

ISSN 2577-0551



WOW STORIES

CONNECTIONS FROM THE CLASSROOM
VOLUME IX, ISSUE I

Spring 2022
Global Literacy Communities: Connecting across Cultures to Build
Understandings of Self and the World



College
of
Education

WOW Stories: Volume IX, Issue 1
Global Literacy Communities: Connection Across Cultures to
Build Understandings of Self and the World
 Spring 2022

Table of Contents

Introduction and Editors' Note	2
Developing a Literacy Curriculum with Global Literature	5
Using Global Literature as Bridges to Understand Ourselves and Other Cultures	11
The Hohokam People Project: Learning Through Windows and Mirrors in a Cross-Cultural Study	21
Sacred Stories as Windows and Mirrors: A Pre-Kindergarten Class Reflection	29
A Global Literature Study of Identity and Kindness in Pre-Kindergarten and Preschool Classrooms	37
Exploration of Children's Literature about Middle Eastern Nations and Islamic Culture	43
<i>It's like we're in the book, Miss!</i> A Multimodal View of Self (and Others) through Connections, Color and a Cross-Cultural Lens	50
Young Children's Cross-Cultural Studies with <i>Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns</i>	65
Building Global Connections through Literature During Online Schooling	72
Global and International Literature for English Learners	78
Developing Text Sets and Engagements Using Children's Literature about Middle Eastern Nations and Islamic Cultures	82

Contributors to this Issue:

Jessica Berry	Jennifer Hook	Kelsey Nowacki Junko
Kathryn Chavez	Meghann Kjolsrud	Sakoi
Lacey Elisea	Benjamin Kowalski	Cassandra Sutherland
Nalda Y. Francisco	Prisca Martens Ray	Manal Tafish
Chika Hayashi-Willis	Martens Jane	Abbey Unes
Julia Hillman	Metzger	

Editors:
 Kathy G. Short, Guest Editor

Production Editor:
 Aika Adamson, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ



WOW Stories, Volume IX, Issue 1 by Worlds of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
 Based on a work at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/ix-1/>.

Introduction and Editor's Note

This issue of *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom* includes eleven vignettes from two global literacy communities in Arizona; one consisted of teachers from a private school in a rural community and the other consisted of teachers from urban Title 1 schools. Each community contained educators committed to the use of global literature with students and with explorations of language and culture across global contexts. These two communities are connected by their focus on children exploring global literature as mirrors and windows to examine their own identities and to engage in cross-cultural studies to develop understandings of cultures that differ from their own.

Global Literacy Communities are small groups of educators who engage in professional inquiry around innovative practices in using global children's and adolescent literature to build intercultural understanding. These communities meet regularly to consider global literature, world languages, and ways of using these books in preK-12 classroom contexts. Although the communities may be school-based, district-based, community-based, or university/school collaborations, they share a commitment to thinking together as professional learning communities and to transforming their practice in classrooms.

In 2020-2021, eight Global Literacy Communities received grants from Worlds of Words to support their work with global literature. The members of these communities shared their work on Padlet and were supported by Cynthia Ryman as the Global Literacy Coordinator. Many spent the majority of their year teaching remotely or teaching under strict safety protocols. Although their work was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, they found ways to connect with each other and with students. Each community has written a vignette for *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom*. This issue contains vignettes by the Vail Global Literacy Community and the TUSD Global Literacy Community. The next issue will highlight the work of the six other global communities in other parts of the U.S.

The Global Literacy Communities project is supported by CERCLL, the Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language and Literacy, at the University of Arizona. This Title VI Language Resource Center supports research related to language teaching and learning and provides quality teaching resources and professional development to encourage the meaningful integration of culture, literacy and world language study.

The first set of vignettes focuses on the Vail Global Literacy Community, a community of educators in a faith-based school for young children, ages 2-9, in Vail, Arizona, that contains both indoor and outdoor spaces for learning. Their goal was to continue their work from the previous year on creating a global literature curriculum that invites young children to take on intercultural perspectives (see Volume 3, Issue 1 [<https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/volume-viii-issue-1/>]) for vignettes of their first year's work). They also wanted to continue developing writing and art experiences to deepen children's cultural understandings in Storying Studio.

The first vignette by Prisca Martens and Ray Martens, the facilitators of this group, provides an overview of their work as a study group and in classrooms to help children in understanding themselves as cultural beings and in knowing and respecting cultures that differ from their own. The second vignette by Lacey Elisea, Jane Metzger, and Casandra Sutherland describes their cross-cultural studies with kindergarten students to explore books as bridges to cultures in Mexico and China. The

third vignette by Meghan Kjolsrud is a cross-cultural study with Grade 1-3 children of the Ancestral people of the Sonoran Desert, the Hohokam. The fourth vignette by Jennifer Hook and Abbey Unes describes a study of sacred stories with young children, ages 3-5, to explore their own identities around the metaphor of mirrors and windows. The final vignette by Kelsey Nowacki and Jessica Berry describes their work with young children, ages 4-5, to explore how they can show kindness and love as part of their identities. All of the vignettes provide rich descriptions of curricular engagements and many examples of children's responses and work along with highlighting the books that supported children's thinking.

The second set of vignettes are written by teachers in a large urban school district with educators from Title 1 elementary and middle schools in Tucson, Arizona. This school district is predominantly Latinx but also contains refugee students from many different countries and so has a growing diversity of languages and cultures. In response to their concern about the depictions of the Middle East in global media as a place of violence and conflict and to tensions within schools, the educators in this group wanted to explore picturebooks about the rich histories and cultures of Muslims in the Middle East. They recognized that they and their students needed both knowledge and new perspectives.

The first vignette by Junko Sakoi, a multicultural district coordinator, overviews their goals as a group and the concerns of teachers who felt they did not have the resources or knowledge to engage with students in a cross-cultural study of the Middle East and Muslim cultures. The study group provided an opportunity to discuss picturebooks with each other before developing paired books and text sets for their own classrooms. Nalda Francisco and Kathryn Chavez describe their work with third graders to find connections between themselves and Muslims in the Middle East around family traditions, food, and character's experiences in picturebooks, with a particular focus on multimodal representations. Chika Hayashi-Willis, an Arts Integration specialist, used picturebooks with first graders to share and explore Islamic arts and Muslim cultures through the books and related art experiences around lanterns and festivals in Muslim and Mexican cultures. Julia Hillman, a fifth-grade teacher, focused her work on two picturebooks set in Syria and Pakistan that connected to students' feelings of isolation and loneliness from the pandemic and to their experiences of bullying. Benjamin Kowalski, an English Language Development teacher in middle school, works with refugee children and selected picturebooks that explore kindness in different cultural contexts. Finally, Manal Tafish, an Arabic language teacher in several elementary schools, selected text sets around themes of courage/hope and values/beliefs and developed a range of engagements to use in teaching culture along with language. Each teacher provides careful descriptions of the picturebooks they selected for their classrooms and why they selected those specific books as well as includes examples of children's talk and artistic responses.

We invite you to read these vignettes and learn about the innovative work occurring in schools that invite children to build bridges across global cultures through intercultural understanding. These vignettes provide many examples of picturebooks and curricular engagements that encourage children to reflect on their own cultural identities and to develop understandings of global cultures so that they come to know their home cultures and the world beyond their homes.



Kathy G. Short, Guest Editor

© 2022 by Kathy G. Short



WOW Stories, Volume IX, Issue 2 by Worlds of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
Based on a work by Kathy G. Short at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/ix-1/2/>.

Developing a Literacy Curriculum with Global Literature

Prisca Martens and Ray Martens

Our Vail Global Literacy Community is a school-based group at Creation School in Vail, Arizona, located southeast of Tucson in the heart of the Sonoran Desert. Creation School is a Lutheran school that serves a total of about 60 students from ages two through third grade (second and third grades were new in 2020-2021). About 50% of the students are of Latinx heritage and 50% European American and Asian. While a few teachers and students speak Spanish, English is the primary language used.

Creation School provides a Christ-centered environment that nurtures children's faith, strengthens families, and invites children to explore and discover their world through rich learning experiences. The outdoor classroom space includes chickens, a butterfly garden, and a natural playscape (i.e., tires, crates, boards, natural elements), all of which extend children's opportunities to inquire about their world, learn, and grow. 2020-2021 was Creation's eighth year.

We (Prisca and Ray) are retired teachers/professors, living in Vail, Arizona, who enjoy spending time with the teachers and students at Creation. In this vignette we introduce our 2020-2021 Vail Global Literacy Community and our goals for the year. We then discuss our work in the classrooms. Our group included teachers from preschool through third grade, but the two of us were only able to directly work in classrooms with students in the elementary school (kindergarten through third grade) on Creation's campus and not with the younger students in another building, due to the school's Covid-19 protocols.

Our Vail Global Literacy Community Study Group

Our Vail Global Literacy Community Study Group had 11 members: Lacey Elisea (kindergarten teacher), Jane Metzger (inclusion specialist/kindergarten teaching assistant), Meghann Kjolsrud (1st-3rd grade teacher), Samantha Zedric (1st-3rd grade teaching assistant), Cassandra Sutherland (K-3rd grade physical education/art teacher), Kelsey Nowacki (pre-kindergarten teacher), Abbey Unes (pre-kindergarten teacher), Jessica Berry (preschool teacher), Jennifer Hook (school administrator/prekindergarten teacher), Ray Martens (facilitator), and Prisca Martens (facilitator).

Our monthly meetings were always lively and energetic with rich conversations about our teaching and the students in our classrooms. The meetings always began with teachers sharing about happenings in their classrooms (i.e., students' work samples, read-alouds and students' responses, problems/issues teachers raised). Then we discussed a professional reading, planned for the next few weeks of school, and set our next meeting date and assignment. Our professional readings included vignettes previously published in WOW Stories, Kathy Short's (2009) article "Critically Reading the Word and the World: Building Intercultural Understanding Through Literature", and Lester Laminack and Katie Kelly's (2019) book *Reading to Make a Difference: Using Literature to Help Students Speak Freely, Think Deeply, and Take Action*.

The goals of our Vail Global Literacy Community in 2020-2021 were to continue to develop the global literature curriculum organized around a "Curriculum that is Intercultural" (Short, 2016) that we started in 2019-2020; and to continue developing writing and art experiences that invite students to explore global literature and deepen their intercultural understandings, as well as create and share their own stories. These goals were the primary focus of our work in the classrooms.

Prisca and Ray in the Classrooms

We were in the kindergarten and 1st-3rd classrooms two to three mornings a week to read and discuss global literature with a focus on developing students' intercultural understandings and supporting students' reading, writing, and art in Storying Studio.

A Curriculum that is Intercultural

Our first major focus with global literature was identity and helping students understand, accept, and know themselves as unique cultural beings. That understanding is critical to their accepting and valuing others (Banks, 2004). By appreciating the significance of culture in their own lives, students come to appreciate and respect its significance in the lives of others, marking the beginning of intercultural understandings (Pattnaik, 2003; Short, 2009).

The books we read related to identity considered such aspects as family, emotions, confidence, fears, standing up for yourself and for others, etc. (see Figure 1 for a sampling).

Figure 1: Selected books from the identity text set.

Title / Author	Aspect of Identity	Art
<i>Green Pants</i> (Kraegel, 2020)	Be yourself and love and respect others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contrast: Pattern, color, shape
<i>The Invisible Boy</i> (Ludwig & Barton, 2013)	Be a friend and reach out to others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contrast: Color vs. black/white Color: Emotion
<i>Sandwich Swap</i> (Queen Rania of Jordan Al Abdullah, DiPucchio, & Tusa, 2010)	Be a friend with your own likes/dislikes and accept and respect others as they are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Text variation Movement Color/Line: Emotion
<i>Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match</i> (Brown & Palacios, 2011)	Be proud of who you are and your likes/dislikes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line: Emotions Contrast: Pattern, color Art: Collage
<i>My Name is Sangoel</i> (Williams, Mohammed, & Stock, 2009)	Be proud of your name and who you are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art: Collage, using photographed faces, newspaper objects, etc.
<i>Sebastian's Roller Skates</i> (de Deu Prats & Rovira, 2005)	Overcome your fears; don't give up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contrast: Color, line, and shape Art: Collage
<i>The Magical Yet</i> (DiTerlizzi & Alvarez, 2020)	Be patient with yourself, know that you're always learning and growing, and keep trying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contrast: Color Movement
<i>Mary Wears What She Wants</i> (Negley, 2019)	Think and stand up for yourself and your ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contrast: Color, shape, pattern
<i>You Can Do It, Bert!</i> (Könnecke, 2015)	Overcome your fears; don't give up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line: Movement
<i>Alma and How She Got Her Name</i> (Martinez-Neal, 2018)	Know that your name is unique and special for you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Text variation Contrast: Color, pattern
<i>The Thing Lou Couldn't Do</i> (Spires, 2017)	Be patient with yourself, face your fears, and keep trying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perspective (space) Color/Line: Emotion Movement
<i>Just Behave, Pablo Picasso</i> (Winter & Hawkes, 2012)	Stand strong in your beliefs about yourself and your ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Text variation Perspective (space) Contrast: Color

Experiences we provided for students included indicating where each child's family originated on a world map, learning how each child's parents selected children's names, and keeping journals with responses and connections to books we read. Several of the teachers' vignettes in this issue include these and/or other examples of how they helped their students think about their personal identities and consider who they are as cultural beings. Vignettes that particularly explore this are "Sacred Stories as Windows and Mirrors: A Pre-Kindergarten Class Reflection" by Jennifer Hook and Abbey Unes; and "A Global Literature Study of Identity and Kindness in Pre-Kindergarten and Preschool Classrooms" by Kelsey Nowacki and Jessica Berry.

When we (Prisca and Ray) were not at school, teachers read/discussed global literature, provided materials and opportunities for students to reflect in journals and write/illustrate their own stories, and organized their own inquiry studies. In "The Hohokam People Project: Learning Through 'Windows' and 'Mirrors' in a Cross-Cultural Study," Meghan Kjolsrud shares a project that she developed with 1st-3rd graders on the ancient Hohokam Indigenous peoples who once lived in the Sonoran Desert.

Our other major focus with global literature was knowing, appreciating, and respecting cultures differing from our own. We did cross-cultural studies on Mexico and China. Each of these studies involved learning something about the cultures, languages, families, geography, beliefs, and a particularly important celebration. Lacey Elisea, Jane Metzger, and Cassandra Sutherland provide highlights of these cross-cultural studies with their kindergarten students in their vignette, "Using Global Literature as 'Bridges' to Understand Ourselves and Other Cultures."

Our foci on cultural identity challenged students to think about themselves in relation to their families and their personal places in that history; their friends, fears, hopes, and dreams; and unique qualities that make them special. The cross-cultural studies built on and extended this focus on children's identities by inviting students to think about how they relate to others in the world, particularly in Mexico and China. Seeing similarities and differences between themselves and children in other parts of the world encouraged their beginning awareness and respect for different perspectives as well as the common human experiences everyone shares (Short, 2009). As Short states, "Not only can [cross-cultural] studies provide a window on a culture, but they can also encourage insights into students' cultural identities. Students come to deeper understandings about their own cultures and perspectives when they encounter alternative possibilities for thinking about the world" (p. 6).

Storying Studio

Storying Studio encompasses our readings and discussions of global literature and the story concepts, meanings, and connections students make but, in addition, specifically focuses on the ways the author and artist create meanings in a picturebook (Martens & Martens, 2018; Martens et al., 2018). It is structured similarly to writing workshop with mini-lessons and time for students to explore ideas, write, and create art. It deliberately celebrates diverse ways of making meaning, particularly through art and written language.

During Storying Studio, when appropriate after reading and discussing a picturebook, we invited students to examine aspects of the author's craft (i.e., story structure, character) and how the artist of

the book created meaning in the art (i.e., use of lines, shapes, color; see Figure 1) and/or how the book was constructed (i.e., fold-out pages, flip books). We also provided opportunities for students to write and illustrate their own stories. Students decided whether to use information we discussed in mini-lessons and also selected the topics and format for their books.

For example, in the fall we found inexpensive but good quality blank books in the shape of a pumpkin or with fall leaves on the cover at a local Target store. We showed 1st-3rd grade students the covers, they chose one, and drafted stories on other paper. Their stories focused on topics such as Halloween, making friends, and zombies. After editing their stories, Prisca typed the texts and we helped students glue the text onto the appropriate pages. Then students illustrated their books. Ben, for example, chose the fall leaves cover but could not decide between topic possibilities so wrote two shorter stories, one about boy/girl relationships and the other about his dog. He made a flip book; one story started in the ‘front’ and he flipped the book upside down so the back was now the front for the other story. The two stories met in the center of the book. Figure 2 shows some of the students working on their books.



Figure 2. 1st-3rd grade students working on books they had written.

In kindergarten we provided blank books we stapled together for the students to write/illustrate their stories. To provide additional support for them as writers, we also wrote several language experience stories as a class, with students dictating the story from an experience we shared. One such story was after our school International Dot Day celebration (based on *The Dot* by Peter Reynolds, 2003). The story dictated by students explained that we read *The Dot*, how they made dots, etc. We copied their story into books (in the shape of a dot) for each student to read and illustrate.

Kindergartners also dictated a language experience story about our Chinese New Year celebration. The first part of their story described how Chinese people prepare for the celebration and the second part told about our school celebration (see Figure 3). After students read the story, some came up to draw rebus pictures above particular words to offer support when they read the story again.

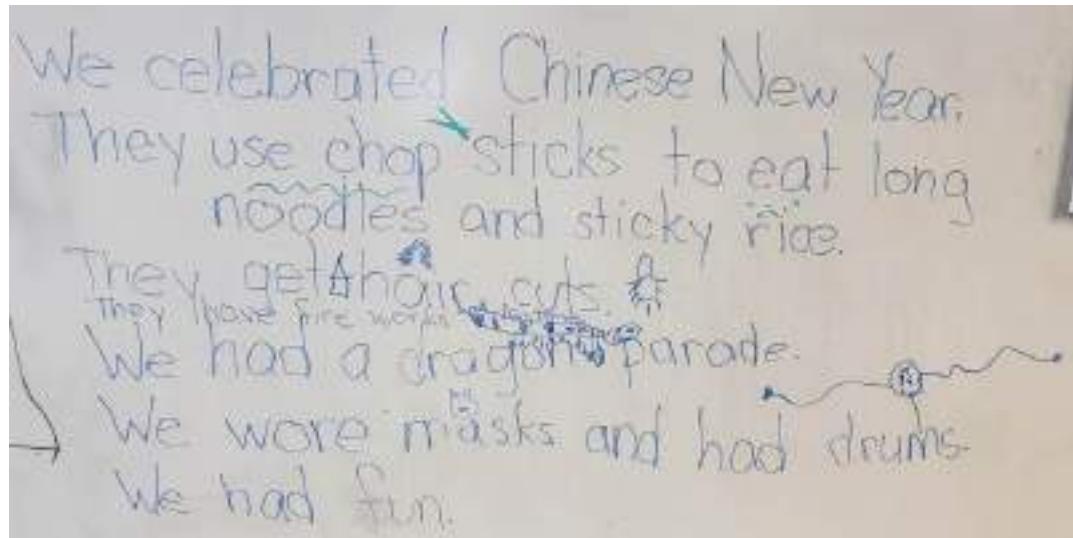


Figure 3. Story about Chinese New Year the kindergarten student dictated with rebus pictures.

When Prisca typed the story and made it into a book for each student, she decided to turn it into a chapter book with the first chapter on Chinese preparations for the celebration and the second about our celebration. Students were thrilled to have a chapter book! They illustrated their pages and added rebus pictures for particular words (see Figure 4-A). Some students also decided to add Chinese characters to their books (see Figure 4-B).



Figure 4. Student's illustrated pages including rebus pictures for selected text (A) and Chinese character student added on the page (B).

Students loved reading and rereading their books and were excited to take them home to share with their families. The books were a rich reflection and celebration of their learning about Chinese New Year as well as a strong support for their literacy development. For details of the full study of China and the Chinese New Year celebration see Lacey Elisea, Jane Metzger, and Cassandra Sutherland's vignette "Using Global Literature as 'Bridges' to Understand Ourselves and Other Cultures" in this issue.

Closing Thoughts

We have consistently found that the richness of global literature, whether the focus is on knowing oneself and personal identity, another culture, or some other topic, captivates students' interests, generates deep authentic discussions, stimulates genuine personal connections, and inspires students' imaginations and creativity. In turn, students are motivated to write and illustrate their own stories, sparking their continued growth as readers and writers. Our journey towards developing a literacy curriculum this is intercultural with reading, writing, and art experiences in Storying Studio has been productive and exciting and one we look forward to continuing in the years to come.

References

- Banks, J. (2004). Teaching for social justice, diversity, and citizenship in a global world. *The Educational Forum*, 68(4), 296-305.
- Laminack, L., & Kelly, K. (2019). *Reading to make a difference: Using literature to help students speak freely, think deeply, and take action*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Martens, P., & Martens, R. (2018). Enhancing experiences with global picturebooks by learning the language of art. *WOW Stories*, VI(1). <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/wow-stories-volume-vi-issue-1/3/>.
- Martens, P., Martens, R., Doyle, M., Loomis, J., Fuhrman, L., Stout, R., & Soper, E. (2018). Painting writing, writing painting: Thinking, “seeing,” and problem-solving through story. *The Reading Teacher*, 71(6), 669-679.
- Pattnaik, J. (2003). Learning about the “other”: Building a case for intercultural understanding among minority children. *Childhood Education*, 79(4), 204-211.
- Reynolds, P. (2003). *The dot*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick.
- Short, K. (2009). Critically reading the word and the world: Building intercultural understanding through literature. *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, 47(2), 1-10.
- Short, K. (2016). A curriculum that is intercultural. In K. Short, D. Day, & J. Schroeder (Eds.), *Teaching globally: Reading the world through literature* (pp. 3-24). Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Prisca Martens is Professor Emerita, Towson University, Towson, Maryland, where she taught literacy courses. She is retired and living in Vail, Arizona.

Ray Martens is Professor Emeritus, Towson University, Towson, Maryland, where he taught art education courses. He is retired and living in Vail, Arizona.

© 2022 by Prisca Martens and Ray Martens



WOW Stories, Volume IX, Issue 1 by Worlds of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
Based on a work by Prisca Martens and Ray Martens at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/ix-1/3/>.

Using Global Literature as Bridges to Understand Ourselves and Other Cultures

Lacey Elisea, Jane Metzger, and Cassandra Sutherland

We are educators at Creation School, a Lutheran school located in Vail, Arizona, approximately 20 miles southeast of Tucson. Lacey Elisea has a degree in early childhood and is currently Creation's kindergarten teacher. Jane Metzger has an early childhood and special education background and helps Lacey in kindergarten. Cassandra Sutherland has an engineering background and currently teaches physical education and art for kindergarten-third grades.

The 2020-2021 school year began a couple of weeks late and with a lot of uncertainty about what the year would hold due to Covid-19. Our kindergarten had 14 students (seven boys, seven girls) in class and three virtual students at home, who eventually joined us in our classroom. The students were mainly from European backgrounds with some from Latin American, African, and Asian families.

We were members of our Vail Global Literacy Community where we read *Reading to Make a Difference: Using Literature to Help Students Speak Freely, Think Deeply, and Take Action* by Lester Laminack and Katie Kelly (2019). We were particularly struck by Laminack and Kelly's concept of "books as bridges" as a compliment to the books as "windows/mirrors" (Bishop, 1990). Laminack and Kelly (2019) state that when books are used as bridges, they "offer the reader an opportunity to connect to distant places, different views, unique people and new experiences" (p. iii).

In this vignette we share how we integrated books as bridges into our curriculum in cross-cultural studies of Mexico and China to help the students develop a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them. We begin with a brief look at how we first helped students think about their own identities as cultural beings.

Books as Bridges

Exploring Personal Cultural Identities

To begin the year, we wanted students to understand their own identities and who they were as cultural beings prior to moving into cross-cultural studies. Kathy Short (2009) argues, "Interculturalism does not begin with the ability to consider other points of view but with the realization that you have a point of view" (p. 3). The books we read related to identity and our discussions focused on understanding ourselves as individuals and on who we are as members of our families, classroom, and community. For example, we read All the Ways to Be Smart (Bell & Colpoys, 2019) to celebrate the talents that each student brings to the world. The book highlights a wide range of ways people are smart (not just grades and test scores), from building boats out of boxes to painting by using one's imagination. The students enjoyed making their own books about how they were smart.

As students' understandings of their personal identities developed, we expanded to look at their families and ancestry. We read *My Name is Elizabeth!* (Dunklee & Forsythe, 2011) which allowed us to discover how special names are. Students gathered information from their parents and then shared in class what their names meant and how their parents chose their names. Students also found out where their ancestors originated and we marked the places on a world map (see Figure 1). Students began to

realize that their family, cultural background and personal experiences impact who they are, how they think, and their actions. For a list of other books we read related to identity see Figure 1 in Martens and Martens' vignette "Developing a Literacy Curriculum with Global Literature" in this issue.



Figure 1. World map indicating where students' ancestors originated.

Exploring Mexico through Literature, Art, and Drama

After our study of the students' individual identities, we did a cross-cultural study of Mexico. Only three students (Ethan, Dean, Noel) had cultural ties to Mexico but most were aware of Mexican culture due to our community's proximity to Mexico. Our study focused on Mexican culture, food, art, and history. We read books like *Let's Explore Mexico* (Moon, 2017) and *If You Were Me and Lived in Mexico* (Roman, 2013) which provided an overview and highlights of the country. This led to the students working on a map to understand Mexico's geographical features and starting a journal to make notes about their learning.



Figure 2. Pages from Emelyn's Mexico journal: Her world map (A); her title "Mexico Adventures" (B); Mexican parents as "mama" and "papa" (C); t-chart comparing and contrasting herself and children in Mexico (D).

Emelyn titled her journal “Mexico Adventures” and noted how in Mexico children had a mom and dad like her but called them “mama” and “papa” (see Figure 2-A). After watching a short clip from Marc Kosak’s 2020 documentary (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqa3WxpzVM4&list=WL&index=3&t=141s>) about how children get to school in Mexico, Emelyn compared herself to the children in the documentary. She made a t-chart about her observations, comparing wake up times, breakfast, siblings, and emotions (see Figure 2-B). She drew a happy face on the left side labeled “Me” and a sad face on the right side labeled “Mexico”. She said, “I put a sad face because if I had to walk at 5AM, I would not be happy.” Through these experiences, Emelyn and her classmates took a deeper look at culture and realized not everyone in the world lives like they do.

They began to understand that children in other parts of the world are similar to them in some ways but also different. They learned to identify their own cultures as well as to distinguish and value cultural differences. Emelyn and her classmates crossed a bridge to experience life in Mexico and deepen their understanding of their own identities.

While some students focused on families in their Mexico journals, others focused on landmarks, symbols and colors. C.J. titled his book “The Mexico Book” and explained he tried to use the colors of the Mexican flag to decorate his title (see Figure 3-A). Dean focused on the pyramids located in Mexico and the difference in these pyramids because they do not have a point at the top (see Figure 3-B). His detailed drawings show the steps up and the flat top. The journals revealed how each student connected with different concepts and experiences. The students used their past personal experiences and interests to make new connections and discoveries.



Figure 3. C.J.’s (A) and Dean’s (B) Mexico journals.

Las Posadas. When our church asked Creation School to organize the Christmas Eve service, we decided to create it around Las Posadas, the Mexican celebration/reenactment of Joseph and Mary going house-to-house looking for housing in Bethlehem prior to Jesus’ birth. The people on the procession are told that the Posadas (The Inns) do not have any room until they reach a manger and are allowed to stay, just as Mary and Joseph were. To prepare, our class began researching Las Posadas

and its meaning. We hoped the students would get past the “tourist perspective” and begin to understand the cultural relevance of the event (Short, 2009, p. 1). Through literature like *Las Posadas* (Hoyt-Goldsmith & Migdale, 1999) and *The Night of Las Posadas* (de Paola, 2001) we learned that the Posadas are an important tradition complete with prayer, music, and food.

Students also learned about poinsettias in art class by reading *The Legend of the Poinsettia* (de Paola, 1997). This story of a young Mexican girl’s first Posadas added to the students’ background knowledge and understanding of Mexican culture (Laminack & Kelly, 2019). In art class, after reading the story, students made poinsettias out of tissue paper, glue, and glitter (see Figure 4-A). First, students examined the illustrations in the book to spark their imaginations of new possibilities for their poinsettias (Ray, 2010). Though the students all used the same mixed media, their poinsettias showed the diversity of their ideas and imaginations. The poinsettias were displayed for the families at the Posada celebration at the school (see Figure 4-B).



Figure 4. Making poinsettias (A) and completed poinsettias (B) for Las Posadas.

During our research, we learned that after the procession, families/communities have parties with piñatas, and we decided to end our Posada that way. Several of the books we read discussed piñatas. While reading, John, age 5, noticed that the piñatas for Posadas were all star-shaped and asked, “Why don’t they have character piñatas?” The students were familiar with piñatas from birthday parties but had never seen the traditional star piñata used during Posadas. We researched the “why” and discovered that piñatas used for Las Posadas are usually in the shape of a star with five, seven, or nine points, with each representing a deadly sin. Together we made a traditional star piñata by using cardboard, cones, strips of newspaper and paper mâché (flour and water) (see Figure 5-A). After drying, the students painted and added streamers. They often asked to view images in a book for reference on how these typically looked. On the last day of the celebration, we broke it. Each child took turns swinging and hitting the piñata (see Figure 5-B). We learned a song in Spanish that is sung while hitting a piñata. When the song ended, that student’s turn was done as well.



Figure 5. Students working on the star pinata (A) and hitting it as the class watches and sings (B).

The Las Posadas ceremony was open to families and the community. This was a chance for students to perform the traditional Las Posadas song and processions from door to door at school and share a new cultural experience with their families and community. This experience allowed students to link school, home, and community, providing a bridge to share learning and experiences, ask questions and deepen their cultural understandings.

Exploring China and the Chinese Lunar New Year

After our study of Mexico, we wanted to do a cross-cultural study focused in another part of the world, particularly one with a nonalphabetic language to help students appreciate the diversity of languages. Since the past few years our school (and most of our kindergartners) had celebrated the Chinese Lunar New Year (Hoang, 2020) and would again this year, we decided to study China. We explored a range of topics, including Chinese families and customs, Chinese language, China's geography, the Gobi Desert, the Great Wall, panda bears, and attending kindergarten in China.

We first pinpointed our location in Vail, Arizona, and the location of China on our world map and on a globe. Books like *Welcome to China* (Jenner, 2008) introduced China's unique topography, including the Gobi Desert, the Great Wall, rainforests, rivers, oceans and mountainous regions. The students were particularly captivated with Mt. Everest. We compared Mt. Everest to Mt. Lemmon, a local mountain many of them had visited. Students were amazed to learn that Mt. Everest is three times taller than Mt. Lemmon. We drew this proportionally on the white board to emphasize the sizes. In their China journals students found Vail and China on the world map and drew in some of geographic features on their China map. They also drew something important to them from our discussion. Anna's journal with Mt. Everest, including climbers, is in Figure 6.

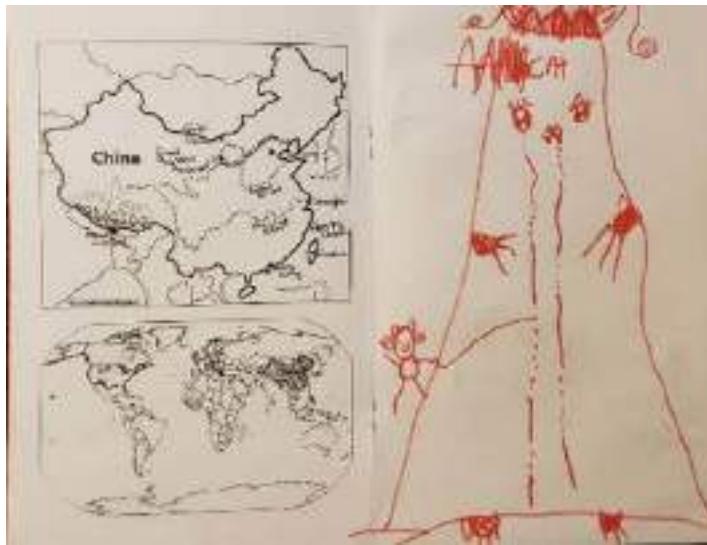


Figure 6. Anna's China map and drawing of Mt. Everest.

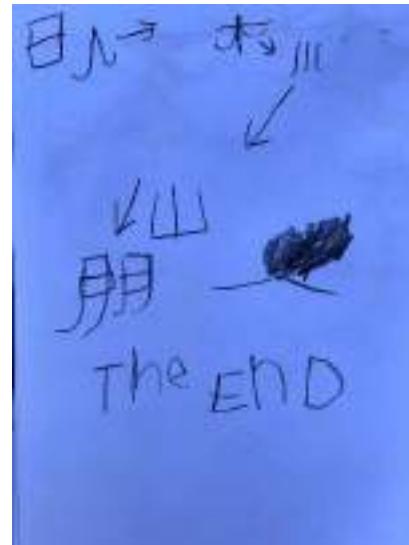


Figure 7. Avery's story using Chinese characters. She used characters for "sun, person → tree → river → mountain → friend".

We also compared and contrasted China's Gobi Desert with Arizona's Sonoran Desert where we live. Since our Sonoran Desert serves as a habitat for many different species of animals and plants, students were interested to learn about those native to the Gobi Desert and add those to their journals. They also enjoyed learning about panda bears and their bamboo diet, which causes them to defecate ("poop") the fibrous bamboo frequently.

To introduce the non-alphabetic Chinese language, we read *The Pet Dragon* (Niemann, 2008) which explains Chinese characters. The book provides examples of how and why lines and shapes form the characters and how characters represent ideas and thoughts, which is different than the individual letters in our language. Students practiced writing Chinese in their journals. Avery's story using Chinese characters is in Figure 7. She used arrows to sequence the order of the characters.

After reading *Kindergarten Day in China and the USA* (Marx & Senis, 2010) we discussed the similarities and differences between attending kindergarten in the two countries. Students noted that while students in China and the USA read, wrote, and ate differently, they all had friends, helped one another, read, wrote/drew, did math, played, and even got haircuts.

Chinese Lunar New Year. With great anticipation, students prepared for Chinese Lunar New Year and the Year of the Ox, which we celebrated on February 12, 2021. We read a number of books, including Chinese New Year (Marx, 2002) and Bringing in the New Year (Lin, 2013). The students loved learning about the lions and dragons that were part of the celebrations. They were surprised that Chinese dragons were considered lucky and good and not scary and dangerous as in most stories with which they were familiar. This helped extend and bridge the students' understandings of their own and Chinese culture. Grace Lin (2016) points out the need for children to "see things from other viewpoints...[and] see outside of themselves". We added a fold-out page to the journals and students drew l-o-n-g snaky dragons as in Lin's book (see Figure 8).

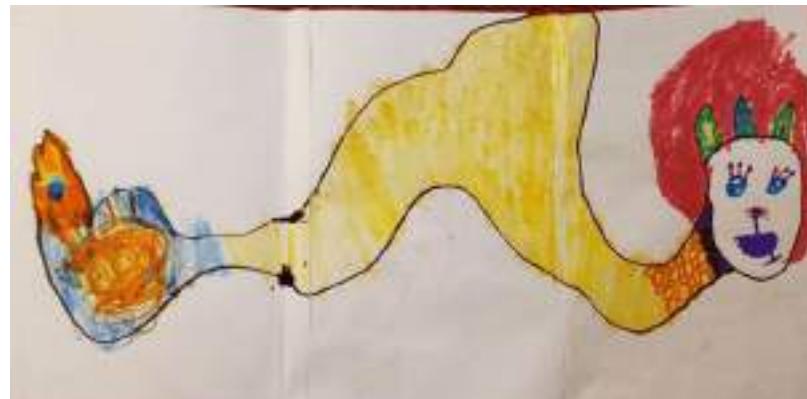


Figure 8. Anna's foldout dragon.

In *Lunar New Year* (Eliot & Chau, 2018), we learned why the color red, lights from lanterns, and firecrackers are significant in the celebration. *How to Catch a Dragon* (Wallace & Elkerton, 2019) added more information about Chinese culture and receiving red envelopes and gold coins during the celebration.

In preparation for our Chinese Lunar New Year celebration, students made red lanterns and drums out of construction paper and noise makers (simulating firecrackers) out of bowls with noise-producing beads and popsicle sticks as handles. They also colored dragon masks to wear. The real highlight, though, was creating the dragon for the grand finale in the parade. We used a big cardboard box for the head and attached a decorated sheet to depict the body and tail of the dragon. Students took turns over several days, using tissue paper for scales, paint, and paper cups with googly eyes, to attend to details to add to the dragon's authenticity. The parade was a success and many parents came to watch (see Figure 9).



Figure 9. Our Chinese Lunar New Year parade.

Following the parade, students enjoyed a Chinese meal, complete with chopsticks, sticky rice, egg rolls, and tea. Students were thrilled to receive a surprise red envelope, containing gold coins for good fortune. The literature we read, our discussions and experiences, and students' reflections in their China journals bridged their understandings and appreciation of culture and further developed their intercultural understandings. After our celebration, students collaborated on a story about Chinese Lunar New Year (See Martens' and Martens' vignette in this issue for information).

Reflection

Through our global literature, discussions, and other experiences, our students crossed bridges and deepened their understandings of themselves and others. We provided them with tools to look deeper and wonder about the world around them. We had not anticipated and were surprised with how bridges also formed with school-family connections and with the community in an unprecedented year full of uncertainty. Students were excited to share their experiences with their families which provided a connection between school and home in a year when parents were not able to participate in the classroom.

Next year we plan to again incorporate global literature and an international curriculum across all subjects. By the end of this year students were asking probing questions about children's daily lives in other countries. This indicated to us their broadening intercultural understandings and their integration of perspectives other than their own which we want to continue.

References

- Bishop, R.S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives*, 6(3), ix-xi.
- Hoang, V. (2020). Chinese Lunar New Year: A celebration of culture. *WOW Stories*, VII(2). <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/volume-vii-issue-2/7/>
- Laminack, L., & Kelly, K. (2019). *Reading to make a difference: Using literature to help students speak freely, think deeply, and take action*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Lin, G. (2016). *The windows and mirrors of your child's bookshelf*. https://www.youtube.com/embed/_wQ8wiV3FVo.
- Ray, K.W. (2010). *In pictures and in words: Teaching the qualities of good writing through illustration study*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Short, K. (2009). Critically reading the word and the world: Building intercultural understanding through literature. *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, 47(2), 1-10.

Literature Cited

- Bell, D., & Colpoys, A. (2019). *All the ways to be smart*. Texas City, TX: Scribble US.
- de Paola, T. (1997). *The legend of the poinsettia*. London, England: Puffin Books.
- de Paola, T. (2001). *The night of Las Posadas*. London, England: Puffin Books.
- Dunklee, A., & Forsythe, M. (2011). *My name is Elizabeth!* Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Kids Can Press.
- Eliot, H., & Chau, A. (2018). *Lunar new year*. New York: Little Simon.
- Hoyt-Goldsmith, D., & Migdale, L. (1999). *Las Posadas*. New York: Holiday House.
- Jenner, C. (2008). *Welcome to China*. London, England: DK Publishing.
- Lin, G. (2013). *Bringing in the new year*. New York: Knopf.
- Marx, D. (2002). *Chinese New Year*. Danbury, CT: Children's Press.
- Marx, T., & Senisi, E.B. (2010). *Kindergarten day in China and the USA*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.
- Moon, W. (2017). *Let's explore Mexico*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications.
- Niemann, C. (2008). *The pet dragon: A story about adventure, friendship, and Chinese characters*. New York: Greenwillow Books.
- Roman, C.P. (2013). *If you were me and lived in...Mexico*. Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace.
- Wallace, A., & Elkerton, A. (2019). *How to catch a dragon*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks.

Lacey Elisea has taught in early childhood classrooms for five years and is the kindergarten teacher at Creation School.

Jane Metzger has an early childhood/special education background and is a teaching assistant in kindergarten at Creation School.

Cassandra Sutherland has taught at Creation School for two years and is the physical education and art teacher in the elementary (K-3) school.

© 2022 by Lacey Elisea, Jane Metzger, and Cassandra Sutherland



WOW Stories, Volume IX, Issue 1 by Worlds of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
Based on a work by Lacey Elisea, Jane Metzger, and Cassandra Sutherland at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/ix-1/4/>.

The Hohokam People Project: Learning Through Windows and Mirrors in a Cross-Cultural Study

Meghann Kjolsrud

I spent my childhood in South Dakota where I developed a love for nature and everything outdoors. I began working in education in 2001. In 2006, I took a break from my career to stay home with my four children. In addition to teaching, I have worked as a Religious Education Director, Family Program Coordinator, and a Preschool Director. In 2016, I obtained a M.Ed. with a specialization in early childhood with an aim to better understand early childhood development. I currently teach at Creation School.

Creation School is grounded on Christian principles and helping students develop a life-long love of learning. Two ways I accomplish Creation's goals are through Project Based Learning and a Global Literacy framework. Project Based Learning is used in many progressive schools today. However, the idea isn't new; the ancient teacher and philosopher Aristotle (383-322 BC) once said, "The things we have to learn before we do them, we learn by doing them" (as cited in S. Ramasubbu, 2015). A century ago, John Dewey, an educational reformer, expressed a similar viewpoint. He believed that students learn by doing and that teachers see themselves as facilitators, not instructors, who observe students' interests and abilities and provide them with what they need to problem solve, imagine, and create (Delisle, 1997).

I learned about global literature when I joined our Vail Global Literacy Community last fall. Through our readings and discussions, I learned types and foci of global literature, the concept of windows and mirrors (Bishop, 1990), the importance of cross-cultural studies, and the need to develop students' intercultural understandings. Kathy Short (2009) states, "Interculturalism is an attitude of mind, an orientation that pervades thinking and permeates the curriculum" (p. 2). Developing intercultural understandings became a goal for my classroom, curriculum, and students.

The cross-cultural study of the Ancestral Hohokam culture described in this vignette brought together Project Based Learning and global literature. The Hohokam were the Ancestral Indigenous people of the Sonoran Desert, where we live. Through this glimpse into our Hohokam People Project, I share how this study authentically impacted students' learning and our experiences. As Short (2009) also points out, "cross-cultural studies provide both a mirror and window for children as they look out on ways of viewing the world and reflect back on themselves in a new light" (p. 5).

Our Classroom

In 2020-2021 I taught a multiage 1st-3rd grade class of ten students, four girls and six boys, ranging in age from 6 – 9. Two students were first graders, four second graders, and four third. The students' ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds were primarily European American, but also Mexican, Brazilian, Korean, and Vietnamese. English was the primary language spoken in the students' homes.

Class Dynamic Challenges

A mixed age group and a small class size are ideal when individualizing education for each student and when using a Project Based Approach for learning. However, when it comes to competitive sports,

a mixed age group and small class size can create challenges. Early in the year, the majority of third grade students loved playing gaga ball (similar to dodge ball) and soccer. However, because of the competitive nature of both games, social conflicts and emotional duress frequently arose. To have enough players for each team, almost all students had to participate. The third-grade students had an obvious advantage, and this caused a lot of frustration and discouragement among the younger students, especially those who had difficulty articulating why they were feeling discouraged and why they did not want to play. In an attempt to overcome this challenge, we held class meetings and group discussions. The students came up with their own fair guidelines for the games, but in the end, the first and second grade students lost interest and stopped playing. This brought about a temporary discord which was uncomfortable for all but perhaps necessary for the growth that was about to occur.

Finding Harmony

On a warm day in January, students stumbled upon a new kind of harmony. While spending time on the back desert playground, Garhett, a second grader, asked if he could turn on the water. He and Michael, another second-grader, began digging a waterway and discussing plans to build a dam. Within a short amount of time, the entire class was drawn into the project (see Figure 1). The students found shovels and began digging and moving dirt. When it was time to go inside, they eagerly asked to return the following day to continue what they had begun.



Figure 1. The class becomes interested in Garhett's waterway.



Figure 2. The first and longest Hohokam-inspired canal leading to the sand pit.

The whole class continued to choose the back playground each afternoon. There they talked, planned, and worked. Together they decided to construct a waterway that would eventually lead to the sand pit area on the far end of the playground (see Figure 2). As I watched them dig, their faces sweaty and determined, I was reminded of the Ancestral people of the Sonoran Desert, the Hohokam, and the seventy-five-foot canals they had built that stretched for over two-hundred miles. This was the start of our Hohokam People Project.

The Hohokam People Project

We began our study by reading *This Place Is Dry* by Vicki Cobb and Barbara Lavallee (1989) and *The Hohokam: the Ancient Dwellers of the Arizona Desert* (Doyle, 1991), where we learned about the desert and the expansive canals and irrigation systems the Hohokam people built. Students were very eager and engaged as we discovered the Hohokam's advanced engineering abilities. Immediately, they began to integrate this new "window" knowledge into their own work and play on the back playground. I saw them transition from digging a basic waterway, to building more sophisticated canals and irrigation systems for their "crops", and I listened in amazement as they began using the concepts and terminology from the literature we were reading. For example, when Garbett began collecting weeds, I asked him about his plan for the weeds he was holding. He responded, "I am planting crops. The canals are the water sources. We're going to bring the water to the crops that we're planting here (see Figure 3). Over there [pointing to another area] is another water source that goes to our house because every person needs water to survive."



Figure 3. Garbett builds canals that lead directly to the "crops", integrating his new knowledge of Hohokam canals and the need for water.

Gaga Ball

When we read *A Brief History of Hohokam Archaeology* (Woodbury, 1991), students made an exciting "mirror" connection. In this article, we learned about ancient ball courts and how they have been found in every village, adjacent to the plazas. The students were fascinated with this discovery as it provided background on the game they played on our school's gaga ball-pit. Since it is still a mystery to archeologists as to how the game was played, I invited students to draw their depiction of the ball courts and the surrounding area and imagine, as if they were the archeologists, how they think the game was played.

Figure 4 shows third grader Calista's drawing and writing. On her drawing (see Figure 4A) she wrote, "A ball pit made by Hohokams and houses with places to eat and animals and crops." In Figure 4B Calista described how she imagined the game was played: "This is a Hohokam village with a ball court. I imagined the ball pit like a playground for parents. This is how you play. One person on the outside throws the ball in and it bounces everywhere while someone

tries to catch it. Whoever catches it kicks it to a teammate. They are trying to kick it in the goal. The goals are located on the turns of the ball pit. The people around the ball pit are the coach and the people watching the game."

Ben's (3rd grade) drawing is in Figure 5. He drew an ancient ball court and wrote, "These two men fight over the ball." His personal experiences with soccer and gaga ball may have served as a mirror enabling him to make a special connection with the Hohokam ball game.

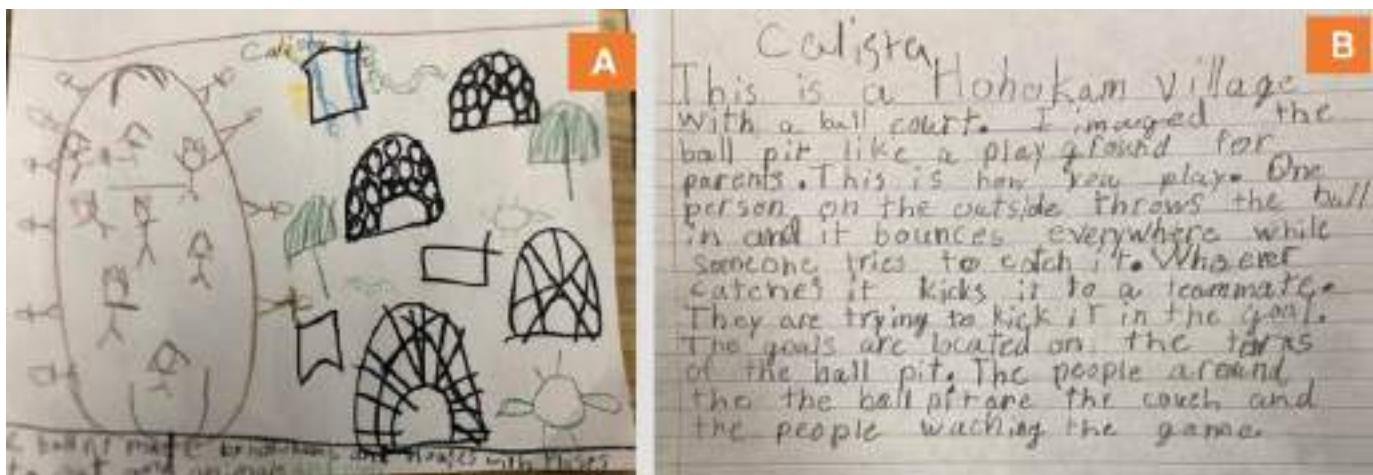


Figure 4. Calista's (third grade) drawing of a gaga ball court (A) and description of how she imagined the game being played (B).



Figure 5. Ben's (third grade) drawing of an ancient ball court.



Figure 6. Liam (third grade) carefully adds his Hohokam-inspired design to his pinch pot.

Pottery

Another aspect of the Hohokam Culture that we studied was the pottery. Many students were familiar with pottery but learning about Hohokam pottery provided another window. Together we read *Craft Arts of the Hohokam* (Crown, 1991) and examined many traditional Hohokam pottery designs. Using air-dry clay, students then constructed their own pinch pots. When the pots were dry, they painted and designed their pots based on their individual interests. Students chose their favorite Hohokam design and practiced drawing it on paper before painting it on their pots. Figure 6 shows Liam painting his pinch pot.

Many of the students painted their pot a reddish orange, as Liam did in Figure 6, similar to the Hohokam's red-on-buff pottery. However, some chose to paint their pots green, yellow, or different shades of blue. Several other students' finished pots are in Figure 7.



Figure 7. Other students' pinch pots with Hohokam designs.

Casa Grande

We also learned about Casa Grande, located in the Casa Grande National Ruins Monument about 90 miles north of Vail. Casa Grande is the tallest and most massive Hohokam building known, standing 35 feet tall (<https://www.nps.gov/cagr/learn/photosmultimedia/multimedia.htm>). We learned it was built with almost 3,000 tons of caliche (<https://www.nps.gov/cagr/learn/kidsyouth/the-casa-grande.htm>). Caliche is a shallow layer of soil consisting of different particles that have been cemented together (https://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_a/A151/welcome.html). To get caliche, the Hohokam had to dig in the ground for it.

When we were back outside, students began integrating their new learning. Calista decided to construct a house based on information she learned about the Casa Grande (see Figure 8).

Other students talked about caliche and decided to dig for it, initiating a shared class love, excitement, and fascination with it. Students dug enormous holes (see Figure 9-A) and collected the mud and caliche (see Figure 9-B). On their own, they decided to make caliche pots and laid them on large rocks in designated areas to bake in the sun (see Figure 9-C). Some students even started their own Caliche Pot Making Factory.



Figure 8. Calista (third grade) adds an entrance to the house she begins to construct with a similar design to the Casa Grande.



Figure 9. Students digging for caliche (A) and finding caliche (B). Caliche pots drying in the sun while students in the background look for more clay to be used for their Caliche Pot Making Factory (C).

The end of the school year arrived long before the students and I were ready. There was no time to paint the caliche pots, no time for more reading and exploring, no time for final reflections in writing and art. Mrs. Hook (our school administrator) asked us to fill in the holes and canals students had dug and return the desert area to its original state in preparation for the next school year and to prevent a huge muddy mess when the monsoon rains hit over the summer. The students were devastated. To cheer them up, Mrs. Hook gave them several jars of “treasure” (old trinkets) to bury and be discovered by next year’s students. I have come to realize that on that day, we buried another treasure, a rare gem in the desert, our Hohokam People Project; and that our memory of it would be patiently waiting to be rediscovered in our minds.

Closing Thoughts

After reflecting on our Hohokam Project, it is evident how it provided windows and mirrors for students. Through windows, such as learning how to get water to crops and build homes in the desert and digging for caliche to build homes and create pots, students developed a respect and appreciation of Hohokam culture; Hohokam ways of living, being, and thinking; and Hohokam creativeness and resourcefulness. In addition, these windows helped my students navigate and overcome the social-emotional challenges in their everyday lives. As we read, dug, and made new discoveries, we also spent time reflecting and discussing “How and why do you think the Hohokam people were able to create such complex canal systems?” I used this question as a window to generate discussion on collaboration and teamwork and highlight another learning from the Hohokam that was occurring as

they worked together on the canals and with the caliche. Our study of the Hohokam's amazing accomplishments helped students learn not only about Hohokam people and culture, but that respect for others and their perspectives, effective communication, and collaboration are necessary in communities to accomplish any big project or task.

As a mirror, the need for shade was very real for myself and students, as it must have been for the Hohokam. Each day our skin would begin to feel hot and sore from the direct sunlight beating down on us, but as we dug, we were transported back in time. Because we share the same desert as the people we were studying, students identified with what it must have been like for the Hohokam. Like the Hohokam, we experienced a real need for shade, shelter, water, and tools. This mirror showed us one of many common human experiences (i.e., love of family, need for food and shelter) we shared with the Hohokam across time and from these, a genuine admiration and appreciation for the Hohokam people and their way of life.

We were not ready for this project to end, feeling that we had only begun to discover and explore the Hohokam People. Through this journey and our study, we came to appreciate the Hohokam People. They achieved high-level thinking and complex social abilities to build elaborate irrigation canals that watered crops and fed thousands of people over a thousand years ago and without the use of modern tools. Students also came to know themselves and grow in who they were individually and as members of a community that works together and respects each other's perspectives and talents. Although our project has ended, a new beginning has begun to emerge, one filled with feelings of deep respect and admiration for our fellow desert dwellers, the Hohokam People of the Sonoran Desert.

References

- Bishop, R.S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives*, 6 (3), ix-xi.
- Cobb, V., & Lavallee, B. (1989). *This place is dry: Arizona's Sonoran desert*. London: Walker.
- Crown, P.L. (1991). Craft arts of the Hohokam. In D.G. Noble (Ed.), *The Hohokam: The ancient people of the desert* (pp. 39-59). Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Delisle, R. (1997). *How to use problem-based learning in the classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Doyle, D.E. (1991). The Hohokam: The ancient dwellers of the Arizona desert. In D.G. Noble (Ed.), *The Hohokam: The ancient people of the desert* (pp. 3-15). Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Ramasubbu, S. (2015, April 1). *The art of learning by doing*. Huffpost. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-art-of-learning-by-do_b_6580006.
- Short, K. (2009). Critically reading the word and the world: Building intercultural understanding through literature. *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, 47(2), 1-10.

Woodbury, R.B. (1991). A brief history of Hohokam archaeology. In D.G. Noble (Ed.), *The Hohokam: The ancient people of the desert* (pp. 27-46). Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

Meghann Kjolsrud has worked in elementary/early childhood education since 2001 and currently teaches Grades 1-3 at Creation School.

© 2022 by Meghann Kjolsrud



WOW Stories, Volume IX, Issue 1 by Worlds of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
Based on a work by Meghann Kjolsrud at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/ix-1/5/>.

Sacred Stories as Windows and Mirrors: A Pre-Kindergarten Class Reflection

Jennifer Hook and Abbey Unes

Creation School is nestled in the hills of the Sonoran Desert in the Rincon Mountains of southern Arizona, just east of Tucson. We believe that children gain much from connecting with the natural world around them. Our guiding philosophy states that children learn through exploration and make sense of the world through intellectual discovery; the physicality of their bodies; an emotional connection to adults and peers; their understanding of themselves and their place in the community; and the wonder and appreciation for the miracle of creation and its Creator. “Creation teachers strive to create environments that are full of wonder, curiosity, magic, beauty, and natural accents” (Hook, 2020). Our children’s senses play a large role in their development and we are careful to design an environment to encourage exploration that supports the best learning environment for the child.

Together we taught one of the prekindergarten classes. Jennifer has been a teacher for 35 years (preschool through college) and is also Creation’s school administrator. Abbey is a registered nurse and has worked in Pediatric Intensive Care and as a nursing clinical instructor. After raising her four children, this year she became a first-year prekindergarten teacher.

Our pre-kindergarten classroom included 10 children from nine different families, six boys and four girls, ranging in age from 3 to 5 years old. We met twice a week for approximately three hours a day. The children were predominantly from White middle-class families. One child spoke English as a primary language and Arabic as a second language within his home. All other children spoke English as their primary language. Two-thirds of the families claimed Christianity as their religious affiliation, and one-third did not adhere to any religious beliefs.

In this vignette we share how we used Bible stories from our curriculum along with global literature to introduce our children to the concept of windows and mirrors (Bishop, 1990). Our goal was to give both teachers and children a tool for seeking identity through children’s literature.

Forming Identity through Global Literacy

The foundation for our Global Literacy project follows the sacred stories of the Bible. Stories based on oral traditions or religious writings that are considered spiritual for a culture are called sacred stories and, in our case, our school is based around Christianity and the Bible. The Bible can be viewed as a credible book in the global literature canon. It was written by approximately 40 different authors, some of whom are named while others are anonymous, and the complete Bible has been translated into 704 languages (Wycliffe Global Alliance, 2020). It speaks to the universal human condition and provides an array of characters across ancient history.

We centered our lesson plans around Bible stories for the year and built our curriculum and learning around the stories to include outside play, blocks, dramatic play, art, science/math, music, circle time, and book center. Creation School belongs to Quality First, which is a taxpayer funded program to ensure high-quality environments for young children. We follow their guidance of book selection to include multiple perspectives, a representation of diversity, and authors from different cultures and

countries, similar to our focus with global literature. Through our sacred stories from the Bible, we see each child as a child of God who is made in God's image and likeness and so we treat others as we would want to be treated, we accept similarities and differences between us, and we recognize each of us as special. During one lesson, we made a list of our similarities and differences. Figure 1 lists, for example, similarities and differences of eye color, hair, and teeth.

In another lesson, children drew self-portraits of themselves (see Figure 2). We were curious about the drawing of a door as a self-portrait, but Shovana (age 4) explained that it was a picture of her hiding behind the door. We wondered if Shovana was making the early representations of her understanding that pictures can mean many things.



Figure 1. Chart of students' suggestions of their similarities/differences from each other.



Figure 2. Students' self-portraits, including Shovana's (age 4) of her hiding behind the door.

In our classroom, we focused on a particular Bible story each week and created our lesson plans around that core story. We then chose books for our literacy component that supported the Bible story. For example, during our theme "Jesus Teaches Us to Pray", we read "How to Pray" from the *Jesus Storybook Bible* (Lloyd-Jones, 2007, p. 222) and discussed how and where we can pray. Short (2009) wrote that, "children bring their personal experiences of living in the world and being part of specific cultural groups and social contexts to school... When students recognize the cultures that influence their thinking, they become more aware of how and why culture is important to others" (p. 4). Some children reported they prayed at meal or before bed, while others thought that was strange. During snack times, we asked if children wanted to have a turn leading our prayer. Occasionally, a child felt comfortable leading the prayer, but often they referred to our classroom prayer instead of a prayer they said at home, feeling more comfortable in our classroom culture. Additionally, we placed multiple different prayer books in our book center to encourage discussion about the different types of prayers.

As another example, when we read the Bible story about Moses and the Exodus, we considered the kind of food Moses and his family may have eaten, such as unleavened bread and manna, which would have taken the place of the bread we eat today. Moses may have eaten hummus with his bread and as a class, we made hummus using a recipe from Mrs. Abbey's grandmother-in-law, a recipe that had been passed



Figure 3. Mrs. Abbey making hummus with help from a student.

down from multiple generations (see Figure 3). Some children were familiar with what hummus was, while others had never tried it before. A child who hears Arabic as a second language was familiar with hummus but did not give insight beyond “I eat that at home sometimes,” to show he was making connections between reading the Bible story, making hummus, and something he experienced at home. Short’s (2009) definition of intercultural understanding includes that learners “develop an awareness and respect for different cultural perspectives as well as the commonality of human experience” and “value the diversity of cultures and perspectives within the world” (p. 3). Allowing children to have a similar experience as a character within a story, in our case a Bible story, helps to broaden their horizons and discover their own identities (Laminack & Kelly, 2019).

Windows and Mirrors

In our classroom, books served a major role to create introspective and extrospective thinking, otherwise termed as mirrors and windows (Bishop, 1990). Laminack and Kelly (2019) state “the right book, at the right time, can span the divide between where the reader stands in this moment and alternate views, new ideas, and options not yet considered” (pg. xiii). Using a book as a mirror helps readers understand their identities and reflect on the world in which they live, such as defining themselves through language, values, and specific cultural norms or foods, feelings and emotions. The window concept helps readers go beyond their immediate worlds to learn about other places, people, emotions, and experiences that are new to them.

Early in the school year, we began to introduce the terms “windows” and “mirrors” to frame our experiences with books and writing. Developmentally, preschool children can “think about objects, people and events without seeing them; however, although less than before, still think they are the center of the world and have trouble seeing things from someone else’s perspective” (American Psychological Association, 2017). Young children also tend to be concrete thinkers, working in the here and now. Abstract thought using metaphors can be a difficult concept that needs to be scaffolded for the children by thinking aloud with them, using why and how questions (Ylvisaker 2006).

Introducing the concept of windows and mirrors as a path to understanding identity started as a concrete exercise. We added mirrors to our writing area, invited the children to look at themselves in them, and asked, “What do you see?” (see Figure 4). The children’s responses included:

- “I see Liam and James playing together behind me.” Julio, age 4.
- “I see myself playing with blocks.” Grace, age 4.
- Chloe, age 4, stated, “Makes me beautiful!” (see Figure 4)

We then encouraged the children to think about what they see when they look through a window. We provided picture frames as a way to visualize the window space. When given this task, some children ran to the classroom windows and described our outdoor area. Some, such as Thomas, age 5, described the view from the windows of their homes (see Figure 5). He commented, “I see flowers, rocks, and grasshoppers through my window at my house.”



Figure 4. Chloe, age 4, looking at herself in a mirror.



Figure 5. Thomas, age 5, imagining the view from a window at his home.

Stories as Mirrors and Windows

It was clear that the children had previous knowledge about the functionality of mirrors and windows. Now our work was to scaffold their understanding of how stories can function as tools to help us see ourselves and understand beyond ourselves. We kept the mirrors and picture frames in the book area to use as a tool when reading stories. We simplified the concepts to be that mirror books are about things that you know, like yourself and your environment. Window books are about people or things you do not know but you can learn. As we read books to children, children discussed whether a book would be like a mirror or a window. Chloe, age 4, guessed that the story about Jesus as a little boy would be a window book because the picture of his school looked different than her school (see Figure 6).

Another activity was to sort book titles as mirrors and windows. We asked, “Which books are about things you know? Which books are about things you don’t know?” Taking a random selection from our book basket, the children organized the books by category. The window books included *A House for Hermit Crab* (Carle, 2013), a story about marine life (which is not a common experience for desert-dwelling children) and *Dragon Dancing* (Schaefer & Morgan, 2006), a book about a tradition not often celebrated by the families in our school.



Figure 6. Chloe, age 4, giving her opinion that the story of Jesus' school was a window book.



Figure 7. A drawing from Hannah's, age 5, book about herself.

recently completed church on campus. The children were able to view the church sanctuary for the first time. Because of the pandemic, none of the children had attended services there. We started in the nursery and looked through the one-way glass window into the church (see Figure 8). The children talked about what they saw, and asked questions about the furniture, different areas, and their purposes.

Then we walked through the door around to the other side to stand at the mirrored side of the glass (see Figure 9). We talked about how this place was first a window through which we could see things we did not know about, but we could learn. Then this place became a mirror in which we could see ourselves in this space. We are part of something bigger than ourselves, a part of a larger community of faith. The

As mirror books, children chose *Germs Are Not for Sharing* (Verdick & Heinlen, 2006), *Froggy Goes to the Doctor* (London & Remkiewicz, 2004), *Bear Feels Sick* (Wilson & Chapman, 2006), and *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Shell* (Colanda & Lee, 2006). It was interesting to see that the books about being sick were in the mirror group. We hypothesized that it was indicative of children living in the middle of a pandemic. When asked why they placed *There was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Shell* (Colanda & Lee, 2006) in the mirror group, the children remarked that the old lady was their teacher, Mrs. Hook!

Writing Mirror Books

We believe writing supports reading, so the children created several mirror books. "A Book about Me!" chronicled what each student knew about themselves and gave teachers a window into students' understanding. Hannah, age 5 stated in her book, "I love flamingos! I love Alicia! I love God! I go at Baby School when I was a baby. I am good! I love my family! Chickens make me feel happy!" (see Figure 7). We noted that Hannah drew from her different life experiences as she dictated her book, including a recent trip to the zoo and the hatching of baby chicks at the school.

Learning From Different Perspectives

As we came to the end of the school year, we wanted to explore the concept of recognizing and learning from different perspectives. Laminack and Kelly (2019) stated in their introduction: "We want readers to explore both the connections between their own worlds and those they read about and how they see themselves and others in new ways as a result" (p. xviii).

To physically manifest this idea, we brought the children to the

children were intrigued by the experience and could readily understand the unique feature of the mirror. However, they struggled to make any deeper connection to either themselves or books.



Figure 8. Children standing in the nursery, looking through the one-way glass window into the church.



Figure 9. Children in the church, looking at the mirrored side of the glass.

Then we walked through the door around to the other side to stand at the mirrored side of the glass (see Figure 9). We talked about how this place was first a window through which we could see things we did not know about, but we could learn. Then this place became a mirror in which we could see ourselves in this space. We are part of something bigger than ourselves, a part of a larger community of faith. The children were intrigued by the experience and could readily understand the unique feature of the mirror. However, they struggled to make any deeper connection to either themselves or books.

Closing Thoughts

Our goal with this project was to give both teachers and children the tool of windows and mirrors for seeking identity through children's/global literature. The concept of windows and mirrors was new for us and we were excited to use the tools as a fresh way to explore identity through our sacred stories. The children enjoyed using the small mirrors and picture frames as prompts in their writing and drawing and took pride in their mirror books. We soon realized, however, that the developmental level of the children, and the brevity of time that we had with them, produced challenges in working through the ideas to a deeper level of understanding about identity. In our effort to teach windows and mirrors, we missed opportunities to follow the children's lead in their own search for identity.

Looking ahead, we understand that reading to children and using stories as windows and mirrors can help children grow in their understanding of identity. As teachers of young children, we want to use the windows and mirrors tool when choosing stories for the classroom and to engage children in deeper conversations about themselves, their personal experiences, and who they are in relation to others. In the

future, though, instead of teaching the windows and mirrors tool, we hope to focus more on the children and engage them in discussions around global literature that invite them to use the mirrors and windows tool to reflect on themselves and others, thereby deepening their understandings. We can then encourage children to reflect on their identities through ownership of their learning in a developmentally appropriate way.

References

American Psychological Association. (2017). *Cognitive and social skills to expect from 3 – 5 years*. <https://www.apa.org/act/resources/fact-sheets/development-5-years>.

Bishop, R.S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives*, 6(3), ix-xi.

Hook, J. (2020, July). *What is a Creation teacher?* Presentation at a Teacher Inservice at Creation School, Vail, AZ.

Laminack, L., & Kelly, K. (2019). *Reading to make a difference: Using literature to help students speak freely, think deeply, and take action*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Short, K. (2009). Critically reading the word and the world: Building intercultural understanding through literature. *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, 47(2), 1-10.

Wycliffe Global Alliance. (2020). *2020 scripture access statistics*. <https://www.wycliffe.net/resources/statistics/>.

Ylvisaker, Mark, PhD. (2006). *What are concrete and abstract thinking*. http://www.projectlearnet.org/tutorials/concrete_vs_abstract_thinking.html.

Literature Cited

Carle, Eric. (2013). *A house for hermit crab*. New York: Little Simon

Colanda, L., & Lee, J. (2006). *There was an old lady who swallowed a shell*. New York: Scholastic.

Lloyd-Jones, S. (2007). *Jesus storybook bible*. Nashville, TN: ZonderKids.

London, J., & Remkiewicz, F. (2004). *Froggy goes to the doctor*. London, UK: Puffin Books.

Schaefer, C.L., & Morgan, P. (2006). *Dragon dancing*. London, UK: Penguin.

Verdick, E., & Heinlen, M. (2006). *Germs are not for sharing*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Wilson, K., & Chapman, J. (2006). *Bear feels sick*. New York: Little Simon.

Jennifer Hook has been in the education field for 35 years, working with students from preschool through college. She currently serves as a PreK teacher and school administrator.

Abbey Unes has been a registered nurse for many years. This was her first year as a pre-kindergarten teacher at Creation School.

© 2022 by Jennifer Hook and Abbey Unes



WOW Stories, Volume IX, Issue 1 by Worlds of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
Based on a work by Jennifer Hook and Abbey Unes at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/ix-1/6/>.

A Global Literature Study of Identity and Kindness in Pre-Kindergarten and Preschool Classrooms

Kelsey Nowacki and Jessica Berry

We were first year teachers at Creation School in 2020-2021. Kelsey's background is in the veterinary field and she decided to make a career change to better accommodate her son's education and schedule. Jessica majored in elementary and special education. She worked as a substitute teacher and as a special education teacher before staying home for a few years to focus on the care of her young children.

Kelsey's prekindergarten class of 13 students included eight girls and five boys, ages 4-5. The students were predominantly White, with two Latinx students who spoke English and Spanish at home. One child was of Arabic descent and one of Hawaiian descent. Jessica's preschool class of nine students was made up of five girls and four boys, ages 3-4. These students were predominately White, with one Latinx student who spoke both Spanish and English at home. All homes were two parent middle- to upper-class families.

In our classrooms at Creation School, we use a mix of Montessori, Waldorf, and Reggio Emilia learning to pursue authentic relationships among teachers and students. We believe that this is the key to developing children's agency and sense of wonder, inquiry, and responsibility, along with a deep rich understanding of what it means to be children of God.

We were members of our Vail Global Literacy Community and met monthly to study global literature, explore ways to expand students' knowledge of the world, and learn about developing students' intercultural understandings. We read articles and *Reading to Make a Difference: Using Literature to Help Students Speak Freely, Think Deeply, and Take Action* by Lester L. Laminack and Katie Kelly (2019). Through the readings and discussions, we learned that books can be used as a bridge to expand students' current understandings. Laminack and Kelly (2019) state, "As a bridge, the book enables a reader to span the divide between his current thoughts, views, beliefs, or attitudes and new ideas or insights that may lead to critical thought and new ways of thinking about and living in the world" (p. xiii). They discuss using global literature to develop and expand students' understandings of life experiences such as loss, making friends, immigration and refugees, helping others, and being kind.

The chapter "Sharing When You Have Little to Give" particularly struck us, pointing out that helping others is often thought of as tangible things, such as donations, medicine, or money; however, helping with our time, energy, attitudes, behaviors, and talents also makes a difference. "Giving is not measured by the pound, in numbers, or in dollars; rather, it is measured by the generosity of spirit and by the care and empathy behind the gift" (Laminack & Kelly, 2019, p. 99). This inspired our conversations about kindness and what our classes could do to help and love others.

The concept of kindness fit with our previous discussions of identity after reading an article by Kathy Short (2009) and the first chapter in Laminack and Kelly's (2019) book, because we see showing kindness and love as part of identity. Children can deepen insights about themselves while also developing a sense of empathy for others through read-alouds and conversations. "We believe this topic [identity] demonstrates for children how each of us brings a mix of genetics, experiences,

thoughts, feelings, attitudes, understandings, biases, beliefs, and family/cultural traditions to the classroom community" (Laminack & Kelly, 2019, p. 2). In this vignette we share how we explored identity and kindness in our classrooms.

Our Studies of Identity and Kindness

Kelsey's Prekindergarten Classroom

Early in the school year in Kelsey's prekindergarten classroom, students drew self-portraits and identified the traits they thought God gave them to make them unique. We discussed that while each student had unique differences and similarities, we are all children of God. This became the basis of our identity theme.

We read *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes (1991), the story of a young mouse who loves her name, Chrysanthemum, until she starts school and the others tease her. In the end she discovers that her name is her own, relates to her identity, and loves it again. During our second reading the students helped make a timeline graph noting Chrysanthemum's feelings during the story, sharing how they identified with Chrysanthemum and her feelings, and what they would do in the story. Josephine, age 4, stated, "We should love everybody."

Along with other teachers in our school, we asked parents for the story behind their child's name and any connections to their cultural backgrounds. Students were excited to share about themselves at circle time. "My name means Princess!" Abigail, age 5, said. They put a star sticker on a world map of the countries from which their families originally came. We then reiterated that Jesus loves all the children of the world and wants us to do the same. Lacey Elisea, Jane Metzger, and Cassandra Sutherland also discuss learning about students' names and plotting their families' origins on a world map in their article in this issue.

Toward the end of the year students drew another self-portrait, this time "inside out." Laminack and Kelly (2019) state, "Though they know each other rather well, these posters reveal some inward feelings and thoughts they may not have shared prior to this exploration. In addition, there may be a disconnect between how one views oneself and how one is viewed by others" (p. 15). To adapt this, we asked the prekindergarten students to identify what was inside their hearts and minds. We discussed how someone looking at them cannot "see" into their heart and only knows what is in their heart and who they are by how they act. Students' suggestions for how to show the kindness in their hearts included, "Get a teacher when [someone] fall[s]" (Maddox, age 5); "Help mommy clean up" (Kiera, age 5), and "Not take toys" (Oriana, age 5). We brought the discussion back to how we should be loving to others.

Examples of students' "inside out" drawings are in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 shows Oriana's, age 5, drawing of herself. For inside her heart she said, "I love God. I really super duper 100% love Him. I love myself." For outside she said, "I like swinging. I'm playful. Love the outdoors."

Abigail's, age 5, drawing is in Figure 2. She explained that the inside of her heart shows she is kind and brave while on the outside she is playful and a sister.



Figure 1. Oriana's, age 5, "inside outside" drawing of herself.



Figure 2. Abigail's, age 5, "inside outside" drawing of herself.

To highlight kindness and discuss how it relates to identity, we read *Never Too Little to Love* by Jeanne Willis and Jan Fearnley (2013), *Berenstain Bears Think of Those in Need* by Stan and Jan Berenstain (1999), and *When I'm Feeling Kind* by Trace Moroney (2015). We discussed how these books show that one small act of kindness can change someone's entire day. To help illustrate how small acts can make a big change we started a kindness chain. Every time students were seen doing something kind at school, we made a loop on the chain. Examples of the kindness loops included picking a flower for mommy, giving a toy to a friend, getting an ice pack for a friend who fell, and asking if someone was ok if they looked sad. Once the chain was large enough, we hung it up in the class for all to see. The students said that they wanted to make the chain go all the way to the corner of the wall. They surpassed their goal (see Figure 3)!



Figure 3. The kindness chain reaching the corner.

Jessica's Preschool Classroom

In Jessica's preschool classroom, Jessica invited students to bring in several pictures of their families as a way to think about identity. We placed each student's pictures on butcher paper and had the students draw their families and how they felt about their families while discussing the different family members. Brandon happily drew circles because his dog "runs in circles when he is happy." Family pictures from Nick, age 3, are in Figure 4.

Students had different family structures: one had half-siblings, some had adult siblings, some had younger siblings, and one even had an au pair. Students found it fun to discuss the differences and similarities, "You have a little brother, just like me!" Georgia commented.

To focus on kindness, we first read *It Came in The Mail* by Ben Clanton (2016). In this book a little boy waits for mail. When mail starts coming through his mailbox, he has too much. In the end, he sends mail so other children can feel the joy of receiving it. We discussed the excitement of receiving good news through the mail and each student made postcards for teachers and fellow students around the school. They also made a mailbox for our class to receive mail. Figure 5 shows Jaclyn, age 4, working on the mailbox. The students were excited to receive notes in the mailbox, including some from Kelsey's prekindergarten class.



Figure 4. Nick, age 3, coloring his family portrait.



Figure 5. Jaclyn, age 4, working on the mailbox.

We continued our conversation of spreading kindness by reading *When I'm Feeling Kind* by Trace Moroney (2015) (see Figure 6). This story follows a bunny and all the things the bunny does for family members and friends to be kind. The book sparked the students' brainstorming of ways they can be kind and helpful. These included "Give my friend a hug when she is feeling sad," and "Help my mom with my little brother."



Figure 6. Reading *When I'm Feeling Kind* (Moroney, 2015).

Finally, we read *Be Kind* (Miller & Hill, 2018). This book tells of a little girl who witnesses something embarrassing happen to a friend and all the things she could think of to do to be kind to her friend, leading up to giving her friend a picture. While reading this book, the students empathized not only with the character doing the act of kindness, but also the character who experienced embarrassment. This spurred a later conversation discussing the ways we feel sad and the ways we would like to have kindness shown to us.

We also discussed ways to show kindness on the playground. Students' responses included "Run with my friends" and "Play with my friends." When asked, "How would you know if a friend doesn't have someone to play with on the

playground?" they were unsure how to respond. That is when we introduced buddy benches, an idea we got from Laminack and Kelly (2019). A buddy bench is a place on the playground for students to sit when they are lonely and need a friend with whom to play, so that "other kids can see them and be friends with them" (Laminack & Kelly 2019, p. 126). We already had benches that a parent built for us to use on the playground and "re-purposed" them with all of the classes, not just our own, into buddy benches (see Figure 7). When someone was feeling lonely or upset, they sat on the bench and a classmate would see and check on them.

Buddy benches were a huge success with all the classes. Students who do not normally interact with each other began sitting, talking, and/or playing together. For example, we saw prekindergarten students sitting with early learners (2-3 years old). It became schoolwide evidence of kindness and empathy. We asked our students how they felt knowing they were able to help someone. "It feels good," said Colton, age 5. We discussed how it makes them feel good to help others feel good.

Reflection

Laminack and Kelly (2019) stated in their introduction that, "Some texts affirm our lives based on similarities and connections, while others provide us a window into the unfamiliar" (p. xvii). For preschool/prekindergarten students, a lot about school is unfamiliar and we introduce them to many concepts, sometimes for the first time. Through these experiences, each student knew what it meant to be kind, had language to verbalize their ideas, and the background to build on further in considering acts of kindness.

Students at Creation School taught us a lot, taking on kindness challenges as they were also learning to know themselves. It was joyful to see them run to help a friend up, sit on the buddy bench with someone, or to see their



Figure 7. Colton, age 5, and Genevieve, age 4, sitting on the buddy bench.

smile when another loop on the kindness chain was added. Our goal is that students continue to explore their identity and always find ways to be kind. Being able to use books to demonstrate these strong values is critical. Not only is it helping students learn to read but to become empathetic caring beings.

References

- Laminack, L., & Kelly, K. (2019). *Reading to make a difference: Using literature to help students speak freely, think deeply, and take action*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann
- Short, K. (2009). Critically reading the word and the world: Building intercultural understanding through literature. *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, 47(2), 1-10.

Literature Cited

- Berenstain, S., & Berenstain, J. (1999). *Berenstain Bears think of those in need*. New York: Random House.
- Clanton, B. (2016). *It came in the mail*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Henkes, K. (1991). *Chrysanthemum*. New York: Greenwillow Books
- Miller, P.Z., & Hill, J. (2018). *Be kind*. New York: Roaring Brook.
- Moroney, T. (2015). *When I'm feeling kind*. Scoresby, Australia: Five Mile.
- Willis, J., & Fearnley, J. (2013). *Never too little to love*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick.

Kelsey Nowacki has a background in the veterinary field and was a first-year teacher at Creation School.

Jessica Berry's background is in elementary and special education and was a first-year teacher at Creation School.

© 2022 by Kelsey Nowacki and Jessica Berry



WOW Stories, Volume IX, Issue 1 by Worlds of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
Based on a work by Kelsey Nowacki and Jessica Berry at <https://wowlit.org/online-publications/stories/ix-1/7/>.

Exploration of Children's Literature about Middle Eastern Nations and Islamic Culture

Junko Sakoi

The goal of our global literacy community was to support students in developing intercultural understandings and global perspectives by exploring children's literature about Middle Eastern nations and Islamic culture. Our group consisted of seven educators from Title 1 PreK–5 elementary and middle schools in the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD). Dr. Yoo Kyung Sung, a professor at the University of New Mexico, joined our study group meetings as a co-leader and co-thinker. Yoo Kyung and I planned the monthly meetings, reflected on the discussions, and supported teachers in incorporating literature into their teaching plans.

TUSD is the largest urban public school district in Southern Arizona, serving about 47,000 PreK through 12th grade students across 89 schools and programs. In the 2020–2021 school year, Latinx students accounted for over 60% of the district's total enrollment, followed by European American students (20%), African American students (6.0%), Indigenous students (3.6%), Asian American students (2.1%), and multiracial students (3.9%) (TUSD, 2020a). Among them are approximately 800 refugee students, who have been in the U.S. for various lengths of time—speaking 40 different languages and representing over 50 countries, including Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (TUSD, 2018). Recognizing this growing diversity in cultures and languages, the district has committed itself to developing a series of plans and programs aimed at improving equity, diversity, and inclusiveness for all members of its community (TUSD, 2020b).

Middle Eastern and Islamic Cultural Themes

Lately, the global media and literature about the Middle East for children and young adults has heavily focused on the stories of refugees in a warzone context (Martin, 2021; Pascale, 2020; Shapiro, 2020). Global literature, such as *The Cat Man of Aleppo* by Irene Latham, Karim Shamsi-Basha, and Yuko Shimizu (2020), *The Unwanted: Stories of the Syrian Refugees* by Don Brown (2018), and *Other Words for Home* by Jasmine Warga (2019), have earned national recognition for their literary excellence and advantages as resources. These stories portray the experiences of Syrian refugees through rich narratives and fascinating statistics, informing readers about the reality of Syrian refugees' sufferings and their adjustments to a new homeland. The many images of surviving violence, war, and atrocities in such stories have raised sympathy about Syrians and other Middle Eastern people.

Yoo Kyung and I were concerned that Tucson students, who have been exposed daily to the global media and to stories emphasizing the Middle East's hardships, might consider the Middle East only from the perspective of victims of war. Recently, several schools have reported difficulties in building relationships between students with Islamic backgrounds and students from other cultural groups. The schools noted that this issue might be stemming from students' limited knowledge about the positive sides of Middle Eastern countries, as well as misconceptions about the countries and their cultural practices. We were concerned that our school curriculum has not sufficiently provided them with resources about the rich histories and cultures of Middle Eastern countries and the people's great contributions to the past and present day in our global society. I have also found that some teachers find it difficult to teach about Middle Eastern themes due to their unfamiliarity with the countries and their lack of knowledge about the available resources.

Yoo Kyung and I, therefore, thought that children's literature might support students in (re)discovering cultures in the Middle East and help teachers become more confident about covering the Middle East in their lessons. In the first study group meeting, we talked about how we could approach Middle Eastern and Islamic themes. We did not want to overlook the fact that Islamic communities exist worldwide, in the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. We discussed, and eventually agreed on, starting with the Middle East, as it contains the highest percentage of Muslims, and comparing the Middle East to other regions. This could also extend to our own Tucson community because of recent growth in the number of families with roots in the Middle East.

We invited the teachers in the TUSD global literacy community to join a monthly study group meeting via Zoom. Besides the virtual meeting, we invited them to share resources and teaching ideas and reflections in a Padlet. Together, we explored children's literature about the Middle East and Islamic culture, read books, shared responses, tried literacy engagements, and discussed academic articles. We also encouraged the teachers to share their teaching experiences and students' learning experiences when using literature and to respond to one another.

A Curriculum That is International

During the first several meetings, we spent time reading and discussing academic articles to build our background knowledge of curriculum, children's literature, and engagements with literature. The first article we read was Kathy Short's (2003) "Exploring a Curriculum that is International." We unpacked each layer of the curriculum framework—personal cultural identities, cross-cultural studies, integration of international experiences and materials, and inquiries on global issues and problems (see Figure 1). The teachers were then invited to share questions, thoughts, teaching ideas, and resources that could be used within the framework. To learn more about teaching strategies, practices, and resources, we also read Short (2009), Sung and Sakoi (2018), and Wilson, Chavez, and Anders (2012).

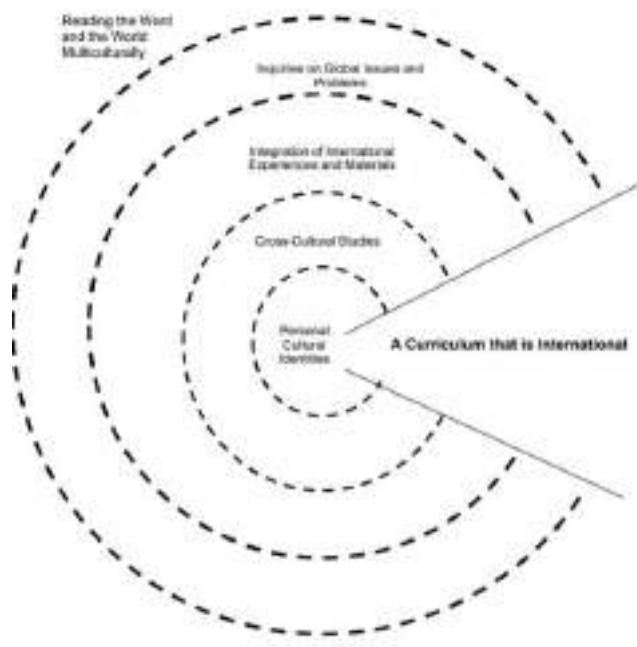


Figure 1. Curriculum that is International (Short, 2003).

Exploring Global, International, and Multicultural Literature

To reach our project goal, Yoo Kyung and I thought it was important to support teachers with an expanded knowledge of global, international, and multicultural literature, encouraging them to see the value and possibilities of literature as a teaching resource across content areas. Therefore, we encouraged the teachers to explore the literature shared on various organizational websites: Worlds of Words (WOW): Center of Global Literacies and Literatures, The United States Board on Books for Young People's (USBBY) International Outstanding Books List, and Notable Books for a Global Society. The teachers also attended author webinars offered by the Tucson Festival of Books and the US Department of Education's National Resource Center Program, to gain more information about authors and their works. We further suggested they explore eBooks and audiobooks available via Epic and Storyline Online. Online resources such as these were a strong need in the virtual classroom settings necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learning a Strategy for Developing Paired Books and Text Sets

In addition to expanding their knowledge of the literature, Yoo Kyung and I thought the teachers might need strategies for sharing literature with students in a meaningful, engaging way. One strategy we suggested was developing paired books and text sets, which contain interrelated texts and help readers develop a deep understanding of and perspective on a topic or theme (Short, 2011a, 2011b).

We shared a strategy for developing paired books and text sets using books about the Middle East, which are interrelated based on universal themes and children's cultures, such as family practices and traditions, friendship, and school experiences. Our goal was to create a context in which students would be able to explore the Middle East through multiple perspectives and understand the complexities and diversities within the Middle East region, beyond simplified labels such as "refugee," "Muslim," or "Arabic speaker."

Yoo Kyung and I developed the following paired books as an example and shared them with the teachers. Each pair includes two books: one about the Middle East and the other portraying a story in which the students could find their own cultures and experiences. Some teachers chose to use these paired books in their classes.

Colors and Shapes: *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors* (Khan, 2012) and *Green is a Chile Pepper: A Book of Colors* (Thong & Parra, 2016).

Family Gatherings and Traditional Foods: *Salma the Syrian Chef* (Ramadan & Bron, 2020) and *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* (Maillard & Martinez-Neal, 2019).

A text set includes five to seven books that are thematically connected, like the paired books. Our initial plan was to create a space in which teachers could develop text sets as a team; however, this would not work in the online space or within the limited time we had due to the difficulties the pandemic brought. Therefore, we developed a list of text sets with an excel spreadsheet for teachers based on their themes and books of interest (see Figure 2), with seven sections: 1) a title of the book, 2) genre, 3) author and illustrator, 4) a main character and a setting(s), 5) story themes and synopsis, 6) text sets, and 7) synopses of the text set books. Then, we guided teachers in searching for books and creating text sets for their classes. During the study group meetings, the teachers shared their text sets and themes with others. The following text sets were developed by two of the teachers.

- Act of Kindness: *The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family* (Muhammad, Ali, & Aly, 2019), *King for a Day* (Khan & Kromer, 2019), *Thank You, Omu!* (Mora, 2018), *A Drop of the Sea* (Chabbert & Guridi, 2018), and *Salma the Syrian Chef* (Ramadan & Bron, 2020)
- Taking Actions for Justice: *The Librarian of Basra: The True Story from Iraq* (Winter, 2005), *Hands around the Library* (Abouraya, 2012), *The Grand Mosque of Paris: A Story of How Muslims Rescued Jews During the Holocaust* (Ruelle & Desaix, 2010), and *Nasreen's Secret School: A True Story from Afghanistan* (Winter, 2009)

Title	Genre	Author & Illustrator	Main character & Setting	Themes & Synopsis	Text Sets: Books	Synopsis of books of Text Sets
Lost and Found Cat (2017)	Nonfiction	Doug Kentz, Amy Shrodes, Sue Gosselin	Iraq to Greece	Separation, loss, displacement, 'losses' journey, refugees, trauma		journey to freedom in Europe. Story sets. Social anger students to take informed actions.
The Cat Man of Aleppo (2020)	Nonfiction picture book	Karin Shuele, Banks, Yoko Shimizu	Arabesean driver man in Aleppo in Syria	Strangers, warzone, separation, loss, displacement, refugee, perseverance		Raziel is between. (graphic novel). Based on the author working among refugees families in a Middle Eastern city. His courage and resilience are tested as a country and has to migrate in a language he does not understand.
Salma the Syrian Chef (2020)	Fiction	Dunya Ramadan, Anna Böök	A family from Syria in U.S.	Friendship, war, g., relatability, separation from family, immigrants		The refugee story in Palestine. Una and her friend share their love for falafel. (graphic graphic novel). The experience of the Israeli author growing up in a refugee camp.

Figure 2. A list of text sets in excel spreadsheet based on the themes and books of teachers' interests.

Engagements with Literature

In the study group meetings, Yoo Kyung and I invited teachers to read aloud picturebooks (*Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors*, *The Arabic Quilt: An Immigrant Story*, and *Under My Hijab*), share responses, and participate in literacy engagements. We discussed these stories through the lens of identity intersections, exploring characters' experiences via multiple social and personal domains, including personalities, activities, religious practices, and relationships with family and friends. One of the study group members who was originally from Palestine helped us develop a deeper understanding of Islamic values, beliefs, practices, and perspectives portrayed in the stories. We also invited teachers to write a mini-bio poem about their life experiences and cultural identities. The book discussions and literacy engagements were worthwhile experiences. They were able to learn read-aloud strategies, share teaching ideas for the books, and gain cultural knowledge about the Middle East. These experiences motivated teachers to share Middle Eastern books with their students.

Final Thoughts

We began this global literacy community project with some tension and hesitation due to our limited knowledge of Middle Eastern countries and our unfamiliarity with their cultures. At the same time, we felt passionate about the goal to support teachers in developing an inclusive school community. Global, international, and multicultural literature gave us opportunities to think, learn, and challenge our

stereotypes. This process gave us confidence in teaching students about Middle Eastern and Islamic themes and cultures.

Children's literature also helped develop critical lenses and gain authentic intercultural understandings of the Middle East—rethinking the social attitudes associated with a warzone context. Organizing and facilitating this global literacy community as a co-leader with Yoo Kyung was also valuable experience for me. The teacher study group was a wonderful, collaborative learning space in which we were all engaged, thinking together and sharing ideas and perspectives. I want to keep working collaboratively with the teachers as a co-thinker, supporting them with their curriculum and lesson development by continuing to share various global, international, and multicultural stories. In this way, we can keep moving forward and growing together as global educators.

Children's and Young Adult Literature Cited

Abouraya, L. K. (2012). *Hands around the library: Protecting Egypt's treasured books*. Illus. S. L. Roth. New York City: Dial.

Brown, D. (2018). *The unwanted: Stories of the Syrian refugees*. Boston: Clarion.

Chabbert, I. (2018). *A drop of the sea*. Illus. R. N. Guridi. Toronto: Kids Can Press.

Khan, H. (2012). *Golden domes and silver lanterns: A Muslim book of colors*. Illus. M. Amini. San Francisco: Chronicle.

Khan, R. (2013). *King for a day*. Illus. C. Krömer. New York: Lee & Low.

Latham, I., & Shamsi-Basha, K. (2020). *The cat man of Aleppo*. Illus. Y. Shimizu. New York: Putnam.

Maillard, N. K. (2019). *Fry bread: A Native American family story*. Illus. J. Martinez-Neal. New York: Roaring Brook Press.

Mora, O. (2018). *Thank you, Omu!*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Muhammad, I. (2019). *The proudest blue: A story of hijab and family*. Illus. H. Aly. Boston: Little, Brown.

Ramadan, D. (2020). *Salma the Syrian chef*. Illus. A. Bron. Toronto: Annick Press.

Ruelle, G. K. (2010). *The grand mosque of Paris: A story of how Muslims rescued Jews during the holocaust*. Illus. D. D. Desaix. New York: Holiday House.

Thong, G. R. (2016). *Green is a chile pepper: A book of colors*. Illus. J. Parra. San Francisco: Chronicle.

Warga, J. (2019). *Other words for home*. New York: Balzer + Bray.

Winter, J. (2009). *Nasreen's secret school: A true story from Afghanistan*. New York: Beach Lane.

Winter, J. (2019). *The librarian of Basra: The true story from Iraq*. Boston: Clarion.

References

- Martin, M. (2021, January 3). *Migrants flee Lebanon in desperate, doomed journey*. <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/03/953073963/migrants-flee-lebanon-in-desperate-doomed-journey>
- Pascale, J. (2020, February 18). *Satellite photos show rapid growth of Syrian refugee camps*. National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/2020/02/18/807150232/satellite-photos-show-rapid-growth-of-syrian-refugee-camps>
- Shapiro, A. (2020, March 4). U.N. refugee agency deputy on the humanitarian crisis in Syria. *National Public Radio*. <https://www.npr.org/2020/03/04/812246901/u-n-refugee-agency-deputy-on-the-humanitarian-crisis-in-syria>
- Short, K. (2003). *Exploring a curriculum that is international*. https://old.coe.arizona.edu/sites/coe/files/a_curriculum_that_is_international.pdf
- Short, K. (2009). Critically reading the word and the world: Building intercultural understanding through literature. *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, 47(2), 1-10.
- Short, K. (2011a). Text sets as contexts for understanding. *WOW Blog*. <https://wowlit.org/blog/2011/02/21/text-sets-as-contexts-for-understanding/>
- Short, K. (2011b). Strategies for reading and discussing paired books. *WOW Currents*. <https://wowlit.org/blog/2011/02/28/strategies-for-reading-and-discussing-paired-books/>
- Sung, Y.K. & Sakoi, J. (2018). Sixth graders' inquiry into the World War II Japanese internment camp. In V. Yenika-Agbaw, R.M. Lowery, & H.P. Ricks (Eds.), *Using nonfiction for civic engagement in classrooms: Critical approaches* (pp. 53-68). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Tucson Unified School District (TUSD). (2018). *Refugee student services*. <http://www.tusd1.org/Departments/Refugee/Refugee-Services-Resources>
- TUSD. (2020a). *TUSD enrollment by federal ethnicity by school (2020-2021)*. tusddatareports.tusd1.org/EnrollmentByFederalEthnicity.html
- TUSD. (2020b). *Commitment to equity, diversity and inclusiveness*. <http://deseg.tusd1.org/>
- Wilson, A.A., Chavez, K., & Anders, L.P. (2012). "From the Koran and Family Guy": Exploration of identity in English learners' digital podcasts. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 55(5), 368-443.
- Junko Sakoi is a Program Coordinator of Multicultural Curriculum Department. (ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5012-6910>)

© 2022 by Junko Sakoi



WOW Stories, Volume IX, Issue 1 by Worlds of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Based on a work by Junko Sakoi at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/ix-1/8/>.

It's like we're in the book, Miss! A Multimodal View of Self (and Others) through Connections, Color and a Cross-Cultural Lens

Nalda Y. Francisco and Kathryn Chavez

This article describes the literacy experiences of a third-grade teacher, Nalda Francisco, an instructional coach, Kathryn Chavez, and the students who together embarked on a multicultural literature journey. The study group was comprised of thirteen students who self-selected to return to in-person learning when Covid-19 pandemic restrictions were lessened. The research site is a K-8 school in an urban city area located in the desert Southwest. Four of the thirteen participants were second graders who joined the 90-minute third-grade literacy block each morning due to overcrowding in their second-grade in-person classroom. Eighty-five percent of the class are classified as Latinx students, plus one African American and 1 multi-racial student. Framed in the belief that critical literacy, reading both the word and the world, are important components of any curriculum (Freire, 1989), the engagements were designed to explore students' own cultural experiences as well as a range of cultural perspectives other than their own. The instructors, members of the Southern Arizona Global Literacy Community, also drew from the social practice of making meaning by combining multiple multimodal representations to represent the knowing and learning taking place in the classroom. Nalda and Kathryn were anxious to create and implement an engaging and informative unit to students returning from remote learning.



Figure 1. Photograph of our classroom and students.

The 8-week unit was designed to support students at varying grade levels to read about, examine, and reflect upon the family traditions, food, and experiences of characters in a variety of multicultural books. The idea was for students to connect literary experiences to themselves, their teachers and classmates as they explored cultures similar to and different from their own. At the end of the unit, we wanted students to create a montage of their work and present their two favorite books. Nalda wanted students to talk about and connect books on their own without a teacher-led discussion. She made sure the presentation included connections between the two books and an explanation of why those two books resonated with the presenters. For Kathryn it was important to use multimodality as a strategy for deeper understanding rather than an embellishment or frill.

The text set was comprised of eight books reflecting a range of global perspectives, including Middle Eastern, Southwestern, and Indigenous cultures. Two of these books served as anchor

texts and were referred to throughout the eight weeks. The unit was framed around the enduring understanding: Across time and cultures there is more that connects than separates us. The essential question used to frame the lessons was: Where Am I From? The question was not only directed towards students, but also used to examine main characters. Other essential questions emerged dependent upon the text set selection (e. g. Do you think the cat man from Aleppo is a real or a fictional character?). Along the way two additional books were incorporated to serve as a scaffold and provide students with a deeper

understanding of visual representation and use of color as they explored their own cultures and cultures other than their own. In the end, connections and inferences were made through student-led discussion rather than teacher led.

Strategies: Making Connections and Beyond

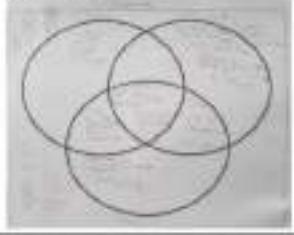
Great books are key to teaching reading comprehension (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). Students in Nalda's class were not only immersed in great literature, but they were also immersed in great reading and thinking strategies. While background knowledge and experiences come to mind as one reads, deeper comprehension comes from linking those connections to our lives (text to self, TS), other books (text to text, TT) and the world (text to world, TW). Other ways of linking experiences were taught using two anchor texts to build schema. Strategies included:

- Anchor experiences (e.g., reading and re-reading anchor texts, traditional food and recipes, exploring maps, TS, TT, TW connections, sketch to stretch, book cover analysis)
- Visible Thinking graphic organizer use (Venn diagrams, KWL Charts, Character webs, Color my world notetaker)
- Multimodal response competency-MRC (embodied representations: patterns, recipes, proudest color)

Nalda and Kathryn modeled these comprehension strategies in diverse ways with different books (see Table 1), and then gave students opportunities to discuss and practice in small groups—and eventually take ownership of using the strategies at the appropriate time and place.

Table 1: Books, resources, strategies, and engagements

Book Title and its Additional Resources	Strategies	Engagements
<p>Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story</p> <p>Additional resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frybread recipe in the back of book • Frybread recipe from the BETC 	Anchor Experience Connections, MRC	<p>My traditional family food; Making frybread recipe</p>
<p>Salma the Syrian Chef</p> <p>Additional resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danny Ramadhan video: (6:42) Global Reads Webinar with Danny Ramadhan - YouTube (start at 4 min.) • Foul Shami recipe: Foul Shami Recipe and Annick Green (annickgreen.com) 	Anchor Experience Connections, Visible thinking, MRC	<p>Sketch to Stretch, Where Are I From web, Making Foul Shami Recipe, Using Word Map for location, 2-ing Venn Diagram, 3-ing Venn Diagram, Verb & Measurement Anchor Chart</p>
<p>One</p>	MRC	<p>My Proudest Color</p>

 <p>Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors</p>	Visual thinking, MRC	2-ring Venn Diagram, 3-ring Venn Diagram, Color My World 
 <p>The Prettiest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family</p>	Visual thinking, MRC	Sketch to Sketch, 3-ring Venn Diagram 
 <p>Under My Hijab</p>	Visual thinking	KWL chart 
 <p>Green is a Chile Pepper: A Book of Colors</p>	MRC, Visual thinking	Family representation, Color My World 
 <p>Salsa: A Cooking Poem</p>	MRC	Making Salsa Recipe, Measurement and Verbs Anchor Chart 
 <p>The Cat Man of Aleppo</p> <p>Additional resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cat Man of Aleppo Video • (602) The cat man of Aleppo • BBC News - YouTube 	MRC, Visual thinking, Anchor Experience Connections	Where I Am From web, Mentor text graphic organizer, Recipe of Self, Using World Map for location 

<p>The Butter Man</p> <p>Additional resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couscous Recipe from teacher • Videos of People fleeing Morocco: Migrant boy swims from Morocco to Spain using plastic bottles (nbcnews.com) • Thousands arrive on Spanish beach after swimming from Morocco (cnn.com) 	<p>MRC, Visual thinking, Anchor Experiences</p>	<p>Anchored Experience Connections, Using World Map for location, Presentation</p>
--	---	--

Connecting Anchor Texts and Experiences

The two books used to anchor and connect readers' experiences throughout the unit were:

- *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story*, written by Kevin Noble Maillard, & illustrated by Juana Martinez Neal (2019, Roaring Brook Press)
- *Salma the Syrian Chef*, written by Danny Ramadan, & illustrated by Anna Bron (2020, Annick Press)

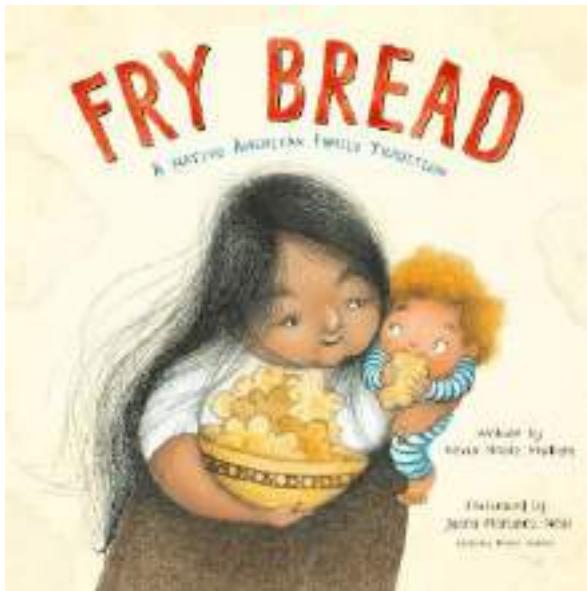


Figure 2a. *Frybread: A Native American Family Story*

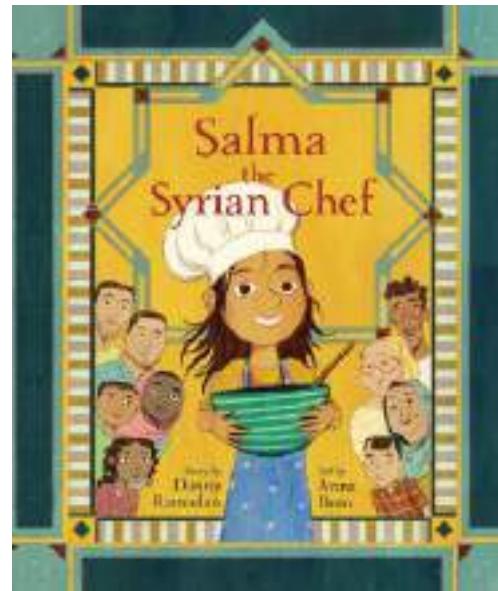


Figure 2b. *Salma the Syrian Chef*.

Traditional foods were linked to the two anchor texts to serve as a foundation for student experiences. These anchor experiences were then used to connect, compare and stretch students' thinking as they explored the entire text set. Most of the third graders in Nalda's class had participated in the WOW Center's author/illustrator presentation of *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* (2020) while attending school remotely. After returning to in-person learning, students read the story again and were given an assignment to create powerpoint slides of a traditional food they ate with family.

Once drawings were complete, Nalda used examples from the text to have students create metaphors representing their family food. Students later returned to these initial pictures to add instructions for their recipes and as a reference when writing their own self-recipes (see Figure 3).

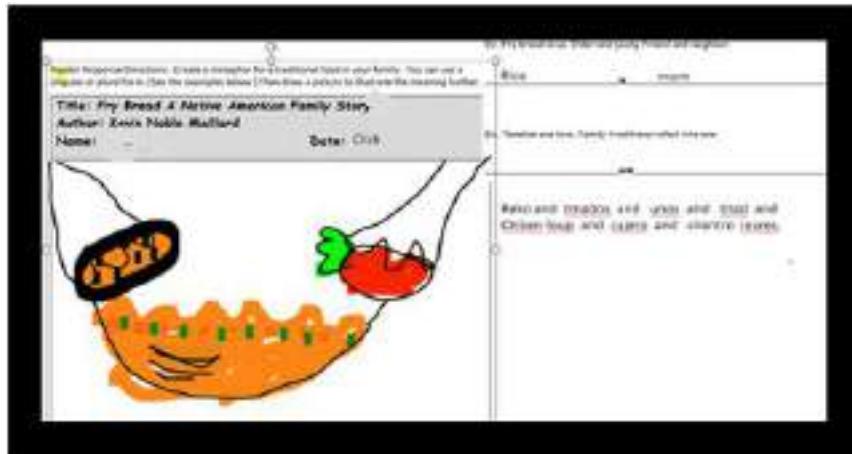


Figure 3. My Traditional Family Food.

Salma the Syrian Chef served as the second anchor text. First the book cover was analyzed closely as a pre-reading strategy to point out use of color and patterns and to make predictions.

David: Cooking book, she has a cooking hat.

Fatima: She's cooking for a family.

Joe: Cooking for a restaurant.

Jose: A chef.

Roy: People love her food because their smiling.

Mario: The girl is smiling too. She's happy! She's a cook. She likes to cook.

After the first reading, a Where Am I From character web was created for Salma (see Figure 4). Maps were also used to help students contextualize location and distance (see Figure 3). After the second reading, students watched a video of the author, Danny Ramaden, making Foul Shami—a Middle Eastern dish central to the book. Next, the class made Foul Shami and the following day from their printed recipes, brainstormed a Verbs and Measurement anchor chart that would serve as a reference when creating their own self recipes later in the unit. Students also considered Salma's use of color in her drawings and realized that Salma's favorite color was purple. In turn they revealed their own favorite colors in a journal response format (see Figure 4).



Figure 4a. A character web.

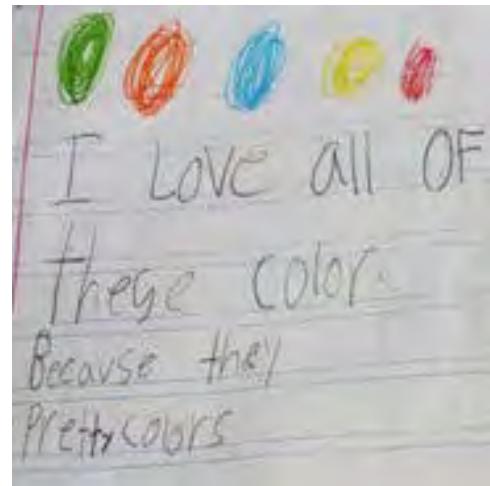


Figure 4b. A student's journal.

Next, students explored a visualization strategy—Sketch to Stretch (Short, 1996)—in order to think more deeply about the author’s particular word choice (see Figure 5). Two quotes were selected from the reading and students were asked to create a visual representation for the quotes. Music was played during creation time and afterwards students presented their drawings to a partner.

After the third reading, students created their own Where Am I From webs and focused on their own favorite color selected previously (see Figure 6). The color was then incorporated into a representative pattern. The goal toward deeper understanding and student-centered discussions was set into motion.



Figure 5. Student Example of Sketch to Stretch.



Figure 6a. Example of Where am I From web.



Figure 6b. Example of Where Am I From web.

Multimodal Response Competency-MRC

Multimodal representational competency (Yore & Hand, 2010) can help students arrive at deeper understandings as they learn to interpret and produce multimodal texts. Color connections, patterns and representations were introduced through anchor texts and focused upon throughout the unit. Siegel (1995) explains, “translating meanings from one sign system to another increases students’ opportunities to engage in generative and reflective thinking because students must invent connections between the two sign systems” (p. 455). Students considered and selected their own proudest color just as authors and illustrators use color to represent characters in the books they read. Besides their initial selection of a favorite color, participants learned to use color to express emotions and depict the metaphors and similes of authors. Students also used specific colors to represent themselves and members of their families.

Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors, The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family, and Green as a Chile Pepper were used to bring about this result. Using a graphic organizer we named Color My World, students used examples from the books to create family representations based on color (see Figure 7). For example, in the Muslim culture blue was connected to the hijab the narrator’s mother wore and in Latinx culture blue was associated with the endless sky. Jose, a second grader, selected blue to represent his father because the color and his father both made him happy. His color selection was not random. He selected blue as his favorite color when relating himself to Salma in an earlier journal entry. Jose extended this thinking to his sister’s color representation of pink because it is her favorite color.

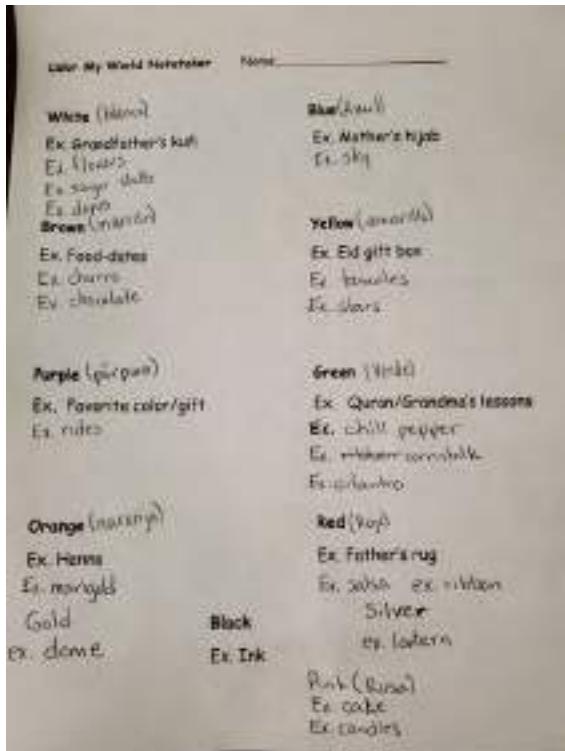


Figure 7a. Student Example of Color My World.



Figure 7b. Student Examples of Color My World.

Another way multimodal representations were made was through food. In *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors*, brown is associated with dates. After reading the book, students sampled and discussed the taste of the dates. While Salma did not relate a color to the dish Foul Shami, the ingredients were related to colors. Like two of Nalda's students, the main character was a second language learner and she used color and drawing to communicate the ingredients she needed to make the dish for her mother (e.g. green for sage, brown for beans, white for garlic, etc.). Later in the unit, salsa was made in a molcajete as students listened to poetry choices from *Salsa: A Cooking Poem* (2017) and then sampled chips and salsa. This book served as a scaffold as red took on the form and taste of a food many students were familiar with and could relate to. Students also explored more vocabulary for recipe writing such as dice, chop, whisk, etc. (see Table 1) as they added more terms to the anchor chart of Verbs and Measurements that originated from their work with Salma's Foul Shami recipe. The anchor chart was referred to again later in the unit as they wrote self-recipes and demonstrated multimodal representation competency by tying their traditional foods to themselves using traits and ingredients such as bravery, kindness, love, athleticism, etc. in the form of a recipe.

Visible Thinking Strategies

Besides the Color My World graphic organizer and the Where Am I From character webs used to help build multimodal representations competency, several other visible thinking strategies (e.g. Venn diagrams, KWL charts, journal writing, etc.) were used to deepen student understanding. First, a 2-ring Venn diagram was used to compare Salma, the Syrian Chef with the main character of *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns*. The similarities students noted:

- The main characters were both female.
- Purple was each character's favorite color.
- Color was tied to something valued. (e.g. yellow: the roof of a Syrian home & an Eid gift box)

At this point, the instructors still felt they were driving the conversations and wanted more student-led conversations. Kathryn decided to set the stage for the topic of bullying, which arises in *The Proudest Blue: The Story of Hijab and Family*, and help students consider their proudest colors. So, she selected the book One (2008) by Kathryn Otoshi as a scaffold. In this book, colors took on new meaning. For instance, the color red, a bully, tells the group of other colors that "red is hot, and blue is not." Blue feels sad and wants to belong, but her peers are afraid of red and offer no help. This is a much different tone from the next book, *The Proudest Blue*, in which Faizah is empowered by her sister's choice of blue for the hijab she wears proudly despite the taunting of bullies.

Note how in Figure 8 using Sketch to Stretch (Short, 1996), Alex uses red to represent the bullies and blue/green to represent Faizah's sister standing up to them in his favorite scene of *The Proudest Blue*.



Figure 8. My favorite scene.

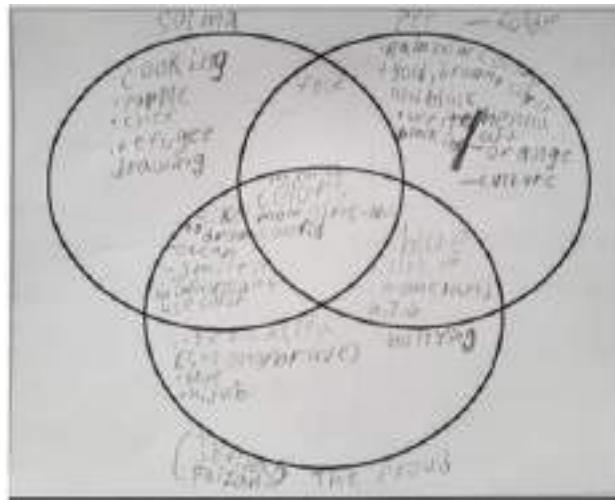


Figure 9. Venn Diagram to compare the 3 stories.

In a follow-up engagement after reading the three books, *The Proudest Blue*, the anchor text, *Salma, the Syrian Chef*, and *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns*, a 3-ring Venn diagram was used in order to make comparisons between the three books (see Figure 9). The similarities students noted:

- the main characters were all confident girls
- all three main characters had a favorite color
- all three characters had a supportive family
- "Moms" were important all three books

Nalda sensed her students had unanswered questions concerning the hijab. She selected *Under My Hijab* to help students clarify their understanding. A KWL Chart (What I Know, Want to Know and What I Learned) provided students and teachers with insights into student thinking. Most students knew the hijab was something protective worn by women. Many students still wondered why women wore them and if wearing the hijab made you hotter. In the end they learned the hijab is taken off at home, worn for religious purposes, and comes in many colors. Students also realized that hair styles and colors underneath the hijab differ from person to person. Once students had a solid understanding of what the hijab was, its purpose and what it represented, it was time to move on to the two final books and give students an opportunity to blend the strategies.

Multiple Responses: A Blending of Strategies

After reading *The Cat Man from Aleppo*, a character web of the main character, Alaa, was constructed. Once the character web was co-created with students, more connections were mad, and schema built using a YouTube video. Students discovered Alaa was not a fictional character but rather a real person who rescued cats in war-torn Syria –a place that *Salma, the Syrian Chef*, had once lived. This connection was made by students as they referred to one of the anchor texts and a character, Salma, for whom they had created a similar character web. Next, a recipe for Alaa was constructed using character traits from the character web and the recipe anchor chart. This was a difficult stretch for the group and both instructors recognized their struggle. For students to move forward in writing

their own recipes, a graphic organizer was designed that incorporated the main components of a recipe from the anchor chart and a mentor text of the Alaa's Cat Sanctuary Stew the group had co-written (see Figure 10).

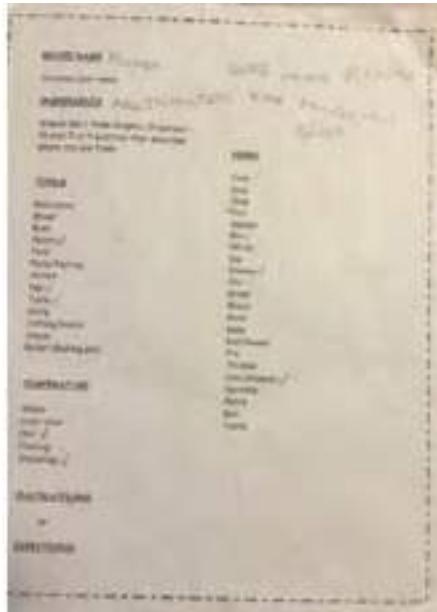


Figure 10a. Student example of self-recipe organizer (front).

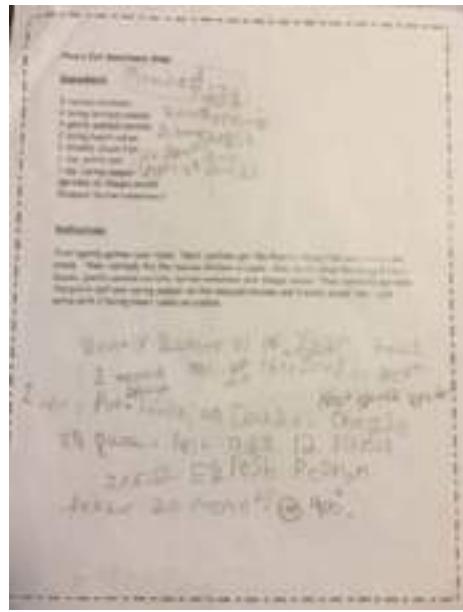


Figure 10b. Student example of self-recipe organizer (back).

Once students created a rough draft of their self-recipes, instructors helped edit and gave feedback. Then revisions were made, a revised draft was typed by students using a recipe format and clipart selected to depict a deeper meaning of the text. The final products provided the instructors with a means of assessing the students' overall multimodal representational competency. Due to absenteeism, eleven of the thirteen students completed the assignment and all eleven students demonstrated competency in translating one sign system to another (see Figure 11).



Figure 11. Student example of self-recipe.

The Butter Man (Letts, Alalou, & Essakalli, 2008) was selected by Nalda and Kathryn as the final book for the unit. The book is rich with color, art and conceptual meaning. Couscous, the traditional Moroccan dish referred to in the text, provided one more opportunity to link a traditional food to the students' schema. In addition, Nalda and Kathryn noted student-centered discussions made insightful connections without teacher direction. Students made predictions about the book as follows:

Jose: Maybe they didn't have food. Maybe they made a butter man.

Alex: The whole land looks like butter.

Jose: The picture of where the little boy lives. (Connection with the Gingerbread man)

Alex: The boy's name is "Ali" in the story. In *Cat Man of Aleppo*, the man's name is "Alaa".

Max: The butter man is someone who walks around and gives butter to people.

Joe: On the first page, the view is higher above the land and now the view is closer. It looks like a path.

Joe: Dad is the butter man and he left.

The book also provided a salient link to contemporary issues in the news as students watched a current news clip on Moroccan migrants fleeing to Spain by swimming with plastic water bottles attached to their bodies (see Table 1 above for link). The instructors posed the question to students: Why do people flee their home country? This inspired more free-flowing dialogue in which students offered answers such as hunger, food, water, work and survival as possible answers. The dialogue also provided an opportunity for them to consider why Ali's father left to work elsewhere and why Alaa had chosen not to flee Aleppo when the war began.

It was now time for students to demonstrate their multimodal representational competency on their own. Students were given a display board on which to draw a representational pattern around the edge and to affix their work from the unit in a montage (see Figure 12). Some chose to work together and some alone, but students were engaged and eager to display their hard work. Display boards were sent home with students to share with family and friends. Adding to the festive atmosphere, Nalda and her sister set up a cookstove outside and heated hot oil to make fry bread for the students who each rolled out the dough to be cooked. Once back in the classroom, Nalda shared her traditional recipe of Navajo tacos with students and provided the ingredients for each child to make their very own taco. It was just like we were in the book!

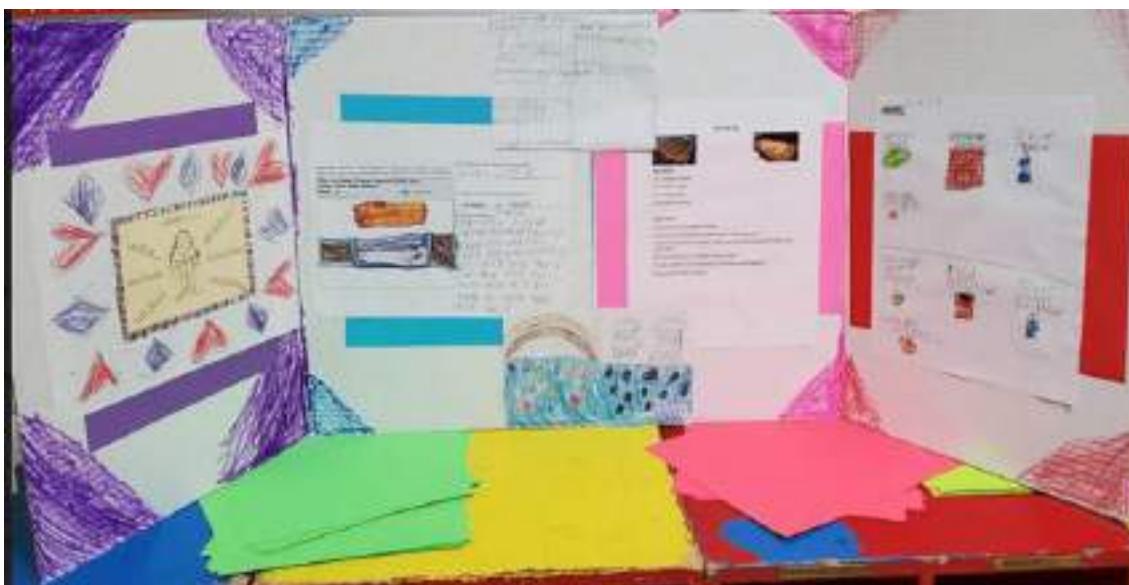


Figure 12. Student example of display board.

For their culminating project, students considered the enduring understanding: Across time and cultures there is more that connects than separates us, as they selected two of their favorite books to present to the class while explaining their text to self, text to text, and text to world connections. They also answered the question of why those two books mattered and even continued making connections during the presentations. Hope and Jose selected the anchor text *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* and the final book they read, *The Butter Man*, to relate (see Figure 13). The two students both liked to cook and found family to be an important text to self-connection. Cooking as a family was central in both books – something both students valued and felt connected cultures. Interestingly one group, Joe and Moses, selected the two anchor texts to compare (see Table 1). Like Hope and Jose, they were drawn to cooking and family; they noted bowls on both book covers and related food to family, which had been the springboard for the unit. Joe and Moses also made connections and noted the yellow color on the cover was similar, one representing butter and the other bread.

"You, know...Taco Tuesday. It's everywhere!" Max exclaimed during his final presentation when he made text-to-world connections beyond the two books he and his partner, Eve, selected to compare. The partners both liked chips and salsa and were drawn to the books because they "went together." While presenting their "Taco Tuesday" text to world connection, as Max spoke his eyes lit up. The books, *Green as a Chile Pepper: A Book of Colors* and *Salsa: A Cooking Poem*, took on new meaning for Max as he made deeper world connections beyond the books by realizing the significance of tacos and how the food relates to everyday life in his southwest community and beyond the Mexican border. Max took ownership of the comprehension strategies introduced while we were reading a series of strategically selected multicultural books and in the end, linked the texts to himself, his classmates and beyond.

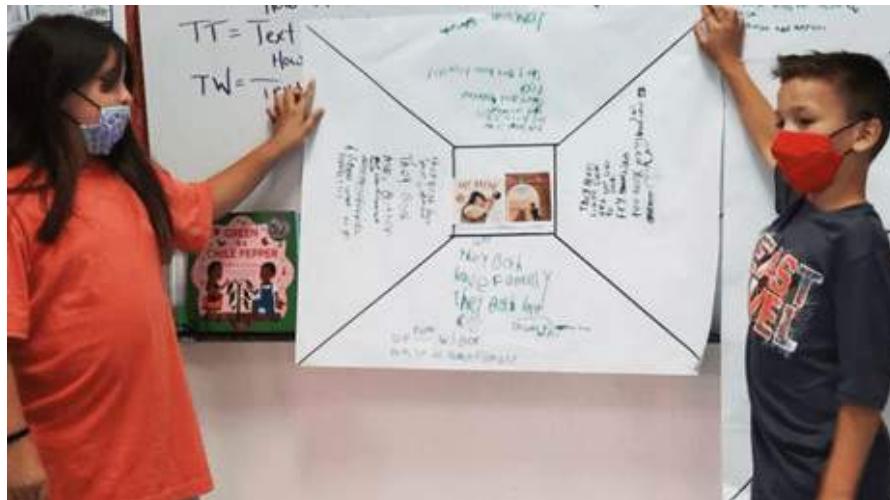


Figure 13. Student examples of selecting two stories to compare and make connections.

Nalda's Final Reflection

During this global and multicultural literacy journey, students had many struggles and ah-ha moments throughout the unit. Many were able to connect to the characters and books in multiple ways. Some students could see themselves in the stories, such as Fatima's connections to *The Golden Dome and Silver Lanterns*: "My dad wears one of these." "This is my life story." "Henna, remember when I had markings." We even saw some students come out of their shells and participate more in class discussions and they were more willing to share their culture and family traditions. At the beginning of the unit, it was a struggle for many to participate and share their ideas in the class discussion, but over time more students were willing to participate and share. The atmosphere of the classroom changed from being teacher led to student led.

At the beginning of the unit and during the first couple books, we had to develop and ask questions throughout the reading of stories to get students involved. But as students became comfortable and more engaged in the stories, they started to ask questions and have mini discussions about different aspects of the stories as the book was read aloud in the class. They asked each other questions and some students had mini conversations with their neighbors about things they noticed or wondered about in the stories. An example of these student-led discussions occurred when reading *The Butter Man*.

Joe: What does fragrant mean?

Hope: Food you smell. It makes the house smell like the food.

Max: Baba is making the food in the kitchen.

The classroom atmosphere slowly changed from the teacher asking questions to the students asking each other questions or having mini discussions about different aspects of the story while the teacher facilitated the discussion. Everyone who wanted to share was able to before moving on to the next part of the story. It was exciting to hear these conversations and discussions. Students were making connections and using reading strategies they had learned over the last couple of years.

Looking forward to the upcoming year and repeating this unit, students learned a lot throughout the unit and had questions or wonders about different aspects of the stories and how they related to their lives and communities. For instance, a student made a comment about the school cafeteria food and how we could make the food better or more edible. Next year, I would like students to create a project with a problem they have found in their lives or community and try to find a solution or ways to improve the situation.

Kathryn's Final Reflection

Students were given opportunities to think critically to "understand their current lives and imagine beyond themselves" (Short, 2009, p. 7). While the curriculum standards were addressed in the unit, the learning went much deeper as students explored food, feelings, thinking and lives of other cultures using multicultural and global literature. No doubt students were happy to be back together after pandemic restrictions had been lifted. It was a special time and a much-needed way to explore cultures other than our own. This unit is also an extraordinary example of how multimodality can be used in the classroom

as a strategy rather than an additive. Along with multimodal representations, children learned to use and take ownership of comprehension strategies in engaging ways. Oftentimes we would look at the clock and realize it was already time to go to lunch. The enthusiasm and engagement along with the multimodal representations that students created during this memorable time were remarkable. I am excited to embark upon our next journey as Nalda and I set out to include others willing to imagine beyond themselves and the confines of teaching in these skills-based times.

Children's Literature Cited

- Argueta, J. (2015). *Salsa: Un poema para cocinar/ A cooking poem*. Illus. D. Tonatiuh. Toronto: Groundwood Books.
- Khan H. (2019). *Under my hijab*. Illus. A. Jaleel. New York: Lee & Low Books.
- Khan, H. (2012). *Golden domes and silver lanterns: A Muslim book of colors*. Illus. M. Amini. San Francisco: Chronicle.
- Letts, E., & Alalou, A. (2008). *The butter man*. Illus. K. J. Essakalli. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.
- Maillard, K. N. (2019). *Fry bread: a Native American family story*. Illus. J. Martinez-Neal. New York: Roaring Book Press.
- Muhammad, I., & Ali, S. K. (2020). *The proudest blue: A story of hijab and family*. Illus. H. Aly. New York: Little, Brown.
- Otoshi, K. (2008). *One*. San Rafael, CA: KO Kids Books.
- Ramadan, A. D. (2020) *Salma the Syrian chef*. Illus. A. Bron. Toronto: Annick Press.
- Shamsi-Basha, K., & Latham, I. (2020). *The cat man of Aleppo*. Illus. Y. Shimizu. New York: Putnam.
- Thong, R. G. (2016). *Green is a chile pepper: A book of colors*. Illus. J. Parra. San Francisco: Chronicle.
- ### References
- Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Siegel, M. (1995). More than words: The generative power of transmediation for learning. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 20, 455–475.
- Short, K. G. (2009). Critically reading the word and the world: Building intercultural understanding through literature. *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, 47(2) 1-10.

Short, K. G., & Harste, J. C. (1996). *Creating classrooms for authors and inquirers* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Yore, L. D., & Hand, B. (2010). Epilogue: Plotting a research agenda for multiple representations, multiple modality, and multimodal representational competency. *Research in Science Education*, 40, 291-314.

Kathryn Chavez is a Curriculum Service Provider at Safford K-8 School.

Nalda Francisco teaches third grade at Safford K-8 School.

© 2022 by Nalda Y. Francisco and Kathryn Chavez



WOW Stories, Volume IX, Issue 1 by Worlds of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
Based on a work by Nalda Y. Francisco and Kathryn Chavez at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/ix-1/9/>.

Young Children's Cross-Cultural Studies with *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns*

Chika Hayashi-Willis

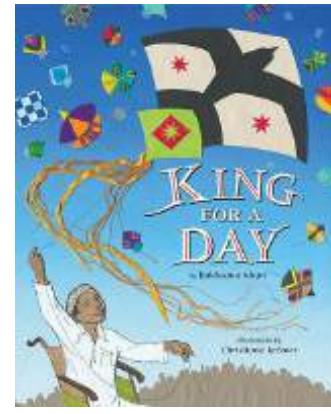
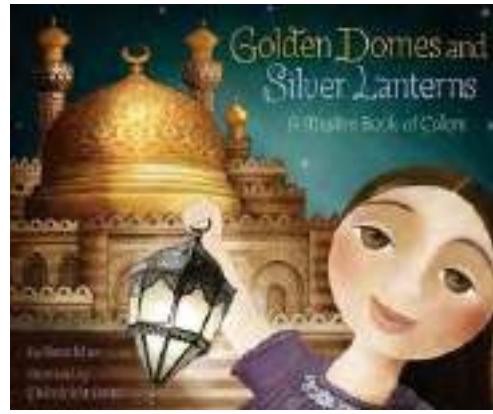
I started teaching kindergarten at Van Buskirk Elementary School in 2004 and became a K–5 Opening Minds through Arts (OMA) Arts Integration Specialist in 2016. Van Buskirk is a Title 1 PreK–5 public school in the southern part of Tucson. This area, called the Tucson Rodeo Ground, has been strongly influenced by Mexican cultures. In the 2020–2021 school year, Latinx students accounted for over 85% of the school's total enrollment, followed by Pascua Yaqui and Tohono O'odham students, Asian American students, and European American students (TUSD, 2020). For many years, Van Buskirk has been committed to integrating the fine arts with Spanish/English bilingual education and, in 2007, it officially started OMA Gold and Spanish Two-Way Dual Language programs. The OMA Gold program allows all K–5 students to receive dance, opera, theater, visual arts, and instrumental music lessons, enhancing their engagement and strengthening their academic and social skills. Over my 20 years of experience as a primary grade classroom teacher and Arts Integration Specialist, I have seen the effectiveness of arts integration in teaching literacy, social studies, math, and science. I love arts integration and work collaboratively with classroom teachers to include arts in areas across the curriculum.

As I am a Japan-born, first-generation immigrant with a transnational identity, being involved in Van Buskirk's predominantly Latinx school community has been an astonishing cultural experience for me. The school provides rich opportunities for appreciating Latinx heritage and culture, and many students find their own cultures and life experiences in the school's books, artifacts, and events. However, though their cultures are well represented, Van Buskirk's students have also suffered from a lack of opportunities to learn about other cultures. I noticed that many of them do not fully grasp the multicultural nature of their community and global society. Therefore, I began to think that an important way to support them in embracing diversity would be to teach them about the histories, values, beliefs, and perspectives of people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Our school district offers professional development courses and workshops, so I started attending them to build my knowledge of multicultural education and curriculum. I learned that global, international, and multicultural children's literature is a powerful resource as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors (Bishop, 1990), not only teaching children about diverse cultures, but also expanding their perspectives toward many things in their societies and world. Such literature became a valuable resource in my lessons, opening doors for students to acknowledge diversities and increase their intercultural awareness.

Global Literacy Community

In American society, I have noticed that Arab Americans and people from Middle Eastern countries have been underrepresented. There are so many things we do not know about them. Personally, I had very limited knowledge about Islamic cultures and society, and I was not sure how to approach learning and then teaching about these cultures. I felt I should be very careful, like stepping on thin ice. I thought Muslim and Islamic themes would be difficult to bring into my lessons. The bottom line was that I simply avoided these themes.

When I was asked to join the global literacy community group, I thought it was a great opportunity to educate myself. I needed more information and resources to ease my hesitations and gain confidence as an Arts Integration Specialist when sharing Islamic arts with my students. In the study group meetings, we read and explored children's literature with a wide range of genres and themes, such as *Under My Hijab* by Hena Khan and Aaliya Jaleel (2019), *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors* by Hena Khan and Mehrdokht Amini (2012), *The Arabic Quilt: An Immigrant Story* by Aya Khalil and Anait Semirdzhyan (2020), and *King for a Day* by Rukhsana Khan and Christine Kromer (2013). Through these stories, we learned about the diverse lives of contemporary Muslim families and their traditions and histories, and we also shared teaching ideas about how to use these stories in the classroom.



Book Selection for Hybrid Arts Teaching

During the 2020–2021 school year, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching visual arts through Zoom was quite challenging. Many students were in difficult learning environments with internet issues and limited art materials, which led to disconnections and teaching–learning difficulties. I diligently focused on engagements as much as I could because I knew students had been looking forward to taking my art class and would enjoy creating art with me. The beautiful illustrations in *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns* attracted me. The image of the silver lantern, fanoos, on the book's cover immediately caught my eye and reminded me of Mexican, Chinese, and Japanese lanterns that people decorate during festivals. I thought the story would motivate students to learn about the Islamic arts and cultures they rarely see, to make connections to the lanterns they see during festivals in their communities. I studied the cultural meanings and geometric designs of the fanoos, and developed a lesson on the topic for Grade 1. It was a visual art integrated English Language Arts, math, and social justice lesson for a hybrid learning setting.

Visual Arts Integrated ELA, Math, and Social Justice Lesson for Grade 1

In *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns*, the narrator, a young Muslim girl, uses colors to share aspects of Islamic life, holidays, foods, artifacts, and traditions. The illustrations are beautiful, dynamic, and richly detailed, and the book includes an Arabic glossary with English translations in its back matter.

- Objective: Students will connect their cultures with other cultures through art observations and will follow directions to create a piece of pop-up art.
- Standard 1: Explore uses of materials, tools, and approaches (using elements of modern art, applying artistic ideas from diverse cultures, etc.) to create works of art or design (VA.CR.2.1a).
- Standard 2: Identify various reasons why people from different places and times make art (to express themselves, to tell a story, to make things look beautiful, to remember special people and events, etc.)(VA.CN.11.1)

ELA (Arizona State Standards) (Arizona Department of Education, 2021)

- Objective: Students will explore new cultural experiences and develop new insights into the self, other people, and the world.
- Standard 1: Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, settings, or events. (1.RL.7).
- Standard 2: Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story using key details (1.RL.3).

Math (Arizona State Standards) (Arizona Department of Education, 2021)

- Objective: Students will name geometric shapes, use attribute language to describe shapes with defining characteristics, and draw and build shapes to understand shape construction.
- Standard: Distinguish between defining attributes (e.g., triangles =closed and three-sided) versus non-defining attributes (color, orientation, overall size, etc.) for two-dimensional shapes; build and draw shapes that possess defining attributes (1.G.A.1).

Social Justice (Arizona Department of Education, 2021)

- Objective: Students will compare and contrast their own family traditions with other cultures' traditions.
- Standard: Understand that how one person's family does things is both similar to and different from how other people do things; develop an interest in both (Identity. ID.K–2.5).

Session	Objectives	Procedures
Session 1: Exploration of Family Traditions through Colors and Symbols (Arts and Social Justice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw connections between the main character in the book and students' own life experiences. • Identify students' favorite family/community traditions through symbols and colors. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students shared their favorite family/community traditions. Then, they picked four traditions and drew a symbol representing each tradition (e.g., a jack-o'-lantern for Halloween and a cowboy boot for rodeo). 2. Students created charts with their favorite traditions. 3. Students labeled the colors found in the symbols representing each tradition. 4. Students colored the symbols.
Session 2: Interactive Read-Aloud (ELA and Social Justice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the students' charts to draw connections between their family traditions and Islamic culture and traditions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Before reading, I asked, "Look at the picture of the book cover and share what you see and what you notice with your friends." 2. During reading, I invited students to explore Arabic words, Arabic cultural items (via colors), and Islamic traditions and holidays (such as Ramadan). This showed them how Muslim people's traditions and customs differ from theirs. 3. After reading, Students used colors to share the similarities and differences among their own family and community traditions and Islamic cultures and traditions.
Session 3: Making a Pop-Up Fences (Math and Arts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop fine motor skills. • Learn geometric shapes. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fold a piece of paper two times to make a skinny rectangle—a shape like a burrito. 2. Open the skinny rectangle. You will now be looking at your half-folded sheet of paper. Make sure that the fold is on the right side. Notice that the fold looks like the spine of a book. Draw two diagonal lines from the fold to the center of the paper. 3. Cut along the diagonal lines, without cutting across the fold line in the center. 4. Open the paper and check the cuts.

Session 4: Designing Pop-Up <i>Fanoos</i> (Math/Arts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make geometric designs. • Review the names of geometric shapes. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students added straight lines to the <i>fanoos</i>. 2. Students reviewed geometric shapes. (For example, a trapezoid has four sides, four angles, and four vertices. It is a quadrilateral with only one pair of parallel sides.) 3. Students traced the lines with a marker. Then they drew a small <i>fanoos</i> on each side of the pop-up <i>fanoos</i>. 4. Students colored the inside of the <i>fanoos</i> to represent the "lights" inside the lanterns. 
Session 5: Making the Background for the <i>Fanoos</i> (Arts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe Islamic architecture and draw it as a background for the <i>fanoos</i>. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We discussed the buildings students have seen in Tucson or in any other places they have visited. 2. We reread the book and explored the shapes, colors, and traits of Islamic architecture, such as domes and towers. 3. Students drew buildings and colored them black, like silhouettes. 4. They added more colors to their <i>fanoos</i> pieces and completed the art project.  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Students pasted their art onto a piece of construction paper to create pop-up cards. 

Table 1. Instructions for making a pop-out card.

Teaching Reflections

Some students had difficulty understanding the procedures for the above lesson, especially creating the pop-up card. It is much easier to do this kind of art lesson in person. The lesson began remotely, but I needed to step into the classrooms to physically demonstrate the project in front of the students. I felt their relief as I checked on their work. Surprisingly, this helped, not only students in the classrooms, but also the students on Zoom, because those who had worked on the project in the classroom shared their strategies and tips with peers via Zoom. Students are sometimes better instructors and teach one another effectively.

Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns is a great piece of children's literature for teaching colors and exploring Islamic arts and cultures. I also see this book as having multiple possibilities, and I used it successfully with art integration. Grade 1 students learned Islamic arts, traditions, and cultures with which they were unfamiliar, and they came to recognize that many people across the world have traditions that are both similar to and different from those of their families. *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns* could be paired well with *My Colors, My World/ Mis Colores, Mi Mundo* by Maya Christina Gonzalez (2013), a Spanish–English bilingual story about a girl who uses colors to explore the desert world in which she lives.

Final Thoughts

The global literacy community was a great study group experience through which I learned how to use children's literature about Muslim and Islamic themes at K –5 settings. I especially valued the monthly meetings, where I learned various approaches for integrating literature in the classroom. The group members shared amazing lesson plans and engagement ideas with me. I am glad that I was able to learn more than I expected.

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent travel restrictions, people with Muslim backgrounds have been viewed with suspicion in the United States. They are also often misrepresented as villains, enemies, or dehumanized characters in the movies, TV shows, and video games to which children and teens are exposed every day. I am afraid that the overrepresentation of such negative images in the media has continued to create biases, prejudice, and stereotypes about Middle Eastern nations and cultures and people. I think it is time to share their stories with students. Books are great tools for confronting these issues.

Children's Literature Cited

- Gonzalez, C. M. (2013). *My colors, my world/ Mis colores, mi mundo*. New York: Lee & Low Books.
- Khalil, A. (2020). *The Arabic quilt: An immigrant story*. Illus. A. Semirdzhyan. Thomaston, ME: Tilbury.
- Khan, H. (2012). *Golden domes and silver lanterns: A Muslim book of colors*. Illus. M. Amini. San Francisco: Chronicle.
- Khan, H. (2019). *Under my hijab*. Illus. A. Jaleel. New York: Lee & Low Books.

Khan, R. (2013). *King for a day*. Illus. C. Krömer. New York: Lee & Low Books.

References

Arizona Department of Education (2021). *Academic Standards*. <https://www.azed.gov/standards-practices/academic-standards>

Bishop, S. R. (1990). *Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors*.
<https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf>

Tucson Unified School District (TUSD). (2020). *TUSD enrollment by federal ethnicity by school (2020 – 2021)*. <http://tusddatareports.tusd1.org/EnrollmentByFederalEthnicity.html>

Chika Hayashi-Willis is an OMA (Opening Minds through the Arts) Arts Integration Specialist at Van Buskirk Elementary School. (ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1583-6620>)

© 2022 by Chika Hayashi-Willis



WOW Stories, Volume IX, Issue 1 by Worlds of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Based on a work by Chika Hayashi-Willis at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/ix-1/10/>.

Building Global Connections through Literature During Online Schooling

Julia Hillman

As a fifth-grade Teacher at Wheeler Elementary School, a Title 1 PreK-5 school in the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD), I had the privilege of working with students whose parents opted for online learning during the 2020-2021 school year. The school year presented many challenges for students and families due to the global pandemic but also brought insights as our classroom became a space for students to connect with each other in new ways and with characters across the globe. Our work as a Global Literacy Community fostered these connections and inspired meaningful book discussions and engagements during a time when many students were losing interest in school.

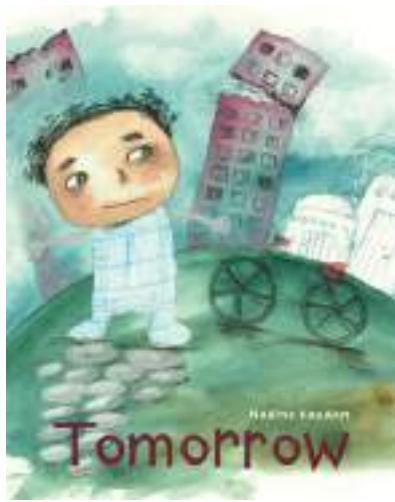
Our Global Literacy Community meetings were engaging from the beginning. We focused on reading and discussing picturebooks set in Middle Eastern countries and sharing engagement ideas. At one of our first meetings, Dr. Sakoi shared a book titled *Under My Hijab* by Hena Khan (2019). The story depicted a young girl's six family members who wore their hijabs in different ways depending on their personalities. After reading, one of our group members commented that she liked the diversity shown in the story in terms of the characters' skin tones, style of dress, where they lived, and how they wore their hijabs. I thought it was an empowering story for young girls who wear the hijab and read it to my class following our meeting. The experiences within our literacy community were valuable because we all connected around literature and took what we learned back to the classroom.

Selecting Books for Reading about Middle Eastern Countries

Several books were selected and shared with students, but the following two held students' attention and sparked conversation: *Tomorrow* by Nadine Kaddan (2018) and *King for a Day* by Rukhsana Khan and Christiane Kromer (2019). The purpose behind selecting these books was to offer students access to characters in countries outside of their own, and to provide mirrors (Bishop, 1990) for students who are from the countries in a context outside of being an immigrant or refugee in the U.S. The importance of representing students who are from the Middle East in different settings and diverse contexts was central to our conversations within the Global Literacy Community, and reiterated by Dr. Yoo Kyung Sung, when I had my mind set on how I wanted to introduce the books by starting with students' stories in the classroom. Dr. Yoo Kyung Sung pointed out that if we started there, students would likely share stories of immigration to the United States instead of stories of their home countries, which is what has typically happened in the past in my classroom. She added that I could start by sharing stories of children in a different country for a change, which was a great suggestion. All of the books were set in Middle Eastern countries outside of the U.S., such as Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Palestine.

Read Aloud, Discussion, and Engagements with *Tomorrow*

The picturebook *Tomorrow* is set in Syria and depicts a young boy who is stuck inside due to an ongoing civil war. I selected this because I thought students would relate to Yazan's experiences and learn some new ways to cope with loneliness, boredom, uncertainty, and loss.



Some of the discussion questions posed by students and myself were: Who is the story about, how do you know? Where does it take place, what details support your answer? Why do you think he has to stay inside? Do you think he made the right decision by leaving without permission? Why didn't his parents yell at him, or ground him? Why did his mother suggest they paint a picture of a park on his wall? How did he feel after painting? What connections did you make to the story? What did you learn from the story?

Students' responses to explicit questions were quick in coming, but inferences took time. They assumed Yazan had to stay inside because of Covid, even after prompts to use what they already know, the text itself, and clues from the illustrations to support their answers. I wondered if

they were paying attention to the details at all because the dark colors, damaged buildings, and absence of anyone outside were not factoring into their responses. But, as we turned the pages, their responses began to change. What stood out to me from this reading was that students connected what they were experiencing to the story based on one event instead of looking carefully at the details. I realized we needed to take more time to read slowly, carefully, and to discuss what we read.

I noticed students empathized with Yazan, commenting that they understood why he left the house without parent permission because he was bored, missed his friends, missed the park, and wondered why he couldn't go outside, like they had all wondered during the Covid lockdown.

S: He couldn't see his friends. He couldn't do anything, no park, swimming, riding his bike. This is the same as what we're going through right now.

S: He can't go outside, like us, but he doesn't have to do online school so he's lucky.

S: No, maybe he just doesn't have a computer. That's not lucky.

Yazan, like our students, tried to keep himself busy by being creative. I asked students what he did to keep from getting bored in order to focus their attention on actions they may have taken to make staying at home more bearable.

S: He drew, built a castle out of pillows, made paper airplanes.

S: He was still bored though. That's sad.

S: He feels the same way I do.

Although Yazan tried to keep himself busy, he was frustrated that his parents had lost interest in him. They were glued to the T.V. screen like we were glued to our computer screens. That's when Yazan lost it and screamed at his parents.

T: Why did he scream at his parents?

S: Because he wanted to go outside. He was mad because he was so bored. He wanted to go to the park. He wanted to ride his bike. They were ignoring him.

Yazan didn't know why he couldn't go outside, but our students did know why they couldn't. I wondered if it was fair for his parents to shelter him from the facts, but students had not posed the question, so I prompted.

T: Do you think if he knew why he couldn't go outside, he would feel better?

S: Maybe, he might still be mad though.

S: Why didn't they tell him?

S: Maybe they didn't want him to get scared.

Did students think it was fair for his parents to withhold that information? I wondered but didn't press further.

Unequipped to make an informed decision, Yazan goes outside without his parents' permission and soon finds himself alone and afraid. I wondered what students thought about this decision.

T: Do you agree or disagree with Yazan's decision to leave the house without his parents' permission?

S: Yes, because he was bored, but it might not be safe because it looks kind of scary out there.

As most kids do when they break a rule, Yazan fears his parents' reactions, especially his father and fears his father will "tell him off" which he did not do.

T: Why didn't Yazan's dad "tell him off" for leaving the house?

S: He feels bad for him because he's so bored. He understands why he wants to leave. He loves his son and feels bad.

The story ends with Yazan and his mom painting a mural of the park he wanted to visit so badly on his wall. She also tells him why he can't go outside.

T: Why did Yazan and his mom paint a park on his wall?

S: To make him feel better. He wanted to go, but can't, so now he can pretend.

T: Why did she tell him about what was going on outside?

S: She told him because he could get hurt if he tries to go out again.

T: What would you paint on your wall if you had permission?

S: A beach, Minecraft, Fortnite, a panda bear, a sunset, Dare Devil, Among Us...

After reading the story, we read the letter from the author located at the back of the book, which begins with “Have you ever been stuck in the house when you’re desperate to go outside?” Kaddan went on to explain that many people in Syria are forced to remain inside because there’s a war going on, and it’s too dangerous to go outside.

T: What did you learn from the story?

S: People have to stay inside for different reasons, not just Covid. Sometimes there’s fighting, even a war going on outside.

T: I learned that it’s a good idea to explain why you made a rule, like no going outside. Otherwise, a person might break the rule and end up getting hurt.

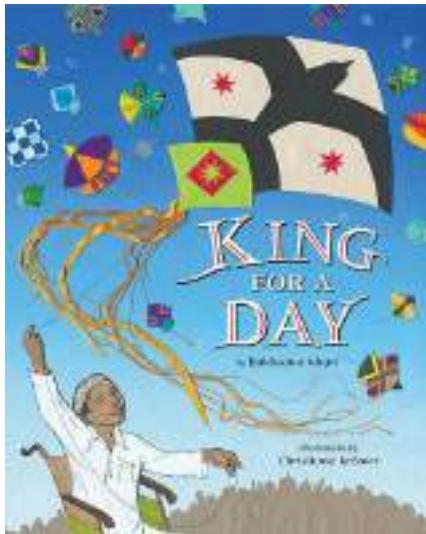
After reading *Tomorrow*, we discussed how to respond to the story. Students liked the idea of creating a mural in their rooms like Yazan and his mother had. We discussed whether this was feasible and decided that since we would need parent permission and supplies, which some students did not have, we should try another idea. As our conversation continued, a student suggested that we create an art wall instead. He said that instead of drawing or painting on our walls, we could add a new drawing to the wall in their homes each week, and share our work at the end of the year. Students liked the idea, and we decided that the art could be in response to what we read, or just something we were interested in drawing.

Students created their first artwork for their art wall titled *Two Windows*, in response to *Tomorrow*. I asked students to create a window and show what they want to see when they look out their window and to do the same for Yazan by putting themselves in his shoes. After drawing and coloring, students shared their work in breakout sessions, then with the whole group. At the time, I just thought the engagement sounded fun, but afterwards, I realized it was also a way for students to use art to cope with staying inside during the lockdown.

Read Aloud and Discussion of *King for a Day*

When I asked, “Who wants to read?”, several students raised their hands and our story began. Some of the discussion questions students focused on as they read *King for a Day* by Rukhsana Khan were: What is Basant? Where is Lahore? What does Insha Allah mean? Why do they go to the rooftops to fly the kites? Why is that boy bullying girls?

Students again located answers to explicit questions quickly, and had different ideas for why one of the characters in the story was engaged in bullying. One response was, “Kids get treated badly at home and take it out on other people.” Another student responded, “Sometimes people who are bullied bully others.” A third reply, “Some people don’t care if they hurt other people.”



After the read aloud, students took turns retelling the story: The main character, Malik, is a great kite flyer. He uses his kite, Falcon, to win the kite battle and teach the town bully a lesson. Because Malik was kind, creative and helpful, he became king for a day.

The next time I read this story with the class, I want to ask which character they connect with most in the story and why. This story was selected initially because it addresses several important topics, one being bullying, and I thought it might bring insights to students who need reminders for how to treat their classmates. I have found that bringing the issue to students' attention through a story can be more effective than having a one-on-one conversation about it.

Our class did not actually work on the following engagements, but upon reflection, I would like to offer these choices next year:

- Create a kite for Basant out of materials found at home.
- Use the art style in the book-mixed media collage to depict the lesson or moral of the story.
- Create a brainstorm map of the possible causes of bullying.
- Create a skit or role play that includes how to stand up to a bully.
- Create a poem, song, and/or dance about Basant.
- Create an infomercial about Basant Kites you make and sell.
- Research the history of Basant and create an informational poster to share with the class.
- Come up with your own spring celebration. What would people do, wear, eat, and what symbols, items, animals, colors, would represent spring your celebration?
- Create a Basant Kite Rap Battle with a partner. Falcon vs. Goliath
- Rewrite the story so that Malik's little sister, and the other girl who was bullied save themselves from the bully without Malik's help.
- Rewrite the story so that the bully apologizes and fixes his mistakes after losing the kite battle and becomes friends with Malik.

Students' Requests to Explore Ramadan

An important part of our class readings and discussions came around Ramadan because students were excited about it. During our reading block, a student said, "Hey, did you know it's Ramadan? We should read about it!" The class quickly perked up and agreed. One book that stood out was *The Gift of Ramadan* by Rabiah York Lumbard and Laura K. Horton (2019). This story offered many important lessons and students again connected to the main character's experiences throughout the text. The main character, Sofia, wanted more than anything to fast for Ramadan. She tried her best throughout the day and eventually needed something to eat before the evening feast that would break the fast. Sofia likely felt bad about it, but decided to make herself useful by helping to prepare the evening meal for her family. Students were able to connect to Sofia by offering examples of times they really wanted to do something but weren't ready yet, like riding a bike, swimming, working on a math problem, or passing a level in a favorite video game.

This story also led to conversations about understanding and respecting differences with respect to religious practices. We discussed how students may need special considerations during Ramadan if they're fasting, like sitting out of P.E. or going to the library or gym for lunch. I realized that in the absence of reading and learning about Ramadan, students may see such considerations as unfair, and I'm glad we took the time to have this discussion.

Final Thoughts

My biggest take away from the Global Literacy Community is that taking time to read and discuss books with fellow educators and experts in the field is meaningful. I learned something new each time we met, from listening to participants' perspectives and ideas. I think this is also what students experienced in the classroom.

Children's Literature Cited

Kaadan, N. (2018). *Tomorrow*. Oxford, UK: Lantana.

Khan, H. (2019). *Under my hijab*. Illus. A. Jaleel. New York: Lee & Low Books.

Khan, R. (2013). *King for a day*. Illus. C. Krömer. New York: Lee & Low.

Lumbard, Y. R. (2019). *The gift of Ramadan*. Illus. L. K. Horton. Park Ridge, IL: Whitman.

References

Bishop, R. S. (1990). *Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors*. Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors (scenicregional.org)

Julia Hillman teaches fifth grade at Wheeler Elementary School.

© 2022 by Julia Hillman



WOW Stories, Volume IX, Issue 1 by Worlds of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
Based on a work by Julia Hillman at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/ix-1/11/>.

Global and International Literature for English Learners

Benjamin Kowalski

As an English Language Development teacher at Doolen Middle School, I have the pleasure of working with a diverse student population from around the world including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Guatemala, Cambodia, and Afghanistan. I have taught various language levels while working at Doolen and this past year I taught English Language Development Level 1 (ELD 1). My class consisted of many true beginners, some who had arrived in the country just before the pandemic saw our schools go virtual. When given the opportunity to participate in the global literacy community, I was excited to introduce students to global and international literature as a way of developing literacy skills and to have them reflect upon their own identities through the process.

Our global literacy community decided to develop units using the framework of a model outlined in an article by Kathy Short (2003) at the University of Arizona entitled “A Curriculum that is International” (see Figure 1). In this model, curriculum begins with having students explore their own cultural identities then moves to cross-cultural studies. Next, the model suggests integrating international experiences and materials, and finally explores global issues. Our original idea for introducing global and international literature was focusing primarily on texts relating to Muslim cultures from the Middle East and northern Africa.

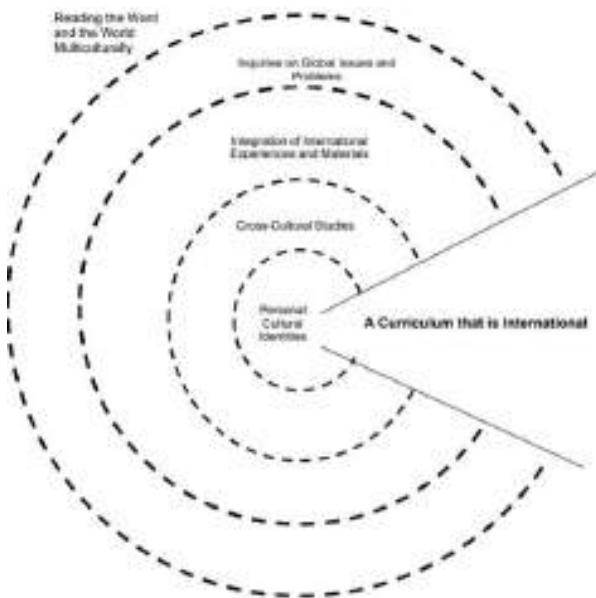


Figure 1. Curriculum that is International (Short, 2003).

As a teacher working with students with limited English, I took this as an opportunity to develop basic reading skills, introduce new vocabulary, and provide writing practice using mentor texts. Additionally, this focus gave students a vehicle to express their own cultural identities, something that has always been a core practice in our ELD classrooms, especially while working with refugee youth as they navigate their lives in their new community. I set out to engage and build empathy keeping in mind the age group (middle school) and educational backgrounds (students with limited or formal education) through the exploration of picture books which allowed them to access the texts, find parallels to their own stories, and to use the texts as a guide to tell their own stories.

I chose three picturebooks that had at least one act of kindness that could serve as a common theme: *Thank You, Omu!* by Oge Mora (2018), *A Drop of the Sea* by Ingrid Chabbert and Raul Nieto Guridi (2018), and *Salma the Syrian Chef* by Danny Ramadan and Anna Bron (2020). We previewed and practiced important vocabulary, then read the story aloud as a class. Students practiced making predictions and completed a notetaker card to record characters, setting, plot, and identify the act(s) of kindness. After reviewing the different acts of kindness, I asked students to think of a time that someone did

1430 East Second Street, Tucson, AZ 85721 78 520.621.9340 wowlit.org ©2022 by Benjamin Kowalski

something kind for them and one time that they did something kind for someone. Here are two samples of student work:

Act of kindness in my life.

When I move to the United States of America in February of 2020, I did not speak English. After one week in USA I was lucky to meet my friend Chanel who came 3 years before us. Chanel is a very important person in my life because she is the first person to teach me some English words. I am glad to have such kind of friend. She always used to come to my place to teach me English. I am thankful to her.

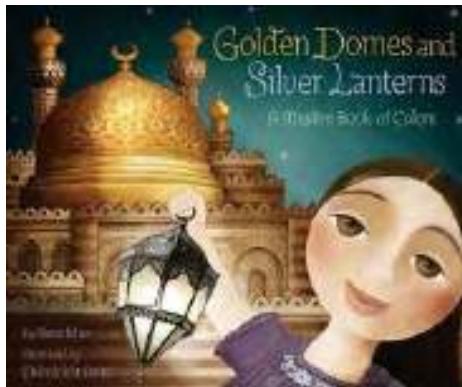
Figure 2a. Student examples of acts of kindness.

Act of kindness

- When I was living in a refugee camp in Rwanda, I had many friends. One of them was Divine. Divine and my other friends we all used to attend the same school. Divine was in a different class. One day as we were playing with my classmate, and they wanted to beat me because I refused to give them my juice. Divine was far from me and my classmate. My classmate started to push me because they wanted to get my juice by force. Divine heard a noise from the distance. She realized that it was me and she came running on rescue. I was very happy because she was the only person among all my friends who came to save me. I really love her, and I miss her!!!

Figure 2b. Student examples of acts of kindness.

While exploring these books, we had many opportunities for students to share about their own cultures. For example, in *Salma the Syrian Chef*, the girl cooks a dish for her mother that she missed from her home country of Afghanistan, providing a great opportunity for students to talk about foods that they miss from their home countries, when they usually eat them, and what feelings come to mind when they think of them. We shared pictures of the dishes and looked at recipes and ingredients. Given more time, in the future, it would be interesting to prepare these foods either in class or have students bring them in to share.



After the books about kindness, we looked at a book about identity that we then used as a mentor text. *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors* by Hena Khan and Mehrdokht Amini (2015) is a book that explores a young girl's culture and faith through the colors of things that are important in her life. She talks about the red rug that her father uses to pray, the blue hijab worn by her mother, and the golden dome of the mosque that her family attends. We started this lesson around the time of Ramadan and some of the students were observing the holy month by fasting. We had a guest teacher, an Arabic speaking Student Support Specialist,

tell us about how her family observes Ramadan and give the class a brief introduction to some of the vocabulary around the holy month. We learned the words for colors in English and matched them to the vocabulary from the book. This text became our template, using the phrase that is repeated in each page of the book, "(A color) is a ...," for example "Silver is a fanoos, a twinkling light, a shiny lantern that glows at night." I asked our French and Kinyarwanda-speaking interpreter to assist the class as they worked on individual PowerPoint presentations to help them put ideas on paper and to be there if students needed support in their home language, as some of the slides students created touched on topics that could bring up strong memories and emotions. Here are some student samples:



Figure 3a. Student examples of powerpoint slides.



Figure 3b. Student examples of powerpoint slides.

White is the color of the dress I wore to church back home in Rwanda refugee camp. I used to wear a white dress most of Sundays,



Figure 3c. Student examples of powerpoint slides.

Blue was the color of my church in Africa. It reminds me our lovely youth pastor and all our friends from the church.



Figure 3d. Student examples of powerpoint slides.

Final Thoughts

The process of exploring global and international literature in an English Language Development classroom was a challenge, but at the same time led to much more personalized and meaningful learning. This experience highlighted the value of mentor texts both as jumping off points for discussion and as places from which to take sentence frames. At our school, we returned to in-person learning for the 4th quarter of the 2020-21 school year. Working with English language learners in a fully online environment before our return provided a unique set of challenges as students simultaneously learned basic English and learned to navigate new computer programs. There is no doubt that this forced an acceleration in computer literacy, but it also meant that when we got back into the classroom, we had some catch up to do both in standardized testing and language skills. This took away from time that would have allowed us to go more in depth with creating artifacts around these books through more in-depth extension activities and is something that I look forward to revisiting next school year.

Children's Literature Cited

Chabbert, I. (2018). *A drop of the sea*. Illus. R. N. Guridi. Toronto: Kids Can Press.

Khan, H. (2012). *Golden domes and silver lanterns: A Muslim book of colors*. Illus. M. Amini. San Francisco: Chronicle.

Mora, O. (2018). *Thank You, Omu!* Boston: Little, Brown.

Ramadan, D. (2020). *Salma the Syrian chef*. Illu. A. Bron. Toronto: Annick Press.

References

Short, K. (2003). *Exploring a curriculum that is international*. https://old.coe.arizona.edu/sites/coe/files/a_curriculum_that_is_international.pdf

Benjamin Kowalski teaches English Language Development class at Doolen Middle School.

© 2022 by Benjamin Kowalski



WOW Stories, Volume IX, Issue 1 by Worlds of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
Based on a work by Benjamin Kowalski at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/ix-1/12/>.

Developing Text Sets and Engagements Using Children's Literature about Middle Eastern Nations and Islamic Cultures

Manal Tafish

I am an Arabic language teacher at John B. Wright and Myers-Ganoung Elementary Schools. Both are Title 1 PreK–5 public schools in central Tucson. They are among the city's most diverse schools, with a large number of children from refugee and immigrant families. Latinx students account for over 40% of the total enrollment in each school, followed by African American students, European American students, Asian American students and Pacific Islander students, Indigenous students, and students from (or whose families are from) Middle Eastern and African countries. The schools incorporate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) and Opening Minds through the Arts (OMA) across their curricula and, in 2017, they began offering an Arabic language class. This class was meant to support students with developing intercultural understandings and global perspectives and embracing diversity by learning about the Arabic language and Islamic cultures. Arabic is a new language for many students, and learning it is challenging for them. I always invite them to engage in various hands-on activities, using children's literature and multimodal tools (e.g., videos, music, and pictures) to make learning fun. I enjoy teaching too, because students look forward to coming to my classes and are excited about learning something new. My classes have been playing an important role in developing inclusive school communities. They create a space in which Arabic-speaking students and students who are unfamiliar with Arabic can learn from one another, better understand each other's cultures and languages, and build relationships.

Global Literacy Community

I was very excited when I was invited to be part of the global literacy community, learning about children's literature concerning Middle Eastern nations and Islamic cultures. I had always wanted to learn strategies for incorporating the literature into my Arabic class. I was also happy to share my own life experiences and cultures as a Muslim woman coming from Palestine. In the monthly meetings, we explored various children's books, such as *Salma the Syrian Chef* by Danny Ramadan and Anna Bron (2020), *Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors* by Hena Khan and Mehrdokht Amini (2012), and *Under My Hijab* by Hena Khan and Aaliya Jaleel (2019). I thought these books could be great resources to support students in learning about the diverse lifestyles, perspectives, and religious and cultural values and practices of Muslim people. I also thought the books—through their use of universal themes, such as friendship, school experiences, and family traditions—would support students in developing a sense of connection to the characters, who are close to their age, and appreciate cultural differences.

Developing Text Sets

Using the literature I received through the global literacy community project and the literature I already had in my classroom library, I developed various text sets, applying the strategy I had learned in the literacy community study group. The purpose of these text sets was to encourage students to explore stories as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors (Bishop, 1990). In this way, they could become aware of the importance of culture in their lives and in the lives of others, while coming to

understand the diversities and complexities in the Middle Eastern region and among Islamic cultures.

First, I spent time exploring educational websites, such as Worlds of Words (WOW), the Middle East Outreach Council (MEOC), and the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY) to see what books were available in the U.S. Second, I selected the books I wanted to use in my Arabic class, and identified major themes across the books, such as family practices and traditions, identity exploration, school experiences, challenges and hope, and life journeys. I then sorted the books based on these themes and selected anchor and related texts. The anchor texts portray Islamic cultures, especially in the Middle Eastern region, and include Arabic words. The related texts are thematically connected to the anchor texts, containing stories set in a global context, but not limited to the Middle East. The table below showcases the text sets I developed. After I completed these text sets, I began developing engagements for them. These engagements are shared in the next section.

Anchor Text	Themes	Related Texts
Olive Harvest in Palestine: A Story of Childhood Memories	Identity exploration, family practice, traditions, heritage, cultural roots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sitti's Secrets, Baba</i> • <i>What Does My Name Mean?: A Journey to Palestine</i> • <i>19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East</i> • <i>The Flag of Childhood: Poems from the Middle East</i> • <i>Habibi</i>
Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors	Colors, shapes, family gatherings, traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Crescent Moons and Pointed Minarets: A Muslim Book of Shapes</i> • <i>Round is a Tortilla: A Book of Shapes</i> • <i>Green is a Chile Pepper</i> • <i>My Colors, My World / Mis Colores, Mi Mundo</i>
My Name is Bilal	Bullying, courage, building relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Arabic Quilt</i> • <i>The Proudest Blue</i> • <i>My Two Blankets</i> • <i>King for a Day</i>
Little Peoples, Big Dreams: Zaha Hadid	Courage, determination, hope, pursuing dreams, unfairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The World is Not a Rectangle: A Portrait of Architect Zaha Hadid</i> • <i>Muslim Girls Rock</i> • <i>Malala's Magic Pencil</i> • <i>Malala and Iqbal</i>
Under My Hijab	Diversity of Muslim families, family love, values, beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mommy's Khimar</i> • <i>Mommy Squang</i> • <i>Deep in the Sahara</i> • <i>My Grandma and Me</i>
Drummer Girl	Challenging gender stereotypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Drum Dream Girl</i> • <i>Game Changers: The Story of Venus and Serena Williams</i> • <i>Amazing Grace</i> • <i>The World is Not a Rectangle</i>
Far from Home: A Story of Loss, Refuge, and Hope	Relocation, forced journey, fear, hope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lost and Found Cat</i> • <i>Lubna and Pebble</i> • <i>Migrants</i> • <i>La Frontera</i> • <i>Stepping Stones</i> • <i>When Stars are Scattered</i> • <i>Four Feet, Two Sandals</i> • <i>Salma the Syrian Chef</i>

Table 1. Text Sets around Islamic cultures in the Middle East.

Engagements for the Text Set: Pursuing Dreams with Courage, Hope, and Supports from Others

I created five engagements for *The World is Not a Rectangle*, *Little People, Big Dreams: Zaha Hadid*, *Muslim Girls Rise*, *Malala's Magic Pencil*, and *Malala and Iqbal*. The purposes of the engagements were to explore Muslim people's hopes, dreams, achievements, and contributions to society. Muslim people, especially women, often suffer from discrimination, oppression, and stereotypes. The characters in these stories also suffer from hardships, and, with the support of family and friends and the community, they seek solutions to and solve those problems with strength and determination.

Engagement 1: Exploring Zaha Hadid's Life Journey

1. Read aloud the story *Little People, Big Dreams: Zaha Hadid*.
2. During reading, ask students:
 - a. Zaha's favorite subjects in school were math and arts, and these helped her in her career as an architect. What are your favorite subjects and why? In what ways do you think those subjects will help you be what you want to be when you grow up?
 - b. What aspects of Zaha's childhood helped her succeed as an architect—a job that was dominated by men?
 - c. What was Zaha's personality like? How does the author describe her personality?
3. After reading, depict Zaha's life journey by writing and drawing. Ask students, "What aspects of Zaha's life experiences helped her pursue her dream to be an architect?"

Engagement 2: Exploring the Buildings Zaha Hadid Designed

1. Read aloud the story *The World is Not a Rectangle*.
2. During reading, ask students:
 - a. What things did Zaha see growing up in Baghdad that she later remembered when she began designing buildings?
 - b. Why did her buildings look different from the buildings other people designed?
 - c. How did Zaha get the ideas for the buildings she designed?
 - d. What do you notice about how her buildings look?
3. After reading, watch a video to see buildings designed by Zaha Hadid. Ask students to describe the buildings (e.g., dances like grass). Use a world map to figure out where the buildings mentioned in the video are located.
4. Imagine that students could interview the following three people mentioned in the book and have them list some questions they would ask these people:
 - a. Zaha Hadid
 - b. One of the architect judges who chose her design as the best
 - c. One of the city committee members who refused to build Zaha's design

Engagement 3: Exploring a Text Set using a Comparison Chart (Short, 2004)

1. As a group, students will read one book from the following: *The World Is Not a Rectangle*, *Little People Big Dreams: Zaha Hadid*, *Muslim Girls Rise*, *Malala's Magic Pencil*, or *Malala and Iqbal*. Then, have them identify the book's themes, settings, and main characters, as well as the problems the characters face and the problem-solving strategies they use.
2. The teacher will create a comparison chart and record students' words. In the chart, write the book titles down one side and the categories (themes, settings, main characters, characters' problems, and characters' problem-solving strategies) across the top. Invite students to talk about the similarities and differences among the books.

Engagement 4: Author and Illustrator Study.

1. Visit authors' and illustrators' websites for more information about them and their works.
 - a. Jeanette Winter (Author/illustrator of *The World Is Not a Rectangle* and *Malala and Iqbal*)
 - b. Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara (Author of *Little People Big Dreams: Zaha Hadid*)
 - c. Saira Mir (Author of *Muslim Girls Rise*)
 - d. Aaliya Jaleel (Illustrator of *Muslim Girls Rise*)
 - e. Malala Yousafzai (Author of *Malala's Magic Pencil*)
 - f. Kerascoët (Illustrator of *Malala's Magic Pencil*)

Engagement 5: Designing Arts with Imagination

1. Students will sketch a building using shapes on paper. Encourage them to use their imaginations to come up with various ways to take something that belongs to nature and turn it into a building design.
2. Zaha Hadid started designing clothes and bedroom furniture when she was a child. Ask students if they have ever designed anything, and, if so, ask them to describe what it was. Have them try designing anything besides buildings, such as clothing, furniture, jewelry, or toys. After they finish, post their designs in the classroom.

Engagements for the Text Set: Exploring Values and Beliefs

I developed five engagements using *Under My Hijab*, *Mommy's Khimar*, *Mommy Sayang*, *Deep in the Sahara*, and *My Grandma and Me*. *Under My Hijab* is a story about a Muslim girl who observes how contemporary Muslim women wear the hijab in a unique way. *Mommy's Khimar*, *Mommy Sayang*, *Deep in the Sahara*, and *My Grandma and Me* show Muslim families in global contexts: the U.S., Malaysia, Mauritania, and Iran.

Engagement 1: Exploring the Role of the Hijab in Muslim Women's Lives

1. Read aloud the story *Under My Hijab*. Before reading, ask students:
 - a. What do you like to wear?
 - b. Do you know the name of what the girl is wearing on her head? (Show book cover).
 - c. Who do you know who wears a hijab?
 - d. Do you know why and when that person wears a hijab?
 - e. Why do you think Muslim people believe it is important to wear a hijab?
2. During reading, ask students:
 - a. How do the characters feel when they wear their hijabs?
 - b. What colors can hijabs be?
 - c. Why is wearing a hijab important to the characters?
 - d. What activities do they do with and without their hijabs?
3. After reading, ask students:
 - a. What are some of the new things you learned? Have you learned any new words from this story? What do you know now that you didn't know before we read this book?
 - b. Read the author's and illustrator's notes. Ask: Why would they want to share this story? What are the messages they want to address?
 - c. Why do you think the title of this story is *Under My Hijab*?
 - d. How does this story connect to your life? Why?

Engagement 2: Important Object, Place, Person, or Memory

1. Students will identify and share connections between the story and their own life experiences. Then, they will depict these connections through writing and drawing.
2. Students will choose an object, place, person, or memory that is important to them. Then, in writing, they will describe why it is important to them and how it makes them feel.

Engagement 3: Exploring a Text Set using a Story Ray Strategy (Short, 2004)

1. As a group, students will read one of the following books: *Under My Hijab*, *Mommy's Khimar*, *Mommy Sayang*, *Deep in the Sahara*, and *My Grandma and Me*.
2. Each group will be given a narrow, three-foot-long strip of paper. On this ray, they will place colors, images, and words that represent the story's significance.
3. The rays will be assembled on a large mural or wall to reflect the story.

Engagement 4: A Portrait of a Personal Role Model

1. Students will create a portrait (a drawing or collage) of a person, who is a role model for them.
2. They will describe what actions and characteristics they admire about this person.

Engagement 5: Author and Illustrator Study

1. Visit the authors' and illustrators' websites for more information about them and their works.
 - a. Hena Khan (Author of *Under My Hijab*)
 - b. Aalya Jaleel (Illustrator of *Under My Hijab*)
 - c. Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow (Author of *Mommy's Khimar*)
 - d. Ebony Glenn (Illustrator of *Mommy's Khimar*)
 - e. Rosana Sullivan (Author/illustrator of *Mommy Sayang*)
 - f. Kelly Cunnane (Author of *Deep in the Sahara*)
 - g. Hoda Hadadi (Illustrator of *Deep in the Sahara*)
 - h. Mina Javaherbin (Author of *My Grandma and Me*)
 - i. Lindsey Yankey (Illustrator of *My Grandma and Me*)

Final Thoughts

I often hear that the Middle East and Islamic cultures are not easy to discuss with children in the classroom. Unfamiliarity may be keeping educators away from these topics. However, I sometimes feel hesitant and tense when teaching Arabic, too. Perhaps this stems from the stereotypes and misconceptions about the Arabic language, Muslim people, religion, Islamic cultural practices, and current social and political concerns in Middle Eastern countries. Yet, I always wonder, what if we keep staying away from teaching about the Middle East and Islamic cultures? I am afraid that will keep creating stereotypes and even disconnections between students with Islamic backgrounds and students from other cultural groups. I think unfamiliarity, hesitancy, and tensions may be a great starting point for teaching.

Children's literature creates a space for students to question, share, learn, and grow together to be global, critical, and active citizens. During the 2020–2021 school year, the COVID-19 pandemic kept causing my teaching schedule to change, and I was not able to settle down to create a consistent time to share the literature and try the engagements I designed. I am very excited about sharing them with my Arabic class in the coming school year.

Children's Literature Cited

Cline-Ransome, L. (2018). *Game changers: The story of Venus and Serena Williams*. Illus. J. E. Ransome. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Cunnane, K. (2018). *Deep in the Sahara*. Illus. H. Hadadi. Decorah, IA: Dragonfly.

Ebeid, R. (2020). *Baba, what does my name mean?: A journey to Palestine*. Illus. L. Jawhari. Melbourne, Australia: Tablo.

Engle, M. (2015). *Drum dream girl: How one girl's courage changed music*. Illus. R. Lopez. Boston: HMH.

Gonzales, C. M. (2013). *My colors, my world/ Mis colores, mi mundo*. New York: Lee & Low Books.

Hoffman, M. (1991). *Amazing Grace*. Illus. C. Binch. New York: Dial Books.

- Javaherbin, M. (2019). *My grandma and me*. Illus. L. Yankey. Somerville, MA: Candlewick.
- Khalil, A. (2020). *The Arabic quilt: An immigrant story*. Illus. A. Semirdzhyan. Thomaston, ME: Tilbury.
- Khan, H. (2012). *Golden domes and silver lanterns: A Muslim book of colors*. Illus. M. Amini. San Francisco: Chronicle.
- Khan, H. (2019). *Under my hijab*. Illus. A. Jaleel. New York: Lee & Low Books.
- Khan, H. (2021). *Crescent moons and pointed minarets: A Muslim book of shapes*. Illus. M. Amini. San Francisco: Chronicle.
- Khan, R. (2013). *King for a day*. Illus. C. Krömer. New York Lee & Low.
- Kobald, I. (2015). *My two blankets*. Illus. F. Blackwood. Boston: HMH.
- Kuntz, D., & Shrodes, A. (2019). *Lost and found cat: The true story of Kunkush's incredible journey*. Illus. S. Cornelison. Decorah, IA: Dragonfly.
- Masood, H. (2016). *Drummer girl*. Illus. H. Hadadi. Arden Hills, MN: Daybreak.
- Meddour, W. (2019). *Lubna and Pebble*. Illus. D. Egneus. New York: Dial.
- Mills, D., & Alva, A. (2018). *La frontera: El viaje con papa/My journey with papa*. Illus. C. Navarro. Boston: Barefoot.
- Mobin-Uddin, A. (2005). *My name is Bilal*. Illus. B. Kiwak. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.
- Muhammad, I. (2019). *The proudest blue: A story of hijab and family*. Illus. H. Aly. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Mohamed, O. (2020). *When stars are scattered*. Illus. V. Jamieson. New York: Dial.
- Nye, N. S. (1997). *Sitti's secrets*. Illus. N. Carpenter. New York: Aladdin.
- Nye, N. S. (1999). *Habibi*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Nye, N. S. (2002). *The flag of childhood: Poems from the Middle East*. Sydney: Turtleback.
- Nye, N. S. (2005). *19 varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East*. New York: Greenwillow.
- Nur, S. (2019). *Muslim girls rise: Inspirational champions of our time*. Illus. A. Jaleel. New York: Salaam Reads.
- Ramadan, D. (2020). *Salma the Syrian chef*. Illu. A. Bron. Toronto: Annick Press.

- Rubio, P. S. (2019). *Far from home: A story of loss, refuge, and hope*. Illus. F. Anaya. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Kids.
- Ruurs, M. (2016). *Stepping stones: A refugee family's journey*. Illus. N. A. Badr. Trans. F. Raheem. Olympia, WA: Orca Books.
- Shami, W. (2019). *Olive harvest in Palestine: A story of childhood memories*. Illus. S. New Providence, NJ: Farouki.
- Sullivan, R. (2019). *Mommy sayang*. New York: Disney.
- Thompkins-Bigelow, J. (2018). *Mommy's khimar*. Illus. E. Glenn. New York: Salaam Reads.
- Thong, G. R. (2016). *Green is a chile pepper: A book of colors*. Illus. J. Parra. San Francisco: Chronicle.
- Thong, R. (2015). *Round is a tortilla: A book of shapes*. Illus. J. Parra. San Francisco: Chronicle.
- Vegara, I. S. M. (2019). *Little people, big dreams: Zaha Hadid*. Illus. A. Amar. London: Frances Lincoln.
- Watanabe, I. (2020). *Migrants*. Wellington, New Zealand: Gecko Press.
- Williams, L. K. (2007). *Four feet, two sandals*. Illus. K. Mohammed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Winter, J. (2014). *Malala, a brave girl from Pakistan and Iqbal, a brave boy from Pakistan: Two stories of bravery*. New York: Beach Lane.
- Winter, J. (2017). *The world is not a rectangle: A portrait of architect Zaha Hadid*. New York: Beach Lane.
- Yousafzai, M. (2017). *Malala's magic pencil*. Illus. Kerascoet. Boston: Little, Brown.

References

- Bishop, R. S. (1990). *Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors*.
<https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf>
- Short, K. (2004). *Literature discussion strategies*. College of Education, University of Arizona. Retrieved from <https://old.coe.arizona.edu/sites/coe/files/strategies.pdf>
- Manal Tafish teaches Arabic Language at John B. Wright and Myers-Ganoung Elementary Schools.
- © 2022 by Manal Tafish



WOW Stories, Volume IX, Issue 1 by Worlds of Words is licensed under a Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
Based on a work by Manal Tafish at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/ix-1/13/>.