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WOW REVIEW

READING ACROSS CULTURES
VOLUME XI, ISSUE 4

Summer 2019
Global Nonfiction and Biographies

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WOW Review: Volume XI Issue 4
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Global Nonfiction and Biographies

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Volume XI Issue 4: Global Nonfiction and Biographies

Introduction

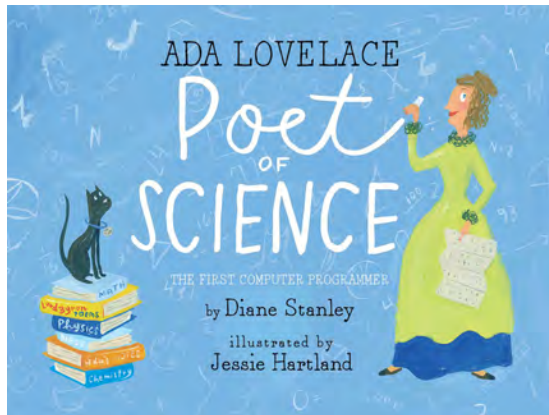
The emphasis on reading nonfiction has resulted in an explosion of quality informational texts from around the world. In this issue we collected reviews of nonfiction books, including biographies and fictionalized books based on facts. As submissions for the issue came in, we were struck by how biographies dominated, perhaps indicating the bond humans have with story. Our one title that is not a biography about a person is actually a biography of three penguins!

The biographies range from little known people like Dita, the librarian at Auschwitz during the Holocaust, to well-known contemporary activist Malala Yousafzai. The texts are rich in visual and verbal images, including autobiographies in story format by Francisco Jimenez and Jessica Kensky and in poetic forms by Jacqueline Woodson and Yuyi Morales. The picturebook biographies present writers, activists, scientists (Ada Lovelace), sports figures/artists (Ernie Barnes), and environmentalists (Wangari Maathai).

Biographies are powerful tools to help readers see possibilities as they read about people who have accomplished so much, despite trying circumstances. Francisco Jimenez and Yuyi Morales both left home for a new country where they did not speak the language. Dita Kraus was discriminated against due to her ethnicity, Ada Lovelace by her gender, and both Ernie Barnes and Jacqueline Woodson by the color of their skin. Mala Yousafzai and Jessica Kensky were injured by terrorists, and Wangari Maathai worked against tremendous political odds to create a movement. We hope you enjoy learning about these fascinating people (and penguins).

Our Fall 2019 issue is open themed. We welcome reviews of recent children's and young adult books that highlight intercultural and global perspectives. **Submission deadline: August 15, 2019.**

Susan Corapi & Prisca Martens, Co-Editors



Ada Lovelace, Poet of Science: The First Computer Programmer

Written by Diane Stanley

Illustrated by Jessie Hartland

Simon & Schuster, 2016, 40pp

ISBN: 9781481452496

Ada is looking for something to do. Left to her own devices in a big house, her inventiveness becomes her companion as she pursues multiple interests, including learning to fly. Readers of this book

quickly realize Ada's imagination is only the tipping point of her intellect and zest for learning. The lyrical prose written by author Diane Stanley, and the winsome, cartoon-like illustrations that utilize gouache by illustrator Jessie Hartland, work together to draw readers into the true story of how Ada Lovelace's ingenuity led her to experiment with her hobbies and surroundings in England, culminating in her work and eventual distinction as the world's first computer programmer. Stanley begins the story focusing on Ada, her imagination, and how her scientific and mathematical interests were fostered by an early scientific education. This positioning seems intentional as readers learn about Ada's keen intellect and mind before Stanley introduces Ada's parents, the famed poet Lord Byron, and mathematician, Lady Byron. Ada was trailblazing in her own right as a nineteenth century wife, mother, and career woman, as well as a mathematician and scientist. This focus on her as a complex woman helps readers visualize Ada as her own individual, independent of family ties.

Ada never knew her father and was raised primarily by her mother. Lady Byron encouraged her to study math and science, even taking her to factories to see how machines operated. One notable example was when Ada saw a mechanical loom designed by Frenchman Joseph Marie Jacquard. The loom was able to weave a variety of patterns because of the use of large paper cards punched with holes; these cards were inserted into the loom providing directions for weaving. This experience provided a foundation for Ada's eventual foray into coding. A later encounter with famed mathematician and inventor Charles Babbage provided an opportunity to see Babbage's calculating machine, the Difference Engine. After her marriage to the Earl of Lovelace and the birth of their three children, Ada worked with Babbage on a new idea of his, the Analytical Engine. This machine could run any mathematical calculation via the insertion of punched cards representing different equations. Ada not only wrote about the potentials of the Analytical Engine—calculations, composing music, reproducing images—but also translated the symbols and rules of operation into a digital format, what we now call computer programming. Ada began the task by explaining how to translate a complicated mathematical program called the numbers of Bernoulli and code it for the machine. Unfortunately, only her initials A.A.L. were ascribed to her work because of the 19th century belief that women's work would not be taken credibly. Even though computers would not be invented for another hundred years, Ada Lovelace is now credited with writing and publishing the very first computer program.

The book ends with an Author's Note, Important Dates, Selected Bibliography, Glossary, and a section on Controversy to extend and support interest in the topic. Readers learn Ada died at

age 36 and did not write any other documents. Babbage's Analytical Engine was never built but Alan Turing and Howard Aiken, both revolutionary pioneers in coding and computer science, later read Ada's manual and recognized how Ada and Babbage paved the way for their own work.

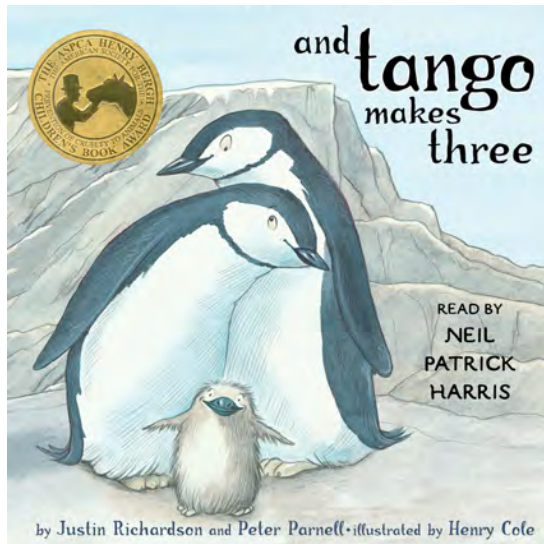
In the Controversy section Stanley explains that several scholars challenged the veracity of Ada's authorship of the Analytical Engine manual. By using direct quotes from Babbage and describing evidence shown in letters and instructions, Stanley verifies Ada did create the algorithm and code for the computer program. In the Important Dates section, readers discover in 1977-1983 the US Department of Defense developed a software language to connect other computer languages and honored Ada by naming it after her.

Other notable nonfiction books on STEM related topics featuring trailblazing females that can be paired with this book include *Ada Twist, Scientist* (Andrea Beaty, 2016), *Marvelous Mattie: How Margaret E. Knight Became an Inventor* (Emily Arnold McCully, 2006), and *Hidden Figures: The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race* (Margot Lee Shetterly, 2018).

Diane Stanley is the author and illustrator of more than 50 children's books. She has become known for her biographies and her work has been recognized by the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe-Horn* Book Award, and the *Washington Post's* Children's Book Guild Nonfiction Award. Her website is dianestanley.com

Jessie Hartland is an author and illustrator of children's nonfiction. Her artwork extends beyond literature as she has painted murals for amusement parks and apartment houses, created window displays for department stores, worked with notable magazines, and designed jewelry. Her website is jessiehartland.com

Sara Kersten-Parrish, University of Nevada, Reno



And Tango Makes Three

Written by Justin Richardson & Peter Parnell

Illustrated by Henry Cole

Simon & Schuster, 2005, 32pp

ISBN: 9780689878459

In Central Park there is a zoo that many families love to visit. The animals in the zoo have their own families too, none more loved than the penguins. Two male penguins named Roy and Silo spend their time together and their keeper, Mr. Gramzay watches as Roy and Silo make a nest together just like other couples. The other penguins take care of the eggs in their nests, but Roy and Silo's nest remains empty. One day, Silo finds a rock that looks

like an egg and brings it back to the nest, but no matter how much or how carefully he sits on it, it doesn't hatch. Mr. Gramzay decides to help. He finds an egg that needs parents and Silo sits and sits until finally out comes a baby penguin! Roy and Silo have a baby named Tango that they care for and love. They are a happy family. *And Tango Makes Three* is a lighthearted and happy story surrounded by Cole's beautiful illustrations, showing readers that Roy, Silo, and Tango are as happy and loved in their family as other penguins.

And Tango Makes Three is a story that introduces the topic of same-sex parents and adoption in a positive and simple way. The story first describes the many families that live in New York and visit the zoo, as well as the different animals that live as couples in the zoo. The authors quickly introduce readers to the theme of family by focusing on this common aspect of life for animals and people. Penguins are known to be primarily monogamous, meaning they mate for life, which makes this story even more interesting. While the other male penguins are wooing females, Roy and Silo woo each other. They walk, swim, eat, cuddle, and build a nest together, just like the rest of the penguins and without being rejected by the group.

The story continues by bringing in adoption. The zookeeper finds an egg that needs to be cared for or else it could die. By giving the egg to Roy and Silo the baby penguin gets two loving parents and the couple is given a baby to raise and love. There was no need to interfere in the care of the egg once given to the penguin couple, as they clearly demonstrated the skills needed to care for a baby. Even the inherited desire for a baby is apparent, as they found a rock to nurture because it looked similar to an egg. The other penguins didn't react negatively or shun Roy, Silo, or Tango and human visitors at the zoo loved the family. They were as they were meant to be and lived true to their nature.

And Tango Makes Three is an important story for children in same-sex families as well as children who need to be exposed to a range of diverse families. This book is a positive way to introduce the concept of same-sex couples. Students may have trouble understanding technical terms, but they understand love. Many teachers support families and children who are LGBTQ+ but are reluctant to discuss the topic for reasons that stem from personal modesty or fear of

backlash. Exposing students to aspects of everyday life, no matter how controversial, broadens and develops their minds and understanding. Books dealing with challenged content encourage discussions of injustices as well as highlight differences in life and society.

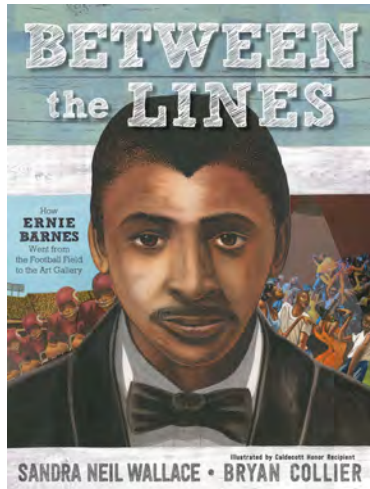
And Tango Makes Three would pair well with Todd Parr's (2003) *The Family Book*, another book that depicts family units in different circumstances with empathy. Both books address a range of family units, including same-sex parents, divorced parents, single parenthood, bi-racial families, etc.

Justin Richardson is an assistant professor of psychiatry at Columbia and Cornell and the coauthor of *Everything You Never Wanted Your Kids to Know About Sex (But Were Afraid They'd Ask)* (Justin Richardson & Mark Schuster, 2014). Dr. Richardson has been featured in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, on the *Today* show and NPR's *Morning Edition*, and in numerous magazines. He talks with parents and teachers about parenting and children's sexual development.

Peter Parnell is a playwright whose plays have been produced at the Public Theater and Playwrights Horizons in New York City and the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, among others. He is a producer and has written extensively for television. He lives in New York City.

Henry Cole has written and illustrated more than fifty books for children, including *Spot, the Cat* (2016), *Unspoken* (2012), and *Three Hens and a Peacock* (Lester Laminack & Henry Cole, 2014). A former elementary school teacher, he now writes and paints full time from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Catherine Valoon, University of Texas at Arlington



Between the Lines: How Ernie Barnes Went from the Football Field to the Art Gallery

Written by Sandra Neil Wallace

Illustrated by Bryan Collier

Simon & Schuster, 2018, 48pp

ISBN: 9781481443876

Ernie Barnes wants to draw. He draws everywhere he can when growing up in the segregated South. Although he isn't welcomed in libraries and museums, his mother knows he loves to paint. She takes Ernie with her as she works as a housekeeper for a wealthy man and Ernie sees paintings that come alive for him.

Ernie draws what he sees in his sketchbooks and continues to draw even after getting scholarships to play football. During his college years, he plays football while also studying art. As the push for equality comes during the civil rights movement, Blacks are finally allowed to go to museums, but Ernie still does not see paintings by Negro artists. Ernie continues to play professional football while dreaming about painting. After watching his new team play, he creates his first football painting called *The Bench*. Ernie goes on to face many challenges in his journey as an excellent athlete while continuing to desire to be an artist. When Ernie decides to end his career as a football player, he struggles at first to live as an artist, but he never gives up. Ernie finds ways to share his paintings in a meeting of the American Football League (AFL) and soon becomes their official artist. He is hired to paint with a football salary. Ernie's artwork is successfully exhibited in New York galleries and he soon becomes a household name. He excels at creating movement in his paintings and proves to the world that he can thrive as an excellent athlete and a successful artist.

Bryan Collier's watercolor and collage illustrations include the actual art of Ernie Barnes to honor his unique style and originality. In the Illustrator's Note, Collier talks about meeting Ernie Barnes and how his work inspired him and many other artists.

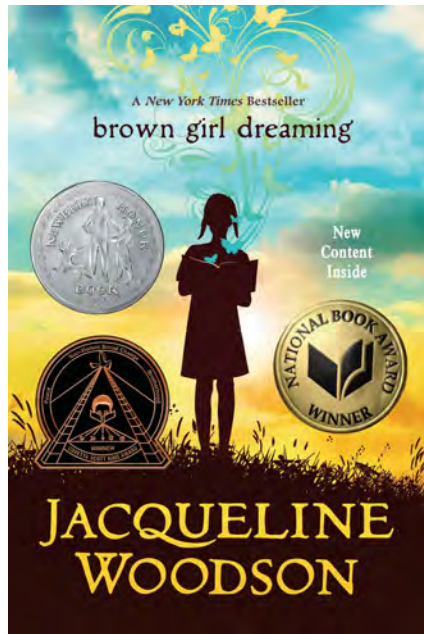
Ernie Barnes's story in *Between the Lines* exemplifies the dreams in all of us. Barnes wanted to be an artist and a football player and by being true to himself, accomplished his dreams, while also pioneering a new style of art. It was important for him to show the beauty and grace of his world in his art and this helped inspire others along the way. This is an excellent book for children to learn about persistence and the will to follow one's dream.

This biography can be paired with *The Undefeated* which Kwame Alexander and Kadir Nelson (2019) created as a love letter to America. It recognizes the struggles and triumphs of Black America and of everyday people who remained steadfast and brave as they journeyed towards their dreams. Another book that pairs well is *Aunt Luce's Talking Paintings* by Francie Latour and Ken Daley (2018). This book tells of a young girl and her Aunt Luce, who loves to paint about Haiti and its history. Through her aunt's paintings, the girl comes to know and understand Haiti as her home with a rich history that helps her see who she is as a person.

Sandra Neil Wallace is a trailblazing author and sportscaster. As the first female ESPN reporter to host an NHL broadcast, she is an agent of change. She is proud to share her stories as a daughter of a refugee and a concentration camp survivor. Her books show how people broke barriers. *Between the Lines: How Ernie Barnes went from the Football Field to the Art Gallery* won the 2019 NCTE Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction. Sandra Neil Wallace's narrative writing style continues to inspire children to dream and be agents of change. She lives in New Hampshire with her family. Her books co-authored with Richard Wallace include *First Generation: 36 Trailblazing Immigrants and Refugees who Make America Great* (2018), *Bound by Ice: A True North Pole Survival Story* (2017), and *Blood Brother: Jonathan Daniels and His Sacrifice for Civil Rights* (2016).

Bryan Collier is an award-winning illustrator. He is a four-time Caldecott Honor recipient. His illustration style combines watercolors and collage to create unique artwork pieces. Bryan was inspired by Ernie's art as he was introduced to this creative giant's work early on in his life. He chose to showcase Ernie's original work in the book instead of re-creating them because Ernie's artistic style truly speaks for itself.

Maria Perpetua Socorro U. Liwanag, Towson University



Brown Girl Dreaming

Written by Jacqueline Woodson

Penguin Random House, 2014, 349pp

ISBN: 9780399252518

Brown Girl Dreaming is a memoir written in verse. Woodson takes the reader through her early childhood into her preteens. Her story is primarily based in South Carolina. On pages one and two she introduces herself through a poem that includes these lines:

"I am born as the South explodes,
too many people too many years
enslaved, then emancipated
but not free, the people
who look like me
keep fighting
and marching
and getting killed
so that today–
and every day from this moment on,
brown children like me can grow up free.
Can grow up
learning and voting and walking and riding
wherever we want."

Woodson introduces us to a time and place that is an essential part of who she is today. She was born in Ohio and raised in South Carolina during a time when the struggle was real and equality for African Americans was a hope and not yet a forgone conclusion. There was civil unrest in the country and the civil rights movement was in motion. South Carolina was the home of Woodson's mother and her family. In this journey she tells the tale of how that family welcomes their daughter and her three children after Woodson's mother leaves her father. While traveling on the bus to Greenville, South Carolina, in 1963, her mother sits in back because it was too dangerous to sit closer to the front and near the driver (Woodson, p. 30). Woodson tells her story to build a door that educates readers regarding: "social practices that function for social justice" as well as injustice (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. 27).

Woodson introduces her older brother Hope, her sister Odella, and her younger brother Roman. She identifies circumstances in her life that readers either have or at some point will experience. She suffers the death of loved ones, such as her grandfather and aunt. Her brother Roman becomes ill from eating lead paint. She even loses her father who wanted her to be named Jack. Throughout the story Woodson details her family history and softly introduces the socio-political aspects of the times and her family's participation in the civil rights movement from a child's perspective.

In writing this book, Woodson invites readers into her world. She not only shares her life story, but also shares her perspective of family, society and culture. She gives readers an opportunity to see themselves reflected in her work or to look through the window she has opened to note social and cultural aspects that differ from their lives. She opens a door to the political events of the time.

There are many instructional connections with this book. This text can be used to introduce students to the civil rights era and to supporters and leaders of the movement. It can also be used to inspire students to investigate their own family history for this time period. The book can be paired with Woodson's other books, such as *The Other Side* (Woodson & Lewis, 2001), *Show Way* (Woodson & Talbott, 2005), and *This is the Rope: A Story from the Great Migration* (Woodson & Ransome, 2013). These books articulate the goals for writing African American children's literature identified by Greenfield: "(a) encourage children to develop positive attitudes towards themselves; (b) help children learn how to overcome negative experiences and see new ways to solve problems; (c) familiarize children with Black history and achievements, and Black heroes; (d) encourage children to reflect on the strength of Black families and respect the contributions of elders; (e) inspire children to enlist in the struggle for freedom and equality; (f) engender a love for the arts" (as cited in Bishop, 2007, p. 231).

Jacqueline Woodson lives with her family in Brooklyn, New York and is an award-winning author. She has won The Poetry Foundation's Young People's Poet Laureate, Margaret A Edward Award for Lifetime Achievement, Newbery Honor Medal, The Coretta Scott King Award, ALA Notable Parent's Choice Award, National Book Award, and Detroit Public School Student's Favorite Author. In 2018 she was the recipient of the Astrid Lindgren Award, an international award demonstrating her global impact. Woodson ensnares the senses with her writing. In *Brown Girl Dreaming* she engages the reader's imagination with descriptive prose. More information on Woodson is available on her website: jacquelinewoodson.com

Chiquita Days, University of Texas at Arlington

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Botelho, Maria Jose' and Rudman, Masha Kabakow. (2009). *Critical multicultural analysis of children's literature: Mirrors, windows, and doors*. New York: Routledge



The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child

Written by Francisco Jiménez

University of New Mexico Press, 1997, 134pp

ISBN: 9780826317971

The Circuit is a moving autobiographical book composed of short stories about Francisco Jiménez's childhood as an undocumented immigrant, son of migrant farmworkers, and a migrant worker himself. Francisco comes to the United States with his parents at age four along with his older brother Roberto. His father dreams of moving to California where he is sure the family's fate will change and they will have a better life. Roberto and Francisco are excited and impatient to arrive in California, a place where they hear people sweep money off the streets. Unfortunately, their envisioned paradise is really a never-ending cycle of arduous work, constant moving to follow the harvest, and poor living conditions.

ous work, constant moving to follow the harvest, and poor living conditions.

Each chapter is a short story that stands alone and reads like a detailed flashback or memory told by Francisco as a child. The chapters are brilliantly written with the essence of innocence and the realness of childhood dreams and fresh emotion. Through Jiménez's childhood accounts, we learn about the struggles of migrant farm working and the fear of deportation that haunts many children. Readers also experience the struggles of learning a new language and adapting to a new school setting while negotiating family relationships, friendships, cultural identity and growing up amidst the backdrop of poverty. This is a beautifully told story of an underrepresented and quiet group of people in the United States.

Francisco is a brilliant and caring child who is always hungry to learn more and is willing to help his family in whatever way possible. In the chapter, *Inside Out*, Jiménez details his first experience entering U.S. schools. He is excited to begin school until his brother tells him about his experience of being hit with a ruler for not following directions in English, a language he did not speak. Nevertheless, he is still excited to attend school. His first day is overwhelming because he does not understand anything the teacher is saying. In the midst of the confusion, Francisco finds refuge in drawing and watching a caterpillar in a jar that is slowing transitioning into a butterfly. Through time and even a playground scuffle, Francisco finally begins to figure out the rhythm of school. Just like the butterfly, Francisco transitions from the inside out.

Francisco Jiménez's autobiographical book is an inspirational series of stories of a person who dealt with many challenges. It proves that one's struggles and adversities do not define how far someone can go. These stories are particularly relevant for young Latinx students who can make cultural connections and relate to Francisco's early experience beginning school and not speaking English. As a Latina who learned English as a second language, I can relate to Jiménez's experience of feeling out of place and embarrassed in an unfamiliar place.

The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child was published in 1997, and originally written in English, then translated to Spanish. It is the first of a four-book series, all available in

English and Spanish. The last chapter ends with a heart wrenching cliffhanger, imploring the reader to continue the series to find out more. *The Circuit* can be paired with the other books in the series: *Breaking Through* (2002), *Reaching Out* (2009), and *Taking Hold* (2017). These books provide information on Jiménez's journey through college and young adulthood as a son of migrant workers.

Francisco Jiménez is a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Santa Clara University (SCU) in Santa Clara, California. He received his BA from SCU and an MA and Ph.D. in Latin American studies from Columbia University. He was also the recipient of the Carnegie Professor of the Year Award in the year 2002.

Yuridiana Franco, Texas Woman's University



Dreamers

Written and illustrated by Yuyi Morales

Neal Porter Books and Holiday House, 2018, 40pp

ISBN: 9780823440559

In *Dreamers*, author Yuyi Morales tells her life story through a blending of English, Spanish, and brilliant illustrations. In 1994, Yuyi Morales left her home in Xalapa, Mexico, and came to the United States with her infant son. She left behind nearly everything she owned and all she had ever known. She spoke little English and struggled to find work. Although life was difficult, she used her strength and passion to build a life for herself and her young son. Yuyi created a home by taking her son to the library. Through the power of stories and her acquisition of English, she began to feel more at home in

the U.S. Morales offers readers a unique immigrant's tale that is ripe with themes of hope, dreams, and love. *Dreamers* demonstrates the power of one's dreams and the importance of stories in building those dreams.

For this work, Yuyi Morales was awarded the 2019 Pura Belpré Illustrator Award. *Dreamers* was also named a New York Times/New York Public Library Best Illustrated Book of 2018. Although the words in the story are simple, readers get deeper insights into the story through the illustrations. *Dreamers* is an important literary work that proves picturebooks can be a medium for valuable messages and life lessons. *Dreamers* begins with images of Morales and her son, arms outstretched, heading towards their new beginning. After coming to America, Morales and her son add the label of "immigrante" to their identities. This is symbolized in the artwork by the crossing of a bridge. As they come to a city, Morales does not speak, disrupted by the "words unlike those of our ancestors." Despite feelings of anxiety and homesickness, Morales discovers the magic of the public library. Using double-page spreads, Morales captures the exuberance of this discovery as she and her son experience the delight of a good story. Through literature, Morales builds a connection to her new home and realizes the power of dreams. The story shows readers that no matter where they live, they can always make themselves a new home. Another important aspect of *Dreamers* is the emphasis on the transformative power of literature. Through the library, Morales finds her place and builds connections with her new homeland.

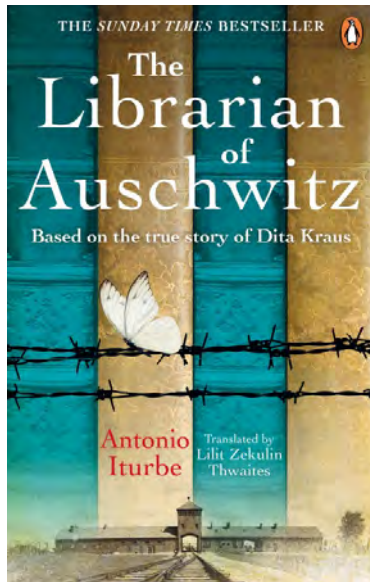
One of the most engaging elements of *Dreamers* is the artwork created by Morales. Using Mexican fabric, metal sheets, childhood drawings, as well as leaves and plants, Morales creates multi-media artwork that blends her Mexican and American lives together. Equally vibrant and surreal, the details in the art provide readers with links between the U.S. and Mexico. Additional images pasted in by Morales provide deeper symbolism to the book. After the story concludes, Morales includes a list of books that inspired her – an addition that helps readers to continue their journey into literacy.

Dreamers would pair well with texts that similarly focus on the power of literature and discovery. Educators could incorporate *Tomás and the Library Lady* by Pat Mora and Raul Colón (2000), *Book Uncle and Me* by Uma Krishnaswami and Julianna Swaney (2016), or *I Am a Story* by Dan Yaccarino (2016) into a unit emphasizing this theme. These books would partner well with *Dreamers*, not only due to their shared motif, but also because these stories emphasize diversity and multiculturalism. By sharing books that emphasize unique cultures, teachers can help students understand the universal importance of storytelling and literacy.

Yuyi Morales was born in Mexico and moved to the United States in 1994 with her husband and infant son. In the early 2000's, Morales enrolled in a class at the University of California Berkeley that focused on writing for children. After working as an illustrator on literary projects with various authors, Morales wrote and illustrated her first book *Just a Minute*, which was published in 2003. She has since worked on over a dozen children's books, as both an author and illustrator. Morales has received over 30 awards and honors for her work, including six Pura Belpré honor awards for illustration. Her books have also received the Américas Award, the California Book Award, and the Tomás Rivera Award. Morales now splits her time between the U.S. and Mexico while continuing to work on new projects.

Dreamers is available in dual language editions of Spanish and English.

Victoria Blandino, University of Texas at Arlington



The Librarian of Auschwitz: Based on the True Story of Dita Kraus

Written by Antonio Iturbe
Translated by Lilit Thwaites
Ebury Press, 2018, 424pp
ISBN 9781529104776

“Look, the people here. . .what are they? Zionists? Anti-Zionists? Atheists? Communists?” A sigh blurs his words momentarily. “And who cares? If you look more carefully, all you can see is people, nothing more. Fragile, corruptible people. Capable of the best and the worst. (p, 223)”

This quote summarizes both the themes and mood of this Sydney Taylor Gold Medal Winner for older readers. Among the ubiquity of Shoah (Hebrew for Holocaust) texts, this one is special. While not technically non-fiction, *The Librarian of Auschwitz* is carefully and thoroughly researched biographical fiction that has been lauded by Holocaust survivors, scholars, and Jews worldwide for good reason.

The author, Antonio Iturbe, a Spanish non-Jew, wrote this novel after learning about the smallest library in the world, eight books at Auschwitz, and its adolescent librarian, Dita Kraus, who risked her life to be in charge of this minute collection. But this is just a small part of the story. Told through the stories of countless characters, including a gay sports coach, a repentant SS officer, doting mothers, lovers, and many others, this is a narrative that revolves around the idea that even in the hell of Auschwitz, people are just like the people you know in your life today.

The plot itself is concerned with the last years of the Shoah and takes place in a special camp for families where, for the time being, children are allowed to live and go to school. They play games, put on plays, and even celebrate Jewish holidays, all under the auspices of Josef Mengele. This setting allows the reader to see life being lived in the most trying of circumstances. The main character Dita, the librarian, encounters different people in her daily life, and the reader is privy to snippets of these people's stories, too.

Infesting all of the stories is the Shoah and the reader is spared none of the horrors. However, unlike many books of this genre, the cruelty and inhumanity are supplanted, not by innocence, but by the business of living. Victims and perpetrators are neither saints nor sinners. Dita is a brave girl, but she is also rude and selfish. She is no hero; instead she is a smart teenager who is doing her best to fashion some kind of an existence as she grows up.

This novel would be best read in middle school and beyond. Because of its scope and themes, it could work well in social studies classes. The book would pair well with *The Book Thief* (Markus Zusak, 2005), a story of a young girl and the books she steals that feed her soul in the stark days of 1939 Nazi Germany. In both stories the teen protagonists are protecting the power of words when words are being suppressed.

The author, Antonio Iturbe, is a novelist, a journalist, and a professor of journalism in his hometown of Barcelona, Spain. He is the author of two well-known Spanish children's series called *La Isla de Susu* and *Los casos del Inspector Cito*.

Melissa Wilson, Leeds Trinity University



Rescue & Jessica: A Life-Changing Friendship

Written by Jessica Kensky and Patrick Downes

Illustrated by Scott Magoon

Candlewick Press, 2018, 32pp

ISBN: 9780763696047

After the tragic Boston Marathon bombing, and what feels like an eternity in the hospital trying to heal after the amputation of her leg, Jessica sees another patient and her service dog and decides to apply for a dog of her own. Jessica receives Rescue, a black Labrador who is nervous about becoming a service animal because he comes from a family of Seeing Eye dogs. He was initially supposed to be

trained as a Seeing Eye dog, but his trainer recognized that being part of a service dog team was a better fit for Rescue because he would work beside his partner as a team player. His trainer worked endlessly to get him ready for his new owner.

Both Rescue and Jessica are nervous about working together. Jessica needs a companion to help her do everyday tasks and is scared that nothing will compare to her old life. Rescue is unsure if he can live up to what Jessica needs. When the two meet, they are instantly connected. They start with basics like getting out of bed, learning to walk, reaching things, and getting around places, learning to work as a team to accomplish each task. Some are harder than others, but one thing is for sure, they will never give up. They work with each other every day, training, and getting used to each other's company. Jessica does normal functioning activities on her own but needs some help from Rescue. He reaches for things, assists her when they are out in the streets, and when they go to the store. He is the perfect companion and partner for her.

Unfortunately, when healing does not go well, Jessica loses her other leg and has to learn everything again. Rescue supports her through tough times. When she wants to give up, Rescue is there for her. Each day gets easier and more accessible for them, but they still face battles. Even though Rescue is a service dog, Jessica makes an effort to let him enjoy the life of a dog. She realizes that Rescue is a dog that loves to act like one when he can, so she takes him to the dog park, plays fetch, gives him snacks, treats, cuddles him whenever she gets the chance, and lets him sleep in on occasion. He is a sweet dog who is loyal to Jessica no matter the trials they face. It is a real-life companionship of two who both need rescuing!

The alternating voices of Rescue and Jessica communicate the nervousness they both feel about this new partnership. Readers learn about Rescue first and get his perspective and feelings. We then hear Jessica's doubts and worries. They are both extremely nervous about meeting one another, "Rescue hoped she did not notice his legs were trembling!" They both thought the other was amazing and bonded right away, which is essential because service animals are with their owners 24/7!

Authors Jessica and Patrick are a married couple who are both Boston Marathon bombing survivors and amputees. The illustrations by Scott Magoon communicate the many dark aspects of the book and provide a sense of how Jessica felt during this drastic transition in her life. Readers develop an understanding of her need for Rescue in her life. Magoon was a runner the same day the bombing happened so he understands the tragedy of that day. When he heard about their story, he felt compelled to draw the pictures realistically. Jessica wanted the art to be authentic because she wanted students to consider what it is like to lose your legs and to feel free to ask questions. When she is out with her husband and Rescue, she said it is normal for them to experience stares and questions, so they created a book that allows students to study, stare, wonder, and question in the safety of a classroom setting knowing other students might have the same wonderings.

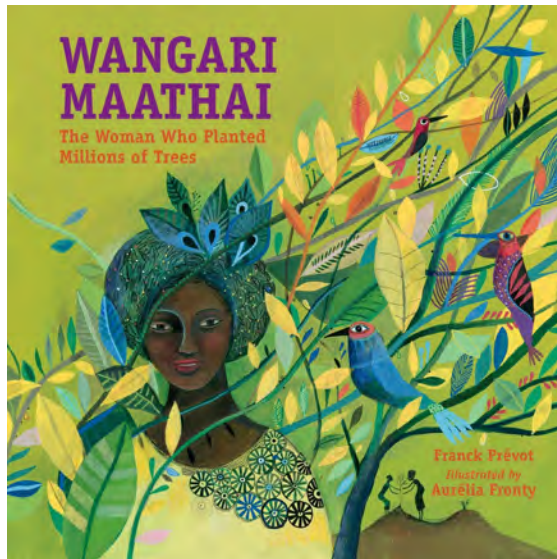
The story is a great book to discuss disabilities and amputation. The book is just the beginning of what a real amputee person has to go through. The struggles and battles of simple tasks can feel like the world is pulling you down every day. Rescue gives Jessica a sense of comfort and freedom to feel like she can do anything she puts her mind too. This is such a powerful message, delivered in a calm way, to introduce a raw topic and give readers the understandings they need to consider differences in abilities. The message highlights that others might have differing abilities that limit what they do or that they may simply do some things differently. The book won the 2019 Schneider Family Award for the portrayal of a disability experience and the Dolly Gray Children's Literature Award.

Rescue & Jessica can be paired with *Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah* by Laurie Ann Thompson and Sean Qualls (2015). It is a story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah from Ghana, Africa, who was born with two legs, one of which did not "work." He was viewed as a curse or useless, but he taught himself how to hop and do normal activities. He hopped two miles to and from school every day because he was determined to get an education and learned to ride a bicycle. After his mother died, he wrote to an organization, received a bike, helmet, shoes, and socks, and began to ride. He rode 400+ miles in ten days, visiting people who were sick or disabled along the way, proving he could do anything he put his mind to, even with one leg. He has a difficult life story, but the struggles he has overcome need to be told. He received a prosthetic leg and had an amazing mentor who pushed him to do great things!

Jessica Kensky was an oncology nurse and a marathon runner. Kensky is a double amputee and Rescue is not only her helper but her comforter as well. She has always been interested in fitness, running, and a healthy lifestyle. Patrick Downes, a doctoral student and marathon runner, is invested in helping people and encouraging others to do what brings them joy. They both found a passion for running in marathons. They were newlyweds when the bombing happened but were sent to separate hospitals. It was almost two and a half weeks before they were able to see each other again when Jessica was transferred to Patrick's hospital. He felt no matter what he said, she was depressed. When she decided to move forward with Rescue, he noticed how her mood changed. Patrick has benefitted from Rescue and respects the bond they have with one another.

Scott Magoon was a runner in the marathon, on the course but between the two blasts. He sees this book as one of his most personal because of his presence at the tragedy. His wife and two young boys were also there watching their dad run. He struggled from PTSD but found relief. He used his experience and friendship with Jessica, Patrick and Rescue to create realistic artwork using digital media.

Danielle Crutch, University of Texas at Arlington



Wangari Maathai: The Woman Who Planted Millions of Trees

Written by Franck Prévot

Illustrated by Aurélia Fronty

Translated from French

Charlesbridge, 2015, 48pp

ISBN: 9781580896276

This picture book biography focuses on Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathia, a political activist who was born and raised in Ithite, a small village in Kenya, in the 1940s. Wangari came from a humble background and cared enough about trees to champion an environmental cause and take on the President of Kenya at the time. The book recounts her life, providing insight into the cultural customs,

the country's political state, and the devastation resulting from the deforestation of Kenya by British plantation owners. Wangari was fortunate that in an era when girls in Kenya were expected to help their mothers at home rather than attend school, her parents enrolled her in school. Wangari became one of very few African females who was literate at that time. In the 1960's she was one of six hundred students from Kenya invited to the United States to pursue their studies. She returned to Kenya after the country gained its independence from Britain. To resolve the deforestation of Kenya, Wangari initiated the Green Belt Movement to plant trees to replace the ones cut down by the British and Kenya's own government. Wangari enlisted the help of women from all over Kenya to plant trees. Her peaceful fight for an environmental cause and democracy in her country resulted in Wangari's imprisonment, which did not dissuade her from continuing her movement. She was eventually elected to parliament. On October 8, 2004, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts and work in Kenya. At the end of the book, Prévot offers a historical timeline with actual photographs of Wangari and important events in Kenya. In addition, Fronty fills the book with large colorful illustrations that complement the story.

This book raises awareness of the value of trees. Wangari pointed out that cutting down trees destroys forest and leads to erosion, which affects the wildlife. Trees bear fruit that feed people, provide shade, and purify the air we breathe. This story reminds us that environmental issues affect all countries and people. This book discusses diverse topics, provides insight about the hardships that other countries have experienced, and highlights the achievements of a woman who dared to challenge the status quo in her country. It is a story that offers a deep insight into caring for trees, the environment, and giving voice to women. It discusses political change and features a female role model.

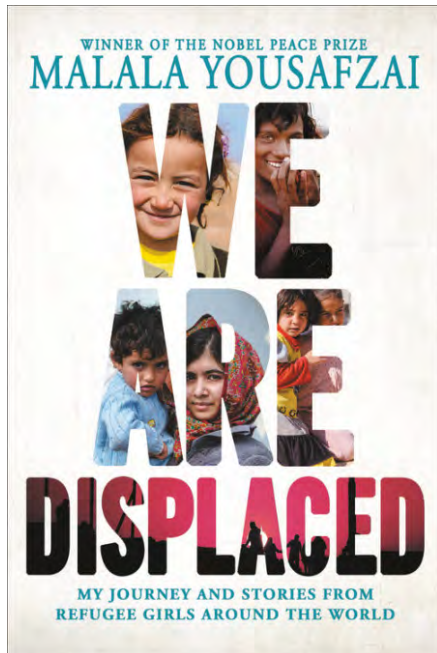
Wangari Maathai: The Woman Who Planted Millions of Trees can be paired with other books on her such as *Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai* (Claire A. Nivola, 2008), *Mama Miti: Wangari Maathai and the Trees of Kenya* (Donna Jo Napoli & Kadir Nelson, 2010), *Seeds of Change* (Jen Johnson, 2010),

and *Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa* (Jeanette Winter, 2008). It can also be paired with other books focused on political activists who made a difference in other countries, such as *Dreams of Freedom: In Words and Pictures* (Amnesty International, 1841) and *Go Show the World: A Celebration of Indigenous Heroes* (Wab Kinew & Joe Morse, 2018). It can also be paired with stories of young people taking action, such as *Amina: Through My Eyes* (J. L. Powers & Lyn White, 2015). Students can discuss the contributions these individuals have made and their significance. This text set can also introduce social injustices carried out by governments, provide connections to female role models who have left a legacy, or convey the adversities and hardships individuals in other countries have endured.

Franck Prévot was born in 1968 in Bourg-en-Bresse, France. He is a French author and illustrator who began writing stories at the early age of seven. In 2003 he became a teacher and published his first book. Since then, he has published more than 20 books in France, some of which have been translated in other languages. More information about this author can be found at The Children's Bookshow.

Aurélia Fronty is a French illustrator who has produced artwork for more than forty books. She discovered her passion for art early on in her life. Her trips across Africa and Asia have influenced her vibrant illustrations. More information about this illustrator can be found at The Children's Bookshow.

Yolanda Weiss, University of Texas at Arlington



We Are Displaced: My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World

Written by Malala Yousafzai

Little, Brown, 2019, 218pp

ISBN: 9780316523646

Malala Yousafzai shares an autobiographical account of her experiences as a displaced person, political target, and ardent activist for girls' education and for refugees worldwide. After telling her own story, she introduces the first-person accounts of nine refugee girls whose journeys to freedom from discrimination, war, poverty, and persecution were or continue to be fraught with danger and hardship. The autobiographical and biographical perspectives in this book increase the impact and poignancy of the plight of refugees and create opportunities for readers to develop empathy and seek action on behalf of others.

Malala began her activism as an eleven-year-old girl growing up in time of political turmoil in Pakistan. Malala's father ran a chain of schools and encouraged Pakistani girls, including his daughter, to get an education. When the Taliban took over the Swat Valley where Malala and her family lived, they banned schooling for girls and then closed all girls' schools. Malala fought back. Using a pseudonym, she authored a blog for the BBC Urdu. In her posts, she wrote about life under Taliban rule, violence and misuse of Islamic teachings, and focused her advocacy on the importance of schooling for girls.

Her outspokenness for female education and peace made Malala a political target. She was shot by the Taliban. A week later, while still in a coma, Malala was airlifted to the United Kingdom where she underwent surgery and treatment for life-threatening injuries. Her family, fearing further reprisals, followed her to the U.K. With the support of her parents, Malala restarted her activism by visiting resettlement and refugee camps, advocating for the young women whose courage, bravery, and resilience she admired, and bringing awareness to the uncertain lives of refugee girls from around the globe. In 2014, at the age of seventeen, Malala earned the Nobel Peace Prize, the youngest person ever to earn that honor.

The refugee girls' first-person stories in this book are unique and highlight the dangers faced and courage needed to be a displaced person in the world today. The table of contents lists the girls' names and a phrase that represents her experience. Malala introduces each chapter with how she came to know each girl.

Zaynab and her sister Sabreen are Yemeni refugees whose journey from their war-torn country separates them and takes their lives in different directions. Muzoon flees the war in Syria and influences the life choices for other girls living in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. Najla was internally displaced in Iraq due to the persecution of Yazidi people by ISIS. Similarly, internally displaced in her home country, María made a documentary film to share the struggle of Colum-

bian people displaced by civil war. Analisa, an unaccompanied minor who escaped from violence in Guatemala, seeks asylum in the United States. After escaping violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Marie Claire and her family were unwanted in Zambia, applied for refugee visas, and ended up in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where she graduated from high school after just five months. (Malala includes a chapter about Jennifer, the Pennsylvania-based refugee volunteer who became the "American mom" to Marie Claire's family.) Ajida, a member of the Rohingya, a persecuted Muslim minority group, escaped from Myanmar to Bangladesh. The final story is Farah's who fled with her parents from Uganda when she was just two-years-old. Farah shares how she has experienced bullying and prejudice as a Muslim African with Indian heritage living in Canada, yet feels "refugee gratitude" for the life choices she was given by her parents' decision to risk leaving their home.

Malala's voice and the voices of the refugees are forceful in this book. Readers will feel the strength of Malala's convictions as well as the fear she experienced as a political target and the courage she displayed from a very early age. Young readers will be inspired by her activism and the refugee girls' first-person narratives. Authentic, vivid descriptions invite readers to live through the experiences of each refugee girl and feel the courage it takes to survive as a displaced person in a troubled world. The final pages of the book include photographs of the refugee girls who contributed their stories, Malala, her family, and the Swat Valley. The proceeds from this book support the work of Malala's Fund (<https://www.malala.org>).

In a closing section, "How You Can Help," Malala offers statistics from the United Nation Refugee Agency. (<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us>). There are 68.5 million "forcibly displaced persons" in the world today. Forty million people are internally displaced within their own countries; 28.5 million are refugees and 3.1 million are asylum-seekers (<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>). The narratives in the book combined with these staggering numbers affirm that the plight of displaced persons is an international crisis in search of a global solution.

In the epilogue, Malala tells how she felt returning to her home six years after she was attacked by the Taliban. In March 2018, she and her family traveled from the United Kingdom to the Swat Valley. Along with the stories of the young female refugees in *We Are Displaced*, Malala's emotions confirm the quote with which she opens the book:

"no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark,

you only run for the border
when you see the whole city
running as well."

--Warsan Shire, "Home"

Educators can pair this book with Malala Yousafzai's other autobiographical books, including *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* (2015), *Malala's Magic Pencil* (2017) and the Spanish language edition, *El lápiz mágico de Malala* (2017). In pairings with biographies written about Malala by other authors, readers may note whether there are differences in how they empathize with Malala's life story. These titles include *Malala: Activist for Girls' Education* by Raphaële Frier (2017), *Malala: A Hero for All* by Shana Corey (2016), and *Who Is Malala Yousafzai?* by Dinah Brown (2015).

A text set focused on the rights of children and young adults could help students make connections across cultures and around the globe. Educators may choose to launch an inquiry with the picturebook *For Every Child: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Words and Pictures* text adapted by Caroline Castle with various illustrators (2000). Two books by Susan Kuklin combine biography/autobiography and topical information that can further students' inquiry into the rights of young children and teens. *Iqbal Masih and the Crusaders Against Child Slavery* (Susan Kuklin, 1988) is about a "debt-bonded" young Pakistani activist who, before his murder at the age of twelve, brought the world's attention to the conditions in which children were working in carpet and other unsafe factory conditions. *We Are Here to Stay: Voices of Undocumented Young Adults* (Susan Kuklin, 2019) includes first-person narratives of the lives of undocumented teens living in the United States today as well as a timeline of U.S. immigration policies and other information.

Judi Moreillon, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign