, and foods used by

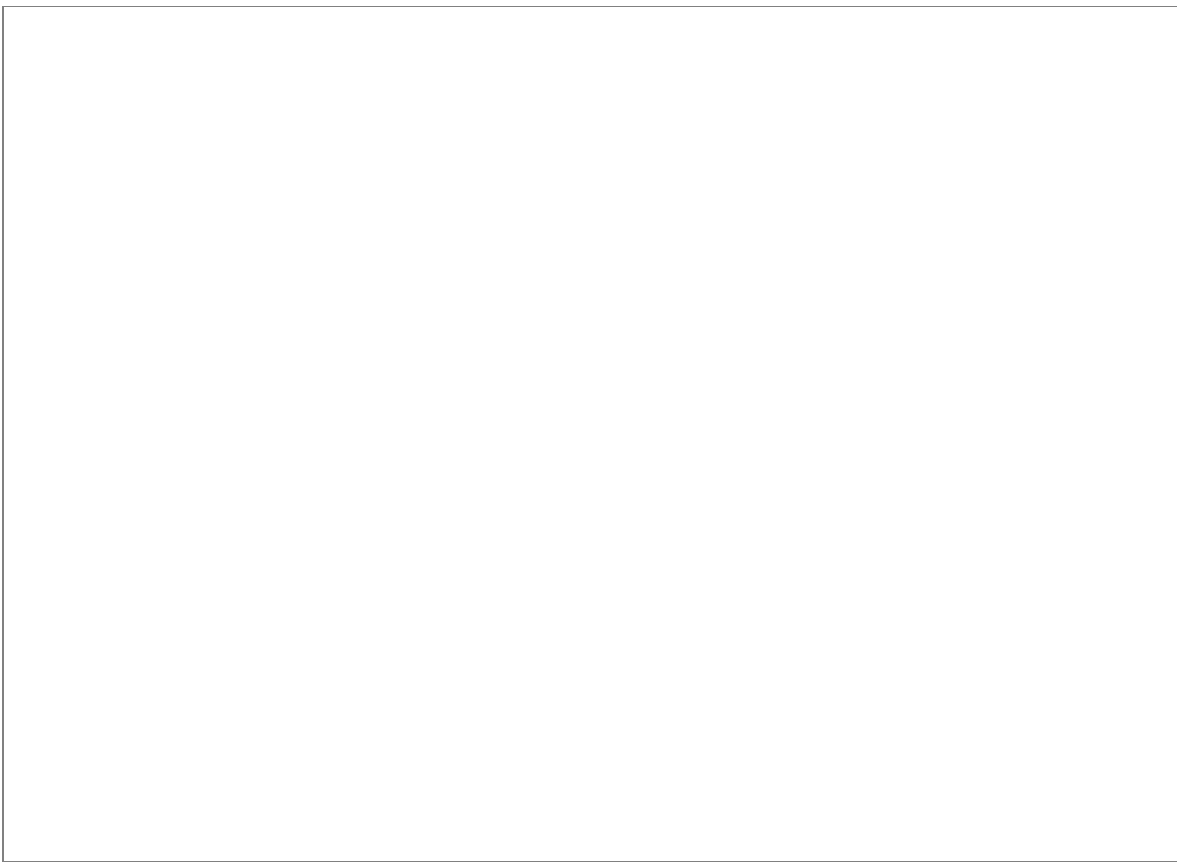
the tribe. Members of the tribe demonstrated tribal dances and students had the chance to interact with the Fancy dancers by dancing along. They also taught the students some tribal Choctaw words, showed their own personal handmade accessories, and explained their regalia. At the end of the visit, students were given the opportunity to try different seeds and nuts that are used in traditional Choctaw cooking. Each teacher and the librarian were given a copy of each book that was read aloud.

The last visit to LHS took place during the week of Cinco de Mayo. The WCPL traveled to celebrate Cinco de Mayo with the students. A high school Spanish-speaking student read a bilingual book to the students titled *Curious George, Piñata Party*, by H.A. Rey (2009). A Spanish-speaking student read the book in Spanish, while a staff member alternated with the English translation of the story. Students then discussed how Cinco de Mayo in Mexico is similar to Independence Day in the United States. Students were shown different types of piñatas, and they were able to discuss ways people enjoy piñatas. As a finale, the children were able to make their own piñata using paper bags, tissue paper, and candy. Students then had the opportunity to try authentic chips and salsa from a local Mexican restaurant. As students ate, the WCPL staff explained how the colors of the Mexican flag are represented in the ingredients used to make salsa. Each student, teacher, and the librarian was given a copy of the book.

These visuals bring alive our experiences in the school and demonstrate the collaborative nature of our project.



Created by: Amber Williams



Created by: Valerie Sweeney

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